

People & Places



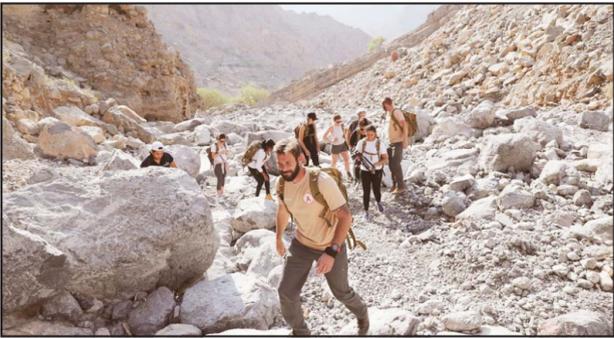
One of the guests tries to fix a shelter during a survival trial at the Jebel Jais, about 30 kms northeast of Ras al-Khaimah, UAE. (AP)



With an image of Edward Michael Grylls better known as Bear Grylls (on the screen), Martin Norton, lead instructor of the Bear Grylls Survival Academy, explains their program before the start a trial survival course, at Jebel Jais. (AP)



Martin Norton, lead instructor of the Bear Grylls Survival Academy (second right), explains to adventurers how to react if they face a wild animal during a trial survival course at Jebel Jais, about 30 kms northeast of Ras al-Khaimah, United Arab Emirates, on Oct 8. (AP)



Martin Norton, lead instructor of the Bear Grylls Survival Academy (centre front), leads the group during a survival trial at the Jebel Jais. (AP)



One of the guests rappel down a rock mountain during a survival trial at the Jebel Jais. (AP)



Guests try to eat worms during a survival trial at the Jebel Jais, UAE, on Oct 8. (AP)

Dance

Wave of cancellations

Pandemic takes toll on 'The Nutcracker'

COLUMBUS, Ohio, Oct 12, (AP): For many, it's not Christmas without the dance of Clara, Uncle Drosselmeyer, the Sugar Plum Fairy, the Mouse King and, of course, the Nutcracker Prince.

But this year the coronavirus pandemic has canceled performances of "The Nutcracker" around the US and Canada, eliminating a major and reliable source of revenue for dance companies already reeling financially following the essential shutdown of their industry.

"This is an incredibly devastating situation for the arts and in particular for organizations like ours that rely on ticket sales from the Nutcracker to fund so many of our initiatives," said Sue Porter, executive director of BalletMet in Columbus, Ohio.

"The Nutcracker" typically provides about \$1.4 million of the company's \$2 million in annual ticket sales, against a \$7 million budget. That money goes to school programming and financial aid for dance class students, Porter said. It's the first year since 1977 that the company isn't staging the ballet in Ohio's capital.

The cancellations have meant layoffs, furloughs and salary cuts, with companies relying heavily - sometimes exclusively - on fundraising to stay afloat. Beyond their financial importance, "Nutcracker" performances are also a crucial marketing tool for dance companies, company directors say. Children often enroll in classes for the chance to dance in the performances as mice, young partygoers and angels, among other supporting roles. For adults, the shows are sometimes their initial experience watching live dance.

"It tends to be the first ballet that people see, the first time they experience attending a production, that thrill when the curtain goes up, the hush of the crowd," said Max Hodges, executive director of the Boston Ballet. "So for that reason it's a key part of the pipeline in welcoming audiences into the art form."

Performances

After deciding to cancel this year's live performances, the Boston Ballet will use archived footage of past performances for a one-hour version to be shown on television in New England. The annual \$8 million in "Nutcracker" ticket sales accounts for about 20% of the company's annual budget.

The pandemic has cost the arts and entertainment industry about 1.4 million jobs and \$42.5 billion nationally, according to an August analysis by the Brookings Institution.

The economic vulnerability inherent in arts organizations is exacerbated when they rely on a major seasonal event - like "The Nutcracker" - for large portions of revenue, said Amir Pasic, dean of the School of Philanthropy at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis.

One silver lining is the opportunity for organizations to improve their online offerings, which could also help open up markets to younger consumers, he said.

That's the case in Toronto, where the National Ballet of Canada is contemplating future hybrid programming that offers tickets for in-person "Nutcracker" performances and less expensive tickets for those who want to watch it online. The company canceled its "Nutcracker" in August.

"We're going to build into our model regular capture of content to build a more robust catalogue," said Executive Director Barry Hughson. "So when we face this at some point in future - hopefully a long way away in the future - we will have solved that part of this equation."



Porter



Actor Colin Firth removes his mask upon arrival for the photo call for the film 'Supernova', as part of London Film Festival at the BFI Southbank, in central London on Oct 11. (AP)



Wayman



Van Halen

Variety

PASADENA, Calif: The childhood home of Eddie Van Halen and a sidewalk outside a nearby store have been turned into memorials to the legendary rock guitarist in his adopted hometown near Los Angeles. The shrines began popping up shortly after Van Halen's death from cancer at age 65 earlier in the week. The tributes have continued to grow and attract a steady stream of visitors day and night.

Van Halen was born in the Netherlands, and moved to Pasadena, California, with his parents and older brother Alex when he was 7. A couple dozen people milled about the nondescript yellow house on Las Lunas Street, swapping memories and snapping photos of the flowers and old photos of the guitar virtuoso.

"This way people have a chance to come out and share their feelings," said Jackie Gibson, whose younger brother was childhood friends with the Van Halens. "We need that right now. We really haven't had a chance to celebrate with everything being closed down. It's a time people can come together and heal."

A pickup stopped in front of the house and its overgrown yard and cranked Van Halen's music, fittingly shattering the quiet on the otherwise neatly kept block. A shed where the brothers practiced still stands in the fenced-in backyard. They continued living at the house, which is now a rental, for a couple of years after their eponymous debut album came out in 1978.

"It's heartbreaking because he's such a part of our lives," said Paige Uranga, a 53-year-old fan from nearby Alhambra. "It's a soft, deep ache compared to all the other really sharp like knife aches we're

Travel

Televised treks into the unknown

UAE hopes Grylls camp draws tourists

JEBEL JAIS MOUNTAIN, United Arab Emirates, Oct 12, (AP): The northern-most sheikhdom in the United Arab Emirates hopes a new adventure camp showcasing its wide-open spaces, fresh air and socially distanced mountain peaks can aid in reviving its tourist industry amid the coronavirus pandemic.

And if that doesn't work, there's the bug eating - a hallmark of the British adventurer whose name graces the course.

Ras al-Khaimah has partnered with survival instructor Bear Grylls to offer a new outdoor adventure camp on Jebel Jais, a mountain that has the highest point in the oil-rich UAE.

The former Special Air Service trooper offers a can-do attitude in his televised treks into the unknown with a camera crew in tow. His outdoor witticisms pepper the course offered in Ras al-Khaimah, which can last for several hours or include a full overnight experience with courses in knifemanship, knot tying and eating far beyond the norms of room service on a beachside vacation.

"People want to be put out of their comfort zone now and that's what we try to do," Martin Norton, the lead instructor of the Bear Grylls Survival Academy, told The Associated Press. "We try to take everyone to their sort of limit where they feel like they're uncomfortable and we can, you know, push them. And people then believe after the course they're capable of a lot more than what they think they are."

On Thursday, participants on Jebel

Jais rappelled down the sheer face of a mountainside, a herd of goats bleating above them. Several grimaced through the dried worms, which tasted to one AP journalist like bulgur wheat until an instructor helpfully noted they leave a long-lingering aftertaste. Already, Grylls' adventure camps have sprung up in his native United Kingdom, as well as 10 locations in China. The Ras al-Khaimah camp marks his first in the Middle East, on a mountain also home to a palace of the emirate's hereditary ruler, Sheikh Saud bin Saqr Al Qasimi.

Overshadowed

It's OK if you need to check a map to find Ras al-Khaimah - or "Top of the Tent" in Arabic. The emirate often finds itself overshadowed by skyscraper-studded Dubai or oil-rich Abu Dhabi, the powerhouse emirates in this federation of seven sheikhdoms.

The emirate, otherwise known for a ceramics factory bearing its initials RAK, has worked to increase tourism, offering itself as a secondary destination in the UAE or a quick holiday for the country's millions of expatriate workers. Russia, Kazakhstan and other nations once part of the former Soviet Union represent most of the tourists coming from abroad. Ras al-Khaimah had reported reaching 1.12 million visitors in 2019.

But then came the coronavirus pandemic, which saw worldwide aviation halted and robbed the entire UAE of its crucial tourism market. The sheikhdom

sought out the "staycation" market, only to find itself the target of British tabloids in May over one hotel's packed pools and cheek-to-jowl lines for the bar during the holy Muslim fasting month of Ramadan.

The fresh air, the space while clambering over rocks in a wadi, or valley, and the austere style of the Bear Grylls camp appears for now to offer the opposite of that. There are plans to build overnight sleeping cabins out of shipping containers for guests. A model cabin stood open Thursday, with plywood-styled bunk beds and a small electrical generator chugging away near the rising mountainside.

Alison Grinnell, the CEO of RAK Hospitality Holding, a state-owned hotel operator, told the AP that travelers want "escapes" like those offered by the new adventure camp.

"We're never going to go back 100% to how we were," Grinnell said of how the pandemic changed tourism. "I think people have got used to more space."

Ras al-Khaimah now offers free coronavirus nasal-swab tests for international travelers as well, said Raki Phillips, CEO of the Ras al-Khaimah Tourism Development Authority. "It's something that's subsidized by the Ras al-Khaimah government to ensure that we welcome tourists, they know they're safe and we can take care of that burden on them," Phillips said.

He added: "There is no easier way to social distance than to be on a mountain."

experiencing."

A couple blocks away, Salvatore Franco was compelled to stop outside the store and view the display of a guitar, photos, candles, cans and pack of cigarettes. Local

legend has it that Eddie and Alex wrote the family name in wet cement on the curb, which is still visible.

In 1968, Franco and the Van Halens delivered the Pasadena Star-News on differ-

ent routes. He recalled Eddie tossing papers from his Stingray bike with banana-shaped handlebars. "He worked hard because he had to buy his drum set," Franco said. "He was always smiling, that's what I remember. Friendly, sociable, he'd walk by and say, 'How ya doing?'"

Franco, in a Van Halen T-shirt, said he went to Pasadena High and what was then called Pasadena Community College with the brothers. He attended some of their earliest performances in local backyards and at the Pasadena Civic Auditorium.

The Van Halens worked their first band, The Broken Combs, at Hamilton Elementary and played at lunchtime. Eddie remembered his early days there as being "absolutely frightening." (AP)

BOSTON: A Boston television reporter was stabbed on the job over the weekend, his station confirmed.

Ted Wayman, a reporter for WCVB-TV, is recovering after he was stabbed in Copley Square, station spokesperson Ro Dooley Webster told The Boston Globe.

Wayman was taken to the hospital and is "going to be fine," she said.

A photojournalist who was working with Wayman was not hurt. Boston police reported arresting a 44-year-old man in connection with a stabbing in the same area on Sunday night, but did not disclose the victim's name and would not confirm if it was the same incident. (AP)



Actors Tom Cruise (right), and Hayley Atwell perform during the shooting of the film 'Mission Impossible 7,' by Christopher McQuarrie, in Rome on Oct 12. (AP)