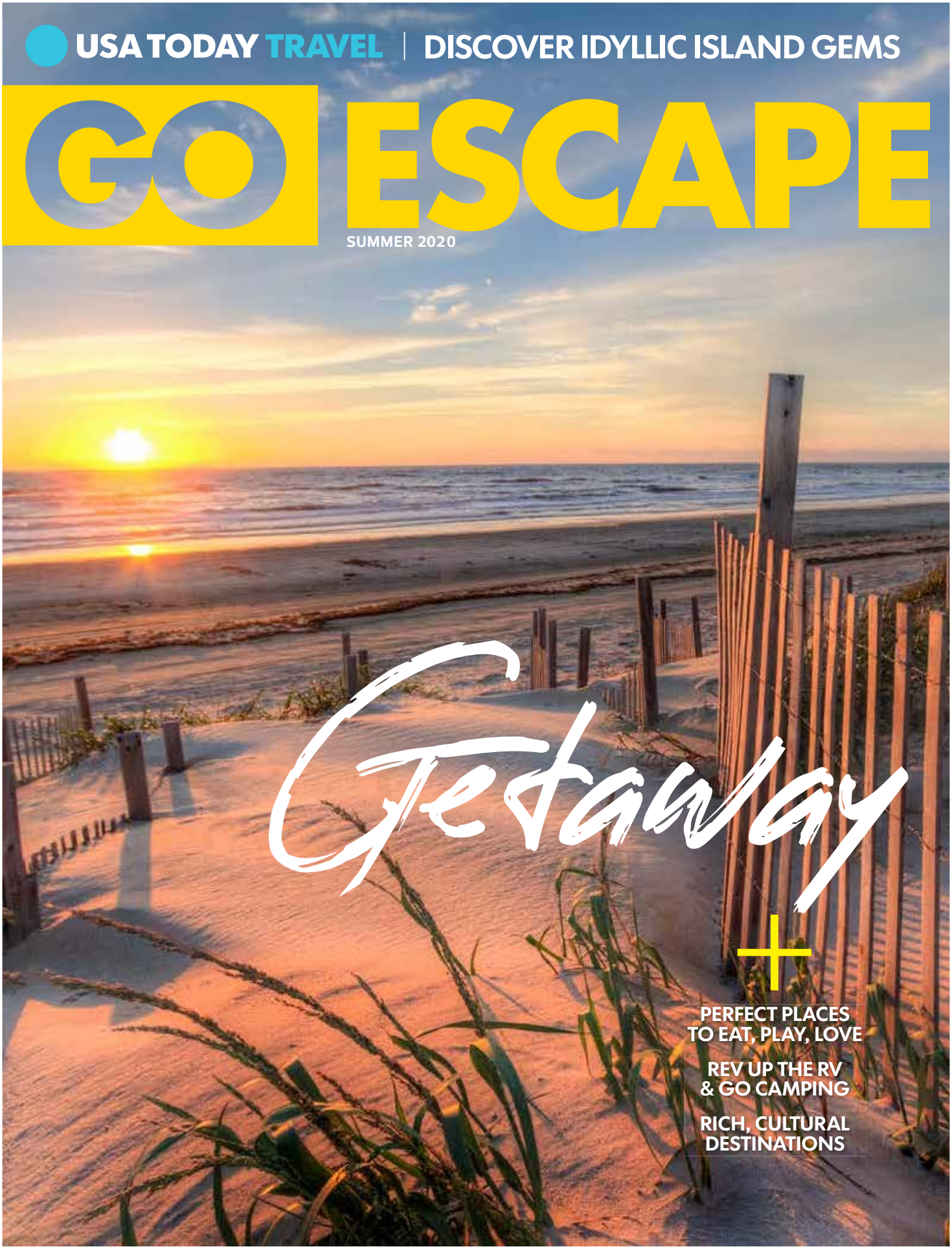
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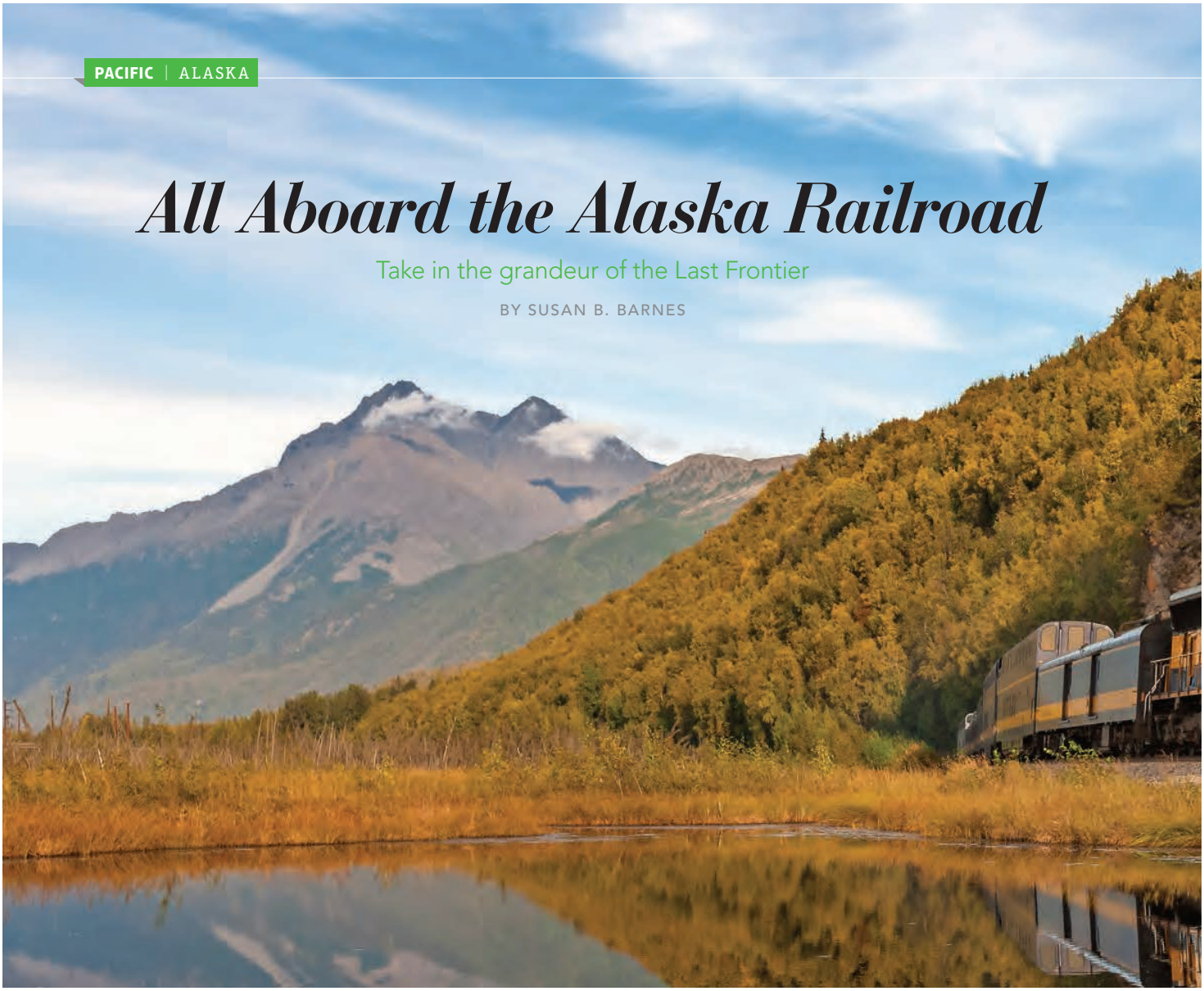
All Aboard the Alaska Railroad

Take in the grandeur of the Last Frontier

BY SUSAN B. BARNES



MICHAEL SULLIVAN

From my seat in the glass-domed Coastal Classic rail car, I watch as we roll out of Anchorage, Alaska, and travel south into the wide open spaces of the Last Frontier. To the right, the Seward Highway winds along the coastline of Turnagain Arm, following the same path as the Alaska Railroad. The conductor and onboard tour guides share the area's history and point out natural highlights along the route. Lucky travelers may see wildlife such as beluga whales breaking the water's surface, bald eagles soaring overhead, Dall sheep perched precariously upon the cliffs and even the odd moose walking along the tracks.

The entirety of the Alaska Railroad spans 470 miles, from Fairbanks in the north to Seward in the south. Stops along the route — including Denali National Park and Preserve, Talkeetna and Seward — provide ample opportunity for exploration.

Riding in a rail car harkens back to the way travel used to be — slow and enjoyable. Without Wi-Fi onboard, guests instead focus on the awe-inspiring beauty that extends as far as the eye can see. The open-air platform on each train is a terrific place to not only take in the fresh, crisp air, but a vantage point for photographers, too. And tourists are enjoying this leisurely way to take in the state. In 2019, more than 522,000 passengers rode the Alaska Railroad.

There are a few options when it comes to traveling by rail in Alaska. To help simplify planning, a number of summer (and even winter) round-trip packages are available from Anchorage that range from two to 10 days and include accommodations. For example, the five-day Taste of Alaska tour from Anchorage

On Track

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