Contents

DEPARTMENTS
16 LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

21 DISCOVERIES
Check in to an 18th-century French château; celebrate Walt Disney World’s golden anniversary; book a trip based on a classic children’s story; and more.

EXPERIENCES
37 Of Fells and Valleys
England’s Lake District is thriving, with some of Britain’s most ambitious restaurants and an idyllic new country-house hotel.

44 A Natural Course
On Cape Breton Island, Nova Scotia, a laid-back weekend full of hiking, craft beer, and whale-watching awaits.

50 Crossing the Cascades
Outdoor pursuits are the focus at three nature-forward lodgings in the wilderness of Washington State.

56 As American as Apple Cider
Cider production is booming in New York’s Finger Lakes, a region with big-time culinary appeal.

62 Into the Forest Primeval
Adventurers can explore snowcapped volcanoes and temperate rain forests in Chile’s Lake District.

71 WORLD’S BEST AWARDS 2021
Travelette’s annual survey of readers’ favorite hotels, cities, airlines, U.S. national parks, and more.

FEATURES
136 The Big Blue
On the Portuguese island of Madeira, sweeping hilltop vistas and charming beachside towns provide a snapshot of the good life.

144 An Urban Canvas
From its venerable downtown museums to the South Side’s community centers, Chicago’s art scene is ever-flourishing.

150 Moving Mountains
Bozeman and Livingston, Montana, are riding high as newcomers discover the area’s creative energy and natural beauty.

156 The Pub Is Dead, Long Live the Pub!
Traditional pub culture is undergoing a sea change in the U.K., as local taverns reinvent themselves for a new era.

168 YOUR BEST SHOT
Reader Larry Graves photographed the oldest part of Zagreb, Croatia.

ON THE COVER THE MOONLIT ROCK FORMATIONS AT SARAKINIKO BEACH DRAW VISITORS TO MÉLOS, GREECE—THE NO. 1 ISLAND OVERALL IN THIS YEAR’S WORLD’S BEST AWARDS (PAGE 71). PHOTOGRAPH BY MARCO ARGÜELLO.
You might be thinking it’s the wrong month. The World’s Best Awards—in October?

Traditionally, we have published the results of our annual reader survey in August. But this year was a little different, to put it mildly. We made the decision to launch our survey two months later than usual, giving you extra time to travel and, in turn, vote for your favorite airports, cruise lines, hotels, safari outfitters, and more. This shift also gave businesses a chance to get back on their feet. With travel booming close to home, we added a few more domestic categories, including top U.S. national park. Our readers responded by voting in record-high numbers.

The 2021 results are a testament to the travel industry's resilience under enormous strain. Nearly two years into the pandemic, there is still much we don’t know about COVID-19. But we do know that some parts of the world have suffered more than others. I’ve seen this unevenness firsthand, having spent two weeks this past July in Kenya with Roar Africa (roarafrica.com). All of the safari lodges I stayed at followed strict protocols. Americans were there, but the lodges were not full—a stark shift for a nation where tourism is typically responsible for 10.4 percent of GDP.

Use these lists as a global resource. Study the names of the companies and destinations. Then imagine the faces behind each of the winners. They are too numerous to count.

The No. 1 hotel in the world this year is Mahali Mzuri, a 12-tent safari lodge in Kenya’s Maasai Mara ecosystem. When I wrote a congratulatory note to the general manager, Wilson Odhiambo, he replied that the news of the win was coming at a welcome time for his team, and he would be honored to see me at the lodge someday soon. Cheers to that.

FROM MY TRAVELS

I’ll be sharing more details of my Kenya trip soon—but first, a few notes on my U.S. adventures. For years, friends with kids had told me how much they loved the Sanctuary at Kiawah Island Golf Resort (kiawahresort.com; doubles from $740), which was voted this year’s No. 1 resort in South Carolina. The sense of space—both in the lobby, with its Lowcountry landscape murals and soaring ceiling, as well as on the wide, empty beach—put my shoulders down an inch or two. Also on the list: the Inn & Club at Harbour Town (seashpines.com; doubles from $419), at Hilton Head’s Sea Pines Resort, home to the Smith Stearns tennis academy for youth. I happened to run into tennis legend Stan Smith on the court, and my life felt complete. Up north, I checked in to the elegant, couples-focused Chanler at Cliff Walk (thechanler.com; doubles from $712), in Newport, Rhode Island, which has chic yurts for outdoor dining, and a new wine garden in partnership with Italian vintner Ca’ del Bosco. I flew there with Tradewind Aviation (flytradewind.com), a private charter company that is now offering scheduled flights to Newport to keep up with the high demand.
You, our discerning readers, will often plan your next adventure before the one you’re on has even ended. Your love of exploring the world has helped sustain the travel industry during these tumultuous times, and as the world began to reopen, you were among the first to get back out there. Your insights on those trips—and on your pre-pandemic journeys, too—informed these rankings of the World’s Best hotels, islands, tour operators, U.S. national parks (a first!), and more. Cheers to you, to the winners—and to brighter days ahead.
Destination Spas

This year’s honorees prove that the right setting can inspire a profound shift in perspective and encourage us to prioritize our health.

TOP 10 DOMESTIC SPAS

   80.13
   This intimate spa (just 40 rooms) and personalized rituals, this Hamptons retreat excels at promoting a sense of calm. An organic cuisine program designed by renowned chef David McMillan adds a compelling reason to visit.

2. Cal-a-Vie
   Vista, California 84.39

3. The Ranch
   Malibu, California 83.35

4. Civana Wellness Resort & Spa
   Carefree, Arizona 93.21

5. Lake Austin Spa Resort
   Austin, Texas 82.64

6. Hilton Head Beach Resort, Hilton Head Island, South Carolina 92.00

7. Ojo Caliente Mineral Springs Resort & Spa
   Ojo Caliente, New Mexico 85.46

8. Lodge at Woodloch
   Hawley, Pennsylvania 91.23

9. Sensei Lanai, a Four Seasons Resort
   Honolulu, Hawaii 81.11

10. Miraval Arizona
    Tucson, Arizona 81.06

11. Carillon Miami Wellness Resort
    Miami Beach 85.81

12. Miraval Austin
    Austin 83.94

13. Ojo Santa Fe
    Santa Fe, New Mexico 88.50

14. Westgate Resort & Spa
    Snowmass Village, Colorado 65.50

15. Gorgua Ranch
    Torga, Portugal 87.39

NO. 1 DOMESTIC SPA

A saltwater pool is used for aquatic massage therapy at Shaw Spa at The House, in the Hamptons.

TOP 10 INTERNATIONAL SPAS

1. Rancho La Puerta
   Tecate, Mexico 85.17
   This Baja California sanctuary exceeds expectations on every level. From its holistic workshops to morning hikes in the Baja mountains, this property has garnered such a devoted following that last year, the property sold out one year in advance, reservations up by 24%.

2. Shi Wellness Clinic
   El Atrio, Spain 84.93

3. BodyHoliday
   Castries, St. Lucia 94.48

4. Tabacón Thermal Resort & Spa
   Arenal Volcano National Park, Costa Rica 82.46

5. Chablé Maroma
   Punta Maroma, Mexico 84.05