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# It's My Party and We'll Fly If I Want To

More travelers are choosing to mark their milestone birthdays and anniversaries far from home, inviting all their friends along for a blowout trip. A guide to the 'celebration vacation'

PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY JOE DARROW; GETTY IMAGES (SPHINX, CAVELS, HATS, BANNER)

BY KEITH BLANCHARD

**A**S A KID looking up from the bottom of the hill, I always assumed the fun of birthdays would decline with age. Ten years old was surely the peak, or possibly 20—it seemed fairly obvious that turning 30, then 40, and so on, would gradually get worse, each “mile-

stone” a millstone of increasing bulk, hung about your neck and stooping your back until the accumulated weight tumbled you into your grave at last. Yeah...about that.

I turned 50 this year, and a deeper truth is becoming apparent. For all the tolls that age exacts—the eye-squint wrinkles, the lower back pain, the nagging mystery that is Iggy Azalea—there are compensatory gains. Example:

If I'm in a conversation that's boring me, I no longer have to sit and nod politely, as I did at 45. I can just walk away! It'll be chalked up to eccentricity. Or not; who cares.

If getting older is supposed to make us increasingly depressed, we never got the memo. (Or we couldn't read the tiny type). Turns out we grow about 5% happier with each decade we've lived, according to a University of Chicago study,

and a lot of people my age are starting to indulge that happiness by traveling ambitiously, with friends and family, for big milestone birthdays or anniversaries.

A full 75% of adults 45 and over have taken, or plan to take, one of these “celebration vacations,” according to AARP research released this year. At the same time, luxury-travel agents and tour operators report fielding more requests from

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# DESIGN & DECORATING

## THE CRITICAL EYE

### Get Down With The Ship

**OUR DESIGN ASSESSMENT:** This quiet corner—created by Hillary Thomas and Jeff Lincoln for a Washington, D.C., living room—exemplifies how to take décor cues from art without succumbing to cheesy matchy-matchiness. Lesser designers might have surrounded the 2005 Edward Burtynsky ship photograph with “nautical” motifs: a rope-trimmed vase, a chandelier contrived from a rusty anchor. Instead, it seems that Ms. Thomas and Mr. Lincoln culled their color palette from the photo: the black of the Eero Saarinen Tulip table; the aged browns of the antique Chinese chairs; the murky blue walls and vase; and the burgundy light fixture (from La Murrina in Los Angeles). The ship’s swelling form, too, is echoed by the blooming table base and the chair backs’ sympathetic curves. (The drapes pooling on the ebonized wood floor nicely counter all that uplift.) Even the light fixture’s open structure nods to the pierced metal cladding of Mr. Burtynsky’s vessel. Result: Unforced harmony. The only false note? The oh-so-picturesque piles of books rendering the table unusable.

**THE DESIGNER’S RESPONSE:** The ship photo was indeed a “starting point and a big influence on how we shaped the room,” said Ms. Thomas, but it wasn’t the only impetus behind the color scheme. “Because it’s a D.C. house, we felt it needed a little ode to patriotism with the reds and the blues.” Did kitschy anchors darken her mind? “God, no. I’ve never done anything like that. For me, design is intuitive.” As for the unconvincing books: “I’ll admit the room is a bit over-styled,” she said with a laugh. —*Dale Hrabi*



## EVOLUTION

### CHAIR APPARENT

A descendant of the regal peacock chair moves to the top of the pecking order—with gold-tone wire sitting in for wicker

**THEN** The earliest peacock chairs were rattan versions conceived in the Philippines during the 1870s. Brits quickly plucked the regal perch for their Victorian gardens, often rendering it in intricately wrought iron. It was the original wicker variety, though, that became a celebrated seat in Europe and the U.S., reigning from the 1920s through the decades, particularly as a photo-shoot prop: Elizabeth Taylor lolled barefoot in one in a '50s snap, Huey Newton repositioned the peacock to symbolize black power in the '60s and Brigitte Bardot practically lived in various iterations during the '70s. Today, a menacing interpretation is the titular chair in HBO's "Game of Thrones."

**NOW** For his company Bend Goods, Los Angeles designer Gaurav Nanda recently debuted a wire update of the peacock chair that combines the strut and structure of the classic with art deco-esque geometric patterning. Outdoor-friendly versions come in white, black and pink; an indoor model in goldtone metal considerably ups the peacock's glamour factor. "You might put the gold-finish chairs by a living room fireplace, or the colorful, powder-coated versions by the pool," said Mr. Nanda.

Bonus: Unlike its intimidating cousin on "Game of Thrones," Mr. Nanda's lounge chair allows you to enjoy a posture of power without gratuitous bloodshed. —*Tim Gavan*

Above: Peacock Chair in Natural, about \$610, [thefamilylovetree.com.au](http://thefamilylovetree.com.au). Right: Peacock Lounge Chair in Gold, \$900; pillow (not shown) and seat pad, \$200 [bendgoods.com](http://bendgoods.com)



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