INSIDER
Seasonal diversions and secret travel tips from local experts

DO / The RiNo art district has 22 galleries and more than 200 artist studios district wide. The best opportunity to see the galleries and studios is on the first Friday of each month, says Weil. There is an amazing diversity of artwork in the district, including painting, sculpture, ceramics, digital art, and more. "Some of my favorite galleries are the Pattern Shop Studio, Helikon Gallery, Plinth Gallery, foot. Proof, Dateline, and Visions West Gallery," he says. "Your first stop to the district should be the RiNo Made, where you can find over 100 of the local artists’ work as well as area maps of the district and murals." The neighborhood's hundreds of murals are created during the RiNo's annual urban-art festival called CRUSH (Creative Rituals Under Social Harmony), held the first week in September. "This is where over 70 local artists and seven international artists converge in the district to create 80-plus murals in one week," explains Weil. "Most artists include their Instagram on their pieces and we encourage visitors to tag the artist in their photos of the works."

EAT / Weil is a regular at Saffta at the Source Hotel and Market Hall and Hop Alley. Saffta has amazing food inspired by the Middle East, Europe, and North Africa, plus a welcoming bar with great views, he says. His go-to order: crab hummus, roasted cauliflower, and crispy eggplant. Hop Alley, located on the east side of the district, serves progressive Chinese fare and specialty cocktails. Weil's favorite dishes include the spicy fried chicken, Beijing duck roll, and salt-and-pepper soft shell crab.

STAY / The Ramble Hotel is located in the heart of the art district off of Larimer and 25th, central to district murals, galleries, and restaurants. "I love that when you walk into the hotel you actually walk into the Death & Co. bar to check in," says Weil. "The rooms are beautiful and the authentic new architecture fits into the neighborhood aesthetic."

Clockwise from top left: Denver's Ramble Hotel; a mural in the RiNo district; a spread at Saffta restaurant.

This month: DENVER

The Insider: TRACY WEIL COFOUNDER OF THE RIVER NORTH ART DISTRICT

When artist Tracy Weil cofounded Denver's River North Art District in 2005, he sparked a neighborhood transformation. Today, the city's former industrial center is a hub of creativity, lovingly nicknamed RiNo. Weil's studio and gallery, Wellworks, is a must-visit contemporary art space in the area.
DRINK / Glasfurd pulls up a stool at Grapes & Soda, Vancouver’s first natural-wine bar—which also offers cocktails and a tight list of international whiskies from Scotland to Japan. “The bar is warm and lively and the seasonal menu is impressive.”

SHOP / “Neighbour in Gastown is a carefully curated selection of international brands,” says Glasfurd. “The secondhand book/magazine collection always surprises me, and I rarely visit without wanting to buy it all,” she says. In South Granville, try Want Apothecary for clothing, rare candles, and gifts, as well as an extensive line of artisanal beauty and skin-care products.

DO / “Walking through either Pacific Spirit Regional Park or the Stanley Park Seawall is an easy way to breathe the fresh air and get a small taste of the nearby Pacific Northwest rain forests without leaving the city,” says Glasfurd. “Quiet and magical—it’s a nice contrast.”

Clockwise from left: Stanley Park Seawall; Grapes & Soda cocktail; Caffe La Tana.

STAY / Glasfurd loves the new Exchange Hotel, located near the waterfront. “It sits at the bottom of the old Stock Exchange building,” says Glasfurd of the hotel, Vancouver’s first LEED Platinum-certified heritage conversion.

EAT / “Bao Bei Chinese Brasserie has become a Vancouver institution,” says Glasfurd of this convivial, no-reservations Chinatown restaurant and bar she helped design. “It’s casual, busy, and with its own special charm.” Go big with dumplings, fish, and fried rice paired with cocktails. For a more subdued daytime food experience, try Caffe La Tana on Commercial Drive. “It’s a small but beautifully designed cafe and Italian grocer,” says Glasfurd. “Visitors can go for coffee and lunch, but the pasta is impressive enough that I sometimes take it home for dinner guests.”
This month: Boise

The insider: MEGAN STOLL
COFOUNDER OF TREEFORT MUSIC FEST

Megan Stoll is the mastermind behind Boise’s wildly popular Treefort Music Fest, the first festival in the U.S. to receive B Corp status. The five-day, indie-music event is held at venues throughout Downtown Boise each March.

STAY / The Modern Hotel & Bar, a renovated Travelodge turned boutique, midcentury hotel on the west side of downtown, is within walking distance of shops, restaurants, music venues, and bars. According to Stoll, the hotel bar whips up some of the best cocktails in town.

EAT / The patio at Wild Root Cafe on North 8th Street is one of Stoll’s staple lunch spots. “They have loads of seasonal, delicious food, from ramen to salads, and a menu that fits all dietary restrictions,” she says. On weekends, she likes the waffles on the brunch menu. If she’s short on time, Stoll grabs a slice from American Pie at the skate park. When she wants to catch up with friends, she heads to Petite 4, a French bistro on the Boise Bench. “The menu is perfect for sharing,” she says.

DRINK / Stoll starts her day with a locally roasted pour-over coffee at Noelle Coffee downtown. “The vegan COYO granola and fruit compote bowl is to die for,” she adds. If you arrive later in the day, they have an interesting natural-wine menu.

DO / The Record Exchange is a staple in Boise for any music lover, says Stoll. Boise also has an incredible live-music scene. “Neurotic is easily one of my favorite venues in the U.S. for a stiff drink and loud music. They also have an awesome jukebox and make the best Bloody Marys in town.” Before shows, lounge on the vintage furniture at Art Haus and sip on a mezcal cocktail, Stoll recommends.

This month: Scottsdale

The insider: SAMANTHA SANZ
CHEF OF TALAVERA AT THE FOUR SEASONS SCOTTSDALE AT TROON NORTH

Raised in the humble kitchen of her grandmother’s restaurant in Nogales, Mexico, Sanz was inspired to attend Le Cordon Bleu in Scottsdale. A rising star, her Latino-influenced cooking has brought her national recognition.

EAT / “I love Fish for its vegetables,” says Sanz. “They’re always changing for seasonality, but my recent favorite was a radish with date butter.” At her former spot, Virtu, guests can expect a constantly changing and delicious Mediterranean-inspired menu. “The chef always has a different plate, and they are all so good.” For homemade pasta, she goes to Fat Ox.

SEE / “My boyfriend and I love to go to the Scottsdale galleries,” says Sanz. Thursday nights they stay open late for Scottsdale ArtWalk, a 40-year tradition where member galleries open their doors to the public to display some of the Southwest’s most celebrated artists.

DRINK / Sam’s likes Patterson’s in Old Town Scottsdale, or the city’s oldest tavern, Coach House, for a dive-bar feel. “They’re the kind of places you go for cold beer and a fun environment,” she says. If you’re looking to dine and drink, an extension of Fish’s restaurant, FishBar offers a rotation of Arizona wines plus ciders from around the world.

DO / When Sanz isn’t firing up the kitchen, she likes to spend time outdoors, specifically with her Boston terrier pup, Massimo. “When we’re not walking near our home, we love to go to Chaparral Dog Park,” she says. For hiking, she recommends the scenic Pinnacle Peak route and for a run, the Scottsdale Greenbelt. “It’s perfect for a run, walk, or bike ride because the paths are wide and it’s nice when you want to see green grass rather than desert.”

Smoked duck at Virtu
This month:
AUSTIN

The insider:
ANDREW KNOWLTON
PARTNER IN MIGHTY UNION HOSPITALITY

SEE / For music, Knowlton says, “Try the Cactus Cafe. Or Hotel Vegas. Or Scoot Inn. Or ACL. Live at the Moody Theater. Or the Mohawk. Or Stubb’s. Or Cheer Up Charlie’s. I could go on.” For a side of true Austin musical history with your country or rock ‘n’ roll, he suggests a show at The Continental Club on South Congress. “I’m partial to Monday nights, when the Peterson Brothers play their funk-inflected blues,” he says.

EAT / Knowlton’s favorite taco truck has changed every month since he moved to town. “I’ve got through an El Primo bean-and-cheese phase, a Rosita’s Al Pastor phase, and a Discada dis-cada phase,” he says. His current obsession: the green chilis—at housemade corn tortillas from Granny’s Tacos on the East Side. Tex-Mex is king in Austin. “If I didn’t mention my daughters’ favorite spot, Matt’s El Rancho, they would run away from home,” he jokes. “Those girls—and the entire city—are addicted to the queso, the cheese dip of highly questionable origins.” At Fonda San Miguel, “regulars swear by the ancho chiles rellenos, but for me there’s only one dish—rich and satisfying braised duck enchiladas,” Knowlton says. Texas is the land of barbecue, and the line at Valentina’s Tex-Mex BBQ deserves to be as long as the one at legendary ‘cue spot, Franklin’s, across town, says Knowlton. What propels owner Miguel Vida to the upper echelon of pit masters is the smoky queso, charro beans, smoked corn, inventive rubs, and one of the best tacos on the planet called the Real Deal Holyfield. “One can’t survive on Tex-Mex and BBQ alone,” he says. “Bufalina is a rambunctious family favorite. My kids love the nicely charred Neapolitan pies with toppings ranging from radish to pecan-pesto to harissa. My wife and I love the funky, fresh wines from the city’s most dynamic bottle list.” From 4 to 5:30 pizzas and bottles of wine are half price.
INSIDER

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

This month: OJAI

The insider: NANCY SILVERTON

CHEF-OWNED, THE MOZZA

RESTAURANT GROUP

Long before she was the queen of Italian-American cooking and a Netflix star, Silverton was visiting the bucolic Southern California town of Ojai on family trips. She now curates cooking demos at Ojai Valley Inn’s new Farmhouse culinary center featuring luminaries such as butcher Dario Cecchini.

STAY / The sprawling, Spanish colonial-style, Wallace Neff-designed Ojai Valley Inn has been a mainstay in the area, and The Farmhouse, designed by Howard Backen, is the largest addition to the property in years. While others golf, Silverton focuses on culinary activities. “You need to visit the apiary,” she says. “You can dress up like a beekeeper and spend time learning about the bees and honey and the hives.”

EAT / On weekends, Silverton hits up La Plaza Market for Fillmore for an early lunch. “A guy sets up an enormous grill in the parking lot and cooks chicken that are just delicious. They have the most beautiful array of aguas frescas and salsas.” She’s a regular at the Sunday farmers’ market, shopping for seasonal finds like pide tangerines and other produce, and at Kate’s Bread, a Sunday-only pop-up bakery hosted in her parents’ garage and workshop.

SHOP / Silverton likes hitting the secondhand shops in Santa Paula and Fillmore when she’s on hunt for milk glasses, and she loves Bart’s Books, Ojai’s storied used bookstore housed in the rooms and courtyard of a sprawling ranch house.

DRINK / East Ojai Drive is the main stretch, and Silverton notes that it’s touristy, but just to the right degree. For a break from shopping and eating, she likes to go to The Ojai Vineyard’s tasting room, which stocks 300 of the vineyard’s bottlings and offers tasting flights that include vintages up to 20 years old.

SEE / Silverton recommends visitors book a tour of the Turtle Conservancy sanctuary, a nonprofit organization with one of the world’s largest collections of rare and endangered turtles (membership required, $50). And enjoy magic hour if you can. “Evening is when the pink hour happens,” says Silverton. The sun sets over the hills and casts a spectacular rosy hue over the Topa Topa Mountains.

LONG BEACH

A vibrant waterfront community with a summer full of events. Our picks:

Pow-Wow Long Beach

WHAT: A wakening celebration of urban contemporary art with a closing concert from R&B

WHEN: July 21-25

Long Beach Sea Festival

WHAT: Waterside events including the Chinese Dragon Boat Festival, the Great Sand Sculpture event, and more.

WHEN: All summer long

Catalina SAIL Race

WHAT: Super boat and water skiers race 65 miles to Catalina in “The World’s Greatest Ski Race.”

WHEN: July 20-21

Annual Long Beach Jazz Festival

WHAT: Top jazz artists of the year perform in a beautiful lagoon setting.

WHEN: August 9-11

© 2019 SUNSET MAGAZINE
All Rights Reserved.
This month: VENTURA

The insider: NANCY DANIELLA MANINI
ARTIST AND TEXTILE DESIGNER AT PATAGONIA

Peruvian-born artist Manini surfs, paints, and shops her way through the Southern California beach town. The self-taught creative has a wide-spanning portfolio too—she’s just as likely to see one of her murals in a retail space across the globe as you are to see her artwork on a piece of clothing.

STAY / You’ll want to find a beachside house to rent for the full experience of Ventura’s laid-back lifestyle. Manini loves the design and location of Ventura Coastline’s home rentals. “The best time to rent one of these is from September to November, when school summer vacation and surf camps are over and it’s less crowded,” she says. “The surf won’t be crowded, and the beach is right outside your door—it’s so peaceful.”

DRINK / For Manini, mornings are hectic with her young children. She refuels at Prospect Coffee Roasters, a sleek, white-tiled coffeehouse on S Laurel Street. “I usually get an almond milk latte here, but there’s also a ginger latte and a rotating list of specialty drinks that are pretty good,” she says. In the evenings, she joins the surf crowd at Topa Topa Brewing Co. “You’ll definitely get a buzz after your first beer,” she says. “They always have a food cart parked outside if you’re hungry, and bands play live music too.”

EAT / The casual Paradise Pantry is a fail-safe lunch break. “My favorite thing to get here is the Spicy Fish Soup; it’s a specialty here with white wine, saffron, and tomato broth,” Manini says. She also likes the salads and pastrami sandwich.

DO / Ventura is a big surf town. While Manini considers herself a beginner at the sport, she paddles out at Surfers’ Point after checking the waves online. “My husband surf’s a lot, and I’ll join him there and at C Street,” she says. “These are locals-heavy surf spots, and I’ll go midmorning, depending on the waves, and he’ll go at lunch.”

SHOP / Findings Market is all about local artisans. “There’s a community here—shoemakers, chair craftsmen, artists—that’s what brings the store together and makes it so special,” Manini says. For home decor, she checks out Passport Habits. “The owner goes to Morocco throughout the year and brings back unique rugs to sell,” she says. “It’s good inspiration for color, surf-y art, and crystals.”
This month: HEALDSBURG

The insider: TUCKER TAYLOR
DIRECTOR OF CULINARY GARDENS FOR KENDALL-JACKSON VINEYARD ESTATES

A savant for new and interesting produce, Taylor cuts his teeth in gardens, including the garden at Thomas Keller’s French Laundry. He loves browsing garden stores or sipping top-notch Pinot Noir at his favorite tasting room.

STAY / Taylor sends guests to The Duchamp Healdsburg. The bungalow-style hotel is located in the heart of downtown (walking distance to wineries and Healdsburg Plaza) and offers six exclusive, private suites that surround a sleek pool and spa. Plus, each suite has its own enclosed patio.

EAT / For an everyday lunch spot or a special dinner with friends, Taylor grabs a table at Campo Fina. “You can chat with friendly locals at the outdoor bar in the back, play bocce, and enjoy one of my favorite dishes: Nonna’s Tomato Braised Chicken with sautéed Swiss chard and soft polenta.” The multi-course, farm-driven tasting menu at Single-Thread is also one of his all-time favorites.

DRINK / Taylor gets his caffeine fix at Plank Coffee, a loved-by-locals spot. “I’ll splurge with a delicious frappuccino and the brioché French toast,” he says. Wine-wise, he’s a fan of Hartford Family Winery Tasting Room in Healdsburg Plaza downtown. “[The winery] focuses on Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, and Zinfandel. Winemaker Jeff Stewart is a master.”

DO / “For a beautiful hike, I always enjoy Healdsburg Ridge Open Space Preserve,” Taylor says. The trail-filled park includes wetlands, oak woodlands, rocky serpentine chaparral, and open grasslands.

SHOP / Open for 22 years, The Gardener’s Healdsburg location “is one of my go-to places for unique pots and specialty gardening and culinary gear,” Taylor says. The lush gardens are brimming with persimmon, palm, pomegranate, and willow, which offer instant inspirations.

EAT / For a menu rooted in farm-sourced ingredients, there’s Local Union 271 downtown. Gleeson especially loves the airy, relaxed restaurant for its light-filled space and hanging plants. Date night she hits Teton, a refined pizzeria serving Neapolitan-style pies on a patio. “They have great Italian wines here,” she adds.

DO / On Sundays, Gleeson hits the California Avenue Farmers Market with her family. “We also tend to frequent the Porto- la Valley Farmers’ Market on Thursdays, since it’s adjacent to our favorite playground and has a redwood grove for picnics,” she says. Over on University Avenue, which runs from Stanford to the heart of the city, sits the historic 1920s Stanford Theatre. “They screen classic films out of Hollywood’s golden age, complete with a red velvet curtain and an onstage organ,” she says. “They also have the best popcorn!”

DRINK / Gleeson ends her evening with a nightcap at Bird Dog. “We like to walk over for a drink (and dessert!) at the bar—it’s one of the most modern and stylishly decorated restaurants in Palo Alto.”

LEFT: Local Union 271 BELOW: Rosewood