

INSIDE Milos opens first hotel in Athens, p. 43

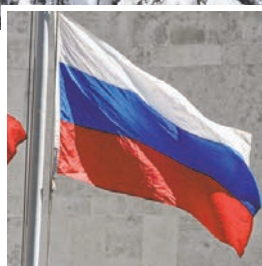
INSIDE Blackwell talks hotels & Bob Marley, p. 44



Travel



Thanks to sanctions, the who's who of Courchevel 1850 have lost their Russian accent.



RED RED WHINE

By MARK ELLWOOD

A BEVY of international flags flutter above Le Croisette, the heart of the ritzy resort of **Courchevel** in the French Alps, where superrich New Yorkers, celebrities (think Robbie Williams, Elton John and Windsors William and Kate) and oligarchs mingle over après-ski champagne.

But in early March, mere days after the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the flag of the Russian Federation was lowered.

"The tourist office was slammed by a campaign to pull it down," Gabriella Le Breton, author of "The Ultimate Ski Book: Legends, Resorts, Lifestyle & More," told The Post. "It was a

big symbolic moment."

Over the last decades, the resort — composed of four interlinked villages and dozens of massive chalets worth tens of millions of dollars each — has become so synonymous with wealthy Russians that Western visitors have nicknamed it Courchevel-ski.

Now, however, the resort is rapidly losing its Russian accent as sanctions put high living on pause for many oligarchs.

"It was strange and surreal to be in Courchevel as Russia was invading Ukraine," a wealthy Brit visiting the resort

this season said, requesting anonymity. "When we arrived, the oligarchs were there in full force. A family in our hotel was sporting head-to-toe red Bogner ski outfits that read Russian Ski Team. We'd see them every morning in the boot room. Just

after the invasion, they became a lot more discreet with their attire."

Courchevel was created from scratch by tourism-chasing French authorities in the wake of World War II, keen to develop a catchall resort in a key location. Today, Courchevel scores the highest daily rental rate of any major resort in the region, averaging \$584 per night, per Knight Frank's Ski Property Report 2022 (the closest rival: **Verbier**, at \$524). But prices for tricked out chalet's in key locations like **Jardin Al-**



Roman Abramovich

pin can reach hundreds of thousands per week.

However, the resort's origins were more egalitarian.

Master planner Laurent Chappis built several settlements named for their supposed altitude in meters: 1850 (the premier

location), 1650, 1550 and 1300. Clustered together on a giant, easily skiable bowl, it was supposed to be a sporty hub that anyone could enjoy.

It worked for a while — or at least until über-oligarch Roman Abramovich touched down there in the 1990s, ski expert Le Breton says.

"He allegedly asked the mayor

See **COURCHEVEL** on Page 29



Andy Parant

One of the resort's top chalets, Shemshak Lodge, sports an indoor Jacuzzi and sleeps up to 10 adults and two kids.

spring travel guide



Bedford Village Inn



Miraval Berkshires



Hotel MTK



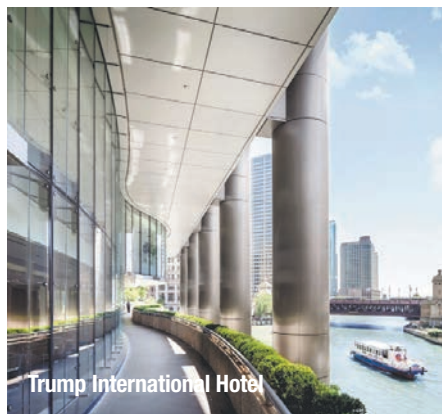
The Saybrook Point Resort



Montauk Manor



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STK Midtown



The Grand Hotel

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From **COURCHEVEL** on Page 27

if he could buy the whole of Courchevel but he was turned down,” she dished.

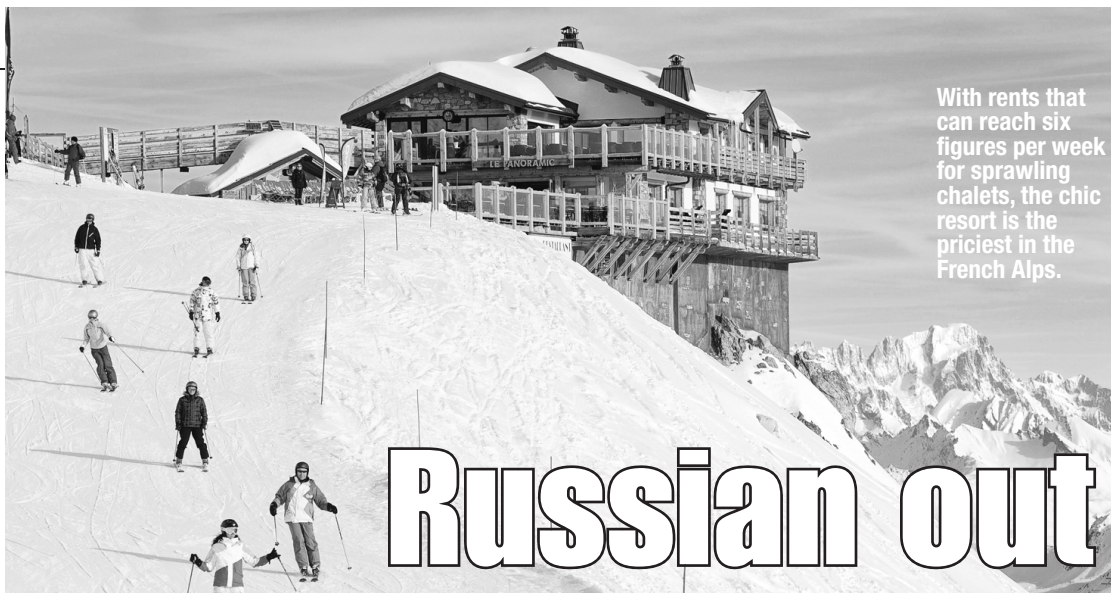
Instead, the billionaire, who is currently sanctioned by the UK, and his pals allegedly did the next best thing, scooting round and snapping up chalets en masse to help boost prices.

For wealthy Russians and western buyers of means, the appeal was obvious: Unlike Swiss chalets, and some sites in Austria, expat owners aren't required by law to rent out their homes for a certain period each year. Instead, they can mothball them and use them for just a couple weeks, if they wish. The just-add-water origins of Courchevel also appeals, as it's easier to build here than in



Andy Parant

April rates at the five-story, 6,000-plus-square-foot Chalet Bacchus start at around \$30,000 a week.



With rents that can reach six figures per week for sprawling chalets, the chic resort is the priciest in the French Alps.

Gamma-Rapho via Getty Images; Getty Images (insets)

Russian out

historic European villages.

The price per square foot for new construction in Courchevel 1850 is around \$3,588.

One longtime visitor noted that Russians treat skiing as a networking hobby, a political pow-wow spot. And it isn't just Russia's elite who've flocked there — one-percenters from its former republics have followed, including Ukraine.

It's deliberately hard to confirm the names of oligarch chalet-owners here — most are snapped up under complex corporate structures. But French media reports confirm that rail magnate and billionaire Nikita Mishin

owns the \$7,000-per night, five-bedroom chalet dubbed **Lys Martagon** (via a Luxembourg shell company, of course). Runaway Kazakh banker Mukhtar Ablyazov — recently sentenced to 15 years in jail in Moscow — also owned a property there.

But one of the area's biggest whales seems to be owned by insurance magnate Nikolai Sarkisov, who allegedly bought the almost 30,000-square-foot chalet called **Apopka** last year.

After money troubles forced the unfinished chalet into bankruptcy, Sarkisov rescued it, at a reported price of around \$26.4 million. It'll be an

ideal backdrop for Ilona Kotelyukh, his 30-year Instagram influencer wife, to use for a few snaps.

Courchevel's super-sized chalets are far roomier than anything available at other five-star spots, says Rupert Longsdon, of the Oxford Ski Company, which offers homes for \$300,000 per week.

“At some other resorts, the bigger chalets are around 13,000 square feet, but here, they could be more



Nikita Mishin



Mukhtar Ablyazov

than 30,000 square feet. The whole resort is like an iceberg — what you see above ground is only the beginning.”

But now that the Russian's have retreated, an entire economy that has been upset.

Ceri Tinley, who runs **Consensio**, another luxe chalet specialist says that Russian are integral to Courchevel's well-being because their peak season, the two-week period in early January that coincides with Orthodox Christmas, would otherwise be a slow week, as the rest of Europe recovers from holiday excess.

Around 40% of her Courchevel clients each year are Russian, but that dropped to around 10% this winter thanks to vaccine rules that banned the Sputnik V jab, she says.

Now, with even fewer Russians expected throughout the year and travel experts expect deals for newcomers in both the sales and rental markets.

“There will be properties owned by Russians that we haven't heard of that get requisitioned,” said Oxford Ski's Rupert Longsdon. “I'm sure that will happen, and some will probably sit out there on the market.”

Nostrovial!

The swish Swiss city welcomes a hotel operating on another level

By **CHRISTOPHER CAMERON**

It's about time that the city know for Patek Philippe, Rolex and Omega got a hotel worth synchronizing with.

Opened in October, moments before the Omicron variant set European travel back yet again, the **Woodward** is the swishest new hotel in a city that's synonymous with luxury.

To start, the five-star stay is a member of the tony Oekter Collection, which includes other super-rich escapes such as Jumby Bay in Antigua, Le Bristol in Paris and Eden Roc in St. Barts, to name a few. With pedigree like that it should be obvious that you won't be staying in a standard room — you literally have no choice but to splurge. That's because all of the Woodward's 26 rooms are suites (*rates*

A diva in Geneva

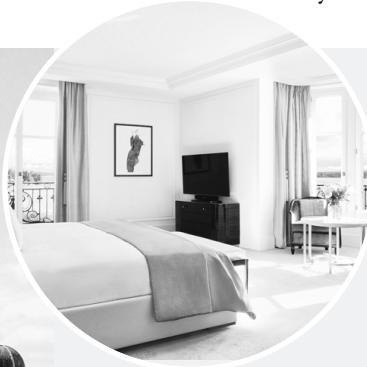


Courtesy of The Woodward (3)

Starting at \$1,340 a night, each room at the Woodward is a suite (inset); there's only 26 of them inside the former bank.

start at approximately \$1,340 per night). But there are suites and then there are suites and the hotel has a few truly remarkable home-sized upper floor mansions to offer.

For instance, the sprawling Presidential Suite is tricked out with original artworks, marquetry, custom rugs (careful with the red wine for God's sake), lacquered wood



cabinets, White Carrara marble and more square meters than you can shake your cigar at.

But the rub here is that those ridiculously costly materials are in all of the rooms — and most have stunning views of **Lake Geneva** and **Mont Blanc** in the distance.

The hotel — situated next to the original League of Nations a 10 minute walk from the city's bustling old town chocolate shops — was originally built in 1901 by French architect François Durel, in post-Haussmann style. It later served as the most Swiss of institutions: a private bank. Now, the building has been restored to its former glory by architect

Pierre-Yves Rochon. But a massive list of less-well-known artisan experts have touched ever surface in the hotel's interior, giving it a “I can't believe a hotel spent money on this” feel.

Every good hotel has a good spa, but the Woodward has another ace up its sleeve. They've partnered with luxury French makeup and fragrance brand Guerlain. The two-floor spa space is the brands first home in Switzerland.

The collabs don't stop there either. The hotel has not one but two restau-

rants from the late Michelin-master Joël Robuchon, the famed **L'Atelier** and plant-focused **La Jardnier**. Both fine-dining establishments are Swiss firsts.

The hotel has other perks include a tearoom, two bars, as well as a members-only cigar lounge, which occupies the former bank vault.

Geneva is known for watches, chocolate, snooty shopping and to the literati “Frankenstein” (Mary Shelly wrote it there after all). Now it can add “hotels you never want to leave” to the list.



The late Joël Robuchon has a **L'Atelier** outpost inside the hotel.

SWISS BLISS

Switzerland's grand hotels offer fresh reasons to go old school

By CHRISTOPHER CAMERON

MISS the Swiss? Don't be neutral. Ski season may be over but this spring and summer there are fresh old reasons to yodel across the Alps.

Timing is everything, so start in the northern clock tower city of Zürich. In the hills above the medieval town along the Limmat, the **Dolder Grand** (*TheDolderGrand.com*), one of Switzerland's most storied be-turreted palace hotels, is showing off with ultra-modern design and contemporary art.

Originally built in 1899 by architect Jacques Gros, known for his romantic chalet-style builds, the old front of the hotel is big on 19th-century whimsy. But in 2004, fairytale fun was introduced to James Bondesque sophistication.

The hotel's owner, UK-based, Swiss financier Urs Schwarzenbach tapped British starchitect and

Baron of Thames Bank, Lord Norman Foster, to build a modern extension to the hotel, which now boasts 175 rooms and apartment-sized suites. Rates start at \$744 per night.

The new wings integrate minimalist materials like steel, iPhone-like black gloss finishes and stencil-cut aluminum with an organic, fluid geometry and forest motifs. Circular floating catwalks flow through the airy hotel to an amenity wing that includes a 43,000 square-foot-plus spa featuring a massive pool, a stunning meditation room with a reflective mosaic dome and saunas. At only one point do the

Gros and Foster buildings kiss.

For Americans used to seeing idiotically executed old-meets-new renovations, fear not. No crimes against art or beauty have been committed here.

And speaking of art, the Dolder is lousy with it. The historic portions of the hotel are brought to life with originals from Salvador Dalí, Jani Leinonen and Takashi Murakami to name very few. Art tends to rotate here as pieces are bought, sold or moved to other properties giving the

hotel an ever-evolving je ne sais quoi.

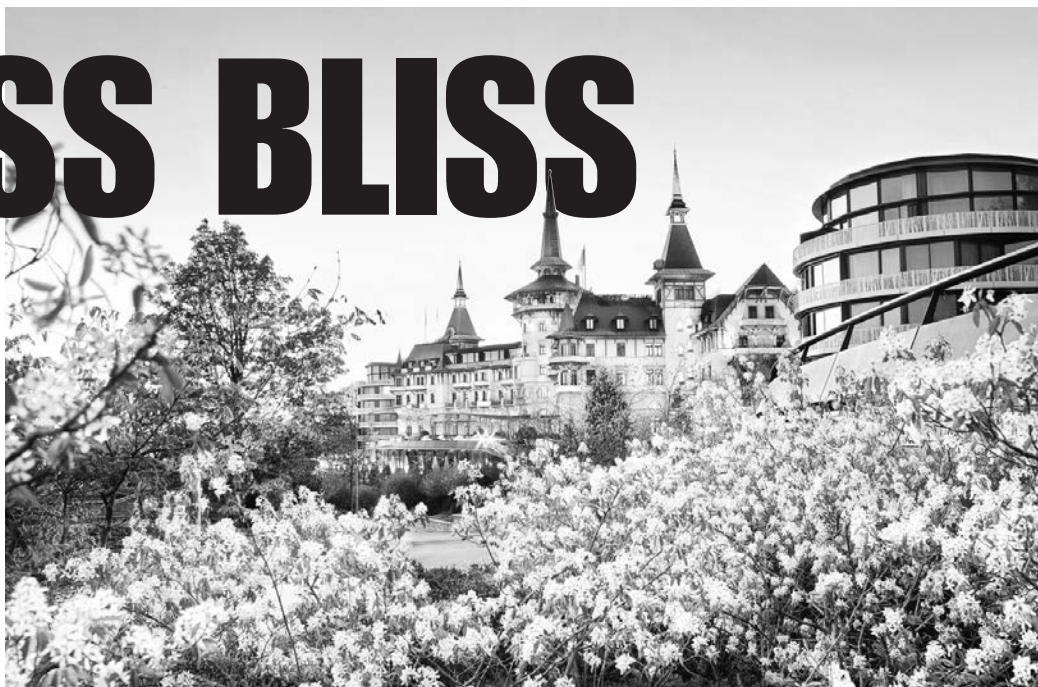
Even when it's time to check out, wonders never cease. As the next palace on the agenda is accessed via Switzerland's famed Rhaetian Railway, a ride that weaves via tunnels and valleys through an UNESCO World Heritage Site to arrive in the legendary resort town of St. Moritz. You could fly private, but you'd miss out.

The spring time's slushy snow is known to snap the knees of intrepid skiers in St. Moritz. So skip the slopes after the winter high season and enjoy the luxury hotel life at 6,000 feet. The views are just as good.

Badrutt's Palace (*Badrutt'sPalace.com*) — the historic hotel known for hosting polo matches on its frozen lake and

housing generations of who's who — opens fresh for the season June 24 and its hottest suite is on the market for the first time in recent memory.

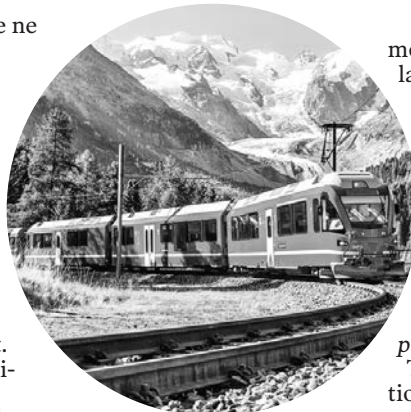
Looming large on the town's skyline, the hotel's iconic wooden tower was occupied by a well-heeled but regrettably anonymous individual for the past 30 years and this season marked the first time that the multi-bedroom, multi-story palace within a palace was up for grabs.



With a massive rotating contemporary art collection and a slick modern wing designed by starchitect Norman Foster, Zürich's whimsical 19th-century Dolder Grand, which sites on hill overlooking the city, is the best of old meets new. Better still, it's a short UNESCO-recognized train ride (inset) away from the Alps.



Courtesy of Dolder Grand (2); Getty Images/Stockphoto (inset)



Summer rates for the most baller pad in Switzerland's richest city are negotiable, according to the hotel, but it was most recently asking \$30,000 per night.

But if that's a little rich for your taste there are plenty of other options, with 157 rooms, including 43 suites, up for grabs. Summer prices from \$485 per night.

The hotel's main attraction in the summer is the social scene, which rivals Le Bilboquet's Sag Harbor outpost on a Saturday night. Its massive old-world lobby is effervescent with champagne sippers. Its cigar room and cocktail lounge is where be-turtlenecked individuals ruminate over the art market. Couples sneak away to the hotel's vast 50,000-bottle wine cellar — home to its hidden **Krug Stübli** restaurant. There are 10 buzzy restaurants in the hotel, burgundy and beluga caviar flowing in all, but in the evenings, ballers blow off steam over Dom and funky beats in the hotel's **King's Social House**, Switzerland's first nightclub.

Another new addition to the hotel this season was **Paradiso**, the mountain's most picturesque slope-side fondue and champagne après-ski escape. It's a chairlift ride away, but all the more lovely in the greener months sans skis.

Afterall, St. Moritz in the summer is all about schmooze, booze and views.



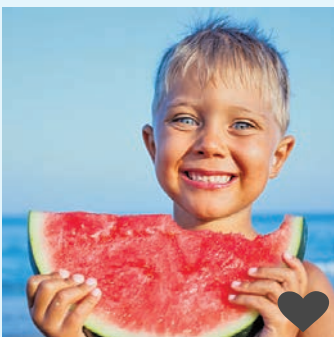
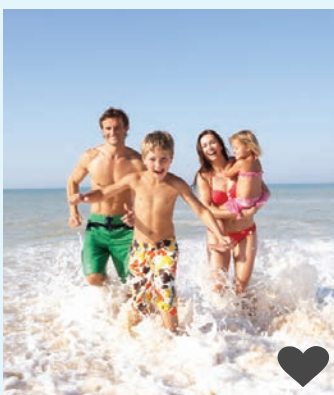
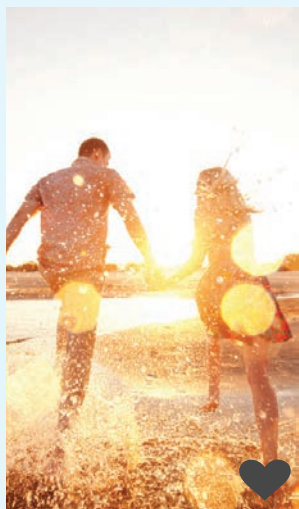
Courtesy Badrutt's Palace Hotel (3)



You may think you know all about Badrutt's Palace Hotel in St. Moritz (your grandparents did), but its famed tower suit (left) is now available to book for the first time in 30 years (if you've got the cash). Its refreshed rooms (right) and world-class amenities (above) are even more reason to visit this summer.



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A Carousel Club, rappers and new takes on gaming give young people a reason to love Hallandale Beach

By CHRISTOPHER CAMERON

NO one at the race track had any idea if the mare's mother was a mudder and there wasn't a betting slip in sight. Instead, a mix of millennials and Gen Zers, all racing newbies placing bets from their mobiles, packed out **Gulfstream Park in Hallandale Beach** just north of Miami in January for the **Pegasus World Cup**

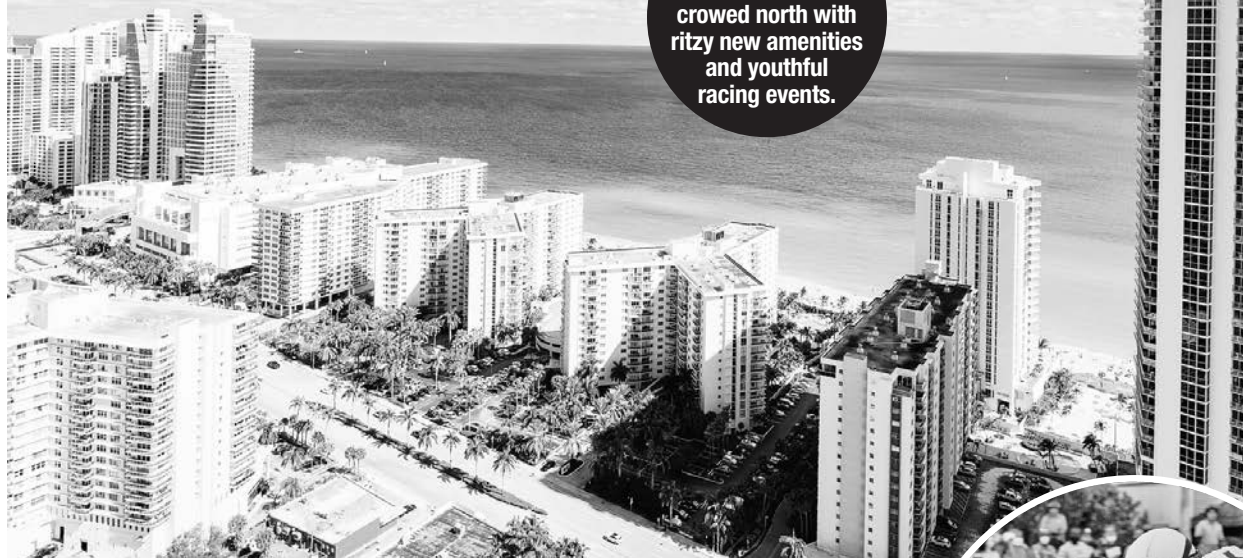
But thoroughbred racing was just one of the attractions. Ja Rule and Lil' Kim performed with DJ Cassidy.

A "Carousel Club" with a merry-go-round bar created Instagramable backdrops. Above the track's casino, another social media spectacular occurred in the all-pink "Flamingo Room" where performers from the Faena Theater showed off their acrobatics. Trendy event partners included the pricey supper club Delilah and rapper favorite Elleven Ultra Lounge.

Turf pounding even got woke this year with nods to humane, drug-free racing, Black History Month art exhibitions and a first-ever racing event just for the ladies: the Pegasus World

RACE TO THE TOP

Hallandale Beach has finally lured the Miami crowd north with ritzy new amenities and youthful racing events.



Getty Images/Stockphoto; Liz Lamont/CSM/Shutterstock (inset)

Golf & Tennis Club at 501 Diplomat Parkway will sprawl over 127 acres when it eventually completes.

Even more excitement is coming to the area next month with the first ever Miami Formula 1 race. Just seven miles from Gulfstream Park in Miami Gardens, real estate billionaire Stephen Ross (the builder behind Hudson Yards in Manhattan) is constructing a purpose-built track for the event.

Auto racing is another sport that is freshening up its look. Thanks to the massively popular Formula 1 Netflix series "Drive to Survive" and a politically correct slant, the sport has managed to attract scores of new young fans who don't know first from second gear.

Parties are happening before and after the May 8 race, including Maxim Magazine's party at the Seminole Hard Rock, which promises performances by the Chain-smokers and "100s [sic] of top models." And it wouldn't be Miami if the race wasn't sponsored by **Crypto.com**.

It's taken billions of dollars of development and strategy, but the wager is already paying off. At this year's Pegasus World Cup the crowd was imported directly from South Beach and Downtown Miami. No one was their to gamble with a social security check. Finally, the fountain of youth is flowing north of Aventura Mall and the oligarch hub of Sunny Isles.

"The idea is to do something really big and draw new fans into the sport," Stronach said. "It's a platform for innovation."



DJ Cassidy, Ja Rule and Lil' Kim performed at this year's Pegasus World Cup thoroughbred race (inset).

Cup Filly and Mare Turf Invitational, which carried a purse of \$500,000.

It wasn't a normal day at the race track. But this "ex-

periential" approach to the sport of kings is here to stay. It's just one gambit real estate developers, race horse owners and online gambling investors are betting will bring fresh blood to the track and the rapidly shifting area.

"We're looking at ways to modernize horse racing and the guest experience, and to draw new fans into the sport," said Belinda Stronach, a former member of Canada's House of Commons, as well as chairman, CEO and president of the Stronach Group, which hosts the Pegasus World Cup and owns the betting app Xpressbet. "We aren't in the 1950s anymore. Horse racing has to be relevant and we have to curate

the experience so that it is compelling."

But it's not just about horseflesh. Stakeholders in Hallandale Beach and neighboring Hollywood are pushing hard to win the war of attrition in a market long known for down-market gambling and retirees.

Today, the area's greyhound track (Florida's dog racing ban went into effect in 2020) has given way to a shinier renovated casino called the **Big Easy**, owned by South Florida real estate honcho and owner of the Fontainebleau Hotel, Jeffrey Soffer. In Hollywood, the Seminole-owned **Hard Rock Hotel & Casino** saw a \$1.5 billion property expansion in 2019 that added a 450-foot tower shaped

like a guitar.

Meanwhile, a flurry of luxury condo towers have risen. For instance, 2000 Ocean, a 38-story luxury condo project in Hallandale, completed construction in March. In addition, a massive new mixed-use golf resort developed by Witkoff and Ari Pearl dubbed the **Diplomat**

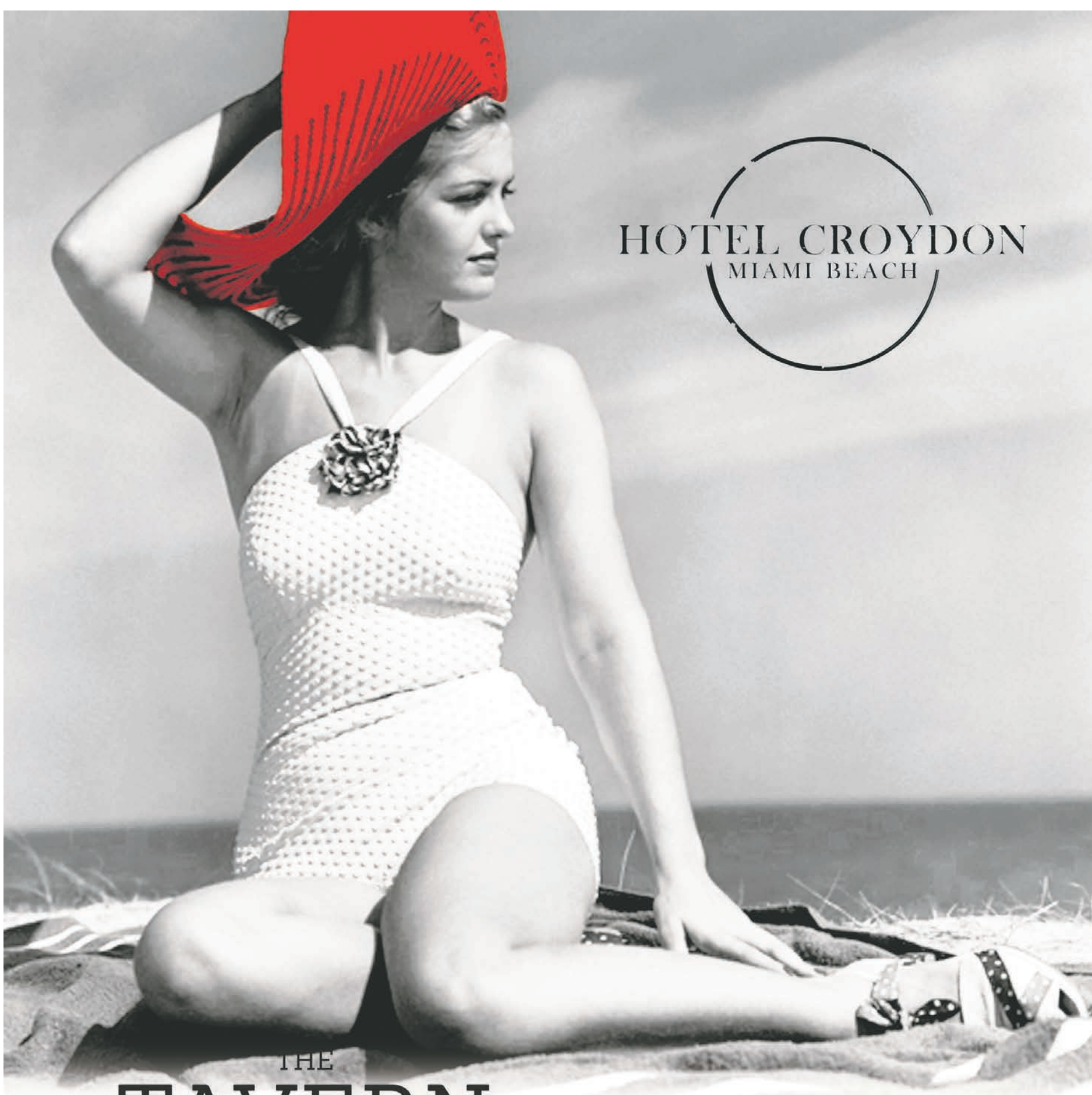


Getty Images for Stronach Group

A Carousel Club bar pop-up at this year's Pegasus World Cup created Instagrammable moments for horse racing noobs.



Cheap cigars and betting slips have been replaced with selfies and gambling apps at the area's Gulfstream Racetrack.



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BARN BURNERS

Chefs from Rainbow Room, Charlie Bird spice up a quaint Maine inn



By LINDA LABAN

TWO New York City chefs head to coastal New England this April and one of them isn't coming back to the Big Apple.

Chef Mathew Woolf is trading in the cityscape views of Rockefeller Center's legendary Rainbow Room for a spot by the sea, as he takes over the kitchen at the celebrated **White Barn Inn** (Room rates from: \$500 per night at AubergeResorts.com/white-barninn), Auberge Resorts Collection in Kennebunk on Maine's southern coast.

He's also invited his friend, chef Ryan Hardy, to head north to showcase dishes from his acclaimed Soho-set, Italian-themed restaurant Charlie Bird for a culinary weekend, April 22 to 24.

"Charlie Bird at White Barn Inn" is part of Auberge Resorts Collection's "Taste of Auberge" series of chef partnerships and restaurant pop-ups at its properties throughout 2022.

"We will be cooking together," said Woolf, speaking to The Post just days before starting his new job. "There's a pasta-making and wine-tasting class; and we'll do a Manhattan-style Sunday brunch. Me and Ryan have done events together before. It will be nice to have a friendly familiar face," he added. "It will help me settle in a bit."

Tickets range from \$85 per person for the class, to \$165 per person for a five-course tasting dinner.

Woolf's itinerant career



Two celebrity culiniers are throwing a cook out at coastal Maine's acclaimed White Barn Inn (inset and above).



MAINE MENU: "Charlie Bird at White Barn Inn," going down the weekend of April 22 to 24, is part of "Taste of Auberge," a series of partnerships between the brand's properties and chefs. Fire pit s'mores (left) pair well with local lobster (right).

has dragged him between the iconic 19th-century, luxury hotel Claridge's in his native England to Chicago and then Los Angeles, before ultimately landing at the Rainbow Room. Now, he is eager to bring his cooking to the White Barn's legendary main dining room and its **Little Barn**.

"Little Barn is more of a refined rustic style. More relaxed. The main dining room will be the fine dining the White Barn is known for," he said.

Lined with raw wood and rustic antiques, the dining room is a real two-story barn moved to adjoin the 1800s farmhouse that originally made up the inn, which now also includes garden cottages and nearby riverside cottages.

In total, there are just 26 rooms and suites.

Woolf's arrival comes at the tail end of a massive, property wide renovation, that switched guest rooms from a classic, elegant design to a more textured rich rustic-chic look of raffia,



wood, and wicker furnishings.

A highlight is over-the-top luxe bathrooms with sumptuous soaking tubs you want to leave — until the dinner gong!

"This is an amazing property with a prestigious heritage," agreed Woolf. "I hope to build on this incredible foundation and bring my flair."

A big part of his flair is fish, he said: "When I started I was on the fish line at Claridge's, so New England seafood dishes

will be a focus here, but I want to work on expressing them in different ways. I love to cook fish. I've already started talking to a local kelp farmer, and a mussel farmer. I want to explore a lot more and get creative with it."

He'll also be bringing the plant forward ideals he picked up in California.

"In the UK, dishes are based around a protein, whereas in California it was more about produce," he said. "I like to base my dishes around vegetables



Chef Mathew Woolf wants to get creative with seafood.



Ryan Hardy is the chef behind Soho's Charlie Bird.

that are in season and build out from there."

The ritzy communities of Kennebunk and Kennebunkport — known for Walker's Point Estate (the Bush family compound) and familiarly known as the Kennebunks — lie on each side of the Kennebunk River, which meanders into the Atlantic.

It's an area and lifestyle that Woolf, who hails from a coastal British town in Essex, a county east of London, knows well.

"I've vacationed there for several summers and eaten at the restaurant every time," he recalled. "For me, it's a home away from home."

But Woolf will miss his spunky team of friends at the Rainbow Room, he said.

"After eight years, [leaving my team is] the saddest thing about moving. But I feel like I'm going back to my roots."



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ON THE ROAD AGAIN

6 travel musts for the rusty globe-trotter

By APRIL HARDWICK

AFTER being told to stay at home for what felt like a decade-long pandemic, we're all finally getting ready for the next adventure. Now that it's time to book those last minute and future travel plans, we've rounded up the best gadgets and gear to help you ease back into it so you can really kick back and enjoy the journey.



▲ Rest assured your favorite beauty buys will never again be painfully discarded when they travel in these TSA-approved carry-on aluminum bottles which come in a compact zipper bag made of recycled plastic. \$35 at [Swell.com](#)

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By JORDAN RIEFE

ARRIVING at Cabo San Lucas airport, most make their way to the nearby resorts. But with all its backward cap-wearing bros looking to get lit, why would you want to?

Instead, head north for a two-hour drive to the city of **La Paz**, a small metropolis of about 250,000 in the Sea of Cortez. It's a charming old burg built on silver mining, fishing and pearls — one of the area's gigantic lemon-sized orbs adorns a crown belonging to the Queen of England.

But you didn't come all this way to mine silver or shuck oysters, though the fishing is abundant — marlin, dorado, yellowtail, grouper, snapper. The best reason to come to this coastal conurbation is adventure. Jacques Cousteau called the Sea of Cortez the world's aquarium, which means to do it right you have to get wet.

If the sharks at the office wear pinstripes, the ones in this sapphire body of water wear spots. They range up to 33 feet long, but they're not the bloodthirsty predators you know. Instead the whale shark is a docile filter feeder, content to mosey along on the surface, casually engulfing its prey.

The sea was murky and frigid the day we took the plunge. Buffeted in choppy waves, it's easy to get disoriented. If you're not careful, you might find yourself spinning around and coming nose-to-nose with the beast. Sure, he has no hunger for humans, but that mouth — as wide as five feet and lined with over 300 teeth (mainly for show)! Few have ever been that close to a mouth so large, a terrifying thrill that will leave you scrambling.

Swimming with whale sharks and sea lions is about the coolest thing you can do in La Paz. **Baja Adventure Company** (BajaAdventureco.com) makes it affordable at \$175, including a homemade ceviche

TAKE THE PLUNGE

Diving into Mexico's whale shark capital

La Paz's whale sharks, gentle giants which can span 33 feet long, are a gill-ty pleasure enjoyed by guests of Baja Club Hotel (inset).



Rum is the life blood of Baja Club, a colonial-style spread on the Malecón, La Paz's main strip.

lunch on **Balandra Beach**, a remote stretch of sand skirting the **Dunas de Arena** national preserve. But there's more, including seasonal whale watching — humpbacks and occasional blue whales in winter. Sandboard on a remote dune where the cardón cactus forest meets the sea, care of **On Board Baja** (\$55/person; OnBoardBaja.com). Ride the powdery sand as you would the snow at Aspen. Just know that it's slower and heavier, and the amount of the stuff you collect on your body

might be enough to build your own dune.

Located on the beachside thoroughfare called the Malecón, the **Baja Club Hotel** (BajaClubHotel.com) is a restored colonial-style villa that once belonged to a family of traders. Dating from the early 20th century, it's been repurposed to accommodate guests with \$300/night rooms surrounding a secluded courtyard. There, in the restaurant under a vine-covered pergola, you can dine on Greek and Mediterranean dishes.

Right outside the door, a charming stroll along the Malecón offers coastal scenery and scintillating sunsets. Turn on any side street to enjoy painted murals and landmarks like the **Catedral de Nuestra Señora de La Paz**, erected in the 1860s, or the old Government House, recently converted into the **Museo de Arte de Baja California Sur**, exhibiting mainly contemporary practitioners from southern Mexico. But get real. You didn't come all the way to La Paz to look at art.

Take a short drive down

the coast to **Chillo-Chill at La Ventana**, the Northern Hemisphere's premiere kitesurfing capital. When the wind is right, kites outnumber seagulls in an array of colors dotting the horizon. It's easier than windsurfing, though the lesson takes at least two hours.

Depending on wind speed you can skip across the surface at up to 40 miles per hour. With no path but the open water, riding on breezes is the closest you'll come to flying without taking to the air. And if it's not your thing, sit back in the shade of a palapa and sip a piña colada while the sun and wind animate the seascape.

If you like, you can rent a tent and glamp for the night so you can be first on the bay when the sun rises. But the smart move is to head

up into the desert hills to **Rancho Cacachilas** (RanchoCacachilas.com). There, at 1,200 feet above sea level, enjoy spectacular views of the coast and rustic desert glamping with farm to table cuisine and friendly guides amid natural splendor for \$300/night.

You can tour the farm, visiting goats, chickens and a burro next to small plots of land where produce is grown. The goats are responsible for the cheese you spread on your bread, *campasuchil*, *palo blanco* or a *girasol* aged three to five weeks.

The maestro around here is an affable dude by the name of Sebastián Del Valle, a naturalist and dedi-

cated outdoorsman who knows the hills like he was reared there. A hike with him will familiarize you with the terrain, but to get intimate with it you'll want a mountain bike for shredding steep narrow trails and the unforgiving turns of the dusty arroyo. But beware: Cardón cacti that look like saguaros are as ubiquitous as fan palms in the higher elevations.

The coat of dust you put on in the desert complements the coat of salt you took from the sea. Adventure hardened, wear both as armor against the deadly sharks in suits back home who are hungrier and less merciful than the whale shark.



Getty Images; Courtesy of Hotel Baja Club (inset)



A family of traders built this early 20th-century villa now repurposed as a \$300 a night hotel.

Courtesy of Hotel Baja Club (2)



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Indigenous practices put travelers in touch with the real Canada

By CHRIS BUNTING

REMEMBER when vacationing to Canada was an easy-going, rated-G lark? An everything's-good, everything's-fine escape to a place where the people dress like us, sound like us (more or less), but *aren't* us?

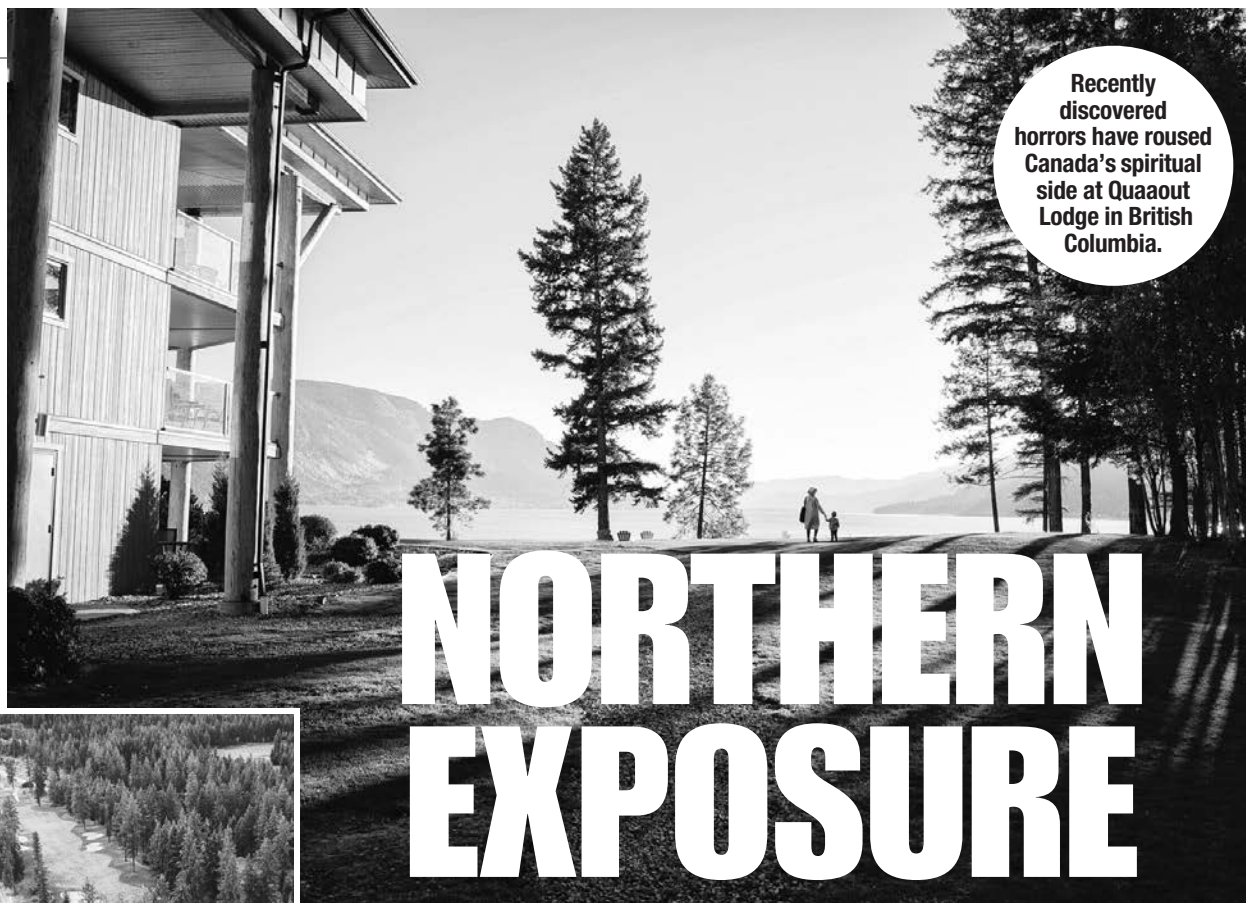
Welcome to topsy-turvy 2022, where otherwise low-key Canada is currently embroiled in a scandal involving more than a century of racism and deadly child abuse, culminating in protests, reparations, even calls for the cancellation of its national holiday.

In other words, Canada's doing its best impression of America.

Even the pope had to jump into the mix earlier this month by finally apologizing for the Catholic Church's enormous role in the murderous and cringingly euphemized "residential school" system which committed "cultural genocide" (their words) of Canada's indigenous populations from the 1880s up through the mid-1990s.

But in order to heal the deep societal wounds and pain in its wake, apologetic-to-a-fault Canada still manages to keep it unapologetically old-school Canada — spiritually, recreationally, wine o'clockually — for residents and visitors alike, at least in one small, largely indigenous pocket of British Columbia Southern Interior.

Half native Secwepemc (Shuswap, in English), half Norwegian, Brittany "Britt" Bakken is a 28-year-old cultural interpreter and healing guide at the **Quaaout Lodge & Spa at Talking Rock Golf Resort** (from \$175; QuaaoutLodge.com) in



Recently discovered horrors have roused Canada's spiritual side at Quaaout Lodge in British Columbia.

Courtesy of Quaaout Lodge at Talking Rock Resort (2)



The native-owned lodge sits on 20 acres of forested, lakeside Squilax Territory.

Chase, 260 miles northeast of Vancouver by car.

Britt's breadth of knowledge in history, spirituality, ethnobotany and especially linguistics is as bold and well-rounded as her nose ring — think Ferdinand de Saussure with a dash of riot grrrl. You could say il papa's mea culpa left her a tad wanting. "To me, an apology alone does not do anything. There are reservations still dealing with dirty, untreated drinking water ... brown sludge that children play in," she said. "Do something about that or shove it. An apology without action is just manipulation."

Today, the spitfire who hails from nearby Kamloops is shepherding our group of

thirsty soul-searchers on a healing journey around the 70-room lodge's densely forested land on the shores of Little Shuswap Lake. We're talking 20 acres of prime, pristine Squilax Territory.

We start early in the morning under a cerulean sky by doing a 15-minute gratis smudge ceremony, or what Britt calls a spirit bath. She lights a bundle of sage in an abalone shell bowl, then either she, or the guests themselves, wave the smoke-billowing stick around the parts of the body most in need of cleansing. Hair seems to be the favorite of our group as it's best at trapping the herb's waft for all-day olfactory bliss. All of the four elements are represented in the smudge — abalone from the water; sage from the earth, and air to oxygenate the sage's flame. The number four is kind of a big deal in Shuswap beliefs.

We then leisurely saunter through the Endor-like woodlands surrounding the lodge — a metropolis of giant cedars, firs and junipers carpeting the ground with their cones (75-minute Walk the Land tour is \$32/pp).

We stumble upon a group of, yes, four fir trees, one of which was not like the others. It had its bark blasted by lightning something fierce years ago, but still lives to tell the tale.

That's all I'll say about "the Healing Tree" lest I spoil all the many stories of miracles

and its pitchy goodness have since paid forward that Gordon "Gordo" Tomma will regale you with. As wise as he is wisecracking, Gordo is a half-Irish fiftysomething Shuswap knowledge keeper and fellow culture interpreter who often accompanies Britt.

"He excels at telling me when I'm wrong," she jokes. Gordo promises that while all of his Healing Tree tales start the same, they never end as such.

We emerge from the forest onto the shores of icy Little Shuswap Lake, grand Monashee mountains providing the backdrop. A short walk down the beach, we come upon a mysterious, red metal-doored structure.

"This is a sweat lodge, free to use," Britt explains. "It gets blistering hot in there

from the lava stones, so you shouldn't wear jewelry. I would have to take out my nose ring." While owned by the same native band, the steam lodge is private and not part of Quaaout proper, and currently padlocked (possibly because of some bad weather, possibly because of some bad humans). In other words, it's officially closed to John Q. Public like us. (But, if you happen to know a guy who knows a guy who knows a chieftain, you might just slip past the proverbial velvet rope one day.)

The capper to our stroll to serenity is a stopover at the lodge's ke-kuli, a traditional, semi-subterranean earth lodge with a fire pit as

centerpiece, intended to spur storytelling, the sharing of sorrows, prayer or just meditation among guests (Storytelling Experience is \$36/pp).

After learning about the initial 215 child graves discovered outside a residential school nearly a year ago (that number has since ballooned into the thousands), Britt visited the kekuli four days in a row, prayed and gave her thoughts to the departed. "I let them know they're not forgotten and offered food to the flame for them to enjoy on the other side," said Britt, who's also a mother of two "kiddos" and an assistant teacher of linguistics at a local daycare.

When we return to the lodge, Britt gifts us with a small satchel of sage and bid us adieu. Intent on a little après-enlightenment at the lodge's restaurant and bar, the day of healing hadn't ended just yet.

Enter five-treatment room Le7ke Spa. First off, this is totally justified as an authentic indigenous experience beyond just the First Nations-inspired décor and design. Its name, Le7ke, means "I am good" in Secwepemctsin and that "7" is not a hallucination, nor is it a stylized "V" a la the movie "Se7en," nor is it the actual number — it's just the best mouth-and-throat-looking pictograph a Qwerty keyboard can conjure up to indicate a glottal stop which occurs quite frequently in the awesomely alphanumeric language. But my nerd-self digresses.

In difficult and heartbreaking times such as these — and not just for Canada's indigenous folk, but for all of its people — spiritual pit stops like Quaaout Lodges and its passionate crew of cultural guides are essential. Although, if you visit

Quaaout's website, an auto-playing promotional video on the homepage shows an entirely different cultural experience: sunglasses-wearing, beer-tossing, hot dog-scarfing bros, with golf clubs slung over one arm, a stand-up paddleboard under the other, hitting the lake's sandy beach with their dog.

Each of us grieves in their own way.



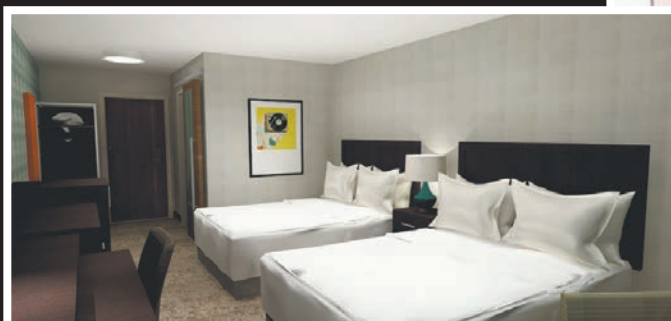
A smudge ceremony is guaranteed to cure whatever ails you and, as a bonus, keeps you smelling sage-fresh all day long.

Benjamin Luk Photography (2)

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REST IN GREECE



Famed Milos restaurant opens ritzy branded hotel in Athens

By SHIVANI VORA

HERE'S a place to take your con-feta-rates.

Milos, the chic and pricey Greek seafood restaurant known for billionaires and celeb guests, has opened its first-ever hotel.

Chef Costas Spiliadis — the man who founded Estiatorio Milos in Montreal in 1979 and grew it to seven locations worldwide (several more are in the works) — quietly opened **Xenodocheio Milos** (from \$420; XenodocheioMilos.com) in January.

But now as summer approaches, the luxury boutique property in the heart of Athens, is finally ready to shine.

The debut marks the first hotel venture for Spiliadis and a return to his Greek roots. It's a partnership with the Intra Athinaiki company, and Dimos Stasinopoulos, the CEO of Epoque Collection, a luxury boutique hotel management company.

"I can't say enough how it's such a special experience to have my first hotel in the country where I'm from," said Spiliadis. "I know the Greek way of hospitality and have been showing that to people for decades in my restaurants. This is an opportunity to carry my philosophy over to a hotel."

Xenodocheio Milos isn't his first-ever project in Greece, however. Spiliadis opened a restaurant in

Athens in 2004, which closed four years ago.

Located in the center of the city near the Old Parliament House and Syntagma (Constitution) Square, the 43-room Xenodocheio Milos is in a prime and historical part of town situated in two heritage-listed neo-classical buildings.

It's also near high-end boutiques from both international and homegrown brands (Louis Vuitton, for example) and surrounded by buzzy restaurants and cafes.

Syntagma Square, where locals staged an uprising in 1843 against King Otto to demand a constitution, is a five-minute walk away, while the Parthenon and Acropolis are 20 minutes away.

Spiliadis says that walking into Xenodocheio Milos is like entering the

home of your favorite family member.

"You're instantly enveloped with hospitality and warmth," he said. "Your every need is catered to with service that's very personalized."

If you want a certain kind of tea for breakfast in the morning, for example, the staff will make sure you have it even if it means buying it from a store.

And if you love history, don't be surprised to find books on Greek history waiting for you in your

room at the end of the day.

It's touches like these that make the hotel stand out. Spiliadis describes it as an "authentic Greek experience."

Xenodocheio Milos has a design that's inspired by the Aegean Sea and Cycladic art and architecture. Features include interiors with high ceilings, muted colors throughout and locally sourced materials such as white Dionysos marble and oak timber panels. Natural light is in no short supply.

The rooms are meant to feel like bedrooms in a home. They're airy and have Greek furniture, pendant lighting, Dionysos marble bathrooms and wooden floors.

In a nod to Greek nautical culture, the headboards and bathroom counters are curved and meant to evoke wind moving through sails.

With their 215 square feet, entry-level rooms are small, but the suites span up 915 square feet; a few

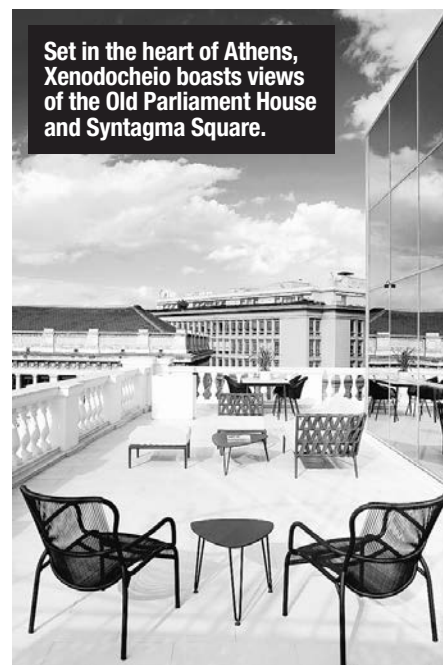
have large terraces that face the Old Parliament House.

Not surprisingly, the cuisine is a highlight of any stay. Guests can enjoy the same Milos food that they're familiar with through room service or in the namesake restaurant.

Think parfaits for breakfast with the legendary yogurt, in-season fruit and

Chef Costas Spiliadis's culinary know-how plays a major role at Xenodocheio Milos, his new hotel (inset, left).

Set in the heart of Athens, Xenodocheio boasts views of the Old Parliament House and Syntagma Square.



Greek honey, traditional Greek salads bursting with the ripest tomatoes and the world-famous Milos Special — thinly sliced eggplant and zucchini, fried like chips and served with saganaki cheese and tzatziki.

Seafood is a star, of course, with choices such as just-caught fish grilled whole and deboned, charcoal-broiled octopus and assorted Greek ceviche.

The restaurant itself has large white columns, a sculptural staircase and sculptures from Greek

artist Dimitris Fortsas.

Off property, the staff prides itself on creating culinary tours of Spiliadis's favorite markets and restaurants and arranging yacht excursions along the Athenian Riviera.

"We're not a big hotel," says Spiliadis. "But, we are one with a heart and a roadway to the real Greece."

There's plenty of Aegean Sea-inspired touches in each of the hotel's 43 rooms, like muted tones and high ceilings.



Courtesy of Xenodocheio Milos (3)



Nathalie Delon / Island Trading Archive

Blackwell with (left to right) Junior Marvin, Bob Marley and Jacob Miller, en route to Brazil in 1980. Blackwell says he met Marley by chance in London after lending him a spot of cash.

ONE LOVE

Island Records legend Chris Blackwell reflects on his rockin' life in Jamaica

By SHIVANI VORA

WHEN it comes to rock and roll, the London-born Chris Blackwell, 84, is a familiar name. As the founder of Island Records, the label he established in Jamaica in 1959 and England in 1962, Blackwell has propelled a long list of music icons into fame: Robert Palmer, Melissa Etheridge, The Cranberries, U2, Bob Marley and many more.

But before music, Blackwell got his professional start in the travel industry more than four decades ago. Today he runs GoldenEye, the famed home of James Bond author Ian Fleming — now a luxury resort and celebrity hideaway — as well as Strawberry Hill, in Jamaica's Blue Mountains and the Caves in Negril.

Now, Blackwell's storied carrier working with the world's most famous artists is being chronicled in a memoir: "The Islander: My Life in Music and Beyond"

(out June 7 and available to pre-order now).

Blackwell, who is a Rock and Roll Hall of Fame inductee, spoke to The Post about hotels, recording and discovering stars.

How did you end up in the travel industry?

My cousin John Pringle opened Round Hill in Montego Hill in the 1950s, which attracted an elite crowd right away because of his wide network of friends. Noel Coward came to stay, and so did the Kennedy family before John became president.



Adrian Booth/urbanimage.tv

Chris Blackwell at his Compass Point, Bahamas, studio with renowned Jamaican audio engineer Steven Stanley (far right).

Bob Marley producer and GoldenEye (top right) owner Chris Blackwell, 84, is looking back in a thoughtful and celebrity-filled new memoir (inset).

I was a teenager at the time and so impressed by the whole set up that I was inspired to get into hotels. I started by teaching waterski lessons to guests at Half Moon. At the same time, air travel to Jamaica picked up,

and Montego Bay was becoming popular with tourists. I loved the energy.

Isn't it your hotel work that got you into music?

Yes. Bands would play at the restaurants and bars on the weekends at both Round Hill and Half Moon, and I was drawn to their music. One time a band from Bermuda came to play had a blind pianist. A couple of drinks in one afternoon, I told them that I wanted to record them. I knew nothing about recording, it was the rum talking. A few days later, we drove to Kingston, which was three hours away, and went to a recording studio. After that experience, I started going to concerts and re-

cording different Jamaican bands who I liked. That was the how Island Records began.

Tell us about discovering Bob Marley.

I was in London working when Bob Marley and the Wailers went to Scandinavia to record a movie, but it fell through. They had no tickets or money to get back to Jamaica and ended up in London. A friend asked me to help them get home. I loaned them money, and we instantly connected. They did a record for me, and that was the beginning.

Who was your most memorable discovery?

It has to be the first person I discovered: Millie

Small, who grew up on a sugar estate in Jamaica. She had the most unique high-pitched voice, and I brought her over to England in 1964 to record "My Boy Lollipop." It ended up being a huge hit and made her very famous.

Suddenly, I catapulted from becoming the guy who was running around London trying to sell Jamaican music to the guy who was in television studios with the Beatles and the Rolling Stones.

You knew Fleming. What was he like?

Fleming first came to Jamaica in the late 1940s when I was around nine or 10. My uncle, who was a writer for the local paper, met him through a mutual friend, and the two of them became close friends. I was in boarding school in England but used to see him when I was home from school holidays.

He was very warm and very disciplined. He followed the same routine daily: a long swim, then breakfast, then hours of writing while locked up in his bedroom. He would emerge at 1:30 for lunch and go back to writing.

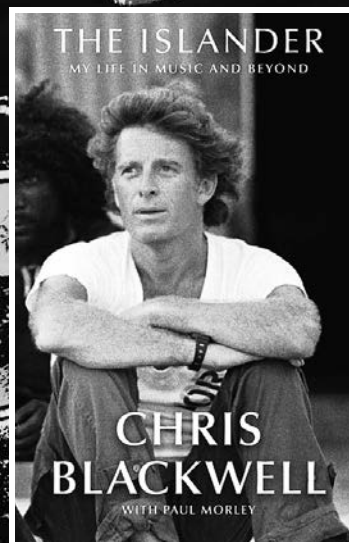
You've been investing in hotels since the 1980s.

I saw this derelict hotel in Miami Beach and spontaneously decided to buy it. It was called the Marlin and I ended up buying and running seven more properties there including the Tides and the Leslie.

I sold the hotels and moved to the Bahamas where I opened two hotels in Nassau: Pink Sands and Compass Point. I built a recording studio there and it's where Robert Palmer recorded his hit "Addicted to Love."



Mark Sagliocco/GC Images





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