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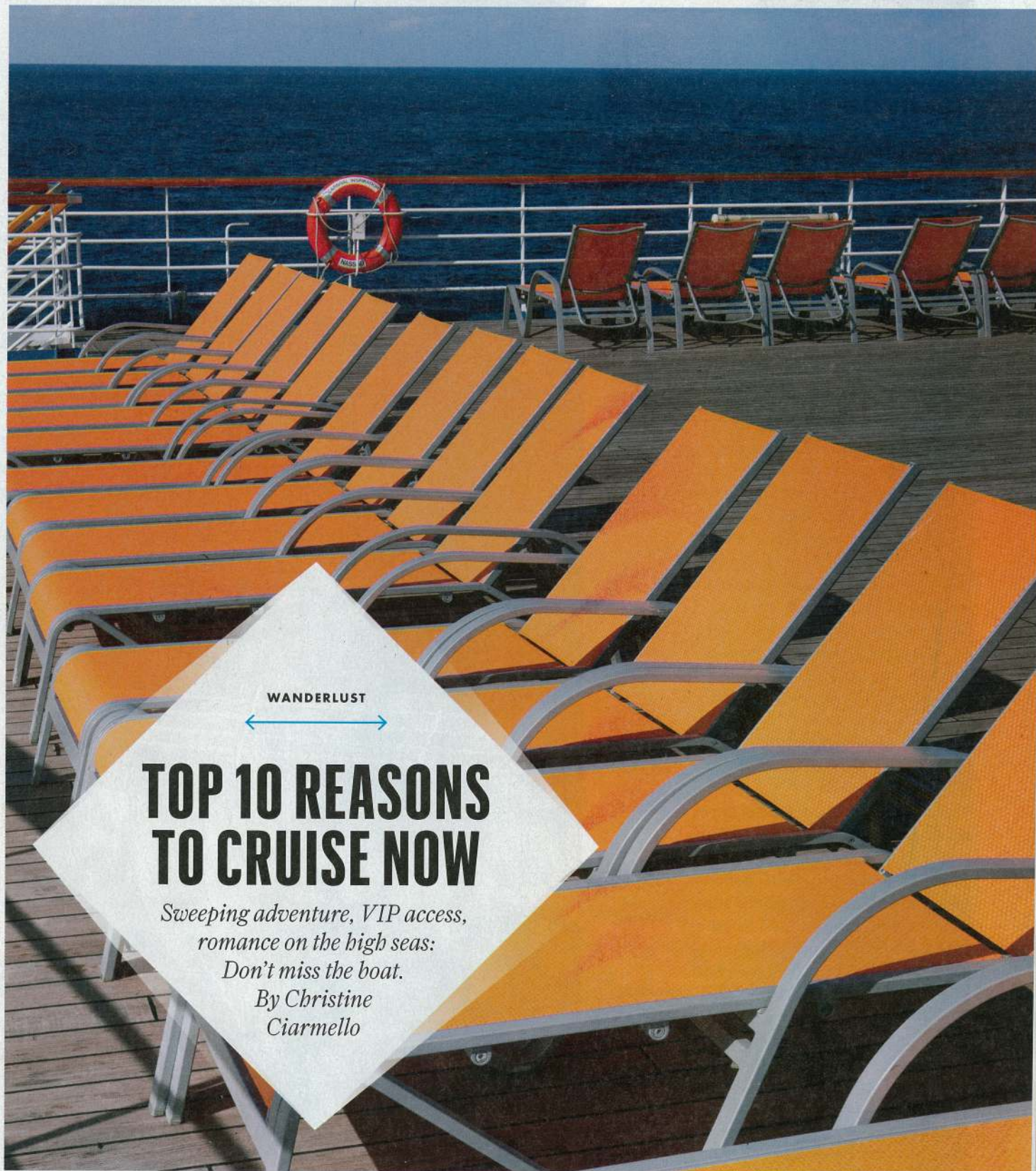
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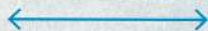


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WANDERLUST



TOP 10 REASONS TO CRUISE NOW

*Sweeping adventure, VIP access,
romance on the high seas:
Don't miss the boat.*

*By Christine
Ciarmello*

1 It's the easiest way to get to Cuba.

Haimark

Tourist visas aren't readily available, but don't let that stop you from visiting this fascinating country. On February 11, the MS *Saint Laurent*, with 24-hour room service and free-flowing wine, will be the first vessel to disembark from an American city (Miami) and make port in Old Havana—after which it circumnavigates the Caribbean island, collecting stories from *santerias*, *trovaderos*, and cigar rollers. From \$4,599/person/10 days; haimarkline.com.

2 It's the only way to explore the so-called "new Alaska" (which isn't actually in Alaska).

Princess Cruises

From 1848 to 1849, nearly 800 East Coast ships rounded Cape Horn to reach Gold Rush territory. Others opted for the calmer Strait of Magellan, lingering in the penguin-populated waters of Chile's Punta Arenas. You can do both while sailing on *Crown Princess* from Los Angeles to Miami (combine two cruises to fully re-create the 1849 route). Darwin's famed archipelago is jugged with glaciers and backed by the snow-capped Andes—all visible from your balcony. From \$1,399/person/17 days from Los Angeles to Santiago; from \$1,699/person/14 days from Santiago to Buenos Aires; princess.com.

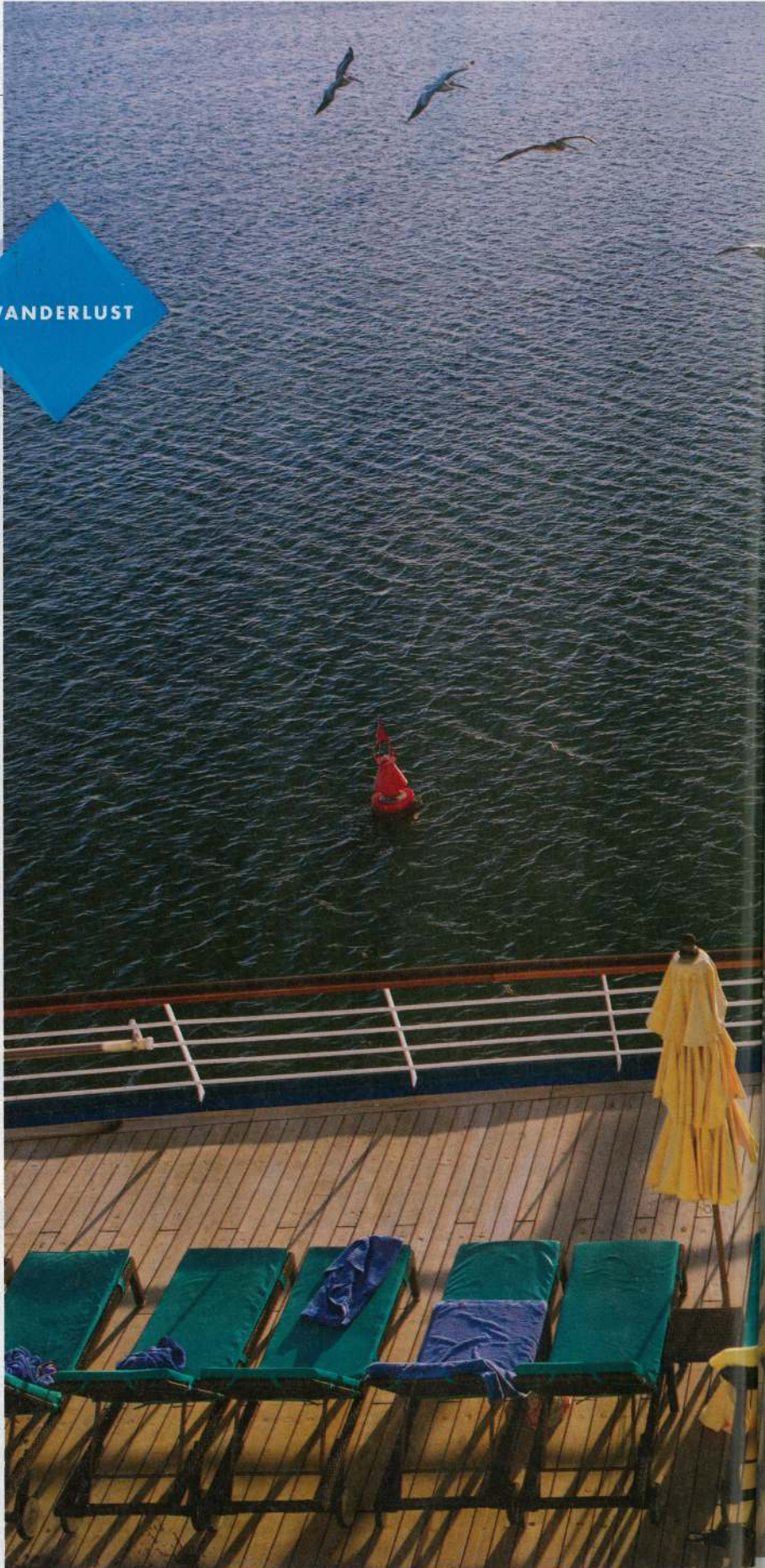
3 It's the antidote to sullen-teenager syndrome.

Carnival

This cruise line knows the secret to a successful family vacation: getting adults to act like children, rather than the other way around. The latest in its fleet, *Carnival Vista*, tempts all ages with myriad attractions scattered along the 1,055-foot ship. There's the Imax (a cruising first), suspended cycling, a raft slide, a brewery, a New England-style seafood shack, and thalassotherapy. With all this to occupy your time, moopy attitudes are sure to be a thing of the past. And where does the ship sail? Does it even matter? From \$409/person/6 days in the Caribbean; carnival.com.

Deck chairs await on a Carnival cruise in Baja, Mexico.

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4 It takes you to once-inaccessible parts of the Alaskan wilderness (this time, actually in Alaska).

Un-Cruise Adventures

In a primarily liquid national park, it makes sense to have a boat as mode of transport. *Safari Explorer* features a hydrophone to listen to whale sounds; an underwater camera that broadcasts onto cabins' TVs; kayaks; and a hot tub. Several of its cruises also spend two nights in Glacier Bay, where you can witness the breathtaking calving of the Grand Pacific and Margerie glaciers.

From \$6,895/person/7 nights; un-cruise.com.

5 Beer for breakfast, beer for lunch, beer for dinner.

Maple Leaf Adventures

It's not officially called the Sudsboat, but if the shoe fits, the MV *Swell* should wear it. The 1912 tugboat makes its annual autumnal run throughout B.C.'s Gulf Islands with beer historian Greg Evans onboard—talking through every sip of the 50 craft beers, every spoonful of the cheddar and ale soup, and every forkful of the stout brownie. Thanks to a strong dollar, this year's cruise will also cost Americans less. From \$2,060 U.S.; Oct 27–31; mapleleafadventures.com.

6 It's the most atmospheric way to arrive in Polynesia.

Crystal Cruises

Boarding a plane to the South Pacific is a cop-out. Instead, make like Captain Cook or Norwegian explorer Thor Heyerdahl. Crystal Cruises' *Symphony* leaves from San Diego, crossing a (possibly storm-whipped) sea and then the equator to approach the Marquesas Islands. You'll be at the peaks of Bora Bora in no time, having endured 13 days of full-service meals and plumped pillows. From \$3,325/person; Nov 26–Dec 9; crystalcruises.com.

7 There's no need to choose only one Hawaiian island.

Princess Cruises

Best mai tais? Most festive luaus? You be the judge. Princess island-hops from the Big Island to Oahu to Maui to Kauai for

Carnival cruises past Ensenada, Mexico.

waterfalls, hula, and leis. From \$1,299/person/15 days; princesscruises.com.

8 Escape to the Canadian version of Winterfell.

Outer Shores Expeditions

The watchmen of Haida Gwaii guard their islands not from the underworld, but from the world out there. The B.C. archipelago north of Vancouver claims a wilderness so pure, a culture so ancient, and a biodiversity so expansive that most people compare it to the Galápagos, only better. Since much of the south island is roadless, a boat is your best friend. Outer Shores Expeditions visits the bogs, rain forests, and fjords on a 70-foot schooner. From \$4,040 U.S./8 days; outershores.ca.

9 It's like hiking, but on the ocean.

Searcher Natural History Tours

The 24-passenger MV *Searcher* plies Baja's Sea of Cortez, an area famously called the "world's aquarium" by Jacques Cousteau. Whales (humpback, blue, minke, and others) are certainly in abundance during the winter, as are seals and sea turtles. Between sightings are hiking adventures to lighthouses on Islas San Benito and to deserts and canyons on uninhabited Isla Santa Catalina. A highlight: taking a fiberglass panga from the mother ship to Laguna San Ignacio for an up-close with a female gray. From \$4,650/person/12 days; bajawhale.com.

10 Unparalleled access (not to mention killer wines).

Oceania Cruises

Let's face it: Sometimes it pays to be a VIP. Such is the case on the *Riviera's* July 2016 cruise of the Mediterranean Sea and Dalmatian Coast of the Adriatic Sea, where *Sunset* wine editor Sara Schneider has secured exclusive invites to taste ethereal Old World wines and prized Mediterranean olive oils. In the evenings, as the 16-deck Oceania ship glides past ancient Roman ruins, Schneider will uncork bottles from around the globe. Other ports of call include Kotor, Montenegro; Zadar, Croatia; and Venice. \$5,099/person/8 nights; winecruisegroup.com/sunset-wine-cruise-2016. ☞



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