

# Angeleno

THE BEST OF LOS ANGELES AND ORANGE COUNTY

NOV/DEC

ANGELENO: MATO WILSHIRE; SUITE 100, LOS ANGELES, CA 90030

## Gina Gershon Unbound

**PLUS:** Thanksgiving, Russian Style • Great Gifts • Exotic Trips • Fabulous Gems



CRYSTAL CRUISES' "CRYSTAL HARMONY" OCEAN LINER GLIDES ALONG SOUTHEAST ALASKA'S MAJESTIC INSIDE PASSAGE.

# DREAM BOATS

**SOME LIKE IT HOT. SOME LIKE IT COLD. WITH LUXURY CRUISES BOUND FOR THE ALASKAN FRONTIER AND SAILING FROM RIO TO CAPE TOWN, IT'S YOUR CHOICE.**

The wide-open expanse of the ocean is spread before you. Sea spray dances lightly across your face, canted upward in beatific repose. Underfoot, the great ship powers forward through the whitecaps like Triton himself. Beyond the horizon lies the delicious promise of an unknown land. Sound appealing? You can't lose with either of the following oceanic journeys. Operated by two of the world's top-shelf cruise lines, each offers luxurious accommodations and amenities, gourmet cuisine and a bounty of onboard activities. But rather than dwell on the Pratesi linens and shuffleboard tournaments, we've chosen to focus on the ports of call you'll be visiting. Land ho-hum? Hardly. **BY REBECCA RAPHAEL**

## ALASKAN ADVENTURE

There's the rugged, man-versus-nature Alaska immortalized by Jack London, a frontier landscape of snow and ice populated by grizzled Gold Rush prospectors, sled dogs and whale-hunting Nanooks of the North. And then there's the modern perception of a farflung arctic tundra whose natural resources—most famously, oil—are the only thing worthwhile about it and whose only inhabitants are quirky *Northern Exposure* eccentrics.

Truth is, our 49th state is a vast wonderland of pristine, awe-inspiring wilderness and amazingly diverse wildlife. One of the best ways to experience a slice of it is via Crystal Cruises' 12-day "Alaskan Adventure" aboard the *Crystal Harmony*, the only six-star-rated cruise ship to sail Alaska in the year 2000. The cruise includes preplanned and self-styled offshore excursions through the port cities of Sitka, Juneau and Ketchikan. Plan your trip during the summer months to avoid sub-zero temperatures, May and September are possibilities, too—cooler than summer, but much less crowded.

Departing from Vancouver, British Columbia, you'll wend your way through the stunning vistas of Alaska's Inside Passage along the state's southeastern coast en route to historic Sitka. The former capital of Russian Alaska, it's a stunningly picturesque city nestled between the Pacific and an extinct volcano. The icy blue waters and shorelines teem with life, so keep a lookout for whales, harbor seals, walrus, bald eagles and black-tailed deer along the way.

Just east of town lies the 107-acre spruce-blanketed Sitka National Historical Park (the Sitka spruce is the state tree), marking the site of the Russian conquest over the Kiksadi Tlingit Indians in the early 1800s. Fifteen totem poles used by the tribe in "potlatch" ceremonies (major gatherings which drew clans from across the region) line a hiking trail next to the sea, and you can get a sense of Russian colonial architecture from the Russian Bishop's House, a log structure built in 1843 that is one of only four surviving examples of the style in North America. St. Michael's Cathedral, a replica of a 100-year-old Russian Orthodox cathedral that burned down in 1966, dominates the center of Sitka and houses relics salvaged from its predecessor. Also worth a visit: the Sheldon Jackson Museum, with one of the best collections of indigenous cultural artifacts in the state.

Further north in Skagway, a key supply point during the 1890s Gold Rush, downtown buildings restored to evoke the town's colorful past (think saloons with player pianos and general stores) cater to the tourist trade. Get up close and personal with the Klondike by exploring the White Pass Trail aboard the century-old narrow-gauge White Pass and Yukon Railway, the first railroad in Alaska, and the Chilkoot Trail. (You can "pan" for gold, but be forewarned: The gold is often planted by locals, and if you find any you'll likely be asked to surrender your "strike.") Stop at the state's oldest operating hostelry, the Golden North Hotel, for king salmon or Dungeness crab, two Alaskan specialties. While you're there, check out the authentic period furnishings (the hotel dates back to 1898) and personal belongings from prominent Skagway families.

Returning south toward Juneau—arguably the most beautiful capital city in the U.S.—you'll pass the snowcapped peaks of Mount Juneau and Mount Roberts, majestic glaciers, and fields of wildflowers. Once anchored, explore the scenery from an eagle's perspective on a helicopter ride overlooking Mendenhall Glacier 13 miles outside the city; mountaineers may opt for a walking tour of the glacier's surface. Juneau's dramatic elevation gain—the city's skyline rises from sea level to more than 3,000 feet within a mile of the

coast—has made it a favorite landscape for both painters and photographers.

Downtown Juneau offers a bustling waterfront along the Gastineau Channel and a historical district filled with restaurants, shops and taverns. Gold fever built this town, too, so it's worthwhile to search out a couple of museums documenting the Gold Rush era during your stay. Juneau is also the place for seaplane and mountain bike excursions, salmon and halibut fishing, whitewater rafting, kayaking, dogsledding, hiking, snowboarding, and cross-country skiing and heli-skiing. Across the channel, Douglas Island affords nature lovers prime bald eagle and heron watching.

The cruise makes its last Alaskan stop in Ketchikan, a major port supported for decades by its fishing and timber industries. Here's where you'll find optimal fishing on waterways with an array of canoe and kayak routes. More totem poles? You came to the right place: Ethnically diverse Ketchikan is home to the world's largest collection of totem poles, found at Totem Bight State Historical Park, Saxman Native Village and the Totem Heritage Center Museum.

## ACROSS A SOUTHERN SEA

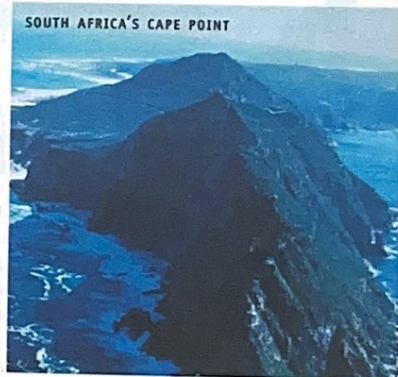
Make like Magellan and go continent-hopping in the South Atlantic aboard Silversea Cruises' six-star-rated, six-deck *Silver Wind* on a 16-day "Across a Southern Sea" cruise from Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, to Cape Town, South Africa.

The international capital of unadulterated hedonism, Rio is justly celebrated for its samba- and lambada-writhing revelers, fabulous sun-drenched beaches and spectacular nightlife.

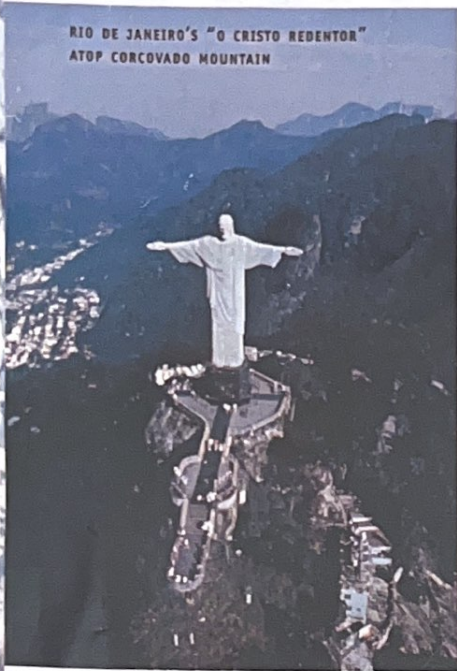
A cultural melting pot largely descended from Brazilian Indian and African slaves, and the Portuguese who exploited them for gold and coffee, Rio is a city of striking divisions: between rich and poor and between its northern and southern zones, bisected by the Serra da Carioca mountains. Part of the Parque Nacional da Tijuca, this tropical rainforest terrain constitutes the world's largest "urban forest." You can orient yourself with the entire city from the summit of dome-shaped Pão de Açúcar (Sugar Loaf) mountain—go by cable car at sunset for the best view—or Corcovado, site of Rio's most famous landmark, the "O Cristo Redentor" (Christ the Redeemer) statue.

Afterward, make a beeline (or is that conga line?) for the affluent Zona Sul, the neighborhoods on or near the beach where Rio's prime attractions, including hotels, restaurants (try the *moqueca*, a seafood stew flavored with *dendê* oil and coconut milk), shops and nightlife, are located. The hot-hot-hot Copacabana neighborhood, with the planet's most storied beach, is the place to soak in the scene (wallet and purse firmly grasped), though sometimes it's so packed it seems as if all seven million of Rio's *cariocas* (as the locals refer to themselves), plus the tourists, have descended upon the strip. Better to say "Ahhh" in Ipanema, Rio's très chic beach neighborhood and home to the boutique-lined Avenida Visconde de

SOUTH AFRICA'S CAPE POINT



MAKE LIKE MAGELLAN AND GO CONTINENT-HOPPING IN THE SOUTH ATLANTIC ABOARD SILVERSEA CRUISES' SIX-STAR-RATED, SIX-DECK SILVER WIND ON A 16-DAY "ACROSS A SOUTHERN SEA" CRUISE FROM RIO DE JANEIRO, BRAZIL, TO CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA. THE INTERNATIONAL CAPITAL OF UNADULTERATED HEDONISM, BRAZIL'S RIO IS JUSTLY CELEBRATED FOR ITS SAMBA- AND LAMBADA-WRITHING REVELERS, FABULOUS SUN-DRENCHED BEACHES AND SPECTACULAR NIGHTLIFE.



RIO DE JANEIRO'S "O CRISTO REDENTOR"  
ATOP CORCOVADO MOUNTAIN



SAMBA IN THE STREETS: RIO'S  
CARNIVAL KICKS INTO HIGH GEAR

Piraja. (Go for the gems and jewelry at H. Stern and Amsterdam Sauer, a great value given that Brazil has some of the largest gem mines in the world.)

And, by all means, don't skip the Museu Carmen Miranda, with its kitschy collection of tropical-fruit-topped hats, shoes and memorabilia bequeathed by the Brazilian bombshell singer.

A word of caution: Carnival, the five-day phantasmagoric orgy that begins on the Friday before Ash Wednesday in February, can be the worst time to go—unless overcharging taxi drivers and hordes of tourists drunk on *cachaca*, the local firewater, somehow appeal to you.

After a two-day jaunt up the coast, you'll hit the 450-year-old city of Salvador, Brazil's first capital. When built, Salvador's administration buildings and residences occupied the hillsides, while forts, docks and warehouses sprawled along the coastline—and, today, the bi-level city is still connected by stone steps, jagged alleyways and the Elevador Lacerda, an Art Deco mechanical hoisting conveyance that's furnished panoramic views of the city since 1872.

Radiating romance, Salvador has retained much of the Spanish-style architecture from its boom days as the nation's major port for the export of sugar, gold and diamonds. Opulent colonial-era churches and mansions still shimmer with gold ornamentation in the historical district. In the "Lower City," the Modelo Market offers pottery and textiles, restaurants serve spicy African-influenced dishes and local performers give demonstrations of the *capoeira*, a martial art developed by slaves that has evolved into a folkloric dance. Numerous beaches provide opportunities for swimming, surfing, sailing or canoeing.

And then it's transoceanic time. Next stop: the far southeastern coast of Africa. (Actually, there are two brief pauses en route, at the remote British-owned islands of Ascension and St. Helena, best known as Napoleon's place of exile from 1815 until his death in 1821.) The ship docks at Walvis Bay, a chief port for

Namibia, which incorporated the city and its offshore islands in 1994. The base for a large fishing fleet, Walvis Bay has lovely beaches, plentiful perches for anglers and an array of wildlife. Bird lovers will want to check out the Walvis Bay Lagoon, a tranquil stretch of water that's home to thousands of wading birds including flamingos and rare white pelicans. It's a little known fact that Namibia also rivals Kenya and Tanzania for prime game viewing.

Cape Town, the final stop on your voyage, is becoming a hot destination, though it's not overrun with zinc-oxidized, Pentax-toting tourists yet. (That will definitely change if it lands the 2004 Olympic Games it's vying for.) Tagged the "L.A. of Africa" by some, it certainly bears more than a passing resemblance to Southern California: fantastic beaches, surfers and a temperate climate. Despite the lurking presence of Robben Island seven miles north up the coast—the infamous maximum-security prison turned museum where Nelson Mandela was held (and whose former cell is now part of a tour)—Cape Town, with its Euro-Indo-Afro scion mixture, remains the capital of laid-back liberalism in South Africa.

Flat-topped Table Mountain flanks the city and is its biggest attraction (in the spring it's covered with flowering plants), but don't miss the waterfront commercial district, with its shops and restaurants, or Sea Point or Lower Cape Town, neighborhoods that buzz with activity until the early hours. There are a million things to do here, from deep sea game fishing to windsurfing, but one of the most surprising pleasures can be found in the fertile green valleys of the surrounding winelands, which produce some of the world's most exquisite whites, reds, sherries, ports and brandies. The historic town of Stellenbosch, which boasts some acclaimed restaurants, lies in the heart of the region along the oldest wine route.

A glass of wine beneath the South African starlit sky. This is one nightcap you're not likely to forget.

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