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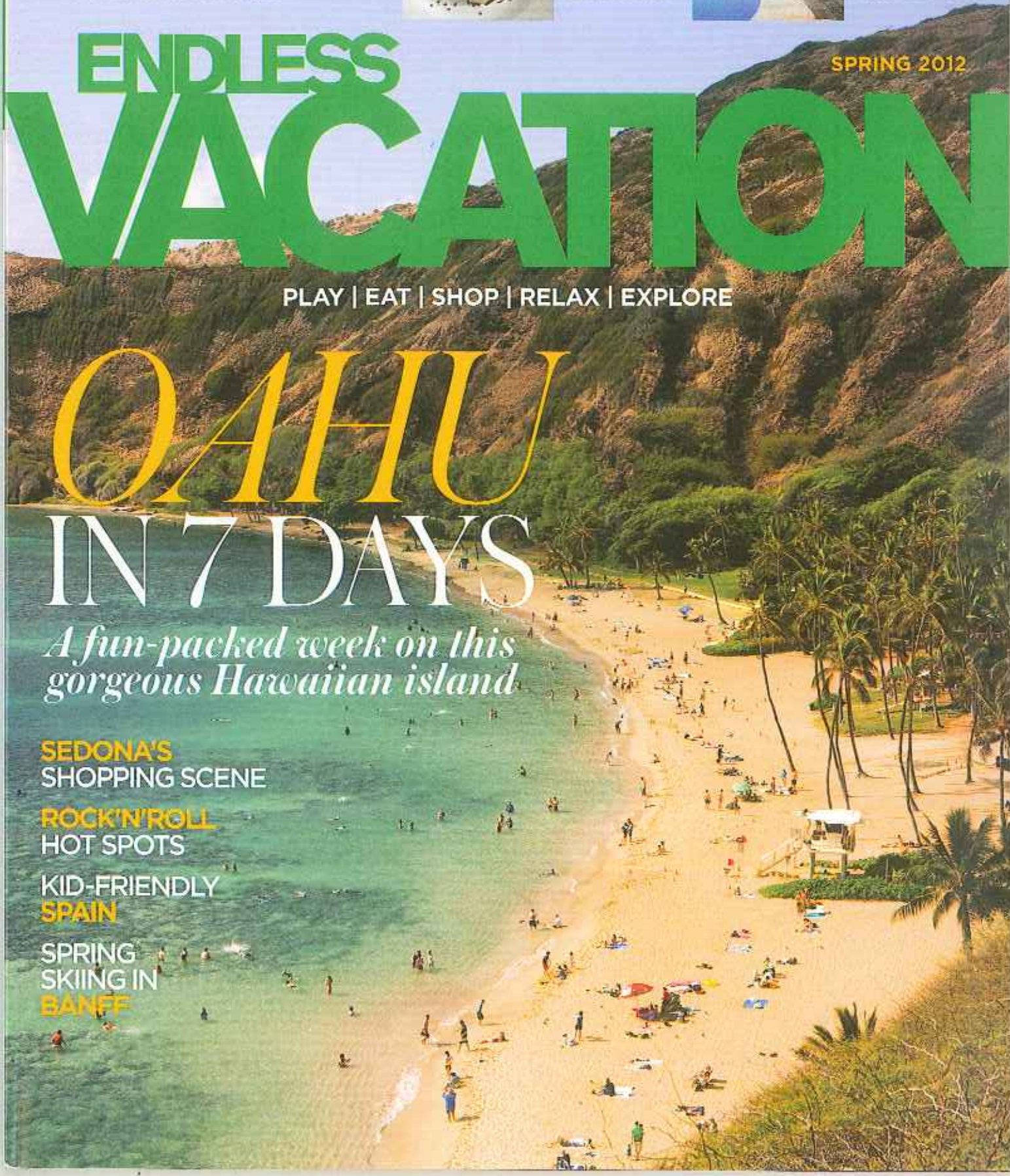
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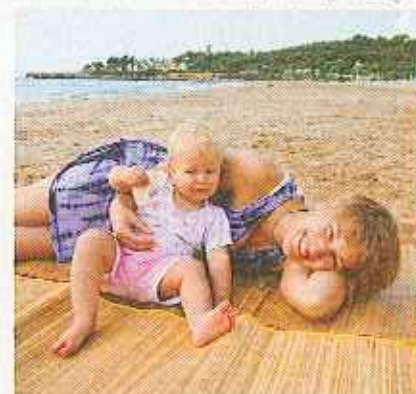
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SPANISH TREASURES: (clockwise from top) Kids take the helm of the *Cyrano*, a tall ship in Tarragona's harbor; baby time on La Móra beach; the Dragon Khan roller coaster at PortAventura theme park.

family-friendly Tarragona

Theme parks, Roman remains and tranquil beaches make the Costa Daurada one of Spain's most appealing getaways

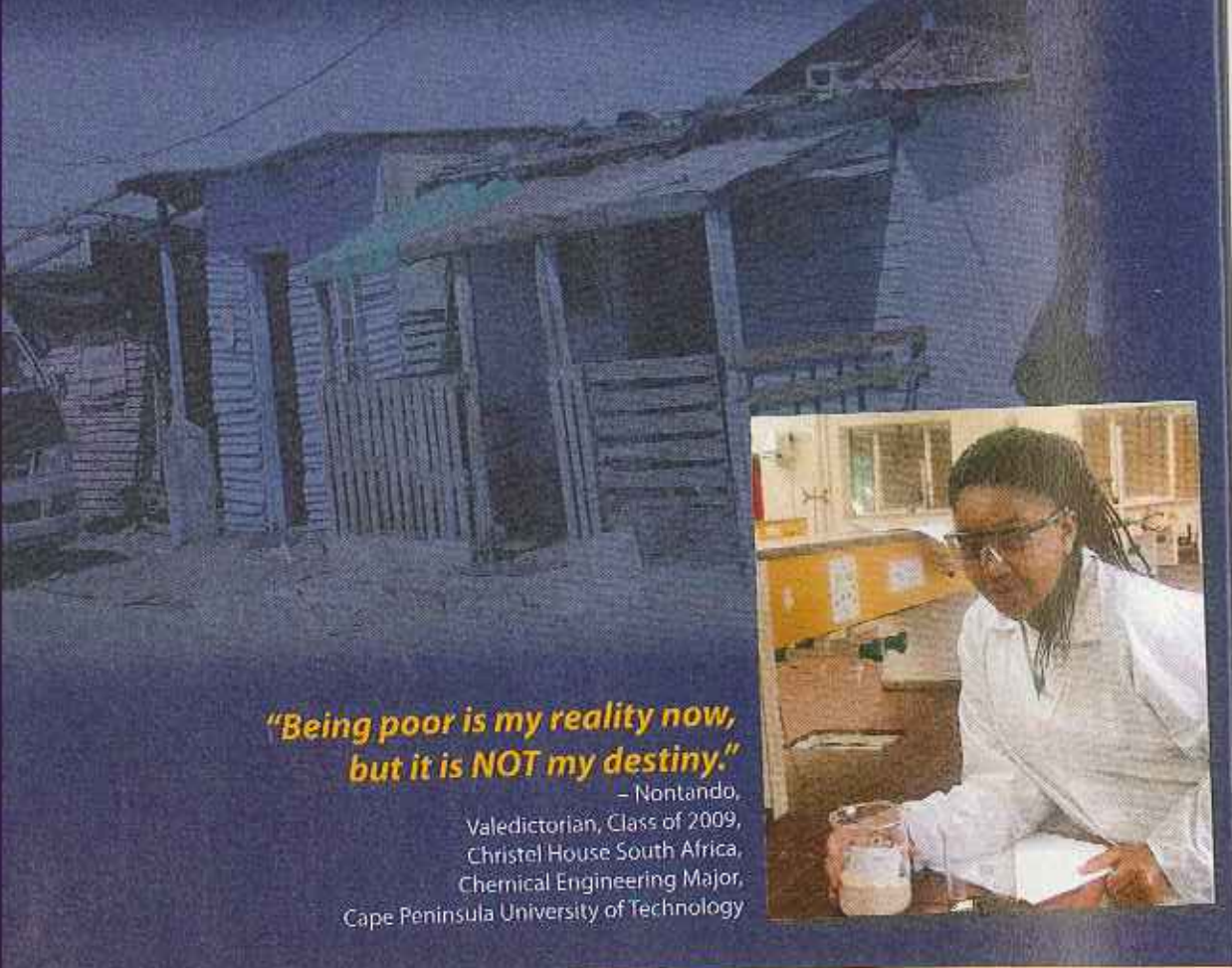
By *Andy Symington*
Photography *Alvaro Leiva*

When you're perched at the top of Europe's tallest roller coaster, with the Roman city of Tarragona, the Catalan coastline and the blue Mediterranean spread out below, you may wonder how the kids talked you into this one. Then gravity and adrenaline take over and you realize that you (and your kids) are having the time of your life.

Rome Away From Rome

Founded in the 3rd century B.C., Tarraco became an important Roman city. Today its World Heritage remains lie under modern Tarragona's center. Kids will thrill to stories of the Roman circus, whose chariot races drew 30,000 spectators, and the seaside amphitheater where gladiators fought.

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SWING TIME: (above) A ride in the Chinese-village-themed section of PortAventura. Right: Ice creams at Palau del Baró, a restaurant in an old palace.



TAKE THE KIDS Spain

PORTAVENTURA TIPS

This theme park offers special packages, such as a money-saving two-day pass. There are more live shows on weekends, but lines can be long; you'll pack more in on weekdays. Express passes give easy access to only the most popular rides, and only once each per day. Bring snacks and water to beat the park's high prices.

Roman walls and a section of aqueduct just outside town are still visible. In May, the Tarraco Viva festival celebrates the town's Roman heritage with recreated battles, Roman taverns and more.

Roll With It

Spain's star theme park, PortAventura, lies just southwest of Tarragona in the resort town of Salou. This spring brings an addition to the list of attractions: a gigantic Himalayan-themed roller coaster that includes a breathtaking 256-foot plunge. The park is divided into zones—the Mediterranean, Polynesia, China, Mexico, the Far West and Sesame Street—and appeals to all ages. Rides are gentle in Sésamo Aventura; the Chinese and Mexican villages have shriek-inducing roller coasters and the Hurakan Condor free fall. Thrill seekers head for the Furios Baco ride near the main entrance: It accelerates from zero to a terrifying 84 miles per hour in just three seconds. There's also a water park, golf courses and a beach club. **PortAventura, Salou;** 34-977-779-090; portaventura.co.uk; open Apr.–Dec.; \$60* adults, \$50 kids. **Aquatic Park, open late May–early Sept.;** \$33 adults, \$26 kids

Water Everywhere

Also near Tarragona is Aquópolis, a no-holds-barred water park with some steep slides, mega-splashes, softer thrills

for younger kids and dolphin shows. **AquaLeón, 10 miles inland,** combines a water park with a safari zoo.

Aquópolis, 65 Av. Pau Casals, Vila-Seca; 34-902-315-011; costa-dorada.aquopolis.es; open mid-May to early Oct.; from \$34. **AquaLeón, Finca les Rasses, Albinyana;** 34-977-687-656; aqualcon.es; open June–mid-Sept.; from \$25

Hit the Beaches

The biggest water feature around here is the Mediterranean itself. The Costa Daurada (also called the Costa Dorada, or golden coast; *Daurada* is the Catalan spelling) is a family-friendly coastline with small sheltered *calas* (coves) separating wide, long stretches of sand. You'll find your own favorite, but some nearby ones to try are La Pineda, a mile and a half of clean sand with a "sub-aquatic park" for divers and snorkelers, and La Móra, a short strand with gentle water. The next beach along, Tamarit, is equally tranquil and overlooked by the spectacular 11th-century castle of the same name. Most beaches have kiosks offering shade, seafood and *pedalo* and kayak rentals.

Boat Rides

Tarragona Blau runs jaunts around the harbor and along the coast from June to September, and child-focused fishing trips in April and May (34-671-212-521; tarragonablau.com; from \$20).

EAT

Mild *botifarra* sausages and pizza-like *llesques* are typical of Catalanian fare. Fish is often served with a nut-based romesco sauce, which is also used as a dip with *calçots* (similar to baby leeks) in a springtime festival.

AQ

Right beside the cathedral, Tarragona's best restaurant is slickly decorated and offers tasting menus and great Catalan wines. **7 Coques;** 34-977-215-954; dinner for two, \$100*

Palau del Baró

Set in a noble palace on an old-town street. Dine on traditional dishes in a pretty courtyard. **3 Santa Anna;** 34-977-241-164; dinner for two, \$80

Barquet

A neighborhood place known for its rice dishes. Try the *arròs negre*, whose black color comes from squid ink. **13 Carrer de Gasòmetre;** 34-977-240-023; dinner for two, \$80

Arena

On the beachfront in nearby Salou. **Hotel Blaumar, Passeig Jaume I, Salou;** 34-977-384-000; dinner for two, \$100

*Prices have been converted to U.S. dollars. Meal prices do not include drinks, tax or tip.

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TAKE THE KIDS Spain



TOWER WITH A VIEW: (from left) The majestic Tamarit Castle overlooks Tamarit Beach near Tarragona; admiring the city skyline from Torre del Pretorio.



The cheerfully painted tall ship *Cyrano* runs scheduled excursions and charters from Tarragona's harbor (34-615-084-440; cyrano.cat; site is in Catalan only). Leaving from nearby Salou and Cambrils, Creuers Costa Daurada offers short and daylong catamaran cruises with time for lunch and swims. One boat has a glass hull for exploring the submarine world (15 Av. Diputació, Cambrils; 34-977-363-090; creuers.costadaurada.com; from \$35).

Barcelona Side Trip

One of the most seductive cities on the Mediterranean is only an hour from Tarragona. Gaudi's Sagrada Família basilica has a magic that kids will appreciate. The rambling Parc Güell invites exploration, as does one of Europe's largest aquariums. *Fútbol* lovers should visit FC Barcelona's stadium. The entrance fee includes an interactive soccer museum and the chance to walk out of the tunnel onto the field, just like the pros do before a game. *Sagrada Família*, 401 Calle Mallorca; 34-932-073-031; sagradafamilia.cat; adults, \$17. *L'Aquàrium*, Moll d'Espanya del Port Vell; 34-932-217-474; aquariumbcn.com; adults, \$15. *FC Barcelona*, Camp Nou, Avda. Aristides Maillol; 34-934-963-600; fcbarcelona.com; adults, \$30

STAY

 RCI affiliated resorts in and around Tarragona include:



Acuasol 2970

A magnificent property near museums, parks, wineries, theme parks and more. 4 Carrer de Barcelona, Poñiscola, Castellón

Member Review: "Nice area with beautiful beaches. Great for a quiet holiday."



Jardines del Plaza 3052

Spanish architecture and a lovely pool, right on the Balearic Sea. 156 Avda. Papa Luna, Peñíscola, Castellón

Member Review: "Beautiful garden setting, 200 yards from the golden beach and the Mediterranean."

Onagrup Club Jardines Paralsol 3051

A short walk to beaches, Roman ruins and ancient monasteries. 19 Calle Ciutat de Rous, Salou, Tarragona

Member Review: "Resort is a few blocks from the train station. Lots of shops and restaurants within walking distance."

Estival Park 2579

Complete health and beauty program, sports club and large pool. 15 Camí del Recó, La Pineda, Tarragona

Member Review: "The beach is very close; the resort has a spa that you could spend the entire day enjoying."

For complete member reviews (as member reviews have been condensed) and additional resort listings, visit RCI.com or call 800-338-7777 (Weeks) or 877-968-7476 (Points). Club Members, please call your specific Club or RCI telephone number.

Non-RCI affiliated resorts:

Gold River Hotel

An elegant Wild West-themed hotel offering unlimited PortAventura visits. Port Aventura, Salou; 34-977-779-090; portaventura.co.uk; doubles from \$134 per night

Gran Palas Hotel

A luxurious spa-hotel with ample gardens by the beach. Duplex rooms are great for families. 5 Carrer de Sèquia Major, La Pineda; 34-977-370-808; granpalashotel.com; doubles from \$160 per night

Hotel Ciutat de Tarragona

Dependable option with a rooftop pool and an appealing café. 5 Pl. Imperial Tarraco; 34-977-250-999; hotelciutatdetarragona.com; doubles from \$112 per night

Greek God Invents FREE Love

Inspired by a mythological romance, this stunning 170-carat amethyst bead necklace is yours for the taking!

She was Amethyst, a maiden devoted to virtue. He was Dionysus, the notorious Greek god of intoxication and revelry. He loved her, but she wanted to wait for someone more suitable. He was a god, used to getting what he wanted. The chase was on. But once Diana saw that Amethyst was serious about keeping her heart pure, the goddess transformed her into a statue of perfect stone. Dionysus stopped partying for a moment and wept. He spilled his wine and infused the statue with the rich violet color we now know as amethyst.

It's not what you would call a happy ending. Luckily we discovered that something good came from their ill-fated romance. Specifically, this spectacular 170-Carat **Amethyst Maiden Necklace**. And the incredible price may just have you shedding tears of joy. For a limited time, you can get 170 carats of polished purple gems valued at \$249...absolutely FREE (you pay only for basic shipping and processing).

The luxury myth has been busted. You're probably wondering why any luxury jewelry company would give away a perfectly beautiful genuine gemstone necklace. But I promise you that we have a reason. The simple answer is that we want to get your attention. Once you get a closer look at our quality and selection, we're certain you'll be back for more. And if you're already a devoted Stauer client, this is just another example of how we keep the incredible offers coming.

Drape yourself in purple perfection. This necklace is a knockout. Each rounded bead retains its own unique shape and just the right amount of translucence to let the light ignite the velvety, violet hues. Each gem is hand set on double-knotted jeweler's thread. The entire length secures with a .925 sterling silver lobster clasp layered in gold. The 18" necklace (with 2" extender) hangs with the same weight and elegance as similar strands that sell for hundreds more.

Extremely limited offer. The good news is that right now, you can get the 170-Carat **Amethyst Maiden Necklace** for **FREE** (you pay only the standard \$24.95 shipping and processing fee). **We'll also include a \$20 Stauer Gift Coupon** with your delivery, good towards your very next purchase. If you're interested in getting 170 carats of genuine amethyst for nothing...we recommend you reserve your necklace now. Because as Dionysus knows all too well, the party can't last forever. **This offer is strictly limited to one FREE necklace per shipping address.**

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