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April 2014



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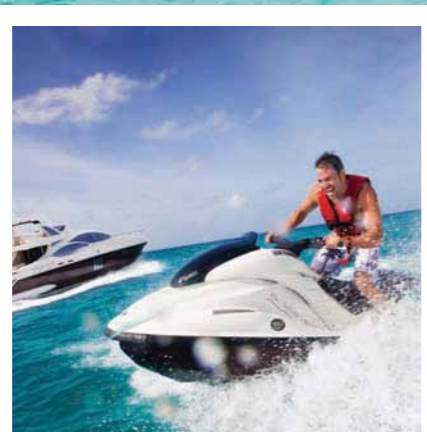
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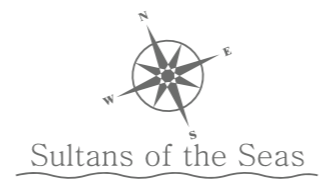
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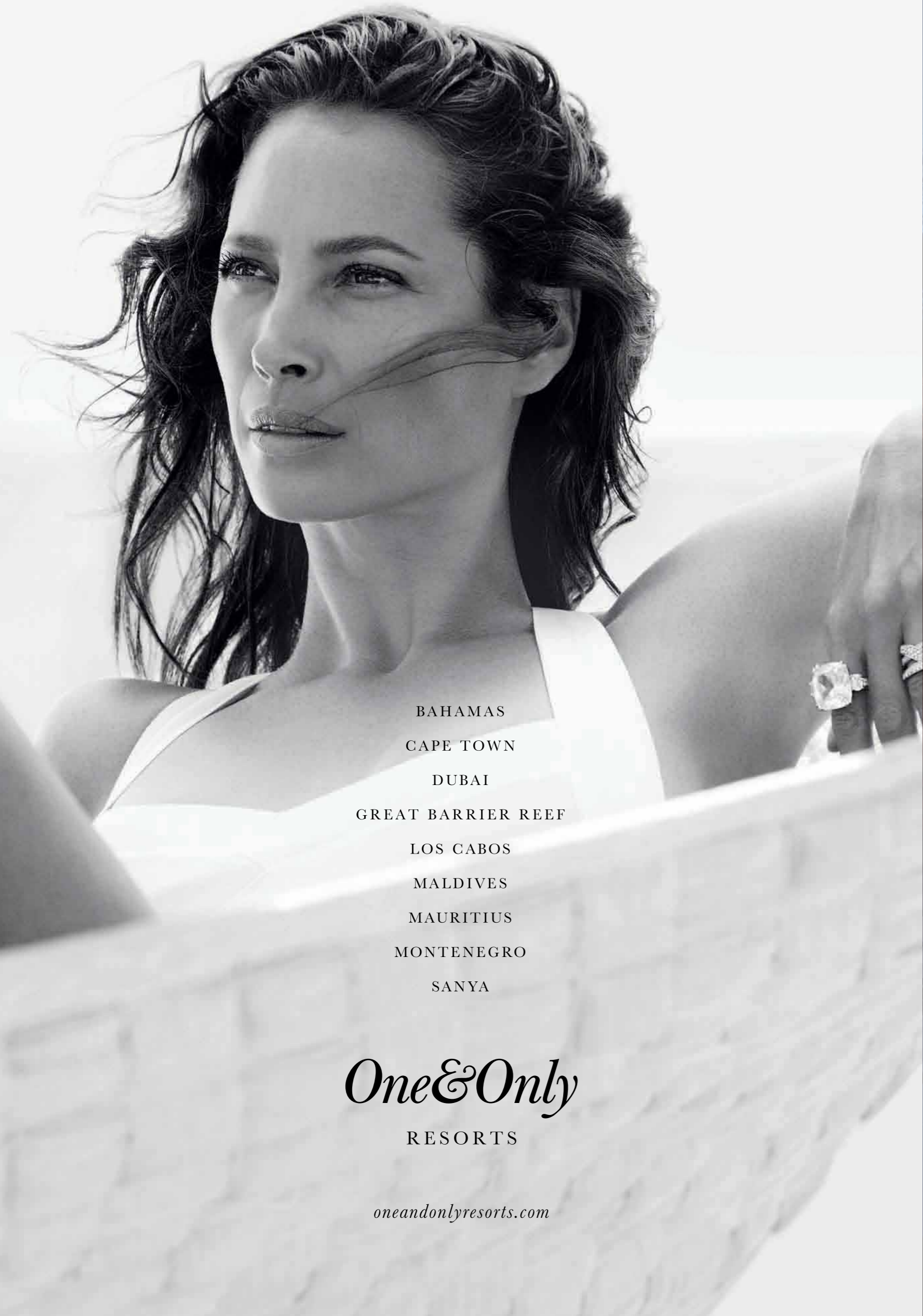
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*Memorable*  
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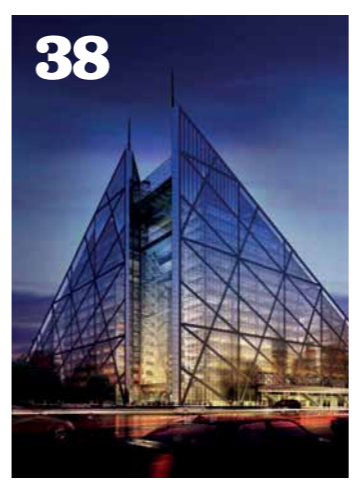


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Photo: Maifushi by COMO

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# Letter from the Editor



I REMEMBER MY first visit to **Barcelona** for two things: staring in awe at Antoni Gaudi's unfinished Sagrada Familia cathedral and long days and nights spent wandering in and out of countless restaurants and tapas bars along **La Rambla**, the tree-lined street that meanders all the way from Plaça de Catalunya to Port Vell on the Balearic Sea. It amazed me how each establishment put a different twist on Catalan staples and managed to extract different flavours from tapas dishes that were essentially the same.

That was five years ago, when Barcelona was well-known as a destination for big conferences and exhibitions, but now, half a decade later, people are flocking to the **Catalonian** capital for other, more gluttonous reasons. The evolution of Barcelona's dining scene from casual to world-class was a natural one; a logical result of putting fresh ingredients, discerning diners and some of the world's most creative chefs in one place. This month, Madrid-based writer Vicky Vilches embarked on a quest to find out more about the **gastronomic revolution** taking place in the city. Read her discoveries in 'Barcelona: a gourmet trail' on page 76.

Globalisation, celebrity chefs and an overall increase in people's appreciation of good cuisine has seen food become as much a part of the travel experience as the people you meet and the places you visit. I can't think of the last time I didn't research a couple of **top restaurants** to try before visiting a city, seeking out local chefs who are making a name for themselves for culinary excellence or gastronomic innovation. At the same time, I'm always keen to try the unknown and the up-and-coming, as I'm sure you are, too.

In other cities, like **Kyoto**, dining like a local can better help you understand cultural practices and give you an insight into the lives of the people who live there. Journalist Graeme Green recently visited the former Japanese capital in pursuit of a better understanding of **Zen philosophy**, but came away with an unexpected appreciation of the local *kaiseki* dining experience, in which small bowls of delicate, steaming food are presented to the diner in a ceremonial fashion. Read his story 'Be here now' on page 54.

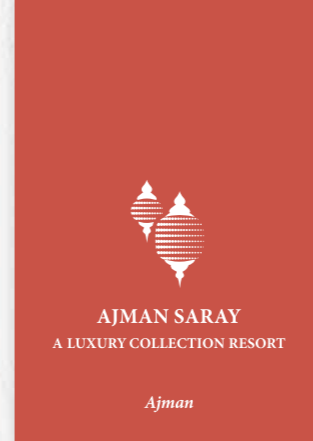
On the other side of the globe in **São Paulo**, chefs are tapping into what could be the world's largest source of unknown ingredients: the **Amazon rainforest**. Using plants (and, in some cases, insects) unique to this vast ecosystem, chefs are re-creating traditional dishes with new ingredients, and coming up with new and innovative creations based on their findings. But it's not all ants and palm hearts — **Brazil's urban jungle** is also home to the largest Japanese population outside of Asia, which, according to our contributor, Nicholas Gill, means São Paulo's Japanese restaurants are some of the most innovative in town. Turn to page 66 to read more about the fast-paced city.

We got a little carried away with our appreciation of gourmet travel in this issue — so much so that we've decided it will be a **taste of things to come**. Look out for more tantalising gourmet experiences from around the world in next month's issue, and be sure to download our digital edition to take *Destinations of the World News* with you wherever you travel. Bon appétit.



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*J. Mortimer*  
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## Contributors



Photo: D.O.M.



### Nicholas Gill

Writer and photographer Nicholas Gill splits his time between Lima, Peru and Brooklyn, New York. His work appears in publications such as *The New York Times*, *Bon Appétit*, *Food & Wine*, *Saveur*, and *New York Magazine*. Nicholas is also the co-founder of *Newworldreview.com*, a website exploring food, drink and travel in Latin America. This month, he reveals the best places to stay, eat and party in the steamy cultural and gastronomic capital of Brazil, São Paulo. Read his story on page 66.

@nicholasgill



### Vicky Vilches

Vicky Vilches is Spanish freelance journalist based in Madrid. She reviews hotels for the weekend supplements of leading Spanish newspapers *El Mundo* and *Expansión*, and writes about travel in *Ocho Leguas*, *Esquire* and *Dapper* magazines. Naturally, we enlisted her local expertise to take us on a culinary tour of Barcelona (page 76), seeking out the best gourmet restaurants and unique dining experiences that make the Spanish city one of the most exciting foodie destinations in Europe.

@vilchesvicky



### Laura Snook

As a travel writer dedicated to uncovering fascinating and magical destinations, Laura is no stranger to experiential luxury. Her adventures have taken her from a healing retreat on a 60-foot vintage yacht to a sanctuary lodge in the shadow of the Lost City of Machu Picchu. This month, Laura was seduced by the charms of Cartagena, where colourful architecture, tempting cuisine and the legacy of Gabriel García Márquez provide the backdrop for an unforgettable 24 hours in the Colombian city. Read her story on page 94.



### Graeme Green

Specialising in adventure and luxury travel, writer and photographer Green has travelled extensively across Asia, Latin America and the USA, and his work has appeared in publications including *The Sunday Times*, *National Geographic Traveler*, *The Guardian* and *The Independent*. After a trip to Japan two years ago, Graeme fell in love with the Land of the Rising Sun, so this month we sent him back, this time to Kyoto in pursuit of the secrets of the ancient art of Zen (page 54).

@greengraeme

## DESTINATIONS OF THE WORLD news

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**Publisher** Anna Zhukov  
anna@dotwnews.com

**Senior Editor** Joe Mortimer  
joe@dotwnews.com

**Deputy Editor** Rebecca Haddad  
rebecca@dotwnews.com

**Deputy Online Editor** Simon Harrington  
simon@dotwnews.com

**News Editor** Steven Bond  
steven@dotwnews.com

**International Sales Director** Jesse Vora  
jesse@dotwnews.com

**Account Executive** James Stead  
james@dotwnews.com

**Sales & Marketing Executive** Siby Thomas  
siby@dotwnews.com

**Art Director** Kris Karacinski  
kris@dotwnews.com

**Multimedia Manager** Vandita Gaurang  
vandita@wnnlimited.com

**Multimedia Graphics Manager** Haitham El Shazly  
haitham@wnnlimited.com

**Circulation department**  
circulate@dotwnews.com

**Finance department**  
accounts@wnnlimited.com

**International Commercial Representations**  
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Tel +971 4 3910680 Fax +971 4 3910688 WNN Limited,  
31 Archbishop Kyprianou Street, 3036, PO Box 51234,  
zip 3503, Limassol, Cyprus

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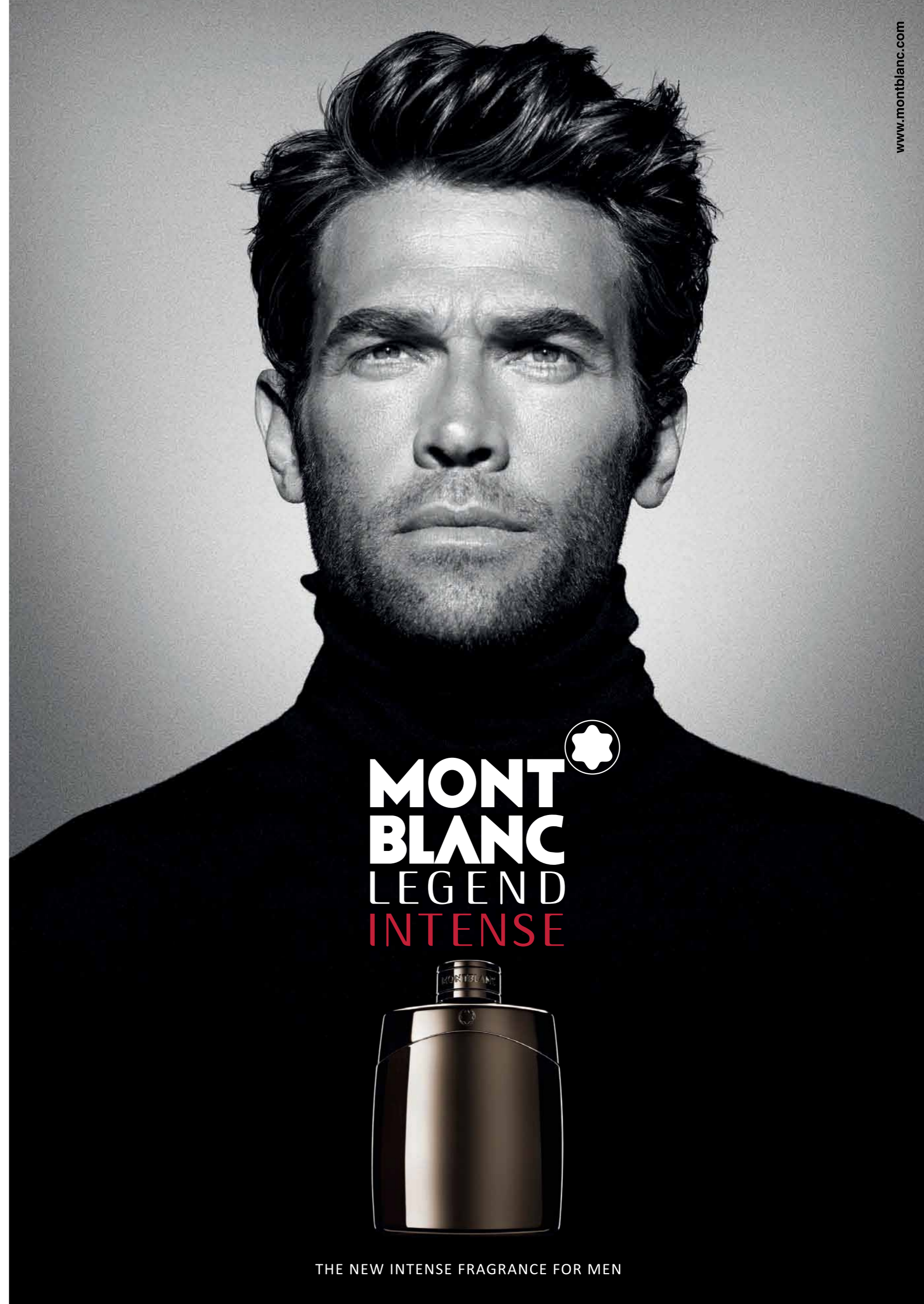
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# News

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the world of luxury travel

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on civilising the  
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## Switzerland's regal playground

**WHY NOT** follow in the footsteps of today's greatest leaders and visionaries this spring with a sojourn in Switzerland?

Davos, the highest city in Europe, is home to Switzerland's largest ski resort and also plays host to the annual winter meeting of the World Economic Forum. The 2014 meeting, which took place in January, was themed "The Reshaping of the World," which was apt, since Davos itself has undergone some recent modifications.

The **InterContinental Davos** is a golden egg-shaped hotel, nestled 1,600 metres above sea level. The 10-storey resort opened just ahead of the elite gathering, proving its worth as being fit for the world's premieres and immediately justified the naming of its Presidential Suite.

Juxtaposed to the newly built InterCon is the refurbished **Rixos Flüela Davos** (below). The 146-year-old structure debuted as a hotel in 1868, but the fast-growing

luxury hotel chain has revitalised the resort throughout its 49 suites including its finest — the 400 sq m Royal Suite. The Turkish brand is not coy about infusing its own heritage into the alpine setting, with Turkish cuisine and a Turkish hammam to complement the vast range of wellness facilities on offer.

Davos and the neighbouring resort town of Klosters share five areas of slopes and some of the world's longest runs, which extend up to 12 kilometres. But these towns are not simply winter destinations; as we venture into spring, there are even more activities on offer.

Overnight stays in the local resorts entitle guests to the **Davos Klosters Inclusive Card**, which is your ticket to a springtime alpine adventure. Whether you're game to get your clubbing fix at either of the two golf courses, take a scenic pony trek through the valleys, or simply take in the vistas via a paragliding experience, there is no shortage of adrenaline-inducing activities within the Swiss mountains.



Elegant accommodation at Rixos Flüela Davos



## Italy's lady of the lake returns

**THE** veteran Italian Grand Hotel Tremezzo resort on Lake Como reopened last month with revamped rooms and an all-new signature suite. The 30 newly refurbished Lake View Prestige Rooms have been given fresh colour schemes and an elegant redesign reflecting the grandeur

of the lake and surrounding areas. The aptly named rooms also offer balcony views over the water. The new signature Suite Aurelia pays homage to the aunt of the hotel owner, whose personal antique collection will be displayed throughout. [www.grandhoteltremezzo.com](http://www.grandhoteltremezzo.com)



**Banksy comes to ME London** Some may preface the widely publicised street artist Banksy as 'infamous', but many would equally celebrate the anonymous Brit as 'brilliant' and even 'iconic'. An upcoming exhibition in London's ME hotel seeks to explore the social, legal and moral issues that surround the ever-popular street artist's work. *Stealing Banksy?*, the most expensive collection of the artist's work, takes place from April 24 before a live auction takes place on the 27th, which will also be beamed live across all Meliá's ME hotels worldwide. The sum of the exhibits is estimated to be worth US \$8.26 million. [www.melia.com](http://www.melia.com)

## A taste of Paris in Mayfair

The Ritz Paris' Bar Hemingway will take residency in London's Connaught Hotel this month. The bars' respective mixologists will join forces to create a specialised drinks menu from April 7-13, combining taste and talent in the 54-seat Connaught Bar during the renovation of the Ritz Paris. The Mayfair hotel also recently introduced The Sommelier's Table, offering a customised culinary experience curated by two-Michelin-starred chef Hélène Darroze and head sommelier Hugues Lepin, who will select from 6,000 bottles in The Connaught's vast cellar. [www.the-connaught.co.uk](http://www.the-connaught.co.uk)



## Life is suite at The Dylan Amsterdam

The Dylan Amsterdam has launched its Serendipity Collection — a set of 16 new rooms including two Signature Suites in partnership with Dutch interior designer, Remy Meijers. The new rooms mesh rich fabrics and generous spaces to balance heritage and contemporary styles. The two signature suites within the collection are named after Dutch architect Jacob van Campen, famous for designing the world-renowned Royal Palace in Dam Square and the master hand behind the Dylan Amsterdam's historic entrance gate. The 40-room hotel also boasts Michelin-star restaurant Vinkeles and Vinkeles on the Water, a gourmet dining concept aboard a specially built canal boat. [www.dylanamsterdam.com](http://www.dylanamsterdam.com)

# South Africa: Cape of good food



Owner's Villa at Delaire Graff Estate Lodge & Spa

AFRICA'S southerly jewel Cape Town has enjoyed the moniker 'Tavern of the Seas' ever since it became a haven for weary sailors to rest and replenish during epic voyages around the Cape of Good Hope. While the Port of Cape Town remains a significant harbour for cargo vessels and cruise liners alike, the city itself is fast gaining notoriety for nourishment.

Cape Town offers a flavourful selection of delicious experiences year round, but April is a particularly choice time for foodies due to the annual **Taste of Cape Town**, which is quickly followed up by both the **Good Food & Wine Show** and **Gugulethu Wine Festival** in May.

Both Capetonians and travellers alike flock to the springtime festivities to feast on the multitude of pop-up events that take place around the main festivals, such as the 'Spier Secret' dinners and the harvest market.

Cape Town's culinary occasions are neither few, nor far between. The award-winning **Neighbourgoods Market** occurs every Saturday, flaunting a wide range of eco-friendly and organic products that are guaranteed to have not journeyed as far as the city's multiple millions of annual visitors.

According to South Africa's *Eat Out* magazine, eight of the top 10 restaurants of 2013 are found

in the city, with ultra-contemporary restaurant **The Test Kitchen** topping the list. Fine-dining options span African, Asian and fusion cuisines from the wider region.

An increasing number of millionaire tourists are favouring the Cape and both *The New York Times* and *The Guardian* ranked the city as a top must-visit destination for 2014. If discrete dining is more to your taste than some of the new luxury hotel offerings are just as likely to leave you satiated.

While the **Delaire Graff Estate Lodge & Spa** in Stellenbosch is but a short drive out of Cape Town's suburbs, the foodie resort's expansive vineyards and olive groves surround an exquisite set of rooms and suites that combine Dutch style thatch roofing with Anglo-French flair. Executive chef Christiaan Campbell is at the helm of **Indochine**, which offers a unique menu created daily according to what produce has ripened on the estate.

Nearer the coast, **POD** provides a funkier boutique aesthetic in the heart of Camps Bay. Vaunted as "barefoot luxury", the eco-focused wooden lodges are a spoon's throw from the bay's myriad celebrated eateries.

The Test Kitchen is Cape Town's top restaurant



## THE RITZ-CARLTON, BAHRAIN HOTEL & SPA

A successful meeting requires several ingredients, but few are as important as location. Situated on the shores of the Arabian Gulf on its own stretch of private beach, The Ritz-Carlton, Bahrain Hotel & Spa makes an ideal spot for corporate and social gatherings. From intimate meetings to lavish weddings and gala events, the 245-room resort has everything imaginable to meet your needs, with more than 3,750 square metres of meeting and banquet space that can accommodate conferences of up to 1,000 people.

The exquisite 1,195 square metre Al Ghazal Ballroom has all the makings of a gala event,

while the slightly smaller Al Noor Ballroom with its intricate golden designs is a perfect venue for weddings for up to 600 guests. The Grand Foyer presents 1,428 square meters of marble lined space accented by panoramic floor-to-ceiling windows, allowing guests to admire the breathtaking views during pre-event receptions. Four additional meeting rooms all equipped with state of the art technology make popular venues for smaller corporate meetings and presentations.

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equipped business centre is available to provide secretarial services, car rental and travel assistance for guests and delegates.

Attendees are also well catered to both before and after the main event, with some of the most luxurious facilities in the city on hand at The Ritz-Carlton, Bahrain Hotel & Spa, including a choice of sumptuous suites and 23 private villas, each with their own swimming pool, private beach and 24-hour private butler. There's also a generous selection of restaurants and lounges and spacious spa facility with a Thalasso Therapy pool and its own Hammam – perfect for post-meeting rejuvenation.

## High-speed thrills at Yas Island



SEBASTIAN VETTEL, Lewis Hamilton and Kimi Räikkönen have all battled it out on the technical turns and lengthy straights at Abu Dhabi's Yas Marina Circuit. Now, luxury race-car specialist Dragon Racing is encouraging well-heeled travellers to add their names to this prestigious list of drivers. Dragon Racing has a fleet of supercars, including the McLaren GT 12C Sprint, Ferrari 458 Challenge and Radical SR8 LM. Each racer is available for bespoke personal use or corporate events at the Dubai Autodrome and Yas Marina Circuit. The company can take care of all the logistics throughout the day and offer a range of high-end additional services, including exclusive limo transfers between the airport and track, and a dedicated hospitality service for suite and restaurant bookings. [www.dragonracing88.com](http://www.dragonracing88.com)

## Chinawhite reborn in the Gulf

A namesake of one of London's most legendary clubs, Chinawhite, opens its doors in Dubai this month. The club's original founders have opted for the fast-paced Arabian city to host the rebirth of the exclusive super-club. While not affiliated with the current licensee of the iconic name in the UK, Grand Hyatt Dubai promises, "everything that the original brand was and more", according to the club's co-founder. The original Chinawhite closed its doors in December 2008, 10 years after its launch, but was famed for being a stylish and glamorous playground for A-list celebs.



## Fortnum & Mason unhampered in Dubai

LONDON'S 307-year-old department store Fortnum & Mason has set up shop in Dubai. The store opened at the foot of the Burj Khalifa late last month, providing its iconic gift hampers, fine teas and preserves to Dubai's discerning diners. The centuries-old store huddles between The Address Downtown Dubai and the Dubai

Mall - unpacking a few locally inspired extras, as well as in-house dining options. The three-storey store will focus primarily on exquisite delicacies and distinguished brews across its two primary floors, and will debut a 'shop within a shop', selling scented candles - an homage to the firm's origins. [www.fortnumandmason.com](http://www.fortnumandmason.com)



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# Shanghai style

Photo: Getty Images / Rob Whitworth



Tiramisu at Calypso

**THE FAMILIAR** axiom tells us that we find strength in numbers, but the world's most populous city has also added style to the formula. Shanghai has seized the crown as Asia's most stylish city, according to a new survey, surpassing Tokyo, Singapore and Hong Kong. The megacity now "leads the fashion charge" in the east, according to researchers at US-based data research company Global Language Monitor, just ahead of **Shanghai Fashion Week**, which runs from April 9 to 17.

While models strut on the city's catwalks, many thousands of visitors will descend on the **China (Shanghai) International Boat Show 2014**. The show embarks on April 10, providing three days of luxury launches and nautical innovations at Shanghai World Expo Exhibition & Convention Center. More than 550 boats are being displayed and more than 30 are in China for the first time.

If you have any change leftover from your new yacht then you may need to refuel for these high-energy events. Shanghai's Jing'an area is hotting up with brace of new eateries. **Calypso** sits within the **Shangri-La Jing An**, right beside Chairman Mao's former residence. Head chef Davide Care's rustic Mediterranean mains contrast the local cuisine somewhat, but the restaurant's aesthetics are borrowed from across the East China Sea courtesy of Japanese designer Shigeru Ban, who has fashioned Calypso into a country cottage made of glass.

Named after the neighbourhood's multitude of pedicabs, **Cyclo** offers a French-Vietnamese fusion in line with the heritage of its father and son owners. Opened late last year, the split-level restaurant is the heartier of the area's new options and has already established itself among the local foodie community as the top destination for Vietnamese fare in the whole metropolis.

The **Sofitel Shanghai Jing'an Huamin** (left) was also due to open this month, bringing a French twist to the booming district, but the opening has recently been delayed. The imposing 68-story façade is the yin to the yang of the 'art du bouquet' styled interior — a celebration of floral shapes and fabrics. The French influence will extend way beyond the hotel's aesthetic and into the gastronomy on offer.



Sofitel Shanghai Jing'an Huamin



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		KE5952	0330	1630	Daily
Seoul	Dubai	KE951	1305	1830	Mon, Tue, Thu, Sat, Sun
		KE5951	2350	0505 <sup>+1</sup>	Daily

- \* Above schedule can be changed.
- \* KE5952/5951 are operated by Emirate Airline



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 KSA (Riyadh) : 966-12-263-3035/6202 (Kanoo Travel)





Live your musical fantasy in Beijing

**HOTEL** Éclat Beijing is now offering an escape beyond comfort and out of reality all together, after unveiling four new exquisitely nerdy Grand Deluxe Lagoon Suites, drawing names and inspiration from beloved fantasy characters and cinematic locations.

The 'Darth Vader' suite is a celebration of geometric designs by Michael Yeung. Functional furniture double as art pieces and playful touches include large LEGO sets of Han Solo's Millennium Falcon, as well as Darth Vader himself. Moving away from the Dark Side, 'Harry Potter' is a light-hearted tribute to Rowling's modern hero. The suite offers Hogwarts gowns and a Dobby statuette, as well as some of Hogwarts library's ageing books.

The musically inspired 'Midnight in Paris' (above) is reminiscent of Parisian salons, with its velvet upholstered chairs and cello patterns adorning the wall. 'Hollywood' provides a stronger cinematic theme with its rich, soft furnishings, chandeliers and overall 1920s feel — with a few Marilyn Monroe images thrown in for fun.

The Éclat is a museum in itself, decorated throughout with great works including original sculptures and paintings from creative greats such as Andy Warhol, Pierre Matter and Chen Wenling. The hotel is also home to the largest private collection of Salvador Dali works in China and certainly one of the largest worldwide. [www.eclathotels.com](http://www.eclathotels.com)

Family ties at Conrad Maldives

All-new Family Water Villas at Conrad Maldives Rangali Island are a luxurious indulgence that can be enjoyed by the entire family. The seven, two-bedroom villas, which linger over the private lagoon, stretch over 150 sq m, decorated in a contemporary Maldivian style. The nifty bathrooms are designed to create the feel of an outdoor bathing experience, and the jacuzzi and sun beds are a step away from the private sundeck, where guests can venture to the nearby coral reef. [conradhotels3.hilton.com](http://conradhotels3.hilton.com)



Photo: Getty Images / Bertalan Rindliff Perceff

Lagerfeld plans his own hotel in Macau

Chanel's creative director Karl Lagerfeld is no stranger to hotel design. Shortly after inking a deal to revamp suites at the Hôtel de Crillon in Paris, Lagerfeld has now put his gloves on a more holistic hotel project in Macau. The 270-room Karl Lagerfeld hotel is scheduled to open in the densely populated enclave in 2017, within the upcoming Lisboa Palace, which is also slated to house a 270-room Palazzo Versace Hotel. "An entire hotel designed by me — it's the first time for me. I think the idea is great," says the veteran designer. Gaming revenues in Macau surpassed US \$38 billion last year, which is six times the revenue seen on the Las Vegas Strip.



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Las Vegas is constantly innovating.

Photo: Getty Images / Karl Weatherly



A Luxury King room at Nobu Hotel Las Vegas



The High Roller

Photo: Denis Truscello

## Las Vegas keeps on spinning

A SHIMMERING shot of glitz and glamour in the Nevada desert, Las Vegas is evergreen with incandescence. Seasons come and go, but Sin City is consistently aglow and open for business. With no real inclement weather to punctuate spring and autumn, it's more often the 'next big thing' that defines the city's changing chapters.

In this case, the next big thing is **The High Roller**, a 167.6-metre Ferris wheel. When it opens this spring, it will be the world's largest, inching ahead of the Singapore Flyer by just 2.7 metres. Each of the 28 spherical glass cabins can hold up to 40 people for a full rotation, which lasts around 30 minutes. The 20,000-kilogram pods are enlivened by music and video, and private renting options are available for greater privacy or special functions such as weddings — this is Vegas after all.

Parallel to Las Vegas Boulevard, home of The Strip, the towering wheel and its 2,000 LED lights is the jewel of Caesars Entertainment's new US \$550 million entertainment precinct known as **The LINQ**, packed with new dining, retail and nightlife offerings. But not everything in Vegas is about being bigger.

With just 188-rooms, **The Cromwell** is due to welcome its first occupants next month, becoming the Strip's first ever stand-alone boutique hotel (also owned by Caesars). Emmy Award-winning chef and American TV personality Giada De Laurentiis is opening her first Las Vegas eatery in the hotel, promising light Italian fare with Californian influences and spectacular views of the Strip. Other boutique options come in the form of the Aria's **Sky Suites**, the Monte Carlo's **Hotel32**, which boasts 50 rooms and suites, and the MGM Grand's **SkyLOFTS**.

Meanwhile, Caesars also plans to open what it promises will be the "most tasteful" suite in the city this month; the 10,300 sq ft Nobu Villa at **Nobu Hotel Las Vegas**. Situated on the top floor of the 181-room, hotel-within-a-hotel at Caesars Palace, the spacious David Rockwell-designed suite will have a 4,700 sq ft terrace with superb views of the High Roller.

SBE Entertainment Group's 1,600-room **SLS Las Vegas** won't open until the US Labor Day weekend in September, but upcoming dining venues within the resort such as The Bazaar by celeb chef José Andrés and Umami Burger have already been confirmed.



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Americas

## Little luxuries in the Big Apple

View from The Roof

**ONE** of the more recent luxury retreats in Midtown Manhattan, Viceroy New York, has announced its cherry on top. The Roof is a charming lounge and outdoor terrace, which supplements the street-level Kingside restaurant and bar on 57th street. The location provides immense views of Central Park, allowing guests to drink in the dynamic city while they imbibe a range of signature cocktails.

Designed by Roman and Williams, The Roof evokes the interior of a luxury yacht, complete with hardwood ipe floors, leather sofas and brass details, all complemented by a series of images based on sky, sea and clouds. Heat lamps and wool blankets will be available to warm guests on the terrace in the colder months.

Elsewhere in Manhattan, another new luxury lifestyle hotel is boasting a new update.

WestHouse New York has teamed up with online retailer Net-A-Porter to offer its range of beauty and fashion amenities to guests. The new partnership offers an online option for its residents, who also have a direct phone line to the store. The hotel is kicking off the tie-up with a Suite Shopping Package. Guests who stay three or more nights will automatically receive a \$500 gift card for any Net-A-Porter products.



### Celebrated designer on board for cruise ship creation

*Place a luxury cruise firm and interior design legend in the same room and something amazing is bound to happen. One of the world's foremost hospitality designers, Adam D.*

*Tihany, has been contracted by the ultra-luxe cruise operator Seabourn to plot the indoor and outdoor guest areas of its newest ship, including spa, lounges and outdoor decks.*

*Tihany has previously worked with the likes of Heston Blumenthal, Daniel Boulud and Wolfgang Puck in order to create culinary spaces, as well as collaborations with major hotel chains such as the One&Only in Cape Town, the Mandarin Oriental in Las Vegas and The Oberoi, New Delhi.*

### Hilfiger eyes South Beach hotel

American fashion guru Tommy Hilfiger has set his sights on the Art Deco Raleigh Hotel on Miami's South Beach. The 1940 beachfront landmark will be transformed into a private club and hotel after being acquired from its owners, who paid \$55 million for it just two years ago. Hilfiger said he is eyeing his own **Hilfiger Hospitality**

brand, which would be inaugurated once the Raleigh's 105 rooms are secured by the deal. The 62-year-old also bought a Grand Beach home for \$24 million last year, but he stole more headlines when he listed his Plaza Hotel New York Penthouse for \$80 million, three times what he paid for the property in 2008.

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# DEBUT

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## Sofitel Abidjan Hôtel Ivoire

Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire

This chic new Sofitel combines French luxury with a distinct African aesthetic. Built in the early 1960s, the property has seen a recent overhaul to enhance the comfort and extravagance of the resort. The fusion theme extends to Toit d'Abidjan restaurant on the 23rd floor, where chef Pascal Favier oversees each culinary creation as guests dine in full view of the Ébrié Lagoon below. Of the 41 suites currently available, the two presidential suites are the hotel's finest, bathed in warm tones and demonstrating acute attention to detail. A further 84 suites and So SPA are due to follow after a second wave of renovations. [www.softel.com](http://www.softel.com)



## Royal Rose Hotel

Abu Dhabi, UAE

A facsimile of a 17th-century French palace in the heart of the UAE capital, the Royal Rose Hotel features 355 rooms and suites in a glistening tower, contrasting the surrounding urban sprawl. It's as though King Midas has laid his hands almost everywhere — even the hotel's fine-dining options are certainly fit for a king. The signature Barocco on the upper lobby features a French Baroque setting, and the Brasserie Cafe further panders to the Francophile, set in an open space overlooking the main lobby. The health club and full-service spa with elegant swimming pool is ideal to offset some of those additional calories. [www.royalrosehotel.com](http://www.royalrosehotel.com)



## Maafushi by COMO

Maldives

The mix of 66 suites and villas located by the sparkling waters of the southerly Thaa Atoll are joined by an abundance of dining and wellness options. Residents can feast on local 'Shambhala' cuisine or select international options, including the Japanese-inspired Tai. The COMO Shambhala Retreat offers traditional Asian therapies and Ayurvedic medicines native to the Indian subcontinent. Three spacious beach villas come equipped with private pools with sunrise views, but cannot rival the resort's overwater villas, each straddling the lagoon and including the services of a private butler. [www.comohotels.com](http://www.comohotels.com)



## Shangri-La Hotel, Lhasa

Lhasa, Tibet

Set atop a plateau 3,650 metres above sea level, Lhasa is a hidden treasure in the Himalayas. The surrounding glaciers and gnarled cliffs ensure that the new Tibetan Shangri-La is an intriguing proposition even prior to entering. The warm, earthy colours, high ceilings and open spaces are also reminiscent of the traditional Tibetan style. The 279-room property pays homage to the region through its cuisine. The Shambala restaurant offers signature roasted lamb with Tibetan yoghurts and cheeses, while Altitude provides more international options and boasts views into the open kitchens. [www.shangri-la.com](http://www.shangri-la.com)



## The Sanchaya

Bintan Island, Indonesia

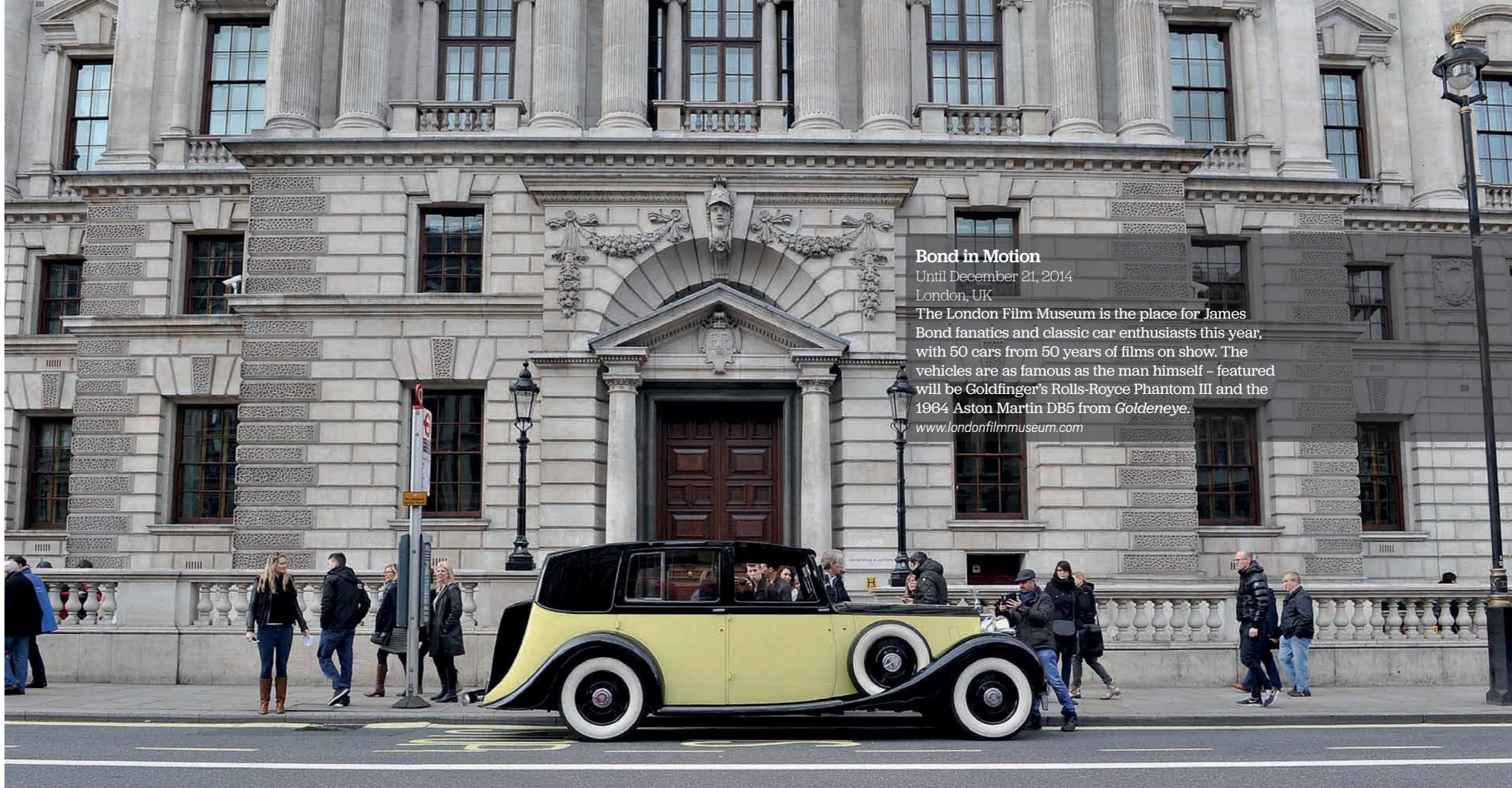
This beachfront estate comprises 19 private villas and nine luxury suites, each decorated with artefacts and keepsakes that speak of the colour and culture of Southeast Asia. Bintan is just 40 km south of Singapore, but you won't find traffic here. The adjacent mangroves are filled with talkative primates and slow-moving monitor lizards, as well as ancient temples and striking tombs. The 240 sq m Vanda Villas each have their own infinity pools as well as four bedrooms that reflect the colonial heritage of Singapore. But if you still haven't finished exploring, there are a variety of traditional Kampung villages nearby. [www.thesanchaya.com](http://www.thesanchaya.com)



**New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival**

April 25 to May 4, New Orleans, USA  
This annual festival is a celebration of food for the soul in the birthplace of jazz. If jazz from the likes of Little Freddie King isn't your thing, the festival also celebrates the heritage of this colourful city, with a marketplace selling arts, crafts and local cuisine – all served with a side of Southern hospitality.  
[www.nojazzfest.com](http://www.nojazzfest.com)

Photo: Getty Images / Douglas Mason



**Bond in Motion**

Until December 21, 2014  
London, UK  
The London Film Museum is the place for James Bond fanatics and classic car enthusiasts this year, with 50 cars from 50 years of films on show. The vehicles are as famous as the man himself – featured will be Goldfinger's Rolls-Royce Phantom III and the 1964 Aston Martin DB5 from *Goldeneye*.  
[www.londonfilmmuseum.com](http://www.londonfilmmuseum.com)

**XV Agua Alta Polo Cup by Porsche**

April 12-19  
Costa Careyes, Mexico  
This luxe Pacific playground for the rich and famous will become the haunt of polo aficionados for the 15th edition of this event, which will see six 10-goal teams play against one another in eight days of competition. Stretch your visit out by a few days to get a chance to unwind in the beach-side ambience of the resort.  
[www.careyes.com.mx](http://www.careyes.com.mx)

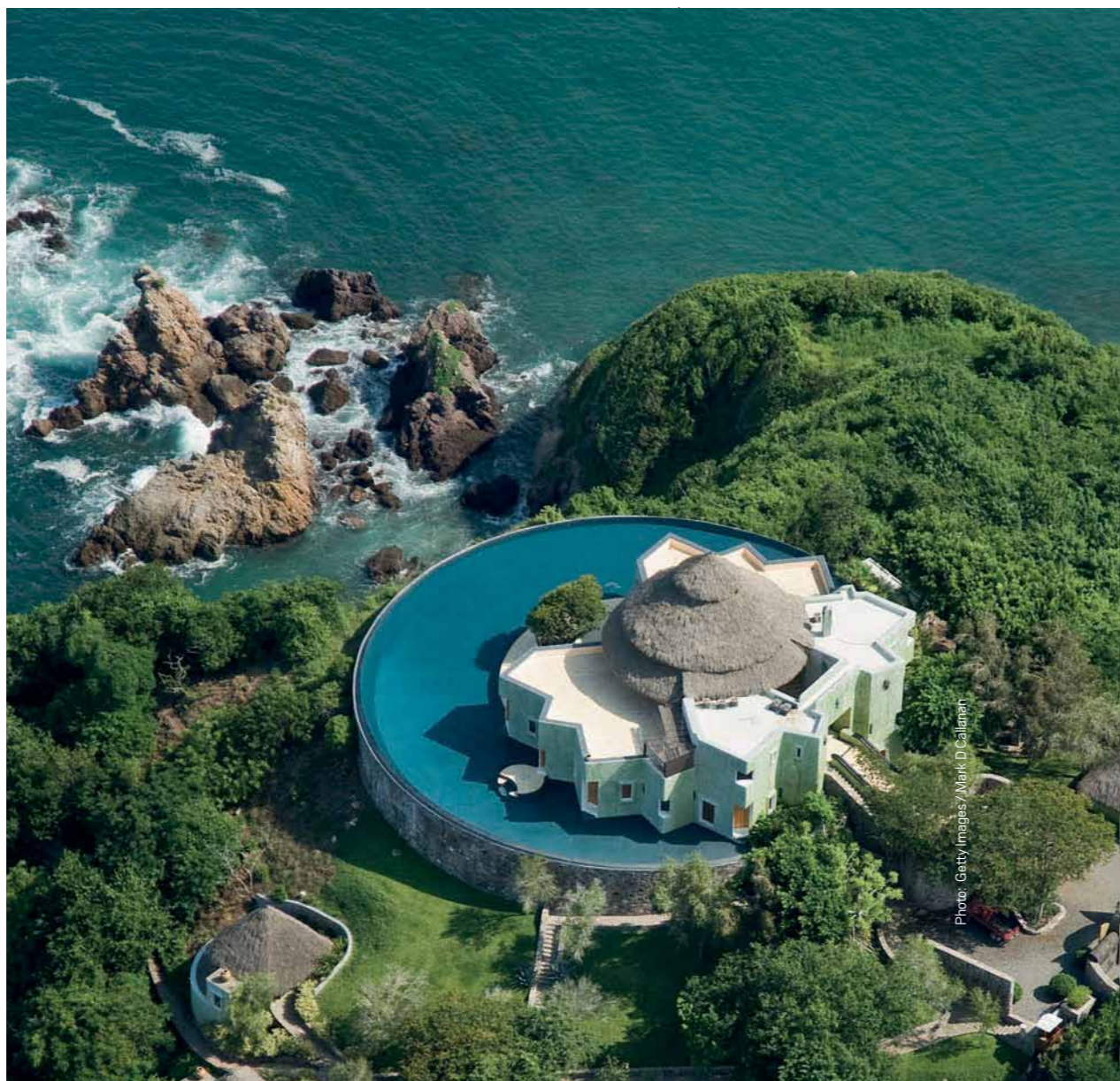


Photo: Getty Images / Mark D. Callan



Photo: Getty Images / Stephen Lovelkin

**Tribeca Film Festival**

April 16-27  
New York, USA  
It's hard to believe this festival, founded in 2002 by actor Robert de Niro, producer Jane Rosenthal and husband Craig Hatkoff, is already in its 13th year. Festivities this year include the inaugural Tribeca Innovation Week, a celebration and opportunity for collaboration between the worlds of culture, technology and storytelling.  
[www.tribecafilm.com](http://www.tribecafilm.com)

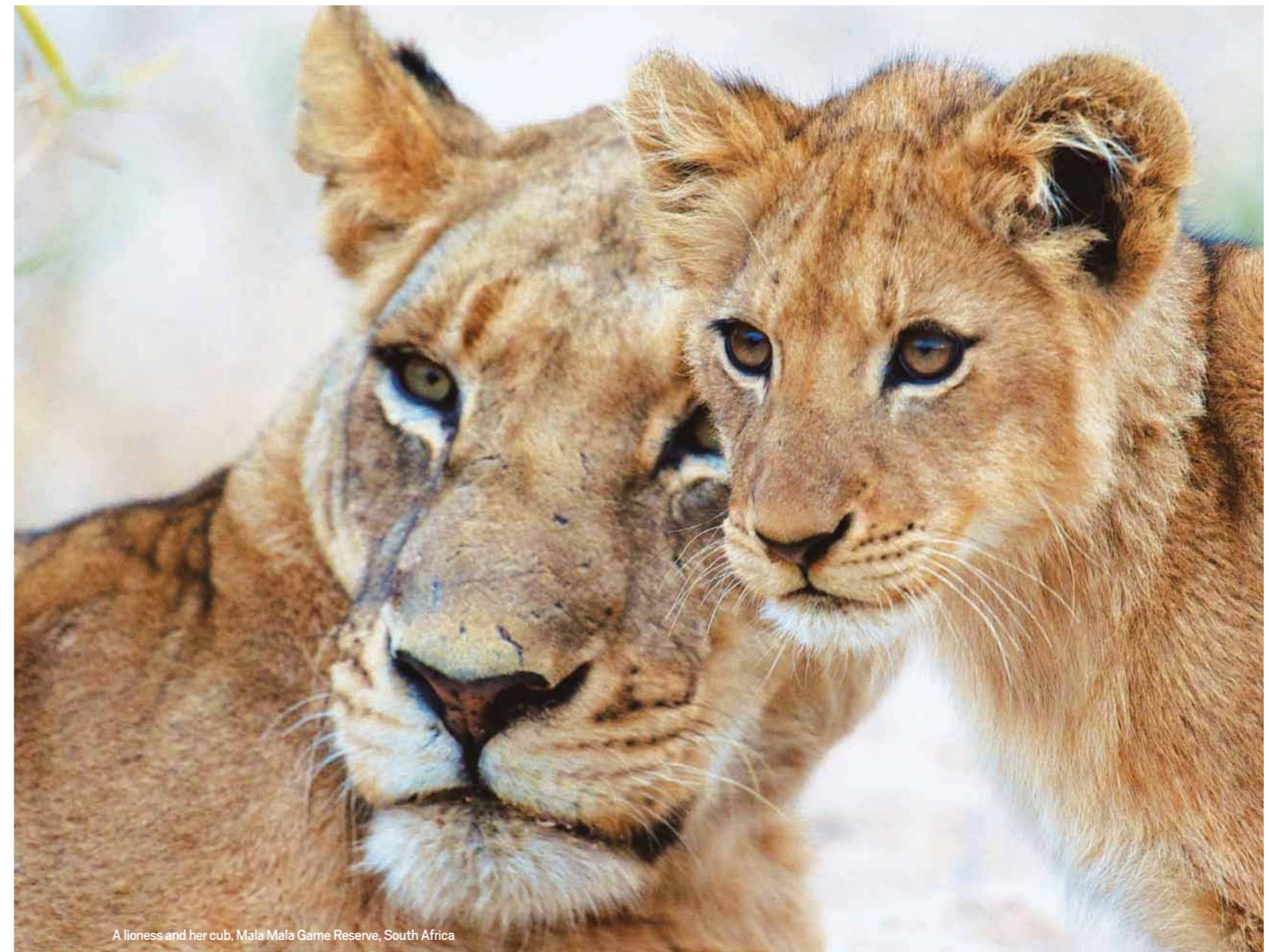
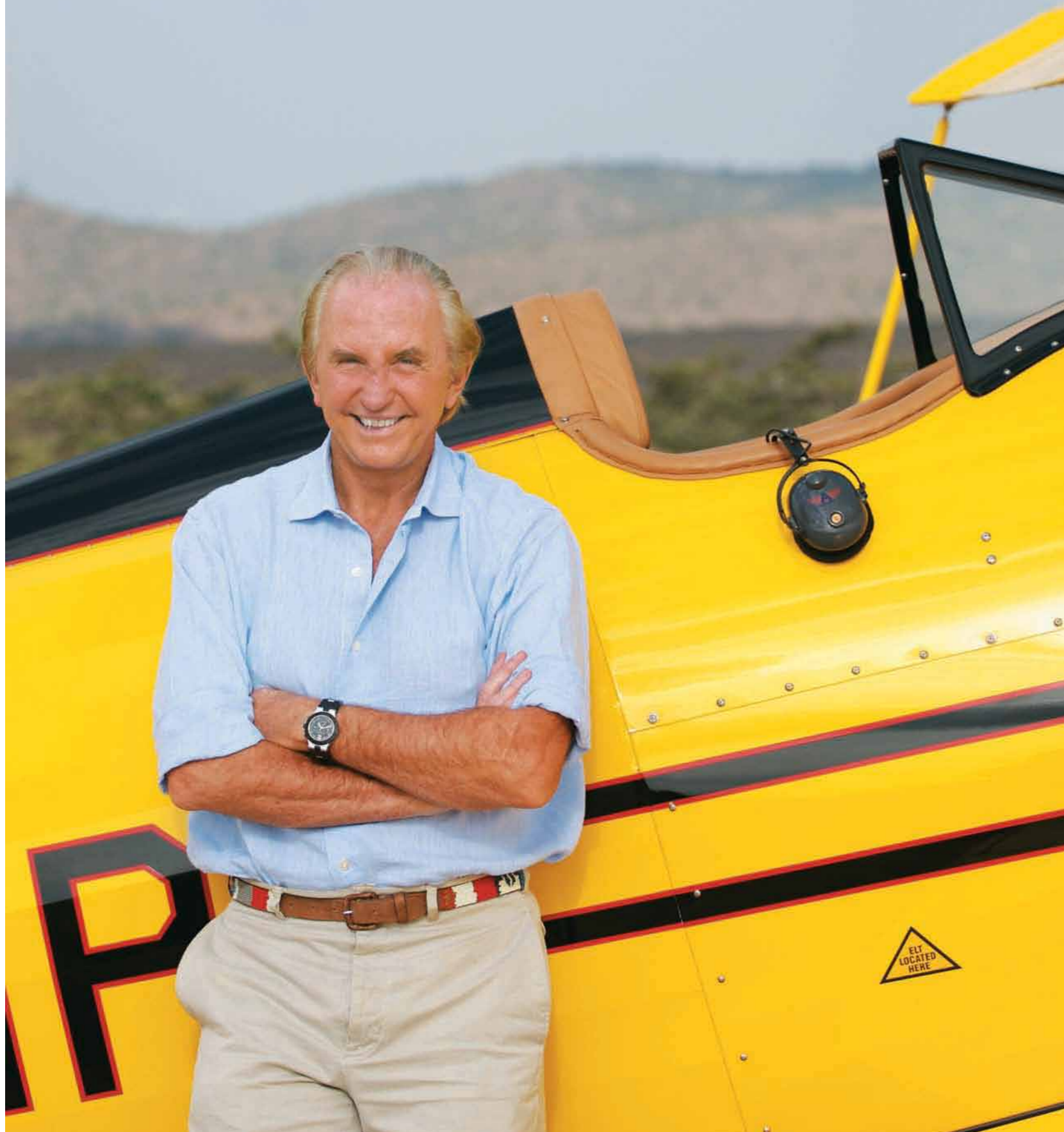
**Antigua Classic Yacht Regatta**

April 17-22  
Antigua  
Watch tall ships and vintage vessels cruise the Caribbean in this yachting event that has been a staple on the Antigua maritime calendar since the 1960s. See painstakingly refitted and restored classic vessels participate in four main races as well as the popular Concours d'Elegance event.  
[www.antiguaclassics.com](http://www.antiguaclassics.com)



# CALL OF THE WILD

Interview: Joe Mortimer



A lioness and her cub, Mala Mala Game Reserve, South Africa

Abercrombie & Kent chairman **Geoffrey Kent** talks about growing up in Kenya, swimming with hammerheads, backing out of the space race and entering war-torn Uganda with the British SAS

To paraphrase Rudyard Kipling, Edgar Rice Burroughs and countless other authors, you can take the man out of the wild, but you can't take the wild out of the man. In this sense is the untamed parts of the world in need of luxurious tented camps, comfortable transportation and all the trappings of a home in Knightsbridge, then the sentiment is certainly true of Geoffrey Kent. The Abercrombie & Kent founder still travels for about 300 days a year, and bristles with boyish excitement when recounting his youthful capers in post-colonial Africa or the depths of the Amazon.

Some believe it's the nine-figure bank balance that keeps the sparkle burning in his eye, or perhaps his Brazilian wife Otavia Jardim, but after I spend half an hour talking to him, it's apparent that Geoffrey's biggest passion is travel. He recalls his travel memoirs like they happened yesterday, and reels off place names with an alacrity that belies his 70-odd years. Geoffrey is restless as we talk, revealing his plans to discover new routes into far-flung and off-the-beaten-track destinations like Iran and Socotra to create new experiences for the legions of loyal customers who have discovered the world with A&K.

#### **What did the world look like when Abercrombie & Kent was founded in 1962?**

I am a white Kenyan, so I was born and grew up in Africa. When self-government came to Kenya in 1962 and we lost all of our farms, my father, mother and myself sat on our farm and decided to start a safari

camp. The company was born with one Land Rover, 100 pounds and the made-up name of Abercrombie & Kent. The truth is, there never was an Abercrombie. I wanted it to start with an 'A' to put us top of the *Yellow Pages* [telephone directory]. The first thing I did was develop the first luxury photographic safari, which was a challenge as everyone hunted in those days.

#### **What was the plan when you set out?**

I had this vision of creating something that would be able to take people to the wildest places in the bush in utmost comfort. This was when I was very young but I had it all worked out. I used all my training. Growing up on a farm in Africa meant I had resilience and used my brain. When I was 16 I drove a motorbike from Nairobi to Cape Town, so I was very well travelled. By age 17, I had been to the Belgian Congo. We were very adventurous and we had no fear. Zero. When I was in the army I was with the 5th Royal Inniskilling Dragoon Guards, so in effect I brought the elegance of a cavalry officer, I bought the pioneering spirit and resilience of living on a farm, and I bought the logistics of the British Army.

#### **How did things grow from there?**

I realised I had hit on something really interesting. Basically, people lead very boring lives and actually they are quite frightened [by the idea of wild places] and reasonably so. But they would sit in awe when I told

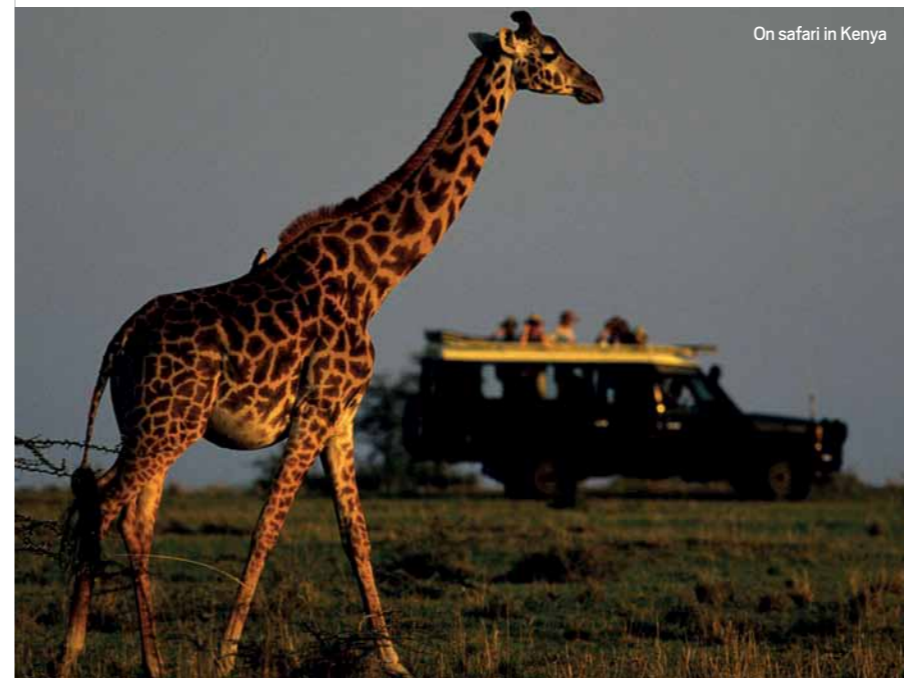
Photos courtesy of Abercrombie & Kent Picture Library, Clickwise, Naashon Zalk + Redux / Dallas Hetherington



Sunset drinks at Sanctuary Chichele Presidential Lodge in Zambia



Machu Picchu at sunrise



On safari in Kenya



Northern Lights over the Arctic



Zodiac expedition in Antarctica

them about my expeditions to here and there, and I said to myself, “why don’t I take them all on these trips?” And so I started to. My father had this wonderful expression, which was a Kings African Rifles Expression: “Geoffrey, you’re going to all the places where you can’t drink the water.” I used to look for the most impossible place you could think of and go there myself.

**Where did you go in the early days?**

I was the first person to drive a truck all the way down to Bechuanaland, which is now Botswana, and set up the first camps there and in Tanzania. I went to Uganda in Idi Amin’s time. I went to Southern Sudan where I was locked up as a suspected CIA guy for a while. I went all over. I went to China in 1979 and got the first license to travel into China — no one had been there before. Then, I went to Antarctica and pioneered that in my little red Explorer, and after that I took her and went 500 miles up the Amazon. No one had ever done that before. It was always pioneering and exploring. And then it was a case of working out how I could take my clients to this destination, having de-risked it. I did everything myself. I still do everything myself today. I de-risk everything, and then put in logistics and the best guides; clever, intellectual guides. They are all university graduates and very smart guys. I put a huge emphasis on that.

“I HAD THIS VISION OF CREATING SOMETHING THAT WOULD BE ABLE TO TAKE PEOPLE TO THE WILDEST PLACES IN THE BUSH IN UTMOST COMFORT”

**What lures you to new destinations?**

I’m always very inquisitive. I have a passion for it. I think I’m like an artist; I like to see an impossible place. When you have a whole world that has been Google-Mapped, it’s hard to find something that is new in travel. So what I look at is every country that has a present and ongoing revolution — that’s my prey. Sri Lanka had been in my sights for a long time. We went in there this year and bought a company.

**After de-risking, how do you create a luxury destination?**

Let’s take Egypt. It’s not very popular today, but it is one of our most successful products. When I first went to Egypt, I don’t think they had one boat. One year later David Niven was doing the movie, *Death on the Nile*, and he asked me up there. There were two boats at that time, the *Isis* and the *Osiris*. I thought they were too big, so I built the first small boat on the Nile, with a swimming pool. Everybody flocked to it and loved it because they were small, intimate trips. I went to the university

in Cairo and hired the best guides. And the rest is history. We now have four beautiful ships and we dominate Egypt with that product. In Africa we did the same in Botswana where we now have 400,000 hectares of land. We built camps, airstrips, logistics and so on. We now have 13 properties all over Africa.

**How did you get into Uganda so early?**

When [Ugandan President Yoweri] Museveni was coming into power, I went in with a bunch of SAS guys, who called me and said, “Hey, Geoff, do you want come and to do a little trip into Uganda?” We got on this little plane and when we arrived we found Museveni, who was still in his fatigues, like he was running a revolution. I said to him, “Listen, if you ever get in, I know there are a lot of gorillas down in the Bwindi Impenetrable Forest.” (I was one of the first to find them — in fact long before [American zoologist] Dian Fossey ever found them.)

I said, “I want that concession. If you give it to me, I’ll come and build it. I’ll build tourism for you.” It’s a long story, but he got in to power and he gave me the concession, true to his word. I habituated the gorillas and built a camp, the Bwindi Impenetrable Forest Camp. Today, 25 years later, we produce US \$1 million per year for the community. We’re also building a huge hospital and schools for them. Those gorillas today represent 50 percent of the world’s gorillas; the rest have been killed or moved out of their habitat.

**What were some of your most amazing travel moments?**

Wow. Well, of course, safaris are always the best of all of them, because it changes every time. To see a female leopard giving birth to cubs very early in the morning is amazing. I saw a crocodile pulling down a rhinoceros once. Animals always have exciting moments. On the other hand, doing the Royal Inca Trail in Peru and walking up to see Machu Picchu at dawn is an amazing sight. I’ve done so many adventures. The other day I was in the Galapagos; my god! We were down 80-feet and there were 50 hammerhead sharks swimming above us like a necklace. It was incredible. I just love doing all this.

Photos courtesy of Abercrombie & Kent Picture Library, Clockwise: Ian Johnson / William Rawlings / Harvey Lloyd / Harold Lassus / Kael Orlafson

**You must have a house full of souvenirs – any items you are particularly proud of?**

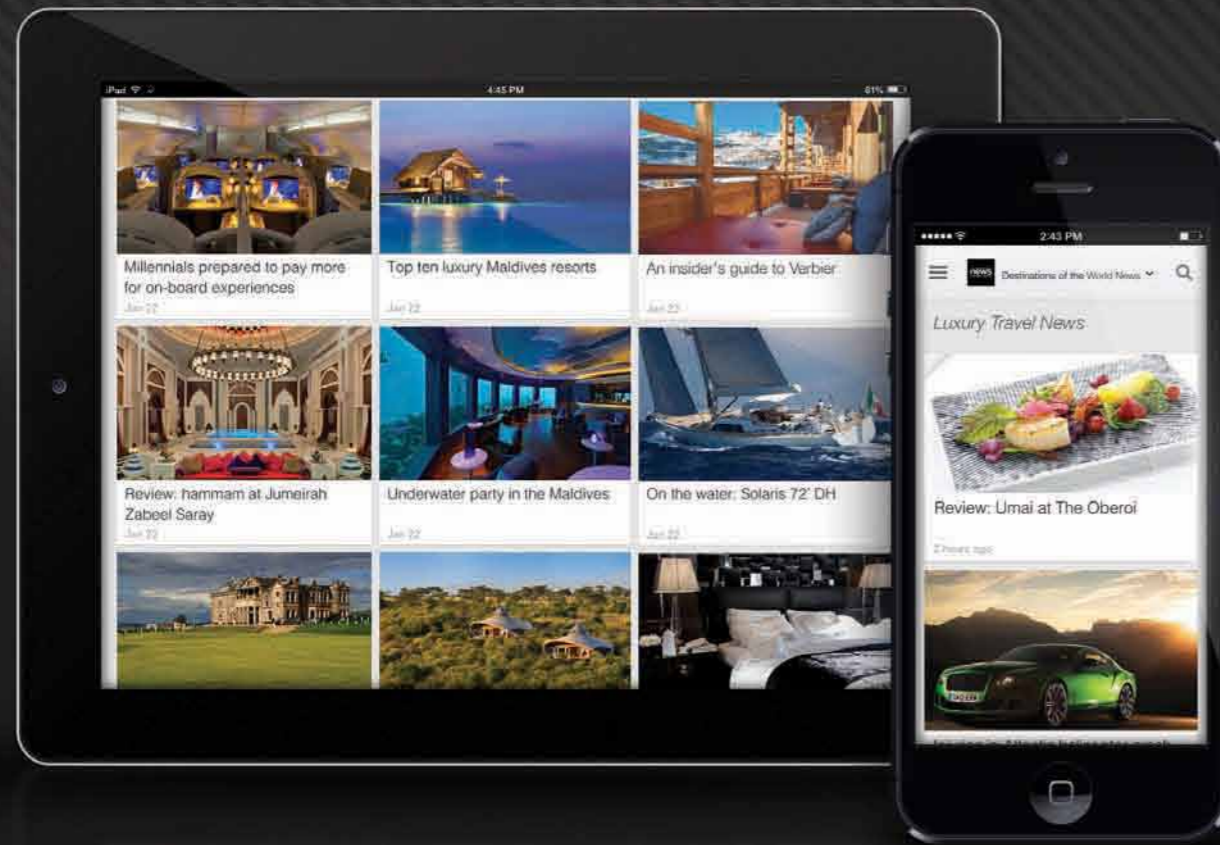
I still love my Zanzibar chest and I’ve got some wonderful things from South Korea. I collect paintings and jewellery from different artists around the world. I don’t have the typical house full of stuff. I have tonnes of masks from Papua New Guinea that live in a warehouse in Nairobi. There’s tonnes of the stuff.

**What happened to your plans to enter the space race?**

I had A&K Space at one stage with 20 people working for the company. Like I told you, I do everything myself. Well, I went to South Africa and didn’t tell anybody and I trained for a week flying in an English Electric Lightning; a 1960s British interceptor bomber that flies at Mach 2.2. You have two little seats and the rest is fuel and a rocket.

We flew up to 40,000 feet in one minute, wearing just a tracksuit, and took on five or six Gs. Then, at 65 or 70 thousand feet, at Mach 2.2, we saw the curvature of earth. When we came back down I thought that it was quite hairy and I said, “I’m out of it”. I let 20 people go from A&K Space and cancelled [the company] in 2006. I queried then whether Richard Branson would ever do this. Those G-forces were too much. I am tough, but for your average guy... That’s why I do everything myself. ■

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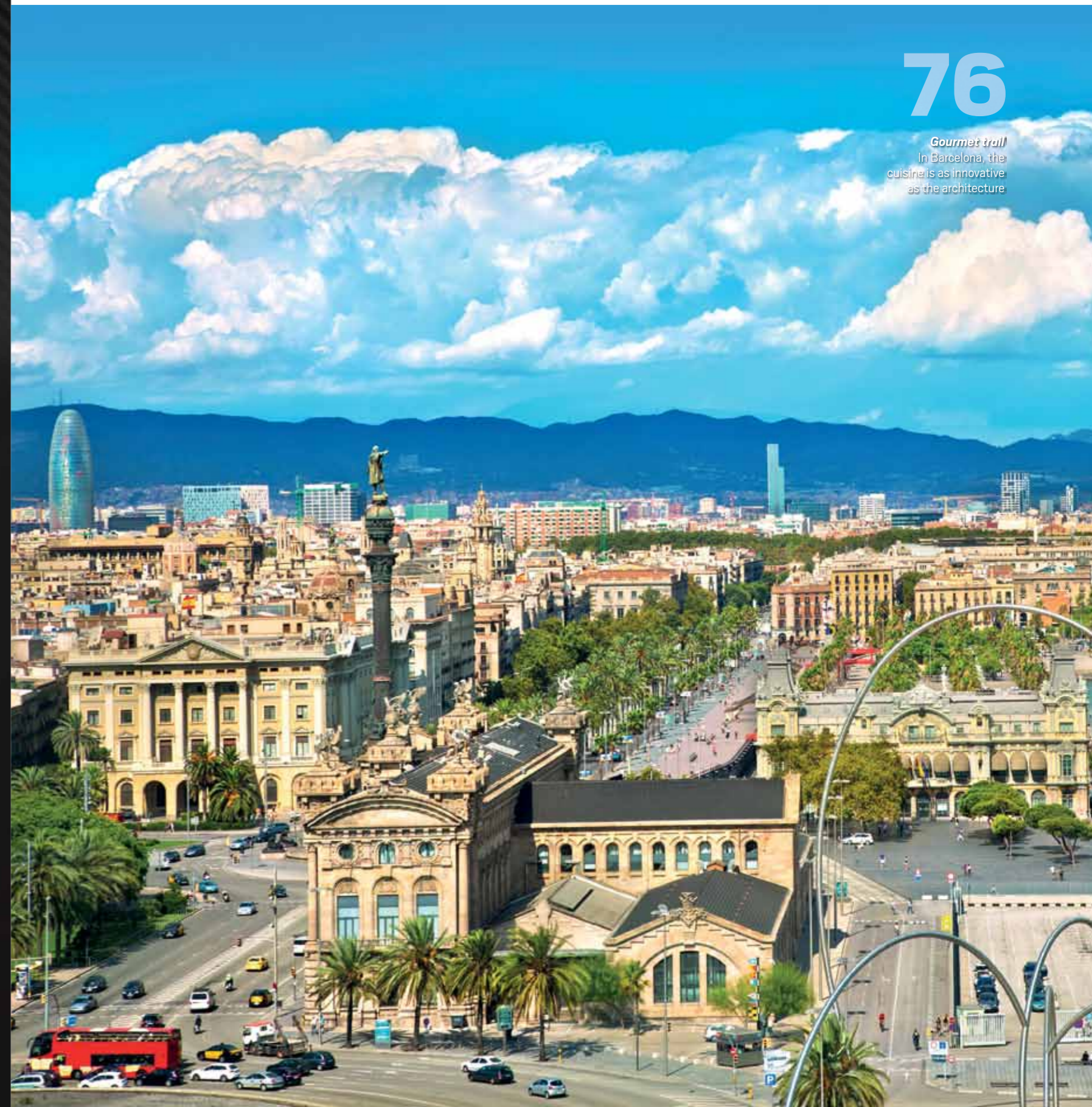


# Destinations

The world's most desirable locations

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# BE HERE NOW

The temples of Kyoto are a visual embodiment of the philosophy that quietly pervades life in Japan: Zen — the ancient art of living every moment

**Words:** Graeme Green

Photo: David Terrazas Morales / Corbis

The gold-leaf-topped Kinkaku-ji temple, also known as the Golden Pavilion, is a UNESCO World Heritage Site



Kennin-ji was established by Japanese priest, Yosai

Photo: Getty Images / Damien Doehamps

The monk sits cross-legged on the ground. We're in a sparsely furnished room that looks out onto a pretty Zen garden with a small stream and neatly pruned trees. "There's no goal, no aim," says the monk, Reverend Toryo Ito, introducing me to the Zen concept. "It's just about sitting. Here, now."

We're in Ryosoku-in, a sub-temple of Kennin-ji, the oldest Zen temple in Kyoto. Zen means 'meditation' and 'Zazen' (seated meditation) is at the heart of Zen Buddhism, which is more of a philosophy than a religion. "It's a philosophy of trusting the human being, not a god," as Rev. Ito succinctly puts it. "The simplest way to describe it is to be natural with the moment; to be present."

Kyoto is one of the best places in Japan to explore and learn about Zen. The city was, for a little more than 1,000 years (794–1868 AD), the capital of Japan. Kyoto is still seen by many as the spiritual, cultural and historical heart of Japan, not least because it's the original home of the famous geishas (or *geiko*, as they're locally known), as well as about 1,600 Buddhist temples and 400 Shinto (Japan's other traditional religion) shrines across the city.

Zen in Japan breaks down into three sects or schools: Rinzai, Soto and Obaku. Soto is the largest, but most of Kyoto's Zen temples are Rinzai. I visit several of the major ones with local guide, Mie Tamada. Buddhism has existed in Japan since at least 538 AD, she tells me. Zen Buddhism was brought to Japan by priest, Yosai (also written as 'Eisai'), from China, where he studied.

He also brought green tea with him, which is drunk in traditional tea ceremonies. In 1202 AD, Yosai established Kennin-ji on the edge of the geisha district of Gion.

There are approximately 85 million Buddhists in Japan today — about two-thirds of the country's population. Many Japanese people are followers of Shinto or Buddhism, or a combination of both. For Zen practitioners, meditation is a useful tool. "People live in a very busy world," says Tamada. "So they have to stop and think about the meaning of their life sometimes."

Many Japanese people, though, aren't particularly religious, choosing to visit a temple at New Year and pray for good luck and happiness, rather than actively follow a religion year round. Zen is more of a cultural tradition than a set of supernatural beliefs; a central part of Japanese culture. "Zen has exerted tremendous influence on every aspect of Japanese culture, including tea ceremonies, art, flower arrangement, cuisine, martial arts and landscape gardening," says Tamada. "Zen is in the Japanese DNA and in Japanese people's way of thinking."

Zen is also evident in Japanese design and taste, favouring simplicity and understated refinement over anything gaudy or ostentatious.

Our first stop is the 700-year-old Daitoku-ji. We enter Zuiho-in, one of the 22 sub-temples in the monastery complex, where Tamada talks me through the Garden of Solitary Sitting, a good example of a typical Zen garden, with features including a stone lantern, neat pine trees, rocks and, rather than grass and flowers, gravel that's been carefully raked to give the impression of water. Zen gardens



Zen garden in Daitoku-ji

Photo: Getty Images / Harvey Lloyd



Hoshinoya Kyoto's location along the Oigawa River is an ideal place to find your balance

## Kyoto

were developed as an aid to meditation. “The elements have meaning, but they’re open to interpretation,” Tamada explains. “A garden is not to look at and admire, but [a way] to look at our self, for reflection.”

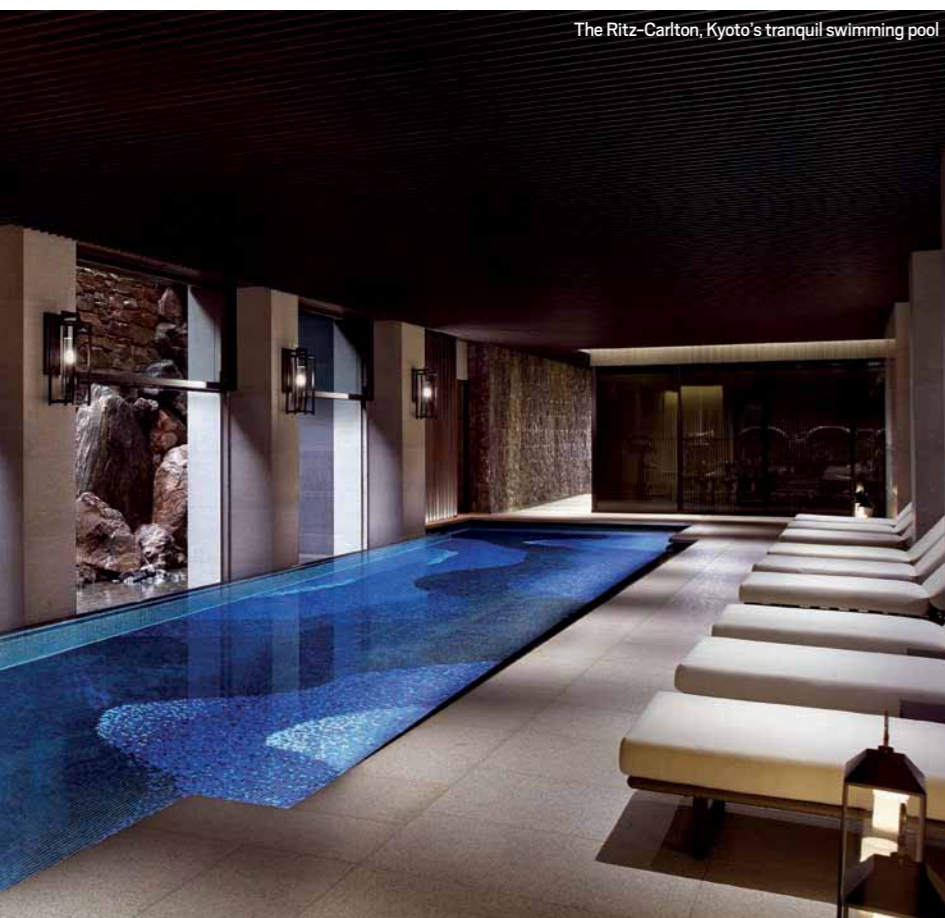
We move on to the nearby Kinkaku-ji (or Rokuon-ji) temple, better known to tourists as the Golden Pavilion. The UNESCO World Heritage Site was rebuilt in 1955 after the original burned down. A key feature is its central temple, which is covered in gold leaf. It was originally built as a retirement villa by Shogun Ashikaga Yoshimitsu, displaying his wealth and power, but was turned into a Zen temple later, which explains why the design doesn’t keep with the Zen philosophy of simplicity. Across the city at Nanzen-ji, Tamada points out the basic feel of the main temple compared to sacred buildings in Christianity and other religions. “In Zen, the most important thing is the practice, the meditation. Nothing else.”

We end the day back at Kennin-ji on the edge of Gion. After 25 minutes sitting silently, timed using the burning of fragrant incense sticks, Rev. Ito dispels a few inaccurate impressions of Zen, including the idea you need to ‘empty’ your mind. “‘Empty’ is a word in many magazine articles about Zen. But it’s not a perfect translation for Zen. Everything flows through your mind like a river and you let it flow and let it go.”

What’s learned in meditation crosses over into daily life. “In daily life, we care about our future too much. And about our past. We don’t live now. We look for the meaning of everything too much. After learning just sitting, we can also learn just working, just standing, just being with others.”



Kinkaku-ji — the Golden Pavilion



The Ritz-Carlton, Kyoto's tranquil swimming pool

Many people have heard of enlightenment. “We often say ‘awakened,’” Ito offers instead. “Buddha was ‘the awakened one’. You can understand impermanence in your mind, but in daily life, you can’t feel it. When awakened, we can live according to this ‘impermanence’ philosophy. It gives contentment. It’s a good way to live.”

### MODERN AWAKENING

These kinds of one-on-one experiences with Zen monks aren’t commonly open to the public; my visit was arranged by The Ritz-Carlton Kyoto, the newest luxury hotel in the city. It would be going too far to call the hotel ‘Zen’, as it’s too luxurious, but the self-described ‘urban resort’ is designed according to the Japanese *miyabi* aesthetic, favouring elegance and refinement above opulence. It’s located in the heart of downtown Kyoto, a 15-minute walk from Gion, but feels peaceful and quiet inside. Rooms are spacious, with big bathrooms decorated with Japan’s famous cherry blossoms and views of the Kamogawa River and the mountains beyond the city.

Keen to continue feeling a Zen-like sense of contentment, I head down to the hotel’s spa to try out its signature treatment, the Ryokucha Serenity Ritual. After a foot rub and scrub, I’m given a gentle pummeling with hot poultices containing green tea and lemongrass, followed by an expert body and head massage.

Zen vibes continue at the hotel’s two restaurants. La Locanda delivers fine Italian cuisine and features a chic mahogany bar, a 360-degree wine cellar and a Zen garden at its centre, complete with a stone lantern, raked

Tokyo



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DESTINATIONS OF THE WORLD

“Zen has exerted tremendous influence on every aspect of Japanese culture, including tea ceremonies, art, flower arrangement, cuisine, martial arts and landscape gardening”

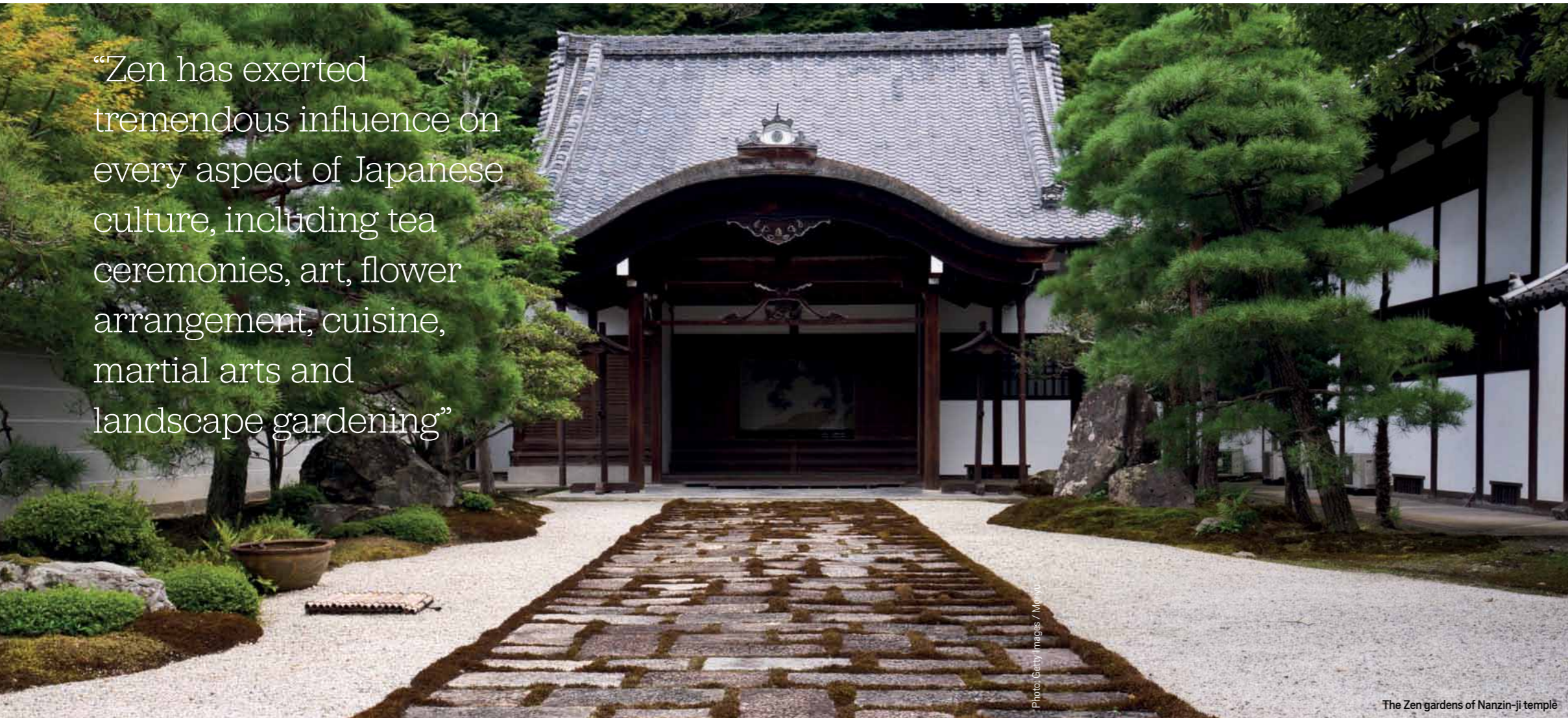


Photo: Getty Images / Mervin

The Zen gardens of Nanjin-ji temple

gravel and bamboo. Meals here end with desserts from France's Pierre Hermé, who also has a shop in the lobby selling macaroons and cakes. His food crops up again at the breakfast buffet. The hotel's other restaurant, Mizuki, is Japanese, with sushi and tempura counters, a *kaiseki* (multi-course) menu featuring top quality dishes including sashimi and crispy tempura, and a Chef's Room serving teppanyaki. The elegant dining room looks out onto a small waterfall and rock garden.

There are other more traditional places to stay in Kyoto, too. Yoshida Sanso, east of downtown, was built in 1932 to serve as the second residence of Prince Higashi-Fushimi, the uncle of the current Emperor of Japan. Members of the royal family still visit, as, I'm told, do monks and Zen masters. There are only five rooms or cottages here, making a stay exclusive and private; a chance to enjoy the warm hospitality of mother and daughter Kyoko and Tomoko Nakamura. Rooms are welcoming and quite minimalist, with *tatami* (traditional mats), sliding doors and traditional artworks. This is also one of the best places in Kyoto to come for lunch. *Kaiseki* meals are served course by course in a private dining room looking out onto the peaceful garden. The food is light, healthy and presented with care and immaculate detail: from sesame tofu and beetroot, to squid, tuna and red snapper sashimi, and miso soup, all washed down with a jug of smooth sake.

Hiiragiya (Holly House) is even older, having opened in 1818. Like Yoshida Sanso, it's built along the lines of a *ryokan* (traditional Japanese inn). There's an impressive modern wing, but really it's the slice of classic Japan that you come for. On the way in, I'm shown the small room where Charlie Chaplin experienced a tea ceremony. I stay in Room 14, a favourite of Japan's first Nobel laureate for literature, Yasanari Kawabata.

### KYOTOCUISINE

Traditional Japanese cuisine, known as *Washoku*, is so important to the country that it was awarded UNESCO Cultural Heritage status last year. Kyoto is one of the country's foodie hotspots, with everything from tofu (try Michelin-starred Junsei — [www.to-fu.co.jp](http://www.to-fu.co.jp)) to noodle dishes. But at many of the top places, you'll be served *kaiseki*. The multi-course dinner features lots of small, carefully presented dishes, with about eight plates for lunch and 10 or more for dinner. Nakamura, a three-Michelin-starred restaurant in downtown Kyoto, is one of the best places to experience *kaiseki* ([www.kyoryori-nakamura.com](http://www.kyoryori-nakamura.com)). I sit in a private room (upmarket Japanese restaurants often host diners in private rooms), with a window looking out onto a Zen-style garden. Over two hours, waitresses dressed in kimonos deliver one course after another, each served in small lacquer bowls or dishes. Highlights include fresh sashimi of yellowfin tuna and squid, a warm chunk of horsehead fish and Nakamura's speciality, Shiro-miso Zoni (rice dumpling soup flavoured with white miso). For special occasions, entertaining clients or for a chance to experience a range of dishes in one indulgent sitting, this is the kind of place to visit.

The colourful geishas of Gion



Photo: Getty Images / Andrew Rich

“In daily life, we care about our future too much. And about our past. We don't live now. We look for the meaning of everything too much”



## Kyoto



Hoshinoya Kyoto is a modern take on the ryokan

### THEGOLDENBOOK

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[www.hiiragiya.co.jp](http://www.hiiragiya.co.jp)

**Hoshinoya Kyoto**  
Tel: +81 503 786 0066  
[global.hoshinoresort.com](http://global.hoshinoresort.com)

**Nakamura**  
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[www.kyoryori-nakamura.com](http://www.kyoryori-nakamura.com)

**The Ritz-Carlton, Kyoto**  
Tel: +81 75 746 5555  
[www.ritzcarlton.com](http://www.ritzcarlton.com)

**Yoshida Sanso**  
Tel: +81 75 771 6125  
[www.yoshidasanso.com](http://www.yoshidasanso.com)

It's easy to see why. It's spacious and classic Japanese, with tatami, painted screen doors and a big wooden bath tub, and is surrounded by its own secluded garden. After another fantastic kaiseki dinner, I explore the streets of Pontocho, Gion and Shimbashi, which look as though they also haven't changed in decades.

To complete my tour of the different accommodation styles available in Kyoto, I also stay in a modern take on the ryokan, Hoshinoya, which is a short boat ride up the Oigawa River from Togetsukyo Bridge, close to the city's famous bamboo forests. Two gardens at the ryokan are designed according to Zen principles to give the effect of flowing water. There are only 25 rooms here, each looking out onto the river. Mine has two levels, the upper level kitted out with a bed and equipment for an in-room, 90-minute acupuncture and massage treatment.

The Hoshinoya staff arrange an early visit to Daitoku-ji to experience morning worship. I leave before 5am and arrive as the first light is appearing in the sky. Rev. Shodo Maeda, the abbot of the temple, chants and beats a rhythm on gongs and a drum shaped like a fish.

Afterwards, we sit in silent meditation, then move to a small room where he serves green tea in a ritualised ceremony. "Like Mount Fuji, there are many points to start," Rev. Maeda tells me. "But the peak is the same. The peak is awakening the self. The peak is to know more about yourself, so you can realise more in daily life; to awake yourself and to make yourself better every day." ■

Designer rooms at Hoshinoya Kyoto



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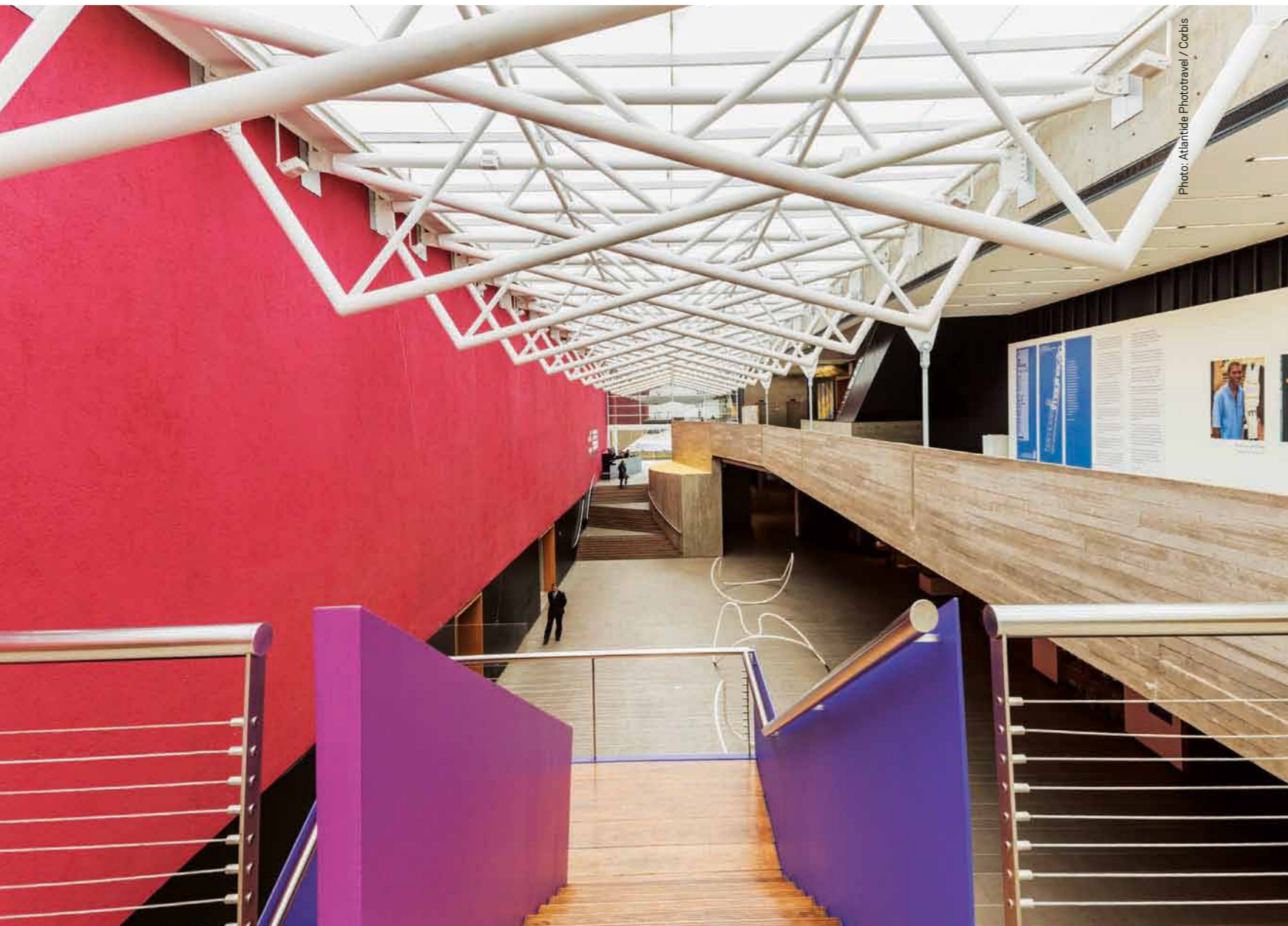


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# SÃO PAULO

U R B A N B R A Z I L

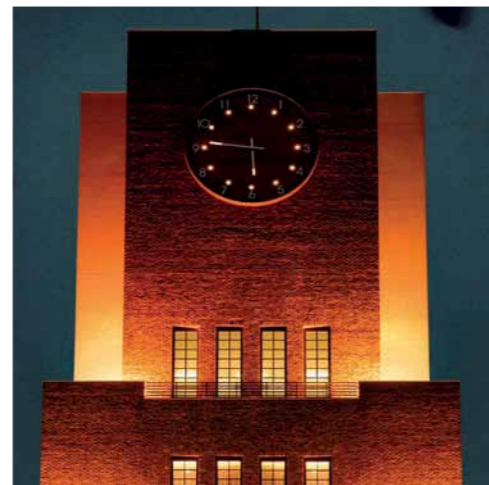
While the rest of Brazil basks in natural wonders and spectacular geography, it's the cultural diversity that makes São Paulo one of the richest destinations in Latin America

**WORDS:** Nicholas Gill



**Family affair**  
(clockwise from left)  
Fasano restaurant at the eponymous hotel is popular among generations of discerning Paulistanos; the restaurant's red-brick façade of Fasano is iconic in the upper-class Jardins district; guests enjoy culinary traditions started by Vittorio Fasano in 1902

**Previous page**  
(clockwise from left)  
Auditório Ibirapuera in Ibirapuera Park; Alex Atala and Facundo Guerra's recently reopened Rivera Bar; inside Instituto Tomie Ohtake



Generations of regulars are known by their names at Fasano São Paulo's ground-floor restaurant of the same name. Amid the restaurant's rich wood tones and leather wall panels that define its old-world elegance, the chic clientele order contemporary renditions of regional Italian plates and drink from the cellar's collection of Châteaux, Barolos and Brunellos. They have grown up with the Fasano family, whose name has set the standard for hospitality in São Paulo for a century, as the city has ballooned into the most populous metropolis in the Americas and the entire Southern Hemisphere.

When Vittorio Fasano arrived from Milan in 1902, he opened the fine-dining establishment, Brasserie Paulista, on Antonio Prado Square, which attracted Brazil's high society. In 2003, four generations later, the Fasanos moved into the hotel business with a 23-floor property, two blocks from ritzy Rua Oscar Friere in the low-rise, upper-class Jardins district. The city's priciest designer shops are all a short walk away, where you can find the strapless silk dresses and linen shirts of Maria Bonita, or the tiny, uniquely Brazilian bikinis of Água de Coco.

Fasano was designed by Isay Weinfeld and Marcio Kogan, boldly blending contemporary

style with the 1930s aesthetic of the English brick façade and walls of travertine marble brought in direct from Italy. The 64 guestrooms and suites all feature Eames chairs and Persian rugs, and in the intimate Baretto bar in the basement, live bossa nova (a popular Brazilian style of jazz) wafts into the hallways every night, occasionally from big-name international performers.

The Fasano is the epitome of modern São Paulo; a refined, creative, hardworking place built on the backs of immigrants. Other hotels have given serious competition to the smaller property, such as the watermelon-shaped Hotel Unique.

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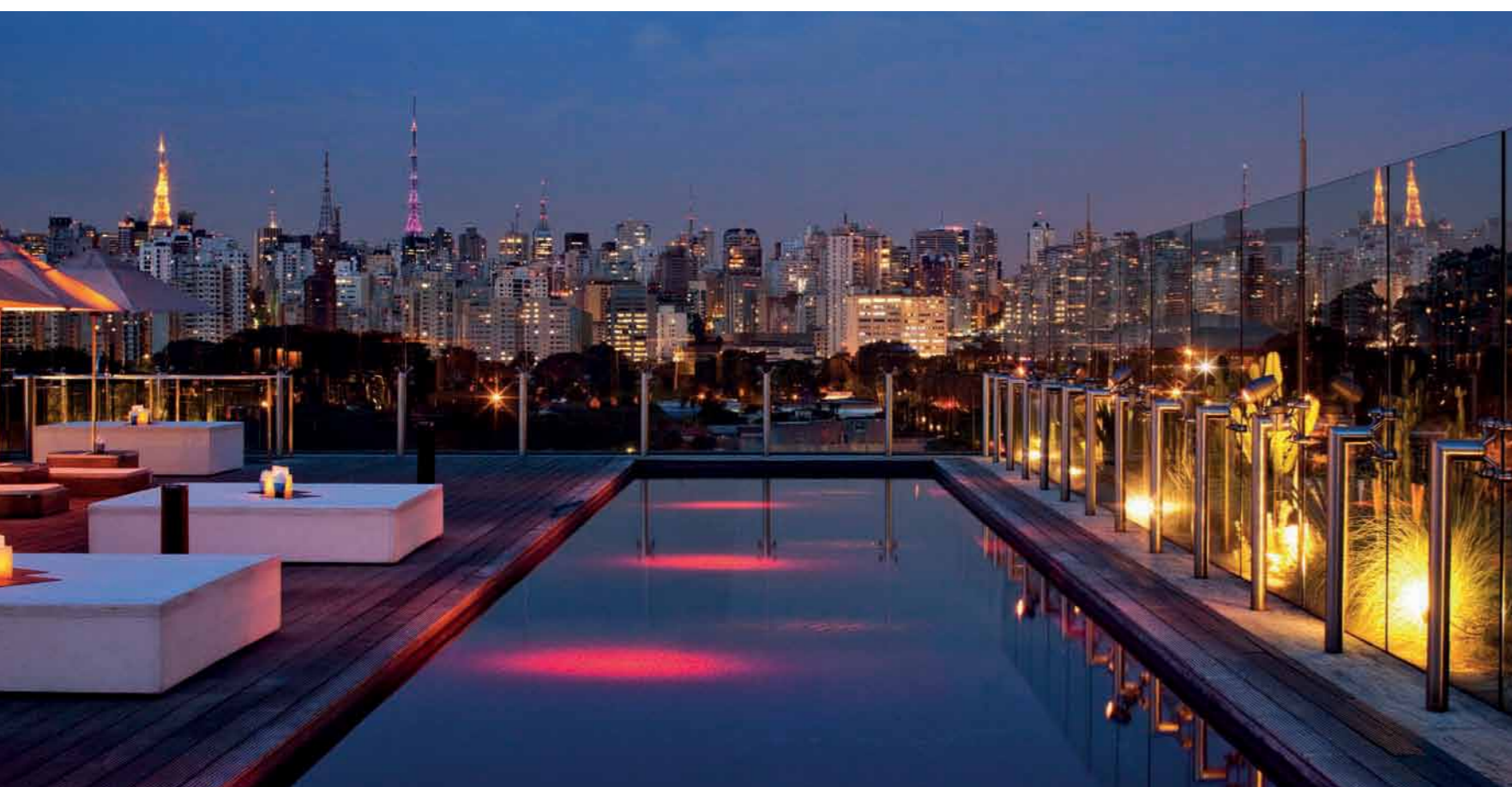
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**Playful designs**  
*(clockwise from top left)* The Auditório Ibirapuera was designed by Rio-born architect, Oscar Niemeyer; Niemeyer's domed Oca Pavilion in Ibirapuera Park; the glass and metal façade of Hotel Unique poses a contrast to many of the retro buildings in the city; the rooftop at Hotel Unique has panoramic views across the city



“Whatever idea you might have of Brazil – the lush green hills of Tijuca National Park, the sparkling beaches of Copacabana and Ipanema, or the raw and wild Amazon jungle – you’ll forget about them here”

It is designed by Japanese-Brazilian architect Ruy Ohtake and is one of the modern architectural icons of the city, with its views of Ibirapuera Park, the city’s largest green space, and model clientele mingling on the rooftop bar. Still, you would be hard-pressed to find a Paulistano — a resident of São Paulo — who would choose anything but the Fasano if given the choice.

**GENETIC MAKE-UP**  
 Whatever idea you might have of Brazil — the lush green hills of Tijuca National Park, the sparkling beaches of Copacabana and Ipanema, or the raw and wild Amazon jungle — you’ll forget about them here. São Paulo is

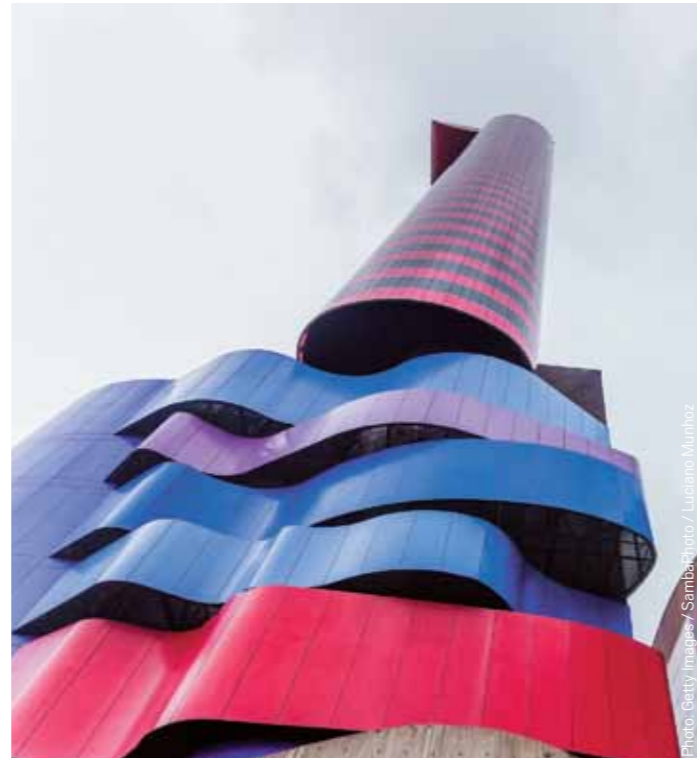
flat, humid, and far from the Atlantic coast and jungle. It’s not a place defined by its geography, as is so often the case in Brazil. Rather, it is the city’s cultural diversity that creates its character.

The city was founded in 1554 by a group of Portuguese priests as São Paulo dos Campos de Piratininga, and for nearly two centuries it remained a poor, isolated village, until gold found in the Minas Gerais region brought new settlers. When the coffee boom began, the city grew considerably, giving rise to the emergence of other industries, which saw an influx of immigrants. By the end of the 19th century, more than half of the population was foreign-born. More than three million

immigrants passed through what is now the Memorial do Imigrante, sometimes called São Paulo’s Ellis Island.

While the original immigrants were from southern Portugal, new populations arrived from places such as Italy, Israel, Syria, and Japan. The main ethnic group in the city today is Italian and the metropolitan region has more people of Italian descent than Rome. The influx left the genetic makeup of the city unlike anywhere else in the country; you are almost as likely to see blue eyes and blond hair as brown eyes and dark skin in São Paulo, now home to nearly 19 million people.

From the Praça da Sé, which has had a church on it since the city’s founding, embark



**Trendsetting design** (clockwise from top left) The Martinelli Building was Brazil's first skyscraper when it opened in 1929; the Riviera Bar, a haunt for the kings of Brazil's film industry, reopened in 2013; Japanese-Brazilian architect Ruy Ohtake designed the Instituto Tomie Ohtake

“São Paulo’s ever-growing restaurant scene is one of the most dynamic in the Americas, rivaling places like New York and Lima”

on a walking tour of the city. There, you'll notice the varied styles and influences that make up the city, from the all-white Banespa Building, an Art Deco structure inspired by New York's Empire State Building, to the 1920s Martinelli Building, Brazil's first skyscraper, designed by Italian-Brazilian entrepreneur, Giuseppe Martinelli.

Near São Bento metro station, the Mercado Municipal (city market) dates back to the 1930s and features stained-glass windows designed by Russian artist, Sorgenicht Conrad Filho. Hundreds of stalls sell exotic fruits like *jaboticaba* (a large, endemic black fruit), *pitaya* (dragon fruit) and *caju* (cashew apple), while restaurant stalls sell sandwiches made from mortadella, the spiced pork sausage that was brought by immigrants from Rome in the 19th century.

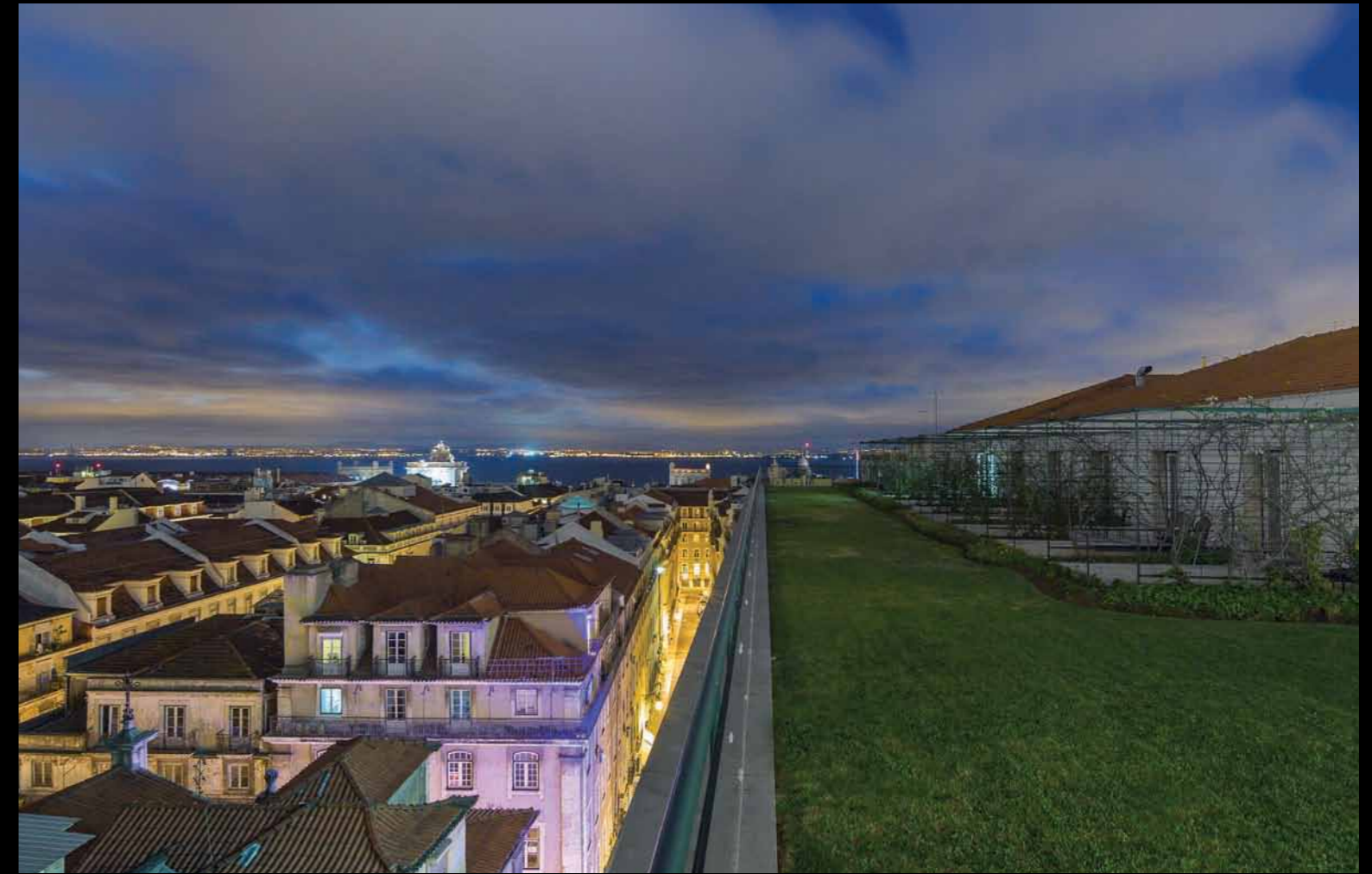
You'll see the influence of the Rio-born architect Oscar Niemeyer all over the city, such as the immense leisure and cultural project called the Memorial da América Latina (Latin America Memorial), founded in 1989, or the playful Auditório Ibirapuera and Oca Pavilion in Ibirapuera Park. Ruy Ohtake has also left his mark, having designed the futuristic Instituto Tomie Ohtake, a cultural centre located in the bohemian Pinheiros district, which is dedicated to his mother.

**MULTICULTURAL FEAST**

Nowhere is the city's diversity more obvious than in its cuisine. São Paulo's ever-growing restaurant scene is one of the most dynamic in the Americas, rivalling places like New York and Lima. At Attimo, which opened

in 2012 to instant acclaim in a beautiful 1950s villa originally designed by Modernist architect David Libeskind, the specialty is Italo-Caipira fusion fare. Inside, a who's who of Brazil delve into the extensive wine cellar and sample sophisticated dishes like purple potato gnocchi with 25-year-old Balsamic vinegar every night of the week.

With the largest Japanese population outside of Asia, it is no surprise that São Paulo's Japanese restaurants are some of the city's most innovative eateries. You'll find stellar *izakayas* (bar-cafés) in the Liberdade neighbourhood and sushi on nearly every corner. Quality varies wildly, but ask any insider and they'll probably recommend Shin Zushi, whose Japanese-Brazilian chef trained in Japan and is always on the hunt for the top seafood in the city.



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Shin Zushi

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(Clockwise from above) Twists on tradition Chef Alex Atala serves Amazon-inspired dishes including dried saúva ant on a slice of pineapple at D.O.M.; Mani's Helena Rizzo has just been named the 2014 Veuve Clicquot World's Best Female Chef; the skyline of São Paulo is cluttered with myriad architectural styles; chef Alex Atala was named one of the most influential people of 2013 by TIME; a green tomato gel infused with flower petals at D.O.M.

The *omakase* menu (chef's suggestion) isn't cheap — very few things in the city are — though the delicate bites like *toro* (fatty tuna belly) and *uni* (sea urchin roe) have never disappointed the Japanese-heavy clientele. More adventurous meals can be found at Jun Sakamoto in Pinheiros, where chef and owner Sakamoto insists on seasoning each bite himself. You'll find unusual combinations like tartare with foie gras or *uni* atop a wedge of tofu on the menu, though the simpler *nigiri* are as good as they come.

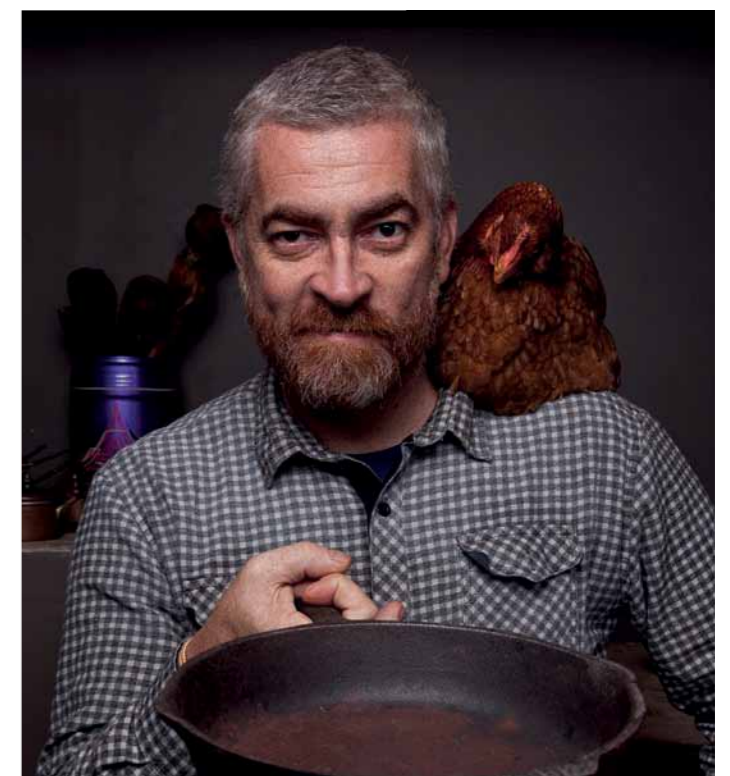
Perhaps the most exciting restaurant in the city comes from Alex Atala, whose D.O.M. was ranked sixth on S. Pellegrino's World's 50 Best Restaurants list. Atala, one of *TIME* magazine's 100 most influential people in the world in 2013, has earned accolades for his exploration of native Brazilian products, including many from the Amazon rainforest.

Order the tasting menu at the restaurant and expect to find dishes such as heart of palm fettuccine with butter and sage, Parmesan cheese and popcorn powder, or a dried saúva ant on a slice of pineapple. Some unusual ingredients, such as the mouth-numbing *jambú* herb plant or *priprioca*, an extract of an Amazonian root previously used only in the cosmetic industry, have also made their way into the Atala's ever-changing repertoire.

Other young chefs have followed Atala's lead, such as former model Helena Rizzo and her Spanish husband Daniel Redondo, whose lively, contemporary Brazilian dishes at Mani have earned her plenty of praise, including '2014 Veuve Clicquot World's Best Female Chef'. At Epice, Atala protégé Alberto Landgraf experiments with fermentation and ageing, resulting in creative Brazilian

fare that may pair pigs' feet with a foie gras mousse and pickled carrots and lentils.

For a nightcap, there's no better place to go than Riviera Bar. This Art Deco bar is located on Avenida Paulista, a place where coffee barons once built grand villas but is now São Paulo's busiest street, home to hundreds of glass skyscrapers. The bar was a haunt of Brazilian film industry types for 50 years until its closing in 2006. Atala and night-life impresario Facundo Guerra, known for his after-dark nightspots like Z Carniceria and Volt, joined forces to restore the bar, and the reinvigorated Riviera reopened in late 2013. There, you can enjoy live jazz and remakes of Brazilian cocktail classics like the Maria Mole, made with cognac, vermouth, Angostura bitters, lemon and sugar syrup. Be prepared, however: Paulistanos party just as hard as they work. ■



An aerial photograph of Barcelona, Spain, showing a dense urban landscape with colorful buildings, a large cathedral in the center, and a waterfront area with a harbor and boats. The title 'BARCELONA A GOURMET TRAIL' is overlaid in large, bold, red letters on the right side of the image.

# BARCELONA A GOURMET TRAIL

From fine-dining restaurants to laid-back eateries that serve cuisine as colourful as the city itself, Barcelona is the prime place to learn the language of good food

Words: Vicky Vilches

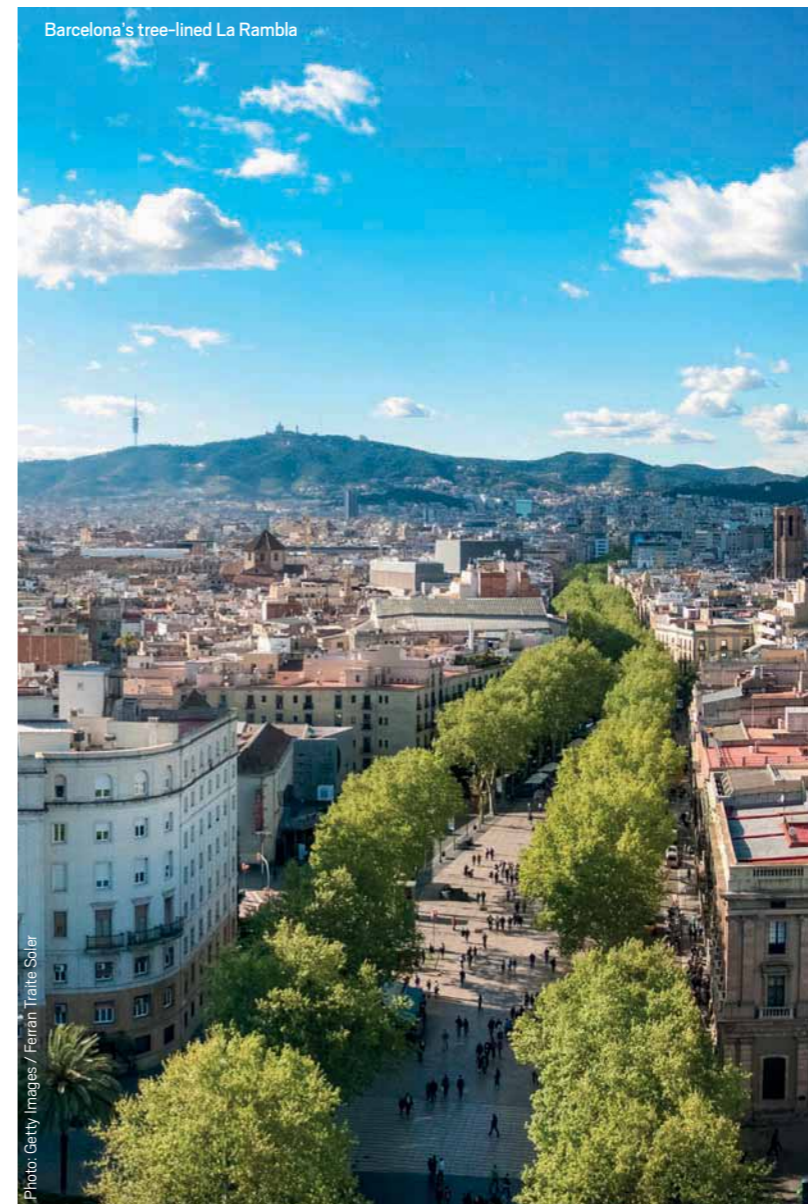
Barcelona's colourful Catalan cuisine is matched by a picturesque cityscape

Photo: Getty Images / Nkech

# ETRO



Moments restaurant at Mandarin Oriental



Barcelona's tree-lined La Rambla

Carme Ruscalleda could easily be mistaken for one of the many housewives who arrive each morning at the historic La Boqueria (market) in the centre of Barcelona. But looks are deceiving. Ruscalleda is one of Spain's most celebrated chefs, with more Michelin stars than any other female chef in the world — five in total for her two restaurants in Catalonia (one in Barcelona, one outside the city). Wearing jeans and sneakers, her trademark short hair and a broad smile, she staunchly champions market cuisine and seasonal produce from both land and sea. “We must get out and touch and smell the vegetables and the fruit. This is the beginning of any good gastronomic experience,” she explains as we walk around the venerable market. La Boqueria is her point of reference and is perhaps the best place to begin a gourmet tour of Barcelona. The city enjoys a well-deserved reputation for good cuisine with a formula that blends quality local ingredients, Mediterranean recipes and innovation.

The historically rich streets of this city are home to some of the world's biggest names in haute cuisine. As well as Ruscalleda, you can find the brothers Ferran and Albert Adrià (creators of the legendary El Bulli restaurant, which closed in 2011) here, as well as the Roca brothers, who own El Celler de Can Roca. El Celler is in the neighbouring province of Girona, a little over an hour from Barcelona, and was named the world's best restaurant in 2013.

La Boqueria dates back to the Middle Ages and is located in the forever crowded La Rambla, a long tree-lined street beside the Gothic quarter that's packed with tapas bars and restaurants. In other words, it's in the very heart of Barcelona. A metal roof has covered it since 1914 and provides a touch of elegance to one of the best and most beautiful markets in the world.

Visiting its 300 or so colourful stalls is not just a game for tourists and world-renowned chefs; the market throbs with city life and offers visitors one of the most authentic experiences in Barcelona. People don't only come here to replenish their larders — it is a popular meeting point where locals meet to enjoy an aperitif or a quick tapas lunch.

## Barcelona



Photo: Esther Sauleida

Chef Carme Ruscalleda



Photo: Moises Torre

Tickets, from the mastermind brothers behind El Bulli



Albert Adrià's airbags filled with Manchego cheese foam

But it isn't all tapas — there are many stalls where you can have something to eat while sipping a beer or vermouth and the market is a perfect place for seafood tasting.

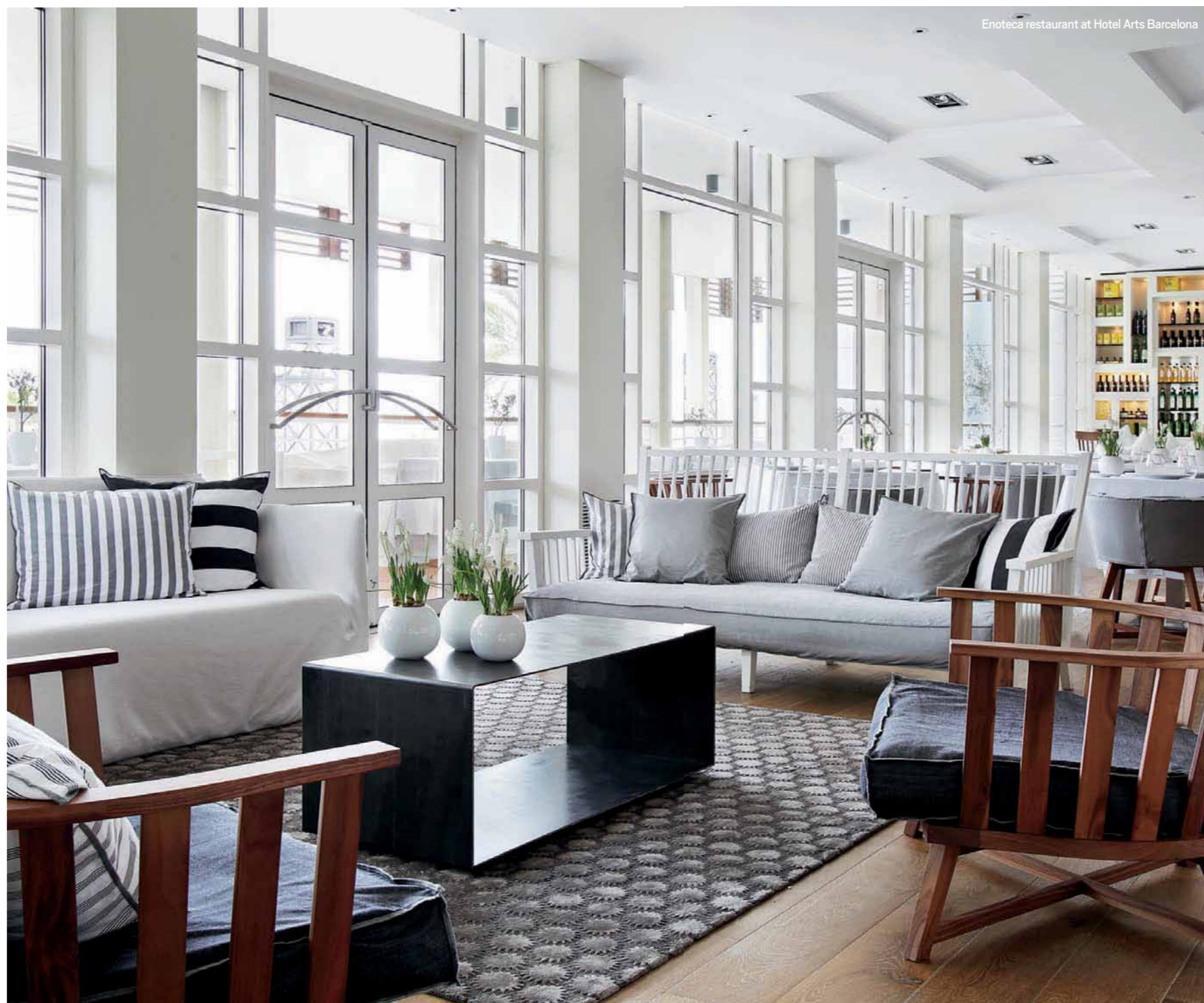
If La Boqueria is the treasure trove of quality produce in its rustic form, Tickets is the height of sophistication, offering some of the most elaborate and extraordinary tapas in the world. The restaurant opened in 2011 on Avinguda del Paral·lel, born out of the incomparable creative talent of the Adrià family. Its alma mater is Albert, Ferran's younger brother and one of the secret weapons of El Bulli, where he used to be in charge of the magical desserts, and is an expert in deconstruction techniques and molecular cuisine. Tickets fuses traditional Catalan tapas with experimental culinary techniques in an ambience that reflects Albert's passion for the world of cinema: expect plenty of show business, a carnival of surprises and extreme quality.

Serving haute cuisine in a bar environment is an innovative formula that was born in Spain. Among the star dishes in Tickets are playful morsels like oyster with a pearl made of seaweed juice and lemon that bursts in the mouth, and dough 'airbags' filled with Manchego cheese foam. Albert Adrià is convinced of the potential of Spanish cuisine to attract tourism and his goal is to turn Barcelona into the gastronomic capital of Europe. As the Adrià empire continues to grow, so does the popularity of Barcelona as a culinary destination.

In addition to Tickets, those feeling nostalgia for El Bulli have the chance to dine at 41° — offering 41 recipes from the legendary restaurant in Figueras — and two other Barcelona restaurants created by the brothers. This spring, they plan to open a Mexican fusion restaurant called Yauarcan and in November they will be opening Enigma about which, as its name suggests, very little is known.

### FIVE-STAR FARE

Between portions of tapas from morning to night, the options for a formal lunch are plentiful and of excellent quality, with 30 restaurants in the city boasting at least one Michelin star. Some of the most prestigious chefs in Barcelona have their restaurants in the best hotels in the city, so having lunch or dinner in a hotel, in contrast with other cities in Spain, is a good option in Barcelona.



Enoteca restaurant at Hotel Arts Barcelona



'Caviar Verde' made from green beans at Moments



Enoteca by chef Paco Pérez

As well as her own restaurant in the seaside town of Sant Pol de Mar, Rusalleda is at the helm of Moments, the gastronomic restaurant in the Mandarin Oriental Barcelona. Decorated by the prestigious Spanish interior designer Patricia Urquiola, the youngest luxury hotel in the city has become one of its most celebrated locations. Its gastronomic offering is first rate and Moments restaurant is, without a doubt, one of the best in the city. One of its specialities is its anti-aging menu, designed in collaboration with dieticians and physicians from the prestigious Clínica Planas. The result is that one can eat at a two-starred restaurant and leave feeling quite rejuvenated. The tasting menu includes dishes such as Mediterranean sea cucumber; monkfish on stew, artichokes and *calçots* (green onions); rice with crayfish, and Penedès chicken cannelloni. Although originally from Italy, cannelloni is one of the more traditional dishes eaten at family Sunday lunches in Catalonia.

A few metres away from the Mandarin Oriental is Majestic Hotel & Spa Barcelona, where just a few months ago, chef Nandu Jubany became its gastronomic manager. This grande dame of hospitality is a key address in the political, social and cultural life of Catalonia. Its recent refurbishment has brought new life to the Majestic Bar, which has reappeared as El Bar del Majestic in the elegant Passeig de Gràcia and is a highly recommended stop after work, offering a wide range of tapas and cocktails. The hotel is also an excellent option for Sunday brunch, offering one of the broadest menus in the city.

A walk around the area where the Majestic and the Mandarin are located is a must. Some of the best architectural examples of Catalan Modernism are nearby, including Casa Batlló and Casa Milà. As well as being home to most of the designer stores in Barcelona, the neighbourhood is also stuffed with great bakeries and patisseries whose shop windows delight the passersby and tempt them with local traditions. Many of Barcelona's confectionery delights bear witness to the Arabic influence on traditional Spanish cooking.



Chef Nandu Jubany heads up the kitchens at Majestic Hotel & Spa



Mediterranean sea cucumber at Moments

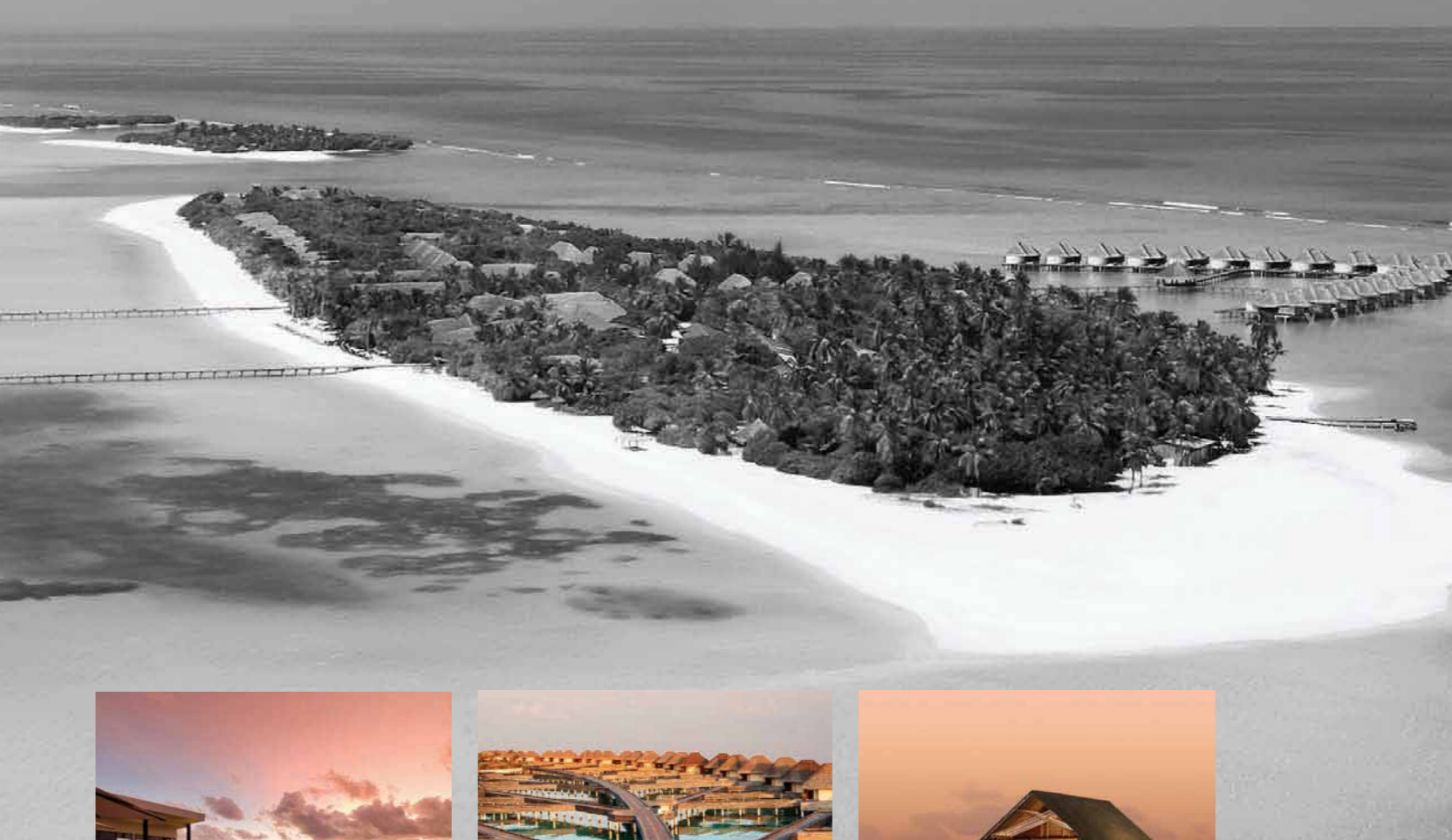


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DESTINATIONS OF THE WORLD



Photo: Olga Planas

Roca Moo gastronomic restaurant at Hotel Omm

Be sure to sample *panellets*, little pine nut-covered balls of marzipan, and *pastissets*, small angel hair-filled pasties. *Turrón* (Spanish nougat) is eaten all year round but especially at Christmas. Pasteleria Escribà, Oriol, Balaguer and Sacha Pasteleria are some of the best classic bakeries in which to sample these sweet treats.

Rosa María Esteva, a key player in the renewed Barcelona gastronomic scene, displays proof of her enterprising spirit both in the elegant district of Gràcia and in various strategically located spots in the city. The entrepreneur has brought to her hometown a rich range of casual restaurants with an avant garde décor, good service and good price quality ratio. Her flagship is the always-cool Hotel Omm, which also houses the Roca Moo restaurant, in association with the Roca brothers of El Celler. Other more informal but interesting venues belonging to Rosa Esteva's small empire, the Tragaluz Group, are El Principal, Mordisco and Pez Vela, a tapas bar next to the W Barcelona, by the sea.

In the section of the city that looks out onto the Mediterranean is the Hotel Arts Barcelona (part of Ritz-Carlton), which is about to celebrate its first 20 years of existence. The hotel offers two different, but equally recommendable dining options from two of the best Catalan chefs. Chef Sergi Arola offers a fun range of creative tapas which has earned him an international reputation at Arola, where you can find Mediterranean produce and traditional recipes with a 21st-century twist, served in small portions. For his part, Paco Pérez heads the gastronomic restaurant Enoteca, which boasts two Michelin stars. Its menu includes dishes such as duck egg and seaweed with "pil pil" sauce, creamy rice with sea urchin and black truffle, Wagyu beef with braised juice or lamb trilogy. Naturally, most of the ingredients are sourced from La Boqueria.

According to Ferran Adrià, the man who changed the rules of the game, cooking is a language through which one can express creativity, happiness, magic, humour and culture. Today, more than ever, Barcelona extends an open invitation to become acquainted with this language, which is so rich in nuances; a language not only used by superstar chefs, but one that can be found in a modest bar, in a market, in a trendy after-work eatery or at a seaside café. You just have to know where to find it. ■



Chef Paco Pérez heads up the kitchen at Enoteca

## THE GOLDEN BOOK

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# MUSCAT AN ANCIENT ESCAPE

Between its glistening gulf and vast mountains, the Omani capital of Muscat is the perfect place to lose yourself in the natural beauty and mysterious history of the Middle East

**Words:** Simon Harrington

Photo: Getty Images / Menny Photography

Private coves and secluded spots  
in the blue waters around Muscat

“A visit to Muscat quickly reveals that the city’s rich past is not entirely resigned to its history books”



As the midday sun beats down on our small boat, the captain keenly surveys the azure horizon with darting eyes and a hand shading his brow. Every so often he lifts his walkie-talkie, speaks in sharp, frenzied bursts and pushes the throttle. At full speed, I watch the barren mountains and isolated beaches of Oman disappear into the distance, replaced instead by the roar of a speedboat engine and a haze of ocean spray. From my plush leather seat at the rear of the vessel I welcome the whipping wind and taste of salt on my lips, as we carve a deliberate, choppy path across the Gulf of Oman.

Suddenly, the rhythmic chug of the motor cuts out, the boat slows, and there is silence. With a gentle bob we drift into an entirely calm body of water free of cruise liners and fishing boats, and the vibrant blue water glistens like a million diamonds. In the distance, the Gulf’s famous spinner dolphins launch themselves into the air, performing incredible acrobatic displays before disappearing beneath the glassy surface.

It’s unsurprising that the coastal areas of Oman’s capital, Muscat, are becoming increasingly popular

#### City by the sea

(above) The whitewashed, low-rise shoreline of Muscat contrasts dramatically with that of other Gulf capital cities

with divers and snorkellers, many of whom travel from far-flung destinations to explore the country’s expansive coral reefs and abundant marine life. With everything from sea turtles nesting on its bays to blue whales fluking in its waters, Oman is an aquatic paradise. But the sultanate’s natural appeal is not limited to its waters.

Travel inland and you will find yourself trekking through arid, towering mountainscapes, exploring desert oases and swimming in freshwater wadis. In fact, a snaking two-hour drive west of the coastal capital of Muscat will take you to one of the country’s most impressive natural landmarks, Jebel Akhdar (the Green Mountain). Part of the Al Hajar mountain range, which runs the length of Oman’s interior and forms a natural border between the sultanate and the UAE, this nature reserve is home to Jebel Shams, the highest point in eastern Arabia at 3,000 metres. Although the region is best known for its rolling sand dunes and far-reaching deserts, this area’s fragile biodiversity and delicate climate has cultivated the uncommon growth of lush shrubbery and exotic trees, creating a visually striking contrast worthy of its ‘green’ epithet.

Photo: Getty Images / Ania Blazewiska



Photo: Getty Images / Buena Vista Images

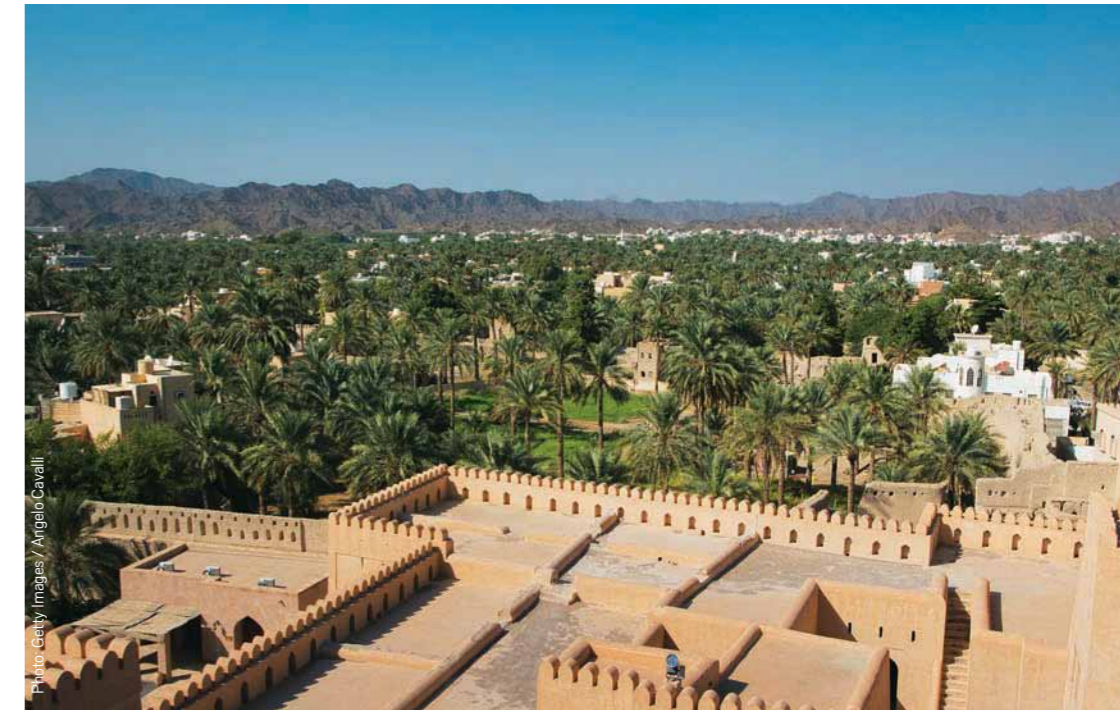


Photo: Getty Images / Angelo Cavalli

Nestled among these many isolated mountainous outcrops are ancient villages and towns with minute populations, each reflecting Oman’s proud Bedouin heritage. A short journey from the base of Jebel Akhdar, for example, is Nizwa, one of the country’s oldest cities, and its former capital in the 6th and 7th centuries. Here, you can traverse the mudbrick turrets of the UNESCO-protected Bahla Fort, lose yourself in the antique Nizwa Souk, visit the tiny mountain village of Misfat Al Abreyeen, or explore the abandoned town of Ghul. It is difficult to believe, when exploring these historic hotspots, that the glittering artificial metropolises of the United Arab Emirates are just a short 45-minute flight to the north-west.

#### CITY ON THE SEA

As we cruise back from our dolphin-spotting expedition, the comparatively subtle skyline of Muscat draws ever closer. We meander past rocky alcoves, hanging yellow cliffs and isolated beaches, many of which are accessible only by boat. It is on these tiny, sheltered stretches of golden sand that couples take romantic overnight

#### Land and sea

(top to bottom) Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque was a gift to the people of Oman from Sultan Qaboos; the ancient mountain town of Nizwa is a two-hour drive from the capital

escapes to stargaze in the pollutant-free sky and groups of friends are spotted sharing a twilight barbecue. I spy several sizeable yachts anchored close to these secluded bays, but they are modest when compared to the vessel moored at Port Sultan Qaboos, where we disembark.

Located in Muscat’s oldest district, Muttrah, the port is the permanent home of reigning Sultan Qaboos bin Said Al Said’s awe-inspiring 155-metre luxury superyacht, *Al Said*. In its monumental shadow, traditional dhows ferry passengers from the dock, tracing the city’s sweeping corniche, and fishing boats deliver their fresh morning catch to the outdoor market — just as they did hundreds of years ago. Standing on the teeming dockside overlooking the quay, it is difficult to imagine that this bustling, picturesque natural harbour was once instrumental in Portugal’s colonisation of Muscat in the 16th century and that, in an era shrouded by mystery, it was a key hub for the historic trading of gold, ivory and slaves between the Middle East and Africa. However, a visit to Muscat quickly reveals that the city’s rich past is not entirely resigned to its history books.



**Endless coast**  
Shangri-La Barr Al Jissah Resort & Spa occupies its own peninsula south of Muscat

A short walk from the dock will see you standing at the narrow, arched entrance of Muttrah Souk, a marketplace that is generally considered one of the first in the Arab world. I enter the bazaar and a strong, perfumed scent fills my nostrils as enthused vendors begin vying for my attention. My Omani guide, Suleiman Khalet, explains that it is the numerous incense traders — each demonstrating the quality of their wares — that creates the souk's unique aroma. Scents are dominated by the burning of frankincense, a resin that is sourced locally and has been traded in the Arabian Peninsula for more than 5,000 years.

We make our way along a slender walkway lined with traditional stalls, each jutting out into the narrow, tiled footpath. The market's energetic hum and dense crowds tell me that deals are rarely done behind closed doors and haggling is commonplace. With numerous stalls competing to sell everything from aromatic spices and handmade silverware to woven fabrics and ornate hookah pipes, it is a bargain hunter's playground.

After a brief stop at one of the market's many coffee houses — where I sample traditional Arabic black coffee served strong with cardamom, known as *qahwa* — we leave the souk and begin the short drive to another of Muscat's cultural must-sees, Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque. The towering 90-metre minaret and golden dome of this house of worship can be seen from almost

every locale in the Bawshar district of the city, and signals a resounding call to prayer, attracting some 20,000 worshippers through its pristine arches. "The mosque was built over a six-year period as a generous gift from Sultan Qaboos bin Said Al Said," explains Suleiman. "It reflects Oman's strong heritage and is our proudest architectural achievement."

On arrival, it is easy to see why. The mosque's incredible, intricate architecture is punctuated by perfectly sculpted, vibrant gardens, bursting with vivid yellows and reds. It's cavernous main musalla (reserved exclusively for male worshippers) can hold up to 6,500 people and features the second largest single-piece carpet in the world, outshone only by the goliath 14-metre Swarovski chandelier that hangs above it. Despite its indisputable extravagance, the mosque has a humbling, calming aura. The quiet, open-air courtyards and sprawling sandstone walkways prove to be the perfect place to lose yourself in contemplative thought, and to escape the hustle and bustle of everyday life.

**A PRIVATE ESCAPE**

Leaving the mosque with a renewed sense of purpose, I begin the journey to Shangri-La's Barr Al Jissah Resort & Spa, which sits just 20 minutes outside of central Muscat. Soon, I am sipping a fruity aperitif in the decadent, domed lobby of Al Husn Hotel.

# Experience the majestic beauty of Oman.



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**Shell shock**  
Baby turtles hatch on Turtle Beach at Shangri-La Barr Al Jissah Resort & Spa

This is the most luxurious of three properties that make up the huge Shangri-La resort complex, and focuses on catering to the needs of discerning leisure travellers, while neighbouring Al Waha and Al Bandar attend to family and business guests respectively. After taking full advantage of the complimentary minibar in my large, traditionally decorated double room — and freshening up with the abundant L'Occitane products on offer — I head to dinner at gourmet seafood restaurant, Bait Al Bahr.

Located just off the resort's sprawling private beach, with views across the cove, the fine-dining outlet uses fresh local ingredients that are sourced from the neighbouring fishing village that shares the hotel's small bay. The quality of fish is undeniable, as is the pride taken in its preparation. I quickly finish my starter of delicate tuna tartar with clam croquette, and take my fork to a fillet of coconut-crusting grouper. On my first piquant bite, I quickly understand why the restaurant is verging on full capacity. After sampling the chef's innovative lobster sausages and finishing with a sweet tiramisu, I look forward to what the resort's breakfast menu has in store for me the following day.

The next morning, I opt for creamy eggs Benedict with a subtly flavoured hollandaise sauce to begin a chilled-out day, which involves nothing but relaxation.

I'm booked in for a mid-morning appointment at the hotel's Chi, The Spa, where I heed the expert advice of my therapist and settle in for a 60-minute Philippine Hilot massage. I relax as the kinks in my lower back are worked out with keen precision and strong hands, amid the cleansing scent of virgin coconut oil. A leisurely stroll past the resort's expansive shared pool and dedicated 'Turtle Beach' (where sea turtles hatch all year round) finds me at Al Husn's private pool, where I wile away the next several hours post-treatment in a haze of cocktails and pool dips.

In the early evening, I board Shangri-La's private Royal 38 boat at the on-site dive centre and begin a short cruise around the rocky islets and natural arches of the winding coast. The clean, briny air is refreshing as the captain drops anchor in a sheltered cove and pours a brimming glass of crisp Champagne Taittinger. I take a long sip and the sun begins to set behind an eternal mountainscape, revealing a hidden spectrum of oranges and yellows. Standing at the bow, I appreciate the measured bob of the vessel and the gentle sound of lapping waves, readying myself for a late flight and my inevitable return to the bright lights and oppressive smog of the big city — a world away from the historic mysteries and azure panoramas of this charming, Middle Eastern country. ■

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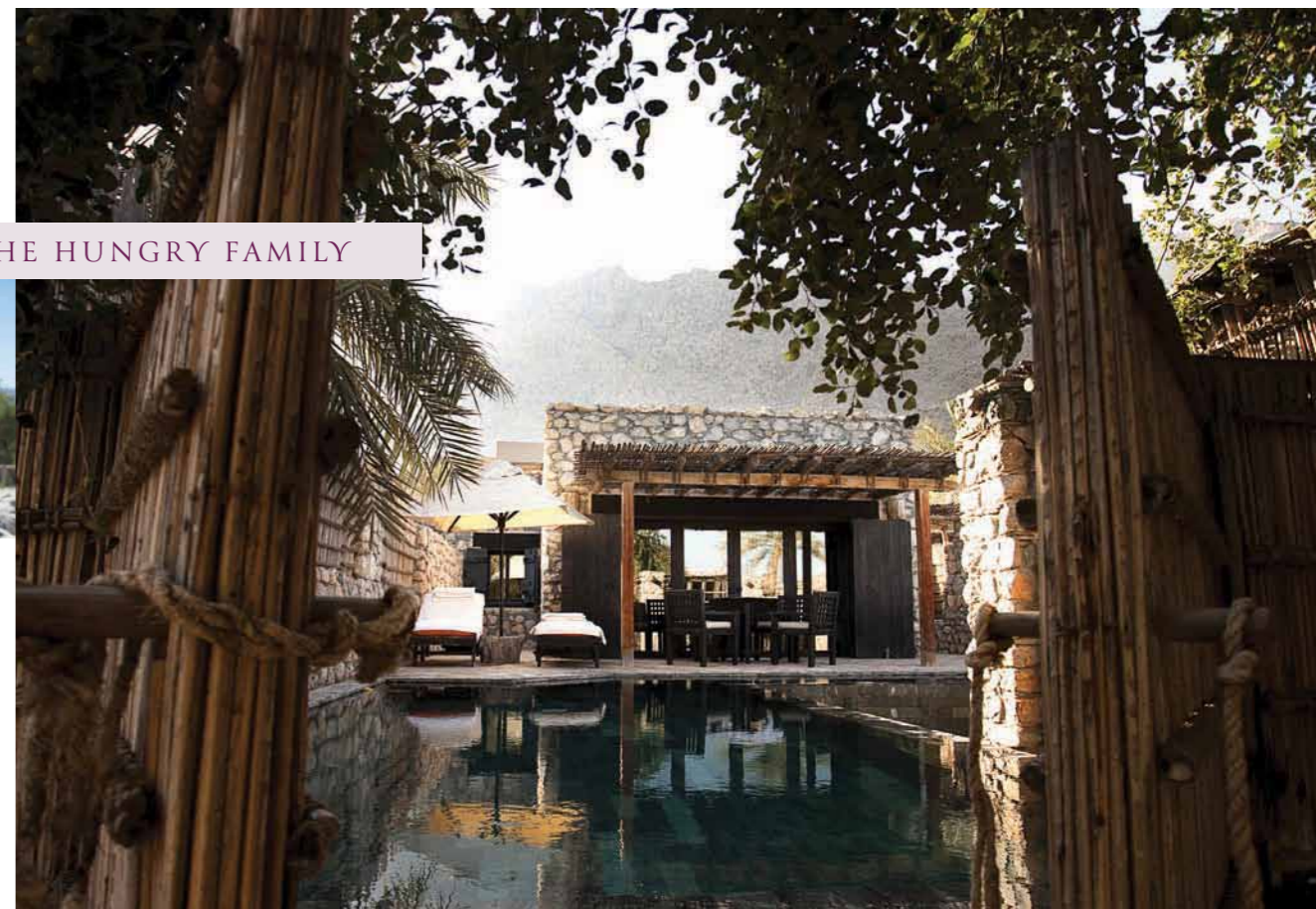
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### THE TALE OF THE HUNGRY FAMILY



*I remember seeing two eyes peeping through the fence at the end of our garden,*

*I suddenly realised it was a mother goat and her hungry young kid who had made their way in to feast on the fallen fruits of the many date palms.*

*Nature was always on our doorstep.*

*Neil Harrison*

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OUT OF THE ORDINARY



# NIGHT & DAY

Colonial grandeur, gastronomic treasures and a touch of romance can all be found within the ancient walls of Cartagena de Indias. Here's how to experience it all in 24 hours

Words: Laura Snook

## 08.00

Check in to the opulent **Sofitel Legend Santa Clara**, a historic hotel set in the heart of the walled city of Cartagena. The Presidential Suite is inspired by the work of renowned Colombian artist, **Fernando Botero**, whose bulbous sculptures are known around the world. Be sure to have your butler arrange a personalised tour of the hotel, which was originally established as a convent in 1621, to give you an insight into the historical and magical stories of its past.

## 09.00

Take breakfast in the hotel's lush courtyard and immerse yourself in a copy of *Of Love and Other Demons*, written by Cartagena's greatest master of the pen, **Gabriel García Márquez**. Winner of the 1982 Nobel Prize in Literature, 'Gabo' was inspired by Cartagena as he unleashed his literary masterpieces. Set in the convent of Santa Clara, *Of Love and Other Demons* is a romantic prelude to the magical journey that lies ahead.

## 10.00

Enlightened and full of vigour, wander around the colonial streets of Cartagena,

retracing the paths of pirates, witches, slaves and Spanish conquistadors, so prevalent within Cartagena's past. Head first to **Las Bóvedas**, 'The Vaults' (Calle Zerezueta), which were once the watery cells of civil war prisoners. Have your aristocratic nose in place as you march down the **Calle de las Damas**, an avenue where noble ladies take their evening strolls and where the King of Spain, Charles VI walked the walls dressed as a dame – apparently to investigate the large costs incurred during construction of the walls. Make your way to **El Portal de los Dulces**, where local sweets like *cocadas* (chewy coconut sweets), caramels and other delectable delights are sold by the bagful.

## 12.00

Continue to the **Plaza de los Coches**, the market square where slaves were once bought and sold, on route to the **Palace of Inquisition** (Calle 32) a vile and heinous place dedicated to torturing victims to rid them of the evils of the devil or cure them of their witchcraft ways. At the Palace, let the 'witches scale' determine whether you are a practitioner of the dark arts or not. Perhaps the caramels at El Portal de los Dulces may not have been such a sinful indulgence;

people deemed to be underweight were often convicted of witchcraft. But, before you start gorging, take heed: those who recorded overweight were often examined as well.

## 13.00

Having proven you are not a witch, relax and indulge in some gastronomic fare in one of the 200-year-old sherbet-colored colonial mansions that have been refurbished and turned into chic restaurants. The pick of the bunch is definitely the famous **La Vitrola**, (Calle de Baloco 2-01; +57 56 600 711) one of the gastronomic greats of Cartagena. Part old-school Havana Club, part trendy bistro, the always-packed restaurant is unquestionably the place to go. Mojitos and fish are the incredibly well-paired signature dishes.

## 14.30

Enjoy a postprandial stroll around the neighbourhood and look out for Cartagena's myriad doorways; brightly coloured portals embellished with antique knockers, often in the form of beautifully sculpted bronze geckos. These door knockers make wonderful souvenirs, so head to **Anticuario El Arcón** (Barrio San Diego Calle del Campo Santo

Sofitel Legend, Hotel Santa Clara



The bright courtyard of Hotel Santa Clara



Take a horse-drawn carriage through the town

9-46; [www.anticuarioelarcon.s5.com](http://www.anticuarioelarcon.s5.com)) to purchase a gorgeous keepsake.

## 15.30

A city of arts, Cartagena continuously celebrates its writers, musicians and artists, none more so than Fernando Botero, whose signature rounded figures are world-renowned. Many renditions of Botero's Rubenesque women by local artisans dot the streets, but to see one of his original larger-than-life masterpieces, head to **La Plaza Santo Domingo**, home to his famous work, *La Gorda*.

## 16.00

If you're feeling hungry, stop off for a radiant platter of fresh Caribbean fruit, available from the **palenqueras** – women who sell fruit from enameled tubs balanced on their heads. A platter always taste much more delicious when the colourful Caribbean ladies of Cartagena are serving.

## 16.30

With twilight ahead, it's time to wander back to your suite to put on your jewels, as a glamorous evening of gastronomy and romance awaits.

## 17.30

Watching the sunset in Cartagena is as sweet as the smell of jasmine on a warm, humid breeze. The best spot for doing so is along **the old wall**, originally constructed to protect the city against pirates. Choose your vantage point, cuddle up and immerse yourself in the romance of it all as the orange light of day gives way to the night.

## 19.00

Once the sun falls into the Caribbean, make your way by **horse-drawn carriage** along the streets of the old town. If it is Saturday, sounds of fireworks will ricochet against the ancient stone walls, with splashes of gunpowder illuminating the sky.

## 20.00

For foodies, Cartagena is now well and truly on the culinary map. Top of the hot list is **Restaurante Donjuán**, a temple of gastronomy, which is a favourite of the Colombian president himself (Calle del Colegio 34-60; +57 317 501 1415; [www.donjuancartagena.com](http://www.donjuancartagena.com)). Having passed through the kitchens of no less than three Michelin-starred restaurants, owner and chef Juan Felipe Camacho celebrates

## STAY

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natural flavours served as they should be; uncomplicated and bursting with exceptional, just-picked flavour. It would be a travesty to not try the *pu/pa*, a simple dish of octopus marinated in olive oil and cilantro. For dessert, pop next door to his other famed restaurant, **Maria**, named after his beloved wife.

## 22.30

Spirits high and appetite sated, head with your entourage to **La Movida** (Calle Baloco 2-14; +57 56 606 126), a centuries-old mansion turned high-society club, offering a glimpse into the world of Cartagena's bold and beautiful. Sip, dance and be merry – after all, you're in the Caribbean.

## 08.00

Awake and prepare yourself for an island-hopping adventure. With Cartagena explored, the Caribbean's Islas del Rosario await. ■

# MyCity

**Rita Szerencsés**, project manager of Budapest 100 civic cultural festival, shares her list of things to see and do, and where to stay in Hungary's capital

## LE MÉRIDIEN BUDAPEST

This building was designed in 1913 and was known as Adria Palace between 1914 and 1918. The hotel is located in the heart of Budapest and is surrounded by a wonderful historical atmosphere.

Erzsebet Ter 9-10; +36 1 429 5500  
www.lemeridienbudapest.com

## BUDAPEST MUSIC CENTER

Budapest Music Center (BMC) is in a gorgeous building close to the river Danube and was founded by trombone player and academy professor, László Gz, in 1996. It's full of information about Hungarian classical and jazz musicians. If you are interested in contemporary Hungarian music, this place is one you just cannot miss.

Mátyás str. 8; +36 1 216 7894; bmc.hu

## SZÉCHENYI THERMAL BATH

One of the largest spas in Europe and a popular place for locals to chill out. The architecture dates back to the early 20th century.

Állatkerti körút 9-11; +36 1 363 3210  
www.szechenyifurdo.hu

## BUDAPEST 100

Budapest 100 is an annual celebration of buildings in Budapest that reach the age of 100 in that year. At this year's event, more than 50 buildings will be open, giving you a chance to discover the hidden treasures of the Hungarian capital. It's an unforgettable cultural experience.

April 26-27; budapest100.hu

## HUNGARIAN HOUSE OF PHOTOGRAPHY

Hungarian House of Photography operates in Mai Manó House, a studio-house built at the end of 19th century for Mai Manó (1855-1917), Imperial and Royal Court Photographer. The aim of the house is to advance the development of Hungarian photography and raise photography's national prestige as a distinct form of art.

Nagymező utca 20; +36 1 473 2666; www.maimano.hu

## RÓZSAVÖLGYI CSOKOLÁDÉ

This chocolate shop is a heaven for sweets lovers. They use traditional processes and pure ingredients to achieve the most natural flavours, and apply detailed yet contemporary designs to create edible works of art.

Királyi Pal utca 6; +36 30 814 8929  
www.rozsavolgyi.com

## TRAFÓ HOUSE OF CONTEMPORARY ARTS

Theater, dance, new circus, music and other visual arts are presented here in an individual and authentic manner. The professional program of the institute is both experimental and audience-friendly. Trafó is the place to go to enrich your visit with a special cultural experience.

Liliom utca 41; +36 1 215 1600; www.trafo.hu

## DIVINO WINE BAR

DiVino is more than a bar, it is a place to taste first-rate traditional Hungarian wines and become acquainted with the local wine culture. The engaging surroundings and the prime Hungarian wine guarantee a memorable night out.

Szent Istvan ter 3; +36 70 935 3980  
www.divinobar.hu

## NANUSHKA STORE

Nanushka is the childhood nickname of Hungarian designer, Sandra Sandor. Through her collection, Sandra combines playful cuts and lush fabrics to create elegant and versatile pieces. Pay a visit to the flagship store to browse the collections and take home a piece of local designer fashion.

Deák Ferenc utca 17; +36 1 214 1729; nanushka.hu

## LACIPECSENYE BISTRO

LaciPecsénye is a refined contemporary bistro serving cuisine based on Hungarian traditions. Expect familiar tastes and simple dishes with a focus on meat. This high-quality gastronomical experience won't disappoint — or leave you feeling hungry.

Sas utca 11; +36 70 370 7474; lacipecsenye.eu



Visitors enjoy Budapest 100



Rózsavölgyi Csokoládé



Nanushka's flagship store



Trafó House of Contemporary Arts

Photo: Gergely Nagy

Budapest

# Fine Drinking.



Sunraysia Mango is currently enjoying minibar residency at the following fine hotels: Burj Al Arab Dubai, The Venetian Macao-Resort-Hotel, Emirates Palace Abu Dhabi, Marina Bay Sands Singapore, Al Bustan Palace - A Ritz-Carlton Hotel Muscat, Sofitel London St James, One & Only Royal Mirage Dubai...

# Spend it

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travel experiences



## 100

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F1 Grand Prix

### 100

VIP travel breaks  
to inspire your  
next holiday

### 104

New models  
from Bentley  
and McLaren

### 109

Jaguar's F-Type  
is well worth the  
35-year wait

### 112

The new leisure  
palace from  
Soraya Yachts

### 114

Diamond Suite  
Penthouse at Hôtel  
Hermitage, Monaco



# Escape

Go VIP at the Monaco GP, tour the Caribbean in a submarine, or get creative on an African safari — all these once-in-a-lifetime experiences await

## Cracking the code

Private island holidays aren't hard to come by these days, but if said island is a former pirate hideaway, that certainly adds a element of mystery and adventure to the experience. The appropriately named Code Island is in the Seychelles, discretely tucked away between the main islands of Praslin and La Digue. It's just 15 minutes from Mahé International Airport, but certainly feels a lot further away once you're there. Code Island is made available to one group or guest at a time (you can hire it exclusively through The Travel Attaché), and it features two private beaches and four presidential villas that can accommodate up to 19 people in total. There's even a French restaurant on site where you can feast on fresh seafood. For an additional cost, The Travel Attaché will also book your flights, with a choice between commercial or private aircraft.

**Available:** now

**Price:** from EUR 70,000 (\$97,174) per week (based on one to four guests)

**Book:** [info@thetravelattache.com](mailto:info@thetravelattache.com)  
[www.thetravelattache.com](http://www.thetravelattache.com)

\*All prices are subject to change. Please contact the listed companies for further information.

## Race down to Monaco

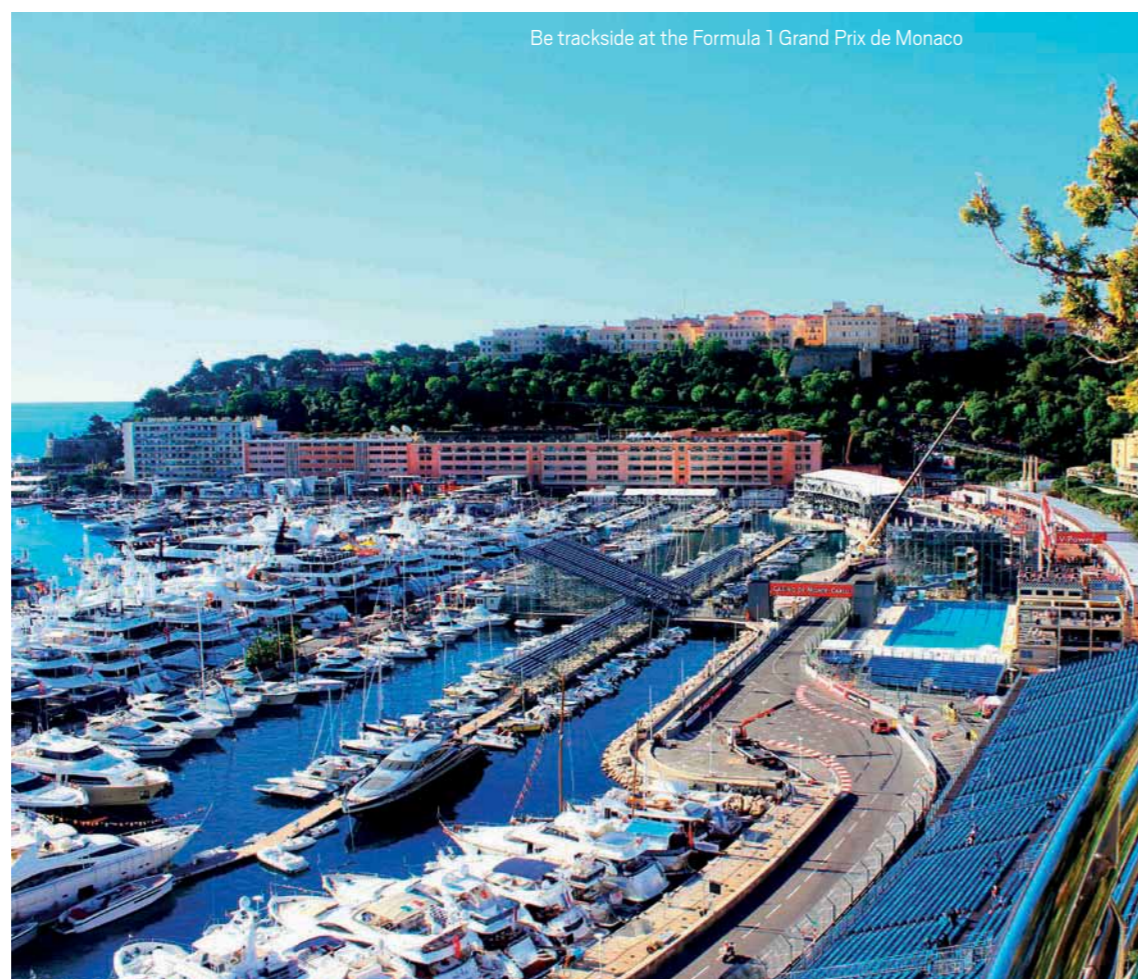
The Formula 1 Grand Prix de Monaco always attracts the who's who of Monaco's social scene, and you can combine your motoring passion with a luxury holiday, via a road trip from London to Monaco. This seven-day itinerary begins in London, where you'll pick up your Lamborghini Aventador (other another supercar of your choice). You'll then work your way to France and enjoy a two-day driving tour to Nice (stopping at the Hotel Assiette Champenoise Rheims for a night). Arriving in Nice, you'll board a helicopter to the Metropole Hotel Monaco, your lodgings for the duration of the Grand Prix. Start proceedings with a VIP cocktail party on a yacht, before soaking up two days of hospitality on the Ermanno Terrace, which boasts winning views of the circuit. After a weekend of parties and racing, you'll fly back to London from Nice airport — though, if you still have a need for speed, you can drive back to London if you wish.

**Available:** May 21-27

**Price:** from GBP 21,030 (\$35,160) per person

**Book:** [enquiries@exclusivvegp.com](mailto:enquiries@exclusivvegp.com)

[www.monacograndprixpackages.com](http://www.monacograndprixpackages.com)



Be trackside at the Formula 1 Grand Prix de Monaco

## Luxury below the surface

Hotel and travel companies are thinking outside the box — or in this case, below the surface — when it comes to holiday experiences. Of course, we've seen underwater rooms, restaurants and even concepts for entirely submerged hotels, but it seems that luxury travel company Oliver's Travels has gone one step further for an exclusive travel experience: a stay in a submarine. Board *Lovers Deep* in St. Lucia (other locations to alight can also be arranged), then sit back and let the captain, chef and butler take care of everything for you. Whether you're relaxing in the living spaces or resting in the bedroom, you can be assured of front-row seats to the marine show happening outside the windows. Everything about the experience is customisable, from the sub's interiors to any extra activities you might want to do during your trip (dinner for two on a private island, perhaps?).

**Available:** now

**Price:** from GBP 175,000 (\$292,583) per night

**Book:** +44 203 637 0999

[www.oliverstravels.com](http://www.oliverstravels.com)



Cruise the Caribbean in a stylish submarine

## Escape



Enjoy a culinary weekend at Sheraton New York

### Be a master chef in NYC

Guests of the Penthouse Suite at Sheraton New York Times Square Hotel can enjoy a little education with their stay if they book the 'Penthouse Escape' package. As well as three nights' accommodation in the bi-level Penthouse, you'll also enjoy a bottomless wine-tasting and cooking class during your stay. Prior to arriving, you'll be consulted by the hotel's culinary team regarding any food preferences and special requests. Executive chef Joe Fontanis will then arrive to the penthouse to teach you how to cook up a three-course dinner in the suite's kitchen. You'll also better be able to distinguish your chardonnays from your sauvignon blancs in a wine-tasting experience hosted by the hotel's in-house wine expert, David Ocampo. After both classes, you'll receive recipe cards and tasting notes to keep you informed. In your free time, enjoy complimentary access to the hotel's Fitness Center and the Club Lounge on the 44th floor, which has a 24-hour food and beverage service if you want to take a break from getting experimental in the kitchen.

**Available:** until May 31

**Price:** \$15,000 (maximum four guests)

**Book:** [oonyc.reservations@starwoodhotels.com](mailto:oonyc.reservations@starwoodhotels.com)

[www.sheratonnewyork.com](http://www.sheratonnewyork.com)

### Sketch on safari

A new experience from Cox and Kings is challenging you to view landscapes not through a camera lens, but rather with a canvas and brush. Partnering up with Art Safari in Africa, the company has put together a trip with a decidedly creative slant. This 10-day tour will be led by expert safari guide Mary-Anne Bartlett, who will take you through the wildlife-rich South Luangwa National Park in Zambia, getting up close to elephants and big cats. Whether you're a dunce or a Dali with a paintbrush, the team at Art Safari will talk you through the steps to capture landscapes and wildlife on a canvas. Your itinerary includes morning, afternoon and night wildlife drives, and plenty of time to linger in the park and capture your surroundings while staying in Art Safari's riverbank lodge — the resident elephants and giraffes may even encourage you to continue to hone your artistic skills in your downtime. All meals and materials are covered in the rate, so the only thing you need to pack is your creativity. The best part? You'll have handmade mementos of your trip when you're done.

**Available:** October 11-20

**Price:** from GBP 2,895 (\$4,840) per person

**Book:** [cox.kings@coxandkings.co.uk](mailto:cox.kings@coxandkings.co.uk)

[www.coxandkings.co.uk](http://www.coxandkings.co.uk)

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# ON THE ROAD



## **BENTLEY CONTINENTAL GT SPEED 2015**

**Engine:** 6.0-litre twin-turbo W12  
**Power:** 626 bhp  
**Torque:** 820 Nm  
**0-100 kph:** 4.2 secs  
**Top speed:** 331 kph  
**Fuel consumption:** 14.5 l/100 km  
**CO2 emissions:** 338 g/km  
**Origin:** Crewe, UK  
**Cost:** from US \$270,900 (in the UAE)

Bentley's flagship powerhouse, the Continental GT Speed, just got even more potent. Tweaks to the massive 6.0-litre, twin-turbo W12 engine mean it now produces 626 bhp and an earth-shattering 820 Nm. The 2015 edition is capable of 331 kph, making it the fastest production Bentley in history. Again. Enhancements to the exterior of the GT Speed include a dark tint finish on the 21-inch wheels and the front and rear lights, and a chrome 'Speed' badge on either side. Inside, the already elegant interior has been upgraded with the addition of accent stripes throughout the front cabin with contrasting stitching, and more 'Speed' branding on the front and rear headrests. In short, one of the world's greatest cars just got even better.



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On the road

### MCLAREN 650S COUPÉ

**Engine:** 3.8-litre  
twin-turbo V8

**Power:** 641 bhp

**Torque:** 678 Nm

**0-100 kph:** 3.0 secs

**0-200 kph:** 8.4 secs

**Top speed:** 333 kph

**Fuel consumption:**  
11.7 l/100 km

**CO2 emissions:** 275 g/km

**Origin:** Surrey, UK

**Cost:** from US \$326,000

It's hard not to let out an excited little laugh when looking at pictures of the latest McLaren creation. The new arrival, unveiled last month in Geneva, is a new sibling to the existing McLaren line-up and bears more than a couple of similarities to the now sold-out P1. If it performs anywhere nearly as well as it looks like it might (and the Brits say it most definitely will), then owners will be in for a treat. The 650S (S for 'sport' and 650 for the horsepower it produces) comes in Coupé or Spider editions. Despite its race-car profile, McLaren promises a comfortable ride and levels of refinement more akin to an executive saloon than a bare-knuckle racing machine.



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Nestled among these many isolated mountainous outcrops are ancient villages and towns with minute populations, each reflecting Oman's proud Bedouin heritage. Some of the most interesting of these, for example, is Nizwa, one of the country's oldest cities, which is said to date to the 10th century. Here, you will trace the mid-century history of the UNESCO-protected Bahla Fort, lose yourself in the heart of the mountain village of Misfat Al Abreyeen, or explore the abandoned town of Ghul. It is difficult to believe, when exploring these historic hotspots, that the glittering artificial

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CITY ON THE SEA

As we cruise back from our dolphin-spotting expedition, the comparatively subtle skyline of Muscat draws ever closer. We meander past rocky alcoves, hanging yellow cliffs and isolated beaches, many of which are accessible only by boat. It is on these tiny sheltered stretches of golden sand that couples take romantic overnight

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### Land and sea

(top to bottom) Sultan Qaboos bin Said, the people of Oman from Sultan Qaboos, the ancient mountain town of Nizwa is a two-hour drive from Muscat.

escapes to stargaze in the Marriott International Inc. of friends are spotted sharing a twilight barbecue. I spy several sizeable yachts anchored close to these secluded bays, but they are modest when compared to the vessel moored at Port Sultan Qaboos, the ancient mountain town of Nizwa is a two-hour drive from Muscat. Located in Muscat's oldest port is the permanent home of STR Global Ltd. bin Said Al Said's awe-inspiring 155-metre luxury superyacht, Al Said. In its monumental shadow, traditional chows ferry the city's swimming competitions and fishing boats deliver their fresh morning catch to the outdoor market — just as they did hundreds of years ago. The teeming dockside overlooks the bay, it is difficult to imagine that this bustling, picturesque natural harbour was once instrumental in Portugal's colonisation of Muscat. The port was a key hub for the historic trading of gold, ivory and slaves between the Middle East and Africa. However, a visit to Muscat quickly reveals that the city's rich past is not entirely lost to its history books.

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**Johanna Devine**  
World Tourism Organisation  
(UNWTO)

# BRAVE NEW WORLD

The **Jaguar F-Type Convertible** is a pint-sized sports car with bags of personality and performance to match

**Words:** Joe Mortimer **Photo:** Haitham El Shazly

**THE NOISE** is unforgettable. When the traffic light goes green, the Jaguar F-Type growls its way quickly through its eight-speed gearbox. The sports exhaust, like everything else in this miraculous little piece of engineering, has been designed especially to maximise the driver experience, and that, in this case, means making more noise.

Jaguar created the F-Type to add a lightweight, high-performance sports car to its portfolio of stately vehicles, that still captures the spirit and essence of vintage Jags. After all, alphabetically (if not chronologically) this is the immediate successor to the much-loved E-Type.

What the company has achieved is a brave and fearless little car that is immensely fun to drive. Design elements like one-touch locking and rubber edges around the A/C controls to make them look like tyres are both fun and practical, and the anti-glare glass in the wing and rear-view mirrors are helpful at night. The touchscreen entertainment and navigation system is mostly easy



to use, although I did struggle to connect my iPhone's music files to the audio system. Connectivity issues aside, it's a practical and easy-to-navigate onboard computer with a Meriden sound system that delivers crisp audio even with the roof off.

For maximum fun in the smallest member of the Jaguar family, I would advise ignoring the superb automatic transmission settings and use the steering-wheel mounted paddles for instantaneous gear changes, propelling the car forwards and around bends with superb agility. With the automatic transmission engaged, in both regular and sport settings, the car does most of the driving for you, selecting and maintaining the correct gear

while coming out of corners, and executing rapid gear changes when braking hard so you are in the right gear when it's time to accelerate.

I'm driving the base model, so the interior is unremarkable, with sports seats in standard leather, but for a slightly larger investment you can upgrade to premium leather performance seats with contrast stitching. The 2015 model is virtually identical to this 2014 edition that I'm driving, except for the addition of electronic controls to move the seats back and forwards (it's currently manual) and a seat position memory function.

The British carmaker has just launched a new coupé version of the F-Type, but the convertible model seems just fine by me.

### NUTS & BOLTS

**Engine:** supercharged 3.0-litre V6  
**Power:** 340 bhp  
**Torque:** 450 Nm  
**0-100kph:** 5.1 secs  
**Top speed:** 260 kph (limited)  
**Origin:** Coventry, UK  
**Cost:** from AED 289,000 (US \$78,690)

The fabric convertible roof can be stowed or raised with the touch of a button in just a few seconds, and going topless does nothing to detract from the performance. With the hood up, the driver's side blind spot is fairly large, and the cabin could feel compact if you were much taller than my 5-foot, 10-inch frame.

If we're judging the F-Type based on appearances, the exterior speaks for itself. Retro design elements such as the wide radial grille and signature Jaguar curves blend with modern touches and pure sporting poise. The F-Type is a thing of beauty that delights equally with its looks, its soundtrack and its on-road performance; a fitting successor to the legendary E-Type. ■



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**Length:** 46.5 m  
**Beam:** 9 m  
**Draught:** 2.45 m (half load)  
**Cruise speed:** 12 knots  
**Price:** EUR 25,000,000  
(\$34,485,000)  
[www.iye.com](http://www.iye.com)  
[www.sorayayachts.com](http://www.sorayayachts.com)

## SORAYA 46 SORAYA YACHTS

It may not be as large as its upcoming sibling, *Soraya 70*, but *Soraya 46* is nonetheless impressive. This four-deck vessel boasts versatile interiors by Ales Bratina, making it easy for the owner to add their own personal touches to the décor. The yacht's central IP network is custom-designed by Cisco Systems, and controls the intercom, telephone and internet connections, lighting, and entertainment system. Five staterooms for up to 12 guests make up the lower deck, while the main and upper decks boast the primary dining and social areas. Functional touches show the careful planning that has gone into the design. The galley on the main deck buffers the sound between the lounge area and the 54 sq m owner's cabin, ensuring privacy. The door to the garage at the stern opens horizontally to allow easy access to the tenders (two on board) and doubles as a swim platform, while the hydraulic helipad at the bow also serves as an operational space for the crew when handling and storing equipment. The upper deck's 70 sq m saloon and bar are primed for parties, while the sun deck's jacuzzi, cushioned seating area and wet bar ensure intimate afternoon gatherings stretch well into the evening. ■

“The upper deck’s saloon and bar are primed for parties, while the sun deck’s jacuzzi, cushioned seating area and wet bar ensure intimate afternoon gatherings stretch well into the evening”

## ON THE WATER THIS MONTH

### WIND, WATER AND BOAT SHOW

Warsaw, Poland  
April 3-6  
[www.wiatrywoda.pl](http://www.wiatrywoda.pl)

### CHINA (SHANGHAI) INTERNATIONAL BOAT SHOW

Shanghai, China  
April 10-13  
[www.boatshowchina.com](http://www.boatshowchina.com)

### SINGAPORE YACHT SHOW

Sentosa Cove, Singapore  
April 10-13  
[www.singaporeyachtshow.com](http://www.singaporeyachtshow.com)

### ANTIBES YACHT SHOW

Antibes, France  
April 23-26  
[www.antibesyachtshow.com](http://www.antibesyachtshow.com)



# Diamonds in the sky

The key to the **Diamond Suite Penthouse** at **Hôtel Hermitage** is an essential accessory for high-rolling visitors to Monte-Carlo

Words: Joe Mortimer



**T**hink of Monte-Carlo and you think of excess. It's a city purpose-built for pleasure, with everything a visitor needs to indulge his or her every whim. There are plenty of establishments prepared to help the affluent visitor part with (or indeed accrue) their wealth in the most spectacular way, from fine hotels and boutiques to the famous gaming house that made it all possible. In Monaco, only the best will do.

If you are going to live life to its fullest here, you need a suitable abode, and as I walk into the Diamond Suite Penthouse at Hôtel Hermitage, which belongs to Monaco's Société des Bains de Mer, it seems that I have found it. High up on the top floor of the legendary hotel, the three-bedroom, 361 sq m suite is fit for a prince.

The door opens into a large living room decorated in black, beige and gold, furnished with animal print cushions and modern ornaments, creating a contemporary safari aesthetic. The theme continues into another lounge area, with ethnic sculptures, a three-legged fruit bowl and more animal print adorning the furniture. But there is nothing rustic about the décor — it is elegant and respectable, with two high-backed armchairs at either end of a sleek black and gold table that cries out for a pack of cards. Rich plum and gold hues in the master bedroom give it a regal twist, and the embroidered fabric on the walls, a leather armchair and writing desk set it apart as the dwelling of the king of the castle.

Doors lead out from both the bedroom and the main living room onto a private terrace equipped with a parasol, two sun loungers and views towards the sparkling Mediterranean. The main living area can be closed off with sliding doors, creating a private enclave for the master bedroom, long bathroom with Bulgari amenities and a huge walk-in wardrobe.

The second half of the suite is more family focused, with two additional bedrooms, an even bigger living area and another spacious terrace

looking down on Port Hercule and across the harbour to the Rock of Monaco and the Old Town. The living area has a different feel to the first half of the suite, with parquet flooring, brass ornaments and bright, fuchsia furnishings that bring the airy, loft-like space to life. The two smaller bedrooms (one double and one single) are decorated similarly to the family living area, and are almost as sumptuous as the master. Almost.

Since the suite is equipped to provide a splendid setting for any kind of activity, leaving seems like a terribly bad idea, but the rest of the iconic hotel is not to be overlooked. There are few better examples of the Hermitage's old-meets-new style than the Winter Garden, where a stained-glass dome built by Gustave Eiffel towers over Pierre-Yves Rochon's contemporary sofas and chairs below. Pre-prandial drinks are taken in the Crystal Bar, another recent addition to the hotel, and dinner by chef Joël Garault in Michelin-starred Le Vistamar is an unforgettable journey of culinary excellence. If you do anything in Monaco, make sure you try his truffle risotto.

And that's all you need to know. There is no need to do anything rash like venture outside, since you have absolutely everything you could need within the walls of the incredible suite and hotel (including private access to the famed Thermes Marins Monte-Carlo, a vast spa and wellness complex). Say what you like about Monaco, there is no rivalling it when it comes to unadulterated luxury. ■

## The important bit

**What:** Diamond Suite Penthouse  
**Where:** Hôtel Hermitage, Monte-Carlo  
**Price:** from EUR 7,500 (US \$10,300) per night  
**Tel:** +377 9806 2525  
**Book:** resort@sbrn.mc  
[www.hotelhermitagemontecarlo.com](http://www.hotelhermitagemontecarlo.com)



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