

# Hemispheres

UNITED 

A STAR ALLIANCE MEMBER 

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## HOME ON THE RANGE

*A trip back in time with the American Mountain Men* P.58

## THE HEMI Q&A: LAVERNE COX

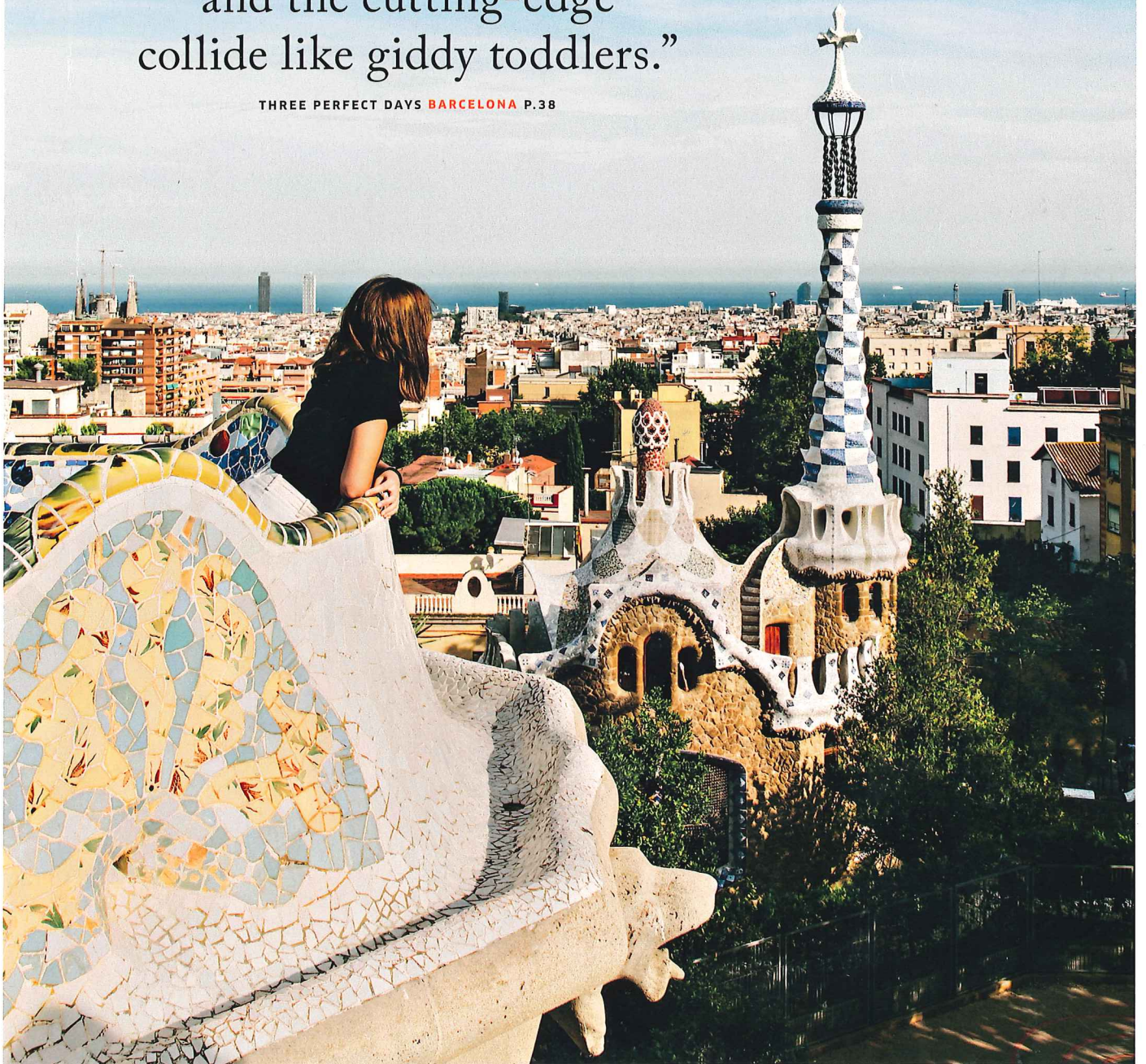
*TV's first transgender star is changing America one role at a time* P.54

## TRANSATLANTIC TOUCHDOWN

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“In this city, the ancient and the cutting-edge collide like giddy toddlers.”

THREE PERFECT DAYS **BARCELONA** P.38





DISPATCHES  
*News and Notes From Around the World*



## Say Lychees!

On the nature of celebrity  
in the middle of nowhere

**CHINA** I'm standing in a soggy field in Hunan Province, surrounded by people in bright traditional costumes milling around at the end of a rain-soaked grape festival. Suddenly, I hear a shout in Mandarin. I look up from the puddles I've been unsuccessfully avoiding. A man stares at me for a second or two, then runs off across the field.

China is riddled with arcane social rules, but I'm pretty sure I haven't done anything to offend anyone, let alone scare them away. Moments later, the man returns with a small child, presumably his son. He thrusts the boy into my arms, then says something I have no hope of understanding. Juggling the child and an umbrella, I smile and deliver one of my five Mandarin words: "*Ni-bao*," or "hello."

By now, it's clear what's going on. International tourists are common in Shanghai, Beijing, and near Xi'an's terracotta warriors, but attract curiosity in many other parts of the country. **From noodle bars to rural festivals, foreigners, bewildered by their sudden celebrity, often find themselves being commandeered for photo-ops.**

No surprise, then, that a small crowd has gathered in this field, personal devices at the ready, to commemorate the presence of the Western woman with the muddy shoes. The kid, who seems to have been through this before, forms his fingers into the peace symbol and holds it next to his toothy grin.

Just then, the boy's father, looking over the shoulder of a woman capturing the moment on her phone, breaks into rapid-fire Mandarin and starts flapping his arms. I'm not sure if it's because he thinks I'm about to drop his son or if he just wants the boy to look at the camera. Finally, the man smiles, says "*Shyeb-shyeb*"—"thanks"—and reclaims his child. Camera clicks follow me all the way back to my bus. —JOHANNA READ