

Business Traveller

INDIA



Connecting point
Business in Chengdu



Desk Matters
Co-working spaces in India



Scottish Splendour
Timeout in Edinburgh



Timepieces to Remember
Top picks from Baselworld 2017



Inside London

A comprehensive look at the English capital





The new Audi A3 line-up



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STEVE DINNEEN is a regular tech columnist for *Business Traveller*. Having a life that is almost entirely digitised and a job that requires frequent travel makes him vulnerable to cyber criminals, who replace crowbars and ski masks with phishing and skimming. He tells us about his favourite security gadgets to help you stay safe on the road. (page 78)



Based in Dubai, **DOMINIC ELLIS** is the editor of *Business Traveller Middle East*. He writes extensively on the region's fast growing aviation and hotel trends since launching the magazine in 2003. In this issue he talks about various wellness options at Dubai's luxury resort Jumeirah Al Naseem that are sure to restore you back to health (page 74).



JEREMY TREDINNICK is the editor of *Business Traveller Asia-Pacific*, based in Hong Kong. "Arriving in Chengdu (page 30), I was bowled over by the speed of change in the Sichuan capital over the past three or four years," he says. "It's outstripping even Beijing and Shanghai in its development as the Eurasian Land Bridge's new south-western hub."

Business Traveller ^{INDIA}

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+91 22 4220 2129
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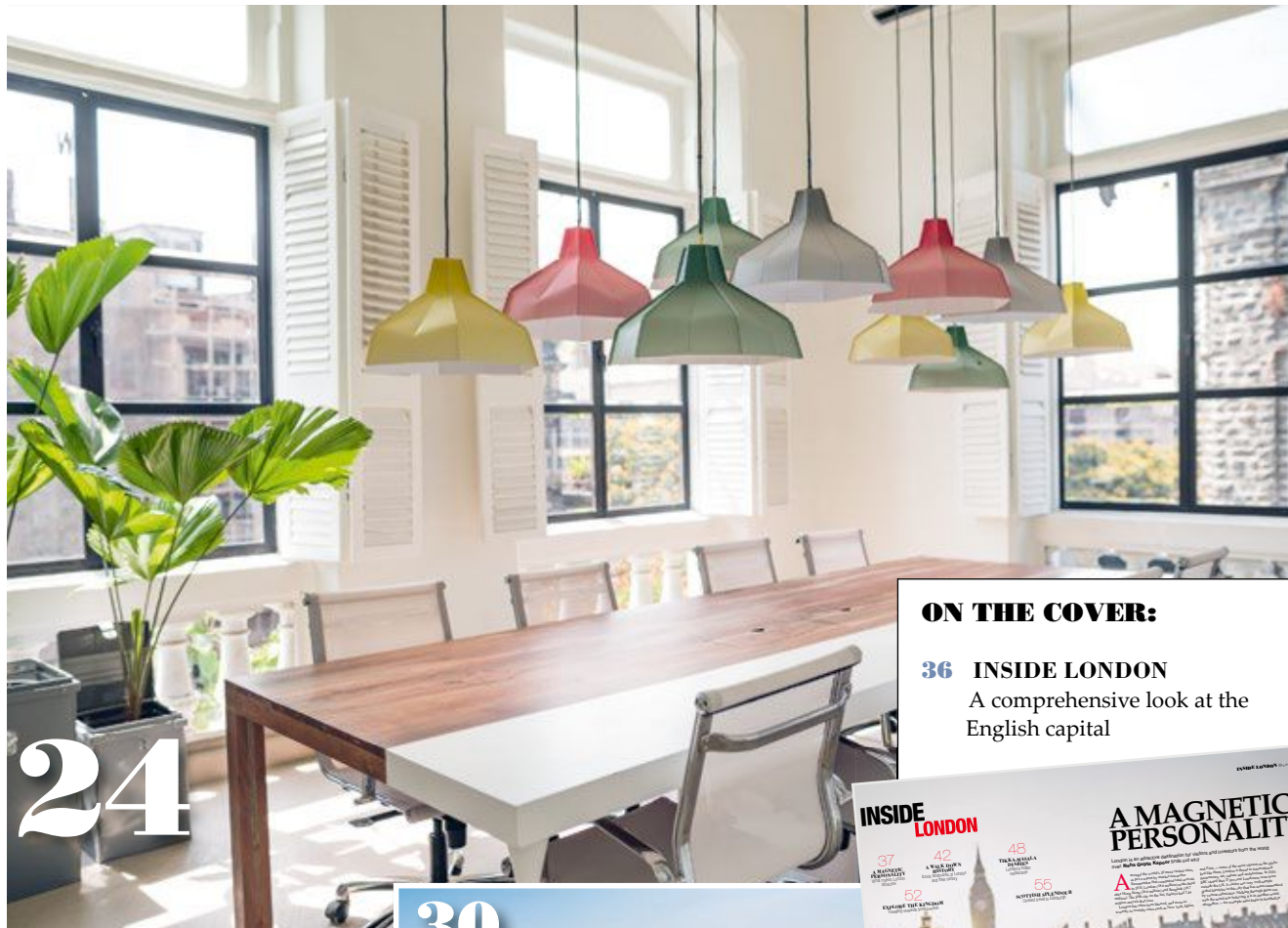
Panacea Publishing
20, Vaswani Mansion
120 Dinshaw Vachha Road
Churchgate
Mumbai 400 020

Business Traveller India is published by Panacea Media Pvt Ltd, by arrangement with Perry Publications Limited. It is printed at Thomson Press India Limited, New Delhi. It is published 10 times a year at our address above. The magazine is entirely independent of all commercial interests within the travel industry. Unsolicited manuscripts will not be accepted for publication. The opinions expressed by contributors are not necessarily those of the publishers, who cannot accept responsibility for any errors or omissions.

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41-43 Maddox Street
London W1S 2PD
tel +44 (0)20 7821 2700
businessstraveller.com



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**TURKISH
AIRLINES**

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SPIRITUAL CAPITAL OF TURKEY

Mevlânâ Mausoleum

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TURKISHAIRLINES.COM

A STAR ALLIANCE MEMBER 



Recently, a friend asked for suggestions on how to spend her time differently in London, having visited the capital city several times in the past. Unlike earlier, this time her visit didn't involve work meetings.

My suggestions began with restaurants. Soon I realised that amongst the many tempting options, Indian eateries featured often on the list. With London's wide acceptance of Indian cuisine, it actually shouldn't come as a surprise that the city has a variety from casual Irani-styled Indian cafes to Michelin-starred and celebrated ones. Read about the best picks on page 48.

Next on the list were names of galleries, starting with Tate Modern. Of course there are other informative museums and galleries too in London, but this one tops the list.

It is more so because the walk from the Blackfriars tube station, over Millennium Bridge is a beautiful way to begin a cultural afternoon. The surrounding architecture makes for a breathtaking view.

Talking about iconic structures, my friend came back well educated on some of London's symbolic sights. It does pay to get a guide, to make the idle amble from one spot to another anything but dull. Do you know the notes to which the bells of Big Ben chime? How did Cutty Sark live in her glory days? Why does London have so much red? Get your fun facts about these places of interest on page 42.

If you're visiting during the week, extend your stay because a trip to the United Kingdom's other cities are just as attractive - Bath, Dublin, Bristol and others. Edinburgh, for example, has a gripping history, most of it centred in its vaults. And then there is the whisky of course, sipping on which warms the soul, as do the scenic panoramas of this hilly Scottish capital (page 55).

Which city features next on your travel plan?

Neha G Kapoor

Neha Gupta Kapoor
Editor

**Grover
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VINEYARDS

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Can you be denied boarding on a confirmed airline ticket?



The United

Airlines incident that forcibly dragged a passenger, Dr David Dao, from its aircraft in Chicago has enraged most parts

of the world. His only fault was refusing the airline's last-minute request to give up his seat to make room for a crew member. The request came after he had buckled himself in United Airlines' Kentucky-bound flight.

Unlike the United Airlines case, in India, passengers are denied boarding before they get on the plane.

The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), India's aviation regulator states: "Airlines overbook their scheduled flights to a limited extent in order to reduce the possibility of flights departing with unoccupied or empty seats because of 'No Shows' by booked passengers i.e. passengers who do not report for travel despite firm bookings before the time limit stipulated by the airline. Under the provisions of CAR (Civil Aviation Requirements), airlines shall be liable to pay compensation to passengers who are denied boarding. Hence, in order to minimise 'No Shows', the airlines will be allowed to levy appropriate 'No Show' penalties in relation to the Fare as defined under rule 135 of the Aircraft Rules 1937. This penalty will be deducted from the fare paid by the passenger."

DGCA's passenger rights report goes on to state that in case a flight is overbooked, the airline must first ask for volunteers to give up their seats for other booked passengers. In exchange, the airline may offer benefits/facilities at their discretion to the volunteers as mutually agreed upon by the passenger and the airline.

If a passenger is denied boarding against her/his will, despite a confirmed ticket and checking in well within the specified time frame, s/he must be compensated by the airline, in addition to full refund of the air ticket.

Compensation in accordance with the provisions of Para 3.5 by DGCA: **3.5.1** The financial compensation indicated below shall be given only if the amount of ticket's cost is higher than the compensation amount:

a) ₹2,000/- or the value of the ticket whichever is less for flights having a block time* of up to and including one hour.

b) ₹3,000/- or the value of the ticket whichever is less for flights having

block time of more than one hour and

up to and including two hours.

c) ₹4,000/- or the value of the ticket whichever is less for flights having a block time of more than two hours.

If the cost of the ticket is less than the amount of compensation indicated above, the airline will be liable to compensate an amount equivalent to the ticket cost in addition to refund of air ticket.

3.5.2 The compensation referred to in Para 3.5.1 shall be paid in cash, by bank transfer or with the signed agreement of the passenger in the form of travel vouchers, in accordance with CAR Section 3, Series M, Part II.

3.5.3 Additionally, the passenger shall be offered the choice between the following:

- a) Refund of air ticket at the price it was purchased.
- b) A flight to the first point of departure.
- c) Alternate transportation under comparable/alternate mode of transport (whenever applicable), to the final destination.
- d) Alternate transportation under comparable/alternate mode of transport (whenever applicable), to their final destination at a later date at the passenger's convenience, subject to availability of seats.

3.5.4 The affected passenger shall be offered compensation alternatives listed in Para 3.5.1 and Para 3.5.3 above and once the option has been selected the affected passenger will not have the option to switch to another form of compensation.

3.5.5 In case of foreign carriers, the amount of compensation paid to the passengers shall be as contained in the regulations of their country of origin or as given in para 3.5.1 of this CAR, whichever is higher.

3.6 Facilities to be offered to Passengers

3.6.1 Passengers shall be offered free of charge the following:

- a) Meals and refreshments in relation to waiting time.
- b) Hotel accommodation when necessary (including transfers).

3.6.2 Airlines shall pay particular attention to the needs of persons with reduced mobility and any other person(s) accompanying them.

*Block time: the time calculated from the moment the aircraft pushes back from the departure gate until the moment it pulls into the arrival gate. dgca.nic.in/Pass_Rights/pass-ind.htm

The Oberoi Group announces the opening of The Oberoi Beach Resort in Al Zorah

Situated only 25 minutes from Dubai Airport, Al Zorah is an ecological wetland that sprawls across 247 acres.

The Oberoi Beach Resort, Al Zorah is set against an idyllic beach and boasts of mangrove forests, lagoons and lush greenery within its premises.

Designed by famous Italian architect, Piero Lissoni, the hotel's accommodation includes rooms, suites and villas with private terraces and swimming pools.

The hotel offers a range of diverse F&B such as Aquario (beachside sea-grill), Poolside Lounge (light bites) and Vinesse (international cuisine). The Oberoi Beach Resort also features Sensio Spa, which offers signature massage treatments, Turkish hammams and Ayurveda inspired therapies. Its meeting facilities make it an ideal destination for corporate events and MICE. This includes its ballroom that spans across 427 sqm and can accommodate 200 guests.

"We celebrate the launch of The Oberoi Beach Resort, Al Zorah, which unveils the destination and the diversity of experiences we offer. We are confident that visitors to Al Zorah will appreciate our flagship 5-star beach resort property, which will become a focal point for tourists and UAE residents to explore and enjoy," says Imad Dana, chief executive officer at Al Zorah. oberoihotels.com



Ethiad Airways shuts ticketing offices in India

Ethiad Airways has closed all its ticketing offices in India. However, customers can continue to make their flight reservations through the airline's website and call centre support.

Arabian Business quoted an Ethiad spokesperson: "As part of our commitment to service guests round-the-clock, Ethiad is increasing its service delivery by switching to a 24/7 support operation. Our staff at the 24/7 service centre are fully equipped to help with all new bookings and re-issuing of tickets, ensuring guests continue to get the same level of service that they were offered by the ticketing offices [in India], which have now closed."

This move from physical offices in India to digital booking facilities follows the growing demand for 24/7 access to the reservation desk.

The 24/7 toll-free numbers if dialling from India are +1800 22 3901 and 1800 209 0808. eithad.com



Hyatt launches personalised in-room streaming

Hyatt has introduced personalised in-room streaming in a number of its US hotels.

The group has partnered with content provider Sonifi, offering its patent-pending Staycast streaming technology to allow guests to stream programmes from Netflix, Hulu and YouTube, among others.

Powered by Google Chromecast, the service is integrated with the World of Hyatt mobile app and is now available in 14 Hyatt hotels including Hyatt Regency New Orleans and Hyatt Centric French Quarter, with more to follow.

Senior vice president corporate marketing for Hyatt, Debbie Goetz says, "This industry-leading collaboration is one more way the World of Hyatt builds experiences with an understanding of what's most important to our community of travellers.

"Today's traveller often has one or more streaming subscriptions, and now they can view their favourite content on the big screen when they're on the road, too."

Using Sonifi's technology, the World of Hyatt app allows Hyatt loyalty members personalised access to streaming services without having to enter a code or personal credentials on their room TV, and automatically logs guests out of the system at check out.

Marriott was one of the first hotel groups to introduce in-room streaming, partnering with Netflix in 2015, while Starwood's Aloft (later acquired by Marriott) launched the service using RoomCast in mid-2016, another provider powered by Chromecast.

From Hyatt, Hyatt Regency San Francisco was the first hotel to offer the Staycast technology, with Andaz 5th Avenue New York the first in the group to enable 4K streaming.

hyatt.com

Silk Air launches flights to Colombo

Silk Air has launched a three-times-weekly service to Colombo, Sri Lanka.

The flights will operate on Wednesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays between Singapore Changi Airport and Colombo's Bandaranaike International Airport as per the schedule below:

Singapore-Colombo			
Flight	Day	Departing	Arriving
MI428	Wed, Sat	0850	1005
MI428	Thursday	0730	0915
Colombo-Singapore			
Flight	Day	Departing	Arriving
MI427	Wed, Sat	1105	1730
MI427	Thursday	1030	1700

The flights will be operated by a B737-800 aircraft, with 12 seats in business class and 150 in the economy cabin.

"Colombo offers rich heritage and a variety of experiences for travellers to explore the beauty of Sri Lanka. The launch of the Colombo flight route as our 53rd destination presents an opportunity for Silk Air to continually provide our customers with increased connectivity to the region via Singapore," commented Silk Air's chief executive, Foo Chai Woo.

The new flight complements the daily service currently operated by parent carrier Singapore Airlines. Together, the carriers will offer a total of ten round-trip flights a week to Sri Lanka.

silkair.com



Park Lane Hong Kong has an ongoing spring break discount



Park Lane Hong Kong, a Pullman Hotel is offering guests an option to enjoy spring in the autonomous territory.

The Sunday Vibes package that is valid until August 31, 2017, includes:

- Free Sunday afternoon tea for two at Ebb & Flow
- Free upgrade to the next room category
- Free wifi for unlimited devices
- Children's amenities available on request.

Guests may enjoy the daily buffet breakfast at PLAYT for HK\$176/₹1,464 per person as opposed to HK\$272.8/₹2,270 per person.



HOTEL NEWS

HILTON GARDEN opens in Shanghai. It has 226 rooms and suites, and is located in Qingpu district, a part of the new Hongqiao CBD. The property has 500 sqm of meeting and banquet space, and can accommodate up to 200 guests. It includes a 200 sqm pillarless multifunction room and four meeting rooms located on the same floor. F&B offerings feature the Garden Grille for buffet breakfast, lunch and dinner; Noodle bar Mian Tan serving Asian noodles and seasonal dishes; the Garden Bar lobby lounge; as well as a 24-hour Pavilion Pastry for snacks or a quick meal.

DUSIT INTERNATIONAL has signed a management agreement to operate the company's first D2-branded property in Bangkok. Dusit D2 Chaengwattana, an upscale business hotel, is scheduled to open in 2020 in north Bangkok. It will feature 200 guest rooms and suites, a rooftop international restaurant and bar, infinity swimming pool, fitness centre and a large banqueting facility.

THE ASCOTT LIMITED opened its first serviced residence in Jeju, a South Korean island, on April 25. Each of the of 344 units comes in a three-bedroom set-up with a kitchen, separate living and dining areas, and a balcony. Amenities include washing machines and dishwashers, and more lavish offerings including a wine cellar and a centralised home automation system. A clubhouse, lobby lounge, gym and sauna, restaurant and children's play areas form the wider facilities also available at the property.

Further, until May 31, 2017, PLAYT has a dinner buffet offer for a party of eight persons or more. If booked three days in advance, the table will enjoy a free bottle of sparkling wine, as well as premium Tomahawk Steak, alongside cold-cuts, sushi, creative homemade desserts and other buffet dishes. parklane.com.hk

Validity of Indian e-visas increased to two months

E-visas issued to tourists travelling to India will have a 60-day validity period. Previously, the e-visa permitted a stay of only up to 30 days at a time in the country.

The e-visa is subdivided into three categories: e-tourist, e-business and e-medical.

Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh says, "Duration of stay on e-visa has increased from 30 days to 60 days with double-entry on tourist and business e-visas and triple entry on medical e-visas."

The medical e-visa allows triple entry into the country within 60 days, whereas the business and tourist e-visas allow double entry.

Both business and medical e-visas can be granted within 48 hours of submitting the application. This however, is at the discretion of the Consulate General of India.

In addition two new visa categories have recently been introduced by the Indian government: film (F) visa, which grants a one year multiple entry facility, and intern (I) visa that allows students to pursue internships in India. indianvisaonline.gov.in



AIRLINE NEWS

SPICEJET will introduce flights between Trivandrum and Male. Daily services will begin May 10 onwards. Flight SG 93 will depart Trivandrum at 1225 and land at Male at 1325. Return flight SG 94 will depart Male at 1410 and arrive in Trivandrum at 1605.

JET AIRWAYS has added a morning flight between New Delhi and Bhopal. Flight 9W 2641 departs New Delhi at 0545 and arrives in Bhopal at 0700. Return flight 2642 departs Bhopal at 0735 and arrives in New Delhi at 0850. This service is operated on a Boeing 737.

BRUSSELS AIRLINES has started direct flight services between Mumbai and Brussels. The airline's Airbus A330 flies the route on Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Sunday. Flight SN602 departs Mumbai at 0105 and arrives in Brussels at 0715. Return flight SN601 departs Brussels at 1045 and lands in Mumbai at 2300.

Hilton to launch six properties in Sri Lanka

Last month, Hilton signed six management agreements with Melwa Hotel and Resorts to manage the upcoming Hilton Hotels and Resorts and DoubleTree by Hilton properties in Sri Lanka.

- Hilton Kandy Resort
- Hilton Yala Resort and Spa
- Hilton Kosgoda Resort
- DoubleTree by Hilton Nuwara-Eliya
- DoubleTree by Hilton Colombo International Airport
- DoubleTree by Hilton Negombo

All six properties will launch consecutively in 2020 and 2021. With this, DoubleTree by Hilton will make its debut in the island nation. The only other Hilton property there, is Hilton Colombo.

Guy Phillips, senior vice president, development – Asia and Australasia, Hilton says, "Our hotels are

strategically located in the heart of key tourist destinations of Kandy, Yala, Kosgoda, Nuwara-Eliya, Colombo and Negombo, allowing them to reap the full benefits of the burgeoning growth in tourism in Sri Lanka. We are pleased to be working with a partner of the experience and standing of Melwa Hotels and Resorts to advance our footprint within this dynamic country." hilton.com





Urbanpod is India's first pod hotel

Urbanpod is India's first boutique pod hotel. It promises to be a smart budget hotel of the next generation, and caters to the basic needs of business travellers. It is located within proximity to the city's domestic and international airports, as well as the local train station.

The interiors reveal a futuristic and stylish design. Designer Formwerkz has adopted the minimalistic theme for this. Stating a paradox, the Urbanpod is a luxurious budget property, which is a "value-for-money" option for guests looking for a comfortable stay.

It features 140 pods that are categorised into suites, private pods, classic pods and ladies-only pods.

Each pod fits one person comfortably, except the suite that can fit two people comfortably. These pods are equipped with a personal television, power socket, two USB ports, a clothes hook, a towel, water bottle at the time of check-in, free wifi and a personal safe. The hotel provides lockers to guests for storing baggage as there is no space within the "capsules". The suites have an additional work counter, a cushioned seating and luggage storing space. The ladies-only pods are situated in an exclusive area with common ladies-only bathrooms.

Bath facilities are common between the pods as they don't hold private bathing areas. The 18 ladies pods share three bathrooms and the remaining pods share 20 bathrooms amongst themselves.

Urbanpod also has a business centre (two work desks with power sockets. Bring your own laptop), a 24-hour reception, free breakfast and a laundromat. Urbanpod's café serves hot breakfast and quick bites from 7am-10pm. theurbanpod.com

OYO Rooms announces partnership with Ola Money

India's largest hotel aggregator, OYO Rooms has announced its partnership with Ola Money, the digital payment solution by Ola Cabs.

Under the partnership, OYO Rooms' guests can make one-touch payments for their hotel rooms via Ola Money, on the former's web and smartphone interface. Users receive a one-time-password upon selecting this option, after which they can proceed to make the payment.

The integration also allows guests to pre-book their Ola taxis while booking across OYO Rooms' network of 7,000 hotels. Ola Cabs is present across 100 cities in India.

"Our partnership with Ola Money — one of the largest digital wallets in the country — will make payments more convenient by offering greater choice," says Vishal Jain vice president of growth and marketing at OYO Rooms. oyorooms.com; olacabs.com



RwandAir launches flights to Mumbai

RwandAir has launched flights between Kigali and Mumbai. Flights operate every Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Sunday.

Flight WB500 departs Kigali at 1235 and arrives in Mumbai at 1052. Return flight WB501 departs Mumbai at 0145 and arrives in Kigali at 0515.

The airline operates its B737-800 for this service, with a state-of-the-art dual cabin featuring economy and business class seats.

"We are delighted to enable new and seamless connections between more African cities and beyond the continent which goes along with creating more businesses and boosts the various countries' social and economic development", says John Mirenge, chief executive officer at RwandAir. rwandair.com



State Bank of India partners with Cox & Kings for State Bank VISA Foreign Travel card

State Bank of India has announced its distribution alliance with Cox & Kings to market its State Bank VISA Foreign Travel card in India.

Cox & Kings will help State Bank of India serve its corporate and travel segments, where the bank has not been very active due to service delivery challenges.

The pilot has been initiated in select branches of the bank. Based on learnings, it will be expanded across the country in the near future.

"We are delighted to partner with SBI and to offer the entire gamut of forex services and the State Bank VISA Foreign Travel card to its corporate customer base. Cox & Kings has an excellent track record in the distribution and servicing of forex travel cards and this association with SBI is a great opportunity to expand our presence and service large corporates," says Anil Khandelwal, chief financial officer at Cox & Kings.

The card is available in eight currencies (US dollar, GBP, euro, Singapore dollar, Japanese yen, Canadian dollar, Australian dollar and Saudi riyal). It offers a safe, secure and convenient way to carry foreign exchange.

sbi.co.in; coxandkings.co.in



IndiGo Airlines announces flights to Doha

Budget carrier IndiGo Airlines has announced flights to Doha. Operations from New Delhi and Mumbai to the Qatari capital will begin May 5 onwards.

Flight 6E 1701 will depart New Delhi at 0130 and arrive in Doha at 0330. The return flight 6E 1702 will depart Doha at 1330 and arrive in New Delhi at 2000. One-way fares for this route will start at ₹18,888 (QAR 1,012).

Flight 6E 1708 will depart Mumbai at 1120 and arrive in Doha at 1230. Return flight 6E 1709 will depart Doha at 0430 and arrive in Mumbai at 1020. One-way fares for this route will start at ₹14,999 (QAR 803).

Doha is the 46th destination in the airline's network. "With Doha as a new destination, IndiGo is all set to enhance connectivity between India and the Gulf region after Dubai, Muscat and Sharjah," says a press-release by the airline.

"Being an economic and cultural hub of Qatar, Doha attracts a lot of business and leisure tourists. Adding Doha on our network is in line with our growth strategy and more so for the Middle-East. IndiGo has established itself as a preferred carrier on India-Gulf routes. We are hopeful that this daily service would also prove equally popular with our flyers," says Aditya Ghosh, president and whole-time director at IndiGo Airlines. goindigo.in

Jet Airways enables payments via Unified Payments Interface (UPI) solution

Jet Airways has announced that its passengers can now buy tickets on jetairways.com, mobile site and smartphone app by using the industry's latest payment mechanism – Unified Payments Interface (UPI).

It is the first Indian airline to offer guests this convenient payment solution.

UPI allows money to be transferred between any two bank accounts instantly, via a smartphone or a web-interface. National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) has launched this system to further RBI's vision enabling a digital economy.

This is Jet Airways' 21st digital payment option to be offered to guests, who are becoming more and more digital savvy.

"Our latest payment interface – Unified Payments Interface (UPI), backed by leading banks is yet another smart solution that is simple, convenient and secure. Transacting via UPI is extremely easy for guests who must opt for the "UPI payment option" during the booking process in order to transact via a Virtual Payment Address, which acts as their



financial address and is linked to their bank accounts. UPI does away with guests having to remember and enter their bank details online to enable transactions and guests only have to remember their M-Pin for facilitating any payment. The integration of UPI as a mode of payment on Jet Airways' website and app is a bold step that complements the nation's drive towards a transparent, digitised economy, on the back of over 250m smartphone connections and record breaking consumption of data via the internet," says Jayaraj Shanmugam, chief commercial officer at Jet Airways. jetairways.com



NEW AMENITY KITS ON QATAR AIRWAYS

Have just flown QR's A380, LHR-DOH in J and DOH-BKK in F.

POST

BPP

DATE

March 23, 2017

15:33

Great seat, great service but the much advertised 'new' amenity kits by Monte Vibiano are presented in very fancy boxes but the contents are of little value and even less use. Also the contents vary little between first and business or male/female.

Unlike the great Armani kits previously offered (and still given on B777 flights) there is no perfume or after-shave, no pen or note pad or tissues, just some anti-ageing cream (men take note!) together with some cheap flight socks and the obligatory eye shades and ear plugs.

esselle

March 24, 2017

11:55

I've never taken a great deal of notice of the content of amenity kits, although I was a big fan of the D.R. Harris products BA used to offer in their first class bags about 20 years ago.

What did, though, strike me as odd about the "Armani" bags QR used to offer was the huge tube of something which didn't appear to have any real purpose. Can't remember for sure, but I think it was after shave balm.

To me, SQ have the better system, whereby they give you socks/eye pads/etc, and then put an ample stock of anything else you are likely to need in the toilet.

MrDarwin

March 27, 2017

16:07

I never had a use for the Armani after shave balm, but my dad absolutely loves them. I'm visiting him now and he was thrilled to receive no less than nine tubes of the stuff (informing me with a smile that he still had two left from previous visits).

I don't mind the new amenity kit. It has lip balm which is a winner for me, and I bring my own Kiehl's mini moisturiser so I'm all good on that front. Almost all my travel is long haul so I figure I'll always look like a painting in the National Portrait Gallery by the time I arrive anyway.



AIR FRANCE PREMIUM ECONOMY

Recently flew CDG to JNB return. Booked premium economy. Two days before outbound, I was offered by email, a paid upgrade into business class which I accepted and paid for, as it was reasonable value. The seat was very comfortable and although the seat goes flat, I found an excellent sloping position for sleeping.

On my return, no upgrade was offered, so took up my seat in premium economy cabin. The shape of the seat and the positioning of the seat

POST

bluemooner

DATE

April 4, 2017

16:54

was good, but the seat padding I found almost as uncomfortable as economy class. Had to keep getting up to avoid a "numb bum".

This is a great shame as the rest of the service/flight was very good. Any other travellers had similar issues or is it my personal "lack of padding".

Alex_F

April 4, 2017

17:00

Sadly I have too much natural padding to require extra padding. Great insights into AF premium economy though. Many thanks.

PeterCoultas

April 4, 2017

20:19

Nice to see my feelings confirmed. Economy and economy plus are almost equally uncomfortable, but with an unjustified price increase for economy plus. Business class is a different and much nicer beast.

bluemooner

April 5, 2017

22:49

Alex_F, cannot be too often that the "extra padding" comes as a benefit!

PeterCoultas, comforting to know I'm not the only one suffering.



NEW CLUB EUROPE CATERING

Today I experienced the new catering for afternoon

POST

MartynSinclair

DATE

March 27, 2017

21:13

The four finger sandwiches have been changed to two and half sandwiches. There are now two fat fingers, clearly the bread thickness has been doubled & 1 open sandwich plus a cake. Scones have gone. I have never seen Club Europe cabin crew look so embarrassed offering this (sub) standard level of catering.

However, a little bit of sunshine was the alternative – a small (and I mean small) plate of meats, scotch egg and cheese – a cut down version of the new alternative longhaul breakfast (well it was available on my last longhaul).

I didn't take either.

BA really are in a class of their own – but on the basis the flights were free (courtesy of avios, i really shouldn't complain).

Has any one seen any other changes in catering.

conc001

March 27, 2017

23:16

Friend of mine works as cabin Crewe at BA. Recently getting fed up with all the cuts and had a very difficult passanger.

LuganoPirate

March 28, 2017

08:08

I think you have every reason to complain Martyn. We all kid ourselves (myself included) the flights are free thanks to Avios/Miles/Points but they're not. We pay for those miles in the tickets we purchase.



ontherunhome
March 28, 2017
09:28

I think we have seen this gradual slide of quality in the economy cabin, so that the offering became so poor, customer feedback indicated passengers would like to buy on board instead. Is this a tactic so that the bean counters can say, that due to customer demand, and lack of satisfaction, we can scrap CE food/CE product, and have a one class service like Aer Lingus.

I have now decided to make Silver my target, then use BA as a last resort, and only when schedule and destination favour BA. You can upset of some customers some of the time, but not all the customers all of the time. The shareholders will like it short term, but the long term damage is going to huge and difficult to put right (and expensive).



POST

AMcWhirter

DATE

March 27, 2017

15:51

FLYBE TO FLY LHR-SCOTLAND

A traveller who took the inaugural EDI-LHR service yesterday reported that the full two hours was needed for the flight.

There was a 30 minutes ATC hold (later reduced to 20 minutes) over LHR.

Eventually the lightly-loaded Q-400 landed more or less on time. Passengers then had to disembark down stairs followed by a five minutes bus transfer from the apron into T2.

canuckland

March 27, 2017

18:28

That's annoying, I was scheduled to be on that flight, but business dictated that I spend the weekend in London. Would have been my first inaugural flight experience, I wonder if the passengers got any goodies or memento's.

Looking forward to T2 and the flight home on Wednesday night though.

Incidentally I also missed the inaugural flight of the 777 from Frankfurt to Chicago too, taking the d flight the day after.

AMcWhirter

March 27, 2017

20:04

canucklad – In fact my posting was somewhat confusing.

The official inaugural flight took place this morning from Edinburgh. It was attended mainly by Scottish media and was reported to be 100 per cent full.

But Flybe's first flight on the route was on Sunday morning and that was lightly loaded.

In other news, I see that Flybe has been fined £70,000 for sending millions of junk emails.

canucklad
April 7, 2017
12:01

My FlyBe LHR-EDI experience (BE2108 18.20- 20.00).

Not a great start as I gave up trying to find and download my boarding pass on to the normally reliable app.

First time I'd been in T2 and was both impressed and disappointed at the same time. Not sure what I expected, but to me, it's just another "anywhere in the world" airport experience.

Due to its compactness I found the two FlyBe desks easy enough, didn't have a wait and although the lass was clearly learning the ropes I was processed quickly, and was issued with my boarding pass.

Be warned that photo ID is required, unlike BA and I didn't have my passport with me as I hadn't made it up the road at the weekend. Fortunately my works security pass was enough and noticing the lanyard, she even commented on how much she enjoyed my company and how lucky I must be, working for whom I work for. Exchanging smiles I was on my way to security.

On-board the aircraft, I'd say it was about 75 per cent full and after the second bus appeared with the last of the passengers the person sitting in 5C moved into the empty row in front leaving me ample room for the flight ahead

The flight was smooth, and the two for eight quid perfectly acceptable bottles of white wine was just as smooth.

I truly hope FlyBe give this a better go than a bearded man patronizingly appearing in a kilt and then disappearing just as fast. I found the service had a bit of a LCC feel to it, but then that's what FlyBe are. As for the incumbent airline on the route, I'm afraid they sum themselves up nicely with the Concorde outside their maintenance base. It's now become a sad metaphor for BA, desperate to hang onto its glory days by flaunting a once great but now redundant piece of kit!

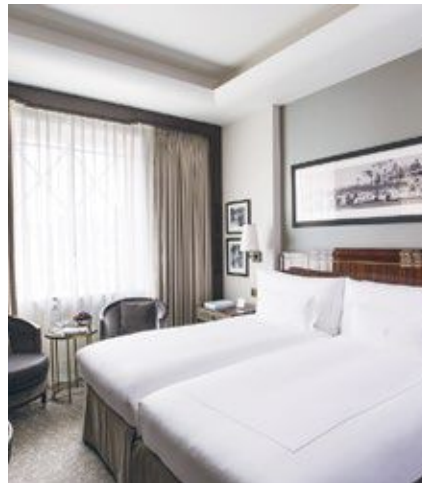
On-board the aircraft, I'd say it was about 75 per cent full and after the second bus appeared with the last of the passengers the person sitting in 5C moved into the empty row in front leaving me ample room for the flight ahead. Having flown BA a couple of weeks before I must say that the seat pitch and the 2X2 seating are a luxury in comparison. We left five minutes early, taxied past the Concorde at BA's base. And our little plane was airborne ten minutes later.

The flight was smooth, and the two for eight quid perfectly acceptable bottles of white wine was just as smooth.



Special: London Hotels

Here is a list of business and luxury hotels to pick from on your next visit to the English capital



InterContinental London – the O2

BACKGROUND The new-build InterContinental London – the O2 opened in December 2015. It is managed by the hotel division of the Arora Group.

WHAT'S IT LIKE? The property feels a little isolated, but the industrial location is dramatic and, in reality, isn't far at all from Canary Wharf or the West End. Decked up in polished marble, glass and steel, the hotel has taken inspiration from the history of shipping – subtle design nods include the hull-shaped Clipper bar, while 30 types of tea from the East India Company are stocked in the Meridian Lounge. The views of the river and skyscrapers opposite make for an eye-catching backdrop. Service is attentive and professional.

WHERE IS IT? On the Greenwich Peninsula. The O2 Arena is directly connected to the hotel. It's a five-minute walk to North Greenwich tube station. London City airport is three stops on the DLR from Canning Town (one tube stop away).

ROOM FACILITIES There are 453 rooms, including 59 suites, across six categories. Entry-level Superior rooms (29-32 sqm) are well-equipped with 42-inch smart TVs, coffee machines, minibars, workdesks with UK, EU and USB sockets (also by the bed), robes and ironing boards, granite bathrooms with tubs and walk-in showers, and Anne Semonin amenities. Décor is neutral with the views of the river, the O2 Arena and Canary Wharf the focal point. Wifi is free, with the option of upgrading to a higher speed (£8-£16/₹641-₹1,282). I streamed an episode from Amazon Prime without a problem on the basic package, and had a good night's sleep in the comfy king-size bed.

Club InterContinental rooms and suites offer more space (from



42 sqm) and some differences in design – the suites have separate changing areas and Bose sound systems, for example. They also come with access to the Club lounge, which serves a buffet breakfast, afternoon tea, and evening canapés and cocktails. It also has a boardroom for eight people.

RESTAURANTS AND BARS

There are two bars and three restaurants. The Clipper bar serves light food, "tea spiked" cocktails and G&Ts with the house Clipper gin. An outstanding breakfast buffet is laid out in the Market Brasserie, which also serves dinner. On the top floor is Eighteen Sky Bar – I popped up for a drink one weekday evening and found it to be quiet, although I visited between Christmas and New Year. The views were fantastic.

After, I went down for dinner at the Peninsula fine-dining restaurant. The sultry lighting and a corner table by the window allowed for a beautiful lookout on to the river. The à la carte menu lists only six starters and six mains ranging from £12/₹961 to £30/₹2,404, so the seven-course

tasting menu for £72/₹5,769 is good value. Wine pairings are an extra £55/₹4,408. The £60/₹4,808 vegetarian menu was fantastic – highlights were the potato and truffle terrine and the chestnut gnocchi.

MEETING FACILITIES Event space totals 20 venues, including the UK's largest pillar-free ballroom, which can host up to 3,000 people for a reception. There's also a vast pre-function area, and a plaza for 400 people outside. The second floor has 15 meeting rooms for 20 to 240 delegates.

LEISURE FACILITIES There is a 24-hour gym with Technogym machines, plus a 17-metre pool. An upper level features a spa with eight treatment rooms. All areas are open to the public for a fee. I enjoyed a jog along the riverside Jubilee Walkway, which leads to the Thames Barrier.

VERDICT The hotel is ideally placed for business people flying in and out of London City airport and those working in Canary Wharf, and offers fantastic views. It's a top-class offering with extensive facilities and great dining.

TESTED BY
Jenny Southan

HOW MANY ROOMS?

453 rooms and suites.

HIGHLIGHTS

A jog along the riverside Jubilee Walkway.

PRICE

Internet rates for a flexible midweek stay in June started from £423/₹33,855 for a Superior room.

CONTACT

1 Waterview Drive,
Greenwich Peninsula;
tel +44 (0)20 8463 6868;
iclondon-theo2.com

- FREE WIFI
- 24hr ROOM SERVICE
- 3 RESTAURANTS
- 2 BARS
- 20 MEETING ROOMS

London Marriott County Hall



BACKGROUND The former London County Hall, which opened in 1922, closed in 1986 and now houses various businesses as well as two hotels – a Premier Inn and this one, which opened back in 1998. It recently completed a multimillion-pound renovation of all guest rooms and many of the public areas.

WHAT'S IT LIKE? The renovation has replaced a lot of the old red and yellow colour scheme and is now much more modern, without this being incongruous. The ground-level parquet floors and wood panelling remain, as do the high ceilings and intricate detailing of some of the plasterwork, but all rooms have been redecorated, the corridors re-carpeted, and modern, locally appropriate art and furnishings introduced, with the serpentine course of the Thames being one of the design themes.

The hotel has quite a strange shape and, depending on where your room is, there are long corridors to walk down, but this is made more interesting by the art and colour, and the wallpaper with bowler hat and umbrella prints. By each lift there's a modern art display made of Penguin books.

WHERE IS IT? By Westminster Bridge on the South Bank. The closest tube station is Westminster, on the other side of the bridge, so a taxi might be more convenient if you have luggage.

ROOM FACILITIES The 206 rooms, which include 12 suites, are on floors one to six. They all have different layouts and views, principally of the Thames, the nearby Jubilee Gardens or the interior courtyard, with prices varying accordingly. In total, 80 per cent face outward, with the rest facing the courtyard. Entry-level Deluxe rooms (there are 82 of these) measure 30 sqm and have Nespresso machines, safes, work desks, plenty of power points (including European and US), and lovely black and white bathrooms featuring Floris amenities and wallpaper with a 1920s print of a London map. Nice touches are umbrellas in every room, orange chairs (a nod to the chairs that were once in the County Hall building) and the detailing on the art deco-style furniture. Other categories are River Thames View, Big Ben View, Junior suite, Balcony suite, one-bedroom Executive and the Westminster suite.

Wifi is £7.50/₹601 per day for standard access and £15/₹1,202 for full speed, although the lower speed is free for gold and platinum Marriott Rewards members who book at marriott.com. Gold and platinum members and suite guests can also use the fifth-floor executive lounge, although this was closed for renovation at the time of my stay (it has since opened). It serves a continental breakfast, plus drinks and canapés from 5.30pm–7.30pm.



RESTAURANTS AND BARS

The hotel's main restaurant and bar is Gillray's Steakhouse and Bar, which has excellent views across the river and a huge choice of gins behind the bar. Just opposite the entrance is the Noes Lobby Champagne bar. The hotel also offers afternoon tea in the Library Lounge.

MEETING FACILITIES There are ten event and meeting rooms on the ground floor; the maximum capacity is 100. They have a variety of layouts, natural light and the wood panelling and artworks give a real sense of the building's history.

LEISURE FACILITIES These include a 25-metre pool and a large fitness centre. The hotel sells private memberships to these, which means there are classes you can join. Visit the reception on the fifth floor to get a code to access the facilities, which are open 5.30am–11pm daily.

VERDICT An excellent renovation of this historic property in a convenient location – try to get a view of the Thames and the Houses of Parliament.

TESTED BY

Tom Otley

HOW MANY ROOMS?

206 rooms and suites.

HIGHLIGHTS

Views of the Thames and the Houses of Parliament.

PRICE

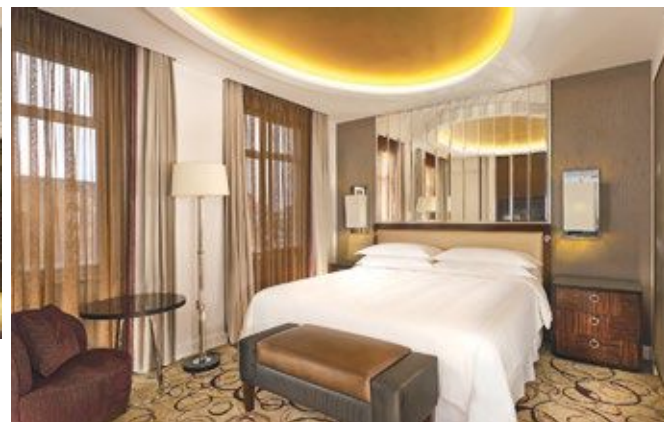
Internet rates for a flexible midweek stay in June started from £412/₹32,979 for a Deluxe room.

CONTACT

Westminster Bridge Road; tel +44 (0)20 7928 5200; londonmarriottcountyhall.co.uk

- FREE WIFI
- 24hr ROOM SERVICE
- 2 RESTAURANTS
- 11 MEETING ROOMS

Sheraton Grand London Park Lane



BACKGROUND The Sheraton is one of the best-known London hotels – an art deco property originally intended to be apartments when its construction began in the early 20th century. Having completed a multimillion-pound refurbishment in October, it has now joined Sheraton’s “Grand” tier.

WHAT’S IT LIKE? The renovation has taken many years, but has been worth the wait. Almost every area has been refurbished or replaced, and the art deco beauty of the interiors shines through all the more clearly thanks to the work done by MKV Design in partnership with Sheraton’s global design team.

The hotel has two entrances: on Piccadilly and behind on Brick Street (where taxis will drop you off). If you enter through the latter, you are faced by a set of black mirrored doors, behind which is a grand staircase leading up to the rooms. The lifts on either side of the lobby are pretty slow and were often busy during my stay, so I used the stairs as much as possible. From Piccadilly, you enter through the Palm Court lounge, which is beautiful, but best enjoyed with a drink in hand rather than dragging a wheelie bag through.

WHERE IS IT? On Piccadilly, a five-minute walk from both Hyde Park Corner and Green Park stations.

ROOM FACILITIES The 303 rooms and suites all offer free high-speed wifi. Classic (20-25 sqm) and Superior rooms (25-30 sqm) make up the bulk of the inventory and, since the hotel is in a hollowed-out U shape facing Green Park, only rooms at the top of the U have park views. Most overlook the open courtyard above the Palm Court lounge. This helps to explain why, despite being on such a busy road, so many rooms enjoy quiet – rare for central London.

The rooms now have a cool elegance about them, with modern furnishings, art deco detailing and a good-sized desk and comfortable chair, along with an HD TV. The air conditioning works well, and an armchair provides the option of sitting somewhere other than the desk or bed.

New to the hotel are 43 Sheraton Club rooms and suites with access to the ground-floor Club lounge. This has two rooms – one for dining and one for relaxing – although in the morning, both are laid out for breakfast. It’s a nice place to relax in the evening. The Club rooms also include free use of the lounge’s eight-seat meeting room. There are only 21 suites in total, all with views over Green Park.

RESTAURANTS AND BARS The main restaurant, with its own entrance on Piccadilly, is Mercante, which offers seasonal

Italian dining (for a review see businessstraveller.com/tried-and-tested). I ate in the 1920s-themed Smith and Whistle bar, which serves cocktails and craft beers alongside “British-inspired sharing plates”, (which seems a contradiction, since most British people I know don’t like sharing their food.) I had a good burger and chips, and the list of real ales and drinks was impressive. Outdoor dining is available in both Mercante and Smith and Whistle, although both areas are on busy Piccadilly.

MEETING FACILITIES The hotel is known for its event spaces, which include the Grade II listed Art Deco Ballroom and Silver Gallery. These were not part of the renovation but on the night I stayed I walked through them once again and can confirm that they are as stunning and well used as ever – they don’t make spaces like this anymore.

LEISURE FACILITIES There is a good gym in the basement. Otherwise, head to Green Park or Hyde Park for a run.

VERDICT The renovation is a great success. It keeps what was special about the hotel – the art deco theme, the Palm Court and the service – and improves it with modern rooms, free wifi and a good Club lounge.

TESTED BY Tom Otley

HOW MANY ROOMS?

303 rooms and suites.

HIGHLIGHTS

The location, and dinner at Mercante, the Italian restaurant.

PRICE

Internet rates for a flexible midweek stay in June started from £352/₹28,182 for a Classic room.

CONTACT

Piccadilly; tel +44 (0)20 7499 6321; sheratonparklane.com

- FREE WIFI
- 24hr ROOM SERVICE
- 4 RESTAURANTS
- 1 BAR
- 5 MEETING ROOMS

St. James' Court, A Taj Hotel



BACKGROUND St. James' Court, A Taj Hotel first opened in 1902. It was patronised by the likes of royalty from the Buckingham Palace at that time. It is owned by Indian hotel company, Taj Hotels Palaces Resorts Safaris, which has another property — Taj 51 Buckingham Gate Suites and Residences — beside it.

WHAT'S IT LIKE? Its exterior flaunts two flags — one of Great Britain and one of India — with pride at the entrance. It resembles a colonial mansion with the name of the property embossed at the top of the gate. The lobby is charming with a residential decor. It features wooden panelling, elaborate chandeliers, lamps and showpieces that make it look quite welcoming. It's partially carpeted with a number of subtle colours like ochre, blue and grey splashed across elegantly. London-themed artwork faces you as you check-in at the reception desk. The hotel's centrepiece is its glorious courtyard, with a Victorian fountain adorned with cherub statues. The St. James' Courtyard restaurant is located here, amidst lush greenery, overlooking which is a Private Dining Terrace — my preferred spot for relaxing in the evening alongside some tea.

WHERE IS IT? In the heart of central London, walking distance

from Buckingham Palace and St. James' Park. Westminster Cathedral, Big Ben, The House of Parliament and Mayfair can be reached by foot from the hotel.

ROOM FACILITIES It features 338 rooms and suites, primarily divided into Classic and Executive categories, which are further split up into Single, Double, King rooms, and Studio, Junior and Master suites. The corridors, rooms and suites are decorated with clean lines and cool colours. My Classic King room (35 sqm) faced the courtyard and was very English in its decor. Muted colours such as grey, off-white and brown, and wooden panels make this space look sophisticated. A media hub connects to the flat screen LCD television that faces the king-sized bed. A traditional work desk and chair with a chest of drawers are adjacent to the window. A maroon coloured lounge and table are placed to the right of the window. The room is well lit with a good number of table lamps positioned around the space. Two colonial paintings above the bed add an artistic touch to the area. Wifi is free across the property. Valet service and free newspapers are offered.

RESTAURANTS AND BARS

There are a number of restaurants and bars across the property

that range from casual to fine dining. Quilon is its signature Michelin star restaurant that serves southwest Indian cuisine. The restaurant's specialities include seafood moilee; lobster with kokum and mango; and sea bass with Goan green and red masala. Bistro is known for its unconventional presentations of local flavours. Afternoon tea at St. James' Courtyard is quite nice. The hotel also houses Bank Westminster (classic English cuisine), Kona (European), The Hamptons Bar and Zander Bar.

BUSINESS AND MEETING

FACILITIES The hotel has 17 conference and banqueting suites, some of which have played host to Her Majesty The Queen and Sir Winston Churchill. Spaces are beautifully furnished with magnificent chandeliers and classic wooden panelling. All meeting rooms are equipped with state-of-the-art technology and video conferencing facility with Tata Communications' concierge support. Edwardian I (183 sqm) is its largest meeting space that can accommodate 300 people in reception style. Edwardian II (59 sqm), Buckingham (29 sqm) and Taj (39 sqm) are some of its other meeting rooms.

LEISURE FACILITIES Wellness Centre is its spa that offers mineral-rich treatments. It features sauna and steam rooms. Personal training is provided to guests at its fitness centre. Taj Khazana is the hotel's lifestyle boutique that retails artefacts, garments and accessories. The hotel gives access to a fleet of chauffeured classic vehicles such as Vintage Jaguar Daimler limousines and Bentleys to guests on a rental basis.

VERDICT Colonial luxury with contemporary service. Ideal for business travellers who want to stay in the heart of the city.

TESTED BY

Ravi Lalwani

HOW MANY ROOMS?

338 rooms and suites.

HIGHLIGHTS

Location, the hotel's beautiful courtyard and restaurants.

PRICE

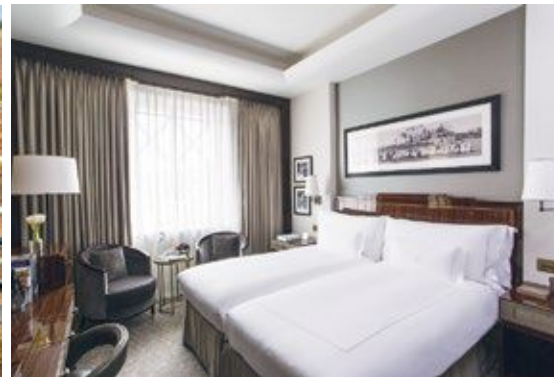
Internet rates for a midweek stay in June started from £274/₹21,950 for a Classic Double room.

CONTACT

54 Buckingham Gate,
Westminster; tel:
+44 20 7834 6655;
stjamescourthotel.co.uk

- FREE WIFI
- 24hr ROOM SERVICE
- 24hr GYM
- SPA
- 6 RESTAURANTS
- 2 BARS
- 17 MEETING ROOMS

The Beaumont



BACKGROUND It is a luxury, 5-star boutique hotel, the first from Corbin & King, noteworthy restaurateurs behind The Wolseley, The Delaunay and other eateries in London. Before the building launched as The Beaumont in September 2014, it was built to be a garage in 1926, and designed by architects Wimperis & Simpson. The property is also a member of Preferred Hotels & Resorts.

WHAT'S IT LIKE? The hotel's design is inspired by the art deco hotels of the 1920s. It has an old-world charm, alongside modern-day technology. On the website, co-founder Jeremy King explains what makes the property feel homely: "At the heart of the hotel is a sense of history to match the 1926 building: the fictional James 'Jimmy' Beaumont becomes an architectural leitmotif, which haunts the corridors of what I imagine to have been a hotel created by a hotelier escaping the constrictions of Prohibition-shackled New York."

The lobby bears checkered flooring that exudes a mid-western feel. Paintings, within bold frames, of presumably "Jimmy's friends and family", hang on wooden walls over wooden furniture and plush upholstery. The Cub Room is finished in wood and more photo frames on the walls. The fireplace lends a cosy feel to it. The Barber's Shop and Grooming Salon here

is designed after those commonly found in the 1920s.

Atop the hotel's facade is a lego-like cement structure, which is actually the "inhabitable" Antony Gormley's ROOM. It is a dark space that encourages the occupant to "enter a different state of consciousness".

WHERE IS IT? Located between Grosvenor Square and Oxford Street, overlooking Brown Hart Gardens, it is a 39-minute drive from Heathrow Airport, and about 300 metres from Bond Street tube station.

ROOM FACILITIES

Accommodation categories are divided into Classic rooms (30 sqm), Superior rooms (32 sqm), Premier rooms (35 sqm), studios (38-43 sqm), Superior studios (44-53 sqm), Classic suites (60 sqm), Mayfair suites (81-90 sqm), The (one bedroom) Terrace suite (91 sqm), The (one bedroom) Roosevelt suite (169 sqm) and The (five-bedroom) Roosevelt suite (606 sqm). All include Nespresso coffee, tea, free wifi, free local calls, work desk, in-room movies and books, free minibar with soft drinks and snacks, LCD television, USB connections for music, underfloor heating in bathrooms, D.R. Harris toiletries, and rain shower.

I was especially impressed by the large hallway and sliding internal door for additional privacy just after my Superior room's entrance. Soundproof windows

helped with undisturbed sleep. There are enough charging points in the room to plug in multiple gadgets.

RESTAURANTS AND BARS

The Cub Room is a bar and lounge, exclusive to resident guests. They may entertain visitors around small wooden tables here. Alternatively, one may escape to this room for a quiet drink or just to relax on the homely sofa-chairs. The Colony Grill Room is an all-day eatery that serves "classic dishes from both sides of the Atlantic". Signature dishes include lobster à la Russe, New York hot dogs, omelette Arnold Bennett, and chicken pot pie. The American Bar is open from 11:30am-midnight and serves snacks, steaks and sundaes with alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks.

BUSINESS AND MEETING

FACILITIES The Lotus Room is a private dining and function space. It can fit 18 delegates for a board meeting, up to 40 guests for a sit-down dinner and 60 in standing reception style. It has a plasma screen television, surround sound and wifi.

LEISURE FACILITIES There is a hammam with sauna, steam and massage therapy rooms, as well as a plunge pool, a salon and a 24-hour gym.

VERDICT Overall it is a luxurious stay in the heart of the city, within proximity to London's business and leisure districts.

TESTED BY

Ravi Lalwani

HOW MANY ROOMS?

73 rooms, studios and suites.

HIGHLIGHT

Evening coffee in The Cub Room.

PRICE

Internet rates for a flexible midweek stay in June started from £477/₹38,188 for a Classic room.

CONTACT

Brown Hart Gardens, Mayfair; tel: 000800 650 1281; preferredhotels.com/destinations/london/the-beaumont-hotel

- FREE WIFI
- 24hr ROOM SERVICE
- 1 BAR
- 2 RESTAURANTS
- 1 MEETING ROOM
- SPA
- 24hr GYM

SPECIAL REPORT



Desk Matters

Akanksha Maker delves into the business of co-working spaces in India



Global workplace provider, Regus recently announced the opening of its new drop-in business centre at Mumbai International Airport.

Upon leaving T2 after a flight back to India, I had a chance to inspect the facility. Positioned more like an arrivals lounge, it is fully equipped with shower facilities and a cafe that allows passengers to freshen up and enjoy breakfast before they head out to meetings in the city. Sprawling over 371 sqm, this space can accommodate more than 100 business travellers at a time.

“At Regus, we understand the requirements and challenges faced by executives and professionals the world over. Over the past year in India, we have worked closely with organisations to provide them with support for various workplace requirements. The launch of Regus Express will now enhance our service offerings further, strengthening the role we play in building productivity and profitability for our customers,” says Harsh Lambah, country manager at Regus in India.

One of the pioneering players in the Indian co-working spaces industry, this Belgian service provider operates a network of 2,800 collaborative business centres across 106 countries and 977 cities. Regus’ enrolment model is very structured where you start by registering on their website. I received a call within 24-hours of a mock enquiry to understand the procedure. The customer care executive was well-versed about the various facilities offered across its spaces. With prices starting at ₹499 per person per day, it offers suites and offices at 96 locations in India to companies and executives to work out of. It also offers meeting rooms and business lounges that provide professionals an ideal office environment at a fraction of the cost of renting a

larger area. Register your credit card information on the Regus app and you can even use its lounges, meeting rooms and day offices on demand.

The idea is to simplify the working life of a professional who doesn’t have access to a routine office. Co-working spaces provide such individuals or companies a platform to nurture their businesses and ideas. This includes freelancers, small to medium sized enterprises or even individual businessmen who are looking for inspiring environments that help them focus on their goals and concepts.

A successful example set by Regus, it has paved the way for several other companies to venture into this segment. While the Brussels-headquartered company is very clear in its positioning of being a serious corporate haven for atypical business set-ups, the Indian industry of co-working spaces has diversified over the last few years. It has recognised the rise of new-age, hipster entrepreneurial ventures that don’t want to work out of monotonous office environments. There is also a realisation that the entrepreneurial youth aspires a networking ambience that offers more than just a desk, internet connection and a cup of coffee. The increasing number of start-ups emerging in the country has definitely catalysed the upsurge of avant-garde co-working spaces across the major Indian metros.

Being important financial and commercial hubs of India, Mumbai, Delhi, Pune and Bengaluru have seen the openings of unique co-working spaces in recent years. On my last business trip to Bengaluru, I stayed at The Waverly Hotel & Residences situated within the complex of VR Bengaluru — a shopping centre. On the higher floor of the boutique hotel is The Hive, an unconventional

Pictured: Ministry of New



A shared working space not only encourages us to share ideas with each other frequently, but also enables us to bring in successful ideas and processes from other professionals and sectors.

co-working space that offers its tenants diverse benefits of its versatile facility. "Designed as an ecosystem to nurture and grow the next generation of businesses, The Hive provides customisable modern workrooms comprising private offices and collaborative workspaces; complete business support services and a connected technology platform for community networking and managing the membership plan" says Ankit Samdariya, spokesperson of The Hive.

I toured the facility on my visit here to further understand what differentiates The Hive from an ordinary co-working space. Apart from a pleasant vibe, it has quirky London phone booths installed in a corner that serve as mobile stations for tenants taking personal calls. The Hive stretches

across 10,000 sqm and holds 1,000 desks that offer high speed internet, dedicated phone lines and server space. Tenants can also use conference rooms, printing services, courier services, mail handling and packaging facilities here.

"Members have access to state-of-the-art retail, hospitality, entertainment, and F&B services at the seamlessly integrated lifestyle centre, VR Bengaluru," Samdariya adds. Tenants can access attached suites and residences at The Waverly, Tribe fitness club, spa and salon, a rooftop pool, lounge bar, microbrewery, PVR cinema, even retail outlets. Home to creative professionals, freelancers, start-ups and other emerging enterprises, The Hive acts as a second abode to Airbus, ID Fresh,

a Wikimedia manager, Conde Nast India among several other firms in the health tech, fitness, education tech, venture capital and lifestyle sectors.

Vivek Banka, founder of data and technology firm Alitore Capital who works out of The Hive gives deeper insight into the work culture at a co-working space. For him, one of the key motivational factors to work out of this "office" is the lack of stress — the company doesn't have to worry about capital and administration. "The team stays encouraged and energetic throughout. They get to focus on work, and we don't have to worry about maintaining the office. After a hard day's work, they unwind at the rooftop bar or the microbrewery. The vibrant community keeps the team enthusiastic always," says Banka.

My trip to Ministry of New, a co-working space in Mumbai's Fort area for a book launch was an interesting experience too. I peeked into their minimal cabins and communal work desks; picture a wooden swing in a mint green, residential-style library with smaller rooms that offer a more intimate set-up. Spacious with a European decor with a local touch that is almost endearing, Ministry of New "welcomes you to a new way of working".

According to their brochure: "Away from the mainstream, away from the crowd, people are yearning for space to be themselves. Space to feel inspired, to connect and be part of a community of like-minded individuals." Ministry of New was conceived by Dutch nationals Marlies Bloemendaal and Natascha Chadha who yearned to work in an inspiring and collaborative workspace. Their aim wasn't to just create an ordinary office but to build a consolidated space that will house a like-minded community.

A visit to the Ministry of New (MoN) ensures creative interactions with freelancers, coaches, consultants, start-ups, expats, NRIs, digital nomads and corporate teams. The Gallery is its 204 sqm workspace that offers a stunning view of Mumbai. The Bark is its wooden room with high ceilings that emanates a peaceful environment for its members. For house teams of six to eight people there are The Team Rooms. There is also a boardroom, a brainstorming room called The Chapel and common areas titled The Courtyard and Mondays (the in-house cafe). While it is priced on the higher side than usual co-working spaces at a part-time membership beginning at ₹9,500 for ten days per month, it provides a host of services that gives you value for your money. This includes exclusive access to curated events here, free coffee and tea, multi-functional printers, full-time technical support, courier and concierge service on-demand, shower facilities and lockers.

A number of small- and medium-sized firms call MoN their office, including Valiance Healthcare System — a health care company focused on developing speciality care centres. A conversation with Mallika Tarkas Parekh, co-founder and

chief executive officer of the company gives perspective on co-working spaces like MoN. “Given that we are a start-up business in health care services, we require a significant amount of time planning and developing our model and standards of care. The Ministry of New is a unique space, creatively designed with an international flair that stimulates us to also think outside the box within our sector about innovative ways in which to change and improve health care services in Mumbai. A shared working space not only encourages us to share ideas with each other frequently, but also enables us to bring in successful ideas and processes from other professionals and sectors,” she says. “While everyone has a title and a role, the co-working environment pushes our team to get involved in tasks and projects that they might not necessarily have the opportunity to do in a more conventional corporate set-up or within a hospital setting. This, in turn, promotes individual growth.”

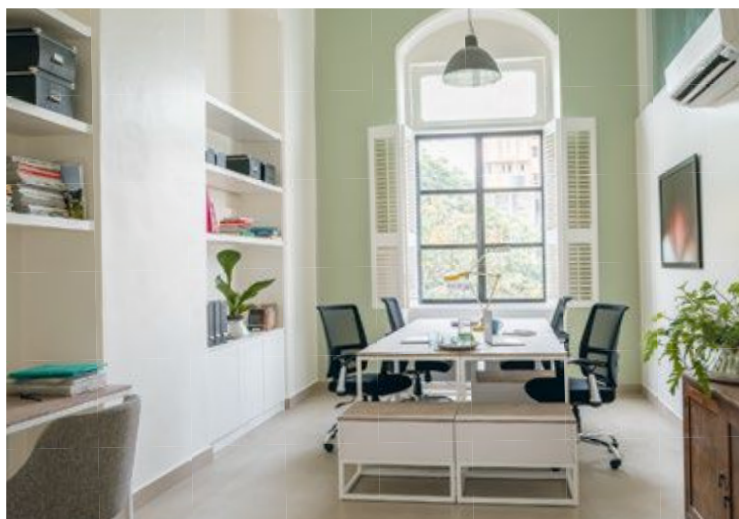
Like Valiance Healthcare System, a number of unconventional start-ups are constantly in the search of collaborative workspaces that encourage them. According to a

research by JLL India, a global real estate services firm specialising in commercial property and investment management, India boasts of almost 100 co-working space operators as of today.

New Delhi-based co-working space provider, Awfis Space Solutions announced the launch of its Hyderabad centre at Taj Deccan hotel. “This is our latest addition to our South expansion. We have 18 co-working centres across four cities — Hyderabad, Delhi, Mumbai and Bengaluru. We plan to take this number to 25 in six locations by April,” says Awfis founder and CEO Amit Ramani in an interview with *The Times of India*. Innov8 — another provider from the capital — also expanded its operations in Bengaluru after venturing into Chandigarh. The company raised an undisclosed amount in an angel round enabled by LetsVenture and Venture Catalysts in March, as reported by *The Economic Times*.

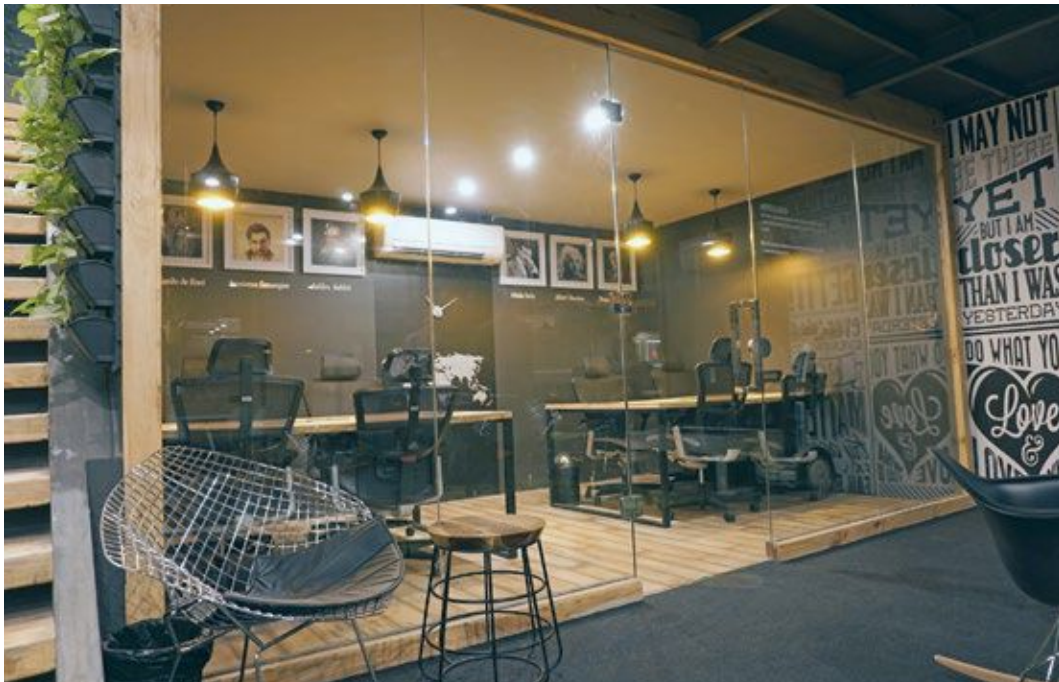
Investopad, 91 Springboard and Alt F are some other providers that operate out of Delhi are spreading their wings across the major metros. “Among the main drivers of this phenomenon are the increasing number of freelance professionals and consultants in today’s globalised workforce, for whom co-working spaces are now all the rage across Indian metros. Also, co-working business centres are in great demand with corporates looking for flexibility in work locations,” says Nitish Bhasin, managing director, markets at JLL India.

Flexible working hours, affordable rents and an inspiring community amidst an uplifting environment are only some of the reasons youth today desire operating out of a co-working space. Whether you’re a business traveller in the city for a few weeks or a budding entrepreneur on the look out for a creative hub, the array of versatile co-working spaces won’t disappoint.



Left and right:
The Hive; Ministry
of New

CO-WORKING SPACES IN INDIA



■ **SOCIAL OFFLINE**

Collaborative workspace in the day and bar by night. Present at 15 locations across India including Delhi, Bengaluru and Mumbai. Free access. socialoffline.in

■ **REGUS**

Corporate-style offices with prices start from ₹499 per person per day across 96 locations in India. regus.in

■ **INNOV8**

Present in Delhi, Bengaluru and Chandigarh. Launching in Mumbai and Noida soon. Every day a new desk is allotted to encourage networking. Prices start from ₹7,000 per person per month. innov8.work

■ **AWFIS SPACE SOLUTIONS**

Along with office space, Awfis provides concierge services, flexible seating, access to networking events — it also has a privilege club. Present at eight cities including Chennai, Pune, Bengaluru and Delhi. Prices start from ₹5,000 per person per month. awfis.com

■ **91 SPRINGBOARD**

A 24-hour workspace that provides access to

a network of mentors, as well as a forum for posting and finding jobs. Present across six cities in India including Mumbai, Delhi, Bengaluru and Hyderabad. Flexible prices. 91springboard.com

■ **MINISTRY OF NEW**

Collaborative workspace in a European-style, minimal decor based in Mumbai. Prices for a part-time membership start from ₹9,500 per person for ten days. ministryofnew.in

■ **BOMBAY CONNECT**

One of the premier co-working business centres in Mumbai. Open spaces with meeting rooms and private cabins. Prices start from ₹3,500 per person per month. bombay-connect.com

■ **INHWA BUSINESS CENTRE**

Collaborative workspace along with serviced offices and meeting rooms in the heart of Gurugram. Prices start from ₹2,000 per person per month. inhwabusinesscentre.com

■ **THE HIVE**

Situated in the IT hub of Bengaluru attached to VR Bengaluru. Access to a range of facilities. Prices start from ₹7,000 per person per month. vrbengaluru.com ■



Nairobi



Manchester

Convenient Connections

(India to Nairobi via Muscat) Starting 27th March, 2017

Nairobi is the capital and largest city of Kenya. The name "Nairobi" comes from the Maasai phrase Enkare Nairobi, which translates to "cool water". It is famous for having the Nairobi National Park, the world's only game reserve found within a major city.

Flight No.	Destination	Departure	Arrival
WY 721	Muscat - Nairobi	14:50	18:55
WY 722	Nairobi - Muscat	00:45	06:50

(India to Manchester via Muscat) Starting 1st May, 2017

Manchester is known throughout the world for two of the biggest names in sport: Manchester United and Manchester City football clubs. The trendy Northern Quarter is the creative hub of Manchester's shopping scene, and offers a unique experience with its mix of bars, cafes and eclectic one-off shops.

Flight No.	Destination	Departure	Arrival
WY 105	Muscat - Manchester	14:00	19:05
WY 106	Manchester - Muscat	20:45	07:20*

* Next Day Arrival

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BUSINESS IN Chengdu

Connecting point

Jeremy Tredinnick discovers
that while its people remain
relatively laid-back, Chengdu is
very much in fast-forward mode





The drive into Chengdu from busy Shuangliu International airport is the same as most modern Chinese cities – along a wide, well-built expressway lined with car dealers ranging from Mazda and Honda to Mercedes, Maserati and Bentley.

The city skyline appears up ahead, a typical forest of soaring towers, but then we turn north towards an even larger urban sprawl and I realise that they were merely part of the Tianfu New Area that has grown so fast in the past few years. This planned 1,578 sq km city will comprise seven zones focusing on manufacturing, high-tech, innovation, and research and development, as well as scenic water and mountain areas to make it appealing as a liveable new urban centre.

Chengdu has more than 4,000 years of history as the focal point of the fertile Sichuan Basin, and has seen its share of change over the millennia, but never on a scale such as this. “Three years ago I came here and the only international hotels were Sofitel, Wanda and the Shangri-La [there was a Sheraton and Kempinski too], but look at it now,” says Khan Sung, general manager of the new JW Marriott Chengdu.

The old downtown district north of the Jinjiang River is still the cultural and business centre, but four subway lines now transport its population of 7.8 million people out to sprawling suburbs and secondary urban centres, while Chengdu’s population over its entire administrative area is 14 million. Somehow, though, it maintains a more easygoing atmosphere than the east-coast cities. Residents have a reputation for valuing quality of life, manifested in the city’s teahouse culture and people’s love of communal discourse and the arts.

ECONOMY & INFRASTRUCTURE

According to the Chengdu Municipal Bureau of Statistics, the city’s GDP exceeded RMB 1 trillion (RMB 1 = ₹9.33) in 2015, a year-on-year increase of 7.9 per cent, 1 per cent higher than the national average. Much of this is down to growth in the automotive and pharmaceutical sectors, but increasingly IT and modern service industries are muscling in on the commercial landscape, especially in areas like the Hi-Tech Zone in the Tianfu New Area.

Chengdu was at the forefront of China’s “Go West” campaign that began at the turn of the 21st century, and has since become a land and air gateway to Europe, the Middle East and Africa for Chinese business. In July 2015, a freight train left the city loaded with electronics and motor parts and headed to Lodz in Poland, from where the goods were distributed to Germany, the Netherlands and Slovakia. Less than a month later it returned with goods from Italy, France and Spain.



This route is part of China's so-called "One Belt, One Road" initiative to create a modern "Silk Road", a Eurasian Land Bridge of rail and road networks linking China's east coast with Europe across Central Asia. Exports from Shenzhen, Xiamen, Ningbo and Kunming will now have a route to European markets through Chengdu, making it a key transport hub.

The city also has major aviation ambitions. In May last year, construction began on the RMB 70 billion Chengdu Tianfu International Airport. Located in Jianyang City, about 50km south of both Chengdu and Shuangliu International, it is scheduled to be finished by 2020 and will cater to the economic growth of Chengdu, the Tianfu New Area and Chongqing, all of which will be connected to it by improved or new road and rail networks.

The need for a second airport for the city and province is easy to see. Shuangliu's passenger throughput reached 40 million in 2015, and is projected to rise to 60 million by 2020 – the second airport will be able to handle up to 90 million passengers per year, cementing Chengdu's status as the fourth-largest state-level aviation hub, after Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou.

Priscilla Wong is residence manager of IFS Residences, a new luxury serviced apartment property that opened in November above the huge shopping mall of the same name. "Growth is expected at a similar pace [to recent years] for the next couple of years since plans were announced to further upgrade the city and its transportation network," she says. "Chengdu will become increasingly internationalised when its second airport opens in 2020; more air routes to Asia, Europe, North America and Africa will generate even more investment in the city."

Previous page:
Chunxi Road
Top and right:
Waldorf Astoria;
The Temple House

WHAT TO SEE

Shoppers will inevitably head to the Tai Koo Li and IFS retail centres, but more typical Chinese goods can be found along **Chunxi Street**, which runs east-west from IFS most of the way to Tianfu Square.

To buy souvenirs, try local snacks or drink tea, head to the restored **Kuanzhai Alley** – also called the "wide and narrow alley" – located about a 15-minute walk west of Tianfu Square. This area of "old Chengdu" alleys and courtyards offers a pleasant, if somewhat theme park-like, cultural experience.

Jinli Street is a maze of narrow lanes reconstructed in similarly traditional fashion, where domestic Chinese tourists buy up fiery-hot chillies in various forms.

Jinli Street occupies the northern tip of a park that surrounds the **Wuhou Temple** (entry RMB 60), which was built during the Three Kingdoms period (AD220-280) to honour Zhuge Liang, a military strategist of the era. It's a genuine piece of ancient history, and a peaceful place to escape the city.

Another refuge is **People's Park**, where one of the city's oldest tea-drinking establishments, the Heming Teahouse, is still popular.

A short walk from here is the new **Chengdu Museum** (open Tues-Sun 9am-5pm; free entry), a huge glass block on the western side of Tianfu Square that is well worth a few hours of your time.

WHERE TO STAY

Niccolo

Connected to the IFS shopping mall and facing the outdoor luxury shopping precinct of Tai Koo Li, this 230-room “contemporary urban chic” hotel opened in April 2015 and houses beautiful art and event spaces such as an oval glass Conservatory and a Sky Garden. marcopolohotels.com

Grand Hyatt

This 390-room hotel opened in July 2015 in the Chunxi Road shopping district. Designed in “French mansion style”, its 3,000 sqm of event space includes a ballroom with a Versailles-style garden terrace, while the No 8 restaurant is designed like a local market.

chengdu.grand.hyatt.com

Wanda Reign

Located by the Jinjiang River, the hotel opened in December 2015 and boasts a 41st-floor lobby with great views. More than 50 types of marble have been used throughout this opulent property.

wandahotels.com

IFS Residences

Rising above its namesake shopping mall, this luxury serviced apartment complex opened 150 of its units last November, with as many more due to be ready by early this year. All of its facilities are for in-house residents only. ifsresidences.com

The Temple House

Occupying one corner of Tai Koo Li, the Temple House is part renovated heritage temple, part gleaming smoked-glass towers. Its 100 rooms and 42 serviced residences sport minimalist décor, while its underground pool, gym and meeting rooms make clever use of skylights. thetemplehousehotel.com

Shangri-La

A 593-room hotel near the river, this was one of the earliest international brands to open in Chengdu, in 2007. The Horizon Club rooms and lounge occupy high floors with sweeping views over the city.

shangri-la.com

St Regis

This luxury property opened in 2014 near Tianfu Square, offering 279 plush rooms, indoor and outdoor pools, and a spa. stregis.com

Hilton

The 315-room Hilton opened in September 2015 in

the Tianfu New Area south of the city. Housed in one of the Seaton Plaza towers, it has executive rooms on floors 32 to 37, with the executive lounge providing panoramic views. A top-floor gym and pool are the highest in Chengdu. hilton.com

JW Marriott

Opened in October 2016 and offering 345 rooms close to Tianfu Square, the hotel’s main selling point is its large ballroom with accompanying roof garden.

marriott.com

Fraser Suites

This popular, centrally located serviced apartment property offers 360 one-, two- and three-bedroom apartments, a pool, a snooker room and a large outdoor barbecue terrace.

chengdu.frasershospitality.com

Other hotels

South of the river are properties such as the Somerset Riverview, Ascott Raffles City, Kempinski (undergoing renovation this year), Oakwood and Renaissance. On its right is the New Century Global Centre – one of the largest buildings in the world by floor area (1.76 million sqm) – which includes two InterContinental, while closer to the Hilton, new arrivals include a Fairmont and Marriott.

A Waldorf Astoria is scheduled to launch in September near the New Century Global Centre, while a Four Points by Sheraton is planned to open in Hi-Tech Zone next year, joining two other Four Points properties in the city. ■





Club Carlson launches triple points offer

Club Carlson loyalty programme is currently offering triple Gold points on all stays completed before June 30.

The scheme – which encompasses brands including Radisson, Radisson Blu, Radisson Red, Park Plaza and Park Inn by Radisson – is also offering a further bonus of 5,000 points for each Sunday or Monday night stayed.

Note that this means members will earn 10,000 bonus points (on top of the triple points) if their stay covers both a Sunday and Monday. In Bahrain, Egypt, Kuwait, Libya, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the UAE the 5,000 bonus points are available for stays on Saturdays and Sundays.

The triple points offer means members will earn 60 Gold Points per US Dollar spent, instead of the usual 20.

Both offers are valid for multiple stays, up to a maximum of 100,000 bonus points earned over the promotional period.

Club Carlson says that free award nights start from “as little as 9,000 points”. clubcarlson.com



Le Club AccorHotels launches triple point promotion for Australia properties

Le Club AccorHotels launches a triple point promotion offered at 30 properties of AccorHotels across Australia. The booking is from April 13 until May 31 for stays until June 30. Any booking made during the registration period is valid until June 30. Guests must register for the Australian Resorts X3 offer before booking, to be eligible for the offer. accorhotels.com





SPG is offering 30 per cent off on stays across the Middle East

Starwood Hotels and Resorts is offering SPG members a 30 per cent off on their stay at any of the properties across the Middle East. The participating properties are in the UAE, Jordan, Oman, Bahrain, Qatar and Saudi Arabia. Booking period for this offer is until May 20. It is valid for stays between April 24 and May 29. starwoodhotels.com

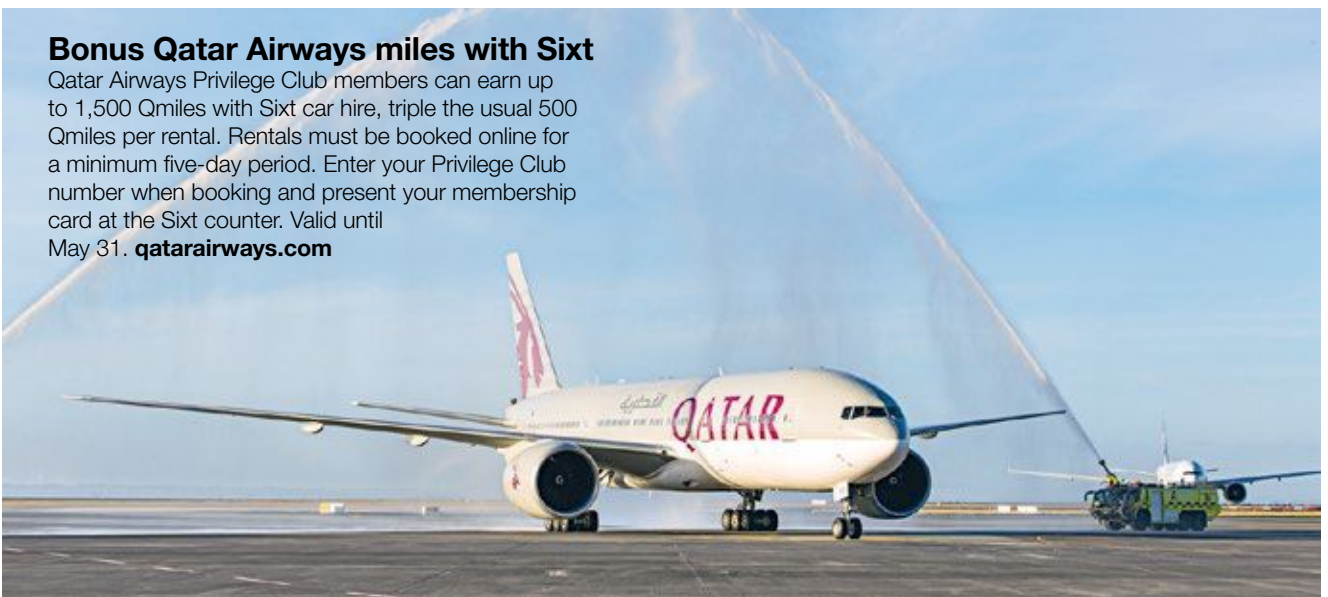


FlySmiLes launches digital membership card

SriLankan Airlines has launched a digital card for the convenience of its FlySmiLes members, the airline's loyalty programme. Members must download and log into the SriLankan Airlines app to access their digital membership card. While FlySmiLes Silver members will no longer be given the plastic card, Classic, Gold and Platinum members have the option of receiving it in addition to the digital version. This is because unlike the Silver tier, the other membership categories benefit from oneworld partner airline privileges. When travelling, passengers can simply display their digital membership cards on Apple or Android supported smartphones and tablets. SriLankan Airlines launched in 1979 and flies to 94 destinations across 44 countries. flysmiles.com

Bonus Qatar Airways miles with Sixt

Qatar Airways Privilege Club members can earn up to 1,500 Qmiles with Sixt car hire, triple the usual 500 Qmiles per rental. Rentals must be booked online for a minimum five-day period. Enter your Privilege Club number when booking and present your membership card at the Sixt counter. Valid until May 31. qatarairways.com



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A MAGNETIC PERSONALITY

London is an attractive destination for visitors and investors from the world over. **Neha Gupta Kapoor** finds out why

Amongst the world's 20 most visited cities, as per a report by market researcher Euromonitor that computed total arrivals in 2015, London (18.6 million) ranks third after Hong Kong (26.6 million) and Bangkok (18.7 million). The 20th city on the list, Pattaya had 7.49 million arrivals that year.

London has often been likened, and more so recently, to dynamic cities such as New York, Milan

and Paris — some of the most vibrant on the globe. Just like them, London is fluent in international gastronomy, art, culture and architecture. In 2015, BBC stated that 37 per cent Londoners were born outside the UK. A visitor can very well sample global lifestyles in this city that has zones earmarked by various ethnicities. Walking through them can trick the mind into believing it is in another world altogether — for example



Clockwise from this to the next page: London Eye; The Sherlock Holmes Museum; London tube map; Liverpool Street; Abbey Road; Platform 9 ¾



mini-India in Southall in the west, a Bangladeshi society in Brick Lane in the east and Peckham in southeast London evidently follows Jamaican lifestyle.

Then there is the hipster culture in and around Old Street, punk and rock 'n' roll in Camden Town and a more eclectic vibe in the lanes of Soho. There is something to do for all types of audiences in London.

Type #AbbeyRoad (St John's Wood tube station) on social media, and its pedestrian crossing will pop up on your screen — this is where The Beatles had shot their famous album cover in 1969. Go to the western departures hall in King's Cross Railway Station for the Platform 9¾ signage as shown in the Harry Potter movie. Below it is the luggage trolley halfway through the brick wall. Just outside of the Earl's Court tube station is Doctor Who's machine for Time and Relative Dimension

in Space. Sherlock Holmes' flat at 221B Baker Street (now The Sherlock Holmes Museum) is a walking distance from the Baker Street tube station. And finally the MI6 headquarters at Albert Embankment is nearest to Exit 1 of the Vauxhall tube station.

All these are attractions that draw in international tourists (mostly during summer) year round. This is in addition to the usual list of London Eye, Tower of London, Madame Tussauds, Buckingham Palace, Westminster Abbey and Hyde Park to name a few.

ART AND CULTURE

For something off-beat, the culturally hungry modernists will find an ongoing eccentric collection of events and festivals at Hackney, Peckham and Brixton — all in zone 2. As they still have old industrial buildings, real estate is cheap in these areas, making it easier for students to rent housing.

This is also why performing experimental theatre and shows by aspiring artists are a rage in these parts — old warehouses are commonly rented out for events. Check the local media for information on such happenings.

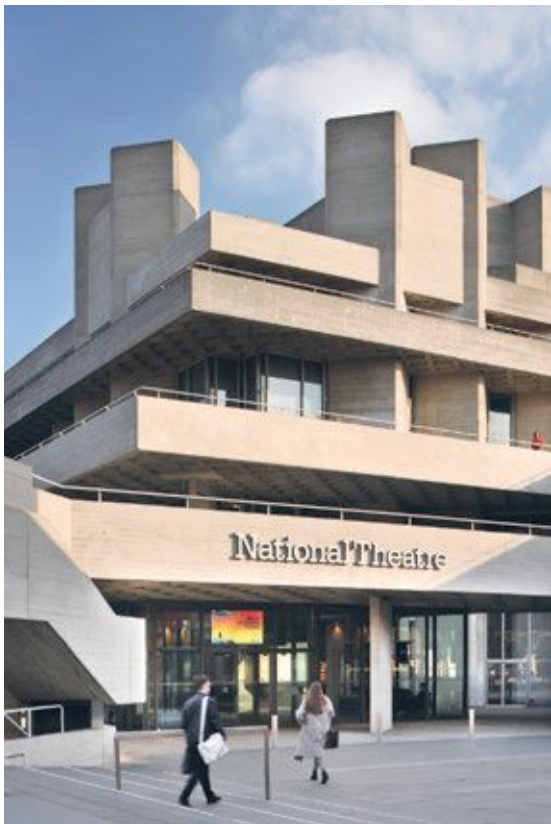
For the more recognised cultural institutes, take the tube to Holborn to visit British Museum, and to High Street Kensington for Science Museum. South Kensington has Natural History Museum, and Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A). The latter is also where you will find interesting art exhibits from time to time.

Of course, no art walk in London is complete without a stop at Saatchi Gallery (Sloane Square tube station). In April 2016, *The Art Newspaper's* Exhibition and Museum Attendance Survey stated that in the last five years, 15 of the 20 most visited art exhibits in London were displayed here. Others on the list included



THE SHERLOCK HOLMES MUSEUM | LONDON.EYE.COM

INSIDE LONDON Overview



MARCOOT RESTAURANT | LONDON | TEMPLE & SONS | ROYAL NATIONAL THEATRE | SHAKESPEARE'S GLOBE

National Gallery (Charing Cross tube station) and Tate Modern (Southwark tube station).

Shakespeare too began his acting and writing career in the British capital. Just off the banks of River Thames is Shakespeare's Globe (Mansion House tube station). It is a theatre and exhibition space "dedicated to the exploration of Shakespeare's work".

Royal National Theatre (Waterloo tube station) is another iconic entertainment house in London with four auditoriums — Olivier, Lyttelton, Dorfman and Temporarily. It also has eating and drinking facilities that include the popular restaurant, House for European cuisine.

Of course there are many other theatres in the city, it really depends on what you want to see. Head to the street between Leicester Square and Piccadilly Circus tube stations. This is where you will find a number of booths vending tickets for the famous musicals that perform in London year round.

FOOD AND DRINK

The city literally never sleeps. Venture out at 4am and you're likely to find kebab shops, pizza parlours and Chinese takeaways serving a busy counter. The clientele is either people working until (very) late or those returning from a wild night out. As for the tastes, they're close to authentic. Earlier still, continuing on the search for "street" foods, one can find English pies, Indian samosas and chicken curry at certain stations such as London Bridge and St Pancras.

For those who believe that food should please the eyes first, London has some of the world's leading speciality restaurants. The more recent ones include the likes of Margot, an Italian venue in Covent Garden; grills and British fare at Temple and Sons; and Nordic eatery, Aquavit whose

sister venue in New York has two Michelin stars. London has its own Michelin star restaurants too — 55 restaurants with one Michelin star, nine with two Michelin stars and two with three Michelin stars.

As for Indian food, there are options of Michelin star restaurants like Benares and Tamarind, and quirky ones such as Dishoom and Gymkhana that impress with their innovative offerings. Flip through this section (Inside London) for more on these iconic Indian restaurants that you must visit in the city.

INTERNATIONAL FUNDS

India and England share a long history that goes back to more than 160 years. It began when the British set up homes and launched companies in our country in the early 19th century. Now with globalisation, Indians and their homegrown companies are buying/renting real estate in the British capital. These include the likes of Zomato, Infosys, Emvigo and Axis Bank to name a few. A prime reason for companies to choose London for expansion is its proximity to Europe and European headquarters.

In September 2015, David Slater, the director of international trade and investment at London & Partners, the official company that promotes the city as an investment destination, had stated: "From technology to life sciences, London's high concentration of global decision makers and experts makes it an ideal destination for businesses looking to establish an international headquarters. This fact is supported by IBM's report which reveals that over [in 2014] we have seen more companies expand and relocate in London than New York, Singapore and Dublin combined."

Confirming this is a survey conducted by CBRE in 2016 that finds London on the top of the list

of the "ten most attractive cities for investment in EMEA". CBRE is a commercial property consultant who has won Retail Agency Team of the Year Property Award 2016.

London & Partners has helped 270 international companies establish businesses in London in 2014-15. It says, "We are the experts on doing business in the capital, helping overseas businesses to set up and grow." Through this company, the tech sector received about 40 per cent of the investment capital, which explains why the Americans, Chinese and Indians accounted for nearly half of this investment.

As for housing, post-Brexit has brought about price cuts in the city's property market. Earlier this year, *Financial Times* quoted Marcus Dixon, head of research at LonRes, a data firm for the residential market: "Sterling has fallen by 16 per cent since the Brexit vote on June 23. Combining these factors could lead to a total discount of 30 to 40 per cent for (real estate) buyers compared with the top of the market."

Indians — NRIs, high net worth individuals and corporate investors — have always been attracted to the economic and political stability of London's markets. Further, the recent Liberalised Remittance Scheme by the RBI has eased the option for Indians to own properties in foreign countries.

Housing.com recently published an article on why Indians find London an alluring destination to buy real estate. Amongst the many reasons listed by the online property broker, it says: "Prevalent property prices in London, post Brexit, provide an opportunity for investment." The article goes on to quote prominent Indian real estate companies who add that friendly bilateral policies between the countries encourage this influx of FDI into London and vice versa. Globalisation and increase in foreign expenditure limits are other encouraging factors stated. ■

Clockwise from left: Saatchi Gallery; Temple & Sons; Margot Restaurant; Shakespeare's Globe; Royal National Theatre



INSIDE LONDON Leisure



TELEPHONE





A WALK DOWN HISTORY

The capital of Britain has much to offer its visitors in terms of interesting sights. **Netra Venkateshwaran** dives into the history of some of its iconic landmarks

Red is what tourists often associate with London. Names of tube stations are circled in a ruby red, the same shade that dresses the queen's guards, as well as the phone booths, post boxes and the double-decker buses. They're also probably the five most "instagrammed" elements to symbolise the British capital.

Why red? It is believed that in the early 1900s, when bus companies each ran allotted routes, their vehicles were painted different colours for easy identification. London General Omnibus Company owned most of the city's buses and painted its entire fleet red to stand out from the competition. The post boxes adopted this colour so denizens can spot them easily from afar as London's gloomy weather can often impair visibility with unpredictable rain and fog. Same goes for the phone booth, although its designer, Sir Giles Gilbert Scott simply wanted to follow the colours of the post box and bus that are instantly recognisable red symbols of London.

Balancing out this bright colour are the city's iconic landmarks in subdued hues of sepia and cream. We often walk past them, briefly halting for a quick photo, and continuing onto the next sight. Not many of us are aware of their interesting facts, just like that of London's blushing red. Here are five such venues that top the tourists' lists.

BIG BEN

Formerly known as Great Bell, Elizabeth Tower, its Great Clock and Great Bell together came to be known as Big Ben. Many propose the theory that Big Ben is named after Sir Benjamin Hall, a Welsh engineer and politician, who was fondly known as “Big Ben” amongst his loved ones. The main bell weighs 13.7 tonnes, has a diameter of 2.7 metres, and a height of 2.2 metres. It has four other bells for each quarter of the hour weighing 1.1, 1.3, 1.7 and 4 tonnes. The hammer that strikes them weighs 200kg, chiming the musical note E for Great Bell, and G sharp, F sharp, E and B on striking the first, second, third and fourth quarter bells respectively. This clock tower that is located at Palace of Westminster has been functional since May 1859 and the bells rang for the first time on July 11, 1859. Every year the minute hands of the four dials travel a distance of 190km each. And by this calculation, on May 2017 they complete 30,020km — that’s more than the distance between the north and south poles — 20,004km. parliament.uk/bigben



TRAFALGAR SQUARE

Between the 14th and 17th centuries, this was the courtyard of the Great Mews stabling, which served The Palace of Whitehall, main residence of the English monarchs in London from 1530 until 1698. In 1812, it was developed as a cultural space open to the public. Today, Trafalgar Square is one of central London's lifestyle venues, as it is surrounded by a number of museums, galleries and buildings of historic importance. Locals and tourists both find it enjoyable to spend an afternoon here. This is also the address for peaceful community gatherings, political demonstrations and campaigns for a

cause. Trafalgar Square was named so to honour the victorious Battle of Trafalgar and to salute Admiral Horatio Lord Nelson, a British flag officer in the Royal Navy, who lost his life in this battle. The 52-metre tall Corinthian column that we see towering over the square today, was designed by English architect William Railton and built between 1841 and 1843. The statue atop the column is that of Admiral Nelson. At its base, there are four huge bronze lions that guard the column. Sir Edwin Landseer, an artist known for his paintings of animals had designed these wild cats in 1867, thus their tag — Landseer's Lions. The fountains were added in 1845. london.gov.uk



CUTTY SARK

Cutty Sark is the world's only surviving clipper and was one of the fastest in her heyday. Clippers are fast sailing cargo ships of the 19th century. Cutty Sark gets her name from what is a depiction of the fastest runner in Robert Burn's poem, *Tam O'Shanter*. Cutty Sark owes her ability to reach speeds up to 17 knots, to her sleek, yet strong design and high quality materials used in constructing her. This ship was built in 1869 for Jock Willis Shipping Line for the purpose of transporting tea from China to Britain in the 1800's. After the steamships became all the rage, cutting sailing time to China by weeks, Cutty Sark changed her course to bring wool from Australia, a dangerous route at the time. In the 1920s she was purchased by former clipper captain who was still in reverence of her glory. Post his death she was given to the navy Training College at Greenwich where she served as a vital training resource for officers of the Royal and Merchant Navies. Post her serving years, in 1954 she found a place in the dry docks of Greenwich in London where major restoration and conservation work was carried out on her. Cutty Sark has been open for public viewing since 2011. rmg.co.uk/cutty-sark





LONDON EYE

This giant Ferris wheel that is situated on South Bank, is an eight-minute walk from Big Ben. Being amongst the world's ten tallest cantilevered observation wheels at a height of 135 metres, a ride in any one of its 32 capsules allows breathtaking views of the entire city. All capsules with a capacity to hold 25 people each, are attached to the external body of the wheel and are operated by electric motors. London Eye is a symbol to "represent the passage of time" with each turn of its wheel. Inaugurated by the then Prime Minister, Tony Blair on December 31, 1999, it was built to commemorate the new millennium and that is why it is also known as The Millennium Wheel. Originally, it was intended to be a temporary structure, but with its growing popularity, city officials decided to let this be a permanent structure of London's skyline. The monument began welcoming the public from March 9, 2000 and today, millions from the world over board it each year. londoneye.com



TOWER BRIDGE

The plans for Tower Bridge were formed in 1876 and it was finally completed in 1894. The 265-metre long suspension bridge helps commuters cross over River Thames on foot and car. The mechanism to control this overpass is situated in the 65-metre high towers at both its ends. These towers are also connected by a walkway with 11-metre long glass panels (installed in 2014) on the wooden floor for unusual views of the traffic passing by below. Visitors often mistake Tower Bridge for London Bridge or think both are the same. In actuality, they're two completely different structures, at a distance of more than 1km from and parallel to each other. By the 19th century, to manage the increasing population in east London, another bridge, other than the London Bridge, needed to be built. It took over 50 redesigns before the current one — Victorian Gothic — was finalised for Tower Bridge. Thereafter, it took a total of eight years, five major contractors and 432 construction workers to complete the project. The 50 submitted designs are still available to view at Tower Bridge Exhibition. This is also where visitors can learn about the bridge's history through photographs, films and literature. towerbridge.org.uk ■



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TIKKA MASALA DIARIES

Akanksha Maker lists Indian restaurants worth a visit in London

When former British cabinet minister, Robin Cook stated that chicken tikka masala was the national dish of Britain in 2001, it made headlines. There are many stories regarding the invention of this dish though. One source claims it originated in an Indian restaurant in Glasgow, Scotland; another one cites that it was created by accident in Uttar Pradesh or Punjab in India. Either way, chicken tikka masala has been instrumental in making Indian cuisine

a part of popular culture in London, along with traditional curry houses.

Strong flavours filled with aromas of spices and Indian condiments provide warmth and relief amidst the plummeting temperatures of the English capital. In recent times, London's array of restaurants ranging from casual to fine dining have redefined Indian cuisine served here. If you're looking for more than just chicken curry on your next visit to London, read on.



Baluchi

India's homegrown The LaLiT Suri Hospitality Group launched its first international property in London this January. The hotel houses the brand's signature pan-Indian restaurant, Baluchi. Along with its signature dal (lentil) Baluchi, which is prepared overnight to achieve an aromatic and rich creamy texture, the restaurant also serves a number of innovative dishes. These include suroore-shorba, a Kerala-style lobster bisque and gucchi aur mushroom ki galouti, which is morels and wild mushroom duxelle with mint and plum chutney. Its paan (betel leaf) biryani that is prepared with rose petals, vegetables, betel leaves and nuts is an item from Baluchi's New Delhi outpost that's made it here. To go along with the mains and appetisers are its range of bread with Indian and international flavours. Pick traditional fillings or go for luscious ones such as porcini and truffle naan. As expected, Baluchi's desserts too stray away from the conventional, with items like masala chai ice-cream, gulkhanda (rose petal jam) gulab jamun — caramelised milk dumplings, and rose petal confit with rice pudding. The restaurant also serves its own version of high tea called "high chai" that comes in two menus, one traditional Indian and another for international palates. The former lists every day Indian preparations like Punjabi samosa and chaat that pair well with tea, while the latter serves macarons, scones, sandwiches and mousses. Appetisers start at £14.40/₹1,167; 181 Tooley Street; tel: +44 20 3765 0000; thelalit.com.



Benares

Named after the former name of the holy Indian city of Varanasi, the Michelin-starred Benares has set high standards for modern Indian cuisine since its inception. Spearheaded by celebrated Indian Chef Atul Kochar, the menu prides itself on authentic Indian fare with a British influence. English ingredients are prepared using age-old Indian techniques to create the restaurant's acclaimed dishes. Benares features a tasting menu that can be paired with wine. Offered on this menu are exotic preparations such as chargrilled Scottish salmon in coconut and curry leaf sauce and Cornish crab croquette in smoked tomato chutney. For the mains, pick between a roasted rump of English lamb or a tandoori cutlet alongside jus and buttered dal. To complete this extravagant meal is an exotic dessert — rhubarb bhapa doi that blends a milk-solid-based South Asian sweet with crème brûlée. Benares also offers an Indian Street Food Menu that has progressive touches. Dishes from different parts of India are presented in a modern format; choose between crispy pani puri from Mumbai or the grilled curry leaf sea-bass from Goa. Its signature cocktails such as passion fruit chutney martini and Bollywood (vodka-based drink) are worth a try. Its seven-course non-vegetarian tasting menu is priced at £98/₹7,941; 12a, Berkeley Square, Mayfair; tel +44 20 7629 8886; benaresrestaurant.com.



Dishoom

Almost 400 Iranian cafes opened by Zoroastrian immigrants from Iran existed during the 1960s in Mumbai; now there are less than 30 in the southern part of the city. Dishoom is London's answer to Mumbai's age-old Irani cafes. Picture high ceilings, slow-moving fans, sepia family portraits; it's easy to get teleported to another place and time at this restaurant. Whether you're looking to begin your day here or visiting at noon for a quick working lunch, Dishoom's expansive menu has something for everyone. Traditional Irani favourites like Kejriwal (two fried eggs on a chilli toast) or Akuri (an Irani cafe staple with three spicy scrambled eggs served on buns) are ideal for a delectable breakfast. Its all-day menu boasts of a wide variety of small bites that are quintessential to Mumbai's local culture. This includes lamb samosas, okra fries and signature items from Mumbai's street-style shops such as vada pav (Bombay's version of London's Chip Butty) and pau bhajji (mashed, buttered vegetables served with warm buns). From its north Indian dishes, opt for murgh malai (butter chicken) and pair it with black house dal alongside a cheese naan. The menu also features chicken berry Britannia, a Dishoom version of the namesake Irani cafe's rice dish, served with cranberries. Its array of refreshing mocktails and cocktails on the same theme won't disappoint. End your meal with kala khatta gola ice (fluffy ice flakes steeped in kokum fruit syrup) presented just like it is presented at Mumbai's Chowpatty beach. Breakfast dishes start at £5.50/₹445; St Martin's Courtyard, 12 Upper Street Martin's Lane; tel: +44 20 7420 9320; dishoom.com.



Gymkhana

The one Michelin-starred Gymkhana is inspired by the culture of colonial Indian gymkhana clubs, where members of the upper strata of society made merry, dined, drank and played sports. It serves classic Indian cuisine with a contemporary touch, focussing on spicy communal dishes. With fans that hang from dark oak ceilings, hunting trophies of the kings and wall lamps from Rajasthan, the restaurant's interiors stir a subtle nostalgia from the time of Indian royalty. Whether you're visiting for lunch or dinner, there are a number of carefully designed menus to pick from. These include the Royal Academy Lunch Menu, a three-course feast with cassava, lentil and sabudana (sago) papadum served with shrimp and mango chutney; Mysore vegetable or Chettinad duck dosa (fermented rice pancakes) and wild mushroom; and truffle and morel pilau (flavoured rice) or tandoori shahi zeera chicken chop or wild muntjac biryani (flavoured rice) with curd. Its dessert menu thrills the sweet lover with items like spiced chocolate truffles, and cashew, banana, raisin and Old Monk kulfi (Indian ice-cream). The Royal Academy Lunch Menu starts at £40/₹3,243; 42 Albemarle Street, Mayfair; tel: +44 20 3011 5900; gymkhanalondon.com.

Jamavar

The Jamavar chain of premium Indian restaurants made its debut outside of India with its London opening, late last year. A concept created by The Leela Palaces, Hotels and Resorts, Jamavar's other outposts are at its hotels in New Delhi, Chennai, Goa and Mumbai. The restaurant's interiors are panelled with dark wood, and are inlaid with huge mirrors and textured wallpaper. Sprawled across two floors are its dining rooms that serve a la carte lunch, dessert and cocktail menus, as well as a tasting menu (vegetarian and non-vegetarian options). The latter is a seven-course meal that includes dishes like holy basil chicken tikka, Old Delhi butter chicken, stone bass tikka, lobster idli (savoury cakes) and cinnamon kulfi with caramelised pecans. For smaller appetites, the two-course lunch menu makes sense. There is another five-course lunch menu, which includes a pappadum basket and kid goat black cardamom kebabs served with mint chutney. There are also a number of signature gin-based cocktails such as "Burman" with Indian spiced gin, Ophir, and "Kashmir" that's Sipsmith gin infused with saffron and Maraschino liqueur. The seven-course non-vegetarian Tasting Menu is priced at £60/₹4,862; 8 Mount Street, Mayfair; tel: + 44 20 7499 1800; jamavarrestaurants.com.



Tamarind

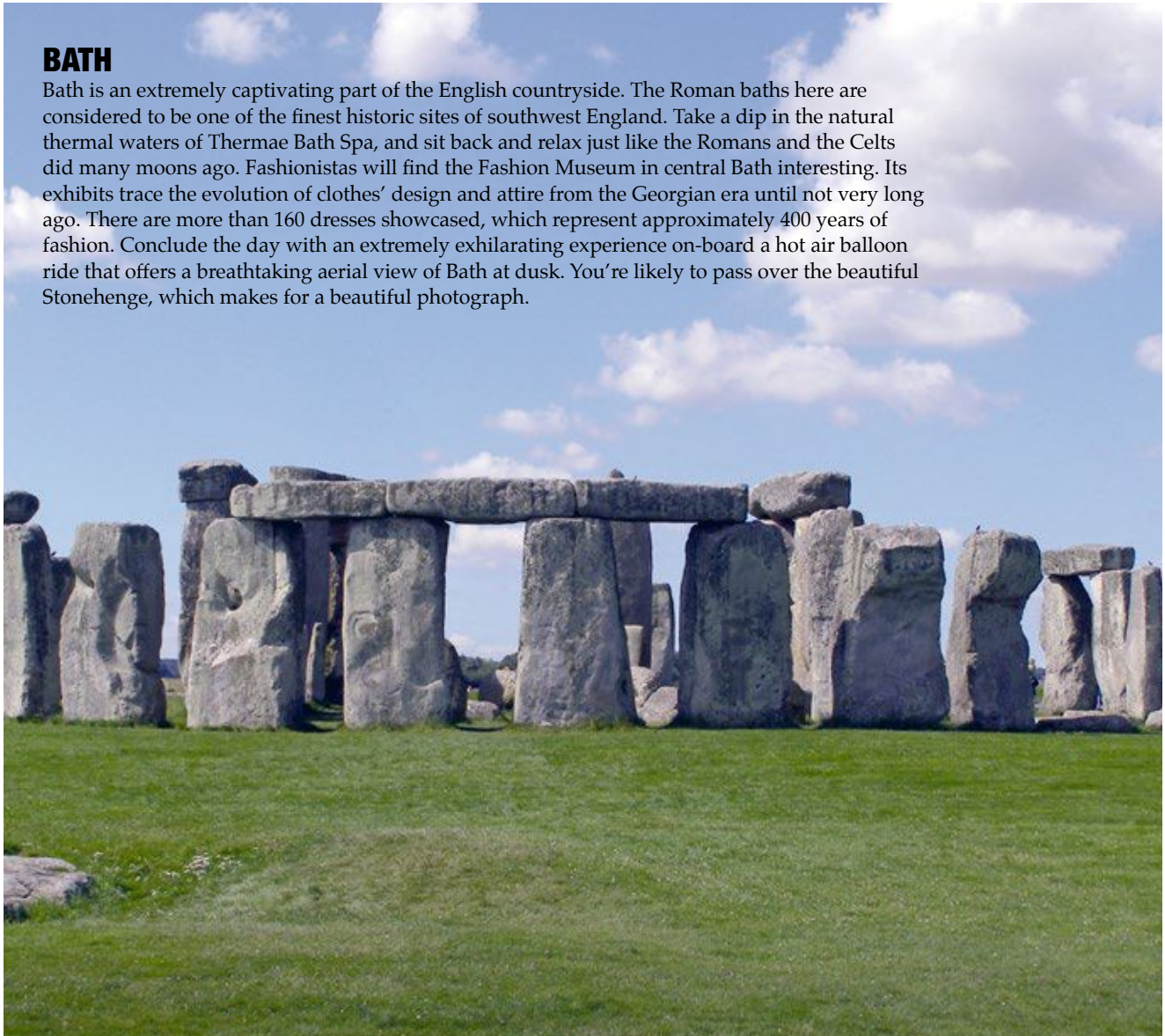
Opened in 1995, Tamarind earned its first Michelin star in 2001, becoming the first ever Indian restaurant in the world to earn this status. Dominated by shades of gold alongside neatly arranged tableware, its decor is plush and welcoming. It is a lavish option for those keen to indulge in authentic Indian cuisine, teamed with humble service. The food is inspired by Mughal fare of northwest India, where fish, meat and game meat were cooked in a tandoor (oven). Tamarind's menu doesn't try too hard with confusing names for its dishes; it's the high quality ingredients and techniques that do the talking. You are welcomed with a plate of roasted pappadum with fresh chutney to begin your experience here. Start with pudhina chops (lamb cutlets with dried mint, tomato and coriander chutney) or a seafood salad (steamed shrimp, halibut, squid and black olives in a fennel and ginger dressing). Tamarind's array of kebabs are definitely its speciality; opt for the kebab selection (tiger prawn, monkfish, chicken supreme and lamb chop) to taste the succulence of well marinated meats cooked to perfection in a tandoor. In mains, its chicken tikka masala is a classic you can't go wrong with, but for something more adventurous, try the lobster masala (lobster tail with shallots, tomatoes and mixed peppercorns). Its refreshing mango milkshake and rich chocolate delicie are unmissable. Tamarind offers the Taste of Tamarind menu, where each course is paired with a different wine like Mort's Black Riesling with chickpeas chaat and Tokaji Late Harvest with carrot fudge and pistachio kulfi. This menu is priced at £125/₹10,130; 20 Queen Street, Mayfair; tel: +44 20 7629 3561; tamarindrestaurant.com.

Explore the KINGDOM

The United Kingdom has much to offer weekenders looking for a break from London. **Netra Venkateshwaran** lists cities within a short distance from there

BATH

Bath is an extremely captivating part of the English countryside. The Roman baths here are considered to be one of the finest historic sites of southwest England. Take a dip in the natural thermal waters of Thermae Bath Spa, and sit back and relax just like the Romans and the Celts did many moons ago. Fashionistas will find the Fashion Museum in central Bath interesting. Its exhibits trace the evolution of clothes' design and attire from the Georgian era until not very long ago. There are more than 160 dresses showcased, which represent approximately 400 years of fashion. Conclude the day with an extremely exhilarating experience on-board a hot air balloon ride that offers a breathtaking aerial view of Bath at dusk. You're likely to pass over the beautiful Stonehenge, which makes for a beautiful photograph.



BIRMINGHAM

Birmingham is a perfect getaway from the fast-paced life of London. The birthplace of the renowned playwright Shakespeare, Birmingham offers a host of exciting activities to history lovers. Start with the Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery situated in the heart of the city. Time warp to either ancient Egypt, pre-Raphaelite, or baroque art eras here. Royal Air Force museum is a great place, where you can learn about the English aviation industry. The museum is known for its international collection of aircraft. One of its highlights is “The Cold War Exhibition” site. Another interesting place to stop by in Birmingham is Cadbury World, where you can spectate the art of chocolate making just like in *Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory*. The city is also famous for its British Motor Museum. Travel through the milestones of some of the biggest car brands like Land Rover, right from their very first models. A fantastic way to sum up this informative, yet restful holiday can be to admire the sunset whilst picnicking at the quaintly pleasant surroundings of Birmingham Botanical Gardens.



BRIGHTON

Soak in the sun at this seaside town to the south of London — Brighton. Full of life, the once upon a time sleepy village now has a few places that you should not miss. Plan an entire day exploring Brighton Palace Pier where one can participate in fun events. Here’s a chance to relish the traditional fish and chips, a patent symbol of England alongside some freshly made churros, doughnuts and crepes. The Shellfish Bar is a fun spot at the pier and is famous for serving innovative seafood delicacies. The air is filled with youthful energy and encourages you to embrace your inner child as you sit on the many rides here. When the sun shines bright, Brighton Beach is swarming with tourists, a perfect spot for sunbathing. Watch out for the pesky seagulls though; they are known to be notorious for snatching any unattended edibles. Finally, embark on a quiet tour of Royal Pavilion, an architectural landmark of Brighton that fuses two cultures. The exterior of this structure is inspired by Indian architectural techniques, whereas the interiors are heavily influenced by Chinese designs.

BRISTOL

Bristol, the city that straddles River Avon, is known for its bridges, balloons, bikes and artists. Explore the historically eminent structures here by stopping by at Bristol Cathedral and Lord Mayor's Chapel. The city in southwest England is home to the world renowned street-artist, Banksy. Sign up for a walking tour alongside his metaphoric and highly impactful artwork on building facades, walls and fences. Visit Bristol Zoo Gardens that houses a monkey jungle, a reptile house, Asiatic lions, bug and twilight worlds, a meerkat lookout point and an exotic aquarium. Conclude the day with a sunset boat ride from the Harbourside or Floating Harbour, both eight-minute walks from each other.



DUBLIN

Not only does the Irish capital have an enthralling nightlife, but it also offers a host of interesting things to do for travellers. Dublin's iconic point is the 26-hectare Guinness Storehouse brewery situated in St James' Gate Brewery that was founded in 1759. Sip on a pint of Irish beer whilst hopping from one bar to another. Take a walk through the National Museum of Ireland and learn about the various animals found in and around the region. The National Transport Museum of Ireland is another informative place to know about the public service and road transport vehicles of the island. Chart through the Irish waters by taking a day trip to one of the coastal towns near Dublin. Pick from lazing on a beach to taking an adventurous cliff walk, indulging in European seafood and sifting through Irish history at its century-old castles. One of the popular picks is the buzzing port town of Dun Laoghaire.

EDINBURGH

The Scottish capital is a delight for historians, lovers of greenery and fans of Scotch whisky. Read on to know more about how to make the most of your weekend here....

Scottish Splendour

Dr Bogadi Prashanth helps plan a visit to Scotland's hilly capital

Edinburgh, the capital of Scotland, is perched on a series of extinct volcanoes and rocky crags. These structures rise from the generally flat landscape of the Lothian, with the sheltered shoreline of the Firth of Forth to the north. When you look down at the city from the edge of Edinburgh Castle, you will see medieval lanes and sweeping terraces that hold over a thousand years of history, mystery and tradition. You will also see a modern, dynamic capital where international festivals attract the world's leading performers, galleries display cutting-edge art, and bars, restaurants and clubs create a lively, cosmopolitan atmosphere with a distinctly Scottish twist.



Edinburgh Castle

Begin your day at Edinburgh Castle, a World Heritage Site renowned for its medieval Old and Georgian New Towns. The historic fortress is situated on Castle Rock that overlooks a mesmerising skyline of Edinburgh. Take a guided tour of Edinburgh Castle to delve into the rich history of this site and you will learn that Castle Rock formed after a volcano eruption over 340 million years ago. Its significance rose as the tensions between the English and Scottish monarchies nearly always centred here. The king who ruled over this castle, ruled over Edinburgh and hence over all of Scotland as it is the country's capital. Therefore, like any stronghold of importance, the castle was constantly under siege. Today, a number of facilities including two cafés, shops, and various historical displays draw tourists from around the world. Queen Anne Tearoom at the top of the castle is where you can enjoy a traditional Scottish meal.

An ideal time to visit is during the Edinburgh Military Tattoo in August that takes place in front of the castle on its grand esplanade after sunset. The Scottish regiment parade in traditional kilts as Scottish songs are played on hundreds of bagpipes and drums. The entire event culminates with spectacular fireworks. Open daily 9:30am-5pm; entry fee £16.50/₹1,349; edinburghcastle.gov.uk

Edinburgh Vaults

These vaults were formed over a hundred years ago under the 19 arches of South Bridge with a width of 100 feet. Far from forgotten, they receive tourists in

multitudes who are instantly trapped in the stories of the city's dark past. Certain vaults thrived as populated red light districts, others held taverns that served travellers, and some lay open as hunting spots for serial killers. It is believed that they even served as the site for various workshops, and also as stables to the Royal Family's bodyguards. With time, the bridge that was never waterproofed due to tight budgets started leaking, forcing businesses to move out. From being a bustling marketplace below the city, these manmade spaces became home to the homeless and immigrants. The bridge's health continued to deteriorate and to save it, city officials had the vaults filled with rubble to hold it up. In the 1980s they were accidentally "found" again. Since then the vaults have been carefully restored, cleaned and preserved so tourists can enjoy a thrilling experience of Edinburgh's history. Mercat Tours (Historic Underground): daily at 4pm and 5pm; £12/₹972; mercattours.com

The Scotch Whisky Experience

Tours to a Scotch distillery lasts anywhere from 50 minutes to three hours. Each tour includes a barrel ride (vehicle, designed as a barrel) through the different production stages of Scotch whisky starting from the barley fields to the bubbling pot, which is the last step in producing this "golden elixir". The guide introduces the audience to the aromas of the regional whisky, allowing you to sniff through part of the world's largest collection of Scotch whiskies. Each visitor is gifted a crystal whisky tasting glass and



Left and right:
Edinburgh Castle;
National Museum
of Scotland



National Museum of Scotland

In 2006, the merger of New Museum of Scotland with Royal Museum, formed National Museum of Scotland. The former's Scottish antiquities relating to culture and history along with collections of science and technology of the latter make this an interesting stop for intellectual stimulation. Discover Scottish archaeological finds, medieval objects, and other artefacts from around the world that span across geology, natural history, science, technology, art and culture. From meteorites to monsters from the deep waters below, the Natural World galleries exhibit lesser known stories of planet Earth, while the World Cultures galleries let you travel out of Scotland without leaving the museum. A number of free and guided tours of the museum are available through the day. Until June 25 runs the Scottish pottery exhibition that displays everyday ware to exotic decorative pieces established by Scottish entrepreneurs. Open daily 10am-5pm; free entry; nms.ac.uk

Royal Botanic Garden

Edinburgh's Royal Botanic Garden was founded in 1670 as a physics garden near Holyrood Abbey by Dr Robert Sibbald and Dr Andrew Balfour. With the help of enthusiastic gardeners and botanists, the collection grew to over 10,000 specimens between 1905 and 1932. Today, it offers visitors 72 acres of untainted nature, not far from the city centre. The garden overlooks fantastic views of the capital's skyline, including a panorama of Edinburgh Castle. Visitors can discover its fascinating history dating back to 300 years that include tales of travellers behind the plants' display throughout this beautiful landscape. Open year round, the garden hosts a popular programme of events, exhibitions and guided tours as well. It also houses restaurants including Gateway Restaurant and Terrace Cafe, and the Botanics Shop that retails a wide selection of gifts, souvenirs, crafts and plants. Open daily 10am-6pm; free entry; rbge.org.uk

is offered a dram of Scotch whisky. The Silver Tour: open January-March and August-December 10am-5pm, April-July until 6pm; entry fee £15/₹1,216; scotchwhiskyexperience.co.uk

The Royal Yacht Britannia

Situated in the Ocean Terminal at Leith race, The Royal Yacht Britannia served as the "floating royal residence" of the British monarch, Queen Elizabeth II from 1954 until 1997 sailing over 10,00,000 miles around the world. Now berthed in Edinburgh, the iconic yacht is open to public viewing and often holds popular events. Trace the footsteps of royalty and discover one of the most special residences of the crowned. Begin your exploration with Britannia's free audio handset tour that covers the yacht's five main decks. At the bridge, walk into the state apartments, crew's quarters and conclude your trip at the engine room. Don't leave without indulging in a "freshly prepared home-made meal" as well as speciality teas and coffees at Royal Deck Tea Room. Open daily 10am-3:30pm; entry fee £15.50/₹1,267; royalyachtbritannia.co.uk

The Kitchin

One of the four Michelin star restaurants in Edinburgh, The Kitchin has an interesting take on modern British seasonal cuisine. The restaurant's philosophy — from nature to plate — reflects Tom, the eponymous chef-owner's passion for fresh, quality Scottish produce. The best way to make the most of your time here is to opt for the sample set lunch. It includes amongst many dishes, crispy pork belly cannelloni served with roasted parsley root, capers and a shallot dressing; roe deer pithivier served with quince puree, ox tongue and roast vegetables; and apple crumble souffle served with vanilla ice cream. A three-course set lunch begins at £33/₹2,674; thekitchin.com ■

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RESORT



Anantara Angkor Resort in Cambodia reopens after renovation



The luxurious all-suite boutique resort, Anantara Angkor Resort reopens after extensive renovation. Its suites, restaurants and common areas have been refurbished, along with the addition of several amenities. The resort is located close to the temple complex of Angkor Wat in Krong Siem Reap. It features 39 suites categorised as Premier, Terrace or Premier Terrace that house private plunge pools. The resort's spa is known for its traditional Thai and Cambodian massages. It also has a steam room, sauna and Jacuzzi. A flavour of progressive Cambodian cuisine can be tasted at the resort's in-house eatery — the Chi Restaurant and Bar. angkor.anantara.com

FRAGRANCE



Tom Ford reveals latest fragrance

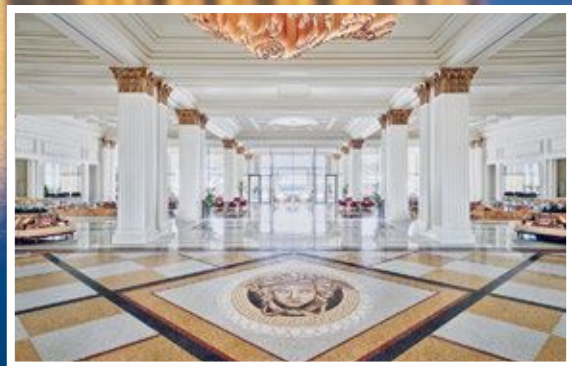
Tom Ford has introduced his latest Private Blend fragrance for men. Part of the Neroli Portofino eau de parfum collection, Sole di Positano is a green citrus floral scent designed to evoke "the dream-like beauty of the Italian coast." Notes include bergamot, bitter orange, lemon and mandarin, as well as ylang ylang, sandalwood, jasmine absolute, soft musk and green moss.

tomford.com

HOTEL

Palazzo Versace Dubai releases a Business Traveller package

Palazzo Versace Dubai has released a new Business Traveller package for its corporate guests. The package entails complimentary high-speed wifi access, a suit and shirt pressing service, transfers from Dubai International Airport and meeting drop off (if booked for a minimum of three nights), a 20 per cent discount on food, beverages and spa treatments, and double iPrefer reward points. The package also offers guests a complimentary shuttle service to Dubai Mall and Dubai Festival City Mall. palazzoversace.ae

**RESORT**

Mandarin Oriental Bodrum opens for summer

Turkish resort, Mandarin Oriental Bodrum officially opened for summer last month. Overlooking Paradise Bay, the resort now offers new fitness and wellness facilities, a butler service for every room category and specially curated room packages. It features 129 guest-rooms, apartments, suites and villas that have balconies, some with infinity pools that blend into the Aegean Sea. The property has eight restaurants and bars ranging from Italian, Turkish to world cuisine. Mandarin Oriental Bodrum is offering the Stay and Dine package that offers daily three-course dinner for two, accommodation for two and daily breakfast for two. It starts at ₹25,332 per night for double occupancy and is valid until October 2017. mandarinoriental.com



BIKE



Ducati Diavel Diesel launches in India

Ducati Diavel Diesel is now available on special request at Ducati showrooms all over India. Ducati Design Centre has tied up with Andrea Rosso, creative director of Diesel Licenses for Ducati Diavel Diesel. This limited edition (only 666 motorcycles) was unveiled earlier this year at the Milan Men's Fashion Week. The bike has a stainless steel superstructure with visible welding and rivets. Diesel's logo on the inside, fine leather seats and a vintage LCD dashboard are some of its other features. diaveldiesel.ducati.com

WATCH



Breitling DC-3 aircraft begins world tour

Breitling begins its 77th anniversary celebrations by deploying its DC-3 aircraft on an extensive world-tour. The airplane took flight in March from Geneva and will halt in parts of the Middle East, India, South East Asia, North America and Europe. It will return back to Geneva in September for the Breitling Sion Airshow 2017. During the course of the trip, there will be multiple air shows and exhibitions around the globe. The crew operating the plane have on-board the Navitimer 01 (46mm) limited edition. The watch is powered by Manufacture Breitling Caliber 01, and features a case-back engraved with the Breitling DC-3 World Tour logo. breitling.com



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ASIA

Hong Kong
May 3

CHEUNG CHAU BUN FESTIVAL

This annual Taoist festival is a celebration of Lord Buddha's birthday. It is acknowledged on the eighth day of the fourth lunar month in accordance to the Chinese lunar calendar. This festival signifies the end of the plague era. Each year, locals and tourists from across the globe devour the Da Jiu or baked bun delicacies at the celebration venues. Adding to the pomp are colourful parades of floats and dancers in elaborate costumes. There is a bun-snatching and paper effigy burning ritual. Other highlights include building of bun towers, the parade with children's floats and the bun tower climbing competition.

cheung-chau.com

Kerala, India
May 5-6



THRISSUR POORAM ELEPHANT FESTIVAL

This is when elephants are worshipped in this south Indian state. It is celebrated in the month of "Medom" in accordance to the Malayalam calendar. Vadakkunathan Temple is one of the main shrines wherein most of the festival rituals are carried forth. The temple is dressed in a grandiose manner. A magnificent display of fireworks illuminates the night sky. The final day is the highlight of Thrissur Pooram — a troupe of 30 elephants are dressed in shiny ornaments and are welcomed at the main temple by a band of musicians and artistes. A tradition that goes back 200 years, the revelry lures a large number of onlookers from the world over.

thrissurpooramfestival.com

Mount Abu,
India
May 9-10

SUMMER FESTIVAL

The hill station in Rajasthan offers tourists and locals a great option to beat the heat, perennially. The Summer Festival in Mount Abu takes place on *Budh Poonnima*, a full moon night. The annual two-day fest is set against a backdrop of the picturesque view

of the rocks and tranquil lakes of the hill station. It features folk dances and classical music performances, which shed light on the tribal and cultural life of the area. The zealous highlights of these two days are competitions such as boating on Nakki Lake, skating, horse racing and tug of war.

tourism.rajasthan.gov.in

Hong Kong
May 19-21



AFFORDABLE ART FAIR

Artists from the world over will be displayed at more than 130 galleries at this celebration of art. Interactive activities will encourage visitor participation in an innovative and exciting manner. affordableartfair.com

AMERICAS

Hawaii, USA
May 1

LEI DAY

Lei means a garland of flowers in this part of the world. In 1929, Lei Day was first officially celebrated as a public holiday in Hawaii. It is a day to commemorate the Hawaiian "aloha" (greeting) spirit. On this day, people revel with events such as lei ceremonies, lei making competitions and hula dances. The proceedings take place during the course of the day and all the participants and onlookers jubilantly dance along enjoying the celebration with pride. honolulu.gov

North and
South
America
May 5

CINCO DE MAYO

"Cinco De Mayo" translates to the "Fifth of May". It is a day to honour the victory of the France-Mexico "Battle of Puebla". Parts of North America populated with Mexican-Americans and all of South America take part in the pomp that keeps the Mexican heritage and culture alive. It is a day to remember the heroic events in history and lost warriors. Even

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North
Charleston,
USA
May 3-7

though it isn't officially declared a national holiday, many local businesses shut shop to cheer huge parades and embrace the spirit of Cinco De Mayo. **5demayopuebla.mx**



NORTH CHARLESTON ARTS FEST

It all started back in the year 1982 when the community decided to promote art and culture by showcasing creations of many national and regional artists and performers. This year marks the event's 35th anniversary and hopes to continue to attract over 30,000 people. The arts fest encompasses a range of performances, workshops, exhibitions and other interactive activities. One of the main highlights there is the Arts Expo, which happens at the Charleston Area Convention Centre. This includes an art and photography show, a gem and mineral show, a children's section and a food courtyard.

northcharlestonartsfest.com

EUROPE

London,
UK
May 12-28

SPIN CYCLING FESTIVAL

As the name suggests, this festival is an attraction to cyclists and sports enthusiasts. Exhibits include displays of the newest innovations in cycling gear and apparel, nutrition stations and other workshops held by pro-cyclists who narrate their experiences and impart knowledge on the sport. This is also where one can find England's top breweries as well as gourmet coffee stalls for visitors to indulge in. In addition, the aromatic air lures all to get a taste of the street food market stalls that serve a variety of world cuisines. **spinldn.com**

Gubbio,
Italy
May 15

CORSA DEI CERİ

The town of Gubbio actively takes part in the annual traditional gathering held for St Ubaldo, its patron saint. Three teams race through the town's streets and slopes of Monte Ingino to the Basilica of St Ubaldo, on foot. The word "ceri" translates to candle and

Cannes,
France
May 17-28

all participating teams carry four-metre-long wooden pillars, which bear a statue of each of the three rival saints: St Ubaldo, St George and St Anthony. Each team has a designated colour: yellow for Saint Ubaldo, blue for St George and black for St Anthony. The race commences in the evening and the entire town parades with the flags and cheers them on to make it to the finishing line. **ceri.it**



CANNES FILM FESTIVAL

The annual Festival de Cannes has made its mark as one of the flagship events of the international film industry. This year, it will complete 70 years and will exhibit documentaries, feature films and short films. The highlight of the festival is that all the films showcased here automatically attain global recognition. The event acts as a platform to open international doors for budding and existing film-makers. This year, Spanish film director and screenwriter, Pedro Almodovar is on the panel as the president of the jury along with acclaimed actress Monica Bellucci.

festival-cannes.fr

Hay-On-
Wye, Wales
May 25
onwards

HAY FESTIVAL

Hay speaker in 2001, Bill Clinton, labelled this: The Woodstock of the mind. This is because the mind is taken to a realm of imaginations through folk songs, reading, writing, and storytelling in the form of novels, essays, monologues, songs, plays and poems. A classroom on a farm in Wales adds to its quirky, country vibe. **hayfestival.com**

WATCHES Baselworld



TIMEPIECES *to* REMEMBER

Business Traveller India picks 21 pieces showcased at Baselworld 2017



BLANCPAIN

This year, the Villeret collection has added a new timepiece to its family. The watch's chapter ring and the Blancpain logo are enamel painted onto the dial. Numbers surrounding the hours denote the week of the year, which is indicated with a blue serpentine handle. Blancpain's patented under-lug correctors for the date and time are easily accessed with a fingertip, thus avoiding the need for a stylus tool.

blancpain.com

Strap: hand-stitched alligator leather

Case diameter: 42mm

Water-resistant: 30 metres

BREGUET

As on Breguet's many historic models, "Grand Feu" enamel has been used on the dial of the new Classique 7147. The numerals are dainty, maintaining the brand's horological heritage. Here, the hours and minutes are indicated by traditional blue steel hands with an offset open tip. The seconds hand moves within its own sub-dial, located at the fifth hour. The model is available in rose gold and white gold versions.

breguet.com

Strap: alligator leather with a gold pin buckle

Case diameter: 40mm

Water-resistant: 30 metres



BREITLING

The black dial of this 1,000-piece limited edition — Avenger Hurricane Military — has a 24-hour display. Luminescent hands and numerals are highlighted in a slightly patinated yellow-beige colour, reminiscent of the instruments produced by Breitling from the 1940s to the 1960s. This model is a nod to the brand's heritage in the aeronautical and military field. It is equipped with a 50mm case in "Breitlight", a trademark high-tech material that is 3.3 times lighter than titanium, 5.8 times lighter than steel, and significantly harder than both.

breitling.com

Strap: military rubber

Case diameter: 50mm

Water-resistant: 100 metres



BVLGARI

With its Octo Finissimo Automatic, Bulgari breaks the world record for the third time — the first two records were broken in 2014 and 2016. This time the brand has put the world's "slimmest ultra-thin self-winding watch on the market to date". Its total thickness is just 5.15mm and that of the in-house, self-winding movement is just 2.23mm. The titanium case and dial reveal a sandblasted surface for a contemporary appeal. The hands and hour markers are coated with a black PVD treatment to enhance legibility.

bvlgari.com

Strap: alligator leather with a titanium pink buckle or titanium bracelet with a folding clasp

Case diameter: 40mm

Water-resistant: 30 metres



CALVIN KLEIN

Calvin Klein Minimal is a classic that is inspired by vintage timepieces of the world of horology. The collection is available for men and women both, and comes in different chromatic versions — tone on tone stainless steel, yellow gold PVD, black and logo contrasted on blue or stainless steel bracelets, and a black and pink gold PVD completed with a mesh bracelet or leather strap.

calvinklein.com

Strap: mesh or leather strap

Case diameter: 40mm for men and 24mm for women

Water-resistant: 30 metres

CARL F. BUCHERER

This brand has a strong connect with its home town, Lucerne, which shows in Carl F. Bucherer's new variant of the Patravi ScubaTec. Its vivid blue is just like that of Lake Lucerne. The 18-carat red gold case is a tribute to its home town's Baroque heritage. Making it suitable as a diving instrument are the automatic helium outlet valve, crown protection in blackened titanium and the diving ring that can only be turned counterclockwise, as required by diving watches.

carl-f-bucherer.com

Strap: rubber with a folding clasp

Case diameter: 44.6mm

Water-resistant: 500 metres



FAVRE-LEUBA

The launch of Bivouac 9000 coincides with the brand's 280th anniversary — a “groundbreaking watch” as described by Favre-Leuba. It is the first mechanical wristwatch in the world with the ability to measure altitudes of up to 9,000 metres above sea level — Mount Everest is 8,848 metres tall. It has an in-built barometer with an airtight capsule fitted into its heart. When the air pressure drops or rises, the capsule expands and contracts respectively. The red central hand indicates the altitude on the bidirectional rotating bezel.

favre-leuba.com

Strap: leather with a pin buckle

Case diameter: 48mm

Water-resistant: 30 metres



FREDERIQUE CONSTANT

The new Worldtimer in Frederique Constant's Classic Manufacture Collection tracks time in 24 cities across varying time zones. These are on the outer rim of the dial that also has the world map etched onto it. This Worldtimer function is completely controlled by a crown that has three positions: turn the crown upwards to manually wind the watch, turn it upwards and downwards to set the date and time, turn the crown downwards to set the time.

frederiqueconstant.com

Strap: leather strap

Case diameter: 42mm

Water-resistant: 50 metres

GRAHAM

Nose art is a painting on the nose, fuselage of an aircraft, a friendly trend that brought some element of fun during the wars. The Graham Chronofighter Vintage Nose Art is reminiscent of this trend. Anna, Lilly, Nina and Sally are the sexy mascots of this 100-piece limited edition each, added to the Chronofighter Vintage Series collection. The sunbrushed vintage dials are painted with these pin-up girls.

graham1695.com

Strap: calf leather with a pin buckle

Case diameter: 44mm

Water-resistant: 100 metres





HUBLLOT

To celebrate its 70th anniversary, Hublot with its Italian marque partner has presented a new collection that is designed by Ferrari and crafted by Hublot — Techframe Ferrari 70 years Tourbillon Chronograph (limited edition). It is available in three versions: King Gold, PEEK Carbon, and Titanium, 70 pieces of each. The black structure on the dial has the chronograph counters, the Ferrari logo is visible at the ninth hour, and the crown, positioned at the fourth hour, is raised by a black PVD Titanium insert and is decorated with the famous Prancing Horse.

hublot.com

Strap: rubber with a folding clasp

Case diameter: 45mm

Water-resistant: 30 metres

JAQUET DROZ

The black onyx dial of the Loving Butterfly Automaton comes with hand-engraved 18-carat red gold appliques. Its case is also made from 18-carat red gold. Jaquet Droz's newest model has a hand-winding mechanical automaton movement, which, on pressing the push button, triggers a mechanism that moves the butterfly's wings and wheel of the chariot.

jaquet-droz.com

Strap: handmade alligator leather with a folding clasp

Case diameter: 43mm

Water-resistant: 30 metres



LONGINES

Longines Heritage 1945 is an elegant and simple timeless piece in beige and copper tones. This vintage looking piece has a sturdy steel case that beautifully complements the brushed coppery dial and aged-looking leather strap. This balance in design continues in the blue hands — leaf style for the hour/minute and baton style for the second hand above the sixth hour in a sub-dial. The hour circle has Arabic numerals, as well as silver cabochons denoting the first, third, fifth, seventh, ninth and eleventh hours.

longines.com

Strap: leather strap in a nubuck finish

Case diameter: 40mm

Water-resistant: 30 metres





MOVADO

This model, Movado Museum Watch, was designed in 1947 by Bauhaus-influenced artist Nathan George Horwitt. The twelfth hour on the dial is signified by a dot, typical to Movado. It symbolises the sun at high noon. In fact, this dial was selected by Museum of Modern Art, New York to be included in its permanent collection in 1960 — the first ever for any watch then. This year the brand has launched three additions to the collection — the ladies' model is in polished yellow gold PVD-finished steel, while the two men's watches are in solid stainless steel.

movado.com

Strap: calfskin leather with a classic tongue buckle

Case diameter: 40mm

Water-resistant: 30 metres

OMEGA

The Seamaster Planet Ocean "Big Blue" is Omega's first timepiece created out of a single block of blue ceramic. The material is widely used by Omega because it is six times harder than steel, scratch-proof and never fades, making it ideal for its collection for the adventurous, such as the Seamaster. The blue ceramic dial displays an orange GMT track and 18-karat gold with white Super-LumiNova coating on the hands and indexes.

omegawatches.com

Strap: rubber with a ceramic fold-over clasp

Case diameter: 45.5mm

Water-resistant: 600 metres



ORIS

About a quarter of the world's coral reefs are damaged through chemicals, careless tourism and overfishing. The remaining is under further threat. Through sales of Oris Staghorn Restoration Limited Edition (2,000 pieces), the brand is helping conserve these ecosystems, in partnership with non-profit Coral Restoration Foundation. This watch model is part of Oris' Aquis collection. Orange on the watch's key indications, including the seconds hand, denote the colour of Staghorn coral. It is also one of the most visible colours underwater.

oris.ch

Strap: rubber strap with a sliding-sledge folding clasp

Case diameter: 43.50mm

Water-resistant: 300 metres

RADO

The watchmaker has added four colours — inky blue, forest green, lunar grey and chocolate brown — to its True Thinline collection (4.9mm profile). The almost bare dials and monochrome colour scheme follow a minimalist design. Most part of the grey and blue high-tech ceramic models' surfaces are polished, the shine is offset by contrasting matt middle links in the bracelet. The green high-tech ceramic model is fully polished and the brown is entirely matt.

rado.com

Strap: high-tech ceramic with titanium 3-fold buckle

Case diameter: 43.3mm

Water-resistant: 30 metres



RAYMOND WEIL

The ultimate legend of British rock, David Bowie has been honoured by Raymond Weil with its 3,000-piece Limited Edition freelancer "David Bowie" collection. The model that the brand labels as being "most free-spirited", marks the artist's 70th birthday, had he still been alive. The dial resembles a vinyl record, the 12th hour is denoted by the lightning bolt from his cover *Aladdin Sane*, and the Andy Warhol designed logo for the singer, featured on the cover of *Diamond Dogs*, is placed above the sixth hour.

raymond-weil.com

Strap: calf leather with a folding steel clasp

Case diameter: 42.5mm

Water-resistant: 100 metres



ROLEX

The unique regatta chronograph of Rolex's Oyster Perpetual Yacht-Master II is dedicated to both yachting enthusiasts and experienced sailors. The dial and hands are designed to enable ease in legibility. A luminescent disc distinguishes the hour hand from the minute hand. Yacht-Master II has a programmable countdown with a mechanical memory that can be synchronised on the fly — press on the pusher at the fourth hour. The pusher at the second hour starts and stops the countdown.

rolex.com

Strap: steel with a folding safety clasp

Case diameter: 44mm

Water-resistant: 100 metres

TAG HEUER

With its partners Intel and Google, TAG Heuer has launched the second generation of its connected watch. The collaboration with Intel features GPS, an NFC sensor for payments, a high definition AMOLED screen, and a selection of customisable TAG Heuer dials, lugs, buckles and straps. Google's Android Wear 2.0 and the new TAG Heuer Companion app helps you stay connected with people and enables easy access to important information on your device.

tagheuer.com

Strap: rubber

Case diameter: 45mm

Water-resistant: 50 metres



TISSOT

Tissot is the official timekeeper of Tour de France, one of the world's most popular cycling races. Tissot T-Race Cycling Tour de France Special Edition bears the race's yellow and black colours and official logo engraved on the caseback. It constitutes large, easy-to-read hands against a backdrop of a black tar-effect dial to illustrate roads. The bicycle's wheel, fork in the frame, brake levers and chain are represented throughout the watch's design.

tissotwatches.com

Strap: silicone strap

Case diameter: 44.5mm

Water-resistant: 100 metres

ZENITH

Zenith's Pilot Type 20 Extra Special 40mm watch has a vintage appearance — aged steel, broad fluted crown, oversized luminescent Arabic numerals, grained dial — all in shades of mustard, khaki, blue and burgundy for a retro appeal. This unisex watch is a nod to the history of the Maison and the caseback bears its historical logo — a coat-of-arms studded with stars with the founding date of the Manufacture Zenith: 1865.

zenith-watches.com

Strap: nubuck leather with protective rubber lining and titanium pin buckle

Case diameter: 40mm

Water-resistant: 100 metres ■



Restored *to health*

Turtles and hotel guests are being coaxed back to fitness in the recently opened Jumeirah Al Naseem, discovers **Dominic Ellis**

A short walk from the busy breakfast in The Palmery at Jumeirah Al Naseem, I'm in an altogether more tranquil spot watching turtles glide up, down and around a 150-metre lagoon. They're easy on the eye and large informative signs provide details of different species. I'm alone in this retreat within a retreat, marvelling at the turtles' range of age and size; not even seasoned divers may have seen adults this large (the biggest is 110kg).

The lagoon bridges Al Naseem and the rest of Madinat Jumeirah, which stretches out along the adjacent buggy-strewn pathways. The prime position is appropriate since the rehabilitation project is a linchpin in Jumeirah's CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) drive; it's the first hotel globally to feature a sea-fed and custom-designed turtle lagoon for rehabilitating critically endangered sea turtles.

We're only staying one night but after several visits to the Family Lounge, dinner on the Rockfish terrace facing Burj Al Arab (lit up tonight for Chinese New Year), deep sleep in an Ocean Superior room, half-an-hour kayaking, games of badminton and table tennis, and swim in two pools – rounded off with a warm Jacuzzi soak at sunset – I'm ready to go again, and I've not gone anywhere near the Talise Spa (the enormous bathroom, stocked with generous Amouage toiletries, felt like a mini-spa in any case). Through settings and services, resorts have this recharging power that few city hotels can rival, and when it comes to the breadth of service offering, few can hold a candle to Madinat.

For the turtles, it takes a little longer, anything from two to three months for the smaller ones to 18 months for the largest. The majority are juvenile hawksbills, which are





found washed up on the Gulf coastline during December, January and February, suffering from the adverse effects of cold sea temperatures, ingesting plastic rubbish and injuries sustained from boats and water craft. During the recovery process, they are subjected to ongoing veterinary examination and monitoring, with appropriate medication or surgery being administered as necessary.

The hardback book, *Madinat Jumeirah 10 years of Heritage at the Arabian Resort of Dubai* (published by Motivate), states: "Smaller turtles are generally the fastest to recover. However some are simply too badly wounded to return to the wild; they remain at Madinat Jumeirah where quality of life is ensured".

Jumeirah's commitment to turtle conservation goes back to 2004 when the Dubai Rehabilitation Turtle Project (together with Dubai's Wildlife Protection Office) first made waves, but this facility takes it to another level. To date, more than 1,090 rescued turtles have been returned to Dubai's waters.

The project has three main goals: to rescue, rehabilitate and release back into the wild any sea turtles that are found sick or injured throughout the region; educate local children, citizens and international hotel guests about sea turtle biology and the local and global plight of the sea turtle (since we're responsible for two of the three main causes); and to understand the success of rehabilitation, as well as to research turtle movements throughout the region and beyond via a satellite tracking

Left: aerial view of Jumeriah Al Naseem **Top:** informative signs around the lagoon **Right:** Jumeirah's turtle lagoon

START THE DAY WITH GROUP YOGA



Not everyone is tucking into the comprehensive buffet in The Palmery. On the other side of Madinat Jumeirah, a group yoga class is underway (private classes can also be arranged at Al Naseem). As settings go, on this perfectly still morning, it's hard to think of many more relaxing spots or better ways to start your day. Yoga Master Vijay hosts classes and health talks are also given by Chef Gabi on the healthiest drinks to refresh after yoga.



initiative (one travelled an astonishing 8,600km in nine months, almost reaching the coast of Thailand). Last year, a couple of turtles were tagged and released and the resort reports positive progress.

I take one last look as two adults pop up for air, one revealing a beautiful brown-and-white patterned head and the other showing vast bulbous eyes and small sharp teeth.

Turtle feeding happens each Wednesday at 11am.

CONTEMPORARY DESIGNS

Compared with Mina A'Salam, Dar Al Masyaf and Al Qasr, Al Naseem is a more contemporary Arabian-themed hotel. Emirati artist Mattar Bin Lahej was commissioned to create a number of statement art pieces such as the large stainless steel caravan of camels running on water, which is located outside the hotel's entrance.

Another sculpture, behind the lobby, is a poem written in Arabic calligraphy by Dubai's ruler HH Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum.

Burj Al Arab is visible beyond backdrop glass on arrival (or at least the lower half), although it's not quite as open or panoramic as I had imagined. You won't find pots and pans suspended in thin air elsewhere in Madinat, but it seems to work at the entrance to The Palmery, similarly the Bedouin camp etchings on the room walls lend a lighter Arabesque quality. Two galloping horses, painted deep blue, make for an arresting sight to the right of the lobby as we walk to the rooms.

Al Mandhar Lounge makes for a pleasant afternoon tea spot but we are escorted onwards to the Family Lounge (going down to ground, the lobby level is 2), opposite a comprehensive kids' club, which serve a



range of regional and international light bites, and is complemented by a juice bar (wine in the evenings) in the corner.

There's plenty to satisfy every palate here; the Jumeirah-logo-topped sweets on the Moroccan and Turkish tray make me smile and alongside the freshest moutabel are cucumber sandwiches and later, delicious mini-burgers, accompanied by a wide range of hot beverages. Black-and-white traditional Arabian prints hang on the walls, and the terrace affords views of the Wadi pool. We spot a famous football manager with his young family; such is the way with Jumeirah lounges.

An elevated area above, accessible via steps, contains the adult-only pool and SugarMash but most will head to the huge one that dominates the back, complete with attractive wind chimes and sections for Jacuzzi jets. None of the pools is especially deep although safety isn't compromised with lifeguards at every turn. The children's pool has fountain jets but looks more suitable for younger ones.

Our fourth floor rooms (#410/#412), left from the lift, are ideal for extra discretion while the other rooms line up further along the corridor to the right. The balcony is just a rail, but it doesn't seem to matter as the sliding doors have knock-out views of Burj Al Arab and Jumeirah Beach Hotel; the one caveat with the rooms this side is the constant traffic to and from the Burj, and surrounding music, in the afternoon (we are here on a Friday), but I sleep soundly in the evening.

For dinner, we eat outside on the Rockfish terrace where service is a curious mix of attentive and careless with food arriving promptly. However, there is no drinks menu; when we ask, we are given a white recommendation, which doesn't arrive, and halfway through the mains we are poured a glass of Rosé. Around the table, the prawns are wholesome, sliced



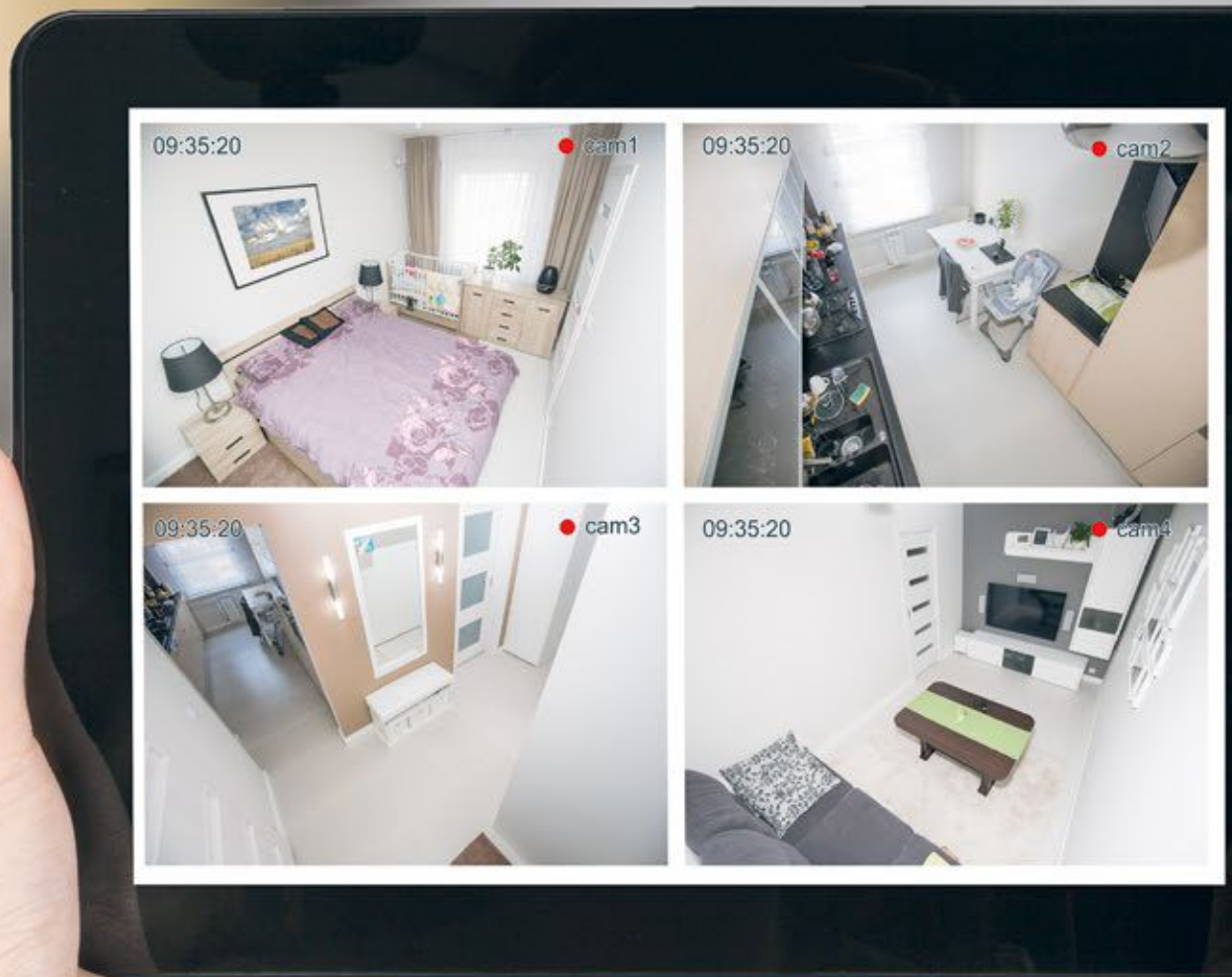
scallops fresh and my turbot wrapped in vine leaves and couscous fine, if a little dry, even with the sauce accompaniment – the same for my partner's seafood mixed grill.

Four external restaurants, operated by international names, include artisan burgers from New York's Black Tap; Tuscan Il Borro by Salvatore Ferragamo (see video on facebook.com/BusinessTravellerME); the Philippe Starck-designed Japanese Katsuya (work ongoing during our stay); and Dubai-based brand Flamingos by Tasha's.

We round off the stay with lunch at the casual Kalsa Pool Bar, whose menu includes traditional Italian street food, and I liked the pizza frita Fiorentina (ricotta, spinach, pine seeds, AED 50/₹877), accompanied by a Marrakech Apples mocktail (fresh lime, mint, apple juice and syrup), which comes in a cocktail glass. ■

Clockwise from left: lobby level; Ocean suite; kayaking after breakfast; Rockfish prawns; artisan burgers

TECHNOLOGY





SAFE as houses

GPS-enabled devices are making it easier than ever to keep your accounts and valuables safe. **Steve Dinneen** looks into the best gadgets to give you peace of mind

If business travel is a way of life, security should be your number-one priority. Tech experts agree that cyber security will be the defining trend of 2017; for every connected device that makes your life a little easier, there's a scammer hoping to take advantage.

On a personal level this can mean major headaches, but if you're abroad for work, security lapses could be worth millions – or, at very least, your job.

Thankfully the tech industry is fighting back, coming up with ever more secure – and increasingly stylish – ways to protect yourself. The explosion of GPS-enabled devices means now you can be alerted if you walk absent-mindedly away from your suitcase, and track the location of your iPhone across continents. You can make sure your contactless payment cards aren't being used to raid the contents of your bank account, and check that your home is safe from the comfort of your hotel room (and if you spot an intruder, even yell obscenities at them over wifi).

Technology may be the problem, but it's also the solution – here are seven gadgets for your next trip...



WOCKET

₹11,548

wocketwallet.com

Second only to having your passport stolen, on my list of travel headaches is having your wallet nicked. The Wocket smart wallet is designed to make sure that never happens. It allows you to securely upload details of every credit, debit and store card you own on to the wallet-sized device, and transfer them at will on to a removable card, which you can use to pay for things. Select the account you need on the screen, use the built-in biometric voice activation to transfer the details and you're good to go. If someone steals it, they won't be able to break into it, but you will still have to buy another one.



TILE MATE

₹3,999

amazon.in

Tile is one of these gadgets that you don't need, right up until the moment when you do. The original Tile Mate is a one-inch square key-fob that you can sync with your phone, allowing you to use an app to see where you have left your keys, and to play an alert so you can find them when they have fallen down the back of the sofa (or press the Tile itself to play an alert on your phone, if that's what you have lost). The app allows you to sync multiple devices so you can keep track of everything from jackets to luggage, all visible on the app. It now comes in a Slim size, which fits inside your wallet.

BLUESMART ONE

₹44,980

amazon.in

This is the smart suitcase you never knew you needed. The Bluesmart One isn't only stylish, it's also packed with tech to make your journey stress-free. The carry-on bag includes a built-in battery that allows you to power your phone on the go, with enough juice for six full charges from its two USB ports. It has a digital scale to ensure you don't have to pay excess baggage charges, a GPS location tracker so you can use its companion app to see where it is, and, best of all, a remote locking feature that will automatically seal the case shut whenever it senses you have walked away from it.



CANARY SMART HOME SECURITY DEVICE

₹21,538

ebay.in

Canary promises to be a one-stop shop for all your home security needs when you're on the road. The slick device, which borrows from the Apple design playbook, includes an HD camera with night-vision capabilities, motion activation and sensors to test temperature, humidity and air quality. It connects through wifi with your phone, allowing you to view your home from afar, with options to record when the motion sensor is activated, and to send alerts to your phone. It also comes with a built-in panic alarm to scare away burglars.



TUMI ID LOCK L-FOLD WALLET

₹6,124

intl.tumi.com

Tumi is renowned for creating stylish travel accessories, and this wallet is no exception. It features a proprietary technology sewn into the wallet's lining that prevents scammers from remotely hacking your NFC credit cards. Any card inside the wallet should be safe, meaning you can protect all of your information in one fell swoop. It's also a beautiful product in its own right, with a soft leather interior with six card slots and a tough, woven "ballistic nylon" exterior. Tumi also incorporates this technology into many of its bags and laptop cases.



NEST CAM SECURITY CAMERA

₹23,557

ebay.in

The connected home revolution is taking rather longer than we had been led to believe – few people actually control their lighting/heating/curtains through an app, and those that do are terrible bores. One company making smart homes cool, however, is Nest, and this camera is genuinely useful. Like most security cameras, you can interact with it using your phone, receiving alerts if the motion sensor is triggered, and this one lets you talk back. You can store video on Nest's cloud, allowing you to play back up to 30 days' footage (from £80 a year).

WD MY PASSPORT 4TB

₹10,299

ebay.in

Keeping your data safe is imperative if you're carting your company's top-secret plans across the globe. A great solution is an encrypted hard drive such as the WD My Passport. With built-in 256-bit hardware encryption, there is virtually no chance of hackers accessing your files, and you can set the device to send a "return if found" message to anyone plugging it in. With 4TB of storage, it has plenty of space for HD video and audio, making it perfect for presentations. It comes in a range of colours, and is tough enough to endure the knocks of long-haul travel. ■





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1. Tiziano Sneakers by Ermenegildo Zegna; PRICE on request; zegna.us 2. Decadence One Eight K Edition by Marc Jacobs; PRICE ₹9,950 (100ml); marcjacobs.com 3. British Rose Range by Body Shop; PRICE on request; thebodyshop.in 4. Oxford Cufflinks by Hermes; PRICE on request; hermes.com



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