

Business Traveller



Cellars in the Sky
Our airline wine award winners



Long range
Short-haul planes get ambitious



Good taste
New London restaurants reviewed



Switched on
The world's most high-tech hotels



The next frontier

How Zurich is creating tomorrow's world



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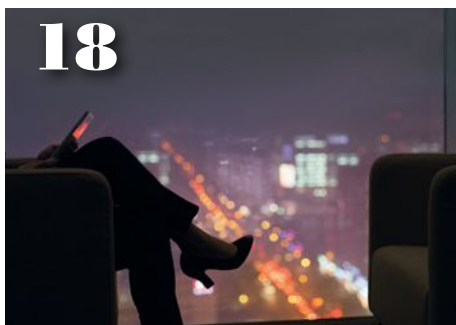
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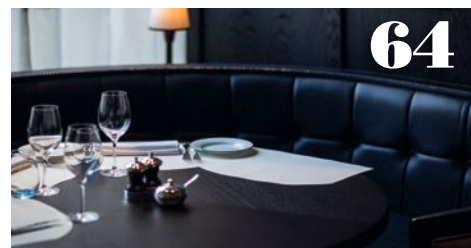
Chengdu's ambitious infrastructure plans have created a thriving transportation hub

Business Traveller

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COVER IMAGE: SPACE SUITE, KAMAH GRAND, ZURICH



Someone famous once said that they enjoyed being interviewed because only then did they work out what their opinion was. You can imagine the process. You drift through life, more or less content or discontent with the state of the world, and then suddenly someone asks what you think about a particular subject. As you struggle to put your thoughts into words, so a definite opinion forms. But it's a fairly safe bet that if you aren't famous, you won't ever go through this process. Or so I thought.

Brexit and the US election. Chances are, you have a strong opinion on both. And not only that but on all the issues that stem from them. Perhaps in general you don't really care who is US president. After all, it's a matter for US citizens. That's true. But then Donald Trump is elected, and issues a presidential order banning travel from seven predominantly Muslim countries, and you find yourself taking sides.

Coincidentally, this week I took a flight to Asia from Europe via the Middle East. On the way, I watched a documentary about global warming called *Before the Flood*. It's well worth watching, not least

since the narrator, Leonardo DiCaprio, is compelling in his mix of passion and despair on the subject, while modestly admitting he's no expert. He certainly racks up the air miles to become one (they were offset, it tells us at the end of the film).

When he's not staring into Arctic crevasses or surveying the flooded

fields of Indian farmers, he's meeting President Obama and the Pope to ask them their opinions. It's great infotainment and ends on a cautiously optimistic note with the Paris agreement on climate change, the same one that President Trump says he may well ignore.

Sitting on those aircraft taking me to and from Asia, I suddenly found myself having to form an opinion. Did I agree with Trump, or Leonardo DiCaprio? Please watch the film – widely available not only on aircraft in-flight entertainment systems but also online. Of course, now an opinion has formed, what to do with it...

Tom Otley
Editorial director



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STEVE DINNEEN is a regular tech columnist for *Business Traveller*. Having a life that is almost entirely digitised and a job that requires frequent travel makes him vulnerable to cyber criminals, who replace crowbars and ski-masks with phishing and skimming. He tells us about his favourite security gadgets to help you stay safe on the road (page 76).



TIMOTHY BARBER is the *Telegraph's* watch editor. In this issue, he looks at the evolution of Panerai from its days as a naval watchmaker to the brand's 1990s revival, thanks to Sylvester Stallone. "Soon, other watch aficionados caught up with an idea that collectors had known for years: that Panerai had created something seriously cool." (Page 74).



JEREMY TREDINNICK is editor of *Business Traveller Asia-Pacific*, based in Hong Kong. "Arriving in Chengdu (page 48), I was bowled over by the speed of change in the Sichuan capital over the past three or four years," he says. "It's outstripping even Beijing and Shanghai in its development as the Eurasian Land Bridge's new south-western hub."

Business Traveller

Editorial director Tom Otley
Managing editor Michelle Harbi
Consumer editor Alex McWhirter
Features editor Jenny Southan
Art director Annie Harris
Staff writer Marisa Cannon
Contributors Timothy Barber, Mark Caswell, Steve Dinneen, Rose Dykins, Hannah Evans, Natalie Hoare, Jeremy Tredinnick
Managing director Julian Gregory
Group publisher Rania Apthorpe
Head of business development Jeremy Halley
Advertisement manager, travel Rebecca Randall
Senior sales executive Stephen Berthier
Circulation manager Jamie Halling
Head of events Emma Gordon
Events assistant Isis Gouveia
Marketing executive Kirsty Clark

CONTACT

Editorial tel +44 (0)20 7821 2700
Email editorial@businesstraveller.com
twitter.com/btuk
facebook.com/businesstraveller
Advertising tel +44 (0)20 7821 2734
Email advertising@businesstraveller.com



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tel +44 (0)844 477 0943
email jhalling@businesstraveller.com

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tel +44 (0)20 7821 2700
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ABU DHABI

Michelle Harbi compiles the latest news from businessstraveller.com

Eurostar launches new Paris lounge

EUROSTAR HAS OPENED its new Business Premier lounge at Paris Gare du Nord.

Located on the top floor of the original 19th-century station building, it features high ceilings and marble fireplaces, and aims to capture the spirit of a Parisian apartment.

The lounge has free wifi, USB sockets and wireless chargers, as well as a black and gold cocktail bar with drinks designed by the London Cocktail Club exclusively for Eurostar. Contemporary art curated by London's Hospital Club are also be on display and available to buy.

Eurostar Business Premier culinary director Raymond Blanc has advised on seasonal dishes and a new tea for the lounge with UK producer Tregothnan. Canapés, salads, and hot and cold dishes are also laid on. eurostar.com



Citizen M to expand in Europe, the US and Asia

DUTCH HOTEL GROUP CITIZEN M is to open four properties in Paris, New York and Taipei this year.

The “affordable luxury” brand will add two hotels in Paris – the 175-room Citizen M Paris La Defense, scheduled to open this spring, and the 330-room Citizen M Gare de Lyon (pictured) in early summer.

In New York, a 300-room property will open at the end of the year, while the 267-room Citizen M Taipei is set to open next month. citizenm.com

KLM returns to London City

KLM HAS RESTARTED London City-Amsterdam flights after an absence of eight years.

Beginning with a single daily flight, from March 26 there will be up to four flights daily. Strictly speaking KLM does offer other flights on the LCY-AMS route but these are operated by Cityjet under a codeshare arrangement.

KLM is offering its new range of tariffs on the London City service, with the lowest prices offered to those passengers without checked luggage. Cityjet, unlike KLM, does not offer a lower hand baggage-only fare on the route.

klm.com



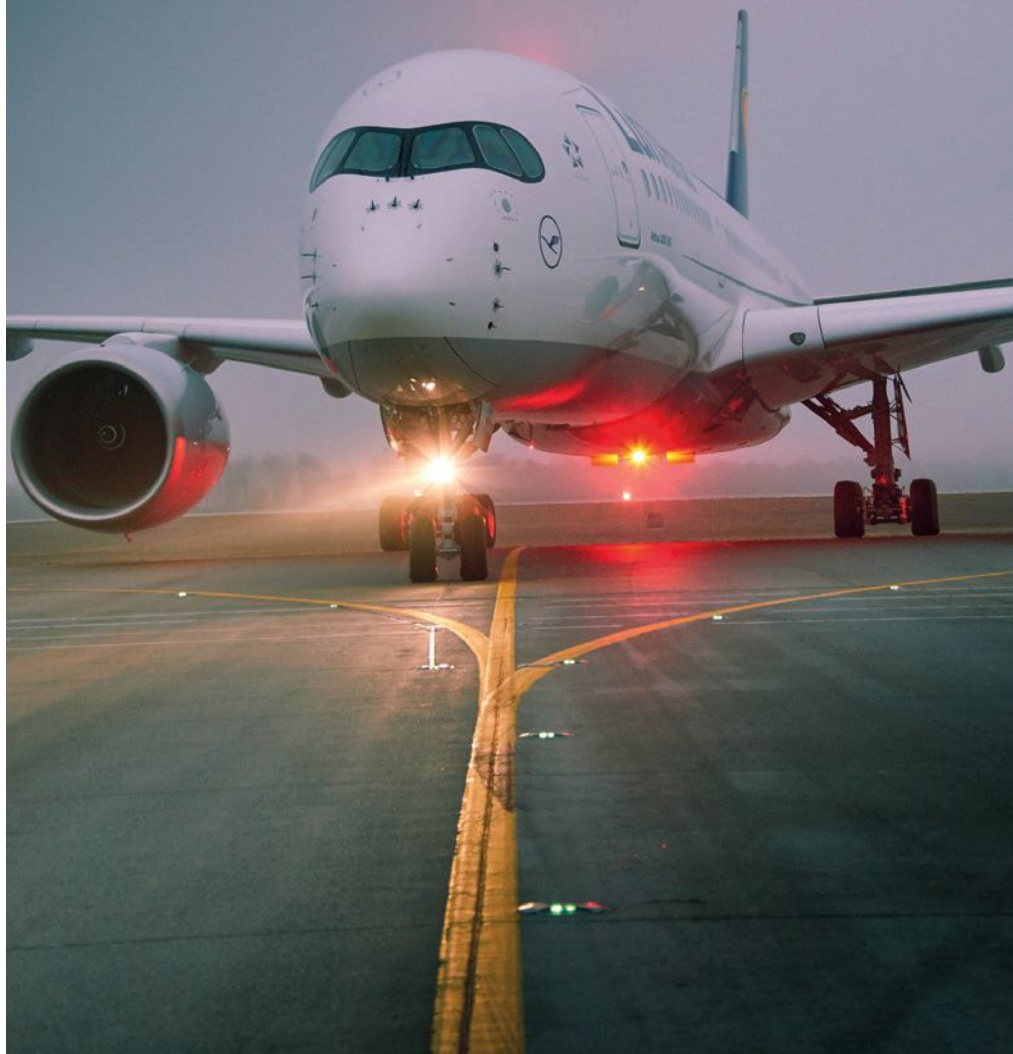
Lufthansa A350 enters service

LUFTHANSA HAS PLACED ITS FIRST A350 aircraft on its Munich-Delhi route, with Boston to follow in mid-March and Mumbai in the summer. The A350 has 293 seats – 48 business class (configured 2-2-2), 21 premium economy (2-3-2) and 224 economy (3-3-3).

Lufthansa's A350 is the first Airbus aircraft to feature LED lighting technology designed to sync with passengers' body clocks and ease jet lag. The system has 24 settings intended to simulate morning, evening and dining "lighting moods", promoting relaxation or activity depending on the time of day.

The aircraft is also the first to feature Lufthansa's upgraded in-flight entertainment system, which lets passengers customise their onboard selections from six weeks in advance and watch on the seat-back or their own devices. Wifi costs €9 for one hour or €17 for the flight.

The first ten of the new-generation aircraft will be based at Munich, with an additional 15 to follow. The airline plans to gradually replace its A340s with the A350. lufthansa.com



AIRLINE NEWS

BRITISH AIRWAYS has announced a range of summer services from Manchester, Birmingham, Bristol and London Stansted. From May, it will begin flights from Manchester to Alicante, Ibiza, Malaga, Mykonos, Nice and Palma, and a weekly London City service. The same month, the carrier will return to Birmingham and Bristol with summer routes to Florence, Ibiza, Malaga, Palma, operating on Saturdays. It will also launch weekly flights from Stansted to Florence, Geneva and Nice.

RYANAIR is to launch a new route between Liverpool and Milan Malpensa this winter. The three-times weekly service will start in October.

IBERIA is to boost its Madrid-Barcelona shuttle service from 16 times each weekday to 26 (13 at the weekend) from July, when a new agreement sees Iberia and Vueling jointly operate the shuttle.

KLM will enlarge its international Crown lounge at Amsterdam Schiphol over the next two years. Phased work will take place until spring 2019, with the lounge remaining open throughout. Seating capacity will increase from 800 to 1,400.

AIR INDIA has moved its Heathrow operations from T4 to T2, joining its fellow Star Alliance member carriers.

ETIHAD AIRWAYS will launch its third Abu Dhabi-Bengaluru service on March 26. A two-class A321 will depart the UAE at 2145 and arrive in Bengaluru at 0315 the next day, with the return flight leaving India at 0435 and landing at 0705.

AUSTRIAN AIRLINES will be expanding its Iranian services with a Shiraz route on July 2. A continuation of the carrier's Vienna-Isfahan link, flights will be operated by an A320 departing Vienna four times a week at 2200, arriving into Shiraz (after a short stop in Isfahan) at 0310.

FINNAIR is to increase frequencies on its routes between Helsinki and Russia, which it says will improve connectivity with Finnair's network from the UK. From April 10, the carrier will double its flights between the Finnish capital and Moscow, to 14 weekly. From April 23, it will add six weekly flights to its Helsinki-St Petersburg route, bringing the total frequency to 20 flights per week.

Gran Melia opens in Rio

MELIA HOTELS INTERNATIONAL has opened the first Brazilian property under its Gran Melia brand in Rio de Janeiro.

The Gran Melia Nacional Rio is located in the upmarket Sao Conrado district, and has 413 rooms ranging from 33 sqm to 300 sqm.

The hotel is housed in a circular building designed by Brazilian architect Oscar Niemeyer. Formerly the Hotel Nacional, a celebrity hotspot during the 1970s and 80s, it had lain empty for more than a decade.

A 32nd-floor signature restaurant by Brazilian chef Felipe Bronze is set to open next month, as is the VIP Red Level lounge with private reception. The hotel also has a rooftop bar and Clarins spa. melia.com



UK and India ease flight restrictions



THE UK AND INDIA HAVE signed an agreement to ease the restrictions on the number of scheduled flights between the two countries.

The deal sees the scrapping of limits on flights from key Indian cities including Chennai and Kolkata. It also sees the opening up of all UK destinations for Indian carriers to launch codeshare flights and, reciprocally, UK carriers can now operate codeshare services to any international airport in India, through domestic codeshare arrangements.

There are currently 88 scheduled services per week in each direction between the two countries, carrying about 2.5 million passengers per year. In 2015 there were 422,000 visits from India to the UK, contributing £433 million to the economy.



Williamsburg hotel now open

LUXURY BOUTIQUE PROPERTY the Williamsburg has opened in north Brooklyn, New York. Located on the junction of Wythe Avenue and North Tenth Street, the hotel was designed by London-based firm Michaelis Boyd (behind the interiors of Soho House and Babington House), using brick, glass and Corten steel in a nod to the neighbourhood's industrial history.

Inside, the 150-room hotel has a staircase that leads to a rooftop bar featuring installations by Minnesota-based street artist Eric Rieger. Later this year, a rooftop pool and three bars will open, including a private bar for guests and an underground lounge. The hotel also has its own tuk-tuk to take guests to the nearby L or G subway stops.

thewilliamsburghotel.com



Virgin Atlantic is first UK airline to offer TSA Precheck

VIRGIN ATLANTIC HAS BECOME THE FIRST UK CARRIER to participate in the Transportation Security Administration's TSA Precheck programme, allowing eligible passengers to access an accelerated screening process when departing US airports.

The carrier says: "Qualifying customers who enter a valid Known Traveller Number (KTN) or Customs and Border Protection (CBP)-issued PASSID in their Virgin Atlantic reservations and are pre-approved, will then see the TSA Precheck indicator on their mobile or printed boarding passes. Eligible customers will then be led to TSA Precheck lanes within an airport's security area to proceed through an accelerated screening process."

The expedited system eliminates the need for travellers to remove shoes, light jackets or belts, with laptops and "compliant liquids" also able to remain in hand luggage. To be eligible, passengers must be a member of TSA Precheck, Global Entry, Nexus, Sentri or the US Armed Forces. virginatlantic.com, tsa.gov



HOTEL NEWS

HILTON has opened the Doubletree by Hilton London Greenwich. Previously a Mercure hotel, the 147-room property is close to Deptford Bridge station on the DLR, and less than a kilometre from Greenwich rail and DLR stations. The group has also launched its 14th hotel brand. Tapestry Collection by Hilton is an "upscale" concept positioned just below its Curio brand. Seven US hotels have signed letters of intent to join, with the first expected to join the Tapestry Collection by the third quarter of this year.

W HOTELS is to open properties in Budapest and Prague in 2020. The 162-room W Budapest will be housed within the late 19th-century Dreschler Palace on Andrássy Avenue, while the 154-room W Prague will be partially housed within the renovated Grand Europa hotel on Wenceslas Square.

ALMANAC HOTELS, a new luxury group, will open its first property this summer – the 92-room Almanac Barcelona, on the corner of Gran Via and Carrer de Pau Claris, close to the Passeig de Gràcia. Hotels in Budapest, Prague, Vienna and Zagreb will follow in the next few years.

VIRGIN HOTELS will break ground on its second US location in New Orleans' Warehouse District in April, with an opening scheduled for early 2019. It already has a property in Chicago.

CARLSON REZIDOR GROUP is to open 17 Middle East/Africa properties this year – in the UAE, Saudi Arabia and Egypt – adding more than 3,000 rooms to its portfolio across the region.

MARRIOTT INTERNATIONAL has opened the Renaissance Lagos Ikeja. The 155-room hotel is 5km from the Nigerian city's international airport, and has an outdoor pool, gym, steakhouse, all-day restaurant and a 24-hour bar.

INTERCONTINENTAL HOTELS GROUP has announced three new US properties for its Kimpton Hotels brand. The Everly, at the base of the Hollywood Hills, and La Peer hotel in West Hollywood are set to join the brand this spring, to be followed by a Palm Springs property later this year.

ACCORHOTELS is to rebrand the Hilton London Stansted Airport as a Novotel property this summer following a renovation. Located about five minutes from the terminal, the hotel was purchased by the Arora Group last year.

MINOR HOTELS is to open the first European property under its Avani brand next month, with the refurbishment and rebranding of the group's Tivoli Jardim Lisboa. The Avani Avenida Liberdade Lisbon will feature 119 rooms, all with balconies, while the lobby will be redesigned.



Wow Air to add premium seats

WOW AIR HAS ANNOUNCED updates to its seating and pricing, including the addition of business class-style seats and priority boarding.

From June 1, the Icelandic carrier will launch a new cabin of "Big Seats" onboard its A330s, which serve routes between Iceland and the US West Coast, offering a 37-inch pitch compared with economy's 30 inches. Larger seats will also be available on the airline's A320s and A321s.

Three fare types will vary in terms of luggage allowance, boarding and meal privileges – these will include Wow Biz (from £156), Wow Plus (from £79) and Wow Basic (from £32). Passengers will be able to purchase both the seats and the fast-track option as add-ons outside of the Wow Biz package.

From the UK, Wow Air flies to Reykjavik from Gatwick, Bristol and Edinburgh. wowair.co.uk

Tell us about your travels at talktous@businessstraveller.com

OUT OF LINE

Singapore Airlines (SIA) is globally renowned as one of the top airlines for its service offering – it won six of the annual reader-voted *Business Traveller* Asia-Pacific awards in 2016 [and five of last year's *Business Traveller* UK awards], and as a frequent Singaporean business and leisure traveller, I fly with SIA for most of my trips.

However, I got a rude awakening when flying on SQ805 from Beijing to Singapore recently. I booked seat 56H – one of a pair at the back of the B777-200 plane. When I sat down, I realised my seat was not aligned with the one in front of me, which was about 25 per cent further to the right.

This caused me a number of problems. Having a meal was a challenge – a quarter of my food tray crossed over to the passenger seated on my right, which was embarrassing. Furthermore, some of the cup holder tray was also located on my neighbour's side, which stopped me from working on my laptop as it was inconvenient. Watching the in-flight entertainment was also difficult, as I had to keep my neck turned to the right which was uncomfortable, both physically and socially – it felt rude to face the passenger on my right.

I did explain the problem to a flight attendant, but all they could suggest was for me to inform the customer service personnel. No relocation was offered, even though there were two empty seats in front of me. Has the airline forgotten about the most basic comfort level of passengers? This is definitely not the industry standard.

Charles Loke, Singapore



Write to us and you may win a prize for Star Letter. Next month we are giving away a cabin-size suitcase from Lojel's Hatch collection. The new-generation hard-side suitcase is made from high-tensile-strength polycarbonate and features a zippered bonnet designed for quick and easy access. For your chance to win, email us at talktous@businessstraveller.com and include your full postal address and daytime telephone number. We reserve the right to edit letters.



SINGAPORE AIRLINES RESPONDS:

The seats Mr Loke refers to in our B777-200s are configured to ensure sufficient space for the movement of passengers, crew and meal carts, due to the narrowing of the fuselage at the rear of the aircraft. While some customers prefer them, as there are two seats instead of the usual three on each side of the fuselage, we regret that Mr Loke did not find his seat comfortable. We apologise that he was not offered an alternative seat after he had made his discomfort known, and will be following up directly with Mr Loke to further address his concerns.

BAD BEHAVIOUR

Shortly before Christmas, I flew with Aeromexico from Mexico City to Santiago, Chile, in business class. No sooner were the doors closed, a gentleman, his daughter and her son were upgraded to the seats near mine. Unfortunately, the child, who was about five or six years old, was very badly behaved, running around the cabin shouting at his grandfather.

In addition, no menus were handed out so I had no idea what I was being offered. There was no gin for a gin and tonic, wine was poured in the galley, there was surly service and a two-hour delay. At the price the airline charged, the flight was a disgrace, and my first letter was greeted with: "We will mention this in staff training."

Avoid Aeromexico. *Ron Brown, London*

AEROMEXICO RESPONDS:

Our sincere apologies to Mr Brown, who flew with us from Mexico City to Santiago, Chile. Regarding the additional passengers in our Premier cabin, we would like to highlight that, depending on a passenger's frequent flyer status, some are entitled to an upgrade if they are on our waiting list. These upgrades are given without any restrictions; however, there are some situations that are out of our control. We regret that Mr Brown's choice of beverage was not available on his recent flight. We will submit his comments to our monthly consumer relations corporate report, which is reviewed by our catering service department so that they can evaluate the beverages stocked.

DELAYED REACTION

I travelled with my family on Emirates in business class from Durban to Frankfurt and encountered serious flaws in the product and service at the airports and in-flight. Among these, the outbound flight was delayed for five hours with practically no feedback from the Emirates ground staff, resulting in passengers not being able to make alternative arrangements. The staff in Dubai fobbed off passengers that missed flights on account of the delayed departure, while on the flight, there were defective seats with malfunctioning in-flight entertainment systems.

I lodged a complaint with Emirates in July, however, the airline has not responded. If it is Emirates' policy that it will receive a complaint, but does not respond, it should advise its passengers accordingly, in which event they can communicate their experiences via other fora and also bear such attitudes in mind when deciding whether or not to fly with the airline.

Hoosen Gani, Durban

EMIRATES RESPONDS:

At Emirates, we take great pride in providing our passengers with the very best customer service possible and we were sorry to hear about Mr Gani's complaint. The enquiry was handled by our Johannesburg office, which has now provided him with a copy of its original response.



SOAKED THROUGH

Our experience with Turkish Airlines was far from satisfactory on a recent flight from Istanbul to Hong Kong. It was pouring with rain and, when transferring to the aircraft, there was no offer of an umbrella to help us reach the plane and no protective canopy over the staircase. When we finally reached the top of the aircraft steps, we had to wait as the rain cascaded from the body of the plane on to us, because a bottleneck had formed inside the aircraft. By the time we reached our seats we were completely soaked. No one offered us a towel or an apology. We then had to endure an 11-hour flight in considerable discomfort.

Our online complaint went unanswered. Our subsequent postal complaint was addressed, expressing great sorrow for our experience about the lack of an airbridge. However, our concerns about the lack of provision for wet weather and the poor training of the in-flight crew were both ignored, and there has been no indication that any steps have been taken to address the inadequate staff training.

Moyreen Tilbrook, Hong Kong

TURKISH AIRLINES RESPONDS:

First of all, we apologise for Ms Tilbrook's unpleasant experience with us on her flight from London to Hong Kong. We have shared her concern about the provision of additional facilities for weather-related conditions and our cabin crew service on board with our customer service department. We will further review and follow up on this feedback so that similar cases will not happen again. Turkish Airlines strives to offer a high quality of service and we will take this case seriously in our review.

Hatching The Next Generation

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HATCH Collection, www.lojel.com

Crafted For The Curious.

#ForTheCurious

Posts from our online forum businessstraveller.com/forum**POST DOING SOMETHING BANNED ON A FLIGHT – A CONFESSION***LuganoPirate***DATE***Feb 10, 10:48*

I'll not say when this happened or on which airline in case I get arrested or banned from flying, but... I was in first class in a suite with the doors closed. Late at night and unusually for me, I was sipping an excellent port and an equally delicious Sauternes. Curled up and comfortable in my seat, suite door closed, during an exceptionally smooth flight, I rummaged in my bag for a charging cable, saw my small cigar tin and, without thinking, took it out with my lighter. I moaned to myself that there was only one left and proceeded to light it. I still can't believe this but I took a sip of port and another puff when we hit a small bit of turbulence, and, in my reverie I suddenly realised where I was. Shocked I had committed such a cardinal sin I put it back in the tin and waited for a reprimand – but none came. I was just so relaxed with the feeling of being at home that I'd forgotten where I was. Has anyone else done something they shouldn't have done on an aircraft and got away with it (or been caught)?

GivingupBA
Feb 10, 11:57

A very good confession. But I wonder if the staff knew you'd lit up but decided to let it pass... Sadly I have no confession – I'd be terrified of teams of air marshals galloping round the corner and pinning me to the floor in handcuffs.

stevescoots
Feb 10, 13:37

I have had a sneaky puff on an e-cigarette under my blanket before, just once. I don't use smelly ones or those that put out more vapour than Drax power station so it was easy to not be seen.

MrMichael
Feb 10, 14:04

I too have used my electronic ciggy, it looks like a phone and by exhaling slowly I have never been rumbled. I use my butterscotch flavour on the flight and usually have a bag of Werther's Originals on my lap. I will continue to do so too...

POST CLUB EUROPE (LONDON CITY)*MartynSinclair***DATE***Feb 12, 20:48*

While London City airport (LCY) is fast becoming my least favourite departure point from the UK, I have to praise BA for its Club Europe product. Out of LCY, you are not only given a hot meal, but a choice of hot meals, served to your seat. At Heathrow, a salad or sandwich is considered suitable fodder. This was to the same destination (Frankfurt) but bear in mind the flight time to/from LCY is shorter

than to/from LHR. LCY is operated by Cityflyer but it still has a British Airways flight number and product. Why is there such a difference in standards?

sparkflyer
Feb 13, 21:21

I flew from LCY to Madrid a few months ago and the food was great, with quite a few courses at breakfast. Maybe as there is no lounge at LCY, the meals are given a higher budget. The seat was decent as well – I love the E190s.

StephenLondon
Feb 14, 13:06

Perhaps there is a difference because the seating on the Cityflyer is not the same as British Airways mainline? I like the product most of the time as the cabin tends to be small, and the crew are proactive, kind and helpful 99 per cent of the time.

GoonerLondon
Feb 14, 13:20

LCY Club Europe meals are not always hot – for a while the main dishes were salads. There is also the risk of having someone next to you. Only LHR keeps the adjacent seat free on the Embraer's 2-2 seating. As noted, there is also no lounge, so catering is the only way of differentiating between them.

POST
seasoned
traveller
DATE*Jan 24, 10:46***WEEKEND IN TOKYO – SUGGESTIONS?**

I have an upcoming business trip to Seoul and Tokyo with a weekend day in each place. Having never spent time in either place and, as usual, travelling alone, are there any sightseeing opportunities that forum members can recommend? Any tips on both places would be very much appreciated.

FDOS_UK
Jan 24, 18:16

Regarding the Tokyo part, Kamakura is a nice day out – my wife and I booked a trip there with viator.com. Some of the Tokyo activities they organise are also worth looking at, Akihabara (Electric Town) is cool and there are some lovely parks, too.

Infrequent
Jan 24, 23:38

If you're into robots and tech, the Miraikan National Museum of Emerging Science and Innovation has a really good robotics section featuring Asimo (the robot developed by Honda). I'd also recommend a stroll around Shinjuku Gyoen National Garden.

Bob19
Jan 27, 08:35

It may be cold in Seoul this time of year but you should have clear skies, so I would recommend climbing Mount Namsan and going up the N Tower. The Gyeongbokgung Palace is worth a visit. The changing of the Royal Guard takes place a few times a day.

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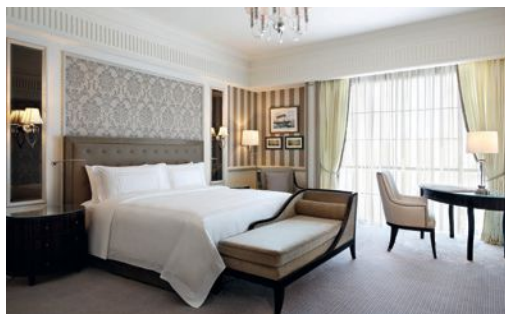
St Regis Dubai

BACKGROUND The St Regis Dubai opened in November 2015, the first of three Starwood (now Marriott International) hotels in the Al Habtoor complex – it has since been joined by the W and the Westin, and the JW Marriott Marquis is nearby – a big draw for very large groups and conferences.

WHAT'S IT LIKE? The extremely grand entrance to the hotel involves driving in through gates, past a security gatehouse and landscaped gardens towards the Beaux Arts-style exterior – a nod to the original New York St Regis. It's impossible to spend any time here without the word "opulent" popping into mind. Whether you think it's over the top or not probably depends on how many hotels you've stayed at in Dubai. It's certainly not understated.

WHERE IS IT? On Sheikh Zayed Road. As well as hotels, Al Habtoor City is home to three residential

It's impossible to spend any time here without the word 'opulent' popping into mind. It's certainly not understated



towers and a Las Vegas-style theatre on the side of the newly created Dubai Water Canal. It's about a 20-minute drive to Dubai International airport and a 40-minute drive to Al Maktoum International, traffic permitting.

ROOMS The 182 rooms and 52 suites are traditionally furnished in grand style, with chandeliers, marble bathrooms and artworks. They are all very large – entry-level Deluxe rooms are an astonishing 55 sqm, with suites starting at 84 sqm. Since the other two hotels within Al Habtoor City are also of a high standard, I suppose this means that the St Regis has to really distinguish itself, which it does – all rooms offer the hotel brand's signature St Regis

butler service. I asked to get my suit and shirt pressed on arrival and it was done swiftly.

All rooms and suites have St Regis beds, which are very comfortable, and the bathrooms have Remède toiletries. All wifi is complimentary and high speed, and the minibar has full- and half-size bottles of premium brands (there's also free tea and coffee). Signature suites include the three-bedroom Sir Winston Churchill suite, which has its own private pool, and a Bentley suite, the brand's third worldwide.

RESTAURANTS AND BARS There are seven food and drink venues, although since you can also use those in the other hotels, this rises to more than 20. Here, options include the St Regis Bar, which is a classic New York bar and a cigar lounge (with a terrace to smoke them). It has a good cocktail menu as well as wines, spirits and cognac.

On level one is the J&G Steakhouse, serving "a sophisticated collection of classics as reimagined by Michelin-starred chef Jean-Georges Vongerichten", and the Brasserie Quartier – a French

brasserie and patisserie. The lobby lounge – the Sidra, meaning "heavenly tree" in Arabic – offers the St Regis afternoon tea experience, while the Champagne lounge on the first floor serves a range of snacks as well as fizz that can be dramatically opened using a sabre.

On the second floor, 1930s-style Parisian inspired Café Fleuri can be found, featuring wooden flooring, marble table tops, a bar counter with a mirror wall, photography and prints of Parisian café culture. It also provides access to open-air courtyard bistro Le Patio, which is similarly styled.

MEETING FACILITIES There are six meeting rooms including the opulent 800 sqm Astor ballroom. The outdoor Roof Gardens is a pleasant venue beside the hotel's two swimming pools.

LEISURE FACILITIES In addition to the pools, there's a gym, and the Iridium spa, which features six treatment rooms, two hammams and separate men's and women's areas with steam rooms and saunas.

Tom Otley

VERDICT A sumptuous luxury hotel, but it's the staff that make the difference – able to help with every request and seemingly happy to do so.

PRICE Internet rates for a flexible midweek stay in April started from £340 for a Deluxe room.

CONTACT Al Habtoor City, Sheikh Zayed Road; tel +971 4435 5555; stregisdubai.com



Westin Hamburg

BACKGROUND The Westin is housed in Hamburg's new Elbphilharmonie concert venue, which opened in January (see "Reaching a crescendo", February issue). Sat atop a former spice warehouse, the €860 million conversion is a spectacle of rippling convex glass panes designed to evoke a ship's sails above a red-brick hull below. Designed by Herzog and de Meuron, the building contains apartments, two state-of-the-art halls and the 244-room Westin.

WHAT'S IT LIKE? An LED wall of swirling, monochrome graphics signals the hotel's street entrance, which is adjacent to that of the Elbphilharmonie. This leads to one of the building's standout features – Europe's longest curved escalator, an 82-metre tube of gleaming walls and white light that carries visitors through the structure's brick base to a semi-covered plaza. Here, a second entrance to the hotel leads into the lobby.

Inspired by Hamburg's maritime tradition, the lobby is a whitewashed space with concave columns and minimalist sculptures resembling the funnels of an ocean liner. Behind reception, an LED screen shows a black and white photograph of an old freighter billowing black smoke. In the evenings, the lights are dimmed and blue spotlights illuminate the funnels in such a way that it looks like night on a ship's deck.

WHERE IS IT? The hotel faces on to the docklands district of Hafencity, a short drive from the city centre.

ROOMS The 244 rooms, which include 39 suites, are spread over 19 floors, all within the glass portion of the building. Categories include the 35 sqm Classic, the 30 sqm Deluxe City Panorama and the 30–35 sqm Premium City Panorama, plus five types of suite. Classic rooms have interior views, while the others look out on to the city and waterfront. I stayed in a 16th-floor Deluxe City Panorama, the windows of which were floor-to-ceiling, convex, and frosted around the edges to restrict sunlight. The décor was

chic and simple, with beech furnishings and clean, cream and white accents. It had free wifi, a 42-inch Samsung TV, a good-sized desk, tea and coffee and a complimentary bottle of water, although this required an opener – I couldn't see one provided. The bathroom had a walk-in rainshower and a large window that opened out on to the bedroom, with a blind should you want more privacy. Suite guests and Starwood Preferred Guest platinum members can use the 19th-floor Westin Club lounge, which serves breakfast, snacks and drinks, and seats 40 people.

RESTAURANTS AND BARS The main restaurant, the Saffron, serves a German-inspired breakfast – I had a fresh omelette with a selection of rye breads and deli meats. The dinner menu is inspired by Hamburg's spice trade, with dishes such as cinnamon and Bordeaux-simmered shoulder of lamb, saffron risotto and salmon poached in curry oil. I had lunch in the Bridge Bar, an elegant space that wraps around the upper corner of the lobby, offering far-reaching views across the Elbe. Sharing dishes are popular – I enjoyed the Fauna Marin selection, which included local *Labskaus* (pickled herring, mashed potatoes and corned beef), salmon with spinach salad and mustard dressing, and codfish meatballs.

MEETING FACILITIES Eight rooms in the brick warehouse below range in size from 23 sqm to 469 sqm, holding up to 180 people. They can be reached by lift or via a spiral staircase from the lobby.

LEISURE FACILITIES The 1,300 sqm Elb spa has a gym, sauna, steam room and six treatment suites, plus a 20-metre pool. *Marisa Cannon*

In the evenings, the lights are dimmed and blue spotlights illuminate the funnels in such a way that it looks like night on a ship's deck


VERDICT The appeal of the Elbphilharmonie is bound to make this one of Hamburg's most popular business hotels – its sophisticated décor and first-rate facilities will ensure it stays that way.

PRICE Internet rates for a flexible midweek stay in April started from €265 for a Deluxe City Panorama room.

CONTACT Platz der Deutschen Einheit 2; tel +49 40 800 0100; westinhamburg.com

CUTTING EDGE





From robot concierges to emoji room service, technology is transforming the guest experience. **Jenny Southan** delves into the world's most high-tech hotels

Not so long ago, I stayed in a hotel that had automatic fragrance dispensers in the rooms – on entering, I was greeted by a cloud of perfume so strong it nearly knocked me out. The window didn't open so I had no choice but to crank up the air con, unplug the offending pump and leave it in the corridor. That night, the bedside tablet refused to turn off, its screen keeping me awake with its ghostly glow.

Unfortunately, many hotels get tech wrong. I am reasonably competent at turning on TVs, but there have been many times when I have had to request maintenance to come and help me connect it to my laptop via a media hub, or sync it to the DVD player. I've struggled to find out what number to dial to reach reception, how to log on to the wifi or to turn out all the lights. These seemingly simple tasks can become incredibly frustrating and fire up a terrible rage against everything electronic.

By this summer, all 4,748 rooms and suites at the Wynn Las Vegas will have an Amazon Echo speaker, allowing you not only to play music but to control the air con, lights, curtains and TV with voice commands interpreted by Alexa, Amazon's built-in personal assistant. It sounds great, but I fear I would be the person who ended up screaming at it to close the curtains because it didn't understand my accent.

Hilton has designed an app for your phone that can be used to check in and open your room door, while the Four Seasons Toronto has in-room iPads allowing you to order a burger and fries at midnight without having to speak to anyone. Lucy is the Virgin hotel in Chicago app – tap the screen to request extra pillows, laundry pick-ups, meals or turndown service. At the Zetta in San Francisco, a new wellness programme utilises brain-sensing Muse headbands for guided meditation.

Here is our pick of ten hotels and brands that are leading the way when it comes to technology. They are not scientifically ranked and we don't guarantee that you won't lose your cool when trying to engage with them, but the digitisation of real-world environments isn't going away so you may as well embrace it. According to the Institute for Global Futures, by 2060 we will all have access to DNA mobile payments, 3D printers and beds that will pre-programme our dreams... ►

1. HILTON MCLEAN TYSONS CORNER, VIRGINIA

Hilton's innovation lab has earned a place in the limelight for its cute-looking robot concierge, Connie. Powered by artificial intelligence from IBM Watson, she can provide restaurant tips in multiple languages and answer questions about hotel amenities. But the McLean has much more going on than that.

Rooms on the eighth and ninth floors have TVs you can log into and watch Netflix, YouTube and HuluPlus. Instead of having to call the front desk for toothpaste, you can send a text with Kipsu. Outside the Pantry is "RealSense by Intel", an eight-screen installation that responds to human gestures. By the Tech Lounge you'll find Amazon Lockers for deliveries.

Ava by Irobot is the hotel's mobile telepresence droid, which will act as your eyes and ears if you can't attend an on-site conference. According to Hilton: "When a person dials into the robot remotely, his or her face becomes the face of the robot and the person can manipulate its movements to interact with guests in real time." It can even mingle at cocktail parties.

Outside the hotel are five electric car-charging points, which are free for guests. At selected hotels, including the McLean, the HHonors app acts as a digital key allowing you to choose your room in advance via a floor plan, check in remotely and unlock your room within five feet of it.

Jonathan Wilson, Hilton's vice-president of product innovation and brand services, says: "[At the Hilton McLean Tysons Corner] we are conducting around 30 tests in partnership with more than 20 of the world's most inventive companies, including Google and Amazon. These tests allow us to capture feedback from guests and hotel management in real time, and are helping us to make travel more connected, personalised and fun. In the coming year, we are focused on harnessing the power of speech recognition and cognitive learning to deliver even better guest experiences." hilton.com

2. ALOFT

Described as Starwood's (now Marriott International's) "tech forward incubator brand", Aloft has introduced robotic butlers in its Cupertino and Silicon Valley hotels. The "Botlrs" work around the clock to deliver guests towels, newspapers, toiletries and bottles of water. They can use lifts without help, and when they arrive outside your room they will call your phone. They only accept tweets as tips and can pose for selfies.

At Aloft Santa Clara and Boston Seaport, meanwhile, the world's first voice-activated hotel rooms have been unveiled. By speaking into an iPad, tapping into the brain of Apple's Siri, travellers can turn lights on and off with a simple "Good morning" or "Good night", play music and fine-tune the air conditioning. At most Aloft hotels (as well as W and Element), Starwood Preferred Guest members can use the SPG Keyless app to open their bedroom doors with their phone.

Emoji room service arrived last year at select hotels – text the water droplet, pill and banana emojis to receive two bottles of Vitamin Water, some Advil and two bananas (US\$10). Brian McGuinness, senior vice-president of Starwood's specialty select brands, says: "We look to consumer behaviour and think about how to integrate these trends into the Aloft experience. The rise of emoji was a logical next step." aloft.com



3. M BETA AT CHARLOTTE MARRIOTT CITY CENTRE

Described as a "travel innovation lab in live beta", this 1980s hotel was transformed by Marriott last autumn, and now exists as an interactive showroom for testing innovations that could then be rolled out across other properties.

In the gym, guests can take part in hundreds of virtual fitness classes presented on large wall-mounted screens, while in the lobby is a booth that measures your mood. Stay Well rooms have purified air systems and digitised lighting to help ease jet lag. Guests can give feedback by pushing Beta Buttons dotted around the property, with real-time approval rankings displayed publicly on digital boards.

At select hotels, not only can you check in and open your door with Marriott's app but use Mobile Requests to order a toothbrush, champagne or flowers. marriott.com

4. 1 HOTELS

1 Hotels is an innovative new brand that combines state-of-the-art technology with sustainability (rooms have bins for unwanted clothes, hemp-blend mattresses and refillable bottles of shower gel), as well as nature-inspired biophilic interiors (living walls, air plants, terrariums and raw timber furniture). Nespresso machines use recyclable pods and compostable cups, while handheld Nexus devices replace the need for guest books, newspapers (Press Reader is installed), room service menus and phones. The Vers 2Q Bluetooth stereos are made of wood from sustainably managed forests – for every tree cut down, they plant 100 more. Even the reusable electronic key fobs are made of wood.

"Technology is key to implementing sustainability, an integral component of the 1 Hotels mission," says Barry Sternlicht, founder of 1 Hotels and chief executive of Starwood



3



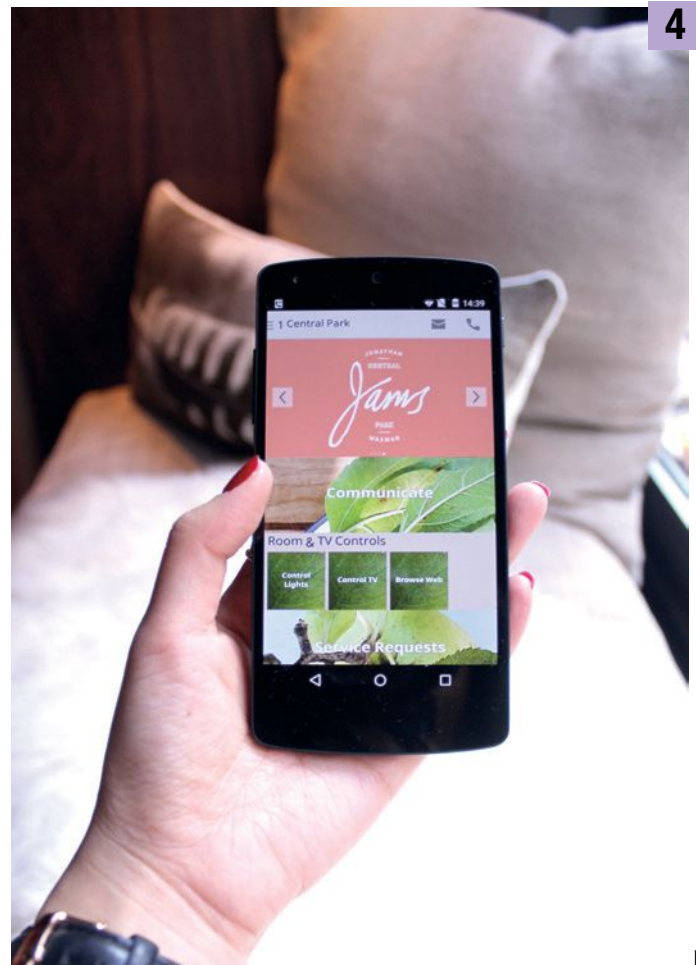
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1

Capital Group. “1 Hotels is part of a greater platform for change in moving hospitality forward and ultimately, making the world a better place. Having the latest in technological and digital innovation goes hand-in-hand in making this possible; from the highest-grade triple water purification systems found in all our hotel rooms – one in Miami and two in New York. Upcoming openings will be in Sanya, China (2018), Cabo and Sunnyvale in California (2019). 1hotels.com

Not only is there free electric car charging, but access to a Tesla for free journeys within a 15-block radius. Gyms have self-powered Peloton Cycles and there are bikes (and recyclable helmets) to borrow instead of taking a taxi. These are available across all three hotels – one in Miami and two in New York. Upcoming openings will be in Sanya, China (2018), Cabo and Sunnyvale in California (2019). 1hotels.com



4



5. YOTEL

Capsule chain Yotel certainly has hotels that look sci-fi, with tiny rooms illuminated in purple and streamlined white surfaces that resemble a lunar module. But its tech is pretty space-age, too. In its flagship New York property, a huge robotic arm lifts suitcases into storage units, while guests use glowing airport-style kiosks to check in.

Signature features include space-saving adjustable SmartBeds that fold 90 degrees to create a couch, Smart TVs and USB/UK/EU/US plug sockets. The 80-room next-generation YotelAir hotel at Paris Charles de Gaulle airport has a co-working space with tables fitted with USB charging points and the ability to print wirelessly for free wherever you are.

The first city-centre Yotel to open in Europe will be the Yotel in Clerkenwell in 2018. The brand will arrive in Singapore, San Francisco and Boston this year, and Miami, Brooklyn and Dubai in 2018. yotel.com

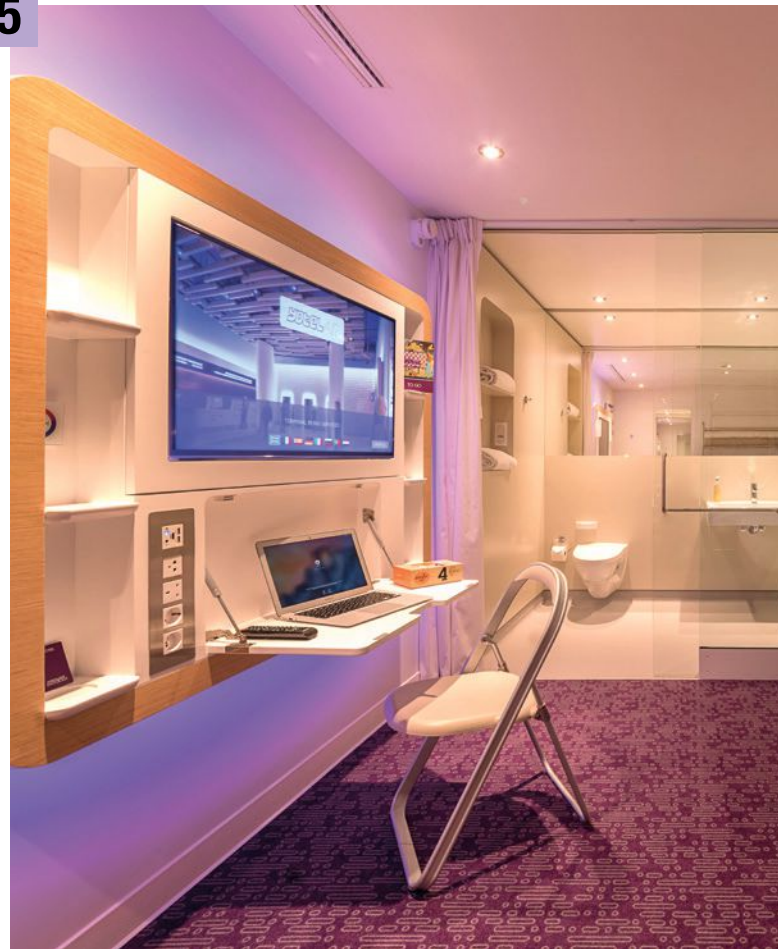
6. ECCLESTON SQUARE, LONDON

This boutique hotel in a 19th-century building in Belgravia is one of the most technologically advanced in the capital. Every one of its rooms has a 46-inch HD 3D Neo Plasma Panasonic TV, a free 3D DVD library and an iPad 2 that functions as a virtual concierge. Hastens beds from Sweden can be adjusted electronically or set to massage mode.

Dividing the bedroom from the bathroom is a wall of Smart Glass – at the touch of a button, it can transform from transparent to opaque. An anti-mist mirror has an integrated LED TV so you can watch the news while brushing your teeth.

Olivia Byrne, one of the hotel's owners, says: "When travelling, guests want a continuation of the technology, comfort and convenience they enjoy at home. So while some outlandish gimmicks are grabbing headlines, it's those tech services and amenities that offer an experience upgrade, but still a continuation and integration of their own personal devices,

5



like AirPlay Mirroring, plus complementary communication technology, that really adds value to a guestroom."

Particularly useful for overseas guests, Handy smartphones with free calls and data can be borrowed. When visiting the hotel's website, a pop-up instant messaging window allows you to put questions to a real-life guest services consultant. eccletonsquarehotel.com

7. PENINSULA CHICAGO

This luxurious outpost of the Hong Kong-based brand has implemented a number of innovations developed by the company's dedicated R&D team. This means all tech found in Peninsula properties is custom-made and rigorously tested.

Along with its Beijing property, the Peninsula Chicago has the most up-to-date gadgetry, including bespoke digital tablets (bedside, desk and wall-mounted) for controlling all in-room functions (lighting, temperature, privacy, valet call and curtains), as well as displaying city guides and restaurant menus, in multiple languages.

Workdesks have internet radio, weather panels and iPod docks, while bathrooms feature LED touchscreen panels for TV and radio. There are also "ambient spa" settings for a "light and sound experience". Flatscreen Blu-ray LED TVs have free HD



movies, memory card readers and virtual surround-sound. The hotel's Rolls-Royce and Mini fleets are equipped with free wifi. chicago.peninsula.com

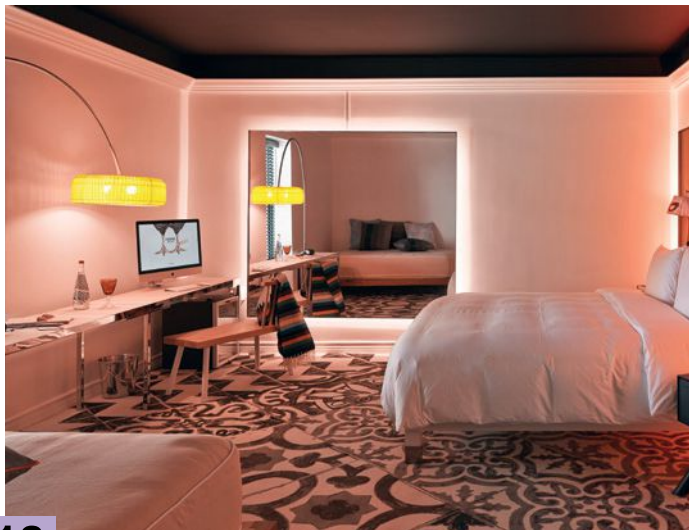
8. THE MIRA HONG KONG

In 2013, whistleblowing CIA contractor Edward Snowden holed up at the Mira before going on the run. Not only is the hotel one of Hong Kong's glitziest and most exclusive, but one of the most technologically advanced as well. All guests are loaned pocket wifi hotspots to use when out and about so they can use their

own phones without racking up data costs.

Kenneth Sorensen, head of hotels and serviced apartments for the Mira Group, says: "Nowadays, every traveller carries at least one private device that has all their contacts and preferred apps. Guests staying in our hotels no longer need to go through the learning curve of getting familiar with a third-party smartphone provided by the hotel, which was the case until now."

The Mira's 492 rooms all have Bose sound docks, 40-inch LCD TVs, laptop safes with built-in chargers, and a tablet with Press Reader and a call-the-concierge function. themirahotel.com



10



9. NH COLLECTION MADRID EUROBUILDING

The NH Collection Eurobuilding underwent a three-month renovation in 2014, turning the 412-room property into another test-bed for hospitality. Upon entering, guests will gaze up at Europe's largest (300 sqm) vaulted, multimedia LED screen. Four Living Lab rooms are fitted with wireless charging points and tablets that let you video-call receptionists. For meetings, there is the Microsoft Lync Online 3D holographic telepresence system.

10. MAMA SHELTER LOS ANGELES

Part of Accorhotels, funky French brand Mama Shelter has installed Apple iMac computers in all of its 600-plus hotel rooms. There are six hotels in the group – the one in LA is a good example of how high-tech they are. The sleek 27-inch desktop Macs are installed with information about hotel amenities and free movies – including porn. You can also access TV, radio and Airplay. Reception will lend you a keyboard to type with. Take pictures with the webcam and (with your permission) they will be displayed on screens in the public areas. mamashelter.com ■

9





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NARROW MARGINS

A new generation of single-aisle aircraft is set to serve long-haul routes.

How will this affect passengers, asks **Alex McWhirter**

ISTOCK



Some 35 years ago, wide-body jets were ushering in a new era of comfortable long-haul flying. The Boeing 747, McDonnell Douglas DC-10 and Lockheed Tri-star provided flyers with space and comfort beyond their wildest dreams. Never again, it was thought, would passengers be condemned to sit in a narrow, claustrophobic tube for hours on end.

However, recent developments threaten to turn back the clock. Narrow-body aircraft such as the B737 MAX and A321LR are shaking off their short-haul origins and are poised to make a comeback on longer flights. Initially, they will operate between Europe and the US East Coast but eventually they could ply other lengthy routes, too.

While it is true that a number of narrow-body aircraft are already in service across the Atlantic (see page 28), these updated variants are more advanced. They are capable of flying with a full load of 180 or 200 passengers nonstop between cities in Europe and airports on the US eastern seaboard. So the economy class passenger located in those roomy B747 seats, configured nine-across with two aisles in the 1970s, will, in 2017, end up in a tighter, six-across, single-aisle charter configuration. ►

Why are airlines downgrading their product? It's simply a question of driving down the ticket price. Forget the comfort and service – these aircraft will mainly be operated by low-cost carriers (LCCs). Narrow-bodied jets such as the B737 MAX and A321LR are cheaper to buy and operate compared with today's sophisticated wide-bodies like the B787 Dreamliner or Airbus's new A350 (which would normally find favour with LCCs). They may possibly be more reliable, too, considering the many problems that Norwegian experienced in the early days of B787 service.

Their flying range varies between just over 3,000 nautical miles in the case of the B737 MAX, to 4,000 nautical miles for the A321LR. Their smaller size and passenger capacity also provides the operator with flexibility, enabling them to be rostered between secondary airports.

It means the LCCs face less risk in finding enough passengers to fill their flights. By operating between smaller airports, they pay lower fees and know that the big boys, with their 400- or 500-seat A380s and B777-300ERs, cannot challenge them directly.

Norwegian has ordered dozens of B737 MAX and A321LR aircraft. It intends to operate the former on a new route between Edinburgh and New York. The launch date is expected late this spring or early summer, with the carrier's B737s due to fly from Newburgh – a 60-mile drive from Manhattan – and Providence, Rhode Island, which is about the same distance from Boston. Norwegian also



EXISTING SERVICES

A number of narrow-bodied aircraft already ply the Atlantic. American Airlines and United, for example, operate a number of B757 services from regional points to the US East Coast, while Icelandair and Wow Air operate various narrow-bodies between Europe and the East Coast but with a plane change in Reykjavik.

The difference is that these are older variants that, in the case of the B757s – a short-distance aircraft specifically adapted for transatlantic service – are somewhat long in the tooth. Range can be an issue. United's B757s, when faced with strong headwinds flying west, have been known to divert to Gander in Canada for refuelling. Canada's Westjet operates B737 services between Halifax in Nova Scotia and Glasgow, but it's a shorter distance.

*Why are airlines
downgrading
their product?
It's simply a
question of
driving down
ticket price*

plans to operate these B737s out of Cork, and there will be many points elsewhere in both Europe and Scandinavia. When it takes delivery of 30 A321LRs in a couple of years' time, there will be further developments.

Aer Lingus is expected to launch a low-cost subsidiary in the coming years. The IAG carrier is likely to finalise a deal with Airbus to lease a number of A321LR NEO (new engine option) aircraft. In an interview given by IAG boss Willie Walsh to the *Irish Independent*, he explained that the A321LR could be used both to expand frequency out of Dublin on busy routes such as New York, as well as operating to other US points. IAG could also use the A321LR out of regional Irish airports such as Cork or Shannon.

From top:
B737 MAX tailfins; B737 MAX assembly;
Azores Airlines A321 NEO



These smaller aircraft will allow niche carriers to enter the transatlantic market. Azores Airlines is a good example of this. Part of Portugal's SATA Group, it has an advantageous base between Southern Europe and North America. In 2019 it will modernise its transatlantic fleet when it will lease four A321LRs.

The Azores are located 900 nautical miles west of Portugal, so the A321LR is ideally suited to the carrier's transatlantic ambitions. Paulo Menezes, chief executive of SATA Group, says: "Our mission is to bring the Azores to the world and the world to the Azores, and we are happy to be investing in the A321LR to achieve this."

Will we see these narrow-bodied jets flying between the Gulf and Europe? Existing B737s and A320s already operate some services to the Balkans and Central Europe but because of range limitations are not typically seen going into Amsterdam, Frankfurt, Paris or London.

Still, it can only be a matter of time before they arrive in Northern Europe. One issue delaying their arrival here is the fact that Europe to the Gulf is not yet a major point-to-point market like North America. Most passengers are travelling beyond, rather than to or from, the Gulf.

Anyone travelling for business would be wise to opt for premium or the most spacious seating provided, assuming, of course, that a superior product is offered on board (that was unclear for these new aircraft at the time of writing). ■

Bottled genius



Which airlines served the finest wines on board last year?
Marisa Cannon reports from our Cellars in the Sky Awards



The marks have been totted up and tallied, and glasses raised to the victorious airlines. After tasting 245 bottles from 33 carriers, our expert panel of judges has crowned the winners of the 2016 *Business Traveller* Cellars in the Sky Awards, handing out trophies to the airlines that served the best in-flight wines last year.

Head judge Charles Metcalfe, co-chairman of the International Wine Challenge, gave out the awards at a reception on February 21 at Trinity House in London's Tower Hill – our thanks to Trinity House for providing the perfect venue. We also held tastings of the winning labels at the Business Travel Show at Kensington's Olympia on February 22-23. Joining Metcalfe on the judging panel this year were Masters of Wine Sarah Abbott, Tim Atkin and Peter McCombie.

CHOOSING THE WINNERS

Airlines could take part providing they served wine in business or first class on mid- or long-haul routes. Each could enter two reds, two whites, a sparkling and a fortified or dessert wine from both their business and first class cellars. They could compete in as

many categories as they liked, but to be eligible for the Best Cellar awards had to enter at least one red, white and sparkling wine.

Every bottle was blind-tasted over two days at Crowne Plaza London Kensington – our thanks to the staff and the critics for all their hard work. Wines were scored out of 100, with award-winning ones rated between 93 and 97, and anything under 75 deemed undrinkable. The judges did not know which wines were submitted by which airlines.

To calculate the Best First and Business Class Cellar awards, we took the average mark of an airline's red, white and sparkling wines. For the Best Overall Cellar, we took all scores into account.

WHAT THE JUDGES SAID

The judges agreed that champagne was one of the strongest categories this year. "Fizz is always easy to be impressed by, and we've had some world-class bottles," Metcalfe said. Atkin added: "They're all big brands rather than grower's champagnes, though, because there's that reassurance in the strength of the brand. If you start with a good glass of Grand Cru or Grand Siècle, it's easy to make a good impression early on, and

people will believe that this is a serious operation."

Abbott said: "In first class, there are examples of specialist wines that are quite rare. Business class is trickier because the budget is lower, but the quality of the wine is generally very good. It's then a question of the appropriateness and the style, but there are some brilliant wines here."

Comparing wine lists is one way of distinguishing quality and the effort behind each selection. "The value of going through a list is that you get closer to the customer experience," Abbott said. "I really liked lists that made a connection between the airline – as the ambassador for its country – and its wine and food. Although it's tougher for those airlines to compete across an international benchmark, I think it's a really laudable effort."

Overall, the judges thought that the white offering was stronger than red this year. "It's easier to get it right with whites because there are two potential pitfalls in the air for reds – one is tannin and the other is alcohol," Metcalfe explained. "With white, you've only got acidity to think about."

Heavy Bordeaux wines, which are very tannic, are often featured on wine lists because of the

'Fizz is always easy to be impressed by, and we've had some world-class bottles'





prestige attached to them. These aren't always the best to serve at altitude, however, as the lack of pressure and dry air makes it harder to sense aroma and the complexity of the flavour.

McCombie felt airlines could make bolder choices, choosing less traditional wines, the flavours of which are enhanced at altitude. "The wines that did best were the pinot noir and syrah in various forms, which will be delicious to drink in the air," he said. "Airlines don't have the opportunity to give passengers ten wines on a flight, so if they choose well, and non-traditionally, they could really impress. They're right that some customers will expect Bordeaux, but I think airlines need to be braver in their selection process."

HOW AIRLINES PICK WINE

Most carriers taste hundreds of wines when selecting their list but methods differ slightly. Icelandair, for example, launches an informal tender whereby suppliers pitch their ideas for menus. Working with a consultant, the airline chooses two to three suppliers to follow on to the tasting phase.

Iris Groeneweg, purchasing manager of onboard retail and service at Icelandair, says: "We usually have a mix of people participating in the tasting – wine specialists, frequent flyers, wine enthusiasts, sommeliers and airline staff. When it comes to choosing the final supplier, it comes down to cost, quality and service level."

Lorna Green, customer experience communications

manager at Qatar Airways, says the airline tries to provide a balance of wines on its list. "Age is not as important to us as the overall quality, taking into account that some wines do get better with age," she said.

"For us, it's more important that a wine is served at its best. We buy some wines in advance and lay them down so we can use them at a later date, when they have matured. We will purchase wines in the coming year from all major wine growing areas, both Old and New World, to provide the balance required."

■ *For your chance to taste some of the winning wines at our London Cellars in the Sky reader event on March 13, email events@panaceapublishing.com stating your name and company. See overleaf for the winners...*

'I think airlines need to be braver in their selection process'

AIRLINES THAT ENTERED

Aer Lingus, Aeroflot, Air Astana, Air Canada, Air France, Alitalia, American Airlines, ANA, Austrian Airlines, British Airways, Brussels Airlines, Cathay Pacific, Delta Air Lines, El Al, EVA Air, Finnair, Garuda Indonesia, Icelandair, Japan Airlines, Jetblue, Jetstar, KLM, Korean Air, LATAM, Malaysia Airlines, Philippine Airlines, Qantas, Qatar Airways, SAS, Singapore Airlines, South African Airways, Thai Airways and Virgin Atlantic. Our sincere thanks to all participants

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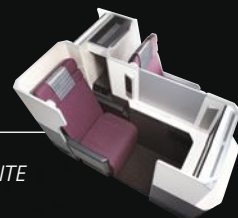
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FIRST CLASS

BEST FIRST CLASS RED

Gold Medal:

Japan Airlines

Kusuda Syrah 2013,
Martinborough, New Zealand

Judges said:

"Rich with bloody, meaty and spicy aromas. The palate is opulent, ripe and firm with delicate tannins"

Score: 96

Silver Medal:

British Airways

Escarpment Kupe Pinot
Noir 2012, Martinborough,
New Zealand

Score: 95

Bronze Medal:

Malaysia Airlines

Schubert Wairarapa Syrah
2013, Martinborough,
New Zealand

Score: 94.5

BEST FIRST CLASS WHITE

Gold Medal (joint):

American Airlines

Domaine René Lequin-Colin,
Clos Devant Chassagne-
Montrachet 2014, Burgundy,
France

Judges said:

"Opulently sweeping and very impressive. So sumptuous. The palate is ripe with a lovely acidity"

Malaysia Airlines

Château La Louvière Blanc
2013, Pessac-Léognan,
Bordeaux, France

Judges said:

"Gracefully aromatic. It is lively and complex and, while oaked, is very interesting"

Score: 94.5

Silver Medal:

Air France

E. Guigal Condrieu 2014,
Northern Rhône, France

Score: 94

Bronze Medal:

Qantas

Flametree SRS Wallcliffe
Chardonnay 2015, Margaret
River, Australia

Score: 93.5

BEST FIRST CLASS SPARKLING

Gold Medal (joint):

Cathay Pacific

Qatar Airways

Krug Grande Cuvée,
NV, Cotes des Blancs,
Champagne, France

Judges said:

"Very fine, toasty and savoury with some evolution. A lovely complex palate with lean, tangy length"

Score: 97

Silver Medal (joint):

Air France

Taittinger Comtes de
Champagne Blanc de Blancs
2005, France

American Airlines

Champagne Philipponnat
Clos des Goisses 2007, France

Score: 96

Bronze Medal (joint):

Malaysia Airlines

Champagne Joseph Perrier
Cuvée Josephine 2004, France

ANA

Champagne Louis Roederer
Rosé 2010, France

Score: 95

BEST FIRST CLASS FORTIFIED/DESSERT

Gold Medal:

Singapore Airlines

Graham's 20 Year Old Port,
Douro, Portugal

Judges said:

"Wonderfully intense and complex. Deliciously wood-aged, nutty and mature"

Score: 96

Silver Medal:

Qantas

Seppeltsfield Paramount
Rare Tokay, Rutherglen,
Australia

Score: 95

Bronze Medal:

British Airways

Mullineaux Olerasay
Number One, NV,
Swartland, South Africa

Score: 94.5



**BEST-PRESENTED
FIRST CLASS WINE LIST**
Cathay Pacific

BEST FIRST CLASS CELLAR

Gold Medal:

Malaysia Airlines

Silver Medal:

American Airlines

Bronze Medal (joint):

Qantas

Qatar Airways

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SOUTH AFRICAN AIRWAYS

A STAR ALLIANCE MEMBER 



BUSINESS CLASS

BEST BUSINESS CLASS RED

Gold Medal:

Brussels Airlines

Château d'Eyran 2012, Pessac-Léognan, Bordeaux, France

Judges said:

"Still has young, green aromatics while managing to be evolved and opulent. A good, rich oak palate"

Score: 95

Silver Medal:

Air France

Château la Sauvageonne Grand Vin 2012, AOP Terrasses du Larzac, Languedoc Roussillon, France

Score: 94

Bronze Medal (joint):

Aer Lingus

Saint Joseph "Les Challeys" 2014, Rhône Valley, France

Austrian Airlines

Neusiedlersee DAC Reserve, Zweigelt Luckenwald 2013, Burgenland, Austria

Score: 93

BEST BUSINESS CLASS WHITE

Gold Medal:

Finnair

Schloss Reinhartshausen Hattenheim Wisselbrunnen Riesling Kabinett 2014, Hattenheim, Rheingau, Germany

Judges said:

"Yummy. Honeyed and very delicious. Fruity and mature. Absolutely lovely"

Score: 95

Silver Medal:

Qantas

Voyager Estate Chardonnay 2013, Margaret River, Western Australia

Score: 94

Bronze Medal:

Qantas

Seppelt Jaluka Chardonnay 2015, Henty, Victoria, Australia

Score: 93.5

Highly commended:

Austrian Airlines

Gruber Rösschitz Weinviertel DAC Hundspoint 2015, Niedersterreich, Austria

Icelandair

St Clair Family Estate Vicar's Choice Sauvignon Blanc 2015, Marlborough, New Zealand

Malaysia Airlines

Wairau River Estate Sauvignon Blanc 2015, Wairau Valley, Marlborough, New Zealand

Score: 92

BEST BUSINESS CLASS SPARKLING

Gold Medal:

EVA Air

Champagne de Castelnaud Blanc de Blancs Millésime 2007, France

Judges said:

"Showing more age and complexity, it is rich, round, delicious, fresh and mature"

Score: 96

Silver Medal:

British Airways

Champagne de Castelnaud Brut Reserve, NV, France

Score: 95

Bronze Medal (joint):

Air Canada

Drappier Carte D'or, NV, Champagne, France

LATAM

Louis Roederer Champagne Brut Premier, NV, Reims, France

Score: 93

BEST BUSINESS CLASS FORTIFIED/SWEET

Gold Medal:

Qatar Airways

Cruz Gran Cruz Colheita Port 1992, Douro, Portugal

Judges said:

"Quite punchy and bold. It has a good length with a direct palate that has some cream and nuttiness to it"

Score: 95

Silver Medal:

Delta Air Lines

Calem 10 Year Old Tawny Port, Porto, Portugal

Score: 94

Bronze Medal:

Austrian Airlines

Kracher Beerenauselese Cuvée 2013, Neusiedlersee, Burgenland, Austria

Score: 93.5

Highly commended:

Air France

Graham's 10 Year Old Tawny, Douro, Portugal

Score: 93



BEST BUSINESS CLASS CELLAR

Gold Medal: EVA Air

Silver Medal: British Airways

Bronze Medal: Cathay Pacific

BEST-PRESENTED BUSINESS CLASS WINE LIST

Qatar Airways

BEST AIRLINE ALLIANCE

Oneworld

BEST OVERALL CELLAR

Gold Medal: British Airways

Silver Medal: Qantas

Bronze Medal: Qatar Airways



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Malaysia Airlines has been working hard to transform itself in the face of adversity. **Marisa Cannon** reports from our recent editor's lunch



A fresh start



These days, traditional airlines have their work cut out. If they're not competing with the low fares of budget rivals, then it's a struggle against the growing networks of the Gulf super-connectors, and countless new entrants in an already crowded market.

As if things weren't hard enough, one carrier that has experienced extraordinary challenges recently is Malaysia Airlines, faced with two high-profile tragedies in 2014, which led to a state buyout and management overhaul. A period of restructuring followed, with recovery plans now resting on an aggressive marketing strategy that aims to pull it out of the red.

What is the future of Malaysia's flag carrier in today's competitive climate? To find out, *Business Traveller* held a readers' event at London's Royal Automobile Club, sponsored by the airline. Chief



Below left: MAB's chief commercial officer Arved von zur Muehlen (left) with *Business Traveller's* Tom Otley
Above: Malaysia Airlines' A380 business class

commercial officer Arved von zur Muehlen began by addressing the elephant in the room, saying bookings effectively flatlined after the disasters. Despite this, he said loyalty remained strong domestically, which helped the company to recover morale quickly.

In 2015, the carrier changed its name from Malaysian Airline System Berhad (MAS) to Malaysia Airlines Berhad (MAB) as part of its restructure. It axed several international routes and reviewed its fleet to ensure efficiency on the routes it kept.

"Malaysia Airlines is the national icon of the country," von zur Muehlen said. "There is a lot of positivity around the brand. Before 2013, we were a five-star airline on Skytrax... then everything fell apart. Now that MAB is one year old, we are looking at a fresh start."

A quick recovery, however, has been hampered by the growth of regional competitor Malindo Air and budget carrier Air Asia, which saw a 40 per cent increase in revenue between 2011 and 2015. Pressure on the Malaysian ringgit as a result of depressed oil prices has also done little to spur a comeback.

Nonetheless, von zur Muehlen says that, today, Malaysia Airlines offers the lowest cost-per-mile fares of any airline on the market. To do this, it had to cut Amsterdam and Frankfurt from its network, leaving London-Kuala Lumpur as its sole European service. Served by an A380, it plans to introduce the A350 on the route by the end of 2017.

Adrian Keating, regional manager for the UK, Europe and North America, said the carrier's marketing efforts had begun to bear fruit, with MAB claiming back some 15 per cent of the market from BA on the London-Kuala Lumpur route.

One reader asked how important Oneworld was to the airline. Von zur Muehlen said: "Oneworld is important to us because it gives us a lot of benefits in terms of earning miles. In terms of connecting with the West, we have a strategic codeshare agreement with Emirates – we're really just operating this at a low level to look at the traffic flow into Europe, but we will be meeting with [Emirates president] Tim Clark soon to see if we can build on this."

Premium economy-style products were a hot topic, with one guest citing the merits of American Airlines and Delta models, whereby gold and silver

members can book extra-legroom economy seats for free. Plans for a similar model are in hand, says von zur Muehlen. "We will offer premium economy as an option along with ancillaries such as more legroom and better food. It won't be in a different class, because that would mean bringing about another tax. We are treating the product as ancillary so we can get around this."

Keating asked readers what other factors would convince them to choose MAB. The resounding answer was low prices, with one guest saying: "I'm always happy to fly Malaysia Airlines, but I've always found many other airlines that offer more competitive fares."

Keating said that the objective was to get back into the market with great value prices, highlighting the airline's reputation for good service. "We need to go back out there with the message that Malaysia is a great airline – it always has been. Although we've had a rocky couple of years, we want to give you whatever you need, with some great fares. We want to engage as much as we can with you to get momentum up and going again."

■ To attend an editor's lunch, email Emma Gordon, egordon@panaceamedia.com, with your name, job title, company and topics of interest.

Marisa Cannon rounds up airline and hotel scheme news and promotions

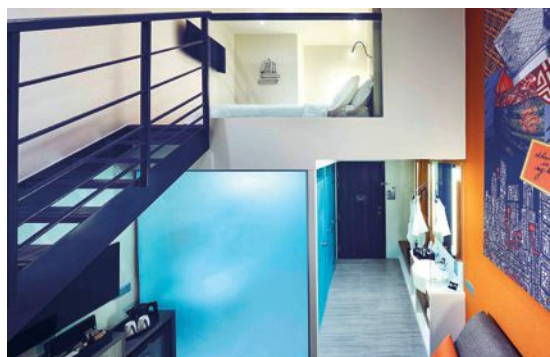


Hilton revamps loyalty programme

Hilton has made changes to its loyalty programme, which include a rebrand from HHonors to Honors, as well as the introduction of a “Shop with Points at Amazon” service. From April, members will also be able to combine points and money for stays (such as at the Hilton Sukhumvit Bangkok, pictured). The changes allow family and friends to combine their points, while top-tier members are able to extend Diamond status on a one-time, one-year extension. hiltonhonors3.hilton.com

Qatar Airways partners with Accorhotels

Qatar Airways and Accorhotels have teamed up to offer benefits to members across both groups' loyalty programmes. Qatar Airways Privilege Club members can now convert Qmiles into Le Club Accorhotels points for stays at 3,400 hotels and resorts across the group's network (including the Mercure Singapore Bugis, pictured). Le Club Accorhotels members will have the same benefit, converting their points for use on flights. The conversion rate for Privilege Club members is 4,500 Qmiles for 1,000 Le Club Accorhotels points, while Le Club members can exchange 2,000 points for 1,000 Qmiles. qatarairways.com, accorhotels.com



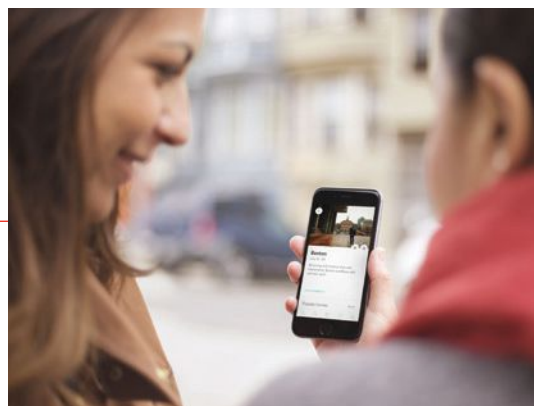
Qantas launches new loyalty scheme for SMEs

Qantas has launched a new Business Rewards programme aimed at small and medium-sized enterprises. The programme gives companies the chance to earn points when their employees fly on Qantas-operated flights or American Airlines and Emirates flights carrying a QF flight code. They can also earn points through purchases with over 40 retail partners in financial services, stationery, fuel and parking, among others. The programme is divided into three “levels”, with each offering improved benefits for a company including extra Q points and discounted airfares. qantas.com



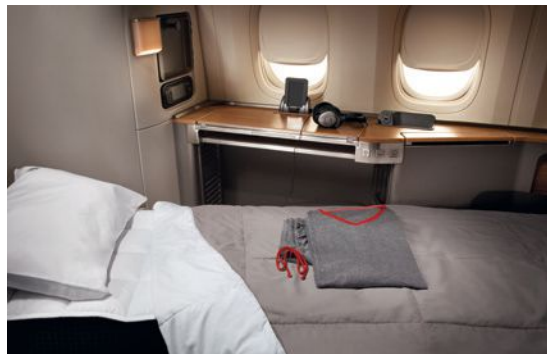
Delta offers triple bonus miles to new Airbnb users

Members of Delta Air Lines' Skymiles programme can earn triple miles when booking stays with Airbnb worldwide. New Airbnb guests can earn up to 2,000 bonus miles, get US\$25 off their first stay and earn three miles for every US\$1 spent on bookings made by April 30 this year and completed by April 30, 2018. deltaairbnb.com



Grab 1,000 miles with Lufthansa and Marriott

Miles and More members can earn up to 1,000 miles when staying at Marriott International properties in Europe. Members can earn up to 500 miles at select-service hotels such as Courtyard by Marriott, AC Hotels by Marriott and Moxy hotels (such as the Moxy Eschborn Frankfurt, below), while stays at full-service properties such as JW Marriott, Autograph Collection and Marriott Hotels can earn up to 1,000 points. Valid until March 26. marriott.com



Earn 40,000 miles on transatlantic flights with American Airlines

American Airlines AAdvantage members can earn up to 40,000 bonus miles when booking two return flights between North America and Europe. A round trip in economy will generate 5,000 bonus points, 10,000 in business class and 20,000 in first class. The offer is valid on nonstop flights operated by AA and eligible British Airways, Iberia and Finnair services between Europe and the US, Canada and Mexico until March 31. aa.com



ADVERTISING FEATURE

Made for meetings

St Ermin's Hotel in London offers a superb setting for your events

In the heart of Westminster's business district, a minute from St James's Park station and a short stroll from Victoria station, St Ermin's Hotel is ideally placed for meetings, whether formal or casual.

Voted one of *Condé Nast Traveller's* "Top London Hotels" in 2016, the hotel has a range of spaces around reception, the library and the Caxton Bar, or more private areas in the lobby mezzanine, offering free wifi and quiet seclusion for checking emails or for casual meetings. Waiter service in all of the public areas is discreet and flexible, while larger meetings and



conferences are easily accommodated in the hotel's 15 flexible event spaces.

The 14 meeting rooms and stunning Crystal Ballroom offer a range of layouts, the largest accommodating 200 people. All feature the latest conferencing technology and abundant natural light. Breakout areas around the business floor provide group work spaces, as well as relaxed settings for coffee breaks or delegate lunches.



Above: Caxton Grill's private dining room seats ten

The Caxton Grill offers bespoke menus, à la carte dining or snacks, with healthy eating in mind, while the Caxton Bar is the perfect place to unwind.

The current delegate day rate from £80 (including VAT) includes tea, coffee, lunch, stationery, wifi and LCD projector/screen.

■ **Contact Tom Walsh for information:** twalsh@sterminshotel.co.uk. St Ermin's Hotel, 2 Caxton Street; tel +44 (0)20 7222 7888; sterminshotel.co.uk

Machine learning

The pretty city of Zurich is quietly becoming a world-leading destination for robotics, artificial intelligence and cognitive computing. **Jenny Southan** reports



Left below:
The autonomous
"ANYmal" robot
Right: ETH
Zurich's new Arch
Tech Lab

There is something uncanny about the way this dog-like robot moves – its skeletal frame whirs loudly as it marches on the spot, then moves side to side, and around in a circle in a strange dance. Built by a team in the Robotic Systems Lab at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology (ETH Zurich), assistant professor Marco Hutter says the "ANYmal" is his newest creation.

Not only can it run but climb, crouch and jump. "We wanted to make something that was optimal from a robotics point of view," he says. "We put springs in all the joints so we can use it in all sorts

INTELLIGENCE HUB

Founded in 1854, the ETH is Switzerland's answer to MIT. Ranked one of the best universities in the world, more than 20 Nobel Prizes have been awarded to its alumni over the years, including Albert Einstein in 1921. Today it has 20,000 students and an annual budget of Sfr 1.7 billion (£1.4 billion), funded by taxpayers. "That is part of the reason the ETH is the best," says professor Peter Seitz, a "sherpa" from its Innovation and Entrepreneurship Lab (IE Lab).

In a warehouse on the Science City campus, a short drive north-west of the old town, architects are using giant mechanical arms to explore new construction



ROBOTIC SYSTEMS LAB, ITAVARCH TECH LAB AG, ETH ZURICH

of environments." As part of a pilot project, the ANYmal has been put to work on offshore oil and gas platforms where it can go about inspection tasks (often dangerous for humans) completely autonomously thanks to laser sensors and cameras.

I ask how it compares with the robot that was sent to Mars. "In general, space technology is very old," says Hutter, walking me down the corridor and pointing to a dusty old unit on caterpillar tracks. "This was part of a study we were doing for the European Space Agency. But wheels are boring – legs are the future."

techniques that employ nothing more than loops of yarn and pebbles, for example, or 3D printed concrete. Upstairs is the Arch Tech Lab, a vast, light-filled space with an undulating roof of 48,000 wooden beams that was built entirely by a single gantry robot. Aleksandra Anna Apolinarska, an architect in the Gramazio Kohler Research Lab at the ETH Zurich, says the days of mass production are behind us. "We think it is time for mass customisation."

From self-driving cars to augmented reality, the ETH is forging a new tomorrow in myriad ways. ▶



Clockwise from far left:

Google campus;
3D printing at the
Arch Tech Lab;
rooftop restaurant
at the Swiss
Federal Institute
of Technology
(ETH)



And with the help of Seitz's IE Lab, students have the opportunity to take ideas from the research stage to market. Between 1996 and 2016, 355 spin-off companies have been founded at the ETH, a number of which have been in the field of robotics.

Verity Studios, for example, designs magical quadcopter drones that are being used in Cirque du Soleil's *Paramour* show on Broadway, while Wingtra builds autonomous fixed-wing planes that take off and land like helicopters, and can be used for anything from filming to wildlife protection. Close to the ETH, Disney has a research lab that opened in 2010, and is putting its efforts into video of the future. In Oerlikon is the HQ of established industrial robotics giant ABB. It's no wonder that Chris Anderson, CEO of 3D Robotics and former editor-in-chief of *Wired*, has dubbed Zurich "the Silicon Valley of Robotics".

TALENT CONTEST

In 2016, Switzerland was ranked first in Cornell University's *Global Innovation Index*, and Zurich came second in the *Mercer Quality of Living* survey, significantly ahead of San Francisco (28th position).

Unsurprisingly, over the decades, the ETH has provided a compelling reason for big companies to locate themselves in pretty little Zurich, a city of just 380,000 people that has grown into a global hub for banking, finance and innovation. The IBM Research Lab was the first from the company outside the US when it opened here in 1956.

Chris Sciacca, IBM Research's communications manager for EMEA, says: "We now have four main buildings including the Nano Technology Centre, which is the newest and the most cutting-edge. To build such a facility just 15km from a major city is unheard of. Normally the science that you will see in there takes place in the middle of the desert or mountains, away from interference."

He adds: "We chose Switzerland because of the access to talent and skills that the country affords us. The standard of living is very good and the government is fantastic at supporting science and innovation with grants. It is very stable, democratic and open. All this means you can attract the best and the brightest."

From his pocket, Sciacca pulls a gold medallion. It's one of IBM Zurich's four Nobel Prizes, two of which were won in the mid 1980s for the invention of high temperature superconductivity and the nanoscale microscope. "Up until this you really couldn't see atoms and molecules with good resolution. You can really point to the 30-year history of nanotechnology in Switzerland to this invention," he says.

At lunchtime, we pop over to the self-service cafeteria for a bite to eat. Our fellow diners are mostly men but Sciacca tells me a healthy percentage are university students, professors and interns. "They sit side-by-side with [IBM employees] and can collaborate with us in a very open environment. Where you want to do high-tech science and innovation, this is vitally important," he says. Alessandro Curioni, IBM fellow, vice-president Europe and director of IBM Research Zurich, agrees: "When you start to connect to other disciplines and cultural mindsets, that is where you grow."

INDEPENDENT THINKING

The level of innovation going on at IBM is mind-blowing – in 2016, its inventors were awarded a record 8,088 patents in the US alone, more than any other company (Samsung was in second place with 5,518 and Canon third with 3,665). Interestingly, more than 2,700 patents were related to artificial intelligence, machine learning and cloud computing. In between forkfuls of risotto, Curioni gives me a crash course in cognitive computing.

He says: "The way we interact with computers is changing. First it was tabular computing, then the programming era, now it is natural language. The ability to analyse unstructured data [such as images and sounds] will accelerate by an order of magnitude the research and development in every field, including aviation and space travel."

The new Cognitive era began in 2011, when IBM's Watson super-computer won US TV quiz show *Jeopardy*. Eleni Pratsini, director of cognitive IoT solutions at IBM Research, says: "One of the rules of the game was that Watson was not connected to the internet so scientists had to feed it hundreds of books and teach it to reason like a human, to understand riddles, puns and subtle connotations."

The breadth of this human-like AI, which can make associations and learn, has since been expanded – now you can log on to ibm.com/watson/developercloud and access more than 60 versions of Watson in the form of individual APIs created for specific tasks such as image recognition and personality insight. Want to build your own chat bot? Download the Conversation API and get to work. Hilton is already using the technology to power Connie, its robotic concierge in Virginia (see our feature on high-tech hotels, page 20).

Last year IBM's Matthias Reumann, from the company's cognitive healthcare department, began using Watson to help Germany's "Dr House", Jurgen Schafer, to diagnose rare diseases. Reumann says:

WHERE TO STAY

Just 4km from the airport, in the up-and-coming business district of Glattpark, visitors can check themselves into the 245-room, five-star **Kameha Grand** (kamehagrandzuerich.com), a two-year-old hotel from Marriott's Autograph Collection. Bringing together the surreal and the luxurious, it has a cigar and shisha lounge, a Michelin-starred restaurant, striking event space for 960 people, and a dozen themed suites including the Gentleman, Watchmaker and Workout suite. The highlight, however, is the Space suite.

Designed by German artist Michael Najjar – who is in training for the inaugural Virgin Galactic flight – the 115 sqm windowless “space station” has a seemingly floating zero-gravity bed, silver furniture, astronaut artwork and an iPad installed with movies such as *Star Wars* and *Moon* that can be streamed to the TV via Airplay.

The 39-room boutique **Marktgasse** (marktgasseehotel.ch/en) in the old town is equally suited to tech-minded entrepreneurs but in an entirely different way. The renovated 15th-century building has a superb street-level café serving healthy Ottolenghi-style food throughout the day, a chic speakeasy for sophisticated cocktails, a trendy brasserie and a library for communal working. It has the cosy feel of staying in someone's house, with simple rooms supplied with Aesop bathing products and comfortable beds, plus Nespresso machines and Geneva sound systems in the suites. Like the Kameha Grand, free wifi is available throughout.

See businesstraveller.com/tried-and-tested for full reviews.





Clockwise from top left: Marktgasse hotel; Space suite at the Kameha Grand; rooftop pool at the Thermalbad and Spa

"There about 7,000 known rare diseases with millions of people suffering from them [but] the diagnostic process is long and cumbersome. We get the patient's files, which can weigh as much as 5kg, scan them, do optical character recognition and store the information digitally. Patients then fill in an extensive online questionnaire, whereby Watson cross-references all the information and comes up with a list of differential diagnoses." As a human, gaining 25 years of experience takes 25 years – and even then you can't even come close to reading every medical report ever published. Watson can, though.

TOMORROW'S WORLD

Come Saturday, I take a trip to the public Thermalbad and Spa. Steam rises in clouds from the waters of the rooftop pool. Snow is falling; the sky grey like aluminium. Down in the vaults of this former brewery, locals soak in giant repurposed wooden vats. At the same time, in one of the buildings across the way, a solo employee pounds away in a gym at the otherwise peaceful Google campus.

Since 2004, Zurich has been the home of Google's largest engineering base outside the US (the biggest is Mountain View in California and the second-largest New York City). Engineering director Emmanuel Mogenet heads up the company's new European Research Lab, which was set up last year on the existing office campus.

Operating in parallel to IBM (not collaborating but not competing), Google has chosen the Swiss city to host its first lab outside the US dedicated to AI, computer perception and machine learning (with the exception of Deep Mind in London, an AI start-up that was acquired by Google in 2014). Why? Because the ETH "produces the best computer scientists in Europe", says Mogenet.

To make sure they not only attract but retain them, the company goes out of its way to provide not just gyms and free food, but fantasy work environments complete with fireman's poles and slides, and egg-shaped privacy pods for when you need time to focus. Every day at 5pm they play the Heidi song and drink free beer. Mogenet says: "Our basic philosophy is that you are most productive when you are enjoying yourself. It is extremely informal – there are a lot of people who wear slippers at the office and bring their dog in."

At the moment, there are 2,000 people representing 75 nationalities working here, but this number is set to rise to 5,000 "Zooglers" with the opening of its new offices in Europaallee, by Zurich Hauptbahnhof station, in January this year. Andreas Meyer, CEO of Swiss Federal Railways, says: "The district around the main station in Zurich will be a hotspot where innovative services are developed and tested, and the future is significantly shaped."

Just beyond the Hauptbahnhof is the former industrial quarter of Zurich West, which over the past few years has become a magnet for hipsters, with concept stores, bars, clothing boutiques and furniture collectives opening under 19th-century railway arches (Im Viadukt) and even disused shipping containers. In the shadow of the green glass Prime Tower, Frau Gerolds Garten lures both business people and families with bubbling saucepans of fondue in winter, served up inside a wooden hut kitted out with hand-knitted cushions and a roaring fire. In the summer, they come for a cold beer in the garden by the train tracks.

Nine minutes' walk around the corner is the Technopark, a 47,000 sqm site that is home to 300 start-ups all hoping to become a success story. Last year, Facebook bought local computer vision venture Zurich Eye, which was founded by three members of the University of Zurich's Robotics and Perception group. Although the social network has its main Swiss office in Geneva, it is opening a small base for its Oculus virtual reality subsidiary here. If you're smart, you'll get in on the action too.

■ Swiss operates more than 180 weekly flights from the UK to Switzerland. Direct flights from London to Zurich start from £84 return. **Visit swiss.com, zuerich.com**



Connecting point

An important road and rail hub between Europe and East China, Chengdu has major aviation ambitions, too. **Jeremy Tredinnick** reports





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

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

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

The old downtown district north of the Jinjiang River is still the cultural and business centre, but four subway lines now transport its population of 7.8 million people out to sprawling suburbs and secondary urban centres, while Chengdu's population over its entire administrative area is 14 million.

Somehow, though, it maintains a more easygoing atmosphere than the east-coast cities. Residents have

a reputation for valuing quality of life, manifested in the city's teahouse culture and peoples' love of communal discourse and the arts.

TRANSPORT HUB

According to the Chengdu Municipal Bureau of Statistics, the city's GDP exceeded RMB1 trillion (£118.5 billion) in 2015, a year-on-year increase of 7.9 per cent, 1 per cent higher than the national average. Much of this is down to growth in the automotive and pharmaceutical sectors, but increasingly IT and modern service industries are muscling in on the commercial landscape, especially in areas like the Hi-Tech Zone in the Tianfu New Area.

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

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



From left: Chunxi Road; Kuanzhai Alley; Wuhou Temple

The city also has major aviation ambitions. In May last year, construction began on the RMB70 billion (£8.2 billion) Chengdu Tianfu International airport. Located in Jianyang City, about 50km south of both Chengdu and Shuangliu International, it is scheduled to be finished by 2020 and will cater to the economic growth of Chengdu, the Tianfu New Area and Chongqing, all of which will be connected to it by improved or new road and rail networks.

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

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

In January, British Airways axed its nonstop Heathrow-Chengdu route, which it launched in 2013, but there are various one-stop options for UK travellers such as with Air China and China Eastern. ■

WHAT TO SEE

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

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

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

Jinli Street occupies the northern tip of a park that surrounds the **Wuhou Temple** (entry RMB60/£7), which was built during the Three Kingdoms period (AD220-280) to honour Zhuge Liang, a military strategist of the era. It's a genuine piece of ancient history, and a peaceful place to escape the city.

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

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



WHERE TO STAY

Niccolo

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

marcopolohotels.com

Grand Hyatt

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

chengdu.grand.hyatt.com

Wanda Reign

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

wandahotels.com

IFS Residences

Rising above its namesake shopping mall, this luxury serviced apartment complex opened 150 of its units in November, with as

many more due to be ready by early this year. All of its facilities are for in-house residents only.

ifsresidences.com

The Temple House

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

thetemplehousehotel.com

Shangri-La

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

shangri-la.com

St Regis

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

stregis.com

Hilton

The 315-room Hilton opened in September 2015 in the Tianfu New Area south of the city. Housed in one of the Seaton Plaza towers, it has executive rooms on floors

32 to 37, with the executive lounge providing panoramic views. A top-floor gym and pool are the highest in Chengdu. **hilton.com**

JW Marriott

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

marriott.com

Fraser Suites

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

chengdu.frasershospitality.com

Other hotels

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

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

Above: Waldorf Astoria
Below: The Temple House





FOUR SEASONS

HOTEL

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lifestyle



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ESCAPE



Kokomo Island opens in Fiji

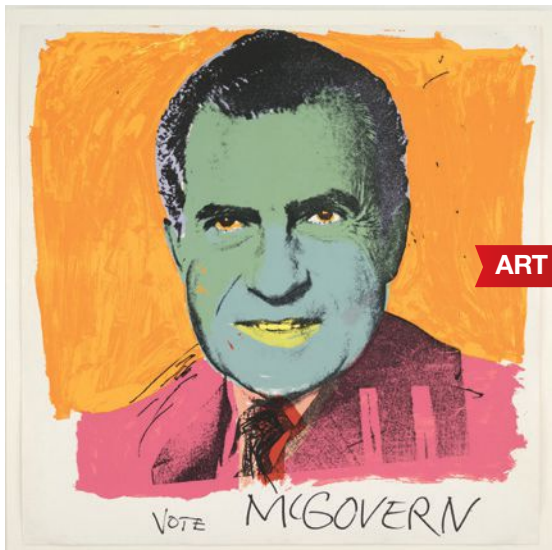
A LUXURY PRIVATE ISLAND RESORT has been launched in Fiji. Kokomo Island is part of the unspoilt Kadavu Group, located south of Fiji's largest island, Viti Levu. Covering 57 hectares, the Small Luxury Hotels of the World member operates on an all-inclusive basis and comprises 26 villas, most located beachside and each with their own infinity pool. It has three restaurants, a spa, tennis court, kids' club, rainforest walking trails and a dive centre, while the Great Astrolabe Reef is metres from the shore. kokomoislandfiji.com, slh.com/kokomo



ART

BRITISH MUSEUM EXAMINES THE AMERICAN DREAM

A MAJOR NEW US EXHIBITION kicks off this month at the British Museum. "The American Dream: Pop to the Present" will explore US printmaking from the 1960s to today, in doing so tracing six decades of American history. More than 200 works by 70 artists will be on display, including pieces by Andy Warhol, Jasper Johns and Robert Rauschenberg, many of which have never been shown before in London. March 9 to June 18; £16.50. americandreamexhibition.org



ANDY WARHOL'S VOTE MCGOVERN, 1972

Bruichladdich releases 'troika' of new whiskies

ISLAY DISTILLERY BRUICHLADDICH has released the second editions of its ten-year-old unpeated Laddie, heavily peated Port Charlotte and experimental Octomore single malts. Head distiller Adam Hannett says: "They have all spent a decade maturing in our warehouses by the shores of Loch Indaal. Although dramatically different from one another, the DNA of the House of Bruichladdich is apparent throughout – delicate, elegantly floral spirit and that salt-citrus tang that can only come from maturation by the sea." The Laddie £50; Port Charlotte £55; Octomore £150. bruichladdich.com



DRINK



CARS

Geneva Motor Show returns this month

THE WORLD'S TOP CAR COMPANIES will be showing off their latest models this month at the Geneva International Motor Show. One of Europe's most prestigious car events, it takes place at Palexpo on March 9-19. Renault will be unveiling its new Alpine sports car, McLaren its 650S supercar replacement and Porsche its upgraded 911 GT3. Other brands exhibiting include Bentley, BMW, Citroën and Ford. 10am-8pm (9am-7pm Sat-Sun); entry SFr 16 (£13). gims.swiss/en



TECH B&O Play unveils new speaker

BANG AND OLUFSEN HAS ADDED

a wireless speaker to its B&O Play range. Beoplay M5 is designed to deliver a top-quality listening experience and to add style to your home, with its True360-degree "omnidirectional" sound and warm, Danish wool-blend covering. Three preset modes optimise its acoustic performance depending on where it is placed in the room, while Chromecast is built in for music streaming. Available in natural or black, with more colours to come; £529. beoplay.com/m5



Ralph Lauren launches London bar

IF SHOPPING LEAVES YOU IN NEED of a stiff drink, head for Ralph Lauren's new London bar. Ralph's Coffee and Bar is located next to the brand's flagship store at 173 Regent Street. The clubby, wood-panelled space accommodates 24 guests in the café with 12 more seats at the bar. It serves classic cocktails, custom-blend coffee and light traditional American dishes. Open 10am-8pm (Sun 12pm-6pm). ralphlauren.co.uk

DRINK



HOTEL

Las Alcobas opens in Napa Valley

STARWOOD'S LUXURY COLLECTION

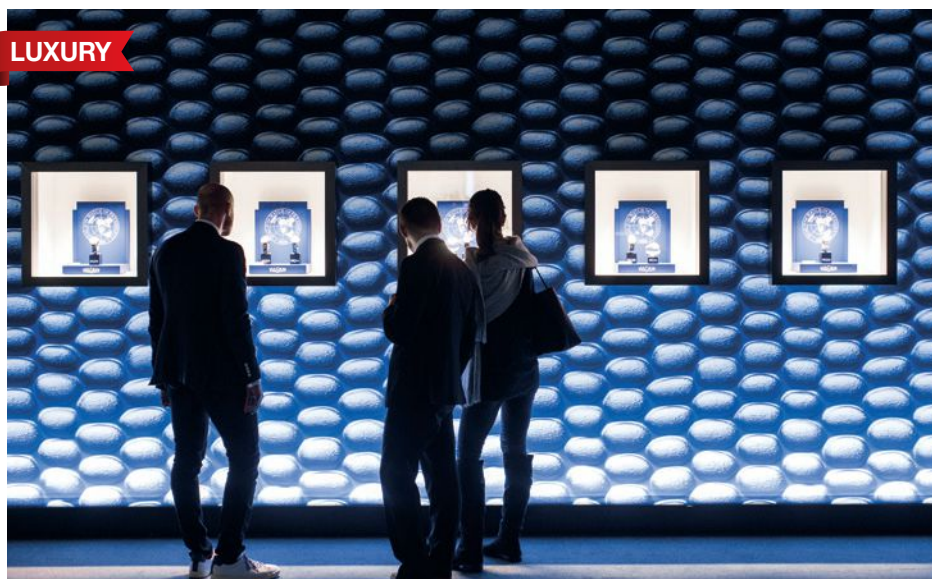
(now part of Marriott International) has opened a new property in California's Napa Valley. Las Alcobas, a Luxury Collection hotel, is located in St Helena, next to the Beringer Vineyards and Estate. It has 68 rooms and suites, most featuring outdoor terraces with fire pits, and some with private hot tubs. Fine-dining restaurant Acacia House serves seasonal cuisine and wines by Napa producers. There's also a spa, yoga studio, gym and an outdoor pool. lasalcobasnapavalley.com

Watch fans head for Baselworld

THE WORLD'S BIGGEST WATCH AND JEWELLERY SHOW

takes place this month in Basel in Switzerland. Attracting some 1,500 top brands and more than 145,000 visitors last year, the likes of Rolex, Patek Philippe, Longines, Blancpain, Tudor, Raymond Weil and Christopher Ward will once again be showcasing their latest creations at Baselworld. March 23-30, 9am-6pm daily (4pm on the 30th); entry SFr 60 (£49). baselworld.com

LUXURY



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Mornings at Terre Blanche are long and languorous. One day, I manage to summon the energy to get up before eight, creeping on to the balcony to survey the cluster of terracotta-tiled villas below. There is no one around, and the only sound to disturb the quiet is the soft twittering of sparrows overhead. By now, the sun is peeking over the horizon, throwing shafts of dusty golden light across the countryside and brightening the honey hue of the lodges on the hillside.

Below, I hear the whirr of a golf cart as it runs along a lane nearby. Navigating the resort's sprawling 300 hectares, the buggies are its main mode of transport, carrying guests between spa appointments, lunch dates, golf rounds and its 115 private villas and suites.

Set in the sun-soaked terroir of Provence, the Leading Hotels of the World member has had a number of owners in its time, most notably Sean Connery, who bought the property in 1979. He commissioned the first fairways for the resort's two championship golf courses, although the project never quite came to fruition under his direction. In 1999, billionaire German entrepreneur Dietmar Hopp took over the site with the intention of turning it into a first-class golfing destination. Today it is a European Tour venue with courses designed by Dave Thomas, a golf school and a biomechanical performance centre designed to analyse and improve your swing.

While my golf skills are limited, I'm fairly accomplished at swimming lazy lengths in the infinity pool, lying prostrate on a massage table



Right: Terre Blanche's infinity pool



Provençale peace

Provence's tranquil countryside is the perfect setting for a restorative weekend break, says **Marisa Cannon**

and perusing the resort's exceptional contemporary art collection, which includes 300 sculptures and paintings from Hopp's private collection. Wandering the grounds, I discover works by the likes of Joan Miro and Antony Gormley.

Cuisine is also a strong point here – there are a number of outstanding restaurants spread across the resort, from Les Caroubiers at the clubhouse to the elegant Le Faventia, which won its first Michelin star last year. The resort has also partnered with a nearby cooking school, should you wish to try your hand at dishing up some local fare.

I sign up for a class at the Institut Gastronomie Riviera, a butter-coloured country house in the



neighbouring town of Seillons. It's headed up by former Four Seasons pastry chef, Nicolas Denis, who gives us a quick tour of the rustic front room and garden before leading us into the kitchen, where the ingredients for our lunch – cod fillet with bayildi of vegetables, black olives and coeur de boeuf tomato coulis – have been laid out.

The recipe is fairly simple, but with praise lavished over us at every stage, I start to believe I am the next Raymond Blanc. After a quick lesson in making pesto, we slide our lovingly layered vegetable terrines to one side to start on our final course – vanilla panacotta with pineapple brunoise and mango and passion fruit foam. Once our work is done, Nicolas promises us each a job if we were ever inclined to stay, and leads us into the garden for a congratulatory Prosecco before lunch is served.

For celebrities stopping at Cannes and Nice for the film awards, Provence's evergreen lavender fields and twee country hamlets are a popular respite from the glitzy coastline. One company that has capitalised on this superstar allure is Rent a Classic Car, which does what it says on the tin with a fleet of 38 vehicles.

One morning, three beautifully maintained cars roll up to the hotel's entrance to take us for

From left:
Terre Blanche's Villa Estèrel;
1967 Citroën DS; the cellars at Château d'Esclans;
Terre Blanche's spa

a spin around neighbouring Tourrettes and to a nearby winery. Spoilt between a 1983 Rolls-Royce convertible, a 1966 Ford Mustang and a convertible 1967 Citroën DS, I opt for the French model after hearing it was Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie's vehicle of choice in their 2015 film *By the Sea*.

The clouds look heavy, but the driver unfastens the roof regardless – "At least until it starts to tip it down," he says with a wink. Hopping in the front, I'm all for it, emulating Brigitte Bardot as we drive out of the resort, although half an hour later I'm more like a windswept Bridget Jones as we arrive for our tasting at one of Provence's largest producers of rosé, Château d'Esclans.



Owner Sacha Lichine was recently dubbed the world's most prominent rosé winemaker by *The New York Times* – an apt description given the revival that his top-selling rosé, Whispering Angel, has spurred. In 2006, Lichine took over the estate on a punt, hoping to shed the wine of its tacky reputation. Since then, it has grown from a production line of 165,000 bottles in 2006 to five million in 2016. The wines aren't cheap, either – a bottle of the estate's top-end wine, Garrus, will set you back around €100.

Tom Schreckinger, director of communications at Château d'Esclans, says: "The engine that's driving this growth is the US, which represents over 60 per cent of our market. Rosé is in such an age of discovery over there and the Côte de Provence of course has a certain allure to those buyers."

Having sold out its entire stock last summer, there isn't a drop of Whispering Angel left to try, but we sample the Château's Rock Angel, Garrus and Les Clans wines instead. I drink most of what we try – it's too good to waste – and feeling warm and heady, I walk back to the car where our driver is waiting. He asks if I'm ready for lunch. It's barely noon, but it feels like early evening, and I delight in how long there is left until tomorrow morning. ■

■ Rates at Terre Blanche in April start from €450 per night for a Deluxe Suite King **terre-blanche.com**





Tasting notes

The *Business Traveller* team tries out the capital's latest restaurant openings



MARGOT

This Italian venue in Covent Garden is the first collaboration from restaurateurs Nicolas Jaouen and Paulo de Tarso, who previously worked together at Scott's in Mayfair. Executive chef Maurizio Morelli is formerly of fine-dining Italian restaurant Latium in Fitzrovia. Margot opened last October.

The restaurant is split across two levels – the main ground floor with a bar across the back, and a basement floor with a smaller bar. De Tarso said that they tried to avoid the “stuffy” feel of many high-end eateries – to this end opting for lots of low-height, curved booth seating, allowing an open feel.

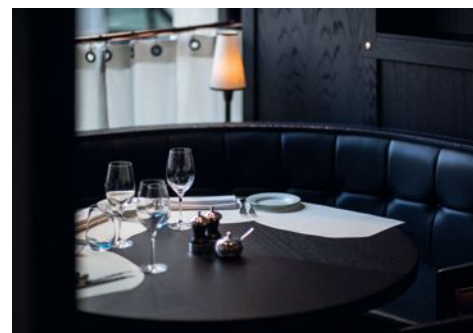
The menu is extensive. Pasta dishes can be ordered in small (starting from £9.50) or large (from £13.50) portions. My starter of tagliolini with Sicilian red prawns, artichokes and torpedino tomatoes was delicious – the pasta perfectly cooked, the sauce rich, and the prawns juicy and bursting with flavour. A main of roast Cornish monkfish wrapped in pancetta, cannellini beans, black truffle and quail eggs was well cooked, although the flavours didn't quite hit the heights of the tagliolini.

My companion started with burrata from Puglia, with a heritage tomato salad and basil pesto, followed by the ricotta and lemon ravioli, fresh tomatoes and basil sauce – probably among the most simple dishes on the menu, but both fresh and flavoursome.

The service was attentive yet discreet throughout, and we were impressed at how smoothly the restaurant ran on a busy night. Combine that with the superb pasta dishes and buzzing atmosphere, and Nicolas and Paulo have created a welcoming venue that should appeal to business travellers and theatre-goers alike. *Mark Caswell*

■ Open 12pm-3pm (4pm Sat-Sun), 5.30pm-10.30pm (9.30pm Sun). Starters £9.50-£14.50; mains £13.50-£60. Wine from £6 by the glass, from £24 by the bottle. 45 Great Queen Street; tel +44 (0)20 3409 4777; margotrestaurant.com

From top: Tagliolini with Sicilian red prawns; Cornish monkfish
Main image: counter dining at Margot





JAMAVAR

High-end Indian restaurant chain Jamavar made its London debut in December with this elegant opening on Mount Street in Mayfair. The concept was created by Leela

Palaces, Hotels and Resorts, which operates Jamavar venues in its Bengaluru, New Delhi, Chennai, Goa and Mumbai properties.

The restaurant is split over two floors, with peach-hued interiors and walls panelled in dark wood and inlaid with large mirrors and green marble pilasters. Executive chef Rohit Ghai has been poached from Michelin-starred Gymkhana. His focus at Jamavar is on small plates inspired by street food from both North and South India, but there are also more substantial portions of curry, biryani and tandoori, with some knockout flavours.

Fried potato cakes (chowk ki aloo tikki) were slathered in honey yoghurt, white radish and tamarind chutney, while the idli sambhar (south Indian steamed rice and lentil cakes) were presented on a skewer with Brussels sprouts and a hot savoury broth.

Mains include old Delhi butter chicken and eight-hour slow-cooked Hampshire lamb shank with Rajasthani chilli, while the vegetarian options include kasundi paneer tikka (delicately charred cheese with raw papaya chutney) and gucchi mutter curry with morels, green peas, fresh tomato and star anise.

It's unusual, in London, where there are so many restaurants opening all the time, to want to eat in the same place twice, but I am already looking forward to going back to Jamavar. *Jenny Southan*

■ Open
Mon-Sat
12pm-2.30pm,
5.30pm-
10.30pm.
Starters £8-£15,
mains £12-£30,
seven-course
tasting menu
£55-£60, wine
pairings £50.
8 Mount Street;
tel +44 (0)20
7499 1800;
**jamavar
restaurants.
com**



From top:
Dhakshini Jheenga;
chowk ki aloo
tikki; selection of
vegetarian dishes



TEMPLE AND SONS

Jason Atherton's the Social Company launched this City grill venue in November. The Michelin-starred chef's City Social is located in the neighbouring Tower 42, and executive chef Paul Walsh heads up both venues.

Seating 66 people, Temple and Sons occupies a former Wagamama, with one half of the restaurant overlooking the open kitchen. The other part is more secluded, making it less distracting for a business lunch.

The deli menu, bar and interiors are inspired by "a traditional British grocery store", with dishes including game sausage roll and Old Spot spiced

pork belly sandwich. Some cocktails, such as Yellow Paint (Sailor Jerry spiced rum, Colman's mustard, elderflower, lemon), are served in milk cartons and cans.

To start, we had the Pork Haslet "mining food" and pickled beetroot salad (£8.50) and cured English meat from Cannon and Cannon (£9). Both were filling and excellent – the pork dish had a sweet and cleansing effect on the taste buds and was a good precursor to the main course of braised Irish short rib, spring onion and coriander (£25).

The fish of the day was sea bream, which was large and delicious, while the sticky toffee pudding with Cornish sea-salted caramel and clotted cream ice cream (£8.50) was lovely and rich. *Tom Otley*

Right:
Braised Irish short
rib, Yellow Paint
cocktail



AQUAVIT

Nordic restaurant Aquavit opened in the sleek new St James's Market development, just off Lower Regent Street, in November. A sister venue to the acclaimed Aquavit in New York, which has two Michelin stars, it takes a more relaxed approach than its fine-dining sibling.

As much a showcase for Scandi design as it is Nordic dining, the interior, by Martin Brudnizki (behind the likes of Sexy Fish and the Ivy), is glossy and gorgeous, light flooding the double-height 142-cover space through floor-to-ceiling windows.

The menu, created by executive chef Henrik Ritzen and Aquavit New York executive chef Emma Bengtsson, offers "a contemporary take on authentic Nordic cuisine". I recommend starting with a smorgasbord of small plates – we had crunchy, tart pickles (£3), creamy and crisp shrimp skagen (prawns on toast, £9), subtly spiced blood pudding with lingonberries, bacon and lardo (£6), refreshing and earthy celeriac, mustard and lovage (£4) and delicate slivers of gravlax with mustard and dill sauce (£9). It was all delicious, and looked great, too – all vibrant colours and pretty garnishing.

My main of Swedish meatballs, lingonberries and pickled cucumber (£16), was comforting – the tang of the berries and cucumber cutting through the sweetly seasoned pork and beef, silky mash and velvety veal stock-based sauce – while the warm chocolate cake with tarragon ice cream and clementine sorbet (£8) was beautiful, oozing hot sauce. Service was accomplished and friendly, which, combined with the fantastic Nordic flavours and glamorous setting, make Aquavit an impressive addition to London's dining scene. *Michelle Harbi*

■ Open Mon-Fri 7.30am-10.30am; brunch Sat-Sun 11am-3.30pm; lunch daily 12pm-2.30pm; dinner 5.30pm-10.30pm (Sun 10pm). Smorgasbord £3-£19; starters £9-£17; mains £16-£34; wine from £6.50 by the glass; from £27 by the bottle. St James's Market, 1 Carlton Street; tel +44 (0)20 7024 9848; aquavitrestaurants.com/london

From top: Swedish meatballs; Arctic Bird's Nest



■ Restaurant open Mon-Sat 12pm-2.30pm, 5.30pm-10pm; bar 11.30am-12am. Starters £3.50-£16; mains £9.50-£25, with fish and meat priced by size. Wine from £5.50 by the glass. 22 Old Broad Street; tel +44 (0)20 7877 7710; templeandsons.co.uk





STREETXO

StreetXO is the first London outpost from three Michelin-starred Spanish chef David Munoz, who runs its sister venue along with a conceptual fine-dining restaurant

DiverXO in Madrid. StreetXO opened in Mayfair in November, serving Spanish-Asian sharing plates.

Located underground, the restaurant is a dark, sultry space decked out with Japanese-inspired neon street signs, chain mail detailing and bulbous light fixtures hanging from low ceilings. It felt like a cross between a club, a psychiatric unit and a meth lab thanks to the straitjacket-clad chefs, a thumping electronic soundtrack and yellow hazard tape. The human heart-shaped crockery displayed on the bar's shelves added to that feeling.

Munoz's taste for theatricality extends to the drinks menu, with cocktails such as the Liquid Madrizzzz's DiverXO (£13), made with jasmine, coconut shrub, lime, ginger and "violet candy nectar", and presented in an orb-shaped goblet the size of my head.

Among the menu's 18 sharing plates, favourites include Pekinese dumpling with crunchy pig's ear (£14.50), served with Jackson Pollock-esque splatters of strawberry hoi sin, and the prawn suquet (£19.60), served on a wafer-thin cracker with dollops of yellow saffron aioli. Flash cooked, the robata carabinero prawns paired well with the brittle cracker and the velvety coconut-based soup in which they stewed.

The atmosphere is friendly and relaxed, with both waiters and kitchen staff taking on a service role. Expect an elaborate experience, offering bang for your buck in terms of theatre and sensory stimulation.

Marisa Cannon

■ Open Mon-Sat 12pm-3pm, 6pm-12am; bar 12pm-12am. Sharing dishes £8.50-£19.90; cocktails £12-£14; wine from £7.95 by the glass. 15 Old Burlington Street; tel +44 (0)20 3096 7555;

streetxo.com



From top:
Liquid Madrizzzz's
DiverXO; prawn
suquet

TEN MORE NEW OPENINGS

MNKY HSE

Pronounced "monkey house", this Latin American restaurant-cum-nightclub is popular with a young, monied crowd thanks to its sexy, upbeat vibe. The food is great – try the sublime black cod marinated in miso and chilli.

mnky-hse.com

ELYSTAN STREET

Order artistically arranged seasonal plates such as roast calf's sweetbread with winter slaw, rabbit ravioli and salt-baked white beetroot with Jerusalem artichoke at this upscale European restaurant in Chelsea.

elystanstreet.com

VENETA

Located in the new St James's Market, eat seafood at the raw bar, charcuterie in a banquette booth or cheese from a trolley. Enjoy small plates of prawn tortellini and octopus with polenta.

saltyardgroup.co.uk/veneta

FUCINA

Pop over to Marylebone for a plate of spaghetti with Devonshire crab or pizza topped with tomato, purple broccoli, sausage, fig and Scamorza. The restaurant was founded by Kurt Zdesar and all produce is organic.

fucina.co.uk

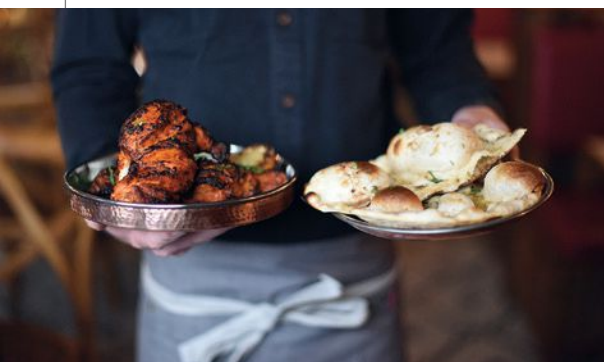
TEMPER

At this Soho meat lovers' den, barbecued cuts are presented in 100g fixes while tacos are filled with aged cheeseburger and chipotle miso pork. There is a selection of 20 varieties of smokey mezcal available.

temperrestaurant.com



Clockwise from top left:
Elystan Street;
Veneta; Aster;
Fucina; Tandoor
Chop House;
MNKY HSE;
Sakagura



LUCA

Explore British seasonal ingredients “through an Italian lens” in Clerkenwell. Savour portions of grouse ravioli with potato sauce and whisky, Hereford beef stuffed with pancetta or Wiltshire trout with herb butter.

luca.restaurant

SAKAGURA

Heddon Street, in the West End, is now the place to come for traditional *washoku* Japanese cuisine, which looks far too pretty to eat, and sake (there is a dedicated cellar). Try the diver scallops with buttered shoyu.

sakaguralondon.com

TANDOOR CHOP HOUSE

North Indian tandoor-style cooking loves British meat; unwind with after-work Amritsari crispy lamb chops, bhaji onion rings, butter naan and gunpowder fries. Gin is distilled locally.

**tandoorchop
house.com**

ASTER

Courtesy of D&D, New Nordic has arrived at Victoria’s new Nova development. Tuck into portions of hot-smoke Arctic char with Greenland prawns, or foie gras with smoked eel, celeriac, apple and lace potato.

aster-restaurant.com

MERE

Opening this month is the new restaurant from *Masterchef: The Professionals* judge and former chef at Le Gavroche Monica Galetti, who will be championing “great seasonal produce and classic techniques”.

mere-restaurant.com

Colombo

Hannah Evans takes a whistle-stop tour of Sri Lanka's largest city

1 PETTAH FLOATING MARKET

Colombo is a vibrant city with a long colonial history and exciting modern developments. Begin by visiting Pettah floating market, found on the banks of Beira Lake in Fort, the financial district. Opened in 2014, the 92 floating stalls sell a diverse range of clothes, shoes, fabric, gadgets and jewellery. Souvenirs here are cheap but be prepared to haggle. As you walk through the busy crowds, a mixture of tourists and local shoppers, you'll see freshly made dishes being prepared at local food stalls. Make sure you grab some *roti* (flat bread) as you wander along the market's pavilions. By now you will have noticed the prominent smell of Beira Lake, an ongoing issue in the area. Once you've finished, exit the markets to the east. W E Bastian Mawatha; open 8am-12pm.

2 GALLE FACE GREEN

The easiest way to get around is by using the city's plentiful tuk-tuks, most of which use meters. Fares start at Rs 66 (33p) and charge Rs 30 (16p) per kilometre plus waiting time. A ten-minute ride west along Lotus Road will take you past several buildings from the island's Portuguese, Dutch and British colonial periods. Once you have reached the seafront, head south and you will arrive at the historic Galle Face Green – this journey should cost no more than Rs 150 (82p).

Stretching for half a kilometre along the coastline, this urban park once played host to horse races and professional sports in the 19th century. Today these events have been relocated, but the seafront is still popular with families, tourists, kite flyers and street-food vendors. Walking south, you will see many

of Colombo's five-star hotels. The recently renovated Galle Face, more than 150 years old, lies ahead of you, the Taj Samudra to your left and the Kingsbury behind you.

3 GANGARAMAYA TEMPLE

After reaching the southern end of the green, take a tuk-tuk five minutes south-east through Kollupitiya, a bustling shopping district. Located on Sri Jinarathana Road, next to Gangaramaya Park, you will find the Gangaramaya temple, Colombo's most significant Buddhist site. Built more than 120 years ago, the complex boasts an impressive collection of statues displayed on tiered terraces and in high-ceilinged chambers. A standout attraction is a museum housing the "world's smallest Buddha statue", best viewed through the section of magnified glass built into its glass case. Visitors must have their shoulders and knees covered to enter. Open 5.30am-10pm; entry Rs 100 (55p). gangaramaya.com

4 INDEPENDENCE MEMORIAL HALL

Drive ten minutes south past Viharamahadevi Park, through Cinnamon Gardens. One of Colombo's most exclusive neighbourhoods, this district was home to more than 100 hectares of cinnamon plantations during the colonial period. Independence Memorial Hall can be found in Independence Square, and is a refreshing escape from the city's stifling heat and crowds. The monument was erected between 1949 and 1953 on the exact spot Prince Henry, Duke of Gloucester, formed the island's first parliament

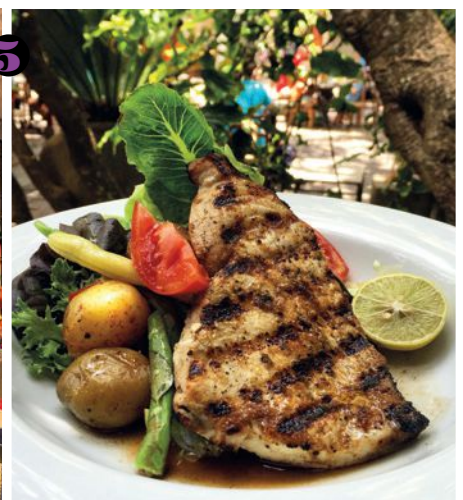
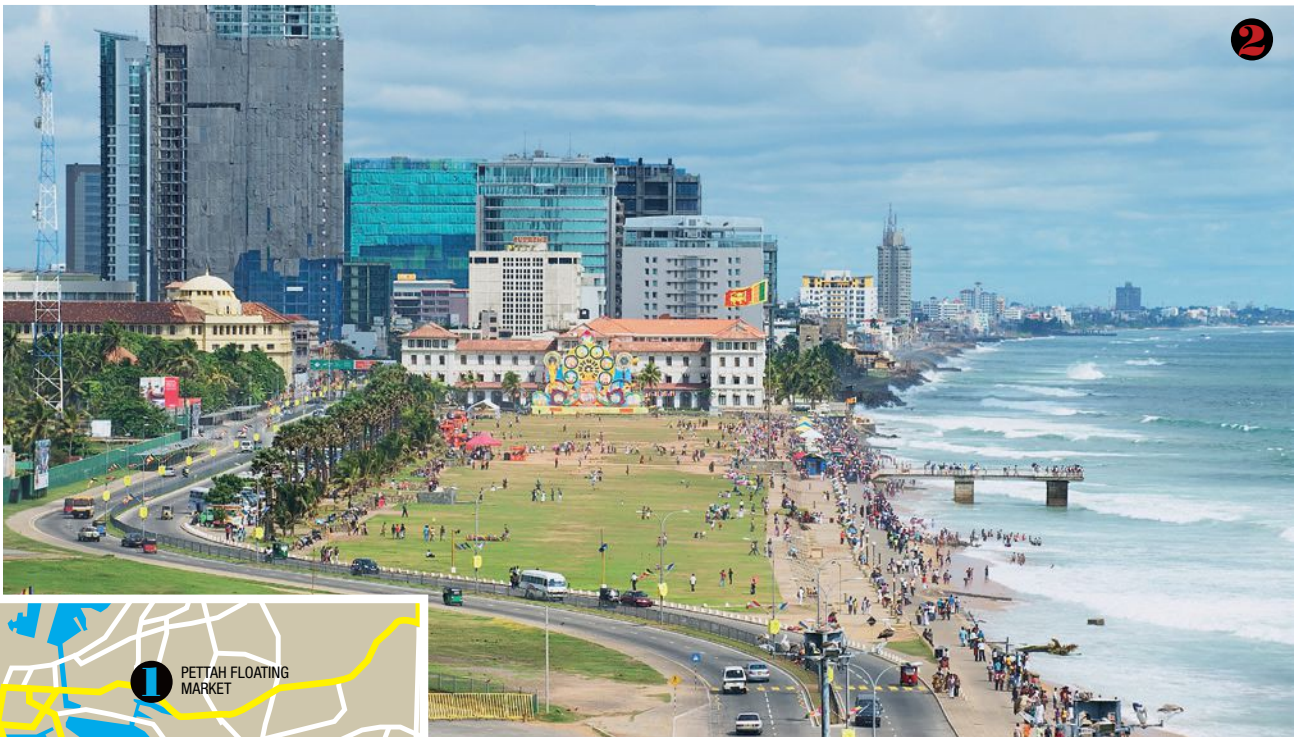
in 1948. Marking the end of the British Empire's rule, the monument is a celebration of Sri Lanka's rich heritage and political independence.

Start at the site's north end, where a statue of Don Stephen Senanayake, Sri Lanka's first prime minister, stands. The assembly hall that lies behind him incorporates architectural styles spanning the 13th century to the Victorian period, featuring sculptures and carvings inspired by the country's Yapahuwa, Gampola and Kandy kingdoms.

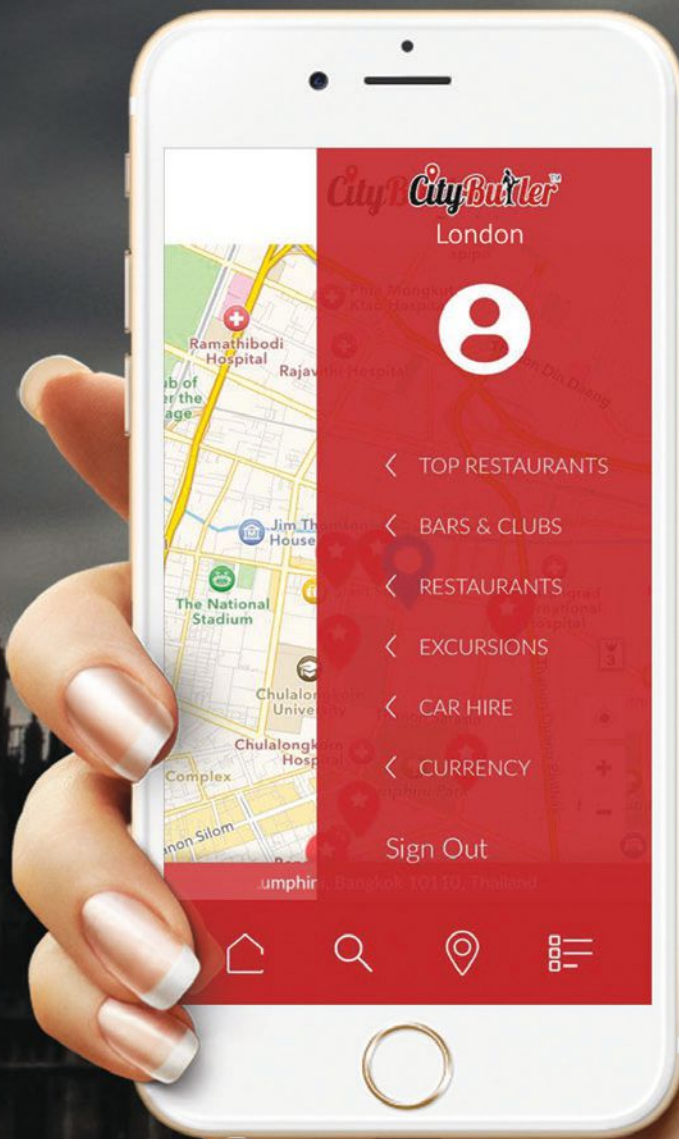
Once you have admired the 60 engraved stone columns supporting the monument, visit the basement museum, which exhibits artefacts relating to Sri Lanka's struggle for freedom, as well as dedications to soldiers who died during the island's civil war (1983-2009). Museum open Tues-Sat 9am-5pm; entry Rs 10 (5p).

5 BAREFOOT CAFE

End by visiting Galle Road's Barefoot Café, a ten-minute ride west along Bauddhaloka Mawatha. Set in a delightful courtyard garden on an otherwise busy street, it's a popular spot for lunch and is famous among tourists and locals for its relaxed ambience and Sunday jazz. An array of fresh sandwiches, soups and curries are served – the black pork curry and Spanish quiche are highly recommended. Don't leave without visiting the adjoining Barefoot Gallery shop, which sells hand-woven crafts and clothes that are perfect for gifts. Open Mon-Sat 10am-7pm; Sun 11am-6pm; 704 Galle Road; barefootceylon.com/cafe ■



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Panerai Luminor
1950 Carbotech
Lab-ID 700; price
on request
panerai.com



On the front line

Once a watchmaker for the Italian navy, Panerai's macho military style and in-house innovations have created a leading global brand. Timothy Barber reports

Among its many merits, the recently opened Design Museum in London serves as a reminder of just how rarefied the category of “design classic” really is. Items such as Charles Eames’s lounge chair (1956), the Porsche 911 (1963), George Cawardine’s Anglepoise lamp (1932) or Harry Beck’s Tube map (1931) are not only formally satisfying, but have blueprints so strong that they’ve brooked little-to-no revision over the decades, without any loss of vitality and style.

As you may imagine, in watches there are a handful of examples – the Rolex Submariner dive watch, the Jaeger-LeCoultre Reverso, the Patek Philippe Calatrava, for instance. Few, however, have come to define the entirety of a brand through a single design – for that, one may turn to Officine Panerai, the Italian firm known exclusively for its large, cushion-shaped watches that have kept to the same essential template since 1936.

As a brand, Panerai is a fairly remarkable concoction: unearthed in the 1990s from almost total obscurity, it has spent 25 years essentially repeating itself, while imperceptibly growing into a luxury powerhouse. It has its own high-spec movement factory, a newly-announced sponsorship of the America’s Cup and a following of hardcore collectors – the self-proclaimed Paneristi – who are among the most obsessive in the luxury world. To that, it’s now adding a serious sense of innovation: this year it unveiled the Lab-ID, a watch with a space-aged movement the firm is guaranteeing for 50 years, meaning it should not need a service in that time.

It’s a remarkable development for a marque that existed for most of its life as a small-scale military tool.



Panerai Radiomir 1940 3 Days 662; £8,650

G Panerai and Figlio was a Florentine watchmaker and retailer (the brand still occupies the original shop opposite the Duomo), which in the 1930s won a contract to supply wristwatches and other precision diving instruments for use by frogmen in Mussolini’s navy. In particular, they were to be used by the divers who piloted the *maiale* human torpedoes that registered considerable success against Allied shipping in the Mediterranean.

In fact, these were the very first watches designed for professional military use under water. It was Rolex that supplied the distinctive cushion case and movement – in auction catalogues, vintage models are sometimes listed under Rolex rather than Panerai – while Panerai’s own design of dial was used. Conceived for strong legibility in darkness, its markings were cut out to reveal luminous paint, patented by Panerai itself, sandwiched underneath.



Vintage Panerai 3646 1943

The arrangement continued after the war and, for several decades, Panerai remained a small and obscure affair. It was only in the 1990s that things came to greater attention when Sylvester Stallone discovered them in the window of the Florence boutique, commissioned a handful for friends and started wearing a Panerai on film. Soon, other watch aficionados – and the luxury conglomerate Richemont, owner of Cartier, Montblanc and others – caught up with an idea that a handful of collectors of the vintage military models had known for years: that Panerai had, pretty much by accident, created something seriously cool.

But a Panerai, compared with similarly chunky “bro watches” from brands such as Hublot or IWC, has a cultured, old-fashioned allure that’s rather singular. My favourite is the Radiomir 1940 662 – with a brown dial that recalls the “tropical” patina found in some vintage examples. With the sparse, modernist dial language, great expanses of curving, polished surface, and straps of rich leather as thick as a horse’s bridle, Panerai watches are satisfyingly powerful, but deeply refined with it.

Richemont recognised this, and bought Panerai in 1997. Investment in a sizeable factory has brought a suite of its own movements, the sturdy style of which reflects the old utilitarian purpose with an emphasis on long power reserves and discrete complications. Last year, Panerai unveiled a minute repeater made entirely in-house. It’s an example of just how far a perfect design idea can be stretched, without actually being stretched very far at all. Perhaps only an Italian marque could come up with a utilitarian military tool that wears the sheen of luxury with such serendipitous style.

■ Timothy Barber is *The Telegraph’s* watch editor.





Safe as houses

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

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

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

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

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





WOCKET US\$179

wocketwallet.com

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



BLUESMART ONE £399

uk.bluesmart.com

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



CANARY SMART HOME SECURITY DEVICE £159

canary.is/uk

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



TILE MATE £23

thetileapp.com

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



ARMOURCARD US\$60 (plus US\$5 UK shipping)

armourcard.com

Credit card skimming is a growing problem, with increasingly sophisticated scammers able to remotely hack contactless payment cards and even ePassports. This is where Armourcard comes in, a device that slides into your wallet and creates an electronic force-field to thwart intruders. Unlike many similar gadgets, Armourcard "actively" protects your information, rather than simply providing a passive barrier: nothing within six inches will be accessible, making it one of the most powerful data-protection solutions available.



**TUMI ID LOCK
L-FOLD WALLET**
£95

uk.tumi.com

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



**NEST CAM
SECURITY
CAMERA**
£159

store.nest.com/uk

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



**WD MY
PASSPORT 4TB**
US\$120

wdc.com/en-gb

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



**DYNOTAG
ALUMINIUM
LUGGAGE TAG**
US\$15

amazon.com

Every suitcase should have one of these affordable, stylish aluminium tags. If someone should find your luggage unattended, the tag, printed in English and Spanish, will direct them to scan the QR code or visit the unique web address, bringing up your contact details. Each tag can be individually programmed through your personal (free) Dynotag account. As the tag is "passive" – it doesn't contain any electronics, instead relying on the phone of whoever finds your stuff – you don't have to worry about it running out of battery.



PIXIE
US\$50 for two "Points"
getpixie.com

Described as "Pokemon Go for your iPhone", this will ensure you never lose your iPhone or keys again. Pixie "Points" come in packs of at least two, with one attached to your phone (order soon and get a free iPhone case; Android not currently supported) and the rest stuck to your favourite possessions. Tracking items works using augmented reality – rather nauseatingly branded "Pixie Dust AR" – overlaying the "lost" item over the real world using the free app. It works within 150ft outdoors, or 30-50ft indoors, and when you get close, it beeps until you have found your stuff. ■

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Cancun	£1098	Jakarta	£1198	Palm Springs	£1298	Toronto	£798
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Caracas	£1098	Kauai	£1598	Philadelphia	£798	Tucson	£1298
Charleston	£1198	Kingston	£998	Phoenix	£1298	Turks and Caicos	£1298
Charlotte	£1098	Kolkata	£898	Pittsburgh	£1198	Vancouver	£898
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Cincinnati	£1098	Kuwait	£798	Raleigh Durham	£1098		
Christchurch	£1998	Lagos	£898	Reno	£1298		
Cleveland	£798	Las Vegas	£998	Richmond	£1098		

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1947

Qantas starts Kangaroo Route

Alex McWhirter looks back at the launch of the carrier's Sydney-London service, which marks its 70th anniversary this year



It's generally believed that the "Kangaroo Route" refers to the many air services linking Europe with Australia via South East Asia. But, in truth, the term is a Qantas trademark. It applies only to Qantas services linking the UK with Australia via the Eastern Hemisphere.

Qantas began flying Sydney-London via the Kangaroo Route in December 1947 using a Lockheed Constellation. There were 29 passengers and 11 crew and the flight called at Darwin, Singapore, Calcutta, Karachi, Cairo and Tripoli.

Overnight stops were made in Singapore and Cairo.

Over the years, flights became faster, passenger numbers increased and the route was shared with BOAC, later to become British Airways. Today, the route has changed beyond all recognition. The past few decades have seen a big rise in airlines based in the Gulf and Asia. These indirect carriers now dominate the market, with many dozens of daily services to numerous cities Down Under, while Qantas and BA services are reduced to a total of three one-stop flights daily from London to Sydney and Melbourne.

Now Qantas plans to regain some of its lost Kangaroo Route prestige. It will inaugurate a Perth-London nonstop service in March next year using the B787 Dreamliner – a far cry from the noisy and slow Constellation of 1947. ■



Pictured: Kangaroo Route posters from the 1940s and 1950s

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