

# Jaunting

The Magazine of Recreational Travel

Aloha! Welcome to

# Hawai'i

A Barge Trip Through Burgundy

A Foodie Fantasy in Scotland

A Bucket List Rocket Launch

Korea's Lost Silla Kingdom

June 2023



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## **Jaunting Magazine**

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All travel involves risk.  
Confirm directions and critical  
information before traveling.  
Be aware of health and other  
concerns.

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*Explore a rich tapestry of  
nature and culture  
on the big island of  
Hawai'i*



Aloha! Welcome to  
**Hawai'i**

Feature by  
**Debbie Stone**



Hilo, Hawai‘i has the distinction of being the wettest city in the U.S. with an average of 276 days of rain per year. I can personally attest to this fact, having recently been to the city and experiencing intermittent heavy squalls and downpours during my visit. The silver lining in all this “liquid sunshine,” however, were all the spectacular waterfalls that thundered down from the cliffs.

I was a first time visitor to the island of Hawai‘i, the youngest and largest of the Hawaiian Islands, and Hilo was my first stop. Top on my list of sights in the area was Hawai‘i Volcanoes National Park. Located less than an hour’s drive from downtown Hilo, the park, which was established in 1916, is designated as an International Biosphere Reserve and a World Heritage Site.

Biologically, the park comprises seven ecological zones and provides refuge for several threatened species. Culturally, its archeological record provides a link to the past, connecting today’s Hawaiians to their ocean-faring ancestors, who made landfall on this island.

The park spans across 350,000 acres and encompasses the summits of two of the world’s most active vol-canoes, Kīlauea and Mauna-loa. The latter is earth’s most massive mountain, with an estimated volume of 19,000 cubic miles and a summit of 56,000 feet above the sea floor. That’s over 27,000 feet taller than Mt. Everest!

Volcanic features at the park include calderas, pit craters, cinder cones, spatter ramparts, fumaroles, Pāhoehoe (ropy) and ‘a‘ā (rough and jagged) lava flows, tree molds, black sand beaches and thermal sections. If





you're unfamiliar with some of these terms, you'll get a crash course in volcanic vocabulary through the exhibits and films at the Kīlauea Visitor Center. You can also learn about the latest info on trails, ranger-led tours, road conditions and any safety precautions.

The park also has numerous cultural sites such as historic foot trails, petroglyph fields, once-inhabited lava tube caves and ruins of coastal fishing villages.

Near the visitor center is an historic cabin that was the 1877 Volcano House Hotel, now converted to the Volcano Art Center Gallery. Inside you'll find a photography exhibit documenting the recent eruption, along with handmade Hawaiian arts and crafts.

Across the road from the gallery is the current Volcano House. Walk through the lobby towards the lounge area for a million-dollar view overlooking the crater.



Then start your tour at the Kīlauea Overlook and head clockwise along Crater Rim Drive. Get out and walk the Crater Rim Trail, which goes about three-fourths of the way around the Kīlauea Caldera. As I viewed the steaming crater, I was reminded that volcanoes are monuments to earth's origin and evidence that ancient forces are still at work. They humble us, demonstrating that our planet is an ever-changing entity with processes that are far beyond our control.

Make sure to check out Nāhuku (Thurston Lava Tube). You'll first descend into the rainforest before reaching the mouth of the 500-year-old lava tube. A moat-like bridge leads you into the dimly lit cave. Inside, lights guide the way through the damp tunnel. Pinch yourself as you realize that you're walking through what was once a riverbed of burning lava.

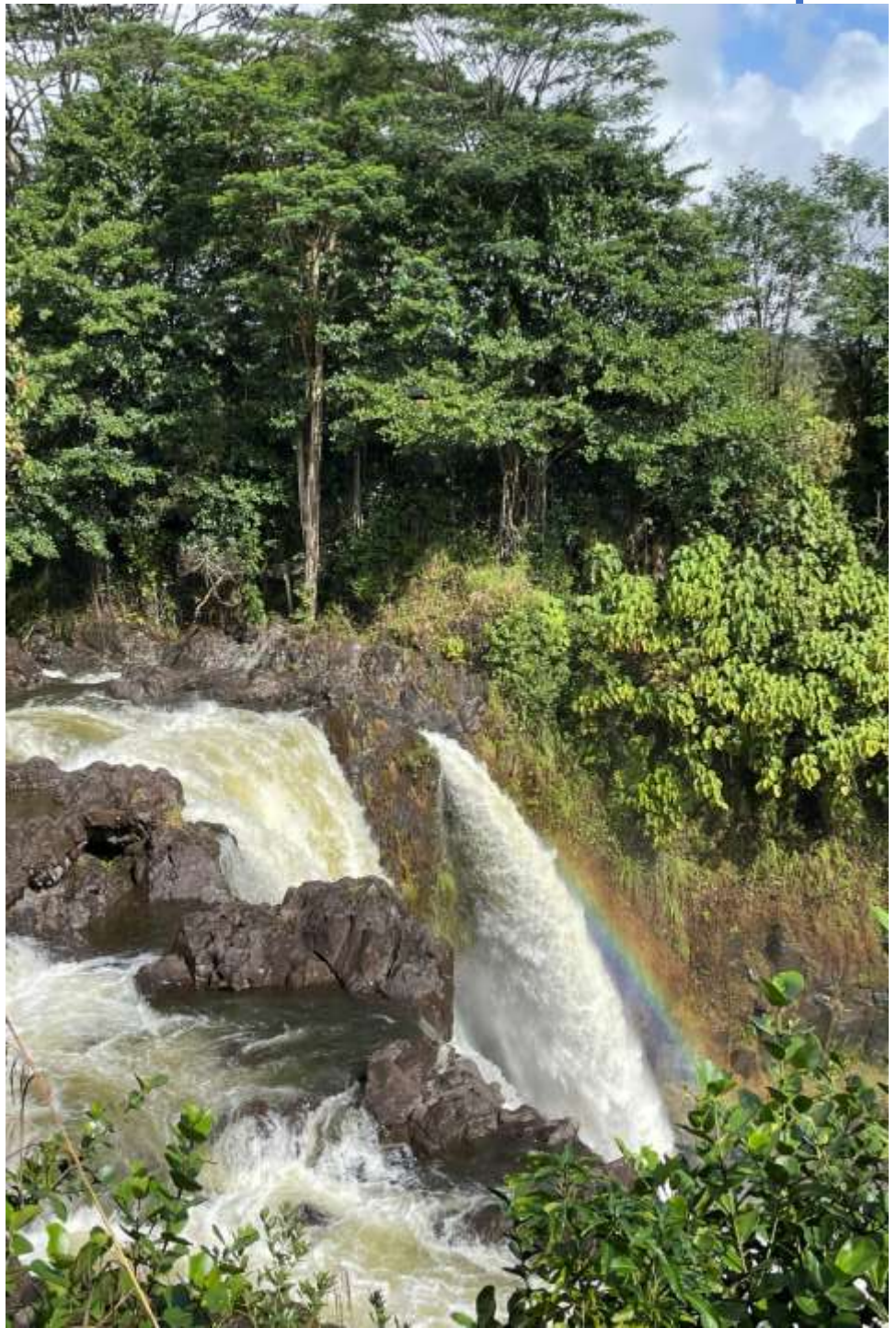
Crater Rim Drive ends at Chain of Craters Road. You can take this road for almost nineteen miles until it reaches the ocean cliffs, stopping along the way to take short hikes to check out the many features of this surreal landscape.

Back in Hilo, the waterfalls were as glorious as I had anticipated due to the rain. About ten minutes from town is Rainbow Falls, a gorgeous eighty-foot cascade that's known for the colorful rainbows formed in the morning mist. It had been raining when I drove up to the parking lot, but as soon as I got out of my car,

the sun decided to shine, providing that perfect photo opp. Take the path to the left and up the stairs for another view from the top of the waterfall.



There are several legends associated with Rainbow Falls. According to one, the large cave under the falls was the home of Hina, mother of the Demi-God Māui. One day, a scary dragon named Mo‘o Kuna tried to block the gorge below the falls to drown Hina. She realized that the cave might be submerged by the rising water level of the river and cried for Maui to help. Māui paddled his canoe to the mouth of the river and destroyed the rock, saving his mother’s life and thwarting the dragon’s plans.



At ‘Akaka Falls State Park, about fourteen miles north of Hilo, you’ll find a pair of picturesque waterfalls: 100-foot Kahuna Falls and towering ‘Akaka Falls, the latter which plunges 442 feet



into a gorge. Walk the paved loop trail, which takes you through a lush rainforest filled with wild orchids, giant bamboo groves and draping ferns. You'll feel as if you've entered a



primordial realm and immediately have that “Honey I Shrunk the Kids” sensation, as you are dwarfed by your surroundings.

The hike offers good vantage points for seeing both waterfalls.

The flora on the island is equally as impressive as the waterfalls.



Hawai'i Tropical Bioreserve & Garden is a

feast for the senses. Founders Dan and Pauline Lutkenhouse discovered the Onomea Valley back in 1977 and from forty acres of impenetrable jungle, they created a twenty-acre Edenesque paradise with more

than 2,000 plant species.

A mile-and-a-half-long path leads you into the valley, over streams, past waterfalls and by century-old mango trees. Lining both sides of the walkway are tropical flowers – orchids, anthurium, bird of paradise, ginger, hibiscus, heliconia, spider lilies,



bromeliad, African tulips and more – in vibrant hues. At the end of the valley, you’ll reach the Pacific Ocean and the views will leave you spellbound.

Lili’uokalani Garden is another lovely spot to stroll. This serene garden fronts Hilo Bay and sits on 24.5 acres. Named for Queen Lili’uokalani, a Hawaiian monarch, the garden is dedicated to the many Japanese immigrants living in Hilo. Created in the early 1900’s, it’s said to be the

largest Edo style garden outside of Japan. Here you'll find tidepool lagoons full of koi and tropical fish, various rock formations, bamboo glades, stone lanterns, charming bridges and a traditional Japanese tea house.

If you're interested in the history of Hawai'i, its islands and its people, stop in at the Lyman Museum and Mission House. The museum began as the Lyman Mission House,



originally built for New England Missionaries David and Sarah Lyman in 1839. About a hundred years later, the museum was established by their descendants. Today, the Mission House is on the State and National Registers of Historic Places and may be visited by guided tour.



Don't miss Hilo's daily farmers' market, where vendors sell exotic fruits and veggies, locally grown flowers, handmade crafts, works of art and photography and souvenirs. Wednesdays and Saturdays are "big market" days, attracting over 200 vendors into the downtown space. I loved perusing and grazing- the apple bananas, rambutan, ginormous avocados, taro, macadamia nuts, lychee, mochi- while mingling among the locals and other tourists.

During my stay in Hilo, I planted myself at the Inn At Kulaniapia Falls. Situated





on 22  
verdant  
acres and  
sur-  
rounding  
a privately  
accessible  
waterfall,  
the inn is  
minutes  
from  
town, but  
worlds  
away. It's

a peaceful retreat, where nature takes centerstage. Accommodations are located in several Asian-inspired buildings. My room was in the Pagoda Guest House, which has its own kitchen, stocked with teas and coffee and a few sweet treats.

Breakfast is included in the room rate and you'll dine on locally sourced items, including eggs, Hawaiian bread and fresh



pine-  
apple,  
while  
taking in  
the  
dramatic  
view of  
the falls  
each  
morning.  
And if  
you want  
a special

dinner, the inn’s team of private chefs will create a meal to remember, using only the finest, fresh ingredients.

The inn is an eco-friendly and sustainable property, generating all of its own power from a hydroelectric system powered by the falls, and solar panels. You won’t be roughing it, though, as all the amenities you need are provided, including high speed Wi-Fi, hair dryers, hot showers, and more. There’s no air conditioning, but none is really necessary. Turn on the ceiling fan, open the

windows for cool breezes and go to sleep to the sounds of the waterfall.

During the day, explore the property with its miles of

trails. When river safety conditions permit, you can even swim, kayak and paddleboard under the 120-foot-tall Kulaniapia Falls.

After my time in Hilo, I migrated across the island to Kona, where I spent the second part of my trip. Thankfully, the weather dramatically improved and with blue skies and warm temps, it was time for me to get out on the water. With this goal in mind, I opted to take the “Midday Meander: Kealakekua Bay Kayak and Snorkel





Photo courtesy of Kona Boys

Tour” with Kona Boys.

Famous for its marine diversity and coral that can grow up to 100 feet deep, the Marine Life Conservation District in Kealahou Bay is one of the most



Photo courtesy of Kona Boys

spectacular  
underwater  
parks in  
Hawai‘i. It’s  
also the most  
protected deep  
water bay in  
the Hawaiian  
Islands.

Our guide  
Ray, who we  
learned is not  
only a certified  
kayak guide,



Photo courtesy of Kona Boys



Photo courtesy of Kona Boys



but also a professional fire dancer, accompanied us on a paddle across the bay, while regaling us with interesting and rich details about the area.

Once across the bay, we got the opportunity to snorkel in one of the most pristine reefs in the world with over 200 species of reef fish, turtles, eels, reef sharks and rays. As I snorkeled, I was captivated by the diversity of the fish around me. My favorite was the parrotfish. Named for their resemblance to their land-residing counterparts due to their beaks, these fish are striking in color. Fun fact: Parrotfish change colors as they swap sex from female to male, triggering a rainbow of hues.

The reef we snorkeled in is by Captain Cook's monument, so of course Ray recounted the famed explorer's experiences and tragic demise on the island of Hawai'i. A marker denotes where he was killed at the hands of an incensed crowd on Feb. 14, 1779.

One of the immensely pleasant experiences we had was seeing where Kona Coffee is grown. Kona Coffee is world renowned and a visit to a coffee farm in Kona is often on many visitors' lists. If you're seeking a fun, interactive, informative and tasty experience, make a reservation to tour Heavenly Hawaiian. You'll get all of the above plus to-die-for views from the farm's hilltop location overlooking the ocean.





Heavenly Hawaiian grows, processes and roasts 100% Kona Coffee on its 39-acre property. A tour of the farm covers the significance and rarity of 100% Kona Coffee, as well as provides an understanding of what it takes to get the coffee from farm to cup. The company is one of over 650 coffee farms in the designated Kona Coffee belt – an approximate 30-square-mile swath of land.

Conditions in this area are highly favorable for growing coffee. The rich, porous volcanic soil has its own natural irrigation system, and the cloud inversion layer provides the necessary mid-day shade for the coffee trees. During the tour, your guide will explain about the different varieties grown on the farm and show you the machines used in processing the beans. You'll also learn about invasive species, particularly the borer beetle and leaf rust, a fungus; both which are very harmful to coffee crops, and what the farm is doing to combat them. You

might be surprised to find out that one coffee tree produces only one pound of coffee. Think of how many trees are needed all over the world to satisfy humans' consumption of this popular beverage!

For an historical perspective as to how the coffee pioneers lived and worked years ago in Kona, take a self-guided tour of the Kona Coffee Living History Farm. Wander around the property, which was once the homestead of three generations of the Uchida family between 1925-1994. The place depicts the family's daily life, complete with family heirlooms, photos, unique furniture, religious altars and other artifacts that speak to the values and traditions of Japanese immigrant families in Kona. Interesting to note is that by 1910, Japanese made up more than 80% of the Kona coffee farming population.





Continue to delve into Hawaiian cultural history at Pu‘uhonua o Hōnaunau National Historical Park. Set on the rugged south Kona coast, Pu‘uhonua o Hōnaunau,

which translates to mean “place of refuge of Hōnaunau,” is one of Hawai‘i’s most sacred historic places. This expansive park was once the home of royal grounds and a safe haven for those who broke the kapu, or ancient Hawaiian laws. Such lawbreakers were punishable by death. However, if you were able to elude your captors and reach the refuge, you could receive absolution from

a high priest. This meant you would be pardoned and given a second chance at life.

Understand that reaching this sanctuary was not easy. A black lava rock shoreline hindered those from



approaching by sea and the waters were shark infested.

Today, visitors can explore the grounds, with points of interest including the Great Wall, which was said to have been constructed of lava rock over 500 years ago;

Hale o Keawe temple, which is guarded by carved wooden images symbolizing Hawaiian gods; a canoe landing and canoe house; fish ponds; and Kōnane, a Hawaiian strategy game played with rocks that resembles checkers.

On various days, cultural demonstrations are conducted at the park to provide an authentic historical experience to

visitors. I watched a woman weaving baskets from coconut fronds and a man making poi during my visit.





Another tour I recommend is of Kona Sea Salt. Located on seven acres of ocean-front on Kona Keahole Point, the farm

hand harvests Hawaiian Salt from deep ocean waters, 2200 feet below the surface of the Kona Sea. Kona Sea Salt is the only sea salt in the world made from pure, 900-year-old deep ocean water, rich in natural minerals and flavor, making it one of the highest quality finishing salts

in the world.

The company puts the water from the sea into an enclosed solar evaporation system, which



dries the salt naturally over the course of a month, leaving behind pure white salt crystals. Because it's naturally dried by the sun, rich minerals like calcium, magnesium and potassium, are preserved. The crystals are scooped up by hand and put into covered wooden hoppers for the final drying step. Once fully dried, the salt is inspected and packaged for sale.

At the end of the tour, everyone gets a chance to taste Kona Pure and Flavored Salts with an array of fruits and veggies. My salt favorites were: fresh herbs, garlic, lemon rosemary and Maui onion.

When it comes to food, the bounty of fresh seafood and produce on the island is astonishing. As a pescatarian, I was in heaven dining on macadamia nut-crusted mahi mahi, poke bowls with seared ahi, coconut shrimp, bouillabaisse, and sushi and sashimi galore. I loved starting my day with an acai bowl, and in the afternoon, I would check out the different shave ice stands. This iconic Hawaiian frozen treat is a must-try for visitors.

Unlike snow cones, shave ice is made with finely shaved, not crushed, ice. It's then mounded in a cup, drizzled with artificially or naturally flavored syrups, and can be topped with ice cream, mochi balls, fruit and a "snowcap" of sweetened condensed milk or cream. Be prepared to be overwhelmed by the variety of flavors!





While on Kona, my sanctuary was the Outrigger Kona Resort and Spa, a 22-acre, luxurious ocean-front property perched

above the lava cliffs of Keāhole Bay. My spacious and comfy room with island inspired decor had all the amenities plus breathtaking views of the ocean. I could have sat on the Lānai for hours, drinking up the vistas and fiery sunsets.



The 509-room resort had everything you could dream of and more, from a multi-level, lagoon style pool with a

200-foot water slide, onsite cafe and poolside bar, shops and a spa with a menu of rejuvenating and relaxing treatments. Each day, there were activities for guests, from yoga and lei making to hula and ‘ukulele lessons. And on certain nights, you could opt to dine under the stars at the “Feast and Fire Lū‘au.”

What also makes the property extra special is its manta ray viewing deck. The Kona coast is one of the only places in the world where you can view giant manta rays up close. And at the Outrigger Kona, these creatures often come out at dusk to feed on plankton right in front of the resort. You can also listen to education talks at the resort’s Manta Center and even take a nighttime snorkel with these gentle beasts at the Manta Ray Village. Like I said, everything!



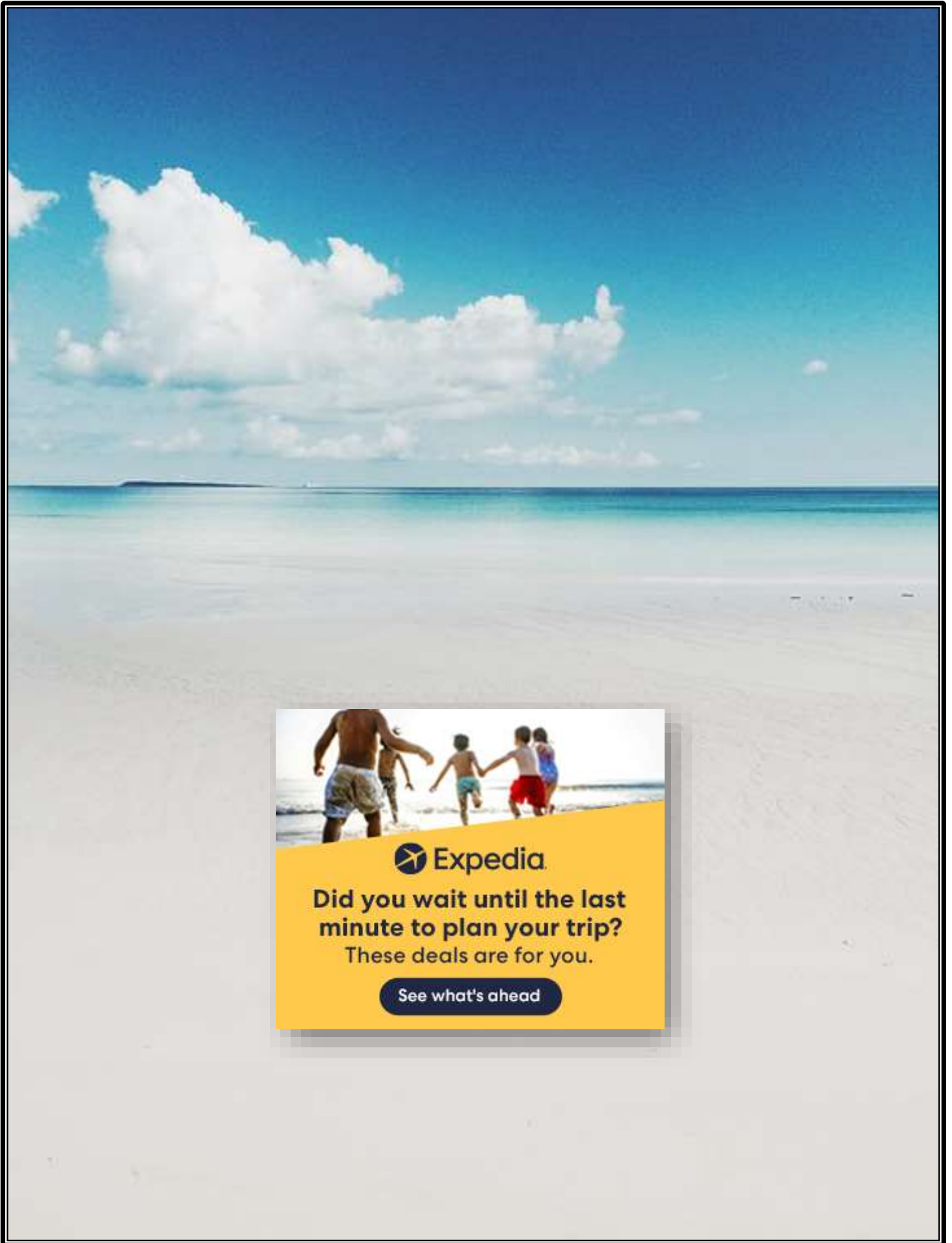
**For more information:**

Hawai'i - [www.gohawaii.com/island-of-hawaii](http://www.gohawaii.com/island-of-hawaii)

Inn at Kulaniapia Falls: - [www.waterfall.net](http://www.waterfall.net)

Outrigger Kona Resort and Spa: - [www.outrigger.com/hawaii/hawaii-big-island/outrigger-kona-resort-and-spa](http://www.outrigger.com/hawaii/hawaii-big-island/outrigger-kona-resort-and-spa)





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A woman with long dark hair, wearing a patterned top and a brown skirt, is seen from behind. She has a dark backpack on and is looking at a large digital departure board in an airport terminal. The board displays various flight information in red and white text on a blue background. The scene is brightly lit, typical of an airport interior.

# Make Your Next Layover The Best Layover Ever

*Discover the secrets to making  
the most of your layovers with  
these tips to productive  
and fun stopovers!*



When it comes to air travel, layovers are often seen as an inconvenience. However, with the right mindset and a little planning, layovers can be transformed into opportunities for exploration, relaxation, and even savings. In this article, we will guide you through strategies to make the most of your layovers, whether you're looking to break up long flights, explore new destinations, or simply make your journey more enjoyable.

**EMBRACE THE LAYOVER:** One of the first steps in maximizing your layover experience is to realize that it's not just idle time. When booking your flights, consider factors such as the duration of the layover, airport facilities, and visa requirements. Longer layovers, typically four hours or more, provide more time to

venture beyond the airport and explore the layover destination. Amazing things lie just outside of the airports – Arlington National Cemetery is a half-hour Uber ride from Ronald Reagan National Airport for instance. However, even shorter layovers can be made meaningful by focusing on airport amenities and nearby attractions. Tell yourself that a layover is an opportunity, not a nuisance.

**PLAN AHEAD:** To ensure a smooth layover experience, it's essential to research and plan ahead. Use online resources, travel guides, and local recommendations to familiarize yourself with the layover destination. Identify points of interest, popular attractions, and local customs. Create a flexible itinerary that suits your preferences and allows for efficient use of your layover time.

## EXPLORE THE AIRPORT:

Airports nowadays offer a wide array of amenities and services that can make your layover enjoyable within the airport premises.

Some airports have amazing experiences waiting for you. The Amsterdam Airport Schiphol (AMS) has the Rijksmuseum Schiphol, a branch of the renowned Dutch national museum, exhibiting a rotating selection





of artworks, allowing travelers to enjoy masterpieces without leaving the airport.

Even if your layover doesn't have a unique experience, frequent fliers and first class

passengers can look forward to airport lounges at major hubs where they can relax, access Wi-Fi, enjoy complimentary food and beverages, or even take a shower to freshen up.

Central areas of airports often look more like shopping malls than airports these days. Many airports feature duty-free shopping, so take the opportunity to browse for souvenirs or indulge in some retail therapy. Treat yourself to a spa treatment or massage to unwind and rejuvenate before your next flight. Additionally, explore the airport's dining options and savor local or international cuisine.

**VENTURE OUTSIDE:** If you have a longer layover, consider venturing outside the airport to explore the layover destination. Many cities have efficient transportation systems connecting the airport to the city center or nearby attractions. Check if the airport offers luggage storage facilities to lighten your load during your exploration. Research iconic landmarks, museums, parks, or neighborhoods that are easily accessible from the airport. Depending on the layover duration, you can

immerse yourself in the local culture, sample regional cuisine, or take a guided tour to discover hidden gems. Just



ensure you have enough time to return to the airport comfortably and pass through security and immigration checks.

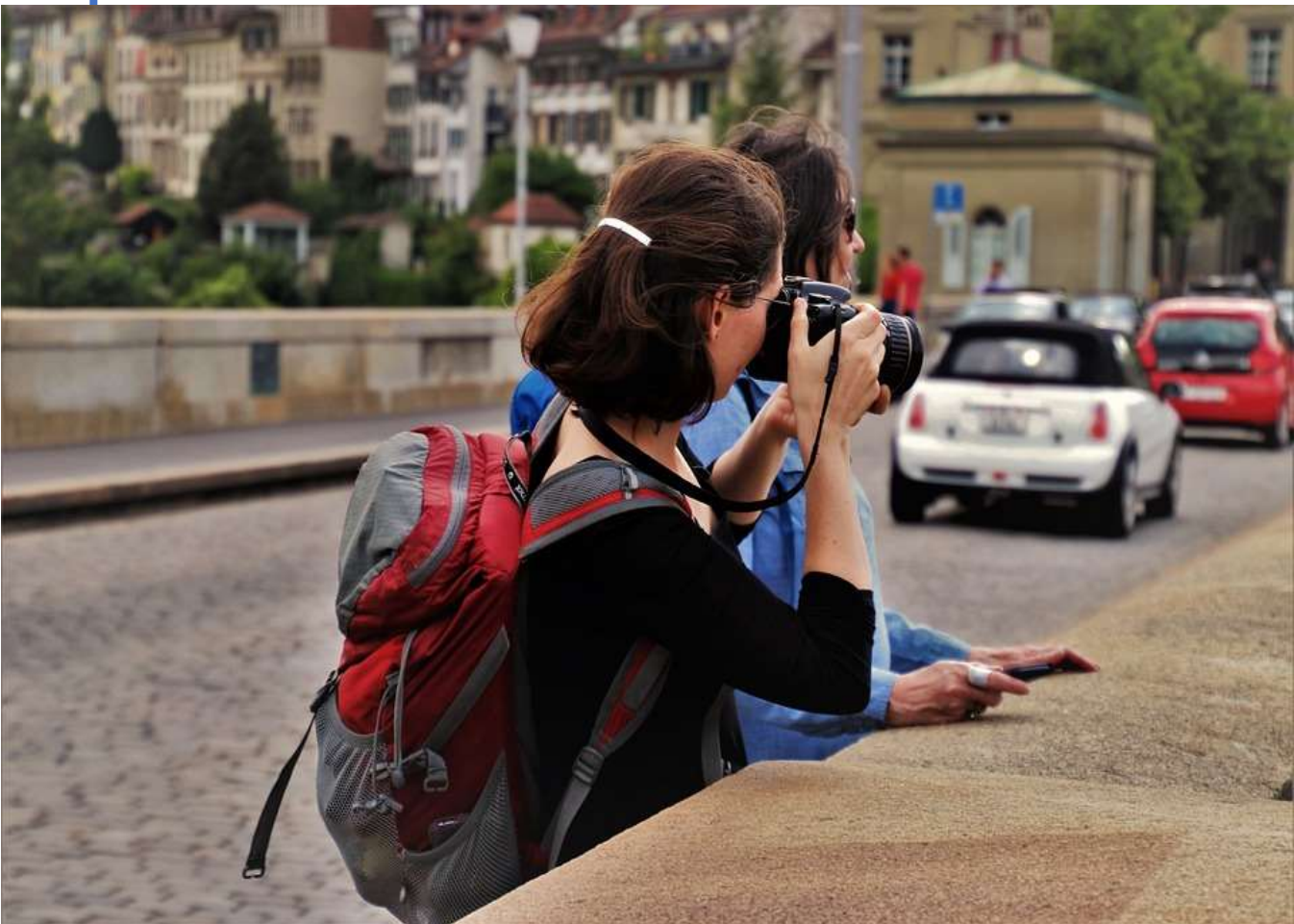
**SAFETY AND TIME CONSIDERATIONS:** While exploring during a layover can be exciting, it's crucial to prioritize safety and be mindful of time constraints. Leave ample time for security checks, immigration procedures, and returning to the airport. Account for potential transportation delays or traffic conditions, especially during peak travel hours. Keep an eye on the clock and set reminders to ensure you return to the airport with sufficient time before your next flight. Remember, it's better to be early and relaxed than rushed and stressed.

**PACK ESSENTIALS:** When embarking on a layover adventure, pack smartly to make your journey hassle-free. Include a change of clothes, toiletries, and essential electronics in your carry-on luggage. Dress comfortably and wear appropriate footwear for walking and exploring. Consider carrying a compact day bag or backpack to store your essentials during your layover

exploration. By packing light, you'll have more freedom to move around and enjoy your time.

**INTERNATIONAL LAYOVERS:** For international layovers, it's essential to be aware of visa requirements, transit regulations, and immigration procedures. Check if you need a transit visa or if you're eligible for a visa-free transit. Research the specific requirements of the layover country and plan accordingly. Useful online resources and embassy websites can provide up-to-date information about visa requirements and transit rules for different countries. Make sure to allocate sufficient time for immigration procedures and any necessary visa applications.

**CONCLUSION:** Layovers no longer have to be seen as a mere inconvenience in your travel journey. By following these strategies, you can transform layovers





into opportunities for exploration, relaxation, and cultural immersion. Choose your layovers wisely, research and plan ahead, and make the most of airport amenities. If time permits, venture outside the airport to experience the local culture and attractions. Remember to prioritize safety, be mindful of time constraints, and pack smartly.

Embrace layovers as an integral part of your travel experience, and you'll discover that they can add an extra layer of excitement and discovery to your journey.

So, the next time you find yourself with a layover, seize the opportunity to make it a memorable and enjoyable part of your travels. Bon voyage!



*Over a thousand years ago, one  
dynasty united the three  
kingdoms of Korea.*



Discovering Korea's Lost  
**Silla Kingdom**

Feature by  
**Max Reynolds**



**General Kim Yushin sat atop his horse, surveying the battlefield from a vantage point on the hill. He knew that the battle was not going well. Despite having the best of the Silla army at his command and backed up with their allies the Tang army from China, his forces were far outnumbered by the 300,000 soldiers of the Baekje and Goguryeo kingdoms. But he also knew that he had a plan.**

With a wave of his hand, he signaled to the center units of his army, in the open in an otherwise wooded and hilly countryside, exposed to a hailstorm of arrows and facing a rush of cavalry to pull back. The enemy forces, seeing the Silla-Tang alliance fleeing the field, surged forward in pursuit, eager to claim victory.

But as the Baekje and Goguryeo troops closed in, they suddenly found themselves surrounded by Silla-Tang forces who had held their positions in the dense woods and hills. The Silla army launched a surprise attack from their rear. The sound of steel on steel echoed across the battlefield as the two sides clashed in a fierce and brutal struggle.

The wide-ranging and chaotic battle turned in favor of the Silla-Tang alliance. The Baekje and Goguryeo forces, caught off guard by the sudden ambush, were thrown into disarray. With tens of thousands dead, their ranks shattered and their soldiers fled in all directions.

For General Kim, the Battle of Hwangsanbeol was a hard-fought and bitter struggle, one that tested the limits of his skill and courage. But with his tactical brilliance



and leadership, he had emerged victorious, securing the future of the Silla kingdom and cementing his place in history as one of Korea's greatest military commanders.

The battle of Hwangsanbeol was the beginning of the end of the Three Kingdoms period of Korea and was a turning point in the unification of Korea under the Silla Kingdom for the next two hundred years.

Archeologists believe they know the location of the battle, not far from the historic capital of the Silla Kingdom, Gyeongju, in present day South Korea. You may not be able to stand in a spot in the forests and rolling hills and say with confidence that you stood where General Kim commanded his troops,



but you can certainly see the wonders of the Silla Kingdom, from royal gardens to temples to astronomical observatories.

During the Silla Kingdom, starting with its birth in the 1st century BC, to its final days in the 10th century AD, the Korean Peninsula saw the development of a unique blend of Buddhism and native shamanism, which produced some of the most remarkable examples of Korean art and architecture. Many of the temples and shrines built during this period still stand today, showcasing the exquisite craftsmanship and attention to detail that was characteristic of the Silla Kingdom.

The Silla Kingdom was also known for its military prowess, which allowed it to expand its territories and

assert its dominance over neighboring kingdoms. This was especially evident during the reign of King Jinheung, who with General Kim conquered the neighboring kingdoms of Baekje and Goguryeo, paving the way for the unification of Korea under the Silla Kingdom.

Despite the many achievements of the Silla Kingdom, its eventual downfall came with the rise of the Goryeo Dynasty, which succeeded it in the 10th century. Nevertheless, the legacy of the Silla Kingdom endures to this day, as seen in the numerous historical sites and cultural artifacts that can still be found in the region.



Many of these sites are in Gyeongju, located in the southeastern part of present-day South Korea,

the capital of the Silla Kingdom from 57 BC to 935 AD. It is considered one of the most significant historical sites in Korea and was designated a UNESCO World Heritage site in 2000.

At the heart of Gyeongju is the Gyeongju Historic Area, which includes numerous cultural heritage sites such as temples, palaces, royal tombs, and observatories. The most famous of these sites is the Bulguksa Temple, a masterpiece of Silla architecture that is widely regarded as one of the most important Buddhist temples in the world. The temple is home to a number of important



relics, including the Seokguram Grotto, a magnificent stone temple that houses a large statue of the Buddha.

The Bulguksa Temple was constructed during the 8th

century under the direction of Silla King Gyeongdeok, and was completed in 774. The temple was built in honor of the Buddha, and it remains one of the most important Buddhist temples in the country to this day.

Bulguksa Temple is a masterpiece of traditional Korean architecture, with numerous halls and pagodas spread across a large, picturesque complex that is nestled

into the side of a mountain.

The temple complex is divided into two main areas: the front, or "Buk," section, and the rear, or "Seo," section.

The Buk section



contains the temple's main entrance and several of its most important structures, including the Dabotap and Seokgatap pagodas.

These structures are widely regarded as some of the finest examples of Korean Buddhist architecture in existence.

The Seo section of the temple complex is accessed by walking up a steep set of stairs that lead up the side of the mountain. Once at the top, visitors are greeted by a large open plaza that is home to several more important temple structures, including the main worship hall, the Hall of Supreme Bliss, and the Hall of Great Enlightenment.

Inside the temple's many halls and buildings, visitors find a treasure trove of ancient Buddhist art and artifacts.



The temple is home to over 500 sculptures and other religious art pieces, many of which date back to the 8th and 9th centuries. These pieces are all intricately carved and painted, with rich details and vibrant colors that bring the Buddha's teachings to life.

Visitors to Bulguksa Temple will also have the opportunity to participate in a variety of traditional Buddhist practices, including meditation and chanting. The temple offers a range of programs and classes for visitors of all ages and skill levels, and its peaceful, serene atmosphere makes it an ideal place to escape the hustle and bustle of modern life and connect with the spiritual traditions of Korea's past.

Seokguram Grotto is located on Mt. Tohamsan, just a few kilometers away from Bulguksa Temple. The grotto is a man-made cave that contains a monumental statue of Buddha and is considered one of the finest examples of Buddhist art in the world.

The grotto was built in the 8th century during the Unified Silla period by Kim Daeseong, a high-ranking official and devout Buddhist. It took over 20 years to complete and is said to have been built as a symbolic representation of the Buddha's journey to enlightenment.

To reach Seokguram Grotto, visitors must walk up a steep mountain trail that offers breathtaking views of the surrounding landscape. The hike takes about 30-40 minutes, and it is recommended to wear comfortable shoes and bring plenty of water. The trail is surrounded by pine trees, and visitors can enjoy the fresh mountain air and the peaceful sound of birds singing.

Upon reaching the grotto, visitors are greeted by a stone staircase that leads up to the entrance of the cave. Inside, the main chamber is small and dimly lit, with the focal point being the statue of Buddha seated on a

pedestal in the center of the room. The statue is 3.5 meters tall and is surrounded by intricate carvings of Buddhist deities and symbols.

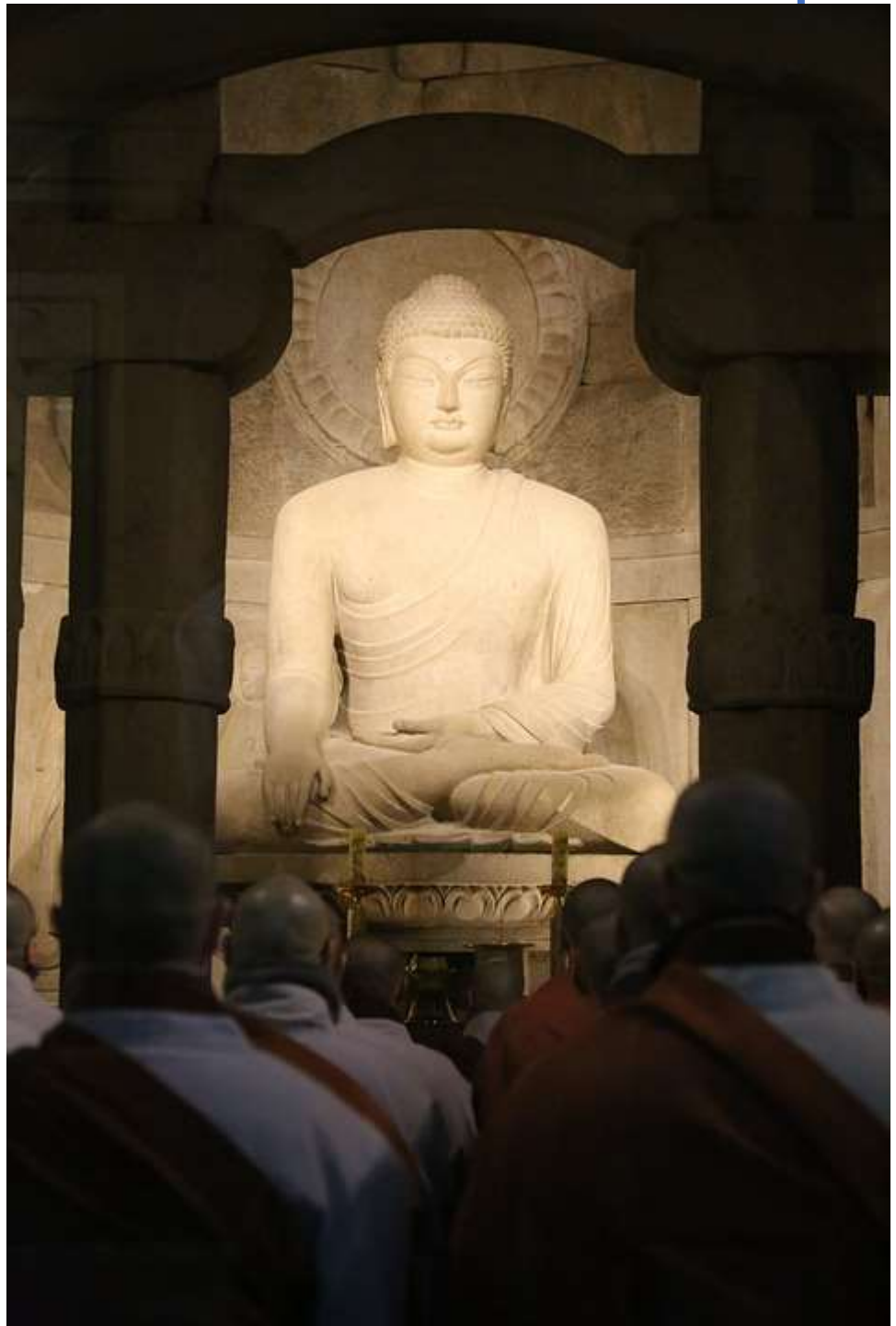
The statue of Buddha is carved from a single block of granite and is considered a masterpiece of Korean Buddhist art. The serene expression on the Buddha's face and the intricate details of the statue's clothing and accessories are a testament to the skill and dedication of the artisans who created it.

Visitors are not allowed to take

photographs

inside the grotto to protect the fragile artwork, but there is a small museum located nearby that offers more information about the grotto's history and construction.

In addition to the Bulguksa Temple and Seokguram





Grotto, there are numerous other historical sites to explore in Gyeongju. These include the Cheomseongdae Observatory, the oldest surviving astronomical observatory in Asia, and the Daereungwon Tomb Complex, which contains the royal tombs of the Silla Kings.

Cheomseongdae Observatory served as an astronomical observatory during the Silla Dynasty in Korea. It is located in Gyeongju, South

Korea, and is one of the most important cultural heritage sites in the country. The observatory was built in the seventh century, during the reign of Queen Seondeok, and it is the oldest surviving astronomical observatory in East Asia.

Cheomseongdae was used to observe the movement of the stars and planets and to calculate the seasons and the lunar calendar. It was an important tool for the Silla Dynasty in terms of agriculture, astronomy, and astrology. It was also used to predict the fortunes of the kingdom and the royal family.

The structure of Cheomseongdae is a 9.4-meter-high cylindrical tower made of 362 stone blocks, which are arranged in 27 layers. The base of the observatory is a square-shaped platform, which is 5.7 meters wide. The observatory is constructed in a way that it is slightly tilted towards the north, which helped the observers to align the structure with the stars.

Visitors can explore the interior of the tower, which is divided into four levels. The first level of the tower has a square-shaped entrance, which is believed to have been used to hold various astronomical instruments. The second and third levels are empty, and visitors can climb to the top of the observatory via a narrow spiral staircase to the fourth level, where there is a small platform. From there, visitors can enjoy a panoramic view of the surrounding countryside.

Cheomseongdae Observatory is a popular tourist attraction in Gyeongju, and it attracts visitors from all over the world. The observatory is open to the public, and visitors can explore the interior of the tower and learn about the history of astronomy and the Silla Dynasty.

The observatory is especially popular during the night, when the structure is illuminated with colorful lights.





The observatory is also surrounded by a beautiful park, which is a great place for visitors to relax and enjoy the scenery. The park features walking paths, gardens, and various sculptures, inclu-

ding a statue of Queen Seondeok, who ordered the construction of the observatory.

In addition to exploring the observatory and the surrounding park, visitors can also participate in various cultural activities. There are regular traditional Korean music and dance performances, as well as workshops where visitors can learn about traditional crafts such as pottery and calligraphy.

Visitors should also take time to explore Anapji Pond. The pond was built during the reign of King Munmu in the 7th century. The pond was originally part of the palace complex and served as a place for the royal family to relax and enjoy the beauty of nature.

Anapji Pond covers an area of approximately 4,413 square meters and is surrounded by beautifully landscaped gardens, pavilions, and walking paths. The pond is fed by a natural spring and is home to several species of fish and water plants. The beauty of the pond is enhanced by the reflection of the surrounding trees and buildings in its calm waters, creating a tranquil and peaceful atmosphere.

The pond was excavated in the early 1970s and several artifacts were found in and around the pond. These artifacts, including pottery, metalware, and jewelry, give us a glimpse into the daily life of the Silla Kingdom and provide valuable insights into their culture and customs.

Today, Anapji Pond is a popular tourist attraction and is visited by thousands of visitors each year. Visitors can stroll along the walking paths that surround the pond, taking in the beautiful scenery and enjoying the peace and quiet. There are also several pavilions and viewing platforms where visitors can sit and admire the pond from a different angle.

During the evening, the pond is illuminated by colorful lights, creating a magical and romantic atmosphere. The reflection of the lights in the water enhances the beauty of the pond and creates a breathtaking view that is truly unforgettable.

In addition to the pond itself, visitors can also explore the surrounding gardens and buildings. The gardens are home to several species of plants and trees, including lotus flowers, willow trees, and bamboo.

Nearby is the National Museum of Gyeongju, located in the heart of Gyeongju city, just a short distance from the Bulguksa Temple and



the Cheomseongdae Observatory. The museum is one of the largest in Korea and contains a vast collection of artifacts



that showcase the rich cultural and historical heritage of the Silla Kingdom. The museum is divided into

several exhibition halls, each with its own unique focus. Visitors can start their tour with the Prehistory and Proto-history Hall, which displays artifacts from the early periods of Korean history, including the Stone Age and the Bronze Age. The hall features a wide range of exhibits, including stone tools, pottery, and ancient weapons, as well as reconstructions of prehistoric homes and settlements.

Moving on to the Silla Kingdom Hall, visitors can learn about the history and culture of the Silla Dynasty. The hall features a stunning collection of artifacts, including royal treasures, ceramics, and Buddhist art. The exhibit also includes a replica of a Silla royal tomb, complete with the intricate wall paintings that were uncovered during the excavation process.

The Buddhist Art Hall is another must-see section of the museum, with an impressive collection of Buddhist artifacts from Korea and other countries in the region.

Visitors can admire the intricate details of Buddhist sculptures and paintings, including some of the earliest examples of Korean Buddhist art.

The museum also has a Children's Hall, which is dedicated to educating young visitors about the rich cultural heritage of Korea in an interactive and engaging way. The hall includes exhibits on traditional games, toys, and clothing, as well as hands-on activities that allow children to experience traditional Korean culture for themselves.

One of the highlights of the museum is the Cheonmachong Tomb Hall, which houses the excavated contents of a royal tomb from the Silla Kingdom. The tomb was discovered in the 1970s and contained a treasure

trove of artifacts, including gold crowns, jewelry, and pottery. Visitors can explore the tomb and see the



artifacts up close, gaining a glimpse into the lives of the Silla royals.

Exploring the historic sites makes it clear that the Silla Kingdom left a lasting legacy on the Korean peninsula that can still be seen and felt today. The kingdom's unification of the Three Kingdoms period paved the way

for a golden age of Korean culture and arts, marked by advancements in technology, literature, and religion.



But the Silla Kingdom's legacy goes beyond its cultural achievements. The kingdom's military prowess, exemplified by General Kim Yushin's victory at the Battle of Hwangsanbeol, ensured the survival and prosperity of the kingdom for centuries to come. It also helped establish the foundations for the subsequent unification of the Korean peninsula.

Today, visitors to Gyeongju can still sense the power and grandeur of the Silla Kingdom as they explore its historic

sites and cultural treasures. From the tranquil gardens to the awe-inspiring temples and observatories, the legacy of the Silla Kingdom lives on, a testament to the power of human creativity and perseverance.

J

**For More Information:**

- [english.visitkorea.or.kr](http://english.visitkorea.or.kr)



**1-Hour cruise of Ellis Island  
and the Statue of Liberty**

**Museum of Modern Art**

**Smartphone Audio App of NYC**

**Skip the lines at the Empire State Building!**



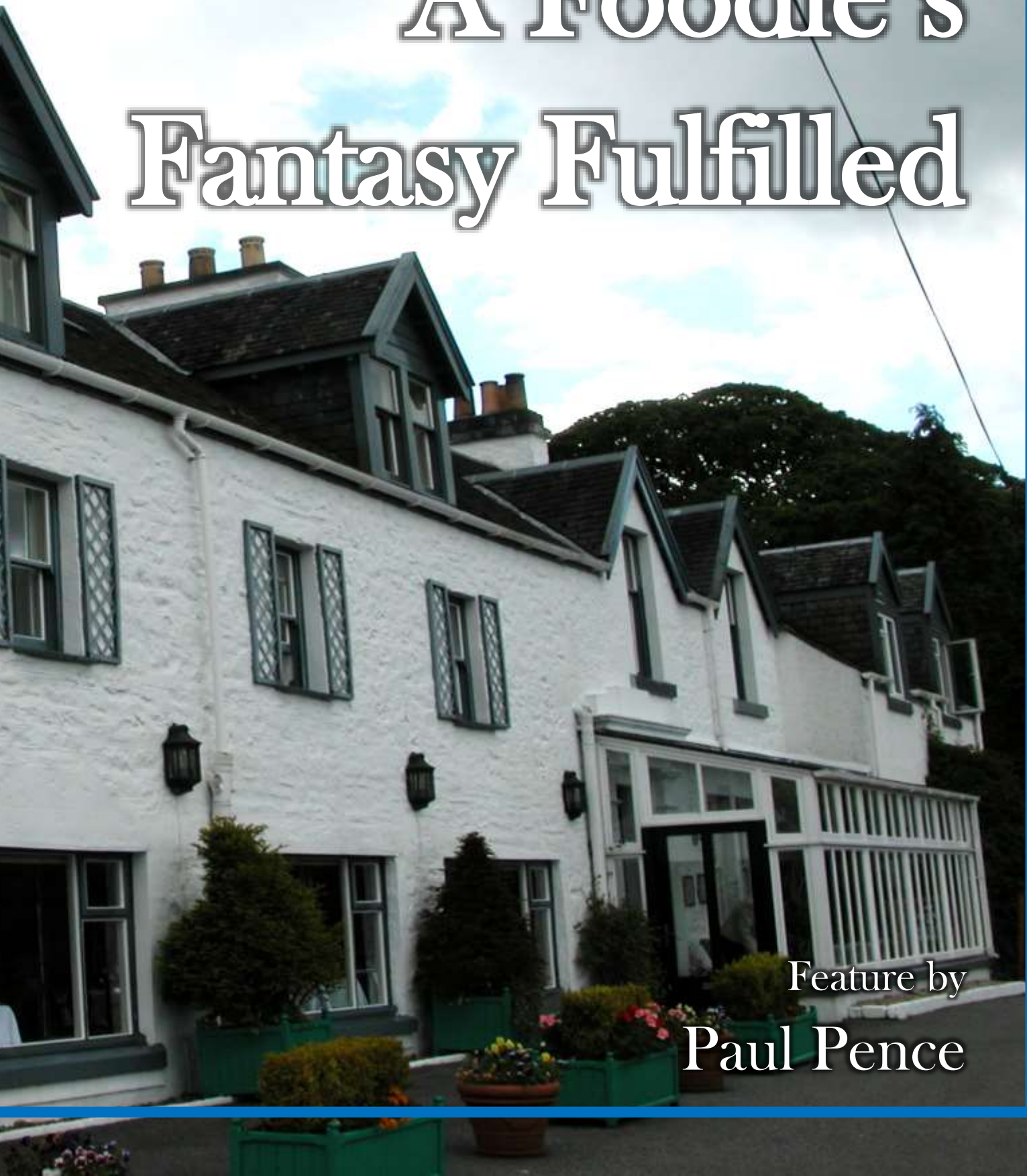
A photograph of a white, textured building with a dark roof and a prominent chimney. A black sign with white cursive text is mounted on the wall. The building has a gabled roof and a window with a green frame. The sky is overcast with grey clouds. The entire image is framed by a blue border.

The  
Airds Hotel

*A scenic drive through  
Scotland's picturesque  
landscapes led to  
an exquisite and  
unforgettable  
culinary experience.*

Airds Hotel in Port Appin Scotland

# A Foodie's Fantasy Fulfilled



Feature by  
Paul Pence



The drive to Port Appin from Inverness took most of the day. Along the way, my new bride Linda and I waded in Loch Ness looking for Nessie the famous monster, toured the Ben Nevis whisky distillery, and saw countryside views enough to fill a lifetime of post cards. The last hour of the trip took us on tight roads and then tighter roads, so narrow that every hundred yards or so the single lane road had wide spots specifically for letting oncoming cars pass.

---

We wound past Castle Stalker, standing singular and square on its own little island in Loch Linnhe, rounded a corner, and at last we found our hotel -- a modest

rectangular building with white harling and a glassed sunroom entry. It dates from the 1700's, when it was used as the southern terminus for the loch's ferry passengers.



Inside the entry we found wicker chairs and a row of green “Wellie” rain boots set out for the guests. The Wellies were an interesting touch – and perhaps the first sign that our hosts, Shaun and Jenny McKivragan, were dedicated to the ultimate in customer service.

Inside was cozy. Soft leather couches and armchairs surrounded the fireplaces and gathered in conversation groupings in two lounges. The furnishings and decorations spoke of





elegance  
and  
comfort  
at the  
same  
time; like  
the  
hunting  
lodge of a  
Scots  
Laird  
perhaps.  
It said  
“welcome  
home”,

where home came from a Louisa May Alcott novel.

Upstairs we had a corner suite with an oversized bathroom and small sitting room – books on the shelves, a variety of CD’s for the player, flat screen TV, and a tremendously comfortable bed. Our room, one of only

12 in the  
entire  
hotel,  
looked  
out over  
the  
hotel’s  
garden  
and the  
loch  
beyond.



We mentioned to the hotel manager that we'd like a little tea after our trip, and before I had retrieved our bags from the



car, a tray had appeared with a complete tea service.

The service was beyond anything in our prior experience. During dinner, our forks and spoons were whisked away and replaced according to each dish and our water glasses were refilled as fast we could drink.

When we got back to our room after dinner, the house-keeper had picked up and folded our dirty clothes. If





we hadn't slept late and skipped what I've been told was the breakfast of a lifetime, they would have made the bed and cleaned while we were downstairs.

But while we didn't experience the breakfast, we did experience dinner - oh dinner!!! What a meal.

When we had told Linda's Scottish cousins that we were going to be visiting the Airds, they said "Oh, foodies!"

"Foodies?" we asked.

"Foodies. Gourmets. Epicures," they explained. "The Airds is famous for their food." The Airds Hotel has three AA rosettes to boast of meaning that their culinary skill, creativity and innovation are among the best that Scotland has to offer.

And we found out why.

Five courses of wonder. Maybe more, depending on how you count.

At 8:30, we chatted with our fellow guests in the lounge where we were offered a pre-dinner drink. Canapés and Linda's gin and tonic arrived. Tiny seared tomato halves, mushroom caps, interesting combinations of cheeses and caviar, each one a tiny sculpture looking too beautiful to eat. But eat we did.

After a while, we were led to the dining room. Waitresses dressed in floor-length tartan skirts glided between the tables bringing bread and butter and ice cubes and chilled water and wine and an amazing variety of silverware.

"Starters" would be course number two if you count the canapés - seared scallops for Linda, while I had a mousse of chicken liver and truffles. Next came soup for me and salad for Linda. Earlier in the day, the kitchen staff had taken our dinner order, which they delivered

without error or misstep, including her special request for a simple salad instead of soup.

The entrees, now course number three or four - I had sea bream and Linda had halibut with a current stuffing. Then dessert for me was a caramelized apple tart with the apple sliced in paper-thin wedges and



fanned across the tart, under peach ice cream, all with a crispy frond of golden sugar candy extending from the ice cream like the feather on a jaunty cap. Linda enjoyed a mango soufflé garnished with pineapple and a leaf of mint, all in a tart-like crust.

Pictures? Alas, this was not the kind of environment where you'd be so gauche as to snap pictures of dinner. Not when the servers were right there whisking up every dropped crumb and the chef was pouring his soul into making a room full of happy diners. You'll just have to imagine and we'll just have to vividly remember the amazing dinner.

Then, off to the lounge for coffee and still more food. The "Petit fours" that accompanied coffee in this case were tiny sweets and chocolates and pastries just as decorative as everything else served that evening.



Summer evenings in Scotland last until midnight, and even then the sun never completely abandons the sky, providing a touch of light from over the horizon. We wanted to explore and enjoy the evening, but we had to sleep – it had been a long trip and too little rest.

And thus, alas, we missed the “breakfast of a lifetime”.

Had the stay been longer, we would have explored the Port Appin village, maybe sat out in the garden on the wooden lounge chairs and sketched the distant lighthouse, or perhaps hired a boat to take us to the isolated and mysterious Castle Stalker.

And we would have eaten even more wonderful food and come home with expanded waistlines to remind us of our stay in a tiny hotel on the western edge of Scotland.

**For More Information:**  
[www.airds-hotel.com](http://www.airds-hotel.com)





*Leave your preconceptions  
behind and embark on a journey  
of luxury, charm, and hidden  
treasures like no other.*

A scenic view of a stone building with a tiled roof, a large tree, and a canal with a reflection. The building is made of light-colored stone and has a brown tiled roof. A large, leafy tree stands in front of the building. A white metal fence with stone pillars runs along the canal. The canal is filled with water, and the building and tree are reflected in it. The sky is clear and blue.

Barge Cruising in Burgundy  
**Taking it Slow**

Feature by  
**Debbie Stone**



When most people think of a barge, they envision a flat-bottomed boat that hauls goods down a waterway – a working vessel. So when I told family and friends that I was going on a barge cruise in France, I received quizzical and confused looks. They didn't understand why I was choosing to travel by what they perceived to be an uncomfortable mode of transportation.

“Au contraire!” I responded, and then proceeded to enlighten them, explaining that this was not a cargo boat, but rather a small, sleek, luxury hotel barge owned by European Waterways. And no, I would not be “roughing it!” In fact, I would be wined and dined, and my every need tended to by an exceptional staff, well-versed in

performing the highest levels of service and hospitality. All this while meandering through the picturesque French countryside along the Burgundy Canal, far from crowds and the hustle bustle of city life.

European Waterways has been operating voyages since the 1980s and cruises in nine countries across Europe from the Midi in Southern France to the Scottish Highlands, and from Ireland in the West to Venice in the East. The company has an excellent reputation and is renowned in the industry. Its immersive cruises offer a more intimate, informal atmosphere than on larger river and ocean cruise vessels, and are a great choice for couples, single travelers, families or small groups.

Each cruise lasts for six nights and the all-inclusive pricing encompasses everything from transportation to and from your barge, stateroom, incredible gourmet meals, all excursions, hot tub and bicycles on board, world class wines and a fully stocked, open bar.

La Belle Epoque, the barge I traveled on, accommodated



a max of 12 passengers, however, my cruise in April only had eight. All of us were from the U.S. and six of the passengers already knew each other. My husband and I were the “outliers,” but



not for long. We were quickly enveloped into the fold and became fast friends with our convivial fellow shipmates in no time at all, sharing stories and plenty of laughs. The atmosphere was like a floating house party with likeminded people, who shared a love of experiential travel, culture, gastronomy, fine wine, local history...and most importantly, good

conversation.

Originally built in 1930, La Belle Epoque was converted into a handsome hotel barge in 1995. The boat boasts four staterooms and two junior suites, a dining room, salon with bar and spacious outdoor deck. Though the staterooms are small, they are cozy, and have all the necessary amenities.

Our crew of six hailed from France, Poland, Brazil, Greece and England. At the helm was Andy, our very personable, knowledgeable and efficient captain/tour guide. Then there was Apostolos, chef extraordinaire; Agata and Maria, hostesses with the mostest, who were responsible for serving the meals and drinks,





cleaning the staterooms and making sure we were comfortable at all times; Fred, the pilot; and Brice, the deckhand. All welcomed us warmly to the boat and preceded to ensure that our journey would be memorable.

Our trip began in

Paris, where we were picked up and driven south to Tomlay in the Burgundy region. There, our barge and attentive crew awaited, greeting us, champagne in hand. After



toasts and introductions, we settled into our state-rooms and then convened in the salon to get to know each other.



Each day, the barge glided sedately along the canal, passing under bridges and going through locks. Most of the canals in France’s extensive system date back to the 17th and 18th centuries and represent a time when roads were primitive. The barges plied the rivers, carrying coal, grain and other supplies from village to village. These waterways were basically abandoned in the late 18th century when railroads took over as the main transportation system. They were later “dis-covered” by young, British travel entrepreneurs and the rest is history.

Al-though the barges carry passengers today, much has remained the same on these antique water routes. They are still intersected by locks, which serve to raise and lower the boats between the varying levels of land, and many are still tended to by lock keepers. We went through a total of 35 locks during our trip and at each, a lock keeper would be there to assist in the endeavor. Passing through them is part of the experience and our group never tired of watching the process.





As to the speed of cruising, it's slow. We averaged about two to three miles an hour, a perfect pace for those who wanted to cycle or walk the towpath, then get back on the boat at one of the locks. It was a nice way to get some activity and work off all the delicious food. Another way I discovered to expend some calories was to try driving the barge. Our pilot let me take a go at it and it was physically much harder than I imagined. Turning the wheel gave me quite the workout!

This leisurely pace allowed us to fully relax and luxuriate in watching the world go by. The bucolic Burgundy landscape is sublime, with fields of wheat and poppies, vineyards, grand chateaus and villages of cobblestoned streets and medieval buildings. You'll pass locals on their bikes or strolling along, and fisherman patiently waiting for their next catch. Others, curious about the barge, will wander nearby for a looksee at one of the locks.

Each day, we left the barge to enjoy an exclusively



curated excursion in an off-the-beaten-tourist-path locale. One day, we explored Chablis, visiting Domaine Laroche to learn the story of St. Martin and the monks who began the history of the town and its famed wines. We toured the old wine cellar and saw a 13th century wine press that's still in use, then had the opportunity to taste several aromatic Classical Chablis, Premier Cru and Grand Cru wines.





Ano-ther day, we toured Chateau D’Ancy Le Franc, a jewel of the Renaissance. Built in 1542, this imposing castle is the masterpiece of Sebastiano Serlio, a celebrated Italian architect. It’s known for its large square construction with four wings flanked by four pavilions, and an inner magnificent courtyard. The building is enhanced with richly sculpted ornamentations and inside, the apartments are lavishly decorated by Burgundy, Italian and Flemish painters. Of special note are the long galleries adorned with eye-popping, flamboyant elements and mural paintings representing mythological and religious themes. Sumptuous marble floors add to this lavish display.

In Montbard, we visited Fontenay Abbey, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Founded in 1118 by Saint Bernard of Coairvaux, it is the oldest preserved Cistercian abbey in the world. The monks, who resided



there, produced and sold metalwork to economically sustain themselves. Up to 500 of them lived at the abbey until the time of the French Revolution. After they departed, the place was converted for industrial use, which preserved all the buildings of the Romanesque period, including the church (a model of simplicity and ethereal light), dormitory (a vast oak-hulled room where the monks slept, fully clothed on benches), cloister, chapter room, common room and the forge.

As our group walked around, we remarked on the beauty and purity of the architecture, which has remained unspoiled for over 900 years. With its lushly landscaped park and gardens, the Abbey is a remarkable site that evokes serenity and spirituality.

Two other excursions brought us in close proximity to French nobility. At Chateau de Ricey-Bas, we rubbed elbows with Baron Charles and his wife, Baroness Segolene, owners of this impressive castle that has been



in the Baron's family for over 200 years. Before dining, we visited the estate's vineyards and the production building, where we learned how champagne is made.

The Baron explained that the grapes are harvested by hand and go through two fermentation processes in order to create the bubbling libation known as "champagne." It's an artform that heavily relies on science. Interesting fact: you can only label the finished product "champagne" if the grapes are

grown in the Champagne Region of France. There are about 60,000 vineyards in this region.

The winery produces six to seven different kinds of



champagne with a total of 70,000 bottles a year, and exports about 70% of its production mainly to the U.S., Germany and Canada.

Lunch consisted of salmon and local trout crustless sandwiches, along with guinea fowl as the entrée, followed by an assortment of cheeses and salad, and strawberry mousse for dessert – accompanied by pink champagne, of course! During the meal, the Baroness talked about the history of the chateau, the family and their endless efforts to restore the place. She was charming and effervescent, with a delightful sense of humor as she regaled us with story after story.





At Chateau de Commarin, we met with Count Bertrand de Vogue, whose family has lived in the castle since the 13th century. He represents the 26th generation of the family and resides onsite. The estate was protected during the French Revolution, so it retains its authenticity, and is known for its exquisite set of heraldic tapestries, artwork and furniture. A moat surrounds the stately chateau, offering a picture perfect reflection.

Against the backdrop of the chateau, we were treated to a display of falconry. Two professional falconers presented several birds of prey, including Tinkerbell, an American Kestrel, who flew from one to another of our hands in search of treats; Rico, a Harris hawk, who we learned can see a mouse from 218 yards away; and Daenerys, a very photogenic barn owl, named for a beloved character in the widely popular series, “Game of Thrones.”





Another highlight of the cruise was the sensational food. Our chef, who was from Greece, took us on a gastronomic adventure and challenged our tastebuds. Meals were feasts for the senses. At breakfast, there were always eggs or egg dishes, yogurts, cheeses, fresh fruit, cereals, breads and croissants, and freshly squeezed OJ. With a spread like this, we were sufficiently fueled for the morning.

Lunch, as well as dinner, was a 3-course presentation, consisting of fresh seasonal salads, sometimes a fish dish or even steamed mussels, homemade soup, a selection of cheeses and/or dessert, and was always complemented by both a red and white wine of the region.

Then there was happy hour, when the libations would flow, along with the hors-d'oeuvres, including such delights as tuna tartare, mango



wrapped in prosciutto, beetroot blinis, snails and on the last night, caviar.

Dinners, which were announced by the ringing of a bell (causing a Pavlovian response to occur!), were showcases of French and Mediterranean dishes, with entrees that featured duck, lamb, chicken, beef and fish. And of course, there were French wines and cheeses, all of which were described in detail to us before serving.

Saying goodbye at the end of the trip was hard, as it meant we had to leave our cushy abode, fantastic crew and our newfound friends, not to mention the glorious food. Back to “roughing it!”

**For More Information:**  
[europeanwaterways.com](http://europeanwaterways.com)



J

*Share the awe-inspiring experience of witnessing a rocket launch at Cape Canaveral, Florida, in this heartfelt personal account that surpasses all expectations.*



An Unforgettable Experience

# Rocket Launch



Reflections by  
Linda Eagleson



Over the course of our lives, there's usually something that happens where we experience an event that is so awe inspiring that it takes our breath away. The birth of a child, a beloved's marriage; a spectacular sunset. It's is so incredible that you just know it will be something that you will remember for the rest of your life. I got to experience that very special moment with my husband not too long ago in Florida when we witnessed a rocket launch.

My brother had recently moved to Tampa so we decided to pay him a visit. While planning our trip, we discovered that the timing was perfect for us to finally witness a launch from Cape Canaveral, a long-held bucket list item. My brother thought it was such a cool idea that he decided to go. I bought the tickets and

started to plan our trip to the Kennedy Space Center to witness the launch of the space capsule Orion which was going to make an orbit around the moon.

The 2 ½ hr. ride from Tampa to Cape Canaveral went by fairly quickly. The space center finally became visible and everywhere I looked I could see the replicas of rockets and spaceships stretching across the skyline. Needless to say, my camera was constantly clicking as I stared in astonishment at the massive structures around the center.

Everything that you could imagine seeing, or doing that was a related to space was displayed at the space center. I kept myself pretty busy reading the history of the launches, astronauts, the Space Shuttle and anything





else that  
    piqued  
        my  
    interest.  
Time just  
went by so  
    quickly  
        and  
    before  
you knew  
it, it was  
time to  
board our  
bus that  
    would

take us to the viewing section for the rocket launch. I was beyond excited at this point!

I wanted to make sure we had the best seats possible in order for my husband to take a video of the launch, (and so I could jump up and down without disturbing anyone)!



There  
were two  
sizeable  
digital  
clocks,  
one at  
either end  
of the  
bleachers  
displaying  
the count  
down.  
The  
weather

was picture perfect with a few scattered clouds in the sky and just a hint of the evening dusk starting to show its colors.



Two young boys sat next to me with their parents and had a pretty hard time containing their enthusiasm. So did I!

Even though we were about four miles from the actual launch site, we were reassured that we could capture every moment without any problems. I kept eyeing the

count-down clock hoping that it would move faster than it was. I kept pinching myself to make





sure that I was really at Cape Canaveral and it wasn't a dream!

And, it wasn't!

I glanced over one more time at the countdown clock and it was at 20 seconds. Then it hit 10 seconds and the crowd began their chant of counting: 10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1. And, we have lift off! From the distance I could make out the fiery display of the

rockets igniting their engines and then it happened. The rocket was in flight!

The roar wasn't deafening at our distance, but it was still so intense that we could feel it vibrating against our bodies.

The crowd was screaming as I was also doing my Happy Dance while the rocket shot into the sky. It moved so quickly that I was afraid to blink and miss something more spectacular than what I was already seeing! The crowd was cheering pretty loudly, but I could still hear the rumbling of the rockets as it streaked across the sky, forever climbing higher and higher into space.

It was spectacular! It was mind numbing! It was one of those "Oh my God" moments that literally takes your breath away.

I continued to stare at the rocket as it was barely visible, but just enough to keep me focused. No one moved in the stands and continued to cheer as the rocket became less and less visible; more like a speck at that point. Just the contrails were faintly displayed and it was now becoming only a memory. It reached almost two miles before we were no longer able to see the rocket ship.

The crowd started to disperse but I continued to stand there, still in awe of what I had just witnessed. I had watched throughout the years numerous rocket launches on television but, I never imagined that someday I would actually be able to observe one in person. Being at Cape Canaveral and watching history being made literally right in front of me was 100 gazillion times better than watching it on TV.

A memory I will hold deep in my heart.







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## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Paul Pence not only writes many of the articles in the pages of this magazine, he is also the publisher and editor of all of the magazines in the Amygis Publishing's family of travel magazines.



He loves exploring, traveling the back roads, experiencing the world, and finding what is unique and memorable about the places he visits.

And he loves writing - poetry, short stories, essays, non-fiction, news, and, of course, travel writing.

For over 20 years, he has shared his explorations with readers in a wide variety of outlets, from groundbreaking forays into the first stirrings of the dot-com boom to travel guides, local newspapers, and television, including Runner's World, Travel Lady, Providence Journal, and Northstar Travel Media. He currently publishes and writes for Amygis Publishing's magazines Jaunting, Northeast Traveler, and Rhode Island Roads.

Debbie Stone is an established travel writer and columnist, who crosses the globe in search of unique destinations and experiences to share with her readers and listeners. She's an avid explorer who welcomes new opportunities to increase

awareness and enthusiasm for places, culture, food, history, nature, outdoor adventure, wellness and more.

Her travels have taken her to all fifty states and nearly 100 countries, spanning all seven continents.

Her stories reach over three million readers and listeners, and appear in numerous print and digital publications, including Luxe Beat Magazine, Big Blend Radio & TV Magazine, Parks & Travel Magazine, Northwest Prime Time, Woodinville Weekly, Santa Fe Fine Lifestyles Magazine, Edmonds Beacon, Outdoors Northwest, Southwest Stories Magazine, Go World Travel and Travelworld International Magazine, among others. She can also be heard sharing her travel adventures on Big Blend Radio.



A close-up photograph of a koala clinging to a tree trunk. The koala is the central focus, with its grey, woolly fur and large, dark brown eyes clearly visible. It is looking directly at the camera with a calm expression. The background is a soft, out-of-focus green, suggesting a forest setting. The text is overlaid on the image in white with a black outline for readability.

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Adventures.*



**Imagine the 'Ultimate Australia Safari,' embarking on an extraordinary adventure that will take you on an immersive wildlife journey across the diverse continent.**

The ultimate Australian safari would have you explore the ancient wonders of the Daintree Rainforest and witness the volcanic beauty of the Atherton Tablelands. You would dive into the vibrant underwater world of the Great Barrier Reef, where colorful marine life will captivate your senses. In Tasmania, you

would be awe-struck by majestic mountains and tranquil lakes that dot the landscape.

You'll journey through the rugged Outback of the Ikara-Flinders Ranges, where vast expanses of untamed wilderness stretch as far as the eye can see. Kangaroo Island beckons with its unique wildlife

encounters, allowing you to observe kangaroos, koalas, wombats, wallabies, and the elusive Tasmanian devil in their natural habitats.



From the lush tropics of Queensland to the breathtaking landscapes of Tasmania in the Southern Ocean, your Ultimate Australian Safari promises a once-in-a-lifetime

experience.

Natural Habitat Adventures has thought-fully curated this 21-day safari, ensuring a seamless travel experience.



Chartered planes will whisk you between destinations, maximizing your time on the ground. Imagine arriving at a remote barrier reef island, where you'll stay in a fly-in

ecolodge surrounded by pristine natural beauty. Spend nights under a canopy of stars at an Outback safari camp in the Flinders Ranges, immersing yourself in the serenity of the wilderness.

This journey goes beyond wildlife encounters. It provides an opportunity to connect with Australia's rich cultural heritage through encounters with local Aboriginal communities. You'll experience their traditional sustainable practices and witness their deep bond with the land, gaining a profound understanding of their wisdom

and their efforts to preserve the country's precious ecosystems.

As a committed advocate for the environment, Nat Hab offsets the carbon emissions of the entire trip, including your roundtrip flights to and from Australia. With their extensive experience in sustainable and conservation-focused adventure travel, Nat Hab has been leading journeys to extraordinary nature destinations around the world since 1985. By choosing the Ultimate Australia Safari, you become part of their mission to raise awareness and



appreciation for the wonders of nature.

The Ultimate Australia Safari offers a limited number of departures in 2024, ensuring an intimate group size of maximum 12 travelers.

Pricing starts from US\$26,895 per person, covering accommodations, the guidance of Nat Hab's expert

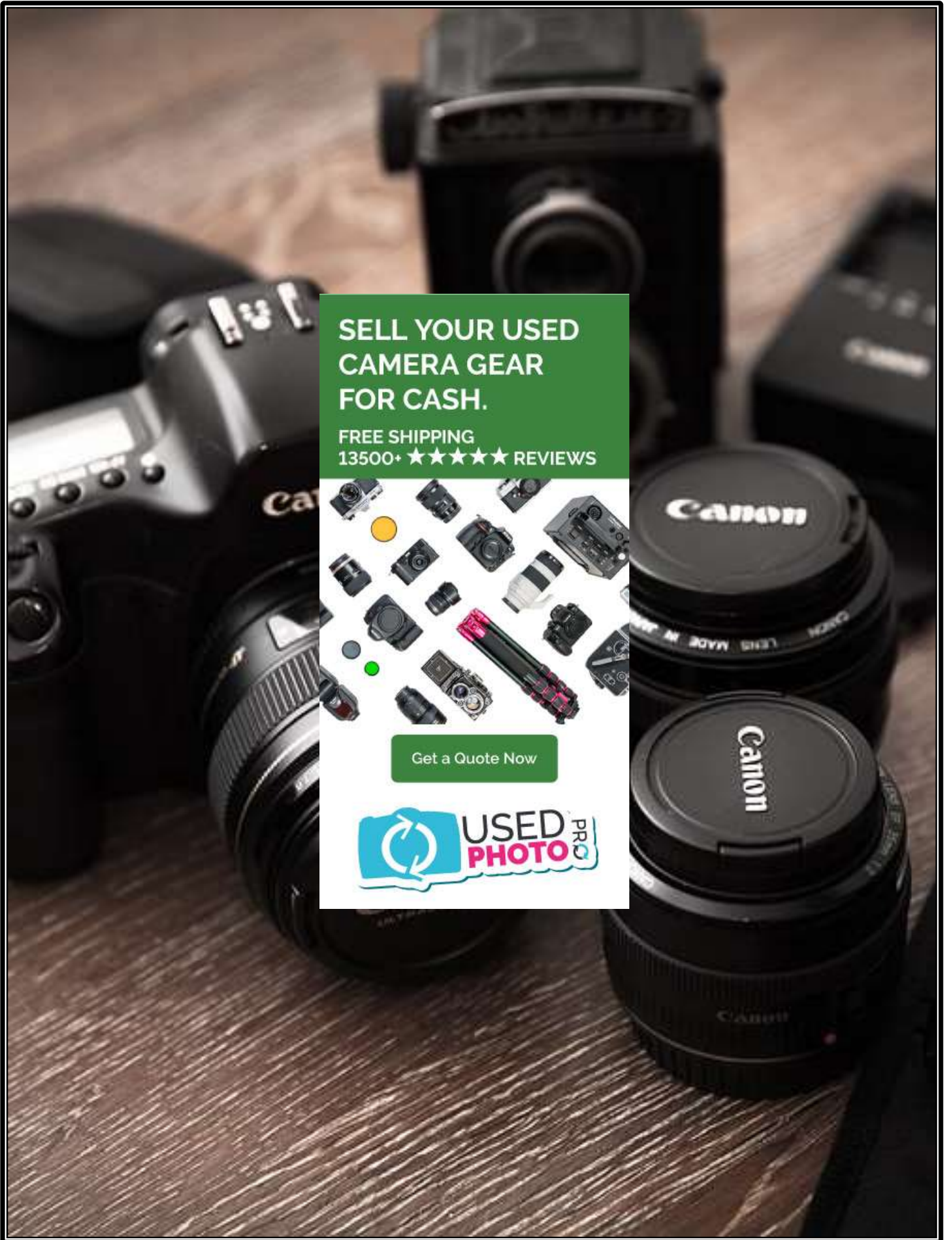
Expedition Leader, local guides, meals, activities, and entrance fees. Nat Hab also offers shorter itineraries exploring the north and south of Australia, as well as an opportunity to extend



your journey with the 12-day New Zealand Nature Explorer.

**For more information:**

- [nathab.com](http://nathab.com)



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