

THE WEEK

THE BEST OF THE U.S. AND INTERNATIONAL MEDIA

The faces of 2019



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ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT EVERYTHING THAT MATTERS

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This week's dream: Visiting Lapland to meet Father Christmas

A well-timed family trip to northern Finland can be the recipe for months of domestic bliss, said Ed Potton in *The Times* (U.K.). And book as early as possible, then tell the kids right away that you're treating them to a sit-down with Santa Claus at the North Pole. Because, believe me, "nothing enforces good behavior like the threat of withdrawing that golden ticket." Our family of four made the trip in November, flying from London to the northernmost airport in Europe on our way to a mountaintop village 170 miles north of the Arctic Circle. A U.K.-based company, Santa's Lapland, handled every detail, so before takeoff, we followed our pilot's instructions when he urged every passenger to shout, "I believe!"

Though I'd heard rumors of no snow, "the view on landing was reassuringly white: all cotton-wool fir forests and frozen lakes." Green-clad elves greeted us at baggage claim, and full sets of winter wear—



Reindeer transport the guests by sleigh.

snowsuits and fur-lined hats and gloves—awaited us at our hotel. In their borrowed boots, Izzy, 7, and Arlo, 3, tromped with us as we followed a torchlit path to a cabin where we feasted on salmon and berry compote. The next few days were packed with activities—tobogganing, snowmobiling, ice-skating, tandem skiing, lassoing contests. But our favorite adventure was the dogsled ride. The huskies yapped in

excitement before we settled in and took off. "Following twisting paths through the forest, it was thrilling for everyone except Arlo, who fell asleep in seconds, swaddled in a blanket."

When the spirited staff decided we were finally ready to meet You Know Who, "they milked the theater for all it was worth." We boarded a sleigh pulled by a reindeer to a clearing where two elves briefly frolicked in the snow with Izzy and Arlo before directing all of us, in hushed voices, to a cabin where Santa awaited; "the children looked as though they were about to explode." Santa didn't disappoint. He had a full white beard and warm confidence, and after greeting Izzy and Arlo by name pulled from a pocket the wish lists they'd written to him many weeks earlier. "I wish I could meet Santa every day," Izzy said later. *A three-day all-inclusive trip to Santa's Lapland (santaslapland.com) costs about \$6,250 for four.*

Hotel of the week



Your winter refuge

Niedermairhof

South Tyrol, Italy

Come ski season, "there really is a lodge to suit every style," said Christian Wright in *The New York Times*. This chic bed-and-breakfast in the Italian Alps occupies a centuries-old farmhouse that was recently gut-renovated by the husband-and-wife owners, who've created eight suites that combine bold contemporary detailing and touches of whimsy. Several ski resorts sit nearby, including storied Kronplatz, and the whole area is beautiful. "The best-kept secret: You can walk up to a local hut, eat some Tyrolean dumplings, rent a toboggan for about \$5, and whiz down." whitelinehotels.com; doubles from \$198

Getting the flavor of...

The convenience of Park City

What they say about Park City is so true, said Eric Wilbur in *The Boston Globe*. The Utah ski resort—now the largest in the U.S.—couldn't be easier to reach for anyone flying in from either coast. I've often skied the Rockies before, but I was new to Park City when my wife and I decided to treat our children to their first trip out West. Flying into Salt Lake City from Boston, we were, as is promised, "on the slopes by lunchtime"—arriving by shuttle at the Westgate Resort & Spa at 11 a.m. The local shopping and dining options gave my wife plenty to do between spa treatments, and the kids and I relished Utah's famous champagne powder and Park City's 7,300 skiable acres. On our last day, we refueled at Drafts Burger Bar before catching a bus to the airport. "No rental car, no traffic headaches. It was all so easy that I jumped at the opportunity to return to Park City, sans family, some six weeks later."

Vermont's 'Queen City'

A travel writer isn't supposed to fall in love with a town, said Melanie Kaplan in *The Washington Post*. But during a recent week in Burlington, Vt., "I felt an unfamiliar tug in my heart." The city of 43,000 on Lake Champlain is simply that appealing, "a serene playground" for folks who enjoy outdoor activities, and home to diverse dining and entertainment scenes. The college town that elected Bernie Sanders mayor four times is also the birthplace of Phish and Ben & Jerry's, and its residents know how to have fun. In the winter, they ski Stowe, sled in Oakledge Park, and pack Gutterson Fieldhouse to watch University of Vermont hockey games. Church Street Marketplace, a pedestrian-only shopping district, is always bustling, and you catch snippets of French from visiting Montrealers. And though there's also no shortage of buzzworthy dining options, hitting Myer's for a dozen Montreal-style bagels is "the best \$10 you can spend."

Last-minute holiday travel deals

Christmas in the capital

At the five-star Jefferson Hotel, the presidential suite comes with a personal violinist if you book the \$15,000-a-night "Sounds of the Holidays" offer. Also included: a keyboard loaded with Christmas songs. Book by Dec. 30. (202) 448-2300

An impeachment special

Stay at the Watergate Hotel in D.C. and for \$2,500 a night you can sleep in the Scandal Room, site of the infamous 1972 break-in by Nixon election operatives, and have drinks in the lobby bar with the two arresting officers. (877) 930-2938

A haute Manhattan holiday

Through Jan. 15, the Mark Hotel, off Central Park, is offering a \$250,000 penthouse package featuring a terrace skating rink, a personal pianist, an in-suite *Nutcracker* performance, and a private meal prepared by Jean-Georges Vongerichten. themarkhotel.com