

NOVEMBER 2018

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**WHY WE LOVE  
CHICAGO**

# TRAVEL + LEISURE

## TRIPS OF A LIFETIME

34 PERFECT VACATIONS FOR EVERY MOMENT IN LIFE

*Atfordale, a  
wilderness  
reserve in the  
Scottish Highlands.*

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# TRIPS OF LIFETIME

## TRAVEL+LEISURE

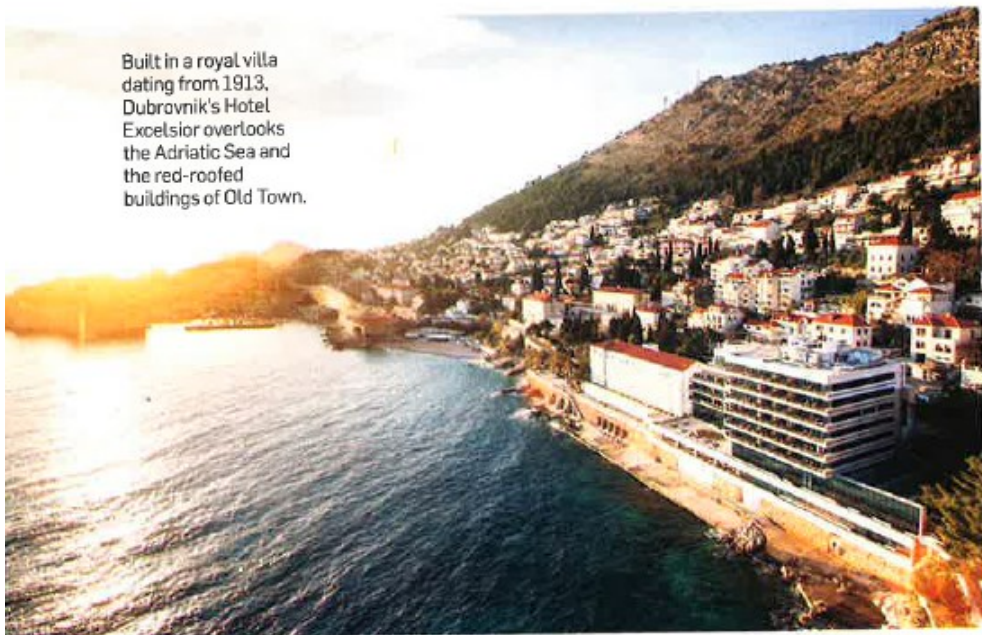
There is no better way to mark the milestones, accomplishments, and inflection points we all experience as we go through this world than to travel. Whether we're throwing a destination birthday for someone we love, giving ourselves a new physical challenge in some far-flung corner of the globe, or bringing the entire extended family together one last time, these kinds of journeys become part of the fabric of who we are. That's why, in the words of the immortal philosophers Kool & the Gang, it's time to celebrate good times, come on!



## SOME MUCH-DESERVED R&R

Dubrovnik, Croatia, provided an ideal backdrop for **Andrea Bartz** to mark the completion of a lifelong goal: publishing her first novel.

Built in a royal villa dating from 1913, Dubrovnik's Hotel Excelsior overlooks the Adriatic Sea and the red-roofed buildings of Old Town.



**A**ROUND MIDNIGHT, I leaned back in my chair beneath a vine-covered trellis and listened to the crickets. Spread out on the table before me were ceramic bowls that had once contained *paradižot*, a beloved local dessert of biscuits and custard, and bottles of grappa infused with walnut and sage. Marija Papak, a Dubrovnik chef who hosts public dinners through **Eat With** ([eatwith.com](http://eatwith.com); \$115), refilled my glass.

"Sometimes, guests want to leave as soon as they are finished eating," she said. "We say, 'why?'"

I encountered the same attitude everywhere I went in this medieval city on the Adriatic Sea famed for its languorous pace. On the way from the airport, as I first glimpsed the craggy mountains abutting the coast, I asked my driver about *fiaka*, a Croatian term I'd learned, which had sparked this trip. Often mistranslated as "laziness," the concept is more accurately described as "the pleasure

of doing nothing." It sounded oxymoronic, but lovely.

"It's when you're chilled out," the driver said as he dropped me off at **Hotel Bellevue** ([adriaticluxuryhotels.com](http://adriaticluxuryhotels.com); doubles from \$365), a five-star property carved into the cliffside. "In between relaxed and lazy." Either way, it felt like the antithesis of New York, which I'd found particularly intense as of late. This coming March, I'll officially become a novelist when my debut thriller, *The Lost Night*, hits shelves. If ever there was a moment to bask in a career milestone, this was it. The problem? The same drive that led me to write the book makes me antsy whenever I try to slow down.

At the hotel, I approached the floor-to-ceiling windows that framed sparkling water churning with swimmers. Typically, I chase a transatlantic flight with a shower, caffeine, and some hotel Wi-Fi, but this time, I practically sprinted to the pebbly beach. The scene looked like an

## Three More Career-Achievement Trips

A round of drinks at the bar: good. A life-changing journey that will get you psyched about the next chapter: way, way better. Here, trip ideas for celebrating professional success.

### THE NEW JOB

After endless interviews and contract negotiations, it might be tempting to just head to a beach. But a bucket-list adventure, like **Red Savannah's** eight days in Egypt, could boost your creativity and stoke your passion for knowledge and discovery. This trip kicks off in Cairo, where you'll stay at the Four Seasons Hotel at the First Residence; visit the largest souk in the Middle East; and tour the Pyramids of Giza. Next you'll spend three days cruising down the Nile on the elegant *Sonesta St. George*, stopping to explore villages and impeccably preserved temples, before returning to Cairo to head home. [redsavannah.com](http://redsavannah.com); Nile Discovery itinerary from \$1,969.

### THE PROMOTION

Instead of putting that hard-earned raise toward a fresh set of wheels or a fancy handbag, treat yourself to one of **Remote Lands'** nine-day trips to the Maldives and Dubai, which combine five-star hotels, sightseeing, and thrilling underwater excursions. This over-the-top vacation begins in the Kaafu Atoll, where you'll stay at a refined resort (one option is the Huvafen Fushi) while experiencing marine-biologist-led nature tours, private cooking classes, and a seaplane flight. Then it's off to Dubai to experience Gulf-style opulence, including a stay at the sleek Armani Hotel. [remotelands.com](http://remotelands.com); from \$20,000.

### THE NEXT BIG PROJECT

Few professional milestones compare with the thrill of launching your own thing. Before you get too swamped with spreadsheets and to-do lists, unwind on a wellness-centered getaway at **Sunrise Springs Spa Resort**. Set on 70 acres of high-desert gardens and walking trails outside Santa Fe, New Mexico, the holistic detox retreat forces you to slow down with offerings like a soak in a mineral-infused tub on an outdoor platform surrounded by cottonwood trees. For a whole-body tune-up, book a consultation with the resident MD, who can help you course-correct problems with digestive health and sleep—both of which can be negatively impacted by stress. [sunrisesprings.ojospa.com](http://sunrisesprings.ojospa.com); doubles from \$245.





Škar Winery, in Dubrovnik, specializes in small-batch Croatian wines and liqueurs.

ad for the European lifestyle: muscular young men in bright Speedos horsed around in the shallows; tan kids dripping salt water climbed onto natural rock ledges before launching themselves back into the sea. Though the late Thursday sun was sinking behind us, no one showed any intention of leaving. I made long, leisurely trajectories across the bay for maybe 15 minutes before I mentally began drafting this

paragraph and rushed to my room to write it. *Fjaka*: still elusive, I noted.

The next day, I walked down to the Old City, a pedestrian-only maze of shops, restaurants, churches, and museums that seems engineered to encourage meandering. Lose your bearings and you might stumble on a hidden bay at the end of a cobblestoned path, flanked by open-air cafés like **Bard Mala Buža** (14 *Ispod Mira*), where I ordered a glass of Stina Pošip, a local white, while watching sunbathers played on rocks like languid sea lions.

As the week progressed, I let my curiosity take the lead instead of going to all the must-visit places I'd saved on Instagram. I drove out to Ston, a nearby town famous for its 4,000-year-old salt pans and hand-harvested oysters, more tender than any shellfish

moment, from hiring photographers to flying the entire family out to toast the couple. If that's not your style, the pair suggests popping the question while on a thrill-filled adventure, such as skydiving in Queenstown, New Zealand, or ice-jumping in the Arctic.

I'd tried before. I rode the cable car up to Mount Srd's peak, then sat drinking a light draft beer, looking out over the Dalmatian Coast. I lay on a lounge chair at the **Hotel Excelsior** (*adriaticluxuryhotels.com*; doubles from \$275) and watched yachts glide past. I took the commuter ferry to Lokrum, a leafy island where rabbits wandered about as if they didn't have any plans, either.

I let the locals point me to their cherished hangouts. Zrinka Marinovic, a publicist, took me to **Škar** (*lekri.eu*), a friend's winery and bar, and tried to explain *fjaka*: "It's when you're not doing anything, but happy about it or still feel accomplished."

She texted two friends, who showed up immediately to swap stories and sample the small-batch Plavac Mali and Rukatac wines with us. *Fjaka*, I realized, is the opposite of FOMO. It's a kindness Croats give one another: I'm here with you, and there's nowhere else I'd rather be. Coming from New York, where social events are so often strategic, it felt refreshing to sit with people for the sole purpose of enjoying their company.

Which is exactly what we did on Papak's patio when I dined with Robyne Hogan, a New Jersey-based attorney; her college-age daughter, Megan; and their local guide, Ivana. When I told the group about my book, Hogan preordered it on the spot. "I'm so proud of you," she announced. "I don't know you, but I'm proud of you."

Normally, I'd toss out a self-deprecating reply, like, "You might feel differently after reading it." Instead, I took a sip of walnut grappa and a deep breath. "Thank you," I said. "I'm proud, too." I felt gratitude mingled with confidence. I'm sure I'll be searching for those sensations again in the spring amid the onslaught of promotion and sales-watching and reviews. But instead of fighting my nerves with a checklist of must-dos, perhaps I'll take a step back and just do nothing.

*One great way to see Dubrovnik is on Abercrombie & Kent's eight-day Treasures of Croatia tour; abercrombieandkent.com; from \$4,795.*

#### MILESTONE MOMENT POPPING THE QUESTION



Long gone are the days of under-the-radar proposals, according to **Kara Bebell** and **Hartan deBell** (*thetravelsiblings@tzell.com*; 212-340-0316), honeymoon and destination-wedding specialists on the A-List, T+L's collection of the world's top travel advisors. Couples want to wow one another and also wow their friends, which has led to the idea of a takeover or buyout proposal. Not only have Bebell and deBell helped clients shut down the Louvre, Versailles, and their favorite New York City restaurant, but they've also noticed people going to great lengths to enhance the