



NATIONAL
GEOGRAPHIC

TRAVELER

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ANNUAL
GUIDE

Best of the World

*20 Places
You Should See
in 2015*

ROAD TRIP
**THE
ORIGINAL
WELLNESS
TRAIL**

GOING LOCAL
**HANDMADE
IN PHILLY**

MY CITY
**COOL GRIT:
MEXICO'S
CULTURE
CAPITAL**

DRINK
**STOUT
CRAWL IN
IRELAND**

CHECKING IN
**CHICAGO'S
INDIE
HOTELS**



INSIDE: THE NEXT MACHU PICCHU, GREETINGS FROM PENANG, OAKLAND REDUX

MONT ST. MICHEL, FRANCE

FAITH AND A FEAT OF HUMAN GENIUS

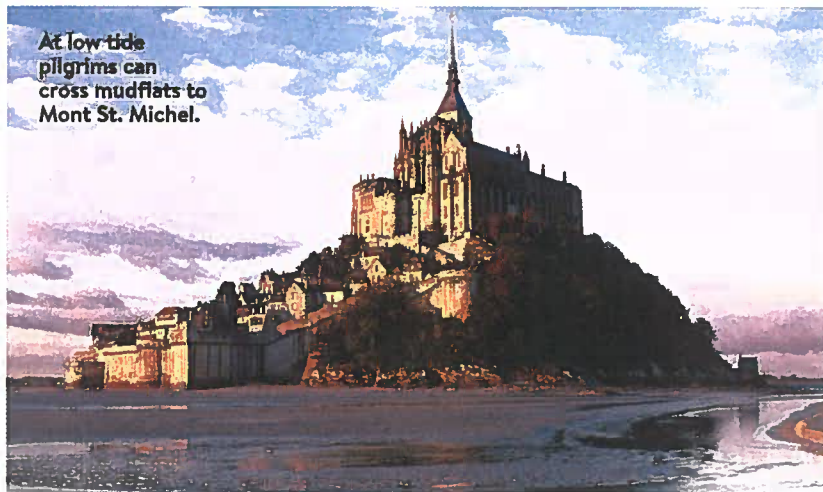
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FOR ABOUT A THOUSAND years, travelers have gasped when the Abbey of Mont St. Michel has loomed into view, rising from a bay fed by tides that are among the highest and most treacherous in Europe. What makes the sight transcendent is the play of light, sky, and weather that can shift hourly here off the coast of Normandy. Total isolation was the point, and pilgrims had to wait for the

tide to recede to make their way across the flats to the abbey.

In 1879, a causeway was built to ease the approach to Mont St. Michel. That and years of agricultural development, though, led to a buildup of silt and sea grass. Rather than lording regally over an expanse of water, Mont St. Michel now stood at the end of a massive mudflat. A reclamation project began in 2005 with the goal of returning the abbey as much as possible to the maritime context the monks envisioned.

“What is important is not that we are restoring it to its original state,” says Patrick Morel, who is heading up the massive reclamation effort that includes a dam and a pedestrian bridge leading to the foot of the mount. “We are restoring the original spirit.” The work is on schedule to finish in 2015, when, with deliberate calibration, 50 times a year, Mont St. Michel and its great monastery will once again seem to float in the water that surrounds it. —MARCIA DESANTIS



At low tide pilgrims can cross mudflats to Mont St. Michel.

PORT ANTONIO, JAMAICA

BLITHE SPIRITS IN PARADISE

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WHEN A HURRICANE BLEW his yacht off course in 1946, Hollywood heartthrob Errol Flynn discovered paradise in Jamaica's Port Antonio, purportedly proclaiming it “more

beautiful than any woman I have ever known.” This haven on the island's northeast coast first boomed when American millionaires such as Alfred Mitchell and his heiress wife, Annie Tiffany, built estates in the early 1900s. Flynn's arrival cued a second swell, drawing Noël Coward and Katharine Hepburn.

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MORNINGTON PENINSULA, AUSTRALIA

EAT, DRINK, PLAY, REPEAT

THOUGH SYDNEY MIGHT argue the point, Melbourne has established itself as Australia's food capital, home to innovative culinary ideas such as micro coffee roasters, nonprofit cafés, and expat pop-ups (British chef Heston Blumenthal is moving his Fat Duck from England to Melbourne for six months next year). Melbourne's chief wine region is the nearby Yarra Valley, but an emerging source of bounty is the rugged Mornington Peninsula, about an hour's drive south from downtown via a recently opened roadway. The peninsula distills the flavors of Down Under in one boot-shaped cape: paddock-to-plate restaurants, down-to-earth wineries where the vintners themselves work the tasting rooms, and small sustainable farms such as 2 Macs and Green Olive at Red Hill that each offer cooking classes.

But the region isn't just about food. In fact, “it has always been Melbourne's playground, with people flocking to the beaches over summer,” says Danielle Field, who, with her brother Max, guides MP Experience food tours of the Hinterland Region of Pinot Noir growers, apple orchards, and strawberry farms. Snorkelers come to encounter leafy sea dragons. Terrestrial wildlife lovers seek out nocturnal pademelons and bettongs. Says Field, “Now the Mornington Peninsula really has something for everyone.” —ELAINE GLUSAC

Now a new generation has discovered Portie's pleasures, from the smoke-fogged jerk grills lining Boston Beach to the log rafts that drift down the lazy Rio Grande. British music producer Jon Baker opened Geejam, a seven-room boutique hideaway. And with Portie-born, Toronto-based financier Michael Lee-Chin, he has relaunched two formerly faded properties, the Trident Hotel and the Castle. Together they are reviving the Blue Lagoon, the famed swimming hole.

“The Blue Mountains are our natural filter,” says Baker of the forested highlands that lie between Jamaica's capital, Kingston, and its most pristine coast. “You have to try harder to get here, and dig a little deeper for the reward.” —ELAINE GLUSAC

BRUNO MORANDI