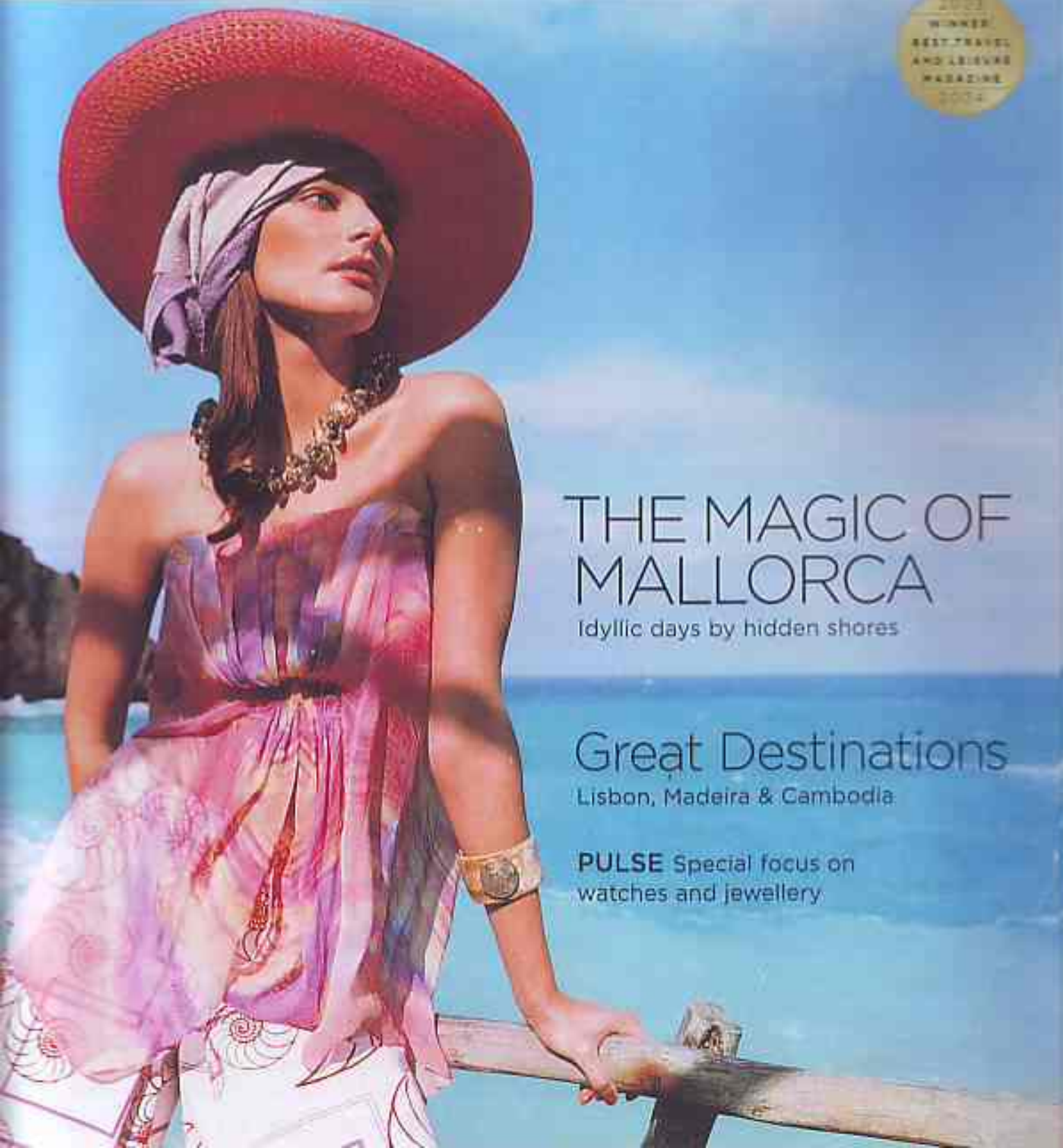


ORIENT EXPRESS

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LUNCH ON THE LAGOON

Visit the fascinating islands of the Venetian lagoon aboard a traditional boat.

The Venetian lagoon, one of Europe's most beautiful wetlands, spreads over some 100km of magical islands. It is a realm of wildlife reserves, abandoned fortresses and churches, vineyards, olive groves and vegetable farms. As locals always tell you, the best way to experience it is in a sailing boat—and now an enterprising Venetian, Mauro Stoppa, has launched an original way for visitors to do exactly that. His lovingly restored, 16m bragozzo, a traditional, wooden fishing boat named Eolo, offers incredible cruises which are not mere sailing trips but include a fascinating explanation of local history and folklore, a gourmet cooking lesson in the galley kitchen and a romantic meal on deck.

On a typical day, the boat visits little-known islands such as San Francesco del Deserto, a wildlife paradise inhabited by a small community of Franciscan monks, the sprawling Sant'Erasmus, which is a market garden of fields planted with artichokes and raddichio, vineyards and fruit trees, and the abandoned island of

San Giacomo in Palude, once a stop-off point for crusaders on their long voyage to the Holy Land.

Morning sightseeing is interrupted for a glass of sparkling Prosecco wine and delicious deep-fried *castrauri*, try local artichokes. Then Mauro and his culinary assistants disappear down into the galley to prepare lunch, where guests are welcome to join them to discover the chef's own Venetian recipes. Mauro stirs a huge frying pan filled with a creamy risotto of courgettes cooked together with their yellow flowers, while in the oven, the main dish might be a giant *scorfano* fish, slowly roasting on a bed of thinly sliced potatoes, or tiny wild ducks, bought the day before from hunters out on the lagoon, and delicately stuffed with foie gras.

A long table is set with silver cutlery and crystal glasses. Lunch is a long, lazy affair, and it is only when guests are dipping typical Venetian dessert biscuits in a glass of sweet Vin Santo, that the captain pulls up the anchor and begins the slow journey back to Venice, arriving at San Marco as the sun sets over the water.

Contact the Cipriani concierge for details or visit www.cruisivingenice.com.

Mauro Stoppa's trip around the lagoon on board his lovingly restored, traditional fishing boat Eolo, includes visits to little-known islands, such as the deserted San Giacomo in Palude, plus a long, leisurely lunch on board, featuring typical Venetian recipes and super-fresh ingredients sourced from the lagoon and its environs.