

Greetings -

This envelope was received
in the Victim Services Division.
PM [REDACTED] sent an e-mail
referencing the contents as well.
It may need to go to Newark due
to its origin but my article contained
Epstein material so we sent it your
way. Sorry in advance!

Thank You,

[REDACTED]
Victim Services Division
[REDACTED]

From: Anna Sac

[REDACTED]
Princeton NJ 08540
[REDACTED]

9/04/2019

To : Human Trafficking Task Force
Federal Bureau of Investigations
7. Edgar Hoover Building, Room 3329
935 Pennsylvania Ave, NW
Washington DC 20535

To Whom It May Concern :

Please investigate the highlighted internet addresses,
names and places in the attached articles. Also:

(AsIs) "Sailing the Virgins" on page 68 in September
2019 "Sail" Magazine ; phones: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] ; and

Places listed on pages 50-57 in "National Geographic"
(June / July 2019).

Thanks and Regards

Anna Sac

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BUSINESS

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VICTORIA'S SECRET



It's a Man's World

A modeling agency linked to Jeffrey Epstein is just one of the chain's worries

Time isn't being kind to **Victoria's Secret**. The lingerie retailer has a problem with the past and a problem with the future—and that leaves the present in a muddle of controversy.

Jeffrey Epstein is supposed to be history at the company—and at its parent, L Brands Inc., for that matter—but he's that skeleton that keeps rattling around the closet to remind everyone he was once an all-too-lively part of the business. Epstein had a two-decade-long reign as close confidant, financial manager, and right hand to the corporation's chief executive officer, Leslie Wexner. He even had the CEO's power of attorney at one time.

Although he wasn't an employee at Victoria's Secret, Epstein also influenced the way the lingerie company operated, associating with the division's chief marketing officer, **Ed Razek**. In 2005, for example, Razek was a guest at Epstein's Manhattan mansion, welcomed by young women who said they were working as models for Epstein. Razek told fellow guest William Mook, head of Mok Industries LLC in Columbus, Ohio, that Victoria's Secret used Epstein models and that his girls were in "the major league," according to Mook.

Epstein's relationship with Wexner and L Brands officially ended in 2007, a year and a half after the

financier was charged with several counts of sex misconduct in Florida. He pleaded guilty to a charge and spent just 13 months in prison on work-release privileges. That penalty was widely derided as exceedingly lenient and, after sex trafficking charges against Epstein were resurrected in July, fresh outrage over the 2007 plea deal led to the resignation of U.S. Labor Secretary Alex Acosta, who'd been the U.S. attorney in Miami in charge of the prosecution. Epstein now sits in a Manhattan jail awaiting trial—and perhaps more revelations of salacious secrets. On July 23 he was found injured in his cell and put on suicide watch.

L Brands' efforts to distance itself from Epstein may not have been all that clean a break. Epstein one point had a \$1 million investment in MC2 Management, according to a sworn deposition from a former company bookkeeper. MC2 is owned by Jean Luc Brunel, a Frenchman who's alleged in a civil lawsuit to have brought girls as young as 12 to the company for sexual purposes and provided them to Epstein and other friends. Brunel even visited Epstein while he was first imprisoned in 2008. Victoria's Secret continued to work with MC2-represented models after Wexner severed ties with Epstein. At least three MC2 models walked in its 2015 fashion show, and

Edited by
James E. Ellis and
Dimitra Kessenides

the agency's models were at auditions in 2017 and 2018. They've also posed for its catalogs and website. In a 2014 letter to Brunel, his business partner, MC2 President Jeff Fuller cited worries by Saks, Nordstrom, Macy's, and other clients about Brunel's friendship with Epstein. There was no mention of concern on the part of Victoria's Secret.

MC2 didn't respond to a request for comment. A representative of L Brands declined to comment beyond statements already issued. L Brands has hired an external law firm to probe any ties between the company and Epstein.

Epstein is the ghost of Victoria's Secret's past. But the company has more to worry about than history. Its business model is increasingly at odds with society's changing definition of beauty and the #MeToo movement, both of which have encouraged a very different vision of how to portray women and their bodies. This isn't just an exercise in political correctness: Since 2015, Wexner's lingerie empire has lost \$20 billion in market value, raising the question of whether a male-dominated company that trumpets women as lingerie-clad "angels" may be out of step with today's consumer.

The chain's founder, Roy Raymond, came up with the idea of a women's lingerie store aimed at men after an unfulfilling experience at a department store buying his wife some lingerie in the 1970s. He felt there should be a place where men would be comfortable shopping for women's underwear. He opened the first Victoria's Secret in 1977. Wexner, already owner of retailers Limited, Lane Bryant, and Express, bought the company for \$1 million in 1982. Through savvy marketing under Wexner, the brand sold directly to women who wanted to look sexy in pushup bras and panties.

As the brand grew, it still provided plenty of eye candy for men—especially in its glittery annual fashion show, which became a marketing coup and a much-anticipated event for the men who flocked to it. The first—staged at New York's Plaza Hotel in 1995, the same year real estate developer Donald Trump was forced to sell the legendary hostelry to avoid bankruptcy—included model Stephanie Seymour gliding down the catwalk. Models wore white and black bras and underwear, but not the large white angel wings that models in subsequent shows would make famous. Over the years the extravaganza grew with more lights and pop stars. Supermodels such as Gisele Bündchen and Tyra Banks graced the stage. As such, it cast a sex-infused spotlight on a utilitarian product our grandmothers used to purchase from the Sears catalog.

Plenty of clothing retailers have used sex to sell. American Apparel's ads of pouty-faced young

women in suggestive poses often had the look of soft porn. And Abercrombie & Fitch's now-defunct "magalog," *A&F Quarterly*, was notorious for including nude models and racy content such as its 2003 discussion on the pleasures of group sex.

But few retailers have fused themselves to the notion of sexiness more than Victoria's Secret, which has spent countless hours making sure the outside world gets that message. Wexner has never shown a lot of personal interest in the models for his brand, according to a former executive. That task falls to Razek, who's worked for Wexner since the 1980s and is part of his inner circle. The 71-year-old marketing chief and his team decide which models earn angel wings. GQ has called him one of the most important people in the modeling industry.

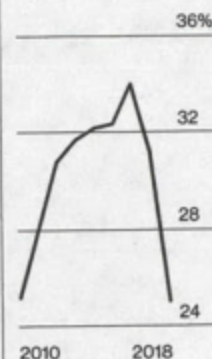
Between tapings of the 2011 fashion show, for instance, the Victoria's Secret angels would crowd around Razek as if he were a coach giving a locker room pep talk before the big game. In a speech that year to his assembled models, which included Adriana Lima and Alessandra Ambrosio, Razek said their job is the "most impossible job in the world, literally in the history of the world. In the history of the world, as of this show, only 165 women have ever been in this show," he said to the dozens of women present. "There have only been 140 pairs of wings in the entire history of this show. That means each of you, every one of you, because there are 7 billion people on the planet. Each of you is one in 45 million human beings. Let's start with that."

But like fashion, times change. Abercrombie in late 2014 parted ways with longtime CEO Mike Jeffries, who once famously told *Salon* magazine that his chain refused to carry women's clothing larger than a size 10 "because good-looking people attract other good-looking people, and we want to market to cool, good-looking people. We don't market to anyone other than that." The chain has also dropped its highly sexualized marketing. American Apparel founder Dov Charney was ousted in 2014 after allegations of sexual harassment, and the company later filed for bankruptcy.

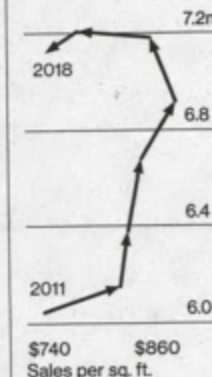
Likewise, fashion companies are increasingly embracing a broader definition of beauty. Younger designers such as Christian Siriano and Becca McCharen-Tran have added plus-size fashions and models to their shows. But Victoria's Secret hasn't strayed much from its uniformly tall, thin angels. Last November, Razek told *Vogue* that, after consideration, he'd decided not to use transgender models in his shows. "Well, why not? Because the show is a fantasy," he said, sparking some outraged celebrities and customers to call for his resignation.

Some in the industry say such tone-deafness ►

● Victoria's Secret U.S. market share in women's underwear



● Victoria's Secret total selling square footage



\$740 \$860 Sales per sq. ft.



● Wexner

◀ may be a result of the 2016 departure of Victoria's Secret's longtime CEO, Sharen Jester Turney, who'd guided the brand for a decade while managing to convince many consumers that its celebration of the feminine body was a form of female empowerment. Turney left because she didn't agree with the direction Wexner wanted to take the business, according to a person familiar with their conversations. "With her gone, the men really just took over," says one former executive. "And these were men who had one ideal of women, and it's not based in reality."

Jan Singer, who replaced Turney, left last year soon after Razer made comments some plus-size models and the transgender community found demeaning. Singer was replaced by a man, leaving L Brands with only two women among the 10 listed executive officers and brand leaders. At the urging of activist investor Barington Capital Group, L Brands this spring added two more women to its board.

The failure to embrace changing norms about women and beauty may already be having an impact on Victoria's Secret's results. After rising steadily since 2010, sales fell to \$7.4 billion in fiscal 2017—the first drop in seven years—and edged slightly lower again last year. Sales at stores open for more than 12 months, a closely watched metric in retailing, also slipped in 2018, with operating income at the unit tumbling 45%, to \$512.4 million.

Those poor results have led L Brands to tighten its purse strings, resulting in the shuttering of dozens of underperforming locations. L Brands announced in February plans to close about 53 Victoria's Secrets in North America this year, more than three times the 15 it's historically closed in an average year. "Given the decline in performance at Victoria's Secret, we have substantially pulled back on capital investment in that business," L Brands executives said in prepared commentary in May after reporting a further 5% drop in same-store sales in 2019's first quarter.

Another notable change: In May, Victoria's Secret pulled its fashion show from network television after 23 years. Ratings bottomed out in 2018, with only 3.3 million viewers, down from the previous all-time low of 5 million the year prior. The annual show is expected to move to streaming.

There may be limits to just how much Victoria's Secret can change its messaging. American Eagle Outfitters Inc.'s rival Aerie line has found a base of passionate customers who are younger and more diverse and are calling for brands to have body-inclusive messages. That's helped Aerie log 18 consecutive quarters of double-digit same-store sales. One advantage is that Aerie doesn't have 40 years

of branding to overcome. "There's been very interesting growth in consumers embracing this more holistic body-image view, but it's probably too far of a step away from what the DNA of Victoria's Secret is," says Alex Arnold, a managing director of the consumer practice at investment bank Odeon Capital Group LLC. "It would be a wholesale repositioning of the company." —*Kim Bhasin, Jordyn Holman, Sophie Alexander, and Anders Melin*

THE BOTTOM LINE Victoria's Secret long prospered by promoting its sexy lingerie. But changing norms about women and beauty could put that growth at risk.

Selling the Rainforest Door-to-Door

● By acquiring Avon, Brazil's Natura plans to turn its army of direct salespeople into online influencers

On a pleasant Tuesday in May, dozens of beauty influencers gathered at the New York Botanical Garden in the Bronx for a vegan lunch and a panel on sustainability in cosmetics. As they sipped passion fruit caipirinhas, the young women snapped photos of lotions and soaps featuring exotic ingredients such as *murumuru* and *priprioca*.

They're the types of products that made host Natura Cosméticos SA a beauty giant in Brazil—and that the 50-year-old company wants to bring to the rest of the world. With its agreement in May to buy Avon Products Inc., Natura is accelerating its global ambitions and betting its brand of natural, ethically sourced cosmetics will appeal to millennial and Generation Z consumers who increasingly want sustainable goods.

The company wants to attract social media enthusiasts such as *Ava Lee*, a New Yorker who was at the Bronx event. "I love that all Natura Brasil products are clean and sustainable," says Lee—*@glowwithava* on Instagram—who often posts photos of cosmetics for her almost 24,000 followers. "It's hard to come by products that smell this good and at the same time are very gentle on the skin and don't cause irritations."

Natura's \$2 billion purchase of Avon—the very company it had long emulated with its door-to-door direct-selling model—will make it the world's fourth-biggest cosmetics company and among the largest focused on natural products. About 80%

"In other markets, you see the movement of beauty going into wellness. In Brazil it started the other way around"

of its products are vegan. The challenge will be staying loyal to its sustainable roots as it rapidly grows. Executive Chairman Roberto de Oliveira Marques says the “value propositions that are the very essence of Natura” are appealing to consumers, particularly millennials, who look for “authenticity” in products and the companies that make them.

Purpose-driven brands resonate more with young consumers, according to researcher Euromonitor International. About 60% of millennials responding to a lifestyle survey said they felt they could make a difference in the world through their choices and actions, compared with about 45% of baby boomers.

Founded in 1969 as a store in São Paulo, Natura soon moved to direct sales, adding 2,000 consultants over the next decade. Novelties, such as offering product refills in the 1980s and a line of soaps and creams that could be used by both new moms and babies in the 1990s, fed steady sales growth in a country obsessed with good looks. But though Brazilians are leaders in plastic surgery and popularized the infamous Brazilian wax, the national concept of beauty is more natural—think of model Gisele Bündchen, with her signature loose hair.

“Natura’s broader portfolio, more focused on wellness as opposed to only beauty, puts it in a unique position to expand abroad,” says David Marcotte, a retail analyst with Kantar Consulting. “In other markets, you see the movement of beauty going into wellness. In Brazil it started the other way around. That’s the grounding for their success.”

Natura gets 30% of its revenue outside Brazil. The company began widening its scope in the past decade, buying a controlling stake in Australian luxury skin-care brand Aesop in 2013 and British soap maker the Body Shop in 2017. It’s taken steps to bring its sustainable ethos to those brands. Natura brought the Body Shop’s marketing back to the cruelty-free cause that jump-started the brand in the 1970s. It’s also taken the fair-trade model it uses to procure its ingredients from the Amazon and expanded it to the African communities that provide *moringa* oil to the Body Shop. At Aesop, packaging changes will reduce plastic consumption by 124 tons per year.

It’s unclear how much Natura will transform Avon, whose sales plunged by half over the past 10 years, to \$5.25 billion, in fiscal 2018 amid competition from trendier brands. The company had given up on the U.S., selling the last of its stake in the American operations earlier this year, to focus on international markets. But it’s still struggled to adapt to changing consumer tastes.

The Avon acquisition will give the Brazilian company access to 27 new markets—including in China and Eastern Europe—as well as greatly expand

the direct-sales model, which Natura says it can modernize and diversify. Marques plans to turn the combined companies’ army of 6 million direct sellers into social media sellers and influencers—who increasingly drive millennials’ cosmetics purchases. Natura is also giving door-to-door associates payment machines and helping them open web stores. “This powerful sales network that gets into consumers’ homes already existed offline, and now it’s converting itself into an online network,” Marques says.

That’s in line with industry trends. Elton Morimitsu, a Euromonitor analyst, says several brands are “abandoning the use of influencers with millions of followers,” he says. “They’re betting



instead on microinfluencers with several thousands of followers, because the conversion rate into sales that the brand will have will be much higher.”

Natura doesn’t sell only through its consultants; it’s made several brands available in drugstores, cut deals to sell others at big retailers, and opened 52 proprietary stores, mostly in Brazil, to showcase its goods. It also has its own virtual store and is using the network of Body Shop franchisees in Southeast Asia to open Natura locations there. It has opened two stores in the New York area, but has no plans to expand quickly in the U.S., Marques says. Until that changes, American consumers need to rely on online shopping and influencers such as [Ana Kcira](#), whose [@fashionstylefoodie](#) on Instagram has about 45,000 followers. She posted a photo of herself spraying Natura’s *pataua* oil, a hair strengthener, on a friend’s braid in Central Park—which generated almost 700 likes. —*Fabiola Moura, with Tiffany Kary*

● Number of direct-sales associates Natura will have after its purchase of Avon

6m

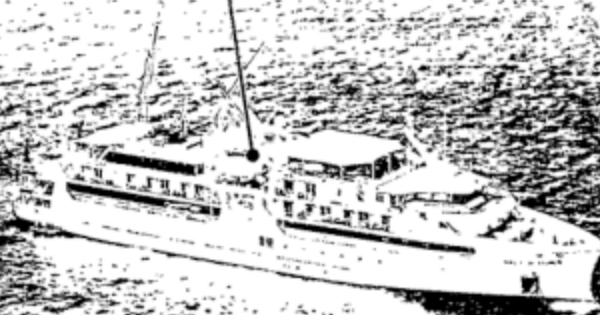
THE BOTTOM LINE Natura’s natural, ethically sourced cosmetics have been a hit at home in Brazil. It’s aiming for similar success globally, as younger consumers lean toward purpose-driven brands.

**Welcome
to your luxury
cruise!**

**Here's where
it gets complicated**

P U R S U I T S

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**A voyage to extremely remote communities
in West Papua, Indonesia, offers that raw authenticity
modern travelers crave. But does it come at a cost?**

By Fran Golden

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They're pretty as
a pitcher

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The granddaddy of all
the Porsche

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"American." Use the
word carefully

59
Holy guitar!

August 5, 2019

Edited by
Chris Rotzlar

Businessweek.com

Felix Wom, chief of the Asmat village of Syuru, looked intimidating in his grass skirt and fur headdress, bird feathers protruding from the side. A necklace of sharp animal teeth stretched across his bare, muscular chest, and his nose held a large curled ring. This ornament was made of seashell, but in the past it could have been carved from human bone.

Twelve miles off the sparsely populated south coast of the Indonesian province of West Papua, Wom sat, unsmiling, for the first time on the deck of a cruise ship. The 120-passenger *Coral Adventurer* was on an inaugural voyage to West Papua, which encompasses most of western New Guinea and other nearby islands, and the ship's captain had invited Wom and a handful of other village elders onboard to calm any fears about intruding foreigners. He offered them a look around, hats with baseball logos, and tins of butter cookies to take home.

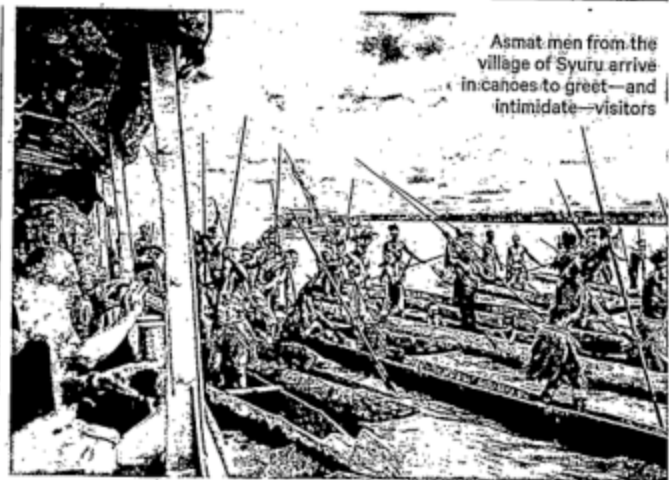
"They want to have a peek at us and really want to see the ship," says tour lecturer Kathryn Robinson, a retired anthropology professor at Australian National University whose research focus includes Indonesia. "If you say no, because that would make us feel uncomfortable, that doesn't work.... Hospitality is a big thing in Indonesia."

The chief already understood it—the symbiotic relationship between locals and visitors. "We can keep our culture because people come to see it," he said through a translator, acknowledging the importance of the money the cruise line brings to his village. "We would be very happy to have more ships coming." As I walked away from our chat, the chief raised his chin, looked ahead at nothing, and let out a long rhythmic call.

The Asmat people once were known as great warriors who used headhunting and cannibalism in their warfare, cultural rituals that ended for good about 60 years ago with the arrival of the Indonesian government. Photographer and art collector Michael Rockefeller, one of Nelson's five sons, may have been a victim of cannibalism after his boat overturned near an Asmat village in November 1961, according to the book *Savage Harvest*, by Carl Hoffman. His body was never found.

The culture lives on in part through performance—which is how the government likes it, says Stuart Kirsch, a professor of anthropology at the University of Michigan who specializes in the Pacific region. "When you're not there, they're wearing Rolling Stones T-shirts from the global used-clothing market, cutoff jeans, and worn-out flip-flops," Kirsch says. West Papua has an independence movement, he says, but "that's typically scripted out of the tourist narrative."

Add the navigational difficulties of swirling winds, shallow seas, shifting sands, and multiple reefs, and it's no wonder travelers seldom stop by. That our diesel-electric vessel was here, near the equator in the middle of hot nowhere, is a result of the expanding market for expedition cruises. Such small-ship



Asmat men from the village of Syuru arrive in canoes to greet—and intimidate—visitors

travel has drawn particular interest among baby boomers willing to pay fares that often top \$1,000 a night for meaningful soft adventure experiences in hard-to-reach destinations.

In this growing niche of the cruise market, 39 expedition ships are set to make their debut from now to 2024, according to *Cruise Industry News*. Big cruise companies are dipping their toes into the lucrative arena. Royal Caribbean Cruises Ltd. acquired four expedition ships (as well as five ultraluxury ships) last year when it paid about \$1 billion for a two-thirds stake in Silversea Cruises Ltd. "It probably increased their fleet capacity by 2% but increased their profit flow by 6%. The profit

per ship is that much higher," says Bloomberg Intelligence senior analyst Brian Egger.

Most of the new boats are polar-class vessels bound for popular cold places such as Antarctica, Iceland, Greenland, and the Canadian High Arctic. But other cruises are sticking to the tropics. As a result, some of

the most isolated people on Earth are seeing more visitors.

Wom's village of Syuru, with its rustic houses and boardwalks crossing the swamp, will welcome four shiploads of cruisers this year, a number agreed upon by the government and tribal representatives. Timing is important in the expedition business: The May itinerary of our round-trip cruise from Darwin, Australia, was tweaked so we could beat a ship owned by French line Ponant SA by a day.

We arrived early in the morning after two sea days churning north from Darwin. Passengers boarded the ship's two hop-on, hop-off tenders and passed mangroves along a brackish river on our way to the village. As we approached, dug-out canoes from several clans emerged from shore. Athletic men and young boys paddled from a standing position, most in grass skirts, their faces and bodies covered with war paint, which assures the warriors their ancestors will protect them.

Men reached for the sides of our boats. Paddles thumped against wood in unison with war cries. "They are performing themselves as violent people," Robinson said. "They are

**"It's like anywhere
where people are performing
their culture. It can be
uncomfortable, but it can also
promote mutual recognition"**

saying, "This is who we are." If they were trying to look scary, they succeeded with me, especially as the flotilla increased to dozens of canoes.

Onshore, men performed a traditional ceremony to launch a new canoe. It was a frenzy of hip-swinging dancing, raised spears and shields, chanting, yelping, and drumming. Women in grass skirts, some topless, danced in support. Passengers stood on the edge of the ceremony, the action only somewhat diluted by some of the villagers holding cellphones. They were taking pictures of us, as we were of them. And what a sight we were in our "adventure" wear, sun hats, and sunglasses, slathered in sunscreen and bug spray. I hadn't thought of myself as a cultural attraction, but locking eyes with a half-naked elderly woman, I realized we both were probing another world. I felt out of place in this one.

Cruisers pulled out rupiah to purchase Asmat art, which is sought by museums and collectors around the world. (Rockefeller was seeking pieces for the Metropolitan Museum of Art's collection of primitive works when he disappeared.) The art traditionally tells the stories of ancestors, but when I picked up a figurine for about \$15—some works went for quite a bit more—and asked about its symbolism, the shy artist said it was just something he imagined.

Oswald Huma, a tour agent from the island of Savu, west of Timor, was hired by Coral Expeditions, based in Cairns, Australia, to help map out our "Warriors and Wildlife" itinerary. He said the most common question the villagers ask is, "Why do these people come to see us?" He struggles with the answer, usually replying that travelers want to buy the wood carvings. He doesn't want to mention the attraction of a history of headhunting.

Robinson says the interactions bring much-needed income.

She's noticed that, since she first visited the Asmat a few years ago, conditions seem to have improved. "The way I see it, for these people who are miles away from any of the circuits of capital, tourism is helping them to realize that they do have something the world will buy, which is their culture," she says. "We might have anxieties about it. But all through Indonesia, people hope that tourism is going to bring income into these remote areas. These people are separate from the exigencies of the world. Pristine and untouched has also got its negatives."

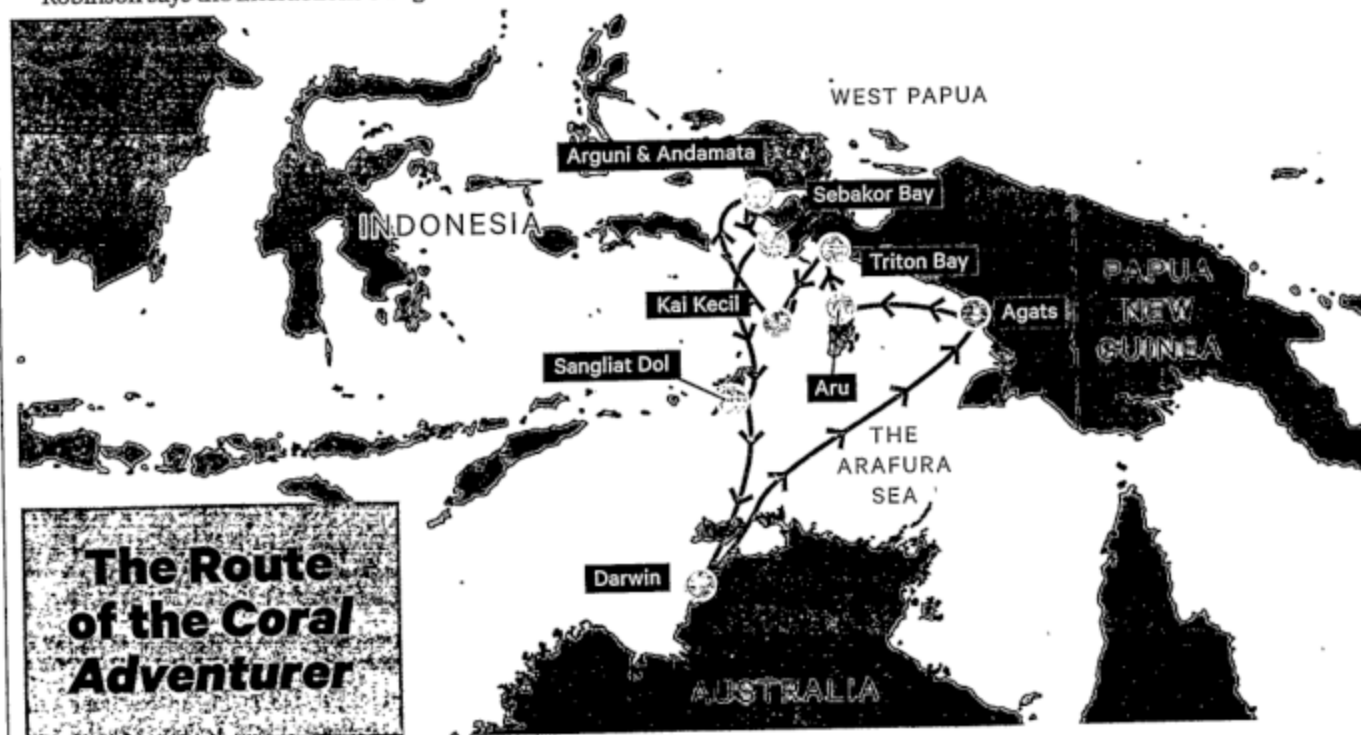
The visits also provide the Asmat an opportunity to practice their culture, Huma says. Elders traditionally teach youth the group's customs by performing ceremonies; paying customers are an excuse to do so. Kids also see the outside world and have an opportunity to practice English, "so they can go out and seek employment and send money home," he says.

"It's like anywhere where people are performing their culture," says Kirsch, the Michigan professor. "It can be uncomfortable, but it can also promote mutual recognition. The Asmat are well known for their art, and these encounters can stimulate appreciation for the artistic style."

Agats, a larger town we visited nearby, has imported goods for sale to locals. Among them are rice, which isn't a staple of the Asmat diet but has become popular, as well as electric motorbikes, tea, sugar, and cellphones. Given the spotty signal, the phones are mostly used as cameras and for playing music.

Huma had spent months in his boat on the Arafura Sea south of West Papua, sometimes in rough seas, convincing leaders in remote villages to welcome the *Coral Adventurer*. He also arranged for English speakers to meet us at each of four stops. Many are teachers, and some traveled far for the jobs as guides.

In the village of Sangliat Dol, on Yamdena Island in the ▶



Extreme Itineraries

Check out these other adventure cruises, priced per person, double occupancy.

Antarctica on Quark Expeditions' Ultramarine

Debuting in late 2020, Quark's polar ship—complete with two

twin-engine choppers to drop you off for heli-skiing—will explore Antarctica. Prices not yet available; quarkexpeditions.com.

Arctic Spring on the National Geographic Endurance

Sailings in April 2020 on Lindblad Expeditions' 126-guest ship bring you to Norway's Svalbard archipelago just as the light is starting to return and the polar bears are waking up. 11-day sailing from \$11,600; expeditions.com

Galapagos on the Silver Origin

Purpose-built by Silversea Cruises for trips to the Galapagos starting in July 2020, Silver Origin will provide a posh floating base camp for visiting Darwin's finches and blue-footed boobies. Seven-day sailings from \$9,450; silversea.com

Greenland and Iceland on the Scenic Eclipse

This "Discovery Yacht," debuting this summer for Australian-owned Scenic, has a submarine and two helicopters for exploring glaciers and fjords, plus other toys. 12-day cruises from \$12,295; scenicusa.com

The Kimberley on the Coral Adventurer

Red cliffs, ancient rock art, towering waterfalls, and salt-water crocodiles all turn up on April-through-September sails around Western Australia's remote northern coast. 10-day cruises from \$7,072; coralexpeditions.com

◀ province of Maluku, the push and pull of multicultural life was magnified. During a one-hour bus ride beforehand, our guide said, "Visitors are rare, as it destroys the daily life."

We were met by an enthusiastic crowd of costumed women in embroidered white peasant blouses and sarongs. Some had arrived hours earlier from nearby villages to greet us with a dance in which they waved scarves and small towels. They welcomed us as "sons and daughters of the village."

A smiling older woman grabbed my arm, and to the accompaniment of drums and singing, the crowd danced past tin-roofed homes to a megalithic ceremonial stone boat in the village center. Shouting, shoving, even screaming ensued, and cruise passengers were hustled off to the side.

Seating in the boat is based on status, but it can be contested. A man had taken a position someone else felt was his. Government officials moved the arguing men out of view so a smaller group could perform a planned ceremony honoring our ship "elders."

The fight—with yelling and shoving—was the rawest experience of our cruise. But for the locals, there was a price to be paid. A government official threatened to file a report, saying there would be consequences. Our ship withheld bags of school supplies, soccer balls, and clean sheets and towels for the health clinic, similar to gifts we'd delivered to other villages. The donations to Sangliat Dol returned with us. "We don't know when we left the village if they would fight over a soccer ball," Huma said. "We don't want a bad thing to happen."

No one on the *Coral Adventurer*, not even the captain, had sailed the West Papua itinerary before, a route designed to mimic a portion of Dutch explorer Abel Tasman's

voyage roughly 375 years ago. Coral Expeditions, a 35-year-old company owned since 2014 by Kallang Capital Holdings Pte. of Singapore, is known more for its cruises of Australia's Kimberley region and the Great Barrier Reef.

When you commit to an expedition cruise to a remote locale, you can expect long days at sea getting there. Wi-Fi connections are sporadic, and there's no satellite TV. Lectures are the main shipboard activity. A marine biologist prepared us for the world's largest fish, whale sharks—who apparently didn't get the memo about our arrival. We looked for them without success in Triton Bay in the southwest corner of West Papua. The passengers, mostly Australians over-60, relaxed onboard in modern cabins and lounge areas accented with African wood and Italian marble. Hot water flowed from showers, cappuccinos from coffee machines. Dinner was a three-course affair, with Australian wines.

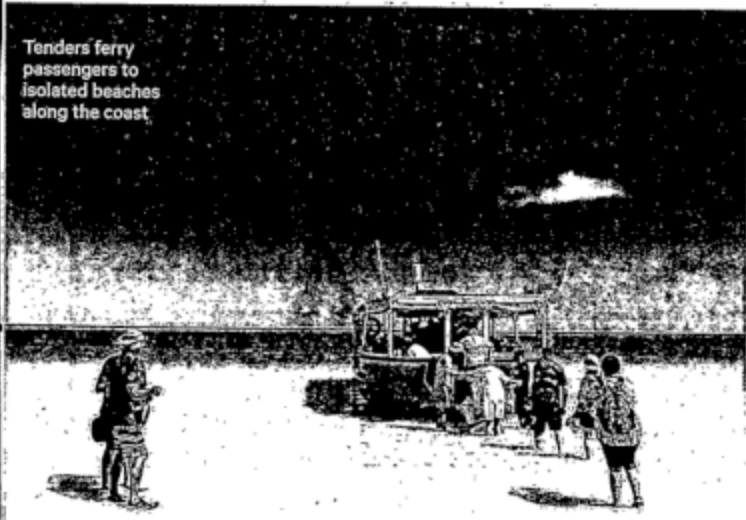
It was sticky and hot when we explored the tidy dirt streets of the Muslim village of Arguni (population 227), in the Fakfak regional district. Women, their heads covered, and their grandchildren offered warm but cautious smiles. Most of the village's adults were as far away as Bali and Jakarta for work or study. Although it was Ramadan, women had risen early to prepare fish dishes and cakes made of tapioca.

"You are not tourists anymore, but part of our family," King Hanafi Paus Paus told the crowd. Later, in his small house, where the front room is furnished with plastic patio chairs and the walls are decorated with photographs of his forbears, the king said tourism is improving. Another ship had arrived five months ago. Ships have a "good effect," he said through a translator. "It protects the history, plus we get money. People leave for work, and now work comes to us." The king's two sons are in high school in the town of Fakfak about 30 miles away. He goes there in his boat, then uses a car he keeps in town to get around.

In all the villages, locals attempted a few words of English, and there was a warmth and sincerity to our encounters—even if most amounted to us staring at them and them staring at us.

Ngilngof village, on Kai Kecil Island, provided the welcome that felt most linked with the outside world: Women in bright purple jackets and long gold skirts danced with delicate hand movements as a ritual leader in black raised a coconut, invoking ancestral protection for the island's natural resources. Meanwhile, on a 3-mile-long beach with soft, white sand, plastic chairs were set up under a tent you could rent for the afternoon. Snack bars sold cold beers and Diet Cokes. ■

Tenders ferry passengers to isolated beaches along the coast



Mountain biking is a sport that's become increasingly popular in recent years. Take, for example, the 2018 Tour de France, which featured a record number of mountain bike stages. In this special issue, we explore the history of the sport, the latest in mountain bike technology, and the best places to go for a mountain bike ride. *Photo by: [unreadable]*

Brooks

A natural swimmer

This little berry's got big ambitions

The worst of friends

Behind the scenes

On the Wild
Gypsy Tour in
Colorado

July 29, 2019

Edited by
Chris Rovzar

Businessweek.com

On Valentine's Day, Sharry Billings posted a photograph on Instagram. Below the image of herself, her hair a red-caramel and her smile open, she wrote: "I love you so much I wanna squeeze you!"

The object of her affection? "All the motorcycles I have owned and will own in the future," she explained. Alongside the photo of her astride a Harley-Davidson, she wrote that bikes "have changed my life, healed my soul, and brought me more love and friendships than I could have ever imagined."

Billings goes by @sistermother13 on Instagram, but the main account she oversees is @thelitaslosangeles. The Litas is a group she joined three years ago as a way to connect with other women riders in her city. She's co-led the L.A. branch for two years. When she joined, it provided her with much-needed healing and camaraderie after her kids grew up and she got divorced. Billings had ridden as a teenager and into her 20s but took a hiatus later. "It was always in my heart," she says. But when she was married with young children, "I thought it was a little too dangerous."

After the breakup in 2015, she found herself longing for escape. And adventure. "My prayer at the time was, 'God, I don't want to date.' These men are not happening," Billings says, laughing. "The first thing that came to my heart was the motorcycle I wanted. It was a Harley."

night pizza runs, say, or weekend coffee meetups—and they take periodic excursions to women-only destination events such as the Wild Gypsy Tour, which is organizing a festival in Sturgis, S.D., in August, and the Dream Roll in Ashland, Ore.

The biggest crowd follows Babes Ride Out, a series of events founded by Anya Violet and Ashmore Ellis in 2013. It started with 50 women riders who gathered to camp out in Borrego Springs, Calif. They built fires, pitched tents, drank beer, and played games on Harleys, Husqvarnas, and Hondas while soaking in nature and one another's company.

These groups are tapping into an undercurrent of the motorcycle industry. As sales have faltered, dropping more than 40% from 2008 to 2010, then recovering somewhat by 2014 but never to previous levels, manufacturers including Harley-Davidson Inc. and BMW Motorrad have struggled to create appeal beyond their core demographic of older white men. Their efforts include offering electric and less-expensive motorbikes and introducing exciting conceptual prototypes. Female riders offer enthusiasm and youth, and, yes, they're spending money that brands crave.

The number of women who own motorcycles has almost doubled since 2010, according to a 2018 study by the Motorcycle Industry Council. Today, 19% of owners are women, up from 10% in 2009 and 8% in the late 1990s. And the number of female riders gets higher as you go younger: 22% of Generation X

While the industry on the whole dropped 40% from 2008 to 2010, the amount of women who own motorcycles has almost doubled

She bought the bike, took the ride. Then she joined the Litas. "I'm very grateful to have found my heart again," Billings says.

Founded in Utah by Jessica Haggett half a decade ago, the Litas have expanded to include hundreds of branches around the world (Litas Denver, Litas Lisbon, Litas Rome), with members ranging from twentysomething singles to 60- and 70-year-old retirees with grandkids. They take regular rides, often along wild back roads, including the Pine Mountain Ridge route near Ojai, Calif., that Billings took with 32 other riders one Saturday in July. It's about riding with your own style and pace but surrounded by like-minded friends.

"If you're learning to ride, you're going to kill yourself riding with men—they ride like bats out of hell!" Billings says. "And women—I'm generalizing here—tend to be more careful. We are mothers, we are sisters, we feel obligated to stay alive."

The Litas are singular but not uncommon. All across California, Oregon, and Utah, from Texas to New York, women-only motorcycle groups and riding events are springing up like wildflowers. They go by names such as the Miss-Fires (Brooklyn, N.Y.), the Chrome Divas (Austin), and Leather and Lace (Daytona Beach, Fla.). They do regular rides: Tuesday

riders are women, and 26% of millennial riders are women. What's more, the average woman who owns a motorcycle spends \$574 annually on maintenance, parts, service, and accessories, while the average man who rides spends \$497.

"We are riding a ton," says Joy Lewis, who started when she was 12. "I have a friend who put 20,000 miles on her bike in one year." Lewis's father, an Alaskan crab fisherman who owned a Harley, got her hooked. "We spend a lot of money on our gear and our bikes, and a lot of things to go with them. I think that's starting to be appreciated."

Andy Jefferson, a spokesman for Husqvarna, says one of the brand's priorities must be to provide support for women's motorcycling. "We were like everyone else—going after a piece of the pie," he says. "But everyone was looking at men, and there are all these other people—women—that nobody even really talks about in conversations about how to sell more bikes." The brand lacks figures for how many of its owners are women but is "working to change that," Jefferson says. "That's part of the problem."

Husqvarna honed in on women riders five years ago when it started sponsoring Babes in the Dirt, an offshoot of Babes Ride Out that's more focused on off-road and dirt-bike riding.



Riders break for water during an afternoon run of the Colorado edition of the Wild Gypsy Tour

Last year the company spent \$50,000 to \$60,000 in support of the three-day rally, lending 27 motorcycles and nine staffers to service the bikes and teach.

"We counted between 80 and 100 girls out there [trying out] Husqvarnas," he says. "The number is not huge by any means, but those are 100 people we didn't have before. It also jumps down to their brothers and sisters and kids. We never would have got these people without doing this."

But more important, "we want to get you to ride a motorcycle," Jefferson adds. "If you ride with Babes and have fun and go buy another brand, great. We just want people riding."

At BMW Motorrad, which on July 1 named Trudy Hardy vice president for the Americas, the company is sponsoring women-only events including the Sisters' Centennial Motorcycle Ride. It's also covering travel expenses and appearance fees for brand reps such as Elspeth Beard, an architect who was the first British woman to ride her motorcycle around the world. The brand also sends pro racer Jocelin Snow and Erin Sills, who holds a 242 mph land speed record, to attend events at local dealerships.

Harley-Davidson has expanded its retail line in recent years to include a host of riding jackets, helmets, boots, and gloves sized and styled for women. It's perhaps the most critical field of growth for the 116-year-old Wisconsin brand, which has seen sales steadily decline since 2014. The average age of a Harley owner is 50. The average price of one is \$15,800—more than many millennials will spend on a car, let alone a motorcycle.

"Even just in the last five years the conversation has shifted," says motorcycle aficionado Lewis. "I'm sitting here in leather Kevlar pants as we speak, about to go into a

meeting. Not only are companies making cute technical stuff that you could wear to work—rather than some weird leather pants with pink embroidery all over the butt that you'd never wear—they're making things we can actually use."

Attendees at events for Babes Ride Out (or BRO, the ironic abbreviation they've adopted) come to America from as far away as Sweden and South America. Some have ridden since they could walk; some can't operate a bike at all, preferring always to be a passenger and imbibe the inspirational atmosphere. There's always plenty of denim and leather on-site—but the hipster kind, not the leather-daddy look. Local shops give classes on basic bike maintenance. Some women get tattoos to commemorate the experience.

"People camp, and there are trailers, too," Lewis says. "The idea is that you grab coffee and breakfast, and then during the day everyone is out riding. And then all the stuff happens in the evenings with bands or karaoke and slow races"—feats of throttle control.

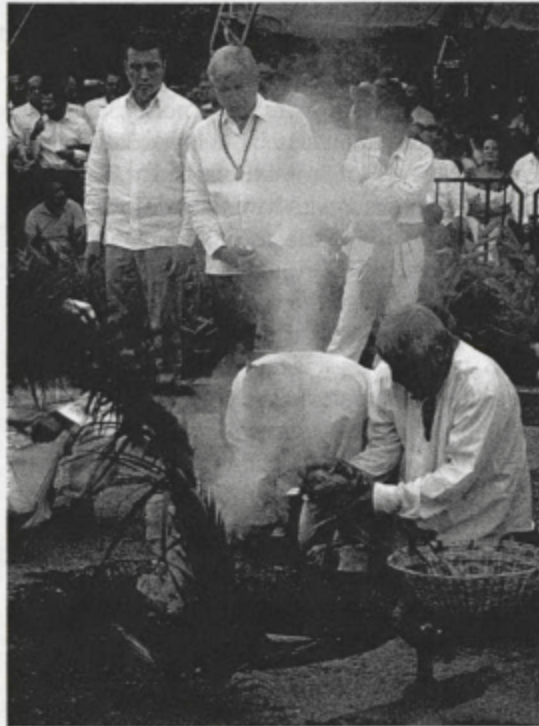
Earlier this year, a 96-year-old woman joined them at camp; she'd first ridden cross-country on her motorcycle 75 years ago. Last summer the annual California desert meetup saw 1,700 women ride in Yucca Valley; 500 attended an East Coast campout in the Catskill Mountains in New York; 700 attended the most recent Babes in the Dirt in Lebec, Calif.

"Maybe people think that women who ride are pretty tough and badass, which is probably true, but all in all, women riders come in all shapes, sizes, colors, and lifestyles, so any label that you want to give them does not really work," co-founder Violet says. "I can honestly say that there is no 'type' ...and we like it that way!"

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32

Edited by
Silvia KillingsworthWhen
Mother
EarthGives You
A Building
Permit

● AMLO's passion project is a 900-mile train to connect beach resorts and colonial-era towns

One day last December, Mexican President André Manuel López Obrador donned a beaded necklace and bowed his head reverently before a fire pit, to ask Mother Earth for permission to build a railroad through the heart of Mayan territory.

The line, which will stretch 1,460 kilometers (900 miles) across five Mexican states, may carry more than 8,000 passengers a day. It will serve some of the country's most popular tourist destinations, including seaside resorts Cancún and Tulum, Mérida and other colonial-era towns, and archaeological sites like Chichén Itzá. For AMLO, as Mexico's leader is widely known, the Mayan Train is something of a passion project. Critics call it an expensive folly.

Rusty railways dating to the 1950s cover less than half of the proposed route, but they'll have to be completely overhauled to handle modern rolling stock. That's the easy part. To lay track along the rest of the route, construction crews will have to cut through miles of rainforest, home to jaguars which are endangered in Mexico, and pumas.

The most difficult part of the undertaking may be finding investors to finance the project's cost, as much as 150 billion pesos (about \$7.9 billion). AMLO's government hasn't specified how it came up with that number, nor has it commissioned a study to prove there will be sufficient passenger and cargo volume to make the line commercially viable. The agency in charge of the endeavor, Fonatur, has described the Mayan Train as a "social" project whose main goal is boosting the economy of the Yucatán Peninsula by way of hotel construction and tourism. "What we're looking for is for the towns along the train's routes to be profitable, and that goes beyond how many tourists use the train," says Aarón Rosado, the Yucatán liaison at Fonatur, the national fund for tourism promotion. The median household income across the five states is half that of the capital, Mexico City. Chiapas, one of the states on the route, is the country's poorest, according to statistics agency Inegi.

"It would be a huge mistake to plan this poorly," says Alexandra Zapata, adjunct director at Mexico's Competitiveness Institute, IMCO, a think tank that studies the impact of policy on the Mexican economy. "There's a profound difference between betting on regional development and ending up with an abandoned ghost project because it cost 10 times more than what was originally thought."

Fonatur opened bidding for engineering work on the Mayan Train in May. The tender elicited enough questions from interested yet confused parties to fill a 253-page document. The session scheduled to respond to those queries had to be delayed a month to allow Fonatur enough time to come up with answers. "Look, I'm not against the train," says Eduardo Ramírez, president of the Mexican Chamber of the Construction Industry. "But they need to prove this is economically feasible and that it won't be a burden for future administrations. We can't keep absorbing governments' mistakes—it's always the Mexican people who end up paying."

Fonatur chief Rogelio Jiménez Pons told Bloomberg in February that "a group of 100 of López Obrador's closest friends" has funded studies that contain traffic projections, but his agency "can't share them just yet."

The Mayan Train's current estimates put its per-kilometer cost at \$5.2 million, on par with France's Valence-Marseille route, the sixth-lowest among 22 lines worldwide that IMCO studied. "It's not clear how they got to that number," Zapata says. "But what is clear is that international experience shows these projects—even when they're perfectly planned—tend to end up costing as much as 130% more."

The only other passenger train that's being built in Mexico will connect the capital to the nearby industrial town of Toluca. Started under former President Enrique Peña Nieto, it's been beset by problems, including lacking the right of way in some parts. The line was supposed to be up and

AMLO's Mayan Train Project

- Station
- Calakmul Biosphere Reserve
- Existing railway
- - - Planned railway



running in early 2018, but today there's still no start date in sight and costs are running 92% over budget. Its price tag has grown to \$66 million per kilometer, IMCO says, making it the third-most-expensive line in its study. "You'd think the Mexican government would learn from this, but apparently they're heading in the same direction," Zapata says.

Peña Nieto's administration also studied the idea of building a train in the southeast. It would have been about five times smaller, but ultimately the administration shelved the project when oil prices fell and the federal budget took a hit.

AMLO's government is looking to fund 90% of the Mayan Train through a so-called Fibra—a hybrid of a master limited partnership and a real estate investment trust. This is the same vehicle that was used to fund part of the \$13 billion cost of building a new airport for Mexico City, a project the president canceled late last year, triggering a sell-off in Mexican bonds, stocks, and the peso.

Environmentalists have voiced concerns about the impact a project this size will have on the region's fragile ecosystem. The proposed route is home to an estimated 800 to 1,200 jaguars, an already endangered species, according to Panthera, a New York-based nonprofit focused on the conservation of wildcats.

To allow the animals to roam freely, the government is considering building large overpasses along sections of the track, likely modeled on those built in Canada's Banff National Park for grizzly bears, beavers, and other big mammals. It's unclear if the current budget for the Mayan Train includes money for any overpasses; the Canadian structures cost as much as \$2 million each, according to Mircea Hidalgo, a member of Panthera Mexico's scientific

◀ AMLO (standing, center) at a ceremony honoring Mother Earth during the project's launch
 ▶ A Mayan pyramid at the site of the ancient city of Calakmul



FROM LEFT: DANIEL AGUILAR/MEXICAN PRESIDENCY/MP; ALEJEN ORICAN/ALAMY DATA; TREN MAYA

◀ council. "It would be a tragedy if this destroys the natural heritage of the Mexican people, one of which is the jaguar," says **Howard Quigley**, jaguar program director at Panthera. "It's just a matter of the government deciding to do it right."

The train's route will include a stop near the Calakmul Biosphere Reserve, one of Mexico's largest protected areas and home to 2,400-year-old Mayan ruins. The area around the reserve has few hotels and roads and isn't used to big crowds, mainly because it isn't easy to get to. In all of 2018 it had only 43,000 visitors. Building hotels, restaurants, and other accommodations for a large influx of visitors may strain the area's precious resources, including water, which would have to be piped in

from adjacent towns. "The entire world recognizes Calakmul's importance. It's a Unesco World Heritage Site," says Carlos Alcérreca, a biologist consulting with Fonatur on conservation practices. "The project needs to find a way to mitigate the impact, but it won't be easy."

Experts' warnings are unlikely to sway AMLO. "This is not just a whim or an imposition," the president told the crowd on that December day as smoke billowed from the earth. "It's an act of justice, because the southeast has been abandoned for too long. It's their time." —*Andrea Navarro*

THE BOTTOM LINE Where López Obrador sees opportunity to develop an overlooked region, his critics see a boondoggle that risks upending a fragile ecosystem.

Can France Make Factories Cool?

● Macron's government is hoping to encourage young French people onto the factory floor

A 20-foot-tall blue rooster, appearing to crow as it strides forward, chest jutting out and wings folded back, is on a tour de France. The inflatable bird is racing to 60 stages across the country, accompanied by a team of 15 technicians, six trucks, and an Airstream trailer. The mission: to restore pride in the country's manufacturing industry.

Each daylong stage of the so-called French Fab Tour includes workshops and games for schoolchildren, conferences, aptitude tests, virtual-reality experiences, and speed-dating-style job interviews. President Emmanuel Macron's government is hoping the campaign will encourage the French back onto the factory floor. "We're in a sector that is the very opposite of sexy," says Julien Hue, chief executive officer of industrial oil manufacturer Hafa.

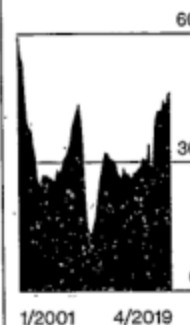
Bottlenecks in labor supply are one of the main constraints on growth in the European economy, frustrating the European Central Bank. After slashing interest rates and pumping billions into the economy with quantitative easing, the ECB says the onus is now on governments to do more to bring people into the workforce and equip them with skills businesses need. The French government

estimates there are about 50,000 vacancies in manufacturing that, if filled, would create an additional 200,000 jobs.

In other large European economies including Germany and the Netherlands, the problems are largely explained by record-low unemployment. In France, however, unemployment is almost 9%, yet 46% of employers in industry report recruitment difficulties, according to the French statistics agency Insee. That's the highest level in almost 20 years. Even when unemployment was at 7.2%, in 2008, French manufacturers found it easier to hire than today. "The main problem for our competitiveness comes from the fact that we aren't able to recruit in industry. And we can't recruit in industry because its image is degraded," says Angèle Parinier-Runacher, one of the ministers in charge of the French Fab.

In the Normandy town of Rouen, the giant rooster struggled to compete for attention with ships visiting for the annual Armada celebrations in June. Only a handful of people passed through to look at the French Fab exhibits, while thousands queued for hours only a few yards away to visit antique sailboats and modern warships. ▶

● Share of French manufacturing companies reporting hiring difficulties



THE GONE- FISHIN' GUIDE...



Oliver White, a guide from North Carolina, gets the money shot with a bonefish in the Marls, Bahamas

to angling experts,
old-school rods,
river ranches,
un-endangered salmon,
an acrobatic kayak,
and the prettiest damn
fly you've ever seen

It's the worst of times to be an angler. The fish are smaller, the crowds are bigger, and climate change is ruining everything. And yet, it's also the best of times: The latest gear makes the sport more effortless than ever, and no location is too remote to access with a rod and reel. For those who like to travel, today's base camps have begun to resemble world-class resorts with spa services, herb gardens, and wine tastings. The focus is still on catching fish, but booking a top-shelf angling vacation means having options. One day you might be heli-fishing for steelhead, the next you're chasing them upriver in a 200-horsepower jet boat. The key to the top trips is your guide, an experienced hand who knows the area and will lead you to the perfect inlets, eddies, runs, and other secret spots. Here are 10 experts on their home turf—and the local fish that'll get you hooked.

—Darrell Hartman

WHERE TO GO,

Hunting for tarpon in the Everglades with Eleven Experience

AND WHO

PATAGONIA

South America's southern wilds are famous for their vast, sparsely populated landscapes—which are flecked with glacial-blue lakes and untouched rivers full of trout. The Argentine side of the Andes has a drier climate and draws comparisons to the American West a half-century ago: It's big-sky country, with a gaucho culture and very little competition on the water.

■ **THE FISH** Patagonia's brown and rainbow trout are considered ideal for dry-fly fishing. The average river dweller here is 18 inches—typically your biggest of the day in Montana. But there are challenges: Afternoon winds can hamper even a seasoned caster.

■ **THE LODGE** Located in the mountain village of Trevelin, Argentina, the PRG Lodge has raised the bar with a smorgasbord of options. It's

where I go with big-hitter clients," says guide Oliver White, who recently brought investor Bill Ackman. The 12-room operation is the flagship of Patagonia River Guides, which was started in 1998. It has its own winery, a 220-bottle whiskey bar, and, opening in the fall, a spa. Guests fish contrasting terrain to the north and south, where PRG can arrange stays in traditional estancias or safari-style camping.

■ **THE GUIDE** Veteran Esteban Oszust is the "best guide I've ever fished with, hands down," says Matt Canter of North Carolina's Brookings Anglers, which books two trips with PRG a year. "He's a very good coach, even with inexperienced anglers."

■ **THE PRICE** From \$5,950 per person for a week; patagoniariverguides.com

SKILL LEVEL:   

SIZE FACTOR:   

UNLESS OTHERWISE STATED, RATES ASSUME TWO ADULTS. THEY DON'T INCLUDE TIP. RATES MAY INCREASE BASED ON SEASON, ACCOMMODATION LEVEL AND OTHER FACTORS.

Tarpon

saltwater fishing left on Earth, says Texas-based guide J.T. Vanzandt, especially now that the Somali pirate threat of recent years has lessened. "If you can part easily with 20k, you should go. The wadeable fish-rich flats of Cosmoledo Atoll in particular have begun to achieve mythical status."

■ **THE FISH** There are bonefish, triggerfish, and barracuda here, but they all dwell in the shadow of the giant, trevally, a bulky apex predator that can average 30 pounds. They're tackle-wrecking machines: massive, hyper-aggressive, and lots of teeth, says Joe Gadd, manager of saltwater fishing programs for Frontiers International Travel. "You want them to eat your fly, but you also kind of know something bad is about to happen." Its ferocity puts the "GT" in a league of its own—one reason Gadd's next available booking here isn't until 2022.

■ **THE RESORT** The beach suites and stilted A-frame bungalows at Alphonse Island Resort ooze private-island luxury, and its fishing pros have been leading excursions to Cosmoledo Atoll for more than a decade. Starting last fall, the resort began offering lodging there at Cosmoledo Eco-Camp, where guests stay in former shipping containers that have been converted into comfortable, low-impact cabins. During the fishing off-season, May to November, the lodge turns the camp over to marine conservation researchers.

■ **THE PRICE** From \$14,950 per person for a week-long guided trip; alphonsefishingco.com

SKILL LEVEL:   

SIZE FACTOR:   

MARTHA'S VINEYARD

This classic New England getaway has sea-food shacks, farmers markets, and historic tree-lined streets, all of which a die-hard angler will happily ignore. Fishing grounds range from saltwater ponds and inlets to beaches, jetties, flats, and action-packed trips to the swift currents that run out to sea from shore. In May, cinder worms emerge from undersea mud to become big-fish chow near the surface. The island's massive squid migration, another feeding frenzy moment, is in June.

■ **THE FISH** The Vineyard's iconic species is the striped bass, and for good reason. "They want to toilet bowl." ▶ **Cont'd on page 61**

WHAT TO CATCH,

HELP YOU FIND THEM

THE EVERGLADES

Florida remains the place to pursue the most pulse-quickening quarry in the sport. What the state's primeval wetlands lack in water clarity, they make up for in sparse crowds and an abundance of hungry game.

■ **THE FISH** Atlantic tarpon checks every box. They roll on the surface, savage small tackle, weigh into the triple digits, and reward anyone skilled or lucky enough to hook one with spectacular acrobatics. Their leaps can snap the line, making the silvery king notoriously hard to land. "The first time I caught a tarpon, it was so aerial, so visual, that I went out of body for a second," says Montana-based guide Hilary Hutcheson.

■ **THE SHIP** Eleven Experience has changed the equation with the live-aboard *Outpost*, "mothership," which cruises the Everglades from

February to April with three air-conditioned staterooms and chef-prepared meals.

■ **THE GUIDE** Paul Ray, one of Eleven's two Everglades experts, has been working the area for 12 years. "Paul is one of the best, if not the best, flye ever fished with—and I fish all over the place," says Wes Bradish, an investment banker in Denver.

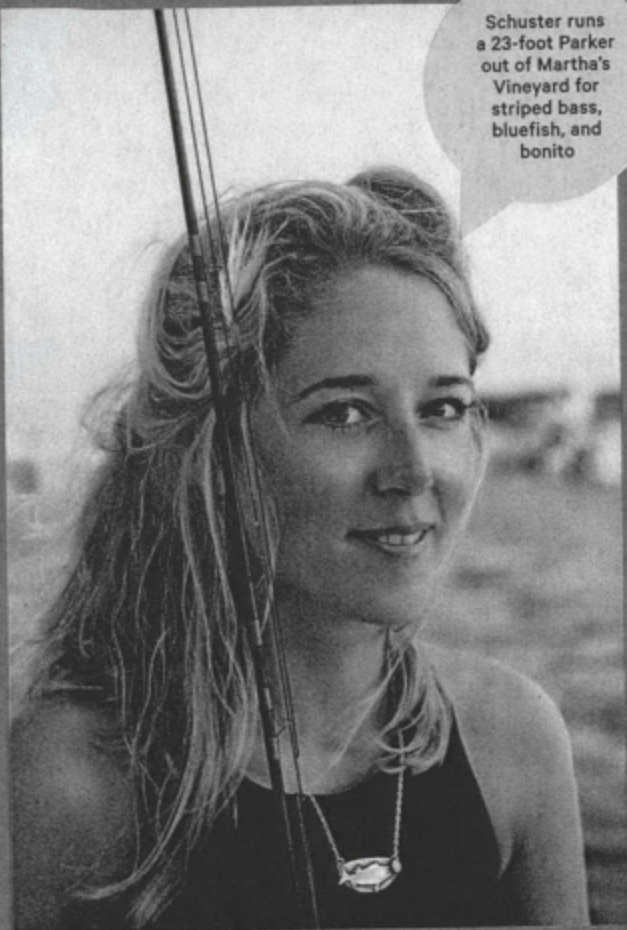
■ **THE PRICE** \$4,800 per person for a four-person, four-night guided trip; elevenexperience.com

SKILL LEVEL:   

SIZE FACTOR:   

THE SEYCHELLES

The Indian Ocean archipelago has the best



Schuster runs a 23-foot Parker out of Martha's Vineyard for striped bass, bluefish, and bonito

of grass—more like a reed than a piece of lumber—and it has a natural sensitivity that more modern materials lack. Bamboo fans say that their rods cast more fluidly, that their slight extra weight does more of the work, and that they're better at cushioning light leaders. Where a graphite caster would talk about power and efficiency, one who uses bamboo might invoke terms such as "warmth" and "friendliness."

There's also the matter of uniqueness. Part of the character of every rod is imparted by the particular culm of bamboo from which it was made—its size, age, density, moisture content, whether or not it was heat-treated and if so, how—so that even among identical rods by the same maker there can be discernible differences. And bamboo rods, like violins, are said to evolve with use, so even if a rod doesn't have a personality the first time you string it up, it will after you've fished with it for a few seasons.

Is this all beginning to sound a little mystical? Well, that's how they get under your skin. The late rod-maker Charlie Jenkins once told me that half of what his customers were buying was the image of the lone craftsman in his workshop with his glasses pulled down on his nose, hand-making their rod. That sounds mostly right to me. Of course, Charlie was too modest to add that, in his case, the other half was one damned fine fly rod. **B**

PHOTOGRAPH BY GABRIELA HERMAN FOR BLOOMBERG BUSINESSWEEK

◀ Cont'd from page 59

your fly," says Hutcheson, who's fished stripers there as a guest. "When they go for it, it's for the kill." In September they typically share the water with bonito, bluefish, and lightning-fast false albacore, loading the field for a Massachusetts "grand slam."

■ **THE INN** The Hob Knob (\$559 per night; hobnob.com), a Gothic Revival inn in historic Edgartown, has the traditional down-home white-columned porch but makes up its beds with sumptuous Versai linens. The full-service spa is a major perk.

■ **THE GUIDE** Abbie Schuster, 29, represents the next generation of northeastern saltwater guides. She only fly-fishes and has a strict catch-and-release policy, unconventional for a striper specialist. "I try to make it a full experience," she says. That could mean a full day chasing schoolies in her 23-foot Parker or a mixed program involving beach driving and a guided yoga session during slack tide.

■ **THE PRICE** \$850 for a full-day trip with Schuster; kismetoutfitters.com

SKILL LEVEL:



SIZE FACTOR:



PONOI RIVER

Moneyed anglers are going farther afield than ever to pursue Atlantic salmon, as commercial harvesting, climate change, and other ills have reduced North American runs. The new hot spot is Russia's Kola Peninsula, whose 25 million acres of tundra and salmon rivers lie almost entirely within the Arctic Circle. The southerly Ponoï River "is so much better than everything else," according to globe-trotting guide Oliver White. Frontiers International Travel spokesperson Mollie Fitzgerald agrees: "They catch in a week what many places in Scotland or eastern Canada catch in an entire season"—on average, 28 fish per rod.

■ **THE LODGE** Ryabaga Camp enjoys exclusive access to 50 miles of the wide, easy-flowing Ponoï, which guests of all skill levels can fish on foot or by boat. Unlike its northerly neighbors, the Ponoï has two mini seasons, in early and late summer. The accommodations have recently been upgraded from canvas tents to duplex wood cabins with en suite bathrooms. A major selling point is the variety of accessibility—that is, once you've taken the weekly charter flight from Helsinki and the two-hour helicopter ride from Murmansk.

■ **THE GUIDE** Ryabaga's Max Mamaev has spent two decades on the Ponoï. "He is truly one of the world's greatest guides—so resourceful, so industrious. I heard he made his first pair of waders out of a chemical warfare suit," White says. "And I believe it."

■ **THE PRICE** From \$7,490 per person for a weeklong stay; frontierstravel.com

SKILL LEVEL:



SIZE FACTOR:



THE AMAZON

The crazy-colored peacock bass is just one of many fascinating creatures in the Amazon Basin, but the violence with which this freshwater predator smacks a fly will take your breath away. The capable guides at Agua Boa Amazon Lodge, located on a clear-water tributary of the same name, rarely have trouble finding them. An inexperienced fly-caster can catch dozens of the smaller "butterfly" variety in a day, even using mandatory barbless single hooks; when the water's low enough, meanwhile, sight-fishing for 15-pounders tests the skills of anglers and guides alike. "It's an honest-to-God adventure," says Canter of Brookings Anglers, who's hosted trips here. "You hop on that charter from Manaus for the two-hour flight to the lodge, and a few minutes in, it's nothing but jungle." Granted. ▶ **Cont'd on page 64**

◀ Cont'd from page 61

the little patch of jungle you come back to each evening has a pool, air-conditioned bungalows, daily laundry service, and no end of well-made caipirinhas.

■ **THE PRICE** From \$6,400 per person for a weeklong stay; sweetwatertravel.com

SKILL LEVEL:   

SIZE FACTOR:   

SKEENA RIVER

Although fish populations near the U.S. border have dwindled, hundreds of thousands of colorful salmonids still flood this massive river system in British Columbia every fall. The mountain hub of Smithers is a 90-minute flight from Vancouver.

■ **THE FISH** Fortified by years at sea, steelhead are as big as salmon and fight with the leaping, hell-for-leather energy of a rainbow trout. Patience and casting capability are a must. "There are very few casual steelheaders," says Justin Miller of the Fly Shop, a California-based retailer and destination-fishing outfit.

■ **THE LODGE** Frontier Steelhead Experience makes the most of the Bulkley River, which sees about 40% of the Skeena's fall steelhead run. Its guides steer rafts through tumbling canyons, race 200-horsepower jet boats upriver, and can arrange heli-fishing days on the ultra-remote Upper Skeena. Home base is a baronial post-and-beam lodge where there's a pastry chef and a masseuse on hand.

■ **THE GUIDE** Joel Gourley has been guiding on the Bulkley for 16 years. "He knows every nook and cranny and is a technician when it comes to finding steelhead," says FSE owner Derek Botchford.

■ **THE PRICE** From \$7,600 per person for a weeklong stay; bulkleysteelhead.com

SKILL LEVEL:   

SIZE FACTOR:   

EG-UR WATERSHED

Landing a 50-inch trout on a dry fly has the ring of a fish story, but not in Mongolia.

When a taimen strikes, "it sounds like someone dropping a bowling ball in the river," says Dan Vermillion, co-owner of Montana's Sweetwater Travel Co. His Mongolian Taimen Camps, the only foreign outfits with exclusive access to the Eg-Ur watershed, have spearheaded conservation efforts since pioneering this niche offering two decades ago.

■ **THE PRICE** From \$6,830 per person for a weeklong stay; mongoliataimenfishing.com

SKILL LEVEL:   

SIZE FACTOR:   

PUNTA GORDA

Belize has hundreds of miles of white-sand flats and the longest barrier reef in the Northern Hemisphere. It banned bottom trawling a decade ago, and efforts are underway to do the same with gill nets.

■ **THE FISH** The finicky permit is the "most annoying fish in the world—that's why getting one becomes an addiction," says Schuster, who's hosted saltwater trips here. Midday sun and winds of 5 to 10 knots will slightly improve your odds of hooking one of these platter-shaped, scythe-finned fish.

■ **THE LODGE** Copal Tree Lodge is far enough below "Permit Alley" that clients get the nearby flats and five brackish river systems largely to themselves. Placid lagoons nearby are a solid

alternative in bad weather. There's also a rum distillery, an organic farm, and a 12,000-acre nature reserve on the premises.

■ **THE GUIDE** "A true permit guide is a special breed of person," says Todd Calitri, Copal Tree's head of operations. He recommends Scully Garbutt, a native Belizean guide. "He makes sure a client has a great day whether they catch a fish or not."

■ **THE PRICE** From \$3,679 per person for a weeklong stay; copaltreelodge.com

SKILL LEVEL:   

SIZE FACTOR:   

THE MARLS

This may be news to the snowbirds of Harbour Island and Eleuthera, but the Bahamas offer some of the world's best saltwater fishing. Typically you're casting over sapphire-blue waters onto shallow sand flats in breezy, high-visibility conditions that require advanced skills. Luckily, the dream-vacation surroundings make it easier to shrug off a shutout.

■ **THE FISH** The silvery bonefish is on every fly fisher's bucket list, and not just because it dwells in paradise. It launches like a rocket when hooked. "They try to do all this sneak shit, pull you into the mangroves, smash the face into the ground to try to get the fly out," Hutcherson says. They're usually in the 5-pound range.

■ **THE LODGE** Abaco Lodge is the only outfitter on Great Abaco Island Marls, a 300-square-mile stretch of pristine flats. Its on-site boat dock is a convenient luxury.

■ **THE GUIDE** Paul Pinder switched from commercial fishing to guiding more than 20 years ago. "No one reads your ability, personality better," Van Zandt says. "He sets the standard for the other guides."

■ **THE PRICE** From \$6,150 per person for a weeklong stay. Shorter trips are available including \$3,595 per person for two-day trips; abacolodge.com

SKILL LEVEL:   

SIZE FACTOR:   



Fish tacos at Copal Tree Lodge in Belize

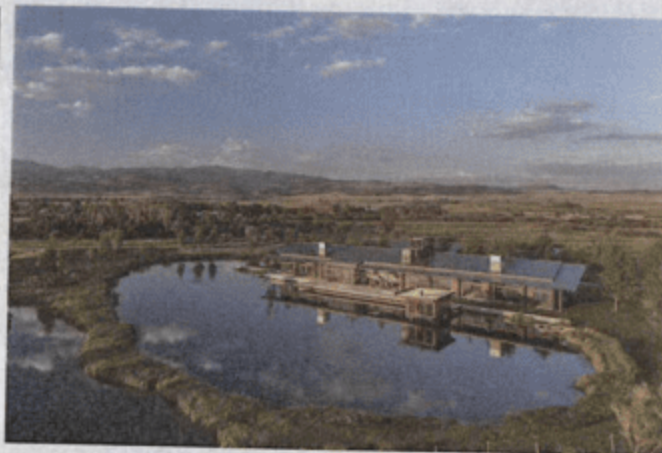
Meanwhile, Back at the Ranch

Got a few mil? Swap your fishing camp for a compound with its own fishing holes. *By Claire Ballentine*



LONE PINE RANCH

Near Mendocino National Forest in Covelo, Calif., this \$25 million estate includes 26,600 deeded acres across three large ranches. It comes with more than 16 miles of frontage on the Eel River, one of the state's largest—and least altered—watersheds to which salmon and steelhead migrate from the Pacific. Acquired by stockbroker Dean Witter in 1942, the property contains a 1930s main home, along with plentiful blacktail deer, pigs, bears, and quails. Broker: Bill McDavid, 406 542-3762



RUBY RIVER ONE AND DONE

Set in southwestern Montana's Ruby River Valley, this 400-acre property includes an airy, minimalist 10,000-square-foot home created by Seattle architect George Suyama and designed to maximize the Big Sky views. There's also an 18-hole putting green and a skeet and pistol range. The \$10.5 million estate includes access to both sides of the fabled Ruby River, but there are also three constructed trout ponds, one of which is right outside the door. Broker: Keith Lenard, 406 542-3762



GRAYSTONES

Located above the Lehigh River Gorge in the Poconos, Graystones Preserve in Albrightsville, Pa., comes with 3,800 deeded acres and seven residential structures holding 31 bedrooms. The \$11.9 million property contains 3 miles of water stocked with large tiger, brown, rainbow, and eastern brook trout and is within easy driving distance of New York City and Philadelphia. With state parks on three sides, whitetail deer, black bears, and turkeys roam the grounds. Broker: Keith Lenard, 406 542-3762



WESTLANDS

This 4,600-acre estate in Meeker, Colo., two hours northwest of Aspen, includes an owner's mansion, guest quarters, a tennis court, and a four-hole golf course designed by Greg Norman. The pinnacle of the \$46 million property, though, is the private 5-mile stretch along both forks of the White River, where it's said 15-pound trout roam more than 30 pools, runs, and channel confluences. For the last three decades, Westlands has belonged to financier Henry Kravis. Broker: Brian Smith, 970 879-5544



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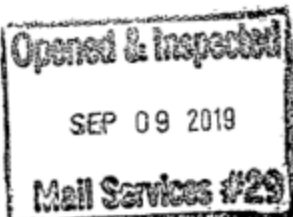
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