



WSU grad's alter ego to compete on 'Drag Race' 2B

# Arts & Culture

BY MELINDA SCHNYDER  
Eagle correspondent

**M**y husband Lee and I have an annual tradition of spending time during the last few weeks of the year plotting out long weekends and vacations for the upcoming year.

Like most everyone else, we got two months into realizing our 2020 plans before canceling every remaining trip we'd mapped out. I don't regret spending that time planning, though, because I find researching energizing and the anticipation of a trip as exciting as traveling. Well, *almost* as exciting.

We'll eventually get to use those itineraries when we reschedule the vacations. When will that be? Nobody really knows how 2021 will unfold and that certainly altered our recent planning sessions. We had to factor in contingencies, guess when we might feel comfortable flying (and check when our canceled travel vouchers expire) and think more regionally, though we've now had nine months to get into that mindset.

For us, plans have to be flexible until COVID-19 infection rates drop, vaccinations reach more people and restrictions on travel ease. Still, it makes me happy to think about what and where our next adventures might be.

Here are 21 regional travel ideas to inspire you to plan for 2021. If you need a deadline for motivation, Jan. 26 is the U.S. Travel Association's annual National Plan for Vacation Day.

**Explore the Santa Fe National Historic Trail**

Considered the country's first international commercial road, the Santa Fe Trail turns 200 in September. Bicentennial events are planned (the Symphony in the Flint Hills Signature Event is scheduled for June 12 near the trail town of Council Grove) but could change based on COVID-19. Regardless, you can follow sections of the Santa Fe National Historic Trail on your own and stop at at-



Courtesy of Melinda Schnyder

The Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge in southwestern Oklahoma is less than a four-hour drive from Wichita.

## Travel inspiration: 21 ideas to plan for your trips in 2021

tractions based on your comfort level.

About 750 miles of the trail's 1,200 are in Kansas, the remainder are in parts of Missouri, Colorado, Oklahoma and New Mexico. There are scenic byways, auto tours, forts, museums, geocaches and other ways to wrap a day trip or vacation around learning the cultural significance of the trail. More information at [nps.gov/santafe](http://nps.gov/santafe) and through the Santa Fe Trail Association, [santafetrail.org](http://santafetrail.org).

**Olympic-size fun in Colorado Springs**

The United States Olympic & Paralympic Museum opened July 30 in Colorado Springs and

was a finalist for best new attraction of the year, voted on by USA Today readers. Twelve interactive galleries offer physical, digital and virtual experiences.

**New Arkansas nature center**

The J.B. and Johnelle Hunt Family Ozark Highlands Nature Center, opened in December 2020 in the northwest Arkansas, is a 61-acre complex with walking and biking trails, live wildlife and fish, 25-acre native tallgrass prairie restoration project, native plant demonstration gardens, outdoor 3-D archery range as well as an indoor marksmanship center and high-tech ex-

hibits.

**Luxury train travel through Colorado**

Rocky Mountaineer, known for its luxury train excursions through Western Canada and the Canadian Rockies, is launching a scenic route between Denver and Moab, Utah. The Rockies to the Red Rocks route is a two-day journey in glass-domed train coaches offering daytime scenery, regional cuisine and an overnight stay in Glenwood Springs, Colo. Operators plan a preview season of 40 departures across 10 weeks from August to October 2021.

**Harry S. Truman Library and Museum re-**

**opening**

The country's first presidential library created by the 1955 Presidential Libraries Act is expected to reopen by the spring with a \$30 million facelift. The Harry S. Truman Library and Museum in Independence, Mo., will have all new interactive exhibits to tell the story of the country's 33rd president.

**75th anniversary of Churchill's Iron Curtain speech**

During his first year as U.S. president, Truman invited former British Prime Minister Winston Churchill to deliver a speech at Westminster College in Fulton, a small town in the middle of

Missouri. Twenty years after the March 1946 speech, the town established America's National Churchill Museum to commemorate "The Sinews of Peace," Churchill's address that became famous for its iron curtain metaphor and as the start of the Cold War.

Learn about that speech and more of Churchill's life by visiting the museum housed underneath the St. Mary the Virgin Aldermanbury church, which was moved from England stone-by-stone and rebuilt on the college campus. The complex is reopening this spring after using the pandemic to accelerate \$3.1 million in preservation work, updates and interior renovations.

**Meow Wolf comes to Denver**

The immersive art pioneers behind Meow Wolf are expanding beyond Santa Fe and two new locations should open this year. Las Vegas' experiential art museum is expected to open in early 2021 followed later in the year by a five-story version just outside downtown Denver.

**Missouri celebrates bicentennial**

Missouri became a state on Aug. 10, 1821, and communities across the state will have online and in-person events and activities throughout the year. Track 200th activities at [missouri2021.org](http://missouri2021.org).

**New Highlander Hotel in Iowa City**

The Highlander Hotel is a 90-room urban resort in Iowa City that revives a 1967 inn where celebs Mickey Mantle, Arnold Palmer and Joan Baez stayed in the 1970s. There's a retro feel with an indoor resort pool and record players and vinyl albums you can borrow from the lending library.

**International traveling Holocaust exhibition in Kansas City**

The most comprehensive Holocaust exhibition to be exhibited in North America is scheduled to open in June at Kansas City's Union Station. Specific dates of the exhibition have yet to be an-

SEE TRAVEL, 8B

IN MEMORIAM

## Restaurants Wichita loved, then lost, in 2020

BY DENISE NEIL  
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The list of restaurants Wichita had to say a permanent goodbye to in 2020 is long. But considering what a year it was, perhaps we should be grateful the carnage wasn't worse.

Below, you'll find my annual tribute to restaurants Wichita loved and lost over the course of the calendar year. This year is a little hard to pin down because of the COVID-19 pandemic, which forced all restaurants to close their dining rooms in March. Some just reopened.

And COVID-19 was not to blame for all the clos-

ings.

Though it was a factor in many of them, others went away with owners citing evictions, slow business, landlord disputes, health problems and retirement.

Take a moment to look back at the deliciousness that was before 2020 took it away.

**JANUARY**

**Coney Island Hot Weiners**, 1001 W. Douglas: This restaurant, specializing in coney dogs and tamales, closed after being evicted over unpaid rent. It had opened less than six months previous.

It's since been announced that Alzavino Wine Tavern will be taking over the space.

**Espresso to Go Go Unicorn**, 120 E. First St:

Warren and Ann Tandoc closed the second location of their local coffee franchise in late January. It had operated on the ground floor of The Lux apartments since 2014. In May, the owners of Little Lion Cafe took the space over and opened Placeholder Coffee there.

**The Dapper Doughnut**, 701 E. Douglas:

Brett and Rebecca Alstatt closed their 1-year-old shop, specializing in mini-doughnuts, coffee and milkshakes, in January. It had operated out of one of the canopies on the plaza at Union Station.

**Mimi's OldTown Mexican Restaurant**, 321 N. Mead: This restaurant



Wichita lost lots of restaurants in 2020.

in Old Town Square, which had originally opened in 2015, closed in late January citing the owner's health problems.

**FEBRUARY**

**The Foxhole Lounge**, 6305 E. Harry: This vet-friendly restaurant and bar opened in July 2019

but closed in February, having never earned enough business to stay open. It's since been replaced by An-Ex Bar & Grill.

**Aero Plains Brewing**, 117 N. Handley: Patrons of this brewery were shocked when it abruptly closed in February.

It's been for sale ever since. Aero Plains originally opened in October 2016.

**MARCH**

**Picasso's Pizzeria**, 5900 E. Central: Owner Kurt Schmidt closed this

SEE RESTAURANTS, 3B



Courtesy of MeLinda Schnyder

The National Churchill Museum in Missouri commemorates “The Sinews of Peace,” Winston Churchill’s address that became famous for its iron curtain metaphor and as the start of the Cold War.

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# TRAVEL

nounced. “Auschwitz. Not long ago. Not far away.” is 20 thematic galleries with more than 700 original artifacts and 400 photographs.

### Northern New Mexico resorts

Two upscale resorts are opening this spring in northern New Mexico, within a day’s drive of Wichita.

Canyon Madness Ranch offers all-inclusive stays for a maximum of 16 guests in eight luxury suites in a newly built 18,000 square foot lodge stunningly perched on a cliff in northeast New Mexico. Large indoor common areas and two decks filled with amenities overlook the Canadian River Canyon. The surrounding 14,000 acres is available for outdoor pursuits, from a championship quality sporting-clay course to horseback riding.

Auberge Resorts has transformed a historic homestead into Bishop’s Lodge, a luxury resort on the northeast edge of Santa Fe. Guestrooms, suites, casitas and a 12-bedroom bunkhouse are available year-round, along with a healing arts studio, shopping, dining and outdoor activities on 317 acres bordering the Santa Fe National Forest.

### Hit the Taco Trail in KCK

The Kansas City Kansas Convention & Visitors

Bureau launched an official Taco Trail last year to help you explore nearly 50 local taquerias. The trail is ongoing but if you’re serious about your tacos and want to win prizes, complete the trail by Oct. 31. Visit [visitkansascityks.com/tacotrail](http://visitkansascityks.com/tacotrail) for mouth-watering details.

### Indoor and outdoor art in Bentonville

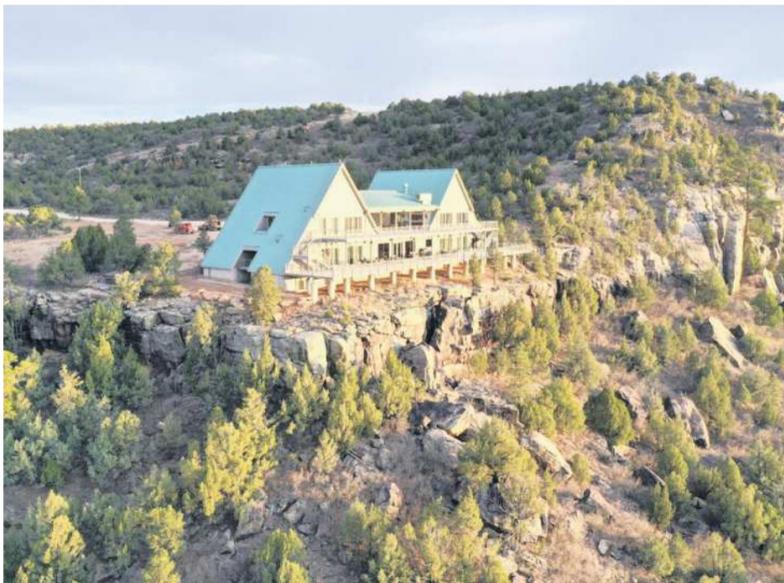
Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art in Bentonville, Ark., turns 10 this year, while its contemporary art satellite space, The Momentary, celebrates one year in February. Both have indoor exhibitions and outdoor installations, plus a full schedule of online programming. See their websites for the upcoming schedule.

### First Americans Museum in OKC

Set to open Sept. 18 near downtown Oklahoma City, the First Americans Museum will share the collective stories of the state’s 39 federally-recognized tribes who were removed from their ancestral homelands to what is now Oklahoma. Explore nearly 140 objects on long-term loan from the Smithsonian Institute’s National Museum of the American Indian and taste Native inspired cuisine in the full-service restaurant.

### Hot Springs National Park turns 100

The 5,500 acres about 50 miles southwest of Little Rock that preserve and protect 47 thermal springs were first set aside in 1832 and became Hot Springs National Park in



Courtesy photo

Canyon Madness Ranch, which is surrounded by 14,000 acres, is one of two upscale resorts opening this spring in northern New Mexico, within a day’s drive of Wichita.



Courtesy photo

Among the newest attractions along Route 66 is the Classen Inn, a restored 1963 motor inn in Oklahoma City.

1921. Now the park is surrounded by the city of Hot Springs. Soaking is limited to two bathrooms but there’s hiking, camping and other outdoor activities.

### New visitor center at Wilson’s Creek National Battlefield

Wilson’s Creek National Battlefield, 10 miles southwest of Springfield, Mo., interprets the first major Civil War battle fought west of the Mississippi River. A 5-mile paved road allows you to drive, bicycle or walk a self-guided tour with eight stops at significant locations. Considered one of the best-preserved battlefields in the National Park System, Wilson’s Creek is opening a new visitor center this spring that will allow it to exhibit more of its artifacts. A large weapons display will showcase 80% of the site’s edged weapons and firearms, including a rare 1860 Henry Rifle, that transformed the outcome of the war.

### Oklahoma’s Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge

Hike, fish, watch bison or drive the scenic roads inside the 59,000-acre Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge in southwestern Oklahoma, less than a four-hour drive from Wichita. The 3.5-mile

paved road to the summit of Mount Scott provides views from 2,464 feet.

### New ways to explore the Flint Hills

Keep an eye on developments at The Volland Store, the community gathering space in the Flint Hills near Alma, about 140 miles northeast of Wichita. The gallery and event space is working on ways to allow visitors to safety experience the traveling Smithsonian exhibition “Crossroads: Change in Rural America” March 13 to April 25 and complementary exhibits and events. One project in the works is staging an original play this summer in the ruins of a home on the grounds of The Volland Store.

### Pikes Peak attractions reopen

The Pikes Peak Cog Railway reopens in May after a multi-year closure for repairs. Whether you reach the 14,115-foot summit of Pikes Peak west of Colorado Springs by train, car, bicycle or foot, you’ll also be able to enjoy the new Pikes Peak Summit House complex.

### Experience WWI sights and sounds through virtual reality

The National WWI Museum and Memorial in Kansas City is the new permanent home of an immersive virtual reality

experience that puts viewers in the trenches during an active World War I battle. Podcaster Dan Carlin leads the thought provoking “War Remains” experience, which is expected to be available for ages 14 and older beginning in May.

### Get your kicks on Route 66

While they are working on a centennial celebration that will culminate in 2026, Route 66 organizations and businesses expect an uptick this year in visitors exploring sections of the 2,400-mile Chicago-to-Los Angeles route.

There are just 13 miles of historic Route 66 in Kansas, but there’s plenty more to explore in nearby Missouri (317 miles) and Oklahoma (430 miles). Restaurants, roadside attractions, museums, visitor centers and motels are among the 66 stops on Oklahoma’s new Route 66 Passport project (order a passport at [TravelOK.com/Brochures](http://TravelOK.com/Brochures), where you also can download a guide of what to see and do along the road). Among the newest attractions is the Classen Inn, a restored 1963 motor inn along Oklahoma City’s stretch of Route 66.

In Springfield, Mo., stay at the Best Western Route 66 Rail Haven, see more than 70 models from the personal collection of Guy Mace at Route 66 Car Museum, grab a burger at the recreated Red’s Giant Hamburg and then see artifacts from the original 1940s restaurant on display among other memorabilia in the comprehensive Route 66 section of the recently renovated History Museum on the Square.

*As operations continue to change, always check the latest procedures for visiting outdoor or indoor attractions as well as any state travel guidance.*

## BOOK NOTES

### WATERMARK BOOKS & CAFE

#### Bestsellers

1. “So You Want to Talk About Race” by Ijeoma Oluo
2. “Sometimes Brave” by Trista Wilson
3. “She Come By It Natural” by Sarah Smarsh
4. “A Promised Land” by Barack Obama
5. “Wichita Memories volume 2” by The Wichita Eagle

#### New and notable

“The Prophets” by Robert Jones Jr. (Putnam, \$27) A singular and stunning debut novel about the forbidden union between two enslaved young men on a Deep South plantation, the refuge they find in each other, and a betrayal that threatens their existence.

“The Liar’s Dictionary” by Eley Williams (Doubleday, \$26.95) An exhilarating and laugh-out-loud debut novel from a prize-winning new talent which chronicles the misadventures of a lovelorn Victorian lexicographer and the young woman put on his trail a century later to root out his misdeeds while confronting questions of her own place in the world.

### EIGHTH DAY BOOKS

#### Bestsellers

1. “The World of Silence” by Max Picard
2. “The Romanov Royal Martyrs: What Silence Could Not Conceal” by Mesa Potamou Monastery
3. “Real Philosophy for Real People: Tools for Truthful Living” by Robert McTeigue
4. “Letters from Father Christmas” by J.R.R. Tolkien
5. “Dostoevsky: Language, Faith, and Fiction” by Rowan Williams
5. “Happy Little Family” by Rebecca Caudill

#### New and notable

“You Are Not a Gadget: A Manifesto” by Jaron Lanier (Vintage, \$16). A programmer, musician, and father of virtual reality technology, Jaron Lanier was a pioneer in digital media, and among the first to predict the revolutionary changes it would bring to our commerce and culture. Now, with the Web influencing virtually every aspect of our lives, he offers this provocative critique of how digital design is shaping society, for better and for worse.

“The Great Tradition: Classic Readings on What It Means to Be an Educated Human Being” ed. by Richard Gamble (ISI, \$20). This anthology reconstructs a centuries-long conversation about the goals, conditions, and ultimate value of true education. Spanning more than two millennia, from the ancient Greeks to contemporary writers, it includes substantial excerpts from more than sixty seminal writings on education.

### NATIONAL BEST-SELLERS

#### Fiction

1. “A Time for Mercy” by John Grisham
2. “Deadly Cross” by James Patterson
3. “Ready Player Two” by Ernest Cline
4. “The Return” by Nicholas Sparks
5. “The Vanishing Half” by Brit Bennett

#### Nonfiction

1. “A Promised Land” by Barack Obama
2. “Greenlights” by Matthew McConaughey
3. “Humans” by Brandon Stanton
4. “Modern Comfort Food” by Ina Garten
5. “Bag Man” by Maddow/Yarvitz

Publishers Weekly

## BOOK REVIEW

# A striking debut novel imagines two enslaved men in love

BY RIGOBERTO GONZÁLEZ  
*Los Angeles Times*

Homosexuality, being a human behavior, has existed in every culture, ancient and modern. Its visibility and acceptability vary, however, depending on each society’s values and attitudes toward same-sex love and desire. It stands to reason, then, that queerness (to use the current term) was extant in the antebellum period, not only in white society but also among slaves. Robert Jones Jr.’s striking debut novel “The Prophets” imagines how Isaiah and Samuel, two enslaved young men, create a space for mutual affection in an American era that suppressed not only their freedom of sexual expression but their right to be human altogether.

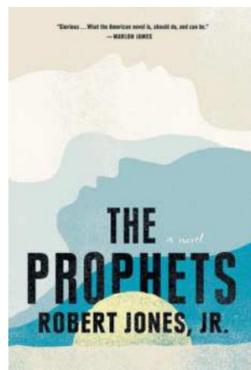
Life on the Elizabeth Plantation, referred to as Empty because of its remote location in rural Mississippi, is summed up by Isaiah in two short sentences: “Anybody with a whip gone use it. And people without one gone feel it.” Rule by fear keeps order. Isaiah and Samuel’s ascribed roles as stable workers, however, allow them to remain inseparable. Their cohabitation in the dark barn enables moments of undisturbed intimacy.

Isaiah and Samuel navigate their bodies quite differently. Externally, they’re perceived respectively as “always one smiling and always the other with his mouth angry and ajar,” but their private conversations (and arguments) over timeless questions about agency, freedom and survival resonate

even with the present moment. If sex was made possible by circumstance, their emotional bond is forged by intellectual interactions that range from the passionate to the philosophical.

The young men’s romantic partnership is somewhat of an open secret among the more observant slaves, like Maggie the wet nurse and cook, who sees it as self-preservation: “There were many ways to hide and save one’s self from doom and keeping tender secrets was one of them.”

For his part, Paul Halifax, the plantation owner, doesn’t take much notice of the closeness between Isaiah and Samuel until he decides to “multiply them through the strategic use of their seed.” But as studs the young men prove deficient. Time for Plan B:



## The Prophets

By Robert Jones Jr.; G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 400 pages, \$27.

“What the whip couldn’t remedy, Jesus could.” Paul props up the enslaved Amos as a plantation preacher, one who holds a dim view of the pair: “If they had cared at all for any of the others, they would have, at the very least, masked their strangeness.” Displeasing the master, Amos knows,

will incur his wrath upon all of them.

To complicate matters further, Timothy, a closeted gay man and the only surviving Halifax heir (many of the others met their end during infancy, courtesy of Maggie’s penchant for poisons), begins to fancy the young men.

A sensitive artist who sympathizes with the abolitionists, Timothy believes his clandestine liaisons with Isaiah and Samuel will allow them to transcend, if only briefly, the master-slave relationship. “Together we can be set free,” he proposes, albeit fully aware that he keeps the upper hand.

Jones sets the stage for a startling climax, though readers will wonder, given the historical period, if any other outcome were possible for two young slaves in love.

The author teases a more promising conclusion by flashing back intermittently to a mythical land in Africa, where the Kosongo people celebrate same-sex unions and are ruled by a fierce woman

warrior, King Akusa, who “vexed some of the other kings that [she] should call herself such.”

The overriding message of “The Prophets” is difficult to pin down if it’s not the transparent one: that Black queer love is not meant to thrive within the confines of Western paradigms. Or perhaps it’s in Samuel’s assertion that “[white people] needed his people for one thing and one thing only: to be his words. Ink-black and scribbled unto the forever, for they knew that there was no story without them, no audience to gasp at the drama, rejoice at the happy ending, to applaud, no matter how unskillfully their blood was used.” But this sentiment too sounds familiar. In fact, it’s the premise of Toni Morrison’s critical masterwork, “Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination.”

*González is a distinguished professor of English and director of the MFA program in creative writing at Rutgers-Newark.*