

## GO HERE, NOT THERE



WINES OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

## Nix Napa. It's time to wine down in the Okanagan.

BY KAREN GARDINER

Offering alternatives to overcrowded destinations.

Napa Valley conjures up images of grand hillside chateaus, opulent tasting rooms, long dinners at Michelin-starred restaurants and perhaps a little celebrity spotting, all factors that have contributed to its anointing as America's most celebrated wine region.

Plucky Napa pinned its place on the global wine map by beating French wines in blind tastings at the 1976 Judgment of Paris. To say this was unexpected is an understatement, and it proved to be a turning point in California's wine industry. The number of wineries in the Napa Valley increased from a few dozen in the 1970s to approximately 475 today — good news not just for the wine industry but also for the state's tourism industry. Napa became a major attraction, creating a market that supports some of the country's poshest restaurants and hotels — the French Laundry and Auberge du Soleil to name two — and, in turn, crowds, particularly evident in late summer and fall. There are still workarounds: You can avoid weekends or head for wineries off the jam-packed main road. Or you could go north of the border instead.

**Location:** About 50 miles north of San Francisco.

Stretching from Shuswap Lake in the north down to the U.S. border, the Okanagan region of British Columbia (sometimes



ERIC RISBERG/ASSOCIATED PRESS

Napa Valley, above, has long been the premier wine region of North America, but for a less-expensive, less-crowded tasting experience, consider Canada's Okanagan Valley, top.

called the Okanagan Valley) is dominated by the approximately 85-mile-long, serpent-shaped Okanagan Lake. One of Canada's sunniest areas, the fertile basin has long been known as the country's fruit basket. (If you visit in summer, you can stop at roadside stands to fill up on just-picked apples, cherries and peaches.) Cycling or hiking the Kettle Valley Rail Trail, which is part of the province's longest trail network, is a popular pursuit, as is skiing the deep powder at Big White Ski Resort and boating on the lake. But today, the Okanagan is better known for its wine. Unlike Napa, few of the Okanagan's 186 wineries export their wines: Around 90 percent of British Columbian wine is sold within the province. So if you want to drink Okanagan wine,

you'll probably have to go there, and the experience and personal touch make it worth the trip.

"It's a very welcoming region," says Laura Kittmer, communications director for Wine Growers British Columbia. "There's a lot of family-run wineries, so you walk into the tasting room and you're literally speaking to the winemaker, the owner and the tasting room manager." Culinary options, including fine dining and taco trucks, are top-notch, too. "What grows together, pairs well together," Kittmer says.

As a younger wine destination, the Okanagan also still offers a wallet-friendly experience. Tasting fees are typically less than \$10 (compared with \$58 in Napa, both in U.S. dollars) and are often, though not always, waived with a purchase of a bottle. It's

easy to hit up multiple wineries in a day by following a wine trail or downloading the Wines of BC Explorer app.

Although it's about 155 miles long, the Okanagan is surprisingly diverse, climate-wise. Travelers typically fly into Kelowna, in the Lake Country subregion, where the province's oldest continually operating winery, Calona Vineyards, was established in 1932. Wineries here are known for such varietals as riesling, chardonnay and pinot noir. At one of the best, Quails' Gate, you can visit the lakeside tasting room, have a wine-paired meal at Old Vines Restaurant and sleep it all off at the adjoining guesthouse.

At the valley's southernmost tip, which is surrounded by a shrub-steppe semidesert and is one of Canada's hottest spots, conditions are ideal for reds such as syrahs and merlots. Nk'Mip Cellars near Osoyoos Lake is majority-owned by the Osoyoos Indian Band, and it claims to be North America's first Indigenous-owned and operated winery. Next door, in the Spirit Ridge Resort, the Bear, the Fish, the Root & the Berry serves Indigenous-inspired cuisine, and the Nk'Mip Desert Cultural Centre describes the history of the Osoyoos people.

**Location:** The Okanagan Valley in south-central British Columbia.

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## Uncertainty looms large over 2022 trip planning



The Navigator  
CHRISTOPHER ELLIOTT

When Kathy Sherman tries to envision traveling next year, she gets flashbacks to March 2020.

She and her husband were about to leave for the annual South by Southwest conference in

Austin when organizers canceled the event. They stayed home, and the couple received airline ticket credits that expire in 2022. (The festival was held online this year.)

Now she has a decision to make.

"We recently received an email from South by Southwest telling us it's time to confirm our reservation for 2022," says Sherman, an attorney from Capitola, Calif. "We couldn't imagine attending a crowded event in, of all places, Texas, next March. I don't think the pandemic will be over by then."

Mention travel in 2022 and it's clear that Sherman's reservations are widely shared. Many of us have planned trips that looked like a sure thing, only to have them disrupted by another surge or a dangerous variant. Travelers want more certainty, and they are planning their 2022 trips accordingly.

An October survey by Accenture, a multinational IT services and consulting company, ranks travel as one of the top spending priorities for the holidays. Among the survey group of more than 1,500 U.S. consumers, 40 percent selected saving for a vacation or trip away as a priority for the year ahead. More than half of the younger millennials surveyed say they plan to travel domestically during the holidays.

"The desire to travel is there for many and steadily returning for others," says Emily Weiss, managing director at Accenture's global travel industry practice. "But the pandemic fundamentally changed the priorities, values and behavior of travelers — whether by necessity or choice."

Weiss says the emphasis will continue to be on health and safety in 2022.

It's a strange time to be traveling. Americans are grappling with the unknowns of travel in 2022 while also managing the fallout from the past almost two years. For example, Sherman's \$400 Alaska Airlines ticket credits expire early next year. As for South by Southwest, she says, "it's hard to imagine we will ever again feel comfortable about being in a crowd, even by 2023." That means she may allow her \$2,500 conference credit to expire.

It's no wonder so many people are nervous about traveling. Yet the reluctance is tempered by the desire to experience the world again after nearly two years of staycations. Anna Gladman, chief executive of travel insurance company World Nomads, reports that summer policy sales hit levels unseen since the start of the pandemic, while autumn sales are more than double what they were last year. "Travelers are taking precautions," she says, "but that hasn't dampened the enthusiasm."

How are the professionals traveling? Carefully.

Eugene Delaune, an emergency medicine physician and expert on travel medicine based in Alexandria, planned three trips for 2022. The first was a weekend ski trip in Whistler, British Columbia, in February.

But he decided to stick with domestic travel and switch the ski trip to Lake Tahoe instead. (His second trip, to France next spring, is still on, but only because his hotels and airline still offer flexible cancellation policies. And

in the summer, he has a rescheduled cruise from last summer out of Amsterdam to Scotland, Norway and Iceland.)

Delaune regularly treats people with covid-19 and advises Allianz Travel Insurance on how to assist customers who have health issues while they're traveling. He says the vaccinated don't get as sick, and they recover faster. Delaune's advice for anyone considering a trip is simple. "The most important advice I can give is to make sure you're fully vaccinated," he says.

Next year, advance planning will be critical. "Plan, book early and get travel insurance," says Michael Embrich, author of "March On: A Veterans Travel Guide." "Booking early is the key."

*"The pandemic fundamentally changed the priorities, values and behavior of travelers — whether by necessity or choice."*

Emily Weiss, managing director at Accenture's global travel industry practice

The reason: In 2022, demand will spike and prices will rise as we close in on spring break and the summer travel season. If you hesitate, you might get priced out of a vacation.

Brian Tan, chief executive and co-founder of luxury travel company Zicasso, says people are already spending more on their 2022 trips, particularly when they go abroad. The average international trip cost for next year has increased to \$5,800 per person — up 38 percent from 2019, according to Zicasso's internal booking numbers. Travelers also expect more, because it may be their first international trip in several years.

"They want upgraded services, such as staying at nicer hotels, taking private rather than group tours and taking trips that last longer," Tan says.

By the way, if you think you can skip travel insurance, think again. Travel insurance used to be optional, but now it's mandatory in some places, warns Karisa Cernera, senior manager of travel services for Redpoint Travel Protection.

"Many destinations are now requiring travelers to purchase travel insurance, which protects against covid-19-related losses and medical needs," she says. These include popular winter vacation choices in the Caribbean, such as Aruba, the Bahamas and the Cayman Islands.

Despite all this, reluctance to travel is decreasing, at least in some quarters. Slightly more than half — 51 percent — of Global Rescue customers now say that by next March they'll take their first multiday international trip since the pandemic started, the highest number ever, according to the company's internal research.

"Travelers are not willing to let health and safety be a barrier," says Dan Richards, chief executive of Global Rescue, a provider of medical and crisis response services.

Though they may not be an obstacle in 2022, health and safety concerns loom large over every trip you take. Ignore them at your peril.

Elliott is a consumer advocate, journalist and co-founder of the advocacy group [Travelers United](http://TravelersUnited.org). Email him at [chris@elliott.org](mailto:chris@elliott.org).

## An essay collection taught me about purpose, place

BY DINA MISHEV

The seventh in an occasional series about the books that spurred our love of travel.

Because I dedicated the majority of my teenage years to the esoteric sport of racewalking, on a rainy October afternoon in 2005 — more than a decade after my retirement from the sport — in the pitted parking lot of a low-slung conference center in Montana, I was able to demonstrate it to Tim Cahill.

Cahill, now in his 70s, is a writer the New York Times once called "a working-class Paul Theroux." He's also the author of a book that changed my life, "Pass the Butterworms: Remote Journeys Oddly Rendered"; a founding editor of Outside magazine; and a pioneer of literary travel journalism. When I met him, he was preparing to racewalk a marathon in Ireland for an assignment from National Geographic Traveler.

He was on the faculty of a writing conference that I had chosen to attend only because he was on the faculty. Over drinks in the hotel bar at the conclusion of a workshop about the craft of writing, Cahill, himself a competitive swimmer in high school and college, asked the table who among us had also been young athletes, and in what sport. (He



DINA MISHEV FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

Dina Mishev goes scuba diving in Micronesia. Tim Cahill's essay collection "Pass the Butterworms" inspired her love of travel.

had a theory that being a high school or collegiate athlete cultivated the same type of discipline being a successful freelance writer required.)

I am proud of my racewalking background — I still wear a shirt dating from that time that reads "RACE WALKING IS A HIP SPORT" — but no one before (or since) Cahill had ever lit up at my mention of it. But his marathon was about a month away, and he had been trying to teach himself

racewalking's awkward gait and rhythm. "By 'teaching myself,' I mean I watched some videos online," he said. "Can you give me some tips?"

Even Olympic-level racewalkers look like total nincompoops when doing it, and Cahill was a middle-aged man at the tail end of one of the periodic flare-ups of malaria he suffered from since being infected with the disease more than a decade prior while visiting the Korowai in Irian Jaya

in New Guinea. (He writes about this in "Pass the Butterworms": "Mosquitoes in thick clouds attacked those of us on the ground. They were very naughty, and probably malarial.")

Helping Cahill with his racewalking form was the least I could do after his book pushed me toward being a traveler and writer.

In 1998, I was 22 years old and flying from my home in Wyoming to Bali, Indonesia, the most foreign place I had yet visited. At a bookstore in Los Angeles International Airport, I saw "Pass the Butterworms" prominently displayed. (It had been a New York Times Notable Book of the Year the previous year.) At the time, I didn't know what butterworms were or who Tim Cahill was. The description on the back cover was intriguing, though, and I had 23 hours of travel in front of me.

Included in its pages were essays by Cahill about horseback riding in the Gobi Desert ("Our Mongolian companions, raised in the saddle, simply stood up in their stirrups on legs made of spring steel and pneumatic shock absorbers."); going for a dip at the North Pole ("It was August 8, and the temperature stood at about 36 degrees Fahr-

SEE BOOKS ON F3

## SIGN LANGUAGE



RICHARD SCHILLER

Spotted by Richard Schiller of Annandale in Marina del Rey, Calif. Have you seen an amusing sign in your travels? We want to feature your photo in this space!

**Here's what to do:** Email your high-resolution JPEG images to [travel@washpost.com](mailto:travel@washpost.com) with "Sign Language" in the subject line. Please include your name, place of residence, sign location and contact information. Selected entries will appear in Travel's Sunday print section. Photos become property of The Washington Post, which may edit, publish, distribute or republish them in any form. No purchase necessary.

## TRAVEL

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# Gifts for the taking

It's that time of year — the time when we stow our Thanksgiving leftovers in the fridge and gradually awaken to the realization that the holiday season is not only here, but well underway. It's time to make a list, and maybe even check it twice.

Are you shopping for a travel lover this year? We've got some suggestions, whether you want to recall travel's glamorous past, navigate its complicated present or just fit more stuff into your suitcase.

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PLANETAGS

## PlaneTags: TWA DC-9 luggage tag

**\$44.95** | If you've ever wanted to literally own a piece of aviation history, these distinctive bag tags made from the outsides of decommissioned airplanes fit the bill. Yours will surely be the only DC-9 on the luggage carousel.



VSSL

## Wolfe Co. Apparel and Goods: VSSL CAMP Supplies Suunto Edition

**\$135** | Size can be deceptive. This cylindrical multitasking camp tool, for example, packs more than 70 handy items — for shaving, orienteering, fishing and more — in a container not much larger than a sleeve of Girl Scout cookies.



LILY LAMBIE-KIERNAN FOR THE WASHINGTON POST



IVY KIDS/QUARTO GROUP

## Ivy Kids: 'On the Plane Activity Book'

**\$12.99** | Most parents would rather ride in the cargo hold than share a plane with a bored preschooler. One potential remedy: This 64-page activity book filled with travel-themed puzzles, maps, crafts and more. Just add crayons.



CAROLYN VAN HOUTEN/THE WASHINGTON POST

## Gear Beast: Universal smartphone lanyard

**\$9.99** | Imagine gazing into crystal blue tropical waters as colorful fish swim beneath the surface. Then imagine the splash as your phone hits the water. With it secured around your neck in this silicone holder, that will never happen.



VIDA

## Vida: Vaccination card holder

**\$15** | Getting carded, pandemic edition. Proof of vaccination is increasingly necessary for gaining access to public spaces and events. This vegan leather holder, sized for the card from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, comes in various colors and includes a clip for attaching to your bag or belt loop.



CAROLYN VAN HOUTEN/THE WASHINGTON POST

## Petit Pillow: The Car Pillow

**\$54.90** | This is for everyone who has ever tried — and failed — to sleep in a car. Available in different fun cotton prints, this wedge-shaped pillow hooks to the headrest and is designed to fit comfortably between your neck and the window.



TOPO DESIGNS

## Topo Designs: Dopp kit

**\$33.95-\$48.95** | The classic dopp kit is timeless, practical — and just a little bit boring. Buck tradition and stow your shaving gear, makeup or family-size bottle of Dramamine in this funky triangular alternative, available in multiple striking color combinations.



MOBILE DOG GEAR

## Mobile Dog Gear: Week Away tote bag

**\$59.99** | Sometimes pandemic trends intersect: rescue dogs and road-tripping, for instance. This tote, which includes food containers and collapsible bowls, allows you to feed your canine companion on the go with little fuss.



MATADOR

## Matador: FlatPak toiletry bottle

**\$12.99-\$34.99** | If you've ever tried to stuff a week's worth of hair-care products into a hard-sided suitcase, you'll welcome this spin on traditional toiletry containers. Soft and squeezable, these TSA-approved pouches not only save space but also reduce waste.

# Tim Cahill's 'Pass the Butterworms' sparks a career full of adventure

## BOOKS FROM F2

enheit, as warm as it was ever going to be here at the geographic North Pole. So sure, several of us agreed, why not take a brief, refreshing dip in the Arctic Ocean. The massive icebreaker that brought us here had formed a nice swimming hole in its wake.”; and eating sauteed sago beetle (“They were unlike anything I’d ever eaten before, and the closest I can come to describing the taste is to say creamy snail.”).

None of these were things I had ever considered doing — or pictured anyone else doing — but, before my Uncle Gus moved to Indonesia the year before, neither was going to Bali. Growing up, my family vacations were road trips in service of my race-walking ambitions; we followed Junior Olympic track meets across the country, so I could waddle around a track and my younger brother could high-jump.

Arriving in Bali, landing on a runway that stretched an alarmingly far distance into the Pacific Ocean, gave me clarity about my future for the first time in my adult life. With the confident earnestness of the young and privileged, I scribbled in my journal: “I’m going to be the female Tim Cahill, a traveler and



DINA MISHEV FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

## The author's collection of books by travel writer Tim Cahill.

a writer!”

The places and adventures he wrote about were a shot of adrenaline to my idea of what was possible, and I wanted to administer this same shot to others. And the actual writing — a mix of humor, vulnerability, introspection, delightfully arcane facts and awe — made me laugh out loud and quietly cry.

In addition to expanding my horizons, “Pass the Butterworms” taught me that the best trips are a combination of pur-

pose and place.

The purposes of Cahill’s “Pass the Butterworms” trips are wide-ranging. He was in Mongolia for science, for example. “For my part, I’d been trying, and failing, to get to Mongolia for over fifteen years. And now, in my saddle kit, I had eight Ziploc bags, full of human hair — hair cut from the heads of Mongolian herdsman and herdswomen.” Back home in the United States, Cahill, a member of the advisory board of the Center for the Study of the First Americans, turned the hair over to archaeologists to compare with 10,000-year-old strands found outside Melville, Mont. “It is possible that the ancestors of the people who call themselves Mongolian — the ancestors of the men I was riding with, of the men pursuing us with pails of yogurt — were ‘the first Americans.’”

Cahill traveled to Peru to be with a friend whose 26-year-old son was slain while rafting a remote river in the Amazon. But excerpting a sentence, or even a paragraph, from “A Darkness on the River” is as much of an injustice as being shown a single steel girder and being told you’re looking at the Eiffel Tower.

My own purposes and places have included tracking snow leopards in the northern Indian territory of Ladakh; celebrating

the conclusion of chemotherapy in Kauai, Hawaii; seeing whether I could go a week without seeing another person in Utah’s Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument; and taking a family trip to Bulgaria, where my dad grew up. “Pass the Butterworms” taught me well.

The biggest lesson I got from “Pass the Butterworms” had nothing to do with travel, though: It was that it’s okay to be vulnerable.

One of the anthology’s shorter stories, “Therapeutic Perambulation,” is about walking across the northern region of the Republic of Congo. Alongside facts about the Ndoki forest, his group’s Bambenje guides and the pernicious populations of local bees, Cahill writes about suffering from anxiety attacks: “A year or so before, I’d made a serious mistake in love. When it all fell apart, I began having the attacks: periods of intense and unfocused fear, accompanied by a jackhammer heartbeat, flushed skin and hopeless depression. I didn’t go out much. Tears came easily in those days.”

Almost two decades after first reading this in “Pass the Butterworms,” I was diagnosed with Stage 3 breast cancer. Lost, confused and vulnerable, I picked up the book looking for a reminder

of the brave, invincible 22-year-old who, reading it through three times on a flight to Bali, set off on a life and career wholly unfamiliar to her.

The 38-year-old cancer patient did not find the young woman, but Cahill’s mentions of mental health — “Therapeutic Perambulation” isn’t the only instance he brings it up — jumped out. (They hadn’t even registered with the 22-year-old me.) He wrote about it so casually, but anxiety attacks are about as casual as being thrown off a cliff. Could writing about such things be part of a way through them?

Sharing my cancer experience and fears would be the most challenging writing I had ever done because of the vulnerability it required, but the scariness of opening myself up in this way paled in comparison to the tireless terror of cancer. The monthly column, “The C-Word,” that I wrote for my local weekly newspaper was the best therapy possible for me. (I did, and still do, also take antidepressants and anti-anxiety medications, though.)

A couple of the pieces in “Pass the Butterworms” are about group trips that readers might book themselves, but more are one-offs not necessarily meant to be replicated (or that are even

possible to replicate). In a story that takes place in his home state of Montana, Cahill writes about a rafting and fishing trip, but says at the get-go that, “for the purposes of obfuscation,” he will not be sharing the river’s name. “If I were to mention its name, my companions would discuss the matter with me using baseball bats and two-by-fours.”

“Pass the Butterworms” encourages finding your own adventures rather than re-creating Cahill’s, so I’ve traveled to more than 60 countries but only literally followed in Cahill’s footsteps once: to an off-the-beaten-path lake and geyser basin in Yellowstone National Park. “At Shoshone Geyser Basin, there are no boardwalks, and almost no one goes there,” he wrote. “Which is fine, if you believe, as I do, that awe is a fairly solitary experience.”

So much of Cahill’s travel philosophy resonates with me, but, on occasion, I find an awe-filled experience need not be solitary — like racewalking in the rain in a random parking lot with the man who inspired me to be a writer and a curious traveler.

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