

reason
FREE MINDS AND FREE MARKETS

GUA
GUATEMALA

NEW ZEALAND

11

STRAP TAG

BAGGAGE

IQALUIT, CANADA

**34 Places
To Find
Freedom**

JERUSALEM, ISRAEL
**CONFLICTS AND
CONTRASTS AND**

LIS

NEW ORLEANS

In Defense of
'Tourist Trap'
CHRISTIANITY

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BAGGAGE STRAP TAG



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TOKYO, JAPAN

**CAPITALISM
IN THE
CRACKS**

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Religion
Finding
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Sep 18	Austin, TX
Sep 20	Dallas, TX
Sep 22	Atlanta, GA
Sep 24	Columbus, OH
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Sep 27	Baltimore, MD
Sep 28	Cleveland, OH
Sep 30	Minneapolis, MN
Oct 2	St. Louis, MO
Oct 4	Chicago, IL
Oct 5	Milwaukee, WI
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61

THE MIDDLE OF NOWHERE

6 Places To Really Get Away From It All

C.J. CIARAMELLA

20

IQALUIT, CANADA

Tropical Culture in Canada's Multicultural Arctic Outpost

MATTHEW PETTI

4

SHELBURNE, VERMONT

Free To Move

KATHERINE MANGU-WARD

42

THE U.S. BORDER

Trump's Crackdown on Foreigners Is Crimping Americans' Travel Plans

MATT WELCH

5

NEW YORK CITY

The Hess Triangle

EMMA CAMP

36

ALGODONES, MEXICO

The Glories of Mexican Dentistry

BRIAN DOHERTY

64

CINCINNATI

A City Built by Immigrants—and Beer

ELIZABETH NOLAN BROWN

68

SEASIDE, FLORIDA

In Seaside, Living Is a Way of Life

PETER SUDERMAN

46

GUATEMALA

The Nearly Free Markets of Guatemala

KATARINA HALL

66

NEW ORLEANS

In Defense of 'Tourist Traps'

CHRISTIAN BRITSCHGI

46

5-Day Historical Getaway in Guatemala

54

BUENOS AIRES, ARGENTINA

See Milei's Transformation of Argentina First-Hand

MARCOS FALCONE

24

CUSCO, PERU

Losing My Religion, Finding My Humanity at an Ayahuasca Retreat

BEKAH CONGDON

27

7-Day Ayahuasca Experience in Peru



CONTENTS

AUGUST/ SEPTEMBER 2025

VOLUME 57, NO. 4

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6

EDINBURGH, SCOTLAND

Tracking a Unicorn in Adam Smith's Edinburgh

AMANDA FRANCE AND
KENT LASSMAN

7

*The Adam Smith
Walking Tour in
Edinburgh*

10

PARIS

Notre-Dame Reborn From the Ashes

RONALD BAILEY

55

FRAGNETO
MONFORTE, ITALY

Visit Your Ancestral Homeland

NICK GILLESPIE

8

HOLLAND
(THE NETHERLANDS);
HOLLAND (MICHIGAN)

To Hide From the State,
or To Escape?

STEPHANIE SLADE

37

MILLAU VIADUCT,
FRANCE

A Beautiful Private Bridge

ROBERT POOLE JR.

12

GEORGIA

The Possible Birth-
place of Wine and
Definite Birthplace of
Stalin

HUNT BEATY

44

JERUSALEM

Conflicts and Contrasts
Make Jerusalem Endlessly
Fascinating

JACOB SULLUM

14

*6 Days in Georgian
Wine Country*

50

QATAR AIRWAYS AL SAFWA
FIRST CLASS LOUNGE,
DOHA, QATAR

The Rise—and Demise?—of
Frequent Flyer Miles

GARY LEFF

60

PORTUGAL

Pastéis and Parenting
in Portugal

LIZ WOLFE

18

NQWEBA, SOUTH AFRICA

Wildlife Thrives on Privately
Owned Reserves

RONALD BAILEY





23

INTERNATIONAL SPACE STATION

The Final Vacation Frontier

KATHERINE MANGU-WARD

72

Tiny Nations in the Crack of the Map

JAMES ERWIN

Micronations: Invent Your Own Country and Culture with 25 Projects, by Kathy Ceceri, illustrated by Chad Thompson

How To Start Your Own Country, by Erwin Strauss

74

A Beatnik Tourist in Ayahuasca Country

JESSE WALKER

The Yage Letters, by William Burroughs and Allen Ginsberg

76

REVIEWS

The Endless Summer | Viking Ship Museum | The Ministry of Time | The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion | Knossos | Ford Rouge Factory | Coastal

78

FROM THE ARCHIVES

Travel excerpts from Reason's vaults

79

CROSSWORD

Free To Travel

STELLA ZAWISTOWSKI

80

BRICKBATS

News of politicians, police, and bureaucrats behaving badly from around the world

CHARLES OLIVER & PETER BAGGE

Cover: Joanna Andreasson Source images: iStock

56

BEIJING

How To Walk, Around the World

TYLER COWEN INTERVIEWS CHRIS ARNADE

32

TOKYO

Capitalism in the Cracks

KATARINA HALL



38

ANYWHERE

The Rise of the Digital Nomad

FIONA HARRIGAN

16

NEW ZEALAND

11-Day Middle-earth Fantasy in New Zealand

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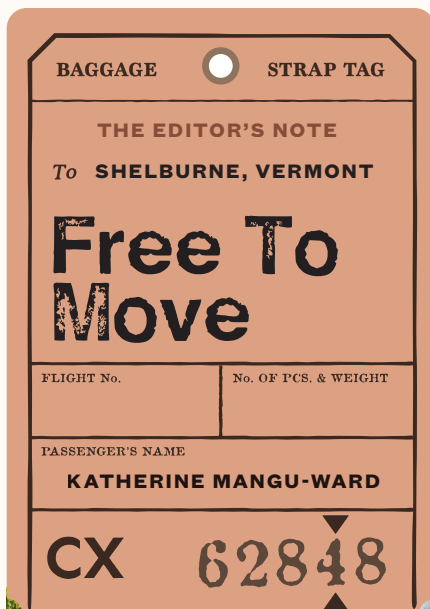
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I WAS ALONE on a wide swath of soft grass near Shelburne, Vermont. A weekend away, phone off, brain quiet. I thought I'd listen to the wind rustling the cedar trees, but what I heard instead was the entire world. The rumble of a plane at 30,000 feet, whisking honeymooners to Mykonos or accountants to Minneapolis. The gentle hooting of the Ethan Allen Express, schlepping rail passengers from Burlington to New York. The crunch of tires on gravel. The lapping waters of Lake Champlain push boaters through a system of canals and locks to the Hudson River.

This is the music of a connected world, a world where motion is the default and stillness the exception. Even when we pretend otherwise, the evidence of our inter-

dependence insists on being heard. And it's beautiful.

This special summer double issue of *Reason* is dedicated to travel. We've got everything from a humble trip for the tulips of Holland, Michigan (page 8), to a full-fledged mission to the International Space Station (page 23). We'll take you to Adam Smith's stomping grounds in Edinburgh (page 6), the Canadian boomtown of Iqaluit (page 20), a libertarian university in Guatemala City (page 46), and dozens of other places where you can find freedom.

Travel is not merely an industry or a leisure activity. It is a human imperative, a manifestation of liberty. It is to claim membership in the great, messy project of humanity. It makes bureaucrats with stamp fetishes nervous, for good reason.

In his memoir *Labels*, Evelyn Waugh, that most elegant and misanthropic of English travelers, described the strange joy and self-discovery made possible by arriving in a place where nothing makes immediate sense: "I soon found my fellow passengers and their behaviour in the different places we visited a far more absorbing study than the places themselves." Waugh's travel writing is peppered with complaints, to be sure—about delays, discomfort, fellow passengers, and the prevalence of garlic—but beneath the surface there's something else: curiosity, humility, and a recognition that being a stranger can be a deeply moral experience.

Philosophers from John Stuart Mill to Amartya Sen have praised travel for its power to expand the moral imagination. Your brain rewires a little when you're the foreigner, when you're the one who doesn't understand the customs or speak the language. That rewiring is essential in a free society—one that requires pluralism not just as a tolerance but as a virtue. It's hard to maintain rigid tribalism when you've consumed ayahuasca with Romanians and Trinis in a maloca in Peru (page 24), opened wide for a Mexican dentist (page 36), or joined the crowds at Jerusalem's Festival of Light (page 44).

The expanding circle is the idea that moral progress comes from including more kinds of people in the sphere of those whose rights and dignity we respect, popularized by Peter Singer in his 1981 book of the same name, but visible throughout history once you know where to look. Travel accelerates that expansion. It turns abstractions into lived experience. A guy once designated as a

"foreigner" is now your Georgian toastmaster (page 12), your temporary Portuguese co-parent (page 60), your new Cincinnati beer-drinking buddy (page 64).

Sometimes, people visit and want to stay. Travel and immigration are not different moral categories. They are points on a continuum. The act—moving from one place to another, in search of something better, in search of home—is the same. Only the labels change: vacationer, expat, migrant, refugee. But governments insist on slicing and dicing these identities into distinct legal statuses, complete with their own visa types, interview protocols, and deportation triggers.

Why should a student on a J-1 visa be treated differently from a coder on an H-1B, or a tourist on a B-2, or a man fleeing violence with no papers at all (page 38)? These distinctions are as artificial as the lines on a map. Yet they are enforced with a level of fervor otherwise reserved for violent crime. As this issue went to press, total bans on travel from 12 countries and heavy restrictions on seven more were abruptly announced.

The result is predictable: lost potential, ruined plans, stranded lovers, wasted talent. Restrictions on the free movement of people are not just economic blunders (though they are that too—see page 42); they are acts of cultural vandalism and personal cruelty.

This obsession with control bleeds back into travel itself. You can feel it at the airport, in the endless security lines and biometric scans. (Though a nice airport lounge can help—see page 50.) The very idea of free movement is too often treated as subversive, something to be managed and monitored rather than celebrated.

At *Reason*, we see things differently. We believe people should be able to move—across borders, between jobs, toward new lives—without begging for permission. We believe the right to roam is inseparable from the right to speak, to work, to love, and to associate freely. We believe that every person standing at a customs checkpoint is not a threat but a traveler.

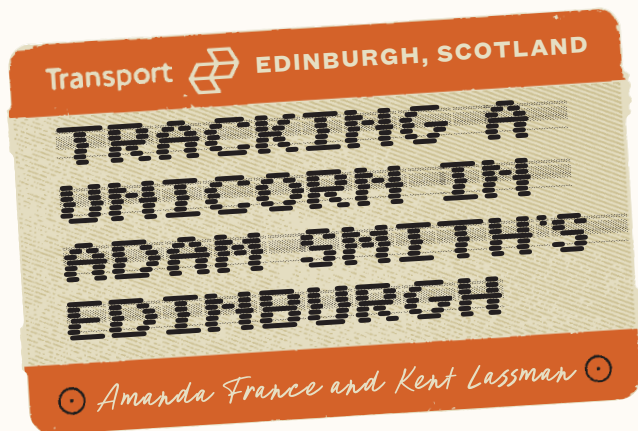
So go. Get on the train, the boat, the bike. Use the visa. Get lost. Get found. Take a trip for no reason at all except to be reminded that the world is bigger than your corner of it. That other people exist. Listen closely. Even in the quietest places, the world is whispering: We are all in motion, together. 🌍



NEW YORK CITY

THE HESS TRIANGLE is the result of an eminent domain fight that began in 1910, when New York City seized and demolished a Greenwich Village apartment building owned by the Hess family. The city had forgotten this roughly 25-inch plot on the edge of the property—until 1921, when officials demanded that the Hess estate pay back taxes on the land. The Hess family refused to give the plot to the city, and in 1922 it instead installed a sidewalk mosaic reading “Property of the Hess estate which has never been dedicated for public purposes.” 📍

—EMMA CAMP



SET AMONG CRAGS, hills, and Gothic spires, Edinburgh—also known as “Auld Reekie” or “Old Smokey”—was an unlikely center of progress in the 18th century: congested and smelly, with a sordid underground at the edge of an empire. Yet it was there that Adam Smith first published his *Theory of Moral Sentiments* in 1759.

Three decades later, Smith finished the sixth and final edition after having returned to Edinburgh, shortly before his death in 1790, making it both his first and last major work. Since then, the book has served as a grounding for the practice of living well and peacefully with empathy for one another. As Smith wrote, “Man naturally desires, not only to be loved, but to be lovely.”

There is nowhere better to get reacquainted with Smith than Edinburgh. Its past remains visible in the soot-covered buildings of Old Town. Beyond the cobbled wynds and imposing cliffside fortress, the city is now integrated with the surrounding New Town and its many gated private gardens. The place has stunning medieval, Georgian, and Victorian architecture, a rich history, and an evocative art scene. It’s little wonder it was named “Europe’s Leading Cultural City Destination 2024” by the World Travel Awards.

In Smith’s day, Edinburgh was the epicenter of the Scottish Enlightenment—the vital beating heart of liberal advances in science, medicine, mathematics, literature, legal reform, architecture, and moral philosophy. Scottish novelist, surgeon, and playwright Tobias Smollett described the burgeoning city as a “hot bed of genius.” John Amyatt, the king’s chemist, remarked that “Edinburgh enjoyed a noble privilege not possessed by any other city in Europe....Here stand I, at what is called the Cross of Edinburgh, and can in a few minutes take fifty men of genius by the hand.”

The Royal Unicorn atop the Mercat Cross now overlooks the world’s first major public

monument to another unicorn—and the first true liberal, according to Deirdre McCloskey. The Adam Smith Institute led the initiative to honor Smith with a 10-foot bronze statue in the former marketplace in the center of Old Town. The same sculptor who erected that in 2008 also created the David Hume statue just across High Street. Smith’s likeness stands outside St. Giles’ Cathedral, gazing down the road to his final resting place and former home.


Coincident with the recent end of Adam Smith’s tercentenary was the 900-year anniversary of the cathedral and the city. In conjunction with these celebrations, economist Ryan Young of the Competitive Enterprise Institute published a collection of essays, *Adam Smith’s Guide to Life, Loveliness, and the Modern Economy*, arguing compellingly that a “revival of Smithian liberalism would make people’s lives longer, wealthier, and more fulfilling.”

In Smith’s market square you’ll find the Heart of Midlothian—a mosaic near the statue that marks the location of the Old Tolbooth, the city’s first tax office and prison. In its day, locals would spit on the heart when passing or entering the building, a sign of protest and disdain for the executioners and tax collectors. The tradition lives on and is considered an invitation for good luck.

Key Adam Smith sites are centrally located along the Royal Mile, which is comprised of five streets, extending from Edinburgh Castle to the Palace of Holyroodhouse. Across High Street from his statue is the former Royal Exchange and Custom House. Smith’s position as a commissioner of customs and salt duties precipitated his return to the city in 1778 and provided an excellent position from which to collect empirical data for his most famous book, *The Wealth of Nations*.

Halfway down the Royal Mile is Canongate Kirkyard, where Smith is buried.

Beyond the church gate, Smith’s unassuming grave is situated along the wall to the left. Abutting Canongate Kirk is Dunbar’s Close Garden. (The term *close* is found throughout the city and especially in the Old Town, or medieval section. It is another term for wynd or alley, and the pathways it describes are usually both steep and narrow.) Initially a private garden, enjoyed by Smith’s mother




STAY AT:
Virgin Hotels Edinburgh

EAT AT:
Commons Club
The Witchery by the Castle
The Kitchin

DRINK AT:
Frankenstein & Bier Keller
The Bailie Bar
House of Gods

DON'T MISS:
The Caves
(UNESCO World Heritage Site)
Afternoon tea at
The Willow Tea Rooms
Jupiter Artland

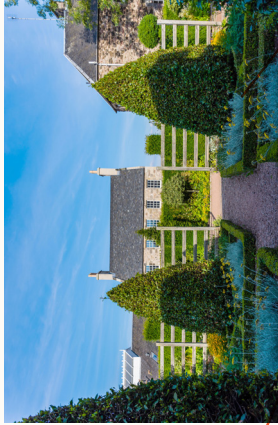


The Adam Smith Walking Tour in Edinburgh

Head out on foot to visit iconic spots from the life of Adam Smith. Key Smith sites are centrally located along the **Royal Mile**, which comprises five streets, extending from **Edinburgh Castle** to the **Palace of Holyroodhouse**.



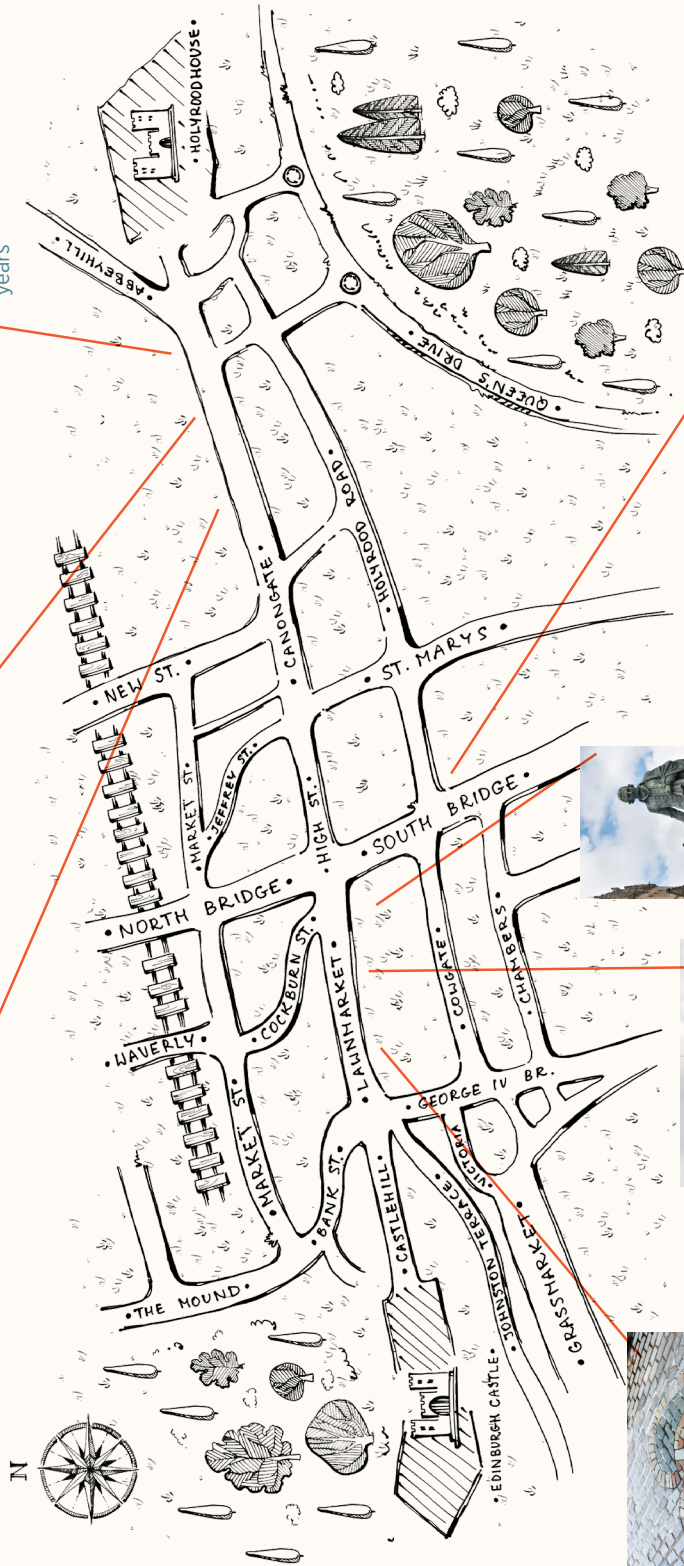
CANONGATE KIRKYARD
The burial place of Adam Smith



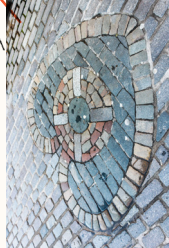
DUNBAR'S CLOSE GARDEN
Initially a private garden, enjoyed by Smith's mother Margaret Douglas, **Dunbar's Close Garden** was redesigned in the 17th century style and opened to the public in 1977.



PANMURE HOUSE
Smith's home during his final years



THE HEART OF MIDLOTHIAN
A mosaic near the statue marks the location of the **Old Tolbooth**, the city's first tax office and prison. (It is traditionally said to spit on the heart, originally as a sign of protest against executioners and tax collectors, now for good luck.)



ST. GILES' CATHEDRAL



ADAM SMITH STATUE
Smith's likeness stands outside **St. Giles' Cathedral**, gazing down the road to his final resting place and former home.

Across High Street from his statue is the former **Royal Exchange and Custom House**. Smith's position as a commissioner of customs and salt duties precipitated his return to the city in 1778.

THE CAVES

The former distillery on "Whisky Row," now called **The Caves**, is an atmospheric substructure of the vaults under the South Bridge. Indulge yourself with a cream crowdie, as Smith did.

Margaret Douglas, Dunbar's Close Garden was redesigned in the 17th century style and opened to the public in 1977.

Next door, continuing toward the Parliament Building and the Palace, is Panmure House, where Smith lived his last dozen years. Chosen for its convenience to the church, with his mother in mind, this is the only surviving residence of Adam Smith. The house fell into disrepair and narrowly escaped demolition. The property was reopened in tribute to Smith in 2018 after a 10-year, 5.6 million-pound investment, though aside from his works little on display is an original artifact.

Throughout his life, Smith kept an extraordinarily close relationship with his mother, perhaps because his father (and namesake) died five months before he was born. No other woman is known to have captured his heart. "I am a beau only in my books," Smith noted. He assembled an impressive library at Panmure with more than 3,000 books, and that is where he finished the last several editions of his signature works.

Smith lost his mother in 1784, when she was 90, six years before he "died of a decay" at age 67. After her death, he wrote to his publisher William Strahan, "I must say to you, what I have said to other people, that the final separation from a person who certainly loved me more than any other person ever did or ever will love me; and whom I certainly loved and respected more than any other person...is a very heavy stroke upon me."

Smith was not just a thinker but a tastemaker. A founding member of the Oyster Club, he gathered the Scottish literati every Friday night for conversations that shaped an age of genius and, by natural extension, America's founding. According to member John Playfair, the club welcomed "strangers who visited Edinburgh from any object connected with art or with science...The conversation was always free, often scientific, but never didactic or disputatious."

The former tavern where Smith hosted the weekly gatherings (attended by the likes of David Hume and Benjamin Franklin) is located a couple blocks from his statue in Old Town. Hidden for more than a century in the city's underground in the Grassmarket neighborhood, it was discovered and restored in 2002 by Scottish rugby internationalist Norrie Rowan.


The former distillery on "Whisky Row" is an atmospheric substructure of the vaults

under the 18th century South Bridge. The Caves, as it's now called, has become a wildly popular live music and private event space. The venue's resurrection is fitting for the former intellectually open community at the heart of the Enlightenment. If you have the opportunity to visit, indulge yourself with a cream crowdie as Smith did.

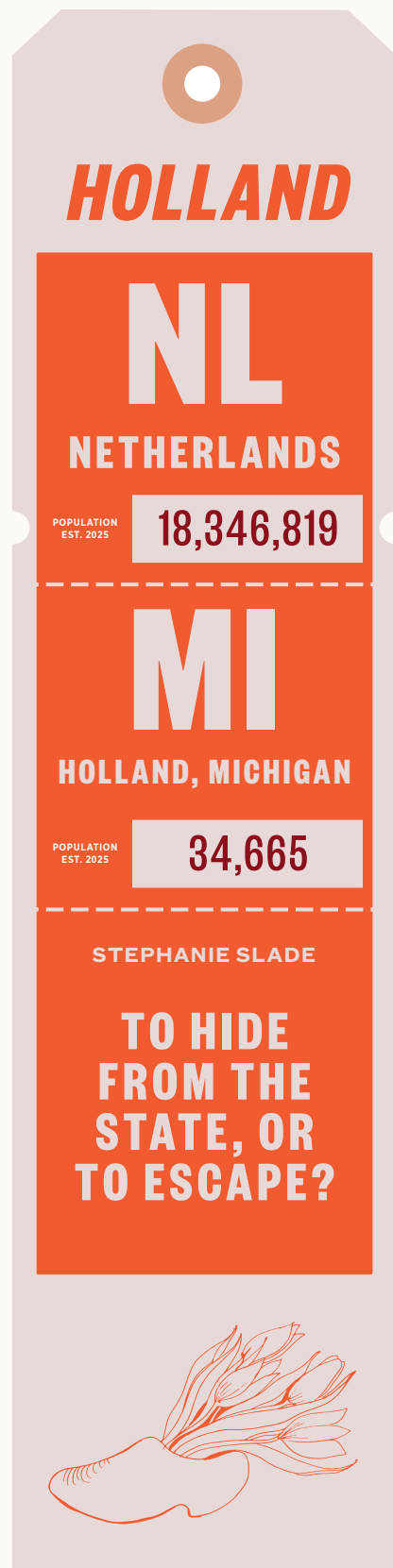
Adam Smith was born across the Firth of Forth in the village of Kirkcaldy, though the family home and his school are both long gone now. As a young man, he studied in Glasgow and Oxford. But he made his home in Edinburgh. It is a city suited to walking and to hills. It is barely more than a mile from Edinburgh Castle to Arthur's Seat, the ancient volcano towering over the city, and an easy stroll to Calton Hill, home of the national government.

In Edinburgh, the easy confluence of old and new, the abundance of bookstores and cafés, the immediacy of the port and the sea beyond are atmospheric comfort for a lovely city built on a human scale. It has become a favorite city in the world.

Tourists delight in the medieval castle, the picturesque campus of a world-class university, and the inspiration for many scenes in the Harry Potter books, including the fictitious Diagon Alley. But there is much more to Edinburgh than the kilted street performers and haggis on offer in every pub. The very character and charm of the city calls to mind a line from *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*: "Nothing is more graceful than habitual cheerfulness, which is always founded upon a peculiar relish for all the little pleasures which common occurrences afford."

From architecture to mechanical engineering and from moral philosophy to history, Scotland's capital city earned the nickname Athens of the North. With an unrivaled tradition of inquiry, the fringes of an empire launched modernity and updated Western Civilization with a decidedly Scottish accent. It was Smith's home and a place for anyone interested in a rich, varied, and liberal life. 

AMANDA FRANCE is vice president for events at the Competitive Enterprise Institute. Her love of conference travel was sealed at the age of 6 when the family traveled to the U.S. Virgin Islands for her father's continuing education with the American Academy of Cosmetic Dentistry. KENT LASSMAN is president and CEO of the Competitive Enterprise Institute. He has been surrounded by dolphins in the Pacific, stung by jellyfish in the English Channel, and accosted by an armed Egyptian Coast Guard patrol but maintains that swim tourism is the best tourism.



HOLLAND

NL

NETHERLANDS

POPULATION EST. 2025 **18,346,819**


MI

HOLLAND, MICHIGAN

POPULATION EST. 2025 **34,665**

STEPHANIE SLADE

TO HIDE FROM THE STATE, OR TO ESCAPE?

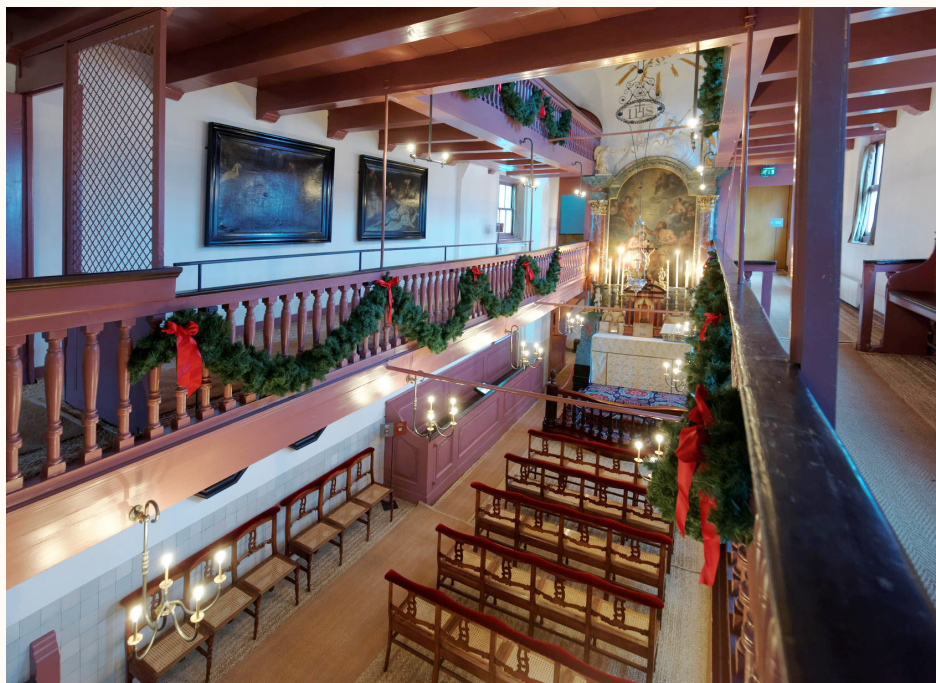


IN HIS 1970 classic *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty*, Albert O. Hirschman explored three ways people can respond to institutional failure: by standing by the institution anyway, by speaking up to agitate for change within the institution, or by leaving the institution in protest. The European wars of religion, and persistent attempts by the victors in those conflicts to hem in the losers, produced manifold examples of all three.

In 1834, a Calvinist minister in the Netherlands named Hendrik de Cock—fed up with theological liberalization within the official Dutch Reformed Church and especially with the church hierarchy’s decision to prohibit him from speaking against what he saw as errors being preached by his fellow clergymen—led some 120 congregations in breaking away to form the rival Reformed Churches in the Netherlands.

The move “did not go unchallenged by the authorities,” explains the Free Reformed Churches of North America (FRCNA) website. “King William I invoked an old Napoleonic law which forbade unauthorized meetings of more than twenty persons, in order to prevent the people from worshipping outside the Dutch Reformed Church. The Secession churches were persecuted for a number of years. Some of their pastors were imprisoned, those who assisted them were often excessively fined and soldiers were quartered in the homes of these ‘trouble makers.’”

Although William’s son and successor lifted those restrictions a few years later, many secessionists had apparently had enough. De Cock’s denominational schism had a trans-Atlantic second act when his fellow minister Albertus van Raalte led an exodus of dissenting Calvinists to the sparsely settled “western” United States. The charming lakefront town of Holland,



Michigan, established by van Raalte and his flock in 1847, now stands as a testament to the promise of exit.

But packing up and leaving is only one possible response to persecution. “Not all the orthodox people in the Dutch Reformed Church went along with the Secession,” notes the FRCNA. “There were those who shared the same objections with regard to doctrinal purity and church government with the Seceders, but they conscientiously felt that they should try to promote a return to orthodoxy within the Dutch Reformed Church.” Here we see feelings of loyalty motivating the exercise of voice.

In fact, Hirschman’s attempt to catalog the various forms of activism available in the face of institutional dissatisfaction misses at least a couple of additional possibilities. For one, his voice-exit-loyalty schema seems to overlook violent resis-



tance—and the religious history of the Netherlands offers a vivid illustration of this option as well.

At the time of the Reformation, Holland—the country, not the town—was under the control of the Habsburgs, who were not inclined to tolerate anti-Catholic heresy. Over the course of the 16th century, the ruling family’s efforts to suppress Protestantism grew more brutal, and petitions by Dutch nobles for an end to religious persecution went unheeded. A response eventually came in the form of iconoclasm (literally, rampaging through Catholic churches and destroying religious icons) and, under the leadership of William of Orange, war.





This “Dutch rebellion” would drag on for 80 years, culminating in the formal liberation of the Dutch Republic in 1648 as part of the larger Westphalia settlement. But no sooner did the Dutch Reformed Church come to prominence in the Netherlands than repression of other religions began. This brings us to yet another possible response to institutional failure, one that’s hard to pithily capture in a word like *voice* or *exit* but that might be summed up as *going underground*.

As early as 1581, the “overt practice” of Catholicism was outlawed in the Netherlands. Perhaps because of the country’s emergence out of the furnace of religious conflict, private worship continued to be permitted. This led to a historical curiosity: the creation of secret churches “hidden in plain sight” within homes and businesses. Catholics would gather in such places to receive the sacraments, according to the Netherlands Institute for Cultural Heritage, “frequently with the tacit consent of the authorities, who were often prepared to turn a blind eye for a small favor, as long as the churches remained unrecognizable from the outside.”

One such church—carved out of the top floors of a canalfront row house in Amsterdam’s red-light district—exists today as a monument to this slice of Dutch history. Visitors to the Museum Ons’ Lieve Heer op Solder (“Our Lord in the Attic Museum”) can ascend a winding staircase through an ordinary-looking 17th century manse before emerging into a spectacular multi-story chapel, complete with statuary, triptychs, and altar.

Amsterdam of course boasts a multitude of world-renowned attractions, from


the national Rijksmuseum to the dedicated Van Gogh and Rembrandt houses, from the home (now a museum) where Anne Frank and her family hid during the Holocaust to the city’s famous red-light district, canal cruises, and coffee shops. But history enthusiasts may enjoy paying a visit to Our Lord in the Attic and experiencing, up close, one religious minority’s clever strategy for avoiding persecution without resorting to either voice or exit.

If a European vacation is outside your budget, consider a trip to the other Holland, a Midwestern town of fewer than 35,000 residents that punches above its weight for tourism. There you’ll find Dutch crafts for sale along the 8th Street shopping district, a chance to climb into America’s only working windmill imported from the Netherlands at Windmill Island Gardens, and a tulip festival that draws tens of thousands of gawkers each spring. Within a short drive are the beaches of Lake Michigan (including one boasting Holland’s historic “Big Red” lighthouse) and Saugatuck Dunes State Park, where visitors can hike alongside sand deposits reaching 200 feet tall or learn about the area’s history and nature by taking a guided tour with Saugatuck Dune Rides.

Holland, Michigan, proudly bills itself as the “City of Churches,” with an unusually high number of houses of worship per capita. Many of them are from within the Dutch Reformed tradition—a small reminder of the town’s origin as a safe place for religious dissenters yearning to breathe free. 📍

STEPHANIE SLADE is a senior editor at *Reason*. She insists Washington, D.C., is the most beautiful city in America.

→ TRAVEL PASS ←



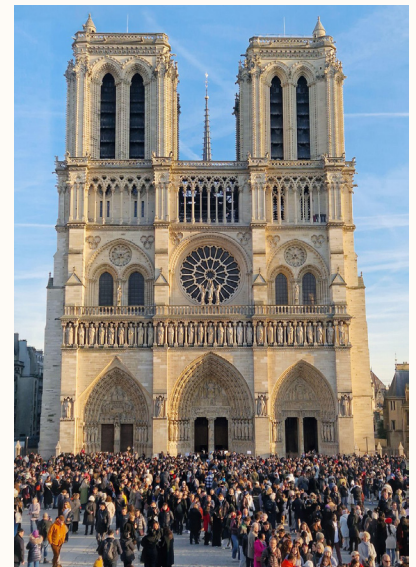
[PARIS]

FRANCE

NOTRE-DAME REBORN FROM THE ASHES

RONALD BAILEY

04375





FIRE NEARLY DESTROYED the Notre-Dame Cathedral in 2019. Thanks largely to an outpouring of private donations, the cathedral now shines more brilliantly than it has for centuries.

My personal history with the cathedral stretches back to my first *Europe on \$10 a Day* backpacking and youth hostel visit in the late 1970s. Advising me to eschew faux sophistication, my boss at *The New Yorker* urged me to visit popular sites like Notre-Dame because “they are tourist attractions for good reasons.” He was entirely correct. It was everything a youngish first-time traveler to Europe expected of an ancient gothic cathedral: gray, a bit dingy, yet magnificent.

Owing to sheer good fortune, subsequent visits to the cathedral afforded me some very happy memories. One occurred after interviewing Friedrich Hayek in Freiburg, Germany, for *Forbes* in 1989. I subsequently traveled to Paris to visit friends but was at loose ends for an evening. So I decided to stroll down to the Île de la Cité to revisit Notre-Dame. When I got there, I noticed that a lot of people were quietly streaming into the shrine. Intrigued, I joined them. I was handed an unlit white candle upon entering the entirely dark interior. Cluelessly, I had stumbled upon the Easter vigil service.

Bearing in mind the frailties of memories, what I recall is that as the organ began playing, a single flame was ignited at the altar. As the choir began singing, the initial spark was touched to candle after candle spreading through the crowd, eventually illuminating the gloomy vaulted interior with flickering incandescence. Even as an unbeliever, I found the experience beautiful and mysterious.

My second sublime experience occurred

in December 2015, when I was reporting from the U.N. Climate Change Conference that produced the Paris Climate Change Agreement. My wife Pamela arrived at the end of the conference, and I suggested that we attend the vespers service at the cathedral. It was lovely as usual. We noticed that no one was leaving. Curious, we stayed seated until the church filled. We heard knocking three times on the gigantic doors of the central Last Judgment portal. We later learned that this had been done by the Archbishop of Paris wielding his crozier. After the third series of knocks, the doors opened wide to admit a long procession of prelates. Again cluelessly, we were privileged to witness the elaborate rituals celebrating Pope Francis’ declaration of the Extraordinary Jubilee Holy Year of Mercy.

In 2019, even as the fire burned, prominent corporate leaders pledged hundreds of millions of dollars to repair and restore the much beloved landmark. So far, they—and hundreds of thousands of other donors around the world—have supplied nearly \$900 million to the project.

Bernard Arnault, head of the luxury brand conglomerate LVMH—think Givenchy, Tiffany, and Chandon—donated 200 million euros. François-Henri Pinault (CEO of the Kering luxury group—think Gucci, Yves Saint Laurent, and Maui Jim) and his family gave 100 million euros. The oil company Total-Energies, at the direction of CEO Patrick Pouyanné, contributed 100 million euros. Through their foundation, the Bettencourt family, the heirs of L’Oréal, donated 200 million euros. Smaller but significant corporate donations came from the French insurer AXA (10 million euros), the advertising giant JCDecaux (20 million euros), and the French bank BNP Paribas (20 million euros).

Among the 340,000 individual private donors from around the world, Americans were notably generous, with around 45,000 people contributing more than \$62 million toward restoring the cathedral. “If the millions of visitors to Paris and France have seen one Gothic cathedral, it is probably Notre Dame, and the fire of April 15, 2019, no doubt activated the memory of that encounter and the bond to the cathedral,” Michael Davis, a board member of the New Hampshire-based nonprofit Friends of Notre-Dame de Paris, told *Barron’s*. It certainly did for me.

While the building’s interior had been gloriously renewed by the time I visited in May, scaffolding still covers part of the exterior—especially toward the rear, where the chapel and the choir are located. The \$140 million euros still remaining will be spent completing those exterior repairs over the next two to three years.

Financed by the private donations of believers, construction of Notre-Dame began in 1163 and was completed 182 years later in 1345. A tribute in the cathedral’s apse near the Crown of Thorns reliquary recognizes that the recent reconstruction is owed “to the 340,000 donors from France and all over the world who, even as the fire blazed during the night, demonstrated their attachment to the cathedral through an incredible display of generosity.” Thanks to their liberality, “Notre Dame de Paris has been reborn from the ashes and is even more beautiful.”

Science Correspondent RONALD BAILEY has visited six of the New Seven Wonders of the World: Chichén Itzá, Petra, Machu Picchu, Christ the Redeemer in Rio de Janeiro, the Roman Colosseum, and the Taj Mahal. He hopes to get to the Great Wall someday.





TBS

GEORGIA

(THE COUNTRY)

The Possible Birthplace of Wine and Definite Birthplace of Stalin



Hunt Beaty



THE PEOPLE OF Georgia might well be the first folks who ever got properly wine-drunk.

Straddling the Promethean Caucasus mountains, wedged between both Black and Caspian seas, Georgia is a cultural crossroads between Europe and Asia. Its fertile valleys and slopes yielded the oldest archaeological evidence of wine production currently on record. During my short yet delightfully buzzed visit last fall, it was apparent that they've only gotten better at both the making and the drinking. Georgian winemaking traditions are hard won; in the Soviet era, many indigenous grape varieties were lost to brutish demands for quantity, not quality. Some families preserved precious varieties in secret.

I saw this heady spirit in the small town of Kachreti at the Burjanadze family home. At a traditional *supra* (banquet), my host and *tomada* (toastmaster) poured glass after glass of his own inky red Saperavi, each after a heartfelt toast, before bursting into a polyphonic song alongside his father. The wine came from a *qvevri*, a traditional clay pot submerged in his backyard, and the bottle's label was stamped with his family's fingerprints, several of whom shared the table and the cherished moment.

Georgia also gave the world one of the 20th century's worst tyrants, Josef Stalin. Born in Gori, west of capital city Tbilisi, Stalin's dark shadow lingers. Venture across the Kura River a few miles outside the city center

and find yourself down a dank underground museum where a young revolutionary Stalin printed secret pamphlets during the Bolshevik Revolution. A charming yet perhaps contextually overeager docent asks you to sign a guest book scattered among USSR memorabilia.

Soviet-era grisliness aside, it's an understatement to say Georgian politics have been complicated. Surrounded on all sides by great powers, the seismic situation encompasses many languages, plus the friction of competing political ideas and faiths in Armenia and Azerbaijan. Most notably it shares a contested border with Russia, the bear next door with an appetite.

If geography really is destiny, then the Georgian situation has understandably necessitated a stiff, perpetual drink.

After the Soviet Union's collapse and at least a decade's worth of post-Soviet corruption, a young Mikheil Saakashvili climbed Parliament's stairs with flowers in hand. The Rose Revolution swept Saakashvili into office peacefully; he reduced government corruption and increased economic liberalization, spurred on by his libertarian-leaning minister of economy, Kakha Bendukidze. Georgia's economy received a jolt, as if the whole country had taken a shot of its beloved brandy *chacha* (second only to the wine) and raised eyebrows in the Western world with the speed and success of those reforms.

Though Saakashvili left a mixed legacy (he's now imprisoned on abuse of power charges), the stickiness of those free market ideas and reforms is notable, however fraught the country remains. Girchi, the only official libertarian party in a post-Soviet state outside of Russia, was formed by dissenters from Saakashvili's United National Movement party after his collapse. It has since advocated both economic and drug liberalization, while staging stunts against conscription and state

crackdowns on sex workers, going so far as opening a brothel in its party headquarters.

Georgia remains a swirl of political foment, as I realized by stumbling accidentally onto Rustaveli Avenue before fall parliamentary elections. Thousands of Georgians paraded, draped in Georgian and European Union colors, marching in support of then-President Salome Zourabichvili, as she tried to hold off billionaire and former Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili's Georgian Dream party. Ivanishvili's ties to Russia and presence in politics still loom large, much like his Bond villain-esque mansion perched high above Tbilisi.

Despite the turbulence, pockets of Tbilisi buzz with young entrepreneurs reclaiming and redefining the Georgian trajectory, one pointed decidedly west. Down an unassuming street, there's Lasha Devdariani selling handcrafted silk robes from his cozy studio, some of which cloaked Tilda Swinton in *Only Lovers Left Alive*. Walk into Sololaki where traditional meets modern at lasamani restaurant—bare candles burning over peeling paint, cracked tiles, and khachapuri hint at the history of both the room and the nation. Around the corner the gents at 41 Degrees Art of Drinks sling cocktails from a handwritten book that taste like the throng on Rustaveli Avenue felt: fiery and self-assured.

John Steinbeck heard of Georgia's magic before arriving in 1947 at the start of the Cold War. In *A Russian Journal*, he noted: "People who had never been there and possibly never could go there spoke of Georgia with a kind of longing and great admiration. They spoke of Georgians as supermen, as great drinkers, great dancers, great musicians, great workers and lovers. And they spoke of the country in the Caucasus and around the Black Sea as a kind of second heaven."

More people, especially free thinkers and drinkers, should visit. Drink the wine, pet the dogs (tagged strays roam lazily, freely, even into bars and hotel lobbies), shoot the chacha, stare at giant Jesus in Holy Trinity Cathedral, devour *khinkali* (hands only), and let the hospitality intoxicate you in its distinctly Georgian way. 🍷

HUNT BEATY is a producer and director in New York City. His previous work as an Emmy Award-winning location sound mixer for *Born to Explore* took him everywhere from the desolate Atacama Desert to the summit of Mount Kilimanjaro.



6 Days in Georgian Wine Country



DAY 1

FLIGHT TO TBILISI

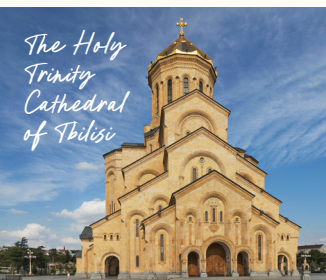
It's best to have a car to see Georgia at your own pace. Pick up a rental and head to your hotel.

Stay in Tbilisi for three nights.

DAY 2

EXPLORE TBILISI

Start your adventure by getting a feel for Georgia's capital, Tbilisi. This is a place where the old meets the new, offering a mix of historic sites and trendy bars and restaurants.



The Holy Trinity Cathedral of Tbilisi

The **Holy Trinity Cathedral of Tbilisi** is the largest Orthodox church in Georgia and boasts fantastic views of the city. Next, take the **Tbilisi Funicular** up to **Mtatsminda Pantheon**, where some of Georgia's most prominent writers, artists, and national heroes are buried. Up there, you can enjoy **Mtatsminda Park** and get a view of former Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili's stunning house. Take the **Rustaveli-Mtatsminda**

Cable Car back down the hill to end the trip.



Rustaveli-Mtatsminda Cable Car

DAY 3

FREE DAY IN TBILISI

Go where the wind blows today, and be sure to drink some wine along the way.

Optional activities: **8000 Vintages wine shop and bar**, **Cafe Daphna**, **Dry Bridge Market**, **Queen Darejan Palace**, **Tbilisi State Academy of Arts**, **the National Gallery**, **Underground Printing House Museum**



Underground Printing House Museum



Signaghi

DAY 4

SELF-DRIVE TO SIGHNAGHI

Head east for your two-hour drive to **Signaghi**, known as "the city of love" and located in the heart of Georgia's wine region. Revel in the colorful buildings, the medieval architecture, and the stunning Caucasus mountains on the horizon. And of course, the wine. Visit the **Kerovani Winery** to sample an assortment of Georgian wines and learn about the traditional Kakhetian method of winemaking in *qvevri* (clay vessels).

Stay in Signaghi for two nights.

DAY 5

FREE DAY IN SIGHNAGHI

Enjoy your final day in Georgia!

Optional activities: **Signaghi National Museum**, **St. George Church**, **Marriage Palace**, **The Signaghi World War II Memorial**, **Signaghi Wall**

DAY 6

FLIGHT HOME

Drive back to Tbilisi for your return flight home.



8000 Vintages wine shop and bar



"The iconic look is classic and timeless"

— Justin X.
Cincinnati, OH



Time Travel at the Speed of a 1935 Speedster?

The 1930s brought unprecedented innovation in machine-age technology and materials. Industrial designers from the auto industry translated the principles of aerodynamics and streamlining into everyday objects like radios and toasters. It was also a decade when an unequalled variety of watch cases and movements came into being. In lieu of hands to tell time, one such complication, called a jumping mechanism, utilized

numerals on a disc viewed through a window. With its striking resemblance to the dashboard gauges and radio dials of the decade, the jump hour watch was indeed "in tune" with the times!

The Stauer *1930s Dashtronic* deftly blends the modern functionality of a 21-jewel automatic movement and 3-ATM water resistance with the distinctive, retro look of a

jumping display (not an actual jumping complication).

Try the Stauer *1930s Dashtronic Watch* for 30 days. If you are not receiving compliments, please return the watch for a full refund of the item price. If you have an appreciation for classic design with precision accuracy, the *1930s Dashtronic Watch* is built for you. This watch is a limited edition, so please act quickly. **Our last two limited edition watches are totally sold out!**

Watch Specifications:

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- 1 1/2" stainless steel case
- Water resistant to 3 ATM
- Genuine alligator-embossed leather band fits wrists 7"-8 1/2"



True to Machine Art aesthetics, the sleek brushed stainless steel case is clear on the back, allowing a peek at the inner workings.

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NEW ZEALAND

11-Day
Middle-earth
Fantasy in New
Zealand

BEKAH CONGDON



DAY 1

FLIGHT TO AUCKLAND

If you are leaving from America, you will cross the international dateline and lose a calendar day in travel. (If you depart on August 1, you will arrive on August 3.)

Stay in Auckland for one night.

DAY 2

FREE DAY IN AUCKLAND

You'll arrive in the "city of sails" early in the morning. Spend the day immersing yourself in the local culture or exploring the charming neighborhoods on foot.

Optional activities: **Auckland city sights tour, ferry to Waiheke Island, Auckland War Memorial Museum**

IT'S LITTLE SURPRISE that many libertarians count *The Lord of the Rings* among their favorite stories.

J.R.R. Tolkien's tales of bravery and camaraderie in the face of an evil lust for control have shaped many libertarian worldviews. Though many adaptations have been made in the decades since Tolkien published *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*, no films brought these beloved books to life as spectacularly as Peter Jackson's *Lord of the Rings* movies, which owe a great deal of their visual power and emotional resonance to the natural beauty of New Zealand, where much of the trilogy was filmed.

Visitors to *Aotearoa*—the Māori name for New Zealand—can find themselves immersed in a geography that feels magically pulled straight from Tolkien's stories. The North Island (*Te Ika-a-Māui*) is home to a rolling hill country and a rural calm that are perfectly suited for the Shire, most notably in the town of Matamata, where the *Hobbiton* set still stands (and where you

can enjoy a feast fit for 13 dwarves). Geothermal regions echo the eerie beauty of Middle-earth's darker corners, and the lush forests near Wellington provided the setting for the ethereal realm of Rivendell.

On the South Island (*Te Waipounamu*), the landscape opens up to jagged peaks, windswept plains, and glacier-carved valleys that became the backdrop for places like Rohan and Gondor. Whether on foot, horseback, boat, or bus, visitors have many ways to experience this real-life fantasy world surrounding the city of Queenstown.

Are you quite ready for another adventure? Gather your fellowship and let this sample itinerary be your guide—but stay flexible. After all, you never know when you might encounter a cave troll or need to find another path into Mordor. Every journey takes some unexpected turns, but as Tolkien reminds us, "Not all who wander are lost." 🗺️

BEKAH CONGDON is a deputy managing editor at *Reason*. She secretly enjoys when travel plans go wrong.



DAY 3

SELF-DRIVE TO MATAMATA: HOBBITON

Pick up your rental and enjoy the 2.5-hour drive through New Zealand's beautiful countryside to the set of *Hobbiton* in Matamata. Your guided tour will take you through all 12 acres of the Shire, including the famous **Hobbit Holes**, until you arrive at **The Green Dragon Inn**, where you can enjoy a complimentary beverage from the famous **Hobbit Southfarthing Range**. After dark, you'll be treated to a two-course banquet.

SELF-DRIVE TO ROTORUA

After dinner, drive one hour to Rotorua, where you will stay for two nights.

DAY 4

FREE DAY IN ROTORUA

Enjoy some leisure time in "nature's spa of the South Pacific."

Optional activities: **Scenic gondola ride, Te Puia geothermal park, Polynesian Spa, Stratosfare Restaurant, Waitomo Glowworm Caves**

DAY 5

FLIGHT TO WELLINGTON

Drop off your rental car and catch your morning flight to Wellington for a one-night stay.

WĒTĀ WORKSHOP TOUR

Wētā Workshop is home to an entire team of creative artisans who've helped bring to life films such as Jackson's *Lord of the Rings* and *Hobbit* trilogies. Learn about the making of movie effects, from armor to creatures to costumes and makeup to miniatures.

DAY 6

FREE DAY IN WELLINGTON

Explore the city's vibrant streets, iconic landmarks, and cultural attractions.



Optional activities: **Wellington cable car**, **Zealandia wildlife sanctuary**

FERRY TO PICTON

Take the 3.5-hour evening dinner ferry to Picton for one night.

DAY 7

FLIGHT TO CHRISTCHURCH

Christchurch, where you will spend one night, is a hub for all things nature, culture, and art.

Optional activities: **Christchurch Art Gallery**, **Centre of Contemporary Art**, **Pōhutu Penguins tour**, **Akaroa dolphin cruise**

DAY 8

SELF-DRIVE TO QUEENSTOWN VIA MOUNT SUNDAY

Mount Sunday, about 2.5 hours from Christchurch, served as the filming location for Edoras, the capital of Rohan. It's one of the most iconic Lord of the Rings locations in the South Island, and the surrounding **Rangitata Valley** is jaw-droppingly beautiful.

Continue to Queenstown, where you will stay for three nights.

DAY 9

FREE DAY IN QUEENSTOWN

Queenstown is a year-round resort where excitement meets tranquility amid stunning landscapes. Situated on the shores of magical **Lake Wakatipu**, there is something for everyone, whether you're seeking serene moments or heart-pounding adventures.

Optional activities: **Doubtful Sound tour**, **white water rafting**, **high country horseback riding**, **gourmet wine tour**

DAY 10

FULL-DAY LORD OF THE RINGS TOUR

Your expert guides will bring you through **Arcadia Station**, the breathtaking filming location nestled in the stunning Paradise area near Glenorchy. This unparalleled experience will bring you closer to the iconic Lord of the Rings locations than any other tour can.

DAY 11

FLIGHT HOME

If you cross the international date line, you will arrive home the same calendar day you leave.



Wildlife Thrives on Privately Owned Reserves

Ronald Bailey



SITTING IN THE front seat of an open Land Rover being driven furiously backward for about a half-mile while being chased by a bugling, ear-flapping, and very pissed off elephant matriarch is, well, pretty exciting. Our guide later speculated that she had been spooked earlier by a roving pride of lions.

This incident occurred during our stay at the Shibula Safari Lodge in the 140-square-mile, privately owned Welgevonden Game Reserve. The reserve is in the Waterberg District in the northern Limpopo province of South Africa.

Besides being chased by an angry elephant, what happened while my wife Pamela and I visited Shibula? We saw a contest between two cape buffalo as they crashed their heavy horns loudly into one another. We learned that giraffes, tall as they are, are surprisingly hard to spot as they blend into the veldt less than 200 feet away. A troupe of baboons hopped onto the walls of our outdoor shower to observe closely the strange bathing rituals of two naked apes. We watched rhinos sedately grazing, zebras playfully jostling one another, a majestic

kudu browsing the bush, and a lioness resting in the shade. For dinner, we enjoyed the sweet flavor of springbok steaks.

One particularly amusing episode occurred when a mother cheetah tried to school her two adolescent cubs on how to hunt warthogs. She sicced them on a small herd of warties and then stood back to watch them hunt. As the cubs darted forward, the herd broke into what can be described only as a mad swirling random scramble. Confused by the warthog whirlpool, the cubs looked back toward their mom and gave up. I swear the older cheetah shook her head in embarrassed dismay.

Speaking of cheetahs, one high point of our visit to South Africa was walking the countryside with the big cats on leashes at the privately owned and run Daniell Cheetah Project. There are fewer than 7,000 cheetahs still in the wild. So the chief goal of the project is to bolster the species' population while preventing inbreeding.

Upon arrival, handlers introduce you to some of their other cats. When Pamela sat down to play with two frisky 4-month-old lion cubs, she discovered when one leapt

into her lap that they had very big paws with claws. The cubs also spent some time stalking a small boy who clearly realized he was being hunted and so scooted to hide behind his oblivious parents. While petting cheetahs, you learn that they purr loudly as they lick you with tongues that are considerably less rough than your housecat's. Also, the fur of their black spots sticks out like Braille dots above their golden coats.

The highlight of the visit was walking with leashed cheetahs down a country lane for a mile or so. The big cats were on high alert surveying the landscape for possible prey. Along the way, we picked up some souvenirs: quills shed by local porcupines.

PRIVATE RESERVES SUCH as Shibula and the Daniell Cheetah Project don't just thrill tourists. They play a critical role in restoring and protecting African wildlife. South Africa has an estimated 9,000 private wildlife properties or game farms, covering approximately 62,000 square miles of land. All of South Africa's national parks, provincial parks, and local government lands together amount only to around 23,000 square miles. Land safeguarded by private industry is almost three times greater than land under government protection. Private game reserves have contributed immensely to preserving the biodiversity of species in the country.

In a 2015 study, North-West University wildlife management expert Wouter van Hoven reported that the expansion of private reserves has brought "a 40-fold increase in the number of wildlife from the early 1960s to today with South Africa now having more wildlife than at any point in time during the past 200 years." A 2021 survey in *Biodiversity and Conservation* estimated that between 4.66 million to 7.25 million herbivores—including elephants, zebras, giraffes, wildebeest, warthogs, springbok, and others—live on private game ranches nationally. Private game reserves had greater species richness per hectare than did state-protected areas.

The researchers conclude that private South African game ranching represents "one of the few examples on earth where indigenous mammal populations are thriving." The results are thrilling to behold, even if it sometimes means your Land Rover needs to make a quick getaway. 📍

Science Correspondent RONALD BAILEY had to learn how to laugh through his snorkel while a playful young sea lion kept trying to drop rocks on him in the Galápagos Islands.





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ulation, 850 are listed as “visible minorities,” including 375 black people, 215 Filipinos, and 95 South Asians. Iqaluit experienced a 110 percent growth in the number of foreign immigrants from 2011 to 2021, and 10 percent of the city’s residents are now immigrants.

I visited Iqaluit at the end of Toonik Tyme ᐅᓂᓐᓂ ᐱᓐᓂᓐ, the local spring festival, which happened to line up with Easter this year. (The main character of *North of North*, an Inuit sitcom filmed in Iqaluit, sums it up as “Whoo-hoo! We didn’t die this winter!”) The temperature during the day dipped just above freezing, and wet slush dripped down the hills. The surface of Frobisher Bay, however, was still frozen solid. The soundtrack to town was the low rumble of snowmobiles zipping across the sea ice.

‘A LOT OF GOODWILL’

THOUGH INUIT NOMADS have roamed the area since time immemorial, Iqaluit itself is a relatively new city. With the help of an Inuk guide named Nakasuk ᓐᓂᓐᓂ, the U.S. military established an airfield on the shores of Frobisher Bay during World War II, part of a string of bases stretching from the northwestern U.S. through Canada and Greenland to Europe. A town grew around the air transit hub, and voters chose it as the capital of the new Nunavut Territory in the 1990s.

Islam arrived not too long after. The Pakistani-Canadian boiler inspector Syed Asif Ali founded a mosque, Masjid Iqaluit, in 2015. He had applied for a job listing in Nunavut, not realizing how far north the region was until he found out he couldn’t drive to his new hometown. “I tried not to go, but my wife said, you go and establish a mosque,” says Ali, who has since left Iqaluit and taken a job as chief gas inspector for the province of Saskatchewan. “The message of Allah has not reached there, and it is our duty to send that message.”

There are indeed a handful of Inuit who converted to Islam after the mosque was built, though I couldn’t interview any. A

mixed Arab-Inuk couple at the mosque declined to be named or quoted for this story, citing privacy. Two other Inuit Muslims had moved out of Iqaluit before I arrived, according to Hussam Beg, a member of the congregation, who gave me a ride to the airport on my last day.

The immigrant Muslim community has also ballooned from around a dozen people when Ali arrived to around 100 people today. Many have had quite roundabout journeys. Mashiur Rahman is a Bangladeshi-Canadian biologist who lived in Ontario before finding a job managing Iqaluit’s fisheries. Beg was born in Saudi Arabia, grew up in the United Arab Emirates, lived in the Bahamas, and passed through the United States before getting a job in Iqaluit as a manager for a local air cargo company.

An information technician from Somalia tells me that his job once sent him to Grise Fiord, the northernmost civilian settlement in Canada, on an island that was completely devoid of human life until the Canadian government exiled some Inuit there in a bizarre 1950s experiment. The average yearly temperature is 2.3 degrees Fahrenheit. Now working in Iqaluit, he plans to retire to sunny Malaysia afterward.

Rahman picked me up from my hotel on my first day in Iqaluit for a tour of the mosque. Perched above Dead Dog Lake on the Road to Nowhere outside town, the mosque shares a parking lot with a small church. Outside, Inuit kids took joyrides on snowmobiles on the frozen lake surface. The sunset lit the hills pink and orange all the way down to Frobisher Bay.

That night the mosque hosted a potluck dinner. The flavors were heavily South Asian, with everyone’s favorite being *nihari*, a slow-cooked mutton stew. Muslims in Inuvik ᐱᓐᓂᓐ, an even more northerly oil boomtown in Canada’s Northwest Territories, make Arctic specialties such as reindeer curry, according to *The Guardian*. But the Iqaluit congregation finds it more difficult to source halal versions of “country food,” because hunting rights for non-Inuit are more restrictive than for Inuit.

A banner on the side of the mosque advertises the Arctic



Food Bank, which was founded by Muslims in Inuvik and later opened an Iqaluit branch. Nearly 50 percent of Nunavut households suffer from hunger, due to a decline in game animal herds and the high costs of importing anything else. In Iqaluit, the secular Niqinik Nuatsivik Nunavut Food Bank ᓄᓅᓂᓂ ᓄᓄᓄᓄᓄᓄ ᓄᓄᓄᓄᓄᓄ opens only once every two weeks, so the Muslims fill in on alternate weeks. “The food bank gets a lot of goodwill,” Beg explained to me.

After dinner, Rahman took me to the Toonik Tyme hockey tournament. Teams had flown in from the farthest reaches of the Arctic Circle and from down south in Québec to compete. Inuit in parkas and sunglasses lined up alongside white Canadians with mullets and baseball caps at the concession stand, staffed by a woman in a hijab.

‘RAW HUMANITY’

THE NEXT DAY was Easter Sunday. I headed to the Catholic parish, where Africans and Filipinos lined up in their Sunday best. Father Barry Bercier was giving a homily about eternal life that seemed applicable to the strange life of the Arctic as well. “It’s good to recognize what you don’t understand,” he said.

After Easter services came the Toonik Tyme dogsled race. A little after noon, locals started to gather in Frobisher Bay await-

ing the teams’ return from their morning voyage across the sea ice. I trekked out onto the frozen harbor, following the tracks left by snowmobiles to the finish line. Others showed up on cross-country skis and a pickup truck. The finish line was marked with orange plastic webbing next to a parking lot carved into the sea ice. By Iqaluit standards, it was a hot day; one of the skiers was stripped down to shorts and a sleeveless undershirt.

Later I returned to the church, where two Cameroonian boys helped me find the entrance to the rectory. I was going to meet with Bercier, and the boys were going to a church group that shares building space with the Catholic parish. The group sang and danced to the lead of a female preacher, who invited everyone to “come to the table of Christ, regardless of denomination.”

Hailing from Worcester, Massachusetts, Bercier has been “obsessed” with the Arctic for decades. Over the years, he has gotten himself assigned to Nuuk, Greenland; Pituffik Space Base, the U.S. ice fortress in Greenland formerly known as Thule Air Base; and Igloolik ᓄᓄᓄᓄᓄᓄ, Nunavut.

Most Inuit in Nuuk and Iqaluit belong to Protestant denominations—the igloo-shaped Anglican cathedral is the most famous landmark in Iqaluit—so the Catholics there are almost all foreigners. Many Catholics in both Nuuk and Iqaluit are workers from the Philippines, a country famous for exporting labor.

“It was Philippine National Day my first summer in Greenland, and on Sunday after church, they all paraded up to my apartment, which was upstairs of the church, with a whole roast pig. And they came in and laid banana leaves on the kitchen table and placed the pig on the banana leaves,” Bercier said. “I said, ‘Where in Greenland did you get banana leaves? And the pig?’ They didn’t tell me. They just laughed.”

Igloolik, on the other hand, had an all-Inuit Catholic congregation in what Bercier calls “the most Inuit of all towns.” There, he preached with the help of an Inuktitut translator. In the north, he says, “There’s something beautiful, something mysterious—there’s a sense of holiness that can pervade things.”

‘WHY NOT HERE?’

ALI, THE FOUNDER of the mosque, had similar feelings. Inuit culture, he said, was more “natural” and “not exposed to the mentality of big cities.”

This isn’t to say that race relations are always kumbaya. Resentments sometimes flare up, behind closed doors or during heated moments. There are the expected tensions when newcomers, whether foreign- or Canadian-born, take highly paid jobs while so many Inuit live a subsistence lifestyle. “Transient settlers,” wrote former Nunavut official Kunuk Inutiq ᓄᓄᓄᓄ ᓄᓄᓄᓄᓄᓄ in 2022, “generate wealth from our lands and resources and leave the scraps and waste for the Inuit.”

A particularly sensitive issue is the competition between the English and Inuktitut languages. In the early 20th century, the

Canadian government tried to forcibly assimilate natives to the white Canadian way of life. Children were sent to the infamous “residential schools,” where conditions were harsh and native languages banned.

The government of Nunavut reversed course completely—official documents and public education are now offered in Inuktitut—but the language is still slightly declining, according to 2021 census data. An Inuk clerk at a store complained to me about outsiders “who come in speaking English and expecting to be spoken to in English” at a time when Inuit are trying to revive their language.

Still, many outsiders are there for the long haul and are accepted into the community. The cash register at Yummy Shawarma, a Lebanese restaurant near the airport, is decorated with a sealskin pouch, a collection of traditional Inuit *ulu* ㄩ knives shaped like the half-moon, and a little statue of a hunter. When I visited, Arabic music was blaring from the speakers, occasionally interrupted by the sound of a bush plane taking off.

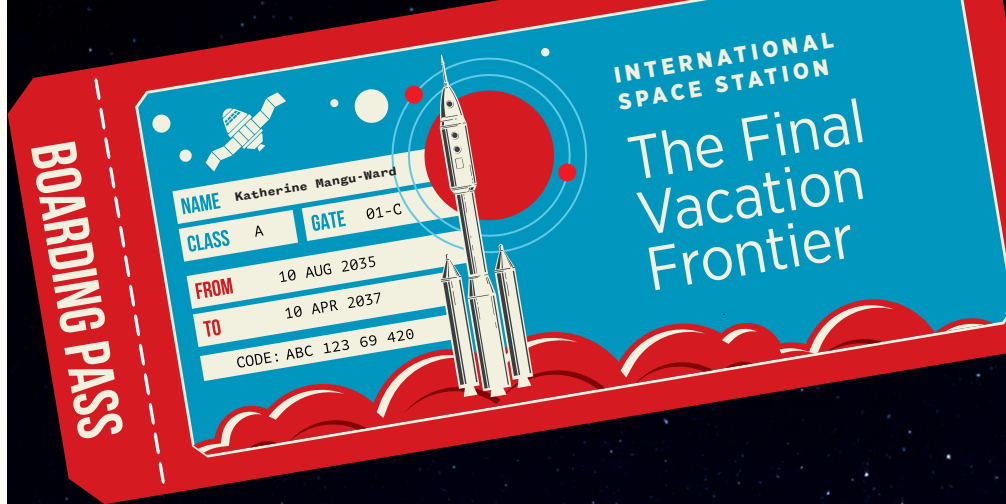
“Why here? Why not here?” Yummy Shawarma owner Khaldoun El-Shamaa told me between warm greetings to his regular customers. “I’ve been here 18 years, I love it. It’s a small community.” He added that, though he’s “not fluent” in Inuktitut, he “speaks a little.”

One night I took a cab back from photographing the northern lights over the harbor. The driver was Nigerian by way of Toronto. “This is my home now. I love it here,” he said.

“Who doesn’t?” piped up my fellow passenger, a young Inuk woman.

The driver agreed. “How can anyone come here and not see it is an amazing place with amazing people?” 📍

MATTHEW PETTI is an assistant editor at *Reason*. He walks around with a collection of SIM cards from different countries taped to his phone, just in case.



LOOKING TO GET *really* away from it all? How about 250 miles straight up and traveling at 17,500 mph away from it all? This year, why not take a vacation in low earth orbit—specifically, on the International Space Station (ISS)?

In recent years, this zero-gravity tangle of wires, solar panels, and science experiments has quietly become the ultimate libertarian getaway: government-funded, sure, but with private companies offering first-class tickets to private citizens, with no TSA line. Enjoy a little slice of the final frontier where the drinks are bagged, the views are unbeatable, and the small but real risk of death keeps things spicy.

Since 2001, a growing trickle of nongovernmental spacefarers have shelled out the big bucks to hang out among the stars. The first space tourist, Dennis Tito—an American engineer and investment manager—paid \$20 million to the Russian space agency to catch a ride on a Soyuz rocket and spent eight days aboard the ISS. Since then, about a dozen other private individuals have followed, including Cirque du Soleil founder Guy Laliberté (who performed clown routines in zero gravity) and Japanese fashion tycoon Yusaku Maezawa, who livestreamed his orbital adventure in 2021 like it was just another TikTok vlog.

You can book a trip through SpaceX or Axiom Space, the latter of which offers “private astronaut missions” at a tidy \$55 million per seat. That price includes training, transport aboard a SpaceX *Crew Dragon*, and about a week on the ISS with food, Wi-Fi, and astronaut jumpsuits provided. (Bring your own ice cream.)

It’s not exactly an all-inclusive beach resort. (Bigelow Aerospace’s plan for inflatable space hab hotels has unfortunately come to naught.) Space toilets are complicated. You’ll need to train for several months beforehand, and there’s a nonzero chance you’ll vomit while upside down in your first 20 minutes aboard. Also, there’s always the possibility of becoming an accidental long-term resident—Russian cosmonauts once got stuck up there for more than a year due to a leaky coolant system, and more recently two NASA astronauts overstayed their planned visit by more than eight months after the Boeing *Starliner* that was supposed to retrieve them was deemed insufficient to the task.

So if you’re tired of TSA gropes, carbon offset guilt trips, and lukewarm meals from room service, consider this: For the cost of a slightly used Gulfstream, you too can become an astronaut, orbiting above the fray with the silent satisfaction of a man—or woman—who really got away from it all.

No passport required. Just a lot of money. 📍

KATHERINE MANGU-WARD is editor in chief of *Reason*. She is mad she wasn’t invited on the all-lady Blue Origin flight.

BAGGAGE
TAG



A

TO: CUSCO, PERU

Losing My Religion, Finding My Humanity at an Ayahuasca Retreat

Bekah Congdon



379-543



AS THE SECOND ceremony commenced and I was handed my half-dose of the plant medicine, I took a deep breath and thought, “This is going to be an amazing night.”

I was transported to a cathedral-like space, and all around me were shapes and colors I can’t rightly describe. It was beautiful. I couldn’t stop looking around at these things I had never seen before. As I marveled, one shape seemed different. Somehow, I knew that I was going to be pulled into that shape.

Indeed I was, and was taken to a new room with new shapes and new colors. It was scary at first, this new room. But I soon acclimated and returned to enjoying the view. Then another shape appeared—a scarier shape—and I was again pulled through.

The sequence continued, each pull into a new shape taking me deeper into a realm of unfamiliar sensations. Time was distorted; I couldn’t grasp whether minutes or hours had passed. Each new “room” brought more fear than the last, as if I were moving further away from reality and into a world where everything familiar was unraveling.

After several of these transitions, the fear became more acute. When a new shape pulled me in, I said in my mind, “I don’t want to do this anymore.” I heard a voice respond, “You said you wanted to heal for those who couldn’t do it themselves.”

It was true. One of my intentions for this trip had been to help heal the generations of women before me who hadn’t had the opportunity for such an experience. Grounded by the response, I found the strength to keep going.

Again and again, a new shape pulled me into what felt like a new dimension. It was too scary. I said I wanted to be done. I was reminded of my plan, and so I continued. On and on. It began happening faster.

As I was pulled into another shape, my legs went numb. The sensation spread upward, leaving my neck and head without feeling. Finally, my arms fell, lifeless and heavy, as if they no longer belonged to me.

Then it hit me—like a jolt of cold realization: I had just died.

A JOURNEY TO DEATH AND REBIRTH

MY PATH TO this harrowing moment began when I escaped nearly a decade of abuse from a pastor. I got a new job, packed my belongings and what was left of my faith, moved across the country, and spent months in a puddle of tears on the floor of a 700-square-foot Washington, D.C., apartment. One SSRI, two therapists, and about a dozen books on abuse and trauma helped me stand up again. But I felt untethered from everything I thought I knew about the world, and I craved a deeper reckoning.

Thanks to D.C.’s Entheogenic Plant and Fungus Policy Act of 2020, which decriminalized recreational psilocybin (along with ayahuasca and mescaline), I was able to start exploring psychedelics. My mushroom trips had been beautiful, tear-filled, and cleansing, and I was eager to further explore the interior of my mind.

Ayahuasca in particular fascinated me. But while its legal status is the same as psilocybin—federally illegal and a Schedule I drug under the Controlled Substances Act, but decriminalized in a handful of places—it is harder to get your hands on than mushrooms, which you can grow in your home or easily purchase online. I also wanted an authentic experience that took me away from the everyday distractions that, for better or worse, prevented me from addressing the pain I was still holding.

I arrived in Cusco, Peru, about 48 hours before my first ayahuasca trip—a requirement to acclimate to the altitude of 11,152 feet. My plane touched down just after midnight, and I paid an Uber driver 13.60 sol (about \$3.70) for the 12-minute drive to my hotel. Watching the city through my rain-speckled window, I felt an odd familiarity in this unfamiliar place.

In my teens and early 20s, I went on several short-term Christian mission trips, mostly to the Philippines. Peru is a very different country, and yet seeing the rows of densely packed homes, small bodegas, internet cafés, and people walking arm in arm transported me back to my 16-year-old self: nervous, exhausted, hoping I remembered every word of the Gospel presentation I’d rehearsed on the flight.

Over the 14 years since my last mission trip, I have reexamined the proselytizing we did. I no longer hold to most of the beliefs I proudly declared then, but I don’t regret what I learned from the missionary trips of my youth. Traveling to new countries—first in groups, then alone—became a lifelong love. More than anything else, I learned to see my fellow human beings as unique individuals of incalculable value.

The next morning, I wandered around the city and practiced my Spanish by declining offers to peruse jewelry, knickknacks, artwork, and alpaca clothing. An artist named Manuel (though he jokingly introduced himself as Pablo Picasso) spoke better English than anyone else I encountered, and so I took him up on his offer to show me around. For an hour we spoke in each other’s languages, and before we parted I bought a few of his paintings—spending more than planned but happy to repay his easy friendship.

I joined a more formal pay-what-you-want walking tour and met a Californian woman named Annette. She was dressed more appropriately than I was for the alternating cold, rain, and sun. As we climbed Cusco’s steep streets, I felt the effects of the altitude and had to break for air.

Annette was better adjusted to the environment; she had been in the country for a week already. I soon learned that she had just returned from an ayahuasca retreat herself. She was not new to psychedelics but sought out ayahuasca after losing her son to suicide. Her son, she told me, had visited her during her second ceremony and brought her the closure she longed for. Tearing up, I hugged her and thanked her for sharing such an intimate moment.

In the afternoon, I impulsively got a tattoo. My artist, Zilver, and I quickly realized that neither my Spanish nor his English was strong enough to carry the conversation, so I downloaded the first translation app with decent reviews, and we took turns typing questions as needed. The drawing came together, and I left with a keepsake on my ribs: three celestial beings framed by the words *Unbound, Untethered, Unfettered*.

Back at the hotel, the effects of altitude sickness grew worse. Aided by another app (Pedidos Ya, a Latin American app similar to DoorDash), I got some dinner but barely touched it before curling up and shivering to sleep. I awoke drenched in sweat (pro tip: Alpaca blankets are absurdly warm) but feeling much better. After a breakfast of watermelon and coca tea, I packed my bags and headed to the plaza where the van to the retreat was waiting.

CHOOSING THE RIGHT RETREAT

AYAHUASCA IS A decoction of the stems of the *Banisteriopsis caapi* vine and the leaves of the *Psychotria viridis* shrub—two plants native to the Amazon—which are boiled down for several hours, sometimes even more than a day. The active ingredient in *P. viridis* (known as chacruna in Peru) is dimethyltryptamine (DMT), the compound that provides the hallucinogenic effects and earns the concoction its Schedule I restrictions, but it only becomes orally active when combined with *B. caapi* or a similar plant.

In 2006, the Supreme Court unanimously ruled in *Gonzales v. O Centro Espírita Beneficente União do Vegetal* that the U.S. federal government had to allow the União do Vegetal—a Christian Spiritist religion that originated in Brazil—to import and consume ayahuasca for religious ceremonies. Since then, five cities, three states, and the District of Columbia have made legal carve-outs for entheogenic substances, but ayahuasca remains federally prohibited. In 2018, a 22-year-old Colombian American and a 42-year-old Canadian citizen became the first known individuals convicted of possessing ayahuasca, both caught separately smuggling small batches of the tea into the U.S. in shampoo bottles.

I don't believe the government has the right to dictate what we ingest, let alone what parts of our minds we may access. But prohibition increases user risk by making purity impossible to guarantee, which made me wary of a stateside retreat. I reached out to a few retreats in the Atlanta area, where I now live, to ask if they were exempt under one of the past court rulings. Most didn't respond, though one cryptically replied, "While I don't thoroughly understand the premise of your question, I can share that our church has been holding retreats in Georgia for the past seven years." That was not reassuring.

I sought retreats that were upfront about who should and shouldn't participate. A good retreat should list medical conditions, medications, and lifestyle factors that are incompatible with ayahuasca. They should also emphasize the risks—even for

healthy, sober individuals—and strongly encourage a preparatory diet. I wanted a place that prioritized safety and responsible guidance over cashing in on the podcast-fueled surge of seekers chasing a psychedelic adventure.

For these reasons (and because they had availability at a reasonable price point), I chose Etnikas Integrative Medicine in Peru. After signing medical forms and waivers, I paid \$50 for an on-site EKG upon my arrival—cheaper and more convenient than scheduling one back home. All that was left to do was stick to the strict diet (abstaining from red meat, pork, alcohol, cannabis, refined sugars, dairy, caffeine, and any sexual activities) for the next three weeks. "Practicing dietary discipline is seen, from a shamanic perspective, as showing respect to the medicine," according to Etnikas, "and is believed to lead to more insight and less difficulty" during the ceremony.

THE ROAD TO ETNIKAS

ON THE 90-MINUTE bus ride from central Cusco to Etnikas, my new acquaintances and I were captivated by treacherous cliffs, lush jungles, and the occasional alpaca. I saw elementary-aged children laugh and play near the street, a barefoot man on a homemade ladder passing construction materials to another barefoot man on a roof, and countless roadside markets selling hats, ponchos, and trinkets. A brick wall in a small village had "FREE PALESTINE" spray-painted messily across it. Such snapshots reminded me how universal the human experience is, regardless of geography.

I felt reverberations of the call that once stirred in me to be a missionary. In 2011, I tested that call by spending three months working at an orphanage on the Filipino island of Mindanao. Afterward, I never considered a lifetime of missionary work again. But I understand why it once appealed to me: Beyond Jesus' directive to "go therefore and make disciples of all the nations," I longed for a life among tightly knit communities in a place of wild beauty. But romanticizing that life ignores important considerations, and too many missionaries with distorted motives do more harm than good. I think what many of us really want is a simpler, more connected way of living, even if we don't know how to name it.

Passing through impoverished areas, my emotions shifted again. I saw people surviving with so little, facing struggles I couldn't begin to fathom, even as the second Trump administration was promising to shut down avenues for immigration and violently remove undocumented immigrants. All I could think was how these people should be welcomed if they ever made it to the United States, and what an immeasurable benefit my homeland could be—and used to be—to those who have known hardship.

Etnikas turned out to be both expansive and tucked away, nestled in a valley split by a raging river. Towering mountains—

7-Day Ayahuasca Experience in Peru

DAY 1

FLIGHT TO CUSCO

International flights mostly connect through Lima before continuing to Cusco. Once you arrive at the Alejandro Velasco Astete International Airport in Cusco, you can use Uber or Lyft to get a low-cost ride to your hotel.

IMPORTANT: Untreated water in Cusco is not safe to drink. Purchase or refill water bottles in Lima. Your hotel concierge can direct you to where you can buy bottled water nearby.

Stay in Cusco for two nights.

Standard hotel: Hotel Cusco Plaza Nazarenas
High-end hotel: Palacio del Inka by Marriott



DAY 2

FREE DAY IN CUSCO

Use today to start acclimating to the altitude. Many hotels provide coca leaves, which you can make into tea to help with symptoms of altitude sickness. Pace yourself and drink lots of water.

Optional activities: Free walking tour, **Cusco Cathedral in Plaza de Armas** (after morning Mass), **Museum of Pre-Colombian Art**

DAY 3

TRANSFER TO ETNIKAS

Etnikas will provide you with the time and place to meet your bus for the 1.5-hour drive to the retreat. Eat a light breakfast before you leave, remembering to follow the diet restrictions Etnikas provides you. When you arrive, you will be taken to your room to drop off your luggage before rejoining the group for a meeting and preceremony rituals. If you opted to get your electrocardiogram done on site, that will happen this afternoon, along with a psychological evaluation to determine your first dose.

FIRST AYAHUASCA CEREMONY

Dress comfortably and don't forget your water bottle. You do not need to bring anything else with you. Phones and recording devices

are strictly prohibited during ceremonies and should be left in your room. Ceremonies begin with an hour of meditation and can last until well after midnight. Always listen to your facilitators and medical team for the best possible outcome.

Stay at Etnikas for four nights.

DAY 4

SECOND AYAHUASCA CEREMONY

Breakfast is provided this morning. There is no lunch or dinner on ceremony days, but fruit and tea are available throughout the day. The staff will tell you about group meetings and volunteer opportunities.

You will have opportunities to share your experiences and hear what others experienced in the first ceremony. Ask questions and prepare your mind for another trip.

DAY 5

FREE DAY AT ETNIKAS

There's no ceremony tonight, so breakfast, lunch, and dinner are all provided. The staff will tell you about group meetings and volunteer opportunities. You can also spend time exploring and hiking around Etnikas, playing with the many pets on the property (dogs, cats, and alpacas), painting or doing yoga in the little maloca, reading, writing, or napping.

DAY 6

THIRD AYAHUASCA CEREMONY

Breakfast is provided this morning. Tonight will be your final ayahuasca ceremony. Remember that there will be no lunch or dinner, so eat fruit and hydrate throughout the day.

DAY 7

TRANSFER TO CUSCO

Breakfast will be provided this morning. The staff will tell you when you need to be ready to leave. You will be taken back to central Cusco, where you can call an Uber back to the airport for your return flight or to a hotel if you are extending your trip.



lush, green, impossibly alive—rise on all sides, as if the earth itself is holding you in a place of safety.

My fellow companions came from around the world: Hawaii, Ohio, Virginia, Maryland, Florida, New York, Argentina, Canada, Costa Rica, Trinidad and Tobago, Romania. Just as varied were the reasons that had brought us here. In a group meeting, we shared what led us to embark on an ayahuasca retreat—processing death and divorce, healing from abuse, preparing to start a company, recovering from addiction, searching for meaning. We also got an intimate glimpse into the spiritual beliefs of our hosts.

Teddy, one of the founders of Etnikas, told us about his experiences with ayahuasca—30 to 40 journeys so far—and why he started this healing center. His English faltered at times, but his message was clear: Everything comes down to love. “If I do not love a stranger as much as I love my spouse, I do not really love,” he said. “If I don’t love an enemy like I love my mother, I haven’t learned to really love.”

I couldn’t help but hear the words of Jesus I had memorized as a child: “You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you....If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that?”

We then took part in what felt, to me, like a baptism. Standing in the freezing river, our maestro dipped a bundle of flowers and reeds in the water and sprinkled it over our heads while whispering a blessing. We were told to focus on forgiveness.

As I looked down at my feet and the current rushing over them, my mind drifted, briefly, to the man who had hurt me for so long. But just as quickly as the river carried itself downstream, the weight of him, and what was before unforgiven, washed away.

MY FIRST AYAHUASCA CEREMONY

CEREMONIES DIFFER, DEPENDING on where you are and who is leading you. Etnikas works with healers from the Shipibo-Conibo, an indigenous Amazonian tribe, and healers from the Q’ero tribe, descendants of the Inca who live high in the Andes mountains.

The first ceremony is preceded by a medical exam and a psychological evaluation, which help the retreat nurses determine your first dose. The ceremony itself begins with a meditation.

Ceremonies take place in a maloca—a large, round structure typically constructed from natural materials—with small cots or beds lining the walls. Next to each bed is a bucket, a roll of toilet paper, and a small dish (for placing your ayahuasca cup after partaking). Ayahuasca is a purgative medicine, which means that, for most people, its use is accompanied by vomiting or diarrhea. Or both. (Another moment of connection

among the group was realizing we all had one goal in common: not to shit our pants.)

We took our seats, propped up on pillows and covered with alpaca blankets. Staff brought each of us our medicine, most of us beginning the first night with a quarter or half dose. With a raise of our glasses and a timid “*salud*,” we threw back our first shot of ayahuasca. It did not taste pleasant. The viscous substance is dark brown and opaque and tastes like a tragic combination of Vegemite and prune juice, with an earthy aftertaste that lingers. Once the medicine is taken, you aren’t supposed to drink anything for at least an hour (or until you start puking—whichever comes first), so we rinsed our mouths, spit in our buckets, and relaxed into our cots.

For an hour, we sat in the silence and the dark. Occasionally, someone would stir or sound like they were experiencing some light discomfort. Eventually, we were checked one by one and asked if we wanted another dose. I started the night with a quarter dose and had not yet felt any effects, so I chose to take a second quarter dose.

Within five minutes, the nausea hit. That same thing seemed to be happening to the others: The sounds of puking—and of people being escorted to the restroom—became consistent. I felt terrible but kept reassuring myself I’d soon feel the relief of purging.

Another 30 minutes later, our main facilitator, Rosie, checked on me. I reported feeling miserable but unable to vomit. Rosie said something I couldn’t hear through the fog of my own discomfort. When I looked at her indignantly, she simply said, “Bekah: Focus.”

With this instruction, I picked up my bucket, placed it in front of me, and got on all fours. Staring into the bucket, I commanded myself: “Puke.” Whether it was my instruction that did it or just the effect of jostling myself around, I did begin to vomit, immediately and a lot. It was intense, but it passed quickly enough. The nausea gave way not simply to the expected after-puking relief but to such a feeling of comfort and peace that I lay back down and reveled for a while in gratitude that I no longer felt ill.

Not all of my companions were experiencing that relief. The room was a cacophony of retching, moaning, crying, and guttural grunting. We had been told it’s good to send loving energy to our friends when we hear them struggling. I found that this made me feel connected to my fellow voyagers and pulled me deeper into my own experience.

After a while, our Shipibo maestra began to sing over the room—hypnotic lines that I can still hear clearly in my mind. Then she moved from bed to bed and sang over each of us individually. The maestro and maestra take ayahuasca along with the group, and the songs are improvised based on the feelings between singer and participant.

Between very mild visualizations and some sensations not



too different from what I experienced on psilocybin, I found myself spending time with each of my siblings. Remembering the focus on forgiveness, I expected I was going to forgive them for things I might be holding against them. Instead, I found myself asking for forgiveness for the times that I had not been the sister I wanted to be. I saw them each in a new, beautiful light, and the night passed with some tears of happiness before I fell asleep.

I woke around 2 a.m., had another medical check-in, and walked back to my room. I lay in bed for a while thinking about the experience, which was, overall, far less extraordinary than I had anticipated. But the feeling of *connection* was so strong. I felt connected to myself and my companions, to the mountains, to the dewdrops sliding off a leaf and watering the earth. Everything felt like a part of me, and I felt like an infinitesimally small yet vital part of the whole. This was in stark contrast to my typically American (and typically libertarian) sense of individuality.

I thought about the value that is so often put on self-sufficiency and individuality. We innovate, develop, and create new tools to achieve this sense of freedom. Undoubtedly, some things are better because of this. Most of us in the United States have easy and consistent access to electricity, clean water, and, often, better roads than you may find in Peru. We can order groceries and buy clothes and have them arrive at our front door without ever interacting with another person. We also have a loneliness epidemic and popular *Christian* figures arguing that having empathy for others is problematic or even sinful. What really makes for a more idyllic human experience: fewer provi-

sions but deeper connections, or convenience aplenty without a close friend in sight?

What would our society look like if more of us saw others as part of ourselves? What if our lawmakers felt this, even once? I recalled an old episode of *The Joe Rogan Experience* when journalist Graham Hancock said psychedelics can “elevate us away from our war-like ways” and, later, said that anyone who wants to run for president should “have at least a dozen sessions with a powerful psychedelic. It can be DMT, it can be ayahuasca, it can be LSD, but they got to go through those dozen sessions. They should be guided by experienced practitioners.” At the end of those sessions, he hypothesized, “I very much doubt if those individuals would be the same individuals who went into the application for the job in the first place.”

Still under the lingering spell of the mind-altering medicine, I drifted to sleep, pondering this idea anew.

MY SECOND CEREMONY AND FIRST DEATH

WE SPENT A portion of the next day at an orphanage that Etnikas supports. The language divide was easily bridged with a game of soccer, and the kids easily schooled their visitors handicapped by age and change in altitude.

Throughout the day, I felt a little anxious about having another pleasant but mild trip; I had come all the way here for something extraordinary. But as the second ceremony commenced and I was handed my half-dose, I thought, “This is going to be an amazing night.”

I had no idea.

Not seven minutes after swallowing the brew, I thought I saw something; not a vision I could describe, but something I knew wasn’t familiar. “Already?” I asked silently. I was prepared for another slow start like the night before. Instantly, though, I heard my question answered. “If you’re ready,” a voice said. Confidently, I closed my eyes and said, “OK.”

What transpired over the next hour or so will never be fully understandable to anyone who wasn’t experiencing it, and honestly, perhaps not even to me. But after I was pulled from shape to shape and room to room, I suddenly became convinced that I had died.

Facing death is a common experience on psychedelics. “Of all the phenomenological effects that people on psychedelics report, the dissolution of the ego seems to me by far the most important and the most therapeutic,” journalist Michael Pollan writes in *How to Change Your Mind*. “It is this that gives us the mystical experience, the death rehearsal process, the overview effect, the notion of a mental reboot, the making of new meanings, and the experience of awe.”

I was aware of this phenomenon, having read Pollan’s book twice, but that knowledge was nowhere to be found when I entered my own death rehearsal process. Then I truly believed

that my body had died—and that if I didn't do something quickly, the rest of me would die as well. I panicked. I wasn't safe, I knew it, and I had to get out.

I had to do something that is hard for me under normal circumstances, thanks to anxiety about being an inconvenience: ask for help. And I did. "I need help. I need help. Please. Please, somebody help me."

Help came. Rosie was at my side again, offering some encouragement. I began to cry. Sob. Wail. I repeated my cries for help and said, "I have to be done." As Rosie and another nurse whispered to each other in Spanish, I still wasn't convinced I had been heard. With every bit of strength I had left, I sat up and looked Rosie in the eye: "You're not listening to me. I have to be done. You have to let me be done."

A few minutes later, I was told they were going to take me to the adjacent medical room. After I argued that I was unable to walk (I was dead, after all), a staffer on either side escorted me out of the maloca. I saw the distant light coming from the open maloca door and thought that if I just got through this, I might still have a chance to live.

My trip was nowhere near done, but I passed the rest of it in the medical room. Rosie became my own personal shaman that night. Purging came, but this time in the form of deep and heavy sobs accompanied by confessions that flowed from my mouth without my consent. "He hurt me. He hurt me for so long. I was only ever kind to him, but he hurt me so badly."

Rosie held me gently as my body trembled, each sob releasing a wound from eight years of silence. It felt as though a younger version of me—one who should have felt safe to speak up—was finally allowed to tell her truth. Every word was an exorcism, every tear an offering, and with each confession a weight was lifted.

My body ached for sleep, but closing my eyes brought back the scary visualizations. Almost instinctively, I began to sing the lullabies that had comforted me as a child. As I drifted off to sleep on the mattress in the medical room, I felt a shift. The emotional storms had passed. I was reborn.

WHAT I LEARNED FROM AYAHUASCA

IF I HAD been told beforehand that I would be taken out of my second ayahuasca ceremony and spend hours crying on someone's lap, I would have considered it a personal failure. Maybe I hadn't followed the instructions correctly, I would have thought; or maybe I just wasn't strong enough to endure the experience. But that is not how I felt when I woke up the next morning.

"Mother Ayahuasca does not give you what you want," the saying goes. "She gives you what you need." I now knew that to be true.

For years, I was slowly dying, trapped in a labyrinth of lies and manipulation and abuse. If something hadn't forced my

silence to break—in my case, the resignation of this pastor after another victim (and then several more victims) came forward—I would still be trapped. Or perhaps I wouldn't be here at all. Ayahuasca gave me exactly what I needed: the chance to again feel that wretched hopelessness, that dark loneliness, that hurt. But this time, I went through it with the strength to ask for help; and this time, someone answered my call. On that floor of a maloca in Peru, I felt the strength, not weakness, that it takes to be vulnerable and admit I couldn't do it alone.

I look back on my ayahuasca trips with happiness and gratitude. I think the world could be a better place if more people felt the deep connection to our planet and its inhabitants that can come from an ayahuasca experience. I also still firmly believe that no government has the right to restrict that option from those who want it.

Yet I don't think I could ever personally advise someone to do it. We all have our own unique hidden pains. Without knowing what Mother Ayahuasca may uncover for someone, I couldn't possibly say whether this would be wise for them. What I can say is that ayahuasca should not be taken lightly. I healed some soul-deep wounds, but I also passed the hardest night of my life in the hands of someone who was trained to care for me, in a place dedicated to that very healing. Without the proper mindset and physical setting, and without Rosie, I would have had a very different kind of trip. Anyone considering an ayahuasca retreat should do so with respect for the powerful medicine it is.

Ayahuasca is not the only agent for creating a sense of connection with our world. International travel is cheaper and easier than ever. Flying was once considered a luxury, but it has become commonplace as airline prices have decreased. New technologies have made travel not just cheaper but easier to navigate. Apps such as Duolingo, Babbel, or Pimsleur allow us to learn a new language before leaving the country, and Google Translate and iTranslate provide instant translation assistance. The global availability of apps from Airbnb to Lyft to food delivery platforms makes travel far less mysterious and onerous. As the rhetoric demonizing people outside our borders grows more heated, those who do not want to outsource our thinking to politicians should try to put ourselves in new places, take ourselves on new adventures, and meet the people with whom we share this rock.

As I learned with ayahuasca, the greatest healing often comes from the most challenging experiences. True connection—to ourselves, to others, to the divine—requires a willingness to step beyond the familiar and embrace the unknown. Whether through travel, conversation, or plant medicine, the path to understanding starts with a choice: to see, to listen, and to open ourselves to transformation. 📍

BEKAH CONGDON is a deputy managing editor at *Reason*. She has a habit of coming home from international trips with new tattoos.

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A THREE-STORY HOUSE tucked into a mere one-meter gap between tall buildings. A flower shop shaped like a triangle, wedged between a retaining wall and the sidewalk. A standing bar humming with laughter beneath the rumble of passing trains. In most cities, these spaces would be dead zones—awkward, overlooked, written off by zoning and building codes as unusable.

But in Tokyo, they bloom with life. These microspaces are amenities. They're capitalism in the cracks, not just in form but in function.

These strange slivers often become homes for new ideas: a two-person bar, a bookstore barely wider than a fridge, a late-night shop that opens on a whim. They invite experimentation, economic as well as architectural.

Tokyo's ability to cultivate these spaces isn't just a cultural quirk. It's a byproduct of a city that leaves room for improvisation, that adapts to its imperfections, and that transforms constraints into creativity.



These spaces reveal what is possible when cities loosen their grip on regulations—when policy becomes an enabler, not a gatekeeper. They offer a glimpse of what urban life could look like if more places embraced flexibility.

Tokyo's urbanism *emerged* more than it was planned. Most of its neighborhoods weren't drafted in a planner's office. They were shaped incrementally by individuals responding to need and opportunity.

Modern Tokyo is a city born from ruin. After the devastating bombings of World War II, with little funding available for formal reconstruction, residents rebuilt on their own—using salvaged materials to create homes on the ruins of old neighborhoods. Over time, the government stepped in to connect and formalize what had already taken shape. The result is a dense, oddly beautiful patchwork: irregular lots, winding streets, and spaces so small that most cities would ignore them. But Tokyo doesn't.

There are at least three varieties of microspaces here: pet architecture, *yoko-chos*, and undertrack infills.

OF ALL OF Tokyo's urban quirks, few are as endearing—or revealing—as pet architecture.

Coined by the architectural firm Atelier Bow-Wow, the term describes buildings that are “unusually small, humorous, and charming”: little pets in a city built for human beings. Awkwardly shaped and impossibly tiny, they defy conventional notions about how much space is necessary for any given use.

You might stumble upon a rubber stamp store crammed into a leftover triangle of land between a train line and the road in Nakano. A one-meter-wide real estate office in Shimokitazawa. A tiny bakery that somehow fits between a wall and a utility pole in Koenji. These are buildings that shouldn't exist, but they do.

In many cities, spaces like these would be rejected outright as unusable. They'd run into a wall of regulatory barriers: minimum lot sizes, minimum unit sizes, parking mandates, and zoning codes that separate uses into rigid slots—residential here, com-



mercial there, industrial somewhere else.

But in Tokyo, they're opportunities. They challenge bureaucratic assumptions about what buildings are supposed to look like. As the Atelier Bow-Wow architect Yoshiharu Tsukamoto has put it: “They illustrate unique ideas with elements of fun, without yielding to unfavorable conditions.” Pet architecture is playful, it's resourceful, and it's all over the city.



YOKOCHO LITERALLY MEANS “side street” or “alleyway.” In Japan, it means something more: narrow lanes filled with tiny bars and restaurants. Usually found near train stations or commercial centers, these narrow streets range from just 1.3 to 2.8 meters wide—narrow enough to stretch out your arms and touch both walls, too tight to meet code in most U.S. cities. Inside, you’ll find bars the size of walk-in closets, seating six to 12 patrons and often run by a single staffer.

Yokochos emerged after World War II as black markets. They were improvised stalls selling basic goods. Over time these stalls became food joints and drinking dens, and eventually they were fixtures of Tokyo’s urban landscape.

The Golden Gai district in Shinjuku packs more than 200 tiny bars into six alleyways in an area smaller than a city block. (It’s the kind of setup a North American fire marshal would never allow.) Most buildings are two stories high, with steep staircases leading to completely different experiences upstairs. Want a fancy whiskey bar? It’s there. A horror movie-themed bar? Absolutely. Hospital-themed? Erotic fetish? Retro video games? A quiet library bar? They have all of the above. All unique. All impossibly small.

Nearby, on the other side of Shinjuku station, the Omoide Yokocho district is known for late-night *yakitori* (chicken skewers) and drinks, with around 80 shops squeezed into a single alleyway. In Shibuya, Nonbei Yokocho—or “Drunkard’s Alley”—crams 40 shops

into spaces barely two meters wide. And in Ebisu, Ebisu Yokocho sits in a covered passageway built on the remnants of a former shopping center that houses *izakayas* (Japanese pubs) ranging from 10 to 16.5 square meters, serving everything from grilled fish to okonomiyaki to oden.

So beloved are these places that developers have recreated them inside modern buildings. Shibuya Yokocho, a sleek version inside the Miyashita Park complex, mimics the feel of the real thing, with curated chaos, shared tables, and dishes from every prefecture in Japan.

Nostalgia aside, yokochos are more than relics. Their size, affordability, and independence make them incubators for creativity and entrepreneurship.

TOKYO’S RAIL SYSTEM is everywhere—and wherever there are train tracks, there are gaps. In many cities, these would be fenced off. In Tokyo, they’re filled with life.

Like yokochos, many undertrack infills began as black markets after the war. What were once dusty, makeshift stalls have since evolved into hubs of commerce and dining.

Near Ueno Station, *izakayas* nestle underneath and between train lines. You can sit shoulder-to-shoulder with salarymen, sip a highball, nibble on sashimi, and watch the trains pass overhead.

A few blocks from there is Ameyoko, a market wedged beneath the Yamanote Line between the Okachimachi and Ueno stations. It’s a sensory overload: cosmetics, spices, fresh seafood, and cheap street snacks packed into a narrow pulsing corridor under the tracks.

A few stops away on the Yamanote Line, in Yurakucho, rows of cozy restaurants and standing bars are tucked into the arches beneath the tracks. Some are linked by narrow alleyways that run under the railway itself, connecting one lively pocket to another. At around 6 p.m., the lights come on, the smoke rises, and the area fills with after-work revelers grabbing food and drinks before catching their train home.

What unites these under-track infills is their uncanny ability to turn infrastructure

into opportunity. Instead of ignoring the voids created by transit, Tokyo builds into them.

TO UNDERSTAND WHY Tokyo looks the way it does, you have to start with zoning. Zoning laws determine what can be built and where—homes, shops, factories, or nothing at all.

In the U.S., zoning is local. Each city or county writes its own code, but most follow similar templates. Neighborhoods are typically residential, commercial, or industrial, with little room for overlap. The rules are rigid. It’s often illegal to run a small business out of your home or to build on a lot deemed too small. Any change of use typically requires hearings, permits, consultants, and months—maybe years—of paperwork. It’s a large bureaucratic system that tends to push out small, experimental, or unconventional uses.

Japan takes a different approach. The same zoning system applies nationwide, from Tokyo’s densest neighborhoods to the smallest rural town. The rules are meant to maintain the scale of buildings, preserve sunlight access, and prevent fire hazards.

Instead of rigid land-use rules, Japan uses a set of 12 flexible zoning categories, arranged on a spectrum from residential to commercial to industrial. These are broad guidelines, not strict prescriptions. Within





them, landowners are largely free to decide how to use their space.

Take Category 1, officially designated as “exclusively residential.” In practice, that doesn’t mean only homes can be built. Small shops, dental clinics, hair salons, and day cares are all permitted. What’s prohibited are large, disruptive developments. You won’t find a depart-

ment store in Category 1, but you might find a ramen shop on the ground floor of someone’s home.

Each zone builds on the one before it. If something is allowed in Category 1, it’s automatically allowed in Categories 2 through 12. The only major exception is strictly industrial areas. Elsewhere, layers of possibilities build on each other, allowing for the kind of vibrant, fine-grained mixing of activities you see in Tokyo.

Japan also avoids rules that would make small-scale development impossible. There are no minimum lot sizes. Small parcels can be freely subdivided. Building heights are based on road width, not a fixed number. And it’s legal to run a business out of your house. The result is a city that allows for increasingly complex and nuanced configurations.

The rules are more like scaffolding than a straitjacket. They set the frame, but decisions are left to property owners, architects, and builders.

This flexibility has made Tokyo radically adaptable. It makes space not just for small businesses but even smaller micro-businesses. If you have an idea and a few square feet, you can start something without hearings or expensive consultants.

“There are a lot of ways in which not only zoning but other pieces of the puzzle all come together to encourage these experimental, intimate, small-scale mom-and-pop businesses,” explains Joe McReynolds, an urban studies scholar at Keio University’s Almazán Architecture and Urban Studies Laboratory. “There’s a lot of tilt in the regulations toward small businesses,” he says, from lower taxes and simpler food safety rules to the relative ease of getting a liquor license.

TOKYO MAY BE unique, but you can sometimes spot a glimmer of flexibility even in cities with heavy-handed planning systems.

Take London. With its heritage protections, conservation zones, strict building codes, and endless red tape, changing the built environment there often means running an obstacle course of applications, consultations, and design reviews. Yet small-scale invention sometimes slips through.

In West London’s Bayswater conservation area, where uniform facades and historical preservation rules are the norm, you’ll find the Gap House. With a street frontage of only 2.3 meters (8 feet), this five-story home fills what was once a

narrow alley between two buildings.

“My inspiration was Japan and the Netherlands,” explains the architect (and owner), Luke Tozer. “Both make good use of small bits of land.”

The project required extensive negotiation, creative diplomacy, and imaginative design work to bring neighbors and planners on board. “We ultimately convinced them of a design that could be contemporary and sympathetic to the adjoining areas without it trying to mimic them,” Tozer says. “One of our arguments was [that] it should be different because it’s obviously of its time but also we want to try and still make it clear that it is a gap.”

The result is a home that opens into a rear garden and maximizes every inch of its narrow footprint. “It required some imagination. Thinking out of the box. Good design, that’s where it comes in,” Tozer reflects. “That’s where good design adds value on tricky sites.”

The Gap House shows that even in cities bound by strict zoning and preservation overlays, there’s still room for architectural courage.

“I love the fact that in a city—even a city where you’ve got an acute housing crisis like in London—there are always bits of land that are left over, forgotten,” Tozer says.

There are cracks worth filling. But if every project demands a fight, we will never see this kind of development flourishing.

“LETTING PEOPLE RUN a little coffee shop, a little bookstore out of the ground floor of their houses, that’s the sort of thing that makes a neighborhood charming and local and lovable and livable,” McReynolds says.

That’s part of what makes Tokyo so magnetic. It’s a city where the unexpected flourishes. Walk a single block and you’ll see a narrow home tucked between buildings, a pet-sized owl café, or a triangle-shaped standing bar. It’s this patchwork—this mixture of building scales and uses—that gives the city its pulse.

Tokyo can’t be copied. Its history is unique. But we can learn from its ethos of trusting its citizens and adopting policies that enable rather than restrict. If more cities embraced the idea that flexibility breeds vitality, we might start to see cracks of our own—cracks that could be filled with opportunities. 📍

KATARINA HALL is a staff editor at *Reason*. She’s a known regular at at least three Tokyo izakayas.

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I **CROSSED THE U.S./Mexico border** six times in a month in 2018, an economic refugee in my own way.

While the consumer price index indicates an overall U.S. inflation rate of around 85 percent since 2000, over that same period inflation in dental costs was more like 133 percent, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

I needed some extensive and expensive dental work, and so I crossed borders seeking my own version of a better (in my case, more affordable) life, sometimes under the piercing gaze of the *federales*. I occasionally drove through U.S. border inspection, many dozens of miles from the border on Interstate 8, being ordered via signs to come to a stop while an agent glanced at my car without actually engaging me in any conversation or even making me turn off the vehicle.

Mexico could not have cared less about this border crossing back then; no one asked for your papers, *por favor*, as you strolled unimpeded from the parking lot on the U.S. side and entered Algodones from Winterhaven, California, at the Andrade border crossing. According to my Mexican

dentist, nearly 13,000 tourists enter there on an average winter day. Algodones is a dental and optical retail paradise; the three blocks I walked to my dental destination were all storefronts selling those services, along with some pharmacies.

Reentering the U.S., however, required standing in a line that was always 45–60 minutes long. At the end you had to show a bored customs officer a passport and answer questions about what you had bought in Mexico. Such answers, at least from a white dude then in his late 40s, were casually believed. If you were driving a car back, you were likely to have a black-suited police officer walk a big menacing looking grey-black dog by your car as it waited in the long line to return to the land of high dental prices.

I was a day tourist in Algodones to replace a three-unit dental bridge first installed about 10 years earlier by a Los Angeles dentist. It had become uncemented about four years prior. I had paid American dentists to recement it three times, and finally it just broke and could no longer be reattached.

Anywhere near where I live in California, getting a new one made and installed would have cost around \$5,000 then; I got out for \$1,300 in Algodones, a fee (paid in U.S. dollars cash) that covered three visits, a deep cleaning, and a root canal in addition to making and installing the bridge.

In terms of bedside manner and the general attitude toward patient-doctor relations, I had an experience unlike any I'd had with an American dentist. I was treated in Mexico as a customer, not a ward. If they suggested work more elaborate or pricey than I felt like spending—and they did—the conversation ended with my demurral.

I've had American dentists straight up refuse to do any ameliorative work short of the more thorough and expensive suggestion they repeated to me incessantly to try to break down my resistance while I was sitting prone in their chair. Now, my desires don't match those of all American patients, who according to some trend watchers in dentistry want more preventative, holistic, and membership-based work. I'm usually looking to solve an immediate issue that I physically perceive as a problem, and to



do it with as little rigamarole and cost as I can. It's great for me, and people like me, that the Algodones option is there. (Even prior to post-COVID inflation, 15 percent of Americans already said that cost kept them from dental care.)

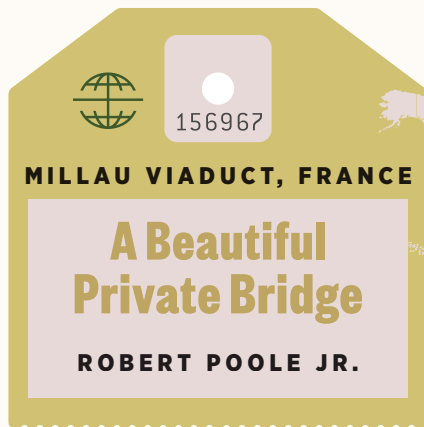
There was one aspect of the experience I didn't love. I'm a bit of a radiation hypochondriac, and they were very casual about shielding you with lead bibs when X-raying you; unless you insisted, they would not do it. While I cannot judge on a professional regulatory level, their general hygiene practices otherwise seemed to match those of a typical American dentist, and I certainly never felt any ill effects.

As far as my needs went, the work seems to be of long-term quality equal to the American work that cost more than four times as much. While I will never know if this is a fault of the Mexican work or an inevitability in any case, the teeth beneath the bridge six years down the line reached a state of rot that led to a gum and sinus infection, or so an American physician believed. So though the bridge was still solidly in place, I had it pulled to extract the husks of teeth underneath it. Nothing is forever. The very fact I had to have this work done in Mexico was because of the lack of permanence of the more than \$4,000 bridge I had put in about a decade prior.

Over all fields, Americans are spending around \$4 billion a year on foreign medical care, and that's likely to grow by about 13 percent a year over the rest of the decade. Dentists themselves are complaining these days that their costs are outgrowing their revenue, and profits and access to hygienists are both being strained. The range of conditions that make dentistry so much more affordable in Mexico include some elements that an American of any income level might not want to be completely enveloped in, such as far lower wages for professionals and their associates, and cheaper overhead from an atmosphere of less prosperity and demand.

But that's why it's good to be able to take advantage of the elements that are better on either side of the border. 📍

BRIAN DOHERTY is a senior editor at *Reason*. His only other travel to Mexico was to a local fireworks festival in which rockets and explosives were essentially shot into dense crowds in the town plaza. It still felt more tranquil than dental work.



FOR MY 80TH birthday, my wife Lou offered to plan a trip somewhere I'd always wanted to go. I chose the Millau Viaduct—Europe's highest and most wonderful bridge.

I used a photo of the viaduct on the cover of my 2018 book, *Rethinking America's Highways*, because it is a superb example of a major highway project as a business enterprise. There were no government subsidies involved in the 1,125-foot-high bridge, which spans the gorge valley of the River Tarn near Millau in southern France. It was financed and is operated and maintained based on toll revenue, exemplifying key ideas in the book.

But it's also more than that. Anti-privatizers like to portray privatized infrastructure as done on the cheap, potentially cutting corners in pursuit of a profit. I already knew that was false, based on a coffee table book about the Viaduct's design. Discovery Channel's coverage of the last stages of its construction declares that it "fits perfectly into the beautiful landscape." It also saves vehicles on the motorway from Paris to the Riviera nearly an hour, compared with driving down into the valley.

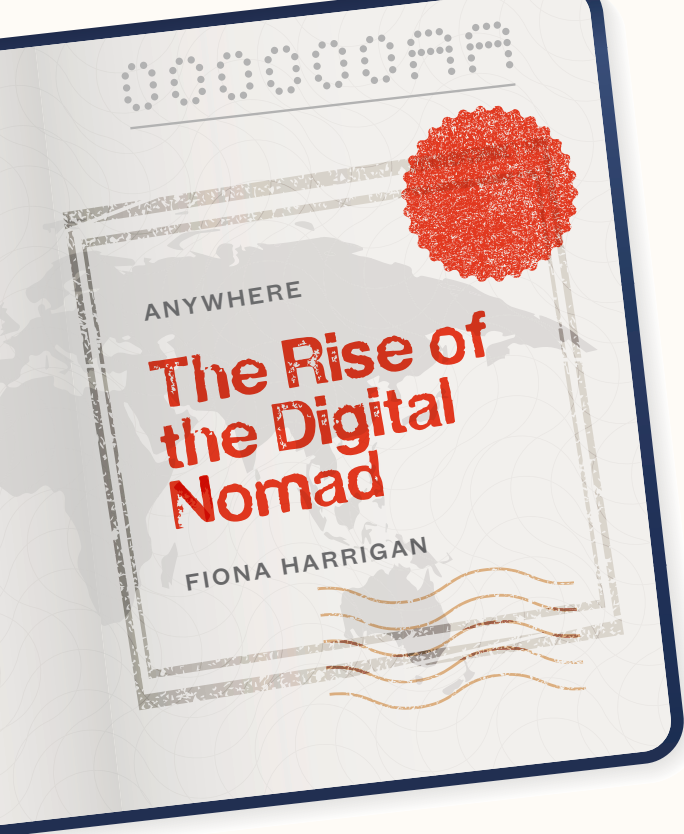
The Viaduct is not merely an engi-

neering marvel; it's breathtakingly beautiful. Seeing it up close, first from the floor of the valley and then driving across it, was overwhelming. Last year was the bridge's 20th anniversary, and the company is introducing electronic tolling at its toll plaza. 📍

ROBERT POOLE JR. was the founding CEO of Reason Foundation and is its director of transportation policy. He has lifetime platinum status as an American Airlines 2 million miler.



Photos: Lou Villadsen



"IT WAS A grueling three-hour commute to my Colorado office this morning. I left Telluride with a yellow day pack strapped to my back, and climbed north into the mountains through the golden glow of early-October aspens," wrote Steven K. Roberts in his 1988 book, *Computing Across America*.

Roberts made his way through the remnants of a mining camp before settling at the desk he'd cobbled out of industrial junk the day before. "My chair is an old dynamite crate; my computer a Hewlett-Packard Portable. I flipped open the display, fired up Microsoft WORD, and here I am at work—pattering into a mountainside text file," he wrote. "No, I'm not on vacation. I am a high-tech nomad—pedaling a recumbent bicycle around the United States with a portable computer while funding the journey with a sporadic outpouring of words."

A year and a half earlier, Roberts had decided to leave behind his stationary life in the suburbs of Columbus, Ohio. He built a bicycle that doubled as a mobile office—"an eight-foot-long machine bedecked with solar panels and enough state-of-the-art gizmology to start an engineering school"—and embarked on a yearslong 17,000-mile journey throughout the United States. Roberts worked as a computer consultant and freelance writer from the road, filing articles via pay phone.

Roberts' lifestyle was completely foreign in the 1980s. People were fascinated by the pioneering digital nomad, whose story landed him on *The Phil Donahue Show* and the front page of *The Wall Street Journal*. And it raised big questions about the future of work.

Before email, Zoom, and Slack became fixtures of everyday work life, the vast majority of the world's white-collar workers were bound to physical offices. Truly remote jobs were scarce. Slowly but surely, technological innovations allowed more people to work from an entirely different city or state than their coworkers. Then the COVID-19 pandemic showed that millions could work remotely *and* effectively, thanks to increasingly accessible and functional digital services. From 2019 to 2021, the number of Americans primarily working from home tripled from 9 million to 27.6 million, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

Also during the COVID-19 pandemic, countries around the world buttoned up their borders and told their citizens to stay home. As the pandemic receded and international travel restrictions began to lift, many newly remote workers were keen to live and work beyond their countries' borders—and foreign governments began to notice.

Looking to capitalize on an unprecedentedly mobile workforce, countries rushed to create visas tailored to so-called digital nomads. Since summer 2020, dozens have unveiled programs designed to entice remote employees to work from their soil. These programs grant legal status for longer than the typical tourist visa, which may be as short as 90 days. That longer term gives digital nomads the chance to build deeper connections in their host countries and have a wider range of experiences than a tourist might.

The benefits to remote workers are obvious, but countries benefit from digital nomad arrangements too. Some collect tax revenue from visa holders. Those that don't still reap the benefits of remote workers spending their foreign incomes and sharing their cultures and skills with neighbors.

But not every kind of visitor is welcome in digital nomad-friendly countries these days. Even as governments set up visa programs specifically to attract the world's mobile employees, they're cracking down on tourists and the amenities they enjoy. Digital nomads may soon find themselves in cities and countries that have heavily restricted their Airbnb markets or imposed daily fees on tourists.

Can these two approaches coexist? Even though countries don't treat digital nomads as tourists, they don't treat them as permanent residents either. Digital nomads are bound to be caught in the tourist battles. If legal digital nomad status comes with enough downsides, remote workers won't want it—and countries risk missing out on travelers who could help address tourism-related worries.

A NEW WORK LIFE

DIGITAL NOMADISM WAS already on the rise before COVID-era remote work freed more people to do their jobs from far-flung places.



The term *digital nomad* predates the pandemic by more than two decades. Tsugio Makimoto and David Manners' 1997 book *Digital Nomad* "predicted a future workforce of globe-trotting travellers logging in from abroad" thanks to "technological advances and humanity's will to explore," reports the BBC. The idea gained more traction in "the 2010s, largely among young people looking for an early-career escape from the decades of 9–5 office work they saw looming before them."

Estonia was the first country to unveil a formal digital nomad visa program after the pandemic began, doing so in summer 2020. Since then, dozens of countries have followed suit. More than 20 European nations offer digital nomad visas or other visas that are accessible to remote-working professionals. So do such expat favorites as Panama, Bali, Thailand, and Colombia. Tiny Caribbean island nations, bustling Asian economies, and some of the world's most populous countries have all joined in.

Most of those visas allow remote workers to live in a country for at least a year. Most require an application fee and proof of regular income or available funds. Jobs must generally be based outside of the visa-issuing country. Beyond those basics, there's quite a bit of variation. For example, Croatia, the Czech Republic, and Georgia allow applicants to bring their families. Digital

nomads who live in Panama can apply for tax residency and may be able to avoid paying taxes at home. (Unfortunately for Americans working abroad, the IRS views "worldwide income" as "subject to U.S. income tax, regardless of where you live.") Belize lets visa holders' kids attend the country's schools. Dominica offers the nomads duty-free goods and various discounts.

In 2023 the World Youth Student & Educational Travel Confederation projected that the global number of digital nomads would reach 40 million by the end of that year and 60 million by 2030. But it's hard to say how large this globe-trotting workforce is—is someone a digital nomad, or is he just working on vacation?—and not every digital nomad has a digital nomad visa. It's also difficult to quantify digital nomads' economic power; some put their global economic value in the hundreds of billions.

Digital nomad visas are a way for countries to regularize a quasi-illegal practice. Someone who wants to stay in a country on a medium- or long-term basis but isn't able or willing to get an immigrant visa or a work visa might decide to work under the radar. They might be there on a tourist visa and resort to border runs—i.e., quick trips abroad to restart the clock on a limited visa. Working in a local job on a tourist visa is illegal, and the law isn't settled about working in a home country-based job from

abroad. Border runs are risky and encourage shorter-term thinking: There's always a chance that someone will be denied reentry. Digital nomad visas can provide more certainty to federal authorities—and to nomads, who can build more permanent lives and deeper connections in their host countries.

While digital nomad visas allow foreigners to stay in a country for longer than a tourist visa would, that doesn't mean they have an easy path to permanent residency. Looking at digital nomad schemes in 65 jurisdictions, the migration consultancy firm Global Citizen Solutions found that “three grant direct access to citizenship for time spent as digital nomads”—Spain, the Netherlands, and the Czech Republic—“while 15 offer pathways to permanent residency, paving the way to eventual citizenship.”

Not exactly immigrants and not just visitors, digital nomads occupy a strange legal and social space. That has left them vulnerable to nearby battles.

THE WAR ON TOURISTS

“WE THINK TOURIST demand is unstoppable,” a Barcelona deputy mayor told CNN in March. “Everyone is welcome. But there's a limit. The only possibility is to control the supply.”

The number of tourists staying overnight in Barcelona just about tripled between 2000 and 2016, jumping from 3.1 million to 9 million. Over 15 million overnight tourists stayed in Barcelona in 2024. While tourism is an important part of Barcelona's

economy, many locals are concerned about how the growing number of visitors is changing their home.

The city made international headlines last summer when thousands of locals took to the streets chanting, “Tourists go home.” Things escalated when some protesters squirted water guns at tourists sitting at outdoor cafés. CNN called it “the water pistol shot that echoed around the world.”

That episode was a hyperliteral version of the tourists vs. locals debate, but it captured feelings that have been bubbling up in the world's hottest vacation destinations. In many of those places, governments are taking measures to crack down on what they see as excessive or undesirable tourism.

Amsterdam directed a “stay away” ad campaign toward British men ages 18–35 who searched terms like *stag party*, *cheap hotel*, or *pub crawl Amsterdam*. Dubrovnik, in Croatia, banned tourists from rolling their wheeled suitcases down cobblestone streets in some parts of the city. Travelers visiting Venice's historic center in spring and summer 2024 faced a daily entry fee of 5 euros. Bali, Indonesia, introduced a 150,000 rupiah (\$9.18) entry fee for international visitors last year, and local officials are reportedly considering raising it. Destinations such as Santorini, Greece, and Palma de Mallorca, Spain, have tightened regulations on daily cruise ship arrivals.

Critics of “overtourism” say it's about bad tourist behavior. It's also about sheer numbers—the idea that too many people are flocking to too small a space. Some borrow environmentalist language about “carrying capacity” and sustainability

when talking about overwhelmed destinations.

The world does have plenty of disrespectful tourists and packed city centers. But discussions of overtourism often minimize the economic symbiosis between tourists and locals (or even view it as a negative). The sheer-numbers approach paints all visitors with the same brush, and the government policies stemming from it are likewise broad.

Perhaps the most common and dis-



ruptive antitourism measure is banning short-term vacation rentals such as Airbnbs. The practice of converting long-term apartments into short-term rentals, which can be a lucrative option for property owners, is often blamed for raising housing costs and shutting residents out of desirable central neighborhoods. That's the argument behind New York City's de facto Airbnb ban, which has driven up hotel prices for travelers. Barcelona has stopped issuing short-term rental licenses and won't renew existing ones, aiming to phase out short-term rentals by 2029. (In May, the Spanish government demanded that Airbnb remove 66,000 rental listings from its site.) Vienna allows homeowners to rent out short-term units for only 90 days per year. Athens is in the middle of a one-year ban on new short-term rental registrations in several city districts.

Several digital nomad visas require applicants to secure a 12-month lease (Portugal's and Italy's, for example), but digital nomads nonetheless make heavy use of short-term rentals. A digital nomad might want to live in a country for a year but not in just one city—something that's easier through Airbnb than a traditional lease. Short-term rental services also allow visitors to vet units via reviews from abroad rather than risking signing a lease for a unit that may or may not match online descriptions.

Daily entry fees, sightseeing restrictions, and tighter Airbnb markets might seem like minor inconveniences, especially for digital nomads who are ostensibly living beyond day-to-day tourist experiences. But they help create the impression that visitors aren't traveling somewhere to experience a place but to impose upon it. And they eliminate some of the amenities that make the digital nomad lifestyle attractive in the first place.

IS THIS WAY OF WORKING ACTUALLY WORKING?

IT'S BEEN OVER 40 years since Roberts pioneered the high-tech nomadic lifestyle. The oldest postpandemic digital nomad visa programs turn 5 this year. They came at a unique time in both remote work technology and global mobility, offering an office abroad to anyone with wanderlust and a Wi-Fi connection. Or at least that was the promise. What's been the payoff?

By some estimates, it's been minimal. Nomads Embassy, a company that assists digital nomads, aggregates visa approval numbers from some of the top destinations for mobile workers. As of February 2023, Croatia had approved 680 digital nomad visas; Estonia had granted 535 by February 2024; and Malaysia had approved 1,506 by July 2024. In the first year of its digital nomad visa scheme, Portugal granted 2,600 visas. Thailand "has approved approximately 1,200 of its Destination Thailand Visas," reports Centuro Global, a company that helps businesses expand globally. According to Euronews, Spain "granted almost 7,500 digital nomad visas in the first 10 months following its introduction."

That's a tiny fraction of the world's digital nomads.

There are a few reasons for this. Many digital nomads can get by without visas; not everyone who wants to work remotely abroad wants to do so for a year. Complicated tax situations, scarce or expensive lodging, and doubts over the portability of benefits all might keep someone from making a long-term leap. Then there are all the bureaucratic hoops.

That raises the question: What are these visas *for*? Governments across the world are still trying to figure that out. They talk about "transforming how people in the world choose to work," enabling "a lifestyle that allows you to explore incredible places," and attracting "highly qualified" and "top" professionals in desired fields. But if hardly anybody is taking advantage of the visas, what are those talking points good for?

Countries hoping to lure digital nomads "will need to consider both what type of remote worker they wish to attract and how proactive they wish to be," explained the Migration Policy Institute (MPI) in a 2022 report. They might "develop a remote work strategy that integrates immigration priorities with economic development and inclusive growth objectives," it noted. Governments could also "create temporary-to-permanent pathways so that some remote workers on visitor and nomad visas can transition to more permanent residence."

"To truly reap the benefits of remote work, governments need to understand that this is about more than generating revenue from digital nomad visa programs," the report continued, "but also making a country an attractive environment for temporary visitors."

Visas haven't been necessary to legitimize the digital nomad lifestyle. But they could be an antidote to overtourism. Digital nomadism "offers a steady income stream throughout the year, reducing dependence on peak tourism seasons," wrote Cabo Verde's secretary of state for digital economy last year. "Digital nomads often stay longer and spend more locally than traditional tourists, creating a more sustainable economic model."

Making it easier for remote workers to settle abroad in the medium to long term means that more people will have access to a slower, more deliberate way of experiencing a foreign country. Not all will flock to metropolises like Lisbon and Barcelona. Some entrepreneurial digital nomads are setting up co-living spaces in European villages facing depopulation, coming to agreements "with the town hall, with local associations, with businesses, with the community itself," Juan Barbed, co-founder of the co-living company Rooral, told Euronews last year.

Countries have much to gain by introducing desirable digital nomad visas or improving existing ones. Digital nomads will never outnumber tourists, but they will suffer if they become collateral damage in a war on tourism. 📍

FIONA HARRIGAN is a deputy managing editor at *Reason*. She once got food poisoning by unwittingly eating brains in Turkey.



AS THE TRUMP administration began snatching college students, detaining legal European tourists, denying entry to British crust-punks, rejecting transgender passports, deporting tattooed Salvadorans, insulting the sovereignty of Canadians, and floating plans to ban visitors from 43 countries, the domestic travel and tourism industry braced itself for bad news.

"Historical data underscores that trade and geopolitical tensions influence travel demand," warned the research firm Tourism Economics in late February. The group had previously estimated that inbound visits to the U.S. in 2025 would rise 8.8 percent over last year; now it was forecasting a 5.1 percent drop. What's more, inbound travel *spending* this year "could fall by 12.3 [percent], amounting to a \$22 billion annual loss."

Sure enough, the year-over-year foreign visitor numbers in March were brutal. Down a jaw-dropping 18.4 percent, they were led by a sharp drop-off from America's No. 1 supplier: Canada.

Then came President Donald Trump's 11th week in office. On April 2, the populist president capped a lifelong enthusiasm for tariffs ("the most beautiful word in the dictionary," he has said on multiple occasions) by announcing import taxes that averaged 22 percent, the largest ratchet in U.S. history.

The move came as a triple whammy to America's globe-leading \$200 billion travel and tourism industry. First, as the luxury travel agent Kate Sullivan told *TravelPulse*, "the cost of hard goods will increase for hotels, airlines, and other industry sectors, who will likely need to increase rates and fares to cover the increases." Second, the disruptions to the global trading system will hit especially hard some of the fastest-growing sources of U.S. visitation—China, India, and Japan. And finally, the concomitant souring of overseas public opinion, particularly in regions (Scandinavia, Southeast Asia, North America) singled out for criticism by the Trump administration, is already depressing numbers. "The U.S. is not perceived as a welcoming

destination," travel agency owner Marco Jahn told the Associated Press after the tariffs were announced.

Americans whose incomes are *not* tethered to the enthusiasms of overseas visitors may have the impression that such industry turmoil will leave their own travel plans unscathed. Alas, they are mistaken.

For starters, domestic hoteliers are heavily reliant on imports for furniture, especially from high-tariffed China and Vietnam. Trump's own hotels are filled with foreign-made dishware, chandeliers, and even American flags.

Making goods more expensive immediately reduces Americans' discretionary spending, which is the bucket from which travel budgets are drawn. Recessions decrease vacations, sometimes sharply; after Trump's tariffs, most of the major economic forecasting agencies (Moody's, J.P. Morgan, Goldman Sachs, Morningstar) jacked up their expectations for an economic downturn. Consumer confidence also tracks closely with travel planning; the former was at a four-year low even before "Liberation Day" tariffs. Further losses in the stock market—as of press time, the Dow Jones Industrial Average has dropped 3 percent since Inauguration Day—would also depress demand.

It gets worse for the American traveler. Over the decades, the dollar has been propped up by Washington's leadership role in global tariff reduction; now that those tables have been turned, the greenback will be less desirable as the world's backstop currency, placing downward pressure on its value (particularly if America's heretofore world-beating economy begins to sputter). The dollar in Trump's first four months slid 7 percent against the euro.

American bookings to the now-more-expensive overseas were already down 13 percent this year before Trump's tariffs. It's not just cost: A mid-March *Travel Weekly* survey of 400 agents found that 59 percent had heard customer concern about anti-American sentiment abroad, with 22 percent reporting resultant cancellations. A YouGov poll in early March showed that not a single European country surveyed had a net positive view of the U.S., with favorability plummeting between 6 and 28 percentage points over the previous quarter. "In Great Britain, Denmark, Sweden, Spain and Italy, these are the lowest figures... since we began tracking this question," the pollster wrote.

So Americans will be traveling domestically, right? Not so fast. Starting on May 7, a whole 17 years after it was originally supposed to happen, Americans are no longer allowed to board a commercial flight unless using a REAL ID. Except Secretary of Homeland Security Kristi Noem said, "If it's not compliant, they may be diverted to a different line, have an extra step, but people will be allowed to fly." As of April, the Transportation Security Administration was reporting that 19 percent of current travelers were passing through checkpoints without Real ID-compliant documents.



That's one "papers, please" hassle; another has the potential to affect citizens who don't even board a plane. Amid his Day 1 blizzard of executive orders, Trump signed the ominous-sounding Protecting the American People Against Invasion executive order, requiring foreigners of all nationalities to register with and get fingerprinted by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) within 30 days of being in the country, unless they are exempted by a preexisting visa. Aimed at (and interpreted as) cracking down on resident illegal aliens, the order also affects the millions of Canadians who until now have been allowed to travel visa-free into the U.S. for up to six months.

What does this have to do with U.S. citizens? Enforcement. As of April 11, according to the DHS' final rule, "An alien's willful failure or refusal to apply to register or to be fingerprinted is punishable by a fine of up to \$5,000 or imprisonment for up to six months, or both." Registered aliens "must at all times carry and have in their personal possession any certificate of alien registration or alien registration receipt card," or else face a \$5,000 fine or 30 days in jail. How does law enforcement determine that a human who either does not have or refuses to show identification is actually an alien? This will surely be tested in court.

Not being fully free to move about the country is, regrettably, a condition that most Americans have already been living with, in the form of Immigration and Customs Enforcement roadside checkpoints within 100 miles of international borders (a zone that covers two-thirds of the population). And for 99 percent of us, coughing up documentation we were already carrying is a low-impact inconvenience.

But millions of Americans this year will still travel in foreign lands, where they are likely to run into an iron rule of international relations: What we do to foreigners, foreigners are eventually going to do to us. Right now, U.S. passport holders can visit most of the world's countries without a visa or with a visa on arrival for up to 90 days. If the DHS gets into the habit of detaining and fingerprinting Europeans after their 30th day of vacation, you can expect that liberalism to constrict.

There is precedent. In 2009, as a result of the 9/11 terror attacks, the U.S. created the Electronic System for Travel Authorization, requiring extra fees, wait times, probing questions, and machine-readable passports of visitors even from the now-43 countries in the Visa Waiver Program. The European Union responded with the European Travel Information and Authorization System, which would have been instituted years ago had Eurocrats developed technological competence in the meantime. (Current D-Day estimates are for the end of 2026.)

The era of permissionless and comparatively anonymous travel is over. Trade wars are making international exchange more expensive and less fun. And even those of us who choose America and stay off planes may find ourselves asked to prove our legal status to a man with a gun. The past was another country indeed, one that many of us wish we could still visit. [t](#)

MATT WELCH is editor at large at *Reason*. He once hopped a wall in Bratislava to take a shortcut through a park at night, only to be detained several hours by police for trespassing at the Slovak presidential palace.



signed in 1757. The agreement, which could be viewed as an attempt to reduce conflict by establishing something like property rights, aimed to prevent interdenominational violence, which nevertheless occasionally breaks out between clerics with contradictory views of the prerogatives assigned to each group.

Near the church's entrance is a conspicuous symbol of that uneasy arrangement: a three-century-old wooden ladder that connects a ledge to an upper-level window. Although that section of the building is assigned to the Armenian Apostolic Church, no one is allowed to mess with the "immovable ladder," lest all hell break loose.

Old as they are, the clashes that inspired the status quo pact are recent by local standards. The original church, completed in 335 C.E. under Constantine the Great, replaced a pagan temple that Hadrian had built over a Jewish burial ground. The church was destroyed in 1009 at the order of Fatimid ruler al-Hakim bi-Amr Allah and rebuilt by Byzantine emperors in the mid-11th century.

All of that amounts to a small but representative slice of Jerusalem's 5,000-year history, which features a long succession of powers contending for control of the same territory, including Canaanites, Egyptians, Israelites, Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, Greeks, Romans, Byzantines, various Arab caliphates, Crusaders, Mamluks, Ottomans, and a fading British Empire. The City of Peace has been a locus of conflict for a very long time—a story that continues to this day.

The status of Jerusalem, which was divided between Israel and Jordan until the Six-Day War of 1967, has always been the trickiest issue for negotiators who imagine a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. While both sides claim history is on their side, a longer view reveals a series of conquests and legal regimes that makes the question of just or rightful ownership difficult to resolve in any definitive

way. For visitors to Jerusalem, the upside of that complicated history is that it left behind traces of all those civilizations, piled one atop another.

You can get a sense of that history at the Israel Museum (in West Jerusalem, near the Knesset) or the Rockefeller Archaeological



Museum (in East Jerusalem, near Herod's Gate), both of which are well worth a visit. But there is no substitute for walking around the city, which is endlessly fascinating.

The first settlement in the area dates to 3000 BCE. It was located near the Gihon Spring in the Kidron Valley, which is connected to the Pool of Siloam in the City of David by a 1,750-foot tunnel. The Hebrew Bible describes the tunnel as the work of Hezekiah, the Judean king whose reign ended around 687 BCE. You can still walk or wade (depending on the weather) through that tunnel, although you may have to crouch a bit to avoid bumping your head.

Nomenclature in and around the Old City can be confusing. The Tomb of Absalom, for instance, has nothing to do with Absalom, and the Tower of David has nothing to do with King David, except that he reportedly was a musician and the site that bears his name is a memorable setting for outdoor concerts. The Jerusalem Light Festival, held in June each year, is another striking contrast of old and new, featuring illuminated displays and projections against ancient walls and buildings.

The Western Wall, the main Old City attraction for observant Jews, is a bit of a puzzle. Although it was the first section of the retaining wall around the Temple Mount that became accessible to Jewish worshippers after the 1967 war, it is not obviously holier than any of the subsequently exposed bits. To the left are tunnels along the retaining wall, where a guided tour sheds light on the question of how low-tech builders managed to cut, transport, and place massive blocks of Jerusalem stone weighing anywhere from two to 600 tons. To the right is the Ophel Archeological Park, where you



THE CHURCH OF the Holy Sepulchre, traditionally identified as the site of Jesus Christ's crucifixion and resurrection, is shared by half a dozen denominations under a baroque "status quo" agreement





can walk on a paved street from the Second Temple period and see the remnant of an overpass above the street, along with ritual baths from the same period and Byzantine homes with mosaic floors.

There is a lot more to see in the Old City, including the Arab Souk and the Temple Mount itself, which is now the site of the Dome of the Rock and Al-Aqsa Mosque, distinctive features of the Jerusalem skyline. You can get a pretty good overview by walking on the northern and southern ramparts of the Old City. The northern walk runs from the Jaffa Gate to the Lions' Gate, while the southern walk begins at the Tower of David and ends between the Zion Gate and the Dung Gate—the counterintuitive name for the entrance closest to the Western Wall.

When I lived in Jerusalem several years ago, I enjoyed the free walking tours that used to leave from City Hall on Saturdays, which frequently ventured beyond the usual points of interest. The subjects included leper asylums, Mamluk architecture, 19th century accommodations for Russian Orthodox pilgrims, and the Templar origins of the German Colony neighborhood. There

is always more to learn about the city, often in places you thought were familiar.

Another relatively obscure attraction will be of special interest to libertarians. Although the Ministry of Finance's Tax Museum on Agripas Street tries to put a positive spin on the government's forcible extraction of revenue, the exhibits reflect centuries of resistance to such demands.

In addition to all the historical and religious sites, Jerusalem is a modern city of about 1 million people, more than twice the population of Tel Aviv-Yafo. There is no beach, but the weather is less humid and more pleasant than in cities along the Mediterranean, with cool breezes to relieve the summer heat. And while Tel Aviv fans may not be impressed by Jerusalem's nightlife, it has come a long way in the last few decades.

The Machane Yehuda market area, which features a plethora of shops selling everything from baked goods and fresh produce to luggage and hardware, used to shut down at night. But now it comes alive with music and crowds drawn by a range of bars and restaurants. Other lively spots include the Ben Yehuda pedestrian mall, the Mamilla mall (northwest of the Jaffa Gate, near the intersection of King David, King Solomon, and Agron streets), and Tachana Rishona, an outdoor mall on the site of an old train station at the end of Emek Refaim Street.

Like Jerusalem's nightlife, Israeli beer, wine, and liquor have undergone a renaissance. Budweiser-like lagers have been joined by a wide range of styles made by craft brewers across the country, vintners in several distinct regions produce highly rated wines, and microdistillers make better-than-passable gins and whiskies.

For whiskey in Jerusalem, my favorite spot is the cozy Glen Whisk(e)y Bar, which has an impressive selection. The owner of that place also operates the Rabbit Hole, a whimsically decorated gin bar on Yanai Street, and Biratenu, a beer bar on Hillel Street. The better cocktail bars include Zuta, tucked in the back of a restaurant on King David Street called 1868, and the Gatsby Cocktail Room, a speakeasy-style joint on Hillel Street. The latter is easy to miss if you don't know it's there—which is true of many things that are worth exploring in Jerusalem.

All of that sounds cool, you may be thinking, but is it worth the risk of dying in a terrorist attack? Like the danger of mass shootings in the United States, that risk has always been much lower than you might surmise from news reports, and that remained true even after Israel's latest war with Hamas began in October 2023.

The Israel Security Agency has reported four civilian deaths from terrorism in Jerusalem since then, all of which occurred during the same incident on November 30, 2023. Israeli defense systems have been remarkably effective at neutralizing rocket and missile attacks, with no deaths reported in Jerusalem. And overall, crime rates in Israel are much lower than crime rates in the United States. Jerusalem looks quite safe compared to Dallas, where I live, for example.

In fact, given the ongoing territorial disputes, life in Jerusalem is remarkably peaceful. For the most part, people of different faiths, cultures, and ethnic backgrounds manage to coexist, their tensions lubricated by commerce, the need to accomplish quotidian tasks, and a mutual interest in avoiding open conflict. That situation is far from ideal. But as the clerics at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre could tell you, it is preferable to the alternative. [▶](#)

Senior Editor JACOB SULLUM, who much enjoyed *Reason's* Caribbean and Alaska cruises, thinks a Mediterranean junket would be well worth the investment.





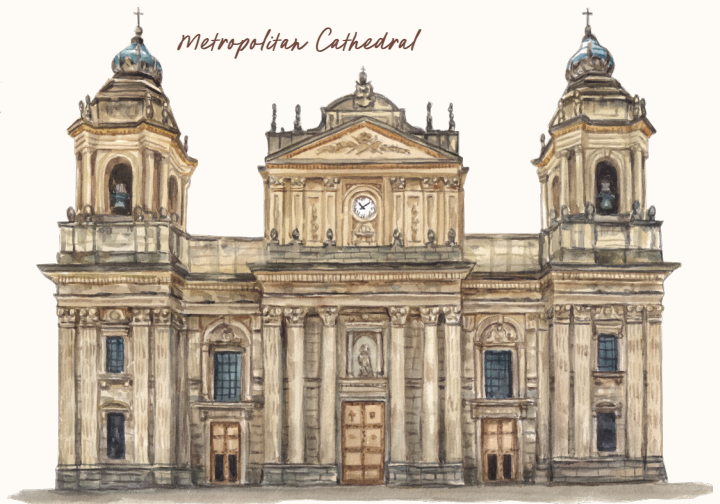
5-Day
Historical
Getaway in
Guatemala

THE NEARLY FREE MARKETS OF GUATEMALA

KATARINA HALL

GUA

GUATEMALA



Metropolitan Cathedral

DAY 1

FLIGHT TO GUATEMALA CITY

When you arrive, head to your hotel and drop off your luggage before exploring the city.

Stay in Guatemala City for three nights.

Standard hotel: La Inmaculada Hotel
Upscale hotel: Hyatt Centric

VISIT THE HISTORIC CENTER

Start your trip in Zone 1, the heart of Guatemala City. Wander through the central square, surrounded by such iconic landmarks as the **Metropolitan Cathedral** (Catedral Primada Metropolitana de Santiago), a blend of baroque and neoclassical architecture, and the **National Palace of Culture**, once the seat of government and now a museum.

Don't miss the **Central Market**, where you can find everything from textiles and handicrafts to fresh produce and street food.



Central market

EVERYONE KNOWS ABOUT the McDonald's Happy Meal—a global icon, with its bright box, its golden arches, and a toy that keeps kids entertained long after the fries are gone. What most don't know is this worldwide sensation was born in Guatemala, a small Central American country more often associated with coffee, bananas, and (unfortunately) crime.

In the mid-1970s, Yolanda Fernández de Cofiño, who founded the first McDonald's in Guatemala, noticed that kids struggled to finish their meals. She created "Ronald's Menu," a kid-friendly meal that included a smaller hamburger, a little batch of fries, a drink, a sundae, and a toy she picked up from local markets. Her idea caught the attention of McDonald's corporate offices,

and by 1979 it had evolved into the Happy Meal we know today.

It's remarkable that a product so central to McDonald's global empire had its beginnings in Guatemala. But it's not surprising. Beneath the headlines of corruption, violence, and poverty, the country pulses with entrepreneurial energy.

Walk through downtown Guatemala City, and you'll feel it. Vendors line the sidewalks, selling everything from *shucos* (Guatemalan hot dogs) to handcrafted jewelry—often just steps away from sleek shopping centers filled with local luxury brands. This is a country where people don't wait for permission or perfect conditions. They improvise, adapt, and build.

Visitors can see this spirit in action at



El Portalito

Grab a drink at **El Portalito**, one of the city's oldest bars, known for its live marimba music. For dinner, head to La Cocina de la Señora Pu, a cozy spot that recreates traditional Guatemalan flavors.

Optional activity: Visit Guatemala's 100th McDonald's—known as "**Mc100**"—in Mixco's Zone 7. The flagship location features a distinctive architectural design as well as the largest McPlay area in Central America.



places like the Mercado Central (the central market), where generations of merchants have set up shop in the city's historic center, or the Mercado de Artesanías La Aurora (the handcrafts market), where artisans from across the country sell handwoven textiles, ceramics, and leather goods. It's also alive in Cuatro Grados Norte, a once-neglected neighborhood now revived by artists, restauraners, and small businesses. And on Sundays, the city's Pasos y Pedales program transforms two of its main boulevards into lively pedestrian zones, buzzing with cyclists, food carts, and families browsing handmade goods.

"About 45 percent of adults are involved in some kind of entrepreneurial activity," explains David Casasola, director of research

for the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) at Universidad Francisco Marroquín (UFM). In 2023, Guatemala ranked second out of 45 countries participating in GEM's survey—the world's most comprehensive study on entrepreneurship, which includes economies from every region and income level—for the highest share of adults owning and managing a recently created business. It also held the third highest rate of female entrepreneurship.

This is partly shaped by necessity. Around 90 percent of Guatemalan entrepreneurs start their own businesses because formal job opportunities are scarce and strict labor regulations make it difficult to enter the formal work force, according to GEM.

"Guatemala has a serious problem gen-

erating employment opportunities," Casasola explains. "Many people can't access the job market because, first, it's a highly regulated market. The way hiring works is very strict....Second, for a formal job to be worthwhile to an employer, the worker needs a level of productivity that is often out of reach—mainly because of low-quality education, limited technical training, and industries that still lack the kind of structure needed to generate significant value."

Labor laws designed to protect workers—such as rigid termination rules, mandatory bonuses, and restrictions on part-time or freelance work—often end up discouraging hiring altogether. Starting a formal business isn't easy either, thanks to layers of bureaucracy and paperwork. Add

DAY 2

DIVE INTO MAYAN HERITAGE

Explore Guatemala's historical roots at two of the country's best museums: **Museo Popol Vuh**, home to one of the world's most important collections of Mayan art, and the **Ixchel Museum of Indigenous Textiles and Clothing**, which showcases Guatemala's textile traditions. Both museums are located on the **Universidad Francisco Marroquín campus**, so take some time to enjoy the beautiful grounds and modern architecture.



Museo Popol Vuh

Shucos



For lunch or dinner, head to Zone 4, the city's creative district. It's packed with great dining options. A local favorite: **Mercado 24**, known for its creative take on Guatemalan ingredients.

Optional activities: Get **shucos** from a street vendor in Zone 4. No need to get out of your car—they'll come to you!



Lake Atitlán

rampant corruption, poor infrastructure, limited access to credit, and legal uncertainty, and it becomes clear why opportunity is often stifled.

Ironically, those very obstacles have pushed many into entrepreneurship. Faced with endless red tape in the formal markets, many Guatemalans turn to informal ventures. About 70.6 percent of early-stage ventures operate without registration, according to GEM. Those that survive and adapt to the challenging environment are the ones that eventually formalize. But whether formal or informal, a business is still a business—and the value these ventures add to society, from creating jobs to fostering innovation, is undeniable.

"This is a developing country burdened by countless obstacles," says Ramón Parellada, a board member of the Center for Economic and Social Studies (CEES). "People need more freedom to pursue entrepreneurship."

CEES was founded in 1959 by the entrepreneur and economist Manuel Ayau and others eager to understand why Guatemala was so poor. Their conclusion: economic barriers—not a lack of talent or effort—were holding the country back.

In 1971, Ayau went on to found UFM, a libertarian university dedicated to promoting free markets, individual liberty, and the rule of law. "The idea of creating a university that stood out from the rest wasn't

driven by an interest in teaching just any subject—those can be taught anywhere," Parellada explains. "Instead, the focus was on teaching the principles that govern a society of free and responsible individuals."

At UFM, my alma mater, "Academic freedom led to other kinds of freedom," as George Gilder put it in *Life After Google*. Its graduates have been central to key economic reforms. One of the most notable examples took place in 1996, when a group of alumni helped privatize Guatemala's dysfunctional state-run phone system. Within a few years, Guatemala became one of the best-connected countries in Central America. Today, call centers are booming. "Sometimes thoughts become things," Alfredo

DAY 3

DAY TRIP TO ANTIGUA

Just an hour from the capital, **Antigua** is a UNESCO World Heritage Site famous for its cobblestone streets, pastel-colored colonial buildings, and unbeatable volcano views.

Walk through the **Santa Catalina Arch**, hike up to **Cerro de la Cruz**, and explore the city's many shops and markets. Grab lunch at **Tartines** for panoramic views of the cathedral from the rooftop. Enjoy a cocktail at **Ulew**, a speakeasy known for inventive drinks.



DAY 4

CONNECT WITH NATURE

Go on an adventure and hike one of Guatemala's volcanoes: **Pacaya Volcano** is a popular half-day hike, with a chance to witness volcanic activity and even roast marshmallows over geothermal vents. For a more challenging experience, try **Acatenango**, an overnight trek with incredible sunrise views of the erupting **Fuego Volcano** next door.

Optional activities: Fly to **Tikal in the Petén region** to visit the **Mayan ruins** in the jungle; visit **Lake Atitlán**, a highland lake surrounded by volcanoes and dotted with picturesque traditional villages.

DAY 5

FLIGHT HOME

Make a list of the things you didn't have time to see for your next visit!

Guzmán, who played a key role in the privatization effort, told *Reason* in 2011.

Guided by CEES' motto "for individual freedom to produce, consume, exchange, and serve without coercion of privileges," other key reforms have followed. These include deregulating foreign currency, allowing Guatemalans to conduct business in any currency, and securing greater autonomy for universities by separating them from state control. These changes have helped start the process of dismantling the barriers that keep so many Guatemalans in poverty.

One of UFM's current initiatives is the Kirzner Center for Entrepreneurship, named after the economist Israel Kirzner.

His concept of "entrepreneurial discovery" describes how entrepreneurs identify and solve unmet needs, creating value in the process. The center applies this framework by helping Guatemalans turn ideas into businesses.

UFM has also pioneered a degree in entrepreneurship, encouraging students not just to build businesses, but to critically assess the policies that shape their success or failure. The goal isn't just profit; it's long-term, widespread prosperity.

Guatemala is an extraordinary country: home to ancient Mayan pyramids hidden in jungles, active volcanoes towering over vibrant cities, and 23 officially recognized languages. But perhaps its greatest

untapped treasure is its entrepreneurial energy.

Guatemala faces serious structural challenges, many of them imposed by the state. But its people continue to find workarounds through informal markets and voluntary exchange. Whether it's inventing the Happy Meal or deregulating entire industries, Guatemalans aren't waiting for permission. They're building prosperity in spite of the system, not because of it. 🇬🇹

KATARINA HALL is a staff editor at *Reason*. She did her bachelorette party in Cairo because Las Vegas felt too predictable.



QATAR AIRWAYS AL SAFWA FIRST CLASS LOUNGE, DOHA, QATAR

12:00 THE RISE—AND DEMISE?—OF FREQUENT FLYER MILES **GARY LEFF**

I JOINED MY first frequent flyer program—American AAdvantage—before a trip to Australia in 1991. Sadly, I let those miles expire. Five years later I was out of college, flying regularly for work, and reading all the materials airlines used to send in the mail. Poring over the terms and conditions, I saw where I could earn 5,000 MileagePlus miles for buying four sodas in four different restaurants. I picked up 40,000 British Airways miles for getting someone at a Jaguar dealership to fill out a form saying my family and I had test driven a car. I went to a Bosley hair loss consultation for 10,000 Delta SkyMiles (I had a lot more hair back then). I bought Emmi cheese and enough magazine subscriptions to fly on the Concorde.

Growing up, I used to fly back and forth between my home in New York and where my dad lived in California. I would look at the first-class cabin longingly, thinking I would never be able to afford to sit there (and that I couldn't fathom spending so much even if I had the means). Yet by earning as many miles as possible and being strategic deploying them, I've flown all around the world in business and first class many times over, enough times to have my favorite airports and lounges.

My favorite world airport is Singapore's Changi Airport, for its food, butterfly garden, and the world's largest indoor waterfall. In the United States, it's Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport, especially for its location. It's reasonably easy to get to, get through, and get out of—it does the thing that an airport is supposed to do, which is help you get somewhere quickly. It also has my favorite lounge in the country, Capital One Landing, which is basically a José Andrés tapas restaurant rather than a traditional lounge. While the best lounge in the world is certainly Air France's La Première lounge in Paris (the Alain Ducasse restaurant, spa, and car transfers across the tarmac



between lounge and plane are amazing), my favorite is the Qatar Airways Al Safwa First Class Lounge in Doha, for its minimalist luxury, 30–40 foot ceilings, and the inspiration it draws from the nearby Museum of Islamic Art. It even showcases pieces on loan from the museum.

But even the best airports and lounges are merely waypoints to the real destination. By my count, I've traveled to a majority of the world's countries (including some like the Maldives half a dozen times and Australia perhaps 20 times)—much of it made possible by airline miles.

THANK DEREGULATION FOR AIRLINE MILES

YOU COULDN'T HAVE frequent flyer miles before deregulation. The federal government set domestic airfares, and the airline industry received antitrust immunity to fix the prices of international trips. Discounts, such as frequent flyer miles, were largely illegal until the Airline Deregulation Act of 1978.

One exception was Southwest Airlines, which in those days flew only within the state of Texas and therefore wasn't subject to those rules. In 1972, it launched the "Southwest Sweethearts Club," which rewarded secretaries with free travel for booking their bosses on Southwest. And when the Civil Aeronautics Board began allowing "experiments in price competition" two years before the Airline Deregulation Act, which meant airlines could undercut Southwest's pricing, the Dallas-based carrier introduced a two-tiered pricing structure: Buy the \$13 discount fare, or pay \$26 on your company's dime and take home a free fifth of alcohol. Southwest was the largest liquor distributor in the state of Texas in 1977.

Deregulation was a pro-consumer cause championed by the likes of Ralph Nader and pursued in Congress by Sen. Ted Kennedy (D–Mass.). Kennedy hired Harvard law professor Stephen Breyer, later a Supreme Court justice, as his staff director for the Judiciary Committee's Subcommittee on Administrative Practice and Procedure, which took the reins on the issue.

The airline industry had been born in government subsidy. The most powerful force shaping the early industry was the Postal Service, which handed out contracts to carry the mail, dictating which airline would succeed on a route. President Her-

bert Hoover's postmaster general awarded contracts at a "spoils conference" in which the major carriers divided up routes and excluded competition.

When this came out, President Franklin Roosevelt's administration canceled the contracts and assigned the Army Air Corps to carry the mail. Poorly equipped for the job, 13 airmen were killed within days. Mail was reassigned to private carriers. United Aircraft and Transport was broken up, producing the companies that became Boeing, United Airlines, Pratt & Whitney, and more. The changes culminated in the Civil Aeronautics Act of 1938, which limited competition and restricted entry into the industry.

The government set fares to ensure airline profitability, and it decided who could fly where. With high prices, planes often had empty seats. Business travel was common and leisure travel less so. Adjusting for inflation, airfares (including airline fees) have fallen around 50 percent since the government stopped setting prices.

Airlines wanted to compete for business but weren't allowed to on the basis of price. That's why service and food became so robust onboard. At one Civil Aeronautics Board hearing, there was discussion over the potential need to regulate the thickness of airline sandwiches, because that was one way airlines competed for passenger business.

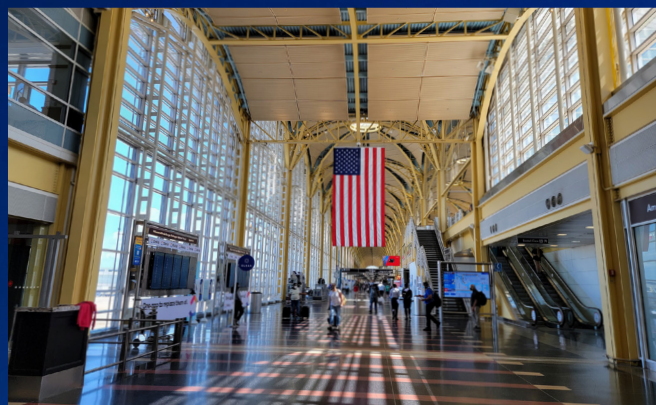
Newly permitted to entice customers by the Airline Deregulation Act, airlines needed to figure out how to create brand loyalty for what is essentially a commodity product: a seat that transports people between two cities. The frequency program was intended to get customers to stick with an airline even when their schedule might be a little less convenient or their price a little bit higher.

A PRIVATE FIAT CURRENCY—AND A TEMPTATION TO INFLATE

NOW WE HAVE a private currency—like bitcoin!—but even more anarchist in that there's code but it doesn't serve as law.

Airline miles are issued by private companies. They can be redeemed for flights, upgrades, car rentals, hotels, merchandise, and more. Miles can be earned not just for travel with the airline, but also for online shopping, gas station fill-ups, credit card spending, real estate transactions, and much else. Since consumers value the currency, airlines are able to sell it to third parties to reward their own customers. Thus, the larger airline frequent flyer programs have their own unregulated currencies that are useful not only within their own business but across businesses, albeit in a mostly closed and controlled ecosystem. They can cancel your miles if you sell them or if you use them in a way they forbid.

While some loyalty programs have devalued their points because the programs were set up too generously and nobody



realized it before it was too late (the original IHG Hotels' Priority Club is an example), mostly frequent flyer miles become consistently less valuable for much simpler monetarist reasons.

Taking the simplest formulation of $mv=pq$, where the number of miles and speed at which consumers want to redeem them has to equal the quantity of available seats times the redemption price. As when the Federal Reserve expands the money supply faster than the economy grows, you get airline loyalty price inflation—it's either that or shortages, where the airline just has to tell customers "no" when they want to redeem their miles.



IN WALKS A POLITICIAN WITH AN AGENDA

SEN. DICK DURBIN (D-Ill.) has been going after frequent flyer programs. If he can delegitimize them, he's got a better argument against opponents of his attempts to regulate credit card swipe fees if they respond "But my miles!" (A majority of frequent flyer miles are earned through airline co-brand credit cards.)

Durbin, along with Sen. Roger Marshall (R-Kan.), seeks to limit the amount that merchant processing networks such as Visa and Mastercard charge to retail businesses. Rather than imposing a direct price cap, their current Credit Card Competition Act would require banks to offer merchants a choice between at least two unaffiliated networks when processing credit card transactions. This means a Visa-branded card issued by a bank could no longer exclusively route transactions through Visa's network alone; it would have to provide at least one alternative network to process the payment.

Banks pay airlines for miles, and they rebate a portion (sometimes all) of the credit card swipe fees to consumers to encourage transactions on their product. That helps them generate charge volume and attract consumer lending. Customers who pay their bill in full each month come out the best: They get the rebate without giving the bank interest on revolving balances. Lower card swipe fees mean less valuable rewards.

Durbin wants to redistribute money from banks and consumers to retailers, and consumers don't want to give up their miles. So, Durbin wants to say that those miles aren't actually such a great deal for consumers after all. His efforts culminated, near the end of Joe Biden's presidency, in a regulatory probe into the inner workings of loyalty programs. It's not clear yet where that effort will go under President Donald Trump.

Loyalty programs have made themselves an easy target.

Ever since the introduction of the first airline mileage-earning credit card, the Continental OnePass TravelBank MasterCard from Marine Midland Bank, we've had too many miles chasing too few seats and airlines consistently devaluing those already-earned miles.

Today, credit cards are a big business for the airlines. In 2024, Delta Air Lines reported \$7.4 billion in revenue from its partnership with American Express. United and American Airlines have programs that are almost as lucrative. And while the comparison isn't exactly apples to apples, those three have reported margins on the revenue of anywhere from 39 percent to 53 percent. Selling miles to banks has represented the entire profit at American Airlines, suggesting that they otherwise lose money moving passengers from one place to another on their planes.

When those three largest U.S. airlines each raised between \$6.5 billion and \$10 billion against the future revenue streams of their frequent flyer programs during the pandemic (borrowing against the money they'd get selling miles to banks), the securitization documents made the point that investors could be confident in getting their loaned U.S. dollars back *since they could always devalue the loyalty currency*. Transaction revenue gets earmarked for servicing the notes prior to any other use, the bulk of revenue must be directed to debt service prior to any other use, and no covenant protects members or their miles. Airlines, and their debt-holders, control the printing press and the redemptions.

SO LONG, COMMON LAW

DELTA ONCE RAN a Super Bowl ad saying its miles would never expire. The company then started expiring its miles. It later reversed this decision, declaring this was the "right thing to do," but it didn't reimburse customers whose miles they had taken away in years prior to this change.

Programs frequently change their rules and don't even tell customers they've done so. Members are expected to keep up with dense rules on a program's website, and many airlines don't provide a summary of what's changing. Fortunately, there are third-party tools that can track website changes. But when that's what's expected of customers, it's no wonder that consumers get frustrated.

When the Airline Deregulation Act allowed airlines to set their own schedules and prices, it also told the states that they couldn't have their own regulations in this area. Unfortunately, the Supreme Court decided in *Northwest v. Ginsberg* that this meant consumers can't sue over frequent flyer programs using common law claims such as duty of good faith and fair dealing, reasoning that such common law principles amounted to state regulation. As a result, frequent flyer programs are largely shielded from consumer lawsuits unless airlines actually violate the terms of their stated program rules.

The only other avenue of redress left was the Department of Transportation, whose inspector general concluded during the Obama administration that complaints about frequent flyer programs have generally been ignored.

THEY HOLD THE CARDS, BUT WE STILL WIN

THE VOLUME OF air travel has grown markedly, and airline tickets have become much more affordable, as a consequence of deregulation. Yet airlines have had to figure out how to compete with each other when the scope of allowable differentiation in the travel experience is limited.

Airports are usually owned by governments in the United States. Security screening is mostly performed by government employees. The features onboard an aircraft, everything from seats to lavatories, are submitted to the government for approval. Airlines can't put doors on business class beds without federal permission. And from the moment a plane pushes back from the gate to the moment it arrives at its destination, it's being told exactly where to go and at what speed by government air traffic controllers.

So airlines, newly allowed to compete with each other nearly five decades ago, figured out how to turn what once seemed like a commodity product into one that consumers saw as differentiated using frequent flyer miles—and a marketing engine unlike that in almost any other industry. Marketing is usually a cost center, but airline miles are a huge profit center, with self-reported margins that can exceed 50 percent.

Airlines would have to spend on marketing anyway. This way, they do it mostly by rebating value to the customer—and in a way where customers get something (travel) that they value more than it costs the provider to offer (especially since companies are frequently offering seats that would have gone unsold).

That's great for the consumer, and it's even better for the informed one who hunts for excess capacity that an airline is going to make available using miles. The best deals are frequently long-haul business and first class redemptions that you'll find using your preferred airline's partners around the world, who have the seats and make them available at the lowest prices.

And so a young child who never thinks it possible that he could see the world, let alone do so in comfort, can expand his horizons, meet more people, try new foods, and bring back a richer understanding of the world beyond what Ted Kennedy, Stephen Breyer, and the other architects of airline deregulation had ever contemplated. 🍷

GARY LEFF is the chief financial officer at the Mercatus Center at George Mason University and author of the *View From the Wing* blog. He once flew business class from Toronto to Cyprus for \$33.

**BUENOS AIRES,
ARGENTINA**

See Milei's Transformation of Argentina First-Hand

MARCOS FALCONE

THE SUGGESTION THAT Argentina could be the home of a self-described libertarian president would have seemed far-fetched, to say the least, only a few years ago. Yet today Javier Milei's Buenos Aires is the city where libertarian history is happening.

Buenos Aires wasn't obviously destined to become a beacon of liberty. The city was abandoned not long after the Spanish founded it in 1536. Only after its resettlement in 1580 did the city slowly develop, but not until the 18th century would it flourish as a trade center.

Many downtown sites from the colonial era are worth visiting. As in the United States, the war that led to Argentina's independence started as a protest over free trade—the locals favored it but the Spanish Empire didn't. On May 25, 1810, local

representatives met at the Cabildo, right in front of what is today known as Plaza de Mayo, and secured self-government for the first time in Argentina's history.

Casa Rosada (the Pink House), where the Argentine president and his ministers work, is also located on Plaza de Mayo but on the opposite side of the Cabildo. There's a museum, and tours are also available. Visitors to the north side of Casa Rosada might, if lucky, see Milei or some of his ministers as they enter or exit the building.

Downtown Buenos Aires itself is extraordinary for sightseeing. San Nicolás, as the neighborhood is officially known, is a living testimony to the freedom and prosperity that Argentina enjoyed at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century. It is no wonder that Buenos Aires is known as the Paris of South America: Just walking around downtown and contemplating the Obelisk, the Teatro Colón, and other examples of monumental architecture is an incredible experience—one of the reasons I personally decided to move here.

Those interested in academia should check the schedule of events open to the public at Universidad del CEMA, just over a kilometer north of Casa Rosada. Milei has spoken many times at the college, and many libertarians (myself included) have taught courses there. Whoever visits the university is likely to find many young, enthusiastic students, many of whom will go on to become monetarist economists.

Just a few blocks west of UCEMA is the Centro Cultural Borges, a must-see for book lovers who enjoy fiction. This is a small museum that is dedicated to the memory of Argentina's most well-known writer who also happened to be a classical liberal at heart, Jorge Luis Borges. Tales like "A Weary Man's Utopia," along with countless speeches and conversations, are evidence of Borges' libertarianism and his underlying anarchism.

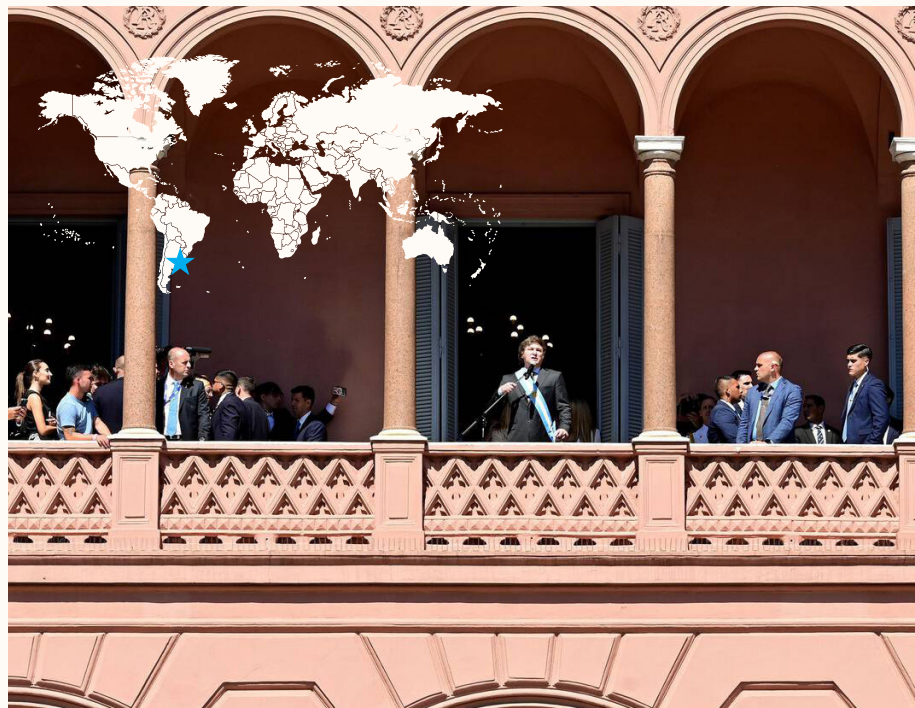
Before leaving downtown Buenos Aires, visitors can turn north from Centro Cultural Borges and walk a few blocks to Plaza San Martín. All along the way, as tourists exit San Nicolás to Retiro, they'll continue to experience what freedom and prosperity used to look like in Argentina through architecture. Just before arriving at the park from Florida Street, there's a monument to Esteban Echeverría, one of the most important 19th century classical liberals in Argentina. His short story "El mata-dero" is still taught in schools today as an example of a denunciation of the country's first dictator, Juan Manuel de Rosas.

There's plenty to do outside downtown as well. One place that may be of interest is La Crypta, a bitcoiner mansion that's open to the public, located right in the middle of the quiet Belgrano neighborhood. It's a coworking space as well as a gathering and networking venue for bitcoiners. Crypto scammers have never been, and are still not, welcome. The bitcoiner community, which has been growing in Buenos Aires since the times of triple-digit inflation in Argentina, knows better.

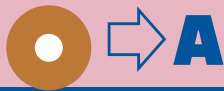
Unfortunately, Buenos Aires was not the birthplace of Argentina's most important classical liberal figure, Juan Bautista Alberdi. Those interested in the intellectual author of the Constitution of 1853, which set the stage for the spectacular decades of immigration and economic growth that once made Argentina wealthy, will have to fly northwest to Tucumán to see the monument dedicated to him as well as the house where the country declared independence in 1816.

For those who can't make it to Tucumán the first time around, perhaps this can be an excuse to come back to Argentina for a second time. We will appreciate it. 🇦🇷

MARCOS FALCONE is a research fellow at Argentina's Fundación Libertad and an associate professor of political science at Universidad del CEMA. He was accused of being an MI6 agent online for posting pictures of the Malvinas/Falkland Islands on social media in 2023.



BAGGAGE
TAG



TO: FRAGNETO MONFORTE, ITALY

Visit Your Ancestral Homeland



NICK GILLESPIE



LAST YEAR I honeymooned in Rome, which was a long day trip from the tiny 2,500-year-old village in the Campania region of Italy that my maternal grandparents left in the 1910s. Of course I had to go—it was surely my only chance to see where that side of my family had come from.

It's a very American thing to travel to ancestral hometowns, especially if your ancestors were fleeing poverty or political repression. Perhaps more than ever, as America grows less sure of its exceptionalism, we want to be reminded that we are lucky to have grown up in the glittering New World rather than the tarnished old one.

But the best sort of travel is that which confounds our expectations rather than confirms our prejudices. And that's what I experienced on a drizzly day in Fragneto Monforte, population 1,700, known for a relic of the 3rd century martyr Saint Faustina, for an ancient and revered *tiglio* tree in the town square, and, go figure, for a hot air balloon festival that started some time around the turn of this century.

I had heard only fleeting references to this speck of a town throughout my childhood, and the stories always drove home how backward, stultifying, and impoverished the place was, even for notoriously poor southern Italy. My mother and her siblings rehearsed a particular narrative about why their parents had emigrated; it was persuasive if uncheckable even before my grandparents died in the 1980s. (They didn't speak English; I didn't speak Italian.) The story went like this: There was no future in Italy back then, especially for peasants like my ancestors. Everyone who could leave, did.

Incredibly, my wife had tracked down a relative of mine via Facebook groups and Google Translate. Part of me worried that we were being scammed—I've seen the second season of *White Lotus*, where Italian-Americans seeking to connect to their roots in the old country are suckered on multiple levels. We took a surprisingly efficient and well-appointed high-speed train from Rome to nearby Benevento (post-Mussolini, it seems, the trains still run on time) and then a cab to Fragneto Monforte, where Pasqualino, my previously unknown second cousin, met us. He was a tall, strapping 50-something construction engineer. He met us with his wife and daughter, who was training in Rome to become a doctor. With his daughter translating, he explained that he was the grandson of my grandmother's sister and his own mother was still alive at 93.

They gave us the grand tour, which took less than an hour, showing us the houses where my grandfather and grandmother had grown up. I searched for my grandfather's initials in the bricks surrounding the *tiglio* tree. (Family lore had it that he'd scratched them in before he left for America as a teenager.)

I was eager to meet Pasqualino's mother Anna, a cousin my mother had never known or spoken of before dying in 1999. She was spry for a nonagenarian—and though she spoke no English, her gestures, expressions, and sounds instantly reminded me of my mother and grandmother. She lived in a beautiful house that had been in the family for generations; truth be told, it was far nicer than the house I grew up in, or those of my Italian-American relatives, which occasionally veered into plastic-covered couches, mirrored walls, and gold-foil wallpaper. She brought us drinks and snacks and showed me photos from the '70s, when my grandparents had visited.

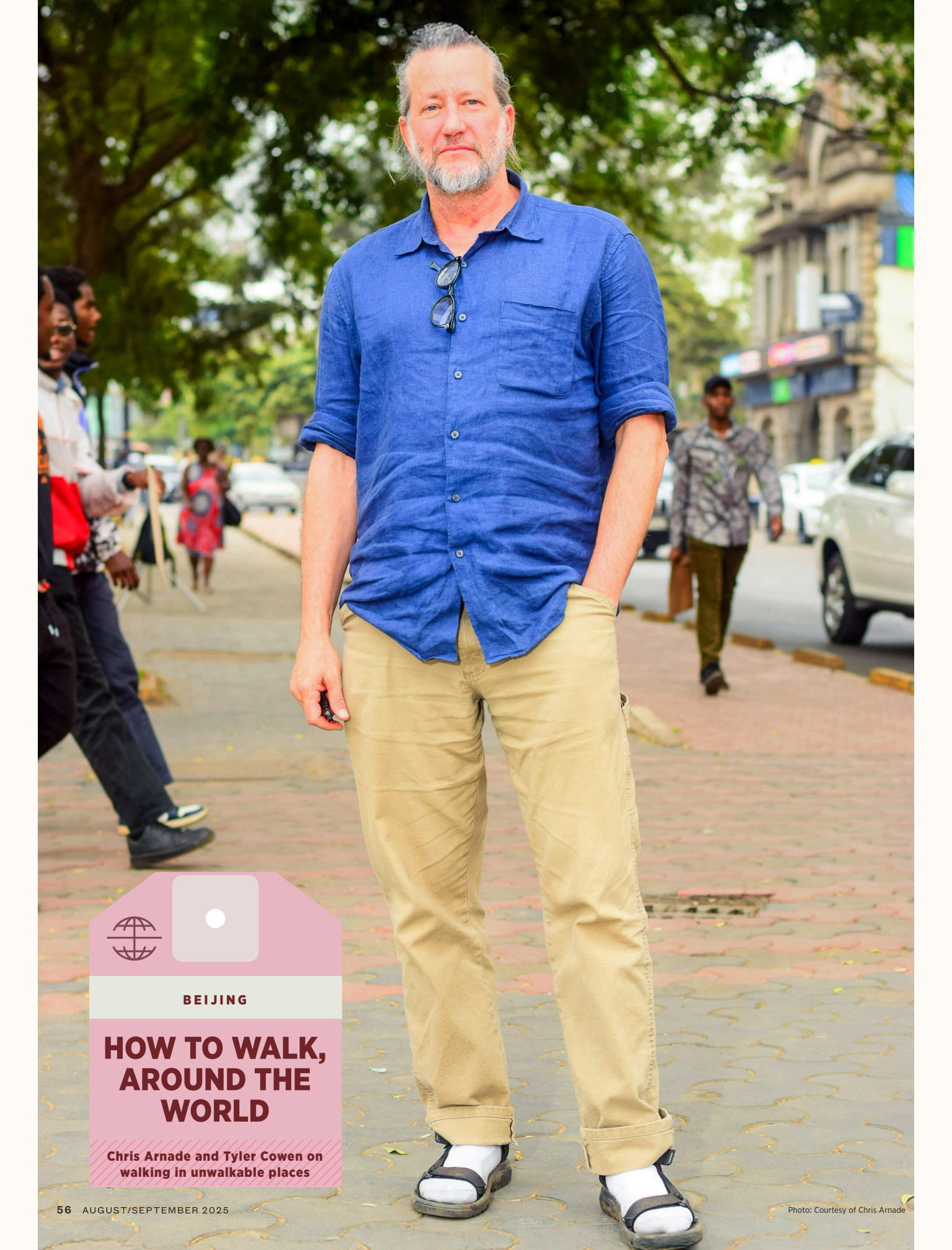


I told her I was taught that my grandparents (her uncle and aunt) had left for economic reasons and to avoid war. No, said Anna, they were all doing pretty well, even during World War I and World War II and the rebuilding afterward. They and one other were the only family members who left, she said, and it was never clear why.

Did she ever wish *her* parents had gone to America? No, she answered: This was always a good place to live.

As I hugged this ancient woman with whom I share a real but tenuous connection and whom I will never see again, I felt for a second like I was hugging my own mother one last time. I was also saying goodbye to family stories that may or may not have ever been true. 📌

NICK GILLESPIE is editor at large at *Reason*. His first trip abroad was a car trip from New Jersey to Montreal when he was 21.



BEIJING

HOW TO WALK, AROUND THE WORLD

Chris Arnade and Tyler Cowen on
walking in unwalkable places

CHRIS ARNADE IS a photojournalist and the author of the Substack newsletter *Chris Arnade Walks the World*. He spent a decade walking through American landscapes and documenting what he saw. Now he has expanded his project to include cities around the globe, whether they're large or small, and whether they're easily walkable or not. His newsletter documents his mileslong walks off the tourist-beaten paths, showcasing real people everywhere from the Faroe Islands to Albany, New York; from Phoenix to Nairobi, Kenya.

Arnade holds a Ph.D. in particle physics from Johns Hopkins University and spent years as a Wall Street bond trader. In 2011 he left finance to document the lives of lower-income Americans, a project that culminated in his 2019 book *Dignity*. Along the way, he developed what he calls the "McDonald's test"—the idea that people's attitudes toward the fast-food chain reveals their level of privilege.

In February, Arnade recorded an episode of the podcast *Conversations with Tyler* with host Tyler Cowen, the Holbert L. Harris Chair of Economics at George Mason University and the chairman and faculty director of the Mercatus Center. Cowen, himself an avid traveler, asked Arnade about what makes a city walkable, the "totalitarian anarchy" in China, and what he prefers when in other countries: McDonald's or KFC?

Cowen: If you had to live in either Beijing or Shanghai for 10 full years, which one would you pick and why?

Arnade: Beijing ultimately, because there was just more there. The reason I liked Shanghai more initially was because I had a good location. I was right next to People's Park, and I had a good four or five days. Beijing grew on me with time, though.

If you had to explain the fundamental difference between the residents of the two places, how would you explain it to an outsider?

I don't have a good answer to that one, because I don't feel like I know either of them well enough. How would you do it?

In Shanghai, status is money and conspicuous consumption. In Beijing, status is power. In a funny way, that intersects with making the city more intellectual—having better bookstores and having ties to more of China. Shanghai is more tied to the outside world, which is maybe better for the city, but for me, makes it less interesting.

I felt the overwhelming feature, and what frustrated me in some ways, was how similar Shanghai and Beijing were. They were inscrutable to me at the level I do things. A lot of that may be the way I approach learning, which is simply [to] walk 15 miles, and they're not particularly walkable cities. I walk to learn, but [in] some places that's not the right approach.

I walked 15 miles in Beijing, 15 miles in Shanghai. I kept on saying that it felt like I was in one of those cheap cartoons where the background kept repeating. I didn't feel like I got a sense of either place at the granular level like I usually do. I don't know if that was intentional.

Parts of Beijing are designed to discourage protests and demonstrations, and that correlates with being hard to walk in.

I was thinking in particular of that approach. I've been reading James C. Scott, who writes a lot about the idea of top-down regulation as control. That's certainly the case in Beijing. Gone are the winding dens of small neighborhoods, because those are hard to control. They're much easier if you replace them [with] 50-story towers with a mall and surveillance.

What struck me when I was in Beijing [was] how top-down regulation is often designed very intentionally for control. Beijing in particular feels that way. That's what frustrated me initially. I landed and I said, "Oh, I'll just walk to Tiananmen Square." Well, I just can't do that.

I got there. I went through five security checks, and I was supposed to have had a QR code where I'd signed up, and I didn't. I just walked by. I wrote about there being what I call a totalitarian anarchy. I think they intend to be control-y, but they're just too incompetent to pull it off.

Some of that's a bit deliberate, though. I think they feel that if people have a sense of partial freedom, they can control them better along the dimensions they want to and they're probably correct.

That's what I thought about with the firewall, which is, everybody has a VPN and everybody knows everybody has a VPN, so there really isn't a firewall, but it's the idea that you regulate people by making sure that the people who can't get enough together to figure out how to get around it, don't get around it.

The VPN is also a way to monitor them, right?

Yes, exactly.

You can't actually trust the VPN supplier.

I don't like to be conspiratorial, but I did notice my VPN clunked out at very odd moments. I was there during the [U.S.] election, and my VPN went out at very inopportune times when there was stuff going on. You think the loosey-goosey approach is actually intentional?

I'm not sure they have the option of cracking down entirely, but I think they have come to terms with the partial controls, and they found that it's still working. Until it

starts not working, don't try too hard to fix it.

I'm going back again, because I find it so fascinating. I don't understand it to the degree I feel like I understand other places. Other places I come away with a pretty quick sense of describing a town in some ways. Maybe it's the scale, because again, they're not really smart places to walk.

I find [China is] like America in a number of ways: inward-looking, large, self-confident, business-oriented, pretty friendly, pragmatic. I think a lot of the [Communist Party] plan is improvised rather than planned. I think they're definitely afraid of disorder and civil war, given their history, in a way we are not. Did you find anything different?

To me, what's interesting about it is how explicit the top-down organization is at the built level as well as at the cultural level. Everything is micromanaged, again, with a loosey-goosey approach to give a little bit of wiggle room.

Asia has very rambunctious cities, and what I like about Asian cities is they have an organic street life, low regulatory organic street life. That is gone in China. That lack of organic street life is intentional. They say, "We don't like this."

There was this neighborhood I was walking through Shanghai where they had bought up the entire neighborhood and it was slated for development into a business park-style living. They had replaced stores with murals of store life. It's just too spot-on for what they're doing, which is removing actual organic street life and replacing it with cartoon images of it.

Which is your preference in a major Chinese city? A McDonald's or a KFC?

Everybody told me KFC, and I stuck with McDonald's. I have become, online, the McDonald's guy, because I wrote a lot about the role of McDonald's in the U.S. Whenever I go overseas, people expect me to use McDonald's, but I don't because people don't use them. There's alternatives. In Beijing, it was McDonald's.

It was interesting. It served the same role it does in the U.S. for very different reasons. In the U.S., McDonald's is the place people go because it's functional relative to the neighborhood. In Beijing, people go because it's dysfunctional relative to the neighborhood, in terms of regulatory rate. You can go and relax.

I went to a few KFCs to use the bathroom, but I don't like fried chicken. I don't like fried foods in general, so I didn't really spend time there. I just found myself spending a lot of time in the McDonald's in China. I find them to be really wonderful places.

My favorite McDonald's in the world is in Auckland, New

Zealand, which is the world's largest Polynesian city.

McDonald's there often serves as the center for Polynesian gatherings—not just Māori, but Cook Islands, Tongans, Fiji. If you're ever in Auckland, it's a phenomenal McDonald's.

The mixing that takes place in McDonald's is absolutely amazing.

Why is Seoul, South Korea, possibly your favorite city?

It's got a functional dysfunction. It's a little bit more dysfunctional, a little less uptight than in Tokyo, but it has a lot of the same positive qualities of Tokyo. It's very safe. It's very efficient. It's got amazing food. It's very active, but it's a bit quirrier than Tokyo, and it's a bit less known, and I enjoy that.

When I'm in a place, I like to get into a regular walk. I have a 10-mile walk [in Seoul] I absolutely love. I do it every day when I'm there.

What is it you think you learn least while traveling the way you do?

I used to be very top-down. I think I, in some sense, have thrown too much of that away. I could do a little bit more background reading in terms of the political strategy. One of the things I've learned from my project is: Most people don't talk about politics. I only talk about what other people want to talk about. No one talks about politics. Being in Beijing, Shanghai, maybe it's not the best example, because people would say, "There's a reason they don't want to talk about it." I don't think that's it.

No, I agree. Most of the world. Even Idaho.

Ninety-eight percent of people aren't political, and they don't talk about politics. I go to a lot of these countries [and] I don't know what's going on politically because people don't talk about it.

Putting aside issues of financial security, how many people do you think should do what you're doing?

It's logistically a hard lifestyle. You have to be a certain personality. I do not mind waking up in a different bedroom every night. I do not mind 16-hour flights. I look forward to them. I don't fly first class, I fly in economy.

My limit is 13 hours. Past that, it wears thin on me.

Yes, but it's time to read. I know my airplanes, I know exactly where the stewardesses hang out, and I go back and I talk to people. I like talking to people.

What is it you learn from stewardesses?

In general, they're just interesting people. They tell you about where they grew up. They tell you where to go. I use the information in the way they wouldn't think I use the information. If they told me to go someplace, I may not go there because that sounds like it's going to be crowded, and I don't like crowds. I just like to hear the life stories, how they got into the career they got into, and what they want out of life.

Is Istanbul the world's most walkable city?

It is one of them. Tokyo wins the walkability award. Istanbul is one of the most walkable cities. If it wasn't for the motor scooter delivery guys....

It's got the weather, it's got the beauty, it's got the diversity. The biggest thing for walkability is what I call local distribution, meaning there's always a shop somewhere.

I just get over to the Asia side and get out of the tourist parts. It's a wonderful city. The thing I like about the history there is it hasn't frozen the city. On the European side is that famous wall—the northern defense wall. It's still there, remnants of it, and it's just used as a car park. There's this 13th-century wall that's just used as a car park, which I still think is pretty impressive. I like the way history is both there but also not relegated to a museumlike status.

Why do you like El Paso so much?

The optimism. The American dream is very much alive in the working-class Mexican-American community, and you see that in El Paso. When I was doing my project on addiction and poverty, El Paso was just fundamentally different. You don't have the despair that you have in places.

A low crime rate, too, right?

Yes. Extraordinarily, in some senses, Mexico acts as the roach motel. If you're going to do crime, go over to Juárez. Consequently, there's [low] crime in El Paso, but it's one of the most optimistic cities in the United States. It has amazing food, by the way.

I think it's walkable. I have walked a lot of it, but I can understand why some people might not see that. Colorful buildings, fantastic weather—by the way, high desert is always my favorite weather. Great weather.

What were the best things about working on Wall Street?

Smart people. The group of people that was the smartest, the people I still enjoy talking to most in terms of being able to talk about anything and not feel like you're going to offend somebody, were generally bankers. Not all of them. There is a hierarchy in banking. But in general, it was a great way to learn about the world at a very top-down approach.

What were the worst things about working there?

It was a very narrow view, which is why I'm doing what I'm doing now. It's fly-in. I stay away from certain neighborhoods, which are generally the wealthy neighborhoods. They're all the same. They're all variations on a theme. They're just not interesting. I used to say the entire investor base in the bond market of Turkey could fit into this restaurant, and they often do. They're all there every night, the same group of people. It's a very limiting perspective.

Do you use AI at all when you travel?

I started using it as a copy editor. What do you use it for, for traveling?

If I'm just arriving in the city, I will have guidebooks, but I'll ask GPT or Claude, "What should I see in the city?" and I'll tell it what I'm interested in. It's better than any guidebook.

Let's say you were going to Xi'an, what would you do?

I would say I'm interested in Chinese history, art, culture, and food.

You're a museum guy? The only museums I go to [are] military history museums.

Those are great, too.

They're histories of propaganda, which I love.

What do you think you'll do next?

I'm going to do this for another few years, and then I don't know. I didn't know I was going to do this.

How did it come about that you did this?

When life was stressful, I found I always walked. When I'm at home, I walk. I have a standard two-mile daily walk that I do, which is very different from my learning walk. It's therapeutic. When COVID happened, I looked at actuarial tables and I said, "Oh, I'm a little bit overweight. That's not good," and so I started walking 10 miles every day, and I really enjoyed it.

When I was in Brooklyn, I walked the entire length of the New York subway system above ground. I've always been into walking. I was looking at a table that [said] 1.5 billion people live in massive cities—these big sprawling Jakartas—I'm like, "I would like to see that." So I just started. I booked a trip to Jakarta and just started walking. 📍

This interview has been condensed and edited for style and clarity. It has been adapted by permission of the Mercatus Center. Listen to the full episode on the *Conversations with Tyler* podcast.



MY BABY WAS stolen in a Portuguese airport.

The culprit was a granny who worked in the bakery there, crafting *pastéis de nata*. While I was sorting out the rental car booking, my husband had taken our then-9-month-old son to fetch pastries. Our son quickly disappeared—taken behind the counter by an insistent old lady who wanted to show him around and, presumably, feed him spoonfuls of custard. Who am I to object to local custom?

Portuguese culture grants special privileges to children and families, and those privileges really do make a big difference. We've been to Lisbon, surf towns to the west, the Azores, and even Cabo Verde, the African island nation and former colony, where many of the same norms apply. Pregnant women, the elderly, and people traveling with young kids get special lines for airport security and customs, ushered through as fast as possible. Native Portuguese will get offended if they see you in the normal line, instructing you to go to the priority line and sometimes getting the attention of the customs officer to make

sure the system is adhered to—the only time Southern Europeans have ever been rule-abiding!

Though their Northern European neighbors are strict about taxi cab car seat rules and paranoid about child safety on buses (in Norway they made me use a car seat), the Portuguese are relaxed about it, allowing parents to make whatever choices they deem best. This is helpful for those of us who don't travel with car seats, preferring to use public transit wherever possible.

Their playgrounds allow lots of risky play. We availed ourselves of Lisbon's Jardim da Estrela, which had plenty of climbing structures, including one extending more than 15 feet in the air, full of kids as young as 5 jousting for the top spot.

Contrast this with the American approach: Our illustrious federal regulators publish the *Public Playground Safety Handbook*, which discourages playground designers from using free-swinging ropes (which “present a potential strangulation hazard,” as they could “fray” or “form a loop”) and mandates the steepness of

slides. Or worse, the New York approach: padlocking certain playgrounds, such as Hudson River Park's Pier 26 and Madison Square Park's, when it gets chilly out, because God forbid children slip or fall in the event that there's ice or snow. (Better to just stay inside glued to a screen, these policies seem to suggest.)

In Lisbon, the public park facilities even had a miniature bathroom for potty-training kids, but you could also freely change a diaper on a park bench. The nearby day cares dressed kids for rain or shine, and they seemed to make outdoor time a habit. The moms did not hover—a refreshing contrast to Manhattan and Brooklyn—and there was a healthy mix of moms and dads handling the kids. (To give credit where due, some Northern Europeans get good marks in these subjects. Playgrounds in Berlin are abundant and, in many cases, designed to maximize kid independence—and nasty weather rarely deters there, since active outdoor time is valued highly.)

At home in New York, I keep a list of fancy restaurants that tend to be welcom-



ing toward babies and toddlers (Bonnie's in Williamsburg, Cafe Gitane in Lower Manhattan), precisely because it feels like a rarity: Several restaurants have adopted policies disallowing children (Jean-Georges, Bungalow). In Portugal, it's standard to see families out to dinner, and out quite late. Though the families don't tend to be huge—Portugal has not been immune to the sinking-birthrate issues that have plagued the rest of the developed world—they are rebounding a bit from a 2013 low of 1.21 births per woman.

Lots of cultures around the world get components of childrearing right: The American expats I met in Tamarindo, Costa Rica, let their kids roam free-range and almost universally homeschooled, seceding from the dominant parenting culture in America, the rat race, and the anxiety. (In some cases, they've deviated very far from the norm: One mom told me it's totally chill to breastfeed 8-year-olds. But I think that's just a hippie thing, not a Central American custom.) Panamanian parents in coastal towns like Playa Venao seem to let their young kids surf with abandon, unsupervised except by siblings. The aforementioned Germans have free-play areas where adults aren't allowed, such as Berlin's Abenteuerlicher Bauspielplatz Kolle 37, a playground with spots for climbing and hammer-and-nails construction and fire building. When I visited, a crowd of 9-year-olds were tending it with pokers; my toddler, not yet allowed in, seemed already to covet access to the flames.

But the Portuguese in particular grasp something I fear American parents miss: You don't have to recede from society once you have children, relegated only to explicitly kid-friendly spaces. The way to get children to learn how to fly and dine in restaurants and act civilized in public is to include them, and to let them practice again and again. Of course, those reps are easier gotten when you have a surrounding culture that acts like children are a gift, not a burden. The grace with which Portuguese culture treats families makes it easier to bear when your kid inevitably messes up in public; everyone who witnesses the tantrum or the spilled glass seems to realize that this is a normal part of living alongside kids—a little cost worth bearing to have a society that's warm and friendly and growing. **1**

LIZ WOLFE is an associate editor at *Reason* and has taken her toddler to 10 countries.

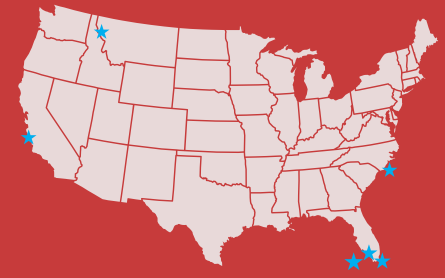


Photos: Courtesy of Liz Wolfe

THE MIDDLE OF NOWHERE

6 PLACES TO REALLY GET AWAY FROM IT ALL

C.J. CIARAMELLA



SURE, PEOPLE ARE great, but sometimes you really want to be an individual—alone. Solitude and quiet, unfortunately, are becoming a luxury commodity. Here are six out-of-the-way places offering unique experiences to the antisocial traveler.



JULES' UNDERSEA LODGE

NO ONE'S GOING to bother you at Jules Undersea Lodge in the Florida Keys, besides maybe a class of new scuba divers practicing in the lagoon outside your window. The lodge offers a hotel room that one must scuba dive down 20 feet to enter. The price includes underwater pizza delivery, too.

Photo: Jules' Undersea Lodge/Purcell Team/Alamy REASON 61



NEW CAMALDOLI HERMITAGE

WHEN MY NEIGHBORS crank up their gas-powered leaf blowers for the umpteenth time, I consider the finer points of joining the brothers of the New Camaldoli Hermitage, a Camaldolese Benedictine hermitage overlooking the cliffs of Big Sur, California.

New Camaldoli's location was chosen for its isolation and beauty, and the place is accessible only by a winding mountain road. The dozen or so monks there take a vow of silence and spend their days in prayer and peaceful contemplation. They also welcome visitors to experience life at the hermitage at several guest lodges.

The branch's founder, St. Romuald, instructed brothers to "put the whole world behind you and forget it," a task that's considerably easier when you're watching the sun set over the Pacific Ocean from a quiet bench with your back to the rest of the world.

FORT JEFFERSON AND THE DRY TORTUGAS

IN 1846 THE U.S. government began building an enormous brick fortress in the Dry Tortugas, a small uninhabited island chain about 70 miles west of Key West. The site was strategically important—but as the name implies, it didn't have a drop of fresh water.

The miserable and ill-fated fort was built largely by slaves and convicts. It was never fully completed because it began collapsing under its own weight, a metaphor so obvious it would be unsporting to joke about if the butt of the joke weren't the government. The fort remained in Union hands during the Civil War and doubled as a military prison, holding criminals and deserters. One of the Lincoln assassination conspirators was incarcerated there for several years after the war. Wracked by hurricanes and yellow fever outbreaks, the military garrison was drawn down and eventually abandoned. The fort's fearsome artillery batteries were melted for scrap or left to rust, never fired once.

Today this sinking government boondoggle can be your island getaway. Dry Tortugas National Park is one of the most remote national parks, reachable only via sea plane or a long ferry ride. The camping is primitive, but there's unmatched stargazing, terrific snorkeling right off the beach, and 70 miles of open ocean between you and someone taking a picture of a brunch plate.



FIRE LOOKOUT TOWERS

FIRE LOOKOUT TOWERS in national forests have mostly been phased out by new technology. That means they're now available to rent for short stays. They're remote, they're inexpensive, and they offer stunning views.

"Boy, it sure seems like there's a lot of government stuff on this list for a libertarian magazine," you might be saying. Well, the government already paid to put all this stuff in the middle of nowhere. We might as well get some enjoyment out of it.

Besides, surely you'd like to brag to your friends about your vacation at Sex Peak Lookout in the Rocky Mountains. Availability and booking information for fire lookout towers can be found on recreation.gov.






EVERGLADES NATIONAL PARK

IF THE PRICE and logistics of getting to Fort Jefferson are too daunting, Everglades National Park offers similar isolationist pleasures for those willing to paddle for it. From the Flamingo Visitor Center at the southern tip of the Everglades, adventurous campers can launch a kayak or canoe and travel overwater to a number of isolated beaches and floating platforms known as “chickee huts.”

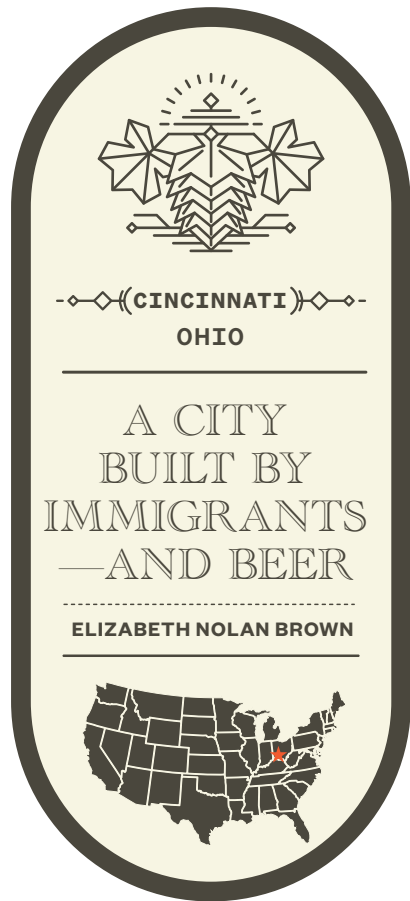
It’s not hard to find a remote backpacking spot, but camping on a chickee hut over the slick flat water of Florida Bay—the only place on earth where alligators and crocodiles coexist—is not something soon to be forgotten.



FRYING PAN TOWER

WANT TO GET a taste of sea-steading without the annoying paperwork of declaring yourself a micronation? Check out Frying Pan Tower, another derelict wonder. This one is a decommissioned Coast Guard light station 32 miles off the coast of North Carolina. A non-profit group is now restoring the iconic lighthouse—named for its 72-foot-by-72-foot platform—and it hosts ecotourism adventure weekends for those whose idea of a fun vacation is skeet shooting 80 feet above the Atlantic Ocean and scuba diving with sand tiger sharks. 

C.J. CIARAMELLA is a reporter at *Reason*. He’s interviewed U.S. senators and dove with bull sharks in Fiji—he prefers the company of the latter.



FAR BELOW DOWNTOWN Cincinnati, you'll find large stone- and brick-walled caverns with dirt-strewn floors. Their great arched passageways loom over piles of century-old rubble, vast vats that once overflowed with beer, and recently added stairways to assist tourists passing through.

As with so much in Cincinnati, we can chalk up these places to beer-loving German immigrants. The caverns were built for storing lager back before refrigeration was widespread. Unlike ales, lagers must be aged and stored at temperatures below 40 degrees. For the city's burgeoning German population to make the sorts of lagers they had known back home, they had to dig deep.

"The cities that made a lot of beer between 1850 and 1880, they all had lagering cellars," says Michael Morgan, author of *Over-the-Rhine: When Beer Was King*. In many places, these subterranean caverns would later be filled in. But not so here.

Curious Cincinnatians and tourists can now traverse recently rediscovered lagering cellars on tours organized by the Brewing Heritage Trail or American Legacy Tours. For a less rustic experience, they can visit Ghost Baby, a cocktail bar and music venue located in a renovated lagering cellar four stories underground.

A trip to—or below—Cincinnati's historic

brewery district will take you to Over-the-Rhine, just outside Cincinnati's city center. When German immigrants started flocking to the city in the 1800s, many settled just north of the Miami-Erie Canal cutting through central Cincinnati. Locals began referring to the canal, derisively, as "the Rhine," and the German-heavy neighborhood just north of it as "over the Rhine." The nickname stuck.

Today this is often relayed as merely a charming little anecdote. But it hints at deep tensions between the city's earliest settlers and the huge wave of immigrants to come.

CINCINNATI'S POPULATION BALLOONED throughout the 19th century, from 2,540 residents in 1810 to 115,435 in 1850, when it ranked as the sixth-largest American city. By 1900, it had 325,902 residents, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

Much of this growth came from immigration. In 1850, nearly half of Cincinnati's population was foreign-born. The bulk of Cincinnati's immigrants came from Ireland or Germany—especially Germany. By 1890, German immigrants or people whose parents were both German immigrants made up 57 percent of Cincinnati's population, according to "The 'Zinzinnati' in Cincinnati," a paper in the October 1964 *Bulletin of the Cincinnati Historical Society*.

Cincinnati Germans tended to settle together, building German-language schools and churches, launching German-language newspapers, and starting social and philanthropic clubs for German Americans. Among the many businesses they launched were beer gardens and most of the area's biggest breweries. These included Christian Moerlein, founded in 1853 by a Bavarian immigrant, and the Hudepohl Brewing Company, founded in 1885 by the son of Bavarian immigrants. Both brands might still be familiar to beer drinkers today.

"THERE'S NO COMMODITY manufactured anywhere in the history of Cincinnati that was as important to it as beer was," says Morgan. Cincinnati started brewing "long before it had these waves of German immigration," he points out. "But we really were defined by those German-style beers, and the way that they were made in Cincinnati."

German lagers were big in Milwaukee and St. Louis too, but not necessarily as good. St. Louis' biggest brewer, Anheuser-

Busch, used rice to give its beers a lighter body, while the Milwaukee-based Pabst used corn. "In German brewing tradition, both of those things were really frowned upon," Morgan says. "They were a short cut—a way to make shitty beer." But Cincinnati brewers stuck to the German brewing tradition: nothing but barley malt, yeast, hops, and water. That's why, in parts of the 1800s, "Cincinnati was the most respected beer anywhere in the United States" and even exported to Europe.

Pork, soap, and some other industries may have technically been bigger, but beer was huge for Cincinnati's sense of identity, not to mention the local economy. In 1891-92, the locals spent "10 million dollars, or an average of \$20 a person" on beer and ale, notes a 1938 Works Progress Administration book called *They Built a City: 150 Years of Industrial Cincinnati*. "Wages paid brewery workers at the time were among the highest in Cincinnati," it adds; "about four thousand men worked in the 33 Greater Cincinnati breweries that year."

Cincinnatians also made wine and spirits. "By 1850 three hundred vineyards covered nine hundred acres within 20 miles of the city" and employed about 500 people, according to *They Built a City*. Meanwhile, "local distillers were producing 1,145 barrels of whisky daily." (At one point, "practically every storekeeper in the city kept a barrel [of whiskey] on hand for customers, who got a free drink while shopping," the book claims. But "state and municipal licensing and regulations did away with free drinks.")

Alcohol created jobs in malt houses, ice houses, and the city's many, many saloons as well. "We were operating an astounding number of bars," says Morgan. By some estimates, there were nearly 2,000 bars in Hamilton County in 1919.

In German areas such as Over-the-Rhine, these bars and Biergartens weren't merely places for men to drink. Many were family-friendly affairs, serving up food and live German music, hosting local clubs and societies, and generally serving as hubs for community.

Alcohol also helped Cincinnati expand from its central city core. Steep hills stretch up all around downtown and, before automobiles were widespread, it was hard to get hilltop settlements going. "The thing that eventually changed that was these short little railroads, the incline planes—we had five of them," says Morgan. The inclines were privately owned and made profitable



and aimed to create an Americanized version of a Macedonian lamb stew.

CINCINNATI'S AMPLE SALOONS and breweries made it a focal point for the temperance movement, which often employed anti-immigrant sentiment in its appeals for a sober city. Several villages surrounding Cincinnati adopted anti-alcohol laws long before the 18th Amendment was passed.

The hilltop resort houses were eventually done in by blue laws. Few of Cincinnati's historic breweries bounced back after Prohibition. Of those that did, fewer still are around today.

Still, Cincinnati is rife with local breweries once again—around 40 in 2023, according to the Ohio Craft Brewers Association.

For craft, Morgan recommends Wooden Cask, West Side Brewing, and Urban Artifact (no one in the country is doing fruited sours better, he says). For ambience, he recommends Northern Row and the roof deck of Rhinegeist Brewery, both in Over-the-Rhine.

If you're traveling with kids, check out MadTree Parks & Rec, nestled into suburban Cincy's spectacular Summit Park. It features ample play space and my favorite local IPA, PsychOPathy.

CINCINNATI'S LATEST INFLUX of immigration has come from Africa, particularly Mauritania. German immigrants are old news now, and so is banning alcohol. But we're in an age of renewed unease about immigrants—especially those that speak their native tongues here or don't seem especially keen to "assimilate"—and renewed efforts to persuade Americans of the danger of drink.

In both regards, Cincinnati's German immigrant experience is instructive. It suggests that immediate assimilation isn't necessary to eventual assimilation, and that retaining pride in one's own language and customs isn't a barrier to building businesses and other institutions that enrich the wider community. It's also a reminder of the ways alcohol and establishments that serve it can bring people together and foster a sense of local identity and solidarity. In today's atomized, globalized, and oh-so-mediated times, that seems especially important—and, in its own way, healthy. Prost! 🍷

ELIZABETH NOLAN BROWN is a senior editor at *Reason* who once willingly took a cross-country Amtrak train.



Over-the-Rhine now features a similar mix of hip and heritage, including Findlay Market, Ohio's oldest continuously operated public market, now surrounded by a spate of new restaurants, shops, and bars. (Try Maverick Chocolate; you'll thank me.)

Some of the area's explicitly German character was wiped out during World War I. Today, however, you can still see the German immigrant influence in the city's celebrations, including a huge annual Oktoberfest celebration, and in some of its most distinctive foods, including Goetta—a part-sausage, part-bread breakfast dish descended from German *grützwursts* ("grain sausages").

There are surprisingly few distinctly German restaurants in the area. But across the river, in northern Kentucky (considered part of the greater Cincinnati area), you'll find Hofbräuhaus serving up classic Bavarian-American fare and Tuba Baking Co. offering creative twists on southwestern German food, including a Swabian take on Cincinnati's famous chili.

This dish, too, we can chalk up to immigration. You can find Cincinnati-style chili—cinnamon spiced, usually served over spaghetti and topped with a mound of cheddar cheese—all over the city, at chains such as Skyline and Gold Star or at independent chili parlors such as Camp Washington Chili (which nabbed a James Beard Award). The first of these was started by brothers who came here from Macedonia

by hilltop "resort houses," which featured ample entertainment and "astounding amounts of beer."

TODAY, VISITORS TO these hilltop neighborhoods can still grab a piece of history with their pints by visiting the likes of Mt. Adams Bar & Grill (rumored to stem from a speak-easy operated by the infamous bootlegger George Remus) or Price Hill's Incline Public House, built on the site of the incline-era Price Hill House and featuring panoramic views of the river and downtown.

In Defense of 'Tourist Traps'

CHRISTIAN BRITSCHGI



IF YOU EVER go to New Orleans, one of your first stops should be the very unhidden gem of Café Du Monde's French Market location. There you can buy some New Orleans special beignets and, if the weather is hot enough (it almost certainly will be) a frozen coffee to wash them down.

Café Du Monde is popular. The advice to go is often not popular.

If you scan internet messaging boards about what to do in New Orleans, posters will often caution against a visit to Café Du Monde. It is dismissed as the most hated of all destinations, a "tourist trap": an overrated, overcrowded cliché that exists to suck money from unsophisticated travelers in exchange for an unsatisfyingly ordinary experience.

Yet this aversion to Café Du Monde is obviously mistaken to anyone who does actually go there. The lines are long, yes, but they move fast. The beignets might not be literally the best in the world, or even in New Orleans. But they're good! Better yet, they're available at a reasonable price. And once you're done with your fried treat, you can walk to any number of other serviceable tourist destinations nearby.

Raging against this delightfully efficient travel experience is a particular strand of travel ideology that encourages you to avoid the "tourist track" in favor of more authentic, higher-quality experiences to be found off the beaten path. Travel content creators, whether on social media or the Food Network, traffic in glamorizing the latter travel experience. Not much travel media could persist without it. There's only so much content one could watch about other people going to see the Louvre or the Vatican or Times Square, after all.

Certainly, when one is traveling vicariously from the couch, it's fine to revel in hunts for the next world-famous hole-in-the-wall. When we're transporting ourselves in reality, the

real rewards will often be found among the greatest hits.

There's a reason for this, and it comes down to two concepts: economies of scale and agglomeration.

Economies of scale is the idea that firms can lower their average costs by producing more units. In other words, if you set up your operation to make a lot of widgets, the cost of making each widget is a lot lower than what could be made by a small widget-making operation.


This is effectively what the largest landmarks and tourist traps do. The National Mall and the Eiffel Tower were built to receive millions of people. Therefore, they're easily able to provide you, the marginal tourist, a satisfying experience at an ever-falling cost. Your presence adds a tiny additional cost to operating bathrooms, maintaining walking trails and directional signage, and even paying staff to tell people where they need to go and where not to spit their gum. The marginal expense of providing you the opportunity of a forced-perspective photo where you hold the Washington Monument aloft is effectively zero.

This is hardly the case with more niche destinations.

The obscure hiking trail with the perfectly instagrammable view likely suffers from increasing diseconomies of scale. These places work when they're patronized by locals and a few regional tourists. Once they go viral, they're quickly swamped. Parking lots are over capacity, trash overflows, and the marginal visitor's photo opportunity imposes severe costs on everyone else. It's why these destinations top internet lists of sights being "ruined" by tourists, even if their root purpose is to be a visitable sight to see.

Gastronomical destinations operate under a similar logic. To return to Café Du Monde: This is a place that takes every advantage from economies of scale. Its food menu is very simple, with just one item: beignets. Its drink menu is a delightfully uncomplicated offering of coffee in its three natural states of hot, iced, and frozen. As a slight extravagance, they've added hot chocolate and bottled water to the menu. Café Du Monde can thus focus on pumping out a few dedicated specialties quickly and at a reasonable cost to both producer and consumer. These production savings can be poured into more staff, bringing faster service.





In contrast, a heretofore undiscovered café, restaurant, or bar typically isn't prepared to handle even a modest surge in visitors. Newfound publicity quickly takes them overcapacity. Small-time businesses have no good options for digging their way out of a rush of tourists looking for the next big thing.

In an effort to maintain their authenticity, they might try to keep everything—from location to the menu to the prices—the same as before. The result, then, is that you'll likely wait around in a huge line for hours. Perhaps, like good capitalists, they'll raise prices to manage higher demand. That's good for the business, of course: No one should begrudge them for seizing an enhanced opportunity for profit. But the higher price, like the longer wait, will take a huge bite out of whatever utility you might get from a slightly higher quality specialty dish from a more authentic local hole in the wall.

For all that effort to see something off the beaten path, the tourist's consumer surplus is just as likely to go down as up. Meanwhile, the more popular the tourist trap, the greater the benefits to tourists will be.

For travelers, there's an instinct to skip anything that seems too generic in favor of something more special and memorable. The fear of crowds and long waits overwhelms the desire to see something truly unique. Why go see the Mona Lisa in Paris, when everyone who visits Paris goes there and everyone visiting Paris at the same time as you will also be there? It's an understandable attitude, but a mistaken one. It fails to appreciate the urban agglomeration that creates the world-class tourist cities that give people a reason to travel in the first place.

Urban agglomeration is basically the idea that people want to be where the action is. Workers move to cities because that's where the jobs are. Firms move to cities because that's where the workers are. As more and more people pile into an area, the whole becomes greater than the sum of its parts. Interpersonal networks become thicker, and the division of labor becomes more specialized.

This agglomeration logic continues to apply, even as the costs and externalities of city life pile up. With more people come more traffic and more pollution.

But the benefits of more people doing more and

more things together always seems to outweigh the associated costs. Keep this agglomerative growth going, and eventually your city will be large enough, and the division of labor specialized enough, to create and sustain the unique cultural amenities that people travel across the globe to see.

There's only so many great artists and great pieces of art in the world. Urbanism's agglomerative pull means many of them end up in a handful of superstar cities. Millions of tourists then follow. The Mona Lisa wasn't painted in Paris. She lives there nonetheless because that's where the eyeballs and the money are. Paris, in other words, exists for you to go see the Mona Lisa. To say that you won't go see the Mona Lisa because that's what everyone does in Paris is to miss the point of Paris.

It's a point even the Parisians can miss. Carlos Moreno—the Sorbonne University professor most famous for creating the idea of the “15-minute city”—has argued that Paris could improve walkability and reduce traffic congestion by using neighborhood schools as playhouses and theaters after hours. On the other hand, “How many Parisians prefer to attend a concert, a ballet, or an opera at a neighborhood school rather than the Garnier Opera House, Opera Bastille, or the Bataclan?” counters the French urbanist Alain Bertaud. “Do these prestigious establishments have to be replaced with neighborhood shows that will give the spectator the satisfaction of walking there and saving about twenty minutes on transport?”

To be sure, not every “tourist trap” is worth the visit or worth the expense. A shirt proclaiming how much you love New York can be bought online. You should also always be on the lookout for scams. And not every minute of a vacation needs to be dominated by sightseeing. If relaxation is the goal, there's a lot to be said for finding a café, bar, or restaurant within walking distance from the hotel and making that your home base for the trip.

But if you are trying to see and do things, you should see and do the things that are ready for you. Don't burn up your vacation days sacrificing efficiency in a fruitless quest for authenticity. The tourist traps were made for tourists. They know what they're doing. If you're a tourist, there's no shame in enjoying them. 📍

CHRISTIAN BRITSCHGL is a reporter at *Reason*. He has been to both Koreas and found one more charming than the other.

BAGGAGE TAG



963-700718

SEASIDE, FLORIDA

IN SEASIDE, LIVING IS A WAY OF LIFE

D | S | H | L | O

Peter Suderman

WALK ALONG:

White-sand beaches

EAT AT:

Bud & Alley's Waterfront
Restaurant & Bar

DON'T MISS:

Sundog Books
Modica Market

YOU MIGHT NOT expect there to be much for libertarians to like about a town that boasts a master plan, where design conformity is rigorously enforced across virtually every building and street, and whose admirers wax poetic about a building code that covers “everything from building materials to roof pitch.”

But Seaside, Florida, often defies expectations. It's a town built on political contradictions: Its surfaces are planned and regulated down to the last nail, but it boasts of individual freedom in its building designs. It was founded on neo-hippie environmental and communitarian ideals, but it was privately built on explicitly capitalist notions of urban development. It's designed to feel like both a tiny town and a big city, with the comfortable intimacy of small village life and the walkable amenities of a major metro area. It's a haven for structural conformity,



but it played an important role in bringing more choice in education to one of America's biggest states. It's a utopian architectural vision that resists pure utopianism.

If you know one thing about Seaside, it's probably that it was the principal filming location for the 1998 film *The Truman Show*—the story of a man living a life of seemingly idyllic ordinariness in what amounts to a fantasy of American small-town life. It turns out that every aspect of his life has been contrived and constructed for other people's entertainment: He's the sole nonactor in a television show about his life, and his perfect little town is actually a vast set on the world's largest soundstage, with every detail, from tiny interactions with neighbors to the timing of the sunrise, stage-managed by a god-like producer character watching over his every move. (Amusingly, the house used in the movie is the childhood beach getaway of Matt Gaetz, the controversial former congressman whom Donald Trump nominated to be attorney general.)

The Truman Show is a story of libera-

tory self-awakening, in which a man must escape from a planned paradise that is also a prison. But in the real world, Seaside is the sort of place people want to escape *to*—precisely *because* of the meticulous planning.

Envisioned in the 1970s by a group of young, forward-thinking architects who saw themselves as holistic community planners rather than merely building designers, Seaside was meant to embody an ideal of unhurried, beachside life, away from both the stress of the big cities and the cookie-cutter isolation of the suburbs. Over the years, it has become ground zero for a popular and influential vision of American city planning known as New Urbanism.

Building began in 1981 with what the city's founder Robert Davis has described as a “conservative business plan and a progressive, perhaps even radical, social plan.” In the 2013 book *Visions of Seaside*, a collection of essays on the town's architectural history and ideals edited by Dhuru A. Thadani, Seaside's planners and residents write expansively about the alleged evils of suburban sprawl and necessity of “liberating”

people from cars. But they also position the town's development within the context of "the specific, distinctly, if not quite uniquely, American tradition of capitalist-sponsored town development, a tradition that existed for 100 years before World War II."

Seaside isn't a movie set, but even apart from its connection to *The Truman Show*, it can feel like one. The town employs a distinctive color scheme of weathered whites and beachy pastels, with wood slat home construction and community buildings that show off stately columns meant to evoke a nostalgic Americana. On sunny spring days, the streets are crowded with tourists, many of whom come simply for the town's ambiance.

If you're planning your own trip to Seaside, make sure to book several hours just for walking around. The town sits on some of Florida's most stunning beachside real estate, with soft sand that is nearly snow white and Gulf waves that sparkle emerald green in the right light.

Beyond the natural amenities, commerce is central to the town's vision of itself. Walk in from the beach and you'll find a boardwalk speckled with cute, quaint shops, selling beachy clothes and ice cream. Stroll across the street and you'll encounter the grand lawn, surrounded by shops that have become a central part of the town's character, including Sundog Books and Modica Market, a deli and specialty grocery market that was fea-

tured in *The Truman Show*. And if you're staying for a meal, be sure to stop in at Bud and Alley's, a Seaside institution that has been in business since 1986, and which was named after two of the town's earliest residents, a dog (Bud) and a cat (Alley).

Combined with the tidy meticulousness of the townscape, the throngs of flip-flop-wearing tourists can make Seaside feel a bit like Disneyland. It's no surprise, then, that Seaside's closest analog—and, perhaps, competitor—is the central Florida town of Celebration, a master-planned community founded in the 1990s by The Walt Disney Company.

The structures may be tightly controlled, but outside of the vast main lawn the landscaping is not: One of the early rules was that home builders could only clear a small buffer around the construction zone. The rest of the original foliage had to be left in place, unkempt and wild, which means that today the town's residential streets are marked by overgrown trees and bushes, giving the roads a lush, green, pleasantly shaggy character.

Even the town's zoning rules are derived from a more propertarian, decentralized understanding of city building codes: Seaside was an innovator in "form-based" building codes focused on aesthetics and ideals. This approach leaves individual property owners with far more flexibility to build personalized, individualized spaces, particularly when it comes to home interi-

ors, than they have under more traditional zoning rules that focus more on strict land-use regulation.

Built on an initial plot of 80 acres that Davis' father purchased in the 1940s, Seaside is a grand vision of intimate small-town life, organized around a vast, grassy town center that features a mix of shops and community buildings, including a tiny post office. Serendipitous community engagement is part of the design schema: Many Seaside houses feature expansive screened-in porches meant to draw people out of their homes, originally built without air conditioning, on warm evenings. The design was meant to facilitate free-range childhoods: In *Visions of Seaside*, longtime resident Isaac Stein writes of walking and biking to school on his own as he grew up. "I thought it was normal for kids to be free after school to explore," he writes. "I felt more like an adult. I was able to mature at a young age, function on my own."

The city's approach to education also has more room than most places for innovation and local control. In the 1990s, a group of Seaside parents wanted to create a small, local school. The result was the Seaside Neighborhood School, which was built with funds raised from the filming of *The Truman Show* and went on to become one of Florida's earliest and most successful experiments with charter schooling. It helped kick-start Florida's education reform movement, and is now the oldest active charter school in the state.

The master-planned aesthetic order of Seaside won't be for everyone, and the control it exerts over its streets and houses will irk those freedom lovers who prefer a more anarchic urban disjunction. But the pleasures of Seaside—and even its critics tend to admit that it is exceptionally, perhaps even eerily, pleasant—have arisen primarily from private entrepreneurship and local efforts, from contractual controls and decentralized development, from the way it has balanced communal norms with private preferences. The most unexpected thing about Seaside is that it somehow channels all of these impulses simultaneously, pulling together disparate worldviews and ideologies into a coherent whole. It's restrictive. It's liberating. It's both—and that's what makes it so special. 📍

PETER SUDERMAN is features editor at *Reason*. He once rode a horse that appeared in the movie *Tombstone* through a Pirates of the Caribbean set, on the way to see giant sea turtles.





CARRYING THE TORCH OF FREEDOM

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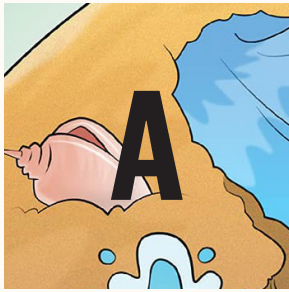
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Tiny Nations in the Crack of the Map

JAMES ERWIN



AFTER THE INITIAL thrill of a few stamps on one's passport, the idea of touching down in yet another nation-state may seem jejune. After you've seen one nation-state, how truly different can another one be? Airports and highways with instantly navigable signage, cultures and cuisines

flattened to meet the supply and demand of global trade, traditions reduced to photo opportunities—just more of the same.

The English essayist Samuel Johnson wrote that “the use of travelling is to regulate imagination by reality, and instead of thinking how things may be, to see them as they are.” More and more, it seems that “how things are” doesn't require much travel at all to understand, and that despite the endless stream of novelties that bombard us, our imaginations are regulated by the ruthless bottlenecks of our streamlined and optimized modern world. Can we still imagine a place where we truly make our own decisions, where we own the glory and duty borne of each victory and each defeat? Can we imagine a place where every person stands without privilege or prejudice under our shared sun?

If we cannot visit this utopia, and if we cannot wave a wand and bring the whole system down tomorrow, then perhaps we can do something else: carve out a place where our wishes and our dreams override the unending bustle of the crowded world. Perhaps as a stepping stone to a world without kings, we can stand up and declare ourselves the equal of any empire or republic. We can raise our own flags and deflate the self-importance of the state's pageantry. We can travel to a place where, contra Johnson, our imagination regulates reality. We can become nations ourselves.

Over the last few decades, a number of hobbyists and eccentrics have done just this, declaring the independence of their apartment, their backyard, or, in one notable case, a raft anchored by a Ford engine block off the coast of Jamaica. A few of these independent-minded pranksters have graduated to become bona fide nuisances to the world of nation-states, but the vast majority don't take themselves or their self-declared sovereign power very seriously. These kings and presidents-for-life have become part of a community of “micronations.”

In her 2014 book *Micronations: Invent Your Own Country and Culture with 25 Projects*, Kathy Ceceri laid out a series of activities designed to walk children through the steps

nomad press One of the great projects from *Micronations: Invent Your Own Country and Culture*

ACTIVITY!

DESIGN YOUR OWN Official Seal

Now that you have some ideas for symbols for your country, use them to create your micronation's official coat of arms and a **seal**. Seals were originally designs pressed into a soft piece of wax with a mold. A seal put on a document shows that a person or government official has approved it.

Today seals are usually stamped on with an inkpad or pressed into a piece of paper with a special tool so that it leaves a raised mark. This project makes a rubbery stamp for putting an inked seal on important documents.

WORDS TO KNOW!
seal: an official symbol that shows that a document or other object belongs to the government.

SUPPLIES

- paper and pencil
- marker
- craft foam
- scissors
- glue
- pieces of cardboard, flip flop, or blocks of wood small enough to hold
- inkpad, or paint on a disposable plate

BUILD IT YOURSELF

- 1 Start by sketching out your micronation's coat of arms. First draw the outside border of your design. Make it thick like the frame on a painting. It can be a circle, a shield, or any shape you like. Then choose some of your micronation's symbols and arrange them inside the border. Keep the symbols simple, and make sure they don't touch each other or the outside border.
- 2 To make the stamp, copy your coat of arms onto a sheet of craft foam. To make the backing, take your cardboard, foam backing from a flip-flop shoe, or wood and lay it on the table with the stamping side facing up.
- 3 Cut around the outside shape of your craft foam seal. Turn it over so the drawing on it is facing down. You do that because your stamp must be a mirror image of the final version. Place it on the backing, then trace around it to show where it will go.

12

Check out more titles and other great activities at nomadpress.net

of declaring independence, from writing a constitution to designing a sweet sash. The book includes brief interviews with figures who will be familiar to anyone who has studied the world of micronations, including Kevin Baugh, the long-serving president of Molossia (located in Nevada, or surrounded by Nevada, depending on how you look at it), and His Imperial Majesty Doctor Eric Lis of the Aerician Empire (located in cyberspace and allegedly in outer space, though Lis himself lives in Canada).

Ceceri doesn't just stick to the fun stuff, like using stickers to make your currency harder to counterfeit. She also uses this whirlwind tour of national symbology and identity to create a primer that walks children through the basics of culture, economics, law, and international relations. If you've got a middle schooler in need of a rainy-day project, then Ceceri has created a cheerful and informative book that will provide them with a lot of fun while sneaking in a bit of learning.

ALL OF THOSE activities are literally child's play next to the DIY projects mapped out in Erwin Strauss' cult classic *How To Start Your Own Country*. Strauss, a passionately libertarian figure in science-fiction fandom, first published this slim book in 1979

and expanded it for a second edition in 1984. At first it feels almost entirely tongue-in-cheek. But when Strauss lays out the approaches an aspiring nation-state might use to gain independence, he starts with the observation that a nation has to have territory and hold it. This leads him into a multipage discussion of topics ranging from accepting the economic domination of larger powers to whether a libertarian enclave can ethically threaten the use of weapons of mass destruction to maintain its independence—heady stuff for page 22 of any book.

If nuclear brinkmanship isn't how you'd like to spend your free time, Strauss walks through some other paths to independence or quasi-independence: setting up shop under a "flag of convenience," a legal battle, simply disappearing off the grid, or setting up a model country (what we would now call a micronation). Strauss puts less effort into giving readers the tools they'll need to organize a successful nation and recruit a population, topics that likely merit books of their own.

All of this makes up a mere third of the book. The remainder is dedicated to a series of small articles detailing different micronations, seasteads, and other secessionist projects of varying seriousness. For younger readers, this might come across as a cop-out, but for readers who grew up in the pre-Wikipedia age, this was the true delight of the book. It was a steady, driving, seemingly endless march of stories that appeared in no history we'd heard of, from Outer Baltonia, a North American "principality" that no one involved took seriously, to the Floating Republic, a brief 1797 alliance of British mutineers that made the very serious demand that London stop fighting Napoleon. After a few pages, it began to shake your faith in yourself. "How did I not know this?" "Can you really just do that?" "Why didn't that revolt succeed?" You might breeze past a handful as curiosities. Assembled in

ranks of dozens, that list of enclaves and ministates and freeholds began to seem more like forbidden knowledge.

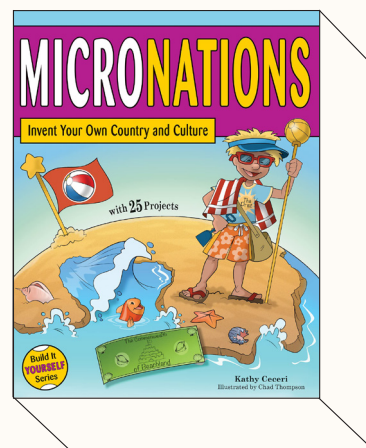
Today, we live in a world of listicles and clickbait trivia, and any random teenager can look into their phone and fire off the facts they just learned to an audience of millions with the easy authority of a tenured professor. Strauss' volume lived in that same space, years before most of us set aside the authority of academia or the library's reference section for the immediate satisfaction of the top three search results. *How To Start Your Own Country* presented an alternate world, and finding it in a used bookstore or a head shop could seem like finding Narnia in a wardrobe.

THE BOOK SITS at the center of today's micronationalism movement, which has exploded in size and popularity as the internet has lowered the barriers to entry. Wikipedia details dozens of micronations, and hundreds more can be found elsewhere on the internet. By gathering the stories of early micronations, Strauss jumpstarted this community.

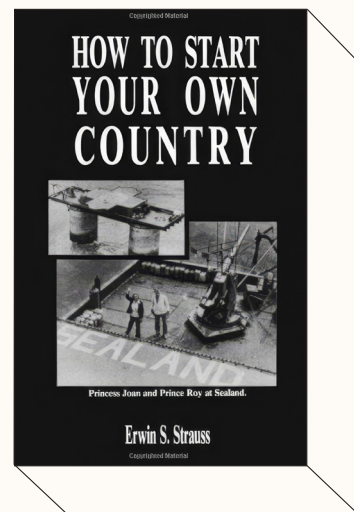
He inspired more than just hobbyists. Venture capitalist Peter Thiel is just the most visible of the many figures who dream of establishing truly sovereign micronations on artificial "seasteads," and in 2009 Strauss spoke at a conference held by the Thiel-funded Seasteading Institute. Strauss' offhand suggestion that aspiring heads of state might begin by co-opting a friendly nation as a "flag of convenience" is visible across the world. As our world becomes ever more interconnected and instantly legible, we have ironically learned more and more that the clean lines on our maps mean less than the flow of money and influence. In the course of suggesting that anyone could run a country, Strauss made his readers think about what people who run countries actually do. For some readers, this was an inspiration; for others, a warning.

Strauss' text is no longer in print, but copies are readily available. While it may be dated in many regards, it still provides the reader with a perspective and a sense of possibility that few books do. You could travel to a foreign country, or you could start seeing the patch of the world where you stand in new and exciting ways. And if you decide to turn that bit of land into a foreign country, well, Strauss has you covered. **T**

JAMES ERWIN is the Des Moines-based author of several reference works, including *Declarations of Independence: Encyclopedia of American Autonomous and Secessionist Movements*, as well as the website *Footnotes to History: The Nations You Didn't Learn About in High School*.



Micronations: Invent Your Own Country and Culture with 25 Projects, by Kathy Ceceri, illustrated by Chad Thompson, Nomad Press, 128 pages, \$16.95



How To Start Your Own Country, by Erwin Strauss, Paladin Press, 170 pages, \$20-\$50 used

A Beatnik Tourist in Ayahuasca Country

JESSE WALKER



LONG BEFORE IT was popular for New Age *norteamericanos* to visit the Andes Mountains seeking psychedelic enlightenment from ayahuasca, the Beat novelist William Burroughs made the trek. But he took the journey in 1953, when the literary template for a psychonautic vision quest

had not yet been set—not that a grumpy cynic like Burroughs was likely to write that way in the first place. Instead his account feels like the diary of an easily aggravated American tourist with firm views on the quality of the local hotels, officials, “god awful greasy food,” and prostitutes.

I say that as an endorsement. I yield to no one in my affection for mind-bending dispatches from inner space, but Burroughs’ bitter commentary makes for much funnier reading—especially since he wrote it in the same hard-boiled crime-story voice that he brought to *Junky*, the novel he published the same year he undertook his trip. The narrative in question is *The Yage Letters*, a book that collects his letters from South America to a friend, the poet Allen Ginsberg. (*Yage* is essentially another word for ayahuasca.) In the very first line, Burroughs announces that he has hemorrhoids, thus setting the tone for his tales.

“On my way back to Bogota with nothing accomplished,” the traveler declares a dozen pages later. “I have been conned by medicine men (the most inveterate drunk, liar and loafer in the village is invariably the medicine man), incarcerated by

Burroughs’ account feels like the diary of an easily aggravated American tourist with firm views on the quality of the local hotels, officials, “god awful greasy food,” and prostitutes.

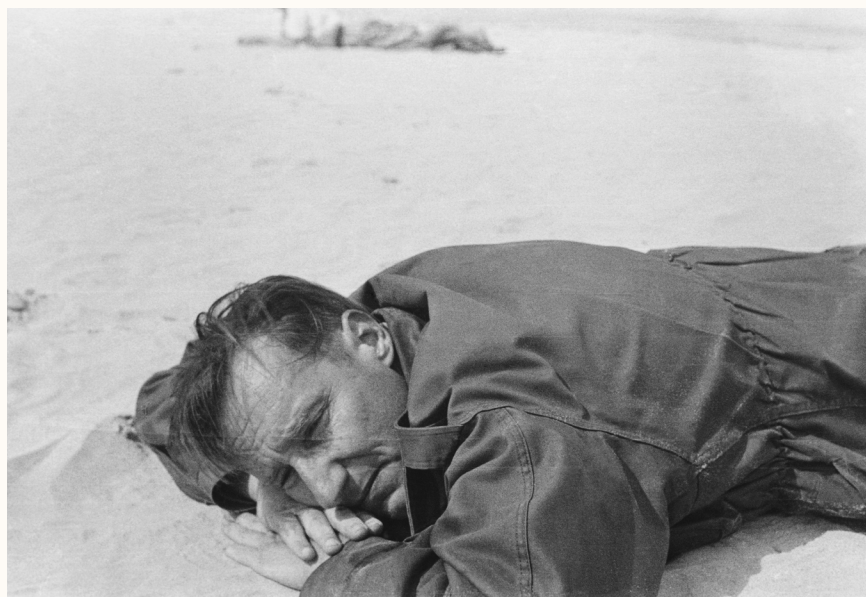
the law, rolled by a local hustler (I thought I was getting that innocent back woods ass, but the kid had been to bed with six American oil men, a Swedish Botanist, a Dutch Ethnographer, a Capuchin father known locally as The Mother Superior, a Bolivian Trotskyite on the lam, and jointly fucked by the Cocoa Commission and Point Four). Finally I was prostrated by malaria.”

As is often the case with Burroughs, the artist complaining of being conned sometimes comes across as a bit of a con artist himself. (In one excursion, he reports, “I was treated like visiting royalty under the misapprehension I was a representative of the Texas Oil Company travelling incognito.”) He certainly isn’t prettifying the less appealing parts of his personality; if anything, it feels like he’s deliberately leaning into them for comic effect. The results may be the only psychedelic diary that reads like a W.C. Fields routine.

Ayahuasca itself is famous for fusing intense religious visions with severe physical discomfort. When Burroughs finally samples it, we get several paragraphs of descriptions of the physical effects (“I vomited violently leaning against a

tree and fell down on the ground in helpless misery”) and nothing at all about the visions on offer. Never fear: Having made the drug sound like the most gruesomely unpleasant ordeal of his life, Burroughs nonetheless tries it again a page later, this time preparing it in a different manner. He has a better experience, but evidently not a life-changing one: The effect, he informs us, “was similar to weed.”

The book also includes a letter Ginsberg wrote to Burroughs from Peru when *he* tried ayahuasca in 1960. Ginsberg, unsurprisingly, says much more about his visions, which terrified him. The slim volume is filled out with Burroughs’ reply to Ginsberg, a brief comment from Ginsberg looking back from 1963 (the year the book was pub-





lished), and an experimental Burroughs text with Latin American imagery.

My beat-up old City Lights edition of *Yage* calls it an “epistolary novel,” a choice of words that raises a question lurking behind countless travelogues: *How much of this is true?* Burroughs really did go searching for this drug in South America, he really did send Ginsberg these letters, and I suspect that most or all of this really did happen, but it’s not hard to imagine the man embellishing a bit in the manner of many raconteurs. Or just coming up with a great phrase like “Bolivian Trotskyite on the lam” and deciding that he simply had to use it.

This is, in any event, one of the most entertaining books in the Beat canon. And amid all its grumbings about the towns and jungles that Burroughs traversed, one of his letters briefly breaks character to strike a more positive, almost utopian note.

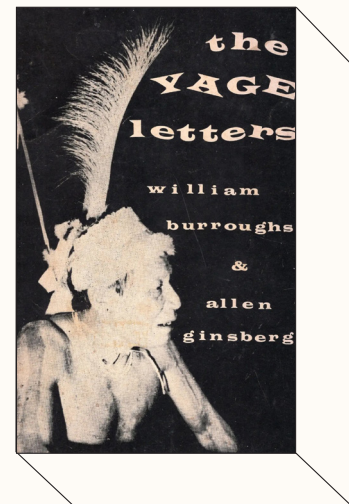
At this point in his life, Burroughs was an Old Right libertarian who

despised socialism and welfare-state liberalism while also having little love for the sort of conservative who preaches sexual moralism or racial purity. That spirit comes through in a letter from Peru that starts waxing rosily about *mestizo* culture, praising South Americans as a sexually liberated ethnic blend (“part Indian, part white, part god knows what”). He blames the region’s troubles on the lingering influence of the Spanish colonists, and he suggests that the civil war then raging in Colombia—classical liberals on one side, Catholic conservatives on the other—reflects “the fundamental split between the South American Potential and the Repressive Spanish life fearing armadillos.” He adds that he has “never felt myself so definitely on one side and unable to see any redeeming features in the other.” What the continent needs, he dreams, is “a new Bolivar who will really get the job done.”

The letter ends. A page later, he gets robbed twice and his old voice returns.

“This is a nation of kleptomaniacs,” he complains. 📍

Books Editor JESSE WALKER is the author, most recently, of *The United States of Paranoia*. He has been to every state but North Dakota and Hawaii—and let’s be real, those should be independent anyway.



The Yage Letters, by William Burroughs and Allen Ginsberg, City Lights, 68 pages, \$8–\$54 used

DOCUMENTARY
THE ENDLESS SUMMER

LIZ WOLFE

When I'm trapped in New York City, and the February winds rattle the windows of my house, and the trees outside are bare, and even my wetsuit—which the 38-degree ocean feels somehow too cold for—lies fallow in the closet, I turn on *The Endless Summer*.

I don't need to tell you it's from 1966; you'll know by Bruce Brown's narration, alternatively corny and wry. The story this documentary tells is simple: Two young surfers, unwilling to enter California's cold winter waters, set off to find a place where it's warm even in the winter, a place where that elusive perfect wave might be hiding (all accompanied by The Sandals' iconic surf rock score).

They try Australia, New Zealand, Tahiti, Hawaii, Senegal, Ghana, Nigeria, and South Africa. They are armed with heavy longboards—before anyone had board bags and leashes (which keep your board from getting too far away from you when you wipe out)—plus an atlas, a few pairs of board shorts, and a single Band-Aid in case of injury.

Today your average surfer can check Surfline, the website that tells you how waves are breaking in thousands of surf spots around the globe. You don't need an atlas: You have Google Maps. You can rent surfboards anywhere, and they come with leashes. You are, by and large, not stumbling across shark infestations or dangerous, shallow reef breaks—unless you intend to.

Watching this classic now reminds us: The world is so much more *known* than it used to be. The romanticism of a surf trip may be diminished. But the siren song surfers hear today is the same one that called *The Endless Summer's* protagonists all those years ago: We all just want to lose ourselves in a wave's perfection for a few seconds, letting everything else melt away. **f**



MUSEUM
VIKING SHIP MUSEUM

STEPHANIE SLADE

The Vikings were certainly world travelers: From home bases in Scandinavia they made their way as far west as North America, as far south as North Africa, and as far east as Russia and the Middle East. They were infamous as raiders, and their long wooden warships sparked terror. But they were also fishers, traders, and settlers of the British Isles and continental Europe. Each activity required a different kind of boat.

About 30 minutes outside of Copenhagen, Denmark, the Viking Ship Museum offers a glimpse into that seafaring life. On display are five real Viking ships, intentionally sunk in Roskilde Fjord around 1,000 years ago to form a defensive barrier and then carefully excavated in the 20th century. Visitors during the summer months can also sail on a reconstructed Viking craft, built on the premises using traditional materials and techniques. **f**

NOVEL
THE MINISTRY OF TIME

EMMA CAMP

What would happen if the modern-day British government discovered time travel? If Kaliane Bradley's highly lauded 2024 novel *The Ministry of Time* is speculating accurately, there would be a lot of paperwork.

The novel follows an unnamed civil servant as she takes part in a top-secret program to help doomed historical figures (in her case, a Victorian naval officer about to perish in an Arctic expedition) adjust to the modern world after they have become unwitting test subjects in a government time-travel project. The typical time-travel story hijinks ensue—romance, murder, blue sci-fi lasers.

Bradley's novel is an enjoyable, fast-paced read offering a unique spin on travel through time. While much of the narrative is devoted to watching a straightlaced Victorian gentleman adjust to the modern world with bumbling wonder, the government's larger plans soon catch up to him. Our characters may have been rescued from lives that would have seen them die of disease or in battle, but if they want real freedom, it will require something even harder to achieve than time travel: escaping a bureaucracy. **f**

VIDEO GAME
THE ELDER SCROLLS IV: OBLIVION

PETER SUDERMAN

If you're looking to see the sights and understand the culture of a foreign land, the easiest way to do it might be from the comfort of your couch, video game controller in hand. Open-world video games come packed with quests, combat, storylines, and bad guys to kill. But their core appeal is in the vast expanses of digital territory that players can explore.

Few such games have ever captured that sense of wonder and discovery better than the now-classic role-playing game *The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion*.

First released in 2006, and recently rereleased with brand new graphics, *Oblivion* was a landmark of the genre, partly for the nonlinear freedom it offered players and partly for the sheer expansiveness of its open world. Set in the mythical fantasy realm of Cyrodiil, it sets players loose on a map that feels continent-sized, with a sprawling and varied ecology and with breathtaking natural landmarks.

There are towns and cities to explore, each with its own architectural style, commercial options, and local culture. Stop at a local inn and you can discuss rumors about the realm's politics, along with indulging in local gossip. Visit a village's vendors and you might find a unique item of clothing, imbued with special powers, for your character to wear.

Playing the game is like visiting a foreign country: You can see the sights, sample the local culture and commerce, and perhaps find yourself on an unexpected adventure or two. It's tourism in a virtual, fictional world. **f**



ARCHITECTURE

KNOSSOS

JESSE WALKER

The world's most glorious monument to fakery, outshining even Las Vegas and the Disney archipelago, is Knossos, the Greek site containing the legendary Palace of Minos. There are real ruins at this place—remnants of a time, more than 3,000 years ago, when Crete was a center of art, trade, and technology. But when Arthur Evans started his excavations there in 1899, things got complicated.

Evans “restored” much of the architecture with concrete, making irreversible changes that owed as much to his creative speculations as they did to the archeological evidence. He had painters decorate the walls, extrapolating whole frescoes

from small fragments. Their art was beautiful, lively, and as authentic as a stuffed minotaur.

Evans also unleashed the idea that the island had been a matriarchal pacifist utopia. As Cathy Gere shows in her 2009 book *Knossos and the Prophets of Modernism*, this vision seized a lot of intellectuals' imaginations, with many people projecting their ideals onto Minoan Crete. The libertarian writer Albert Jay Nock declared that the Cretans enjoyed a thousand-year “period of unexampled peace and prosperity.”

Rather than remove Evans' additions, today's keepers of Knossos offer two layers of commentary. Tour the grounds, and the signs will fill you in on modern scholars' best guesses about the realities of ancient life there. But they'll discuss Evans' Knossos as well. After all, his notions are part of the place's history too. **i**

MUSEUM

FORD ROUGE FACTORY

JASON RUSSELL

When a friend kindly offered to drive me home to the Detroit area after a semester at college, he had one request: He wanted to see a car factory. I was skeptical I could pull that off—but lo and behold, Ford offers tours of its Rouge Factory as part of The Henry Ford museum complex.

Most factories are not known for their design, but parts of the complex were designed over a century ago by legendary Detroit architect Albert Kahn. Nor are factories known for the art they inspired, but Diego Rivera spent months at the factory doing research for his *Detroit Industry Murals*, featured in the Detroit Institute of Arts.

Many factories are, however, known for labor strife, and the Rouge factory has that too: 1937's Battle of the Overpass. Combine all that and you get a working factory that's also on the U.S. National Register of Historic Places.

The factory has changed a lot, from making Model T parts to making Mustangs to assembling electric Ford F-150s. The factory floor is cleaner and safer than the discourse over factory jobs may lead you to believe, though the jobs still aren't the right fit for anyone who doesn't want to work on their feet or listen to a cacophony of machinery and car horns all day.

The automation is evident in the ever-present twisting and turning of robotic arms. The global influence is harder to see, but it is there: Less than a third of the content of the 2024 model F-150 comes from the U.S. or Canada, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, and it's less than a quarter for the electric version. **i**

COOKBOOK

COASTAL

ELIZABETH NOLAN BROWN

Coastal: 130 Recipes from a California Road Trip is a lavishly illustrated how-to manual for making ghee, lox tacos, rhubarb brownies, grilled eggplant yakitori, bacon-fat roasted turnips, and much more. It's also a love letter to California's central coast. Author Scott Clark is a college dropout who cooked at multiple hoity-toity restaurants before opening his own place—Dad's Luncheonette—in a rented caboose on California's Pacific Coast Highway.

A mix of classic American comfort food and crunchy-Californian dishes with multicultural flair, *Coastal* borrows ample inspiration and ingredients from Mexican, Japanese, French, Korean, and other cuisines. He gives fresh takes on familiar foods—red miso caramel apples, matcha mochi waffles—along with more adventurous fare (head cheese with charred onion mustard, anyone?).

These recipes are “project cooking”—unlikely to be your go-to weeknight meals. Still, *Coastal* offers everyday inspiration to get creative and elevate the ordinary.

A “visual storybook of free-spirited California living,” *Coastal* introduces readers to not just recipes but the folks who make them possible, including sea vegetable foragers, wild boar hunters, regenerative farmers, and organic wine-makers. It's a cookbook, but it's also a reminder of what makes America great: its melting pot of cultures, its natural beauty and abundance, its capacity to accommodate reinvention, and, of course, some perfectly crunchy potato chips. **i**



4

YEARS AGO

May 2021

"A common refrain during the Obama administration, echoed by both major-party presidential nominees in 2016, was that people in the FBI's Terrorist Screening Database, which includes the no-fly list, should not be allowed to buy guns. Using the list to abridge civil liberties was a bad idea then, and it's a bad idea now. The no-fly list is a civil liberties nightmare: secretive and nearly impossible to challenge."

C.J. CIARAMELLA

"The No-Fly List Is a Civil Liberties Nightmare"

20

YEARS AGO

March 2005

"It is correct that airline security should be rethought from the ground up. But ground-up rethinking should really start at the ground. The [Transportation

Security Administration (TSA)] should be eliminated, not refocused....TSA security measures have been inconsistent and mindlessly reactive. This is because bureaucracies are poor at assessing and balancing risk. They are much better at surfing public opinion and following political cues. Witness the TSA's obsession with small, sharp things early in its tenure and the shoe fetish it adopted after Richard Reid demonstrated the potential hazards of footwear. This is not a foresighted, research-based, risk-assessing organization."

JIM HARPER

"Transportation Security Aggravation"

29

YEARS AGO

October 1996

"The nation's airports are now owned by local government authorities, and federal law requires the authorities to deposit their revenue into a reserve fund for airport improvements—a provision that has prevented private companies from buying commercial airports. No investor would sink money in a venture if all its profits had to be reinvested in the airport. The Federal Aviation Authorization Act of 1996 (H.R. 3539), however, would allow the Department of Transportation to exempt as many as five commercial airports from the reinvestment rule."

MARC LEVIN

"Flight Plan"

40

YEARS AGO

November 1985

"The history of transportation technology is the search for greater speed at decreased cost in resources, safety, and investment. This search has been stifled over the last 11 years by the 55-mile-an-hour speed limit, to the detriment of us all. It is as if the government had decreed in the '50s that airplanes were going fast enough and that no aircraft could surpass the speed of the DC-6. What a world of benefits would have been lost! The case against 55 is overwhelming, but help from our legislators in Washington does not appear to be forthcoming."

ALAN PISARSKI

"Deep-Six 55"

44

YEARS AGO

May 1981

"In 1970, when Congress and the Nixon administration agreed to continue passenger rail travel in the face of growing public preference for auto, bus, and plane, a modest \$40 million was put up to get Amtrak rolling. In 1981 Amtrak is still rolling, and the taxpayers now are laying down nearly \$900 million a year for it. Amtrak officials enthusiastically predict that the system will soon achieve 'a permanent and ever more crucial role in our national transportation system.' More realistically, the Interstate Commerce Commission notes that 'Amtrak seems to have stabilized into a position of permanently subsidized operations.'"

JEFFREY SHEDD

"Amtrak: Congress's Toy Trains"

46

YEARS AGO

February 1979

"These are heady times for supporters of the free market. For the first time in US history, an entrenched regulatory body—the Civil Aeronautics Board—has had its powers emasculated and is targeted for outright abolition, in 1985. As a result of the partial deregulation already accomplished, air transportation is booming, with both falling prices and rising airline profits."

ROBERT POOLE JR.

"Lessons of Deregulation"

48

YEARS AGO

April 1977

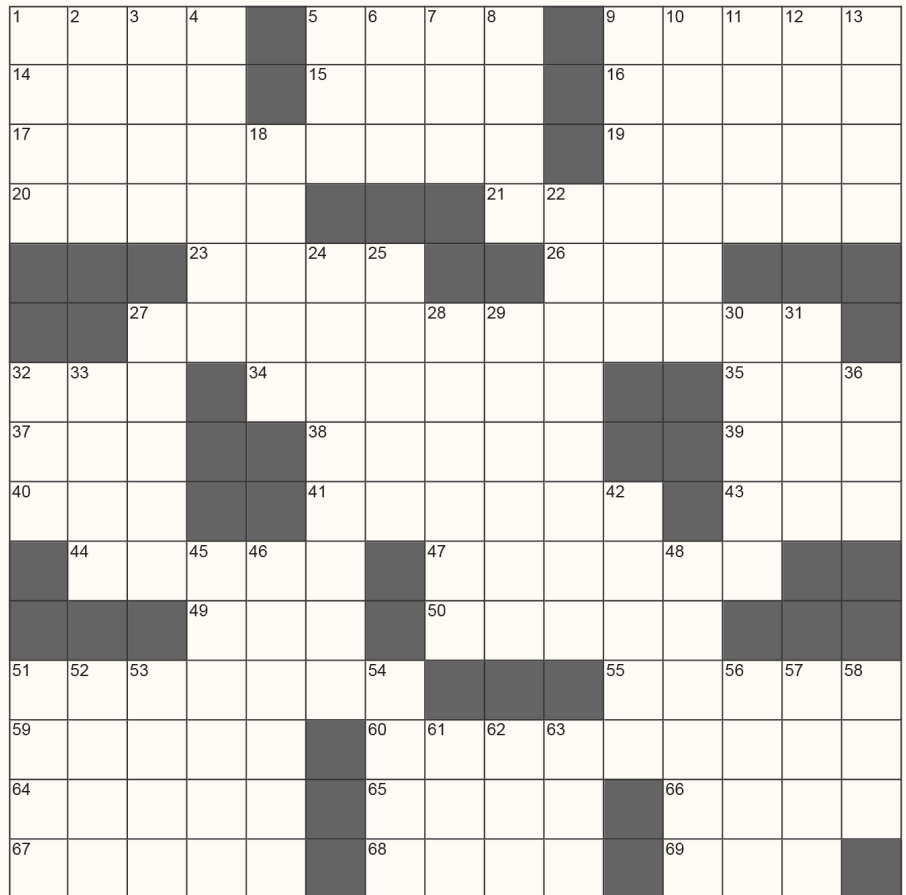
"The [Interstate Commerce Commission] was the very first of the regulatory agencies—though today it is by no means the biggest. It presides over more than 2,000 employees, spread among 78 offices throughout the United States. It operates on a yearly budget of around \$34 million. It writes and distributes hundreds upon hundreds of rules, decisions, regulations and findings in the transportation industry yearly. Included in its bureaucratic grasp are all railroads, and parts of trucking, pipeline and interstate water carriers. It acts as a court—judge and jury—in numerous disputes each year, and makes decisions in those disputes which affect each and every American citizen. And those decisions and directives operate to damage the American consumer in the yearly amount of not mere millions of dollars, but to the tune of billions."

TIMOTHY CONDON

"Abolish the ICC!"



Free To Travel



ACROSS

- 1. Do some last-minute studying
- 5. Cheese in a Greek salad
- 9. Ex-president who thinks Facebook is a public good
- 14. Streamer that refused to run certain political ads in 2022
- 15. ___ down the law
- 16. Rabbit relatives
- 17. Where to visit Adam Smith's grave
- 19. Move stealthily
- 20. Put on TV again
- 21. Many Nixon statements during the Watergate scandal
- 23. Vehicles that need a medallion to operate in NYC
- 26. "Industry Baby" singer Lil ___ X
- 27. Where to visit Independence Hall
- 32. Sense of self
- 34. *The Sound of Music* song
- 35. Bureau that buys metadata to spy on you: abbr.
- 37. Legally prohibit
- 38. Dies down

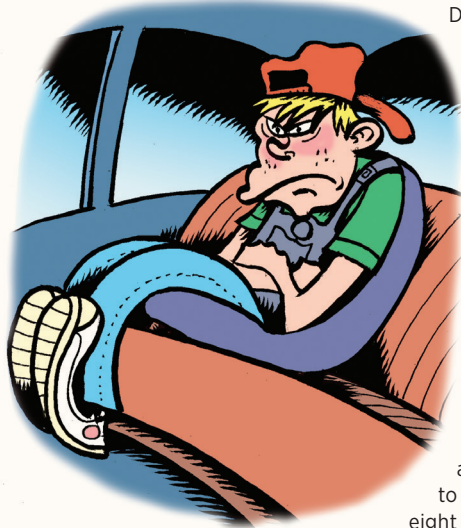
- 39. ["Not my mistake"]
- 40. "Well, that's show ___!"
- 41. What John Fetterman wore to Trump's second inauguration
- 43. Bit of body art
- 44. Sports car engine
- 47. Where to visit Ludwig von Mises' stomping grounds
- 49. *Dungeons and Dragons* character class
- 50. ___ but goodie
- 51. Either of Peter Suderman's dogs
- 55. Buckets at the beach
- 59. Completely committed
- 60. Where to legally visit a brothel or get cannabis at a coffee shop
- 64. *Game of Thrones* family name
- 65. The C in ACA
- 66. A bunk has two
- 67. Apartments and houses
- 68. Polish some prose
- 69. Apt rhyme for "Hooray!"

DOWN

- 1. Singer of "Dark Lady" and "Believe"
- 2. ___ awakening
- 3. Shawkat of *Arrested Development*
- 4. Where J.D. Vance harangued Europe about democracy in January
- 5. Target of a seasonal vaccine
- 6. Prominent feature of 16-Across
- 7. Comedian Notaro
- 8. Condition whose meds are highly DEA-regulated
- 9. Response to a zinger
- 10. Permanently exile
- 11. Geographic region
- 12. Banquet, for example
- 13. Poses a question
- 18. Pattern of challah bread
- 22. Joined the military
- 24. Casually ignores
- 25. Ranked-choice voting opponent Palin
- 27. Citrusy Japanese dipping sauce
- 28. From the beginning, in Latin

- 29. Lagasse of New Orleans
- 30. App where you can find @reasonmagazine
- 31. Continent of Tokyo and Taipei
- 32. Tidal withdrawal
- 33. Way of walking
- 36. ___ of Congress
- 42. Take potshots
- 45. Emulate Stephen Breyer in 2022
- 46. Loses a staring contest
- 48. Close at hand
- 51. Kind of horse feed
- 52. Choral voice part
- 53. Loudly shut
- 54. Confront head-on
- 56. Ingenious thought
- 57. *The Iron ___* (political biopic)
- 58. Text message protocol: abbr.
- 61. More than just annoyed
- 62. Colombo, ___ Lanka
- 63. Lunar new year celebration

Find this puzzle's solution at reason.com/puzzle



Dubai International Airport when he was stopped and searched. Authorities found 118 grams of cannabis and CBD, which O'Rourke's wife says he uses to treat the chronic pain from Addison's disease, a rare and life-threatening condition. His life sentence was overturned in February, and he was allowed to return home after eight months in detention.

The California Assembly Transportation Committee voted to advance Assembly Bill 435, which would require all children under age 10 and shorter kids under 13 to sit on a booster seat. Teens up to 16 years old would also be banned from the front seat altogether unless they meet the height requirements. Currently, children at least 8 years old or 4 feet, 9 inches tall do not have to use a booster.

A Canadian man was sentenced to life in prison in Dubai for possession of cannabis and CBD products. Kevin O'Rourke was traveling to South Africa through

Over 61 years, David O'Connor had driver's licenses in four states, including a commercial license for work as a truck driver. But when he went to get a REAL ID, Tennessee Driver Services Center officials not only refused to issue one but also revoked his driver's license, citing a state law prohibiting licenses for noncitizens. O'Connor, a Navy veteran, has been a citizen since birth, but he was born in Canada, where his parents temporarily lived at the time. When Tennessee officials saw his birth certificate, they assumed he was Canadian and refused to believe otherwise.



Italian aviation officials blocked a British Airways flight from leaving Milan for London after a surprise inspection found some seat cushions were too wide and thick. Cushions on exit rows are supposed to be smaller to create more room in case of an evacuation. To fix the problem, the air crew called out serial numbers for the

correct seats and had passengers check their cushions to see if any matched those numbers. They were able to locate enough cushions to swap out for the exit rows, and the flight departed after a delay of an hour.

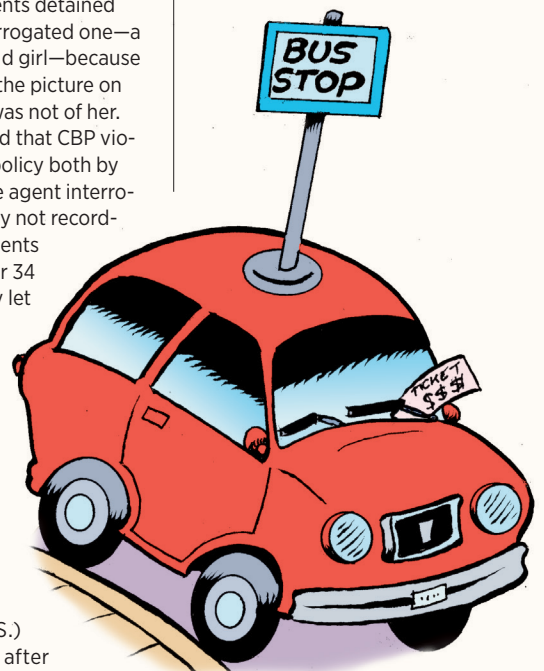
From October through December 2024, South Fulton, Georgia, Mayor Khalid Kamau made \$26,000 in unauthorized purchases on his city-issued credit card. That spending included more than \$5,000 in plane tickets, including a 20-day trip to Ghana. Kamau defended the trip, saying it was part of his economic development plan for the city.

A federal judge awarded \$1.5 million to a family whose children were wrongly detained at the border in March 2019. The family lives in Mexico, but the children, who are U.S. citizens, attend school in the United States. When the children attempted to cross the border as they regularly do, Customs and Border Protection (CBP) agents detained and interrogated one—a then-9-year-old girl—because they believed the picture on her passport was not of her. The judge ruled that CBP violated its own policy both by having a single agent interrogate her and by not recording it. In all, agents held the girl for 34 hours and only let the children go when their mother began giving interviews to the media.

Lino Monteleone of Montreal received a \$186 Canadian (\$133 U.S.) parking ticket after



a bus stop sign was installed overnight in front of his house, replacing a legal spot where his daughter's car was parked. On April 1, 2025, Monteleone's doorbell camera showed city workers setting up the sign just before 8 a.m. A parking agent issued a ticket just minutes later at 8:05 a.m. Montreal's public transport agency said the sign was added due to nearby construction and that it doesn't notify residents about new bus stops because there are 10,000 in the city.





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