

Business Traveller

ASIA-PACIFIC

JUNE 2018

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Creativity is driving change in the Californian city

AIRPORT LOUNGES

100 reasons to arrive early

MOSCOW

Five must-visit restaurants in Russia's capital

PLUS

Tried and Tested
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BELOW
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SURFACE

*There's more to the Maldives
than meets the eye*





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COVER: CONRAD MALDIVES RANGALI ISLAND



happened to be in Seoul last month during the third inter-Korean summit. This was a momentous occasion for many reasons: it was the first time a North Korean leader had ventured to the South in half a century; the signing of the Panmunjom Declaration promises to usher in an era of peace (technically, the two Koreas are still at war since a peace treaty was never signed); and, perhaps most importantly, it heralded a commitment to the denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula.

The meeting was bolstered by Kim Jong Un's meeting with China's President Xi Jinping, and a summit with US President Donald Trump scheduled to take place this month.

The international community breathed a collective sigh of relief. After months of escalating "fire and fury" rhetoric between the US and the rogue hermit state, this cooling of tempers was a welcome, stabilising move... or was it?

During various meetings with senior government officials, business leaders and tourism representatives in Seoul, the topic of the summit was met with subdued enthusiasm. I was puzzled – why wouldn't people be celebrating this "historic and momentous occasion" with gusto?

Well, firstly, this is not the only time such talks have occurred. During my visit I went to Aston House, a gorgeous mansion built to host the first inter-Korean summit in the 1960s. It never happened. Two summits did eventually take place in 2000 and 2007, though both proved to have short-lived success. Looking at the tangle of international diplomatic strategies that need to be navigated now, it's easy to see the many things that could upset the fragile peace talks.

Secondly, the perceived impact of the North Korea threat is, to many locals, overstated. The cyclical sabre-rattling by North Korea has become so common, that even those living up in the DMZ hardly bat an eyelid.

What does have an impact, however, is international reaction to the drama as it is portrayed to the world – something South Korea is largely powerless to control. Nervous eyes have watched the tennis match of insults traded between the "rocket man" and the "dotard" over the past year, and this pantomime of international diplomacy has consumed the world's press, dominating the narrative of the region in a fashion that borders on the burlesque.

Should either Trump or Kim do something new to upset the other and escalate tensions (what a crazy notion...), it will be South Korea's business community that pays the price, as global nerves return and people view the country as a high-risk zone once again – despite the fact that nothing has really changed.

When your economic prosperity is tied to the whims of two erratic heads of state, and you've done this dance before, it becomes clear why Seoul's business community might be reserved in any celebration.

For now, however, things seem to be moving in a positive direction – and hopefully such cynicism is misplaced, particularly as Seoul is a fantastic destination and one I would encourage anyone to visit.

Tamsin Cocks Editor

THIS ISSUE'S PICKS



MOSCOW BITES

Five restaurants worth trying in the Russian capital (page 56)



LA LA LAND

A behind-the-scenes look at Hollywood's entertainment industry (page 30)



AFTERNOON IN SEOUL

A compact tour of what to see, do and eat in South Korea's capital (page 36)



TRAVEL WELL

Staying healthy on the road has never been easier (page 50)


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A STAR ALLIANCE MEMBER 



GUY DIMOND

Guy Dimond started his career editing and writing travel guide books for Dorling Kindersley, Cadogan, Time Out and others. But winning an award as the best food and drink journalist in the UK took him in a different direction, and he became *Time Out's* restaurant critic in London. He recently switched back to full-time travel journalism, based at *Business Traveller's* offices in London. His observations of food culture extend to airline and airport lounge food. In this issue he collates the 100 best lounges in the world; page 38



KATE FARR

Kate Farr and writing partner Rachel Read are freelance writers, editors and bloggers based in Hong Kong, and co-founders of boutique writing and editing agency Editors' Ink. When not busy writing for their print and online media clients, they can be found over at their own lifestyle blogs; Kate writes about parenting and travel at Accidental Tai Tai (accidentaltaitai.com) while Rachel blogs about beauty and food at Through The Looking Glass (rachttlg.com). In this issue, they examine the transformation of the hotel room into a sanctuary of health and wellness; page 50



VICKI WILLIAMS

Vicki Williams is a freelance writer specialising in luxury travel, food and wellness, with articles appearing in numerous prestigious publications, including *South China Morning Post*, *BBC Travel* and *CNN*. With a solid reputation, she is known for insightful, engaging features and candid reviews. In this issue Vicki lets loose on her pet travel peeve; page 63



APRIL HUTCHINSON

A travel journalist and editor for more than 20 years, April Hutchinson is the editor of *TTG Luxury*. April regularly combs the globe in search of the best luxury hotels and destinations. In our April issue she explored the idyllic, unspoilt beauty of the Seychelles. In this issue she returns with the latest offerings available in another paradise destination: the Maldives; page 24

ILLUSTRATIONS: BENJAMIN SOUTHAN



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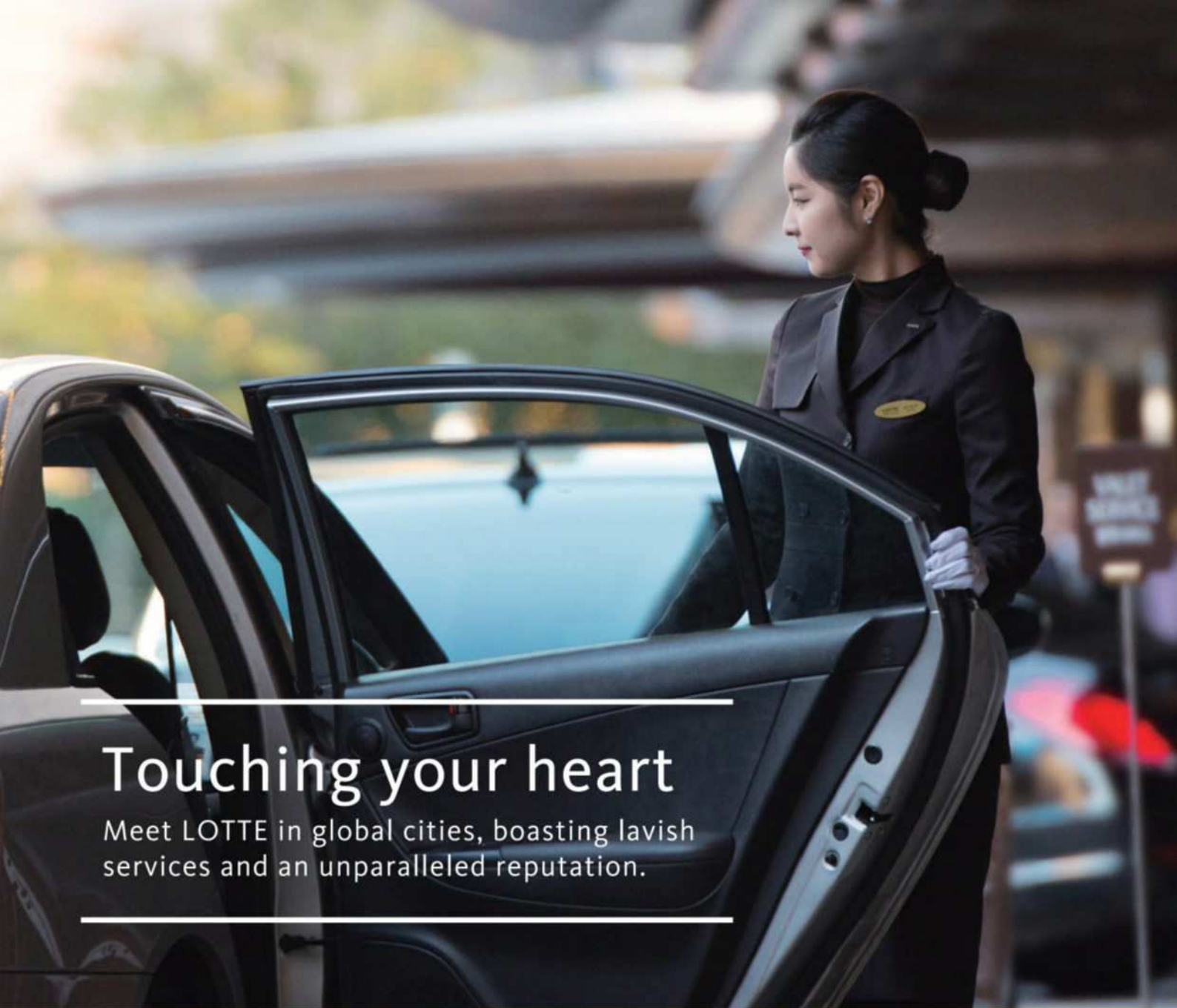
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PAL GOES FULLY FLAT ON A321NEO

PHILIPPINE AIRLINES has unveiled the new business class seat product for its single-aisle A321neo aircraft. Laid out in a 2-2 configuration, with a small divider to separate passengers, all 12 seats will be angled towards the windows.

The new seats will recline into a fully flat bed position, though with the 2-2 layout this does mean window-seat passengers will need to

climb over their neighbours to exit their seat. Passengers will have access to in-seat power and USB outlets, seat-back screens and wifi.

The new seats will be available on Philippine Airlines' Manila-Brisbane route from July 2, 2018 onwards, making it the only narrow-body flight to Australia to offer fully flat seating in business class. philippineairlines.com



FOUR NEW HOTELS IN... BANGKOK



AKYRA SUKHUMVIT BANGKOK

Opened in May on Sukhumvit Soi 20, this 46-room hotel is committed to no single-use plastic in its rooms or F&B outlets. Instead, biodegradable bin bags and glass bottles are used, reusable shopping bags are available, and guests are given stainless-steel water bottles on arrival with self-service drinking water stations on every floor.

theakyra.com

HOLIDAY INN BANGKOK

The hotel unveiled its new look in April following a multimillion-dollar facelift.

The most notable change is in the lobby, where the front desk, restaurant, bar, lounge and business centre are combined into a single space. All-day-dining restaurant Ginger and the 1920s-inspired bar Beer Republic have also been refreshed. The 379 guestrooms also feature a new "nature-inspired" design. ihg.com



SLEEPING WITH THE FISHES

CONRAD Maldives Rangali Island is set to introduce an incredible underwater suite in November. The two-storey Muraka suite will feature a king-sized bedroom, living area and bathroom five metres below sea level with uninterrupted 180-degree views of the surrounding marine life. The upper floor will include a twin bedroom, gym, integrated living room with kitchen facilities, plus an expansive deck (read more about the Maldives on p24).

Prices on consultation. conradhotels3.hilton.com



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BANGKOK MARRIOTT HOTEL THE SURAWONGSE This 32-storey hotel opened in April and comprises 197 guestrooms (including extended-stay apartments) and 106 deluxe suites. Its downtown location is close to the Skytrain and key attractions. A highlight is the Yao Rooftop Bar, which offers cocktails and signature bar bites with a Shanghai-inspired terrace that provides breathtaking views of the city. marriott.com

WALDORF ASTORIA BANGKOK

Opening in the Magnolias Ratchadamri Boulevard development in August, the hotel will have 171 rooms and suites that start at 50 sqm and come with luxury Salvatore Ferragamo amenities. Six F&B outlets include Thai-Nordic restaurant Front Room and two rooftop bars, The Loft and The Champagne Bar. Other facilities include a wellness spa and infinity pool. waldorfastoria3.hilton.com



SLEEK SEDAN

LUXURY automobile brand Lexus has launched its all-new 2018



LS in key Asian markets, including Japan, Singapore, Hong Kong and China. The sleek automobile promises a “smooth, powerful performance and exceptional quietness and comfort”. A coupé-like silhouette, low centre of gravity and striking 20-inch alloy wheels set the vehicle apart from other sedans, while interior details such as lumbar and shoulder heating mechanisms provide superlative passenger comfort. lexus.com

Hainan's watery wonderland

IN APRIL, the giant Atlantis water park and resort opened in Sanya in the south of China's Hainan Island. Following this, the Haikou Wet'n'Wild Water Park opened in May, located in the Mission Hills tourism development in Hainan's north. The park offers more than 30 slides and pools, including the Vortex, Half-Pipe, Water Rocket, 360 Rush, Super 8 Aqua Racer and Wave Pool. For less adrenaline-inducing pursuits, visitors can chill out in a tube on the lazy Rainforest River. The 240,000 sqm precinct houses a range of retail and dining outlets, with luxury hotels The Ritz-Carlton and Renaissance close by. Adult ticket prices start from RMB218 (US\$34); children RMB168 (US\$26). wetnwildhaikou.cn



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A HERITAGE ICON AMIDST
SINGAPORE'S VIBRANT CITYSCAPE



*B*uilt in 1900, Goodwood Park Hotel is one of Singapore's distinguished heritage hotel highly favoured by discerning travellers with its old-world colonial charm. Much of the hotel's original beauty has been faithfully restored, with the Grand Tower gazetted a national monument in 1989.



Situated atop a lush landscaped hillock, the hotel features 233 elegant guest rooms exuding a cosy homely vibe within the vast 6-hectare compound. The well-appointed Heritage Rooms are newly refurbished with exciting contemporary tones to add a touch of elegance to the iconic hotel. Other facilities include 2 outdoor swimming pools, a fitness centre, 5 renowned restaurants, a bar and a deli.

Conveniently located in the shopping and entertainment hub of Orchard and Scotts Road, the hotel is also 10 minutes from the main business district, perfect for both leisure and business travellers.

For room reservations, please call +65 6730 1811/44 or email: rmresv@goodwoodparkhotel.com.

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TOUCH OF LUXURY

THE Sukhothai Shanghai opened recently, unveiling its exclusive new spa offering. Located on the lower ground level, The Retreat is comprised of two private treatment suites – one with a whirlpool – and three single treatment suites. Four treatment categories include The Retreat Signature, Discover Lava Shells, Full Body Massage and Traditional Chinese Medicine. Curated by expert therapists, the menu combines Southeast Asian therapeutic treatments with blended essential oils such as jasmine, lemongrass, patchouli and bergamot. sukhothai.com/shanghai




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FIVE-STAR HOTEL PRICES



Source: Skyscanner, March 2018

ROUTE NEWS ✈️

ASCENT:

AIR BELGIUM, a new start-up carrier, was forced to push back its original April 30, 2018 launch date after it failed to secure Russian overfly rights. The airline now expects to launch its first flight to Hong Kong on June 3.

CATHAY DRAGON is giving Davao City and Medan their first non-stop connections to Hong Kong on October 28 and 29, respectively, with new services operated by its Airbus A320.

HAINAN AIRLINES plans to launch its third non-stop flight to Tel Aviv on August 2 this year, connecting the Israeli city with Guangzhou for the first time.

DESCENT:

AMERICAN AIRLINES will be dropping its non-stop flights between Chicago and Beijing on October 20, saying the route is no longer economically viable within the current fare environment.

QANTAS is reducing frequency on its daily services between Sydney and Beijing and Dallas/Fort Worth (DFW). From October 28, the Beijing service will fly just five times per week, while the DFW flights will drop to six times weekly starting February 4, 2019.

VIRGIN AMERICA made its final flight at the end of April, capping a decade of service that has ended with Alaska Airlines, which bought the airline in 2016, now having fully subsumed Virgin America's operations into its own brand.

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TRAVEL TALES

NO SMOKING ON BOARD

A KLM flight from Amsterdam to Kuala Lumpur was forced to make a diversion to Phuket that lasted 18 hours after smoke began to accumulate in the cabin when a passenger's mobile phone overheated. The manufacturer and model of the phone have not been revealed.



JUVENILE JOLLY

A 12-year-old boy from Sydney managed to take a solo trip to Bali recently, after he stole his parents' credit card in order to pay for flights and a hotel, travelling on a flight to Perth and then another to Indonesia.

TAKE A BREATHER

A 25-year-old passenger got a US\$10,000 fine and was detained for 15 days after he opened an emergency exit door on a Lucky Air flight in order to get some fresh air while waiting to get off the aircraft in Sichuan, China, inadvertently deploying the aircraft's evacuation slide in the process.

THE RAT'S OUT OF THE BAG

A passenger from Arkansas who lost their luggage after taking an American Airlines flight had their bag returned to them five days later, only to find a deceased rat inside. The passenger was given US\$1,600 by the airline in restitution, the maximum international payout.

Space jam

PASSENGERS travelling on Hainan Airlines' domestic flights in business class are now offered Space One noise-cancelling headsets, developed by UK-based hi-fi brand KEF and Porsche Design. The new headphones will be available on flights operated by aircraft outfitted with the airline's Hai Studio in-flight entertainment system, which include its B787 Dreamliners and A330s. Hainan Airlines has made no mention of the headphones rolling out to business class on its international routes at this stage, so travellers will likely continue to see the Bose QuietComfort 25 headphones on these services. hainanairlines.com



THE SKY'S THE LIMIT

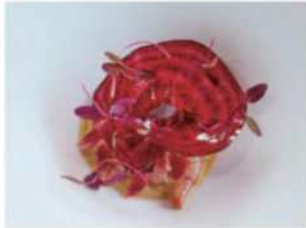
EMIRATES has launched its new Emirates Vintage Collection concept that will see the carrier serve a selection of top wines from its private cellar in Burgundy to first class passengers on select routes to Asia, Australasia, Europe and the Americas this year. Each route will see a different wine introduced for a limited period. This month, first class passengers on Emirates flights to Australasia and select destinations in Asia will enjoy Chateau Margaux 1998.

To complement the wines being offered on each route, the carrier has also begun rolling out new glassware and destination-specific pairing menus.

emirates.com



THREE NEW RESTAURANTS IN HONG KONG



ECRITURE

Opened in April atop H Queen's in Central, executive chef Maxime Gilbert matches French cooking techniques with seasonal ingredients from Japan and France, while the interior blends soft organic wallpaper with a symmetrical copper ceiling. Try the Library of Flavours menu (HK\$1,488/US\$190) for a sumptuous seven-course tasting experience. lecomptoir.hk/ecriture



FUKURO

Get a taste of Tokyo after dark at Black Sheep Restaurants' first Japanese *izakaya* (casual Japanese pub), which opened in May. From Elgin Street you enter a raw concrete and wood-panelled space where denim-clad waiters greet you. Choose a booth or stools, and watch the chefs in the open kitchen while listening to a Japanese/American punk soundtrack. fukuro.com.hk



SHANGHAI GARDEN

Shanghai's "*haipai*" (East meets West) culture arrived in Central in May. Located in Exchange Square, the French-inspired space has a subtle emerald tone, paired with warm, slatted wooden walls, plush velvet banquettes and a multicoloured herringbone floor. Chef's recommendations include signature barbecued duck and stir-fried duck. maxims.com.hk



Luxuriate in Tranquil Splendor

Strategically located in the city's new business and commercial district, Shangri-La Hotel, Guangzhou is adjacent to the Guangzhou International Convention and Exhibition Centre – home to the world-renowned Canton Fair and the largest exhibition centre in Asia – with easy access to a host of Fortune 500 companies and public transportation.

Nestled amidst 5,800 square metres of tranquil gardens overlooking the Pearl River, the hotel is also a reputable hotel offering 613 guestrooms, 65 suites and 26 serviced apartments. Six stylish restaurants and bars cultivate an intriguing ambience for exploring dynamic culinary arts at one stop. Situated on 34th floor, Horizon Club Lounge offers panoramic city views and exclusive executive privileges to our prestige business guests. For those wishing to energise before a meeting or unwind after a long day, the hotel offers the very best in fitness and wellness with a 1,000-square-metre Health Club. The indoor pool with constant temperature of 28 degrees Celsius and a 1,000-square-metre free-form outdoor swimming pool easily accommodate your mood for exercise or relaxation. In addition, the signature CHI, The Spa at Shangri-La blends traditional Asian healing philosophies with modern-day luxury to create an experience of pure indulgence and spiritual revitalisation.

As an ideal event destination in South China, Shangri-La Hotel, Guangzhou boasts 6,000 square metres of meeting and banqueting venues featuring two majestic ballrooms, eight function rooms and a 100-seat auditorium, as well as a 2,000-square-metre outdoor venue enable the hotel to cater to events of any scale and style. The versatile meeting and banquet space presents the tailored event services to cater diverse needs in appreciation for all corporate guests.



Shangri-La Hotel, Guangzhou
1 Hui Zhan Dong Road, Hui Zhu District, Guangzhou 510308, China
Tel: (86 20) 8917 8888 www.shangri-la.com

HOT DEALS

Business Traveller COMPETITION



The two prizes this month include a three-night stay in a St Regis Grand Deluxe Room with daily breakfast for two.

WIN A FREE STAY IN MACAO

TWO OF THIS MONTH'S prizes come from the St Regis Macao, Cotai Central. Located on the city's popular Cotai Strip, the St Regis Macao combines traditional Chinese architectural amenities with technological savvy in each of its spacious 400 guestrooms and suites. The hotel's signature St Regis Butler Service also provides guests with an unrivalled personal touch aimed at fulfilling guests' every need any time, day or night. Meanwhile, the property's location provides guests with convenient access to more than 850 international duty-free shopping outlets, some 150 diverse dining venues and plenty of entertainment options.



Two winners will enjoy a three-night stay in a Horizon Deluxe Room with Horizon Club access, along with breakfast, all-day refreshments and evening cocktails. Blackout dates apply.

WIN A FREE STAY IN TAIPEI

TWO OF THIS MONTH'S prizes also come from Shangri-La's Far Eastern Plaza Hotel, Taipei. Located in the heart of Taipei about 45 minutes from Taoyuan International Airport, the hotel combines luxury hospitality with a design that blends contemporary styling and traditional Chinese Song Dynasty-inspired aesthetics. The hotel's 420 guestrooms have recently been upgraded; its nine F&B offerings cover everything from Japanese to Shanghainese cuisine; and its rooftop pool has stunning views overlooking the city's famous Taipei 101 tower. A popular choice among readers of *Business Traveller Asia-Pacific*, the hotel was voted the Best Business Hotel in Taipei in the 2017 *Business Traveller Asia-Pacific Awards*.

APRIL'S ONLINE COMPETITION WINNERS: Maggie Mei-kuen Lau (Hong Kong) and Nicole Woods (UK) won a three-night stay in an Executive Suite and a Premier Suite at Winsland Serviced Suites by Lanson Place in Singapore.

East, Hong Kong

has launched an "Infinity 8" package to celebrate its eighth birthday. The deal includes room upgrade to the next category, daily breakfast for two at the all-day-dining restaurant Feast, a special eighth anniversary drink for two at the newly renovated Sugar, complimentary minibar, a special anniversary gift, 18 per cent dinner discount at Feast, HK\$88 (US\$11) discount on laundry per stay, plus airport transfer. The package rate starts from HK\$2,200 (US\$280) per night and is valid until December 31, 2018. east-hongkong.com



Bellagio Shanghai

is running a "Grand Celebration at Bellagio - Premium" package. The offer includes accommodation in a deluxe suite, daily breakfast for two at Café Bellagio, in-room check-in and checkout, 24-hour butler service, three pieces of laundry or pressing per stay, set dinner for two at Lago by Julian Serrano, Aroma Blast Treatment for two at the spa, as well as early arrival by noon and late checkout at 4pm. The package rate starts from RMB6,888 (US\$1,085) and is valid until September 10, 2018. bellagioshanghai.com



Mandarin Oriental, Singapore

has a "Wellness Retreat" package consisting of accommodation in an Ocean View room, a one-hour yoga or personal training session, 90-minute Mineral Wellness Massage, "Spa Lunch" at Dolce Vita for two, as well as daily breakfast at Melt Café for two. The package rate starts from S\$1,190 (US\$891) and is available until December 31, 2018. mandarinoriental.com





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Star letter

LOUNGE OF HORROR

Reading an article in the March 2018 issue of *Business Traveller Asia-Pacific*, I learned that the Jakarta–Singapore route is the third busiest route in Asia.

With so many flights between Jakarta and Singapore every week, Indonesia must be an important market for Singapore Airlines (SQ).

However, in T2 Soekarno–Hatta International Airport (CGK), Krisflyer Gold members are only eligible to enter the Pura Indah Lounge (contracted lounge) – they are not allowed to access the SilverKris Lounge. I have two questions about this:

1. Do the SQ team in Indonesia routinely check the standards and quality of the lounge provided for Gold members? I found Pura Indah Lounge to be very dirty, dark and dated – it does not meet the standard of a typical SQ lounge. There's even more horror to be found if you enter the bathroom (leakage and stains everywhere). If you are "lucky", you can find cockroaches wandering around in the food area.



And I am lucky quite often...

2. Why doesn't SQ allow its Krisflyer Gold members to enter the SilverKris Lounge in Jakarta when they can enter SilverKris Lounges in other countries?

Ritchie Kurniawan, Jakarta

STAR LETTER PRIZE



CH10322 GR

This month's Star Letter winner will receive a stylish pair of Charmant Titanium Perfection frames with a sleek design and a light nylon titanium frame for comfortable wearing.

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

SINGAPORE AIRLINES RESPONDS:
We are sorry that Mr Kurniawan was disappointed by our lounge arrangement in Jakarta. Singapore Airlines does not have a SilverKris Lounge in Jakarta. We believe Mr Kurniawan was referring to the Esplanade Lounge, which is also a contract lounge just like the Pura Indah Lounge.

During peak hours, we are unable to allow all eligible customers to use the Esplanade Lounge due to the limited space available. As such, some customers may be directed to the Pura Indah Lounge instead. Nevertheless, we regret that Mr Kurniawan found the Pura Indah Lounge facility substandard. Our service team is currently looking into the issues with Pura Indah Lounge as mentioned by Mr Kurniawan.

Singapore Airlines would like to thank Mr Kurniawan for the feedback and we apologise for the disappointment.

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INNOVATION BEYOND IMAGINATION



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CHARMANT
TITANIUM PERFECTION

THERE IN SPIRIT

I am a regular reader of *Business Traveller* Asia-Pacific and always enjoy reading the Letters section of the magazine to see what has happened to travellers in the region and how the airlines have dealt with the various situations.

In my case I travelled from Colombo (CMB) to Kuala Lumpur (KUL) on November 11, 2017 on MH178, before connecting to my onward flight to Jakarta (CGK) on MH711. My bags were checked through in Colombo and I received my boarding pass for the second leg MH711, though there was no gate number on the boarding pass.

At KUL I checked the departure gate and accordingly proceeded to Gate 8 and 10 (which have the same entrance) around 8.30am. I saw my Jakarta flight was departing from Gate 8 so proceeded to the waiting area, which was crowded because another flight was departing to Yangon also from Gate 8.

I started reading my book; the Yangon flight was called. I then noticed that most people in the departure lounge had left. I went to the counter and asked when the Jakarta flight would be called – she checked my boarding pass and told me my flight to Jakarta was already boarding from Gate 10.

I immediately went up to Gate 10 but the door was closed and the plane was about to depart. The staff told me my bag had been taken off the plane and I had to go to the ticket counter at the satellite terminal to be re-booked on MH 721 to Jakarta at 1355.

I was told that according to the system I was a “no show” and would have to pay RM473 (US\$122) to continue my journey.

I was not a “no show”, as that term is used to describe someone who simply does not turn up for a flight. At worst I made a mistake in very confusing circumstances by going to the adjoining gate from which an MH flight departing for Jakarta was on the signboard both outside and inside the gate.

As you can imagine I was seriously inconvenienced by what happened and had to cancel meetings in Jakarta. As a business class passenger I do not feel that I should be penalised for this sort of error.

I wrote to MH to request that my RM473 be refunded, but the rote response I received reiterating that I was a no show only served to irritate me further. One would reasonably expect that MH would be more accommodating to its premium passengers when something like this goes wrong. I think there is a point of general interest for all travellers in what happened here and also that MH should be taken to task as to how they deal with customer issues.

Nick Stone, Jakarta

MALAYSIA AIRLINES RESPONDS:

Malaysia Airlines regrets the unfortunate incident encountered by Mr Stone.

As per standard airline practice and to avoid unnecessary confusion of passengers arriving at the wrong departure gate, boarding passes for passengers with an onward connection or connecting flight out of Kuala Lumpur will not show a gate number.

Upon further investigation, we believe Mr Stone may have confused his flight MH711, which was scheduled to depart at 0905 from Kuala Lumpur to Jakarta at gate G10, with another flight to Jakarta that was departing from gate G8 at 1015. There was no gate change as alleged. As Mr Stone had only arrived at gate G10 when MH711 was closed for boarding, his ticket status was treated as a “no show”.

BAD CONNECTION

I was booked to fly with Thai Airways on TG910 on March 3 from Bangkok to London (departing 1255, arriving 0715), where I had a connecting flight with Eurowings to Berlin.

On March 2, I received a notice that TG910 had been rescheduled due to technical reasons, with the new departure at 0730, arriving into London at 1240.

My connection with Eurowings was booked at 0840 on March 3, so I contacted the Thai Airways reservations department to sort the matter out. The representative said I would have to speak to the ticket desk in the morning.

The next day, staff told me they would send a message to London to rebook my Eurowings flight. I got the same assurance at the gate, and from the onboard purser – who even said the captain had been involved.

On arrival, the Thai staff had no record of my name. After much to and fro, I was told it had nothing to do with Thai Airways and I would have to sort it out myself.

I then went to the Eurowings ticket desk and found I’d missed the last flight to Berlin by 20 minutes. The rebooking fee would have been approximately £60 (US\$81), but instead I had to buy a new ticket with Lufthansa for £334 (US\$451).

By the time I arrived it was 11pm, and there were no more trains running to my destination so I had to take a taxi, which cost €76 (US\$90) (versus €10/US\$12 for the train), arriving at 1.30am for a 9am meeting.

I received nothing but false and misleading information from Thai Airways during the incident and have had no follow-up from Thai Customer Care in the six weeks since. I want to know why there was such misinformation, and more importantly, how Thai Airways will compensate me for the additional cost and great inconvenience caused by their staff.

Brinley Waddell, Bangkok

THAI AIRWAYS RESPONDS:

Please accept Thai Airways International's (THAI) sincere apologies for any inconvenience caused by technical problems that resulted in change of departure time for flight TG910 on March 3 from Bangkok to London.

THAI would like to clarify that it is normal procedure for the air purser to consult with the captain regarding passenger service matters. Furthermore, the captain is able to contact THAI ground customer services for passenger assistance upon arrival at the final destination.

With regard to this matter, please be advised that your passenger record with THAI only specified that you held a ticket routed from Bangkok to London Heathrow, whereby THAI's liability ended upon arrival in London. You stated that you held a separate ticket for travel from London to Berlin on Eurowings, which unfortunately was beyond THAI's area of liability as it is a separate air carrier. Therefore, it is not possible to provide compensation for the Lufthansa ticket that was purchased upon missing the last Eurowings flight nor the taxi fare incurred, all of which could not be reimbursed or absorbed by THAI.

Kindly accept our apologies for any miscommunication or misunderstanding that occurred in any verbal conversations with our staff.



Join the debate

READERS SHARE FIRST-HAND KNOWLEDGE, EXPERIENCES AND TRAVEL SOLUTIONS

BUSINESSTRAVELLER.COM/FORUM

EVER STOLEN SOMETHING FROM AN AIRLINE?

POST RFERGUSON

OK, I'll be the first to admit it... I'm guilty! After seeing the Saudia business class lounge in JED I had a sofa selected for my nine-hour transit on the return journey and all I needed was a pillow (I always carry my own light blanket)... where could I find one of them? Upon landing in JED I shoved my J-class pillow in my bag and off I went. I read an interesting article about theft from aircraft, primarily of bedding products. Airlines are upping the ante in the amenity department with more luxurious duvets, pillows, etc. As a result more and more are walking off the aircraft.

Someone disembarking at a home base with a little kiddy wrapped in an economy blanket is one thing. Walking off gung ho with a business class pillow tucked under your arm is another, especially if the aircraft is downroute – pillows aren't changed over away from base, only the covers are changed. So if someone walks off with one, that's one passenger who will not have one on the return if the flight is full. I know "collectables" aren't limited to bedding – there's crockery, cutlery, etc. Virgin Atlantic cheekily printed "pinched from Virgin Atlantic" on the bottom of their salt and pepper grinders, as they'd become so desirable. I've even seen people take rolls of toilet paper from the bathrooms and shove them in their cabin baggage.

→ DEREKVH

I will admit to there being five Crabtree & Evelyn Concorde eau de toilette bottles taking pride of place in my bathroom cabinet (not all from the same trip!).

→ ESSELLE

Years ago BA used to have cashmere throws in F, and I think my wife may have forgotten to remove them from around her shoulders on disembarking on a number of occasions. They are made of acrylic now (enhancement?) or some such equivalent, and she has become a reformed character, always leaving them on board.

→ EUFLYER

Great question! I have a stash of metal cutlery from most airlines I've flown (teaspoons are my favourite). I've never taken a pillow or blanket purely due to lack of space in my carry-on, but often been tempted. When I was young I did collect safety cards – which may have been rather selfish in hindsight. I do have a nice linen headrest with the Aegean logo on it on my bedroom armchair. I also have a lovely MEA branded coffee mug. Previously, when I travelled far less frequently, such collectables had more meaning to me. Nowadays, the less carry-on/off luggage the better.

→ ROBERTBLONDON

Yes, I like to have a souvenir teaspoon from each new airline like another respondent. I have also when undertaking a long car trip requiring a snooze en route taken a pillow and blanket. I also have a nice Virgin mug and of course an S&P set (as they do invite this particular one as another respondent said!). And the BA business creams on occasion. I also use the BA/Virgin pyjamas all the time!

EMIRATES AND PREMIUM ECONOMY

POST RFERGUSON

So after years of speculation it sounds

like this is going to happen. In a podcast Q&A with Tim Clarke regarding premium economy, he explicitly states that they *will* be installing premium economy on the new A380s arriving in 2020 and the entire concept has already been "spec'd". I wonder if we will see other ME airlines follow suit?

→ AMCWHIRTER

Of course we will – even though QR continues to claim its economy class is as good as its rivals' premium economy. In EK's case introducing premium economy had to happen at some stage. More and more of its non-Gulf rivals have introduced premium economy in recent years and as you know EK is not about flying people to and from Dubai alone.

→ PETERCOULTAS

No premium economy gives great things to travellers over economy, only minor tweaks that we previously had in a decent ordinary economy... but, it gives the airlines vast extra profit per seat for a negligible investment... at least long haul in business seats you actually get something worthwhile.

→ FDOS_UK

As a frequent user of premium economy on Air Canada, BA/OpenSkies and Norwegian, I completely disagree. I've never had 38" (or 43") pitch in economy. To have 23 per cent extra seat pitch is excellent and whilst not exactly like an older cradle seat, not that far off, either. In fact, Open Skies 757 Prem Plus seats are old BA cradle seats, fitted with 38" pitch. So premium eco is not that far away from business class in 2000, in terms of seating, though a long way away in F&B terms.

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Apex of hospitality

Towering above the city, Shangri-La's China World Summit Wing, Beijing offers world-class service and event spaces, with an art collection to rival museums

Nestled in Beijing's CBD, the Shangri-La's China World Summit Wing, Beijing, is perched at the top of the soaring 330-metre China World Tower. The unbeatable views from the hotel extend all the way to the rooftops of the Forbidden City.

One of the first things guests will notice is the hotel's stunning array of art pieces, exclusively commissioned to complement the lofty ceilings and spacious setting. The museum-worthy collection boasts more than 100 pieces of art, including murals, paintings and decorations showcasing the beauty of contemporary China.

In the lobby, for example, guests will be awed by the 72-metre Art of Life mural, which captures the beauty of nature through acrylic oils and detailed brush strokes, while the four stunning "bubbles in space" chandeliers are made from Czech Republic hand-blown glass and weigh 500kg each.

There are 278 guestrooms (including 29 suites) boasting an average size of 65 sqm – the most spacious in the city, all with floor-to-ceiling views. Classic wooden décor incorporates subtle Chinese touches, and extensive facilities include complimentary internet, iPod docking stations and round-the-clock butler service.



The hotel also features the city's highest dining and entertainment venues: the signature restaurant Grill 79, The Lounge, the bar Atmosphere, a Wine Bar and the Chairman's Rooms, exclusive private dining facilities from level 79 upward. Further options to be found in the complex include legendary Hong Kong restaurant Seventh Son and Japanese cuisine at Nadaman – both on the level four.

Event organisers and meeting planners will find a world of choice and opportunity at China World Summit Wing, Beijing, with

more than 5,500 sqm of dedicated space. Dominating the third floor is the Summit Ballroom, one of the city's largest pillar-free ballrooms that can accommodate up to 2,000 people. Other standout features include the 10-metre-high ceilings, bullet proof floor-to-ceiling windows and a direct access car lift. The rooftop Pine Garden and a 95-seat auditorium are also available.

For relaxation, the hotel features a lifestyle sanctuary with 24-hour gym and indoor infinity swimming pool on level 78, as well as CHI, The Spa, Shangri-La's signature spa brand.

The central location of China World Tower offers direct access to regional headquarters of multinational corporations plus high-end retail, F&B and tourist attractions. The complex is also home to the Guomao subway station, a strategic artery connecting the new landmark to the rest of Beijing. By car, Beijing Capital International Airport can be reached in approximately 45 minutes, while Beijing Railway Station is a short 15-minute drive from the hotel.

**China World Summit Wing, Beijing,
No.1 Jianguomenwai Avenue,
Beijing, 100004, China; tel: +86 10
6505 2299; shangri-la.com/beijing/
chinaworldsummitwing**





DESERT ISLAND PICKS

25

The choice of hotels in the Maldives has never been greater

WORDS APRIL HUTCHINSON

When the Maldives first made it onto the tourist map 45 years ago, it was all rustic huts and rough-and-ready liveaboard dive trips. But fast-forward to 2018 and you will find superyachts, ice rinks, luxurious overwater villas with butlers, expansive spas, great chefs and feats of engineering, such as the world's largest underwater restaurant.

The Maldives has diversified its activity holidays too. Pro surfers have tackled the waves around the Four Seasons Resort Maldives at Kuda Huraa, which has its own annual surf competition and a Tropicsurf school. Tropicsurf also operates out of resorts such as Anantara Dhigu, Como Maalifushi and Gili Lankanfushi, while over at Four Seasons Private Island at Voavah, there's a motor yacht that can zip you to a number of secret surf breaks you'll most likely have to yourself.





26

With 1,200 islands dotted around 26 beautiful atolls, there's always a new resort just opened in the Maldives



When it opened at the end of 2016, the seven-bedroom private island of Voavah was billed as the world's first exclusive-use UNESCO hideaway, given its location within Baa Atoll, a UNESCO World Biosphere Reserve since 2011. But if all that privacy gets boring and you want to be more sociable, you can use the hotel's motor yacht to cruise over to the nearby Four Seasons Resort Maldives at Landaa Giraavaru and hang out.

At the Four Seasons you can put your name down for "Manta on Call", a service that contacts you wherever you are in the resort and whizzes you by speedboat to manta ray sightings. Since 2006 the resort has been the home of the Maldivian Manta Ray Project, and through its initiatives such as Manta Researcher for the Day and private manta "seafaris", you can get to know more about these incredible creatures. They especially love Hanifaru Bay, tempted here – particularly from May to November – by the huge amounts of krill and plankton. If you happen to be there around a full moon, you could see as many as 100 mantas congregating.

If marine life is what fascinates you, you've clearly come to the right place. The whale shark is the world's largest fish, and plenty of these gentle giants are resident in the Maldives year-round. May to September is their most active time, and one of the best places to see them is South Ari Atoll. Excellent resort options around here include Constance Moofushi – which also offers a great all-inclusive plan. There is also the W Maldives; super-

cool Lux South Ari Atoll; and the expansive Conrad Maldives Rangali Island, which boasts Ithaa Undersea Restaurant, the world's first all-glass undersea restaurant.

IN WITH THE NEW

With 1,200 islands dotted around 26 beautiful atolls, there's always a new resort just opened in the Maldives.

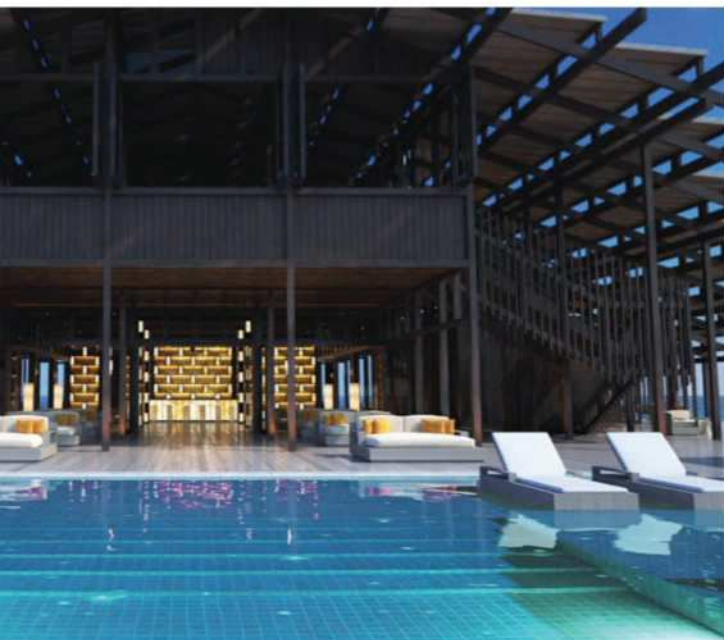
These include St Regis Maldives Vommuli Resort, where the luxury starts as soon as you arrive at Malé International Airport. Suite guests are collected by the resort's Bentley, luxury SUV or multi-passenger van, and taken from the airport to the seaplane terminal.

The other big headliner is Soneva Jani, where 25 villas exist in a mini archipelago of islands, one of which is home to the Maldives' first outdoor silent cinema. Most of the overwater villas have slides running down from their upper deck straight into the sea, plus retractable roofs – so with a simple flick of a switch, you could be lying beneath the stars.

Another popular newcomer is Milaidhoo Island, which opened in 2016 and offers unforgettable day trips, such as a picnic on a sandspit just for you – well, you and a couple of members of the team to pour you champagne and serve lunch. Milaidhoo comes from the country's original resort company, Universal, whose portfolio also includes Baros, the third hotel to open in the Maldives back in 1973. More recently, in 2017, Universal launched the contemporary-styled Dhigali.

PREVIOUS PAGE:
Four Seasons Private Island at Voavah

CLOCKWISE FROM OPPOSITE TOP:
Mu Beach Bar and Grill at Jumeirah Vittaveli; the main pool at Coco Privé private island resort; Kudadoo Private Island; and a suite at the John Jacob Astor Estate, St Regis Maldives Vommuli Resort





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**CLOCKWISE
FROM ABOVE:**
Coco Bodu
Hithi resort;
Universal's
Baros island
resort; Sun
Resorts'
Kanuhura

Also “new” for this year is the revamped Kanuhura, an established Sun Resorts favourite that relaunched after an 18-month renovation, given a new “gypset” (gypsy jetset) look. Highlights here include the Kokaa Spa and Iru beach lounge, set on one of the best beaches in the country – here, you also get three islands for the price of one, including Jehunuhura, the setting for a toes-in-the-sand lunch at grill restaurant Drift.

Another grand opening in 2017 was Grand Park Kodhipparu, reached by a 20-minute speedboat ride from Malé. Part of the Park Hotel Group, it opened in June with 120 villas, a kids’ club, three restaurants including the Jospier grill-equipped Firedoor, and a seven-room spa by the Comfort Zone brand.

Also now open is Fushifaru Maldives, with its 49 villas described with local words relating to their views, such as *Maakandu* (“vast Indian ocean”) and *Etherevari* (“the lagoon”), along with three restaurants and a spa.

ON THE HORIZON

If all those just aren’t new enough for you, looking forward, the resort most likely to arrive next will be the 67-villa Lux North Malé Atoll. This offering from Mauritian hotel operator Lux Resorts and Hotels will welcome guests in October, with Art Deco, South Beach Miami-style interiors and a rooftop terrace on each “residence” – deemed to be a Maldivian first – giving them a five-metre vantage point over the lagoon.

Also close to being revealed is Kudadoo Private Island by Hurawalhi, designed by architect Yuji Yamazaki, who also enjoys the distinction of creating the world’s first 100 per cent solar-powered luxury resort – Club Med Finolhu Villas. Slated to open in September, adults-only Kudadoo Private Island will house 15 overwater villas, set five minutes away by boat from sister hotel Hurawalhi, home of 5.8 Undersea Restaurant, the world’s largest all-glass undersea restaurant.

INFORMATION

Tourism information
visitmaldives.com

WHERE TO STAY

Baglioni Resort Maldives

+39 02 3666 1966 (pre-opening),
baglionihotels.com

Baros +960 664 2672, baros.com

Club Med Finolhu Villas

+960 664 4040, clubmed.co.uk

Coco Bodu Hithi resort

+960 664 1122, cococollection.com

Coco Privé private island

resort +960 664 8887,
cocoprive.com

Conrad Maldives Rangali

Island +960 668 0629,
conradhotels3.hilton.com

Constance Moofushi +960 668
1010, constancehotels.com

Dhigali +960 658 6060, dhigali.com

Four Seasons Resort Maldives

at Kuda Huraa +960 664 4888,
fourseasons.com

Fushifaru Maldives

+960 662 0202, fushifaru.com

Grand Park Kodhipparu

+960 665 1111, parkhotelgroup.com

Jumeirah Vittaveli

+960 664 2020, jumeirah.com

Kanuhura +960 662 0044,
kanuhura.com

**Kudadoo Private Island by
Hurawalhi** +960 662 2000,
kudadoo.com (opening this year)

Lux South Ari Atoll

+960 668 0901, luxresorts.com

Milaidhoo Island

+960 660 0484, milaidhoo.com

Soneva Jani +960 656 6666,
soneva.com

St Regis Maldives Vommuli

Resort +960 676 6333,
stregismaldives.com

W Maldives +960 666 2222,
wmaldives.com

WHAT TO DO

Surf lessons with **Tropicsurf**

at **Four Seasons Resort**

Maldives at Kuda Huraa

cost around US\$169 per
hour for those with some
experience; beginners from
around US\$358.

Manta on Call at **Four**

Seasons Resort Maldives

at Landaa Giraavaru costs
around US\$160 per person.



If marine life is what fascinates you,
you've clearly come to the right place

Coming soon, too, is the Baglioni Resort Maldives, due to open this summer, with 96 villas in an elegant Italian design reflective of the brand; there will also be a three-bedroom presidential water villa.

Meanwhile, Accor has secured management of the former Jumeirah Dhevanafushi and will be reflagging that as a Raffles Maldives Resort later in 2018 after some refurbishment.

Further choice, under the Accor umbrella, comes from an additional Fairmont hotel. This is currently being built in front of Jumeirah Vittaveli, which launched its US\$35,000-a-night Royal Residence this year, sleeping up to 14 people on a five-bedroom private estate within the resort. Jumeirah Vittaveli is a great choice for families generally – and is probably why they will be the ones to launch the country's only ice rink this season. Yes – an ice rink, in a tropical paradise. There's never a dull moment in the Maldives. **BT**





LOS ANGELES

As the entertainment industry evolves, Tinseltown is in a state of transformation. We look behind the scenes of the USA's creative powerhouse

LA STORY

WORDS JENNY SOUTHAN

The prop house at Warner Bros Studios has four floors, each the size of an American football field. It's said to be the largest prop house in the world... though there's one under construction in China, by Wanda Studios, that may soon surpass it. From Tiffany lamps and presidential desks to oil paintings and telephones from every era, there are almost half a million items available for rental. It's like walking through an antiques shop on an industrial scale, with all manner of curiosities to catch the eye along the way. Here's a gold ladder signed by Lady Gaga, an Iron Throne from *Game of Thrones*, a cobwebbed skeleton from *Pirates of the Caribbean*, the piano from *Casablanca*. Outside, huge trucks are loaded up with eclectic hauls of cargo to be delivered to the many sets and studios located across the city of Los Angeles and beyond.

According to Film LA (the official film office for LA), California spent US\$30 billion on film and TV production in 2016, with the average movie budget being just over US\$75 million. Along with Paramount, Universal, 20th Century Fox, Disney and MGM, Warner Bros has been at the heart of filmmaking in Hollywood for decades. Today it has 35 cavernous sound stages and 14 exterior sets, including a New York street complete with fake subway entrances, shops, a hotel, theatre, diner and residential façades ready for dressing. "If you have the dime, we have the time," says my guide, explaining that movies and shows don't have to be Warner Bros productions to shoot here. Long-standing TV shows that have been filmed in this location include *Ellen* and *The Big Bang Theory*.

ONLINE STREAMING

Employing more than 141,000 people, entertainment is the most important pillar of LA's "creative economy". Last year it generated US\$190 billion and employed one in eight people. Consequently, Los Angeles has been dubbed the most creative city in the US. But, disruption is afoot. The industry is changing, with online streaming shaking up Hollywood in a way it's never experienced before. Even social media companies such as Facebook, with a new campus in LA's Playa Vista, are investing heavily in bespoke video content (Facebook's Watch video-on-demand platform launched in the US in summer 2017).

In 2017, Netflix spent US\$6 billion on original programming, and is reportedly planning



**THE AVERAGE
MOVIE BUDGET
IN CALIFORNIA
IS JUST OVER
US\$75 MILLION**



to plough another US\$7-8 billion into dramas and documentaries in 2018. You only have to drive down Sunset Boulevard to see the literal rise of extended format programming, with huge billboards advertising *The Crown* (Netflix), *Big Little Lies* (HBO), *The Problem with Apu* (TruTV) and *The Marvelous Mrs Maisel* (Amazon).

"There aren't enough sound stages in LA to cope with demand," says Chris Rico, director of innovation at the Los Angeles County Economic Development Corporation. Competing with Hollywood's traditional studios, Netflix has now signed a ten-year lease for 52,000 sqm of space from Hollywood's Sunset Bronson Studios (the original Warner Bros location and where 1927's *The Jazz Singer* was filmed), including sound stages, production studios and a shiny new 14-floor Gensler-designed office. Amy Dee, Netflix's director of global real estate, workplace and procurement told the *Los Angeles*

ABOVE:
Sunset
Boulevard
LEFT: LA
street art



HOW TO MAKE IT IN HOLLYWOOD

**MARC CLEARY, WRITER/
DIRECTOR FROM DUBLIN**

"Choreography brought me to the US. It gave me a lot of confidence, supplied me with a visa and introduced me to great people, but somewhere deep inside I knew I wanted more. I began writing and, one night, got chatting to a couple of strangers in a bar. At the end of the night, one of them gave me his card and said: 'If you have any sense you will send me the first 40 pages tomorrow.' Turns out it was one of Hollywood's biggest producers, who later became one of my greatest mentors.

"My first short film, *Pepper*, was a big success. I had the great fortune of working with a phenomenal cast and crew. It made my job so much easier and was a truly wonderful collaborative experience. That acted as my calling card and from that moment it was a lot easier to find people to work with, or have people put faith in me as a writer and director. Finding the right representation has been the biggest challenge.

"Right now I'm developing a TV show based on a seven-book series set in Northern Ireland, which is really exciting. The work I am most proud of has been my last two pilots. My first pilot was sold to Warner Bros almost overnight and my second is currently in development.

"Inspiration and drive are what make LA a unique place to work as a creative. Everywhere you look there are movie billboards, premieres, Q&A events and workshops. It's hard to be around all of that and not be inspired. The same goes for the drive and dedication from a lot of the people here. It's difficult to climb up the ladder without major backing, but thankfully you can't throw a stone without hitting someone as hungry as you are. It's about finding the right people with that drive, and also making the choice to keep creating content until you find the project worth pushing."

Times: “We wanted to be where Hollywood came to life. Even though we’re a cutting-edge tech company, we take very seriously the history of the entertainment industry and its roots in Hollywood.”

Meanwhile, Amazon is moving from Santa Monica to Culver Studios (near Sony Pictures in Culver City) where films such as *Citizen Kane* were once made. Apple, too, is keen to muscle its way into Hollywood production and is apparently on the lookout for a permanent studio base to create original content (it plans to spend US\$4.2 billion on programming by 2022). Over the next year, Google’s YouTube is funding more than 40 movies and shows for its site, which is a state-of-the-art production facility in Playa Vista. It occupies a former aircraft hangar once used by legendary film director and aviator Howard Hughes, but now refurbished with giant green screens. BuzzFeed Motion Pictures has been entrenched in Hollywood’s Siren Studios for the last couple of years as it looks for somewhere bigger, while, conversely, famed director James Cameron is renting studio space 25 miles away in Manhattan Beach, where he is filming his *Avatar* sequels.

BILLION DOLLAR BABIES

There have been all manner of bankruptcies, mergers and takeovers in Tinseltown, and new deals are being forged all the time. The most headline-grabbing deal in recent times was the announcement in December 2017 of a planned US\$52.4 billion sale of the majority of Rupert Murdoch’s 21st Century Fox empire (including the movie and TV studio) to the Disney Company. If it happens, by 2019 Disney will have added two new streaming platforms – one for sports and one for entertainment. Disney will also be gaining control of homegrown LA streaming (VOD) company Hulu (Fox, Comcast and Time Warner also have stakes in it), which spent an estimated US\$2.5 billion on original content last year.

A report from the Otis College of Art and Design predicts that, over the next four years, employment in LA’s creative economy will grow by more than 5 per cent across sectors including entertainment, fashion, printing and publishing, architecture, interior design and digital media. It’s easy to believe when people speak of the flood of New Yorkers, for example, moving here for more opportunities, cheaper rents and sunnier climes.

Rico says: “I find that if you asked New Yorkers ten years ago if they’d ever live in Los Angeles, they would have said ‘No way, New York is the place to be, I would never live in LA, it’s too big, there’s too much traffic’. But relative to Manhattan it’s a bargain. Whereas they’ll have been living in a 300 sq ft [28 sqm] apartment there, for a comparable amount of money, here they can have 1,000 sq ft [93 sqm]. I think for artistic people, being in a place that’s conducive to being in a good mood can be beneficial for their work. After getting used to a frenetic pace of life, they come to LA and it’s as if they have excess bandwidth. It’s infused new energy into the city.”



TINSELTOWN TURNS CEREBRAL... AND COOL

Many people have dismissed Los Angeles as a vapid place to live, but its growing status as a cultural capital is gaining respect. It’s much deserved, when you consider it has some of the best museums and galleries in the country, including the Getty, The Broad and LACMA, which will be expanded by 2023 thanks to a US\$600 million investment that will see its campus extended over Wilshire Boulevard with the addition of the LACMA Building for the Permanent Collection. (The new nearby Wilshire/Fairfax subway station will open at around the same time.) Running from September 2017 to January 2018, “Pacific Standard Time LA/LA” was an ambitious four-month exhibition of Latin American and Latino culture with works by 1,100 artists from 45 countries displayed across more than 70 venues in LA and the wider state. It’s endeavours like these that are inspiring an influx of talent.

With a growing community of creatives comes innovation, which means LA is also leading the way when it comes to everything from health food trends to the experience economy (Airbnb Experiences lists dozens of activities you can book with a local, such as vinyl record shopping with a Grammy award-winning artist).

There are lots of trendy hotspots such as Abbot Kinney, Echo Park, Silver Lake and Los Feliz emerging across LA these days, but one area that has seen significant change in terms of the creative economy is Downtown. It’s impossible to miss, being the only cluster of high-rise buildings in an otherwise low-rise city. Essentially the central business district, its make-up has been changing. It’s become more residential and, over the past five years or so, the old warehouses and lofts have been taken over by artists. Gentrification has swiftly followed and, now, beyond the apocalyptic border of Skid Row, where

EMPLOYMENT IN LA'S CREATIVE ECONOMY WILL GROW BY MORE THAN 5 % IN FOUR YEARS



desperate drug addicts and homeless people live in tents on the pavement (outrageous to see in a state as wealthy as California), you'll find the fully fledged Arts District and some of the most expensive real estate in LA.

The Arts District has the familiar feel of New York's Brooklyn or London's Shoreditch with murals on the sides of buildings, hipster boutiques, neon sign workshops, cold-brew coffeehouses, ice cream parlours, breweries, distilleries, concept stores, co-working spaces and galleries such as Hauser & Wirth, which also has a chic bistro called Manuela next door and a mini urban farm with chickens. As artists are evicted or forced to move on because of inflated rents, corporates are taking the opportunity to reap the benefits of this new walkable neighbourhood. The Hyperloop World Headquarters has moved to the Arts District; there's the Los Angeles Cleantech Incubator; and Warner Music will be relocating from its headquarters in Burbank. Designer Phillip Lim and Dover Street Market will be opening stores later this year.

**CLOCKWISE
FROM TOP LEFT:**
The Paul
Smith store
on Melrose
Avenue; LA's
iconic palms;
the subway

Chris Rico says: "I left LA for San Francisco between 2010 to 2014 because I got tired of the fact that the only thing anybody ever talked about was 'The Business'. It was always what sucked the oxygen out of the room – even in the *LA Times*, the whole business section was about Hollywood.

"So I went to San Francisco seeking a place where there was a diversity of thought and ideas, and in the time I was there, LA and San Francisco switched places. With the arrival of Dotcom 2.0, San Francisco became a one-conversation town – all anyone talks about is what app they are building. LA, meanwhile, has this complement of new technology, aerospace, autonomous vehicles, fashion, digital media and art. Movies are not the only thing that people talk about now."

He continues: "If you think about Charlie Chaplin, Howard Hughes and Walt Disney, people like that were what defined Los Angeles as this place for dreamers. Today, you have new dreamers such as Elon Musk and Evan Spiegel, who created Snapchat and decided to keep it in LA because of the creative economy and how integral that was to its offering, even though many of its venture capitalists were trying to get him to move to Silicon Valley.

"I think what is happening in LA right now is you are seeing that convergence, where you have all of these artists and new technology. When you get into designing rockets and imagining future modes of transportation, for example, it's very creative."

By the time of LA's Olympic Games in 2028, Rico predicts the city will look very different. There will be a new light rail and metro system (public transport is severely lacking right now). Meanwhile, Musk's Boring Company has already started digging tunnels beneath the city for a new kind of transport system in which cars are shuttled beneath the roads on drive-on, drive-off "skates". There will probably be self-driving cars too, so instead of getting angry at being stuck in traffic, you can sit back and enjoy watching *Avatar 4*. ■



WORDS TAMSIN COCKS

Explore the area from Dongdaemun to City Hall: a treasure trove of history, culture and food

1 Dongdaemun Design Plaza

Start your tour with the unmissable landmark that is the Dongdaemun Design Plaza (DDP). The curved, futuristic venue, designed by the late architectural maven Zaha Hadid, is one of the city's key event and exhibition venues but day-to-day is a hub of creativity. Boutique brands congregate in the Design Market on the first floor, with plenty of quirky modern gifts and gorgeous homeware products to browse, while the Design Lab embodies the spirit of innovation; at 3D printing specialist IOYS, visitors can get scanned and have miniature figurines printed in their own likeness (prices start from about 70,000 won/US\$65 for an 8cm figure).

Audio-guided tours of the spaceship-like venue are also available, encompassing the many artworks and the History and Culture Park. For lunch, head to newly opened Hino's Recipe in the DDP for

modern Italian cuisine. The bright, airy restaurant is the brainchild of the CEO of YG Foods (a subsidiary of YG Entertainment, which created K-Pop megastars such as Big Bang). ddp.or.kr

2 Ikseon-dong

From the DDP, hop on Subway Line 5 (via the History and Culture Park) to Jongno 3(sam)-ga Station, or a 20-minute taxi ride will take you to Ikseon-dong street. Like its popular neighbour Insa-dong, the area features maze-like streets bearing traditional Korean *hanok* buildings. However, while Insa-dong (once famous for antiques and art galleries) is starting to become commercialised with big chains and tacky tourist shops, the up-and-coming Ikseon-dong is an unspoilt cultural gem. Young artists and entrepreneurs have started to repurpose the old working-class area with modern boutique and handicraft stores, but plenty of traditional

elements remain, with local restaurants and beautiful teahouses featuring leafy interior courtyards.

3 Jeongdong Theater

Another quick taxi ride (or Subway Line 1 to City Hall station) will take you to Jeong-dong – the “European Quarter” of Seoul that is still home to many foreign embassies. There's plenty of history to soak up while wandering the leafy boulevard of Jeongdon-gil, which starts at Daehanmun Gate and skirts Deoksugung Palace. Free, guided walking tours, sponsored by the government, can be booked via Visit Seoul (english.visitseoul.net/walkingtour).

For a more lively cultural immersion, head to Jeongdong Theater. Launched in April, *The Palace: Tale of Jang Noksu* transports you to the Joseon Dynasty in a 90-minute performance that offers spectacular *hanbok* costumes, an insight to traditional instruments



and dance, creative staging and a compelling story about Jang Noksu, the thief turned slave, turned royal consort. The entire performance is done without words (aside from some brief story settings relayed in four languages on a monitor by the stage). If you want a hands-on experience, there is also the chance to learn how to play the iconic *janguu* drum at 3pm in the Jeong Dong Maru venue above the theatre.

Show starts at 4pm Tue-Sat; ticket price 40,000-60,000 won (US\$37-56); jeongdongtheater.com

4 Seoulo 7017 and food walking tour

After sitting, it's time to stretch those legs. Head south to City Hall Station to link up with Seoulo 7017 – a new sky park built along a disused 1970s overpass in a similar vein to New York's Highline. The elevated path has become a leafy trail through the heart of the city bustle, peppered

with cafés, gardens and stages for a variety of street performances. Book a food tasting and cultural tour with Gastro Tour Seoul to further elevate the experience. Guided excursions of Seoulo 7017 take in historical sights such as the old backstreets of Pimatgol and the Yakhyeon Catholic Church, while making regular pit stops to enjoy flavours from Seoul's history – from traditional kimchi-flavoured pancakes and *tteok* (rice cakes) to modern Korean fried chicken and beer. Tours cost around US\$80 per person for scheduled tours – alternatively you can book custom tours; gastroourseoul.com

5 La Yeon

Make sure you save space for your final destination. Hop in a cab and head to The Shilla Seoul. Before getting in the lift, see if you can sneak a peek at Yeong Bin Gwan – a gorgeous traditional venue originally used to house foreign VIP guests,



but now a wedding favourite. Otherwise, head up to the 23rd floor to the three-Michelin-starred Korean restaurant La Yeon. The combination of an elegant setting, views stretching out across the city, and beautifully prepared and presented traditional Korean cuisine, is the perfect way to end the day.

Advance booking is necessary; lunch 12-2pm, dinner 6-10pm; dinner set from 160,000 won (US\$150); +82 2 2230 3367; lhw.com/hotel/The-Shilla-Seoul-Seoul-Korea BT







TOP

100 airport lounges

39

Arrive at the airport early - these lounges are destinations in their own right

WORDS GUY DIMOND

American Airlines
Flagship lounge,
New York JFK

Earlier this year, we asked *Business Traveller's* online Forum users to recommend their favourite airport lounges to fellow travellers. This elicited many well-informed responses – almost as enthusiastic as the suggestions for the *worst* airport lounges (which can be read online at the address below).

Alongside your suggestions, we have added the best lounges we at *BT* have visited, and included “pay-to-enter” lounges as well as airline ones. This list isn't definitive, but it's a start. Feel free to let us and other readers know which ones we have missed via the Forum. When it comes to recommendations, we'd rather have a list of 200 than 100. businessstraveller.com/forum

UK & EUROPE

LONDON HEATHROW

BRITISH AIRWAYS CONCORDE ROOM, T5

Refreshed in November 2017, the Concorde Room is for BA's first class passengers and Gold Guest List members. There's an à la carte restaurant for dining and a bar service.

EMIRATES, T3

Reviewed by *BT* last year (November 2017), this well-equipped lounge has plenty of secluded spots to work and relax, and has the advantage of direct boarding of the plane from the lounge.

ETIHAD AIRWAYS, T4

This lounge has free spa treatments (albeit in 15-minute appointments), good food and a buzzy atmosphere. It's for first and business class passengers combined.

LUFTHANSA SENATOR, T2

Lufthansa has more than one lounge at Heathrow, one in the main Terminal 2 and one in Terminal 2B. The Senator lounge is for first class passengers and Star Alliance Gold Card holders.

MALAYSIA AIRLINES GOLDEN LOUNGE, T4

Both first and business class share a divided space. Service is personalised and attentive, and the food offering varied and of excellent quality.

NO1 HEATHROW, T3

Reviewed by *BT* in March 2017, this pay-for-entry lounge has “lots of amenities, contemporary décor and good food”, and costs from £36 (US\$49) for three hours if booked online. Showers cost an extra £10 (US\$13.5); “sleep pods” from £60 (US\$81) for three hours.

United Airlines
Club lounge,
London
Heathrow
Terminal 2



PLAZA PREMIUM, T4

Plaza Premium has a strong presence at Heathrow, and many of its six lounges are impressive. For example, the T4 arrivals-side lounge has 25 luxurious showers (US\$18 for 30 minutes' use – prices are charged in US dollars), with lounge use starting at US\$37 for one hour.

QANTAS, T3

Opened in November 2017, this has Neil Perry's Aussie-style dishes, a cocktail bar, six shower suites, workstations and more besides. For first and business class passengers combined.

QATAR AIRWAYS PREMIUM, T4

BT Forum user Amanda says this is the best at Heathrow: “Has to be the Qatar lounge at LHR – service, food, facilities are all top notch.” It's open to Oneworld first and business passengers too.

UNITED AIRLINES CLUB, T2B

One of the three Star Alliance airline lounges in Terminal 2B, the United lounge has good views, a lovely atmosphere and a long bar with good service and a wide selection of drinks.

VIRGIN ATLANTIC CLUBHOUSE, T3

There have been recent changes including losing the spa bath, but this is still one of the top lounges in the world, and a great advertisement for the differentiation the Virgin brand has brought to flying.

LONDON GATWICK

BRITISH AIRWAYS CLUB AND FIRST, GATWICK SOUTH

With good views, a choice of wines and food and a mezzanine level in the Club lounge, these two newish lounges have been warmly welcomed by BA passengers.

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 31 restaurants, bars, cafés and retail outlets 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 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.

Visit www.fullertonconcours.com to find out more.



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



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

www.fullertonhotels.com



Lufthansa first class lounge, Frankfurt

51ST & GREEN, DUBLIN

This is the pre-clearance business lounge for flights to the US. You can pay for access €35 (US\$42) per person online or €39 (US\$46.5) at reception, though it is complimentary to business class ticket holders.

AIR FRANCE LA PREMIERE, PARIS CHARLES DE GAULLE

Opinions differ about Air France, but there is a consensus about this classy lounge with its Clarins spa, top wines and serene, peaceful atmosphere.

AIR FRANCE BUSINESS HALL L, PARIS CHARLES DE GAULLE

One of several refurbished or reinvented Air France lounges opened in January 2018, this also has a Clarins spa as part of the first phase; part two will follow in July 2018.

ASPIRE APHRODITE, LARNACA, CYPRUS

Open to all travellers from £2799 (US\$38) per head. "Good food and drink, plenty of space, comfortable seating, nice views, good internet and lovely staff," says *BT Forum* user ASK1945.

ASPIRE, ZURICH TERMINAL E

Aspire has two lounges at Zurich. This one is that rare phenomenon – a lounge with an outdoor terrace, plus views of the apron, runway and the main terminal. It's a pay-to-enter lounge and costs Sfr35 (US\$35) per visit.

THE LOFT, BRUSSELS AIRLINES, BRUSSELS

"Largish with great tarmac views and super comfy armchairs by the windows with power. Decent food, drink and wifi and a nice feel generally," says *BT Forum* user Alex_F.

ARIKLASSI (BUSINESS), TALLINN

Passengers gain access for €30 (US\$36); some business travellers get in for free. "Good selection of food, quiet, outdoor terrace overlooking the aprons," says *BT Forum* user rferguson.

CALPE LOUNGE, GIBRALTAR

A Priority Pass lounge run by Lounge Club; you can get access from US\$29. The views of the Rock are magnificent, and "You could sit outside on the sofas!" says *BT Forum* user Bath_VIP.

CIBELES VIP, MADRID

For non-Schengen passengers, this lounge is open to anyone for €30.60 (US\$36.5). "Nice large space with great apron views and reasonable food selection," says *BT Forum* user travelforfun.

EVENTYR, COPENHAGEN KASTRUP

Usually Dkr250 (US\$40) to get into, this lounge also permits BA, Emirates, Delta and Norwegian flyers with the right status. It has showers and "superb views," says *BT Forum* user Bath_VIP.

FINNAIR PREMIUM, HELSINKI

Great "for the Finnish design, food and sauna," says *BT Forum* user travelforfun. Exclusively for Finnair Plus Platinum and Gold members, or Oneworld Emerald cardholders.

FINNAIR SCHENGEN BUSINESS, HELSINKI

The Schengen lounge has good buffet food, and is "bright with plenty of seating," says *BT Forum* user Blanicka. You can buy entry for €48 (US\$57).

AGEAN AIRLINES NON SCHENGEN, ATHENS

A new option (opened December 2017) in Terminal A, this small lounge serves local Greek dishes such as spinach pie, plus Greek wines, but lacks hot food options.

KLM CROWN, AMSTERDAM SCHIPHOL

This lounge for intercontinental business passengers is undergoing an upgrade, but is still open; completion is planned for 2019.

LUFTHANSA FIRST CLASS, FRANKFURT

This entire first class terminal is "simply amazing and remains my most memorable lounge experience," says *BT Forum* user MartyrSinclair. Lufthansa and Swiss frequent flyers are welcome.

VIP LOUNGE FRANKFURT

A luxurious VIP area with limousine service, restaurant, private rooms/suites and cigar lounge. Premium services – at premium prices, starting from around €330 (US\$394) per person.

LUFTHANSA FIRST CLASS, MUNICH

Cigar lounge, gourmet restaurant, showers and baths, and limousine service to the aircraft. Very modern, with views over the aircraft. Open to Lufthansa and Swiss frequent flyers.

MARCO POLO CLUB, VENICE

Entry is €40 (US\$48). "Several very nice spaces including small outdoor selection," says *BT Forum* user travelforfun. Priority Pass members, Diners Club and a few others get in for free.

SWISS FIRST, ZURICH TERMINAL A

This lounge reopened in March 2018 with great food, bedrooms and an outside terrace in the summer. It's widely considered to be one of the best lounges in the world.

SWISS FIRST, ZURICH TERMINAL E

Not as new as the Terminal A lounge but just as luxurious featuring bedrooms, champagne bar and two restaurants, plus an outside terrace.

TURKISH AIRLINES, ISTANBUL

It may be crowded, but this lounge is "mind-blowing for a long stay, loads of things to eat and spaces to sit [and] fab drinks selection too," as *BT Forum* user norbert2008 puts it.

"My most memorable lounge experience"



RIGHT: Qatar Airways Al Mourjan lounge, Doha
BELOW: Slow lounge, Cape Town



MIDDLE EAST & AFRICA

BIDVEST PREMIER, CAPE TOWN

"A good selection of ripe fruit, cooked breakfasts, good espresso, interested staff and a quieter upstairs section affording a lovely view," says *BT Forum* user barnacles.

BRITISH AIRWAYS GALLERIES/FIRST, JOHANNESBURG OR TAMBO

BA's First and Club lounges in Johannesburg have a "great selection of fresh food... free massages, good wine selection, good coffee, lovely staff," says *BT Forum* user miningguy.

BRITISH AIRWAYS, DUBAI

A new addition to the BA network, this one is split into two distinct spaces, one being a small Concorde Bar which is accessed by a key card from the main business class lounge.

EMIRATES FIRST CLASS, DUBAI

The two Emirates lounges had a US\$11 million refurbishment completed in 2016. Paid-for access used to be for Emirates passengers, but you can now (since 2017) buy your way into first class for US\$200, while the business class lounge costs around half that price.

ETIHAD AIRWAYS FIRST, ABU DHABI

BT reviewed it in October 2016 and found the service, food and drink first-rate. You can take a quick workout or spruce up at the barbers or spa before the flight. You can pay to get in (from US\$200 for first class, US\$100 for business).

OMAN AIR BUSINESS, MUSCAT

Day beds, showers, complimentary massage and more besides. "Full dining option – food is good. Nice bar area. Helpful business centre," says *BT Forum* user cwoodward.

QATAR AIRWAYS AL MOURJAN, DOHA

One of five Qatar lounges in the main terminal, all sumptuous, this one has "sheer space and variety", says *BT Forum* user Inquisitive.

QATAR AIRWAYS AL SAFWA, DOHA

Not content with having just one impressive first class lounge, Qatar has two. The Al Safwa, however, is exclusively for first class ticket holders flying with Qatar Airways.

SAUDIA ALFURSAN GOLDEN, JEDDAH

For first and business passengers in the busiest airport in Saudi Arabia. The international lounge is open to anyone for SAR189 (US\$50).

SAUDIA ALFURSAN GOLDEN, RIYADH

Both first and business under one roof, with first class more secluded. There's a good buffet, showers and Apple computers to use.

SLOW, CAPE TOWN

For domestic flights, including BA flights operated by Comair. A fabulous lounge with a huge selection of food and drink over two levels, two bars including a cocktail bar and the famous "Loo with a view".



ASIA

ALL NIPPON AIRWAYS FIRST CLASS, TOKYO HANEDA

For first class ANA or Star Alliance guests. "Amazing! At 6.50am they were running around offering people champagne and Hibiki Japanese whisky," says *BT* forum user Kingston.

AMERICAN EXPRESS THE CENTURION, HONG KONG

For Amex Platinum Card and Centurion members. The Centurion area features a menu by chef Lau Yiu Fai of the Michelin-starred Yan To Heen at the Intercontinental Hong Kong.

BLUE RIBBON, BANGKOK AIRWAYS, KOH SAMUI, THAILAND

A small but delightful lounge on this Thai island. "The most charming and relaxing place. Mostly open-sided thatched cabanas. Well appointed and run," says *BT* Forum user cwoodward.

CATHAY PACIFIC THE DECK, HONG KONG

Opened in March 2018, this replaces the Cabin lounge. It's for Cathay's first and business class passengers, Marco Polo Club Silver members, plus Oneworld Emerald and Sapphire members.

CATHAY PACIFIC THE PIER FIRST, HONG KONG

Cathay Pacific has a number of lounges at Hong Kong: The Wing, The Cabin, The Bridge and The Pier. The Pier was refurbished in 2015, and the *BT* review in 2016 called it "superb".

CATHAY PACIFIC THE WING FIRST, HONG KONG

Twenty-three shower rooms, workstations, plus a noodle bar. "While the Pier is cosier, this one has private cabanas with baths... This alone wins it for me," says *BT* Forum user ThomasCox.

CATHAY PACIFIC FIRST/BUSINESS, MANILA

Opened in 2015, this well-designed lounge is the "small sister to The Pier at Hong Kong. Good bar and food. Very comfortable, even for a few hours," says *BT* Forum user cwoodward.

CATHAY PACIFIC, BANGKOK SUVARNABHUMI

Opened in 2015, reviewed by *BT* in June 2017, for first and business passengers. "Very comfortable," says *BT* Forum user MartynSinclair.

CATHAY PACIFIC, SINGAPORE CHANGI T4

Opened in 2017, this is one of the distinctive Studioilse-designed lounges which are

becoming Cathay trademarks. Facilities include a noodle station, but no showers or tended bar.

CATHAY PACIFIC, TOKYO HANEDA

Cathay uses Studioilse to create its distinctive lounge designs, and this early revamp formed the template. The made-to-order noodles, hip looks and attractive wood surfaces are all there.

CATHAY PACIFIC, SHANGHAI PUDONG

The Cathay Pacific and Cathay Dragon lounge is for first or business travellers plus one guest; or for Oneworld business class passengers.

CHINA AIRLINES, TAIPEI TAOYUAN

An impressive, surprisingly large and stylish business lounge with extensive food options, showers, workstations and more. The buffet has a mix of Chinese and Western dishes.

GVK, MUMBAI

Reviewed by *BT* in November 2016, this is "a well-equipped lounge to recharge and work". Access is free for business and first class passengers of the many partner airlines.

HONG KONG AIRLINES CLUB AUTUS, HONG KONG

Opened in 2017 at a cost of more than US\$4 million, there are showers, a huge buffet and great views of the bridge to Macau. It's free for

first and business class passengers, or you can pay HK\$350 (US\$44.5) for entry.

JAL FIRST, TOKYO NARITA

The first class lounge for Oneworld Emerald members (the Sakura lounge is for business class). It's small, with a buffet section of Japanese and Western food, plus showers.

MALAYSIA AIRLINES GOLDEN, KUALA LUMPUR

Opened in March 2018, this smart lounge in the international terminal is a showcase for Malaysian food, with traditional Malay, Indian-Malay and Sino-Malay dishes, plus Western food.

MIRACLE, BANGKOK

Part of the Priority Pass group. "Big space, nicely divided into areas and rarely seems busy... spacious and immaculately clean," is the verdict of *BT* Forum user Travelling4Fun.

OMAN AIR, BANGKOK

"Fresh dates, wonderful appetiser-sized dishes of hummus, hot dishes for main courses, and 'authentic' Arabic coffee," says *BT* Forum user barnacles. For first and business class.

PLAZA PREMIUM EAST HALL, HONG KONG

This lounge takes paying guests, and also business class for airlines without their own →

Cathay uses Studioilse to create its distinctive lounge designs

Cathay Pacific The Pier first class lounge, Hong Kong



Taking business travel to new heights

Elevate your experience at Shangri-La at the Fort, Manila's
Horizon Club rooms



Located on Levels 37 to 40, the Horizon Club rooms of Shangri-La at the Fort provide business travellers with a combination of breathtaking views, personalised service and luxurious accommodations in the center of Bonifacio Global City (BGC) – one of Manila's premier business and lifestyle districts.

At a generous 45 to 47 sqm, the Horizon Club Deluxe rooms provide a luxurious setting with unparalleled city views. Guests who stay in a Horizon Club room will also enjoy access to the Horizon Club Lounge, an exclusive space at Level 40, with services and amenities that are tailor-made for hassle-free stays, allowing more time to focus on the business at hand.

Club Lounge guests can enjoy the following complimentary benefits:

- Buffet breakfast, served daily
- Coffee, tea and other non-alcoholic beverages available throughout the day
- Cocktails and canapés in the evening
- Use of the Horizon Club meeting room for two hours per day
- Pressing service for one business suit/dress upon arrival
- Use of the in-lounge computer and internet services
- Private check-in and checkout in guestrooms, with an option for late checkout on the day of departure
- Tea, coffee or another hot beverage of choice to be delivered to the guestroom with a requested wake-up call



Shangri-La at the Fort, Manila is a landmark mixed-use development in the emerging business and lifestyle district at the centre of Metro Manila. With a young and contemporary vibe, it is one of the fastest growing urban developments in Asia.

Guests can stroll through the variety of upmarket retail shops, green spaces and restaurants while waiting for their next meeting.

Shangri-La at the Fort, Manila is also home to Kerry Sports, a

comprehensive indoor fitness and recreation destination across a sprawling 8,000 sqm space. This lifestyle leisure club offers 24-hour access to the gym, state-of-the-art facilities that include an NBA-grade basketball court, tennis and squash courts and up-to-date fitness classes by top accredited trainers.

The complex is a 20-minute ride from the international airport, stands next to the newly opened Philippine Stock Exchange building and is within walking distance of international schools, embassies, a world-class medical facility, as well as upscale recreation destinations, the Manila Golf Club and the Manila Polo Club.

Shangri-La at the Fort, Manila, 30th Street corner 5th Ave, Bonifacio Global City, Taguig, 1634 Metro Manila, Philippines; tel: +63 2 820 0888; shangri-la.com/manila/shangrilaatthefort

A highlight is the on-demand noodle bar

lounges at the airport. *BT* reviewed it in March 2017. There's a twin lounge in the West Hall.

SATS PREMIER T1, SINGAPORE CHANGI T1

Open to Priority Pass holders, this lounge has a buffet, showers and secluded booths where you can work in relative comfort. It's a busy lounge though, and used by many regional airlines.

SKYTEAM, HONG KONG

Often busy, but a highlight here is the "on demand" noodle bar, which provides three types of Chinese noodles that are cooked on order.

SINGAPORE AIRLINES SILVERKRIS, SINGAPORE CHANGI T2

There are two Silverkris lounges in Terminal 2B at Changi Airport – left for first class, right for business. "[Business] beats some first class lounges," said Lady London on the *BT* Forum.

SINGAPORE AIRLINES SILVERKRIS FIRST CLASS, SINGAPORE CHANGI T2

BT reviewed this first class lounge in March 2018, and found it had good service and everything you need. "Discreet luxury", as *BT* Forum user Inquisitive put it.

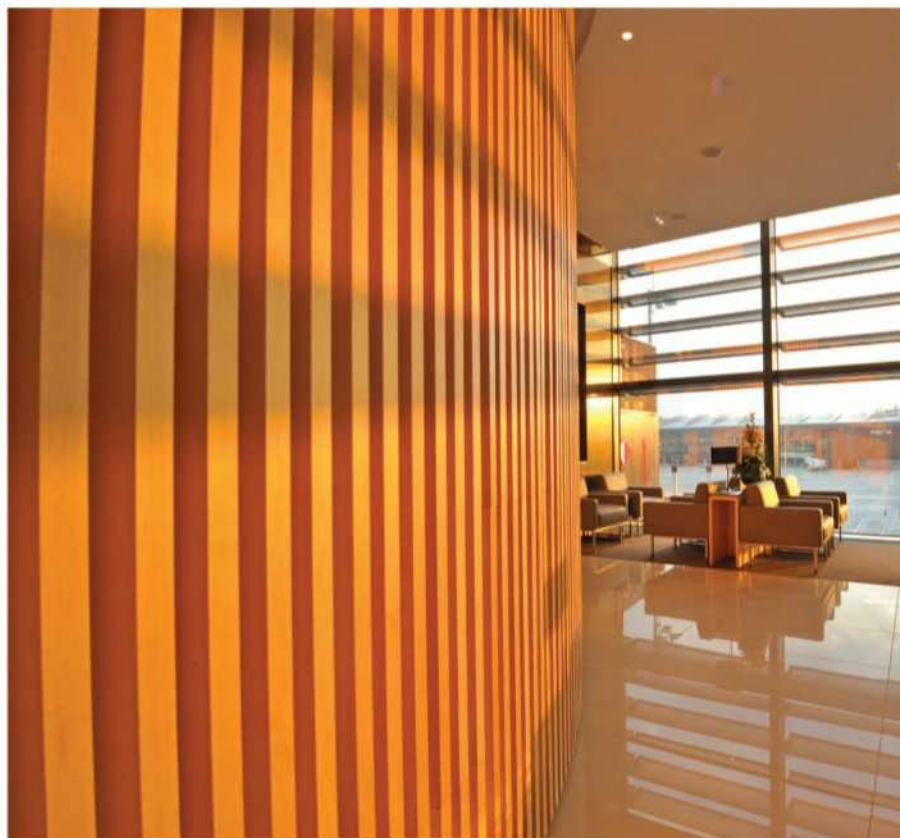
THAI AIRWAYS ROYAL FIRST, BANGKOK

The feel is calm and friendly, and you can have a complimentary one-hour full body massage. Just make sure you don't miss the plane.

VIETNAM AIRLINES LOTUS, HO CHI MINH CITY

A Skyteam lounge with good facilities, decent wifi speed (for Vietnam) and even a "pet lounge", because Vietnam Airlines allows domestic passengers to carry their dogs on board.

BELOW: China Airlines lounge, Taipei



THE AMERICAS

AIR CANADA SIGNATURE SUITE, TORONTO

Very chic, with a full-service restaurant that includes a private dining room for small groups or families. Exemplary food and beautiful use of maple wood, but no showers.

AMERICAN AIRLINES FLAGSHIP, MIAMI

For first and business class, Oneworld Emerald and Sapphire flyers. "Very spacious with good food and drink," says the *BT* Forum user who (presumably immodestly) calls himself "christ".

AMERICAN AIRLINES FLAGSHIP, NEW YORK JFK T8

According to *BT* Forum user ThomasCox, "Never felt crowded. Comfy lounge chairs by the huge floor-to-ceiling windows. There's also a separate First Dining Room for genuine first class tickets."

AMERICAN AIRLINES FLAGSHIP, CHICAGO

"A cosy, comfortable space, especially charming and helpful staff and a decent food display," says *BT* Forum user travelsforfun.

AMERICAN AIRLINES FLAGSHIP, LOS ANGELES

The First Dining Room is a standout with its impressive à la carte menu. There are currently four Flagship lounges from AA – the others are Dallas/Fort Worth, Heathrow and Philadelphia.

AMERICAN EXPRESS THE CENTURION, HOUSTON GEORGE BUSH

Reviewed in December 2017 by *BT*, "a pleasant surprise from start to finish, a simply excellent lounge – and an impressive benefit for Platinum card holders (and Centurion ones)."

AMERICAN EXPRESS THE CENTURION, MIAMI

This lounge is currently undergoing expansion, and will get new amenities including a wine bar plus private phone rooms. But even while parts of it are under wraps, it's still very good.

BRITISH AIRWAYS, BOSTON LOGAN

BA is currently investing £88 million (US\$119 million) into its US lounges. The Concorde Dining restaurant is one of the visible highlights of this investment, and it opened in 2017.



BRITISH AIRWAYS CONCORDE ROOM, NEW YORK JFK T7

For first class BA passengers. It's "comfortable, exclusive, spacious with friendly staff and excellent wine," says *BT* Forum user ThomasCox.

BRITISH AIRWAYS CLUB/FIRST, CHICAGO

Access to First lounge is for Emerald members or those travelling in first class. "While small, has lovely staff," says *BT* Forum user ThomasCox.

BRITISH AIRWAYS CLUB/FIRST, HOUSTON

Also open to Emerald members and first class passengers. "Staff escort you to ensure you're first to board," says *BT* Forum user ThomasCox.

BRITISH AIRWAYS GALLERIES, WASHINGTON

When reviewed by *BT*, we noted "you can only go into the Concorde Dining [room] if you are flying First. Gold or Emerald Card won't help."

DELTA SKY CLUB, SEATTLE TACOMA SOUTH

This 2016 lounge has "decent food and a view of Mount Rainier," says *BT* Forum user travelsforfun. Non-Delta entry costs US\$59 per person.

DELTA SKY CLUB, NEW YORK JFK T4

Primarily aimed at Delta Sky Club members, anyone can get in for US\$50. This lounge boasts an outdoor patio in warm weather, and there are appealing shower facilities too.

ONEWORLD BUSINESS, LOS ANGELES

Customers can choose from eclectic and international menus created by renowned Australian fusion chef Neil Perry. There's also a cocktail bar and 16 shower suites.

ONEWORLD, SAO PAULO

Reviewed by *BT* in August 2015, when "the staff kept the buffet replenished and the place tidy. There were at least three attendants just looking after the six showers."

QANTAS BUSINESS, LOS ANGELES

This Marc Newson-designed space is "a modern lounge with great à la carte food choices, and – as ever – great wine," says *BT*'s Julian Gregory.

STAR ALLIANCE, LOS ANGELES

One of the best lounges in the US, with an "Open

terrace, ramp views, good food, wine – what's not to like?" as *BT* Forum user trident3 opined.

STAR ALLIANCE, RIO DE JANEIRO

Brazilian design is showcased at this attractive lounge, run by the Plaza Premium Group. It's open to Star Alliance Gold status passengers as well as business and first class ticket holders.

UNITED POLARIS, CHICAGO

This is United's flagship while more Polaris lounges are under construction. There are showers, daybeds, good food and cocktails.

VIRGIN ATLANTIC CLUBHOUSE, NEW YORK JFK T4

BT Forum user Defcon5 likes the "craft beer and tapas". It also has a spa, good workstations with printers and British food on the menu.

VIRGIN ATLANTIC CLUBHOUSE, LOS ANGELES

Reviewed by *BT* in 2015, this US\$3.4 million Clubhouse "has also got the basics right – and enough food so that you can get on the flight and sleep all the way home if you wish."

ABOVE LEFT: Air Canada Signature Suite, Toronto
ABOVE: British Airways Galleries lounge, Washington Dulles





ABOVE: Etihad Airways first and business lounge, Melbourne
RIGHT: Virgin Australia lounge, Brisbane

AUSTRALIA & NEW ZEALAND

AIR NEW ZEALAND INTERNATIONAL, AUCKLAND

Opened in 2015, the ANZ flagship lounge is for ANZ business class passengers and travellers with a lot of Airpoints. "Comfortable – very good food and even better wine... close to all gates, good IT," says *BT* Forum user cwoodward.

ETIHAD AIRWAYS FIRST AND BUSINESS, MELBOURNE

You can now (since January 2018) buy walk-in access to this lounge for US\$75; or for an additional US\$40, you can get the VIP room and live out your Bond villain fantasies sitting on the chic furniture (Blofeld white cat not supplied).

QANTAS FIRST, SYDNEY

"Hands down the most comfortable, most spacious lounge with a great view, the best/friendliest service and the tastiest food," says *BT* Forum user ThomasCox.

QANTAS FIRST, BRISBANE

Qantas started out in Queensland nearly 100 years ago, so their Brisbane lounge is special with lots of natural light and smart design.

QANTAS FIRST, MELBOURNE

"Many people mention the QF First Lounge in Sydney. I rather like its smaller cousin in Melbourne, which is quieter but offers the same service," says *BT* Forum user TominScotland.

QANTAS INTERNATIONAL TRANSIT, PERTH

With the introduction of Qantas's non-stop flights from London, this lounge focuses on "wellness" with wholesome food, yoga classes,

"bright light therapy" and other jet lag-countering ideas for those on long-haul flights.

VIRGIN AUSTRALIA, BRISBANE

Like the Virgin Australia lounges in the bigger cities, there's a dedicated espresso and wine bar in the centre of this lounge. The wifi is fast.

VIRGIN AUSTRALIA, SYDNEY

The signature espresso and wine bar lies in the centre of the room, but there are also meeting rooms, and a huge range of reading material. **BT**





Twenty years of premium service

The world's largest independent airport pay-in lounge provider is celebrating its 20th anniversary with a new elite offering

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Plaza Premium Group, a global airport hospitality network, has provided travellers with accessible, high-quality lounges for two decades through its flagship brand, Plaza Premium Lounge.

Plaza Premium Lounge gives travellers a haven away from the hustle and bustle of the airport by providing a space with top-notch services and facilities at major international airports.

Comfortable seating, enticing food and beverage selections, showers with amenities, private resting suites, VIP rooms, recharging stations, Wi-Fi, and Internet work stations are but a few of the services offered to travellers to improve their airport experiences.

So far, the company has successfully grown its network to cover more than 160 locations in 40 airports across 21 countries and regions all over the world.

These include major international airports such as Abu Dhabi, Brisbane, Hong Kong, Kuala Lumpur, London Heathrow, New Delhi, Rio de Janeiro, Riyadh, Shanghai, Singapore, Sydney,

Taipei, Toronto, Vancouver, etc.

But the Group is constantly expanding, and has most recently launched new Plaza Premium Lounge locations in Terminal 5 of London Heathrow Airport, as well as in Melbourne Airport, Riyadh's Dammam King Fahd International Airport, and Rome's Leonardo da Vinci - Fiumicino Airport.

Further developments in the US, Finland and China are also in the company's sights.

Plaza Premium Lounge also prides itself on offering a one-stop shop to its valued partners, which range from airport authorities and airlines to corporate partners. This total airport hospitality solution spans architecture and design, operation and project management consultancy, quality assurance, branding and product development, pre-opening management, and global marketing and sales strategies, to name a few.

On top of its own facilities, Plaza Premium Group also manages lounges for leading airlines and alliances including Cathay Pacific, China Eastern Airlines, El Al Israel Airlines, Lufthansa, Singapore Airlines, Thai Airways, SkyTeam, Star

Alliance and American Express.




Now, to celebrate its 20th anniversary this July, the Group will launch a new, elevated brand called Plaza Premium First.

The elite concept has been built upon the stellar reputation created by Plaza Premium Group's flagship brand Plaza Premium Lounge, which has won numerous accolades including the Skytrax World's Best Independent Airport Lounge in both 2016 and 2017.

Recognising the demand for a new tier of premium and elite airport lounge experience, Plaza Premium Group has answered that call with a mission to take airport lounges to the next level.

This elite concept will debut in Hong Kong this summer. Visitors to the Plaza Premium First lounge can expect a raft of upgraded facilities in the form of personalised services, made-to-order dishes and cross-brand experiences.

Stay connected with us
plazapremiumgroup.com

 Plaza Premium Group
  Plaza Premium Lounge

FEEDING A HEALTHY HABIT

As business travellers aspire to a healthier travel lifestyle, hotels have been quick to innovate

WORDS KATE FARR & RACHEL READ

There was a time when business travel was synonymous with unhealthy habits – heavy room service meals, uninviting fitness centres and all-too-easy access to the hotel bar – leaving departing guests in considerably worse shape than at check-in. But with a marked increase in the concept of “wellness travel”, hotels across the world are stepping up to offer a wide range of tailor-made, health-conscious services, innovative initiatives and amenities designed to boost nutrition, improve fitness and ensure a better quality of sleep – all within the comfort of your own room.

WHY WELLNESS?

Is this new-found preoccupation with health and wellness just another passing fad? According to Gaynor Reid, vice-president of communications and CSR Asia Pacific for Accorhotels, “Wellness tourism grew by around 9 per cent in 2017 – 50 per cent faster than overall global tourism – so we know there is a growing demand from our guests for wellness offerings.” But what is behind this marked upswing in health-consciousness? “We believe people are more aware of the impact of diet and exercise on longevity and mental health, and also that there is a greater search for balance in life,” Reid says. “The bottom line is that health and wellness is no longer a trend; it has become a reality.”

Sean Hunt, area vice-president of Marriott International for Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific, agrees. “I think we’re seeing hotel guests – both business and leisure travellers – prioritising wellness because they’re realising that maintaining their routine and healthy lifestyle on the road helps them feel better both during and after their stay,” he explains. “In today’s world, looking and feeling good is seen as a luxury.” →







WORKING IT OUT

A key part of this experience is, of course, fitness. However, with many business travellers short on time, it can be impossible to squeeze in a full gym session – which is why many hotel brands are now bringing the workout direct to guests.

“Pullman Hotels and Resorts recently collaborated with renowned fitness guru Sarah Hoey to develop a programme designed to help travellers adopt a healthier lifestyle,” Reid says. This tailor-made programme includes a series of short yoga and fitness videos that are available in-room, created to support and encourage guests to incorporate workouts into the busiest of schedules.

Fairmont, another Accorhotels premium brand, offers its President Club loyalty members free use of sneakers and gym clothes from Reebok – a particularly helpful perk for business travellers who often travel only with carry-on luggage.

Meanwhile, Westin Hotels’ “Let’s Rise” campaign includes a series of in-room HIIT (high-intensity interval training) workouts created by health coach Rachael Finch, that are suitable for all fitness levels. The workouts are especially designed for hotel guests and can be

comfortably achieved in any guestroom without the need for special equipment. Westin also offers the option of pre-booking rooms that include a treadmill or a stationary bike, meaning dedicated runners and riders needn’t give up their goal of a PB while on the road. (Westin has also joined forces with New Balance to provide workout gear for guests to use throughout their stay.)

For those who prefer their workouts with a touch of elegance, JW Marriott Hotels and Resorts’ newest venture is totally on point. “Behind the Barre” is a series of in-room fitness videos created in partnership with the Joffrey Ballet; aiming to fuse the elegance of a ballet class with a good workout, it can be incorporated into any existing exercise routine. The partnership is also rolling out “Barre to Bar” pop-ups throughout Asia, merging ballet-infused classes with boozy Sunday brunches for the ultimate in #workoutgoals.

HOLISTIC HELP

Of course there’s more to feeling good than exercise – which is why many hotel groups are focusing on developing a well-rounded approach to their guests’ wellbeing.





For a 360-degree approach to wellness, look out for Swissôtel's Vitality Room concept, which launches in Asia in 2018. Launched in collaboration with style tome *Wallpaper* magazine, the room is designed to be a complete sanctuary for weary travellers, featuring air purifiers, modifiable circadian lighting that eases jet lag and promotes a restful environment, and bathroom options that include individual scents, coloured lighting and even adjustable water pressure for the ultimate in bespoke bathing.

The brand also has a strong focus on improving mental as well as physical wellbeing, offering guests at their Singapore and Sydney properties a set of specially designed postcards that come complete with Caran d'Ache coloured pencils for a mindful adult colouring session.

Westin have also focused on the positive mental health benefits of art, partnering with renowned artist Johanna Basford to create three detailed adult colouring sheets. Available across the Asia-Pacific region, the sheets subtly highlight the hotel's "Pillars of Wellness" concept, which encourage guests to sleep, eat and move well throughout their stay. The designs feature elements of Westin's wellness offerings – cups of chamomile tea, running shoes, healthy fruits, etc – woven into intricate patterns that aim to boost guests' creativity and create a dedicated space for meditation.

And to deepen your meditation practice on your next business trip, look no further than Morgans Hotel Group. The chain, which has properties across the US and in London, Istanbul and Doha, has collaborated with Mindfulness Everywhere, creators of the popular Buddhify app, to produce ten guided meditation sessions for hotel guests to download. Offering the opportunity for reflection, relaxation and recharging, these short and easy-to-use sessions aim to make meditation accessible to everyone.

OPPOSITE PAGE:
Westin offers in-room equipment and gear as well as HIIT workout programmes created by Rachael Finch (pictured)
ABOVE:
JW Marriott combines ballet with a workout

Accessibility is at the heart of The Peninsula Hotels' new "Yoga in the Mornings" initiative. Rolling out this summer, with the group's Hong Kong and Shanghai properties among the earliest adopters, all guestrooms will contain a dedicated phablet that details a simple yoga routine for guests to try at their leisure – with yoga mats available on request from housekeeping.

The "Season of Wellness" at 137 Pillars Suites and Residences Bangkok – which runs until June 24 – takes a different approach, flying in four "Masters of Wellness" to offer their expert skills, with wellness therapy, massage treatments and peak performance coaching variously on offer. "With today's ultra-hectic lifestyles, we wanted to bring in some of the world's best wellness practitioners, so guests can discover how best to find balance within themselves for a healthier and happier life," says Bjorn Richardson, 137 Pillars' general manager.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Forget old-school room service menus of uninspiring sandwiches and quick-fix snacks; these days, in-room meals are designed to be both nutritious and delicious.

Leading the way is Intercontinental Hong Kong, which collaborated with the Hong Kong Adventist Hospital to create its "ihealth" initiative. Based on academic nutritional guidance from the hospital, Intercontinental's culinary team created an all-day menu designed to address the prevention of four of the most common health concerns worldwide: diabetes, cardiac disease, hypertension and the need for antioxidants. These dishes have been thoroughly analysed by the hospital's trained dietitians and formulated with key ingredients chosen to help tackle these issues; icons on the menu denote which of the specific health concerns each dish has been designed to target – with breakfast, lunch and dinner options all available 24 hours in-room. →



Health is also on the menu for Hyatt Hotels and Resorts, whose “Food. Thoughtfully Sourced. Carefully Served” philosophy has seen the group commit to healthy, sustainable and responsible dining across its properties globally. Initiatives include vegetarian and gluten-free options, a focus on portion control and balanced meals, dishes made with reduced sodium, sugar and calories, and cooking with organic produce, naturally raised meat and sustainably sourced seafood – qualities all reflected in the group’s “Healthy Balance” in-room menus worldwide.

Whilst exact dishes vary between properties – allowing individual chefs to exercise their culinary creativity – they are all tailor-made to offer “flavourful, healthful and perfectly portioned options”. This is showcased in the “Create Your Own” section, where guests customise their dishes with a choice of proteins (typically available pan-fried, grilled or steamed), vegetable-centric sides and sauces.

Wellness lies at the forefront of the latest additions to The Mandarin Oriental Hong Kong’s room service offerings – a selection of fresh juices and an acai bowl designed by leading iridologist and detox expert Jennifer Thompson. These creations are packed with superfood ingredients that deliver a wide range of antioxidants, vitamins, minerals, fibre and omega-3, all carefully chosen to achieve different goals. For instance, the “Recharge” juice is ideal for reviving those suffering from

CLOCKWISE FROM THIS PAGE TOP: Intercontinental Hong Kong ihealth in-room breakfast; Swissotel’s Vitality Room; a “Master of Wellness” at 137 Pillars Suites and Residences Bangkok; Morgans Hotel Group’s Buddhify app; and Mandarin Oriental Hong Kong’s healthy juices

jet lag or too many late nights, whilst the “Energy” acai bowl is the perfect breakfast for those looking to power up for a busy day ahead.

Have a health-conscious company event planned? The Ritz-Carlton Bali’s innovative Healthy Meeting options have got you covered. Split into three categories (Detox, Energy Boost and Revitalising Secret), these four- to six-hour experiences include team-building exercises like t’ai chi or beach volleyball, alongside several nutritious group meals. Delegates can enjoy a healthy organic breakfast and three-course lunch, plus wellness breaks for purifying juices, infused waters, health-enhancing teas and nourishing snacks. All meals have been devised to focus on food with a low glycaemic index to aid digestion – a definite improvement on unappetising spreads of sandwiches and biscuits in anonymous conference rooms.

SWEET DREAMS

After a hard day’s work, nothing beats crawling into a comfy bed – and hotels are taking the art of getting a good night’s sleep to a whole new level.

This can be seen in Landmark Mandarin Oriental Hong Kong’s Entertainment Suite, which features the FreshBed Sleep System. This system utilises patented climate-control technology that allows guests to adjust the bed to their preferred temperature, with silent ventilation to ensure allergen-free air, combined with an ergonomic mattress for the utmost comfort. “Guests



travel to different time zones and weather conditions, and their daily schedules can be tight – wellness is essential for them to maintain a positive energy and healthy body,” explains Gladis Young, the hotel’s director of communications. “FreshBed treats our guests to a longer, deeper sleep, making them feel fitter, improve their mental agility and helping them perform at their very best.” Those who have difficulty nodding off can also try tuning in to some soothing spa music on the in-room television to help lead them into the land of nod.

Four Seasons’ signature bed is equally impressive; created in partnership with the experts at Simmons Bedding Company, its mattress uses advanced technology to keep you cool throughout the night and provide optimal support for your frame. You can also pick between three mattress toppers for your preferred level of firmness, and peruse a pillow menu filled with choices suitable for different types of sleeper – including a buckwheat option for relieving allergies and neck pain, or a stone type that provides a cooling sensation and head support.

The rooms themselves have been fully kitted out to promote an excellent night’s sleep, with thorough soundproofing, in-room temperature controls, lighting chosen to complement the body’s circadian clock, and even interior design elements scientifically proven to have soothing effects on the brain.




Westin takes a similarly multifaceted approach. In addition to the brand’s “Heavenly Bed” that features “ten layers” of comfort, there’s a “Sleep Well” bedside amenity – a lavender balm infused with essential oils that ease tension and help guests wind down naturally – and in-room dining menu, curated by nutritionists at SuperFoodsRX, to feature ingredients that promote rest and recovery. Guests can also opt for a scheduled “Bedtime Call”, a reminder of when you should turn in for the night depending on what time you need to be up in the morning, based on guidelines from the World Sleep Society.

Six Senses is also getting serious about sleep, collaborating with acclaimed sleep doctor Michael J Breus to ensure guests get the optimum quality shuteye. After filling out a sleeping habits questionnaire, guests receive personalised tips on how to improve their quality of sleep. Those who opt for the “Sleep with Six Senses Upgrade” – available at the group’s Vietnam, Thailand, Oman, Seychelles and Portugal properties – bag themselves a dedicated “Sleep Ambassador” to help prep their room and provide support throughout their stay.

This includes a Sleep Bag filled with specially developed sleep aids, including bamboo fibre pyjamas, ear plugs, a jasmine sleep spritzer, a worry journal for jotting down anxieties that keep you up at a night, and a thumb drive containing videos featuring suggestions and professional advice from Dr Breus himself.

Additional sleep-boosting items like dehumidifiers for climate control, a Sound + Sleep Ecotones Machine loaded with 30 different sound profiles (including a white noise setting), and speciality pillows are also available on request.

A lucky few in Bali in May 2018 were able to attend COMO Shambhala Estate’s first ever Sleep Awakening Workshop, where renowned sleep consultant Trish Kelly helped guests take control of their sleep patterns and learn how to deal with insomnia – meaning better sleep in the long run, regardless of where in the world they find themselves bedding down for the night. □



Sample flavours from the world's largest country at these five upmarket restaurants

WORDS TOM OTLEY



From Russia with grub

With the 2018 FIFA World Cup kicking off this month in Moscow, it's fair to assume that a few conveniently timed business meetings have been placed on the itinerary. Whether you're in town for the football, or really are just flying in for business, here are some classic dining options to try in Russia's capital city.

BELUGA

Housed on the second floor of the historic National Hotel, Beluga opened at the beginning of 2017, replacing the former Italian restaurant. Moscow isn't short of places serving caviar, but this has the most extensive menu of caviar in the city, as well as Russian and international-style dishes.

The design by Anastasia Panibratova "was inspired by the Swan Princess from the fairy tale of Tsar Saltan, depicted on the canvas of Mikhail Vrubel". It's a beautiful space. The bar counter is in the shape of a giant crystal caviar dish, which is a lovely touch, and there are bespoke chandeliers of Lalique crystal. At one end, in front of an antique mirror, is a clever art piece depicting Russian models in *kokoshniks* (traditional Russian headdresses) taking selfies. It was created by an artistic duo known as the Recycle Group, who examine contemporary culture through a "quasi-archaeological lens".

Try the caviar, and maybe Sosva herring and anchovy mousse (650 rubles/US\$10), followed by a main course of salt-baked sturgeon with Abkhaz lemons and thyme (1,600 rubles/US\$26) or stewed lamb tongues with bulgur (920 rubles/US\$15).

Open 12pm-12am; Hotel National Moscow, 2nd floor, 15/1 Mokhovaya str. bld. 1, Moscow, 125009; tel +7 (495) 901 0336; national.ru/restaurant-beluga

LEFT:
Beluga





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SEVEN

If you are travelling with your family, or just want a more relaxing environment but with excellent food, Seven is the place. The restaurant's menu has been designed for families; it combines dishes of Russian, European and Asian cuisine in a friendly format meaning even the fussiest children will be happy, while their parents can enjoy delicious cuisine. Sample dishes include chicken breast with "Romano" on the grill and homemade mayo (490 rubles/US\$8), and half a Rostov duck with Hoisin sauce (890 rubles/US\$). The two floors of the restaurant have been designed by architectural studio DBA-group, with wood, concrete, blackened metal parts, glass pendants and lots of greenery.

Open breakfast weekdays 8am-2pm, weekends 10am-4pm; main service 11am-11pm; Dmitrovskiy Ln, 7, Moscow 125009; tel +7 (495) 205 0277; sevenrest.ru

CAFÉ KRANZLER

Situated in the Hotel Baltshug Kempinski Moscow, Café Kranzler is named after the legendary Berlin coffee house (once operated by Kempinski). Despite being refurbished last year, the venue's modernity has been successfully disguised with styling reminiscent of its famous 19th-century namesake. You can enjoy



sophisticated European cuisine here such as Vienna schnitzel (2,200 rubles/US\$35) and beef stroganoff (2,000 rubles/US\$32) of course, but also Russian favourites such as a three-deck caviar starter – served with three different Beluga vodkas (prices vary) and orecchiette pasta with Kamchatka crab, lemon and red caviar (1,600 rubles/US\$26). A dessert of Russian blinis with berries, sweetened sour cream and vanilla ice cream (700 rubles/US\$11) will provide the calories.

Open 10.30am-3am; Hotel Baltshug Kempinski, Ul Balchug 1, Moscow 115035; tel +7 (499) 503 0043; kempinski.com

OPPOSITE PAGE:
Seven
ABOVE: Café
Kranzler



ADVANCE PURCHASE

Futian Shangri-La, Shenzhen is a welcoming luxury retreat in the heart of Futian CBD, Shenzhen.

The hotel houses 528 guestrooms, offers discerning business and leisure travellers the legendary Shangri-La hospitality, luxurious accommodations, recreation and spa facilities, and six food and beverage outlets.

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Tel (86 755) 8828 4088 Fax (86 755) 8828 4388 www.shangri-la.com



KAZBEK

Georgian cuisine has a very special reputation in Russia, and new restaurant Kazbek champions this with a mother-and-son team from Tblisi running the kitchen. Located on the third and fourth floor of an old factory building – a space that was a nightclub until recently – the design of the two-storey restaurant is a triumph – the top floor has aged ceilings, columns and plenty of greenery as well as a terrace with seating for 150 guests and views over the Moscow River and the Radisson Royal Hotel. Try *kbinkali kalakuri* – dumplings with pork and veal (100 rubles/US\$13) – as a starter. The mains might be *Megrelian khachapuri* – a delicious cheesy bread (590 rubles/US\$75), black scaperch with *dzbondzholli* (980 rubles/US\$125) or a chicken shashlik (690 rubles/US\$88).

Open 12pm-12am; 1905 year Street, 2, Moscow 123022; tel +7 (495) 401 7653; mykazbek.ru

CHESTNAYA KUHNYA

Translated as “Honest Kitchen”, this is a modern Russian restaurant by chef Sergey Eroshenko. The two-storey restaurant feels like the kitchen of a country house. It’s unpretentious, with a Russian tiled stove in one corner upstairs and simple wooden tables. Chef Eroshenko has also chosen to share his love of hunting, with some of



FROM TOP:
Kazbek;
and
Chestnaya
Kuhnya

his trophies displayed on the walls. But the simple décor belies the food, which offers great subtlety and sophistication. Sample dishes include Dagestan lamb loin kebab marinated in sweet herbs (920 rubles/US\$117); whole Volga sturgeon smoked in a Russian wood stove (1,450 rubles/US\$185), and Siberian river fish with *forshmak* (herring) on rye bread (590 rubles/US\$75). Fresh ingredients, a friendly atmosphere, reasonable prices and of course “honesty in everything”. Open 12pm-12am; Sadovaya-Chernogryazskaya, 10, Moscow; tel +7 (495) 607 5090; chestnayakuhnya.ru



New kid on the block

The soon-to-open Hotel VIC on the Harbour is now accepting bookings, tempting travellers with a range of modern tech and standout facilities

Located in the upcoming district of North Point on Hong Kong Island, Hotel VIC boasts spectacular panoramic views of Victoria Harbour with direct access to a waterfront promenade.

Just 15 minutes from Central, the hotel is connected to a plethora of transport options with an MTR station steps away, and the North Point ferry pier and other public transport options easily accessible.

On arrival, guests will find the tech-savvy property is committed to making their stay as smooth as possible. For starters, guests can bypass normal check-in queues, and simply register their arrival and departure online.

Within the 671 luxury guestrooms and suites, guests will find stunning, modern designs, a free minibar, lightning-fast and complimentary wifi plus flat-screen TVs with IPTV connections.

A tailor-made mobile app has been created to help guests manage their needs, including room service, dinner reservations, airport transportation and general enquiries. Information about



hotel features can also be found with the tap of a finger. When guests are heading out, a complimentary smartphone is ready to go with them, offering unlimited data connection, useful city apps and free IDD calls to China, Japan, South Korea, US and UK.

Dining options all come with amazing views of Victoria Harbour. Indoor and outdoor seating is available at all-day dining outlet The Farmhouse, while next door The Farmhouse Deli offers freshly made cakes and pastries. For a more sophisticated experience, head up to Cruise, our rooftop restaurant and bar on

the 23rd floor. Diverse eateries and shops on the podium floors, as well as plenty of local options in the vibrant North Point area, offer further choice to guests.

At the Health Club, guests can enjoy a Virtual Reality Fitness Experience – the most innovative way to enjoy a workout. Fitness enthusiasts can try out the VR flying machine by ICAROS, for a fun, effective and unique exercise experience.

Hotel VIC, 1 North Point Estate Lane, North Point Hong Kong; tel:+852 3896 9888; www.hotelvic.com

Five-star family fun

With numerous dining options, an outdoor pool and child-friendly amenities, the whole family can enjoy a stay at Conrad Hong Kong



FAMILY FUN PACKAGE

Conrad Hong Kong has launched a special package to encourage multi-generational travel. The package includes:

- Breakfast for two adults per room
- Connecting rooms on priority
- Complimentary kid's amenity (slippers, shampoo, body wash, toothbrush, Conrad rubber duck and bear)

The package starts from HK\$2,500/ US\$318 (plus 10 per cent service charge) per room per night with ongoing validity. Check ConradHongKong.com for full T&Cs

Renowned as a prime accommodation choice for business travellers, the Conrad Hong Kong warmly welcomes the whole family to enjoy its facilities.

Ideally located above the luxury Pacific Place shopping mall in Admiralty, Conrad Hong Kong is a strategic hub to access many family-friendly places. Hong Kong Park, for example, is located just behind the hotel, with guests easily able to explore the gorgeous oasis on foot. Other big draws, such as Ocean Park, are easily accessible just a few stops away on the MTR.

There are also plenty of facilities within the hotel to keep the family entertained: the large heated outdoor pool is a guaranteed winner to stay cool during steamy summer days, while mum and dad can grab a drink by the poolside bar.

Other leisure options include the Health Club, with a 24-hour fitness centre boasting state-of-the-art equipment, a steam room and sauna, massage service and personal fitness trainers on request.

Dining options are also sure to satisfy, with six food and beverage outlets within the hotel. Guests can opt for the elegant surroundings of fine-dining Italian Nicholini's or go for local Cantonese flavours in Golden Leaf. For more casual affairs, the poolside Garden Café offers a range of international cuisine. Children's menu options are available at all eateries, with high-chairs also available.

Parents may also be inclined to make use of the hotel's babysitting service while they explore the Pacific Bar – a tranquil spot with an extensive selection of cocktails, champagne, wine and liquor.

Throughout June, a special afternoon tea will be available in the Lobby Lounge

from 3pm. In collaboration with lifestyle label Papinee, the afternoon tea includes an array of whimsical French pastries and snacks that look straight out of a fairytale. The Papinee Horse mascot – a symbol of magnificence and power – is also celebrated, with ingredients inspired by the traditional folklore that gave birth to the Papinee Horse.

A range of innovative cocktail options are on hand to wash down the sweet treats, or alternatively free-flow Perrier-Jouet provides the perfect accompaniment. Prices start at HK\$318 per head, or HK\$518 for two (plus HK\$218 for Perrier-Jouet).

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

A crime against good taste

The in-room amenity that should never be found in five-star hotels



VICKI WILLIAMS
FREELANCE TRAVEL AND FOOD WRITER,
AND FORMER ASSISTANT EDITOR OF
BUSINESS TRAVELLER ASIA-PACIFIC

Having stayed in – and written about – numerous five-star hotels, I like to think I know real luxury from wannabe. I have a critical eye for detail and notice the small things – things that can make a huge difference to the guest experience – and am sometimes asked if I’m a hotel inspector.

If I was an inspector, my most recent stay in a five-star, Forbes-rated luxury hotel would have seen the property losing points, because it triggered my number one pet peeve when staying at a hotel of this calibre – literally and figuratively leaving a bad taste in my mouth.

For me it is a crime against hospitality. It is decidedly not five star, and frustratingly, is not confined to this particular hotel.

Let me set a typical scene. The room is impressive, perhaps even stunning – large, with floor-to-ceiling windows, tastefully decorated and furnished. The expansive bed is extremely comfortable, maybe even designer or trademarked; the high threadcount linen is also sold in the gift shop. The bathroom most likely features a lot of marble, there is a TV in the mirror, the bath is big enough for two, and the amenities bespoke. There is a touchscreen device from which I can control everything in the room. Signs of attention to detail are everywhere.

There’s also the ability to make tea and coffee in-room, which I appreciate. It’s good to be able to have a cup of herbal tea

to soothe jet lag when I’m wide awake at 3am, or an invigorating morning cup of coffee, without having to wait for room service. It’s a small touch that can make a difference (personally, I need a coffee before interacting with the world).

At the five-star level the tea is never dust or low grade, the collection is often curated and is likely to feature elegant triangular bags made from silk-like material, containing large-leaf tea or whole flowers; you taste the quality with every sip.

So far all expectation boxes have been ticked. But turn to the coffee and this entire picture (of luxury and quality) comes crashing down as my peeve raises its dragon-like head, eliciting fiery anger and five-star swearing. Why? Because it’s mass-produced instant coffee!

Really? I say again: Really?

There is nothing “luxurious” or “high quality” about instant coffee – it tastes truly awful. This bitter, sometimes acidic drink tastes inferior partly due to the lower-quality beans used (due to the expense of processing involved), and because the processing leads to some loss of aromatics, oils and inherent sweetness.

To put it in a five-star hotel shouts “cheap” to me. Why go to all this effort and expense (even the complimentary toothbrush at one “instant-coffee hotel” was gold) only to drop

the ball? It is so out of place with the rest of the room experience that it stands out like a flashing neon sign. Instant coffee may have once been cool, but only ever due to convenience, and that time has long passed. Now there is so much better to be had.

I am not suggesting pod coffee machines in every room – they are an environmental disaster on the whole. I am suggesting what I have occasionally experienced and has impressed me: a French press/plunge pot, with ground coffee provided in sealed foil pouches – each enough for one pot. Coffee could also be provided in refillable airtight containers to be more cost-effective/ environmentally responsible.

It’s not rocket science, but it would be an important breakthrough.

And while I’m at it, please provide UHT (long-life) milk in the fridge rather than the chemical/artificial-ingredient/ sugar-laden non-dairy creamer/whitener, which is as big a crime against our palates as cheap “coffee”!

I’m no coffee snob – I just like to be able to make myself a decent cup of coffee in-room when staying at this level of luxury and quality. For me there are no excuses for not being able to – absolutely none! ☐

**I’m no coffee snob –
I just like to have a
decent cup of coffee
in-room when staying
in luxury hotels**

Cheaper by the mile

Are long-haul low-cost airlines here to stay?



JOHN STRICKLAND
DIRECTOR OF JLS CONSULTING

Long-haul low-cost carriers (LHLCCs) operate the airline business model of the moment. Some would argue we've been here before, with affinity charters (get a group together and travel cheaper), or with Laker's Skytrain of the 1970s, or indeed numerous other iterations of long-haul charter flights. Today's LHLCC airlines are pricing their fares low to steal traffic from incumbent carriers on existing routes; but more significantly, they are also stimulating new traffic and opening up new markets.

They are being aided by a new generation of fuel-efficient aircraft, such as the B787 Dreamliner or the A350, both of which carry fewer passengers than previous wide-bodied aircraft. Less fuel consumption and fewer seats reduce risk when testing new markets. Two companies are taking the lead: AirAsia X operating out of Malaysia in the Asian markets, and Norwegian in the European to US markets. Being popular and attractive to customers is one thing; achieving profitability and long-term sustainability is another, however.

To date, AirAsia X has delivered limited profitability, while Norwegian turned in a significant loss for 2017. We are going to see more LHLCCs arrive on the scene, but I'd be surprised to see the level of success that's been witnessed for short-haul LCCs. There are many in-built challenges to delivering the profit margins

needed to pay for the new and efficient, yet expensive, aircraft that airlines such as Norwegian have on order.

Using low prices to stimulate traffic results in more reliance on leisure customers, who can be easily tempted away by competitors. So LHLCCs are tackling this by offering more lucrative premium seats with additional space, meals and added frills (Air Belgium's upcoming Hong Kong–Brussels route is a case in point).

NEW STRATEGIES

The seasonality of passenger traffic is another challenge. In many markets, not even low fares will fill the aircraft on a year-round basis, resulting in the need to find other counter-seasonal markets. Full-service network carriers get over this by feeding high volumes of short-haul traffic onto their long-haul flights at their hubs. LHLCCs need their own feed. Around half of AirAsia X's passengers connect from AirAsia short-haul flights. Outside of Scandinavia, where Norwegian has the density of short-haul schedules to do the same thing, it needs to find other solutions. Ryanair would have made a good partner, but the two airlines have fallen out, so no deal there.

If this wasn't enough of a challenge, there's been a response from long-haul network carriers. When short-haul LCCs began to grow, existing airlines didn't take the model seriously until it was too late. Lessons have been learned, and that mistake won't be repeated. Lufthansa has now set up a long-

haul arm of its LCC Eurowings, and Air France-KLM is dabbling with Joon, though exactly what these "new" airlines will achieve isn't clear. Joon is evidently lower cost (than Air France), but not truly low cost, and is pitched at millennials; but some French millennials I spoke to recently said they didn't understand what the airline was about.

IAG, on the other hand, has a multifaceted response to the LHLCC phenomenon and is joining the party in earnest by using several of the airlines in its portfolio. Aer Lingus, a lean, mean fighting machine, is expanding its North Atlantic activity out of the Republic of Ireland with plenty of feed potential to and from the UK and Europe. It has also introduced cheaper economy fares with fewer frills – and it has scored where Norwegian failed, by reaching a feeder deal with Ryanair that will come into place later this year. This deal will boost its ability to fill seats on its long-haul flights. British Airways is also introducing no-frills economy fares, bringing densified Boeing 777s with 10-abreast economy seats to London Gatwick, but also including more higher-profit premium economy seats. This will allow BA to deliver lower unit costs than Norwegian can on its B787s. IAG has also established its own LHLCC airline, Level, which has started services to North and South America from Barcelona and begins operations from Paris Orly in summer. Level can obtain feed from IAG stablemate Vueling at both airports and uses Airbus A330 aircraft that consume more fuel, but are cheaper to buy or lease.

It's going to be interesting to see how this plays out in the years ahead. There are going to be winners and losers, and we could see some big shocks, but it looks like the LHLCC model is here to stay. **BT**

When short-haul LCCs began to grow, airlines didn't take the model seriously until it was too late



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**Tried,
Tested,
Tasted.**

TRIED AND TESTED

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Qantas B787-9 business class LONDON-PERTH



BACKGROUND At 14,500km, this is the third-longest commercial flight currently in operation, and the first scheduled non-stop service between the UK and Australia. It's served daily by a B787-9 from London Heathrow Terminal 3.

The new route means that Qantas now has three routes between Australia and London – the direct Perth-London service on the B787-9 Dreamliner; a reinstated Sydney-Singapore-London service on the A380; and London via Dubai from Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide or Perth with partner airline Emirates on a mix of A380 and B777 aircraft.

BOARDING This was from Gate 1 (for scheduled departure at 1315). Priority boarding for business class passengers came after children and the elderly. Business class is spread over two cabins in a 1-2-1 configuration (A-EF-K). I was in the front cabin. The aircraft caters for 236 passengers in three classes: 166 economy, 28 premium economy and 42 business class seats.

THE SEAT I was in row 2 in a centre seat, 2E. The seat is a Thompson Aero model and allows every passenger to have direct aisle access. It has a staggered seating configuration, so that when the seat is fully reclined, the feet of the passenger slide below the side table of the seat in front (sounds weird, but works well). The window

seats are either close to the window, or slightly further away and closer to the aisle.

The seat has a 46-inch pitch, 80-inch bed length, and either a 23-24 inch seat width or a 24-25 inch bed width.

The seat can be in a reclined position from take-off right through to landing, because there is an over-the-shoulder strap as well as waist strap for safety (which you only have to wear for take-off and landing).

Changing into pyjamas in the washrooms requires at least a nodding acquaintance with the basics of yoga

The seat is very spacious, with a large amount of storage space, a side table with storage and a good-sized armrest on both sides. The centre seats have a divider, which is up when you enter the cabin, but that can be lowered if you want to chat with the passenger in the neighbouring seat. There is more storage under the side tables, though the exact location of this depends on which seat you are in. There's an area for magazines and a bottle of water, which was waiting at the seat when I boarded.

There is a single washroom at the front, and two washrooms at the rear between the two business class cabins. These washrooms are small, and changing into pyjamas in the privacy of the washrooms

requires at least a nodding acquaintance with the basics of yoga.

BEST SEAT The front row – row 1 – has only two seats, the window seat 1A and 1K, and is best avoided because it's too close to the galley. The first full row is row 2, and there the front two seats, being bulkhead seats, have more leg room. These two front seats are good for those travelling as a couple, though at the front there are no overhead lockers over the middle seats because of the crew rest being overhead, so you will store your bags in the overhead lockers above the window seats. Seat 2E has a side area by your feet where you can keep your hand luggage during the flight.

The best window seats are those close to the window and away from the aisle, and these are seats 3A, 5A, and 7A, though 7A is quite close to the rear galley. On the other side of the aircraft go for 3K, 5K or 7K.

THE FLIGHT Once on board we were offered water and champagne (Jacquart Brut Mosaïque), and our jackets were taken. After take-off we were offered Martin Grant sleepsuits. There were also washbags in two colours, darker colours for men, pink for ladies, with designs by Warakurna artist Polly Butler-Jackson. Further drinks weren't offered until 1500 and the lunch service took two hours from this time, so we



finished eating at around 1700. I think this was because it was the inaugural flight, as service was much quicker on the return.

There was an appetiser of bubble and squeak – tasty, but we were given no cutlery. When I asked for a fork I was only given a napkin. I chose crab cakes to start, which were moist and full of flavour, served with corn salsa, chilli and rocket. For a main I chose grilled chicken with mustard seed carrots, basmati rice and coriander yoghurt. The portions were generous and it was delicious. Desserts included ice cream, rhubarb trifle or cheeses. If you want to pre-order from a bigger menu, Qantas calls this service Menu Select.

Snacks offered throughout the flight included mozzarella, olive and spinach calzone; bacon sarnie with brown sauce; or beef cottage pie with peas.

I worked for a few hours and then reclined the bed; the flight attendants can do this for you. There's a mattress topper, which you slip over the headrest to keep it in place. There's also a good-sized pillow and duvet. The bed has enough room by the side that you can keep drinks and objects next to you and the IFE allows the screen to be dimmed so there's just a message in a low light telling you how much flight time remains.

The bed is good for sleeping, though once fully reclined to turn from your back onto your side isn't easy because your knees jam against the top of the alcove.

Once reclined you can raise the bed a little and read until it's time to go to sleep (or watch the IFE). I slept for a couple of hours. I then got up to fetch a snack and drink, before going back for a longer sleep.

I woke about three hours before landing and filled in the breakfast card. The care taken over the food is best shown by the breakfast selection, which included omelette and corn fritter, with pickled mushrooms, pancetta and tomato and chilli relish; cardamom pears with coconut yoghurt, quinoa, almonds, hazelnuts, blueberries and honey; smoked salmon, or soba and raw courgette strips with ponzu dressing. There's a choice of juices including spinach, cucumber, apple, celery and lemon.

ARRIVAL We landed 20 minutes early into Perth and then made our way to immigration where there was no queue.

VERDICT This is a historic new service and it was a pleasure to be on the inaugural flight to Perth. Once on board it didn't seem different from many other long-haul flights, with the extra three or four hours not really adding any discomfort. That might not be the case in economy or premium economy, one of the reasons Qantas has increased the number of premium seats on this aircraft. I hope the service is commercially successful, because being able to reach Perth so easily is a great start to a visit to Western Australia.
Tom Otley

WHAT'S NEW

This is the first commercial non-stop flight from London to Australia.

WHAT'S NOT

The B787-9 Dreamliner is flown by many airlines in various seating configurations.

BEST FOR...

This is the fastest way to get to Australia from the UK, and you get to Perth directly.

PRICE

The internet rate for a return business class flight from London to Perth costs £3,883 (US\$5,269).

FLIGHT TIME

16 hours 45 minutes
(17 hours return).

CONTACT

qantas.com.au

Cathay Pacific B777-300ER economy HONG KONG-NAGOYA



BACKGROUND Cathay Pacific is rolling out a new economy class seat product on its B777 aircraft as it transitions from a nine-across to a ten-across layout. A handful of 777 aircraft currently have the new configuration, with the carrier aiming to complete all B777-300s and B777-300ERs by the end of next year.



70

THE SEAT The retrofitted 368-seat B777-300ER is divided into six cabins, two with 40 business class seats, followed by 32 premium economy seats in the third. The remaining three cabins are filled with a total of 296 new economy seats.

The seat design is similar to that offered on the airline's A350, with the same trademark "Cathay green", a 32-inch pitch and six-inch recline. I was seated in 52K, a window seat in the second economy cabin. At 190cm tall, I'm used to feeling cramped in economy seats, but surprisingly I still had about two inches of space between my knees and the (upright) seat in front.

The seat cushioning has become noticeably thinner, but fortunately this doesn't equate to less comfortable back support. The leather headrest provides additional neck and head support, adjustable by height as well as angle.

However, when it comes to seat width, there's no doubt that the space has decreased in the ten-across setting. The seats are now 17.2 inches wide, compared to the previous 18.1 to 18.5 inches. This results in a lot of shoulder-bumping with your neighbour.

A new pull-down shelf with cup holder, located under the TV, is the perfect size to hold a tablet or for storing small personal items without having to lower the entire tray table. Located just beneath the IFE monitor are earphone and USB outlets, while a power output is also located underneath the seat. When I did lower the tray table, I noticed I still had about two inches of space between it and my thighs – something I seldom find in economy.

WHICH SEAT TO CHOOSE? Front row seats in each cabin have more legroom, as do seats 40C and 40H due to there being only eight seats in row 39. You may want to avoid rows 42 and 72, as these are located closest to the lavatories. Rows 56 and 57 are also adjacent to the galley, meaning potential disruption from meal services.

THE FLIGHT Soon after take-off, the crew distributed snacks and drinks – I opted for the cold Japanese oolong tea. Dinner was served after the drinks. I chose pork rice, which came with a bun and cold wasabi noodles that really triggered my taste buds. I finished with chocolate Haagen-Dazs ice cream. Overall, I was pleasantly surprised by the quality of the meal – tasty, interesting and filling.

After dinner I had a look at the new in-flight entertainment (IFE) system, which has also been given an upgrade. The touchscreen TV has been enlarged to 11.6 inches, larger than both the A350's and B777-300ER's screens; it's now able to play media in high definition (HD). The content library was wide-ranging and relatively up to date. The touch controls have also been significantly improved, with better responsiveness. For example, I could use two fingers to zoom in and out of the 3D Earth map that displays the aircraft's flight path.

ARRIVAL The plane started its descent at 2030 before touching down at 2100. It was not far from the arrival gate to immigration,

BEST FOR...

Great in-flight catering and upgraded seat product

PRICE

Internet rates for a return economy class ticket in mid-July start from HK\$6,469 (US\$824) including tax and surcharges.

FLIGHT TIME

3 hours 55 minutes

CONFIGURATION

3-4-3

SEAT WIDTH

17.2in/44cm

SEAT PITCH

32in/81cm

SEAT RECLINE

6in/15cm

CURRENT ROUTES

Hong Kong-Nagoya
Hong Kong-Mumbai

CONTACT

cathaypacific.com

At 190cm tall, I'm used to feeling cramped in economy seats, but here I had two inches of space between my knees and the seat in front

and it only took me about 15 minutes to clear the document check. My luggage was first out after the priority baggage.

VERDICT Passengers are naturally wary of the move to ten-across layout, but it's not as bad as it seems. Cathay Pacific has upgraded the seat product with small touches and a more advanced IFE system, as well as maintaining high-quality in-flight catering. Though the seats are undeniably narrower, the improved legroom, as well as other factors, actually made this economy experience better than most. *Valerian Ho*

Pan Pacific Yangon

BACKGROUND Opened on November 1 last year, the new Pan Pacific is part of a mixed-use development through its connection to the Junction City Shopping Centre. The property is home to 336 guestrooms and suites.

WHERE IS IT? In the middle of the central business district (CBD) and close to popular tourists sights. The city's old town, home to a plethora of colonial-style architecture, is also a short distance away.

WHAT'S IT LIKE? Sleek and modern, particularly compared with the more traditional aesthetic of Pan Pacific Group's other hotel in the city, the Parkroyal Yangon. That said, there are plenty of subtle indigenous design details, from the stupa sculptures decorating the lobby to latticework structures whose spaces reveal Buddha and Shwedagon Pagoda outlines.

Staff were pleasant and helpful – the level of English throughout was good and more than a few members of staff remembered me after just a single interaction.

ROOMS I was staying in one of the Junior suites. These are located in the corner on each floor, and provide incredible views over the city in two directions, with an entire wall of floor-to-ceiling windows. The room is divided into workspace, bedroom and living room, and bathroom.

Two comfortable swivel chairs serve a round desk, with universal power outlets, USB and HDMI sockets located below the adjacent bookshelves, which created a welcome "study" feel.

The main room comprises a king-size bed facing a flatscreen TV and an L-shaped sofa along the windows. Natural light is abundant during the day thanks to these windows, though at night the lighting can be a little dim. Switches are generally easy to figure out, with most located next to the bed.

A bathroom with separate rainshower and tub is at one end of the suite, with



a smart toilet at the other. Both areas have their own sinks and large mirrors, though neither had power outlets nearby, which made using an electric razor (or the provided hairdryer) rather tricky.

FOOD AND DRINK There are four food and beverage options at the hotel, plus the executive lounge. Saan Restaurant (Burmese for "rice") on level R is the hotel's all-day-dining eatery offering a buffet breakfast and dinner of international fare. The made-to-order coconut soup noodles were a particular highlight.

Also on level R is The Teak Bar, which boasts a gorgeous alfresco area with great city views – particularly at sundown – and locally inspired cocktails.

Hai Tien Lo (6/F) is a Cantonese fine-dining restaurant. This too offers great views over Yangon River, and has private rooms available.

Pacific Marketplace, a bakery and café, is on level one. Those with access to the executive Pacific Club Lounge on the top floor will find a quiet spot to grab breakfast. The buffet selection here is reasonable, with eggs prepared to order in the adjacent kitchen.

MEETINGS Pan Pacific Yangon has four meeting venues of 50 to 60 sqm, and a 600 sqm grand ballroom that can accommodate up to 800 people, theatre-style. Meeting rooms have high-speed wifi and audio-visual equipment, as well as access to catering and business support services. Typical business services (printing, faxing, translation) can be found on the sixth floor.

A magical view is on show at sunset from the sky infinity pool on the hotel's wellness floor

BEST FOR...

Location to the CBD and popular tourist sights.

DON'T MISS...

City views from the sky infinity pool.

PRICE

Internet rates for a one-night stay in a Junior suite in mid-July start from US\$305 excluding taxes.

CONTACT

Pan Pacific Yangon, corner of Bogyoke Aung San Road and Shwedagon Pagoda Road, Pabedan Township, Yangon, Myanmar; +95 1 925 3810; panpacific.com

LEISURE This is an area where the hotel excels. The view from the sky infinity pool on the hotel's wellness floor is breathtaking, encompassing the adjacent Holy Trinity Anglican Church and golden Shwedagon Pagoda in the distance. Take a dip in the pool around sunset for the most magical views.

St Gregory's Spa and Wellness Centre includes a sauna, steam room, Jacuzzi and swimming pool, alongside its treatments. These include facials, massages and traditional Myanmar therapy.

The hotel also has a well-equipped 24-hour gym, with plenty of treadmills and cardio equipment.

VERDICT Business travellers can't really go wrong with the new Pan Pacific – its location in the middle of the CBD is convenient, its facilities are high quality and the staff are helpful. Aside from some minor in-room quibbles, the hotel is thoroughly enjoyable to stay at. *Craig Bright*

Samsonite Evoa



BACKGROUND Samsonite's Evoa collection launched in 2017. There are three colours available: silver, copper and black, all with a brushed finish.

DESIGN The case has a minimalist style with a textured brushed effect that gives a sleek metallic aesthetic (the case itself is made of plastic, though it does feature metal corner protectors). There are three sizes available – mine was the smallest 55cm/20inch variety, suitable for carry-on. At 3.4kg the case doesn't eat into the standard 7kg carry-on allowance too greatly. The finish of the product is excellent and the case is sturdy, though I would expect the plastic exterior to get scratched over time. The Evoa zips open into two equal halves, though only one side has a full divider, which zips closed. The top half of this divider is a plastic mesh, while the bottom is a translucent pocket that's good for storing documents. One noticeable feature is that the handle mechanism doesn't intrude too much into the interior space so you don't lose too much volume.

HANDLING The Aero-Trac suspension wheel system is designed to reduce noise and vibrations while in motion. Indeed, the Evoa is smooth, quiet and easily manoeuvrable. However, when I was pulling the case behind me on just two sets of wheels, the Evoa lost some of its smoothness – particularly as the wheels have to swing round when switching direction, which felt rather clunky. One feature that is definitely useful is the adjustable height of the handle – the Evoa has multiple settings, though the mechanism can get a little stuck on the way down.

SECURITY The Evoa uses a TSA Recessed Combo lock (so travellers shouldn't need to worry about it being broken during security checks). The case itself is fastened using zips that clip into place and remain secured while the bag is locked, and the zips themselves are dual layered, providing added security.

VERDICT It may not have too many bells and whistles, but the Evoa is a solid, straightforward carry-on suitcase that is comfortable and easy to use. *Craig Bright*

DIMENSIONS

55x39x21cm

VOLUME

36 litres

WEIGHT

3.4kg

COLOURS

Brushed silver, copper or black

WHEELS

Eight

WARRANTY

Ten years limited

PRICE

HK\$3,150 (US\$401)

CONTACT

samsonite.com

Rimowa Topas Cabin Multiwheel

BACKGROUND Rimowa's iconic aluminium case rose to prominence after being the only material to survive a factory fire at the company's headquarters in Cologne, Germany in 1937. There are three colours in the collection – silver, titanium and stealth (black).

DESIGN The classic silver Rimowa case is effortlessly stylish and stands out next to other brands, the smart, functional appearance striking a good balance between casual and formal. Size-wise, the case fit comfortably in the overhead compartment, but weight is a point to consider. The metal case is quite a hefty 4.8kg when empty – leaving just 2.2kg for personal items if the airline is strictly enforcing the typical 7kg hand-carry limit. However, the aluminium is very durable and scratch-resistant compared to plastic-based models. The hard shell also gives peace of mind for carrying breakable items, and should fare well in the hold if you check in your case. A plastic grip encircled the case to keep it waterproof. The royal blue interior was fairly roomy – I managed to pack a thick coat in one half, and a pair of shoes, laptop, tablet and work documents in the other. The contents of both sides are kept in place by rigid boards, secured with Velcro strips. There is also a double-zipped net on each of the boards, allowing you to store small flat items.

HANDLING The Rimowa has four pairs of wheels, and is very smooth to pull along with excellent balance. The telescopic handle has no pre-set stages meaning you can easily adjust the handle length to your exact preference. I also appreciated the switch to plastic for the handle material, as metal can be unpleasant to hold in cold environments.

SECURITY There are two TSA locks (one at the top and bottom), which are easy to set and unlock.

VERDICT The durability of a Rimowa is second to none. Despite being deliberately rough with my case during the journey to stress-test it, it came back in perfect condition. The main drawback is the weight, as it's heavier than most. *Valerian Ho*



DIMENSIONS

55x40x23cm

VOLUME

45 litres

WEIGHT

4.8kg

COLOURS

Silver, titanium and stealth (black)

WHEELS

Eight

WARRANTY

Five years

PRICE

HK\$8,080 (US\$1,033)

CONTACT

rimowa.com

American Tourister Air Ride Spinner 55/20 TSA

BACKGROUND

American Tourister is one of the brands acquired by Samsonite and certainly carries a certain cachet, with its products prominently displayed in department stores.



DESIGN One of the first features to notice on the Air Ride range is the triangular design, giving what would be an otherwise staid, ridged surface a distinctive geometry. The case has a good amount of space, and I found that extra material I accumulated during my trip (such as brochures and souvenirs) were easily accommodated thanks to the flexi material and generous measurements. The Spinner 55/20 TSA could be considered the baby of the Air Ride range, but it's no less robust – it maintained its shine and capabilities after back-to-back trips to Bangkok and Adelaide. A double zipper is the tool of choice for opening and closing, while the interior is designed to provide a compartment for the lid section with a zipped punch and another neat zipped section against a panel on the lower section. Another highlight for this case is that it's very lightweight, at just 2.9kg.

HANDLING The Spinner has one handle for carrying and gripping, but positioned on the top; sensible enough as the lid and opening section offer more room for packing this way. The extendable handle gives four positions for coasting along airport walkways or the tilt and drag towards the taxi stand.

SECURITY Zip tags clip into recessed TSA locks with a latch on a groove and four-digit dials.

VERDICT This was a solid, no-fuss carry-on that performed well and proved adaptable enough to deal with extra contents on my return. *Martin Donovan*

DIMENSIONS

55x35x25cm

VOLUME

36.5 litres

WEIGHT

2.98kg

COLOURS

Textured silver, matte black, matte burgundy, matte grey

WHEELS

Eight

WARRANTY

Three years limited

PRICE

US\$132

CONTACT

samsonite.com

Tumi Merge International Expandable Carry-On in Ocean Blue

BACKGROUND Tumi's brand-new Merge collection launched in January 2018. The collection has been inspired by the Californian landscape, cities and laid-back vibe.

DESIGN Not as eye-catching as some of Tumi's other brands (the beautiful 19 Degrees collection for example), but it's smart enough for a business trip and relaxed enough for leisure travel too. It's a neat, stylish case without being ostentatious. A useful zip expander increases the depth to 28cm, with an overall capacity of 38 litres. The soft-shell case is quite lightweight at 3.7kg, but has been created with durability in mind and the primary material is Ballistic Nylon – a thick, sturdy form of woven nylon originally used as body armour in WWII before the creation of Kevlar. The material is hard to scratch, though being a textile, probably wouldn't fair too well in rain. The inside of the case felt extremely roomy, with additional pockets for organisation, and the top-down format was efficient. The front of the case has three additional pockets, making it easy to prioritise items you may need to grab quickly.

HANDLING The standout feature of this bag was its fantastic balance and manoeuvrability thanks to the four sets of dual-swivel wheels. Even when fully expanded and packed to the brim, I could twirl the case like a ballerina with the tiniest exertion. It also handled itself well over rougher terrain, such as uneven pavements. There's a three-stage telescopic handle, plus retractable top and side carry handles and a bottom grab handle – particularly useful for yanking your bag off a crowded carousel.

SECURITY My main quibble with this case was the discrete TSA combination lock – easy to lose and unable to secure all of the exterior pockets together. A neat identity tag is buckled onto one side and the bag also features a TUMI Tracer – with barcode and QR code.

VERDICT A good choice. The case looks good, is a dream to manoeuvre, can hold plenty of items – particularly if utilising the expander – and offers options to prioritise important items. My only complaint was the unattached lock. *Tamsin Cocks*

DIMENSIONS

56x35x23cm

VOLUME

38 litres

WEIGHT

3.7kg

COLOURS

Ocean Blue, Reflective Silver, Coffee, Green Camo, Sunset Red

WHEELS

Eight

WARRANTY

Five years limited

PRICE

HK\$4,990 (US\$635)

CONTACT

tumi.com



Tipping around the world

Who and how much should you tip when abroad?



Tipping etiquette varies from country to country – in the US it can feel like you have to tip everyone generously, while in Japan tips are never expected.

UNITED STATES

US establishments usually don't include service charges in the bill. In restaurants you typically add 15-25 per cent, with high-end restaurants tending towards 25 per cent. If a waiter or waitress performs phenomenally well, the tip could climb to 30 per cent.

The general rule for tipping bartenders is US\$1 per drink. Porters receive US\$1-2 per bag and taxi drivers are usually given 10-15 per cent. Coffee shops or fast food restaurants may put tip jars next to the cash register; however, do not feel obliged to leave a tip. Over-the-counter services generally are not rewarded with tips. Hairdressers, masseuses and other personal services are typically tipped 15-20 per cent.

UK AND EUROPE

Unlike the US, many restaurants and some cafés and gastropubs (pubs serving quality meals) in

the UK add a service charge of 10-12.5 per cent to the bill.

Where this is added, no tip is expected. Otherwise, it's customary to tip 10 per cent.

In pubs, tipping bar staff is not common. On occasion, you might buy the bartender a drink. As for taxis, it is customary to round up to the nearest pound and let the driver keep the change, or tip 10 per cent if it's a long journey. Porters tend to receive around £2 (US\$2.7) for their service, maybe £5 (US\$6.8) at a higher-end hotel.

Tipping customs across Europe are broadly similar to the UK, with slight variations from country to country.

CHINA

Tipping in most Asian countries is less widely practised than in the US, UK or Europe. In China it's very rare, though upmarket restaurants may garner a meagre 2-3 per cent in tips. Westernised cities such as Hong Kong and Macau incorporate 10-15 per cent service charges, so there's no need to tip on top of that. In most other cases, such as taxis or hotels, no tip is given. However, in Hong Kong, bellboys usually receive HK\$5-10 (US\$0.6-1.3) per piece of luggage.

INDIA

Restaurants in India usually accept 7-10 per cent tips, but the larger the bill, the lower the percentage. For example, on bills above Rs1,000 (US\$15), a 5-7 per cent tip will suffice. Restaurants in Delhi and Mumbai often incorporate

service charges, negating the need to tip.

In hotels, one usually tips for the entire hotel staff, generally 5-7 per cent and usually put in a tipping box near the front desk. Sometimes, if there are no tipping boxes, bellboys will expect a small tip. There is no need to pay porters, auto-rickshaw or taxi drivers more than the agreed fare.

JAPAN

Tipping in Japan is never expected. Offered tips will be refused and may be considered offensive. The only exceptions are tour guides. Although it is not obligatory, tour guides do accept tips and will not be insulted by the gesture.

MIDDLE EAST

Most countries in the Middle East will expect to see 10-15 per cent tips at restaurants. Cities such as Dubai typically add 10-15 per cent service charges to the bill, though it is still customary to tip an additional 5-6 per cent on top of that.

In the US it can feel like you have to tip everyone generously, while in Japan tips are never expected

Taxi drivers are not usually tipped, but some hotel staff may expect around 10 per cent. In Israel, the standard tip for porters is six shekels (US\$1.7) per bag and four shekels (US\$1.1) per day for housekeepers.

SOUTH AFRICA

South Africa has an informal system of tipping car guards, R2-R5 (16-40 US cents), to assist you with parking and discourage thieves as theft is so prevalent. Tipping at restaurants in South Africa is usually around 10 per cent, but it is customary to tip 10-20 per cent to bartenders. Hotel porters get between R10-R100 (US\$0.8-8) and in cabs the total cost is rounded up to the nearest R10 (US\$0.8).

AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND

Neither Australia nor New Zealand have strong cultures of tipping. Tipping is never socially required, so it's all up to the customer. It is slightly more common with taxis and hotels than restaurants – A\$2 (US\$1.5) might be given to cab drivers or bellhops.

SOUTH AMERICA

Tipping tour guides is common, generally 10 per cent of the cost. Hotel doormen tend to receive equivalents of US\$1-2, and taxi drivers accept tips, though it's not expected. In countries such as Paraguay and Peru service workers are not paid much, so tipping is always appreciated. In restaurants, if there's no service charge, tips are around 10 per cent – higher or lower depending on service.



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