

World Traveller

Issue One Hundred and Seven | March 2017

Complimentary Copy

FAR-EAST FANTASIES

Terraced rice paddies, sizzling cities and exotic panoramas – get the very best out of Asia

MOROCCO A LA MODE

Hipster cafés and serious surf-vibes abound in the port city of Essaouira

Mexico's Pacific Coast

Baking-powder beaches, hedonistic resorts and an underwater nirvana: discover this celebrity playground



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Victoria Thatcher

Editorial Director

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David Wade

Managing Editor

Emma Laurence

Editor

Hayley Skirka

Art Director

Andy Knappett

IllustrationsAdam Avery, Jacob Stead
& Tommy Parker**Sales Manager**Lisa Price
lisa@hotmediapublishing.com
+971 4 375 3608**Production Manager**

Muthu Kumar

March 2017**ISSUE ONE HUNDRED AND SEVEN**

With winter disappearing into the distance, it's that time of the year again when spring is on the horizon, the weather is gorgeous and it seems that there's a whole bunch of festivals unfurling. Here in Dubai, it's also when celebrities flock to town, with Rod Stewart, Guns N' Roses and Bryan Adams all making an appearance this month. In keeping with the celebrity theme, we've been exploring the beautiful Pacific coast of Mexico, a longtime favourite with the Hollywood elite. With endless baking-powder sands, untouched vistas and a tropical underwater world, it's easy to see why.

We're also looking east to some of the adventures waiting to be discovered across Vietnam and Cambodia, the of-the-moment hot spots in South Asia. From jungle-covered temples and rolling mountains swathed in rice paddies to bustling metropolises steaming with delicious street eats, we show you how to get the best out of this Far East region. Keeping with destinations in vogue, we unearth the best of Essaouira on Morocco's Atlantic coast. The surfing paradise is packed with trendy boutique hotels, authentic eateries and gorgeous scenery, proving that the kingdom of Morocco isn't all bustling souks, snake charmers and lolloping camels.

With new air routes from the Middle East to Dublin, a quick trip to the capital of the Emerald Isle is called for, and we're also showcasing beautiful Montenegro, set to soar with direct flights launching from Dubai to Tivat. And, in contrast to all this trendsetting, we take a step back in time to find out more about Oman's most precious commodity on the beautiful coast of Salalah. Enjoy.

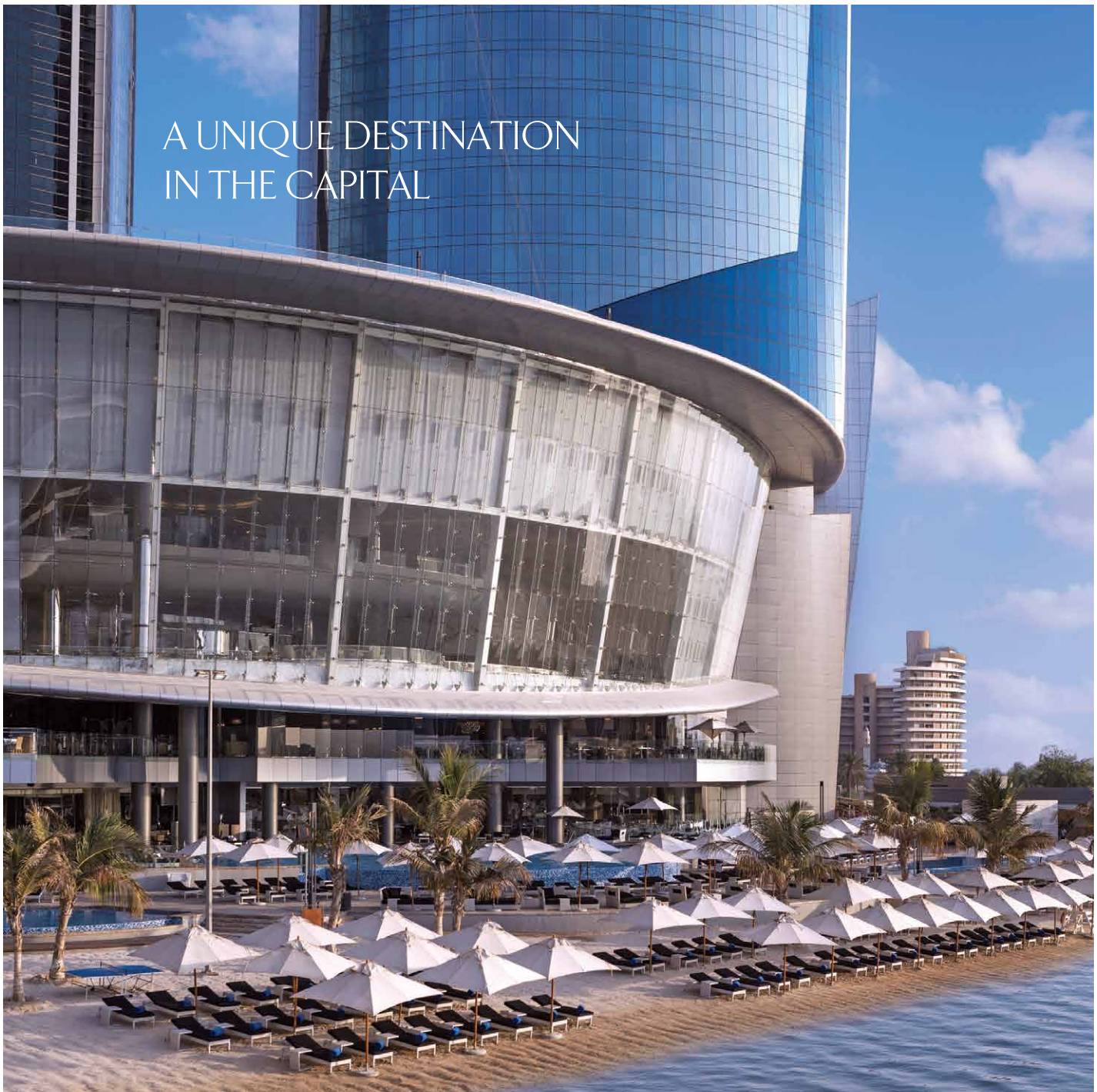
Hayley Skirka*hayley@hotmediapublishing.com*

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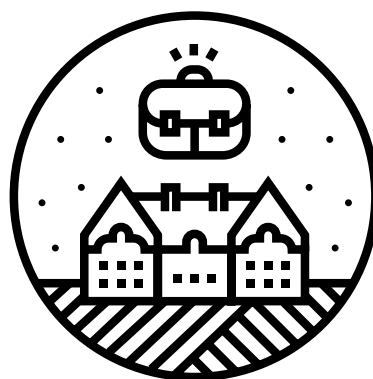
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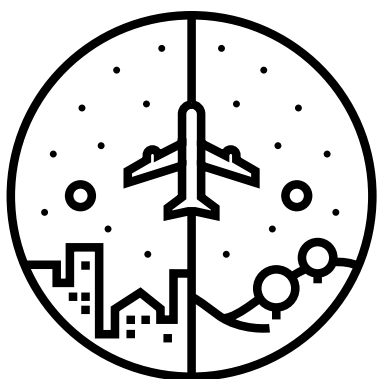
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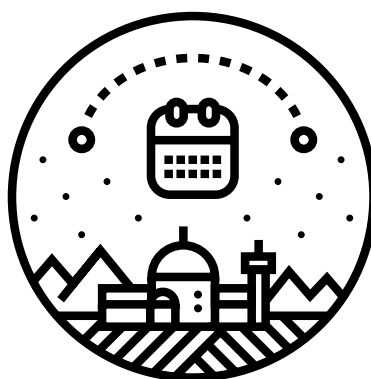
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Escape it all and unwind with a short break. Our monthly look showcases the GCC hotels where memories are just waiting to be made

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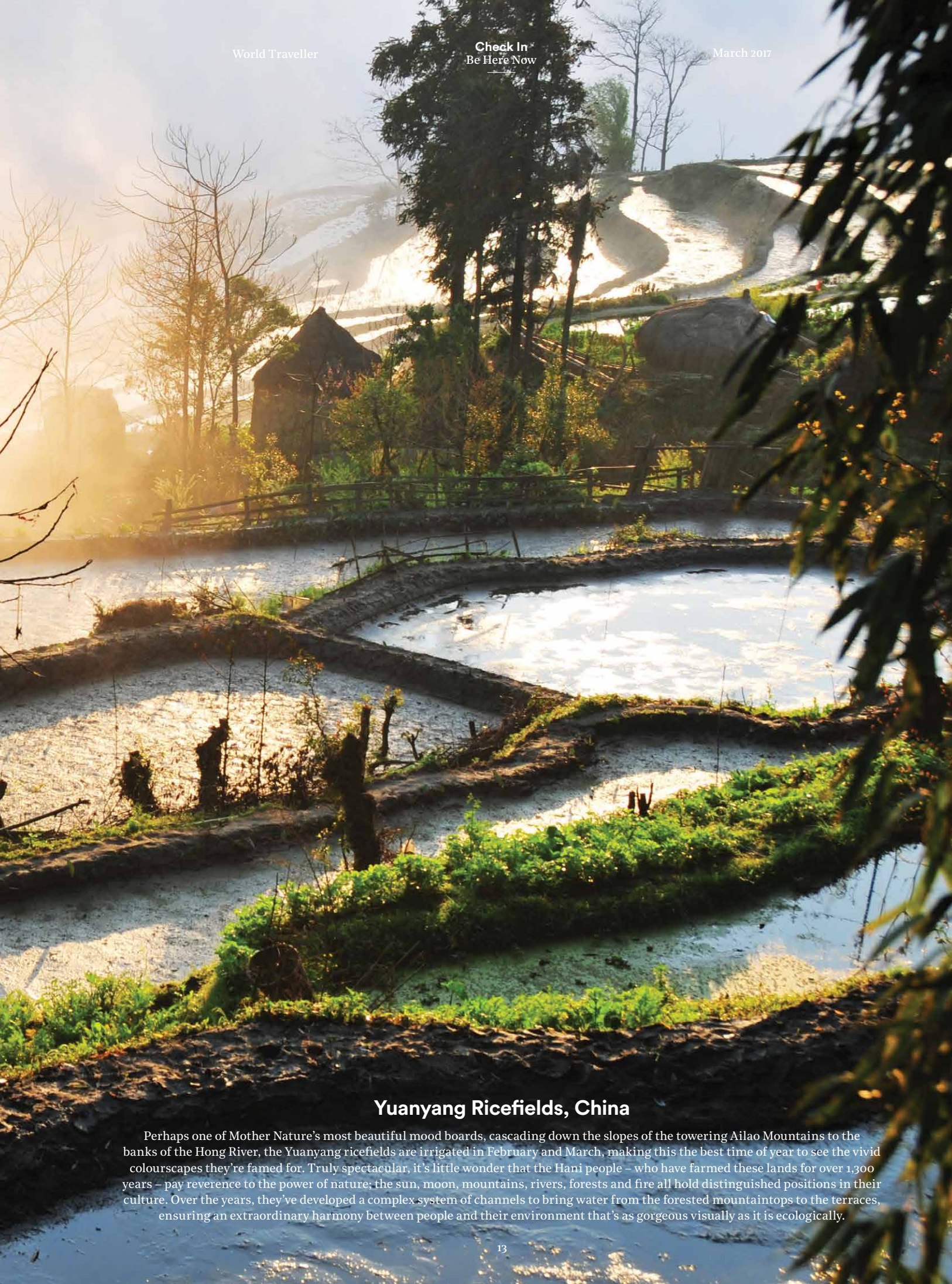
Be Here Now

Holi Festival, India

India's festival of colours has taken the world by storm and you can now find insignia-fuelled celebrations everywhere, but there's nothing quite like experiencing this ancient Hindu celebration in its native land. Clouds of pink, purple, red, blue and yellow dust fill the air, colourful flower showers are sprinkled over participants and people take to the street singing folk songs as they mark the beginning of spring. Expect the air to be filled with music, the streets to be filled with chatter and a general sense of jovial celebration at this exciting event, this year set to take place on 13 March.



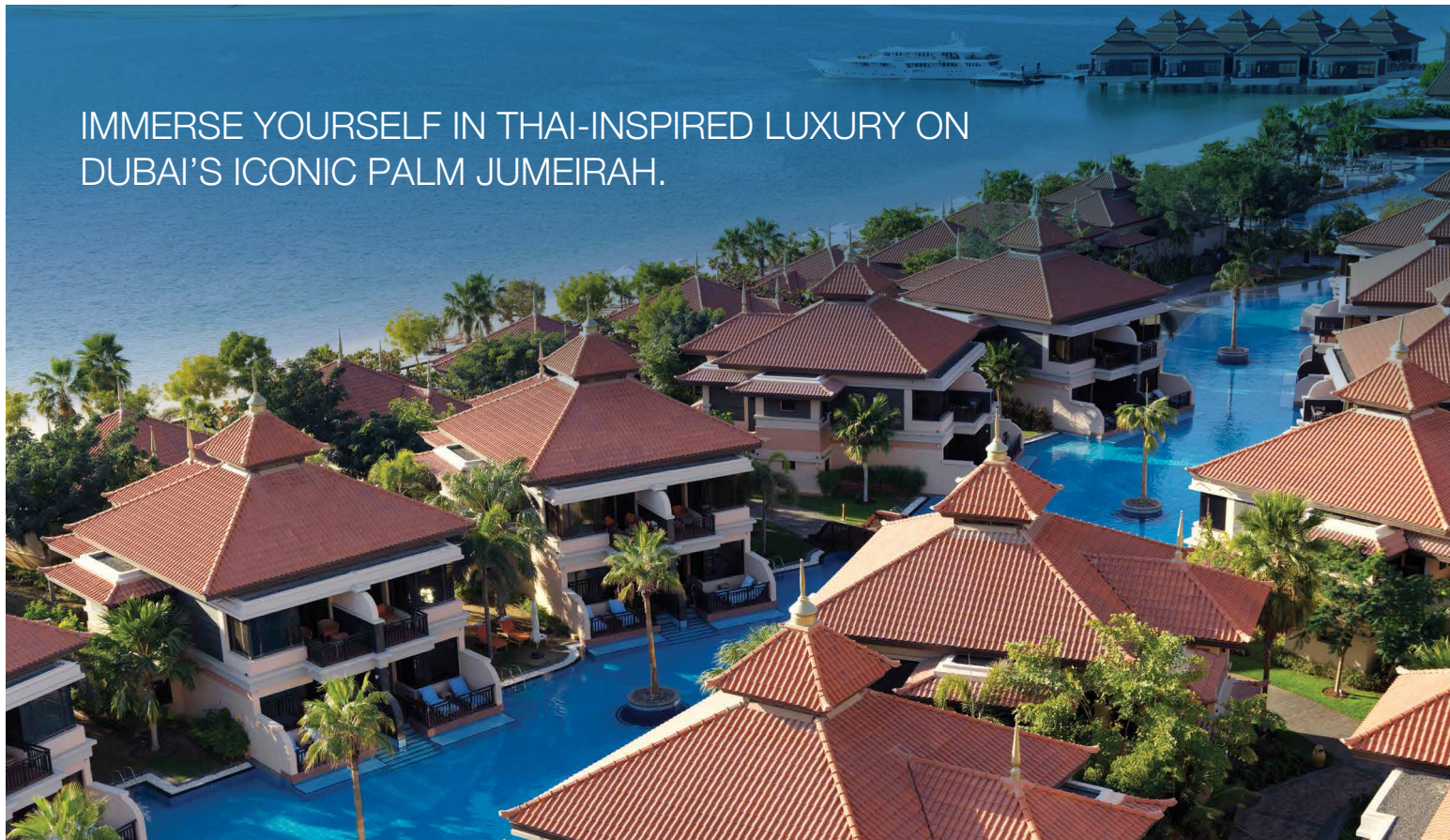




Yuanyang Ricefields, China

Perhaps one of Mother Nature's most beautiful mood boards, cascading down the slopes of the towering Ailao Mountains to the banks of the Hong River, the Yuanyang ricefields are irrigated in February and March, making this the best time of year to see the vivid colours they're famed for. Truly spectacular, it's little wonder that the Hani people – who have farmed these lands for over 1,300 years – pay reverence to the power of nature; the sun, moon, mountains, rivers, forests and fire all hold distinguished positions in their culture. Over the years, they've developed a complex system of channels to bring water from the forested mountaintops to the terraces, ensuring an extraordinary harmony between people and their environment that's as gorgeous visually as it is ecologically.

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Globetrotter

Castles in Dresden, comfort-food fine dining across the world, new hotel openings in Fujairah and Congo, and the rise of Montenegro: we discover all that's hot in the exciting world of travel this month...



Introducing... FAIRMONT FUJAIRAH

Nestled among the rugged peaks of the Al Hajar Mountains with the Arabian Gulf lapping at its shores, the Fairmont Fujairah is a brand-new addition to the east coast of the United Arab Emirates. Fujairah's only art-inspired resort, expect to be impressed by the interiors here – every detail has been carefully considered. From the concierge desk crafted from mock luggage to the travel-related quotations carved into the lobby walls, there's an overwhelming sense of elegance and a strong appreciation of art throughout.

Modern sculptures inspired by the ostrich eggs that can be found at the Fujairah Museum sit opposite the hotel's Moroccan teahouse, Arteasan. A wall of discovery escorts guests from the lobby level down to ground, where the brightly coloured Canvas, the hotel's all-day eatery, serves up delicious local and

international buffets. Outside, the tiled swimming pool is thoughtfully temperature-controlled, ideal for swimming in all year round. Boats bob happily in the adjacent marina and watersports are available.

After building up an appetite on the water, grab a bite to eat at IAMMAI against a fantastic backdrop. Or, if it's relaxation you seek, drop by Willow Stream Spa, a rustic haven with a whole host of therapies – we love the Caribbean rain-shower experience.

Dinner at Copper Lobster is not to be missed. Paying homage to the emirate's fishing traditions, thick ropes intertwine around wooden posts and the menu offers an array of seafood delicacies, all beautifully presented. Sit outside to enjoy colourful creations served up by the resident mixologist, accompanied by beautiful sea views.



Royally historic

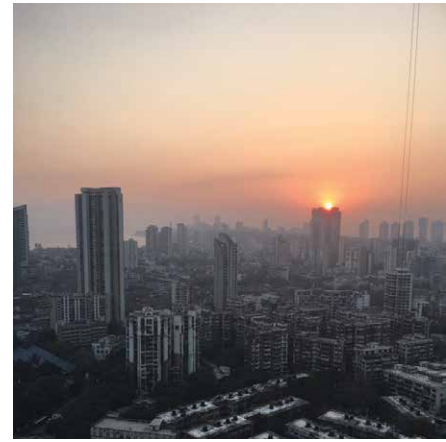
The capital of Germany's Saxony offers a whole host of historical draw cards, but should you bed down in an 18th-century trading house or an ancient castle? The choice is yours

GEWANDHAUS DRESDEN

- **What to expect?** This 18th-century trading house of tailors and fabric merchants has been reborn as a boutique hotel with sleek public areas, beautiful rooms and a breakfast worth talking about. Drink in true luxury with furnishings created by craftsmen, cakes made by in-house pastry chefs and service that is second to none.
- **Where?** In the heart of the city and within walking distance of the historical district, you're perfectly placed to visit Semper Opera, the beloved opera house on the Elbe River, and the beautifully reconstructed Frauenkirche. If you visit in winter, don't miss the world-renowned Striezelmarkt Dresden.
- **Must-do?** Don't miss the stunningly designed indoor pool, sauna and Turkish bath. Afterwards, opt for a spot of grape tasting with specially selected Saxon varieties, or watch the cake artists at work in the patisserie as you enjoy a gourmet coffee.

HOTEL SCHLOSS ECKBERG

- **What to expect?** High above the River Elbe, amid a forest of old trees, this traditional castle mansion has an unmistakable charm and a magical presence that's sure to impress.
- **Where?** Set in its own riverside park, perhaps the only drawback to bedding down at this abode is that you'll never want to leave to explore what else the city of Dresden has to offer. But you definitely should; pay a visit to Pillnitz castle and head to the Berg-und Wasserpalais to see the museum of applied arts. Or let the hotel organise a tour down the water on the oldest fleet of paddle steamers in the world.
- **Must-do?** Dine in the historic garden hall upon timber banquet tables, or enjoy truly magnificent views with your meal in the pretty winter garden. Head out for a morning run around the Castle Park – the grounds are a delight, and the perfect immersion into your fairy tale-like surrounds.



Culture

• VISUAL SATISFACTION

To coincide with this month's Art Dubai – Dubai's biggest art festival, now in its 11th year – Vida Downtown Dubai has teamed up with visual artist Owais Husain for the first installation of Art in Vida 2017. The resultant work, *Empires Of Memory*, is a fascinating video installation housed within the boutique hotel. Celebrating creativity and individuality, the exhibition is set to run from 10 March to 15 April and will beautifully explore the themes of identity, displacement and memory via mixed media. Detailing the evolution of memory through history, the artist also delves into hierarchies of culture across generations. An interactive totem pole is set to enthral guests as they dive into projections of Husain's mind via abstract videos, while steel trunks play host to subjective interpretations of memory on screens.



• Insider

CHAOTIC CONGO

Perhaps better known for its traffic and robot-controlled intersections, Kinshasa also offers wide-open freeways, colourful markets, eclectic French eateries, and now, the first ever Rotana hotel in Africa. The 101-room Kin Plaza Arjaan by Rotana, in the capital of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, opened last month and is ideal for business travellers or those passing through Africa's second-largest city.



Three ways to... Get adventurous in Asturias

Northern Spain's best-kept secret has rolling meadows, stunning beaches and craggy hills – perfect for a springtime visit

Go off the beaten track

New roads interconnect villages, coastlines and mountains, while well-trodden footpaths are ideal for hikers in search of discovery. The Camino Real de la Mesa follows the old Roman road that formerly linked Asturias with the neighbouring province of Castile and León, and measures just over 25 miles, making it a great way to get acquainted with the valleys.

Get riding

Hire a mountain bike and prepare for epic rides of up to eight hours. The Tour of Spain passes through Asturias, but don't worry if that seems like too much of a challenge – simply hop on a local bus to take care of the hillier spots. From the Lakes of Covadonga to Soto de Cangas, past scenic lagoons and rocky vistas, get ready for a journey to remember.

Catch some surf

The Cantabrian Sea produces solid waves on a regular basis, meaning surfing can be enjoyed year-round, although you may need a wetsuit in the winter. La Barra, near Rodiels Beach, is a great spot for beginners, but those with wave-riding experience should make their way to Tapia, Salinas El Mongol or the lovely Playa Espana.



• Food for thought

BACK TO BASICS

Raise your hand if you love comfort food and then prepare to feel seriously happy, as the future of fine dining is officially going back to basics. These three places know exactly where their bread is buttered...

Aux Lyonnais, Paris

Quality and simplicity are the backbone of this little bistro in the heart of Paris that's headed up by renowned chef Alain Ducasse. Tuck into French comfort food such as Fritots de Saint-Marcellin (little pieces of fried cheese served with leeks and mustard) or go for the hearty black pudding. The portions are large, the flavours robust and the interior delightfully charming.

Hix Soho, London

Beautifully designed, thanks to Mark Hix's artist friend Damien Hirst providing unique pieces for the décor, Hix Soho offers diners simply served, utterly indulgent dishes that are handmade from rigorously sourced native ingredients. Tuck into dishes including Ayrshire veal stew served with January king cabbage, or plump for an all-time British comfort classic with Hix's take on fish, chips and good old mushy peas.

Casa Rufo, Bilbao

Over 100 years old, once inside this unassuming family-run establishment, you'll discover an intimate network of hidden rooms and secret corners where the corridors are lined with all sorts of delicious typical Basque preserves, oils and vegetables – all of which are for sale. The menu is simple and traditional with Basque country classics that can be expertly paired with grape, and everything is cooked with a healthy dose of Spanish know-how.

• App

SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE APPS

iDiscover is a great new app that preserves a city's heritage through the input of locals. Relying on the people who know the place best, the app details walking and cycling routes as well as maps for travellers, allowing them to discover off-the-beaten-track gems and unique shops as well as the more well-known sites. You can download it free of charge, although in-app purchases may be required.



• Going up in the world

LAND OF WONDER

Where? Tivat, Montenegro

Why? This tiny country is about to witness a tourism boom with FlyDubai soon to launch direct flights from Dubai, twice a week from June to September. What's more, GCC nationals are exempt from visas while those holding a UAE residence visa can simply get the required visa on arrival, simple.

What? Tucked between Croatia and Albania, expect gorgeous beaches, ancient towns, beautiful mountains and superyacht-stocked

marinas in this Adriatic heaven. Wake up along the beautiful coastline, have lunch on the banks of Skadar Lake, and enjoy an evening walk in the Montenegrin mountains – we dare you not to fall in love with the place.

Where to stay? The Regent Porto Montenegro is a great choice with an unrivalled waterfront location and a backdrop of lush mountains. Overlooking the marina, it's aptly nautical and offers plenty for guests to revel in. A five-storey oasis of elegance and comfort inspired by Venetian Renaissance masters, check out the Regent Spa, dine in style and simply enjoy.



My City
Montreal, Canada



JOEY GHAZAL

The gastropreneur and founder of Dubai's The MAINE Oyster Bar & Grill gives us the low-down on Québec's most sparkling city

By far the most European city in North America, Montreal was founded by French missionaries around 8,000 years ago and is now a melting pot of cultures and ethnicities. Best known for Céline Dion, Cirque du Soleil and the Canadian Grand Prix, there are many other icons worthy of recognition. **St-Viateur** bagels, Portuguese chicken at **Romados**, warm pies at **Rustique**, foie-gras poutine at **Au Pied de Cochon** or the world-famous smoked-meat sandwich at **Schwartz's**, to name just a few.

Home to some of the finest restaurants in North America, the dining scene is packed with renegade chefs and perfect little restaurants like **Le Club Chasse et Pêche**, **Hoogan et Beaufort**, **Bouillon Bilk**, **Le Filet** and **Garde Manger**. If you want to brunch like the Québécois, don't miss Martin Piccard's take on the **Cabane à Sucre Au Pied de Cochon** (Sugar Shack), where maple syrup reigns supreme.

Avoid the overhyped, guidebook-recommended sites of Expo 67 and Stade

Olympique and only make your way to **Ile Sainte-Hélène** for the electronic-music scene at **Picnik Electronik** – every Sunday, from May to October. If culture is what you're after, **Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal** never disappoints. Montreal is also full of emerging artists; get a glimpse of what lies ahead at **Never Apart** or **DAX** galleries.

The city's relationship with music is no secret and no story is more famous than John Lennon's 1969 bed-in at the **Queen Elizabeth Hotel**, where *Give Peace A Chance* was penned. The cultural centre of Montreal is **Place Des Arts**, home to festivals like the Montreal Jazz Festival and Francfolie, and the summer brims with other offerings like the Just for Laughs comedy festival, Osheaga and the International Fireworks Festival, equivalent to the Oscars of the pyrotechnics world.

An extremely bike-friendly city with over 350km of cycle paths, springtime and summer are perfect for touring Montreal's architecture

on two wheels, taking in **Old Montreal**, **Notre-Dame Basilica**, **Mary, Queen of the World Cathedral** and the **Montreal City Hall**. The winter, on the other hand, is sub-arctic and partly why Montrealers brag about having one of the largest underground networks in the world. Hockey is to this municipality what horse racing is to Ascot, and the **Montreal Canadiens**, affectionately known as The Habs, are the city's *raison d'être*. If you're lucky enough to visit during game season, tuck into a pre-match feast at **La Queue de Cheval Steakhouse**, the ultimate man cave and an ideal pre-game spot.

Fall is my favourite time of year – there's nothing like discovering the **Plateau** and the **Golden Mile** as the leaves turn brown. Try brunch at **Beauty's** then stroll down **Rue St Denis** and stop by **Atwater Market** just off **Rue Notre Dame**. Vibrant and historically rich, you need at least five days to discover Montreal properly, and make sure you go hungry.

Ask The Expert



Rob Arrow

Head of product at dnata

Rob Arrow is a self-confessed hotel geek. With over a decade of experience in the luxury travel industry, Rob loves nothing more than talking hotels and discovering destinations. His favourite country is Lebanon, his beloved city is Melbourne, and his dream is to own a boutique retreat in the Italian Alps

Q. Is Doha worth a visit on a weekend or is it just like the Emirates?

A. I loved seeing this question when it came in and my answer, in its shortest form, is a resounding YES. Doha is only a quick flight from Dubai and while there are indeed many similarities, it also offers some gems that too many people don't yet know about. One thing I love about Doha is that it's a little less busy than Dubai, or even Abu Dhabi.

Over the past four years, it's also had a much-needed surge in top-quality luxury accommodation and now boasts **The St. Regis**, **Kempinski**, and even **Anantara Banana Island** – an almost Maldivian experience right in the heart of Qatar's inner islands. One property that really stands out is the **Shangri-La Hotel Doha**. Merely a year old, it has a wonderful charm with fantastic dining options, well-appointed rooms, a secluded swimming pool and a beautiful garden. Right in the heart of the **West Bay** area, it's also conveniently connected to the central mall.

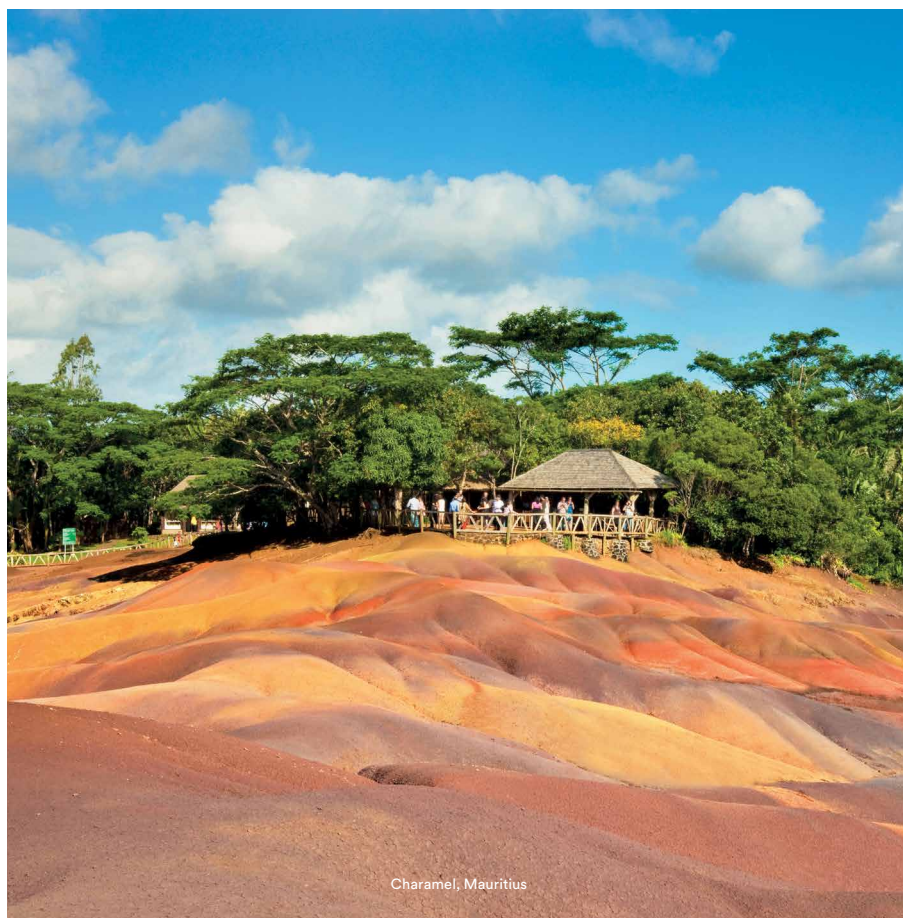
Hotels aside, there are fantastic cultural opportunities like the **Museum of Islamic Art**, which has a great gift shop, ideal for picking up unique pieces from international artists. There's also the **Katara Cultural Village** with its UNESCO fortress, stunning mosque and amphitheatre, where events are often held. Finally, don't miss **Souq Waqif** for grabbing some bargains or a spot of people-watching.

When it comes to dining, there's a great emerging restaurant scene – **Nobu** at the Four Seasons is one to check out. Another hidden treasure is **Tiger Cookies** – don't miss the Nutella cookie pie. Definitely worth hopping on a plane for, even the airport is a talking point with amazing shops, great food and fantastic art pieces, all right on our doorstep.

Q. I want a luxury island break but don't know whether to pick the Maldives, Mauritius or the Seychelles?

A. This is an interesting question and one I tend to get a lot. With so many amazing resorts now available across the Indian Ocean, it can make it quite tough to know where to choose, but it's very much about knowing what you want to get out of your trip. When you consider all three archipelagos, it's obvious that they each offer something quite different.

If you want luxury and seclusion with a twist of romance and a hint of *Robinson Crusoe*, then



Charamel, Mauritius

the **Maldives** is for you; the luxury of some of the resorts here is unbeatable. The recently opened **Soneva Jani** is an all-Overwater Villa base that features 23-second retracting ceilings to allow you to fall asleep in luxury, and simultaneously under the stars. And the brand new and highly futuristic **The St. Regis**, with full butler service, is luxury unrivalled.

If you want a touch of seclusion but with the option to explore a little, then the **Seychelles** is the place to be. Try the **Four Seasons Seychelles**, where you can look out over the beautiful world below from your hillside pool villa and easily make a day trip to the quaint capital of **Victoria**. It may even be an idea to combine your stay with a visit to **Praslin** (a short internal flight away) to stay at the **Raffles** resort – total luxury accompanied by beaches and the stunning **Vallee de Mer**. Or go for rustic luxury on **Fregate Island**, where

you can experience luxury at its best without feeling cut off from the rest of the world.

Finally, let's not forget the full list of activities that **Mauritius** offers – it's clearly the archipelago for those seeking adventure. Stay at the newly refurbished **Shangri-La Le Tossierouk** or the recently renovated villas of **Four Seasons at Anahita**, and get out and about by golfing or sailing around the island. It's a fantastic place to discover everything from great golf courses to a rich colonial past and surprising history – for instance, did you know that the salt industry was Mauritius' main commerce before the advent of tourism? With all three places offering something different, simply decide what you want to get out of your trip and your decision makes itself.

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• SEE AND DO

Rewind the clock

As well as its forward thinking, Korea's capital is known for its tradition – so museums, historical sites and ancient culture aren't hard to find. Try the National Museum of Korea for a grand, marble-lined walk down memory lane, or join a tour to wander around World Heritage-listed Changdeokkung, the city's most beautiful palace. Discover more by visiting the precincts of the royal palaces or enjoying a beverage in a tranquil teahouse, and pay a visit to Bongjeonsa Temple on the Han River – a great place to watch monks perform traditional ceremonies.

Explore the future

Want to know how awesome your life is going to be in the very near future? Then a tour of the futuristic Tum is a must. Run by SK Telecom, this museum gives visitors a sneak peak at self-driving cars, shopping avatars and other soon-to-be inventions. Located in the impressive T Tower in the Uijiro district, each exhibit is interactive, with visitors given a compatible

device to use throughout the tour. Be sure to book in advance, at tum.sktelecom.com.

Gangnam style

Not just the subject of the infectious pop song by South Korean rapper Psy, Gangnam is also Seoul's hippest neighbourhood. Lying south of the river, it's a prime spot for expensive real estate, upmarket shopping and over-the-top partying. Pick up outfits by top Korean designers in Apgujeong & Cheongdam, throw some shapes at Octagon, the city's hottest club, and head to Queen's Park to people-watch in wonder as Seoul's fashionistas graze between beauty salon and boutique.

• DON'T MISS

March is the best time to visit as the city erupts in a plethora of blooming cherry blossoms, billowing lilacs and vibrant azaleas. It's also the start of festival season – check out the Gwangyang International Maehwa Festival and the Gurye Sansuyu Festival. All the main streets hang giant national flags, making it a great photo opportunity.

• EAT AND DRINK

Junsik

Headed up by Jung-sik Yim, the so-called king of new Korean cuisine and owner of the Manhattan outpost of the same brand, this place is a must-visit. Expect traditional ingredients served in an ultra-modern manner from the master of molecular offerings at this fine-dining eatery with a fantastic atmosphere. Try the branzino served with house-made tofu and mussel broth – as beautifully plated as it is delicious.

Vatos Urban Tacos

Located in Itaewon – Seoul's scruffy backwater – Vatos Urban Tacos is where Mexican and Korean cuisine combine. Funky, relaxed and headed up by three Korean-Americans who've combined their mother's traditional cooking with the foods they grew to love in the States, it's the place to tuck into dishes like kimchi carnitas fries – classic French fries seasoned with braised carnitas and sautéed kimchi – as well as plenty of colourfully crafted mixed drinks.

Thanks Nature Café

As renowned for its animal cafés as for its K-pop, cat and dog cafés are something of the norm in Seoul, but this spot in the middle of Hongdae takes that theme one step further with a pair of live sheep as the main attraction. Decorated in neutral, earth-inspired tones with plenty of lamb accessories, tuck into delicious waffles and aromatic coffee in the presence of the resident fluffies.

• STAY

JW Marriott Seoul

If it's luxury and location you're after then you can't go wrong with a stay at this towering hotel, which offers some of the best views in Central City. Rooms are gorgeously decorated; opt for a riverside room for splendid Han vistas. A three-floor gym, luxury spa and delicious dining options including a whimsical sushi bar await, and you're just steps from shopping on Famille Street, directly opposite the Banpo Bridge and a few minutes' drive from Gangnam.

Hyangnamu House

In the heart of the cultural preservation area that is Bukchon Hanok Village, this guesthouse is perfect for those seeking a Hanok homestay – a wonderful cultural experience and the best way to experience authentic Seoul. Among ancient rooftops and small alleyways, this 100-year-old house boasts artistically styled rooms that offer comfort-hugging beds and spacious porches in one of the most beautiful parts of the city.



Chef's Top Tables: Colin Clague

The name Colin Clague has long been associated with some of Dubai's best restaurants, from Zuma to Jean Georges, via Qbara; now, you'll find the British-born chef masterminding the modern Anatolian cuisine of Rüya at Grosvenor House. Here, he selects his all-time favourite places to eat elsewhere in the world

• NOBU FIFTY SEVEN, NEW YORK

Order: *The black cod and new-style sashimi*

As a former head chef of Zuma, you might think it's strange that I'd pick one of Nobu's restaurants, but I honestly had a completely faultless meal there. It sticks in my memory – the service was impeccable and the food, which I had tasted many times before, in various Nobus around the world, was exemplary. There are two floors with a spacious lounge downstairs – make sure you have a drink there before heading up to the dining room.

• RESTAURANT ANDRE, SINGAPORE

Order: *The menu changes regularly but my standout was ocean-trout confit in citrus oil*

Situated in a terraced house on Bukit Pasoh Road, this legendary restaurant by Chef André Chiang is a dream come true from start to finish. Chiang micromanages every last detail – from the ingredients to the plates to the décor – and it shows. His philosophy, or 'octaphilosophy' (built on eight elements of gastronomy: unique, pure, texture, memory, salt, south, artisan, terroir) is all about ingredients and making the most of seasonality. Classically trained in France with some of the greats, his eponymous eatery is a must if you're visiting Singapore.

• THE FAT DUCK, BRAY

Order: *The 14-course tasting menu*

I have to be honest, molecular gastronomy isn't really my thing as I've never been particularly scientific – however, what Heston Blumenthal has achieved at this iconic English eatery is truly incredible. Boasting as many chefs as customers, the restaurant is housed in an old

16th-century cottage in the beautiful village of Bray, out in the Berkshire countryside. It's a bit off the beaten track but a meal here is a once-in-a-lifetime experience. Make a foodie weekend of it and stop at The Waterside Inn nearby, the Roux family's restaurant where you can also spend the night.

• HYOTEI, KYOTO

Order: *The Asagayu rice porridge*

As classic as it gets, the inside of this beautiful kaiseki restaurant is all woods and tatami rooms. With a rich history dating back over 400 years, it serves the very best food Japan has to offer. They don't tend to bend to Western tastes here, but if you love traditional Japanese cuisine then this three-Michelin-starred enclave makes for essential dining when in Kyoto – not only for the authentic cuisine but also for the stunning building and location, in scenic Northern Higashiyama.

• PER SE, NEW YORK

Order: *The oysters and caviar (well, you only live once)*

Without doubt one of the highlights of the restaurant world, when I visited Per Se several years ago, with another head chef from London, we had to call in a favour from Jason Atherton to get a reservation, they were so booked out. I'm not surprised – the food that Thomas Keller and his team prepared that evening was mind-blowing. We both chose the tasting menu with grape pairing but the two menus were completely different, and being chefs we swapped plates, so in all we tried nearly 30 dishes that night, and everything was perfect. Ten out of 10 and then some.

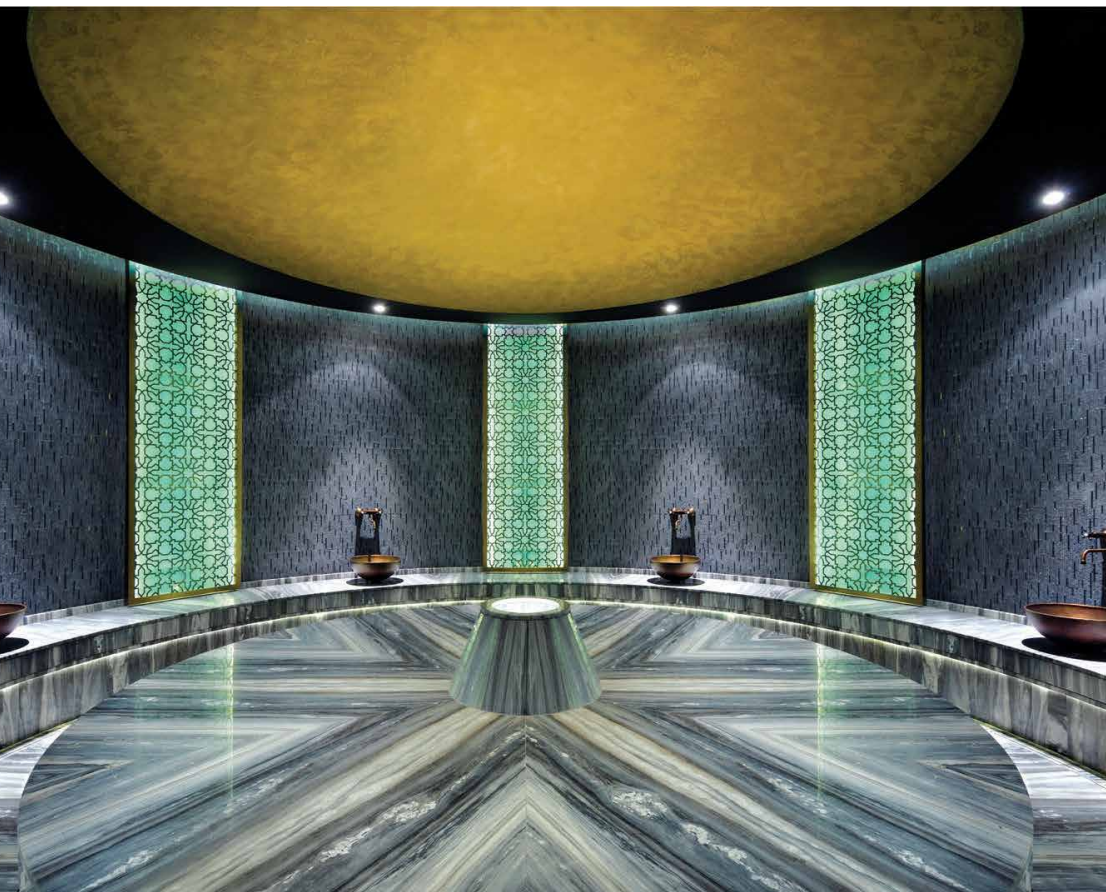


Nobu Fifty Seven's
squid pasta



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Style & Wellness

Set off in style for a boys' weekend in Estonia's capital, discover Glasgow's secrets with a Scottish designer or embrace the quiet as wellness retreats around the world undertake a newfound vow of silence



Silence is golden

From silent eating to wellness monasteries, serious downtime is trending right now. We highlight three of the world's most peaceful retreats

SOUNDLESS SPA

Escape to a world where silence truly is golden at **Therme Laa Hotel and Spa in Vienna**. The first comprehensively silent spa experience in Austria, this is a world of quiet where everything (other than check-in and dining) is literally hush hush. Having only opened its doors in December, this peaceful abode is definitely worth a visit for those seeking to discover the benefits of silence. Beautifully designed based on the principles of sacred architecture, the spa areas are both reminiscent of and named after Choir Stalls, Monastery Gardens and Cloisters.

A VOW OF SILENCE

Having scooped a travel award for Best Mental Recovery spot in 2016, **Eremito** (pictured) in Italy's **Umbria** is a soulful, stunning example of a trend that looks set to spread. Housed in an ancient monastery on over 7,000 acres of unspoilt nature, this wellness monastery has a

focus on meditation, reading, yoga and hiking. Not one for the tech lovers, you're completely cut off from Wi-Fi and phone signals, and instead get to savour what you're eating as the 8pm gong announces it's time for silence in the candlelit dining room. With a DNA based around peace, contemplation and refinding oneself, this place is definitely on our visit list.

TASTE THE QUIET

It's not only spas and hotels that are busy getting quiet; silent eating is also making a noise, although we think we might struggle with this one. **Ichiran** ramen shops – with 60 locations across **Japan, Hong Kong** and the **US** – offer spaces where solo diners sit in booths facing the wall and speak to nobody; instead, lights indicate available booths and diners fill out their order on a menu that is scanned by an electronic reader. Disembodied hands appear with your noodle bowl – no faces, no words and a Zen approach to eating.



Style-Savvy Local
IONA CRAWFORD

Designer Iona Crawford (ionacrawford.com) has exhibited in Paris, Tokyo, London, Beijing and New York. She tells us more about what to expect from the home of Glaswegians

What are people's impressions of Scotland?

Castles, crackling peat-fuelled fires, **tartan rugs**, **kilted warriors** and **haggis** – and while you can find all this in Scotland, Glasgow is more a brave new world of opportunity, creativity and innovation than it is a *Braveheart* movie.

Where do you draw inspiration from?

It's sparked at every touch point, from the most spectacular, colourful, **sensory adventure** to the dramatically mundane.

Where's a great Glasgow breakfast spot?

Bakery 47. Tucked away in an inconspicuous area on the **Southside** of the city, breakfast here is immense. Think slow-cooked cinnamon baked porridge with prune compote, burnt white chocolate and almond crème patisserie, and stuffed sourdough bagels.

What should we do/visit/see?

From the majestic **Kelvingrove Art Gallery** to the expertly curated exhibitions at the **Thistle Gallery** on Park Road, the stunning acoustics of the **Royal Concert Hall** and the dizzy heights of the **Barrowlands Ballroom**, Glasgow is a cacophony of contrasts.

What about eating out?

Finnieston, on the once highly industrial north bank of the **River Clyde**, has undergone a dramatic transformation and is now a mass of cool bars, artsy independent design studios and all manner of delicious dining destinations on a strip beneath the towering tenement buildings typical of the city. Have laid-back seafood in a cute, architecturally masterminded space at **Crabshak**, satisfy carnivorous palates at **The Butcher's Shop** and don't miss the widely lauded **Ox and Finch** on shoppers' favourite **Sauchiehall Street**.

**What to pack for...****A guys' weekend in Tallinn**

With built-in scales so you're never over your allowance, two USB ports and an integrated battery to charge devices while on the move, Raden's A22 Carry-On Smart Suitcase (mrporter.com) is the perfect choice for a weekend escape with the boys exploring all that Estonia's capital on the Baltic Sea has to offer.

1. *In The Sea There Are Crocodiles* by Fabio Geda, USD9.23 at Amazon 2. iPhone 7, from USD649, Apple 3. Wool-blend sweater, USD180, AMI 4. Leather and shearling-trimmed shell down gilet, USD518, Rocky Mountain Featherbed 5. Amazingreen eau de parfum, USD67, Comme des Garçons Parfums 6. Wood-handle twill umbrella, USD309, Francesco Magliar 7. Moisturiser, USD65, Perricone MD



8. Leather passport holder and luggage tag, USD230, Shinola 9. Tom Ford Hedonist PM timepiece, USD1,925, fortis-watchshop.com
 10. Cashmere and leather gloves, USD412, Prada 11. Tortoiseshell acetate rake comb, USD53, Buly 1803 12. Tortoiseshell acetate handle comb, USD53, Buly 1803 13. Green mélangé stretch merino wool-blend socks, USD36, The Worker's Club. All at mrporter.com unless otherwise stated

An Arabian Utopia

Amid rolling sand dunes and under desert skies, the stunningly beautiful Qasr Al Sarab Desert Resort by Anantara offers an Arabian adventure brimming with wonder

As the sun begins to peek over the endless sand dunes, a caravan of camels sways slowly over the desert sand. The morning sky turns from inky black to deep brown, then on to a burnt orange, and the thousands of stars that danced in the atmosphere the night through retire for the day. Like ripples of ribbons in the distance, the sand dunes slowly come to life as the desert sun casts its fiery glow upon them. And there, among all this beauty, lies the wondrous Qasr Al Sarab Desert Resort by Anantara. With a name that translates to 'Palace of Mirage', this exclusive retreat appears as if an entrancing desert oasis, rising unexpectedly from the dunes in the heart of the Liwa Desert.

For an otherworldly Arabian experience, Qasr Al Sarab beckons you with a majestic welcome. A world apart from the towering skyscrapers that the UAE is famed for, this dusty pink and ochre-toned resort offers authentic Arabian rooms and villas in subtle natural tones filled with locally inspired décor. For something truly special, bed down in one of 14 tastefully decorated Anantara Suites, each with a private patio offering gorgeous views over the desert landscape.

When it comes to dining, there's an abundance of fine fare to suit every taste. Al Liwan offers an authentic Levantine bazaar

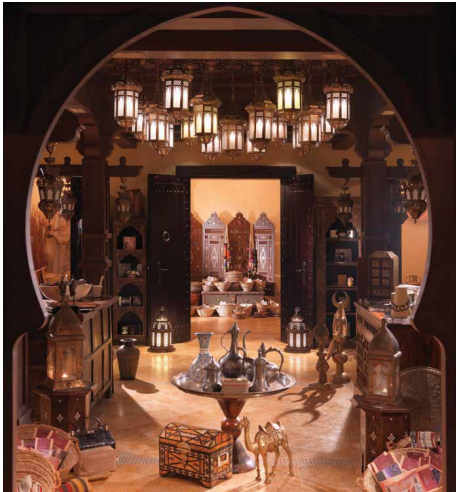
atmosphere, while those seeking a taste of romance will delight at poolside haven Ghadeer. Suhail offers the finest cuts of meat served in a sumptuous rooftop restaurant and Al Waha exudes style and sophistication with an ever-changing showcase of cuisine, all complemented by a sprinkling of Emirati flair. Make the most of this desert oasis with a Dining by Design experience and enjoy a romantic signature dinner atop golden sand as the sun sets behind folded dunes.

Of course, no Arabian retreat would be complete without a camel excursion – head out at sunrise or sunset and enjoy spectacular views just as the Bedouins used to. For something more energetic, try your hand at fat biking or sand boarding, and don't miss the dune-bashing experience in a convoy of gleaming Land Cruisers – a thrilling way to career around this orange landscape. To get a real sense of where you are, try out authentic Emirati pastimes of days gone by, including falconry and archery, and learn more about hunting during a Saluki dog show.

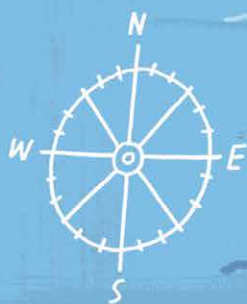
For an Arabian escape filled with auburn-hued scenery sure to stay with you for years to come, retreat to Qasr Al Sarab Desert Resort by Anantara.

For more information, visit qasralsarab.anantara.com





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**D Germany**

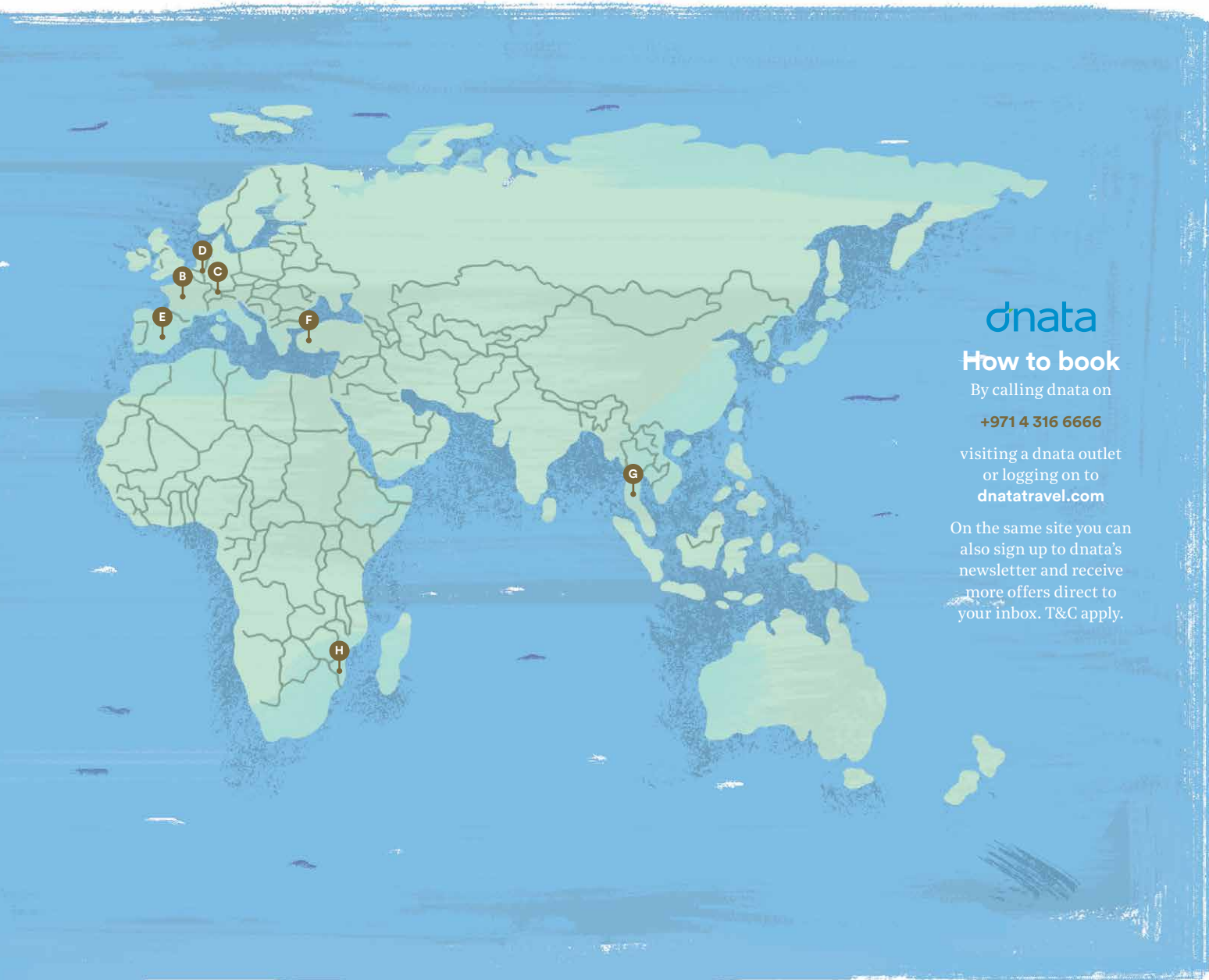
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Thani Maldives; The Sun
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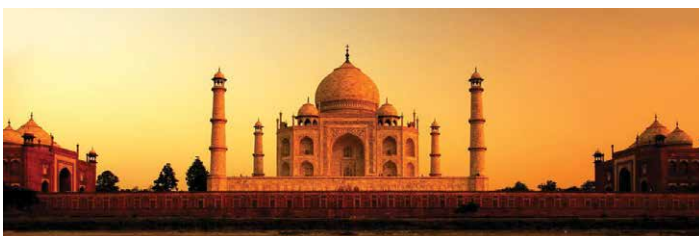
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The Locals' Guide To... Split

Croatia's second-largest city is a buzzing haven of heritage, style and well-kept secrets – we find out more from those who know it best



DINA VRKIC VUCIC

Founder of *missdeestyle.com* (@missdeestyle)

Fashionably suave

An ordinary woman with an extraordinary wardrobe, Dina lets us in on Split's fashion secrets

• What's your go-to shopping destination?

Probably either of the two biggest shopping malls in the city: Mall of Split or City Center, both located 15 minutes by bus or taxi from the centre of the town.

• The city's best-kept retail secret?

Zadarska Street in the city centre, where you can find dozens of small galleries and clothing shops, and where everything is hand-made in Croatia.

• To avoid tacky souvenirs, what would you recommend buying as a memento of a visit to Split?

During spring and summer head to Prokurative Square, near Riva Harbor, where you'll find a fantastic art market. It's great for picking up local hand-made souvenirs in the form of jewellery or art, and you can also buy fine olive oil and grape from local manufacturers.

• What's the street style like?

People are very fashionable and quite self-aware. On the street, especially at lunchtime and in the evening, you'll be forgiven for feeling like you're on something of a fashion runway with people donning everything from high-end brands to second-hand vintage finds. There's one fashion accessory that's a must in Split – high-quality sunglasses!

• Any local designers we should know about?

Dott. and ID concept stores sell hand-made products by the best local designers, and are great places to see talent on the up.

• What's the city's most stylish restaurant or bar, or the current place to see and be seen?

I would most definitely recommend the fantastic Fabrique at the very end of Riva Harbor, as well as Matoni restaurant near the well-known Bacvice beach. For the best beverages in town there's only one place in my book – Sanctuary Bar.



JOZO BABIC

Tour guide (@tourbylocals)

A bit of everything

Local tour guide Jozo tells us where to go and what to do when visiting this historic city

• What should be on everyone's to-visit list?

If it's your first time, the Emperor's Quarters is one of the most impressive Roman ruins in the world; visit the Town Museum and the Temple of Jupiter, too. Bacvice Beach is probably the most popular beach in the region; expect gorgeous sandy stretches surrounded by lots of greenery and street-food stalls where you can try tasty snacks like grilled sweetcorn and Croatian doughnuts.

• Where should art lovers head?

The Gallery of Fine Arts is housed in an old building near Diocletian's Palace that used to be the hospital and dates back to 1792, which is actually quite modern compared to the rest of the street. There are old masters and iconic pieces on the upper floors, while downstairs there's a local connection – all the artists on display were born in or around the Split area.

• Where's best for a simple wander around town?

A great place for people-watching is the Obala Hrvatskog Narodnog Preporoda, also known as the Riva waterfront. Right in front of Diocletian's Palace and bordered by palm trees, grab a seat at one of the cafés tucked under billowing awnings and settle in to see people wander the promenade as boats bob in the harbour in front of you.

• A good picture-taking spot?

The best terrace in the entire city has to be at Café Vidilica, at the top of the evocative Varos quarter. Sit here with a cool drink to see the whole of Split laid out before you and beyond to the islands scattered in the Adriatic Sea. It's kid-friendly thanks to stonewalls guarding the steep drop.

• What would make for a good day trip?

Head to Krka National Park or Plitvice Lakes, or make your way to nearby Mountain Mosor for some really great views and little cafés serving delicious local food.





Palm trees and
promenades in Split



There's one fashion accessory that's a must in Split – high-quality sunglasses



KRISTINE GLANT

Local foodie (@kristineglnt)

Coastal delights

Food lover Kristine spills the best-kept secrets of Split's perfect seaside location

• What's your go-to restaurant in Split?

My absolute favourite has to be Bepa, located within the old city walls. If the weather's nice there's nothing better than settling down on its terrace in the heart of Narodni Trg. Dishes are traditional Dalmatian meals with a twist, and all made from scratch. Don't miss the La Bombaaaa dessert if you've got a sweet tooth.

• What's trending food-wise right now?

Split is as fashionable when it comes to food as it is style. When it comes to back-to-basics dishes, we're already ahead of the pack as our meals are always home-cooked, made with local ingredients and can last for hours. Croatian olive oil is world-renowned; try Uje Oil Bar, where you can eat dinner and buy around 50 varieties of the stuff. Recently, going out for breakfast has become a big thing, too – try Figa Good Bar or La Maison de Sarah.

• The hottest area in town?

Probably one of the best places for visitors to stay is within the walls of Diocletian's Palace – there's a bunch of hotels and guesthouses here and plenty to see and do. It gets a little noisy because you're in the centre of the town but it's a great base for exploring.

• Must-try local foods?

Cuspajz – a type of stew – and also soup; we eat soup all year round, even in the height of summer. Make sure you try some delicious fresh fish, probably caught that very morning, and classic pasticada – a stewed beef dish that the Dalmatian coast is famous for.

• The most stylish restaurant?

Paradigma, opposite the Bellevue Hotel, is a sleek oasis that's definitely one of the city's most stylish spots. The food is totally amazing – it's all fresh ingredients and creative dishes paired perfectly with delicious grape from the region and surrounding areas.

Discover... Dublin

Ireland's thriving capital on the east coast is packed with historic sights, traditional music, cobbled streets and the thundering River Liffey slicing north from south



↓ River Liffey

Carving through the very heart of the city, the River Liffey cuts the traditionally working-class northside from the more uppity southside. The length of the river is peppered with numerous bridges including the Sean Heuston Bridge, James Joyce Bridge and famous O'Connell Bridge. Artwork along the riverside includes the Famine Memorial Sculpture – commemorating the Great Famine of the mid-19th century, during which approximately one million people died and a million more emigrated from Ireland – and the World Hunger Stone. It's the bustling spine of Ireland's capital.





↑ Temple Bar area

Now a favourite with hen and stag groups, this area is Dublin's answer to New York's SoHo. More than any other neighbourhood, it represents the dramatic changes the city has faced in the last few decades. Taking its name from one of the streets of its central axis, the area was targeted for redevelopment in the early Nineties after a long period of neglect and its cobblestone streets now house traditional pubs, upmarket bars, vintage stores and quaint eateries.



↑ **Grafton Street**

Dating back to 1708, this street started off as an inauspicious laneway in the then unfashionable southside of Dublin but is now the busiest thoroughfare in the city and the most popular shopping street with Dubliners. Home of the original Irish department store Brown Thomas and filled with music buskers and street performers, dine in any of the countless bars and restaurants in this bustling strip that's right next to the picturesque Stephen's Green.



Doha to Dublin

Getting to Ireland's capital is going to be a whole lot easier with Qatar Airways set to launch daily flights to Dublin from June 2017.

To book, visit qatarairways.com

→ Port village of Howth

Hop on the DART and head out of town until you reach this pretty port village – it's the last stop. Wear your hiking boots and get ready to trek the cliff-path loop, which will see you rewarded with awesome views towards the Irish Sea, over the cliffs and the rolling green grass. Beginners should start on the blue trail – it's an easy 7km hike that takes less than two hours to complete and gives you epic views. After you've worked up an appetite, check out the weekend farmer's market or head to O'Connell's bar, where awesome vistas over the harbour out to Ireland's Eye and Lambay Island guarantee an inspiring backdrop to accompany your glass of the country's famous black stuff.





World Traveller

Destinations
Far East

March 2017

Far

East

Fantasies

Taking a train through postcard horizons of paddy fields. Tasting the fire of sizzling street food.
Sorting that stylish tailor-made suit. Want to turn your Southeast Asian dreams into reality? Start right here...





**You're dreaming of...****• SUNRISE OVER ANGKOR WAT**

First comes the chorus of the birds, a hundred thousand rainforest voices. Then the dark sky brightens, silhouetting the serrated stupas of Angkor Wat on the horizon, and colouring the moat that surrounds them. A frog plops off a lily pad, sending ripples through the reflections. And then the sun breaks, apricot behind the ruins. Shafts of light through the forest fall on monks as they shuffle to the temple gate, clutching brass begging bowls like upturned bells. The day warms, butterflies fill the air and the fatigue of that 4.30am start fades from your mind.

Angkor Wat is as ancient as the great cathedrals of Europe, part of a ruined city nearly twice the size of modern Edinburgh, protected by a forest park. You'll need at least two days here and it's really worth waking early on both. Try to arrive prepared by prebooking both hotel and driver-guide; the ruins are about 30 minutes from most nearby hotels. On the first day, join the throng at the West Gate for that iconic silhouette view. On the next, go to the East Gate to see the morning light burnish the temples. For a magical half hour, you'll have the buildings almost to yourself.

You want to...**• HAVE AN OUTFIT TAILOR-MADE IN VIETNAM**

Nothing makes you feel more like a don or a diva than slipping into a little number made especially for you. And in fashionable, French-influenced Vietnam, you can get a catwalk-worthy outfit run up for the price of a Michelin-starred main course. In Hanoi, whole neighbourhoods are given over to tailors – of varying quality. To find the best, look for shops that have their own tailors on staff (the others send your measurements out to factories). You should be able to see them snipping and stitching away.

Most have a stash of outdated fashion magazines for you to peruse for ideas, but unless you want to look like an extra from *Dynasty*, it's best to bring a photo or two of your own. Or, better yet, pack a favourite dress, shirt or suit and have it copied – the Thao Silk tailors are experts at this, charging about USD35 for a pair of linen trousers or USD50 for a silk dress (73 Hang Gai Road).

TOP TIP: Get to the tailor's as soon as you can on landing, as you'll require at least one additional fitting (two for a suit) – 24-hour services do exist, but a rush job is unlikely to result in the best fit.

How to do...**• PREAH VIHEAR TEMPLE, CAMBODIA**

You finally reach the ancient stone gates of Preah Vihear Temple, after a slow rumble over a sandstone causeway. It's a long, vertiginous climb, but worth it for the sprawling complex of grand winged walls, balustered windows and slender galleries, busy with carvings of warriors. Visually, it compares to Angkor – but this is one temple you're likely to get all to yourself. Crowning the Dangrek Mountains, it's the highest shrine in the Khmer Empire.

Brushing the border with Thailand, it gives you the best sense of northern Cambodia.

Inaccessible for years, due to an ownership dispute between the two nations, with the issue now settled you can wander peacefully through ancient archways, taking in eerie views across Cambodia's rainforested lowlands. Bring your passport – it may be checked on the way into these remote borderlands. And don't stray further than the temple's grounds as there may still be the odd landmine.

TOP TIP: It can be done in one day, on an eight-hour trip from Siem Reap, but it's better to overnight at Preah Vihear Boutique Hotel.

You want to...**• WHIZZ ALONG ON A SCOOTER IN VIETNAM**

Sweat beaded to his brow, his grin hidden by a white facemask, the bug-eyed driver flips the kickstand. He revs the throttle, jolting the engine to life, and signals to you to hold tight as the lights flicker from red to green. Within seconds, the scooter is weaving through tight alleys, first past a butcher shuttling ducks to market, then a bloodshot-eyed labourer with a washing machine strapped to his motorbike. The whole city is on the move and there's no better way to blend in and see the sights than on a scooter tour. You could hire your own for about USD20 a day (offroadvietnam.com) but the traffic can be deadly, so play safe and join a fully guided trip for about USD125 a day. In the big cities, try Rent A Bike Vietnam in Hanoi (rentabikevn.com) or Flamingo Travel (flamingotravel.com.vn), which offers a number of immersive cross-country trips. Your hair will be dishevelled by the end, but you'll never forget the ride.

You're dreaming of...**• SPEEDING ALONG ON A SLEEPER TRAIN**

There's no better window on life in Vietnam than one in a carriage aboard the Reunification Express, the service that runs the full length of the country. Sit back, coffee in hand, paperback on your side table as the Vietnam snapshots slip by: a family of four squeezed onto a scooter; red sun hanging low over a sodden paddy field, making silhouettes of loping buffaloes; a fisherman casting a net with a hiss over a lagoon. The train creaks across iron bridges and drifts into stations, slowing past cloth-swaddled monks on their way to temple; the hurly-burly of a fruit and veg market; and school kids in impeccably pressed uniforms, rushing out of class like a flock of busy starlings.

You can board at any station. If you choose to go the whole way, embarking in Hanoi, you'll click-clack for more than 1,700km, past the ancient capital of Hue and the long, white-sand beaches of Da Nang and Nha Trang, through the craggy Annamite Mountains and across the broad plains of southern Vietnam, into sultry Ho Chi Minh City.

Don't believe talk about the lack of creature comforts. The Reunification Express is hardly Pullman-plush, but the service is venerable, dating back to 1976, when North and South Vietnam were reunited after the Americans



lost the war. It aimed to open up trade and enable everyday Vietnamese to explore their country. To mark the train's 40th anniversary, last year several of the carriages underwent a major overhaul – repainted in shiny communist red, but updated with decidedly capitalist private air-conditioned berths and waiter service. Book a couchette in a four-berth cabin (or the whole cabin if you're a group) and you'll get just enough space under your bunk for bags. Rides are cheap (a sleeper berth costs about USD60 for the 791km between Da Nang and Hanoi; vietnam-railway.com), and you can hop on and off at stations along the way, such as Hue, or Da Nang's beaches (you do need to buy separate tickets, though). Just remember to bring something warm to snuggle down in: the air-con is icy.

You're dreaming of...

• LOUNGING ON CAMBODIA'S BEACHES

The night is milky with moonlight and stars so bright they light the long sweep of beach and the forest behind. You leave your bungalow and step onto silvery sand still warm from the sun. Cicadas sing. Waves beckon. Go on, peel off your clothes, plunge in. The sea soon glistens from the microscopic, bioluminescent plankton all around you. The next day, take a boat to the coral reef, to swim with languorous turtles and darting fish. An afternoon hike through the forest brings you to a fishing village where wooden houses huddle on stilts over the water, and people pray in a wooden temple, or heave nets from brightly painted longtail boats. That's if you don't want to stay on the sands – watching for hornbills and monkeys in the trees, or just curling up with a book in your hammock.

Cambodia certainly has beaches – on the mainland around Sihanoukville and on the half a dozen small islands a few kilometres offshore. Unlike in Thailand and Bali, where concrete buildings clamour for space, here the sands are empty, with resorts just sparsely scattered, and on the islands there is almost no crime – leaving you safe to wander at will. Among the best barefoot hotels are Kactus, built between the trees on forested Koh Ka Tiev island, and Monkey Maya, just outside Sihanoukville. Each has a beach to itself. More exclusive digs are found at the lavish Song Saa Private Island resort, set in a private reserve: it has huge air-conditioned villas, a lavish spa and an over-water restaurant serving succulent seafood.

Island-hopping is easy. Distances are short and ferries and fishing boats make several daily crossings from mainland Sihanoukville and between many of the islands (fares are about USD18 return). But come soon. The Chinese have big plans.

How to do...

• THE CU CHI TUNNELS

With your knees under your chin, you squeeze through the manhole into the darkened chute, disappearing from view and back in time. Around you are some 250km of tunnels, honeycombed beneath the ground where Vietnam's guerrilla army, the Viet

Cong, concealed living areas, storage depots, landmine factories – even hospitals. With the flutter of bats, it's claustrophobic, and as you breathe the bitterly thick air, the brutality of the Vietnamese war effort truly hits home. There's even the chance to fire AK-47 rifles at targets, which some tourists do, pretending they're Charlie Sheen in *Platoon*. History has clearly taught them nothing.

TOP TIP: Most tourists visit the Ben Dinh site, but it's a far quieter and more powerful experience at Ben Duoc. Both are only about a 50km drive from Ho Chi Minh City.

You've fantasised about...

• SAILING THE MEKONG

Aboard a wooden sampan you cast off in a soft-focus haze, the light slowly beginning to fade, the rice paddies wrapped in mist. As you glance at the swarm of boats departing the wharves, it seems the whole delta is on the move: cigar-shaped water taxis, warped wooden ferries, dug-out fishing canoes, all weighed down with every kind of cargo, human and animal. Ahead lies a vast half-drowned bowl of stilted villages, waterlogged fields and the great river lands of the Mekong, beneath a smoky sky. Survival is easy, says your boatman. You simply need to learn how to stay afloat. Reassuringly, you can also cruise the river on an all-inclusive ship. Routes vary wildly, but consider Phnom Penh to Ho Chi Minh City with Pandaw. Or sail it all in style from Hanoi to Siem Reap and Ho Chi Minh City with Viking Cruises.

TOP TIP: Despite the Mekong's vastness, stretching from Tibet to the South China Sea, it can run surprisingly low. Book during the cooler season (November to February) after the rains have passed.

You want to...

• GORGE ON STREET FOOD

Cloudy broth tickles your tongue, piquant and thick with glassy noodles. The veg in your spring rolls is so fresh and crisp, it could've been picked minutes ago. Curries fragrant with lemongrass and galangal have a chewy nuttiness that makes rice superfluous. Whether Cambodian or Vietnamese, the street food here is divine. Even better, it counts among the world's healthiest eating.

Make for the twisting streets of old Hanoi, between Hang Da and Dong Xuan markets, where every second doorway reveals a simmering cauldron of pho. Maybe, too, a noodle master himself, pulling strands from lengths of dough that will feed diners seated at pavement stools. Makeshift cafés brew java frothy with egg yolk, while streetside canteens serve fish seared with fresh herbs. It all oozes a craftsman's passion.

TOP TIP: Don't be deterred by the crowds; high turnover equals freshness equals safe. Adding chilli kills bacteria, too. Or hire a clued-up guide (streetfoodtourshanoi.blogspot.com) to steer you.

You're dreaming of...

• VIETNAM'S FLOATING MARKETS

They're not peaceful or brochure-pretty. But Vietnam's Mekong River markets are a



photographer's dream, brimming with life and colour. Canoes piled with cucumbers battle on the currents with tugs carrying tomatoes. Busy vendors in conical hats brandish steaming baguettes while steering tiny dug-outs with bare feet. It's a miracle no-one falls in. They're easily visited on a two-day tour from Ho Chi Minh City, or en route down the Mekong, between Vietnam and Cambodia.

How to do...

• CAMBODIA'S KILLING FIELDS

Rising amid the Killing Fields is the imposing memorial of a Khmer-style Buddhist stupa. The silence hangs heavy as you step inside to find tiers of human skulls, testament to the unimaginable horror of the 1975-1979 Cambodian genocide. The Choeung Ek camp is surprisingly small, the fields reduced to memorial gardens. Their history is signposted – otherwise you'd have no idea the deep, overgrown pits here were once mass graves. A visit is almost unbearable, but essential all the same (USD6; cekillfield.org).

TOP TIP: The audio guide (included in ticket) is moving, but locals resent it for taking guides' jobs. Consider a full day with a guide (USD56, including a visit to the S21 prison; insideasiatours.com).

You've fantasised about...

• CRUISING HALONG BAY

Invaders pour in from the North. The battle is all but lost. Then, there be dragons. A fire-breathing beast screams across the sky, a blaze of ferocious offspring at her back. From their mouths, infernos erupt and emeralds spray like cannonballs. Victory is won, Vietnam is free and Halong Bay is born. Or so goes the legend, which doesn't seem that outlandish when you first glimpse this mesmerising UNESCO World Heritage site – just quaint to obscure the 8,000-plus other visitors that arrive every day.

One way to arrive is by seaplane: Hai Au Aviation (seaplanes.vn) is the only operator, with flights from Hanoi costing from USD285 one way. A splurge, yes, but it'll spare you four hours of dreary road travel. And that dragon's-eye view of Mr Whippy clouds over velvety mountains will stick with you for as long as you live. Alternatively, stay overnight. Halong's day-trip boats are restricted to five set routes, with most racing along the same course like a Red Bull-fuelled flotilla (starting from about USD60). By contrast, a one-night cruise can loop among the bay's 1,600 islands at leisure: with Paradise Cruises you'll get to kayak around the tucked-away Cua Van floating village, explore the eerie Sung Sot cave and enjoy a sunset swim in the idyllic bay at Coconut Tree Island. Or try Journeys to the East, which does 'glam' with pimped-up private junks delivering bubbly, private chefs and massages.

TOP TIP: To get the bigger (not to mention less-populated) picture, look for boats doing 'route five' – the day-trip boats stick to routes one to three to get back to port on time, but fewer make it around route four, and fewer still route five.





Opening page: Sunrise at Angkor Wat **Next pages,** clockwise from top left: Don Det on the Mekong River; rowing water lilies down the river in Vietnam; traffic on Lo Duc Street; Siem Reap in Cambodia; a tailor in Vietnam **Previous pages, clockwise from top left:** Koh Rong Island; a Vietnamese street vendor; Ha Long Bay; cycling through Hanoi; Prasat Banan temple **This page:** Occheuteal Beach in Cambodia

● Essentials

Where to stay:

Accommodation in Vietnam and Cambodia ranges from backstreet cheap to palatially opulent and when it comes to the latter, Anantara has two of the best hotels in Vietnam – by a sweeping beach in Mui Ne and riverside in Hoi An. Park Hyatt Siem Reap is the hippest spot near Angkor Wat or, for a taste of colonial charm, try Grand Hotel d'Angkor. Places fill up fast during peak tourist seasons, so booking in advance is wise. Dnata has a whole host of accommodation in both countries.

Editor's tip:

As in most Asian countries, there are always a few street scams to watch out for. The most common is taxi drivers and market sellers trying to overcharge or short-change you, so ask drivers to turn on the meter before getting in, and have plenty of loose change in your pocket for exact payments. Remember that Southeast Asia is still a relatively poor region, so aim to tip people for good service, or if they've gone out of their way to help.

Inspired to travel? To book a trip, call +971 4 316 6666 or log on to dnatatravel.com

Pacific

Words : Katie Bowman

**Come on in, your name's on the list!
The stars have been kicking back
on Mexico's glittering Pacific coast
for years and now you can too...**

Heights

I'm no star stalker. My smartphone doesn't vibrate interminably as news of Jennifer Aniston's latest fringe comes in. Nor do I listen out for the 'plip' of *OK!* magazine on the doormat like a stay-at-home dog awaiting his owner's return. But I am, I'll confess, fascinated by celebrities' travel lives. So when I see Jennifer Lawrence snorkelling with sea turtles off Mexico's west coast, a destination that's already bewitched me with images of empty bicarbonate-of-soda sands; lush Jurassic-like jungle, with palm fronds big enough to surf on; thatched-cabana living (hammocks mandatory); and fresh fish tacos, dripping in habanero sauce, it's almost a stamp of approval. You can sneer if you want. But don't tell me you've never enjoyed your steak 10% more when the waiter tells you George Clooney ordered one the day before.

Mexico gets further gold stars (in both senses) because, unlike LA or St Tropez, it's easy-going and all-welcoming. Velvet ropes and VIP bars have no place here. Which is why the A-list loves it so much, Kate Hudson, Matt Damon, Ewan McGregor, Jennifer Aniston, Beyoncé, Kanye West, John Mayer, Rihanna and Orlando Bloom included. You're as likely to be mopping Tabasco off your chin beside a scruffy surfer as next to Lady Gaga.





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It's a destination that's already bewitched me with images of empty bicarbonate-of-soda sands and lush Jurassic-like jungle, with palm fronds big enough to surf on

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Opening page: Las Casitas de Las Flores, a residential complex within Careyes, Jalisco state **These pages, clockwise from top left:** Beach life on Mexico's Pacific coast; travel vibes in Sayulita; the Sayulita coastline; waves breaking at sunrise in Sayulita

Sayulita:

FOR SURFY SERENITY

If Sayulita were a star, she'd be make-up-free Gwyneth or no-fuss J-Law (who both holiday here). You're on the laid-back Riviera Nayarit, part of historic Jalisco state – home of mariachi – yet just 45 minutes' drive north of Puerto Vallarta Airport (taxis are safe, as is hiring a car). Imagine the Mexico you might have seen in dog-eared history books or sepia photographs on restaurant walls – where horses pull cartloads of guavas across cobbles, and papel picado (that vibrant street bunting) crisscrosses the sky, while a moustachioed trio wails of lost love in the bar. Look down the street and you'll spy surf beyond the market stalls, an aquamarine froth tossing about

surfers and swimsuits. Look up the way, and there's a wall of forest, teeming with geckos, armadillos and hummingbirds, as if it were still 1484 and Cortés was a mere twinkle in his papi's eye. That is Sayulita.

I settled in at Don Pedro's – a thatched beach restaurant, open to the sea – and made myself familiar with his shrimp tacos: three crisp corn tortillas, each buckling under the weight of crunchy cabbage strips, fiery red onion, sweet tomato chunks, and shrimp in light-as-a-4.5-tog-duvet batter, all doused in Salsa Huichol Picante. Then, when the sun's strength dwindled from Hadean to simply scorchio, it was time to try stand-up paddleboarding – a most marvellous Sayulita pastime that marries the coolness of surf with the tranquillity of watercolour painting, yet

still gives you a flat tummy (so that's how gym-hating Cameron Diaz does it). Instructor Bapas weaved us through the swimmers, until we were out on the open water, millpond-still that day, drifting through the peace. Out further still, we paddled around the cove to placid Playa de los Muertos, the area's 'secret beach'. I squinted for Gwyneth, but didn't spot her.

Sayulita is in that perfect stage of gentrification, too – still raw enough to feel authentic, but developed enough to have its first boutique hotel (Playa Escondida Hotel) and a store selling the hand-woven Aztec rugs you've been eyeing up in said hotel all week. If you'd come here 10 years ago, you'd have had to have rented a room above the bar. If you go 10 years from now, that same bar will probably be a Starbucks.

Puerto Vallarta:

FOR OLD-SCHOOL GLAMOUR

If Puerto Vallarta were a star, she'd be Elizabeth Taylor. In fact, she was Elizabeth Taylor, since the diva lived here in the mid-1960s while Richard Burton was filming *The Night Of The Iguana*. So enchanted were they both by the then-teeny fishing village, Dick bought one house, then purchased Liz a second villa across the cobbled street, and linked them by a stone bridge that still stands today (the house is now the intimate Casa Kimberley hotel). Myth has it, the turbulent lovebirds had at least one formidable fight a day, which sent them off to their separate villas, then invariably ended with a conciliatory smooch on the bridge by nightfall.

And that's what Puerto Vallarta Old Town is all about – showiness, hedonism, but with a retro appeal. Eva Longoria chose PV for her nuptials as, in her own words, she wanted a 'big fat Mexican wedding'. Unlike tourist-developed Cancún, Los Cabos or the Riviera Maya, Puerto Vallarta developed organically, around a genuine harbour where life still revolves around the day's catch. I took a walk through the Old Town grid – Calles Hidalgo, Juárez, Matamoros – ducking into the Parroquia de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe de Puerto Vallarta. It was gilt-edged gorgeous, with a gold crown atop the bell tower, but untouristy, too – old ladies were selling hand cream on the steps, while a stray dog was happily disturbing an orderly line of nuns outside.

Then it was on to Isla Río Cuale, a jungly little island in the middle of town, reached by a spindly suspended rope bridge. Between twisted tree roots reminiscent of Angkor Wat, flea-market stalls balanced, along with a handful of wooden benches taken by coy, young couples on first dates. When a sprinkle of rain arrived, everybody took shelter beneath the giant, protective arms of the banyan trees.

If you buy only one tourist ticket in Puerto Vallarta, make it a street-food tour. Locals Amanda and 'Lobo' (Wolf) led my circuit, bringing together Amanda's infatuation for tacos with Lobo's for Mexican beverages. I could rave about the succulent Dhs1 tacos 'al pastor' at Pancho's, or the Mexican candies we bought for colleagues back home (tamarind, dulce de leche and coconut). But it was the chapulines that will stay with me for ever. Grasshoppers. Delicious, earthy, and not-as-brittle-as-you'd-think grasshoppers. As the rain came down in torrents outside, chef Hugo at Maia restaurant told us how he'd stolen his grandmother's guacamole recipe, because of her ingenious use of fried chapulines. Gracias, Granny Hugo.

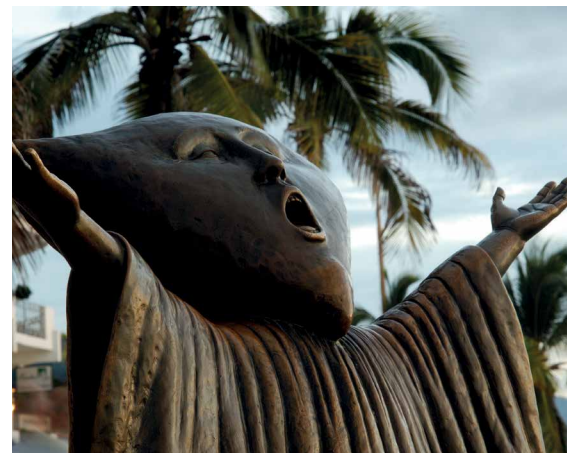


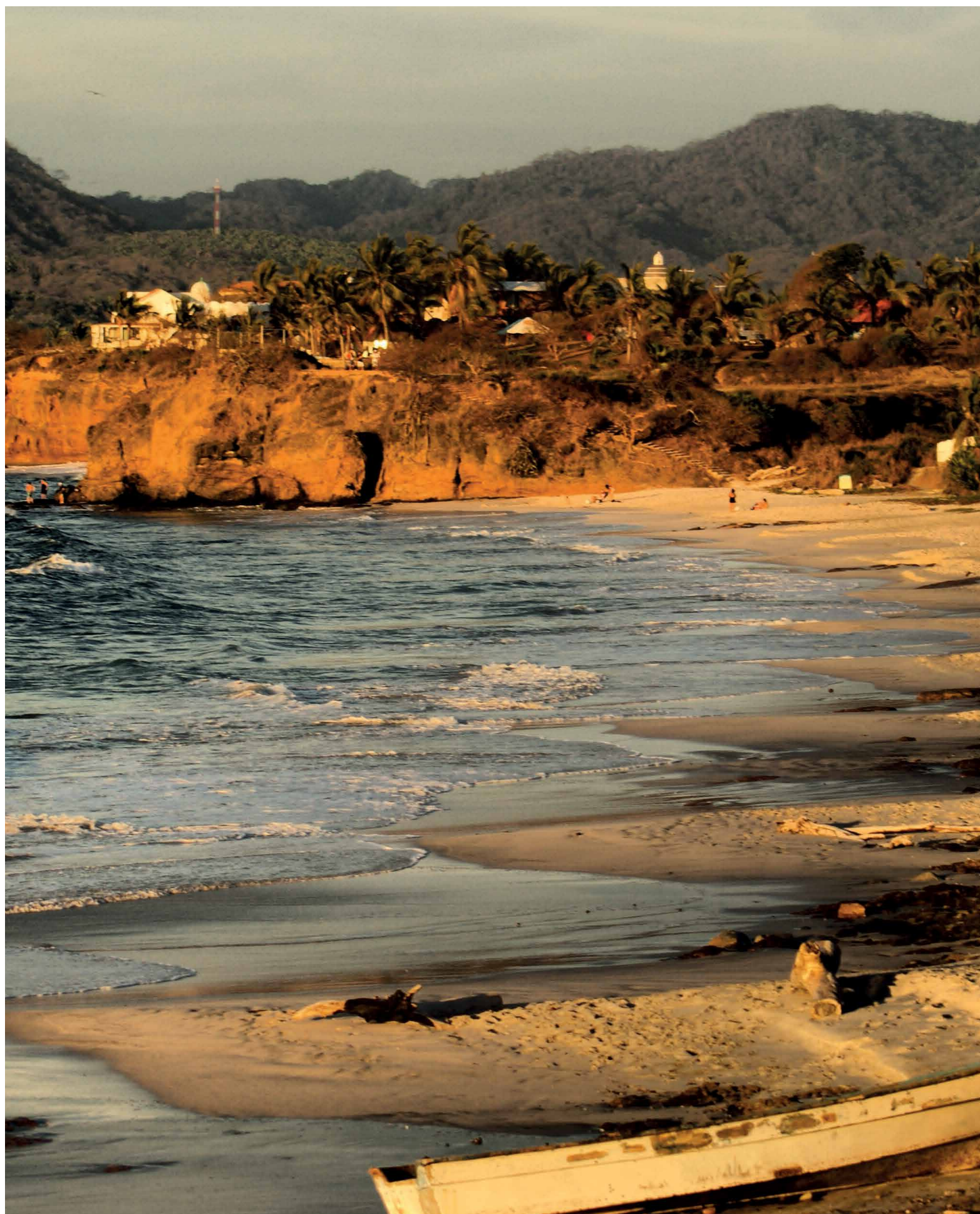


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At one point, my guide and I found ourselves engulfed by a school of sturgeon – every move we made, they followed, every U-turn, they mimicked. It was magical

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Previous pages, clockwise from left: Puerto Vallarta city; a restaurant in Puerto Vallarta; a sculpture along the Malecon; a street in Zona Romantica
These pages, from left: Punta Mita; the Jack Nicklaus Four Seasons Golf Course at Punta Mita



Punta Mita:

FOR A-LIST COSSETING

And last but not least, Punta Mita. If Punta Mita were a star, she'd be the top bod – Beyoncé (if you're thinking Grammy winners); Matt Damon (if you prefer Oscars); Bill Gates (if you're a tech head); or Kimye (if you're into that sort of thing). And, of course, all of them have holidayed in Punta Mita; Bill even has his umpteenth house here.

When you've trodden enough colonial cobbles, or haggled for enough hand-stitched cushions, and you find yourself ready for a cold drink by the pool, this is where to check in. Punta Mita is a five-star-fabulous resort town, just half an hour's drive west of Puerto Vallarta. Its starriest stay is The St. Regis – one of those clever luxury hotels that cossets guests away in a hibiscus-scented, air-conditioned bubble that they never want to leave, yet gives them enough bona fide Mexican touches (live local mariachi on the beach; obscure national fruits at the breakfast buffet) that they don't feel guilty about it.

I soon overcame my guilt – not least because, if it weren't for The St. Regis, I'd never have made my most memorable Mexican culinary discovery (after the grasshoppers): aguachile. This is a sparky starter, where slices of raw shrimp are 'cooked' by the potent mix of lime juice, salt, onion, chilli and coriander they bathe in. It was a revelation. I became that person in the hotel restaurant who orders the

same dish every night, each time my polite waiter having to pretend he is impressed by my local food knowledge. Filling in the gaps between aguachile with pool time, beach walks and sundowners, I quickly fell for Punta Mita.

Brilliantly, if bizarrely, you can experience one of Mexico's greatest wildlife adventures from this otherwise insular five-star world. Just offshore from Punta Mita are the Islas Marietas, a national marine park with a cap on visitor numbers. This is because it's such a unique aquatic environment, you can spot (without trying hard) the blue-footed booby, a sensationally, surreally, seemingly cyan-painted bird only otherwise found in the Galápagos. On the Marietas, you can swim through ancient stone arches, and snorkel with Olive Ridley sea turtles, spiky pufferfish or fantastical flying needlefish. At one point, my guide and I found ourselves engulfed by a school of sturgeon – every move we made, they followed, every U-turn, they mimicked. It was magical. This was the last place on Earth I'd expected an Attenborough moment.

In fact, when I looked back on my week of grasshoppers-en-guac, manta rays and cathedral calm, not to mention my market-stall finds, there'd been many surprises from Mexico's Pacific coast. It may have been the celebs who'd piqued my interest, but it was the blue-footed booby that was the real star.

Inspired to travel? To book a trip, call +971 4 316 6666 or log on to dnatatravel.com

MOROCCO'S Sweet Spot

Sweeping beaches, windswept souks, freshly caught seafood and an infectious laid-back attitude: Essaouira is the kingdom's hippest locale

Words · Tara Steven



A few weeks ago I found myself happily pootling around Morocco's most infamous beach town doing nothing much of anything at all. This is where Jimi Hendrix was said to have penned *Castles Made Of Sand*, though, in fact, it was written long before he set foot in Essaouira. But there are fortifications and miles of golden sand, as well as narrow lanes and blue-trimmed houses all neatly shoehorned into the chunky walls of the Skala Kasbah that protects this charming little town from the pounding waves of the Atlantic Ocean.

Essaouira is a place to lose yourself poking around the souks, dipping in and out of the numerous art galleries, sipping coffee in the plazas and munching freshly grilled fish at the open-air stands down at the port. From there you can stroll for hours along the seashore, stopping for juicy burgers or just-caught fish sushi at beach bars such as Ocean Vagabond, or continue on to the village of Diabat, just south of town, and pop into Tangaro for a yoga session, massage or sunset beverage.

Largely thanks to its mix of locals and foreigners, the town is a lot more laid-back than most Moroccan destinations, and while there's no denying locals love a chat over a carpet or carved thuya-wood trinkets, you'll never feel bullied into doing, or buying, anything.

In the past few years, it's been transformed from a pretty, pint-size medina with a tranquil air to a place where the souks now coexist with hip young Moroccan designers, simple guesthouses have become boutique hotels and the eating and drinking – from fishermen's shacks and coffee shops to sleekly stylish restaurants – is exceptional. But there is more to the wider region of Essaouira than you would ever imagine and, if you rent a car and expand an exotic weekend away to a full week's stay, you'll be rewarded with the thrill of discovering a place with its own special atmosphere.

Inland from the town, the Saouri countryside unfolds in a series of undulating hills intersected by deep ravines carved by ancient rivers that occasionally still roar after heavy rains. Argan forests are carpeted with wildflowers and provide fodder for tufty-haired black goats. Just six miles south, hidden among dune forests thick with eucalyptus, mimosa, juniper, tamarisk, carob and thuya, you'll find Baoussala, which opened about 15 years ago, the first eco-lodge in this area.

A local favourite for weekend getaways, it's a great place to hole up when the Atlantic wind blows in, and wallow in the garden bath, ryokan style. Nearby Sidi Kaouki – until recently the domain of surfers – is all the rage among the fashion set, who check into Rebal Riads and spend their days hanging out by the pool or roaming the beach. You can't really blame them – the wide, golden sand runs for miles to a hazy horizon.

Nearby, down a boulder-laden track that follows the line of the sand, is Mouette et Les Dromadaires. Set back a little from the pounding waves, Mouette is a spruce, whitewashed shed with wicker furniture on a paved terrace, sail shades and, I'm told, sensational fish and seafood.

Unfortunately it was closed when we visited, so we continued to the more rustic, but even more off-the-beaten-path Chez Abdou. Abdou is Sidi Kaouki's very own Dr Dolittle, who told me over a lunch of the most intensely delicious octopus salad, fried squid and John Dory grilled over flames, that he had grown up on the streets and had often slept with animals to keep warm. This was his payback time and the little stone dwelling, with its terrace raised in the sand, was teeming with dogs, ducks (rescued from the souks) and even a donkey dozing in the shade of a tree.

We stayed and played with the animals until the sun dipped over the horizon, turning the unusually quiet waters of the Atlantic a deep fiery red, then reluctantly took our leave despite Abdou's offers of a room (if you're into back-to-basics camping, he rents a converted stable next door with no electricity, but a fireplace, an idyllic terrace and views that make you feel you're at the end of the world).

These are by no means the region's only secrets, though. Scattered across this coastal countryside is a clutch of stylish rural hotels, chilled-out restaurants and little market towns such as Had Dra – known for its Sunday souk selling livestock, local produce and the odd antique carpet. It's part modern-day eco-warrior (everything is local, organic or slow), part hippy (alternative lifestylists abound), part in-the-know jet-setter (check out the palatial villas and new-build kasbahs hidden in the hills), which gives it an attractive, anything-goes atmosphere that seems to work for everybody.

Family favourite is the Jardin des Douars, where little ones can comfortably spread their wings. Built in the Nineties and modelled on the rammed-earth kasbahs of the anti-Atlas, it has the most sensational botanic gardens and terraces spilling down over a ridge looking across the Ksob river. Rooms come in just about any configuration, from the cavernous two-bedroom Royal Suite with open fireplaces, banks of arched windows opening onto impressive views and a huge domed living room, to the sprawling family rooms with bunk beds and walled-in terraces. There are two pools – one for children, one for grown-ups, both heated for year-round swimming – and a private, glassed-in room for extended family gatherings off the main lounge and



A local favourite for weekend getaways, it's a great place to hole up when the Atlantic wind blows in, and wallow in the garden bath, ryokan style



Opening page: The beautiful Jardins de Villa Maroc These pages, clockwise from left: Boutique lodgings at Villa Maroc; Place Moulay Hasan; the ramparts of Skala de la Ville; colourful market wares



dining room. I've yet to meet a parent who didn't love it – or who didn't manage to squeeze in an afternoon at the spa and hammam.

Style-seekers should head to the Jardins de Villa Maroc to loll around a pale aquamarine pool, sipping drinks while surrounded by gentle, postcard-perfect countryside. The dining room, bar and lounge were decorated by John Quinn (of the stylish One Up bar in the town centre), who painted giant wicker lanterns in shades of olive and teal, paved the floors with modernist-inspired tiles and clad the cocktail bar in carved plaster. Three spacious suites arranged around one of the old farm buildings have been given a sleek, Martha Stewart-style makeover with a large kitchen-dining room presided over by an open fireplace, outdoor dining in the shade of a giant bougainvillea and a private swimming pool.

The region is especially appealing to foodies. It seems there's a women's cooperative making superlative organic argan oil over every hill, but less obvious is Val d'Argan, which despite its unlikely location is widely considered by connoisseurs to be one of the best vineyards in the country. Have lunch here, or head to Abderrazzak Khoubbane's La Fromagerie nearby, an organic goat farm producing wonderful goat's cheese. The chef here serves the sort of lunch that would make Yotam Ottolenghi proud – sprouting-seed salads and vegetable-stuffed briouats, finished with a lavish cheeseboard on a terrace. Khoubbane flits around, explaining how it was thanks to the director of Marrakesh's very own grande dame, La Mamounia – who happened by one day and ended up buying his cheese for the hotel – that put him on the map. You can't help thinking it won't be long before the rest of the region follows.

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Flower market in Bangkok

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One Weekend For All In... Bangkok

The city with the longest official name in the world, home to the biggest Chinatown on the planet and the place where Red Bull originated... say sawadee to Thailand's bustling capital

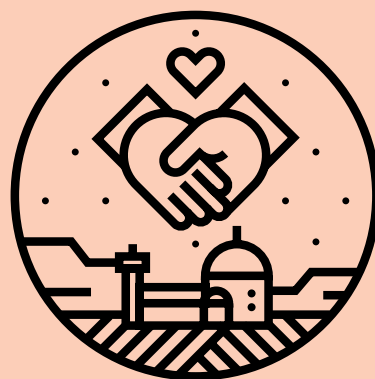
• Ask a local

"You can't come to Bangkok and not visit the markets – no matter what you're looking for, you'll find it here and even if you don't want to buy anything, just soaking in the buzz is a quintessential Bangkok must-do. For foodies, a wet market should be top of the list. The largest is Khlong Toei but my favourite is Wang Lang; take the boat across the river to reach it and stock up on lots of local dishes. While you're in town, get up early one day to visit Pak Khlong Talat. A maze of colours, this floating flower market is really worth seeing, especially the huge piles of orange-hued marigold blossoms, woven into garlands that we call phuang malai – they symbolise good fortune. When it comes to shopping, head to Asiatique, right on the riverfront, where you can pick up handicrafts, souvenirs, home décor and local art."

– Nuanjan Buakao

• Did you know?

Although the capital of Thailand is known to the world as Bangkok, local people refer to it as Krung Thep – a shortened version of its actual name, which is the longest in the world. In full it is Krungthepmahanakhon Amonrattanakosin Mahinthara Yutthaya Mahadilok Phop Noppharat Ratchathani Burirom Udom Ratchaniwet Mahasathan Amonphiman Awatansathit Sakkathattiya Witsanukamprasit.



The Romantic One

To stay

- Anantara Riverside Bangkok
- Banyan Tree Bangkok
- Mandarin Oriental Bangkok

Sit down to a romantic rooftop dinner at one of the many high-rise hotels in town – try **Vertigo** at Banyan Tree Bangkok, **Sirroco** at State Tower or **Red Sky@55** at Centra Grand. Arrive just before sunset and watch the city light up around you before you feast on delicious Thai eats with your loved one. Another lovely option for couples, since you're in the Venice of the East, is a dinner cruise in an antique rice barge on the **Chao Praya River**. Departing every evening from a private pier at the **Anantara Bangkok Riverside Resort and Spa**, it's romance guaranteed. And perhaps one of the most romantic activities in the entire country (so long as you have a head for heights), why not set off on a once-in-a-lifetime hot-air balloon experience, soaring up above the rooftops of Thailand's capital, towards the sprawling countryside. Toast your landing with a glass of bubbles, a 200-year-old custom in the world of balloon flights. To end your stay, settle in to watch the sun set over magnificent **Wat Arun**. For the best view, cross the river to the fourth floor of the stylish Arun Residence, and its cosy, open-air bar, **Amorosa**. You're guaranteed perfect vistas over the Chao Phraya River and Wat Arun beyond as the sun sets and lights illuminate the temple.



The Adventurous One

To stay

- Riva Surya Bangkok
- The Okura Prestige Bangkok
- Sofitel So Bangkok

While some visitors may be content cruising downtown in the back of a tuk-tuk, for those seeking serious adventure, Bangkok doesn't disappoint. First up, get yourself to **Club Taco**, close to Suvarnabhumi Airport. Spend the day getting to grips with the water onboard or on skis as some of Thailand's finest cable riders impress you with their tricks and twists at this exciting water-sports park. Later, if you want to escape the humidity for a bit while putting your Spider-Man skills to the test, the **Racquet Club's Urban Playground** offers over 700 sq ft of indoor climbing space ranging from a bouldering wall and cave to a 12m top-rope climb. With levels of adventure suitable for the whole family, it's a great afternoon spot. Of course, a visit to Thailand's capital isn't complete without trying your hand at some Muay Thai, and in Bangkok, decent gyms abound. Try Chinatown's **Chuwattana** or stay overnight at **Luktupfah** fighting camp to really immerse yourself in the sport. If waves are more your thing, you don't need to wait for the swell reports each morning. Instead, head to **Flow House**, where an amalgamation of surfing and wakeboarding on an inflatable ramp pumped with water awaits. By the end of your visit you'll be all adventured out.



The Family-Friendly One

To stay

- The Sukotai Bangkok
- JW Marriott Hotel Bangkok
- Siam@Siam Design Hotel Bangkok

Thai people love children so it's no surprise that there's oodles to keep them entertained. From theme parks to arcades to exciting outdoor adventures, there's something for every age. No matter the time of year, **Snow Town Bangkok** promises deep piles of the white stuff that are prime for building snowmen and creating snow angels, and, four times a day, there's a cascade of snow from the roof. There's also a beginner's slope where you can get the kids familiar with wearing skis and keeping their balance. If you want to encourage them to get cultural, the recently refurbished **Museum of Siam** is a good pick. Housed in a former palace, it's packed with great hands-on exhibits that explore the history of Bangkok and Thailand. If you want to get outdoors, then a boat trip on the river or the canals that cut through the city is a fun way to see local life. Try the **Chao Phraya Express** or hire a longboat from **Tha Sathon pier**. Within easy reach of the city, the **Khao Yai National Park** is a UNESCO World Heritage Site that's a haven for over 350 bird species, elephants, white-handed gibbons, Asiatic black bears and wild dogs. When it comes to eating, a kid-friendly but wholly authentically Thai pick is a portion of mango sticky rice with coconut cream – yum.



The Restful One

To stay

- Ariyasum Villa
- Chatrium Hotel Riverside
- The Siam

Known for its noise and chaos, a restful retreat isn't perhaps the first thing you think of when you think Bangkok. For a refreshingly tranquil visit, head to **The Siam**, where an in-house wellness trainer can create a programme tailored just for you. From Asana and Vinyasa yoga classes to a whole host of meditations and ancient Ayurvedic treatments, you're guaranteed relaxation. **Lumpini Park** is 142 acres of greenery and peace and quiet, perfect for a midday stroll. Spot monitor lizards, hire a paddleboat and get out on the lake, or take a picnic and watch the locals perform Tai Chi. Afterwards, the **Sky Asiatique Ferris Wheel** whisks you up, up and away, far from the busy streets below. For a truly calm experience, splurge on a private gondola and enjoy soothing music, breathtaking 360° views of the city and some sought-after downtime. The **Jim Thompson House and Museum** is another good option for some restful wandering. Named after the American entrepreneur who settled in the city in the 1950s, founded a successful Thai silk company and then mysteriously disappeared in Malaysia, this site of six traditional Thai houses is surrounded by jungle and koi ponds, and is a great place to rest body and mind.

48-Hour Foodie: Baku

Local cuisine in the city of flames is a delicious mix of Iranian, Turkish, European and Mongolian delights just waiting to be devoured

Illustration : Adam Avery

• Regional delights

Make sure you have some **Motal Pendiri** – this strong cheese is made in the Caucasus mountains from sheep or goat milk. **Mangal salad** is another must-try – roasted peppers, aubergines and tomatoes, delicious with freshly baked bread.

– **SAMIR ALIYEV**

Chef cuisine at Nakhichevan

• Hot right now

There are so many hot-right-now spots in this city, but you need to make sure you discover some typical Azeri places with fresh food and great atmosphere. **Sumakh** is one such place, where you can try the whole range of Azerbaijani cuisine, and one of its highlights is the show kitchen. Another place to which a visit is almost mandatory is **Chinar** – a famous Baku landmark and a meeting place for decades. Originally a teahouse, nestled under a cluster of chinar trees, it's been reborn as a magnificent building of contemporary architecture and great Asian cuisine. You can also enjoy a huge variety of mixed drinks and Azeri shisha in **Dragon Lounge**. **Shirvanshah**, a rare museum-cum-restaurant, is another great choice where you can enjoy fresh national and ethnic food while admiring artworks created at different times by Azerbaijani artists. And of course there's **Zafferano**, the all-day restaurant at the Four Seasons named after the abundant saffron that grows throughout Azerbaijan.

– **ERKIN ALIYEV**

Chief concierge at Four Seasons Baku

Day One

• Breakfast

As the name suggests, **Sehirli Tendir** is one of Baku's local spots where bread is made in-house in the traditional tendir (clay) oven. Dishes are simple and rich, and the atmosphere inviting and authentic. Portions are huge and the price is more than reasonable; don't miss the kuku – a hearty serving of tomato and eggs with as much freshly baked bread as you can manage. The place is tiny, so get there early.

• Lunch

Tucked away in an unassuming basement on a downtown corner, at first glance **U Dali** isn't perhaps the most friendly of settings. But step inside and prepare to be won over by the authentic taste of Georgian home cooking. Settle into a humble wooden booth surrounded by shepherd's costumes, black-and-white prints, nautical accessories and wooden clocks, and feast on a slew of Georgian classics like khachapuri, lobio and kuchmachi.

• Dinner

On the city's main boulevard, by the shore overlooking the Caspian Sea, you'll find an imposing building housing three of its best eateries: **Sahil**, **Tosca** and **Pasifico Lounge and Dining**. Each is unique but the latter is one you should certainly seek out. A playful menu offers exotic flavours from across South America – tuck into Brazilian salads, Peruvian ceviche and Argentinian steaks paired with specially imported drinks.

Day Two

• Breakfast

Just a few minutes from Mohammed Mosque, uber-cute **Merci Baku** is a great pick for breakfast. Open 24 hours a day, expect a selection of Azeri and European eats in a quaint setting where intricate lanterns hang from the ceiling, coloured flowers adorn the walls and a white piano commands one corner of the restaurant. Delight in a typical Azeri breakfast of cheeses, jams, scrambled eggs, tomatoes and sausage in the heart of the old town.

• Lunch

Inside the walls of the 500-year-old Icheri Shekher fortress, **Mugham Club** is one of the best places in the city to sample traditional Azeri dishes. Furnishings are eclectically colourful with bright tapestries adorning the stone walls, which are littered with old photographs of the city. Persian rugs and grand candelabras abound. When the weather is nice, opt to sit alfresco where a pretty courtyard and fig trees covered with twinkling lanterns create something quite magical.

• Dinner

In downtown Baku, around the corner from Fountain Square, excellent sushi awaits at **Zakura**, the city's first real izakaya. Dishes are simple and authentic, prepared by a team of experts who've worked at Japanese restaurants in both Tokyo and London. A great dining experience, where delicious eats blend perfectly with the intimate atmosphere.





The Museum Of The Frankincense Land

Frankincense has been one of Oman's most famous natural products since antiquity and its heady aroma is never far away. We find out more with a visit to Salalah

Salalah, Oman

Frankincense: something I've known of since childhood, when schoolteachers taught me festive carols that told stories of shepherds carrying gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh to a stable in the heart of Bethlehem – and yet something I know nothing about. Gold we all know; myrrh, well, perhaps that's next on my journey of discovery – but frankincense for the moment has brought me to the south of Oman and the coastal city of Salalah.

Home to the Museum of the Frankincense Land, Salalah is one of Oman's most prominent producers of the natural product and so seemed like a great place to find out more about the stuff. The weather conditions along this particular coastline are ideal for growing frankincense trees, which can reach up to 16ft in height. Monsoon rains during Khareef and hot, desert conditions the rest of the year round help to produce some of the finest – and most expensive – frankincense in the world.

Just minutes from the brand-new Al Baleed Resort Salalah Anantara, in an unassuming white-brick building, lies the aforementioned museum. Visiting one sunny spring day, I stepped through the arched entrance where, in the middle of a central courtyard, surrounded by a circular wall, I saw a solitary frankincense tree. As pretty as it was, my first glimpse of the plant didn't give me much more of an insight into why exactly frankincense is so esteemed, so I made my way into the museum, hoping for a bit more in the way of enlightenment.

Happily, plenty more awaited in the shape of informative signs and thought-provoking exhibits. It turns out that Dhofar, the Governorate of which Salalah is a part, has been known as the land of Frankincense since ancient times, due to it being the principle source of the finest and most famous varieties of the incense. The area has a rich history – having been recognised as a place of prominence by the Pharaohs, Phoenicians, Greeks, Romans, Persians, Hindus and Chinese over the years.

The very scent of Oman is frankincense. Deeply ingrained in the culture – upon arrival at our resort the evening before we'd been

greeted with refreshing towels doused in the stuff – it turns out that it's used for everything from medicine (apparently it's good for easing joint pain) to therapy (it can relieve anxiety), as well as perfume. Not only that, but this stuff is big business – and has been for many years. In ancient Oman, frankincense was one of the most important trade items and, for generations, locals have tapped frankincense resin from the trees on their land. I wanted to know exactly what this involved so requested a little more information from our friendly guide, Omar.

Ushering me back outside to the tree in the courtyard, Omar proceeded to show me exactly how the process works. First, a metal blade is used to cut the tree, allowing a few drops of white milky sap to bleed slowly onto the bark. This liquid is left to solidify for just over a week or so before it's harvested and spread out on flat surfaces, where it is then left to dry out for months. According to Omar, legend has it that flying snakes protect frankincense trees and, while I didn't see any such creatures in the museum, I did notice two watchful security guards overlooking its precious tree.

Once harvested, this clearer frankincense is the highest-quality grade. In Salalah, Al Hojari is the purest type to be harvested, closely followed by Ashazri, Annajdi and then the darkest (and most affordable) Ahsa'bi. Oman has played a part in giving these trees value through the trade of frankincense, which in turn has effectively formed a bridge of communication between East and West for centuries, certainly not a trifling role to boast of.

On the other side of the museum is an exhibit that's just as revealing when it comes to antiquity, albeit devoid of frankincense wisdom. Instead, it's dedicated to maritime history and features countless intricately detailed scale models of ships as well as a huge wooden replica of a dhow that visitors can climb on.

Take a step back in time and journey through history at this fascinating exploration of the best frankincense in all the land.

Words : Hayley Skirka

Staycations

Sometimes you just need to get away from it all. With our comprehensive round-up of great places to escape to across the GCC, you're all set for a weekend of stress-free fun



Fairmont Fujairah

fairmont.com/fujairah

Location
FUJAIRAH

In a nutshell

This coastal art-inspired abode is something special, surrounded by mountain, sea and desert landscapes.

Selected suite

Try the Deluxe One Bedroom Suite, featuring separate sleeping and living areas – all beautifully designed – and two outdoor terraces offering epic vistas.

Cuisine

Tuck into all-day dining at brightly coloured Canvas, have light bites with a view at IAMMAI or go for European eats at Café Pronto. Arteasan is a great choice for a spot of afternoon tea and Copper Lobster is truly the pièce de résistance.



The Westin Dubai Al Habtoor City

westindubaialhabtoorcity.com

Location
DUBAI

In a nutshell

Right by the new Dubai Water Canal, this place – with its strong wellness ethos and family-friendly vibe – feels like home.

Selected suite

The corner-located Executive Club Suite offers mammoth rooms with a stunning finish and breathtaking canal and Burj Khalifa views.

Cuisine

Go for elegant Italian at Il Capo or funky American at Cook Hall. The endless buffets at Seasonal Tastes are well-remembered, while Daily Treats is ideal for small bites. Mixed drinks and nights out at Bling come highly recommended.



Grand Millenium Al Wahda

millenniumhotels.com

Location
ABU DHABI

In a nutshell

Palatial and elegant, this fabulous abode offers magnificent views of the Arabian Gulf and the glittering shoreline of Dubai accompanied by all the finery you would expect from this luxury brand.

Selected suite

The King Premier Suite is a private oasis boasting a huge balcony and living room, exclusive lounge access and a superb sea view.

Cuisine

Where to begin? Try Social by Heinz Beck, Serafina for sundowners and live entertainment, or LAO for authentically delicious Vietnamese.



Jumeirah at Etihad Towers

jumeirah.com

Location
ABU DHABI

In a nutshell

One of the five majestic structures that make up Etihad Towers, this soaring address offers spectacular style in the very heart of the capital.

Selected suite

For a space that's almost as lavish as the views it commands, the Grand Club King Room on the upper floors is a great choice, and also gives you access to the swanky Club Executive Lounge on level 45.

Cuisine

Get all dressed up for lauded French-inspired Brasserie Angélique, enjoy sundowners with a view at Ray's Bar or try authentic Italian at Bice.



Lapita, Dubai Parks and Resorts

marriott.com

Location
DUBAI

In a nutshell

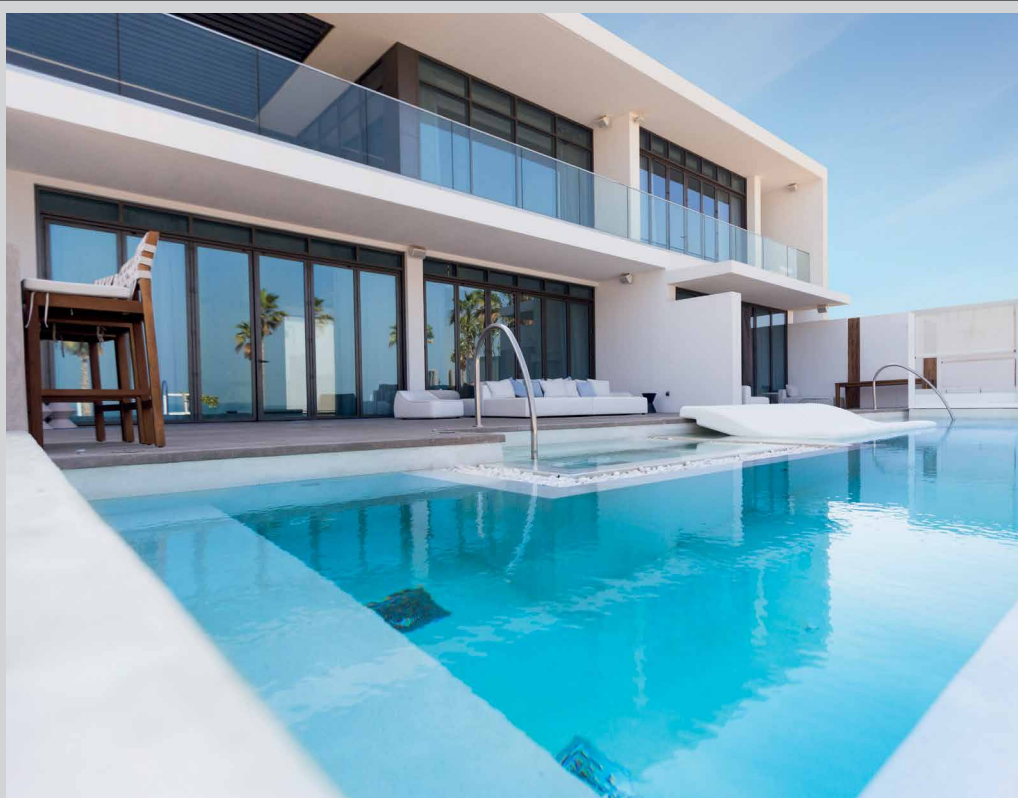
The only hotel in Dubai Parks and Resorts, this Polynesian paradise offers restful accommodation designed with a hint of the exotic – right next to the theme-park action.

Selected suite

Perfect for those travelling with kids in tow, the two-storey, three-bedroom private villa boasts river and resort views, a private terrace and plunge pool.

Cuisine

Rooftop spot Lani offers Polynesian tapas while Kalinea is all-day dining with Pacific island flavours. Asian awaits at Hikina and Ari is a pool bar with an international menu.



Nikki Beach Resort & Spa Dubai

nikkibeachhotels.com

Location
DUBAI

In a nutshell

Uber-stylish and immaculately designed, this Pearl Jumeira hot spot boasts 450m of private beach and gorgeous Arabian Gulf panoramas.

Selected suite

The one-bedroom beach villas offer direct access to the sand as well as private pools and sun-warmed terraces.

Cuisine

Cafe Nikki has delicious bites and Soul Lounge is ideal for sundowners.

• Ask the concierge

Guest experiences manager Alina Filat gives us some insider tips

Which is your favourite suite?

The Ultimate Suite – it's sensational with a full-length window frontage overlooking the Arabian Gulf.

What activities can guests enjoy?

They can pick between the amazing music and dining options at the vibrant Beach Club, or the relaxing tranquillity of their private villa.

What's your favourite on-site restaurant?

Cafe Nikki, thanks to its great views over the Arabian Gulf and organic, responsibly sourced fresh ingredients.

What makes Nikki Beach Resort & Spa Dubai special?

It's truly unique and definitely a place to meet and create memorable experiences.



A Mother's Love

The capital of the UAE is set to celebrate all things mothering with a 10-day-long edition of the Mother of the Nation festival

Taking place along more than a kilometre of the capital's beautiful Corniche, the second Mother of the Nation festival returns to Abu Dhabi from Sunday 26 March, and will be an exciting showcase of interactive programmes, educational activities, exhibitions and performances highlighting the role that mothers play in preserving the traditions of Emirati culture.

Centrally themed around the work of Her Highness Sheikhha Fatima bint Mubarak, the festival highlights the inspirational values of the Mother of the UAE and will feature diverse activity zones. The festival generates a highly interactive atmosphere that welcomes families and individuals from all walks of life and is a definite must-visit in the capital this month.

Having expanded since the inaugural edition last year, the festival, which is organised by Abu Dhabi Tourism & Culture Authority, will be divided into four areas hosting more than 100 activities. The Happiness Zone will offer a whole range of art exhibits and activities inspired by HH Sheikhha Fatima's commitment to fostering future generations through initiatives in which they may learn and grow. Activity cabanas and a music stage will provide entertainment for visitors of all ages.

In The Progress Zone, be prepared to think beyond the boundaries with interactive experiences and installations to engage young and old alike, which will encourage people to think beyond where we are now. A huge central stretch of the festival will be the Beach Dining

Zone, where an eclectic selection of food and beverage offerings including food trucks and unique stalls will offer a range of flavours from both the UAE and around the world.

The Mother of the Nation Pavilion is a memorable tribute to the accomplishments of Sheikh Fatima and is set to be a beautiful place of reflection detailing her enduring legacy. Visitors will be invited to find inspiration in her values and vision through a variety of historical offerings in a new curatorial concept. Finally, The Souq Zone will feature stalls selling traditional Emirati goods and demonstrating the methods used to make them; expect to see jewellery making, dhow painting and more.

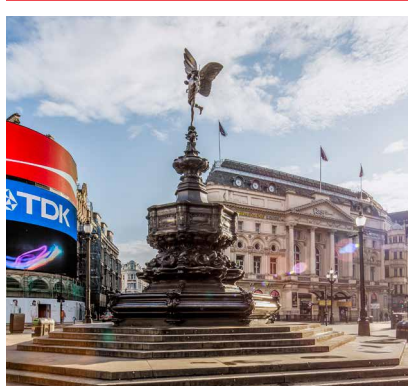
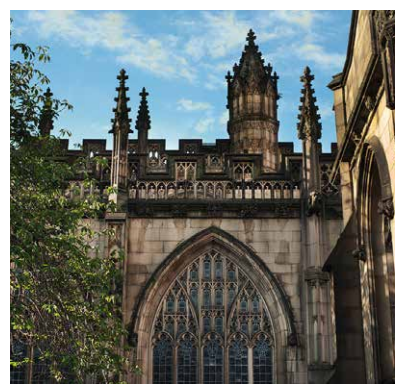
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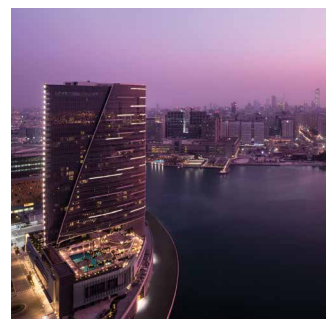
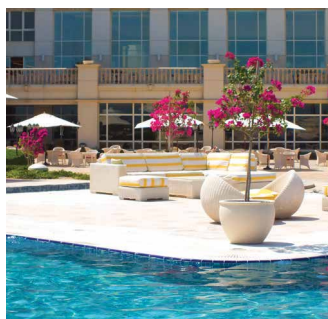
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get 60 minutes, plus first filling of soft drinks in maxi bar

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Validity: Now 'til 10 April 2017

THE ST. REGIS ABU DHABI

1 night from **USD125** per person

Special offer: Complimentary upgrade to sea-view room, guaranteed interconnected rooms and late check-out until 4pm
Includes: Stay in a Superior Room with breakfast

Validity: Now 'til 31 May 2017

FAIRMONT DUBAI

1 night from **USD137** per person

Special offer: 20% discount on room rate, and 2 children under 12 stay and eat for free with a complimentary extra bed

Clockwise from top left: The Regency Kuwait; The St. Regis Abu Dhabi; Fairmont Dubai; Rosewood Abu Dhabi; Al Wadi Desert Ras Al Khaimah; Kempinski Hotel & Residences Palm Jumeirah; Sofitel Bahrain Zallaq Thalassa Sea and Spa

Includes: Stay in a Fairmont Room with breakfast

Validity: Now 'til 31 March 2017

AL WADI DESERT RAS AL KHAIMAH A RITZ-CARLTON PARTNER HOTEL

1 night from **USD275** per person

Special offer: 2 children under 12 stay and eat for free with a complimentary extra bed, access to Ritz-Kids club, and family bicycles to use around the resort

Includes: Stay in an Al Rimal Pool Villa with breakfast

Validity: Now 'til 10 April 2017

World Traveller's Recommended BEACH STAY

Head out of town for a staycation that will
keep the entire family happy



WHERE?

Le Méridien Al Aqah Beach Resort

THE LOW-DOWN: On 230m of pristine beach and with the gorgeous Hajar Mountains as a backdrop, this sprawling resort is the ideal place for a family beach escape.

THE SCENE: Less than two hours from Dubai International Airport, Fujairah is filled with expats escaping the skyscrapers of the big cities and seeking a more relaxing staycation. Entirely family-friendly, it's also perfect for those with little ones.

THE ROOM: The Royal Club Rooms are all located on the 15th floor upwards, meaning you're guaranteed great views. Ensuring the

vista outside is the focal point, rooms all have floor-to-ceiling windows and boast stylish but simple furnishings. Each sleeping up to four people, there's free Wi-Fi for everyone and we love that there's access to the Club Lounge, too – great for all-day snacks and beverages that are entirely free of charge.

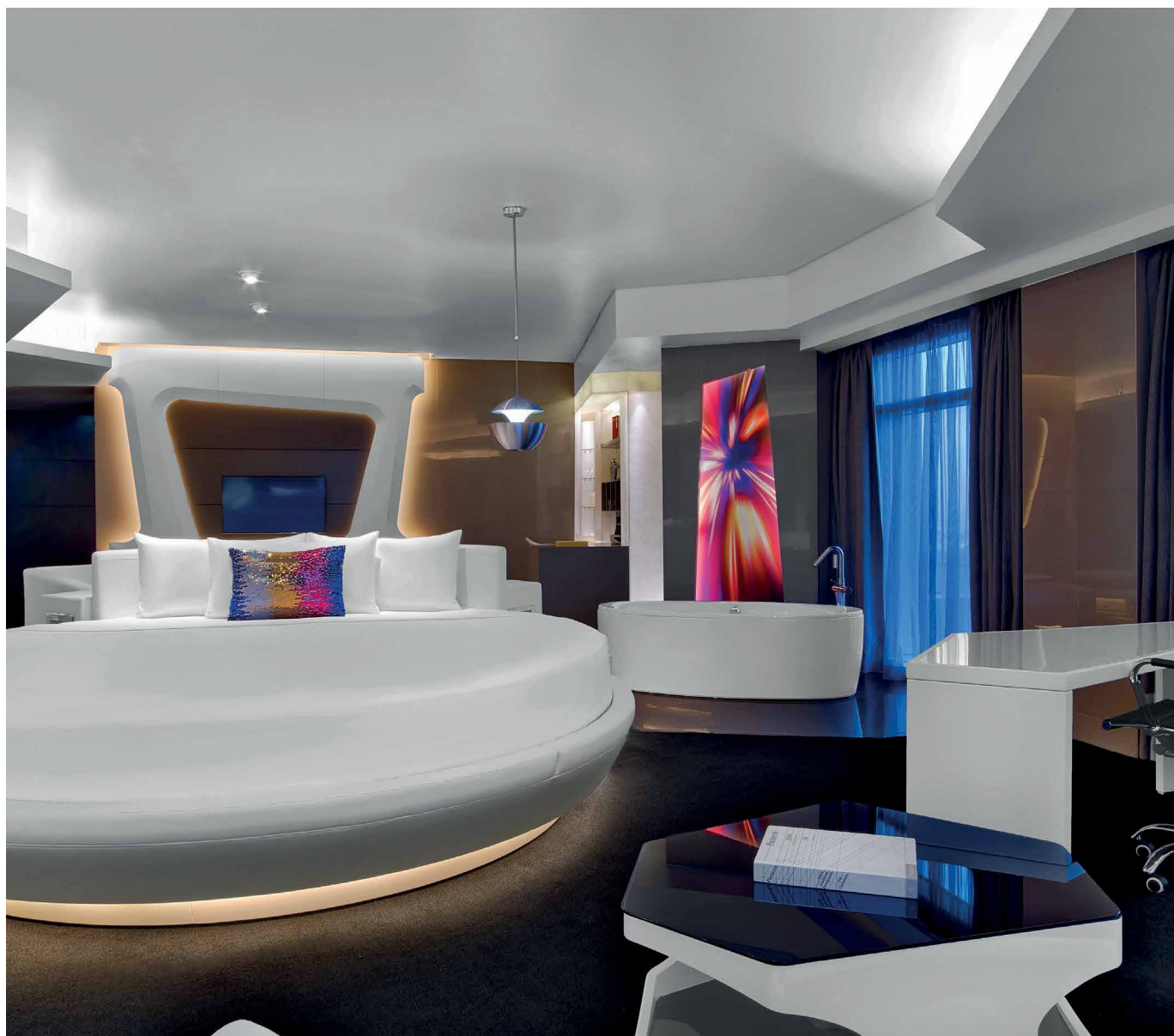
TO DO: One of the best things about this place is the newly renovated kids' and teens' club, sure to keep all ages entertained for the duration of your stay. It's also home to some of the UAE's best underwater delights, making it a great place to go snorkelling or head out on a scuba-diving trip. Fly-fishing on the resort's 30ft sport-fishing charter boat is also not to be missed, and the gigantic pool has an all-important swim-up bar.

TO EAT: You'd have to check in for a long stay if you wanted to sample all of this hotel's offerings but make sure you stop by Taste Thai for delicious eats from the land of smiles, the beachside Gonu Bar & Grill, and Swaad for authentic Indian dishes. If you've got kids, make a beeline for Sapore, where big bowls of home-made pasta and crunchy pizzas await. And for sundowners with a view, make your way to Astros Rooftop Bar.

OUR FAVOURITE PART: While not strictly part of the hotel, we can't think of anything better than the absolutely amazing marine life – we could seriously snorkel here for hours upon end. We also can't fault the service, with staff resort-wide going out of their way to make us feel welcome during our visit.

World Traveller's Recommended CITY STAY

Funky and futuristic, W Dubai is the ideal base
for a fun-filled stay in the heart of the city



WHERE?

W Dubai Al Habtoor City

THE LOW-DOWN: In one of Dubai's most exciting new destinations, this funky Al Habtoor City abode oozes style and sophistication, and nods to the future with a design that's oh-so cool.

THE SCENE: This place attracts a cool clientele so dress to impress and expect a crowd of hipsters, trendsetters and those in the know, as well as plenty of designer luggage – but without any hint of snobbishness.

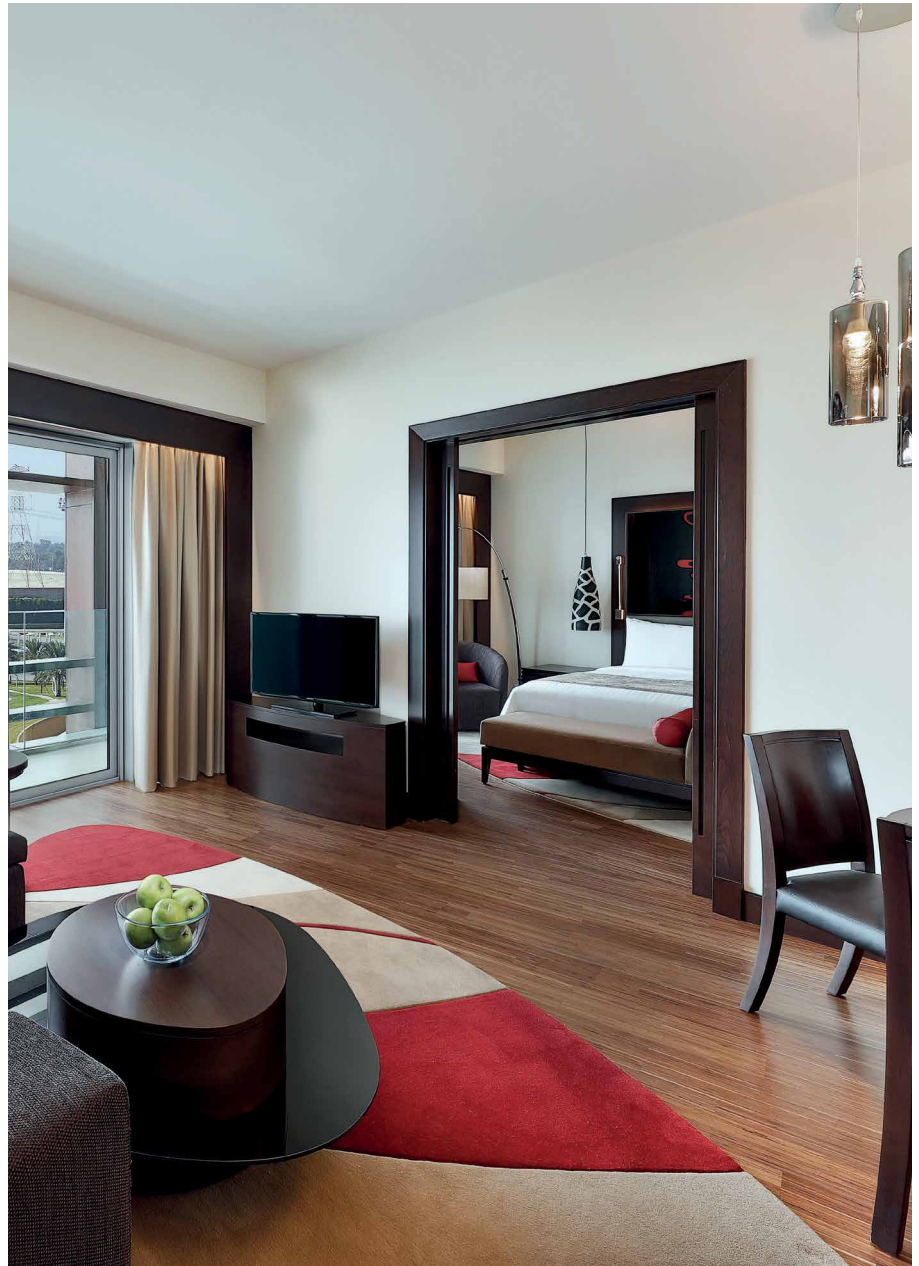
THE ROOM: Settle into the one-bedroom Fantastic Suite for a showcase of bright, bold design with gorgeous views of the city and

the glistening Dubai Water Canal. At 117 sq m, there's plenty of space to move around, and the circular king-size bed takes centre stage in the sleek bedroom. A curved lounge area, with a huge flatscreen television, is perfect for relaxing in, and the soak tub in the centre of the suite is a great talking point.

TO DO: Lounging at Wet Deck is a must-do; grab your friends and hop onto a daybed to slurp on delicious mixed drinks as you catch some rays at this spectacular rooftop pool, awesome views included. Fridays are all about the music with Audio Tonic hosting big-name DJs at the weekly pool party. Head to Fit Gym for the latest in the way of workouts, or join the Flex Yoga sessions every Friday morning, followed by a high-energy breakfast.

TO EAT: On the 31st floor, Namu offers Japanese and Korean flavours, live cooking stations and a wide selection of rice-based Asian beverages. Meanwhile, Level Seven offers dishes from the rustic markets of Spain, Italy and Greece in a gorgeous wood, steel and vintage art-adorned space. W Lounge serves up small bites and mixed drinks while the interconnected The St. Regis Dubai, The Westin Dubai and The Atrium offer countless more eating options.

OUR FAVOURITE PART: From the minute you walk in you feel like you've been transported to some kind of futuristic haven and, while we don't think we could live here forever – you eventually start to crave a sense of normality – there are definite bragging rights to be had by checking into this swanky address.



Win!

An exciting stay at the brand-new Marriott Hotel Al Forsan, Abu Dhabi, located in Al Forsan International Sports Resort

The perfect hotel for sports fans, the brand-new Marriott Hotel Al Forsan, Abu Dhabi offers a luxury abode coupled with fantastic views and an entire plethora of sporting activities, ideal for adventurous types.

With football and rugby pitches, basketball, tennis and volleyball courts, indoor paintball, a professional karting circuit, off-road buggy track, shooting facilities, world-class equestrian centre and polo field, as well as a stunning lake with a water-ski and wakeboarding cableway system, it's the perfect choice for an energising break. Children are well looked after, too, with an outdoor splash and adventure playground and indoor kids' club.

When you're done exerting yourself, relax in the Saray Spa & Health Club and indulge in some fantastic treatments, or try out the traditional hammam. Having worked up an appetite, take your pick from six venues catering to every taste. The Lobby Lounge is a great spot for coffee with a view, while the Grill offers delicious contemporary dining.

Appaloosa is the place to go for creative drinks and Couture is a stylish lounge in which you can enjoy tapas. Khayal offers a unique selection of tasting plates and Splash is the welcoming poolside bar, where you can take respite from the mid-afternoon sun. There really is something for everyone here. If you want to be in with a chance of winning, simply answer the following question:

What's the name of the spa at the Marriott Hotel Al Forsan, Abu Dhabi?

- A) Sanctuary Spa & Health Club
- B) Wellbeing Spa & Health Club
- C) Saray Spa & Health Club

Email your answer to easywin@hotmediapublishing.com by 30 March 2017.

Prize includes one-night stay for two with breakfast. Voucher valid from 1 April 2017 for three months excluding blackout periods. For more information on the resort, visit marriottalforsan.com



Suite Dreams

Our monthly finish with a flourish, delving into a unique suite whose character and style will set you apart

What:
ONE BEDROOM CLIFF POOL VILLA

Where:
Anantara Al Jabal Al Akhdar Resort

It may take you a few minutes to appreciate the subdued elegance of your villa when you first walk through the door, such is the plea from the spectacular view billowing in through humongous floor-to-ceiling windows. Sun-soaked towering cliff face dramatically sliced by a tumultuous canyon screams loudly for your attention, and the infinity pool on your private terrace invites you in with more than a subtle wink. But rest assured, you'll spend plenty of time soaking in the pool drinking in those views, so take a few minutes to savour the rest of your beautiful abode.

Over 2,000 sq ft of unassuming luxury awaits, and local wood and materials have been used throughout to ensure a subtle but unmistakable Omani flavour. Relax in your private majlis or, if you fancy yourself as a bit of a Seurat, then the perfectly positioned easel complete with artist's sketch pad and colouring pencils is begging to be put to use.

Then there's the huge marble bathroom with twin sinks, outdoor rain shower and hammam-style bathing area, not to mention your walk-in dressing room, where you'll also find an Omani dishdasha – perfect for lounging in. As you get ready to fall asleep in the vast king-size bed,

lay your head down on your selection from the resort's Sweet Dreams pillow menu and remember to leave your curtains slightly ajar – there's nothing quite like the first rays of sunlight streaming in over that canyon view to start your day off right.

Away from your villa – although we're not sure you'll really want to leave – there's a resort infinity pool and a beautiful viewpoint named after the late Princess Diana, who famously visited the mountain many years ago. Retreat to the spa, where the air is infused with restorative Himalayan salts, and unwind with a timeless Arabian treatment that's fused with typical Anantara Thai influences. For the energetic, there's canyon walks, rock-climbing, abseiling, cycling, a via ferrata and more, while kids and teens can enjoy dedicated clubs. Dine by design overlooking the spectacular surrounds or enjoy a huge variety of dishes at Al Maisan. Enjoy Italian delights at Bella Vista, and be sure to stargaze from the tower housing Al Qalaa before tucking into Middle Eastern fine dining and exciting mixed drinks. All in all, be prepared to fall in love with this mountain retreat.

jabal-akhdar.anantara.com

AL AIN

EVENINGS AT THE OASIS

Family evenings in the Oasiscape. Traditional performances, film screenings of pop culture from the 80s and 90s, food and fun for the whole family to enjoy

AL AIN
OASIS

MAR 10 - 11
APR 7 - 8

6:00 PM

CELEBRATING THE SEASONS

Activities within the Oasis designed so that the visitor can experience the different seasons of the Oasis and what it means to have been an Oasis Farmer

AL AIN
OASIS

FEB 1 - MAR 15
MAR 30 - APR 15

ONGOING

MEMORY OF THE EMIRATI SONG

Paying tribute to their forefathers, young Emirati performers play familiar melodies from the 50s, 60s and 70s, while singing the words of original Emirati poetry, in a unique concert that preserves the Memory of the Emirati Song

AL JAHILI
FORT

MAR 2
APR 13

8:00 PM



MY OLD HOUSE

Join archaeologists and conservators on a bus tour exploring the unique architectural features of old homes and oases in Al Ain

MULTIPLE VENUES

MAR 8 - 9

10:00 AM

COLLAGE EXHIBITION

Artists from across the UAE will be invited through an open call to exhibit their works of art in a collective, community exhibition highlighting the use of mixed media as an art form

AL QATTARA
ARTS CENTRE

MAR 15 - 18

ONGOING

FALCONRY HUNTING TRIP

Re-enactment of the setting, events and mood surrounding a falconry trip, a favourite sport of the ruling family

QASR
AL MUWAIJI

MAR 16 - 18

5:00 PM

BARTABAS: AN EQUESTRIAN SHOW

Part of the Emirati-French cultural programme, a unique performance by equestrians and horses from the prestigious Versailles Academy of Equestrian Arts

AL JAHILI
FORT

MAR 23 - 25
MAR 27 - 28

8:00 PM

TRUCIAL SCOUTS EXHIBITION

Temporary exhibition hosting a collection that pertains to the Trucial Scouts, which originated from Al Jahili Fort

AL JAHILI
FORT

APR 12 - AUG 31

ONGOING

WORLD MUSEUM WEEK

A week long programme with a focus on the History of Museums in the UAE in collaboration with museums from other Emirates

MULTIPLE VENUES

MAY 16 - 18

ONGOING

OASIS AFTERNOONS

Family afternoons of events and workshops at the community market of crafts and artisanal products

AL AIN
OASIS

MAR 3 - 4
MAR 24 - 25
APR 7 - 8

2:00 PM

MY HERITAGE, MY RESPONSIBILITY

A seasonal outdoor programme featuring talks, film, workshops and activities focussing on various aspects of Emirati culture

AL AIN
PALACE
MUSEUM

MAR 30 - 31

5:00 PM

LITERARY EVENINGS AT MUWAIJI

A series of evenings dedicated to the Literary Arts; narrators, storytellers, chroniclers and the popular Poetry Programme in collaboration with the Academy of Poetry

QASR
AL MUWAIJI

MAR 18
APR 1

7:00 PM

EMIRATI MELODIES

Emirati concerts showcasing the musical heritage of the UAE as especially of the Al Ain region

QASR
AL MUWAIJI

MAR 9

8:00 PM

TRAVEL THROUGH OUR TRADITIONS

Serving as a bridge between cultures, visitors will be invited to spend time with Emirati women within their homes and farms to discuss different ways of life and experience Emirati culture first hand

MULTIPLE VENUES

MAR 15
MAR 22
MAY 3
MAY 10

10:00 AM

MULTAQA ZAYED NATIONAL MUSEUM

Arabian Horses (Bartabas):
A discussion panel on Arabian horses

The Trucial Scouts:
A discussion panel accompanying Trucial Scouts exhibition

AL JAHILI
FORT

MAR 22

APR 12

7:00 PM

ABU DHABI CLASSICS

Orchestre National du Capitole de Toulouse with Tugan Sokhiev and Edgar Moreau: Inspired by the stories of 1001 Nights. The concerts will include pieces from Saint-Saens, Nielsen, Ravel, Rimski-Korsakow

UAE
UNIVERSITY

MAY 3

8:00 PM

WORLD HERITAGE DAY

A weekend celebration to mark the significance of World Heritage Day, including talks, seminars and family workshops to celebrate Emirati heritage as it relates to the annual theme

AL AIN
PALACE
MUSEUM

APR 20 - 21

5:00 PM

COMIC ART GROUP EXHIBITION

Artists from across the UAE will be invited, through an open call, to exhibit their comics, animations and pop art to culminate in a collective community exhibition

AL QATTARA
ARTS CENTRE

MAY 22 - JUL 29

ONGOING



Visit Al Ain

and enjoy the culturally enriched annual programme of activities and events.

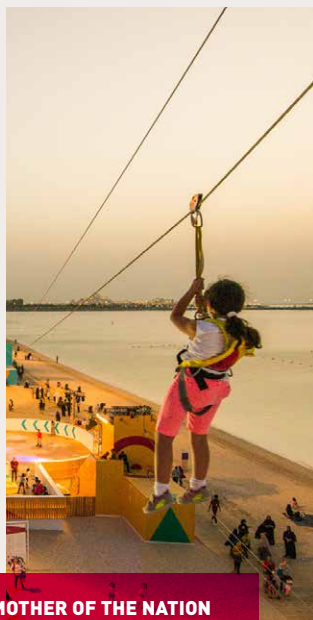
Celebrate the emirate's essence of the past and the contemporary vision of the future.

* The programme is complimentary, however prior registration is required.
To register please contact: 03 711 8331 or 03 711 8332
Or email us on: aanm@tcaabudhabi.ae



@visitabudhabi





**MOTHER OF THE NATION
FESTIVAL**
Mar 26 - Apr 4
Abu Dhabi Corniche
motn.ae



**ABU DHABI INTERNATIONAL
BOOK FAIR**
Apr 26 - May 2
ADNEC
adbookfair.ae



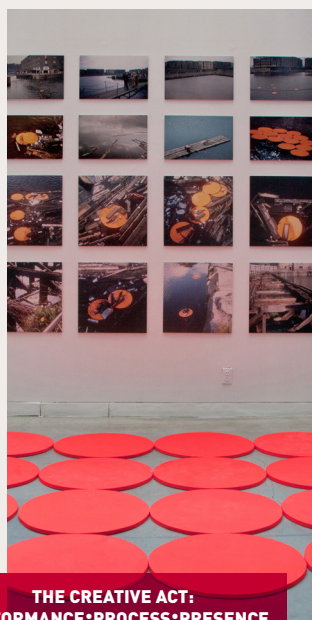
ABU DHABI CLASSICS
May 2, 3 & 23
Multiple Venues
abudhabiclassics.ae



**BARTABAS: AN EQUESTRIAN
SHOW**
Mar 23 - 25, 27 - 28
Al Jahili Fort, Al Ain
visitalain.ae



AL AIN CULTURAL PROGRAMME
Jan - May
Multiple Venues
visitalain.ae



**THE CREATIVE ACT:
PERFORMANCE • PROCESS • PRESENCE**
Mar 7 - Jul 29
Manarat Al Saadiyat
saadiyatculturaldistrict.ae



TRUCIAL SCOUTS EXHIBITION
Apr 12 - Aug 31
Al Jahili Fort, Al Ain
visitalain.ae



COLLAGE EXHIBITION
Mar 15 - May 18
Al Qattara Arts Centre, Al Ain
visitalain.ae

There's so much happening in Abu Dhabi all year round. The emirate's packed events calendar is filled with a diverse selection of world-class art, culture, heritage, literary and entertainment experiences organised by Abu Dhabi Tourism & Culture Authority for all the family to enjoy.
abudhabievents.ae



Elevating Luxury to New Heights.

Comprising two iconic towers, the JW Marriott Marquis Dubai is centrally located beside the Dubai Water Canal. Offering a spectrum of facilities for the most discerning travellers, it is the ultimate destination of exceptional taste featuring an array of diverse restaurants and lounges.

1,608 LUXURIOUS GUEST ROOMS AND SUITES
OVER 14 AWARD-WINNING RESTAURANTS AND LOUNGES
SARAY SPA FEATURING TRADITIONAL HAMMAMS,
17 TREATMENT ROOMS AND A DEAD SEA FLOATATION POOL
STATE-OF-THE-ART HEALTH CLUB AND FITNESS FACILITIES
8,000 SQM OF SPECTACULAR MEETING SPACES

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or visit jwmarriottmarquisdubai.com

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DUBAI

