

ALLEGRA

MAGAZINE

VOLUME 1

MARIA VALETTA

A True
Wine Enthusiast

Profile

ALETA ST. JAMES

Spiritual Trailblazer

Style

CINDY KAREN

Fashion Designer

Travel

PACK LIGHT DREAM BIG

Mexico
Jamaica
The Catskills



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LETTER FROM THE PUBLISHER

Welcome to Allegra Magazine

Launching Allegra Magazine is more than the debut of a publication—it’s the beginning of a heartfelt journey, one that’s been years in the making. In a world that often rushes past the meaningful moments, Allegra exists to help you pause, breathe, and reconnect with the beauty of now.

Our mission is simple, but powerful: to inspire a more authentic way of living. That means noticing the small joys that surround us every day, cultivating gratitude for the ordinary, and making space for the things that truly matter. This premiere Flipbook is just a first glimpse of that vision—a preview of what’s to come as we build something lasting and soulful.

In these pages, you’ll find stories that celebrate quiet luxury, thoughtful design, deep conversation, and the kind of travel that transforms rather than just entertains. You’ll meet people who live with passion and purpose, explore places that stir the imagination, and discover rituals and practices that support a more grounded, intentional life. We’re not here to chase trends or echo the noise. We’re here to offer clarity, warmth, and a sense of connection.

Think of it as a doorway, not a destination. If what you see sparks something in you—curiosity, inspiration, even a sense of nostalgia—then we invite you to explore further. Our website offers the full Allegra experience: longer features, fresh updates, exclusive interviews, curated photo essays, and original content that goes beyond the page. It’s a space designed to nourish your mind, delight your senses, and remind you that beauty still matters.

We’re especially proud to highlight soulful travel and mindful wellness in this first issue—two themes that we believe go hand in hand. Traveling with purpose, whether across the globe or just out your front door, allows us to see the world with new eyes. Likewise, taking care of our inner life is not a luxury, but a necessity. Allegra honors both: the outward journey and the inner one.

As Publisher and Editor-in-Chief, I want to thank you for being here at the beginning. Whether you’re flipping through these pages with your morning coffee or diving in at the end of a long day, know that every story, image, and word has been chosen with intention. We’ve created Allegra Magazine as a companion for those who seek beauty not just in grand gestures, but in the everyday.

Here’s to the start of something beautiful. We’re just getting started—and we’re so glad you’re here.

With gratitude,

Patricia Canole

Publisher & Editor-in-Chief

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MARIA VALETTA

Uncorking Joy: From Sommelier to Storyteller

By Patricia Canole

Meet Maria Valetta, a true wine enthusiast who's turned her passion for vino into a vibrant, multifaceted career. With a string of certifications under her belt—Certified Sommelier (CS), Diploma in Wine and Spirits from the prestigious WSET (DipWSET), Certified Specialist of Wine (CSW), and Certified Sake Adviser (Sake School of America)—Maria is much more than a wine and beverage expert. She's your go-to guide, wine bestie, and cheerleader for sipping what you love.

With over 40K Instagram followers, Maria brings the wine world down to earth with her signature mix of glamour, humor, and education. Whether posting about hidden gems in Napa or pairing bubbly with brunch, her content is as relatable as it is aspirational. Unsurprisingly, she landed the cover of Vegas2LA Magazine as one of the top women in wine to watch.

Maria is also the Chairwoman and Director of Wine Sponsorships for the Las Vegas Food & Wine Festival, bridging the gap between world-class wineries and wine lovers in the most fun and fabulous way while working side-by-side with top chefs. She's also the voice behind the mic on the popular CorkRules podcast, where she decodes restaurant wine lists and chats with industry insiders so you can order wine with confidence.

She's graced TV screens as host of the national series The Chef's Kitchen, and digital shows like The



Maria's mission is to empower others through wine—making it approachable, educational, and undeniably fun. Photography courtesy of Maria Valetta on location at Wolffer Wine Estate, Sagaponack, Long Island. Fashion

Celebrating the soul of wine travel—from Croatia's sun-drenched coastlines to the volcanic vineyards of Santorini. Photography courtesy of VinoInfluencers. Fashion by Maje. Photographed on location at Finca Montepedroso, Rueda, Spain.

Philly Dish and Philly Uncorked, spotlighting culinary talents and delicious pairings. Her motto? "Drink what you love." That genuine spirit defines everything she does—whether she's on-camera, at a festival, or guiding you through your next favorite pour.

Maria isn't about what's in the glass, she's about the stories, the experiences, and the people behind every sip.

We recently met with Maria and discovered that this lovely woman has much to share.

What made you settle in Las Vegas?

Las Vegas is such a unique mix of energy, elegance, and endless culinary exploration—once we got through the COVID shutdown and the "Strip" opened, it felt like home. The Vegas food and wine scene is incredibly dynamic, and being here allows me to connect with an international audience while supporting a growing local community rooted in the culinary scene. Let's be honest, Vegas is like one giant playground—who can resist the lights, the luxe, and the never-ending list of celebrity-chef restaurants to try?

What's been the most rewarding aspect of your work with the Las Vegas Food & Wine Festival?

Honestly, it's the joy of bringing people together. Being able to curate wine experiences and showcase incredible wineries alongside our city's top chefs is fulfilling. Watching someone try a wine they've never heard of from a boutique producer and fall in love with it is magic. Watching chefs cook live and enticing patrons to try an interesting ingredient combination is also exciting. And, most importantly, it's a charitable event—we always give back to a local charity because supporting the Vegas community is so important to us.

How do you approach making wine more accessible and less intimidating for your audience on Instagram?

I keep it real! I'm not here to lecture anyone. I'm here to have fun and help people find what they like. I make wine easy to understand, challenge my viewers with Wine Trivia Tuesday segments, explain food pairings, and offer wine tips in a conversational way. There is no snobbery, no pressure. Wine should be fun and a little spicy; it doesn't have to be super formal.

Share a memorable experience from your time hosting Chef's Kitchen

One of my favorites was interviewing a chef who foraged his own ingredients and told an amazing story about how his grandmother taught him to cook. It was such a beautiful moment to see how personal and emotional food can be. That's what I love—those connections that go beyond the plate.

What's a common misconception people have about fine wine?

That wine must be expensive to be good! Price doesn't always equal quality. There are incredible, affordable, delicious wines—you need to know where to look (or ask your favorite wine blonde for tips).



Channeling chic confidence: Maria shares how Las Vegas became the ultimate backdrop for her flavorful journey. Photography by Bob Marley Domeck. MUH by Crystal Chandler. Fashion by Fashion Nova. Photographed on location at Wineaux, Las Vegas.

Back on the road to Napa Valley, where wine stories come to life and connections deepen. Maria reminds us that great wine always brings people together. Photography courtesy of Cirrus Aviation.





With a full glass, high class, and unapologetic sass, Maria invites wine lovers to sip with curiosity, connect with intention, and uncover adventure in every bottle. Photography by Antonova Viktoria. MUA by Adriana Leagaer. Photographed on location at Nolinski Venezia Hotel, Venice, Italy.

MARIA VALETTA

Continued

How has your experience judging food and drink competitions influenced your perspective on the industry?

It's given me a deeper appreciation for craftsmanship and consistency. Judging forces you to look beyond labels and reputation—it's all about what's in the glass or on the plate at that moment. It's humbling and eye-opening, reminding me that great flavor can come from unexpected places.

Tell us more about CorkRules.

CorkRules is like your wine-savvy friend who's already scouted out the restaurant wine list. On the podcast, we walk through menus from top restaurants and make recommendations based on occasions and your budget. The app is a game changer—it helps you easily navigate wine lists, considers your budget, and makes dining out a lot less overwhelming. It's all about empowering people to order wine confidently.

What are your favorite wine regions to visit and explore? What makes them so special?

Napa Valley will always have a piece of my heart—it's the first wine region I visited, but I'm also enchanted by places like Croatia, known for its interesting grape varieties, or Santorini in Greece, known for its vines formed in the shape of little nests to combat the winds! Every wine region has its own soul, its own story, and, most importantly, incredibly intriguing winemakers. All these factors are what make wine travel so life changing.

What is the most essential advice you would give someone wanting to start learning more about wine?

Start with curiosity, not fear. Try wines from different regions, and try unusual, unpronounceable grapes. Try everything!

To join Maria Valetta's wine club, log on to boissetcollection.com/mariathewineblonde/join/wine-society/new

Maria is a pro at navigating wine lists—guiding quests to hidden gems, standout values, and perfect celebration pours. Photography courtesy of Maria Valetta. Fashion by Ronny Kobo. Photographed on location at Ocean Prime Restaurant, Las Vegas.



ALETA ST. JAMES

Embracing The Ageless Factor & The Power Of Transformation

By Patricia Canole
Photos by Neil J. Tandy

Aleta St. James is more than a spiritual healer and life coach—she’s a radiant example of what it means to live fully, fearlessly, and without apology. A trailblazer in the world of energy healing and emotional transformation, Aleta has dedicated her life to helping others clear old wounds, awaken their power, and embrace what she calls The Ageless Factor—a radical redefinition of aging, rooted in a mind, body and spirit alignment.

Her story captured national attention in 2004 when, at age 57, she gave birth to twins through IVF making her one of the oldest first-time mothers in the United States. For some, that moment was the beginning of her story. But for those who knew her work, it was simply the latest chapter in a life spent challenging limits and rewriting the rules of what’s possible.

A JOURNEY FROM STAGE TO SOUL

Aleta’s early career was spent in the limelight, performing as a singer, actress and director. Among her greatest triumphs was playing Sheila in the Amsterdam production of *Hair*. As a director she worked with stars from film and Broadway including Danny Aiello, Broderick Crawford, Pernell Roberts and Robert Forester. But despite her success in entertainment, she felt called to something deeper—a spiritual path that would allow her to use her natural healing gifts to heal, inspire, and uplift.

That calling led her to intensively study Eastern and Western healing traditions. What began as personal exploration quickly evolved into her own professional practice, and by the 1990s, Aleta had become one of Manhattan’s most sought-after energy healers practicing world-wide.

She would later explain in her nation-wide best seller *Life Shift: Let Go And Live Your Dreams*: “You are not broken—you are blocked. And once the blocks are removed, your natural brilliance will shine.” That core belief became the foundation of her healing philosophy and the root of her ability to help people ignite transformation from the inside out.



ALETA ST. JAMES

Continued

THE AGELESS FACTOR

Aging is inevitable, yes. However, the types of aging we encounter...well, that's up for discussion. There's a world of difference between the chronological age and biological age. Our minds and bodies are far more adaptable and regenerative than we've been led to believe. Society loves to whisper that decline is a given. I say: "Take a deep breath, hold it for five seconds, and let it go. In that moment, something shifts. We make space for a new possibility."

Central to Aleta's teachings is the concept she coined as The Ageless Factor—a vibrational state of being in which age is no longer a limitation, but a source of power and wisdom. "The Ageless Factor is not about denying your age," she says. "It's about redefining it. It's about embodying your highest vibrational self—no matter what your age or circumstance."

According to Aleta, aging isn't simply a biological process. It's an energetic one. She teaches that trauma, grief, resentment, and emotional stagnation speed up physical aging while clearing those energies can restore vitality, beauty, and joy. "You can be 35 and feel like you're 90," she often reminds her clients, "or you can be 70 and feel like you're just getting started."

For Aleta, it all comes down to frequency. When the mind, body and spirit are aligned, life flows more freely. And when energy is trapped, it creates disease—physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Her work is designed to shift people back into alignment so they can remember who they really are—radiant, powerful, limitless beings. "Aging is not a sentence," she says. "It's an invitation to rise into your full power."

TRANSFORMATION THROUGH ENERGY

At 77, she's challenging the way we think about aging—and invites you to do the same. She points out that "for too long, we've been told that getting older means breaking down: aching joints, isolation, financial hardship. But I'm rewriting that story. One of the simplest, most powerful mindset tools I use is this phrase: "Cancel, cancel, cancel." It's my way of cutting through the noise and choosing a new narrative/ belief system.

Aleta is a renowned master healer and intuitive life coach with over 40+ years of experience and study. What sets her apart is her ability to intuitively read energetic blocks in the subconscious and use her healing energy to clear and transform them. Through private sessions, workshops, and retreats, she has empowered thousands of clients to successfully create a new paradigm for the life they truly desire. Aleta has helped people navigate a wide range of life experiences—including fertility, legal strategies, business ventures, and matters of the heart.

She often guides clients to confront the deeper patterns keeping them stuck. "The universe responds to who you are being, not just what you are doing," she tells them. "Your energy is your currency—invest wisely. You're not too old and it's not too late," Aleta says. "Those are just illusions. The soul knows no clock."

A JOURNEY & PHILOSOPHY

In 2005, Aleta shared her journey and philosophy in her book Life Shift: Let Go and Live Your Dream. Part memoir, part spiritual guidebook, the book outlined the inner tools she used to transform her own life and thousands of clients.

At the heart of Life Shift is a message of radical self-liberation. "Your past doesn't define you. Your vibration does," she writes. That insight has empowered thousands of readers to shed shame and lack of self worth, shift their energy, and start fresh—no matter how many times they've been knocked down.

The book continues to be a spiritual touchstone for people navigating uncertainty, reminding them that the only real limits are the ones they've agreed to carry.

TWO MIRACLES

Aleta's decision to become a mother at 57 wasn't just a personal triumph, it was a cultural lightning bolt. "I didn't let society's beliefs about what's 'appropriate' stop me," she said in a televised interview. "I listened to my soul, and it said yes."

She credits her success not only with modern medicine but also with the energy work, visualization and spiritual practices she had cultivated for years. "I treated my dream like a living seed," she explained. "I watered it every day with faith, love, and vibration." Her story continues to inspire women around the world who want to challenge timelines and live according to their soul's calendar, not society's.

LIVING HER LIGHT IN 2025

Aleta St. James doesn't just teach transformation—she embodies it. Her life defies the rules, not for the sake of rebellion, but in the name of possibility. Whether she's guiding someone through a healing session, speaking at an empowerment summit, or getting together with good friends, she carries the same core belief: Aleta knows you have the power to begin again.

She believes if we keep repeating the same outdated beliefs about what it means to get older, our bodies will fall in line. But if we choose to believe in vitality, strength, and reinvention, our biology listens. We stop being victims of time and start becoming students of potential.

Just remember what Aleta St. James believes: It's all possible!

ALETA ST. JAMES: IN HER OWN WORDS

In a society that glorifies youth, Aleta St. James stands firm—aging on her own terms and inspiring others to do the same. She's an energy healer, spiritual mentor, and transformational guide who has helped countless people peel away limiting beliefs and rediscover their personal power.

In this candid conversation, Aleta speaks from the heart about beauty myths, emotional blocks, and what true transformation really takes. From financial struggles to spiritual awakenings, here—in her own words—is the wisdom of a woman who's lived boldly, loved deeply, and continues to reinvent herself every step of the way.

What are the common misconceptions most people have about aging?

It's inevitable and called deterioration: the loss of energy, beauty, and vitality. For many that means life is over. This is one reason why cosmetic surgery has experienced a surge in popularity in recent years. The fact that everyone wants to have the face and body of a 25-year-old makes life increasingly difficult—and expensive.

Not feeling good enough to meet a potential partner concerns most women. I've found that retouching photos to the point of looking unnatural is the trend. Altering the face and body to appear something they are not can be overwhelming. I collaborate with women who have had facelifts. But to

change the outside also means you need to change what's inside. Holding on to anger, resentments, and old beliefs will quickly show in your face. So, no matter what a plastic surgeon can do to trim the years, not banishing that old thinking will not help matters at all.

What's the most common pattern you see that keeps people from living to their fullest potential?

Feeling that they're not good enough. Simply put: It's low self-esteem. Comparing yourself to others is no doubt the number one block.

Can you share an example from your own life where you had to transform yourself?

Achieving financial freedom and moving out of what I was programmed to believe that with struggle will also come success. My Italian Polish heritage and Brooklyn upbringing led me to perceive wealth differently. I've been independent all my life, never married, and became a single mother. What helped me was discovering my own worth. I've learned if you own your worth that has value to it; if you don't others will never value you!

What does true transformation look like?

It's awakening one day with the burden of financial stress, feeling that there's no love around you, and discovering your creativity has dried up. We create our own reality. Based on your beliefs, once you get to the core of what's in your subconscious, you will



Radiant, resilient and reborn: Aleta glows with the vitality she teaches, proving age is just a vibration.

identify and clear that block as you level up to what is possible. You will start bringing the positivity into your life that you deserve.

Looking ahead, are there new projects or teachings we can see from you in 2025?

I am so excited that I have written my second book proposal which is a memoir as well as how you can continue transforming and renewing yourself. I am also looking forward to being part of a rejuvenation clinic in Cabo, Mexico that incorporates mind body and spirit. I feel truly blessed to lead retreats in magical Los Cabos in collaboration with VidaSol Health, bridging my mind, body and spirit work with Vidasol's cutting edge regenerative medicine for participants to experience total transformation and embody The Ageless Factor.

You're not too old: Aleta lives by the truth she teaches—reinvention is always within reach.



A VISIT WITH CINDY KAREN

Practicality Meets Poetry In Fashion

By Patricia Canole
Photography by Neil J Tandy

In the ever-shifting landscape of fashion, where trends flicker and fade with the seasons, certain designers possess an enduring quality, a signature that resonates beyond fleeting fads. Cindy Karen is undoubtedly one such luminary. Her name resonates in industry circles and is celebrated by those who appreciate clothing as an art form. She represents a unique blend of timeless elegance and contemporary flair. To delve into the world of Cindy Karen is to encounter a passionate artist who creates dreams on the fabric canvas.

“Fashion is not just about clothes; it’s about confidence, comfort, and embracing who you are,” says Cindy, her voice warm and genuine, much like the designs that bear her name. In an industry often perceived as exclusive and intimidating, Cindy Karen has carved a unique niche, creating versatile and elegant clothing for the modern woman who values style and practicality. Her brand isn’t about chasing fleeting trends; it’s about providing enduring style solutions for real women living real lives.

Her journey into the world of fashion wasn’t a straight runway walk, but rather a gradual unfolding, nurtured by a deep-seated appreciation for beauty and an innate understanding of form and texture. Unlike many designers who emerge from traditional fashion schools with avant-garde visions, Cindy brings a refreshing perspective to design, one rooted in real-life experiences and a deep understanding of what women truly need in their wardrobes.

“I always found myself searching for pieces that could take me from a business meeting to dinner, or from a casual weekend to a slightly more formal event, without feeling overdressed or underdressed,” she explains. “It was that personal quest for practical yet beautiful clothing that sparked the idea for my brand. I realized if I was looking for it, other women probably were too.”

TIMELESS QUALITY

What truly distinguishes Cindy Karen is her unwavering commitment to quality and timelessness. In a fast fashion-dominated landscape, where garments are often made to be disposable, her brand stands as a beacon of thoughtful design and enduring style. “I believe in investing in pieces that you’ll love and wear for years, not just a single season,” she states firmly, a conviction that resonates with a growing consumer base tired of unsustainable consumption.

“
I believe in investing in
pieces that you’ll love and
wear for years, not just a
single season.”

*Versatility Meets
Vision: A signature
travel dress, designed
to take the modern
woman from runway
to real life—with
effortless chic.*



*Quiet Power
Dressing: Minimalist
tailoring and fluid
lines reflect Cindy's
belief that elegance
lies in simplicity and
strength.*



*More than a label, The Cindy Karen
Collection is a lifestyle, where style and
function coexist beautifully. Whether it's
travel or business, Cindy always reinvents
designs with a blouse, a belt, or favorite
scarf—easily creating different looks.*

CINDY KAREN

Continued

“Our fabrics are carefully selected not just for their aesthetic appeal, but for their comfort, durability, and ease of care. Our designs are intentionally simple, meant to flatter a wide range of body types, and are truly made to last. It’s about empowering women to feel good in their skin, no matter where they are or what they’re doing, and without having to constantly buy new things.”

This philosophy is evident in every garment, from her signature travel dresses—praised by globetrotters for their wrinkle-resistant properties and effortless chic—to her sophisticated separates that seamlessly mix and match, allowing for endless outfit combinations.

“I hear from so many women who tell me how my pieces have simplified their packing for a trip or made getting dressed in the morning so much easier when they’re juggling work and family,” Cindy says proudly. “That’s truly the greatest compliment. Knowing that I’m helping women navigate their busy lives with a little more ease and elegance, that’s what it’s all about. It’s about giving them back precious time and mental energy.”

HANDS-ON DESIGN

Beyond the aesthetic appeal and practicality, there’s a conscious effort to build a brand with integrity. Cindy is deeply involved in every aspect of her business, from sketching initial designs and selecting fabrics to overseeing the manufacturing processes. “It’s incredibly important to me that our manufacturing partners operate ethically and that the people who bring my designs to life are treated fairly,” she emphasizes, her voice firm. “We work with facilities that uphold strong labor standards because a beautiful garment shouldn’t come at the cost of someone’s dignity.” This transparency and dedication to responsible practices resonates deeply with her growing

customer base, who are increasingly seeking out brands that align with their values and contribute positively to the world.

For Cindy, success isn’t just measured in sales figures, but in the genuine connections she builds with her community. She frequently engages with her customers, listening to their feedback, understanding their needs, and incorporating their insights into future collections. “It’s absolutely a collaborative process,” she explains. “My customers are my muses. Their diverse lifestyles, their experiences, and their frank opinions are invaluable in shaping what we create next. We’re not just selling clothes; we’re building a relationship, a community of women who appreciate quality, comfort, and timeless style.” This open dialogue fosters a sense of loyalty and trust that is rare in the often-impersonal fashion industry.

THE FUTURE OF FASHION

Cindy Karen’s designs are a testament to the power of thoughtful craftsmanship, the beauty of understated elegance, and the transformative potential of clothing. She doesn’t just create garments; she crafts experiences, imbuing each piece with a sense of timeless sophistication that resonates with women who appreciate enduring style and quiet confidence. Her legacy is not just in the clothes she creates, but a feeling she evokes in those who wear her designs—a feeling of grace, empowerment, and timeless beauty. Cindy’s designs have graced prestigious fashion events, from New York Fashion Week to exclusive international showcases, earning her accolades and a devoted global following. Her work has been featured in leading fashion publications, further solidifying her reputation as a visionary in the industry.

Looking ahead, Cindy Karen envisions her brand continuing to evolve, expanding its offerings while staying resolutely true to its core principles of versatility, quality, and timeless elegance. “I want to keep creating pieces that make women feel confident, comfortable, and effortlessly stylish, whether they’re traveling the world or simply enjoying a quiet day at home,” she shares. “The goal is always to

simplify their wardrobes and elevate their everyday experiences. Because when you feel good in what you’re wearing, when your clothes aren’t a source of stress, you’re free to focus on what truly matters—your family, your work, your passions, your life.”

DEFINING HER TRUE STYLE

In a world constantly chasing fleeting trends and promoting disposable fashion, Cindy Karen offers a refreshing and much-needed alternative: a brand built on authenticity, quality, ethical practices, and a genuine desire to empower women through thoughtfully designed clothing. Her journey reminds us that true style isn’t about conforming to societal expectations or following every fad, but about embracing your unique self, one comfortable and chic outfit at a time. As Cindy herself puts it, with that characteristic blend of practicality and passion, “Fashion should be a joy, not a struggle. It should make you feel like the best version of yourself, every single day.”

With every collection, she continues to deliver on that promise.

Caption goes here.



*Designed For A Journey:
From boardroom to boarding
gate, Cindy’s pieces travel
light but speak volumes.*

*Rooted In Real
Life: Inspired by
her own journey,
Cindy creates
for women who
seek grace, not
gimmicks, in
their fashionable
wardrobe.*



ONE LOVE... MANY ADVENTURES

Discovering Jamaica's Spirit, Style & Sunshine

Article and Photos by Neil J. Tandy

Jamaica, the island paradise of Bob Marley, Reggae, stunning beaches, jerk chicken, Red Stripe beer and Blue Mountain coffee was high on my list of must-visit Caribbean hotspots. So, when I was recently afforded the opportunity to relax for a few days at the brand new, all-inclusive, adults-only Princess Senses The Mangrove resort, I packed the swim shorts, sunblock and sandals and headed off on the four-hour flight from New York to Montego Bay.

Clear turquoise waters, white beaches and lush landscapes, the promise of what was to come was mouthwatering.

Upon exiting passport control and customs, I met my complimentary transport to the resort and set off on the hour-long journey to my Green Island getaway, my driver imparting plenty of local knowledge on the way.

A DREAM ISLAND ESCAPE

After being cordially greeted with a cold face towel and some fresh, cold juice in the lobby of Princess Senses The Mangrove which is the adults-only side of the property (the resort also offers a kid-friendly property called Princess Grand Jamaica), I was swiftly checked in and then shown to the Food Market.

The variety of foods and beverages available are extensive, exceedingly well prepared and truly delicious. From salads, cold meats, various seafood options, fresh fruits, hot local dishes, desserts and pastries, the variety was impressive and more than enough for anyone.

This was my first time at an all-inclusive resort, so getting used to having whatever I wanted took some getting used to, but by the end of my trip, it was all second nature to me.

WARM WELCOMES

After the delicious lunch, I was shown to my delightful junior deluxe suite with its soft king-size bed, open plan lounge and bath with double rain shower. Most accommodations at the



Escape to Princess Senses The Mangrove, a sanctuary where luxury meets lush tropical beauty. Tucked between the Caribbean Sea and serene mangrove forests, this resort invites you to unwind in paradise, your way.

JAMAICA

Continued

resort feature a balcony with a sea view while ground-floor rooms have swim out balconies, leading to incredible infinity pools.

For the remainder of the afternoon, I relaxed and explored the resort, taking a dip in the pools, feeling the warm sand beneath my toes, locating the nine al la carte restaurants and arranging a private driver with the on-site tour group, Tropical Tours for a tour of nearby Negril and its environs, and a sunset cruise (more about that later).

SIPS & SOCIALIZING

The a la carte restaurants are all top-drawer and offer a selection of Italian, Asian Fusion, sushi, seafood, Japanese, Mexican, Jamaican-Caribbean food and a steakhouse. There are several bars too for the adults; the very chic, laid-back piano bar and the MVP Sports Bar were the two that I visited—the first night I was there, the final USA v Canada hockey game was being shown on the many big screens at MVP, which certainly kept the crowd entertained!

With few exceptions, food at all restaurants is included in the all-inclusive price as is most alcoholic drinks (some exclusive wines and Champagnes, however, are extra).

After returning to my room, showering and getting into some casual evening clothes, I ventured back down to Food Market and indulged in the wonderful hot dishes available from the buffets, followed by a sampling of some of the many desserts and some ice cold soft drink from the serve yourself soda fountains.

After dinner, I popped into the 24-hour coffee shop to grab some Blue Mountain espresso and an ice cream from the many flavors on offer. Happy but tired, I retired to bed and slept well in that glorious king-size bed, beneath crisp white linen!

A DAY OF ISLAND INDULGENCE

The following day was going to be one of relaxation, soaking up the energizing Caribbean sun, lazing on the beach, swimming in the ocean, eating plenty of great food and having an incredible 50-minute Swedish massage at the impressive 14,000 square-foot fitness and wellness center. It was total relaxation combined with the Jamaican vibes, a friendly staff and the luxury of having to do nothing but enjoy myself.

That evening, I went to Robert's Flame Steakhouse for dinner. On the menu: pork chops served with garlic honey-mustard sauce, fresh vegetables and delicious thinly sliced potatoes. Incredible! After dinner, I stopped by MVP Sports Bar before I called it a night.

Saturday dawned and I gathered my necessities for a day of exploring Negril: Camera, lenses, cash (there is a convenient ATM in the resort lobby), swim shorts, towel, water and a sense of adventure. I met my driver Jordan and emphasized I wanted to see everyday life, not just tourist attractions. I certainly had the right guy to show me around!



Everybody knew Jordan and I got some wonderful insight into day-to-day Jamaican life, visiting art and craft markets, a local fish market where the catch of the day was being prepared, into small villages in the furthest reaches of the "West End," and also visited some of the main tourist attractions including the world-famous Rick's Café.

SUNSET, MUSIC & MAGIC

All too soon, it was time for Jordan to drop me at Jamvest Beach to board the catamaran for a 3-hour sunset cruise. Lots of great music and an open bar accompanied us on the cruise as we headed out along the coast, before anchoring at Rick's Café, where everyone disembarked, except for a couple of us—I stayed behind to photograph the famous cliff jumping and some spectacular seabirds.

We returned to Jamvest as the sun set, a beautiful orange glow spreading across the horizon, the perfect end to my last day in Jamaica.

ONE LOVE, ONE PROMISE

On departing Princess Senses The Mangrove the following morning, I vowed to return, to explore more of what this incredible resort has to offer, to have more adventures in Negril and to indulge myself with warm Jamaican hospitality.

Ya Mon, One Love!



A MEXICAN PARADISE

VidantaWorld Riviera Maya & Cirque Du Soleil JOYA

Article and Photos by Neil J Tandy

I had never been to Mexico, despite hearing about all the great places to visit and I had never seen a Cirque Du Soleil performance live, so when I got the opportunity to combine the two into a single experience, I couldn't wait!

Cirque Du Soleil JOYA has had a permanent home at the luxurious VidantaWorld Riviera Maya for 10 years; a resort just 23 miles from Cancun Airport and situated between lush jungle and the Caribbean Sea, I was lucky enough to be visiting for the 10th anniversary celebrations, which I will let you know about later.

Arriving at Jungala Park Hotel after a short shuttle ride from Cancun Airport, my fellow travelers and I were speedily checked in and shown to our various suites. My beautiful ground floor one bedroom suite, with a luxury kitchenette, a wonderful dining and living area, a private balcony and a bathroom featuring an incredible shower and Jacuzzi tub.

LUXURIOUS ACCOMMODATIONS

The twice-daily suite service was a welcome luxury, often accompanied by a delectable confectionary treat, fresh fruit, or other healthy snacks thoughtfully placed on the dining table and breakfast island—a truly appreciated detail.

Our first evening unfolded with a delightful welcome dinner and cocktails at La Cantina. The menu was a vibrant exploration of local flavors, from the sublime guacamole to the rich rib eye and bone marrow tacos, and a succulent slow-cooked short rib that introduced me to an unexpected delicacy—crickets! Surprisingly palatable, they were followed by a



refreshing cacao ice cream and some delightful mocktails, concluding a truly excellent meal.

Returning to the hotel via one of the resort's convenient trams, I retreated to the comfort of my suite, tired but content, ready for a restful night under the crisp white sheets of the king-size bed.

SUN, SEA & THRILLS

Day two dawned bright and early, and after a refreshing shower, beachwear was the attire of choice for a day promising fun and adventure. But first, breakfast! The resort's impressive buffet-style breakfast offered the perfect start to the day. A mouthwatering array of fresh fruits, breads, pastries, cooked options, juices, and invigorating coffee and teas ensured a memorable breakfast experience.

After breakfast, a short stroll led to the VIP cabanas at Beach Club, where a couple of blissful hours were spent basking in the sun and enjoying the refreshing waters of one of the resort's many pools. Throughout, we were treated to delightful mocktails and other beverages while gazing out at the turquoise expanse of the Caribbean Sea.

The weather was beautiful, mid 80s, sunny with a nice breeze coming off the ocean, it was absolutely perfect. The allure of the Jungala Aqua Experience was strong, so we headed to the VIP cabanas there to

From endless choices for dining pleasure to activities on land and water, this is Mexico like you've never experienced it.



Vidanta Riviera Maya is a world-class luxury resort that delivers far more than just sun and sand—it's a curated experience that blends indulgence, adventure, and artistry in one lush, sprawling paradise. You'll find this little bit of paradise between the untamed beauty of the Yucatan jungle and the turquoise shimmer of the Caribbean Sea, and just 23 miles from Cancun Airport. Guests are welcomed into a sanctuary of opulent suites—some featuring private balconies, Jacuzzis, and thoughtful amenities like twice-daily service with hand-delivered treats—that make even downtime feel decadent.

secure our valuables before venturing into the water park.

ADRENALINE-PUMPING FUN

This aquatic playground delivered on its promise of excitement. I braved two thrilling waterslides: The Beachside Boomerango, a near-vertical tube ride accommodating up to four people, and the solo Paradise Freefall, a heart-stopping vertical drop from 66 feet, reaching speeds of 25 mph leading to a horizontal splashdown that thoroughly soaked onlookers. Surprisingly, both were firsts for me, and I wished time had allowed for repeat rides.

Next, a long, relaxing journey along the Lazy Rio, Latin America’s longest lazy river, provided a welcome change of pace—a truly enjoyable experience. Emerging from the gentle currents, we made a stop at the Brave Wave Pool, where impressive 4.5-foot waves rolled in every 10 minutes, a major draw for body surfers.

GLAMPING IN PARADISE

The afternoon was dedicated to unwinding in a shady VIP cabana, indulging in popsicles, flavored water, and nachos, all part of the “Relaxation Experience” priced around \$120 (and shareable among four adults). Overlooking the Lazy Rio and enveloped by the jungle, this is a must-do for anyone who appreciates “glamping.”

Dinner that evening took us to the opulent Japanese restaurant, Gong. A diverse and delectable array of Japanese dishes, including sushi, seafood, and Peking duck, was enjoyed in a stunning setting. The attentive and gracious wait staff enhanced the extraordinary Asian ambiance.

CIRQUE DU SOLEIL + MORE

My final full day at VidantaWorld was dedicated to the magic of Cirque Du Soleil, commencing with a press conference featuring Ivan Chavez, son of Vidanta Group founder Daniel, and Daniel Lamarre, Executive Vice



Chairman of the Board of Cirque Du Soleil. Exciting announcements were made about the future of Cirque Du Soleil, including the unveiling of a brand-new show, LUDŌ, set to premiere at Vidanta Nuevo Vallarta on Mexico’s West Coast in November 2025. Billed as “the most epic water dinner show ever created,”

anticipation is already high.

Lunch was a delightful affair at the picturesque Chiringuito Terrace, a buffet-style meal enjoyed under a grand cabana right by the beach. The soothing sounds of the waves and the refreshing scent of the Caribbean Sea mingled with the enticing aromas of freshly grilled New York Strip Steaks, complemented by the sweet fragrance of local fruits and tempting desserts.



JOYA transforms a night into a magical journey

After lunch, a leisurely walk along the beach was followed by shopping at Jade Boutique and Salum, a charming bohemian shopping village. Then, it was back to the hotel to prepare for the highlight of the week—the Cirque Du Soleil JOYA red carpet event, dinner show, and VIP after-party.

A SPECTACLE OF SENSES

Cirque Du Soleil JOYA is an extraordinary 80-minute experience, seamlessly blending a captivating show with an enthralling dinner and entertainment—elevated to an art form. Exquisite cuisine, including a beautifully presented dessert served in a hollowed-out book mirroring the impressive stage design, added to the magic. The seamless integration of theatre, acrobatics, music, and a unique culinary journey makes Cirque Du Soleil JOYA an absolute essential experience when visiting Vidanta Riviera Maya.

A vibrant VIP after-party and a breathtaking drone light show brought a perfect evening, and an all-too-brief escape to the Northeastern Yucatan Peninsula, to a memorable close.



PARADISE FOUND

While many associate Mexico with the beaches of Cancun, the ruins of Tulum, and other well-known destinations, VidantaWorld Riviera Maya offers a comprehensive experience. From top-tier accommodations and gourmet dining, to thrilling adventures, lush jungle, stunning beaches, perfect weather, pampering, shopping, excellent value, and the unparalleled magic of Cirque Du Soleil, it truly has it all.

I, for one, will certainly be returning.

A SERENE EMBRACE

A Soul-Soothing Escape To The Catskills

Article and Photos by Neil J Tandy

Just a two-hour drive from the city's frenetic energy, nestled within the tranquil folds of the Catskill Mountains, lies Fishs Eddy, home to Estates by Brophy, a year-round private retreats. Owner Gale Brophy's open invitation to visit at any time finally beckoned recently. While I'd captured the essence of her properties during a summer photoshoot last year, the allure of another visit was irresistible.

The journey itself was a relaxing experience. Once past the George Washington Bridge and onto the Palisades Parkway, the traffic thinned, revealing a scenic drive that eased away any lingering city stress. The approach to Fishs Eddy, via the remarkable single-lane Veterans Memorial Bridge—a converted 1901 railway bridge—set the stage for the peaceful escape that awaited.

EXPLORING THE ESTATES

The property consists of three historic 1839 homes, exuding a timeless charm. There's the main house, Gale's personal retreat from Palm Beach and NYC; the residence of Debbie, the resort's dedicated head of housekeeping, and her husband, Tony; and the cozy guesthouse where I settled in. After a warm welcome from Debbie and Tony, a quick drive to Hancock, just 5.5 miles away, provided the necessary provisions and a comforting meal at the Circle E Diner.

The estates, known as DeerRidge and RiverView, offer individual rentals and together can accommodate up to seventy-two guests. My first foray was to RiverView, timed perfectly to capture the sunrise painting the mountains. Mother Nature delivered a breathtaking spectacle as I explored the grounds. The log main



guesthouse boasts an indoor hot tub, sauna, and inviting living spaces, while the entertainment building offers additional bedrooms, a pool table, and a banquet hall capable of hosting 225 guests.

NATURE'S SANCTUARY

Fishs Eddy, cradled by the East Branch of the Delaware River, is a haven for wildlife, including Bald and Golden Eagles, and a paradise for anglers. The surrounding hiking trails offer an ideal escape for those who, like me, find solace in the mountains rather than beaches. Days were spent immersed in the tranquility of nature, breathing in crisp mountain air and absorbing the panoramic views. It's a place that compels you to slow down, appreciate the simple pleasures—birdsong, clean air, and the sheer beauty of the landscape.

As the day waned, I ventured to DeerRidge to witness the sunset. This unique building, with its converted horse stable once housed Gale's champion polo ponies and Kentucky Derby winner Strike the Gold, and upper-level bedrooms fashioned from haylofts, offered a glimpse into a rich history. The views across the former paddocks to RiverView, perched majestically on the



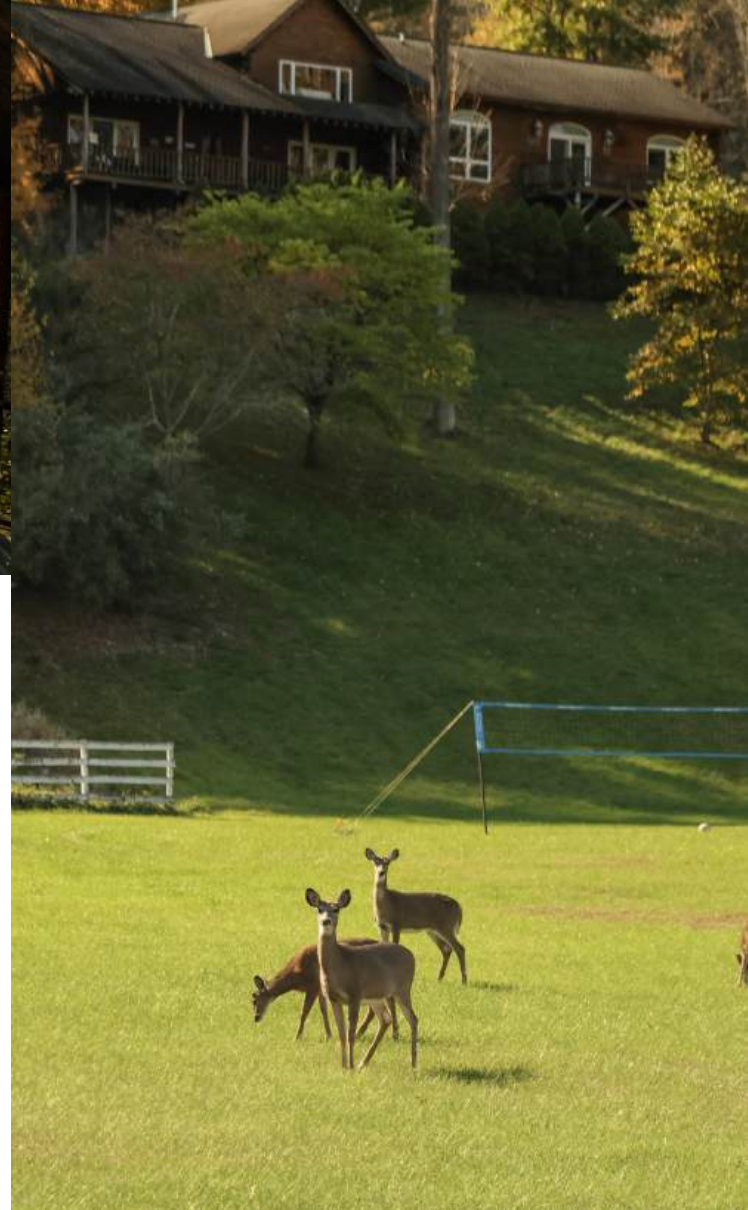
hillside, were truly spectacular.

MOUNTAIN ADVENTURES

My final day was dedicated to adventure. With Tony as my guide, we embarked on a Kubota UTV ride, exploring the mountain trails and marveling at the dramatic bluestone outcrops. It was the perfect culmination for a restorative weekend.

Fishs Eddy, with its serene beauty and warm hospitality, promises a new discovery with each visit. I'll be back, eager to explore its ever-changing landscapes, no matter the season.

For more information visit GaleBrophy.net





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