

Business Traveller

ASIA-PACIFIC

APRIL 2018

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COVER: IMAGE DESIGN & GALACTIC GIRL BY SKY26

WELCOME



As we were going to press, news broke that world-renowned physicist Stephen Hawking had passed away. One of the most brilliant minds of the 20th century, Hawking often mentioned the fact that his birth date was exactly 300 years after Galileo's death. No doubt he would have enjoyed the coincidence that his death was 139 years to the day that Albert Einstein was born, too.

His contributions to the world of cosmology – concerning the birth, evolution and fate of the universe – led to repeat Nobel-prize nominations, particularly for his groundbreaking theory that “black holes ain't so black” and that some things, dubbed “Hawking radiation”, can escape after all.

His last work, entitled “A Smooth Exit from Eternal Inflation”, was submitted just days before he died and could be his most important thesis ever, with a mathematical blueprint to prove the existence of parallel universes...

For those of us who aren't experts in theoretical astrophysics, Hawking will also be remembered for his courageous and inspirational battle with Lou Gehrig's disease (or “ALS”), a rare form of motor neurone disease that left him paralysed and communicating through a computerised voice system.

Given just two years to live at the age of 21, Hawking defied all expectations by living a full and rich life with humour and optimism until the respectable age of 76. And as he himself pointed out, he may have had a wheelchair-bound existence on Earth, but his mind was free to explore the cosmos.

So it seems a fitting coincidence that our cover feature this issue should also be looking at the stars, or more specifically, looking at the work of other brilliant minds and their exciting efforts to launch space tourism. From the suborbital flights already being sold by Virgin Galactic to Space X's planned trips around the moon, it's time to empty those piggy banks for the trip of a lifetime. Turn to page 30 to find out more.

Tamsin Cocks Editor

THIS ISSUE'S PICKS



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Break-out Café



Dai Pai Dong



Catering Truck

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MARISA CANNON

A former staff writer at *Business Traveller*, Marisa Cannon is now a content editor at Cedar Communications, working on British Airways digital platforms. Passionate about luxury travel and business trends, in this issue she reports from the Spanish capital on how a tech revolution has revived Madrid's fortunes; page 22



MINTY CLINCH

Avid golfing enthusiast Minty Clinch has written about the best greens all over the world for publications including the *Independent* and the *Financial Times*. In the run-up to the 2020 Olympic Games, Tokyo's courses are swinging into action so Minty heads to the Japanese capital to highlight a selection of courses, including the official 2020 Olympic course; page 66

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APRIL HUTCHINSON

A travel journalist and editor for more than 20 years, April Hutchinson is the editor of *TTG Luxury*, a business magazine for premium travel professionals, which has just celebrated its tenth year and received the accolade of Trade Publication of the Year at the 2017 Travel Media Awards. For her sins, she regularly combs the globe in search of the best luxury hotels and has visited the Seychelles more times than she cares to mention out loud; page 42



DOMINIC BLISS

Dominic Bliss is a London-based journalist who writes on travel, sport and general interest. Work assignments have included hiking with Berbers across the Atlas Mountains, searching out polar bears in the Arctic, boxing with Amir Khan in Hollywood, cooking with Jamie Oliver and mountain biking in Utah. Sadly Dominic wasn't able to experience a trip around the moon for our cover story on the developments in commercial space travel – but it might not be too long before this is possible; page 30

ILLUSTRATIONS: BENJAMIN SOUTHAN

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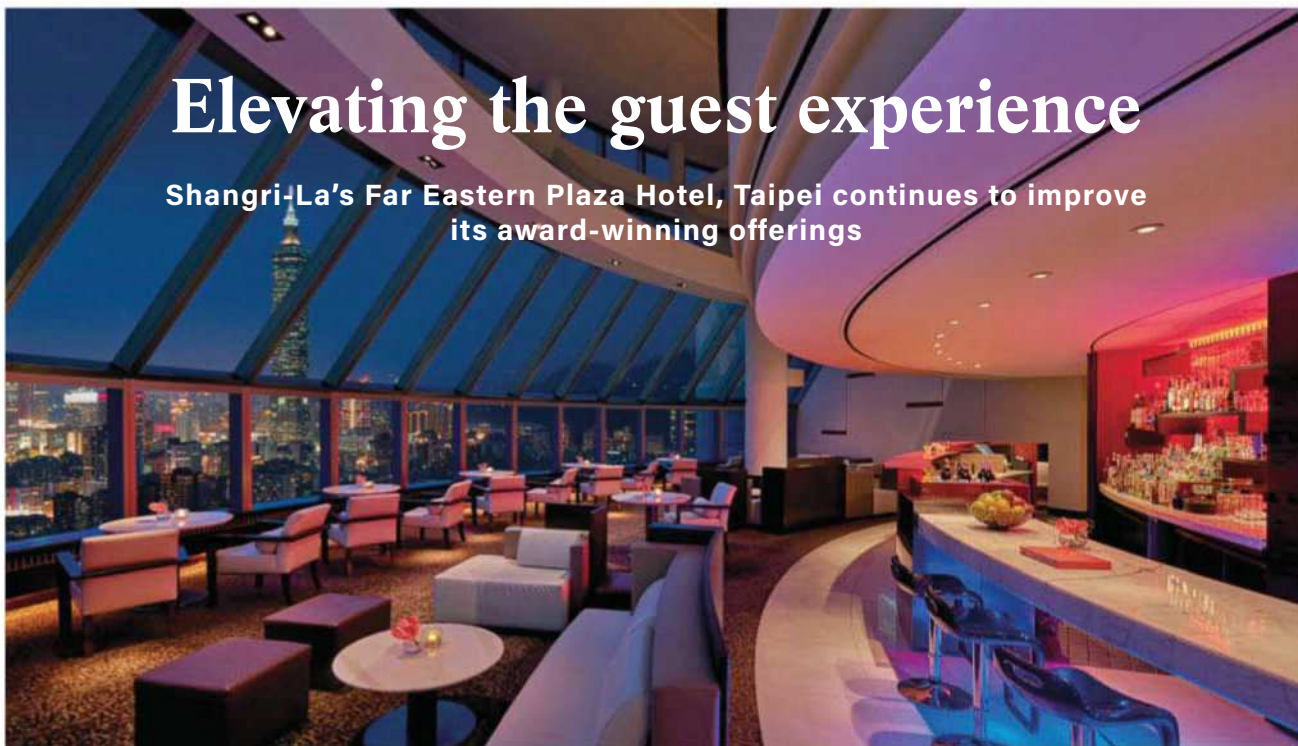
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Elevating the guest experience

Shangri-La's Far Eastern Plaza Hotel, Taipei continues to improve its award-winning offerings



Awarded "2017 Best Business Hotel in Taipei" by *Business Traveller* Asia-Pacific readers, the elegant Shangri-La's Far Eastern Plaza Hotel, Taipei is going from strength to strength with new offerings for 2018.

Standing 43 storeys tall in the heart of Taipei's premier financial district, the hotel boasts panoramic views of the Taipei skyline with many rooms overlooking the iconic Taipei 101, along with unparalleled service and exquisite décor that blends East and West.

The 420 luxuriously appointed guestrooms, including 37 suites, have been designed with the concept of "eternal elegance" inspired by the Song Dynasty, featuring a mix of traditional Chinese décor with modern design details. The majority of rooms feature cosy window seats to create a homey relaxation space and enjoy the impressive views.

A highlight of the property is the year-round heated rooftop pool on the 43rd floor, which overlooks the city's key landmarks as well as the surrounding mountains.

Guests staying in the Horizon Club Rooms and Suites are welcome to enjoy the Horizon Club Lounge, where you will experience privileged benefits including private check-in and checkout,



a delectable breakfast spread, all-day refreshments, and evening canapés and cocktails. Business travellers can also host small meetings in the private meeting room.

Various dining facilities include Shanghai Pavilion (39/F, Shanghainese cuisine), Marco Polo Restaurant (38/F, modern Italian), ibuki by TAKAGI KAZUO (7/F, Japanese teppanyaki, Kyoto cuisine, sushi and tempura), Shang Palace (6/F, Cantonese) and Café at Far Eastern (6/F, all-day dining and buffet). Marco Polo Lounge (38/F, live DJ and cocktails) and Lobby Court (1/F, live performance and gins) feature beverage selections, afternoon tea sets and light snacks, while Li Bai Lounge (6/F, whiskies and wines) provides a wide selection of delicacies and beverages.

This year, the hotel has launched a new "Guest Experience Program" to provide guests with the opportunity to immerse themselves in vibrant local experiences. Guests can choose to have a private cooking class with the hotel's five-star chef or wander the lively Da'an district with our knowledgeable hotel guides for a series of fun-filled activities from bar hopping to night market tours.

To further enhance the overall guest experience, Shangri-La Hotels and Resorts has launched the new Shangri-La Mobile App with an exclusive loyalty programme offer from Golden Circle. The bonus points promotion, valid until April 30, invites travellers to "Unlock the World of Shangri-La" at over 100 hotels and resorts across the Shangri-La, Kerry Hotels, Hotel Jen and Traders Hotels brands. The key functionalities include fast and easy booking, mobile check-in/check out, management of Golden Circle account and redeeming rewards. Members of Golden Circle can instantly take advantage of the benefits and promotions by downloading the app.

Shangri-La's Far Eastern Plaza Hotel, Taipei, 201 Tun Hwa South Road, Section 2, Taipei 10675, Taiwan, R.O.C; tel: 886 2 2378 8888; shangri-la.com/taipei



Food for the long haul

Qantas's 17-hour flights between Perth and London took off last month with an in-flight menu designed to help passengers cope with the long flight and reduce jet lag.

Working with researchers from the University of Sydney's Charles Perkins Centre, Qantas has developed dishes that it says will "encourage sleep at optimal times during the flight" by improving passenger hydration.

Passengers can expect dishes such as tuna poke salad and salmon, soba and raw zucchini noodles in business class, and marinated beef, citrus, cumin and zucchini salad in premium economy and economy.

The airline's drinks menu, meanwhile, comprises probiotic-infused Botanica cold pressed juice shots to aid hydration, as well as Qantas sleep tisane (herbal tea) and hot chocolate to help passengers fall asleep. qantas.com



NEW AIRPORT LOUNGES



CATHAY PACIFIC has opened a new lounge, The Deck (a former Dragonair lounge) at Gate 16. Operated by Sodexo, the facility features familiar favourites such as the Noodle Bar and a unique offering among the carrier's other Hong Kong lounges in the form of The Terrace – an open-ceiling, L-shaped veranda that overlooks the airport's apron, taxiways and northern runway. cathaypacific.com

BANGKOK AIRWAYS' new Boutique Lounge and the Blue Ribbon Club at Suvarnabhumi International Airport are located opposite Gate D7 at the airport's concourse D. Boutique Lounge offers 120 seats and features a computer room, newspapers and snacks such as popcorn. The smaller Blue Ribbon Club has 50 seats, also featuring a selection of hot foods, a private shower room and a massage service. bangkokair.com



PARK HYATT AIMS HIGH IN KL

MALAYSIA will be getting its first Park Hyatt-branded hotel in 2021, situated in what is set to become Southeast Asia's tallest skyscraper, the PNB 118 tower in Kuala Lumpur. The new Park Hyatt Kuala Lumpur will occupy the top 17 floors of the upcoming 118-storey tower, which is also set to be the third tallest skyscraper in the world when it opens in 2020.

A total of 232 rooms – including 28 suites – will be available in the luxury hotel, plus 30 residential apartments. There will also be a number of residential-style spaces including galleries and libraries. Three on-site restaurants and bars will be open to guests and visitors, comprising a signature restaurant as well as a “skyline-level” restaurant and bar. hyatt.com

BRING A PLUS ONE

Minor Hotels Group has launched the Avani+ brand to “encompass a selection of hotels and resorts showcasing the next level in style, design and facilities”.

Its first property opened last month in Luang Prabang, Laos, close to the Mekong River. Avani+ Luang Prabang features 53 rooms with either a balcony or terrace, French colonial-inspired interiors, a gym, spa facilities, yoga pavilion and a 25-metre courtyard swimming pool. minorhotels.com



WATER TAXIS IN HONG KONG?

Could water taxis soon be coming to Hong Kong? According to a recent study by the Worcester Polytechnic Institute, nine out of ten people would be interested in using water taxis to travel across Victoria Harbour. Government officer Edward Yau said discussions were under way to introduce water taxis, and the government has floated a proposal to introduce the service by the end of 2019.



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MALAYSIA AIRLINES has reopened its Satellite Golden Lounge at Kuala Lumpur International Airport following months of renovation. The space has a total of 455 seats in the business and first class areas with a Malaysian heritage-inspired design. There is a Laksa Bar, local and international buffet counters, a barista and a sports bar, as well as a meeting room, Muslim prayer room, family area and smoking room. malaysiaairlines.com

LUFTHANSA recently opened a new lounge in Departure Area A, Terminal 1 of Milan Malpensa Airport. The 117-seat facility has furniture designed by Swiss firm Vitra and floor-to-ceiling windows offering views over the airport apron. The central bar serves barista-brewed coffee, and there is a Coffee Corner at the lounge entrance. Food options comprise Italian aperitifs, finger food and made-to-order dishes from the open kitchen. lufthansa.com



PLUS

AMERICAN AIRLINES opened its revamped Flagship Lounges at Los Angeles International Airport in January.

AUSTRIAN AIRLINES will open two new-look Senator lounges at Vienna Airport before summer.

AIR FRANCE has opened a new business class lounge in Charles de Gaulle airport. A VIP room will open in July.

QANTAS will renovate its international business class lounge at Sydney Airport in Q3 this year.

SKYTEAM will open its first South American lounge in Santiago, Chile and one in Istanbul New Airport by the end of this year.



TRAVEL TALES



BUDGIE SMUGGLER

A man was caught trying to smuggle 20 live finches crammed inside tube-shaped canisters into New York's JFK airport last month. US Customs and Border Protection officers confiscated the birds and fined the man US\$300.

FEAR THE WALKING DEAD

A 27-year-old man who tried to ram a stolen vehicle into an airport terminal building in Illinois reportedly did so because he became concerned about an impending zombie apocalypse.

X-TREME MEASURES

A woman in Dongguan jumped into an airport x-ray machine alongside her purse rather than part with the bag as it went through security scanning. The woman was reportedly trying to protect money inside her purse.

DRY IN THE SKY

A female passenger on board a packed Ural Airlines flight from Turkey to Russia was seen drying her underwear by holding it up towards the overhead air-conditioning vents.

UP IN SMOKE

A power bank recently caught fire in a passenger's carry-on bag that was located in the overhead bins on a China Southern flight from Guangzhou to Shanghai. Crew extinguished the fire but a replacement plane had to be found for the flight.

QUEEN OF THE SKIES RETIREMENT HOME

A recent Netflix documentary *The World's Most Extraordinary Homes* revealed how a woman in Malibu, California built her dream house using the wings and tailfins of a former passenger Boeing 747 aircraft. Owner Francie Rehwald commissioned architect David Hertz to design the house, who paid just US\$26,000 to purchase the scrap aircraft (though the entire project reportedly ran well into the millions). Developers had to close five freeways to transport the aircraft parts, while a Boeing CH-47 Chinook helicopter (one of the heaviest lifting helicopters) airlifted them the rest of the way to the building site.



NEW DINING



DEAR LILLY

Located in a glass-walled space on the roof of IFC mall in Hong Kong, Dear Lilly is a new romantic dining outlet with floor-to-ceiling shelves crammed with vintage perfume bottles brimming with flowers, and hundreds of bouquets hanging from the kinetic ceiling. It serves contemporary European cuisine with flavours of the Mediterranean. diningconcepts.com



LA FAMIGLIA

Located in Macau's Taipa Village, La Famiglia is a Portuguese-Italian restaurant that boasts a family-style atmosphere. It offers a leisurely environment with a menu of contemporary Italian dishes, tapas and wines, all with a Portuguese twist. Popular dishes include La Famiglia seafood rice, and grilled wagyu T-bone steak with coriander salsa. taipavillagemacau.com

Which wines should you choose on an airline?

WHEN IT COMES to wines offered on board their flights, airlines are now thinking about the effect that the cabin environment has on wine, and have begun selecting those that are best suited for the change in palate we experience while at altitude.

So which wines should travellers opt for in order to get the most enjoyable experience? The judges of our annual Cellars in the Sky awards had some pertinent observations to make when it comes to choosing the right wines...

IN BUSINESS CLASS

Avoid reds from Bordeaux
(also known as clarets)

// They are completely wrong for the air: tannic, too high in acidity and invariably young because the airlines can't get the older vintages." - *Tim Atkin, MW*

Opt for fruit-forward red grape varieties

// In business class reds, the three top wines were all shiraz/syrah." - *Peter McCombie, MW*

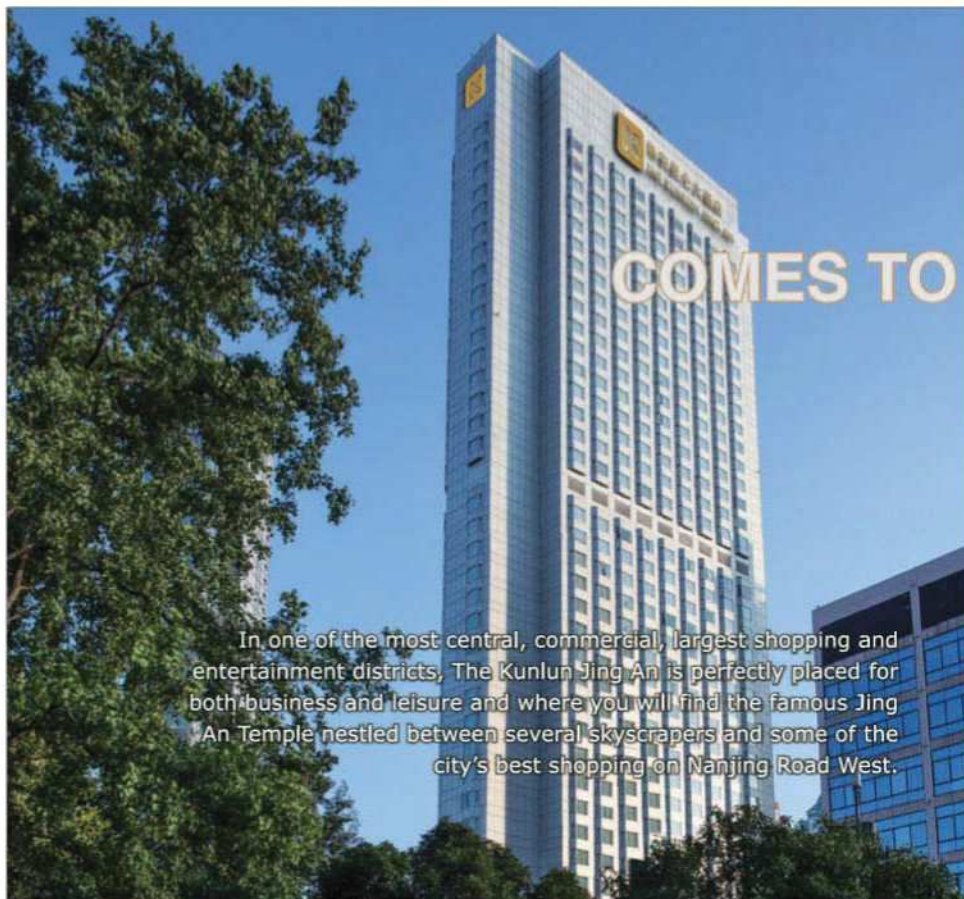
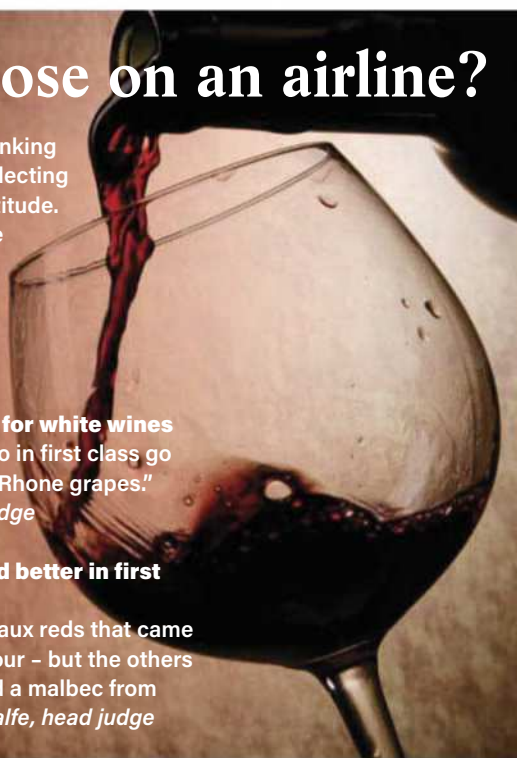
IN FIRST CLASS

Chardonnay is a safe bet for white wines

// Red is more difficult, so in first class go for whites, or for the Rhone grapes." - *Charles Metcalfe, head judge*

Bordeaux reds performed better in first than in business

// There were two Bordeaux reds that came through in the final four - but the others were a northern Rhone and a malbec from Argentina." - *Charles Metcalfe, head judge*



In one of the most central, commercial, largest shopping and entertainment districts, The Kunlun Jing An is perfectly placed for both business and leisure and where you will find the famous Jing An Temple nestled between several skyscrapers and some of the city's best shopping on Nanjing Road West.

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Airbnb looks to the skies

AIRBNB FOUNDER BRIAN CHESKY has revealed that the online accommodation marketplace has "seriously considered" a number of concepts surrounding aviation, as part of the company's plans to become an "end-to-end trip business". An Airbnb airline could be in the works... airbnb.com



10 MOST COMMONLY LOST ITEMS ON FLIGHTS (in no particular order)



*Source: Hong Kong Airlines. The airline launched its online We Found service in May 2017, which allows customers to instantly check on lost property items. A total of 2,926 pieces of lost property have been found and recorded as of February 28, 2018. hongkongairlines.com

ROUTE NEWS ✈️

ASCENT:

Hainan Airlines launched four routes in four days last month: Shenzhen-Brussels, Beijing-Tijuana-Mexico City, Shenzhen-Madrid and Changsha-London Heathrow.

Cathay Pacific is launching direct flights to Cape Town on November 13 this year using its Airbus A350-900.

China Eastern will launch flights between Stockholm and Shanghai on June 16, giving the Swedish capital its first non-stop connection to the Chinese city.

Qatar Airways plans to return to London Gatwick with double-daily flights in May – seven years after cancelling the route.

Virgin Australia has its eyes on a second Hong Kong service, this time giving the city a daily connection with Sydney sometime in mid-2018.

DESCENT:

Flydubai cut its double-daily service to Bangkok last month, despite having recently begun deploying its new B737 Max 8 aircraft on the route.

FOUR NEW HOTELS CLOSE TO AIRPORTS

MGM COTAI

Located a five-minute drive from Macau's airport, the US\$3.4 billion hotel offers 1,400 rooms and suites, plenty of meeting space, a high-end spa, plus a host of retail offerings and F&B outlets. The property also boasts the MGM Theater, offering three resident entertainment shows. A collection of more than 300 pieces of art – from ancient to contemporary – is also showcased throughout the property. mgm.mo/en/cotai



HYATT REGENCY SHENZHEN AIRPORT

Opening this month, the hotel is only a five-minute walk from the airport via an indoor corridor. The 335-room property has a Regency Club on Level 11 that overlooks the airport runway, while other F&B options include Market Café offering an Asian and Italian menu; Xiang Yue showcasing Cantonese, Northern Chinese and Sichuan cuisines; and The Bar for drinks and snacks. hyatt.com



HOTEL OKURA MANILA

Opening later this year, the hotel will be situated within the Resorts World Manila integrated resort area, about ten minutes' drive from Ninoy Aquino International Airport. Its 191 rooms have an average room size of 60 sqm, while F&B offerings will include traditional Japanese and Spanish restaurants, all-day dining and a bar. There will also be a pool and fitness facility. okura.com



MERITON SUITES SYDNEY AIRPORT

Opening this April, the all-suite Meriton Suites Sydney Airport can be reached in ten minutes from both the International and Domestic terminals of Sydney Airport. The property boasts 179 suites, ranging in size from one to three bedrooms. Daily housekeeping service is provided, while leisure facilities include a fitness centre, heated indoor pool and sauna. meritonsuites.com.au



It's Showtime

Performances to catch on your travels around the region this month

LA PARISIENNE - CABARET FRANCAISE MACAU

UNTIL JUNE 17

Coming to Macau for the first time at The Parisian Theatre, The Parisian Macao, an international cast of 38 stunt performers, illusionists, world champion skaters, international models and award-winning dancers and performers will take you on an amazing 65-minute journey, performing high-energy basketball-themed acrobatic acts, thrilling ice skating formations and motorcycles speeding inches from each other inside an iron globe. Tickets from MOP188 (US\$23) to MOP488 (US\$60). macauticket.com



CIRQUE DU SOLEIL HONG KONG

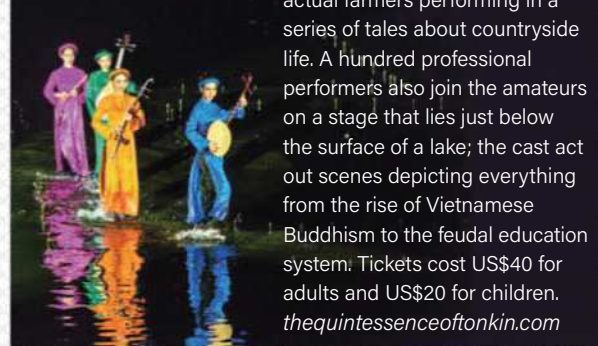
APRIL 19-JUNE 3

With a new production named *KOOZA*, the famed circus troupe will combine thrilling, heart-stopping acrobatic performances with the art of clowning. The show will be presented by colourfully costumed characters, and will spring open like a jewelled toy box to capture the audience's imagination and set pulses racing. Tickets from HK\$488 (US\$62) to HK\$1,888 (US\$240). cirquedusoleil.com/kooza



THE QUINTESSENCE OF TONKIN HANOI ONGOING

This cultural show stars 150 actual farmers performing in a series of tales about countryside life. A hundred professional performers also join the amateurs on a stage that lies just below the surface of a lake; the cast act out scenes depicting everything from the rise of Vietnamese Buddhism to the feudal education system. Tickets cost US\$40 for adults and US\$20 for children. thequintessenceoftonkin.com



HOT DEALS



THIS MONTH'S prizes come from Winsland Serviced Suites by Lanson Place. Located in the heart of Singapore, Winsland Serviced Suites by Lanson Place offers a relaxing, tranquil environment for travellers seeking short- or long-term accommodation. The spacious suites have been recently renovated, sporting a new modern look inspired by nature, and beyond the walls of the property guests can find an abundance of exciting shopping, dining and entertainment options just a block away on Orchard Road.

For more details and to enter, visit businesstraveller.com/competitions

Two prizes this month include a three-night stay in a one-bedroom Executive Suite and a three-night stay in a one-bedroom Premier Suite.

JANUARY/FEBRUARY ISSUE COMPETITION WINNERS: Virginia Bovolo and Peter McNamara each won a three-night stay in a Horizon Deluxe Room at Shangri-La's Far Eastern Plaza Hotel, Taipei.

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Radisson Hotel Group rebrands

Carlson Rezidor Hotel Group has rebranded as Radisson Hotel Group, bringing with it a new name, a revamped loyalty programme and an aggressive expansion plan in Asia-Pacific.

The group aims to double its total number of rooms across the region, from its current 18,000 to close to 38,000 in the foreseeable future.

Much of this development is expected to take place in China, where the group aims to triple its presence over the coming five years with expansions into second- and third-tier cities.

Meanwhile, the group's loyalty programme has also been renamed

Radisson Rewards. Each of the tiers has been renamed, and they have also had their thresholds reduced to make it easier for members to attain and maintain status.

radissonhotelgroup.com



Fraser Place Melbourne is offering a special deal for *Business Traveller* Asia-Pacific readers.

Guests using the promo code "APAC" to book a Studio Apartment will receive a bottle of wine. Apartments have a kitchen, free wifi and bottled water on arrival. The rate starts from A\$165 (US\$130) and is valid until September 24, 2018.

melbourne.frasershospitality.com



Dorsett Wan Chai Hong Kong is running a 26 Hours "A" Feature programme

for guests booking a room directly on the hotel's website. This allows guests to check in at any time they like before checking out after 26 hours. Additionally, they can choose three of the following benefits during the stay: airport lounge access, a Buy-1-Get-1-Free Ocean Park ticket, free room upgrade, free breakfast, or free meal vouchers at local coffee shops (*cha chaan teng*). Starting rates for a Standard room begin at HK\$1,100 (US\$140). The deal is valid until further notice. wanchai.dorsethotels.com



Mandarin Oriental, Singapore has a Discover and Dine at Cherry Garden package.

It includes a one-night stay in a Club Marina Bay Suite, a special selection of Chinese tea and a Chinese Singapore Heritage Cookbook, breakfast at Melt Café for two, a visit to the Chinatown Wet Market with the hotel's executive Chinese chef, a dim sum masterclass for two, as well as weekend dim sum brunch at Cherry Garden for two. The package starts from S\$2,500 (US\$1,904) and is valid until October 31, 2018. mandarinoriental.com



The Fullerton Heritage

A world-class destination offering luxury hotel accommodation, dynamic dining and lifestyle entertainment choices

A waterfront development whose architecture combines both the historical and contemporary, The Fullerton Heritage comprises a myriad of dining, hospitality and lifestyle establishments across The Fullerton Hotel Singapore, The Fullerton Bay Hotel Singapore, The Fullerton Waterboat House, One Fullerton, The Fullerton Pavilion, Clifford Pier and Customs House.

Together with the two hotels' nine dining destinations, an array of 29 restaurants, bars and cafés in the precinct make it a vibrant focal point of lifestyle offerings for both hotel and city guests to enjoy.

The precinct is strategically positioned in the heart of Singapore's Central Business District, minutes from the city's iconic cultural landmarks and close to the main shopping belts of Suntec City and Orchard Road. It is also well linked to various transportation hubs, with Changi International Airport less than half an hour away and Raffles Place MRT Station within a few minutes' walk.

A graceful and modern two-storey waterfront development, One Fullerton features an exciting tenant mix with some of Singapore's best restaurants, bars and entertainment concepts, from chic cafés to fine-dining alfresco destinations serving international cuisines. Located on a unique urban promenade, the destination is also directly adjacent to the historic Merlion Park that attracts over one million visitors every year.

For intimate fine dining, The Fullerton Waterboat House houses the restaurant 1919, while Clifford Pier – a 1933 historic landmark that was once Singapore's first

port of call for immigrants – offers The Fullerton Bay Hotel's flagship restaurant, The Clifford Pier.

Customs House, a stunning celebration of Singapore's past, has been transformed into a dining and entertainment complex featuring leading establishments such as Kinki, Super Loco and Sabai Fine Thai on the Bay. Perched at the apex of the 23-metre-high tower of Customs House is The Lookout – a dining destination that boasts 360-degree views of the city skyline and Marina Bay.

For captivating views of the bay, The Fullerton Pavilion is where guests can indulge in Italian cuisine at Monti.

Of the historic buildings along the precinct, The Fullerton Hotel is perhaps the most iconic. Transformed from a 1928 neoclassical General Post Office, the luxury hotel was gazetted as Singapore's 71st National Monument in 2015. Carefully designed to provide travellers with a sanctuary to retreat and rejuvenate, each of the hotel's 400 rooms and suites overlooks the sunlit lobby atrium, scenic Singapore River or Marina Bay. With its unique blend of rich heritage and contemporary style, it is consistently recognised as one of the best hotels in the world.

Moreover, within the hallowed hallways of this iconic building is The Fullerton Spa,

an urban oasis featuring signature therapies that deliver visible results. Located on the mezzanine level of The Fullerton Hotel, The Fullerton Spa creates a passage to allow you to escape, renew and relax.

Across the road, The Fullerton Bay Hotel is the latest addition to the precinct. Built on the waters of Marina Bay, the award-winning hotel makes a striking impression with breathtaking architecture, glamorous interiors and legendary service. Presenting 100 rooms and suites replete with private balconies and double-glazed floor-to-ceiling windows, guests are treated to stunning vistas of Singapore's cosmopolitan skyline.

In 2018, The Fullerton Hotel Singapore celebrates the 90th anniversary of the Fullerton Building in which it is sited, with a repertoire of events, encapsulating the iconic building's rich heritage and the brand's passion for luxury hospitality and lifestyle.

A highlight of the celebrations is the debut of Fullerton Concours d'Elegance from 29 June to 1 July 2018. A line-up of over 90 vintage, classic and super cars will take centre stage, alongside charity car drives, gourmet food offerings, family carnival, music performances and more. Guests and the public are invited to join in the celebrations and be part of history in the making.



1 Fullerton Square, Singapore 049178
Tel: +65 6733 8388



80 Collyer Quay, Singapore 049326
Tel: +65 6333 8388



Star letter

BIRTHDAY BLUES

In June 2017, I purchased two first class tickets on a Dreamliner from Phuket via Kuala Lumpur to London (BA34) to celebrate my husband's 80th birthday.

Things quickly went from a dream trip to a nightmare. On the second leg to London, my husband discovered the IFE system in his seat was not working – the steward changed the headphones, to no avail. Eventually they discovered half the IFE systems in the first class cabin were not working, so they could do nothing. Then we were given pyjamas – these were all the same dark-blue colour for men or women, which made us look more like inmates than elite passengers.

Next, the food: the appetizer was an extremely spicy salmon ceviche. Was there an alternative? No. Did anyone ask if we were ok with spicy food? No. For the main course my husband chose the beef tenderloin, which came rock hard and totally overcooked. The steward changed it – but the second tenderloin came even harder. My husband agreed to try the risotto instead but this was tasteless. With no decent dinner, my husband was given a small plate of cheese – surely common sense would have been to make this dish a little bigger. My husband went to sleep with no movie to watch and no dinner.

I decided to charge my mobile phone only to find that the charging points were also not working, and the cabin crew didn't seem to know how to use the equipment (though thankfully, at this point, the switched-on cabin services director took my phone to charge somewhere else).

STAR LETTER PRIZE



XL2110 DA SONATA

This month's Star Letter winner will receive a stylish pair of Line Art Charmant frames with a lightweight, elegant style. The upscale eyewear features quality materials and an ergonomic design.

For your chance to win the Star Letter, email us at editorial@businessstravellerasia.com and include your full postal address and daytime telephone number. We reserve the right to edit letters.

After a sleep, I woke first and had some breakfast. Later my husband woke up, but when he chose his breakfast, was told they had run out of the dish he wanted.

Other issues included having just one toilet cubicle for the nine first class passengers, crew and pilots.

Moreover, it was dirty from the start, whereas other airlines keep this spotless at all times.

Thank you British Airways for making this birthday so unforgettable.

I wrote to customer services when I landed, demanding an upgrade for the return section (we were only able to book business class apparently) or a full refund.

They chose to remain silent until the day we flew home, then told us there was no alternative route with first class, upgrading was not possible and a refund was not possible. Instead, they offered me 15,000 Avios in compensation, which as a friend told me, meant I could fly for free between Heathrow and Gatwick... quite disgusting.

I suppose if we were famous people we would have new tickets and a red carpet. But being only full-paying passengers, who cares? Thank you British Airways for making the trip so awful, for not responding on time, and for not coming up with a decent solution.

Sabine Wolf Gilbert, Phuket

BRITISH AIRWAYS RESPONDS:

We want every customer who flies with us to have a fantastic experience. We have apologised to Mr and Mrs Gilbert and offered them a gesture of goodwill.

We're grateful for our customers' feedback and as soon as the aircraft landed we called in engineers to investigate all of the issues raised.

We are proud to fly more than 100,000 customers across the world every day and our colleagues work extremely hard to deliver consistently high standards in the air and on the ground. We are investing £4.5 billion [US\$6.3 billion] over the next five years, including taking delivery of 72 brand-new aircraft and refurbishing 128 of our long-haul aircraft.

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TAKEN TO THE CLEANERS

I read Derek Picot's piece entitled "Taken to the cleaners" (in the Jan/Feb edition) and was utterly appalled.

While he rightly acknowledges that most guests will have no idea what the appropriate price for laundering specific items might be, the idea that "the way forward is to understand the real cost of providing a laundry service, minimise it and then add as much profit as you can possibly get away with" is fundamentally misguided.

It's precisely this kind of thinking that has led to the financial services industry being subject to "conduct" regulation. Part of what conduct regulators are looking at (in addition to other bad behaviour) is that firms don't take advantage of their customers – notably by exploiting information asymmetry between what they know and what their clients know.

Given that many of the clients staying in the hotels Mr Picot's piece is directed towards will work in the financial industry, can I politely suggest that subjecting them to the very thing their own regulators dislike is not very clever?

It's also a bad business model irrespective of your client base. It might work in the short term – and there is an absence of conduct regulators in the travel industry – but it's indicative of a "rip-off" approach to customer service that will eventually get found out. Fleecing people because you can is not intelligent business in the 21st century.

Based on the article, the only reservation I intend to have with the sort of hotel taking advice from Mr Picot is around making a booking in the first place.

Christian Hunt, UK

DEREK PICOT RESPONDS:

I cannot agree more that in a competitive market the consumer should look for value and fair pricing. The article was intended to be thought-provoking and relevant to the business traveller, as this was a subject that generally falls below a client's buying horizon. I felt it provided a challenging subject that would interest readers. The ideas expressed were not so much a pricing tutorial for hoteliers, but to warn travellers of the potential for hoteliers to steal the shirts off their backs!

TURBULENCE IN CHINA

In response to Agnes Wong's question in the January/February 2018 issue regarding turbulence over flights to Shanghai, I'm a pilot for an airline in Australia that flies to China. Your reader is correct in saying turbulence over China is worse, however it's not for the reason you responded with – though the varying mountainous terrain and extreme weather patterns in winter definitely add to the problem.

China's airspace is almost entirely military and highly restrictive. For example, if you were to route from Hong Kong to Zhengzhou, there's effectively only one route or corridor of airspace you can take. We often deviate off track laterally to avoid bad weather, sometimes requiring up to 100 miles to avoid [it], but Chinese ATC (air traffic control) is often unable to permit our request due to the military airspace either side. Adding to this problem is that should you wish to climb to a higher altitude to avoid said weather you can't do that either, because there are others on the same corridor both above and below you. Compare this to Australia for example, where we frequently deviate to avoid storms, and it's usually not an issue getting a clearance from ATC to do so.

The corridors in Australia/the rest of the world are not so set in stone; you could have five planes all at once going from Perth to Melbourne on entirely different routes without issue.

I believe having almost all airspace controlled by the military is unique to China. This certainly makes flying in China interesting, a bit more bumpy, and I hope it answered the reader's question in layman's terms.

Name and address supplied

To provide more information on why it is potentially more turbulent over China, there are two factors specific to the region. One is the large patches of restricted military airspace... The other is that increased smog and carbon pollution can also create increased turbulence. A study conducted over the South China Sea found that thunderstorm build-up was twice as likely to occur over frequent shipping lanes, and concluded that it was due to the carbon output of merchant vessels' exhaust. Fine smog particles in the air assist ice formation in the atmosphere and produce stronger storms, leading to turbulence.

Andrew Mizzi, Hong Kong

LACKING IN HOSPITALITY

I was returning from Orlando to Leeds via Chicago and Heathrow but upon checking in, I was told that my flight from Orlando to Chicago was delayed by over two hours and I had to be rerouted via Dallas Fort Worth (DFW). I asked to be placed on the direct flight with BA to Gatwick that was departing within two hours, but was told by the American Airlines (AA) check-in agent that it wasn't possible as that flight was going via a different airport. As I waited in the lounge, the outbound flight to DFW was also delayed by 90 minutes due to bad weather, which resulted in me missing the last flight from DFW to Heathrow.

I arrived into DFW close to midnight and was placed on a flight 18 hours later, with no offer of vouchers, hotel or transport. I was exhausted and tired, and frankly gobsmacked by how AA treats its passengers in business class.

The next day, I boarded the Heathrow flight, which ran out of hot meals. My bags were then not transferred to my connecting flight to Leeds. I am utterly shocked and disgusted by how this journey unfolded. Doesn't AA have any responsibility towards its international business class passengers when things don't go to plan? Why can't it learn from carriers like Emirates, which offers complimentary stopovers in premium hotels during long layovers?

Ahmed Alhilou, UK

AMERICAN AIRLINES RESPONDS:

We're sorry for the challenges Mr Alhilou faced. Unfortunately, adverse weather impacted his travel despite our efforts to reroute him. He was rebooked on the first flight the following day. We understand Mr Alhilou's frustration and, as an apology, we provided him with a US\$200 e-voucher, and have since been in touch again to reimburse him for his overnight stay in DFW. We hope that he will accept our apologies and that we will see him onboard with us again soon.



Join the debate

READERS SHARE FIRST-HAND KNOWLEDGE, EXPERIENCES AND TRAVEL SOLUTIONS

BUSINESSTRAVELLER.COM/FORUM

MOST FRUSTRATING AIRLINE RULES

POST CEDRIC STATHERBY

What is the most frustrating or petty rule you have encountered in your air travel? I will start the discussion with BA's rules on use of lounges on a codeshare flight. I have a gold BA Exec Club card and if I fly on a BA-operated flight, or a Oneworld airline's flight, I can take a guest into the BA lounge with me, but if I fly on a BA codeshare flight on a non-Oneworld airline, I cannot take a guest into the lounge with me even if we both have BA tickets bought on ba.com and BA flight numbers. This is the very definition of petty and pointless. If BA sells me the ticket it should honour the standard terms of its FF programme, which is that gold card members can use their lounges and invite a guest to join them. One does wonder who dreamed this restriction up!

→ FRUSTRATEDFLYER

In the US if you turn up at the airport early for a domestic flight an American airline will be happy to try and get you on an earlier flight at no cost. In Europe/UK if you are on a British/European airline they will charge you a fortune even if the earlier flight is empty (unless on a flexible ticket)!

→ TIREDOLDHACK2

Having to take out the contents of the amenity kits, when you're in transit, and then having to put them in transparent plastic bags. Even if the amenity kit bag is still sealed. For God's sake.

→ SANRAN

The worst rule I came across with airlines was with Swiss/Lufthansa: I needed to cancel the final leg of a four-

leg trip and asked my travel agent to cancel it with the airline (I thought the airline would like this, as they could sell it to someone else). Well, they asked me for SFr200 (US\$212) for that: obviously I kept it and didn't pay anything and the airline kept the seat empty. I still cannot figure out the logic behind this.

→ MIDDLECLASSTRAVELLER

For me, the most frustrating airline rule would be not allowing passengers to change (read "correct") the booking name at all. I haven't encountered this myself, but I've heard a few cases where passengers weren't allowed on board because they (or the booker) misspelt one letter of their name, or by mistake chose the wrong gender.

WHEN IS PRIORITY BAGGAGE NOT PRIORITY BAGGAGE?

POST LUGANOPIRATE

Many frequent flyer programmes tout priority baggage delivery as one of the reasons for attaining status with them, but I question if this is a benefit that can truly be delivered? The reason I ask is despite being Gold with Swiss, my bags are only sometimes among the first to be delivered, and on a couple of occasions among the last. I recently flew from New York to Milan with Emirates in first class with Gold status, one colleague was in business with Silver status and the final one economy with no status. We all checked in at the same time and at the respective desk for our class. On arrival among the first cases delivered was my colleague from economy, about 20 bags later my other colleague's bag followed, and after another 20 or so my bag arrived. Of course it made no real difference, but I question if airlines and their FF programmes can really deliver on this benefit?

→ CATHAYLOYALIST2

I have had the same experience. It is down to whether priority bags are loaded into a container for that purpose and loaded last, thus offloaded first, or not. I would say my bags have been in the first 20 bags 20 per cent of the time, middle order 60 per cent of the time and last 20 per cent of the time. Oversized bags seem to be delivered quickly.

→ ESSELLE

I think the issue will always exist when airlines contract to local ground handlers away from their home base. Unless the contract has big penalties attached for non-compliance, the ground handler will default to whatever is easiest.

→ GIVINGUPBA

I agree that airlines cannot really deliver on this benefit because delivering earlier is often outside their control. However, promising the benefit is not outside their control - I wish they wouldn't do that.

→ ANTIPODES

I agree with most of what has been said but would like to point out that in Indonesia, Garuda separates the premium class luggage and has it delivered on a designated carousel.

→ VIAJEROUK

Agree with antipodes about Garuda: even better, premium passengers don't need to wait at the carousel at CGK or DPS - Garuda staff will collect bags from the carousel and deliver to you while you sit in a small arrivals lounge. That's what a "Priority Baggage Service" should be; bags have always arrived pretty quick for me so I guess the luggage tags do make a difference there.

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Decade of excellence

The Cityview celebrates double digits with a range of special promotions

This September, one of Hong Kong's greenest hotels will celebrate its 10th anniversary milestone. The Cityview boasts a prime address in Yau Ma Tei, near cultural and urban delights such as Nathan Road and Temple Street Night Market.

Over the past decade, the hotel has undergone major renovations and now boasts modern premier rooms that offer an urban oasis of pure luxury for discerning business travellers. The iconic Cityview lobby has also been redesigned to emphasise the concept of an urban oasis with living walls featuring more than 2,000 living plants and comfortable rattan seating to allow guests to share stories with fellow travellers.

The Cityview has also been a champion for environmental practices since 2008, ranging from banning shark's fin dishes and implementing a total smoke-free policy to developing innovative water heating systems and offering green meeting packages.

These efforts have been recognised with a slew of prestigious awards,

including EarthCheck Gold Certification, ISO 50001:2011 qualification for Energy Management Systems by the British Standards Institution, and Silver Award winner of the 2016 Hong Kong Awards for Environmental Excellence (HKAEE).

Other achievements over the years directly relate to improving the guest experience, from the introduction of crowd-pleasing Thai restaurant Amazing, and the installation of fast, free wifi throughout the property, plus the additions of free smartphones in every guestroom.

Again, these improvements have been rewarded with the likes of a Certificate of Excellence 2017 from TripAdvisor, and other recognitions from various platforms including booking.com, Agoda and Ctrip.

To celebrate ten years of continuous improvement, The Cityview has launched a number of special packages. At the same time, rather than rest on its laurels, the hotel is looking forward to the next decade and forming ambitious plans to capitalise on upgraded facilities and attract more MICE guests, as well as appealing to more international markets.

10TH ANNIVERSARY PROMOTIONS

CULTURAL FUN 2-NIGHT ROOM PACKAGE
Experience Hong Kong culture with a range of added treats to maximise your stay.

Package includes: Two nights in a Premier room; daily buffet breakfast at City Café for two persons; "Cultural Playground" local walking tour; The Cityview handmade beer for two at Amazing Bakery; surprise gift upon check-in; late check out until 3pm; one-way shuttle bus service to or from the airport; special discount on laundry service and dining at all outlets. Package priced at HK\$1,388 (plus 10 percent service charge) per room for a minimum of two nights, valid from May 1 – Sept 30, 2018.

DINING VOUCHERS

Enjoy a set of six dining vouchers for HK\$1,000 (original price HK\$1,788 + 10 percent service charge); including:

- 1 bottle of organic wine
- 1 signature cake at Amazing Bakery
- 1 dinner coupon at The Balcony (valued at HK\$300)
- 1 buffet lunch coupon at City Café (valued at HK\$278)
- 1 tea buffet coupon at Amazing (valued at HK\$188)
- 1 dinner coupon at Amazing (valued at HK\$300)

Other dining promotions include special menus at The Balcony & Amazing, 10th anniversary themed buffet at City Café, Discount of the Month, The Cityview Handmade Beer and signature cake at Amazing Bakery.



The Cityview Hong Kong, 23 Waterloo Road, Kowloon, Hong Kong; tel: +852 2783 3888; thecityview.com.hk





World Pride celebrations

OPEN FOR BUSINESS

After almost a decade of recession, the Spanish capital is back on its feet thanks to foreign investment and a flourishing tech scene

WORDS MARISA CANNON

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It's late afternoon when I arrive in Madrid and, heaving my case up the Metro steps, I'm welcomed by a blast of hot, musty air and the toot of a trumpet somewhere not too far away. A group of burly men in fluorescent mesh string vests stroll past, and, hoping to get my bearings, I follow them towards the sound of swelling chatter.

As we approach the square of Puerta del Sol, with its surrounding buildings draped in rainbow flags, it dawns on me that I've arrived for the final hours of World Pride – a week of open-air concerts, flotilla parades and street parties in the name of LGBT rights.

Back in 2008, these celebrations might have been tainted by the grim reality of the global financial crisis. Spain was hit particularly hard, prompted by the collapse of its property market, which had boomed ever since the launch of the euro in 1999. Austerity followed, along with a series of bank failures and a spike in unemployment, at its height in 2013 reaching 26 per cent.

Today, the darkest days of recession are over thanks to a combination of quantitative easing, falling oil prices and growing exports from large Spanish companies such as Inditex – owner of clothing giants Zara and Massimo Dutti – and infrastructure firm Ferrovial, which developed Heathrow's T5 and new T2 and is now working on a joint venture with London's Crossrail.

Today, the darkest days of recession are over thanks to falling oil prices and growing exports





“We have a high level of engineers, a great quality of life, access to talent and interest for our start-ups”

Smart government policies have also helped to attract foreign investment – from e-commerce giants Alibaba and Amazon, alongside digital and fintech providers such as UST Global, Ebury and Ria, among others.

The capital has done particularly well in appealing to overseas investors, drawing as much as €51 billion (US\$63 billion) in foreign direct investment (FDI) between 2012 and 2016. “Ever since Spain and Madrid left the economic crisis behind, investment has grown rapidly,” says Rocio Guemes, director of government agency Invest in Madrid. “In 2016, Madrid received investment worth €11.5 billion (US\$14.25 billion), up 11.5 per cent on the previous year. This was 47.5 per cent of the total investment received in Spain.”

Things got even better in 2017. The third quarter of last year saw FDI of €2.6 billion (US\$3.2 billion), up 59.6 per cent from the previous quarter and 12 per cent more than the same quarter in 2016.

Much of this funding has been ploughed back into real estate, financial services and construction, as investor confidence grows in the property sector. The country’s GDP is now rising steadily, up 3.1 per cent at the end of 2017 compared with the previous year, while unemployment has fallen to a post-crisis low of 16.5 per cent.

START-UP HOTSPOT

Before the effects of the extra cash could be felt, glimmers of hope began to emerge from the city’s tech scene. While the downturn ravaged Madrid’s housing and construction sectors, young entrepreneurs capitalised on the low rents and living costs. Support

for start-ups began to appear in the capital, with Spanish telecoms group Telefonica opening its global small business accelerator Wayra in 2012, followed by the 2015 launch of Google’s third European outpost for entrepreneurs (after London), offering a space for people to work and collaborate.

“Spain has always been a country of entrepreneurs, but the crisis was a wake-up call,” says Sofia Benjumea, head of Google’s Campus Madrid and co-founder of the South Summit start-up conference. “Since 2012, the start-up ecosystem has developed tremendously, both in Madrid and Barcelona, along with new hubs like Valencia and Malaga.”

At that time, Google Campus (googleforentrepreneurs.com) was present only in London and Tel Aviv (it now has hubs in Warsaw, Seoul and Sao Paulo), so why did it choose Madrid next? “The answer is, why not?” Benjumea says. “Spaniards are not the best at selling themselves, but we have a high level of engineers, a great quality of life, access to talent, and our start-ups have received interest from a lot of major venture capital funds.”

Now in its third year, Campus Madrid has amassed 32,000 members from across Spain, Europe, the US and Latin America, all of whom can use it to work, meet and host demo days and workshops, for free. Housed in a 19th-century battery factory, the space is bright and airy with colourful murals, a café and clusters of Scandi furniture where pairs of 20- and 30-somethings huddle over their laptops.

ABOVE: Google Campus



NEW WORLD

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The top floor is reserved for late-stage start-ups that have gained residency – there are currently seven of these, from a grocery shopping and delivery app to one that monitors your fertility if you are trying to conceive. Since opening, Campus start-ups have created 2,500 jobs and raised more than €37 million (US\$45.8 million) in funding.

FOSTERING INNOVATION

In 2016, the European Commission oversaw the launch of a pilot initiative called Madrid Startup House (madridstartuphouse.com), which is working to establish a one-stop shop to provide support and guidance for fledgling enterprises. It has been mobilised by communications agency Hugin and Munin and investment facilitator Socios Inversores, whose directors established the project.

Asier Basterretxea-Gomez and Victor Teodosio co-founded Madrid Startup House in 2016. “While we know there is a lot of growth and investment, Madrid’s start-up scene is dispersed – you have something here and there, instead of a nice, thick gravy where you can see who is part of the ecosystem and community,” Basterretxea-Gomez says.

The foundation is working to integrate these parts, as well as to create useful tools such as a start-up community





CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE:
Puerta del Sol; the
new Amazon HQ;
Plaza Mayor;
San Miguel market;
Calle de Alcalá



“Over the past five years we have proven that Spain is an ideal place to innovate”

map, an events platform and advice on funding. It has also recently joined Startup City Alliance Europe (SCALE) – an alliance of 19 start-up organisations in 11 cities aimed at creating a broad ecosystem while offering support to firms that are ready to scale up and leverage their European neighbours. Members include Amsterdam, Helsinki, Paris, Rome and London.

Young start-ups with a great idea but no cash are in luck. One of the foundation's key programmes aims to improve the often demoralising and restrictive process of finding investors. Basterretxea-Gomez says that they are creating an online stage where the country's most popular crowd-funding platforms can facilitate their projects, tap into capital and get in touch with private investors.

“This has uncovered a huge amount of talent,” he adds. “We presumed this existed in Spain and Madrid, but it was hidden because [new start-ups] couldn't find ways to fund themselves.”

But it isn't only start-ups that have found fertile ground in Madrid's tech sector. Since launching in Spain in 2011, Amazon has opened new locations across the country each year, and, in 2016, unveiled a technology centre in the capital. At the launch, Terry Hanold, vice-president of technology for Amazon EU, said: “Over the past five years we have proven that Spain is an ideal place to innovate. We have found professionals with incredible talent.”

In 2017, Andreu Castellano, corporate communications manager at Amazon Spain, said: “This year, Amazon will create more than 600 new fixed jobs in Spain, which means that in just one year, its workforce will increase by more than 50 per cent.”

In the autumn of 2017, the group's Spanish headquarters relocated to a larger 12,000 sqm space in downtown Madrid with capacity for more than 1,000 staff. The new tech hub also moved there, along with the first team outside of the US that develops software for Amazon Business, the group's B2B marketplace.

A new Amazon logistics centre is also due to open this year in Illescas, Toledo, 40km south of the capital, and is expected to create more than 900 jobs in its first three years. →



Nuevo Norte will aid Madrid in its attempts to attract UK business as Brexit draws near

TOURISM TRENDS

Despite growing security concerns across the continent, tourism here remains strong, with 6.7 million international visitors exploring Madrid in 2017. Brands such as W and Four Seasons are set to open hotels in the next year or so, while recent city-centre launches include properties from Hyatt, Only You, Melia and NH Hotels.

Monica Torres is general manager of the 83-room NH Collection Palacio de Tropa, which is housed in a 19th-century palace that was once home to the last viceroy of Spain in Mexico. “The next few years are going to be quite challenging, with the opening of Four Seasons and W nearby, so this area is going to be a hotspot,” she says.

Meanwhile, an ambitious regeneration project in northern Madrid is likely to up the ante for many businesses when it eventually sees the light of day. Designed to rival international financial hubs such as Canary Wharf and La Défense in Paris, the Madrid Nuevo Norte project plans to transform 268 hectares of industrial wasteland into a business zone also encompassing homes, parkland and a metro extension.

While this should be cause for excitement, no one is holding his or her breath for a timely delivery – the project was first announced in 1994 and has been held up by years of bureaucratic and political wrangling. Last summer, a revised version of the project was finally approved and, when work begins later this year, it will be one of the largest urban regeneration projects in Europe, with proposed funding in the region of €6 billion (US\$7.4 billion).

“We have studied other projects in Europe to decide which features to replicate and errors to avoid,” says a project spokesperson. “Several studies indicate that there is a lack of high-quality offices here. We want big companies to choose Madrid as their headquarters. All companies will be welcome.” Although in its early



stages, the project has allocated 149 of the 268 hectares to commercial use, and expects to build close to 11,000 new homes.

All of this will aid Madrid in its attempts to attract UK business as Brexit draws near. Invest in Madrid’s Rocio Guemes says that the Madrid Nuevo Norte development will be one of the most advanced business zones in Europe.

“We are perceiving interest in the project from foreign companies and, once it is launched, there will be excellent opportunities for investment,” she says. Having weathered the storm, it’s clear that, today, Madrid is open for business. ■

FROM TOP:
Nuevo Norte
development;
NH Collection
Palacio de Tropa;
Only You Atocha

Reign of Pleasure

Luxury, comfort and service are guaranteed at Shanghai's Wanda Reign on the Bund

Ideally situated along Shanghai's Huangpu River, the Wanda Reign on the Bund is nestled in the heart of Shanghai's historic financial district.

From its enviable vantage point, guests can enjoy magnificent views of the Bund as well as the futuristic Pudong skyline.

The convenient central location is just a 45-minute drive from both Shanghai Pudong International Airport and Hongqiao International Airport, while Shanghai Railway Station is a 20-minute drive away.

The hotel sets new standards in modern Art Deco design from its stunning exterior to the 190 guestrooms. Guests are guaranteed a superior night's sleep with the "Bed of Reign" featuring a handmade US Talalay latex mattress and tailor-made wool bedding from New Zealand, while the signature "Dream Catcher" services, including fragrance, music and bedtime reading amenities, further complement a blissful night's sleep.

Each guestroom is luxurious and contemporary, with a digital control system, complimentary high-speed Wi-Fi and an iPad smart in-room control including in-room dining ordering function. Digital screen "peepholes" connect to the in-room LCD TV, allowing guests to monitor visitors with ease, while for ultimate privacy, an individual valet box allows staff to collect laundry or newspapers without disturbing guests. To top it off, the world-class butler service can cater to every whim.

Five restaurants and bars offer a range of high-quality options, from all-day dining at Café Reign, with its authentic



Shanghai breakfast buffet, to the River Drunk Huaiyang Chinese restaurant for classic southern Chinese flavours and the ever-popular He Japanese Restaurant with custom-made sushi and teppanyaki by Master Chef Yoshi.

The elegant Executive Club Lounge is an ideal spot for pre-dinner drinks and lighter bites, or guests can soak up the views from the rooftop RuiKu Restaurant and Champagne Lounge with afternoon tea. In the evening, the party really gets going, with Shanghai's glamorous elite and a resident DJ.

Premium guests can also make use of Club Reign to enjoy bespoke food and beverages, a unique Wine and Cigar Bar, soothing treatments at SHUI Spa and four luxury private KTV rooms with dance floor, disco lasers and cutting edge audio-visual equipment.

For business events, the majestic Grand Ballroom and three private function rooms on the third floor offer state-of-the-art technology and unbeatable views of the Pudong skyline.



SPECIAL PROMOTION

Enjoy the facilities at Wanda Reign on the Bund with this exclusive package for *Business Traveller* readers:

PACKAGE INCLUDES

- One-way airport transfer service
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 - Three pieces of pressing per stay
 - Personalised business and secretarial service

Package starts from RMB2,300++ (US\$294++) for a one-night stay. A minimum of two nights' stay is required. Offer valid until December 30, 2018, subject to availability.

Wanda Reign on the Bund, No. 538 Zhong Shan Dong Er Road, Huangpu District, Shanghai 200010, P.R. China; tel: +86 (0)21 5368 8888; wandahotels.com

FLY ME TO THE MOON

After this year, if all goes to plan, two very wealthy amateur astronauts will lift off in a rocket from Kennedy Space Center's Pad 39A – the same launchpad used by the Apollo missions back in the 1970s – before looping around the Moon and returning to Earth. Presumably they've both remembered to reserve a window seat.

This very ambitious mission is being staged by a Californian spaceflight company called SpaceX. Founded by Elon Musk – he of Tesla and PayPal fame – SpaceX won't yet reveal very much about the mission, not even the two astronauts' names; only that they will be launching on a 70-metre-high Falcon Heavy rocket, and then circumnavigating the Moon in a much smaller autonomous Dragon 2 spacecraft.

"This would be a long loop around the Moon," Musk revealed. "It would skim its surface, go quite a bit further into deep space and then loop back to Earth. So I'm guessing, distance-wise, maybe 300,000 or 400,000 miles." The flight is expected to last a week; the price, undisclosed.

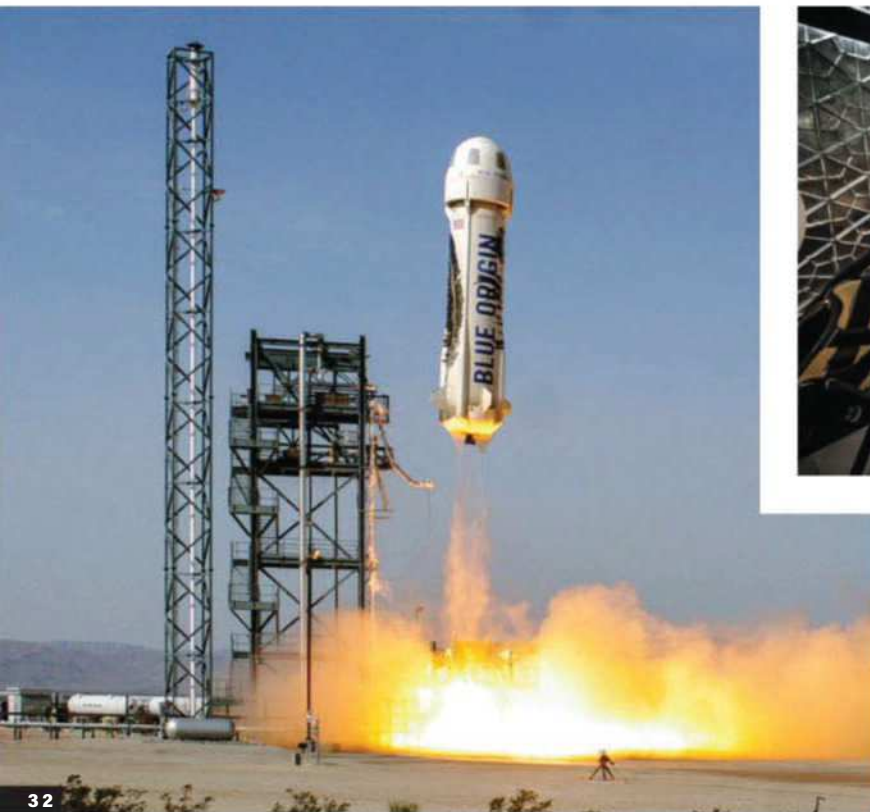
Much shorter and less ambitious are the spaceflights currently planned by British entrepreneur Richard Branson's spaceflight company Virgin Galactic. For a US\$250,000 (return) ticket, ordinary punters will get a trip aboard *SpaceShipTwo*, a reusable, rocket-powered winged spacecraft with capacity for two pilots and six passengers. The amateur astronauts will fly into space, 60-plus miles (100km) above the Earth's atmosphere, where they will "experience a thrilling, dynamic rocket ride; true unencumbered weightlessness; and the best possible view of Earth and the blackness of space".

Virgin Galactic wouldn't commit to a precise launch date for the first commercial flight, but its commercial director Stephen Attenborough did tell *Business Traveller*: "It's on the horizon but one can never be →

...and beyond. Spaceflight companies are already taking bookings for trips into Earth's orbit and even around the Moon. Suddenly, a two-week holiday in the Caribbean looks very dull indeed







entirely certain as to how far away that horizon is.” Paying passengers are merely a stepping stone towards the company’s ultimate goal of industrial spaceflight, with reusable craft. “Our quest is to reduce the cost of space launch, so reusable vehicles are the holy grail,” Attenborough says, suggesting that, in the future, Virgin Galactic may sell its transport services to asteroid mining companies, scientists, or companies and governments wishing to place astronauts or satellites in space. For example, it’s currently collaborating with communications company OneWeb, which aims, via a satellite network, to offer internet broadband to everyone on the planet.

CROSSING CONTINENTS

Virgin Galactic also has its sights set on operating long-haul air travel above the Earth’s atmosphere, where lower gravity and lack of air resistance would save huge amounts of time and fuel. Flight times of a couple of hours from London to Sydney have even been mooted.

“With the exception of Concorde, we’ve been travelling through the air at a little below the speed of sound for many, many

years,” Attenborough adds. “This would leapfrog supersonic speeds and probably get into hypersonic, in excess of Mach 5.”

One of Virgin Galactic’s rivals in commercial spaceflight is Washington State-based Blue Origin, which has already secured contracts to deliver satellites into space, and successfully launched New Shepard, a reusable launch system. The company’s boss is Jeff Bezos, the man who earned his fortune through Amazon. He hopes space tourism will give his rocket scientists the practice they need to reduce the cost and increase the efficiency of space travel, with the ultimate goal of moving heavy industry off planet Earth altogether.

“It is a step towards a spacefaring civilisation,” he said in a recent BBC documentary, *The 21st Century Race for Space*. “We have sent robotic probes to every planet in the solar system and we know, without a shadow of a doubt, that Earth is the best one. This is the best planet! The only way to really protect it is to eventually move heavy industry off Earth.”

Bezos understands why critics of space exploration want to see our home planet’s myriad problems solved before we head into

space. However, he contends that space is “part of the solution” to Earth’s problems.

“Space is a much better place to do heavy manufacturing. In space, you have 24/7 solar power. Every kind of element that you need is available in very large quantities. Over the next couple of hundred years, that will allow us to both continue to have a dynamic, expanding, growing, thriving, interesting civilisation, while protecting the diamond of a planet that we evolved on.”

FOREIGN BODIES

Within space industry, asteroid mining is an intriguing possibility. In 2014 the European Space Agency landed (and inadvertently bounced) a probe on the surface of a comet called 67P/Churyumov-Gerasimenko.

This was just the start. While comets tend to be dust and ice, asteroids are composed mainly of metals and rock, many of which are invaluable to the products and industry essential to modern life and that could be depleted from Earth within the next 50 to 60 years. Over the following few decades it’s thought spaceflight companies will send robotic probes to asteroids in order to extract valuable minerals and metals. A



Virgin Galactic also has its sights set on operating long-haul air travel above the Earth's atmosphere

single asteroid of the right type would be worth a fortune if brought to Earth.

There are two major companies leading the way in this field. One is California-based Deep Space Industries, which has partnered with the government of Luxembourg. The other is Washington State-based Planetary Resources, which plans to mine metals for use in extraterrestrial construction and spacecraft components. The latter suggests there are around 16,000 near-Earth asteroids, containing two trillion tonnes of water.

Back at SpaceX, Elon Musk could well do with some of that rocket propellant. His cleverest boffins have designed the Falcon Heavy rocket, which they claim is three times more powerful than its predecessor, the Falcon 9. Musk states the new model can not only propel long-haul commercial flights up above the Earth's atmosphere, or spaceflights around the Moon inside the Dragon 2 craft, but will also eventually transfer cargo and passengers to Mars, Venus, even Jupiter and Saturn.

"We should have a lunar base by now. What the hell's going on?" Musk said at the International Astronautical Congress in September 2017. "And then, of course, Mars, and becoming a multi-planet species. Beats the hell out of being a single-planet species."

Musk has the mind-bogglingly ambitious target date of 2024 to send humans to the red planet. First, in 2022, there will be an unmanned spaceship to "confirm water resources, identify hazards and put in place initial power, mining, and life support infrastructure".

Two years later the manned mission is scheduled to follow. "Then we will build up the base, starting with one ship, then multiple ships, then start building up the city, then making the city bigger. And over time terraforming Mars, and making it a really nice place to be."

Much of Musk's zeal stems from his fear that our planet might eventually succumb to an extinction caused by an asteroid strike

CLOCKWISE FROM FAR LEFT: New Shepard, Blue Origin's launch system, lifts off in June 2016; the interior of SpaceX's Dragon 2 spacecraft; Virgin Galactic's *SpaceShipTwo* during its first powered flight; and Jeff Bezos, billionaire founder of Blue Origin

or a global pandemic. Should this happen, he argues, colonising Mars will ensure the human race doesn't die out completely.

Despite all the promises (some might call them pipe dreams) from billionaires Branson, Bezos, Musk et al, space tourism has so far been a niche activity for the super-rich. There have only been seven amateur astronauts in space so far.

The very first was American investment specialist Dennis Tito who, in 2001, paid Russia's space agency US\$20 million to visit the International Space Station and spend a week orbiting the Earth.

"The beauty of private spaceflight [is] you can be goofy if you want to," Tito said in a BBC documentary that showed him aboard the station sipping a mocktail. "There's no one to criticise you. You're paying your own bill. You're not having this trip on government money. So there's a lot more freedom."





Most astronauts talk about their experience for the rest of their lives

Tito remembers spending half of every Earth orbit staring out of the spaceship porthole at the incredible views, while listening to opera. “I never got bored looking out. It was such an awesome experience being off the planet and being one of the privileged few humans to do this. It’s never left me. I think of it every day.”

What else can wide-eyed space tourists expect to behold? On any future spaceflights, the views of Earth will no doubt rapidly fill up the memories of their mobile phones. Zero gravity is another out-of-this-world experience they will surely dine out on, though it’s not easy to acclimatise to.

George Pantalos works in bioengineering at the University of Louisville in Kentucky. He was lucky enough to experience weightlessness on NASA’s KC-135 zero-gravity plane used to train astronauts, otherwise known as the “vomit comet”.

“In weightlessness, you are effortlessly floating,” he explains. “The most comparable feeling is floating in water without the sensation of water on your skin. Because you feel so light, you can move about with the slightest amount of effort. Pushing

off a surface too hard, which is the common mistake of all first-time free-floaters, results in you zinging around like a ping-pong ball. Nice and easy does the trick. Peter

Pan never had it so good, and Michael Jordan only got a few seconds of hang time. In weightlessness, you have all the hang time you need.”

Given the rapid advances in reusable rocket technology, it might be assumed that space travel will eventually become as common as visiting the poles or climbing Mount Everest. Virgin Galactic plans to build a whole fleet of spacecraft for tourists. “There have been 560 or so people who have been into space to date,” Attenborough says. “I would expect that we would fly that number of people in just a few years.” He refused, however, to be more precise than this on passenger numbers.

Space tourism, Attenborough believes, is far more important than simply being an opportunity for multimillionaires to boast about their holidays.

ABOVE: SpaceX’s Falcon 9 at Vandenberg, California

“We’re going to offer people an extraordinary, profound and life-changing experience. If you read the accounts of professional astronauts who have gone to space in the last 50 years, most of them came back and talked about their experience for the rest of their lives. They come back with a clear perspective: there is only one [habitable] planet we know of. There isn’t an alternative home for us within reach at the moment. Earth is extremely beautiful; it looks very fragile from space. There is a sense we’re all in this together, and that there’s much more that unites us than divides us. By being able to give a lot more people a similar experience, we think spaceflight has a powerful, potential force for good in its own right.”

Until then, ticket prices remain at US\$250,000 a flight. Naturally, Richard Branson, the boss of Virgin Galactic, has a seat reserved on the inaugural commercial flight. And Attenborough, as the first employee hired by Virgin Galactic 13 years ago, won’t be far behind. ■



Michelin-star experience

World-class chefs and the highest-quality ingredients turn classic Shanghaiese fare into a spectacular culinary journey at the Jumeirah Himalayas Hotel Shanghai

A Michelin star is the hallmark of fine dining; the ultimate recognition of a culinary team's skill, the quality of ingredients used and the imagination that has been poured into a menu.

The Jumeirah Himalayas Hotel Shanghai is therefore thrilled to announce it has been awarded a Michelin star for its Shang-High cuisine once again in 2018 – the second consecutive year since the *Michelin Guide* launched in Shanghai.

While it is notoriously difficult for any restaurant to achieve this coveted accolade it's even harder for Chinese cuisine to gain acknowledgement. But rather than dazzle customers with a flamboyant menu and avant-garde tricks, Executive Chinese Chef Frank Hu at Shang-High chose to go back to basics and focus on traditional Shanghaiese dishes.

Creating a pure menu of Shanghaiese classics, however, was not enough. After all, there is no shortage of Shanghaiese dishes all over China. In order to distinguish Shang-High, Chef Hu insists on top-quality, fresh ingredients and immaculate preparation. For example, to create the classic Fresh River Shrimps dish, each tiny shrimp is painstakingly shelled by hand, ensuring a sweet, fresh and vibrant flavor when dipped in its traditional accompaniment of rice wine vinegar.

Chef Hu has also used his years of experience to elevate the dishes by adding a hint of something new and exciting. At Shang-High, the Braised Cuttlefish with Pigeon Eggs and the Smoked Pomfret, both iconic Shanghaiese dishes, have been

Executive Chinese Chef
Frank Hu



infused with unusual ingredients and amazing presentations to give diners an unexpected delight.

But as every top chef knows, gaining a Michelin Star is one thing – keeping the title year after year is another. Rising to the challenge, Chef Hu is constantly experimenting and reinventing the classic dishes on his menu. He travels all over the world for inspiration and fresh ingredients to give Shanghaiese cuisine a unique spin.

Finally, attention must be paid to the environment. The elegant, traditional Chinese décor of Shang-High in the main dining room and seven private dining areas is the perfect accompaniment to the exquisite Chinese cuisine food that is served.

**Jumeirah Himalayas Hotel Shanghai,
No. 1108 Mei Hua Road, Pudong, Shanghai 201204, China;
tel: +86 21 3858 0888; jumeirah.com**



Exploring Hoi An on two wheels is the best way to appreciate the charming "City of Lanterns"

WORDS TAMSIN COCKS



SIMPLE PLEASURES

The view from my balcony in the new East Wing at La Siesta Hoi An Resort & Spa is enticing: a saltwater lagoon pool dotted with palm trees, surrounded by a courtyard of ochre European-style villas. The view inside my spacious, colonial-style Junior Suite is pretty decent too: gorgeous handcrafted teak furniture, polished wooden floors and a blend of modern Asian décor.

But what's grabbed my attention is a striking black-and-white photograph on the wall; the portrait captures a wizened old Vietnamese couple sharing an intimate joke. Her unforgettable toothless grin beams from ear to ear as her mischievous husband, with an equally iconic tuft of white beard, tenderly tousles her hair. The absolute joy and mutual affection radiating from the seemingly poor elderly couple is powerful and utterly captivating.

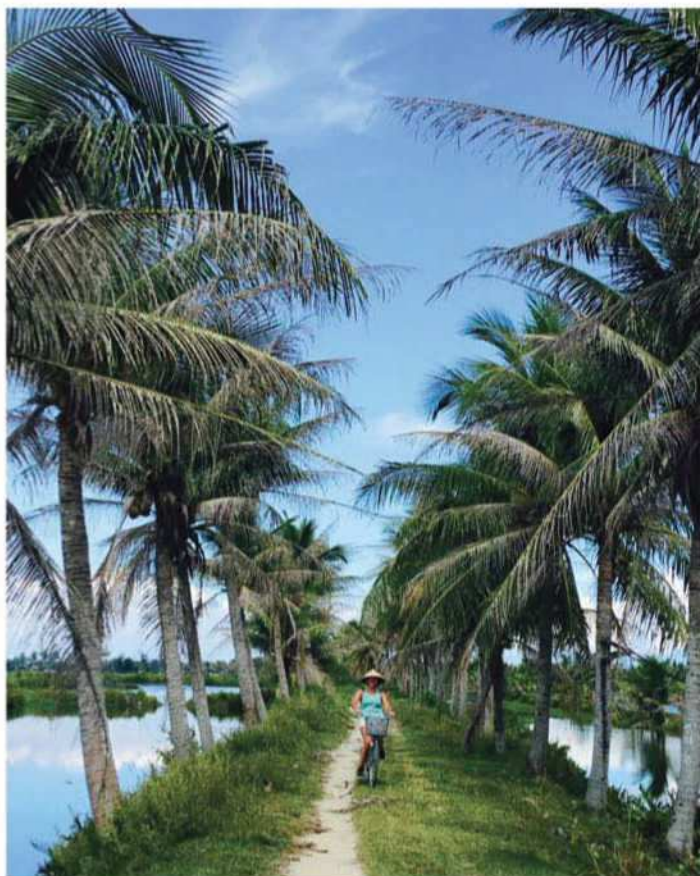
Other art pieces are dotted throughout the room showing moments from Vietnam's past – much of it serene scenes of local life. There are conical hat-wearing farmers watering their crops, children playing by lily ponds and fishermen steering traditional boats through waterways. It's the perfect foreshadowing for the next few days of relaxing and soaking up the charming appeal of Vietnam's slow-paced rural life.

Hoi An, in Quang Nam province, is worlds away from the frantic moped-swarming cities of Hanoi or Ho Chi Minh, or glitzy resort-filled neighbour Danang, just 40 minutes up the coast and the entry point for most Hoi An-bound visitors via Danang International Airport.

In the centre is the well-preserved ancient town, a major 16th-century trading point in Southeast Asia that was declared a Unesco World Heritage site in 1999. The town's legacy as a cultural melting pot is strongly reflected in the unique architecture, comprising an eclectic mix of traditional Vietnamese, Chinese, French, Portuguese and Japanese architecture. The picturesque maze of alleys is now home to boutique art galleries, shops and traditional tailors that are well worth a visit, but simply exploring and soaking up the atmosphere is rewarding in itself. Unlike many other Vietnamese destinations, where extreme →



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driving courses are recommended for foreigners hiring any form of road vehicle, the quiet, leafy boulevards around Hoi An can easily and safely be navigated by bicycle – it’s an idyllic form of transport, and since cars and motorbikes are banned from the town centre it’s more convenient, too.

Further along the river, the town gives way to more local food markets and it’s here that you’ll find some of Vietnam’s best restaurants. According to celebrity chef Anthony Bourdain, the *banh mi* (Vietnamese baguette sandwich) from Banh Mi Phuong restaurant (2B Phan Chau Trinh, Hoi An) are the best in the country. You must also try Hoi An’s signature dish, *cao lau* – rice noodles in a fragrant broth with slices of pork, crunchy fresh vegetables, bean sprouts and herbs. The town is also credited with the creation of *mi quang* (flat rice noodles with shrimp, pork and grilled rice crackers) and *banh vac* (shrimp dumplings), plus a few other local favourites. Suffice to say – your taste buds are in for a treat.

Another adornment that makes this beautiful heritage town even more enchanting is the constant presence of lanterns – a tradition reportedly started by Chinese immigrants in the 16th century that has taken on a life of its own and given Hoi An the moniker

Hoi An can easily and safely be navigated by bicycle – it’s an idyllic form of transport



“City of Lanterns”. When evening arrives, the lantern shops draw us like moths to a flame as we become mesmerised by the wall of bright, warm colours, differing shapes and intricate patterns – an ideal tourist souvenir. The night markets are also filled with a mixture of lovely keepsakes and unusual items ranging from clothes and shoes to beautiful lacquerware ornaments, silks and cushion covers.

For those looking for evening entertainment, a few typical backpacker-style bars are mixed in amongst a selection of local and high-end restaurants and dessert-style eateries. However, I head back to dine at La Siesta Resort & Spa as they are hosting their Weekly Royal Dinner – an authentic Vietnamese barbecue held on the lawn of Red Bean restaurant every Saturday (seating is limited, so hotel guests need to reserve in advance).

To mark the occasion, guests are encouraged to select a traditional *ao dai* (colourful silk tunic) from a rack in the lobby – with accompanying hat. Never one to shy away

Come evening, the lantern shops draw us like moths to a flame, mesmerised by the bright, warm colours

from a costume, I gleefully select a striking red number, though within minutes Vietnam’s stifling heat has convinced me of my folly and I change back into normal attire after a quick photo. The buffet is a glorious seafood feast, with baked fish, fresh mussels, giant prawns, juicy scallops and lobster bisque, complete with a tableside prawn-shelling service and accompanied with fresh salad, rice paper rolls and a delicious, chilled sauvignon blanc. While this is a particular treat, the normal service at Red Bean and the breakfast buffet is equally delicious (particularly the rich Vietnamese coffees waiting in the fridges), while the modern European fine dining at The Temple Restaurant & Lounge is exceptional: on another evening, I sampled artfully presented salmon with tagliatelle and roasted vegetables followed by a beautiful passionfruit cheesecake.

The next morning we’re up early to embark on a day of cultural sightseeing to experience the “real” Vietnam, guided by genial hotel manager Bentony Vu. We each take one of the hotel’s quaint, basket-fronted bicycles, don our conical hats (remarkably adept at protecting

CLOCKWISE FROM OPPOSITE TOP LEFT: Iconic Japanese bridge in Hoi An’s old town; cycling the countryside; and an old Vietnamese couple



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Our cycling route takes us past village temples, through rice fields and skirting lotus ponds and lakes

from the sun while allowing a slight breeze to cool the head, thus avoiding the dreaded “hat hair”) and set off in single file along the roads – countering the odd wobble as our childhood muscle memory kicks in. Within minutes, we’ve left any semblance of the town and find ourselves surrounded by beautiful countryside. Our route takes us ambling past village temples, through rice fields, and skirting lotus ponds and lakes. At one point we come across a local farmer slowly riding his water buffalo to the next field – he laughingly asks if we’d like to clamber aboard, though the smell emitting from the buffalo is a little too authentic for my tastes.

Eventually we roll to a stop in Tra Que village, a vegetable farming village that has evolved into an ecotourism hotspot for visitors who are keen to understand and get involved in authentic local experiences. We park our bikes in the courtyard of a modest one-storey abode and wait for our hosts. When they emerge, my jaw drops: out shuffles the tiny old lady from the photograph in my hotel room, her beatific, toothless smile and crinkled face unmistakable. Her tiny frame is dressed in a soft rose tunic and paisley print pants casually rolled above bare feet, her hair placed in a bun with a hair band to keep it in place. Behind her comes her husband, almost as tiny as she – with his rock-star beard and

badger-hair styled into a quiff for the occasion.

Bentony explains what I already know: the couple are models for some of the portrait photography featured in the hotel. Their names are Nguyen Thi Loi, whose sprightly *joie de vivre* belies her 86 years, and her 92-year-old husband Le Van So. After receiving a present of biscuits, Nguyen offers a comment that makes all the Vietnamese burst out laughing. Bentony translates: “But how can I eat them if I don’t have any teeth!”

The couple clasp hands and welcome their visitors, before showing us through their humble home and into their garden. The neat allotment patches contain sweet-scented herbs and vegetables including mint, lettuce, basil and spring onion, as well as many I can’t identify. They demonstrate the watering system – it looks rudimentary, with two pails hung on either end of a wooden pole that rests on the shoulders, but it’s an acquired skill of balance and core strength that I don’t quite master with my own clumsy, sloshing attempt.

Reluctantly our time with this ever-smiling duo comes to an end, and we hop back on our bikes to the Thu Bon River bank where we gingerly step down into rounded bamboo boats. Their strange appearance dates back to the arrival of French colonialists, who began levying taxes on boat ownership – taxes that were unaffordable to the majority of Vietnamese fisherman, who needed such vessels for their livelihood. The locals therefore cunningly invented a new kind of vessel: the



CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE: Lotus ponds dot the Hoi An landscape; Junior Suite Balcony room in La Siesta Hoi An Resort; and a *thung chai* basket boat



thung chai, arguing (not unfairly) that they were more like baskets than boats and so couldn't be charged. The crafty plan worked, though as we soon discover, steering a circular boat also requires a special technique. Luckily our guide has mastered this over a lifetime and takes us on a pleasant tour through waterways flanked by towering coconut palms, and past other local fishermen casting their nets and foraging in the small pools for purple crabs.

After disembarking, we walk a little way to Con Nhan Village and Sabirama, a local restaurant and cooking school. The idyllic venue is situated in a large garden, complete with a long dining table for large groups, an alfresco cooking station and a relaxing pagoda in the middle of a large pond filled with koi carp. Using local ingredients, dishes and utensils, our diminutive cooking teacher shows us how to wield our woks without singeing our eyebrows as giant flames leap out of the pan. The results are pretty fantastic, if I do say so myself, and we gobble up our creations of crispy Vietnamese pancakes with bean sprouts and fresh rice paper rolls filled with prawns and herbs. (Sabirama offers complete day tours that include many local activities, including a visit to the local market, basket boat trip, cooking class and a ride in a buffalo cart for US\$45 per person; restauranthoian.com).

By the end of my two-day sojourn in Hoi An I still can't speak any Vietnamese, but I have managed to forge a connection with the place, its history and the beautiful people that live there. I take home with me a renewed sense of calm, and a reminder that simple pleasures are some of the best things in life. ■

An overnight stay in a Junior Suite Balcony, Club Wing room at La Siesta Hoi An Resort & Spa in mid-May starts from US\$136 per night; lasiestaresorts.com

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VIRGIN LANDS

WORDS APRIL HUTCHINSON

The Seychelles, in the heart of the Indian Ocean, remains determined to protect its natural attractions



Few places on Earth are as hopelessly idyllic and exotic as the Seychelles, where prehistoric-looking giant tortoises amble between towering granite boulders and flour-soft beaches demand to be adored.

This Indian Ocean archipelago is fairly new to the tourism game, with the international airport only having opened in the early 1970s. The country is still blissfully undeveloped, with the powers that be taking a measured, low-impact approach. Even more commendable is the placing of more than half the country's land under the protection of national parks and reserves.

The population of just under 95,000 people is spread across 115 jewel-like islands, with much of the tourism and hotels concentrated on the main island of Mahé. The second most touristy island is Praslin. But where the

Seychelles comes into its own is in its array of castaway luxury resorts set on their own remote islands. Little wonder then that the country has become the favoured destination of many celebrities, from George and Amal Clooney to the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge.

The Seychelles' appeal runs much deeper than mere celeb-spotting though. The islands the stars adore for beauty and privacy are actually pioneers in conservation. Take Fregate: the size of Monaco yet with only 16 villas, it's a Jurassic Park-like retreat. The current 2,200-strong population of Aldabra giant tortoises were bred from a population down to just 150 only 25 years ago, and they now roam freely across the island. Fregate is also responsible for saving the little Seychelles magpie robin from disappearing forever, and there are now more than 200 of these dainty little birds back in the archipelago. Fregate's popularity is further bolstered by its seven beaches and the excellent Rock Spa resort. →

RIGHT:
Diving with
a hawksbill
turtle
BELOW:
A Seychelles
magpie robin



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North Island – which has just 11 villas – is also known for its conservation work, with its “Noah’s Ark Project” involving rehabilitation and restoration of a once ecologically devastated island. Like many in the Seychelles, North Island’s natural state was destroyed by intensive plantations more than a century ago, but the mission since has been a return to its pre-human state: many species of birds have returned, while hawksbill and green turtles nest on its beaches once again.

One of the best examples of the Seychelles’ Eden-like paradise – and one you don’t have to be a guest at a luxurious private island to experience – is Vallée de Mai Nature Reserve, the only place with all six of the

country’s endemic palm species. Set deep in the heart of Praslin, this UNESCO-recognised site exists almost in its prehistoric state and is famous for being the home of coco de mer, a palm tree that produces the largest seed in the plant kingdom, and

is now found only in the Seychelles. The utter beauty of Praslin’s beaches will impress even the keenest beachcombers; two of the best are Anse Georgette and Anse Lazio, fringed by takamaka trees and bordered by the large granite boulders so typical of the Seychelles. Places to stay include the highly desirable hillside villas of Raffles Praslin, or the more established Constance Lemuria, which has the country’s only 18-hole golf course and three beaches on site.

The eco-mission on many of the Seychelles’ islands has been to return them to their pre-human state

A ferry runs from Mahé to Praslin, but from May to September it’s not so pleasant if the sea is rough; it is also possible to fly between the two. Praslin is also a handy island-hopping base, with Cousin and Curieuse islands nearby, both with strong conservation stories to tell. Curieuse is the only other island where coco de mer grows today, but in its past, the island was destroyed by fire, pillaged of its resources and tortoise population, and used as a leper colony. Its story now is a very positive one, as it’s managed as a reserve you can visit on a day trip. Cousin Island Special Reserve is another success story. This former coconut plantation is now a species-saving sanctuary, and has become the most important nesting site in the western Indian Ocean for the critically endangered hawksbill turtle.

The Seychelles’ third most populated island is La Digue, a charming place where most people use two wheels to get around. Boat tours from Praslin usually include bike hire, so you can soak up local life there and head to beaches such as Petit Anse, Grand Anse and Anse Source d’Argent, one of the Seychelles’ most famous. Félicité is a larger island where the new Six Senses Zil Pasyon took up residence last year, occupying less than a third of the island, with 30 villas and 17 private residences.

The hottest new hotel opening so far in 2018 is Four Seasons Resort Seychelles at Desroches Island, which launched on March 1, 2018 as the only resort on that island. Home to 40 suites, here days might be spent with a picnic and hike into the jungle, checking out 15km of beaches, or bumping into some of the 150 giant Aldabra tortoises.



LEFT: Palms fringe many island tracks
BELOW: The seed of a coco de mer palm
BOTTOM: A giant tortoise on Praslin Island



INFORMATION

Seychelles Tourism Board
 seychelles.travel

WHERE TO STAY

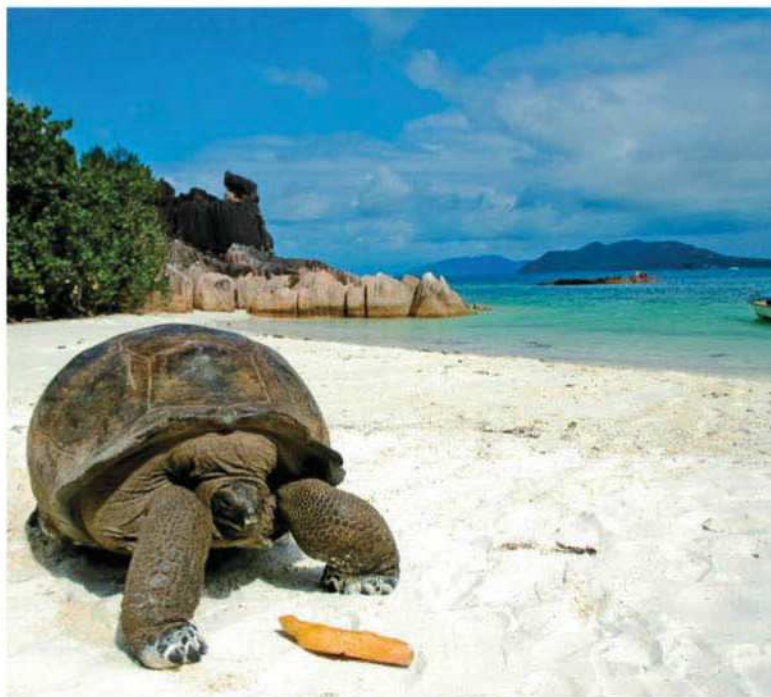
Constance Lemuria
 constancehotels.com
Four Seasons Resort Seychelles at Desroches Island
 fourseasons.com
Fregate Island Private
 fregate.com
North Island
 north-island.com
Raffles Praslin
 raffles.com
Six Senses Zil Pasyon
 sixsenses.com

WHAT TO DO

Vallée de Mai Nature Reserve
 sif.sc
Cousin Island Special Reserve
 cousinisland.net
Curieuse Marine National Park
 seychelles.travel
Takamaka
 takamakaram.com
Morne Seychellois National Park
 seychelles.travel

There's plenty to see and do on the main island too, where the capital Victoria is about as bustling as the Seychelles ever gets. For a moment of respite, step inside Kenwyn House, one of the oldest and best examples of French colonial architecture on the island and a place to shop for arts and crafts. Another popular option on Mahé is the island's rum distillery, Takamaka, where you can learn about rum making – and get a little taster. If you're craving healthier outdoor activities, head to the highest point in the Seychelles, Morne Seychellois – at 905 metres. It's a three-hour hike and sits inside a national park that claims an impressive 20 per cent of the whole island.

Culturally, Seychellois are mainly descended from African slaves brought by the French and later freed by the British, while Chinese merchants and traders also started arriving about 150 years ago, contributing to the Creole mix. Festival Kreol is a big deal for the Seychelles (in late October 2018). If you're visiting at that time, expect a week of events showcasing the colours, sounds and flavours of Creole culture. Joining in with the hip-swaying, foot-shuffling Segá dance will be a must – especially if you've had a drop of that rum to give you a boost of confidence. ■





5

Hong Kong

46

WORDS VALERIAN HO

Spend an afternoon discovering these local gems in Hong Kong's North Point district, from bustling markets to a high-end rooftop bar

1 Oi!

Start your exploration with an artistic experience at Oi! on Oil Street. Housed in a Grade II historic building constructed in 1908 (the former clubhouse of the Royal Hong Kong Yacht Club), Oi! is a new platform to promote young talents, encourage artistic collaboration and connect people with the community. The centre hosts numerous quirky workshops such as the Music Table, where professional musicians teach visitors to play melodies with cups, wine glasses and other kitchen equipment. The Twins Kitchen workshop encourages guests to bring food with them to participate in a shared group meal. There are also regular art exhibitions: running until the end of May, *Back to the Basics* from Kwan Sheung Chi and Daniel Knorr showcases the relationship between art and materials in daily life. Open Mon 2pm-8pm, Tue-Sun 10am-8pm; free admission. icsd.gov.hk

2 Java Road Market Cooked Food Centre

If you skipped the Twins Kitchen at Oi! then head to one of Hong Kong's most famous cooked food markets to sample some local delicacies. Head east and walk for ten minutes along Electric Road before turning onto Java Road and ascending to the second floor of the Java Road Municipal Services Building. Don't be put off by the lack of refinement in the plastic tables and chairs: this is where you can experience Hong Kong's local "dai pai dong" style at its finest. Must-try Cantonese dishes include pork rib and bitter melon, black ink squid and wind sand chicken. Tung Po Kitchen has become the favourite eatery for locals and expats, largely due to "superstar waiter" and part-owner Robby Cheung with his trademark mohawk, customised Wellington boots and habit of performing the moonwalk or teaching customers how to open

their beer bottles with chopsticks. Open daily 6am-10.30pm; Tung Po Kitchen reservation: +852 2880 5224

3 Chun Yeung Street

After a hearty meal, walk it off with a stroll to the local market. Head back down Java Road and turn onto Tong Shui Road where you will reach Chun Yeung Street – a bustling marketplace that offers a real window onto the daily life of locals. The all-purpose market is always busy: housewives buy fresh meat and vegetables for dinner; couples snap up prized foodstuffs imported from Japan; and bargain hunters browse the pop-up stalls for everything from pyjamas to accessories. However, the main draw for tourists is the crazy combination of the impossibly narrow, crowded lanes doubling up as one of the main thoroughfares for Hong Kong's iconic double-decker tram. Listen out for the "ding ding" as it comes through and hop out of the way.

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH HOTEL VIC ON THE HARBOUR



1



2



3



4

4 Harbour Cruise Bauhinia

For a less frantic scene, what better than a cruise encompassing the gorgeous views of Hong Kong's famous Victoria Harbour. Head to the North Point Ferry Pier to board your vessel. At 7.30pm, the pink Harbour Cruise Bauhinia fleet offers a special two-hour Dinner Buffet cruise, timed with the Symphony of Lights laser show at 8pm (from HK\$470/US\$60). The harbour tour includes a live band performance and a buffet dinner as you sail past landmarks like the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre and Observation Wheel. There is also an earlier sailing departing at 5.45pm returning at 7.15pm (from HK\$350). cruise.com.hk

5 Cruise at Hotel VIC on the Harbour (opening in summer)

After disembarking, wrap up your tour by enjoying a sophisticated glass at Cruise, the rooftop bar of the soon-to-open Hotel VIC on the Harbour. The 671-room hotel has an enviable position on the waterfront, and the rooftop bar offers unbeatable panoramic views of the harbour. When it opens in June, guests will be able to relax with a selection of cocktails, wines or spirits, plus tasty nibbles prepared by a talented culinary team. Another option is to enjoy a walk along the hotel's harbourfront promenade (also opening in June) to enjoy the stunning views from another angle. hotelvic.com **BT**



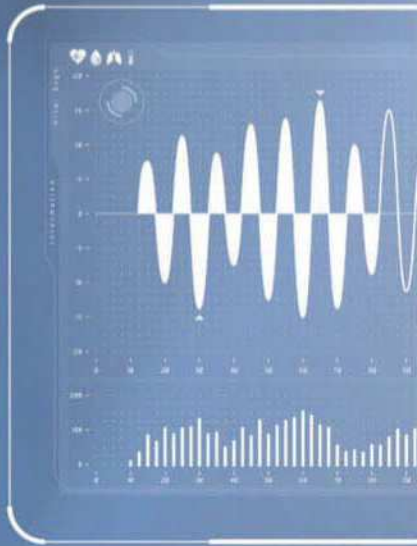
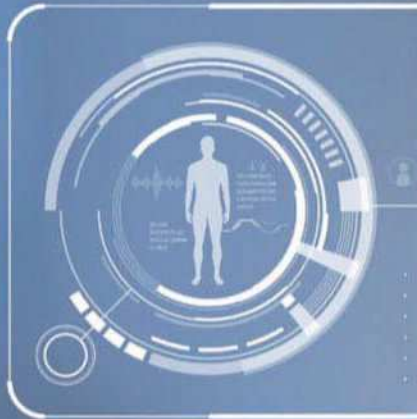
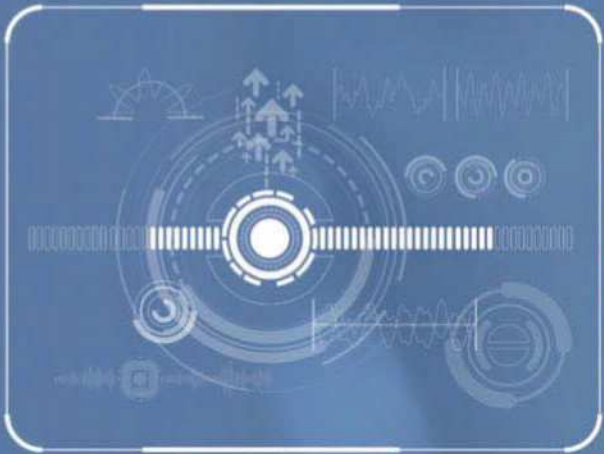
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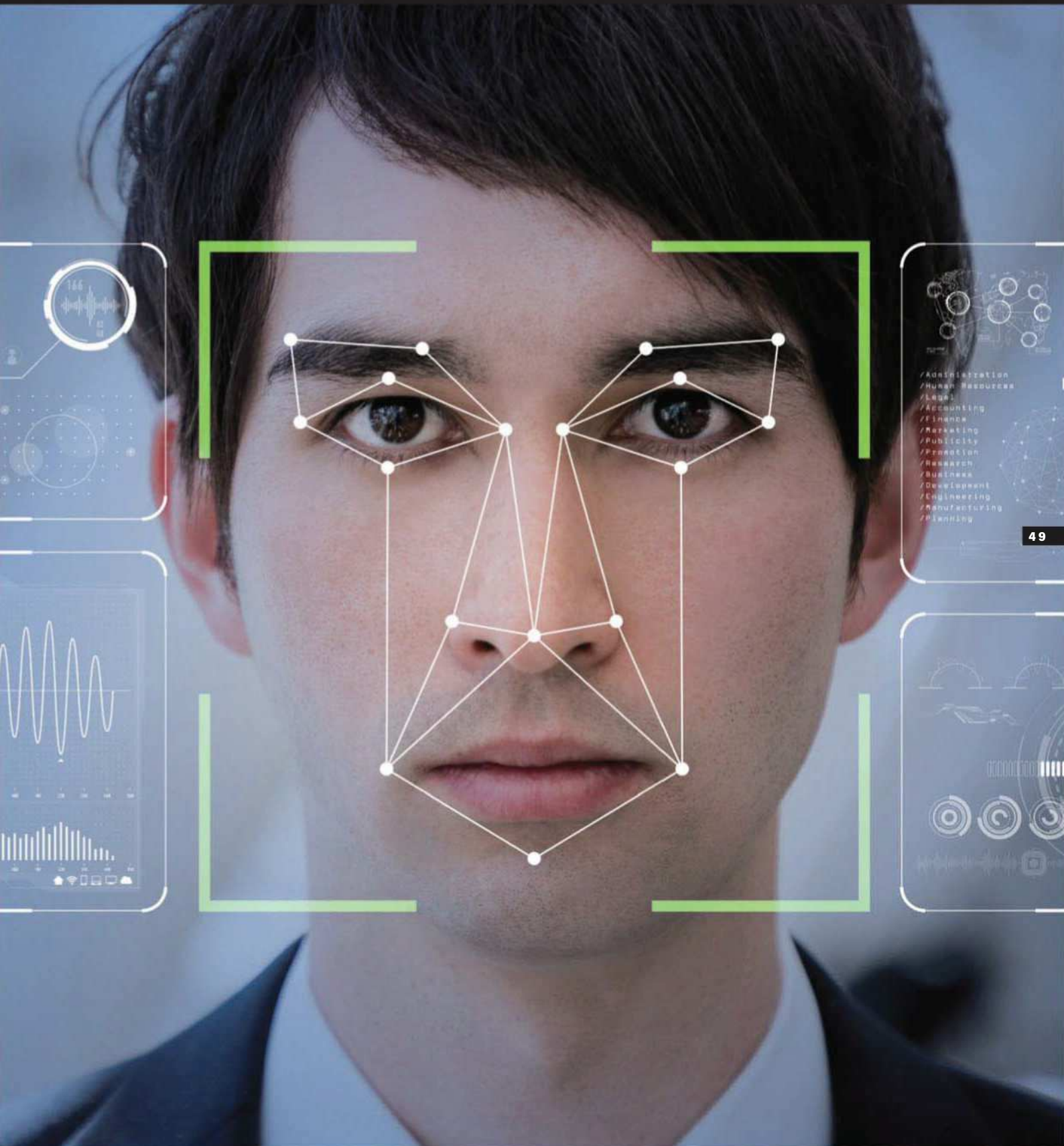


WORDS JENNY SOUTHAN

THE SHAPE OF THINGS TO COME

From reactive hotel rooms to alternative commutes, we identify the business travel trends you need to know about for the year ahead







EXPERIENTIAL REWARDS

Hotel loyalty is moving away from rewards in the form of room upgrades and free stays to money-can't-buy experiences and hyper-personal gifts. Small Luxury Hotels of the World, for example, redesigned its loyalty scheme in September, renaming it Invited and introducing preferential treatment to elite members in the form of birthday gifts and invitation-only events.

Intercontinental Hotels Group, meanwhile, has joined forces with Opentable and Grubhub to allow guests to earn and redeem points on meals in restaurants. Global Hotel Alliance's Discovery programme offers "local experience" rewards for Platinum and Black members, such as seabob snorkelling in the Maldives or scenic cycle rides around Bali. The scheme also applies to Kempinski hotels. The hotel group says: "Whether it's a rare elephant ride in the jungle, a private tour of a Geneva watch factory usually closed to the public, a traditional Adumu dance with Masai warriors in Kenya, or a tour of Malta's presidential palace and gardens, these experiences present the best of local gastronomy, culture and craftsmanship."

ABOVE: Commuters are adopting new travel methods
RIGHT: In-room fitness makes exercise more appealing

FACIAL RECOGNITION

The iPhone X isn't the only employer of facial recognition as a means of identification and added security. Airports and airlines are increasingly integrating the technology into their biometric boarding and immigration systems to help reduce queues, paperwork and the required staffing levels on checkpoints. While you may be anxious that this undermines your privacy, there is no way to turn the tide, so you may as well accept the benefits of a less stressful journey through the terminal as recompense.

Last summer, Delta Air Lines introduced its first biometric bag-drop stations at Minneapolis-St Paul International Airport, requiring a facial scan at the self-service points to verify the passport holder. Last October, Singapore's Changi Airport opened its new Terminal 4, which features biometric screening at check-in as part of its focus to become a fully automated end-to-end terminal. Dubai airport, in partnership with Emirates, is going further by creating camera-lined facial recognition tunnels that you walk through without pausing to stare at a screen. The first tunnels should be in place at Dubai's Terminal 3 by the end of summer 2018.

Meanwhile, British Airways is the first airline to use self-service biometric boarding gates on international flights out of the US,

starting with Los Angeles International. BA has been using biometric gates at London's Heathrow Terminal 5 for domestic flights since March 2017. Amsterdam Schiphol airport and KLM are working on a similar initiative, as is JetBlue, which has replaced boarding passes with facial scanning at Boston Logan airport.

British Airways said that its new technology, created by Vision-Box, "will create a smoother journey for customers, as they will no longer need to present their passport or boarding pass at the gate – only at check-in and security. Instead travellers can simply look into a camera prior to boarding, wait for their biometric data to be verified, and then walk onto the aircraft."

In the US, Customs and Border Protection is trialling its Biometric Exit US in a handful of airports (such as Chicago O'Hare and Las Vegas McCarran), but there are plans to install it at every airport in the country within three years. The endeavour is being pushed forward by President Trump, who wants to use facial recognition to track visa holders as they leave the country (or not).

ALTERNATIVE COMMUTES

With congestion on roads getting ever worse and train services frequently unreliable,

getting to work has become a daily ordeal that pushes stress to unhealthy levels and eats into time that could otherwise be spent more productively. Some commuters have turned to cycling as an alternative mode of transport.

A recent study from the International Journal of Workplace Health Management has found that cyclists arrived at work feeling less stressed than people who had driven. Reflecting increased awareness of ways to improve mental health, a growing subset of people are being more creative in the ways they get from A to B, often using their commute as an opportunity to get fit. Some people are running to work, while others, in cities such as Munich, Basel and even London, are kayaking, surfing, paddle boarding or even swimming down the rivers, packing their laptops and suits in waterproof bags.

Carriers such as Qantas and Air France have cancelled orders for the A380 superjumbo

UNPREDICTABLE MOTHER NATURE

Business travellers need to prepare for flight delays and cancellations in the year ahead by having appropriate insurance, up-to-date duty-of-care policies and watertight back-up plans ahead of disruptive weather conditions sweeping the planet. Many experts are putting this down to global warming (the last three years have been the hottest recorded), and 2018 is expected to be just as bad, if not worse.

Last year, Hurricane Harvey caused deadly flooding in Houston, leaving 80 people dead and US\$195 billion worth of damage and, along with Irma and Maria, wreaked destruction on many Caribbean islands. Some of California's worst-ever wildfires led to mass evacuations across the state – the Thomas fire, in December (not normally a month prone to many blazes), proved the largest on record, burning more than 272,000 acres (110,000 hectares of landscape, while mudslides killed 15 in January. Severe monsoon flooding in Bangladesh killed 1,200 people and affected more than 40 million – aid agencies said it was one of the worst humanitarian crises the region had seen in years.

Seismic activity is also causing problems. Two earthquakes hit Mexico last autumn, one of which proved the deadliest in 30 years; and a 7.3-magnitude earthquake in Iraq and Iran killed up to 580 people not long after. Scientists predict that due to a periodic slowing of the Earth's rotation, there will be more quakes in 2018.

IN-ROOM FITNESS

Hotels know all too well that the gyms they invest in often aren't used – people can be inherently lazy, yet the desire for better fitness remains. With that in mind, some brands are taking steps to make it as easy as possible for guests to work out during their stays by putting fitness equipment in bedrooms instead. A growing number of Marriott's Westin Hotels & Resorts in the US, for example, are now offering some rooms with Peloton exercise bikes and online spinning classes streamed live or on-demand to built-in screens.

As part of Pullman Hotels & Resorts new wellbeing programme, a series of seven-minute videos has been created by wellness ambassador Sarah Hoey for guests to follow in their rooms or download from Youtube. This is accompanied by in-room yoga mats, fitness bags and local jogging maps. According to brand leader Lilian Roten, the underlying ethos is that fitness "must be accessible to everyone, regardless of your location, your time zone, how your diary is looking or your personal practice."

At the same time, Hilton has been rolling out its Five Feet to Fitness concept to hotels

in North America, featuring mini studios with Wattbikes, Gym Rax units with TRX straps, medicine balls from Lyft, Hyperwear Sandbells, yoga mats and meditation chairs, plus a screen for bespoke on-demand exercise classes created by Aktiv Solutions.

Ryan Crabbe, former senior director of global wellness at Hilton, said: "The variety of activity the room enables is motivating. One morning a guest can decide to roll out of bed for a quick guided stretch and yoga poses. Then later that evening, they might return from a stressful day and take a brisk bike ride while catching up on a favourite show or the day's business news."

NEXT-GEN AIRLINES

Aimed at millennials, Air France launched a new low-cost subsidiary airline for hipsters in December, ushering in a new era for trendy aviation created for the younger generation. Richard Branson did a good job of making flying sexy with Virgin Atlantic, but Air France's Joon is looking to inspire a different kind of ethos, much in the way hotel chains have all launched "lifestyle" brands. Crew are dressed in "basic, chic" uniforms that consist of royal-blue cardigans, polo shirts, block-print shift dresses, gilets and retro-styled white trainers. Travellers who download the YouJoon app will be able to stream entertainment on-demand to their devices while in the air. There will also be individual touchscreen monitors on long-haul flights. On short-haul A320 flights, food and drink (with the exception of one free tea or coffee) has to be paid for,





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but on long-haul A340 services it's free. The menu lists items such as Sicilian lemonade, smoothies, craft beer, tapas and organic quinoa salad. Unlike typical budget airlines, intercontinental services also have premium economy and business class cabins with fully flat beds. At the time of writing, there were one-way fares available from Paris to Barcelona, Oslo and Rome from €49 (US\$60), and Istanbul from €99 (US\$122, starting in March), Tehran and Cairo from €149 (US\$184), and Cape Town from €279 (US\$344) from April.

FAREWELL TO JUMBOS

The unmistakable B747, with its humped upper deck, first took to the skies in 1969 – and almost 50 years later, it's finally reaching the end of its life. Aircraft manufacturer Boeing says that it sees “no significant demand” for the jumbo jet anymore, and has dropped the plane from its 20-year forecast. Instead, it predicts airlines will be choosing Boeing's more efficient B787s and B777Xs for long-haul flights. In 2017, both Delta and United retired the last of their B747s, meaning no US airline flies the jumbo any longer. There are still around 500 in service globally, but a recent delivery of a B747-8 to Korean Air may prove the last to be built.

In contrast, a new entry to fleets around the world is the smaller, single-aisle B737 MAX. It has already become the fastest-selling plane in Boeing's history, with more than 4,000 orders from 92 carriers.

ABOVE: Natural disasters are ever more common

The aircraft comes with Boeing's new Sky Interior, “modern sculpted walls and window reveals”, LED lighting and larger overhead bins for luggage. It comes in four variants – the MAX 7, 8, 9 and 10 – installed with 172 to 230 seats. Last year, Norwegian, Southwest Airlines, Air Canada, Silk Air and Westjet all received their first B737 MAXs. In November 2017, it was announced that Flydubai had placed a monster US\$27 billion order for 225 of the planes.

This is part of a wider trend for airlines buying smaller aircraft, instead of larger planes with far greater operating costs. Even though fuel is currently cheap, carriers such as Qantas and Air France have cancelled orders for the A380 superjumbo.

AIRBNB HOTELS

Given Airbnb's ambitions to become a one-stop shop for travel – from home rental to experiences and possibly even flights – it makes sense that the company is partnering with property developers to build its own branded accommodation. In Florida, Airbnb is working with Newgard Property Group to open a 300-unit apartment tower for early 2018 (called Niido Powered by Airbnb) in Kissimmee, near Orlando.

Tenants will be able to rent apartments on Airbnb for up to 180 days a year, and there will be hotel-style support in the form of cleaning and linen services, keyless entry systems, in-room safes and concierges. According to the *Financial Times*, Airbnb plans to unveil another five such projects over the next two years. There are also rumours

This looks to be the year that high-tech smart luggage with built-in batteries is banned from being checked in

that Airbnb will launch a “Lux” portal aggregating high-end private residences this year, allowing it to compete with One Fine Stay (now part of Accorhotels).

SMART LUGGAGE BAN

Business travellers have endured liquid and laptop bans in recent years, but 2018 looks to be the year that high-tech smart luggage with built-in batteries is embargoed. In December, American Airlines announced that suitcases containing lithium-ion batteries pose a fire risk when they are placed in the cargo hold of an aircraft.

As a consequence, from January 15 2018, all smart suitcases were banned from being checked in unless the power pack is removed. Other airlines, such as Delta and Alaska, have issued similar rules and EU carriers may follow suit, while Cathay Dragon and Cathay Pacific banned smart suitcases from January. (Smart luggage will continue to be allowed in the cabin – providing the batteries can be removed.) Brands that manufacture this sort of luggage, which can charge devices, be tracked and even move on its own in some cases, include Away, Barracuda, Bluesmart, Horizn Studios and Modobag.

AIRPORT GYMS

Instead of sitting in the airport lounge eating platefuls of free food and drinking wine, many of us would feel better at the end of our journey if we'd done a workout instead. Last autumn, Lennart Meri Tallinn airport in Estonia became the first in Europe to install a pop-up gym within its terminal near gate 6 (complete with runway views). Operated by My Fitness, the light, expansive gym has high ceilings, with Technogym weight machines, an elliptical trainer, a rowing machine, exercise bike, treadmill and staircase trainer. The only problem is there are no showers.

Roam Fitness is also taking gyms for jet-setters seriously, having opened its first in Baltimore airport last year. The 109 sqm facility has cardio equipment, free weights, →



Stay inspired

Let Conrad's professional team of "destination storytellers" guide you on a curated experience that fits your schedule

What would you do if you had just one hour to explore Hong Kong? Or three hours in Bangkok? Or five hours in Guangzhou?

With its Stay Inspired initiative, luxury brand Conrad Hotels & Resorts offers a customised collection of one-, three- and five-hour experiences at all 33 hotels – or in other words, the Conrad 1/3/5.

As the luxury brand knows, more and more guests want to use whatever free time they have to discover something new about their destination. They want to find authentic hidden gems that are off the beaten path and can't be found in a guidebook.

The Stay Inspired programme targets this intrepid group of business travellers who desire to merge work, life and pleasure, and who are seeking experiences to satisfy their wanderlust and fit their busy schedules.

Each Conrad 1/3/5 recommendation

reflects a carefully curated aspect of a destination, covering food, shopping, art and design, culture, family, adventure and more. From harvesting oysters on the Algarve coast in Portugal to making soba noodles taught by a soba master in Tokyo, the Conrad 1/3/5 itineraries allow guests to immerse themselves in a destination with hyper-authentic activities tailored to their personal interests and time available.

For example, in Hong Kong, the 1/3/5 recommendations might encompass:

- 1 hour – A trip to 65 Peel, Soho's hippest gastropub.
- 3 hours – Get hand-painted porcelain from Master Tso at his ceramic factory.
- 5 hours – An MTR journey to the south of the island to embark on an Instagrammable hike.

Conrad Hotels & Resorts has decided to abolish the standard transactional relationship between a concierge and a guest, by retraining staff as storytellers who are able to inspire guests with attuned options that

ignite their curiosity and passions.

The curated collections are available through the Conrad Concierge from within the Hilton Honors app or at StayInspired.com.

With this Stay Inspired initiative in mind, the team has created a number of exclusive "money-can't-buy" packages available on the Hilton Honors Auction Platform. For example, the recent "Taste of Hong Kong with Agnes Chee" package saw two lucky bidders embark on a culinary tour of Hong Kong with renowned food critic Agnes Chee, which included choosing fresh seafood in Ap Lei Chau to exploring Chee's favourite spots in Central, plus food and accommodation at the Conrad Hong Kong.

These packages are believed to bring guests refined experiences to explore Hong Kong like locals.

Conrad Hong Kong
Pacific Place, 88 Queensway,
Hong Kong; tel: +852 2521 3838;
ConradHongKong.com



Air France subsidiary Joon is ushering in a new era of trendy aviation aimed at the younger generation

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medicine balls, TRX suspension straps and space for stretching. Mercifully, there are four private showers. You can also buy healthy snacks and drinks on-site, and even rent Lululemon fitness clothing if you haven't packed any of your own. Roam Fitness says it plans to open three more US locations this year and, within five years, hopes to have 20 locations including some overseas.

REACTIVE ROOMS

Marriott International has partnered with Samsung and Legrand (a specialist in electrical and digital building infrastructures) to create a prototype internet of things (IoT) hotel room, which it hopes to one day bring to its portfolio of properties. Marriott believes in a sci-fi future where mirrors talk and your shower recognises you when you walk in. It says the IoT Guestroom Lab allows users to ask a virtual assistant for a wake-up call, to start a yoga routine on a full-length mirror, or set the shower to the temperature stored in their customer profile.

The Irvine Marriott in California has been experimenting with a smart shower door, whereby people can draw or write

down ideas in the steam on the glass, and then have them beamed to an iPad. A select number of Marriott's Aloft hotels already have voice-activated rooms.

AFFORDABLE LUXURY

Good news for budget-conscious business travellers is the continued growth of affordable luxury in both hotels and airlines. Boutique hotel mogul Ian Schrager launched his new high-design Public hotel brand in New York's Lower East Side in 2017, with 367 pared-down rooms, open-plan co-working spaces, a florist, cocktail bars, a deli, rooftop event space and free wifi. The idea is you get everything you

need to work and relax on-site and in style, but for lower prices than you might expect (from US\$195 a night).

In a similar vein, Dutch chain Citizen M offers just one category of compact room and no in-room dining, swimming pools or gyms. Instead, guests benefit from generous amounts of communal space for working and eating, and a hip canteen open 24 hours. Again, there is an emphasis on creating a trendy but homely environment. A night at the new Citizen M La Défense in Paris costs from €71 (US\$88) a night, and the chain plans to expand across North America and Asia over the coming years.

The new Moxy Times Square (from Marriott) is another example of a hotel chain that has chosen to invest in imaginative interior design, lively social spaces and superb dining at unusually low rates (from US\$124 a night) by eliminating extraneous facilities and levels of service.

Affordable luxury is coming to airlines too. The Lufthansa Group's budget subsidiary Eurowings has announced it will be installing a business class cabin – with fully flat beds – on board its long-haul wide-body aircraft departing Dusseldorf from the end of April 2018. Oliver Wagner, the airline's CEO, said: "That's not a contradiction for Eurowings. We see strong demand for another top product on routes with high business travel, for example from Dusseldorf to New York, Miami and Fort Myers." And, he says: "We'll be entering the Bizclass race with our usual budget-priced tickets." ■



ABOVE: The hip uniform of trendy new airline Joon
RIGHT: Citizen M hotels offer affordable luxury



The Krakatoa Lanes



New Zealand sirloin steak

Not your average event venue

Where else can you make cocktails, listen to live music and go two rounds of bowling as part of a business meeting?

Few business event venues can offer cocktail making workshops, live music and ten-pin bowling in addition to facilitating thought-provoking meetings and fully equipped presentation facilities.

But Tikitiki Bowling Bar is not your ordinary event venue.

Spanning some 22,000 sq ft, with stunning views of Sai Kung's mountains and the South China Sea, Tikitiki Bowling Bar offers a one-stop shop for all your corporate event needs.

Delegates will love the combination of escapism and fine dining at The Beach Bums and Cannibals Restaurant, headed up by former Four Seasons Hotel chef Peter Lim, while The Octopus's Garden is the place to go for live music and bites.

Delegates can also enjoy the alfresco environment at Island of the Gods or simply share a few drinks at the Sea Dogs and Mermaids Bar, before settling in to a round of bowling at the Krakatoa Lanes, complete with its own video wall.

Customised set menus are available for private dining, while the Island Buffet Menu for larger groups includes hot and cold sections, a carving section with roasted New Zealand sirloin steak, and dessert. Tikitiki Bowling Bar also has more than 25 free-flow house drink options available.

In addition to four themed restaurants and a bowling alley, the venue has all the essentials for getting down to business, including state-of-the-art audio-visual equipment and an array of



Beach Bums & Cannibals Restaurant



Tiki-inspired cocktail

unique teambuilding experiences. These range from courses on how to concoct the perfect tiki-inspired cocktail, to team quizzes and model building sessions that promote critical thinking and collaborative skills.

Packages can be tailored to suit large groups of up to 865 people, or more intimate gatherings, all within the venue's unique resort-style décor.

For organisers with long-term teambuilding plans, the Work Harder! Play Harder! package allows organisers to plan four separate events that can take place over the course of the year, each with a unique theme. These include: Brainstorming with a conference session, quizzes and presentations; Building Blocks providing short films, model building challenges and cocktail making; Think Tank where delegates can engage

in interactive bowling games, puzzles and treasure hunts; and Strategic Solution, with bowling, minute games and card games.

Choose any combination of the four packages for a 10 per cent discount, or try all four and get 15 per cent off. Interested organisers can get in touch to experience a free test drive, during which they can enjoy two house drinks, two rounds of bowling, and two hours' free parking as part of the site visit.

Tikitiki Bowling Bar, 4/F Centro, 1A Chui Tong Road, Sai Kung, New Territories, Hong Kong;
events@urban-ent.com; tikitiki.hk

GAME

OF DRONES



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In the highly competitive drone market, a number of manufacturers are vying for supremacy

WORDS CRAIG BRIGHT



On the other hand, last year Edmonton International Airport began using drones to combat the problem posed by birds, using “Robirds” developed by Clear Flight Solutions to scare birds away from runways.

While drones were once a relatively niche sector, they have now become one of the technology world’s most competitive, with the pack leaders almost all based in China. (From our list, Parrot is the only non-Chinese brand to feature). Intense market competitiveness has even seen high-profile companies such as GoPro, renowned for its durable action cameras, being forced to announce the closure of its entire Karma drone division after struggling to gain a foothold...

With so many options available these days, knowing which drone to buy can be a daunting task. We’ve selected six of the top performers to help you with your decision.

Drones have swarmed the market in recent years, and there’s now a drone to suit every type of consumer: would-be filmmakers can capture stunning panoramic videos, making them excellent hiking and adventure companions; sports enthusiasts are tracked by slimmed-down machines designed for speed and agility; while drone racing has become so popular that in 2016 Dubai hosted the World Drone Prix with a prize pool of US\$1 million.

In the world of aviation, however, the emergence of drones has been a little less welcome. Numerous airports, from Gatwick to Dubai International, have encountered disruptions from flyers operating drones within restricted airspace, and last year the British pilots association BALPA, citing safety concerns from potential collisions, called on the UK government to crack down on the use of drones near airports. Other European nations, including France and the Netherlands, have taken to training eagles to hunt and bring down drones that stray too close to airfields.

DJI MAVIC PRO

PRICE: US\$999
 SIZE: 8.3CM X 19.8CM
 WEIGHT: 734G
 MAX SPEED: 65KM/H
 MAX FLIGHT TIME: 27 MINUTES
 CAMERA: 4K AT 30FPS (VIDEO)/12MP (PHOTO)

Shenzhen-based DJI is one of the leading names in consumer drones. The DJI Mavic Pro (see picture above) is one of the top drones currently available on the market. The ability to fold its arms in to decrease its size to just 8.3cm x 19.8cm makes it highly portable whilst maintaining the quality of a larger drone. It’s also especially good for users looking to film high-quality video – the camera can capture 4K video at up to 30fps.

At US\$999 it is a notably more expensive than other models on the market, though, making it more of an investment than a frivolous buy. Some upgraded iterations have recently been unveiled: the Mavic Pro Platinum has an improved 30-minute flight time while also supposedly generating 60 per cent less noise, and rumours abound about a newer Mavic Pro 2 hitting the market in the foreseeable future.

dji.com



DJI SPARK

PRICE: US\$399
 SIZE: 14.3CM X 14.3CM
 WEIGHT: 300G
 MAX SPEED: 50KM/H
 MAX FLIGHT TIME: 16 MINUTES
 CAMERA: 1080P (VIDEO)/12MP (PHOTO)

The smaller and lighter DJI Spark has been designed for new drone users, with advanced gesture controls that make flying the drone relatively straightforward. But the coolest features? It activates itself using facial recognition scanning and can even be controlled using hand gestures alone – and if the idea of controlling a flying robot by waving your hands around like a wizard doesn’t excite you, we don’t know what will.

dji.com



HUBSAN X4 DESIRE PRO

PRICE: US\$119.99
SIZE: 18.4CM X 18.5CM
WEIGHT: 155G
MAX SPEED: 18KM/H (GPS MODE)
MAX FLIGHT TIME: 11 MINUTES
CAMERA: 1080P

The X4 Desire Pro from Shenzhen-based Hubsan is one of the cheaper quadcopters on the market, and at just 155g it's also a lightweight option. Able to be controlled via a smartphone wifi connection, the drone has a number of useful features such as waypoint flying, that enables you to set paths for the drone to fly by itself, along with an automatic "return home" function that activates when it gets low on power. There is also an additional Expert Mode that increases the sensitivity of the transmitter, thereby making the drone more responsive – a good feature for learners as they become more adept at handling the quadcopter. hubsan.com



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PARROT BEBOP 2

PRICE: US\$399.99
SIZE: 32.8CM X 38.2CM
WEIGHT: 500G
MAX SPEED: 60KM/H
MAX FLIGHT TIME: 25 MINUTES
CAMERA: 1080P (VIDEO)/14MP (PHOTO)

Larger and more powerful than its Bebop predecessor, the Bebop 2 comes in at a mid-range price point while also offering a good-quality camera and responsive controls, particularly the ability to brake from top speed

in about four seconds. It's a little larger and heavier than other drones in its category, partially due to a larger battery that affords 25 minutes of flight time, but its bulk also makes it more resistant to buffeting winds. Parrot's drone also comes equipped with the company's "Follow-me" GPS and visual tracking mode, which allows it to follow and film a selected target entirely autonomously, making this a good option for people looking to video themselves doing outdoor activities. parrot.com



EHANG GHOST DRONE 2.0

PRICE: US\$399.99 (AERIAL)/
US\$899.99 (VR)
SIZE: 35CM X 19.5CM
WEIGHT: 1,150G
MAX SPEED: 70KM/H
MAX FLIGHT TIME: 25 MINUTES
CAMERA: 4K AT 24FPS
(VIDEO)/16MP (PHOTO)



The Ghost Drone 2.0 is notable for the way that it's controlled by tilting your smartphone rather than through a traditional remote controller. Tilt your phone to the left and the drone mimics the movement. This makes for a dynamic flying experience, though if you're looking for precision-shot videos you may find this a little tricky. However, Ehang has also developed a virtual reality variant of the drone that comes with VR goggles, which track your head movements in order to control the direction of the on-board camera. And even if you're not the most capable flyer, the accompanying app contains smart algorithms to reduce human error.
ehang.com



YUNEEC HD RACER

PRICE: US\$179.99
SIZE: 13.5CM X 13CM
WEIGHT: 65G
MAX SPEED: TBA
MAX FLIGHT TIME: 6 MINUTES
CAMERA: 1080P (VIDEO)/13MP (CAMERA)

Yuneec's HD Racer was announced earlier this year and is the Chinese company's first racing drone. As such, its focus is on being lightweight and speedy rather than offering advanced filming functions – though it's not without some nifty tricks of its own, most notably a Flip Up mode that automatically uprights the vehicle if you crash it. Beginner and advanced modes are available, and at US\$179.99 it won't break the bank either. The HD Racer is set to hit the shelves some time this year.

us.yuneec.com

SHANGHAI SURPRISES

Celebrating the city's diverse culinary landscape



WORDS JASMINE JI AND VALERIAN HO





In the early 20th century Shanghai emerged as a major trading city known around the world for its cosmopolitan mix of peoples and vibrant style. As international investment poured in, and British, French, American and other entrepreneurs developed the city, they brought with them foreign cuisines that became widely accepted by the food-loving Chinese, adding

to famous food traditions from Huaiyang, Canton and Zhejiang to create a smorgasbord of restaurants offering superb dining to suit all tastes.

Today there are so many excellent restaurants in Shanghai it's almost impossible to give anything more than a broad overview of the city's culinary landscape, but we've collected a few personal picks that give a taster of Shanghai's stylish dining options.

LAGO BY JULIAN SERRANO

Talented US chef Julian Serrano recently introduced his famous restaurant from Las Vegas to the Bellagio Shanghai, bringing a dining concept that highlights Italian small plates and side dishes – following the modern trend of “appetisers as the new main course”. LAGO offers Italian dishes such as vitello tonnato (cold sliced veal), strozzapreti pasta and ABG dry-aged tomahawk steak, and if you love dessert, you shouldn't miss the classic Italian affogato.

The restaurant's interior design has a space-age feeling; walking through the long, glass-decorated tunnel at the entrance you'll see a shining red-hued wine cabinet, within which more than 300 bottles of wines from around the world are stored (the accent is on Italian, of course). The spacious dining area is connected to an outdoor terrace with expansive views of the Huangpu River and Lujiazui district (there's also a private dining room).

OPEN 6–10.30pm daily

ADDRESS 6/F, 188 Beisuzhou Road, Hongkou District

CONTACT +86 21 3680 6777; bellagioshanghai.com

ULTRAVIOLET BY PAUL PAIRET

The mysterious Ultraviolet is hard to categorise. For starters you won't even know where it is until your booking is confirmed – and that's hard enough to do as there's only one table with ten seats. You also need to pay for your meal in advance at the time of booking.

This three-star Michelin restaurant is more artistic than luxurious, using technology to activate your emotions and trigger your taste buds. During the 20-course feast, graphics are shown on the white walls and accompanied by lights, sounds and smells, activating your gastronomic imagination. Paul Pairet's avant-garde style surprises you with the taste of each course; combined with sounds and imagery designed to tell a story, it's a unique multi-sensory experience that's well worth the extra effort to book.

OPEN Tue to Sat from 6.30pm

ADDRESS Meet at Mr & Mrs Bund restaurant, 6/F Bund 18, 18 Zhongshan Dong Yi Road, Huangpu

CONTACT uvbypp.cc

BO SHANGHAI

The “demon chef” Alvin Leung is good at injecting new techniques and flavours into a traditional recipe, creating his own “X-Treme” Chinese cuisine. Bo Shanghai is a secret fine-dining





restaurant hidden behind the Daimon Bistro – Leung’s other restaurant, and boasts just 26 seats, with six of them arranged at a live cooking station. The 12-course tasting menu emphasises the variety of Chinese cuisine, with traditional dishes from China’s eight different regions, put together with Leung’s imaginative fusion skills. A recently launched menu titled “Journey”

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT:
 Ultraviolet by Paul Pairet;
 The Chop Chop Club; Bo Shanghai

comprises 13 dishes – a mix of reimagined Italian and Chinese recipes.

OPEN 6–9pm, closed on Tue

ADDRESS Bund 5, 6/F, 20 Guangdong Road

CONTACT +86 21 5383 3656; arielle@boshanghai.com

THE CHOP CHOP CLUB

The Chop Chop Club is a new carvery by UNICO Shanghai that specialises in grilled meats. Designed for group gatherings, this restaurant is all about the communal or shared dining experience. Signature dishes include char-roasted chicken, char-roasted lamb shoulder and grilled sea bass – with carefully controlled cooking times to keep the meats’ skin crispy and moist. Roasted leg of lamb, barbecued piglet, turbot grilled over an open fire, salt-encrusted snapper, pressure-steamed crab, charred beef tongue and other mouth-watering dishes are all carved on a centrepiece wooden deck.

A new range of bottled cocktails as well as creative cocktails made to order, plus an extensive selection of aperitifs, wines and champagnes accompany the food.

OPEN 6–11pm daily

ADDRESS 2/F Three on the Bund, 17 Guangdong Road, near Zhongshan Dong Yi Road

CONTACT +86 21 5308 5399; unicoshanghai.com



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SHANG-HIGH

Shang-High serves classic Shanghaiese cuisine with the emphasis on classic flavours, creative interpretations and modern cooking techniques. Awarded a Michelin star for the last two years, it is directed by executive Chinese chef Frank Hu, who specialises in creating Chinese cuisine using international ingredients. One must-try dish is his braised beef cheek with black truffles, the supremely tender meat rendered fragrant by the thinly sliced truffles. If you're looking for something a bit more adventurous, try the braised cuttlefish with pigeon eggs or smoked pomfret. Both are iconic Shanghaiese dishes, given a modern touch by adding different ingredients.

OPEN 11.30am–2.30pm and 6–10.30pm daily

ADDRESS Level 6, Jumeirah Himalayas Hotel

CONTACT +86 21 3858 0728; jhsrestaurants@jumeirah.com

XINDALU

Xindalu – China Kitchen is located in Hyatt on the Bund. A popular restaurant with a stylish dining environment, its dishes are made in traditional Shanghai and Zhejiang style, and prepared in the open kitchen. Here, chefs showcase their skill in making hairy crab roe dumplings and pot-sticker pork dumplings – a visual feast preceding a delicious meal. Don't miss the signature roasted Peking duck (the chef is from Beijing), which is made using traditional ingredients and an apple-wood fired oven to roast the duck.

Xindalu also regularly brings out new menus. Since March, it has launched seasonal dishes such as the tossed toona shoots with fresh walnut, slow-boiled Yunnan chahua chicken with spring bamboo, and steamed Changjiang longjaw anchovy, which is only available in the spring so grab this chance to try the delicious freshwater fish.

OPEN 11.30am–2.30pm and 5.30–10.30pm daily

ADDRESS Lobby level, East Tower, 199 Huangpu Road

CONTACT +86 21 6393 1234 ext 6318;

shanghai.thebund.hyatt.com



YONG YI TING

Shanghai and its neighbouring Jiangsu and Zhejiang provinces are known as the home of Jiangnan cuisine. Yong Yi Ting, at the Mandarin Oriental Pudong, specialises in the refined seasonal dishes of this regional food. Consultant Chef Tony Lu chooses the freshest seasonal ingredients to create such classic signature dishes as stewed “lion’s head” pork dumpling filled with crabmeat in sweet soy sauce, and yellow croaker wonton soup with salted vegetables.

Yong Yi Ting is elegantly designed and offers six luxurious private dining rooms, some connected to the outdoor terrace overlooking the garden. There's also a chef's live-cooking table and a wine cellar storing a great selection of wines from around the world. A speciality of the restaurant is a choice of 20 precious Chinese teas to pair with your Jiangnan dim sum.

OPEN 11.30am–2.30pm and 5.30–10.30pm daily

ADDRESS LG1, 111 Pudong Road (S), Pudong

CONTACT +86 21 2082 9978; mandarinoriental.com

CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE:
Shang-High;
Fu He Hui;
Puben by
Jerome Leung
and Yong Yi
Ting



FU HE HUI

There are a lot of vegetarian restaurants in Shanghai, but Fu He Hui gets first mention from many of the city's food aficionados. Unlike some other vegetarian restaurants, it maintains the belief that its dishes' ingredients should retain their originality. Surrounded by a group of old villas, the restaurant's interior was designed by Lv Yongzhong to have a homey feeling. There are three set menus, all offering eight courses but prices differ depending on the ingredients you choose. Menus are updated seasonally and only the freshest, healthiest ingredients are used – keep an eye out for uncommon ingredients that are notoriously hard to procure and rarely found on restaurant menus.

OPEN 11am–2.30pm and 5–10pm daily

ADDRESS 1037 Yuyuan Road, Changning District

CONTACT +86 21 3980 9188

PUBEN BY JEREME LEUNG

Jereme Leung was one of the earliest Asian chefs to mix Western and Chinese cuisines. Over the past 30 years, he has travelled extensively in China and has incorporated a host of Chinese cooking techniques into Puben. Its signature dish is golden roasted duck, renowned for its crispy skin and tender, juicy meat. The special ingredient for the sauce comes from rose flowers airfreighted in from Yunnan.

Another must-try is Leung's black gold egg custard buns. This artistic dish is black in colour and decorated with golden lines on top. The custard and egg yolk centre matches well with the bun, providing a rich flavour. Also made using Yunnanese roses, the Yunnan edible rose pastry is inspired by the famous scene of snow and flowers in the picturesque town of Dali. Bite into the layers of the cake and enjoy the delicate scent and flowery taste that is redolent of a fragrant rose garden.

OPEN 5–10.30pm (Mon to Fri); 11.30am–2.30pm (Sat and Sun)

ADDRESS 5/F, 579 Wai Ma Road

CONTACT +86 21 6339 1188; volgroup.com.cn/en/pb.html

LOCAL DELIGHTS

PAN-FRIED BUN

Pan-fried buns are delicious and you can find them everywhere in Shanghai. Juicy but with a crispy bottom, there are fully fermented, partly fermented and non-fermented options, and you can choose different meat fillings.

XIAO LONG BAO

This is most people's favourite. It's a bite-sized dumpling usually filled with pork. Be careful when picking up the dumpling with your chopsticks, as the skin is very thin and easily broken, and the delicious meat juice (the best part of the dumpling) will then flow out. Top tip: pick the dumpling up with chopsticks and a spoon, so even if the skin breaks the juice will be held in the spoon.

STEAMED PORT

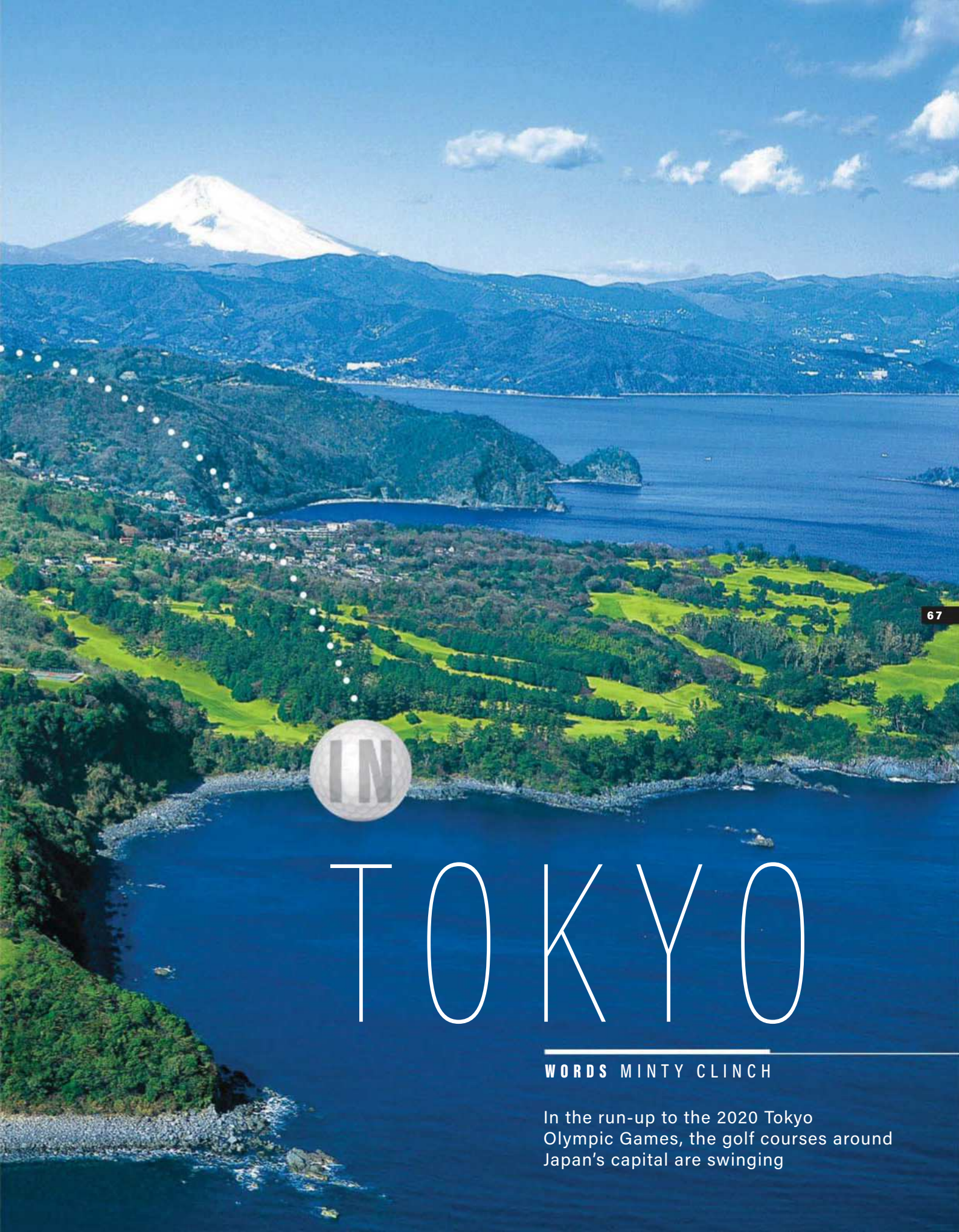
If you really like that meat juice, then don't miss the steamed port dumplings. These are larger than xiao long bao and the skin is comparatively thicker. Normally locals don't eat the skin as it is quite thick – they just drink the rich soup inside. Most restaurants will prepare a straw for you but be cautious because the soup is very hot!

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TEE TIME





TOKYO

WORDS MINTY CLINCH

In the run-up to the 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games, the golf courses around Japan's capital are swinging

KAWANA HOTEL

WHERE 120km south of Tokyo (one hour by bullet train, plus 15-minute minibus).

WHY The Kawana's first course, Oshima, opened in the 1920s. Then followed a visit from revered course architect CH Allison, who persuaded Anglophile owner Baron Kishichiro Okura to create the Fuji Course, named for the mountain seen from the 11th fairway. Laid out through mature parkland with changes of elevation and deep bunkers, it opened in 1936. The opening tee shot is steeply downhill, begging the question, "what comes next?". The answer is a gruelling three-hole climb. After the halfway house – a compulsory 15-minute stop – fairways cross a plateau towards the finishing stretch along spectacular cliffs. The 11th is the longest hole, while the 15th, which slopes down towards the shore, is the most dramatic. No buggies on Fuji, but Oshima allows them. Some holes have robot carts to carry players up steep inclines, an eerie taste of the automation to come.

PRICE Fuji: weekdays ¥26,000 (US\$245), weekends ¥34,000 (US\$320), fee includes caddie and range balls. Oshima: weekdays ¥12,300 (US\$116), includes buggy with GPS and range balls; weekends ¥14,300 (US\$135). Club hire ¥6,480 (US\$61), Japanese brands.

HOURS Fuji: stay-and-play tee times 8am-10.30am. Oshima: visitors any time from 8am until sunset.

FACILITIES Fuji: 18 holes, 6,701 yards par 72; Oshima, 5,711 yards par 70. No outdoor practice area. Underground electronic driving range. Putting green.

MAX HANDICAP 24.

FOOD AND LEISURE The Kawana Hotel, built in the 1920s, has 100 rooms and was stayed in by honeymooners Marilyn Monroe and Joe DiMaggio. Not all rooms are non-smoking, so reserve ahead. There are two grass tennis courts, swimming pools, and billiard and mahjong rooms. The restaurant serves sashimi and sushi.

CONTACT 1,459, Kawana, Ito-shi, Shizuoka, 414-0044; +81 557 45 1111; princehotels.com





FROM OPPOSITE PAGE:
Kasumigaseki
Country Club seen
from the air; and
from the green;
Kawana Hotel

KASUMIGASEKI COUNTRY CLUB (KCC)

WHERE 40km north of Tokyo (35 minutes from Kan-Etsu/Ken-O expressway).

WHY The most likely way to get into this private club, the 2020 Olympic course, is through an invitation from a member. To stage the event, the club was pressured into opening to women members in March 2017.

The KCC was established in 1929 with the East Course and redesigned in 1930 by CH Allison. His secret design weapon was a cavernous bunker, represented at the par 3 10th on Kasumigaseki East. He also provided input for the West Course.

In that era, courses routinely had twin greens, with different grass for winter and summer – a feature considered outdated now that bent grass can cope with climatic vagaries. Part of the brief for Tom Fazio and son Logan, the US team refashioning the East for the Olympics, is to eliminate the twin-green system. In other respects, they

remain true to tradition, lengthening and opening up the fairways and enhancing the bunkers – without adding gimmicky water features to existing lakes and streams.

PRICE Weekdays ¥27,000 (US\$254), weekends/holidays ¥31,000 (US\$292).

HOURS 7.30am to sunset. Closed Monday.

FACILITIES East Course (2020 Summer Olympics) 18 holes, 7,466 yards par 71; West Course 18 holes, 7,117 yards par 73. 250 yard range, five short-game practice greens and putting greens. Five pros offering tuition. Club hire not available.

MAX HANDICAP 20 (certificate not requested, but best to take a copy).

FOOD AND LEISURE Understated luxury marks a low-rise clubhouse in a circle of pines, which serves quality Japanese food and has a bar/terrace where businesspeople can be seen making deals after their rounds.

CONTACT 3398, Kasahata, Kawagoe-shi, Saitama 350-1175; +81 492 31 2181; kasumigasekicc.or.jp



TOKYO GOLF CLUB

WHERE 33km north of Tokyo, 45 minutes from the start of the Kan-Etsu expressway.

WHY Inspired by a visit to the USA, the first Japanese-designed course was created by golf course architect Mitsuaki Otani, and opened near Tokyo as a six-holer in 1913. This was the start of a tumultuous history, which included three changes of venue and requisition, first by the Imperial Japanese Army and then by the US Army at the end of World War II. The club settled into its current location in 1956 and is now an oasis in a very urban world.

As with many Japanese courses, the Allison factor can be clearly seen in the demanding bunkering and approach shots that require guile rather than strength to be successful. Later influences on the design include the UK's Sunningdale and Wentworth, bringing a touch of Surrey heathland to the Japanese capital. As a prized venue for the Japanese Open, the layout was refurbished in 2010 by Gilbert Hanse, the architect of the Olympic Golf Course in Rio de Janeiro.

PRICE Weekdays ¥29,000 (US\$273), weekends ¥33,500 (US\$315), with a compulsory caddie.

HOURS 7am-6.30pm. Closed Monday.

MAX HANDICAP 20.

FACILITIES 18-hole course, 6,904 yards par 72, practice area, putting green. Club hire not available.

FOOD AND LEISURE The club celebrated its 50th anniversary in 1963 in style with the addition of an elegant yet rustic clubhouse designed by distinguished architect Anthony Raymond. Set among deciduous trees, it has a long terrace overlooking the course – a relaxing venue for 19th hole analysis.

CONTACT 1,984, Kashiwabara, Sayama, Saitama 350-1335; +81 4 2953 9111; tokyogolfclub.jp



ABOVE AND LEFT: Lakewood Golf Club and Tokyo Golf Club

LAKWOOD GOLF CLUB

WHERE 75km southwest of Tokyo (72 minutes by train with 15 minutes by bus).

WHY With its 50th birthday approaching in 2019, Lakewood is one of the most popular golf day trips from Tokyo. Visitors love the course, the facilities, meals in the clubhouses and the dramatic setting between Mount Fuji and Mount Hakone. In spring on the West Course – the more challenging of the two – the opening tee shot onto a fairway lined with cherry blossoms is nothing short of dazzling. The course rewards intelligence over power, with changes in elevation and abundant water features; the most dramatic is the four-tier waterfall at the signature 4th. The East is marginally more spectacular. The 1st sets the tone with a lake to the left and bunkering on both sides of a relatively generous fairway, followed by a blind dogleg approach shot. The course asks tactical questions as it meanders through the forest, culminating in a nail-biting risk-reward

decision over water to a three-tiered green at the par 5 18th.

PRICE Weekdays ¥25,150 (US\$237), Saturday ¥40,150 (US\$378), Sunday/holidays ¥37,150 (US\$350); green fees include caddie and buggy.

HOURS 7am to sunset.

MAX HANDICAP 36, certificate not required.

FACILITIES West Course: 18 holes, 6,554 yards par 72. East Course: 18 holes, 6,524 yards par 72. 19-stall covered driving range (7am-10.45am), practice bunker, bent grass putting greens.

FOOD AND LEISURE The main West clubhouse has guest locker rooms with *onsen* and massage chairs. Breakfast/lunch is served in the Cafe, while Dinac, on the second floor, offers an international menu. Kohantei, the clubhouse for the East course, serves seasonal food at its restaurants.

CONTACT 169 Kuroiwa, Oiso, Naka, Kanagawa 259-0105, +81 4 637 2115, lake-wood.co.jp. ■

The decline of the business lunch

Has the sobering transformation of long liquid lunches contributed to better business? One nostalgic journo thinks not...



ROBIN LYNAM
HONG KONG-BASED FOOD AND WINE WRITER

Twelve years have passed since the green and gold splendour of the Mandarin Grill at the Mandarin Oriental Hong Kong fell victim to radical refurbishment. Yet I am still mourning it, and for me what it represented: civilised long lunches.

Not that there is anything wrong with the restaurant of the same name that has superseded the classic, windowless grill room that was *the* place to go for a three-hour lunch for more than four decades. It holds a Michelin star, and every time I have been there the food has been excellent.

But it is businesslike. Where the old room was full of softly lit recesses into which people playing truant from their offices could discreetly retreat, the Mandarin Grill today is flooded with natural light. Everybody can see everybody else, and people meeting there for a business lunch are probably discussing business.

I find that dispiriting. When I started having business lunches back in the 1980s, as you took at noon the seat you expected to occupy until 3pm, a waiter, who already knew your response, would enquire whether you would like to see the wine list. Today, you are asked the spirit-dampening question, “Still or sparkling?”

The point about the business lunches of 20 or 30 years ago is that they weren’t particularly about business. They were a reward for already having done some, or an opportunity to get to know people with whom you *might* do some, with their tongues nicely loosened. Those lunches were bathed in good wine. At 2pm you did not say, “Good lord is that the time? I must

be getting back to work.” You said, “Let’s have another look at the digestif trolley.”

During a brief stint in public relations before I subsided into journalism, I worked with a senior account executive who quite frequently returned late from a long, boozy lunch and fell asleep at his desk. One time I remember the boss sticking his head round the door and nodding approvingly. “He must have signed another client,” he said. He was right. Not only was this executive not functionally impaired by lunchtime drinking, he was able to function quite substantially because his clients liked drinking with him.

The withering of expense accounts has something to do with the near disappearance of the long lunch, but I suspect it is more a consequence of changing attitudes towards daytime consumption of alcohol. It is hard to get properly into the spirit of the occasion without the social lubricant.

Today even one glass of wine, never mind finishing the bottle, is widely regarded with austere disapproval. “You don’t drink during the day, do you?” I was once asked, incredulously, by one of the new school of daytime puritans. He would have thought nothing of getting plastered in Lan Kwai Fong until 3am and struggling into work with a debilitating hangover, but regarded a lunchtime martini or glass of champagne as the gravest dereliction of duty.

Today even one glass of wine, never mind finishing the bottle, is regarded with austere disapproval

I doubt that we do business any more efficiently as a result of the new puritanism, but we certainly do it less agreeably. And in Asia we have lost most of the venues where good old-fashioned business lunching was properly understood. The traditional hotel grill room is all but extinct. Of the classics in Hong Kong the Mandarin Grill is now a misnomer, and the Excelsior Grill and Hilton Grill merely memories.

In Kowloon the Holiday Inn Golden Mile did away with the Baron’s Table years ago, but the risen-from-the-ashes Hyatt Regency is to be warmly commended for recreating Hugo’s, historically a long lunch favourite, and still a venue which recognises that lunch is a celebration of life.

Morton’s at the Sheraton remains highly sympathetic to people who still like to start lunch with a martini or two while they study the wine list. So does The Envoy at The Pottinger hotel, my current favourite long lunch venue. These are places that after 2.30pm prefer to continue to take your money rather than chase you out of the door.

In 1987 the late Keith Waterhouse, who in *Who’s Who* listed “Lunch” as his sole hobby and who would have been horrified by the institution’s decline, wrote an excellent book called *The Theory and Practice of Lunch*. It contains much sound good sense, and I commend it to your attention. **BT**

Rise to the challenge

As guests expect more for free, hoteliers are searching for new ways to boost the income from in-room charges



DEREK PICOT

A HOTELIER FOR MORE THAN 30 YEARS
AND AUTHOR OF *HOTEL RESERVATIONS*

Times are challenging for hoteliers. International business travellers are pushing for more and more benefits from their room rate, while sources of profit disappear for the hoteliers. First it was mobile phones decimating the hotel's telephone revenues. Then its replacement – charging for the internet – became more difficult as travellers demanded it for free. To put all this in perspective, 20 years ago, a 200-bedroom hotel might comfortably make as much as 8 per cent of its total profit from in-room services. Now hotels face a hole that has to be covered from other sources.

Cunning hoteliers who specialise in the dark art of making money from technology and in-room refrigeration were thrown a challenge. It took a little thought, but there was a breakthrough.

INTERNET CHARGES

The first was to introduce two internet speeds. Slow speed for free, faster charged at a premium. This, of course, came about because of the realisation that 60 per cent of all downloads were not for email traffic but for movie sites – which incidentally means no one is paying for the in-room films anymore.

Recently I had to provide an analysis for a hotel chain on the degree that free internet usage was influencing the decline of pay-for movie income. The client wanted to know how much revenue could be compensated by offering chargeable high-speed broadband. Most hotels have their in-room systems provided free of charge against commission on pay movie income. The client's concern was, if this dropped too far, they would be expected to pay for the equipment – a hefty

charge if you think about all those rooms requiring flatscreen TVs and connections. The analysis showed a distinct decline in people watching the movies, though pay-per-view adult movie revenues were still strong at weekends with leisure guests. My research revealed that there were also certain nationality trends, and demonstrated that while the British may follow the general purchasing trend, if there was a Premier League football match on, their preference was to watch it rather than seek other entertainment.

In search of other ways to reverse the revenue decline from television and communication services, the focus has returned to the minibar. As a general rule, greater temperance in corporate life means minibar use is also declining – it is a “break even” operation at best. The cost of having a staff member check rooms and replace glasses every day absorbs potential profit.

Readers will have encountered automated bar systems to help inventory control. These allow automatic billing and also tell staff which rooms need restocking and when. It doesn't really save the staff cost, though. Guests use the minibar for the “wrong” reasons – to store medicine, cheese, milk and a heap of personal items. Inevitably, some of these get left behind to the horror of the next arrival, who understandably takes a dislike to syringes and curdled dairy products. On top of that there appears to be a breed of guest

that takes pleasure in drinking the minibar contents and then refilling the bottles with similar-coloured liquids (don't ask). The result is that each bar still has to be checked daily. The key to financial success for the savvy hotelier is to persuade the customer to steal less and spend more.

Recently, I stayed in a hotel in the States where, for a premium, the minibar was included. I was disappointed to find that it was only stocked with soft drinks and a couple of beers. The concept had one advantage: it was serviced when the room was cleaned and saved me from the daily visit of an attendant to check the bar. However, my feeling of benevolence was diminished by irritation at

having to order my nightcap from room service. The time taken for delivery, the tip and surcharges cost me both angst and cash. But money was being made.

Now we see the rise of the honesty bar, where you drink as much as you like from bottles in your room with the cost assessed at the end of the stay. It seems to work, but doesn't come close to recovering what has been lost in profit from the days of outrageous telephone charges and overpriced mini cans of Coke.

I predict there will be some new ideas. The note encouraging you to “Save the Planet”, for instance. Rather than requesting you reuse towels, it will ask that you use them sparingly or not at all. Perhaps they will offer a discount if you bring a sleeping bag. And as for the air conditioning – now there's an opportunity.

Guests use the minibar for the “wrong” reasons – to store medicine, cheese and milk



Luxury above the clouds

The new Park Hyatt Hangzhou soars above the city, with high-end accommodation, dining, business and leisure facilities

Floating high above the fabled destination of Hangzhou, the new Park Hyatt Hangzhou crowns the uppermost levels of a 49-floor skytower.

Ideally located for business and leisure, Park Hyatt Hangzhou is a new landmark of the Qianjiang New City CBD. The hotel forms part of the 800,000 sqm MixC complex, which also comprises Grade-A offices, residential apartments and retail space.

The hotel is a 30-minute drive from Hangzhou International Airport and a 15-minute drive from Hangzhou East Railway Station.

Designed by award-winning New York duo Yabu Pushelberg, Park Hyatt Hangzhou's 242 guestrooms and suites are the highest in the city, with uninterrupted views of the city skyline, river and mountains.

Starting from 55 sqm, the guestrooms welcome travellers into a contemporary sanctuary defined by natural woods and a relaxing lake-blue colour palette. Each decorative element has been custom designed, from the hand-tufted silk carpets depicting Hangzhou's plum blossoms to the unique bed-head



featuring a cherry-blossom pattern that gently glows at night. Spa-style bathrooms of white marble feature freestanding marble bathtubs, double vanities and deluxe Acca Kappa bath products, plus a separate automatic Washlet toilet.

From afternoon tea at the Living Room to authentic Zhejiang and Cantonese cuisine at the Dining Room, Park Hyatt Hangzhou's seven showpiece restaurants and bars offer the city's ultimate dining and drinking experiences. A particular highlight can be found at Forty8 on the top two levels of the hotel. The casual restaurant offers an "above-the-clouds" experience with a glass-bottom floor extending from the tower. Forty8 also encompasses a cocktail and wine bar, whisky and cigar bar, live music stage and a large outdoor terrace.

Meetings, celebrations and special events are elevated to a new level of exclusivity and style at Park Hyatt Hangzhou. Event guests enjoy private hotel access through a marble reception hall leading directly to the main 650 sqm Ballroom on Level 2 which hosts up to 400 guests. On the same floor, The Residence offers a more casual setting with four meeting venues, residential-style lounge spaces and a show kitchen, for all kinds of meetings and events of between 30 and 100 guests.

On Level 35, guests will discover the highest swimming pool in Hangzhou. After a relaxing swim, guests can retire to the lounge deck or Bath House offering a series of whirlpools. The adjacent Fitness Centre invites guests to get active with the latest LifeFitness cardio machines, including the Synrgy360. Park Hyatt Hangzhou has also curated a collection of unique guest experiences, ranging from a private West Lake cruise to golfing on a tea plantation and witnessing the dramatic Qiantang River Tide.

Park Hyatt Hangzhou, 1366 Qianjiang Road, Hangzhou, China, 310020; tel: +86 571 8696 1234; parkhyatthangzhou.com

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Business
Traveller ASIA-PACIFIC

the report

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**Tried,
Tested,
Tasted.**

TRIED AND TESTED

**Hong Kong Airlines
A350 business class**

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TRIED AND TESTED

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Hong Kong Airlines A350 business class

LOS ANGELES-HONG KONG



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BACKGROUND As part of its ambitious and aggressive expansion plans, Hong Kong Airlines took delivery of its first A350 in September 2017. After launching on short-haul routes to Bangkok, Taipei and Shanghai, the aircraft made its long-haul debut on the new route to Los Angeles, which launched in December. Services to London, New York and San Francisco are expected to follow this year.

CHECK-IN My shuttle arrived at Tom Bradley International Terminal B at around 0730 for my 1045 flight to Hong Kong (HX69). The terminal was very busy that morning, but there was a short queue in the business class lane in Hong Kong Airline's check-in area A. TSA passenger screening is on departure level 4, which can be reached via the escalator next to the Hong Kong Airlines counters. Again, there was hardly a queue, and I was airside by 8am.

THE LOUNGE Hong Kong Airlines business class passengers can use the LA International Lounge located on level 6, a three-minute walk from security (there were very clear directions printed on the Lounge Invitation ticket). This is a spacious

lounge with plenty of seating and power points (including USB ports), a modern design and an indoor balcony with views of the terminal. The morning food choice felt rather limited (cup noodles, sandwiches and pastries) but there was Starbucks coffee and alcoholic beverages for those so inclined.

BOARDING I left the lounge at 10am and it was just a one-minute walk to gate 148. Boarding began five minutes later.

THE SEAT The 334-seat A350 has 33 business class seats from rows 11 to 21 (without row 13 or 14). The seats are arranged in a 1-2-1 configuration and each passenger enjoys direct aisle access.

The seat product is similar to that on the A330, with a generous 44-inch seat pitch – but there are also some new details, like the carpets, the pillows and blankets (already on the seat when you board), which are now a modern grey colour instead of purple.

The airline has dispensed with the massage function in the seat, but the touch panel control has been improved with more straightforward preset options and better responsiveness. The in-seat magazine rack

PRICE

A return business ticket in mid-May starts from HK\$21,992 (US\$2,813) including taxes, fees and charges.

FLIGHT TIME

15 hours 35 minutes

AIRCRAFT TYPE

A350-900

CONFIGURATION

1-2-1

SEAT RECLINE

180 degrees

SEAT WIDTH

23in/58cm

SEAT PITCH

44in/112cm

BED LENGTH

84in/213cm

CONTACT

hongkongairlines.com

The fully flat bed is generously long – I am 192cm tall and still had room to spare when lying down. I slept very well for six hours

has been moved to seat level to allow more space in and around the side table, where there are two USB ports (international charging points are under the seat).

Another highlight is the sturdy work/dining table, housed vertically in the seat-back panel and which, usefully, can be pushed away so you can leave the seat without having to clear it first.

THE FLIGHT As I settled down in my seat (16A), a cabin crew member offered me a welcome drink of orange juice or water. I was also given a menu and my pre-meal drink order was taken. We pushed back at 1045 before taking off at 1100. After the seatbelt sign was switched off, slippers

TRIED AND TESTED FLIGHT



and an amenity kit were distributed, consisting of an eye mask, socks, dental kit, earplugs and L'Occitane hand cream and lip balm.

My order for lunch was taken when my lemon tea and nuts were delivered.

Hong Kong Airlines has introduced charming new tableware designs in business class, with the dishes representing various parts of the Bauhinia flower and the salt and pepper shakers (which passengers are encouraged to take home) resembling dim sum. The menu has also incorporated lots of home references. The lunch starter was impressive: abalone celeriac mousse tart and sliced lobster with lemon chimichurri sauce and a side salad. A Chinese bean curd, ginkgo and diced pork soup followed, which was an unusual bonus. Main courses included a vegetarian, beef and chicken options. I chose the chicken breast stuffed with peppadew pepper and mozzarella in demi-glace sauce, with roasted sweet potatoes and seasonal vegetables – a colourful dish that tasted great. My meal finished with a chocolate cake.



After lunch, the cabin lights dimmed and changed to a purple colour tone, so I reclined into the fully flat bed to get some sleep. It is generously long – I am 190cm (6' 2") tall and still had room to spare when lying down. The armrest has also been built wider, which is useful during the flight, and the space between the semi-open footwell was partially blocked with a cushion, thus preventing my foot from falling into the gap when sleeping. I slept very well for around six hours.

I woke up because of turbulence. The attentive crew asked if I wanted a mid-flight snack – a vegetarian brioche sandwich with pepper jack cheese and mixed vegetable, assorted Chinese dim sum or a cheese plate. I ordered the dim sum, consisting of sticky rice and a rice noodle roll, which was a good option.

Each passenger is granted 15 minutes of wifi access for free; after that the charges are: US\$4.95 for 20MB of data, US\$8.95 for a one-hour pass or US\$18.95 for a full-flight pass. I purchased the full-flight package and considered it good value for 15 hours. There were no problems with sending messages or doing emails, though sending photos was a bit slow.

I also spent some time navigating the IFE system, which was smooth and responsive with a wide range of movies, music and TV

programme options, plus live broadcasts of CNN, BBC World News and Sports24. Passengers can also experience take-off and landing from different aircraft camera view points.

The cabin lights came on two hours before landing for the refreshment service. The starter comprised of fresh fruit while the main course was either beef lasagne with herb marinara and chive alfredo sauce or roasted BBQ pork in Chinese five spice sauce with steamed rice, a fried egg and seasonal vegetables. I chose the BBQ pork, but felt it could have benefited from more sauce. The meal was completed with cheesecake and cassis mousse.

ARRIVAL A crew member came to each passenger to say thank you and goodbye before the flight started its descent at 1800, which was a nice personal touch. We landed smoothly at 1830. Immigration was not busy and it didn't take much time to collect my priority luggage and clear customs.

VERDICT The 15-hour journey flew by. I enjoyed the comfortable lie-flat bed to rest, and had plenty of time to do some work on a firm table with strong wifi connectivity. I also appreciated the excellent service as the cabin crew took care of me and made me feel at home during the flight. *Valerian Ho*



The Langham Huntington, Pasadena, Los Angeles

BACKGROUND The property originally opened in 1907 as the Hotel Wentworth, but was plagued with an unfortunate succession of floods, earthquakes and financial problems, forcing it to close until it could be reopened in 1914. Over the years it has been taken over by several brands including Sheraton (1954) and Ritz-Carlton (1991). In 2008, Langham Hospitality Group purchased the hotel and instigated a multimillion-dollar renovation of restaurants The Royce and The Tap Room, as well as The Huntington Spa and cottage guestrooms. The hotel celebrated 100 years of hospitality in 2014.

WHERE IS IT? Located in the upscale residential area of Pasadena, a 20-minute drive from downtown Los Angeles and a 45-minute drive from Los Angeles International Airport.

WHAT'S IT LIKE? The leafy Oak Knoll neighbourhood is a beautifully quiet and peaceful setting to retreat to after a day of meetings. The hotel itself is simply stunning with its century-old classic European architecture and sprawling 23-acre (nine-hectare) grounds. I arrived on a chilly December day and was met by a blast of warmth in the lobby, which is elegantly appointed with classic European furnishings and grand chandeliers. Decked out in luxurious creams and whites, the light tones were enhanced by large French windows overlooking an inner courtyard that allowed light to flood into the lobby.

ROOMS For me, the charm of the property is its historic quality and sensitive dedication to upholding its classical décor. Even the lift, for example, is surrounded in old-style wood and emits a "ding" when passing each floor.

My enormous (80-odd sqm) one-bedroom Huntington Suite on level 4 continued with this classic theme, with vintage wooden furnishings, antique decorations and historic prints adorning the walls. Large windows ensured the room



was well lit with natural sunshine, while a small balcony was present to soak up the verdant views towards the city.

A spacious worktable in the living room is well equipped with power outlets and USB ports, plus an adaptor for out-of-town guests, which was appreciated. A kettle, teabags and coffee machine were also located nearby.

The bedroom was also generously sized, with a comfortable poster bed in the centre, though the ventilation system was quite noisy.

The bathroom has also been super-sized. A long corridor leads to a toilet and standing shower at one end, while a bathtub and the basin are at the other end. Gorgeous-smelling Chuan Spa bath kits were provided, along with a second adapter for guest use.

Complimentary wifi is available for all guests. I had trouble connecting to the internet initially, but a staff member quickly came to fix the problem after a call.

LOUNGE The Club Lounge is located on level 8, operating from 6.30am to 9pm (or until 10pm Fri to Sun). It's not a large space, but the modest size lends itself to a more homey feeling. The breakfast buffet selection, however, is extensive: from fresh salmon to scrambled eggs and fruit.

FOOD & DRINKS There are three restaurants and a bar. I dined at the high-end Royce Wood-Fired Steakhouse one evening, a cosy, dimly lit venue with grand high-backed chairs. I ordered the 16oz bone-in ribeye steak, which was absolutely delicious: juicy and flavourful. Other venues include The Lobby Lounge, serving its

Renovation has brought the hotel up to date, while great service never goes out of style

BEST FOR...

The quiet and relaxing environment.

DON'T MISS...

A trip to Chuan Spa.

PRICE

Rates for a midweek stay in a Huntington Suite in May start from US\$575 per night, inclusive of taxes.

CONTACT

langhamhotels.com/en/the-langham/pasadena/

classic afternoon tea, and The Tap Room, the hotel bar with a good wine and cocktail list and a beautiful garden view from the heated terrace.

EVENTS The hotel has more than 4,645 sqm of meeting and event space ranging from the 34 sqm The Georgian Petite to the 1,042 sqm Huntington Ballroom.

LEISURE Extensive leisure facilities include three tennis courts, an outdoor heated salt pool, Japanese garden and a Horseshoe Garden at the back. A gym and the Chuan Spa are located in a separate building next to the entrance. I tried the whole-body Chuan Balancing Massage, which was very relaxing, and followed this with a comfortable rest period on a waterbed.

VERDICT This building may be over a century old, but the renovation has brought the facilities up to date and ensured the high standards remain, while excellent service never goes out of style. Its prime location tucked away in a sleepy residential area is ideal for relaxing, while the city is just a 20-minute zip away. *Valerian Ho*

The Ritz-Carlton, Astana

BACKGROUND The hotel opened in June 2017 in time for Astana's Expo 2017 event. It occupies the first 18 floors of one of the two Talan Towers in the middle of the city centre. Above it are Ritz-Carlton residences on floors 19 to 25.

WHAT'S IT LIKE? The spacious lobby makes a statement you walk through the door: this property is all about top-end luxury and refinement. Gold is used throughout the hotel as a nod to the country's ancient Saka (Scythian) culture, with lots of artwork too. From the doormen and front desk personnel to the waiting staff and concierge team, the level of service (and English) is of a higher standard than most other Astana properties.



FACILITIES There are 157 rooms (measuring 40 sqm) and suites. My palatial Executive Suite was 115 sqm, designed with dark woods, shiny gold metal detailing, leather and textile furnishings, and carpets in calm greys, browns and blues, plus attractive parquet flooring. The expansive living room – with plenty of table space and seating – would be ideal for meetings of up to six people, its quality no doubt creating a good impression.

Three restaurants and bars include the lobby-level Ozen Lounge for upmarket cocktails and Asian-Mediterranean food; Mökki on the third floor, which is the all-day dining restaurant offering "organic, cosmopolitan" cuisine (breakfast was expansive and heavy on meat offerings); and Selfie – a combined bar and restaurant on the 18th floor.

The Club Lounge offers a meeting room and food throughout the day, while the 1,400 sqm of event space include one of the city's largest grand ballrooms (982 sqm) plus three meeting rooms, two boardrooms, a business centre, Guest Lounge and VIP room. Third-floor leisure facilities include the Ritz-Carlton Spa, a salon, a huge 275 sqm gym and 25-metre pool.

VERDICT Superlative service, an unbeatable location, great suites and a fantastic overall Club-level offering make this the new benchmark business hotel in Astana. *Jeremy Tredinnick*

BEST FOR

Location and world-class service.

DON'T MISS

Breakfast in Mokki and cocktails in Selfie.

PRICE

Standard internet rates for an Executive Suite with Club Lounge access in mid-May start from 504,000 tenge (US\$1,562) including tax and surcharges.

CONTACT

16 Dostyk Street, Astana 010016; +7 7172 734 000; ritzcarlton.com



The St Regis, Astana

WHAT'S IT LIKE? The exterior is grandiose in style, with two ten-storey L-shaped wings either side of a central "podium" that features two huge golden-domed "yurts". Inside the ostentation disappears, replaced by calm, understated luxury. The property's relative separation from the rest of the city, the green park surrounds and the feeling of space gives it a real resort-like feeling.

FACILITIES The east wing contains 120 rooms and facilities (the west wing contains 50 large residences). There's also 9,500 sqm of office space, and a retail area. There are three room categories and four suite types. My entry-level Deluxe room felt like a suite at 68 sqm, with a three-quarter height divider "wall" separating the lounge area from the "bedroom". Great artwork and books in the room, plus the signature St Regis butler service, made it a comfortable space to relax in.

La Rivière is the main all-day restaurant, featuring Mediterranean cuisine and an alfresco area (a standout was the wide selection of Kazakhstani honey – delicious). The Grill is an excellent fine-dining establishment featuring a meat-ageing cabinet and an open kitchen, while the St Regis Bar is typically stylish with a library section and Kazakh ornaments plus a separate smoking area. There are four meeting rooms, a wonderful yurt-style Winter Garden event space and the 520 sqm Astor Ballroom. Leisure options include the Iridium Spa and The St Regis Athletic Club, with a relatively small but well-equipped gym, and a fantastic 20-metre heated pool looking out over the river.

BEST FOR

Resort-like atmosphere and stylish room design.

DON'T MISS

A signature Bloody Mary in the St Regis Bar.

PRICE

Standard internet rates for a Deluxe room in mid-May start from 220,000 tenge (US\$682) including tax and surcharges.

CONTACT

1 Kabanbay Batyr Avenue, Astana 010000; +7 7172 790 888; thestregisastana.com

VERDICT An outstanding luxury offering with considerable style. *Jeremy Tredinnick*

Duddell's



Duddell's is the creation of restaurateur Yenn Wong. Her Hong Kong original of the same name holds two Michelin stars, and is smart but pricey – much like this London Bridge branch inside the beautifully refurbished St Thomas Church.

There's a full menu with dishes such as lobster noodle and plenty of rich ingredients, including truffles and wagyu beef; but we visited for the full dim sum selection at lunch. The Duddell's fish and prawn dumpling is a variation on *har gau* (the classic shrimp dumpling) steamed in wrappers that were deftly made and translucent, the filling correctly resistant to the bite. Crispy *char siu* bun was a highlight – the roast pork filling flavour-packed and intensely savoury, while the poached chicken dumpling had an impeccable spicy stock. Slithery yet firm, these dim sum exemplified the mastery of texture that Chinese chefs have.

VERDICT This is a great venue for corporate entertaining near the City, with discrete space between tables and well-executed dishes that won't frighten the guests. *Guy Dimond*

HOURS	PRICE	CONTACT
Mon-Sat 12-3pm, 6-11.15pm; Sun 12-3pm, 6-10.15pm	Dim sum £7-9 (US\$9-12) per plate (three pieces). Three- course dinner for two with wine around £130 (US\$181)	9A St Thomas St, SE1 9RY; +44 (0)20 3957 9932; duddells.co

GREAT NEW LONDON BARS



◆ THE BLUE POSTS

A venue in two parts. The ground floor is a smart craft-beer pub, while the first floor is a bijou cocktail bar called the Mulwray with lovely drinks, table service and brilliant snacks.

theblueposts.co.uk



◆ THE NICKEL BAR

The Ned hotel near Bank in the City has several restaurants and bars. This one serves US whiskeys and modern cocktails under the signature Nedgroni (£11/US\$15), plus full meals.

thened.com



◆ KETTNER'S TOWNHOUSE

CHAMPAGNE BAR

New owners Soho House Group have kept the iconic bar, but given it a facelift. Champagne cocktails start from £12 (US\$17).

kettnerstownhouse.com

Indian Accent

This is the third Indian Accent – the first two opened in Delhi and New York. The link is owner Rohit Khattar and chef Manish Mehrotra. Mehrotra has returned to London after a decade's absence, making this Mayfair branch the flagship.

Indian Accent is so polished you could be forgiven for thinking the menu will be tame. Not a bit of it. Mehrotra's taken plenty of offbeat ingredients and turned them into thrilling dishes that push the boundaries of modern Indian cooking. Amla is a wild tree fruit containing 20 times the vitamin C of an orange, inedibly sour when raw. But cooked into a fruit confit, mixed with pomelo and cashew, it's served as a toothsome *chaat* (snack or appetiser). The humble *dosa*, a crisp pancake that's breakfast for south Indians, is here turned into a cloche-like cone that lifts to reveal a spicy mélange of water chestnuts and enoki mushrooms, layered with spices. *Mishti doi*, a Bengali dessert of sweetened yogurt, cleverly replaces ricotta in Sicilian-style cannoli.

VERDICT Brilliant cooking of a standard rarely seen, slick service and prices that aren't grasping: book now while you can still get a table. *Guy Dimond*



HOURS	PRICE	CONTACT
Mon-Sat 12-2pm, 5.30-10pm	Three-course dinner for two with wine around £140 (US\$195)	16 Albermarle St, W1S 4HW; +44 (0)20 7629 9802; indianaccent.com

Rochelle Canteen at the ICA



This new branch of an iconic Shoreditch restaurant has taken root in the events space, gallery and cinema that is the Institute of Contemporary Arts on The Mall. The ICA has attracted generations of bohemians for its avant-garde events and still does. Life imitates art with the canteen's blank-canvas look; the menu is equally unembellished.

Rabbit and bacon pie comprised a vast pastry lid stretched over a family-sized dish, browned and pitted from the baking; the meat within was well-flavoured and hearty.

The ox cheek with pickled walnut and celeriac mash wasn't Instagram-worthy, but the rich flavours were clear, bright and thrilling. Chunks of slow-cooked beef were ethereally light, falling apart at the touch of a fork.

The puddings were equally simple. A slice of quince and almond tart had a moist texture, ideal comfort food for a cold rainy evening.

VERDICT This quirky place is perfect for taking overseas associates who still think British home cooking is dull. It's nose-to-tail-tastic for dinner with friends too. *Guy Dimond*



HOURS

Tue-Sun
11am-11pm

PRICE

Starters £1.50-£4.50
(US\$2-6); main courses
£12-£16 (US\$17-22);
puddings £6.50-£7
(US\$9-10); wines from
£5 (US\$7) a glass

CONTACT

The ICA, The Mall,
SW1Y 5AH; +44
(0)20 7729 5677;
**arnoldand
henderson.com**

LONDON'S BEST NEGRONIS



◆ BAR TERMINI

Bartender Tony Conigliaro's original Soho bar remains the best of the two branches. Four types of negroni each cost £7 (US\$9).

bar-termini.com



◆ CLARIDGE'S

A mix of gin, Martini Rubino and Galliano L'Aperitivo, £19 (US\$26), served up in a sophisticated Mayfair setting.

claridges.co.uk



◆ SUPER LYAN

Cocktail maestro Ryan Chetiyawardana's Bloodshot Negroni, with bourbon and beef tea (£9/US\$12) is deliciously different.

superlyan.com

Bombay Bustle



The team behind the Michelin-starred Jamavar restaurant in Mayfair opened this less expensive branch in November. It's no less elegant, but has a slightly different focus – the rich pickings of Mumbai's diverse culinary scene.

Misal pao is a breakfast dish of toasted white bread rolls – introduced by the Portuguese – filled with a spicy bean stew. Bombay Bustle's take on it is exemplary; the bread rolls were pert, and little details such as the diced onion and lime slice garnish were utterly pukka.

Bambaiya ragda are fried potato rissoles in a chaat of chutney, spices and chopped onions, with a topping of crisp gram-flour noodles. This version had the requisite pairing of sour and sweet notes that are typical of Gujarati snack food.

Mumbai's muslims excel at meat and rice dishes. The *dum nalli* biryani here is authentically slow-cooked in a tightly sealed vessel; once the lid is lifted, the aromatic spices waft out and long grains of rice and tender lamb are revealed.

VERDICT The Mumbai menu will be appreciated by those who prefer the authentic flavour of India to its Anglicised counterpart. *Guy Dimond*



HOURS

Mon-Sat
12-2.30pm and
5.30-10.30pm

PRICE

Starters £5-£10 (US\$7-14); main courses
£10-18 (US\$14-25);
wines from £6 (US\$8)
a glass

CONTACT

29 Maddox Street,
W1S 2PA; +44
(0)20 7290 4470;
bombaybustle.com

Taxi or Uber?

The pros and cons of regulated cab services versus ride-sharing newcomers

It's been less than a decade since Uber was launched (2009), and just five years since it expanded to Asia (in Taipei, ironically, given Uber has currently suspended operations in the Republic of China).

While in many cities there is fast, convenient public transport to transfer you from the airport and whisk you around town, often a taxi is still the preferable (or only) option. But where taxi charges are on the high side, or finding a cab when you need one is difficult, ride-sharing companies like Uber have gained a foothold.

In Australia Uber is officially permitted by the government, with major city airports even offering dedicated Uber pick-up zones. Hong Kong allows Uber to operate if its drivers have a proper permit, but worries about suitable third-party insurance coverage remain a big issue.

Not all countries are as welcoming, however. In India, New Delhi has banned Uber, and the app-based service is facing serious roadblocks in other major cities. The company's extensive battles with the Taiwanese government and taxi drivers resulted in its withdrawal from that marketplace, and over on mainland China, Uber sold out to national ride-sharing firm Didi Chuxing after struggling to compete in the PRC.

There are ethical and safety concerns about looser regulations related to ride-share apps that have been flagged by readers on businessstraveller.com/forum. But if money is your main concern, the following table shows relative costs:

City	Distance from airport to downtown (km)	Taxi cost (US\$)	Uber cost (US\$)
Auckland	27	61.99	33.38
Bangalore	36	8.04	6.58
Bangkok	35	9.69	7.76
Hanoi	28	10.62	9.17
Hong Kong	39	34.60	26.70
Jakarta	37	10.51	8.66
Kuala Lumpur	70	13.83	12.72
Melbourne	24	43.55	27.40
Mumbai	10	2.80	3.40
Singapore	23	17.81	15.91
Sydney	17	42.03	30.10
Tokyo	21	61.93	62.61

Source: Go Rentals

RIDE WITH BENEFITS

Of course Uber's initial success has spawned a host of similar enterprises, including:

- **Taxify** – available in Melbourne, Sydney, European and African cities
- **Lyft** – available in the US
- **Cabify** – available in South America, Portugal and Spain
- **Gett** – available in the UK, US, Russia and Israel
- **Ola** – available in India
- **Grab** – available in Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, Vietnam, the Philippines, Myanmar and Cambodia
- **Didi** – available in China
- **Careem** – available in Dubai

Airlines and hotel groups have seen the potential benefits from partnering with ride-sharing companies. Frequent-flyer programmes (FFPs) offering points or miles through partnerships include:

Airline FFP	Ride-sharing company	Benefits and details
Qantas's Frequent Flyer	Uber	• Gold, Platinum and Platinum One members earn 3 points per A\$1 spent on airport rides booked through the Qantas app • Silver members earn 2 points per A\$1 spent • Bronze members earn 1 point per A\$1 spent (<i>New Uber users get 2,000 Qantas Points on their first ride</i>)
SIA's Krisflyer	Grab	• SIA customers can now book Grab rides through the Singapore Air mobile app • Grab Rewards members can convert their Grab Rewards points into Krisflyer miles.
Delta's Skymiles	Lyft	By linking Skymiles and Lyft accounts, you can earn: • 2 miles per US\$1 spent on airport rides • 1 mile per US\$1 spent on all other rides
Jetblue's Trueblue	Lyft	By linking your Trueblue and Lyft accounts, you can earn 30 Trueblue points for every airport ride (<i>*Up to US\$20 in ride credit as a new Lyft user</i>)
Iberia Plus, BA Executive Plus, Vueling Club	Cabify	Get 1 Avios per 1km in Spain and 1 Avios per 2km in Mexico, Portugal, Chile and Brazil (<i>*750 Trueblue points or US\$15 off when signing up and taking first ride</i>)
Aeromexico's Club Premier	Cabify	Earn 1.5 Premier Points for each kilometre travelled (<i>*New users get 400 Avios for first ride</i>)

Over on the hotel side, Uber users travelling to Singapore can book the "Stay & Ride with Uber" package at one of Millennium Hotel and Resorts' six properties, allowing one complimentary Uber ride daily, as well as other benefits including free room upgrades and 20 per cent discount on F&B.

And if you're an IHG Rewards Club member, you'll receive four Didi Premier coupons every month, with Club and Gold Elite members getting 15 per cent, Platinum Elite 20 per cent and Spire Elite level 25 per cent discount coupons (promotion runs until end of the month).



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Plaza Premium Lounge is proud to be the world's first independent airport lounge with the largest global network and for the past 20 years, we have been endeavoured to deliver best-in-class airport hospitality services to our travellers in 28 airports across 15 countries and regions.

From passion to profession, our people – be they in-lounge teams or back-of-the-house experts – work together in synergy to perfect every facet of your lounge experiences with love, care and great values.

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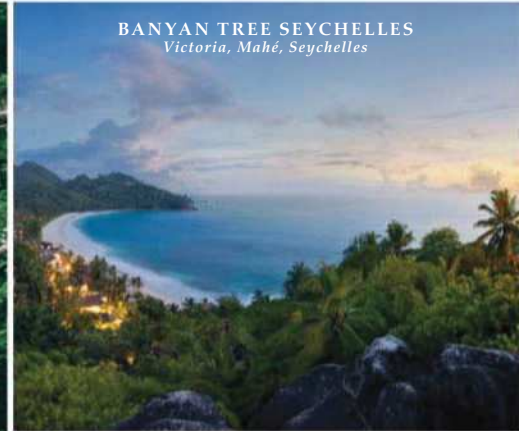


Travel means dreaming of what comes next.

Milestones are set beside the road not to commemorate how far you've come, but to mark the distance to the destination ahead. At Preferred Hotels & Resorts, we are proud to celebrate five decades of travel and hospitality. It's a landmark that comes amid great change in how, where, and why we travel. *Thank you for taking this journey with us.*



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