

SHENZHEN AUSTRALIA LIMA CAMBODIA KATHMANDU MOROCCO

DestinAsian

FROM ASIA TO THE WORLD

A high-angle photograph of a tropical coastline. On the left, a lush green forested hillside descends to a sandy beach. The water is exceptionally clear, showing shades of turquoise and light blue. A small white boat with a few people is in the water. In the distance, another island is visible under a clear blue sky. The foreground shows rocky terrain with some green grass.

**Mergui
Magic**
Island-hopping
in Myanmar's
idyllic archipelago

FLÂNEUR FOREVER





83 DestinAsian

FEATURES

78
FIRST FOOTSTEPS
For centuries the haunt of reclusive sea gypsies, Myanmar's Mergui Archipelago offers one of the region's most idyllic—and vulnerable—yachting destinations.
By **Kendall Hill**

.....



ON THE COVER Heading ashore at Kyun Phi Lar Island in the Mergui Archipelago.
Photograph by **Christopher Wise**



88
THE OUTBACK OF BEYOND
The Top End of Australia's Northern Territory offers adventure writ large, as well as an intimate glimpse into the ways of its original peoples
By **Claire Scobie**

.....



100
PERU ON A PLATE
The country's natural bounty is on full display in Lima, where markets overflow with Peruvian produce and restaurants showcase some of Latin America's most exciting cooking.
By **Sanjay Surana**

.....



108
SHENZHEN STEPS UP
A fishing village just 40 years ago, southern China's manufacturing hub is now aiming to transform itself into a capital of design.
By **Olivia Rosenman**

.....



ST REGIS

**BEYOND
EXPECTATION**

When next season's stiletto
is your Achilles' heel.

*An after-hours appointment with
the personal shopper who will
fit an unforgettable experience,
one of the many reasons why.*

SINGAPORE FASHION WEEK
Wednesday, 13th May 2015
to
Sunday, 17th May 2015
NGEE ANN CITY CIVIC PLAZA



STREGIS.COM

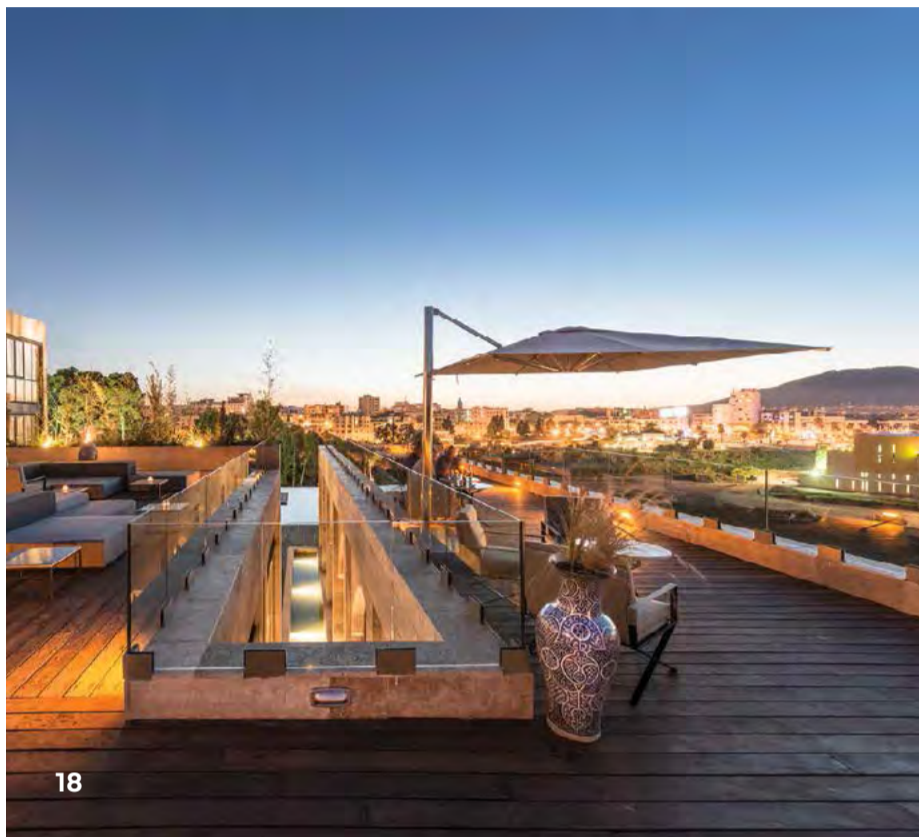


spg
Starwood
Preferred
Guest

A LEGACY OF LUXURY. NOW AT OVER 30 OF THE WORLD'S FINEST HOTELS & RESORTS.
AFRICA THE AMERICAS ASIA EUROPE THE MIDDLE EAST

83 DestinAsian

DEPARTMENTS



18

GOOD TO GO

14 FIRST SHOT

St. Regis's private-island Venetian outpost.

16 UPDATE

New York's Whitney Museum makes a move; Ubud's first food festival; a new inn for Inle Lake.

18 ABOUT TOWN

Fresh finds in Fez.

20 ROOM REPORT

Checking in to Jakarta's latest five-star hotels.

22 NEXT STOP

Springtime in the Sapa highlands of Vietnam.

23 RAIL TOUR

Making tracks through the former Yugoslavia.

24 TOP TABLES

Three new Japanese-inflected restaurants in Manila.

26 THE LIST

A quartet of Antarctic cruises.

28 AGENDA

Upcoming film festivals to look out for.

34 AIRLINE NEWS

The latest updates from the world of air travel.



50

6 PUBLISHER'S NOTE

10 LETTERS & CONTRIBUTORS

12 SPECIAL DEALS

Offers and discounts from hotels in the region.

68 FLASHBACK

Afghanistan's Bamiyan Buddhas, 1997.

124 SKETCHBOOK

Artur Stepniak on Cinque Terre, Italy.

.....



45

VIEWFINDER

45 PICTURES PERFECT

Award-winning images from the 2014 Travel Photographer of the Year competition.

DISPATCHES

50 SPAIN

On a tour through the vineyards of Penedès, the region's sparkling wines prove a perfect match for all manner of Catalan dishes.

56 CAMBODIA

From Siem Reap to Phnom Penh, a small band of locavore chefs is determined to bring homegrown produce back into the spotlight.

62 NEPAL

For all its hurly-burly, Kathmandu and its neighboring cities teem with temple-filled plazas, Buddhist monuments, and moments of surprising serenity.

FROM TOP: COURTESY OF SAHARA HOTEL; PHILIP LEE HARVEY/POTY.COM; TERENCE CARTER

OM SWASTIASTU WELCOME

BECOME A PART OF ALL THAT IS NOW. EXPERIENCE THE
JUXTAPOSITION OF BALINESE MYTHOLOGY AND THE W HOTELS'
INVIGORATING ENERGY AND DYNAMIC AESTHETICS

**W RETREAT & SPA
BALI - SEMINYAK**
152 RETREATS
4 MARVELOUS SUITES
1 WOW SUITE
1 EXTREME WOW SUITE
75 VILLAS
4 EXTREME WOW VILLAS
24-HOUR AWAY SPA
2 RESTAURANTS
4 BARS
4 MEETING ROOMS

JL. PETITENGET, SEMINYAK
KEROBOKAN, DENPASAR, BALI

+62 361 4738 106

whotels.bali@whotels.com

EXPLORE

WRETREATBALI.COM

WRETREATBALI

@WBALI

@WBALISEMINYAK

@WBALISEMINYAK

W

BALI

SEMINYAK

RETREAT & SPA

WATER AND THE WORKS

On the rare occasion, a trend comes along with enough allure to make you question your own style. In the realm of travel, small-boat cruises are stealing the show with exactly that kind of cool

authority right now, tempting even strictly landlubbers to spend some time afloat on glorious vessels rolling through remote territories only accessible by water. In our cover story, Kendall Hill documents one through the Mergui Archipelago, a group of 800 islands off the southern coast of Myanmar that only became open to tourism in 1997. His accounts of the empty, powder-soft beaches are dreamlike, but it's his descriptions of the Moken sea gypsies who live among them and the less glamorous realities of their home's environment that linger. It's a refreshing story that captures paradise along with its imperfections.

On the other side of the world, our culinary contributor Sanjay Surana recently visited Peru to check in on the food scene in Lima, which is getting to be very vogue. There will always be New York and Tokyo drawing aspiring chefs like magnets,

but it's wonderful to see a country's talent stick to its own soil and build a place worth visiting for the menus alone. In Cambodia, too, Leisa Tyler covers how chefs are determined to change its import-driven restaurant culture with a locavore mentality. It's exciting progress.

Other features include a report on Shenzhen and its rise as a design capital of China as well as an adventure tale in Australia's Northern Territory complete with termite-mound tastings and crocodiles galore; there's something in this issue to interest every type of traveler. And on that note, we always appreciate when you share a bit about yourself and your own travel habits on our annual readership survey, enclosed in this issue. We look forward to hearing from you.



e-mail: publisher@destinasian.co.id

Live Life

like a **culture aficionado**

Immerse yourself in the **Ascott Lifestyle** and live as you always have; just bigger, better and bolder.

Widen your horizons with a myriad of fascinating cultural expeditions – your soul will be fully enlivened.

Because life is about living.



Ascott offers a collection of lifestyle experiences, handpicked for your indulgence during your stay at any of our serviced residences.

**Enjoy Our Best Rate Guarantee
and Live Life with Ascott**

www.the-ascott.com | +65 6272 7272



With three award-winning serviced residence brands, we welcome you to enjoy our renowned hospitality in more than 200 properties in over 80 cities spanning more than 20 countries across Asia Pacific, Europe and the Gulf region.

DestinAsian

Maggie M. Halim
Chairwoman

Ronald Liem
Publisher & Managing Director

Christopher P. Hill
Editor-In-Chief & Associate Publisher

.....

Anastasia Rivai
Group Art Director

Gabrielle Lipton
Contributing Editor

Chitra Permatasari Anwar
Online Editor

Agus Pramono
Muhamad Haikal
Graphic Designers

Suhartina Sindukusumo
Editorial Assistant

Dimas Anggakara
Senior Videographer

Ahmad Fickar Fajar
Videographer

Abdul Khalik
Michael Purwagani
Digital Imaging Artists

Kusdiana
Senior Production Manager

Adi Wijaya
Nuridin
Production Executives

Heri Yuliana
Junior Production Executive

.....

Design by
Brownfox Studio
www.brownfoxstudio.com

destinasian.com
facebook.com/destinasian.mag
twitter.com/destinasian_mag
instagram.com/destinasianmagazine
.....

All rights in this publication and the name are owned by DestinAsian Media Pte. Ltd. and licensed to P.T. Mahapala Mahardhika. No part of this magazine may be reproduced without permission. All rights reserved. Opinions herein are those of the writers and not necessarily endorsed by P.T. Mahapala Mahardhika.

DestinAsian is published six times a year and distributed throughout Southeast Asia and Hong Kong. The magazine assumes no responsibility for the safekeeping or return of unsolicited manuscripts, photographs, or other material.

To subscribe or order back issues, please visit www.destinasian.com or e-mail us at subscribe@destinasian.com. You can also call 62-21/573-7070, fax 62-21/574-7733, or write to: P.O. Box 08 JKPPJ, Jakarta 10210 A, Indonesia.

Singapore MCI (P) 087/07/2014

Francisca Liem
Director

.....

Patty Abidin
Director of Operations and Business Development

Tony Setiawan Gani
Finance Controller

Lord Raditya Basuki
Assistant to Publisher

Robert Lau
Regional General Manager Sales and Online

Gracia Martina Betty
Regional Sales Senior Manager

Soh Yun Huei
Advertising Sales Senior Manager

Sri Neni (Ninies)
Sales Manager

Candraditya Putri
Sales Support & CRM Executive

Darwin Chang
Ita Dwi Yulianti
Marketing Communication Managers

Rachel M. Kawilarang
Senior Marketing Executive

Paolo Avis
Group Online Marketing Manager

Deransy Dinar Haliesya
Marketing Support

Vera Siagian
Circulation and Distribution Manager

Liana Phiong
Finance & Accounting Assistant Manager

Aan Trixana
Finance & Accounting Senior Supervisor

Chrisdian Yuli Ardianto
HR & GA Corporate Manager

Laila Karina Agustina
HR & GA Senior Executive

Antonius Jefrisoe Gunawan
Online Manager

Sunaryo Tandil
IT Manager

Shilton Hardi
IT Staff

Atiet Soeharto
Office Manager

DESTINASIAN AD SALES CONTACT

Singapore and Other Countries

Robert Lau, Soh Yun Huei
65/6536-1895
rlau@destinasian.com
yunhuei@destinasian.com

Indonesia

Gracia Martina Betty
Sri Neni (Ninies)
62-21/573-7070
betty@destinasian.com
ninies@destinasian.com

MEDIA REPRESENTATIVES

Australia

• **Retail Publishing Pty Ltd.**
David Elliott
61/4507-62656
retailpublishing@gmail.com

China

• **MHI China Ltd.**
Mary Yao
86-10/8528-3636
mary@mhichina.com

Hong Kong

• **MediaWorks Asia Ltd.**
Kim Kenchington
852/2882-1106
kim@mediaworksasia.com

India

• **RMA media**
Faredoon Kuka
91-22/2925-3735
91-22/6570-3081
kuka@rmamedia.com

Japan

• **Shinano International Inc.**
Kazuhiko Tanaka
81-3/3584-6420
kazuji@bunkoh.com

Korea

• **The Peak Media Co., Ltd.**
Pearl (Yoon-Joo) Jin
82-70/4639-3007-8
pearl@tpmkr.com

Malaysia

• **Next Media**
Jo Shim
60-3/6148-1810
jo_shim@nextmedia.com.my

Thailand

• **N.J. International Media Co., Ltd.**
Narntittha Jirarayapong (Noo)
66-2/635-5185 ext. 14
noo@njintermedia.com

United Arab Emirates

• **The MediaVantage**
Lenora Bennis
971-4/425-3300
lenora@themediavantage.com

THE LUXURY COLLECTION®

Hotels & Resorts

The Luxury Collection® is the curator of the world's most enriching and desirable destination experiences, the key that unlocks some of the most authentic locales. Each hotel and resort is a distinct and powerful expression of its location, a gem-like treasure to be savoured, celebrated and collected.

LIFE IS A COLLECTION OF EXPERIENCES
LET US BE YOUR GUIDE

theluxurycollection.com



Pictures from left to right: ITC Grand Chola, a Luxury Collection Hotel, Chennai; Twelve at Hengshan, a Luxury Collection Hotel, Shanghai; Sheraton Grande Sukhumvit, a Luxury Collection Hotel, Bangkok; The Astor Hotel, a Luxury Collection Hotel, Tianjin; Keraton at The Plaza, a Luxury Collection Hotel, Jakarta

The Luxury Collection® Hotels & Resorts in Asia Pacific

*China: The Astor Hotel, a Luxury Collection Hotel, Tianjin The Azure Qiantang, a Luxury Collection Hotel, Hangzhou
The Castle Hotel, a Luxury Collection Hotel, Dalian The Grand Mansion, a Luxury Collection Hotel, Nanjing (Q2, 2015)
The Hongta Hotel, a Luxury Collection Hotel, Shanghai The Royal Begonia, a Luxury Collection Resort, Sanya
Twelve at Hengshan, a Luxury Collection Hotel, Shanghai*

*India: ITC Gardenia, a Luxury Collection Hotel, Bengaluru ITC Grand Bharat, a Luxury Collection Resort, Gurgaon, New Delhi Capital Region
ITC Grand Central, a Luxury Collection Hotel, Mumbai ITC Grand Chola, a Luxury Collection Hotel, Chennai
ITC Kakatiya, a Luxury Collection Hotel, Hyderabad ITC Maratha, a Luxury Collection Hotel, Mumbai ITC Maurya, a Luxury Collection Hotel, New Delhi
ITC Mughal, a Luxury Collection Hotel, Agra ITC Rajputana, a Luxury Collection Hotel, Jaipur ITC Sonar, a Luxury Collection Hotel, Kolkata
ITC Windsor, a Luxury Collection Hotel, Bengaluru*

Indonesia: Keraton at The Plaza, a Luxury Collection Hotel, Jakarta The Laguna, a Luxury Collection Resort & Spa, Nusa Dua, Bali

Japan: Suiran, a Luxury Collection Hotel, Kyoto

Malaysia: The Andaman, a Luxury Collection Resort, Langkawi

*Thailand: Sheraton Grande Sukhumvit, a Luxury Collection Hotel, Bangkok The Naka Island, a Luxury Collection Resort & Spa, Phuket
Vana Belle, a Luxury Collection Resort, Koh Samui*

spg
Starwood
Preferred
Guest

MERIDIEN

loft

FOUR
POINTS

WESTIN

THE LUXURY
COLLECTION

W
HOTELS

Sheraton

ST REGIS

element



CALLAGHAN WALSH
Home Base: Hong Kong
Photographed: “Shenzhen Steps Up,” p. 108

.....
My biggest surprise in Shenzhen was how modern the city feels. It’s just a quick hop over the border from Hong Kong, and yet it could be a world away. You feel very much immersed in China and the continual advancements being made there.
If I go back I’ll check out the Bionic Brew craft-beer brewery and bar, tucked into an industrial park on Shahe Jie.



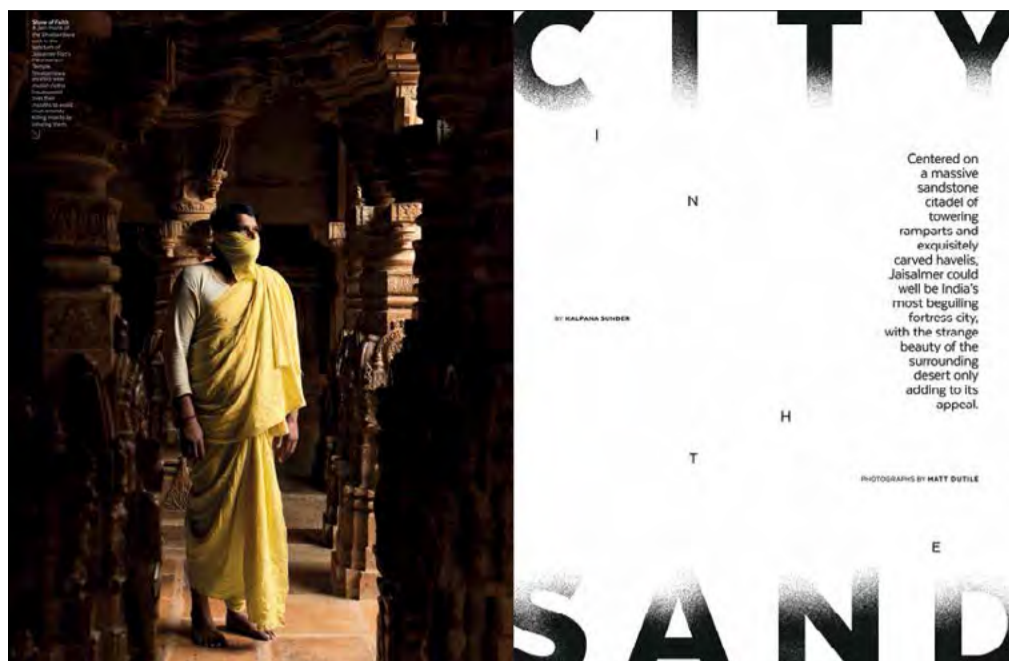
LEISA TYLER
Home Base: Penang
Wrote: “Cambodia’s New Crop,” p. 56

.....
My favorite homegrown discovery on this trip were the basketball-size pomelos from Koh Trong, a tiny island in the Mekong near Kratie. They’re plump, juicy, and give off alternating bursts of sweet and sour.
The best hangout in Phnom Penh is Touk Bar, for its happy-hour draft beers and prime people-watching views over the esplanade as the sun sinks over the Bassac River.



SANJAY SURANA
Home Base: Singapore
Wrote: “Peru on a Plate,” p. 100

.....
My first impressions of Lima weren’t great. I was expecting a beautifully faded colonial city, not ho-hum modern architecture. But there are some gorgeous spots, especially Plaza Mayor and the Miraflores Boardwalk.
Most memorable meal? I didn’t eat a bad meal anywhere in Lima. But for ingenuity and an uninhibited celebration of Peru’s natural bounty, it would have to be dinner at Central.



DESERT DREAMING

I came across your magazine during a recent trip to Southeast Asia and found it very inspiring. I was particularly taken with your story about Jaisalmer [“City in the Sand,” Feb./Mar. 2015]. The photos of the havelis and fort were stunning, and it’s fascinating how every part of life there is linked somehow to the desert environment. I’ve barely just arrived back in New York, but I’ve already started planning my next trip to Asia.

—Daniel Dominguez Wetter, New York



.....
RIVER REVERIE I went up the Mekong years ago on one of the Pandaw boats between Ho Chi Minh City and Phnom Penh, and that was fun. But judging from your story about the Tonle Sap leg of the Mekong cruise circuit, I seem to have missed out on a lot [“The Life Aquatic,” Feb./Mar. 2015.] Cambodia’s “Great Lake” sounds fascinating. Next time!
 —Bruce Campbell, Hong Kong


DESIGN OF THE TIMES I like your new design, very clean and simple. Thanks for the refresh—and for the great stories and photography that go with it. —David Tsui, via Facebook

POWDER HUNGRY A friend of mine happened to be reading your magazine on the way over to Japan recently and showed me your Niseko story, which I was thrilled by [“The White Stuff,” Dec. 2014/Jan. 2015]. We are close friends with the owners of Bar Gyu, which you mention, and we go to Niseko every season—this year I spent 41 days there. I’m a snowboarder, and Niseko always delivers. I also went to British Columbia for heli-skiing in the Rockies with Mica Heli Guides. It was terrific.
 —Ting Ji, Hong Kong

We welcome your views and recommendations. Letters to the editor should be sent via e-mail to letter@destinasian.com or by post to The Editor, DestinAsian Magazine, P.O. Box 08, JKPPJ, Jakarta, 10210A, Indonesia. Published letters may be edited for style, clarity, and length.



Better pack

your  for a big adventure

from Melbourne to London to Brunei

or any of the stunning places we

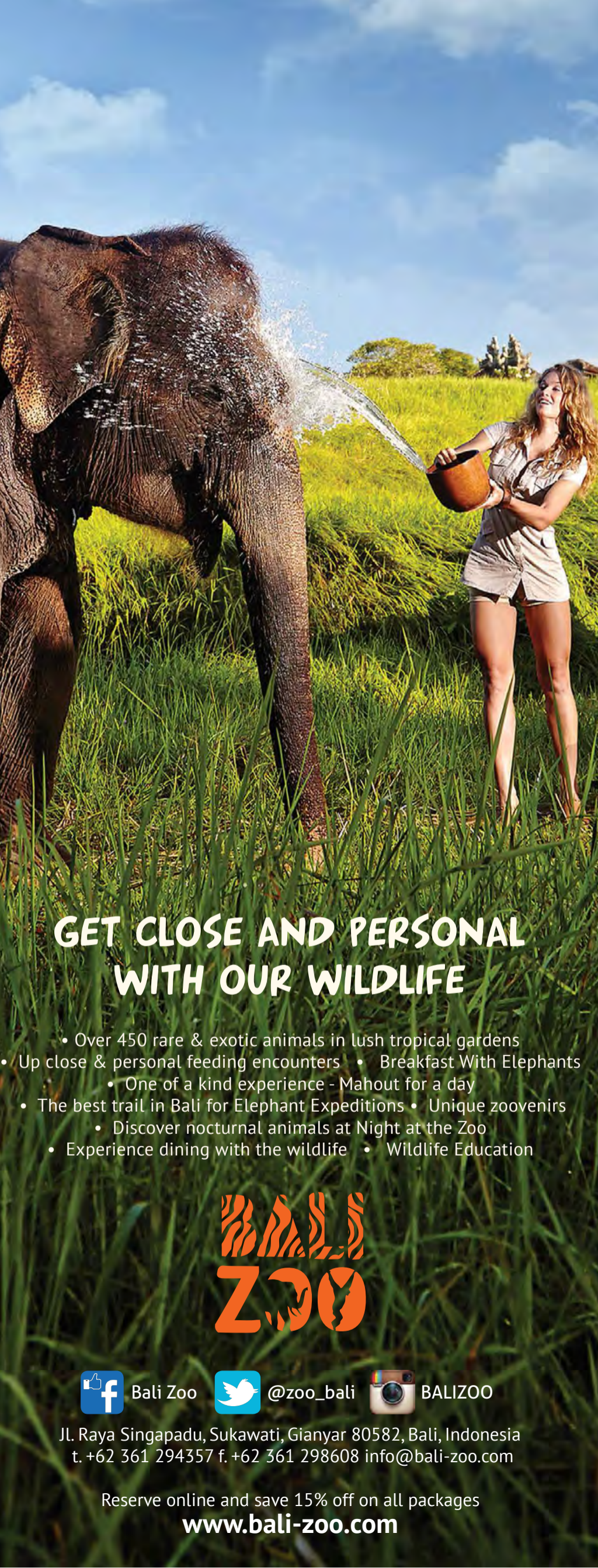
travel across the world. Get ready,

it's time to *fly*



...betterfly Royal Brunei
Visit us at www.flyroyalbrunei.com today!





GET CLOSE AND PERSONAL WITH OUR WILDLIFE

- Over 450 rare & exotic animals in lush tropical gardens
- Up close & personal feeding encounters • Breakfast With Elephants
 - One of a kind experience - Mahout for a day
- The best trail in Bali for Elephant Expeditions • Unique zoovonirs
 - Discover nocturnal animals at Night at the Zoo
- Experience dining with the wildlife • Wildlife Education



Bali Zoo



@zoo_bali



BALIZOO

Jl. Raya Singapadu, Sukawati, Gianyar 80582, Bali, Indonesia
t. +62 361 294357 f. +62 361 298608 info@bali-zoo.com

Reserve online and save 15% off on all packages

www.bali-zoo.com

SPECIAL DEALS



/ China /

SHANGRI-LA HOTEL, NANCHANG

For leisure travelers stopping over on their way out to Jiangxi's beautiful countryside or business travelers spending a few nights in the city, Nanchang—the bustling capital of Jaingxi Province in southwestern China—now has a luxurious new place to stay. Situated across the Gan River from the 1,300-year-old Pavilion of Prince Treng, the 473-room Shangri-La is marking its February debut with nightly rates from US\$90 through the end of July, a 25 percent discount on standard rates (shangri-la.com).

Indonesia RIMBA JIMBARAN BALI

Families looking for an early summer getaway will do well to take note of the Family Holiday Hotel Package Bali running through the end of June at Rimba, the beautiful five-star hotel within the larger Ayana Resort and Spa property on the coast of Jimbaran Bay. The package includes two rooms with the second priced at a 50 percent discount, inclusive of breakfast for two adults and two children (rimbajimbaran.com).

Thailand SOFITEL SO BANGKOK

It's been three years since the Sofitel So Bangkok opened its doors as one of the city's most stylish hotels, and in celebration, it's offering a series of deals revolving around its birthday number. Through the end of April, three-night stays booked in its So Club room category or higher come with nightly credits of US\$30 to be used at any of its three restaurants, three bars, or spa, and on every Wednesday during the same period, food and beverages at the restaurants are discounted by 33 percent (sofitel-so-bangkok.com).

Vietnam HOTEL DE L'OPERA, HANOI

A grand colonial-style manse in walking distance from Hanoi's Old Quarter, this MGallery-branded hotel is adding a new draw for travelers headed to the Vietnamese capital. Through the end of 2015, stays of three nights in any of its richly decorated rooms only need to be booked seven days in advance to receive the third night's stay for free (hoteldelopera.com).



COURTESY OF SHANGRI-LA; COURTESY OF SOFITEL SO BANGKOK

A TRADITION OF EXCELLENCE,
DEFINING NATURAL LUXURY THE WORLD OVER.



Anantara Dubai The Palm Resort & Spa



Qasr Al Sarab Desert Resort By Anantara, Abu Dhabi



Anantara Kihavah Villas, Maldives

ANANTARA – CELEBRATING ITS 15TH YEAR OF NATURAL LUXURY.

Since 2001, Anantara has been creating hotel experiences that bring back a sense of excitement to luxury travel. From the most vibrant cities to some of the world's truly outstanding islands and iconic cultural destinations, Anantara has become synonymous with distinct natural luxury. Consequently, Anantara today is the choice of a growing class of modern travellers seeking the extraordinary anywhere they go. Celebrating its 15th year of natural luxury hospitality, Anantara continues to bring outstanding experiences to the world's finest addresses.

Discover the excitement in luxury - explore anantara.com or call +66 (0) 2365 9110



CAMBODIA ▪ CHINA ▪ INDONESIA ▪ MALDIVES ▪ MOZAMBIQUE ▪ THAILAND ▪ QATAR ▪ UNITED ARAB EMIRATES ▪ VIETNAM ▪ ZAMBIA
OPENING SOON: NEW ZEALAND ▪ OMAN ▪ SRI LANKA

GOOD *to* GO

ABOUT TOWN
A new flair
for Fez
p. 18

TRAIN TOUR
Making tracks
through the
Balkans
p. 23

TOP TABLES
Three new
restaurants in
Manila
p. 24



Lagoon Luxe
The six-hectare Isola
di San Clemente is
now home to
St. Regis's third
Italian property.



VENETIAN REVAMP

A 10-minute boat ride from the crowds of Venice's Piazza San Marco, Isola di San Clemente became a sanctuary for sophisticated travelers when its historic buildings were recast as a private-island hotel in 2009. Fresh from a multimillion-dollar makeover courtesy of its new owners, the property looks set to be even more impressive when it reopens in April as the **St. Regis Venice San Clemente Palace**. Occupying a former 17th-century monastery, the hotel comprises 191 rooms and suites done up in silk brocades, Murano-glass light fittings, and terrazzo floors, many with views of the lagoon. The cypress-studded grounds also feature a pool terrace, a tennis court, and the 900-year-old San Clemente Church—an impossibly romantic spot for weddings or vow renewals (39-041/475-0111; stregisvenice.com; doubles from US\$590). ©



ST REGIS
CHENGDU

**BEYOND
EXPECTATION**

A Modern Legacy of Storied Luxury

Contemporary elegance in the heart of the business district, The St. Regis Chengdu is the premier destination for leisure or business. Boasting an iconic address in an ancient city, travelers gravitate to this bustling metropolis to see the world-renowned pandas, sample traditional Sichuan cuisine or pursue the luxury fashion boutiques.

88 TAISHENG ROAD SOUTH,
QINGYANG DISTRICT, CHENGDU,
SICHUAN PROVINCE, CHINA 610017

STREGIS.COM/CHENGDU

TEL 86 28 6287 6666

FAX 86 28 6283 0666

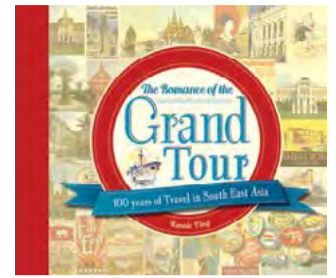


STREGIS.COM

spg
Starwood
Preferred
Guest



On the Move
The downtown home of New York's Whitney Museum.



TOUR DE FORCE

.....
Lavishly illustrated with period photos and antique maps, ***The Romance of the Grand Tour - 100 Years of Travel in South East Asia*** (Talisman Publishing) is a nostalgic exploration of the region's legendary port cities during the colonial era. A director at Singapore's National Heritage Board, author Kennie Ting retraces the steps of an East of the Suez Grand Tour that takes in old-world Rangoon and Singapore through to the Dutch East Indies cities of Batavia and Surabaya. If the Merchant Ivory team had ever written a travel guide, it would probably have looked a lot like this.

—Daven Wu

WHIT LARGE

At the point where Lower Manhattan's Meatpacking District of list-only clubs and designer flagships begins transitioning into the West Village's brownstones and cafés, the **Whitney Museum of American Art** opens the doors of its new, ultra-contemporary home by the Hudson River on May 1. With one of the world's foremost collections of its kind numbering 21,000 works and counting, the bastion of 20th- and 21st-century art had long outgrown its uptown address at the Marcel Breuer building, which the Metropolitan Museum of Art will take over as an outpost of its own. The Whitney's new Renzo Piano-designed digs more than doubles the museum's former size at nearly 20,000 square meters, including indoor and outdoor exhibition spaces overlooking the High Line, a 170-seat theater, and two eateries conceived by famed New York restaurateur Danny Meyer. The inaugural exhibition *America Is Hard to See* (through September 27) focuses on American art from 1900 onward, including works by Hopper, O'Keeffe, and Calder. Call it a modern housewarming (99 Gansevoort St.; 1-212/570-3600; whitney.org). —**Gabrielle Lipton**

P.S. May also ushers in the fourth annual Frieze New York art fair, showcasing more than 190 of the world's leading galleries in a custom-built tent on Randall's Island in the East River (May 14–17; friezenewyork.com).



ISLAND FLAVORS

.....
The first ever **Ubud Food Festival** is being held this year, putting the theory that food is the window into a culture into practice. Headed by the same folks behind the Ubud Writers & Readers Festival, the event will explore the diversity of Indonesian cuisine, filling the central Balinese town of Ubud with three days of panels and tastings led by restaurateurs and food specialists, farmers' markets, and cooking demonstrations and master classes taught by some of the best chefs in the region (June 5–7; ubudfoodfestival.com). —**GL**

LAKESIDE LUSTER

As one of Myanmar's biggest draws, Inle Lake has no shortage of hotels on its shores. But with the opening of **Sanctum Inle Resort** comes a refuge unlike the rest, modeled after a European monastery with 96 rooms often featuring vaulted ceilings and arched windows. Given its cigar lounge, wine list, gardens, and spa, Sanctum is a far cry from asceticism, but after days spent on its tours of the lake, a nearby winery, and Kakku Temple, who would want to return to anything less? (Maing Thauk Village; 95-1/860-4945; sanctum-inle-resort.com; doubles from US\$484) —David Tse



INDONESIAN INSPIRATION

Once fashioned into the kimonos of Japanese nobility and gowns of Marie Antoinette, the intricately dyed and woven threads of ikat—Indonesian for “to tie”—are nothing new in the realm of status symbols. Most recently, their hazy, cloud-like patterns are the inspiration for **Hermès's** new tableware collection, Voyage en Ikat. Made in the French porcelain capital Limoges, the pieces comprise a dinner service set ranging from saucers to a soup tureen, each with beautiful jewel hues of emerald, sapphire, and ruby bleeding across their surfaces, touched with 24-karat matte gold hand-applied by Hermès craftsmen (from US\$230; hermes.com). —GL



TAILOR SUCCESSFUL,
EXTRAORDINARY

CORPORATE

And
Private
Events



SOUTH EAST ASIAN BAR BITES
AND STREET STYLE CUISINE

CONTACT LONGTAIL TEAM
AT INFO@LONGTAIL.SG TO
PERSONALIZE YOUR EVENT



MONDAY TO FRIDAY

11.30AM TO 11.00PM

SATURDAY 4.00PM-11.00PM



longtailSG www.longtail.sg



LONGTAIL ASIAN BRASSERIE & BAR
70 Collyer Quay, #01-03 Customs House,
Singapore 049323

TEL: +65 6532 1319 E-MAIL: INFO@LONGTAIL.SG



FEZ TIME

A stylish scene is emerging in Fez, a Moroccan city in the midst of transformation. Here are six new places to discover. BY ISOBEL DIAMOND

LE JARDIN DES BIEHN

Hidden amid the 9,600 winding streets of Fez's medina, or old town, this former palace and its tranquil courtyard have been restored into a nine-room hotel by owner Michel Biehn, formerly a Provence-based antiques dealer and interior designer. Sun-drenched colors and mosaics fill the property with a sense of place, as do ancient textiles, bespoke furniture, and museum-quality antiques from Biehn's private col-

lection. Locals like to drop into Le Jardin's Fez Café, where meals use produce from the hotel's organic garden (13 Akbat Sbaa, Douh; 212-5/3574-1036; jardindesbiehn.com; doubles from US\$165).

RESTAURANT NUMÉRO 7

Nearby Le Jardin, Numéro 7's black-and-white design sets a striking stage for one of the city's most innovative culinary concepts. Underlined with a goal of cross-cultural exchange, the kitchen is headed by a rotating roster of renowned international chefs who come to spend up to four months in residency here, working with local farmers and producers to create ingredient-driven menus five nights weekly (7 Zkak Rouan; 212-6/9427-7849; restaurantnumero7.com).

DAR ROUMANA

Housed in a restored riad, this bed-and-breakfast is palatial with its soaring ceilings, intri-



Moroccan Matter

Clockwise from left: The courtyard at Le Jardin Des Bienn; the art displayed at Numéro 7 rotates to feature different artists; Hotel Sahrai's infinity pool.

cately tiled floors, and detailed latticework. The five suites are huge, and in the evenings, the courtyard transforms into a restaurant serving fine Moorish and Mediterranean cuisine. Views taking in the entire medina are afforded from the rooftop terrace, the perfect place for an evening aperitif (30 *Derb El Amer, Zkak Roumane*; 212-5/3574-1637; darroumana.com; doubles from US\$94).

THE ARTISAN PROJECT

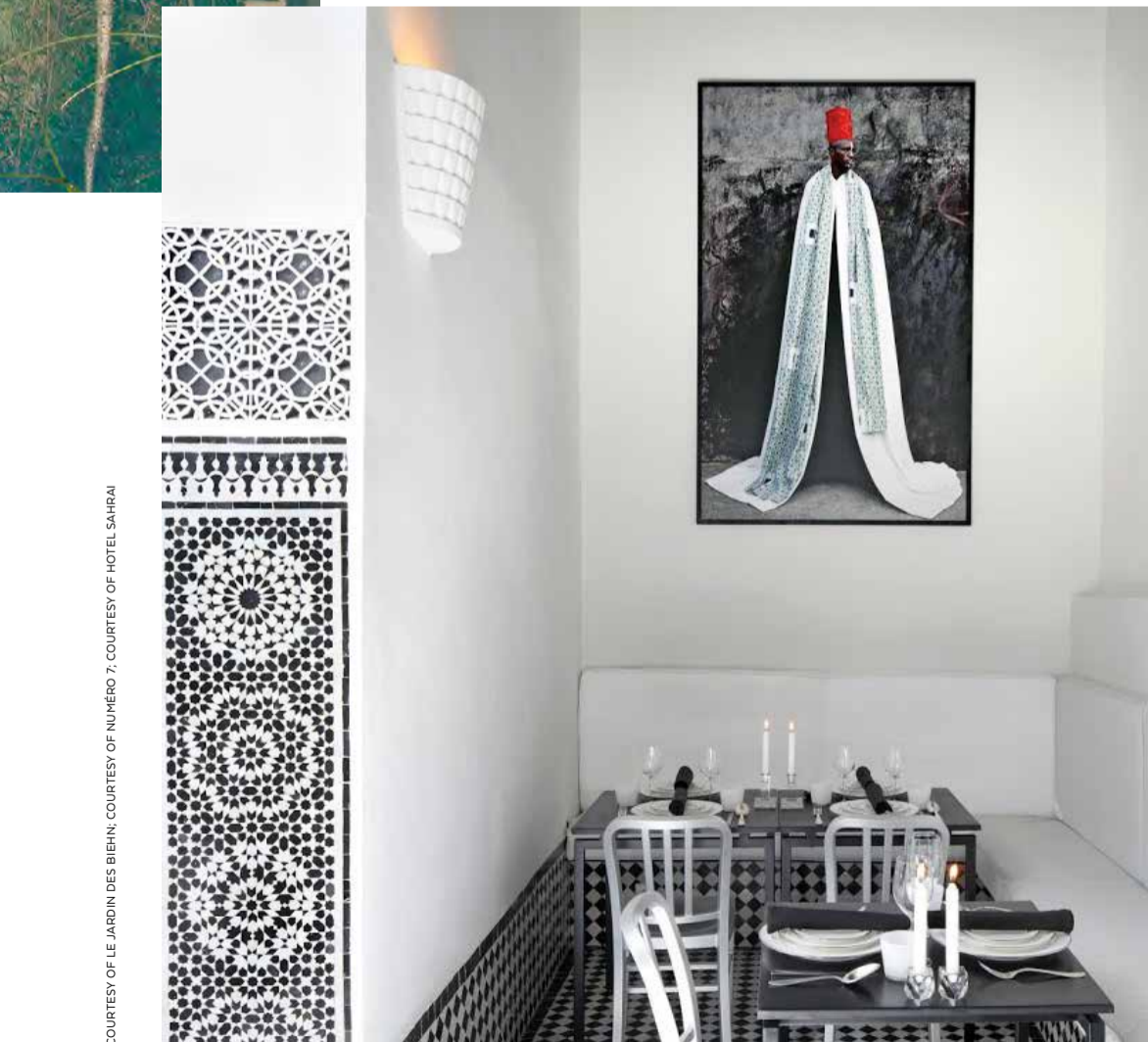
From exquisite leather bags to woven throws and rugs, artisanal goods in the city souks come in choices galore. Knowing where to shop and how much to pay, however, can be a bit of a minefield to navigate. Luckily, former Los Angeles resident Nina Mohammad-Galbert offers an elite shopping service, meeting with clients to discuss their wants before guiding them to the best spots in the medina's markets or outside of town to Berber villages, famed for their abstract weaving patterns (*no telephone*; artisanprojectinc.com).

HOTEL SAHRAI

On a hilltop between the medina and the Ville Nouvelle, or new town, this 50-room beauty opened last fall as Fez's sleekest hotel yet. Paris-based architect and designer Christopher Pillet combined contemporary furnishings with Moroccan crafts, and Berber rugs, Fassi ceramics, and brass lamps are placed throughout. Along with a French brasserie and Amaraz, serving Moroccan fare, there are rooftop terraces and the first Givenchy Spa in Africa (*Bab Lghoul, Dhar El Mehraz*; 212-5/3594-0332; hotelsahrai.com; doubles from US\$170).

MAISON BLANCHE

Another designed-by-Pillet hot spot, this Ville Nouvelle bar and restaurant is nothing if not sophisticated. Walls of slate and hot-pink seats provide a cool, European ambience for chef Thierry Vaissière's French delicacies such as duck foie gras terrine with fig chutney and orange mille-feuille. For a nightcap, the mezzanine bar offers a selection of cigars, cocktails, fine spirits, and champagne (*Rue Ahmed Chaouki*; 212-5/3562-2727; mbrestaurantlounge.com). ©





Sister Act

A guest room at the Fairmont Jakarta. Left: Inside the Raffles' art-filled lobby.



DOUBLE DEBUT

It's been a few years since Jakarta got its last new big-name luxury hotel, but the dry spell has ended thanks to the openings of the Fairmont and Raffles—sister properties that each have a look of their own.

BY GABRIELLE LIPTON

Fairmont Jakarta

.....
Overlooking the 18-hole Senayan National Golf Club on one side and the park-like Gelora Bung Karno sports complex on the other, the Fairmont is one of those rare Jakarta high-rises with views of greenery. Inside, the hotel is Japanese-informed with tastefully sparse decor, and while the 380 rooms and 108 apartment-style Sky Suites sport Fairmont's polished, if predictable, style of plainclothes luxury, the 10 dining venues will contribute a measure of glitz once they're all open by the end of August. Among them will be an outpost of New York's Cotton Club and the top-level K22 Bar & Lounge and View, which respectively

promise DJ-hosted nightlife and one of the best new restaurants in the region. For daylight diversions, there's a 1,000-square-meter spa, the neighboring Plaza Senayan mall (connected to the hotel by an underground tunnel), and an elevated outdoor pool with, of course, great views (*Jl. Asia Afrika No.8; 62-21/2970-3333; fairmont.com; doubles from US\$375*).

Raffles Jakarta

.....
Seven years in the making, Raffles finally opened mid-March in the Kuningan area. With three restaurants and 173 rooms—which even at entry level have separate living areas and butler service—it's less

than half of Fairmont's size. And the look? Tremendous. The owner, famed Indonesian architect and art maven Dr. Ir. Ciputra, created the hotel as a tribute to his favorite painter, the late Hendra Gunawan, and while the artist's actual works reside in the Ciputra Artpreneur museum next door, the hotel's design extensively ties back to Gunawan's deeply emotive narratives and colors, from the golden chairs and the etched elevator doors to the lobby's huge mosaic mural. The exceptions are the 14th-floor pool terrace, with its gardens and draped cabanas; the spa; and the colonial-style Writers Bar, a nod to the original Raffles in Singapore (*Jl. Prof. Dr. Satrio No.3-5; 62-21/2988-0888; raffles.com; doubles from US\$375*).

THANK YOU

To all readers of DestinAsian for having voted Grand Hyatt Jakarta “Best Hotel” in Jakarta for the 9th consecutive year. Your loyalty is our most precious reward.

GRAND | HYATT™

GRAND HYATT JAKARTA

Jalan M.H. Thamrin Kav. 28-30, Jakarta, 10350

+62 21 2992 1234 TELEPHONE

+62 21 5020 1234

+62 21 2992 1345 FAX

jakarta.grand.hyatt.com

HYATT name, design and related marks are trademarks of Hyatt Corporation. ©2015 Hyatt Corporation. All rights reserved

SPRINGTIME IN SAPA

High in Vietnam's remote northwest mountains, the old French hill station of Sapa is today among the country's most popular destinations, providing an unrivaled mix of adventure, climate, and culture. The town, sited around a small lake at an elevation of 1,600 meters, is surrounded by terraced rice fields and highland scenery, including the sharp-edged peak of Mount Fansipan, the tallest peak in Indochina. Trekkers here can also count on memorable encounters with the colorful ethnic minorities—Hmong, Red Dao, Tay, Giay—that inhabit these hills. But unless you want to contend with the fog (and occasional snow) of Sapa's winter, or the rain of the June–September wet season, spring is the ideal time to visit—dry, clear, and clement. And for diehard hikers, this may well be one of the last chances to enjoy the views from atop Mount Fansipan in near solitude: slated to open in September is a cable car that will cut the three-day trek to the summit to just 15 minutes, whisking as many as 2,000 people up the mountain every hour. —David Tse

Getting There Night trains from Hanoi cover the 300 kilometers to Lao Cai City, the provincial capital, in eight hours. (Guests of the Victoria Sapa Resort will want to avail themselves of the exclusive Victoria Express Train, which offers the most comfortable carriages on the tracks.) From there, it's an hour's drive by taxi or hotel shuttle along the scenic, sinuous road to Sapa.

Where to Stay Sapa has accommodations to suit any budget. At the top end is the 77-room **Victoria Sapa Resort & Spa** (84-20/387-1522; victoriahotels.asia; doubles from US\$150), with a chalet-style setting above the western end of the lake. A 45-minute drive from town, **Topas Eco Lodge** (84-20/387-1331; topasecolodge.com; doubles from US\$110) offers a hilltop escape overlooking the villages of Thanh Kim and Ban Ho.

What Else There is no shortage of trekking companies in Sapa, most of which offer walks along the popular southerly route to Ta Van village. For something different, contact **Sapa Sisters** (sapasisters.com), an all-female, Hmong-owned outfit that takes guests off the usual tourist circuit.



MARTIN PUDDY/GETTY IMAGES



ON TRACK IN THE BALKANS

A rail journey takes in the sites and scars of the former Yugoslavia.

BY LEISA TYLER



Ties with the Past

Above, from left: Overlooking Mostar's Neretva River and its Ottoman-style bridge; the boarding platform at Budapest's Keleti Train Station.

Built by the Ottoman and then Austrian-Hungarian empires in the mid 19th century, rail lines once crisscrossed much of the Western Balkans, from the shores of Montenegro to the pine-carpeted mountains of Serbia. With the start of the Yugoslav Wars in 1991, however, train travel in the former Yugoslavia ground to a halt as the federation's six socialist republics fragmented into independent states, sparking a decade of bloody ethnic conflicts. Thankfully, the region has put that era behind it, and the tracks once operated by the state-run Yugoslav Railways were returned to service six years ago,

operated by their respective countries as part of a network that offers not only pretty landscapes, but also a window into reconciliation.

Easing the way for rail buffs is the 11-night Balkan Grand Tour from Sydney-based train specialists Railbookers, a special itinerary that zigzags between the Hungarian capital of Budapest and Dubrovnik on Croatia's Adriatic coast (or vice versa). Guests spend five to nine hours a day aboard trains—which range from Bosnia's old but endearing carriages to Croatia's modern, if nondescript, ones—before stopping for the night at the region's most poignant cities. These include the old Ottoman trading town of Mostar, whose splendid 16th-century bridge and rickety old town were destroyed by Croatian bombs in the early 1990s but have since been rebuilt and awarded World Heritage status; sobering Sarajevo, still pockmarked with bullet holes from its four-year siege by the Bosnian Serb Army; and Belgrade, the fiercely independent Slavic city and Serbian capital renowned for its welcoming people but gritty, dark character. Throw in some dramatic scenery en route—eerie canyons so deep they rarely see daylight; fields of mustard and wheat gleaming in the midday sun; long-abandoned stone fortresses straddling craggy ridges—and you've got a journey that is as edifying as it is inspiring. ©

Railbookers' Balkan Grand Tour is priced from US\$1,280 per person, twin share, including hotel accommodation, breakfasts, transfers, and train tickets. See railbookers.com.au.

GETTY IMAGES; LEISA TYLER (TOP RIGHT)

MANILA ON THE MENU

Japanese flavors take center stage at this trio of new restaurants in the Philippine capital.

BY SCOTT JAMES ROXAS



MECHA UMA

Taking its name from the Japanese expression *mechakucha umai* (“absurdly delicious”), Mecha Uma is the latest venture by chef Bruce Ricketts, whose first Manila restaurant, Sensei Sushi, signaled the arrival of a young master. His fans have followed him to this minimalist space in Fort Bonifacio, where he blends local organic produce with seasonal Japanese ingredients in regularly changing blackboard specials and an *omakase* (chef’s choice) menu that recently included such standouts as Hokkaido sea urchin with grilled oyster and monkfish liver, and tuna with coconut, foie gras mousse, and roasted pineapple sandwiched between tuile wafers (RCBC Savings Bank Corporate Center, 25th St., Fort Bonifacio, Taguig; 63-2/801-2770; mechauma.ph).

NOBU

Anchoring celebrity chef Nobu Matsuhisa’s first hotel foray outside the United States, the latest Nobu restaurant is making waves amid stunning views of Manila Bay. Sleek wood-and-marble interiors accented with floral motifs provide the backdrop to Matsuhisa’s acclaimed Peruvian-



Tasting Notes

Above: Mecha Uma’s chef Bruce Ricketts and his tuna “sandwich” with foie gras mousse and roasted pineapple. Top: Manila’s Nobu restaurant is the signature dining experience at the months-old Nobu Hotel in Parañaque City.

influenced Japanese dishes, including signatures like black cod with miso. But this new location also serves items that are rarely available at other Nobus, such as pork belly with spicy miso and a fragrant seafood paella. The chef’s private-label sakes and wines are also on offer to complete meals, which are best enjoyed on the alfresco dining terrace next to the reflecting pool (Nobu Hotel, cnr. Aseana Blvd. and Macapagal Ave., Tambo, Parañaque; 63-2/691-2882; nobuhotelmanila.com).

12/10

With a vibe that suggests both laid-back bar and art gallery, this *izakaya*-inspired newcomer is the second restaurant by twentysomething Filipino couple Thea De Rivera and Gab Bustos, who named the place for their anniversary date. Young as they are, these two are making a mark on the Manila dining scene with rave-worthy food and interiors. The Japanese-Korean menu features stellar items such as the raw tuna salad and the blowtorched salmon with sea urchin, caviar, panko, ponzu, and sea salt. The portions are intentionally small to allow diners to self-curate their own degustation, which seems to work quite well for the young urbanites that keep the place full even on a Monday night (7635 Guijo St., San Antonio, Makati; 63-915/663-2823). ©

PreferredSM

HOTELS & RESORTS



The Grand Del Mar, San Diego, California, USA



Andara Resort & Villas, Phuket, Thailand



NIZUC Resort & Spa, Cancun, Mexico



ME London, London, England, UK

650 Hotels. 85 Countries. An infinite number of unique experiences.
It's a big world. *What do you Prefer?*

LEGEND | L V X | LIFESTYLE |  CONNECT | PreferredSM
RESIDENCES

Choose your view of the world by exploring the entire portfolio at PreferredHotels.com.

EPIC ANTARCTICA

Planning an expedition cruise to the white continent but not sure which one's for you? Here are four of our favorites, each departing from Ushuaia, Argentina.

BY GABRIELLE LIPTON

1 / For Shutterbugs NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC EXPEDITIONS

In addition to seal-spotting Zodiac tours, walks through penguin colonies, and kayaking around icebergs, NGE's Journey to Antarctica cruise has a photography component that can't be beat. For 14 days, a National Geographic photographer joins passengers on either the well-appointed *National Geographic Explorer* or *National Geographic Orion* ship to offer one-on-one lessons and curate onboard photo presentations. *Multiple sailings in November through January; nationalgeographicexpeditions.com; from US\$12,970 per person*

2 / For the Inquisitive ABERCROMBIE & KENT

An ultra-luxe journey for the ultra-curious, A&K's 12-day Classic Antarctica trip on Compagnie du Ponant's *Le Boréal* is filled with lectures and shore excursions led by passionate geologists, historians, and biologists. Sixteen expedition staff and a 1-to-12 guide-to-guest ratio ensure a heady mix of elucidation and adventure; Dr. James McClintock, author of *Lost Antarctica*, will lead the environment-focused sailing on December 9, which also includes a visit to the Palmer Station research facility on Anvers Island. *December 9–20 and January 3–14; abercrombiekent.com; from US\$9,995 per person*

3 / For Adrenaline Junkies WORLD EXPEDITIONS

It's like summer camp on ice with the 11-day Basecamp Antarctic Peninsula cruise. The 116-passenger, no-frills *Plancius* (a former Dutch research vessel) is used as nothing more than an eat-and-sleep base for long days filled with mountaineering, kayaking and Zodiac tours, and snow-shoe treks. Other options for those undeterred by the cold include scuba diving and camping on the ice for a night. *November 21–December 1 and December 28–January 7; worldexpeditions.com; from US\$8,650 per person*

4 / For Skiers ICEAXE EXPEDITIONS

For avid skiers, nothing could be more thrilling than making the first tracks down a mountain at the bottom of the world. Based aboard the 117-passenger *Clipper Adventurer* and interspersed with visits to penguin rookeries and scientific stations, six of the 13 days of IceAxe's Antarctica Peninsula Adventure Cruise are largely spent skiing through some of most scenic areas around the Antarctic Peninsula: Neko Harbor, Anvers and Wenke islands, and Paradise Bay. *November 7–19; iceaxe.tv; from US\$8,995 per person*



Strait Shot

Passengers aboard *Le Boréal* take in the wild beauty of the Antarctic Peninsula's Lemaire Channel.

TRIP TIP The short Antarctic cruising season doesn't start until late November, but cabins fill up fast, so book as early as you can.

ALL THE RIGHT NOTES

Since the age of nine when he got his first record, **Rob Wood** has been a self-confessed music addict. Now, as founder of Music Concierge, the London-based music consultant designs soundtracks for some of the world's hottest retail and hospitality brands, including Como, Espa, and Per Aquum. Here, he sounds off about his aural occupation.

- **ALL OF OUR WORK IS BESPOKE** to each brand. We think about interior design, acoustics, space size, and audience, but ultimately, we must translate each brand's character into a musical DNA.
- **WE DESIGN DIFFERENT CONCEPTS** for different parts of a hotel. Like DJs, we often create wow-factor playlists for bars and clubs, but we also have to create a suitable soundtrack for that same hotel's lobby at 7 a.m.
- **SOUND AFFECTS OUR BEHAVIOR.** A boutique hotel shouldn't be playing mainstream pop, and a more mass-market brand could alienate its

audience with thought-provoking, aspirational music. But once the playlist and atmosphere is right, people will enjoy themselves, spend more time and money there, and come back.

- **MUSIC CONCIERGE'S LIBRARY** is one of the most detailed in the world, with more than 240 styles ranging from cult film soundtracks to Detroit techno to music from Bhutan. I even have a collection of records related to ping-pong, I kid you not.
- **I'D LOVE TO DO WORK** for Richard Branson's Virgin Galactic. Space flight music—there's a challenge! —GL



COURTESY OF ROB WOOD

EASTERN & ORIENTAL EXPRESS, SOUTHEAST ASIA

DISCOVER SOUTHEAST ASIA

VENTURE OFF THE BEATEN TRACK WITH OUR NEW 6-NIGHT FABLES OF THE PENINSULA JOURNEY ON BOARD THE EASTERN & ORIENTAL EXPRESS. BEGIN YOUR JOURNEY WITH A NIGHT AT THE LEGENDARY RAFFLES HOTEL IN SINGAPORE, BEFORE BEING WHISKED OFF TO KUALA LUMPUR, THE CAMERON HIGHLANDS AND HUAY YANG.

THE ULTIMATE WAY TO EXPLORE HIDDEN SOUTHEAST ASIA - ABOARD ITS MOST ELEGANT TRAIN

SPECIAL OFFER: \$500 COMPLIMENTARY CREDIT

Book any journey in 2015 and receive up to \$500 complimentary credit per couple to spend on board. Quote code EOBC at time of booking.



HOTELS | TRAINS | RIVER CRUISES | JOURNEYS | BELMOND.COM

CONTACT OUR LUXURY TRAVEL CONSULTANTS ON +65 63950678 OR YOUR LOCAL TRAVEL AGENT.

Book any journey in 2015 and receive \$200 onboard credit when booking a Pullman Cabin, \$300 when booking a State Cabin and \$500 when booking a Presidential Suite. This offer cannot be combined with any other offer or promotion. Valid for new bookings only. Offer subject to availability and may be removed at any time. When booking please quote code EOBC.



REEL TIME

France's Festival de Cannes may be spring's film event extraordinaire, but these cities elsewhere in the world offer equally noteworthy film festivals and cinematic exhibits open for any and all cinephiles.

BY GABRIELLE LIPTON

NEW YORK

.....

Founded in part by Robert De Niro to revitalize its namesake neighborhood after 9/11, the 13-year-old **Tribeca Film Festival** (April 5-26; tribecafilm.com) is now one of the city's most star-studded events. Venues stretching from 23rd Street down to the Battery screen pre-released films of all

genres, this year kicking off with the premiere of *Live From New York!*, a documentary about the king of sketch-comedy shows Saturday Night Live. In between films, grab a bite at **Tribeca Grill** (myriadrestaurantgroup.com), a De Niro-conceived dining den where the festival's visiting big names are known to gather—this year, look for James Franco (on hand for the premiere of

his new drama *The Adderall Diaries*) and the five surviving members of Monty Python, stars of the anticipated documentary *Monty Python: The Meaning of Life*. Later in May, **Rooftop Films** (May 22-August 22; rooftopfilms.com) picks up the festival baton, screening new indie flicks on rooftops, in gardens, and at other outside venues throughout the summer.

SEATTLE

.....

Not only is the **Seattle International Film Festival** (May 14-June 7; siff.net) the mostly highly attended film festival in the United States, but it's also one of the longest. Much of its three-and-a-half-week span overlaps with Cannes, but industry professionals come to catch the tail end to try and pick future Oscar contenders out from the some 250 features, 150 short films, and handful of ultra-pre-releases that require viewers to sign a contract of confidentiality before watching. While in the city, don't miss the Experience Music Project Museum's **Star Wars and the Power of Costume** (through October 4; empmuseum.com) exhibit, which starts its 12-stop international tour here.



TORONTO

.....

Documentaries are surging in popularity, and Toronto's **Hot Docs** (April 23-May 3; hotdocs.ca) is their bastion as the largest documentary festival in North America. If the 170-film program is overwhelming, look to the shorter list of special presentations, which this year include intimate portraits of Mavis Staples and Nina Simone in *Mavis!* and *What Happened, Miss Simone?*, a philosophical address on the state of the environment in *Planetary*, and a culinary field trip around the world in *Foodies*. Cinematic festivities continue at the overlapping **Toronto Jewish Film Festival** (April 30-May 10; tjff.com) and **Contact Photography Festival** (May 1-31; scotiabankcontactphoto.com), which exhibits renowned international photographers in 175 venues citywide.

SYDNEY

.....

One of the longest-running film festivals in the world, the **Sydney Film Festival** (June 3-14; sff.org.au) is also one of the most diverse, showcasing everything from high-intensity dramas to animations and director retrospective film series. It's known for sending its moviegoers across town to the city's coolest theaters, from the retro, velvet-curtained Hayden Orpheum Picture Palace Cremorne to the screening rooms in the Art Gallery of New South Wales. The latter is also running a film series of its own through April and May called **Brought to Light** (through June 3; artgallery.nsw.gov.au), showing the influence of Australian-made films, alongside a photo exhibition of similar theme, **The Photograph and Australia** (through June 8).

Experience the Perfect Blend of City and Nature Staying



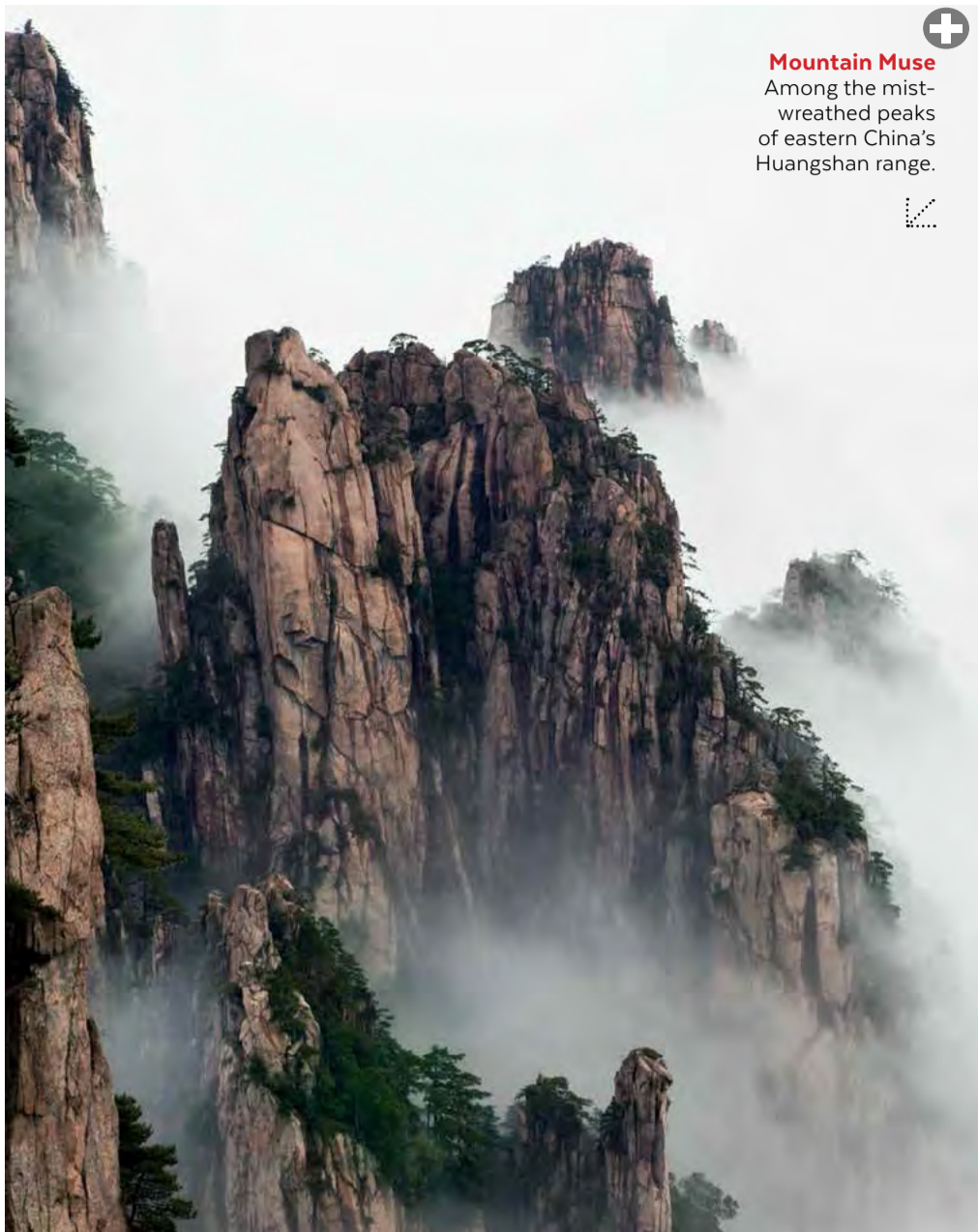
Please call +886 2 6631 8000
for more information or visit
www.humblehousehotels.com
No.18, Songgao Rd., Xinyi Dist.,
Taipei 110, Taiwan (R.O.C.)

Located in Taipei's Financial Center - Xinyi District, Humble House Taipei boasts a convenient location for a quick access to transportation. With its interior designed by Hirsch Bedner Associates, a world-renowned hospitality design company, the hotel also features great artistic works collected from all over the world, which creates distinctive atmospherics with the idea "garden in the city." Furthermore, all the rooms give a clear view of the lovely city, and free access to high speed Internet is available throughout the hotel, enabling both personal and business travelers to receive messages and share ideas anytime and anywhere.



HumbleHouse
TAIPEI

寒舍艾麗酒店



Mountain Muse

Among the mist-wreathed peaks of eastern China's Huangshan range.



DIRECTOR'S NOTES



Few people know what's hot in the world of travel better than **Alison Gilmore**, the London-based exhibition director of Asia's most prestigious travel-industry event, the **International Luxury Travel Market Asia**. Here, she shares some of her insider insights.

● **IN REGARDS TO TRAVEL, 2015 WILL BE THE YEAR OF WHAT?** Health and wellbeing. "Digital detox" is the title being batted around at the moment, and quiet space and mindfully switching off are key this year. I'm as guilty as the next person for looking at my e-mails before getting out of bed in the morning, but we all need to disconnect, even if only for 24 hours. The spa industry has also gained a lot of market share in recent years, and it's

not a passing trend we're seeing but sustainable, substantial growth. Spas are rooted in ancient philosophy, and they're also sexy. They appeal to us on levels we understand, be it relaxation, instant gratification, or a lifestyle change that we want.

● **ILTM ASIA IS FOCUSING ON CHINA THIS YEAR. WHY?** More international travelers come from China than any other country in the world. According to *The Economist*, the

Chinese are expected to buy more luxury goods while abroad than tourists from all other countries combined this year, and within five years, it's estimated that Chinese tourists abroad will exceed half a billion annually.

● **WITHIN CHINA, WHAT ARE SOME REGIONS ON THE RISE?** I am particularly fascinated by the 900-year-old village of Hongcun in the eastern province of Anhui. A UNESCO World Heritage Site, it's backed by the peaks of Huangshan, or the Yellow Mountain, which is spectacular too, with a once-in-a-lifetime trek through ancient pine trees, amazing rock formations, hot springs, and seas of misty clouds. And in southern China, there are more and more luxury lodges, eco-camps, and small guesthouses opening up along the Ancient Tea Horse Road to Tibet, particularly in Yunnan. Brands that are typically resort- and beach-focused—Six Senses, Lux Resorts, Hyatt Regency—are all opening up in the hills there, as more and more travelers are thirsting for nature.

● **OUTSIDE OF ASIA, WHAT ARE SOME OF THIS YEAR'S MOST DESIRABLE DESTINATIONS?** We've designed ILTM Asia 2015 to highlight certain countries and regions, and two that are especially trending at the moment are Iceland and Latin America. Nine Worlds and Nordic Luxury are just two of Iceland's specialist groups for tailor-made experiential trips, and lately they've been the talk of the town. In the wellness department, the medical spa at Iceland's geothermal Blue Lagoon is incredible. And in Latin America, Argentina is particularly hot, with gastronomic cruises down the Amazon River, in-depth tours focused on South American arts, and adventure expeditions through the Andes.

● **WHAT ARE SOME FAVORITE TRAVELS OF YOUR OWN?** Two places that stand out for me are Laos, which is such a magical and spiritual place, and Antarctica, which is absolutely a world of its own. But it's also the little things about travel that I love; even after 20 years working in travel and flying the distance to the moon and back twice, I still get excited to check in to a hotel and enjoy something as simple as a sumptuous bath. Perhaps this is on my mind because of my recent stay at the Ritz-Carlton Shanghai, Pudong—their enormous soaking tubs are amazing! ☺

ILTM Asia 2015 will be held June 1–4 at the Shanghai Exhibition Centre in Shanghai (ilTM.com).



BISMA
EIGHT

UBUD

Bisma Eight isn't simply a hotel.
We are a home of craft and pride.
A place of celebration.

We'll be seeing you soon.

NOW OPEN

#bismaeight
facebook.com/bismaeightubud
bisma-eight.com

Jl. Bisma, Ubud, Gianyar – 80571
Bali Indonesia



ALL IN THE FAMILY

With a special set of adventures and experiences, St. Regis is redefining and refining the joys of family travel



Few experiences in life are as memorable and meaningful as a fantastic trip taken together as a family. Whether it be some quiet time on a remote beach, the excitement of taking in a natural wonder, or the energizing activity of exploring a new city, a vacation done well is as enriching in the moment as it is long-lasting in its impact on family members of all ages. Prizing the importance of these family journeys, St. Regis Hotels & Resorts offers its Family Traditions, a specially curated program of unforgettable experiences at the top destinations in the world.

From the moment families arrive, each of St. Regis's more than 30 properties is prepared to take care of each and every family need. Young travelers are immediately made to feel

special with amenities designed specifically for them, such as child-sized robes, slippers, treats, children's menus, and relaxed restaurant atmospheres that will happily accommodate any special request. As for any further need, from itinerary planning to finding a replacement for something forgotten in the packing process, St. Regis butlers are there to ensure every detail is well taken care of, having been a signature component of the brand for more than a century.

One of the joys of traveling is the freedom that it brings, and for that, St. Regis offers expert babysitting and nanny services, so that parents can have some cherished time of their own while resting assured that

their kids are in good hands with childcare services carefully selected from only the best local providers. At St. Regis's resort properties, impressive Children's Clubs offer everything from computer labs and movies to cultural excursions and outdoor activities, letting kids experience destinations in their own style.

The biggest highlight of the Family Traditions program, however, is its roster of hand-selected experiences unique to each locale and equally appealing to all ages and generations. From private tours of sacred historic sites to athletic escapades on Olympic courses to culinary excursions and unforgettable meals, each experience is designed to immerse families in their travels in a way they will never forget.



The St. Regis Sanya Yalong Bay Resort

The pristine natural setting of China's Hainan Island awaits exploration by land or water with the St. Regis's two special experiences here. Families can explore the diverse ecosystems of a mangrove forest by kayak on an expertly guided tour, or, for landlubbers, a tandem-bicycle ride along country mountain roads is a perfect way to take in the breathtaking scenery of Yalong Bay. Back on the resort's grounds, an impressive playground is conveniently set right next to the tennis courts, letting families enjoy some playtime outside without losing sight of one another.



The St. Regis Osaka

In the vibrant Japanese city of Osaka, the St. Regis invites families to explore its cultural side. At the My Cup Noodle Factory, families can learn about the history of Japan's most famous instant noodles and custom design their own dish. Admission here additionally includes tickets to 28 attractions, including the Tennoji Zoo, Nagai Botanical Garden, and the city's highest Ferris wheel. Or, for an interactive history lesson, the Osaka Museum of History offers activities such as digging for artifacts in addition to rotating exhibitions about local history and culture.



The St. Regis Bangkok

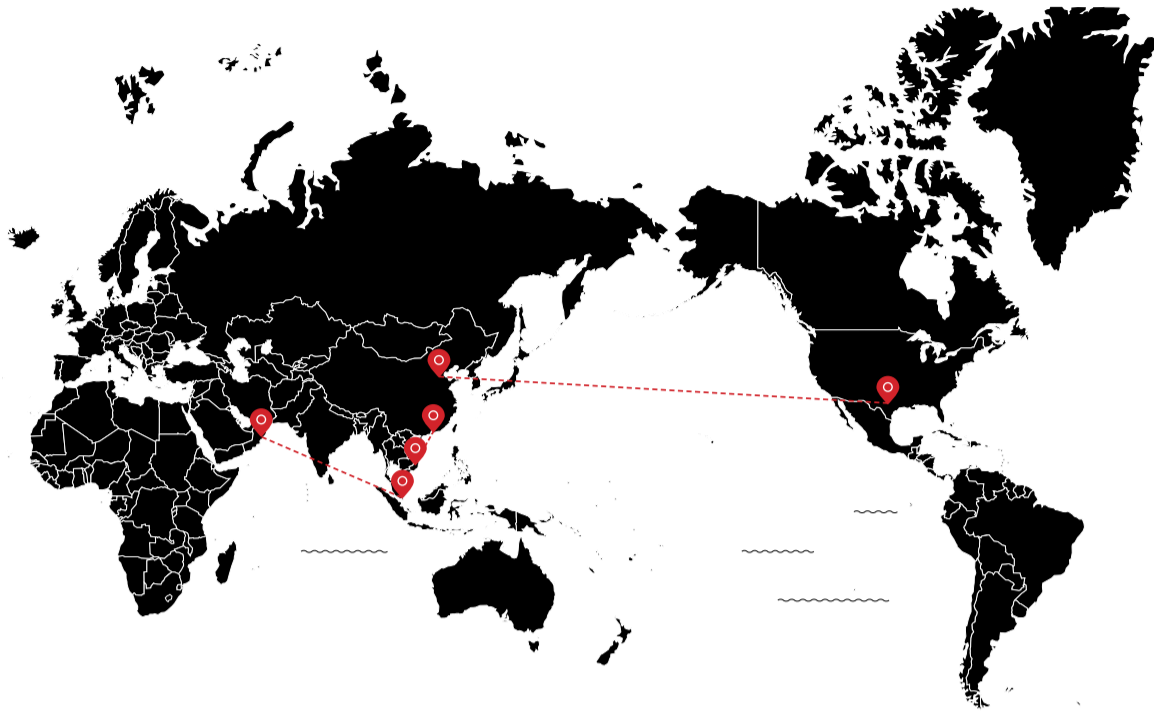
Knowing no family vacation is complete without photos, Bangkok's St. Regis has created a special Bangkok photo hunt, sending families along with a butler around to city sites and capturing them on a Polaroid camera for scrapbook-worthy printouts. For a full day out of the city, families can venture to Elephant World in Kanchanaburi province, a rehabilitation center that teaches visitors how to care for the animals. Or, for a meal in, a hands-on approach to Bangkok's culinary scene is available with cooking classes led by the hotel's executive chef.



The St. Regis Bali Resort

Bali is known for its natural beauty, and the St. Regis, located in Nusa Dua, offers families a unique way to learn about it through visits to the Eco Learning Park. Supported by the Indonesian non-profit R.O.L.E. Foundation, the park teaches visitors about sustainable permaculture gardening, reforestation, and more. For a more playful outing, trips to the nearby Pirates Bay Bali park are sure to get parents and kids both climbing through pirate ships and tree houses, flying kites and making campfires, and, of course, going on a treasure hunt.

More family experiences await at other St. Regis properties. Visit stregisfamilytraditions.com



ROUTE UPDATES

.....

Muscat-Singapore
Oman Air

Oman's flag carrier is expanding its Asian network this year, with new flights to China and Goa (as well as daily services to Jakarta) in the works for 2015. On March 29 the airline added Singapore to its route map, after replacing its nonstop service between Muscat and Kuala Lumpur with one that now flies via the Lion City (omanair.com).

Beijing-Dallas
American Airlines

Beginning May 7, American Airlines will fly direct from Beijing to Dallas-Forth Worth, making it the first carrier to offer nonstop service between the two cities. The route marks the airline's 11th service between Asia and the U.S. and will first be operated by its retrofitted Boeing 777-200ER aircraft, which have the largest 777 business-class seats of any American carrier, before switching to brand-new Boeing 787 Dreamliners in June (aa.com).

Hong Kong-Da Nang
Hong Kong Express

On April 1, Hong Kong Express launched thrice-weekly direct flights from Hong Kong to Da Nang, making it the only low-cost carrier to fly this route. The service is meant to ease travel to central Vietnam's popular beaches in Da Nang and also Hoi An, a 45-minute drive from Da Nang International Airport (hkexpress.com).



BULLETIN

.....

Cabin Comforts
All Nippon Airways

ANA has improved cabin comfort on its routes between Tokyo and Singapore, Bangkok, and Jakarta. New menus and amenities began in business class to all three cities in early March, followed by the launch of both first and premium economy classes on Narita-Singapore flights March 29. This is the first time ANA has offered premium economy on intra-Asia routes, a service that it plans to extend to its Jakarta- and Bangkok-bound flights come August 1 (ana.co.jp).

On the Program
Etihad Airways

Members of Etihad's loyalty program, Etihad Guest, can now add the airline's new payment feature, Walletplus, onto their member card. Created in partnership with Visa, the card allows members to preload it with money and convert it to 11 different currencies while traveling, locking in exchange rates before they go. Offered to members in the United Arab Emirates in March and now rolling out to others, Walletplus also comes with rewards: every US\$2 spent in the UAE and US\$1 spent elsewhere earns one Etihad Guest Mile (etihad.com).

IN-FLIGHT SERVICES

NEW DIMENSIONS

Until mid June, first-class Qantas passengers will be able to test out the airline's latest in-cabin innovation: Samsung Gear VR virtual-reality headsets. Currently available as part of a trial run in Qantas's first-class lounges in Sydney and Melbourne and on flights between those cities and Los Angeles, the ergonomic headsets (powered by Galaxy Note 4s) provide in-flight entertainment in a three-dimensional, 360-degree format, from an aerial tour of Iceland to a Cirque du Soleil performance and a gamut of interactive video games. If the response is positive, Qantas is expected to develop more content for the device—and perhaps offer it in business class as well (qantas.com).



COURTESY OF QANTAS; COURTESY OF ANA

THE BEST OF BALI

From its vibrant traditional culture and picturesque landscapes to its energetic beach scene, prepare to be dazzled by Indonesia's ultimate holiday island.





TAKING IT TO THE BEACH

The bustling seaside villages of Kuta, Legian, and Seminyak are a haven for shoppers, gourmands, and night owls alike. Dynamic by day and night, this southwest strip of shops, cafés, restaurants, and bars is ideal for walking, bargain hunting, and, of course, recuperating from all of the day's activities.

Kuta is perhaps best known for its surfing, sunsets, and nightlife. Shopping here was once predominantly surf- and souvenir-

oriented, but the area has evolved considerably in recent years, particularly since the 2012 opening of Beachwalk, an airy, low-rise mall filled with a wide range of boutiques, cafés, and entertainment venues, including a kids' playground. Nightspots in Kuta bustle with a loyal international following, and are popular among those looking for a relaxed but festive atmosphere. Nearby, Legian is fast developing as a hot spot for its hip hotels and gourmet restaurants and cafés.

The accessibility of Kuta and Legian, as well as the affordability of the resorts here, make them a favorite among those looking for fun. Families also tend to favor this

part of the island for its wide variety of distractions for young people, including the waterslides at Waterbom Park. At dusk, crowds gather at beachside cafés to take in the view before the night's activities begin.

For style-conscious visitors and locals, Seminyak is the place to see and be seen. The neighborhood has become one of the trendiest spots on the island, with a gamut of specialized boutiques, interior decor stores, upscale bars and restaurants, and beach clubs. Some of the best international cuisine can be sampled here alongside a youthful and fashionable set that makes Seminyak such a vibrant and exciting destination.

WHEN YOU BEGIN WITH INFINITY, POSSIBILITIES ARE ENDLESS

Begin your new life together
by diving into a dream world that is yours and yours alone.
Conrad Bali presents "Talya", our exclusive underwater photo shoot.
Go beyond Infinity.



CONRAD®

BALI

the luxury of being yourself™



Jalan Pratama 168, Tanjung Benoa, Bali 80363 Indonesia
For further enquiry email weddings@conradbali.com
or visit ConradBali.com



SOUTHERN SHORES

Sun lovers and surfers alike flock to Bali's southern Bukit Peninsula to make the most of white-sand beaches, crystal-clear waters, dramatic vistas, and some of the best waves on the island ... not to mention the luxurious resorts.

On the east coast of the Bukit lies Nusa Dua, a tourist enclave that has been developed along one of the best beaches on the island. Once a coconut plantation, Nusa Dua is marked by a tranquil stretch of white sand and offshore reefs that make the water perfect for swimming. Well-maintained facilities, spectacular views, landscaped gardens, world-class golf facilities, and a good range of children's

activities all serve to make Nusa Dua resorts popular with families and those looking for an indulgent getaway.

Just north of Nusa Dua is Tanjung Bena, a relaxed beachside neighborhood where water sports are the main draw. Windsurfing, parasailing, waterskiing, and all things aquatic are well served by operators from individual resorts. There is safe swimming in Bena as well, so the resorts lining the sand tend to be family friendly. From here, take a short boat ride to the nearby islands of Nusa Penida and Nusa Lembongan, where there are several excellent dive sites. Each year from July to November, divers from all over the world flock to Nusa Penida to catch a glimpse of the gigantic sunfish that come to surface in the shallow waters.

Some of the best surfing in Bali can be found off the west coast of the Bukit at

Uluwatu. The road to the beach is quite well hidden and is rarely visited by those not wishing to engage some challenging waves, as the water is unsuitable for swimming and the beach is rocky. For leisure visitors, Uluwatu Temple is the village's main draw due to its majestic position, perched atop sheer cliffs above the crashing surf.

The village of Jimbaran is on the isthmus that connects the Bukit to the rest of Bali. A beautiful crescent of white sand and calm blue waters has made Jimbaran a site for some of the island's premier resorts. Jimbaran Beach is also lined with dozens of great open-air seafood restaurants. They are reasonably priced, with the catch of the day being brought in straight from the sea. Be sure to start dinner early in order to witness an unforgettable sunset.

THE VILLAS

AT AYANA RESORT

FLOATING BRUNCH?
AS YOU WISH



DISCOVER *an exquisite world infused with the spirit of tranquility, elegance and sublime service at The Villas at AYANA Resort. Immerse yourself in the refined luxury of one of the 78 private Villas set amongst a breathtaking tropical haven of calm and relaxation in Bali.*

Delight in the signature service from an internationally certified butler, dedicated to ensuring your journey to a new realm of relaxation. Whether it be a romantic candle-light dinner accompanied by a musical quartet, a pampering and soul-balancing in-villa massage or a floating brunch served to you as you enjoy the ocean views from your private swimming pool, you need never leave your private sanctuary.

Explore the pleasures of AYANA and RIMBA beyond your exclusive Villa. Delight in an extensive choice of restaurants and bars including the iconic Rock Bar, where reservations are exclusively available for guests of The Villas at AYANA Resort, or indulge in an ultra-lavish treatment at Spa on the Rocks villas surrounded by the crystal waters of Jimbaran Bay.

To begin your journey to a world of relaxation and exclusive benefits, please visit www.ayanaresort.com


The Villas
at AYANA Resort
BALI



EXPLORING UBUD

Ancient customs, a rich artistic heritage, and warm hospitality converge in the symbolic heart of the island. Add to this endless views of lush green rice paddies and forests, and you'll begin to understand the mystical beauty that Ubud is famous for.

Ubud's scenic countryside consists of gently sloping hills and picturesque rice paddies, which offer great walking and cycling trails. Take a tour and discover the smaller villages around central Ubud that still contain groups of artisan families—an exciting way to see Balinese art in the making. Ubud is also the ideal place to watch Balinese dancing. The Legong, Ramayana, and Kecak are performed

nightly in and around the Ubud area, including at the Puri Saren Agung (Ubud Palace) in central Ubud.

An essential part of Ubud's allure is the leisurely pace of life that seems to permeate daily activity. For visitors looking to relax, there are several spas in the area that provide traditional healing and well-being treatments. In fact, Ubud derives its name from the Balinese word *ubad*, meaning "medicine"—a nod to the many local medicinal plants and herbs now widely used internationally—and a pampering day at their source promises a special treat. Many of the products used during these therapies are made from the natural ingredients found in indigenous plants, herbs, and flowers.

For the more active traveler, Ubud also offers a range of outward-bound pursuits. The rushing waters of the Ayung River,

whose dramatic gorge dominates western Ubud, make it ideal for a day of rafting. For animal lovers, must-sees include the Sacred Monkey Forest Sanctuary in central Ubud and, about 10 kilometers south of town, the Bali Zoo, where guests can join guided night walking tours or play mahout for a day with one of the zoo's resident elephants.

And if you have time to visit only one of Bali's museums, make it the Agung Rai Museum of Art. Comprising a trio of tile-roofed buildings on the outskirts of Ubud, the property is enveloped by lush, landscaped gardens, best viewed from the open-air café that doubles as a theater for Balinese classical dance and music. Inside, the art on display presents a remarkable survey of Balinese and Javanese works from past and living masters, alongside pieces by foreign artists who have lived on the island.



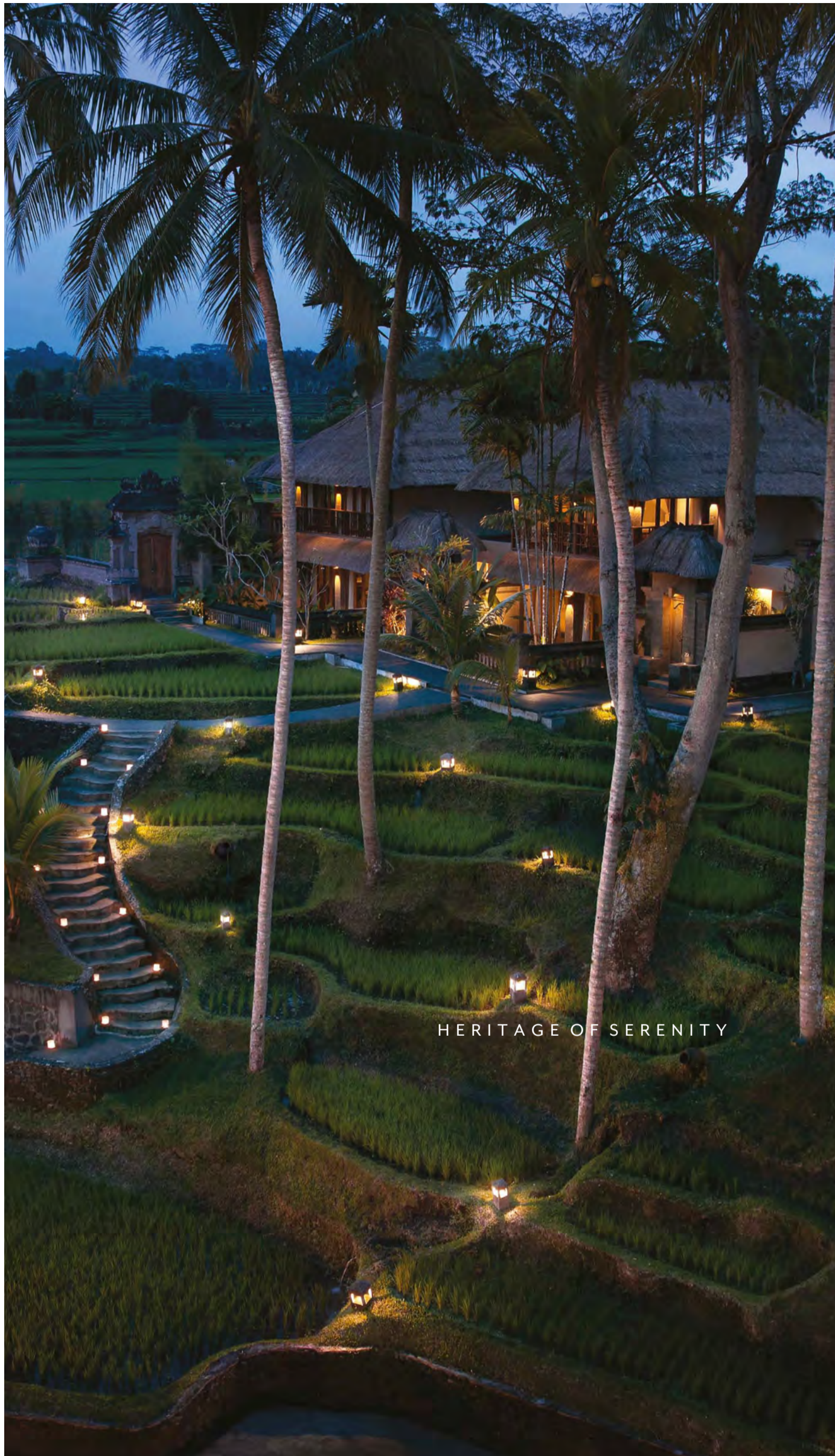
KAMANDALU

UBUD

Escape to the peace and tranquility of Kamandalu Ubud, a 5-star boutique resort situated amid lush paddyfields in the green hills of Ubud. From your very own Balinese-inspired villa, step out to enjoy the warm hospitality of our staff and explore the natural surroundings that lie just beyond.

Jalan Andong
Banjar Nagi
Ubud, Bali 80571
Indonesia
T +62 361 975 825
reservation@kamandaluresort.com

www.kamandaluresort.com



HERITAGE OF SERENITY



NORTHERN EXPOSURE

Although the northern shores of the island are becoming increasingly developed, they are still relatively quiet, and staying here can be a more peaceful way to enjoy the same amenities found in the south. Dramatic mountain scenery marks this area, and beaches

predominantly consist of grayish-black volcanic sand. They may not be as celebrated as the stretches of white sand in the south, but northern beaches—particularly that of Lovina—are just as breathtaking. The abundance of coral reefs just off the coast makes for calm waters, which are also popular for their large dolphin population.

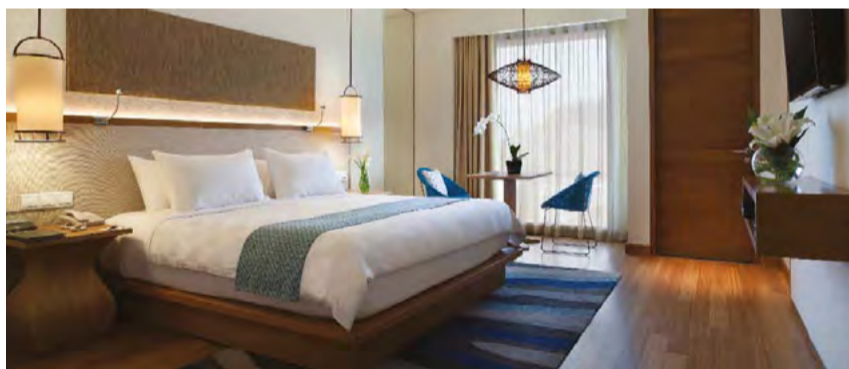
East of Lovina is Bali's second-largest city, Singaraja, which was Bali's colonial capital

during the Dutch period. It is one of the few places on the island where visitors can still see colonial-era architecture, especially around the harbor and waterfront. West of Lovina is the village of Pemitaran, which is the ideal place to begin exploring northwestern Bali and the 19,000-hectare Bali Barat National Park. From Pemitaran, there is direct boat access to the island of Menjangan, a nature reserve that offers some of the best diving and snorkeling in Bali.



INTRODUCING THE NEW FAMILY BLOCK

The Family Block at Padma Resort Legian is superbly designed for comfort with a unique artistic twist. Our 64,4sqm rooms are facilitated with one master bedroom, one children room with bunk-bed, two bathrooms and a private balcony. The building encompasses a large swimming pool with three water slides and lush gardens to uplift the senses.




PadmaResort
Legian

Jl. Padma No. 1 Legian, Bali 80361, Indonesia | t. +62 361 752 111 | f. +62 361 752 140 | e. reservation@padmaresortbali.com | www.PadmaHotels.com

MEJEKAWI by KU DE TA

BALI'S MOST MODERN CULINARY EXPERIENCE

Dining on the Island of the Gods doesn't come finer than at Mejekawi. In fact, there's no other restaurant on the island quite like it. An intimate tasting kitchen and laboratory, Mejekawi uses cutting-edge techniques to fuse Indonesian recipes and local ingredients with hints of other global cuisines, making for some of the most exquisite food on the island.

With a sophisticated dining room overlooking the Indian Ocean on the second floor of KU DE TA, one of Seminyak's chicest hot spots, Mejekawi loosely translates to mean "sacred table" and is the perfect place for private dining with a group of friends or family. Using cooking equipment from Sub-Zero & Wolf such as immersion circulators, rotary evaporators, and homogenizers, executive chefs Ben Cross & Nuño Garcia create imaginative dishes that push the boundaries.

The restaurant's open kitchen allows guests to directly observe the chefs in action as they prepare five- or 12-course tasting menus designed to showcase contemporary high-tech cuisine blended with local specialties. Seasonal standouts include woodfired freshwater crayfish with XO sauce, fregola, and spring onion; *sop buntut*, or oxtail



soup, with dashi, tomato raisin, and charred onion; and for dessert, a chocolate cone with mangosteen-bitters gelato, bamboo, and ginger flower. For a dose of entertainment, "hidden" courses are added in for an element of surprise.

Mejekawi's cocktails are as forward-thinking as the food, expertly mixed using the laboratory's equipment, and the wine list has earned the restaurant an Award of Excellence from Wine Spectator. Additionally, Mejekawi



counts as only one of KU DE TA's nine sub-venues, and for a pre-dinner aperitif or a post-dinner nightcap, there's nowhere better to go than downstairs to the indoor and outdoor bar and lounge areas. Come early in the evening for sunset views, or, later on, dance on the beach to world-class DJs spinning into the night.

Jl. Kayu Aya 9. Seminyak, Bali, Indonesia;
62-361/736-969; kudeta.net

African Odyssey

British photographer Philip Lee Harvey was the competition's overall winner for his portfolio of images from Ethiopia and northwest Namibia, where women of the Himba tribe cover their skin and elaborately braided hair with a paste—*otjize*—made from ground ochre and butterfat.



/ Global /

PICTURES PERFECT

works of the latest round of winners, which will be exhibited in the galleries of London's Royal Geographical Society from July 24 to September 5, range from Ansel Adams–esque landscapes of Indonesia to gritty street photography in the Democratic Republic of Congo, from black-and-white portraits of a rural Chinese elderly community to color-saturated shots of cave diving in Mexico, each an example of the rare eye it takes to document a subject with a style. To see the full gallery of 2014's award-winning images online, visit tpoty.com. —**Gabrielle Lipton**





A World of Difference

Clockwise from right: Andrea Francolini's portrait of a girl in the northern Pakistan village of Shitindas received a special mention; members of the Society of Elegant Persons of the Congo—better known as the Sapeurs—appear in this photo shot by Johnny Haglund on the streets of Kinshasa; Jakub Rybicki received Best Single Image in a Portfolio for this image taken during an 800-kilometer bike trip across the frozen surface of Siberia's Lake Baikal; New Talent Portfolio winner Massimiliano Fabrizi photographed the grave beauty of Cuba in his set of works.



MASSIMILIANO FABRIZI; ANDREA FRANCOLINI;
JOHNNY HAGLUND; JAKUB RYBICKI/TPOTY.COM



DESTINASIAN READERSHIP SURVEY 2015

Take part in our survey and stand a chance to win a four-night stay in any one of these three GHM hotels – The Club at The Legian Bali in Indonesia, The Chedi Muscat in Oman, or The Nam Hai Hoi An in Vietnam



THE CLUB

AT THE LEGIAN

BALI

Across the road from Seminyak Beach, The Club at The Legian is the glamorous hideout of choice in Bali's most happening neighborhood. Mixing Indonesian art and artifacts with contemporary design, 11 villas each come with a nine-meter-long pool, 24-hour butler service, and access to the private Club lounge. Guests additionally have access to the facilities of the all-suite The Legian Bali, just across the street. Its lounge-lined infinity pool nestles up to the beach, offering a place to sun apart from the crowds, and come nightfall, the Pool Bar is one of the area's chicest places to sip a cocktail.

THE CHEDI

MUSCAT, OMAN

Muscat is one of the Arab Gulf's most scenic gems, and there's no finer base from which to explore it than The Chedi. More than eight hectares of grounds are filled with fountained courtyards, gardens, and reflection pools, balancing the clean and minimal 158-room hotel with a landscape of traditional Omani design. Eight restaurants and Muscat's largest spa offer on-site attractions aplenty, while day trips are easily arranged to the city's 17th-century fortresses, up into the Al Hajar mountains for hikes, or out on dolphin-watching cruises and snorkeling expeditions to the colorful reefs nearby.

THE NAM HAI

HOI AN, VIETNAM

When it comes to beach resorts, The Nam Hai is as timeless and sophisticated as they come. Set on the East Sea's shores in central Vietnam, 100 beach and pool villas are modeled after traditional Vietnamese garden houses with granite floors and terra-cotta tiled roofs, and a centerpiece three-tiered pool leading down to the ocean makes the lush tropical setting even more picturesque. Relaxation comes easily with the pond-side spa's therapeutic treatments, while for a bit of exploration, Hoi An and its Ancient Town—one of the country's eight World Heritage Sites—is only a shuttle bus ride away.

TERMS & CONDITIONS: One entry per person only. • Competition is open to all participants who are 18 years of age or older except for employees of DestinAsian and prize sponsors. • Prizes include 4-night stay inclusive of breakfast for two in a one-bedroom villa at The Club at The Legian Bali, a Chedi Club Suite at The Chedi Muscat, or a one-bedroom beachfront villa at The Nam Hai Hoi An. • Voucher is valid for six months from 01 July 2015 • Prize is not transferable, with no cash and/or benefits alternative. • Rooms are subject to availability and black-out period (01-22 August, 20-31 December 2015 for The Club at The Legian Bali; 18-24 October, 23-31 December 2015 for The Chedi Muscat; and 23-31 December 2015 for The Nam Hai Hoi An). • Advance booking must be made directly with the hotel and prize letter/certificate should be presented at the point of reservation for verification purpose. • The winner will be notified within 14 days after the draw and results will be published in the Oct/Nov 2015 issue of DestinAsian. • No purchase is necessary to enter. • Please tick this box if you do not wish your details to be used by a third party.

DestinAsian

GHM
A STYLE TO REMEMBER

Congratulations to the winner of our Dec 2014/Jan 2015 issue's draw, Pak Hung Man of Hong Kong, for a 5-night stay at Hotel Éclat Beijing.

DISPATCHES

CAMBODIA
 On the locavore
 trail in Siem
 Reap and
 Phnom Penh
p. 56

NEPAL
 Exploring
 the riches of
 Kathmandu
 Valley
p. 62

CAVA COUNTRY

When it comes to sparkling
 wines, France may have
 the glitz and grooming of
 Champagne, but a tour through
 the winemaking hills of the
 Penedès region proves that
 Catalonia's earthy cavas have
 an appeal of their own.

BY LARA DUNSTON



Catalonia Uncorked
 Views across the
 cava vineyards of
 Llopart to the multi-
 peaked mountain
 Montserrat.

A LEGACY OF LUXURY

The Danna Langkawi, your gateway to a memorable luxury vacation in Langkawi.

Set amidst a backdrop of nature's beauty of sun, sandy beach, marina bay and verdant green hills coupled with unsurpassed warmth hospitality, The Danna Langkawi offers everything you need for an ultimate holiday.

Save up to **25%** when you book through www.thedanna.com with promo code **DESTASIA**.

Terms & close-out dates apply.



THE DANNA LANGKAWI

KL Sales Office Address :

Hotel Istana Kuala Lumpur City Centre, 2nd Floor,
73 Jalan Raja Chulan, 50200 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
T : +603-2143 1010 F : +603-2143 1333
E : sales@thedanna.com



Hotel Address :

PO Box 236, Telaga Harbour Park, Pantai Kok,
07000 Langkawi, Kedah, Malaysia
T : +604-959 3288 F : +604-959 3188
E : info@thedanna.com W : www.thedanna.com



On my last trip to Barcelona I met a man, and I fell in love—with cava, that is. The gentleman, dashing in a dark suit and striped tie, was Josep Elías Terns, owner of the Parató winery in Penedès, a wine region some 50 kilometers southwest of the city. As he poured me a glass of the crisp, light, elegant sparkling wine, he told me something I wouldn't forget. "Ferran Adrià said that cava is the only wine that can match 25 dishes," he said, citing Spain's most celebrated chef. "It's like with music. There's classical, there's rock, and then there is the kind of music that goes with everything."

Four years later and I'm back, trundling through Barcelona's lackluster suburbs on a train bound for Sant Sadurn d'Anoia, the gateway to Penedès. I'm on my way to meet some oenophile friends and discover just how versatile cava is through five days of wine tastings paired with quintessential Catalan dishes.

Once outside the city, red-brick apartment buildings give way to red-roofed farmhouses and gently undulating hills planted with ancient vines, and before I know it, my train pulls into a station directly opposite Freixenet, the cava producer credited with popularizing the wine internationally in the 1980s. The group I'm meeting includes Oriol Ripoll, the director

of online Spanish-wine retailer Decántalo. I ask him what distinguishes a great cava. "A good expression of *terroir* above all," Ripoll says. "The wine should have fled all preconceived ideas of cava, as it should have a rich, individual personality built over decades. The differences in latitude, geography, weather, and grape varieties of each winery create great differences between the wines."

Compared to the picturesque wine regions of northeastern France where vines grow in neat rows surrounded by manicured lawns and perfectly pruned hedges, the *terroir* of the Penedès is elemental, which I see first during a visit to the vineyards of Vinícola de Nulles, a wine cooperative established in 1917 that produces cavas under the brand Adernats. After scrambling up a stony track, I survey the vineyards, their craggy vines twisting down hills encroached with scrubby bushes, rocky gullies, wild herbs, and groves of walnut and olive trees. The air is perfumed with the scents of pine and rosemary, and as I gaze out at the jagged blue ridges of Montserrat looming over the region, a salty sea breeze wafts over the vines and caresses my cheek. It's that sort of wild and rugged Mediterranean beauty, the flavors and fragrances of which permeate the wine I taste

Grape Escape

Another view of Montserrat; grill-charred calçots (spring onions) in the cellar restaurant at Canals & Munné; sampling cavas in the tasting room at the Llopert winery; Cava rosé at the Bohigas winery.



during the rest of the week.

Back at the Vinícola winery, I sit down for one of Adernats' monthly pairing dinners and am immediately immersed in a Catalan setting of a different sort. One of seven Modernist "wine cathedrals" built in Catalonia by Gaudí disciple Cèsar Martinell i Brunet in the early 20th century, the winery has high vaulted ceilings, arches of beautiful brickwork, and a nave filled with wine vats instead of pews. Over the course of five dishes, we sample varietals made from xarello, macabeu, and parellada—the three native grapes traditionally used to make cava. The best pairing for me is the starter: a summer soup of tomato-and-watermelon gazpacho with marinated anchovies paired with Adernat's Essència, a smooth and aromatic cava the color of light gold.

The next morning, we drive an hour east to the village of Puigdàlber and stop at Mas Codina, a hilltop winery dating back to 1681. After ambling through misty vineyards, we settle around an antique table in the cavernous dining room of the estate's sandstone farmhouse to sample their cavas. We breakfast on a range of bubbly with Catalan cold cuts and cheeses, but it's the heady Brut Nature Gran Reserva, aged for 42 months in Mas Codina's cava cellars,

The Wineries

Bohigas

Finca Can Macià,
Òdena; 34-93/804-
8100; bohigas.es.

Canals & Munné

Plaça Pau Casals 6,
Sant Sadurní d'Anoia;
34-93/891-0318;
canalsimunne.com.

Cuscó Berga

Les Gunyoles, Avinyonet;
34-93/897-0164;
cuscoberga.com.

Juvé y Camps

Carrer Sant Venat 1,
Sant Sadurní d'Anoia;
34-93/891-1000;
juveycamps.com.

Llopart

Subirats; 34-93/899-
3125; llopart.com.

Mas Codina

El Goner, Puigdàlber;
34-93/898-8166;
mascodina.com.

Vinícola de Nulles

Nulles; 34-977/602-622;
vinicoladenulles.com.

that best holds up to the meal: rich and creamy goat cheese from the foothills of the Pyrenees; sweet, oily, melt-in-your-mouth *jamón Ibérico*; and a spicy chorizo that is too pungent for a Champagne.

For lunch, we continue on to the town of Subirats, where the family-owned Llopart winery has been producing cava for well over a century. The lovely Jeci Llopart, a fifth-generation winemaker who runs the winery with her three siblings, greets us outside before taking us through the property. We sip their crimson Rosé Brut Reserva in the sleek, contemporary tasting rooms; we try the gamut of cava grape varietals that we carefully pluck straight from the vine; we hike up the hill to the original family farmhouse, taking in majestic vistas of the Penedès valley and Montserrat.

After visiting the dank cellars that lie deep beneath the vineyards we make our way back to a tasting room, where a spread of traditional dishes and contemporary tapas has been laid out to accompany our cava tasting session. Llopart guides us through pairings, starting with three rustic classics: *pan com tomate y jamón*, or toast rubbed with fresh tomato and a slice of jamón Ibérico; *coca de setas y butifarra*, the regional take on pizza with forest mushrooms

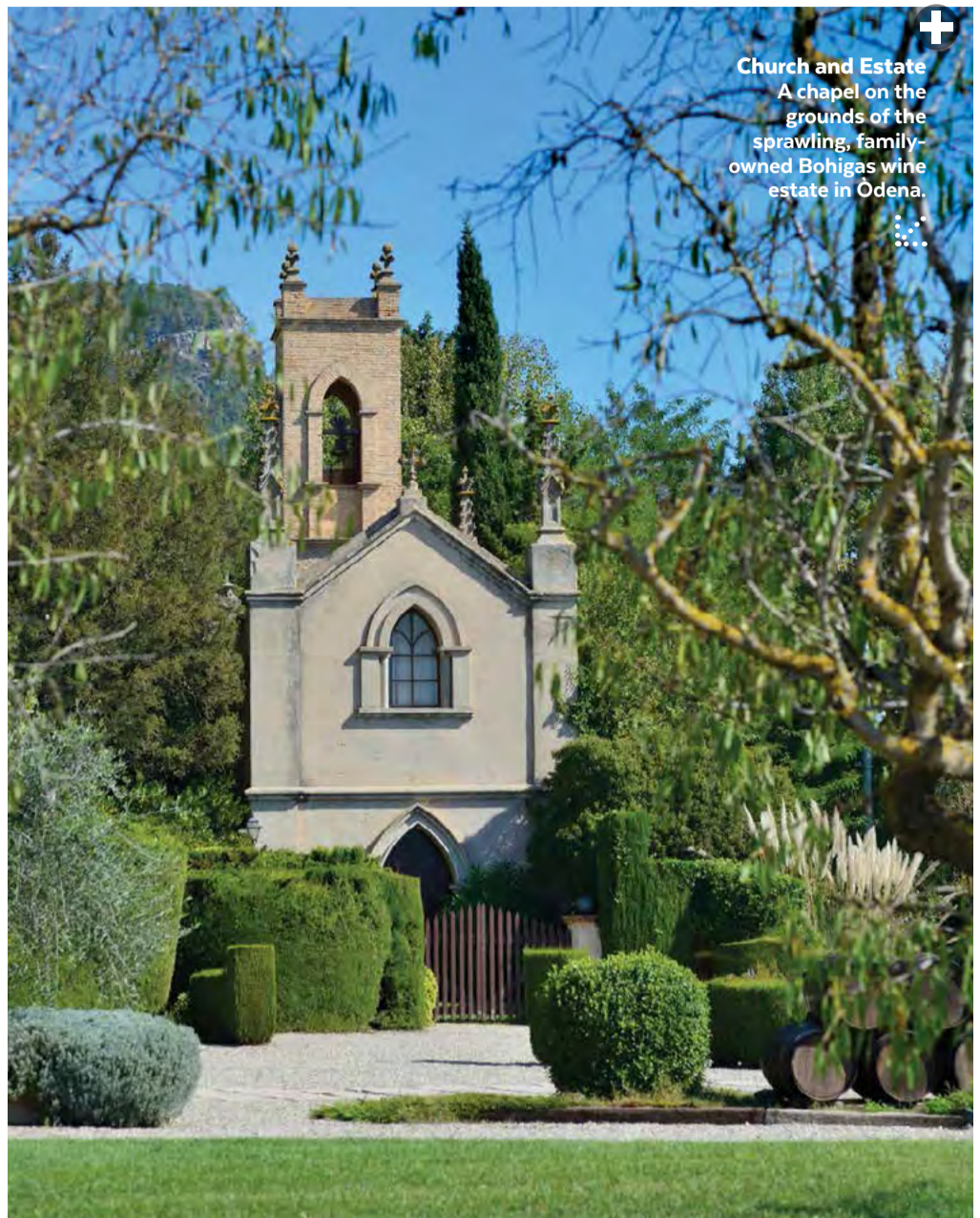
and a Catalan sausage whose recipe dates to Roman times; and plates of *escalibada*, smoky grilled vegetables drowned in virgin olive oil. Everything is local and—true to Adrià's assertion—works wonderfully with the wine.

"It's the fruitiness and freshness that really makes cava special," Llopart tells us, as she pours the last drops of a well-structured, creamy Imperial Gran Reserva Brut into my glass. "And its flexibility," she adds, opening a bottle of Leopardi Gran Reserva Brut Nature, which she suggests having with the sausage, its spicy notes matching well with richer, heavier dishes. "I love Cava because you can have it at any time—winter or summer, with or without food, with all moments."

Over the rest of the trip, we wash down an array of Catalan specialties with countless glasses of the wine. There's *fideus*, the humble Catalan version of paella made with fried noodles, at the Cuscó Berga winery in Avinyonet; a sublime array of *pica pica* sharing plates—tuna tartare, plump scallops on creamy mashed potatoes, piping hot croquettes, and fried quail eggs with trumpet mushrooms—served in the chandeliered dining room at the Bohigas winery in Òdena. One of our most epic meals unfolds back in Sant Sadurní d'Anoia, where we dine at Juvé y Camps, renowned for producing some of the finest cavas in the world—and the food is made to match. After a marathon-like tour through their tremendous multi-storied cellars, we sit down to mountains of cured ham and cheese, *escalibada* with herring, duck cannelloni, seafood stew with octopus, cod with spinach, and chicken with pine nuts. Each dish is matched perfectly with a cava, from a fun Brut Rosé through to the big Gran Juvé y Camps.

However, it's our final meal that shows the wine's versatility the best. At an old-fashioned restaurant in the cellars of Canals & Munné in the center of Sant Sadurní d'Anoia, our hosts, the winemaker Oscar Canals and his charming export manager Natalia de la Calle Zancajo, demonstrate the most quintessential of Catalan rituals, the *calçotada*. It's the act of peeling and eating the first of the season's *calçots*, enormous spring onions, which involves dipping them into Romesco sauce, bending one's head back, and letting the sweet, soft morsels slide along the tongue before washing them down with a mouthful of cava. I could never imagine doing the same with Champagne.

As I wipe the sauce from my mouth with a paper napkin, I recall something else that Terns told me years ago in Barcelona: "The best way to really feel Penedès is to go and drink the cava." Mission accomplished. ●



Church and Estate
A chapel on the grounds of the sprawling, family-owned Bohigas wine estate in Òdena.



Getting There

Singapore Airlines (singaporeair.com) flies daily to Barcelona, both nonstop and via Milan. From Hong Kong, **Swiss Air** (swissair.com) offers the most direct connections to the Catalan capital. The Penedès region is 40 minutes from Barcelona by car, and easily accessed by train as well.

Where to Stay

Those opting to visit Penedès as a day trip from Barcelona will want to base themselves at **Hotel Omm** (265 Carrer Rosselló; 34-93/445-4000; hotelomm.es; doubles from US\$270) in the fashionable Gràcia neighborhood. Home to the Michelin-starred Roca Moo restaurant, it also features a rooftop pool terrace that looks across to Gaudí's Casa Milà. For something closer to the wineries, consider the 12-room **Hotel Mastinell** (34-93/115-6132; hotelmastinell.com; doubles from US\$265), which sits next to a cava vineyard just outside Vilafranca del Penedès, the region's main town.



WHY DOES A CAR IN SINGAPORE COST AS MUCH AS A HOUSE IN THE USA?

HASLINDA AMIN
Global Perspectives. Local Insights.
Live from Singapore, Weekdays

Bloomberg
TELEVISION


bloomberg.com

Salad Days

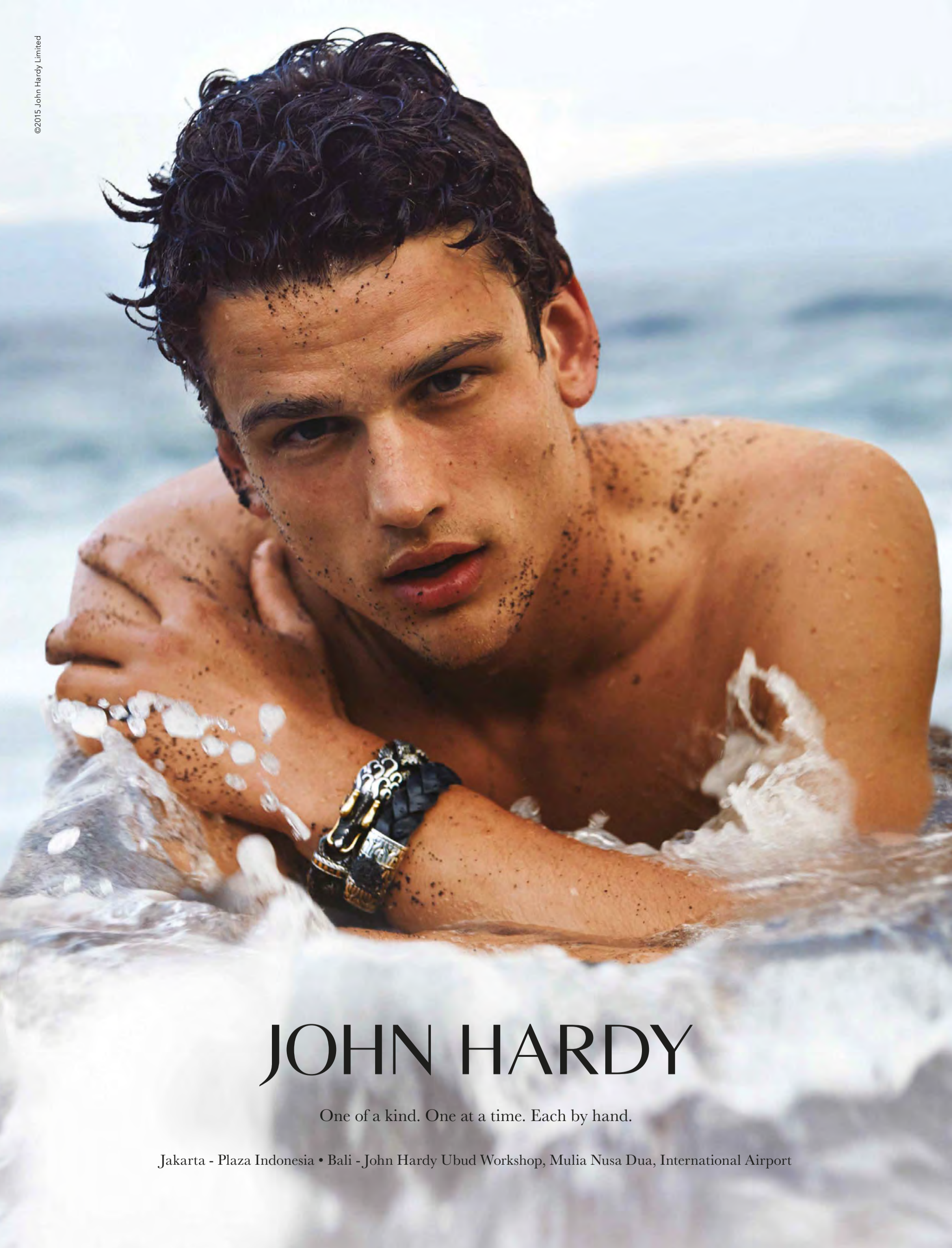
Wild mushroom salad with charred shallots and a puree of miso and lemongrass at the Common Tiger in Phnom Penh.



CAMBODIA'S NEW CROP

From Siem Reap to Phnom Penh, a small band of locavore chefs is determined to bring homegrown produce back into the spotlight, one tasting menu at a time.

BY LEISA TYLER



JOHN HARDY

One of a kind. One at a time. Each by hand.

Jakarta - Plaza Indonesia • Bali - John Hardy Ubud Workshop, Mulia Nusa Dua, International Airport



It's 8 p.m. in Siem Reap on a wet September evening. Tourists are thin on the ground here at this time of year, but Cuisine Wat Damnak is full. In the restaurant's two dining rooms—one air-conditioned and contemporary, the other a breezy upstairs nook modeled after a traditional Khmer house—patrons slowly devour chef Joannès Rivière's nightly tasting menu while the rain thunders down outside.

Locavore dining may be nothing new in the grand scheme of the global food scene, but it is in Cambodia, and Rivière is largely to thank. A bear of a Frenchman with a no-nonsense take on life, Rivière left his career as a pastry chef

in the United States in 2003 to come to Siem Reap and volunteer as a cooking instructor at a nonprofit hotel and restaurant school. In 2005, having learned the Khmer language and even written a Cambodian cookbook, he joined the Hôtel de la Paix (which was renovated and rebranded as the even more luxurious Park Hyatt in 2013), advancing the degustation menu at its Meric restaurant along with his own passion for Cambodian cuisine.

Traveling the country, Rivière discovered a plethora of exotic ingredients: the slightly sour ambarella fruit, the deliciously earthy *termitomyces* mushroom, the mildly sweet Kampot pepper, the herbaceous lime-green marsh weed *limnophila*, the small puffer fish found in the Tonle Sap. The bigger surprise was that none of these had found a place in the kitchens of Hôtel de la Paix, which, like the town's other top hotels, imported most of its perishable products from Europe and Australia. Undeterred, Rivière began integrating his findings into the menu at Meric, eventually developing a Khmer tasting menu that featured such things as beef-shank curry and green mango salad with dried snake.

Rivière refined his approach further after leaving the hotel in 2011 to open Cuisine Wat Damnak. Coupling strictly Cambodian ingredients with French cooking techniques, the restaurant captured diners' imaginations and quickly became the vanguard for Cambodia's locavore movement. On the night of my dinner there, the menu includes croaker fish pulled from Tonle Sap that morning, served with pounded sesame; a delicate and earthy consommé with wild prawns and raw egg; a tantalizing pork shank, caramelized on the outside and coated with zesty Kampot pepper; and, for dessert, a dragon-fruit meringue. Considering the five-course tasting menu costs just US\$24, no one seems to mind when certain experimental dishes aren't yet perfected, such as frog that's a bit too delicate for the powerful *prahok* (fermented fish paste) that accompanies it.

"The best ingredients we can get are Cambodian, so that's what we use," Rivière explains. "Our fish is from the lake; the chickens are raised under the house; vegetables come from the farmer down the road. We use lesser known and often disregarded products because they are the freshest and the tastiest we can get."

Thankfully, Rivière isn't the only chef in Cambodia tapping the local bounty. Another is Timothy Bruyns, a South African who came to Cambodia in 2011 to be executive sous chef at Song Saa Private Island, a resort off the

Common Ground

Above: South African chef Timothy Bruyns in the dining room of the Common Tiger. Opposite, from left: Baked sea bass with ginger leaf, local young vegetables, and spicy tomato concassé at the Park Hyatt Siem Reap; consommé with wild prawn and raw egg at Cuisine Wat Damnak, chef Joannès Rivière's trail-blazing Siem Reap restaurant.



country's southeastern coast. Now the owner of a Phnom Penh restaurant called the Common Tiger, Bruyns says, "There's a perception that ingredients from the West are best, or even those shipped in from Thailand, but they aren't. What's best is what's grown on our doorstep."

When I stop into the Common Tiger for lunch, the tattooed, energetic Bruyns first presents me with a refreshing salad of raw tuna from the southwestern province of Koh Kong that "came off the boat just this morning" with lily-flower stem, banana heart, salted turnip, and hot basil. Following this is a rich salad of roasted wild mushrooms with miso and lemongrass puree, charred shallots, a sprinkle of forest fern tips, and fat fresh soya beans adding color and crunch. But as astoundingly good as that is, better yet is the dish he's saved for last: glazed free-range pork ribs sourced from a farm outside Phnom Penh that have been cooked sous-vide for 20 hours with *kombu* (Japanese kelp), chili, ginger, lime leaf, and shallots.



Where to Stay

Formerly the historic Hôtel de la Paix, the 108-room **Park Hyatt Siem Reap** (Sivutha Boulevard; doubles from US\$224) offers pomp and glamor in Art Deco-style in the heart of downtown. In Phnom Penh, **Raffles Hotel Le Royal** (92 Rukhak Vithei Daun Penh; 855-23/981-888; raffles.com; doubles from US\$192) was one of five palace-like hotels built by the French colonists in the 1920s, and its rooms are accordingly fit for kings.

Bruyns' food, like Rivière's, is difficult to label. "It's not Cambodian cuisine by any stretch," he says. "Rather, it just takes advantage of produce in the area. I put foie gras on the menu when we first opened, but one look at the faces of my Khmer staff, and I realized I wasn't in France. So we abolished everything not Cambodian, with the exception of kombu and miso."

He is, in fact, so committed to local produce that he refuses to keep a cool room at the restaurant, forcing the kitchen to procure its ingredients daily from the market. Or from foraging—when we meet, Bruyns seems particularly excited about an endemic spice called white cardamom, which grows in southwest Cambodia's Cardamom Mountains and imparts a menthol-like flavor that is perfect for curing tuna and duck. "None of my staff had even heard about this extraordinary spice; it doesn't exist in the markets," he says. "But go into the forest and get past the leeches, and it's everywhere."

While not every chef goes out exploring



Fresh Approach

Raw tuna with lily flower stem, banana heart, salted turnip, and hot basil at the Common Tiger.

Cambodia's natural pantry for new, wild ingredients to the extent that Bruyns and Rivière do, certain businesses are changing the suppliers' side of the equation too. Eggscellent is one, a free-range egg enterprise started by Swiss expat David Keller to help create jobs and ameliorate poverty in the countryside around Siem Reap. Eggscellent now supplies eggs to numerous restaurants, guesthouses, and hotels in Siem Reap, including the Park Hyatt, which orders 300 eggs a day for breakfast.

The Park Hyatt has proved to be a major supporter of local suppliers, often spotlighting them in its Masters of Food and Wine series of events. One special menu was created to showcase Kampot peppers; another, the honeys from Nature Wild, an organization that supports sustainable wild honey collection around the country. The menu I try is an eight-course degustation that pairs Cambodian-inspired dishes with fruit- and spice-infused rice spirits from Sombai, a Siem Reap business. Devised by the hotel's locally born sous chef Piseth Theam, the meal begins with tuna cured with Kampot pepper, fresh and

light and perfectly matched with Sombai's spicy mango-chili spirit. Thin slices of raw U.S. beef tenderloin marinated with lemongrass and kaffir lime are served with a lemongrass-and-lemon spirit, a sweet accompaniment for a dish so tender, and by the sixth course—a chicken and pineapple curry with winter melon served with coconut-and-pineapple spirit—everything just tastes like candy.

Theam, whose father was the chef de cuisine at the original Hôtel de la Paix from 1961 until 1963, plans to incorporate homegrown fruits, vegetables, and meats into his menus as well. He says he's eager to get Cambodia's food culture back to what it was in the days before the Khmer Rouge had their devastating effect upon the country and its culture. Re-establishing reliable supply chains will take a lot of effort, but, in the words of Joannès Rivière, "It's a win-win—the community benefits, the environment benefits, and the food is fresher, tastier, and cheaper." As the saying goes, you reap what you sow, and it looks like Cambodia is poised to regain lost ground. ●

Where to Eat

For three tasting menus that highlight the best of Cambodia's produce, try:

Cuisine Wat Damnak
Wat Damnak village, Siem Reap; 855-77/347-762; cuisinewatdamnak.com; six courses for US\$28.

The Common Tiger
20 St. 294, Phnom Penh; 855-23/212-917; thecommontiger.com; five courses for US\$50.

The Dining Room, Park Hyatt Siem Reap
Sivutha Blvd.; 855-63/211-234; siemreap.park.hyatt.com; eight-course Sombai Tasting Menu for US\$80.

Enjoy Jakarta's Best Greens



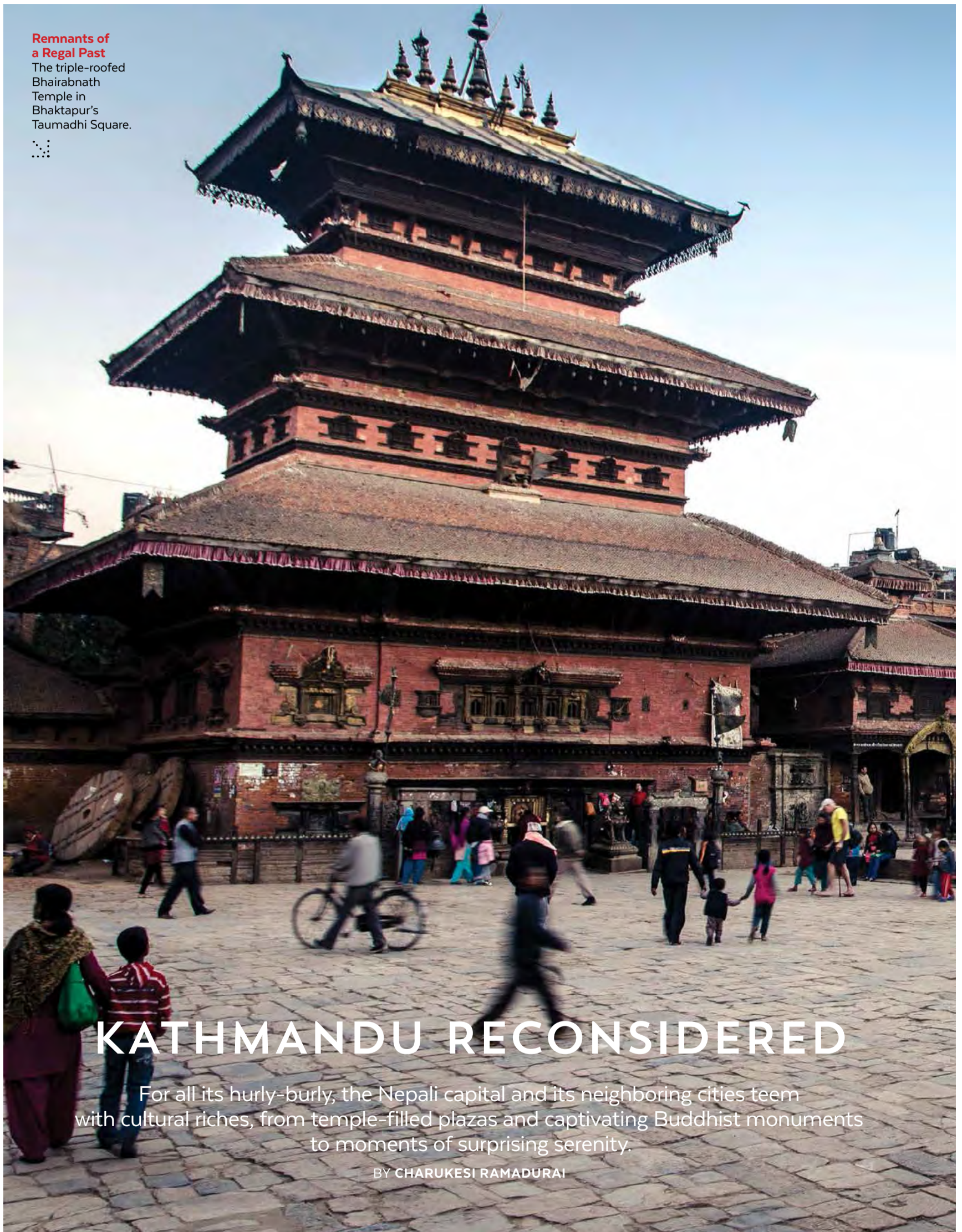
BOOK NOW!
+62 21 559 1111
www.CENGKARENGGOLFCLUB.com



True Enjoyment!

**Remnants of
a Regal Past**

The triple-roofed
Bhairabnath
Temple in
Bhaktapur's
Taumadhi Square.



KATHMANDU RECONSIDERED

For all its hurly-burly, the Nepali capital and its neighboring cities teem with cultural riches, from temple-filled plazas and captivating Buddhist monuments to moments of surprising serenity.

BY CHARUKESI RAMADURAI

#AsiasGotTalent

axn-asia.com/asiasgottalent



HOME OF ASIA'S GOT TALENT



ASIA'S GOT ★ TALENT

Every Thursday at 8.30pm
(7.30pm JKT/BKK)

Refer to local listings for broadcast details in your region.



Sacred Sites

The stupa at Swayambhunath, an important Buddhist site on a hilltop overlooking Kathmandu that dates back to fifth century.



When I talk about my plans for Nepal, the first thing I hear is, “But why would you waste so much time around Kathmandu?” People seem to expect that I would only want to spend a day reveling in the heady chaos of the city’s Thamel district before quickly moving on to popular stops like Pokhara or Chitwan National Park. After all, that’s what everyone does.

I, however, intend to spend my time exploring the riches of Kathmandu Valley’s trio of royal cities: Kathmandu, Bhaktapur, and Lalitpur. From the 15th to mid 18th centuries, when the valley was divided among three Newar kingdoms, its rulers vied to outdo each other in terms of art and architecture, ushering in a period of cultural efflorescence. Enriched by trade, they spent lavishly on their palaces and royal plazas (known as Durbar Squares), commissioning ever-more-spectacular temples, statues, and residences. So outstanding is the craftsmanship—in stone and wood, brick and bronze—that UNESCO in-



Getting There

SilkAir (silkair.com) flies direct to Kathmandu from Singapore, as does **Dragonair** (dragonair.com) from Hong Kong and **Thai Airways** (thaiairways.com) from Bangkok. Both Bhaktapur and Lalitpur are less than a 20-minute drive from the airport.

scribed the bowl-shaped valley and its monuments as a World Heritage Site in 1979. With a few days on my hands, I plan to take in as much of it as possible.

From Kathmandu’s international airport, my husband and I make a beeline to our guesthouse in Lalitpur, drop our bags, and head straight back out into the street. Walking through a narrow market lane toward the city’s Durbar Square, I keep craning my neck to better see the elegantly carved wooden windows that punctuate the facades above me. Lalitpur (also known as Patan in Nepali) is home to Nepal’s largest community of artists, including a bevy of metalsmiths and woodworkers, and this lane is dotted with their ateliers, tempting us to linger over the beautiful works of art displayed casually outside. But the light is fading fast, so we press on.

Suddenly, we emerge into a large open plaza and stop short in awe. Brimming with pagoda-roofed temples and shrines, the brick-paved Durbar Square immediately reminds me that Lalitpur means “city of beauty.” The buildings are all exquisite, with their perfect symmetry and lushly carved wooden pillars and beams (including some unexpectedly risqué motifs). One temple, the 17th-century Krishna Mandir, is built of stone in the *shikhara* style of northern India, its slender central tower rising elegantly above tiered pavilions. But worshippers are few on the ground, as the square today serves more as a social hub than a religious one. I don’t spot many tourists either, just a few Japanese visitors engrossed by their camera phones and selfie sticks. But there are dozens of locals floating around—old men shooting the breeze, perched on wobbly benches in front of the temples; families out for an evening stroll, oblivious or perhaps inured to the beauty around them; children chasing after balloons intent on flying their way to freedom; gangs of teenage girls giggling over jokes that only the very young can find funny.

Lalitpur was founded in the third century B.C., making it the oldest town in the Kathmandu Valley. Like its neighboring cities, medieval Lalitpur grew rich from its position on the ancient trade route between India and Tibet, and the wealth it acquired makes itself obvious inside the Patan Royal Palace complex. Sundari Chowk, one of the palace’s three main inner courtyards, is centered on a 17th-century stone bath lined with intricately sculpted bas-reliefs. It’s stunning. As I stop to admire the carvings, a man with a camera appears next to me and introduces himself as Mike from London. After telling me that he’s been traveling around Asia for months now, he says with a thoroughly be-



LUXURY · INDULGENCE · LIFESTYLE

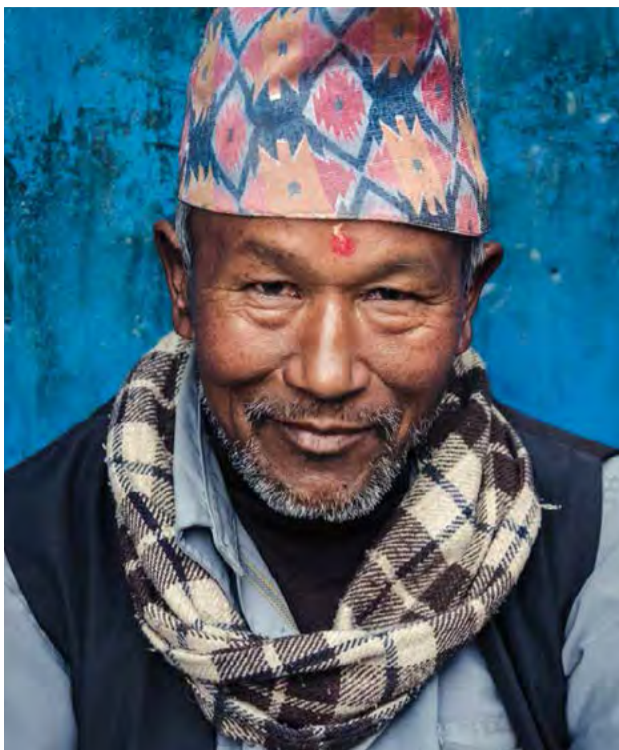
FIRST CLASS

CNBC'S SUSAN LI TAKES YOU BEHIND THE VELVET ROPE TO SHOW YOU THE MOST EXCLUSIVE DESTINATIONS IN TOWN. MEET THE PLAYERS WHO ARE SHAKING UP THE LOCAL SCENE, AND DISCOVER THE HIDDEN GEMS AND ULTIMATE INDULGENCES.



cnbc.com/first-class

Please visit asiaschedule.cnbc.com for the full timings. To subscribe, call your local pay-TV operator now.



mused look, “You know, this reminds me of Angkor Wat—I never expected anything like this in Nepal.” Nor, to be honest, had I.

If Lalitpur proves a revelation, the Durbar Square in Bhaktapur, 12 kilometers to the east, delivers a jolt of déjà vu, and not at all unpleasantly. The temples here are similarly magnificent, as is the Palace of Fifty-five Windows, a former royal residence that now houses the National Art Gallery. But Bhaktapur’s real star is a short walk away in the middle of Taumadhi Square: Nyatapola, a pagoda-style temple of five increasingly smaller levels that give it the look of a house of cards that might come toppling down at any minute. Despite the cafés and shops that ring the square, it is absolutely quiet. In the stillness of the evening, it’s difficult to imagine that this temple was built to house the idol of a goddess so fierce—Siddhi Lakshmi—that its inner sanctum is off-limits to all but temple priests. I spend the rest of my time there ambling happily through the neighborhood’s labyrinth of narrow shopping streets and chatting with craftspeople at Pottery Square, where all manner of clay jugs, bowls, and vases are lined up on the ground to dry in the sun.

Over the last few decades, the backpacking hordes have come, seen, and conquered Nepal, so I’m surprised by how much of the valley has remained relatively untouched by the madding crowds. Not all of it, though—Kathmandu city is very much the urban disaster it is proclaimed to be. The streets here teem with people and vehicles, as does the Durbar Square, where taxis somehow squeeze through the cobbled lanes and vendors loudly hawk everything from hot tea to tacky trinkets and plastic hair clips. The air is punctuated by the squeals of children as they race after pigeons



Pleasure Palace
The intricately carved stone bath in the Lalitpur palace’s Sundari Chowk courtyard. Left: A Bhaktapur resident.

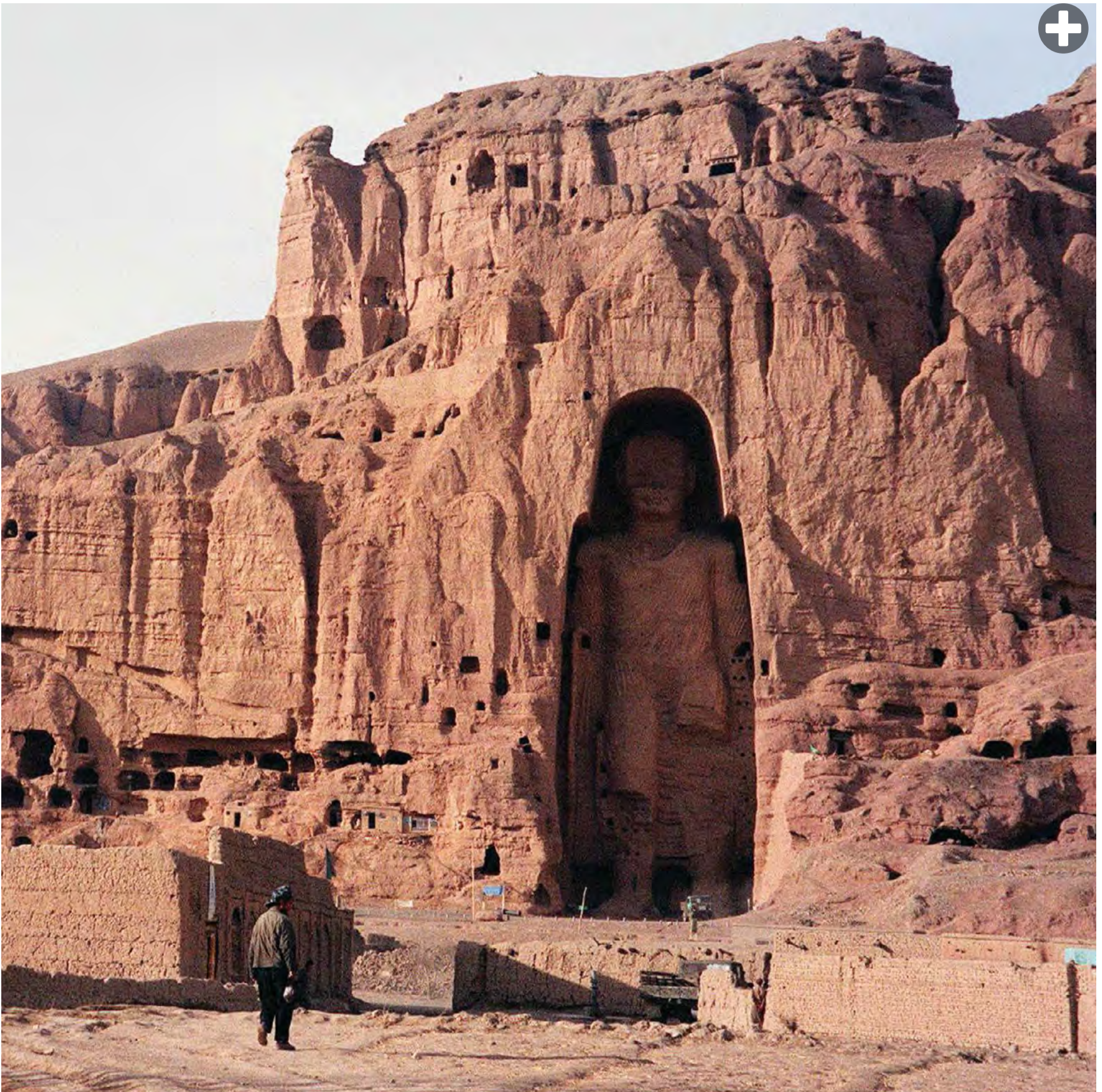
Where to Stay

The **Hyatt Regency Kathmandu** (977-1/449-1234; kathmandu.regency.hyatt.com; doubles from US\$165) sits on the road leading to the Boudhanath stupa and features 280 rooms with wooden floors and hand-woven Tibetan carpets. In Lalitpur, go for **Traditional Homes Swatha** (traditionalhomes.com.np; doubles from US\$90), a Newari mansion restored into a bed-and-breakfast with seven spacious rooms. In Bhaktapur, **Hotel Heritage** (hotelheritage.com.np; doubles from US\$130) is the plushiest option, its 25 rooms outfitted with local textiles and antique wood.

that take flight with a loud whoosh at the slightest provocation. Yet somehow amid the clamor, a few locals manage to nap on the broad stone steps of the temples.

Venture beyond Kathmandu’s central neighborhoods, though, and you find quieter, more likeable places to explore. People often talk about the Garden of Dreams as Kathmandu’s urban oasis, an expanse of neoclassical gardens that belonged to the son of Nepal’s fifth prime minister. But I find my sanctuary at the Boudhanath, a huge Tibetan-Buddhist stupa on the eastern outskirts of town. We head there early one morning and encounter a brilliant tableau of faith, with pilgrims in traditional Tibetan garb and maroon-robed monks circumambulating the monument, prayer wheels in hand.

As with the rest of the city, the Boudhanath—or Boudha, as it is known locally—pulsates with life. But here, the cacophony is muted to a soothing hum that envelops both the believers who deem themselves blessed by the stupa’s benevolent Buddha eyes and the visitors like me who watch it all from a distance, immersed serenely in the moment. ☉



/ Afghanistan /

1997

Visiting the towering Buddhas of Afghanistan's Bamiyan Valley in 1997, you'd be forgiven for thinking that the twin World Heritage-listed statues could withstand anything—after all, they'd been staring out from their sandstone niches for more than 1,500 years. Sadly, just four years later in March 2001, the monuments—one 35 meters high, the other 53—were dynamited and destroyed by the Taliban; Bamiyan residents hiding in the mountains claim that they heard bombs going off for week. It was an act of wanton destruction that shocked locals, historians, and the world, but the

country's new government was quick to step in and announce plans to rebuild the statues. Though the project has been painstakingly slow, it has revealed many previously unknown facts about the Buddhas along the way, not in the least the intense colors originally used to decorate them, as well as the skill of their artisans. Also discovered were 50 previously unknown caves—a dozen of them decorated with Buddhist frescoes—dating back to when Bamiyan was an important pilgrimage center along the ancient Silk Road. Until such time as the Buddhas are reassembled, there is some comfort in knowing that the valley's full history has yet to be written. —Natasha Dragun

A TASTE OF THAILAND



From the mountains of the kingdom's north to the shores of its southern reaches, Thailand offers a tantalizing diversity of dishes that range well beyond the standard pad thais and green curries. Here, a region-by-region roundup of the fare you have to look forward to.





NORTHERN NUANCES

Myanmar, China, and Laos can all claim to have influenced the culinary offerings of northern Thailand, where a cooler mountain climate and verdant forests are to thank for stellar produce, including a wide variety of roots, herbs, and vegetables.

Once home to the Lanna Kingdom, Thailand's north, which includes the provinces of Chiang Mai and Chiang Rai, is the base for the majority of the

country's ethnic groups, meaning that diners can look forward to fare heavily influenced by geography.

There are many sour and bitter flavors used in cooking, especially in dishes such as *kaeng ho*, which sees curry re-fried with glass noodles with pickled bamboo shoots and lemongrass added. Glutinous rice is often served on the side to be rolled into balls by hand before being dipped into sauces.

Hugely popular in Myanmar, *khao soi* (a curry broth with egg noodles and chicken, pork, or beef) also makes an appearance in northern Thailand, as do *kaeng hang lay* (a pork curry seasoned with ginger, tamarind and turmeric) and *kaeng yuak*, made with banana palm hearts.

Handmade sausages are a regional specialty, and among the favorites are *sai ua*, a flavorful blend of pork, dried chilies, garlic, shallots, and lemongrass—make no mistake, this sausage will get your heart pumping. Another favorite is a raw sausage called *naem maw*, made with ground pork, pork rind, sticky rice, garlic, and chili; the meat is “cooked” by a fermentation process that occurs when it is stored in ceramic pots.

Northern Thailand is also a haven for noodle lovers. In Chiang Mai, the Burmese-style *khao soi* egg noodle soup is a standout and often comes with pickled cabbage, lime, and chili. *Wusen* noodles, made from mung-bean starch, are another highlight. They're commonly added to curries, soups, and stir-fries.

Perhaps the most common festive meal in the north is *khantoke*, a sort of Lanna-style banquet that sees diners gather around low circular tables made to enjoy small plates while watching cultural performances.



ESCAPES CREATED FOR YOU

Only Thailand can offer you the ultimate range of choice when it comes to accommodation and activities, and only Centara can do it all with effortless style and hospitality. Just decide which of our balmy, blissful Thailand destinations, such as Phuket, Koh Samui and Krabi, best suits you; and then choose the ideal Centara property from our spacious suites, penthouses or villas.

BOOK DIRECT FOR OUR BEST RATE GUARANTEED

www.centarahotelsresorts.com

T: + 66 (0) 2101 1234 # 1 E: reservations@chr.co.th

CENTARA
GRAND
HOTELS & RESORTS

Bangkok • Pattaya • Hua Hin • Phuket • Krabi • Koh Samui
THAILAND • MALDIVES • MAURITIUS

SAVORING THE SOUTH

The panhandle of southern Thailand and its offshore islands—Phuket and Koh Samui among them—are known for dishing up the country’s spiciest cuisine. Influenced by neighboring Malaysia, southern Thai cooking also takes cues from the region’s Muslim population—the food here is often laced with coconut and turmeric, not to mention a liberal dose of galangal, garlic, lemongrass, and kaffir lime leaves.

Indian fare also makes an appearance on tables around the country, with particularly tasty dishes represented at breakfast, when flaky *rotis* are served with pungent curries; the Indian-style flatbread is also commonly topped with grilled bananas and condensed milk.

Unlike mainstream Thai curries, in which herbs and roots are the primary ingredients, many Muslim-influenced southern curries are characterized by dry spices, popular in Indian cooking. These flavors are exemplified in dishes such as *kao moek gkai*, a brightly colored rice dish laced with turmeric and served with a sour chili sauce. Turmeric, paired with garlic and white pepper, is also used to season popular fried fish dishes, as well as soups and curries.

When ordering in southern Thai restaurants, it’s common to see a large platter of vegetables—fresh, pickled, and cooked in coconut milk—with aromatic and pungent herbs and bitter leaves placed in the middle of the table. These fresh bites are great accompaniments to the robust, and often fiery, curries and sauces that you’ll find in southern cuisine; you’ll also find cashews added to dishes along the southern coast.



Many dishes in the south incorporate white noodles made with fermented rice paste, usually added to a spicy coconut milk curry such as *nahm yah* or topped with a chili-and-peanut sauce. Both come with the aforementioned herb-and-vegetable platter.

Given the extensive coastline of the southern peninsula, seafood usually stars across all dishes. Don’t miss favorites such as crispy tamarind prawns with sweet-and-sour chili, or charcoal grilled fish served with hot-and-sour dipping sauces. And then there are the spicy soups such as *tom kha talay*, made with fresh seafood, coconut milk, galangal, lemongrass, and lime.

SOME VIEWS ARE SPECIAL. OTHERS ARE SPECTACULAR.



ESCAPE TO OUR EXCLUSIVE DESTINATION TO CREATE IRREPLACEABLE MEMORIES.
DISCOVER INTERCONTINENTAL SAMUI BAAN TALING NGAM.

Our Resort encompasses 22 acres of lush, tropical landscape with breathtaking views of the Gulf of Thailand. A place that brings its luxurious seclusion & privacy to an award-winning setting.

Do you live an InterContinental life?



CONDÉ NAST
johansens
Luxury Hotels • Spas • Venues

For more information or to make a reservation,
please call +66 (0) 7742 9100
reservations@ickohsamui.com
or visit samui.intercontinental.com



INTERCONTINENTAL[®]
SAMUI BAAN TALING NGAM RESORT

In over 170 locations across the globe including BALI • BORA BORA • FIJI • HUA HIN



The low, flat central region also encompasses the country's wet rice-growing plains, with many recipes designed to be paired with non-glutinous jasmine rice. It's for this reason that some of central Thailand's most applauded dishes are those that we most commonly see served at Thai restaurants around the world. The three most popular curries from central Thailand have a coconut-milk base and include green curry, usually made with seafood or chicken; a hot red curry known as *kaeng phet*; and a milder, creamier version called *kaeng phanaeng*.



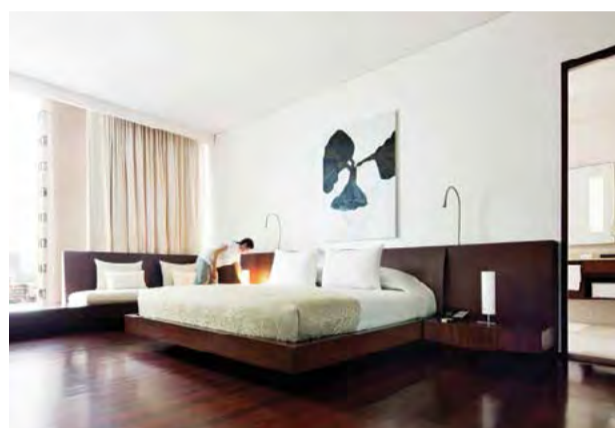
Tangy salads known as *yam* ("mixed") are a central Thai invention. There are many varieties of *yam*, but ingredients they all have in common are shallots, fish sauce, lime juice, sugar, and fresh or dried chillies. Popular incarnations of the dish include *yam nuea yang* (with sliced grilled beef), *yam tale* (mixed seafood) and *yam wunsen* (glass noodles). Tom yam, that globally loved, aromatic spicy and sour soup, is from the Thai heartland as well; it's often made with coconut milk (*tom yam nam khon*) and prawns.

Central Thai cuisine is also distinguished by an abundance of fish and prawns from the Chao Phraya River. Giant river prawns native to this part of the country are used in grilled dishes such as *kung pao*, while *haw mok pla* sees fish, spices, coconut milk, and egg steamed in a banana-leaf cup and topped with thick coconut cream before serving. Oysters from coastal towns along the Gulf of Thailand make an appearance in crispy omelets known as *hoy tod*.

HEARTH & HEARTLAND

Home to the former kingdoms of Sukhothai and Ayutthaya as well as to present-day Bangkok, central Thailand is also where you'll find royal Thai cuisine, a culinary tradition known for its refined use of ingredients and techniques. Expect such dishes to be carefully spiced and ornately prepared and presented.

Chinese flavors and cooking techniques are evident in many Central Thai dishes, from *kai phat met mamuang himmaphan* (Sichuan-style chicken with chillies and cashews) to *salapao* (steamed buns) and various wok-fried meat and vegetable meals.



Metropolitan by COMO, Bangkok

High style and fine cuisine in the heart of the city

In the realm of Bangkok's design hotels—or any hotels, for that matter—the Metropolitan by COMO, Bangkok is one that never goes out of style. Since it opened in 2003, its chic aesthetic, exclusive size, and impressive facilities keep it perennially positioned as one of Bangkok's best hotels to stay.

Set back off of South Sathorn Road, the Metropolitan is equally convenient for business and leisure travelers. It's nestled in the heart of the city's central business district, a short walk away from attractions such as Lumpini Park, the Patpong night market, and Silom shopping complex. And should you want to zip to another part of the city, the Sala Daeng Skytrain station and Lumpini MRT are within walking distance too. Renowned Singapore interior architect Kathryn Kng

retrofitted the building with a design that is clean and modern, featuring a gorgeous lobby of makha wood, creams, and oxidized brass and 169 rooms including four penthouse suites that are airy and bright, accented by carefully selected Asian antiques.

The Metropolitan is particularly well known among gastronomes as the home of Nahm. Here, chef David Thompson crafts unusual, carefully sourced produce into inventive Thai cuisine, for which Nahm has won numerous awards including recently being named Asia's Best Restaurant on San Pellegrino's prestigious annual list. Also onsite is the swanky Met Bar for tapas and drinks and Glow for health-conscious breakfasts, lunches, and dinners. The latter emphasizes clean eating with fresh, often raw ingredients made into

tasty dishes such as those on its new breakfast menu—think raw young coconut and almond “porridge” with banana and strawberries; coconut pancakes with poached pineapple, blueberries, and toasted coconut; and lots of cold-pressed juices.

When it comes time to unwind, there's the COMO Shambhala Urban Escape for relaxing spa treatments, private yoga sessions, or day-long body cleanses. For a bit of fitness, there's a fully equipped gym with private trainers and a 20-meter outdoor lap pool, equally ideal for aquatic workouts and just lounging around. What's more, from April 16 until October 31, guests who book 21 days in advance can enjoy the Ultimate Saving package offering nightly rates from THB4,000, inclusive of breakfast for two.

EATING ISAN

The pungent, spicy dishes of Isan, Thailand's northeast, are heavily influenced by the Khmer culture of neighboring Cambodia as well as the fare dished up in Laos (to its north and east) and Vietnam. The climate in this part of the country is extreme, swinging from hot and dry to very wet. Rice doesn't grow well here, which means that meals revolve around hardy produce.

When you sit down to dinner at a Thai restaurant, many of the most popular dishes served up will have Isan origins: sticky rice, papaya salad, and many *laab* (minced meat salads) were first created here.

Isan cooks don't cut any corners when it comes to flavors that pack a punch. They are particularly heavy-handed in their use of chilies (fresh herbs such as dill, basil, and mint are used to counter the bracing heat), strong fish sauces, fermented fish (*plah rah*), and sour limes and tamarind. The cuisine is also distinguished by its use of pickled and cured ingredients, popular due to the fact that wood for cooking can be scarce in the area.

Popular regional dishes include *somtam* (a salad using green papaya), *laab bpet* (a pungent duck salad, sometimes



cooked with duck's blood), *gai yang* (chicken marinated in soy or fish sauce and spices, flattened and grilled), and *naam jaew* (a paste-like dip for meat and vegetables made of dried chilies, tamarind, shallots, and shrimp paste). The intense flavors of these dishes are usually tempered by sticky rice.

amazing
THAILAND
2015
Discover Thainess



ALL YOU CAN **EAT,**
ALL the **TIME.**

FOOTPRINTS

For centuries the haunt of reclusive sea gypsies, Myanmar's remote Mergui Archipelago offers one of the region's most idyllic—and vulnerable—yachting destinations.

BY **KENDALL HILL** PHOTOGRAPHS BY **CHRISTOPHER WISE**

**A Beach of
One's Own**
Enjoying a solitary
moment on the
sandy shores of
Kyun Phi Lar Island.

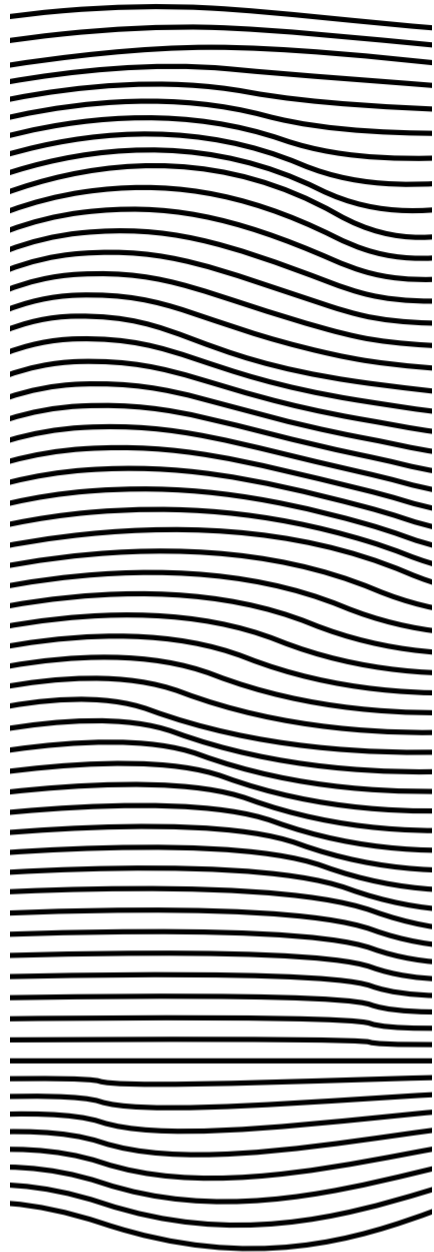




**Whatever Floats
Your Boat**

Carrying up to eight passengers at a time, the 25-meter ketch *Meta IV* is the flagship of Burma Boating's yacht fleet.





In the 21st century it is difficult to imagine a corner of the world where 800 mostly uninhabited islands still exist in the heart of its most populous continent. Where annual visitors are measured in the hundreds, not the thousands. And where each morning, if I rise before my fellow sailors, I can swim to the nearest of these islands, leave the first footprints on its fine bleached sands, and inhale the honeyed perfume of blooming sea poison trees lining the shore.

This is how each day begins on a six-day sailing trip through the Mergui Archipelago in southern Myanmar, filled with pinch-me moments that more than reward the effort of getting here. Off-limits to tourism until the late 1990s, it is only in the last couple of years, since Myanmar opened up, that voyages through the islands have started to take off. Burma Boating, the outfit I'm sailing with, was one of the pioneers when they launched a website three years ago offering yacht charters. Within a fortnight they had their first reservation; in two months, they were booked out for the season. Demand was so strong they added a second boat in the first year; now they have six.

Cruising the Mergui

Burma Boating's five-night sailings depart Saturdays between late October and late April and cost from US\$2,050 per person twin share, including all meals, non-alcoholic drinks, and activities. Private charters are also available. For bookings, call 66-2/107-0445 or visit burma.boating.com.

Burma Boating's German co-founder, Christoph Schwanitz, tells me he discovered the islands by chance when he and a group of friends chartered a boat in Phuket to sail to India's Andaman Islands, about 800 kilometers to the northwest. Denied a visa, they instead set a course for the Mergui Archipelago, a day's sailing away.

"Nobody could tell us anything about it," Schwanitz recalls. The only other vessel he saw during a week at sea was *Eclipse*, the superyacht owned by Russian oligarch Roman Abramovich.

Things have changed, obviously, since then—dive boats and Burmese fishing boats are a more common sight now—but there is still a powerful sense of remoteness. Even getting here is an adventure: passengers must arrive in Kawthaung, Myanmar's southernmost point and the main gateway to the Mergui islands, by domestic flight from Yangon or via a long drive north from Phuket to the Thai border town of Ranong, and then make a slightly dodgy crossing of the Pakchan River by leaky longboat. But the sight of the 25-meter teak beauty *Meta IV* bobbing off Kawthaung's coast banishes any fears about this being some rough and ready expedition.

Our crew consists of Thai captain Ekachai Pongpaew, his uncle Chet, chef Wa, and our Burmese guide Aung Kyaw Kyaw (AK for short). They decide our precise itinerary according to prevailing winds and tides. "This is a relatively uncharted territory," Schwanitz says, "but we always have a Burmese guide on board and they know the area very well."

Life on board is barefoot (no shoes allowed) and do-as-you-please, be that learning the ropes when the *Meta IV* is under sail, or lazing on a sun lounger with a book. Below deck lie four compact but comfortable double berths with en suites. To be honest I'm less concerned with the slightly cramped bed than with the onboard catering (which is generally excellent) and whether the icebox is fully stocked (generally yes).

On the first night my last-frontier fantasies are drowned out by the hornet engines and spotlights of fishing boats sheltering beside us in Octopus Bay. These noisy boats become a regular, but thankfully not constant, feature of our island days.

The other folk we encounter often are the ethnic Moken, or sea gypsies, who have lived a semi-nomadic existence on these waters for centuries. We usually spy them standing upright like paddleboarders in their dugouts, scissoring oars to propel themselves across the sea.

The Moken have fascinated me ever since I read that virtually all of them escaped unharmed from the 2004 tsunami. Some reports suggested the Moken's superior sea lore helped them read the signs of the looming catastrophe and move to safety. AK argues the islands' natural geography would have protected them from the worst of the waves. Either way, I'm keen to meet these fascinating people.

The first morning in the Mergui brings a swim in the warm Andaman waters, a kayak excursion to Za Det Nge island, and a few more sobering facts about the reality of this “pristine” archipelago. The beach at Za Det Nge looks postcard-perfect from a distance, but up close it is a marine dump. The taproots of tropical trees are snagged with faded plastics, glass bottles, expired flip-flops, polystyrene floats, and the accumulated jetsam of the ocean. Even more shocking is the discovery, when snorkeling these translucent waters, that dynamite fishing has decimated the region’s coral reefs. This is not the virgin paradise I was expecting. The government neglect that has spared the Mergui islands from the ravages of development has also, apparently, spared them any attention at all.

But it is still a paradise of sorts, as we’re reminded when we arrive at Za Det Nge by kayak and a ball of hundreds of black fish surrounds us then bleeds like ink into the shallows. Or when we’re under sail, with the engine cut, and the only sounds are the thwack of waves against the hull and the slap and billow of cloth above us. Or lying in bed on sultry nights and gazing up through the skylight at the starry firmament.

Our first sight of Ma Kyone Galet village is a row of rickety shacks on stilts lining the shore of Bo Cho island. There is a small pagoda to the left, and above it a lush path leading to a gilded stupa. We anchor offshore on the morning of day two, excited by the prospect of visiting a Moken village.

AK warns us before we leave the *Meta IV* that we will need shoes. “There is rubbish everywhere of course because this is a remote area,” he explains. “When we walk on the beach we need to take care a lot.” He’s not kidding: the muddy sand is mined with nasty shards of broken glass. Minding our steps, we make it safely to dry land and wander along a sandy street offering small cakes to children and observing the locals observing us. Women and children take shelter in the shade of stilt houses, hoping to catch a cooling breeze off the water.

During a sudden downpour we take cover in a humble café where the flat-screen TV shows a football match in a distant country. The people are welcoming, and I get to chatting with the village nurse. She says the most common illnesses on the island are malaria and cardiovascular disease. There are also injuries from knife attacks, she says, using her

hands to make slashing motions at her neck and ears.

We spend a happy half hour in the schoolhouse with shy but smiling children, taking photos and playing games. To reach the school we first have to cross an arched bridge over a squalid creek that functions as a communal garbage dump. While hundreds live in this village, AK reckons only about 80 are Moken. He says they settled in this east-facing bay for protection from the southwest monsoons. The *New York Times* reported a different story in 2013, however—that the Moken were forcibly settled here by the military junta in the late 1990s.

That same report quoted Jacques Ivanoff, a renowned ethnologist who has spent decades documenting this fragile culture, talking about tourism in the Mergui. Ivanoff told the *Times*: “Even if I don’t really like it, if foreigners come respectfully and aren’t asking the Moken to recreate ceremonial traditions, maybe it means that more people will become aware.” Schwanitz also sought Ivanoff’s opinion before starting *Burma Boating*. “His main mission, apart from studying the Moken, was to keep tourism out because he was convinced that would destroy them,” Schwanitz explains. “But now he thinks some kind of well-managed tourism, something that involves them, is the only thing that might save the Mokens’ future. Otherwise they will get completely marginalized by development and logging.” (Instituto Oikos, an Italian NGO working in the archipelago, also advocates controlled ecotourism to protect the region and its people.)

Ivanoff’s cautious blessing makes me feel slightly better about intruding on this village, but it can’t erase the glaring inequity between them and us—our shiny yacht versus their grinding existence. I read later that material possessions mean nothing to the Moken; their language has no words for “want” or “mine.” Even so, the visit dispels any romantic notions I had about the nomadic life of the sea gypsies. Back on the boat, AK tells me that rampant overfishing is threatening their survival. Last year, he asked one Moken family what they would do if they could no longer feed themselves from the sea. “If we can’t find the sea produce, we just die,” they told him.

“After this, I am really so sad for these people,” AK says.

To lift the mood Ekachai takes us to 115, better known as Honeymoon Island for the outrageous

WE LOAD THE COCKTAILS, BEER, AND SNACKS ONTO THE DINGHY AND HEAD TO THE BEACH WHERE THE CREW HAS BUILT A BONFIRE AND EKACHAI IS STRUMMING HIS GUITAR FOR ADDED SUNSET ATMOSPHERE

Cruise Control

Opposite, clockwise from top left: One of the four cabins on *Meta IV*; curried squid and grilled chicken from the boat’s galley; captain Ekachai Pongpaew charting a course through the islands; the first mate at the wheel.



An Archipelago

Apart

Many of the Mergui islands' craggy coastlines remained uncharted until recently. Opposite: At anchor under a star-studded sky.









Coastal Encounters

Above, from left: Local fauna; a Moken sea gypsy in his dugout canoe. Opposite: A shore excursion to Kyun Phi Lar Island.

romance of its setting. There we swim and snorkel and marvel at the brochure-perfect beauty before motoring on to Kyun Phi Lar where our captain has promised us a “powder beach” (and he’s right—the sand feels like talcum powder between the toes). As we approach the island, the water erupts with fish leaping into the air and skidding along the surface on their tails. This is a very good omen for dinner.

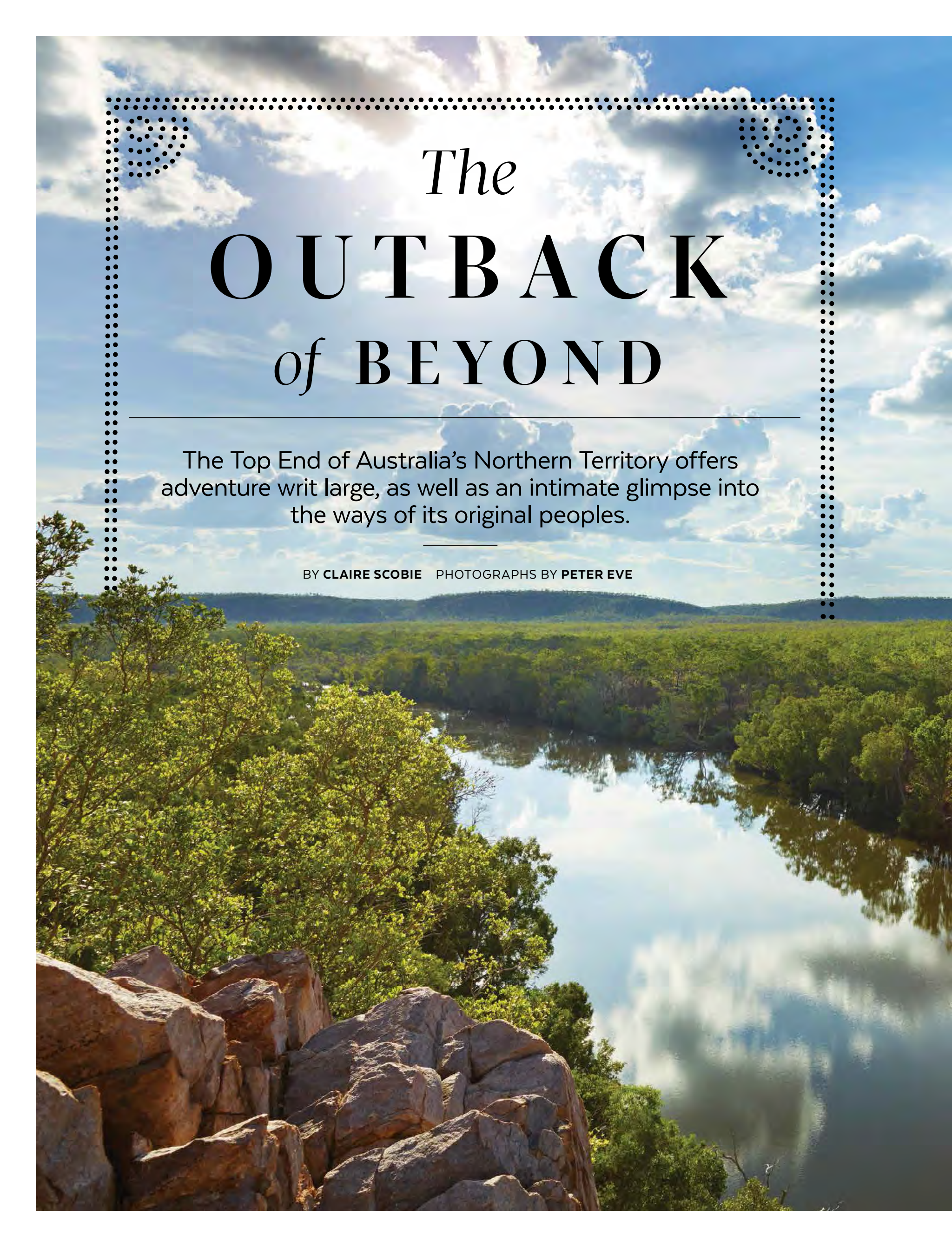
We are not alone at Kyun Phi Lar. There are two Moken boats anchored at one end of the beach, silhouetted in the afternoon sun. They see us too and before long a delegation—two youngish men and a girl with curly, sun-streaked hair—pulls up to our yacht in a dugout. The crew brings them eggs, rice, fish, water, and sweets (and later a bottle of rum and cigarettes), and they give us a special treat in return—two lobsters.

The situation calls for cocktails. Each night one of us is in charge of sundowners, and tonight it is me. I decide that a rum-based concoction with mango, kiwi, and orange sounds good, but it turns out like a boozy smoothie. Regardless, we load the cocktails, beer, and snacks onto the dinghy and head to the beach where the crew has built a bonfire and Ekachai is strumming his guitar for added sunset at-

mosphere. In the pixelated twilight the sea turns to glass, a silvery blue mirror reflecting the last light in the sky. We snap photographs madly to remind ourselves that these islands really can be Asia’s Arcadia. Back on the boat, dinner under the stars. Chef Wa and Jiang Jing, our enthusiastic Chinese shipmate, have been busy catching tropical fish. An hour later Wa serves their haul sashimi-style as an appetizer to his *pièce de résistance*, the lobster.

I ask him how he’s cooked it. “Lobster thermidor,” he says, as if that’s the most natural dish to serve on a boat in the middle of nowhere. It’s one of those moments—in fact, one of those days—to treasure from the trip.

For now, charter yachts and dive boats are the only way to see the Mergui Archipelago. There is just one island resort, near Kawthaung; Schwanitz has heard of other developers with licenses to build hotels in the archipelago, but nothing has happened yet. “So far it hasn’t changed much because you can only get here by boat,” he says. “There are no villages, no roads, no telephone or Internet, and only two sources of fresh water. But 10 years from now, I’m sure this will be a very, very different world.” ☉



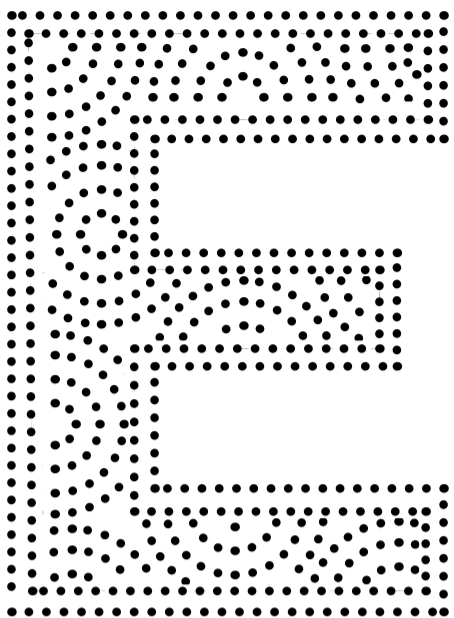
The
OUTBACK
of **BEYOND**

The Top End of Australia's Northern Territory offers adventure writ large, as well as an intimate glimpse into the ways of its original peoples.

BY **CLAIRE SCOBIE** PHOTOGRAPHS BY **PETER EVE**

**A River Runs
Through It**
A view over the
Katherine River as
it flows out of the
Nitmiluk gorge
system near
Cicada Lodge.





everything is on a grand scale in the Northern Territory. The skies, the vistas, the land—and most certainly the crocodiles. Known locally as “salties,” Australian saltwater crocs can weigh up to 1,000 kilos, live to be 70 years old, and stretch more than six meters in length. The world’s largest reptile has adapted so well to life in the Northern Territory that there’s almost as many of them living here as there are people. But try as I might, I can’t spot a single one as I speed across the Mary River floodplains in an airboat. I also can’t think for the shrill cries of countless whistling ducks as they come in for landing, turning the sky black with their beating wings.

I am at Bamurru Plains, one of a crop of low-impact eco-lodges in the Top End, as the tropical northern reaches of the Territory are called. To get here, I’ve flown from Sydney to Darwin, then hopped on a 25-minute charter flight to the luxury bush camp’s dirt airstrip. By the time I finally arrive, I have no sense of how far I’ve traveled or how remote this place is. I’m doubly disoriented by the fact that Bamurru Plains is as close to the African safari experience as you’ll find in Australia. Situated on a 300-square-kilometer working buffalo station at the edge of Kakadu National Park, the lodge features just nine stilted bungalows with walls of mesh fabric that give you a front-row seat to life on the eucalyptus-studded savanna. But instead of hippos, you see buffalo wallowing in the mud; rather than a hyena caterwauling at night, you hear the barks of a distant dingo.

The first few hours are surreal as I adjust to the sense of space. I wander into the large dining room-cum-lounge that spills onto a breezy deck in the main building and help myself to some tea at the open bar. Later that day, I sit on my bed and watch a lazy jabiru (black-necked stork) pick its way through the water like the old man of the marsh. Its spindly pink-orange legs and iridescent sheen reflect the dense afternoon light. A group of buffalo chew the cud nearby; one young male is so close I can hear the grass tear. In the evening, as a top-notch communal dinner is served—king prawns with tomato and salt bush, followed by steak and a decadent chocolate-and-orange soufflé—a herd of wild horses streaks across the savanna.

Over dinner the next night, my fellow guests—a mixed bag of American adventure-seekers and Australian sport fishermen—discuss their day’s activities: an exhilarating airboat tour, a bush-tucker walk, a four-wheel-drive safari to the mouth of the Sampan River. When I start telling Doug, an attorney from Ohio, how many birds I’d seen that afternoon, his eyes glaze over.

“I guess you’re not interested in birds?”

“Nah, only to shoot,” he says.

It turns out Doug spends his holidays hunting in the worlds’ most inaccessible regions. He tells me that his walls at home are lined with the heads of trophy animals. Mine, in contrast, is covered with a world map pinned with flags of wild-places-still-to-visit.

“But dang, no luck seeing a croc today,” Doug continues.

It’s good to know I’m not the only one. May, apparently, is the worst month for saltie-spotting. So I resolve to return to the Northern Territory at a different time of year—and this time with my family.

The opportunity comes when my sister, Jane, announces plans to visit from England in August with her husband and three sons, aged 10, 12, and 15. Knowing the low boredom threshold of teenage boys, my husband and I design a nine-day Top End itinerary that includes bush camping and a stay at an Aboriginal-run resort, all within a reasonable budget. I want to give Jane and her brood an unforgettable experience. I also promise crocodiles.

Tess Atie proves to be a perfect first host. The owner of Northern Territory Indigenous Tours, she spent her childhood camping in the bush in what is now Litchfield National Park, two hours by road southwest of Darwin and a popular weekend getaway for locals. If you’re “sick and tired of reef and rock, kangaroo and koala,” Tess says, then her intimate, immersive tours are just the thing.

As we climb into Tess’s well-equipped jeep, she lets us know how she wants the day to run, squeezing the cheeks of the youngest boy, Leo, who wiggles shyly away from her. “Now I haven’t got time for cold-shoulder people,” she says. “Even though I’m petrified inside, I want you mob to be as blunt as you like because you aren’t going to offend me.”

Over the next few hours we see “her country” in a completely different light as her stories bring us closer to the land and its original inhabitants. And it’s not all serious. She provides such entertainment that the boys draw up a long list of “Tess-isms” that they spout over and over. At one point, turning to the boys, she says with a straight face, “What you really need to watch for is them pigeons that sit in the Carpentaria palms.” They nod, expecting a gem of ancient wisdom. “Cos they eat red berries and shit black all over the car.”

Unlike Kakadu National Park, where all creeks and billabongs are off-limits for swimming because of the salties, Litchfield offers plenty of spots for a refreshing dip. (Rest assured that the much smaller freshwater crocodiles you may see are benign.) Splashing around in a rock pool at Buley Rockhole whets our appetite for a picnic lunch at Wangi Falls, perhaps the most scenic of the many waterfalls that tumble off the park’s dramatic sandstone escarpment. It’s also a sacred Aboriginal women’s site. When Jasper, the 15-year-old, asks what that means, Tess points to a fissure on the cliff wall shaped undeniably like a vagina. My nephew’s face turns beet red. Tess winks at me,

Leading Lady

Opposite: Jawoyn leader Jane Runyu on the banks of the Katherine River. Runyu is the chairwoman of Nitmiluk Tours, which owns and operates Cicada Lodge.







Cicade Country

Clockwise from left: Cicada Lodge's chef de cuisine, Dean Julian; grilled barramundi features regularly on Julian's menu; the entrance to Cicada Lodge. Opposite: A coffee-making session on the lodge's pool deck.



Getting There

Singapore's **Silk Air** (silkair.com) operates thrice-weekly flights to Darwin, while **Jetstar** (jetstar.com) flies there five times weekly from Bali.

When to Go

The Top End's dry season lasts from May through late September and offers the most comfortable weather, especially in June and July.

Where to Stay

Set in splendid isolation on the Mary River floodplains just to the west of Kakadu National Park, **Bamurrup Plains** (61-2/9571-6399; bamurruplains.com; from US\$428 per person, including meals) provides an unequalled "wild bush luxury" experience. More budget-friendly accommodation awaits at the Mercure-managed **Kakadu Crocodile Hotel** (61-8/8979-9000; gagudju-dreaming.com; doubles from US\$110) in Jabiru, as well as among the en-suite tents at **Litchfield Safari Camp** (62-8/8978-2185; litchfieldsafaricamp.com.au; doubles from US\$117). But for sophistication and a rich cultural experience, the Jawoyn-owned **Cicada Lodge** (61-8/8974-3100; cicadalodge.com.au; doubles from US\$542) could well be the state's top outback billet.

then goes back to preparing lunch, turning fillets of wild barramundi over hot coals.

Later, we visit the ruins of Blythe Homestead, where Tess says her Aunt Esther's family grew up, eking out a frugal living from the nearby tin mines. Outside are the rusting 44-gallon drums that once held food stores to get them through the tough times. Tess shows us how to forage for bush tucker, sucking on green ants, which explode lime-sour in the mouth. Interspersed between her quips and blooming laugh, the conversation ranges from indigenous philosophy to the harder issues affecting "her mob"—alcoholism, high rates of detention, lack of education, and poverty. "I want people to understand why Aboriginal people suffer. I want to give a different perspective that we're not just people who spend our time sitting on welfare. We are very wise people and have a deep understanding about country. In the Northern Territory we are trying to live in mainstream society, and struggle and scratch through a culture that's not ours. We do the very best we can."

Two swims and a walk across the top of Florence Falls later, Tess drives us back to the Litchfield Safari Camp, where we're staying in raised tents. But before we get there, she promises us a final treat that "will make our eyes water and tastes better than chocolate." The boys' eyes light up as they picture ice cream, but smiles turn to bafflement when Tess pulls off the road and leads us to a red termite mound, asking everyone to find a leaf with which to spoon a little dirt off the top. These rock-solid formations, standing between two and four meters tall, pepper the park, with one group, the Magnetic Termite Mounds, rearing up like giant headstones in a cemetery.

"Now don't be scared, just taste it. Don't crunch—enjoy the flavor and swallow." I can see Jaspar is really struggling. "Tess, I thought you said this tastes like chocolate!" he moans.

"You weren't listening, I said it's *better* than chocolate."

This final bush delight tastes of fire and scorched earth and is eaten for its high content of zinc and other minerals. The boys are ecstatic. Tess succeeds in sealing a little memory card in their hearts.

After two days at Litchfield, we drive 270 kilometers south to Katherine and the famous Katherine Gorge, or Nitmiluk ("Cicada Place"), as the local Jawoyn people know it. Accommodation in the surrounding Nitmiluk National Park ranges from chalets to the exclusive Cicada Lodge, our luxury high-note of the trip.

Situated above the Katherine River, the Jawoyn-run lodge seems to hover in the pristine landscape as if it, too, is a passing guest. Walkways connect 18 tin-roofed rooms to a central pool deck and dining area. Each room combines sophisticated finishings, from the fancy coffee machine to the monsoon shower, augmented by ocher-toned colors and handwoven

artifacts. They also come with private balconies that look out to a distant escarpment, a view shared only with the agile wallabies that congregate at dusk.

Canapés are served at sunset and as we sit down to dinner, a brilliant afterglow casts this ancient sandstone country into hues of burnt orange. We start with a generous tranche of kangaroo loin and astringent pomegranate sauce, followed by wild-caught barramundi and, for dessert, a Jane Austen-style rose-water milk pudding. If the wine list is rather minimal, the enthusiastic chef makes up for it, serving us with a flourish.

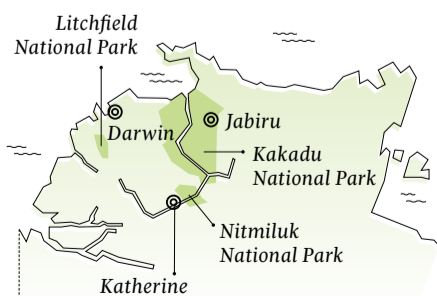
We're up early the next morning for a 7 a.m. breakfast cruise with Nitmiluk Tours, a Jawoyn-owned operation that co-founded Cicada Lodge. As the boat glides between the high sandstone cliffs, a guide explains how the Jawoyn believe that Bolung, the rainbow serpent, created the gorge in his image, snaking through the land. As he must not be disturbed, no one is allowed to fish in the deepest parts. Millions of years ago, the Katherine River carved 13 separate gorges through this escarpment, but only the first two can be reached on the cruise. To explore farther, we later rent canoes.

After browsing the displays at the Nitmiluk Visitor Centre, which describes the region's six different seasons, its history, and its flora and fauna, we walk slowly back to the lodge. It's pushing 36°C, sapping even the lively chatter of the boys, who declare the rest of the afternoon be spent poolside. I had thought I might try one of Cicada's basket-weaving classes, but the sun loungers look too inviting. Before I know it, a blissful few hours have slipped by, and it's sunset canapé time again.

Our last three nights are spent in Kakadu National Park. As we drive across the boundary, I recall something that Tess said. "If I'm going to Kakadu, I would have to ask permission to go through. I just can't go into someone else's place. It's a bit like me going into your house and helping myself to your fridge without asking. If I take a tour there, I always bring a magpie goose to a local traditional owner, out of respect."

A World Heritage Site, Kakadu was originally home to 10 Aboriginal clans who lived in its unique mosaic of ecosystems. After the park appeared in 1986's *Crocodile Dundee*, the tourism influx began. As it covers 20,000 square kilometers, an area half the size of Switzerland, we focus on two regions—the Yellow Water Billabong and the ancient rock-art site of Ubirr in the northeast.

In the wet season, up to a meter of water can cover the roads, and some areas, such as Jim Jim Falls, require four-wheel-drive year round. Home to 280 bird species and 60 different mammals, the park also harbors 11 types of turtles, 115 varieties of reptiles (including 36 species of snake), and an amazing diversity of insects and plants, many of them endemic.





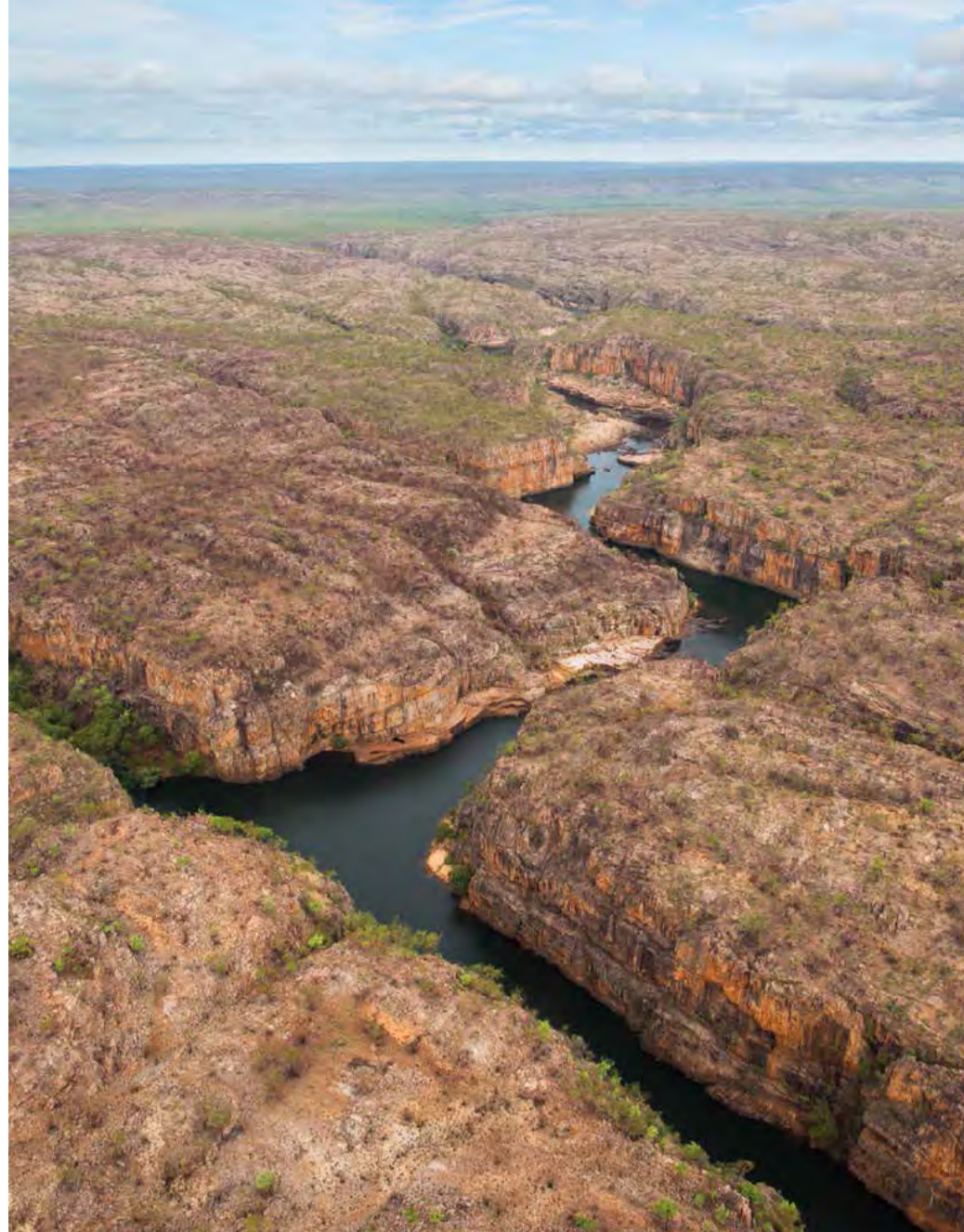
**No Uncertain
Termites**
A two-meter-high
mound built by
magnetic termites
in Litchfield
National Park.





Double Drop
The twin cascades
of Florence Falls
in Litchfield
National Park.





FROM THE MOMENT WE PUSH OFF, I COUNT A CROCODILE A MINUTE FOR THE FIRST 10 MINUTES. THESE AREN'T SLEEPY CROCS, EITHER; THEY SEEM ALMOST PREDATORY AS THEY ENCIRCLE THE BOAT. BUT TYRONE, OUR LEAD GUIDE, ISN'T FAZED

Comes With the Territory

Opposite, clockwise from top left: Rock art in Nitmiluk Gorge; a bird's-eye view of the Katherine River as it cuts through the ancient sandstone of the gorge; Tess Atie at Wangi Falls in Litchfield National Park; northern rosellas—a species of Australian parrot—can be spotted throughout the Top End.

Touring the Top End

Join Tess Atie for an unforgettable trip to Litchfield National Park with her **Northern Territory Indigenous Tours** (ntitours.com.au); day tours from Darwin start from US\$195 per adult. In Nitmiluk National Park, **Nitmiluk Tours** (nitmiluktours.com.au) offers a range of activities, from cruises on the Katherine River (U\$62 per adult for two hours) to short helicopter flights over the gorges (US\$78 per person). Another must-do is the **Guluyambi Cultural Cruise** (kakadutoursandtravel.com.au; from US\$60 per adult) up the East Alligator River into Arnhem Land.

“It’s like a giant supermarket here,” says Jaimee, a park ranger at Yellow Water. “You can eat anything if you know what’s on the shelves. And if you can’t eat it, it probably wants to eat you.”

After a day exploring Yellow Water’s football-field-size swaths of billowy pink water lilies, we drive east. At Nourlangie Rock we stop to admire 6,000-year-old petroglyphs before driving on to the indigenous-owned Kakadu Crocodile Hotel at Jabiru. The air becomes hot and brittle, and keeping the boys well hydrated and covered with sunscreen is an hourly task.

Jabiru is our base for visiting the sandstone outcrops of Ubirr in the East Alligator region. Its three natural art galleries, with some rock paintings dating back 20,000 years and the most recent done in the 1980s, are spectacular. The “X-ray”-style paintings that show animals’ internal organs in yellow and red ocher are almost postmodern in their veracity. Others, including one of a thylacine (Tasmanian tiger), which became extinct on the Australian mainland over 2,000 years ago, provide a historical record of how the land has changed. The images also depict a plenitude of food, from goannas to fish, waterfowl to wallabies—easy pickings that allowed the local clans more time for ceremony, art, and other cultural pursuits.

From the galleries it’s a short walk up a tiered path to the natural viewing platform over the vast Nadab floodplain. This is where the well-respected Gagudju elder and conservationist “Big” Bill Neidjie, who helped establish Kakadu as a national park in 1979, once lived. We catch the last minutes of a free talk by a ranger, who recites some of Big Bill’s words as if evoking his spirit. Neidjie was brought up “the traditional way, but learned white fella ways,” the ranger says. “He learned to surf between both worlds. He always wanted to share his country. By doing so, he said, ‘Now you’re part of the story, you’ll take it with you.’”

With the sinking sun slowly turning the sandstone from scarlet to plum, I look over to see one woman with tears streaming down her face. Afterward she tells me, “I’m Australian, but I’ve never felt such a connection to the land as I do here.”

My promise to my nephews that they’ll see a crocodile is more than delivered on our last boat trip together, when we join a cruise on East Alligator River. Our guides are a pair of young guys from the nearby Aboriginal community of Oenpelli. When not

speaking with us, they chat in their mother tongue, the rhythmic rolling sounds mirroring the sway of the tin boat on the gray-green water.

From the moment we push off, I count a crocodile a minute for the first 10 minutes. These aren’t sleepy crocs, either; they seem almost predatory as they encircle the boat. But Tyrone, our lead guide, isn’t fazed. He tells us that male salties can have up to 30 “girlfriends” and will dominate a 1.5-square-kilometer area, warding off any competing males that attempt to come near.

Getting so close to these beasts, with their pointed, protruding teeth and slow blinking eyes, is unnerving. Leo seeks the comfort of his uncle to sit next to, and my sister snuggles closer to me.

“Them salties are a bit cranky one,” says Tyrone, flashing a brilliant white smile, when he sees the English tourists huddling together. “Sometimes they jump higher than the boat.”

“Not today?” Jane asks nervously.

“No, today they do death roll,” he jokes.

The farther downstream we go, the farther modern life drifts away. We are traveling parallel to a vast, tiered wall of cliffs that marks the natural divide between Kakadu and the Arnhem Land region. The conglomerate rocks, remote and unreachable, seem to peer down like Cubist heads, and I swear we’re being watched. When I mention this to Tyrone, he gives a small smile. It’s well known in Aboriginal lore that spirits live among these ancient stones.

The boat pulls up on the Arnhem Land side of the river. Together, the guides rattle off the resources found in the bush, such as melaleuca trees, whose papyrus bark is used to build shelters, and hibiscus flowers, which can alleviate stomachaches. They show us how to sharpen flints and the barbed tips of ironwood they fix to their spears for big game.

On the trip back, the number of crocodiles wanes. But the edginess stays for the whole two hours, making it our most authentic outback experience yet. The Top End is wild, unpredictable country, and to see it with guides like Tyrone and Tess stripping away the gloss of “lovey-dovey tourism” (another Tess-ism) is what makes our visit unforgettable. As though to underscore that unspoken thought, Tyrone squats down on the deck and, with a flick of his wrist, launches a spear into the water as if it’s the most natural thing in the world. And in these remote parts, it is. ☉

Down to Earth

A recent tasting menu at Lima's Astrid y Gastón included a course of Andean potatoes baked in an adobe brick.



PERU ON A PLATE

BY **SANJAY SURANA**
PHOTOGRAPHS BY **CHRISTOPHER TESTANI**

The country's remarkable natural bounty and melting pot of culinary influences are on full display in Lima, where markets overflow with Peruvian produce and restaurants showcase some of Latin America's most exciting cooking.

A

Lima in the Limelight

Below, from left: Astrid y Gastón inhabits a 300-year-old mansion; the kitchen at Chez Wong; chef Virgilio Martínez in the garden at his acclaimed restaurant Central; Diversity of Corn, one of the 17 courses on Martínez's elevations-themed tasting menu.

As much as I consider myself an adventurous eater, grilled guinea pig has never aroused my culinary libido. And yet here I was at Lima's annual Mistura food fair standing before a straw bowl filled with cavy carcasses, their pale-pink flesh tufted with wisps of unplucked hair and arranged on a bed of celery sticks and purple corn. To the left, more guinea pigs—or *cuy*, as they're called in Spanish—lay flat and spread-eagled like cartoon roadkill over smoldering charcoal. The young Peruvian manning the grill lowered his surgical mask and assured me that they tasted like rabbit, with an earthier flavor, but even then I couldn't bring myself to sample the Andean staple.

The guinea-pig stand was one of hundreds at Mistura, a 10-day celebration of Peruvian food that ranks as the biggest culinary festival in Latin America. Stretching for more than a kilometer along the beachfront at Costa Verde, the fair divides itself into more than a dozen sections that showcase everything from the potent grape spirit pisco and the de facto national dish of ceviche to breads loaded with aniseed and potato, endemic foods from the Andes and the Amazon, hybrid dishes cooked by the progeny of immigrants, desserts like quinoa ice cream and pumpkin-flavored maize pudding, and, in a big beer tent, a handful of Peruvian brews.

Launched in 2008, Mistura is a raucous, joyous event that puts the spotlight on a cuisine that is finally receiving the global acclaim it deserves. Back in 1999 the prescient *New York Times* critic Eric Asimov declared Peruvian food "one of the great cuisines of the world," and these days pretty much every culinary prophet seems to agree, from Ferran Adrià and Alain Ducasse to the folks at the Culinary Institute of America, which named 2014 the year for Peruvian cuisine. No surprise, then, that the top two establishments in the latest edition of Latin America's 50 Best Restaurants are Peruvian: Central and Astrid y Gastón, both in Lima.

"Peru has a culinary heritage that dates back thousands of years and a cuisine that has been shaped by five centuries of fusion," Martin Morales, a British-Peruvian chef and author who's opened the Peruvian restaurants Ceviche and Andina in London, tells me. "Potatoes originated here, as did tomatoes, peanuts, and a large variety of chilies, maize, and cereals. Peru is also the home of many of the world's superfoods: quinoa, maca root, amaranth."

Two critical factors have shaped Peruvian cuisine. First, the country's vast range of microclimates enables it to grow almost anything, from the tubers and chili peppers harvested by Andean farmers millennia before Francisco Pizarro and his conquistadors arrived in the 1530s, to the wheat, rice, onions, limes, sugar, apples, and grapes that the Spanish brought with them alongside pigs, chickens, sheep, and cattle.



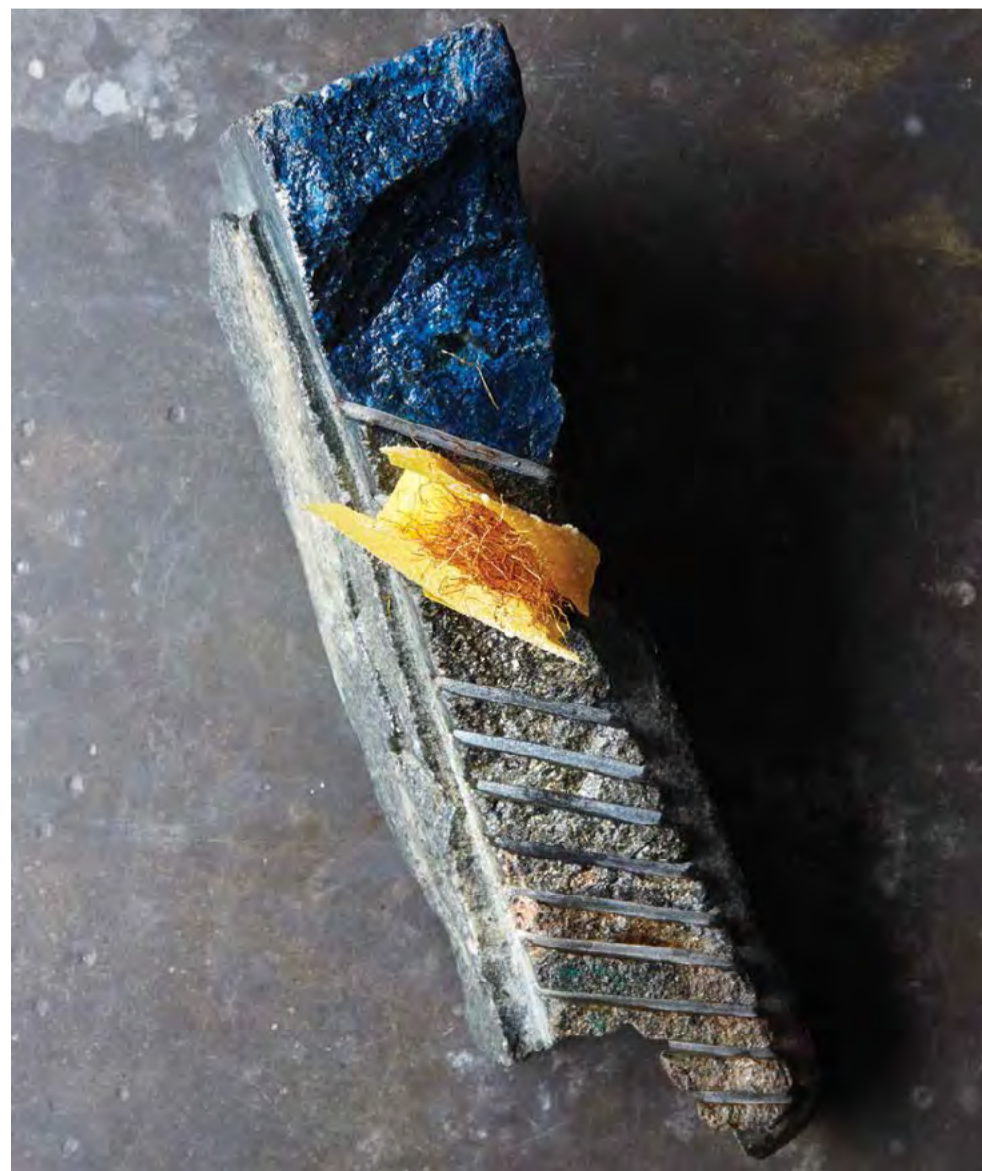
The theme of the tasting menu at Astrid y Gastón was Memories of My Land, a journey through Peruvian life that would run through 28 “elaborations,” as Acurio calls his courses


My visit to Lima’s Surquillo Market, a fount for many of the city’s top chefs, demonstrated the bounty that Pachamama (“mother earth” in Quechua) continues to provide centuries later: giant broccolis, verdant stalks of asparagus, plump artichokes, and wrecking ball-size *zapallo* squashes; brilliant white cauliflowers framed by fleshy leaves; tubes of cinnamon the length of a walking stick; *cherimoya* custard apples and *tumbo* passion fruits; nuts and olives and wonder grains like quinoa, *kañiwa*, and *kiwicha*; and all manner of seafood and meat.

The other force that shaped Peruvian cuisine is the country’s historic melting pot of cultures. The Spanish brought with them new foods but also Africans as soldiers and slaves. They were followed by Chinese and Italian immigrants, and finally, at the end of the 19th century, the Japanese, who came to toil in the sugar plantations and fish the waters. Each group has left its culinary imprint, aided by what chef Gastón Acurio, Peru’s culinary evangelist-cum-patron saint, calls “an open-minded society ready to


mix everything.” The offal eaten by slaves gave rise to dishes such as *chanfainita* (cow-lung stew); the Chinese fused their predominantly Cantonese fare into things like *lomo saltado* (a stir-fry of beef and potatoes); and the Italians are responsible for *tallarines verdes* (literally, green noodles), Peru’s version of spaghetti pesto. And then there’s Nikkei, as Peruvian-Japanese cuisine is called. Popularized overseas by Nobu Matsuhisa—who honed his skills in Lima before garnering fame in America—it’s all the rage at places like Maido, one of Lima’s most sought-after tables, where chef Mitsuharu Tsumura turns out such specialties as miso-marinated butterfish and the ceviche-meets-sashimi dish called *tiradito*.

Yet the most exciting aspect of Peruvian cooking is the contemporary stuff, which first surfaced in the 1980s under the name *Novoandina*. The movement, started by journalist and food critic Bernardo Roca Rey, sought to prepare classic Andean ingredients—llama meat, ancient grains and root vegetables like *oca*—using modern techniques, and had the potential







Tomate silvestre
Solanum lycopersicum
Mala, Lima
800 msnm



Sacha Inchi
Pithecellobium volubile L.
Lamas, San Martín
900 msnm



Oca
Oxalis tuberosa
Huamanga, Ayacucho
2,760 msnm



Ungurahui
Genocarpus batavi Martins
Alto Mayo, San Martín
860 msnm



Land of Plenty

Above, from left: Scallops at Surquillo Market, which showcases the country's dizzying array of produce, seafood, and meats; a butcher at the same market. Opposite: Peruvian ingredients on display at Central.

to be revolutionary. Except it wasn't, stymied by, of all things, another attempted revolution: the brutal guerilla insurgency of the Shining Path, which began in 1980 and continued until its leader, Abimael Guzmán, was captured in 1992. It wasn't until the end of this uprising that Peru's economy began to recover, tourists returned, money reappeared, and the dining scene gradually evolved. Novoandina cooking was resuscitated and restyled as Nuevo Andino, informed by a cadre of chefs who had studied and cooked abroad—Gastón Acurio, Virgilio Martínez, Rafael Osterling, and Pedro Miguel Schiaffino.

The 2.0 version of the movement prescribes dishes like doses of edible art, primed for an audience riding the wave of a robust economy. To judge by the waiting lists for the multi-course meals served at Martínez's Central and Acurio's Astrid y Gastón, the formula seems to be working. Thanks to a couple of last-minute cancellations, I managed to bag reservations at both, one for lunch, the other for dinner. But first, I needed to exercise my palate: tackling a marathon requires warm-up runs.

Hidden behind a high concrete wall in Lima's bohemian Barranco neighborhood, Amoramar is a discreet, open-air restaurant with tables arranged on a shaded wooden deck. As its name playfully suggests,

seafood is a specialty here, and my lunch began with a fine sole ceviche accompanied by *salsa criolla*—the ubiquitous condiment made from red onions and peppers in lime juice—and a trio of octopus tentacles grilled to a smoky char and enlivened with strawberry reduction. Then came a fall-off-the-bone duck leg and a butcher steak prepared *pachamanca*-style (cooked in the ground) with Andean potatoes and rocoto peppers.

In need of a stroll afterward, I stepped out in the Miraflores neighborhood, where my hotel was located. Lima, with a population of 8.5 million, isn't a classically pretty Latin American city—it lacks the dilapidated splendor of Antigua Guatemala's church ruins, or the ubiquitous postcard-ready colonial courtyards and narrow streets of Cartagena—and parts of it are a hodge-podge of architectural genres that include Baroque, Art Nouveau, Soviet-era Brutalist, cowboy-builder hatchet job, and increasingly generic modern glass buildings. But some areas are truly memorable, like the grand central square Plaza Mayor. Another is the Miraflores boardwalk, which traces the cliffs above the Pacific and takes in handsome little parks.

That evening at La Picantería, a rowdy joint designed like a classic *picantería* (small, family-run restaurants that serve local specialties) from the



Getting There

From Hong Kong, the most efficient connection to Lima is **Cathay Pacific's** (cathaypacific.com) codeshare flight with **LAN Perú** (lan.com) via LAX. For Singapore-based travelers, try **KLM** (klm.com), which will get you there in 30 hours including a 4.5-hour layover in Amsterdam.

Where to Stay

A marble pile in Lima's poshest neighborhood, **Belmond Miraflores Park** (Ave. Malecón de la Reserva, Miraflores; 51-1/610-4000; belmond.com; doubles from US\$320) is newly renovated and comes with sensational Pacific views from its rooftop pool. For something more intimate, consider the 17-room **Hotel B** (Sáenz Peña 204, Barranco; 51-1/206-0800; hotelb.pe; doubles from US\$450).

Where to Eat

Amoramar

García y García 175, Barranco; 51-1/619-9595; amoramar.com.

Astrid y Gastón

Casa Moreyra, Ave. Paz Soldán 290, San Isidro; 51-1/442-2775; astridygaston.com.

Central

Calle Santa Isabel 376, Miraflores; 51-1/242-8515; centralrestaurant.com.pe.

Chez Wong

Calle Enrique León García 114, La Victoria; 51-1/470-6217.

La Picantería

Ave. Francisco Moreno 388, Surquillo; 51-1/241-6676; picanteriasdelperu.com.

country's north and south, plates of shockingly fresh ceviche and sandwiches of crispy, immaculately fried silverside fish pepped up by herbs and lemon appeared and disappeared. I looked around at the simple interiors, the beachy thatched ceiling, the communal tables, the candidly unsophisticated chalkboard menus, and recognized that the food, as one would hope in a restaurant, was allowed to be the star of the show.

Suitably acclimatized, I was ready for the 28-course lunch at Astrid y Gastón. First opened in 1992, Acurio's flagship restaurant relocated last year to a meticulously restored 17th-century hacienda—Casa Moreyra—in the tony San Isidro district. Fronted by a garden of herbs and vegetables, the building's elegant interiors are speckled with contemporary art, including a canvas of a naked woman tight-rope along railway tracks and a colorful mural that reads *Somos Libre, Seámoslo Siempre*, the opening lines of the Peruvian national anthem. Before being shown to my seat, the host, Carlos, took me to the kitchen. It was as quiet as a library, the chef and his crew calm and smiling.

The theme of the tasting menu, which changes every six months along with restaurant's decor and crockery, was Memories of My Land, a journey through Peruvian life that would run through 28 "elaborations," as Acurio calls his courses. School-year memories were evoked by a tin filled with snacks of chocolate-covered *lucuma* (an Amazonian fruit) ice cream, crispy squares of sweet potato, meringues that tasted of anchovies and olives, and peanut bars redolent of garlic, chili, and coriander. A drink of the *nispero* fruit, or loquat, cheekily placed inside a large ice cube—hurry, hurry, drink it before the ice melts—signified coming home from school. Another elaboration featured suckling pig with bitter hints of mustard, accompanied by flower petals and pomegranate, while "grandma's *torrejita*" of asparagus, caviar, chives, and wasabi was remarkable in its subtlety of flavors. Courses and memories kept coming—ice cones with syrups of fruit; a medley of salted carrots, quinoa leaf, gorgonzola, radish, and candied pecans; a ceviche of apple, rocoto pepper, sea urchin, and *airampo* flower; and a homey comfort dish of mashed potato with fried eggs and chicken sauce. Two courses in particular stood out: an impossibly tender carpaccio of avocado with sour cream, crispy onion, a touch of chili, sesame seeds, and tiny pearls of intense coriander; and a dessert involving granules of chilled chocolate-coated sugar that exploded in my mouth like Pop Rocks, adding a dash of childish jocular to the proceedings. After three hours and forty-five minutes, I closed the meal—which cost a mere US\$135 without the wine pairing—with the house version of *emoliente*, an herbal digestive drink popular in Lima's winter. Before I left, Carlos handed me a small bound book that recounted everything I'd eaten and doubled as a memento. It was

touching, and not something I'd ever received at a restaurant—a token that made the entire experience all the more pleasurable.

My dinner at Central the next day was equally gratifying. The restaurant's 17-course tasting menu was themed "elevations" and seemed designed to remind diners of Peru's astonishingly diverse topography and the produce it yields, from a clam collected six meters underwater to potatoes grown at 4,000 meters in the Andes. The dishes were elemental and painstakingly composed, sometimes served on a piece of rock or nestled on a bed of flowers and plants plucked from the rooftop garden. The Dry Andes course—*oca* tuber covered in an edible clay that looked like fine, damp ash—comprised a couple of gray nuggets on a slate that sat on a round dish of tubers, to represent the landscape. Its texture and temperature surprised me—as cold, smooth, and intermittently crispy as the Indian ice cream *kulfi*, with a not dissimilar taste. Other revelations followed. A tiny, dense cube of cooked corn melted in my mouth like fudge; duck with coffee was aromatic and smoky; bread flecked with cocoa nibs was bitter but helped to reset the palate; octopus and sweet purple corn were tempered by tart *airampo*; sticky, intense mountain beef was paired with brussels-sprout flowers; olives from southern Peru accompanied charred lentils and grilled beans.

Intermittently, waiters brought by small display cases to elucidate on the more unfamiliar raw ingredients, like red *achiote* seeds and *ungurahui*. And sometimes Martínez himself appeared to introduce the next course, sliding from table to table in his blue apron and suede shoes and colorful socks. A young man with deep-set eyes that give him the brooding good looks of a misunderstood matinee idol, he would discuss and dissect a given dish in his soothing voice, occasionally crack a joke, rearrange anything on the plate that might have moved out of place with the tweezers he kept in his top pocket, then return to the kitchen to work alongside his fresh-faced, unfailingly upbeat cooking partner and wife Pia Leon.

Martínez's unbridled love affair with his country's food was astounding. But the greater revelation was that at the best restaurant in Latin America, there was no strong-arm door policy, and the chef was actually cooking, greeting, charming, with no drama or pretense. In fact, all the Peruvian chefs I met on my trip shared this lack of ego, a trait most purely distilled by Javier Wong, Peru's ceviche guru, whom I met a few days earlier at his no-frills *cebichería* Chez Wong. "People say I make the best ceviche in Peru, but that is not important to me," the 67-year-old told me, wearing his trademark tinted glasses and white flat cap. "Every Peruvian must have ceviche to live and each Peruvian has his favorite, for his own reasons. That is what's important." In a world obsessed with celebrity and fame, how refreshing it is to find chefs that believe that the food is more meaningful than the preparer. ●



Peruvian Provender
Central's Octopus in the Desert features grilled octopus with an emulsion of *airampo* (prickly purple pear).



Taking Stock

Under the elevated podium of the Rem Koolhaas-designed Shenzhen Stock Exchange Building. Opposite: A mural in the OCT-Loft arts district.

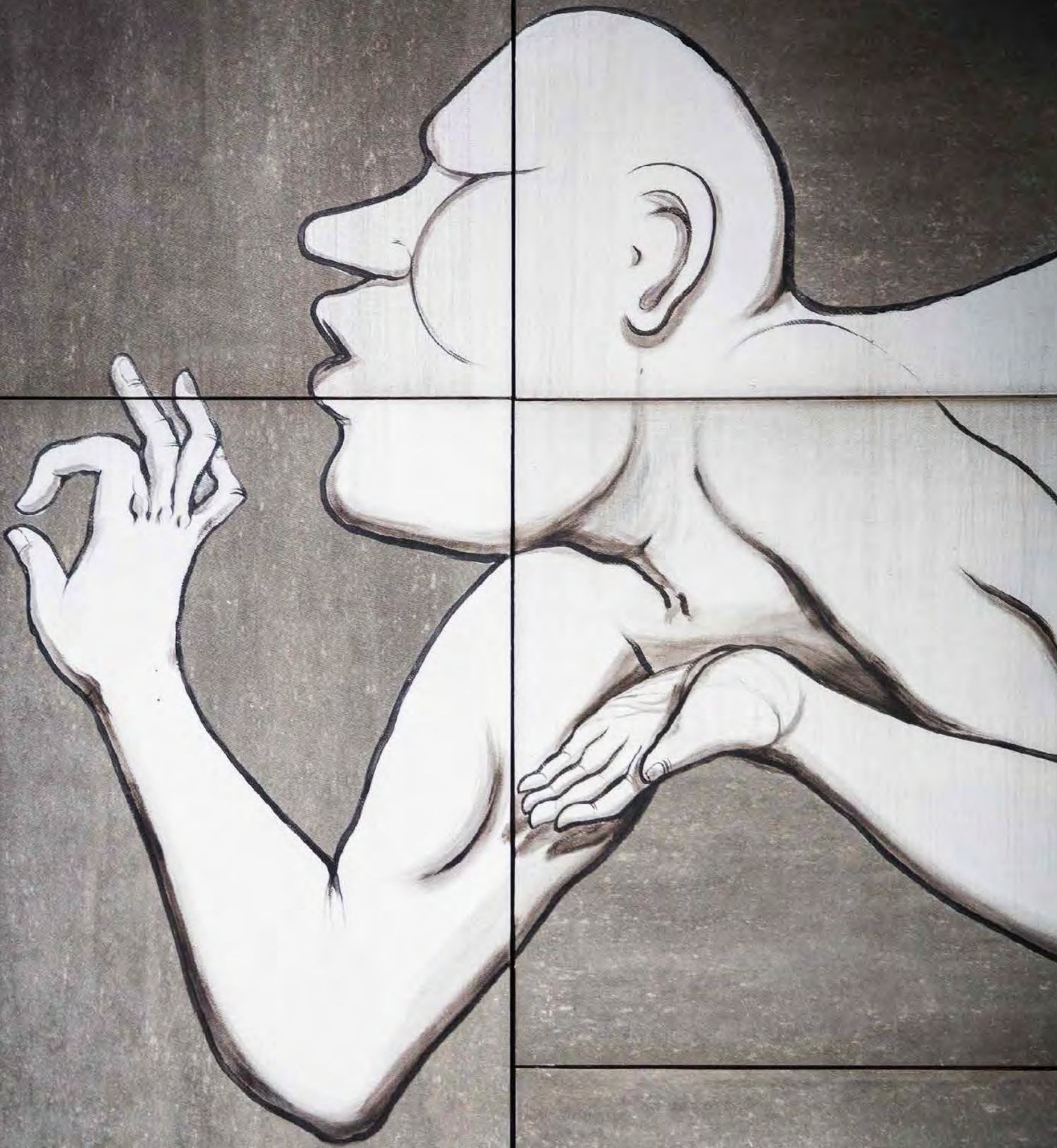


Shenzhen

Steps Up

It took less than four decades for this onetime fishing village on the **Pearl River Delta** to transform itself into southern China's manufacturing hub. Now one of the largest cities in the country, can Shenzhen achieve the same success as a center of design?

BY OLIVIA ROSEMAN PHOTOGRAPHS BY CALLAGHAN WALSH



“A vast expanse of luxuriant urban forest”

has a strange ring to it—I’m not sure whether I should be enthralled or appalled at the notion. It’s the opening line of a promotional video produced by the Shenzhen city government almost eight years ago, around the same time the southern Chinese metropolis was designated a UNESCO City of Design. Considering some of the other burgs on the organization’s list—Berlin, Montreal, Saint-Étienne, Seoul—Shenzhen seems an unexpected choice for UNESCO’s Creative Cities Network. But is it any less deserving?

According to the promo video, no! Packed full of state-sponsored hyperbole, it renders the city a breathtaking utopia, “full of vitality and vigor.” That’s a far cry from how most people might regard what is China’s southern manufacturing hub and one of the busiest ports in the world—“full of factories” is probably closer to the mark. But there’s no doubting the local government’s ambition to transform Shenzhen from the city at the end of the Chinese production line to the country’s design capital.

If that sounds like a pipe dream, consider that this is a place that has metamorphosed from fishing village to megacity in less than 35 years. The metropolitan government has to navigate the convoluted bureaucracy of the Chinese Communist Party yet is afforded a degree of freedom. That’s thanks, in part, to Shenzhen’s status as a Special Economic Zone (the city was named China’s first SEZ in 1979). But it also touches on the old Chinese saying “heaven is high and the emperor is far away.” And while Shenzhen struggles to match the verve and aestheticism of Helsinki or Seoul, there’s something abuzz in the city that designers will tell you is starting to make it stand out.

“Twenty years ago, the first time I visited, I thought Shenzhen was the absolute worst city I’d ever been to,” says Tom Verebes, the creative director of Hong Kong-based design consultancy Ocean CN. “But it’s changed immeasurably and is turning into a really interesting place.” Verebes, who is also an associate professor of architecture at the University of Hong Kong, works regularly on projects in main-

land China. That includes Shenzhen, where his firm helped develop a 79-square-kilometer swath of land around the city’s latest showpiece, its US\$1.4 billion airport terminal. “In contrast to Hong Kong, they [the Shenzhen government] seem to have a focus on putting Shenzhen on the map as a creative hub. I think they are quite forward-looking,” he says.

Home to more than 15 million people, Shenzhen is one of the fastest growing cities in the world, its population swollen over the past few decades by migrant Chinese workers. But more recently, the city has welcomed a new kind of immigrant. “All sorts of artists and more creative disciplines and practices are moving to Shenzhen because it’s really emerged as the center of those industries in southern China,” Verebes says. “That includes a lot of Hong Kong designers, advertising firms, and architects who now have offices in Shenzhen as well.”

Urbanus, one of China’s leading architecture firms, chose Shenzhen for its headquarters back in 1999. Says Tat Lam, head of the company’s in-house research studio, “The atmosphere in Shenzhen—especially the political system—is quite different from Shanghai and Beijing, more open. Here, the government’s Planning Bureau takes a very proactive role in urban design. They are all very professional people who have trained as engineers, and a lot of them have PhDs.”

The fruits of their efforts are perhaps best showcased by the OCT-Loft arts district. Just 10 years ago, drab factories with smoking chimneys dominated the 15-hectare industrial site in eastern Shenzhen. Now, thanks to a government initiative, it has been converted into a precinct dedicated to leisure and creativity. One Saturday morning, the first sunshine of spring adds to the warmth and energy buzzing throughout OCT-Loft’s galleries, studios, restaurants, and cafés, where it’s the sound of grinding coffee, not grinding machinery, that fills the air. In a French bakery, delighted day-trippers snap pastry pictures on their phones, no doubt posting them straight to Weibo, China’s Twitter-like microblogging platform. A pop-up market provides a showcase for young designers, bursting with enthusiasm, to promote their work. Purple-haired cosplayers perch on benches in their unrelenting pursuit of the perfect pose.

As night falls and the families head home, Shenzhen’s bright young things emerge to eat, drink, and listen to live music. At Hutaoli they do all three at once. You might have to wait for a table, an inconvenience you’ll soon forget once you’re drinking cocktails from glass jars, listening to live music, and eating spicy Sichuan food (try the *suan la fen*—beanstarch noodles dressed in a hot, sour, mouth-numbing sauce).

Urbanus played a huge role in the success of OCT-Loft, setting the development strategy and laying the plans for the first phase of construction. Deciding to keep rather than demolish the 10 existing buildings—

State of the Arts

Opposite, clockwise from top left: Outside an exhibition space in OCT-Loft; one of the complex’s many galleries; barista Samuel Chang outside OCT-Loft’s popular Gee Coffee Roasters café; nearby Hutaoli doubles as a “music bar” and restaurant.



但我们
后来因为
“同意
各自发展
1995年
我认为也







Getting There

Shenzhen Bao'an International Airport is serviced by a handful of Southeast Asian carriers, including **Silk Air** and **Air Asia** (with direct flights from both Bangkok and Kuala Lumpur). From Hong Kong, Shenzhen is easily accessed by road or train. The Hong Kong MRT's East Rail Line travels to the Hong Kong/Chinese border in just under an hour; after disembarking at Lo Wu for border formalities, travelers can hop straight on the Shenzhen metro service.

Where to Stay

Five-star lodgings are easy to come by in Shenzhen these days, including two JW Marriotts (one in downtown Futian, another in the Bao'an district), a Ritz-Carlton, a Four Seasons, and a St. Regis. And for something with sea views, there's **Hotel Kapok Shenzhen Bay** (86-755/8188-6666; kapokhotelshenzhen.com; doubles from US\$190), a design-driven property in the city's southwest Nanshan district.

Let a Hundred Flowers Bloom

Opposite: Florists outside their shop in the OCT-Loft complex, which has blossomed as a creative hub.

old factories, warehouses, and dormitories—the firm instead planned for organic, organized chaos. Lam and his colleagues were sure (and they were right) that small-scale retail and food outlets and independent studios would spring up to “fill the gaps,” as they put it, “setting up new relationships between buildings by wrapping and penetrating the existing fabric.” In the case of the OCT Art & Design Gallery, the wrapping was literal: Urbanus encased the original structure in a glass curtain wall comprised of hundreds of hexagonal frames, leaving the scarred warehouse facade underneath untouched. Acute angles jut out from the wall and into the gallery space, making you feel like you're stuck inside a building that was sketched out using only a geometry set. During an exhibition by the Tokyo TDC Design Awards early last year, the winning film, *Now is Better* by New York-based design firm Sagmeister & Walsh, played on continuous loop. An eerie, a cappella soundtrack only increased the surreal experience inside.

Cohosted by Shenzhen and Hong Kong, the Bi-city Biennale of Urbanism\Architecture is the only biennial exhibition in the world dedicated exclusively to the themes of urbanism and urbanization. While previously held at OCT-Loft, the biennale's Shenzhen component graduated to a bigger and better venue for its three-month-long 2013/2014 edition: a derelict glass-manufacturing plant in the Shekou port area that was transformed into a 122,000-square-meter exhibition space dubbed the Value Factory. Walking amid the building's network of canals and troughs, where molten glass was once set in molten-tin baths, I was not always sure what was art and what had once been factory life.

“What Ole [Bouman, the Dutch curator] did with the Value Factory was phenomenal,” says Marisa Yiu, a Hong Kong-based architect who set up the biennale's rendition of Studio-X, a network of urban research labs established by Columbia University's school of architecture. She also says that the Shenzhen side of the event was “amazing in terms of planning ahead,” at least compared with her rushed experience on the Hong Kong side during the biennale's 2009 edition. “It's more state run in Shenzhen and they have developers on board who commit pretty early on. But in Hong Kong, we submitted a proposal in May 2009, were appointed in June, and had to open in December. We actually published a book called *Instant Culture* as a response.”

But “instant culture” is a criticism some designers level at Shenzhen, too. “Planners here only look for the big names,” says Lam, who is critical of decisions such as bringing in Rem Koolhaas and his Dutch firm OMA to design the new Shenzhen Stock Exchange building. From the right vantage point, the headquarters of China's third-largest stock exchange looks like it's hovering on a flying carpet—the imposing gray monolith rises from a three-story plat-

form cantilevered almost 40 meters above ground; OMA, the firm behind Beijing's famously inverted CCTV skyscraper, describes it “as if lifted by the same speculative euphoria that drives the market.” But Lam is unimpressed. “Rem Koolhaas comes to Shenzhen and they give him an office tower. Why not get him to help with generic housing developments? I think that would have made a big contribution.”

The city has also been given a lift by the Massimiliano Fuksas-designed Terminal 3 at Shenzhen Bao'an International Airport. Completed in 2013, it is the largest single public building to be built to date in Shenzhen and the first commission in mainland China for the Italian architect, who clearly jumped in at the deep end with a project of such behemoth scale. The structure's shape is meant to evoke that of a manta ray, but step inside and you'll feel more like you've entered a spacecraft. The whiteness is almost blinding. A huge honeycomb of metal mesh undulates over the immense, open space. Everything shines. Slim, smooth, white columns extend 25 meters up from the floor. Each one is almost 40 meters apart from the next, increasing the sense of vastness while also instilling mild terror. Are there really enough columns to support so much ceiling?

Every architect knows the importance of first impressions, and Fuksas's design was aimed squarely at wowing the traveler as soon as he steps inside. From the entrance doors, you should be able to see to the building's far end, 1,500 meters away. But the view is obstructed. Placed in prime position, front and center not 20 strides from the door, a huge fake pine decorated with plastic yellow flowers protrudes like a nightmarish Christmas tree with melting fairy lights. For Fuksas, it's an abomination, like dousing a chef's gourmet masterpiece with ketchup. But despite his best attempts to get the thing removed, the tree stays put.

The fake pine might have looked less out of place at Shenzhen's first Maker Faire, where kooky is king. In April last year, a gathering of geeks put Shenzhen on the “Maker Movement” map, joining the ranks of San Francisco, Oslo, Rome, and Tokyo as hosts of what the organizers call “the greatest show (and tell) on earth.” The community of self-described “ingenious makers and innovative technologists” descended on the city in their thousands, showcasing the latest and weirdest robots, drones, and unexpected art-cum-science projects.

Scott Edmunds, a Hong Kong-based biologist, was at the Maker Faire to pursue his interest in open science. What is that, exactly? “Open hardware attempts to make much cheaper scientific lab equipment, gamifying research into soil-based antibiotics, stuff like that,” he tells me. But Edmunds says his favorite exhibitor was a team from Japan showing off their brainwave-controlled cat ears. “They were hilarious.”



Industrial History

Above, from left: Old silos at the Value Factory, a derelict glass factory turned exhibition space; one of OCT-Loft's resident clothing designers.

Considering Shenzhen's reputation for electronics manufacturing, the arrival of Maker Faire has been a long time coming. No doubt many attendees made a side trip to Huaqiangbei Commercial Street. The cluster of electronics malls near the city center has been made famous by a widely spread rumor that says you can get everything you need to make a U.S. army tank there, except for two pieces. The market has become a destination for Silicon Valley's up-and-coming, who flock there to source materials for their prototypes. Type "Huaqiangbei electronics" into Google and you'll find a host of pages about how to navigate the market, an indispensable resource for the hopelessly non-Chinese speaking Silicon Valley computer geek.

Shenzhen is also well endowed with knock-off attractions aimed squarely at domestic tourists—Switzerland's Matterhorn Mountain, for example, or the Lincoln Memorial; Sydney's Harbour Bridge or the Palace of Westminster; the Eiffel Tower or the Taj Mahal. More than 100 of the world's most famous attractions (in miniature) are conveniently packed into the Window of the World, a theme park that is about the size of the Vatican but infinitely more surreal.

For the time-pressed traveler who wants to focus on China's must-see sites, just one subway stop away is Splendid China, where you can walk a Lilliputian version of the Great Wall, visit a pint-size Temple of Heaven, and ogle the Three Gorges Dam in an afternoon. Or visit Minsk World, a decommissioned Soviet aircraft carrier turned military theme park that comes complete with a roller disco. Top off the day with dinner at the bathroom-themed Modern Toilet restaurant in Luohu, and you'll wake up the next morning wondering if it was all a dream.

Yet amid all the kitsch there's been an undeniable upsurge in sophistication, especially on the hotel front, where tired, '90s-built accommodation has given way to a gamut of international luxury brands including Ritz-Carlton, JW Marriott, and Four Seasons, all in the new financial district of Futian. But will the city that drove China's economic rise at the end of the 20th century drive its own ascent to becoming a creative nexus?

"I don't think it's the New York of the East, let's put it that way," says Verebes. "But Shenzhen is a post-industrial city that's very much planting creative and cultural roots—and finding a new urban identity." ◎

Now you have landed, make sure you arrive first class

Anytime, anywhere, travel safe with Golden Bird. Our reliable driver will make your every journey convenient. For all your transportation needs, we offer you a flexible rental period, whether it is short-term or long-term, hourly or daily.



Enjoy your ride, and arrive in style and sit back relax with our range of standard to luxurious cars. Your destination awaits you.

Book now via 24-hour call center or Get 15% discount via online order through website <https://reservation.bluebirdgroup.com>

www.bluebirdgroup.com



GOLDEN BIRD
LIMOUSINE & CAR RENTAL

24-hour Call Center Jakarta
(021) 794 4444



Blue Bird Group



Bluebirdgroup

BALI, INDONESIA



Experience Your Bali!

Enjoy the harmonious balance between modern comforts, Balinese architecture and traditional hospitality in Kuta, Tuban, Legian, Seminyak and Candidasa.

RAMA
HOTELS & RESORTS
BALI

Jl. Bakung Sari Kuta Bali 80361, Indonesia P. +62 361 751864 E. info@ramahotelsbali.com W. www.ramahotelsbali.com [f ramahotelsbali](https://www.facebook.com/ramahotelsbali)



BALI, INDONESIA

exotic & idyllic retreat

...where life is a private celebration



the gangsa

private villa
by KAYUMANIS

www.thegangsa.com

Sanur | Ubud | Nusa Dua | Jimbaran

P. 62 361 705 777 F. 62 361 705 101
E. experience@kayumanis.com

KAYUMANIS



www.kayumanis.com

BALI, INDONESIA



The Kayon Resort

is perched on Ubud hills side, surrounded with holy Petanu River and lush tropical rainforest gives a relaxing vibe. Kayon means tree of life creations and secret that grows from earth towards heaven.

Located only ten minutes drive from Ubud center, this enchanting five star boutique resort is designed in complete harmony with nature. Decorated with Ramayana story relief on stone wall creates a romantic ambience.

At the Kayon resort, where the Ubud life Secret discovered and romantic love story created, with the genuine Balinese hospitality.

Banjar Kepitu, Desa Kendran, Tegallalang Ubud - Bali

Phone: +62 361 4792553 | Fax: +62 361 4792552

info@thekayonresort.com

www.thekayonresort.com

Managed by Pramana

BALI, INDONESIA



A PERFECT ESCAPE

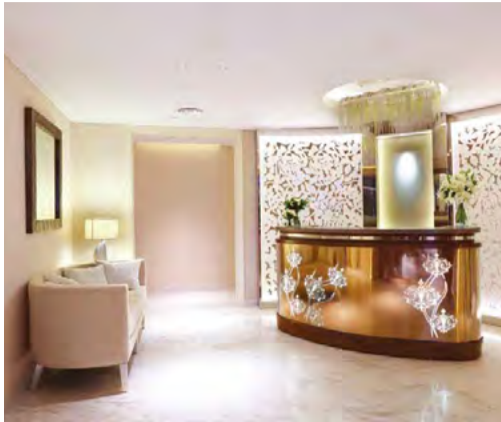
An ideal choice for those looking for luxurious facilities, peace and tranquility in beautiful surroundings with personalized service and excellent food

MAYARESORTS.COM



connections

UPDATES AND OFFERS FROM DESTINASIAN PARTNERS



YANGON'S NEW BEST

Freshly opened in April, Best Western Chinatown Hotel is located on bustling Anawrahta Road in downtown Yangon and combines the area's distinctive cultural charms with Best Western's comfort, connectivity, and service. The hotel offers 91 deluxe rooms, all with free Wi-Fi, in addition to an all-day restaurant, bar, fitness center, business center, and three function rooms catering to both large and small events. What's more, the hotel is in easy reach of Bogyoke Market and the area's myriad shophouse restaurants.

For more information, call 95-1/251-080 or visit bestwestern.com



BEACH BEAUTY

The Nusa Dua resort enclave may be full of plush spas, but on the grounds of Sofitel Bali Nusa Dua Beach Resort, Vietura Artisan of Anti Aging offers a different approach to beauty and wellness. An aesthetic and lifestyle clinic with 12 contemporary and relaxing treatment rooms, Vietura focuses on non-surgical holistic treatments to counter the effects of time. The staff of medical experts works with clients of all ages to find the right procedure for their desired results, be it a detox with colonic hydrotherapy, facial sculpting with the non-invasive Power Cell Lift, or a personal consultation with the resident life coach to devise a new health-and-wellness regime to take home.

For more information, call 62-361/849-2888 or visit vieturabali.com

SUITE SAVINGS

Singapore is ringing in its 50th anniversary of independence this year, and to add to the festivity, Parkroyal Serviced Suites has put together a special SG50 promotion. Through the end of the year, best available rates are discounted by half, seeing spacious One Bedroom Premium Suites starting at US\$210 a night and Two



Bedroom Deluxe Suites—ideal for families—starting at US\$240. Guests can hop next door to the Parkroyal on Beach Road to take a dip in the sprawling swimming pool or relax in its St. Gregory Spa. The trendy shopping strip of Haji Lane, meanwhile, is just a few blocks away.

For more information, call 65/6296-2511 or visit parkroyalhotels.com



FRESH IN PHANG NGA

Thailand's Phang Nga province on the Andaman coast has plenty of draws—gorgeous white beaches, renowned dive sites, a namesake national park—and its latest is the Pullman Khao Lak Katiliya Resort and Villas. The property's 223 guest rooms and 97 villas boast a casual yet elegant mix of contemporary and Thai design, made even more appealing by special opening rates starting from US\$100. Add to this the resort's six on-site restaurants and 600-meter stretch of private beach, and you've got a retreat you'll never want to leave.

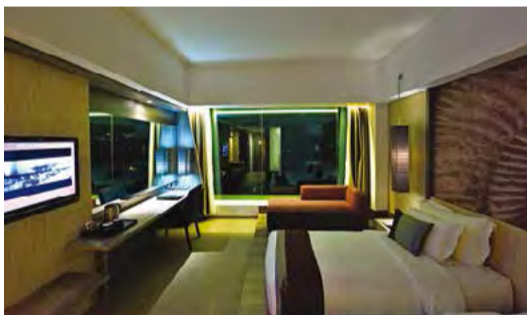
For more information, call 66-76/427-500 or visit pullmankhaolak.com

THE HILL VILLAS



For couples and families seeking a hideaway that's romantic and exotic, there's no better place than The Hill Villas. Perched on the secluded peak of Mumbul Hill in Nusa Dua, the one- to three-bedroom villas are designed with traditional architecture and authentic artifacts, giving each a unique character and ambiance. Embodying Balinese luxury, each of the 10 villas also comes with its own pool, garden, and breathtaking views of the surrounding Jimbaran and Pecatu hillsides extending out to Tanjung Bena Bay. There's a spa, an assortment of cooking classes, and access to a private beach nearby, as well as a private chauffeur for guests who wish to explore any of Bali's beaches, restaurants, and attractions further afield.

Jl. Taman Giri, Banjar Mumbul, Nusa Dua, Bali;
62-361/847-8888; thehillvillas.com

ASTON PRIMERA
PASTEUR

For guests seeking an extra dose of comfort during their stay in Indonesia's third largest city, the Aston Primera Pasteur in Bandung now boasts a new Executive Floor. Completed in January in the 278-room hotel's north tower, the floor exclusively houses the hotel's top three room categories—the Executive Room, Family Room, and Royal Primera Suite—in addition to having its own lobby, international all-day dining restaurant, and well-equipped meeting room, all to give extra privacy to its guests. The hotel's indoor swimming pool is conveniently located on the floor right above.

Jl. Doktor Djunjunan No. 96, Bandung, Indonesia;
62-22/206-0123; astoninternational.com

METIS RESTAURANT,
LOUNGE & GALLERY

The newly opened lounge at Métis gives Bali visitors yet another reason to head to one of the island's most sophisticated settings. Overlooking a beautiful lily-pond garden and designed with a high-tech retractable roof, the space serves cocktails and Mediterranean-influenced tapas, making it a great starting point for a night out in Seminyak. Or, come earlier for one of its two High Tea Packages and sip carefully selected teas paired with exquisite bites.

The well-established kitchen is always bringing new cuisine to the fine-dining restaurant, most recently with the Meat and Poultry menu, an expertly crafted list of seven gourmet entrees and classic sides. Keep an eye on adjoining Métis Gallery as well, as it regularly unveils new collections of antiques, artwork, and home goods from around Southeast Asia.

Jl. Petitenget No. 6, Kuta, Bali;
62-361/473-7888; metisbali.com



PLAZA BALI



With a convenient location, a range of helpful services, and the widest array of duty-free goods anywhere in Indonesia, Plaza Bali's location at the Soekarno-Hatta International Airport in Jakarta is the ideal one-stop shop for duty-free shopping. Staffed by friendly sales people, the retail space is cool and relaxing, providing discerning customers with the perfect opportunity to make those last minute duty-free purchases or to buy gifts for friends and family back home. The extensive range of goods includes exclusive items from Mont Blanc, Hermès, Lacoste and the like; better still, the shop's pricing policy guarantees that you won't find better priced merchandise anywhere else. Happy shopping!

62-21/559-0338; plazabali.co.id





LONGTAIL ASIAN BRASSERIE & BAR

With cuisine inspired by street food from Laos, Thailand, and Vietnam and an extensive selection of cocktails and Asian beers, Longtail Asian Brasserie & Bar is one of those places where everything on the menu sounds tantalizingly cool. Couple that with its European-brasserie style and location in the Customs House on the edge of Marina Bay, and the result is one of Singapore's perennially hip waterside restaurants, with barrel-aged Negronis to boot.

Grandma Chicken Rice

INGREDIENTS

- 800 g Chicken breast, cut into small cubes
- 45 ml Soy sauce
- 15 ml Sweet soy sauce
- 15 ml Oyster sauce
- 30 ml Cooking oil
- 30 ml Sesame oil
- Pinch of salt
- 2 l Chicken stock
- 60 g Tapioca flour, dissolved in hot water
- 4 servings Rice
- 4 Eggs, sunny-side up
- 1 Chinese sausage, sliced
- 3 stalks Spring onions, sliced
- 6 Red and green chili peppers, sliced
- Pinch of white pepper



METHOD

First, prepare the stew. Heat up a wok, pour in the cooking oil, and add the chicken once the oil is hot. When the chicken starts to brown, mix in the oyster sauce, soy sauce, sweet soy sauce, and stir well. Add in the chicken stock, salt, and dissolved tapioca flour, and stir until thick. Last, add in the sesame oil. When ready to serve, put each serving of rice in a dish and top it with the stew and a sunny-side-up egg. Garnish with the sliced sausage, spring onions, and chilies, sprinkle with white pepper, and serve.



70 Collyer Quay, #01-03 Customs House,
Singapore, 049323; 65/6532-1319; longtail.sg



THE SHORE RESTAURANT & BAR @ GRAND NIKKO BALI

Nestled on Grand Nikko Bali's stretch of oceanfront in Nusa Dua, The Shore is the posh resort's culinary star. Built to resemble a ship on stilts, the restaurant's design is complemented by a menu of seafood, imported meats, and delicacies such as escargot and duck consommé. Its champagne and oyster bar is also perfect for a pre-dinner snack.

Pan-seared Barramundi Fillet with Roasted Pumpkin Puree and Madras Edamame Tomato Fondue

INGREDIENTS

- 100 g Barramundi fillet
- 2 g Sea salt
- 3 g Black pepper
- 3 g Thyme leaves
- 5 g Garlic
- 6 ml Olive oil
- 200 g Pumpkin
- 30 ml Honey
- 3 g Sage leaves
- 30 g Shallots, sliced
- 5 g Fresh ginger, sliced
- 3 g Lemongrass, sliced
- 50 ml White wine
- 200 ml Champagne vinegar
- 100 g Butter, chilled
- 3 g Madras curry powder
- 60 g Edamame beans
- 40 g Tomatoes, diced



METHOD

Cut the fillet in half, leaving the skin on. Heat two tablespoons of the olive oil, garlic, and thyme leaves in a skillet until the oil begins to smoke. Salt the skin side of the fish pieces and fry them on that side over moderate heat for two minutes. Turn and cook on the other side

until done. For the pumpkin puree, preheat an oven to 180°C. Slice the pumpkin in half; drizzle with olive oil, honey, and sage; and bake for about 45 minutes. Let it cool for five minutes, then scoop out the pumpkin and mash it with a fork. Lastly, for the fondue, combine the shallots, ginger, lemongrass, black pepper, white wine, champagne vinegar, and curry powder in a one-and-a-half-quart sauce pan, and simmer until it's reduced to half. Remove from heat and immediately whisk in the butter. Strain the liquid before adding in the edamame and diced tomatoes. Arrange the barramundi atop the pumpkin puree, decorate with the fondue, and serve.



theshore
restaurant & bar

Jl. Raya Nusa Dua Selatan, Nusa Dua, Bali,
Indonesia; 62-361/773-377; grandnikkobali.com

ILTM

INTERNATIONAL
LUXURY TRAVEL
MARKET

ILTM[®] ASIA

SHANGHAI 1 - 4 JUNE 2015

ASIA'S LEADING LUXURY TRAVEL EVENT

ILTM ASIA IS AN INVITATION-ONLY EVENT, WHERE THE VERY BEST TRAVEL AGENTS AND ADVISORS FROM ACROSS ASIA MEET THE WORLD'S MOST SPECTACULAR LUXURY TRAVEL EXPERIENCES.

IF YOU ARE A LUXURY SUPPLIER OR BUYER OPERATING IN THE ASIA PACIFIC REGION, PLEASE REGISTER YOUR INTEREST IN ATTENDING AT **WWW.ILTM.COM**

THE CHOSEN FEW

Recognizing the very best in regional travel and beyond.

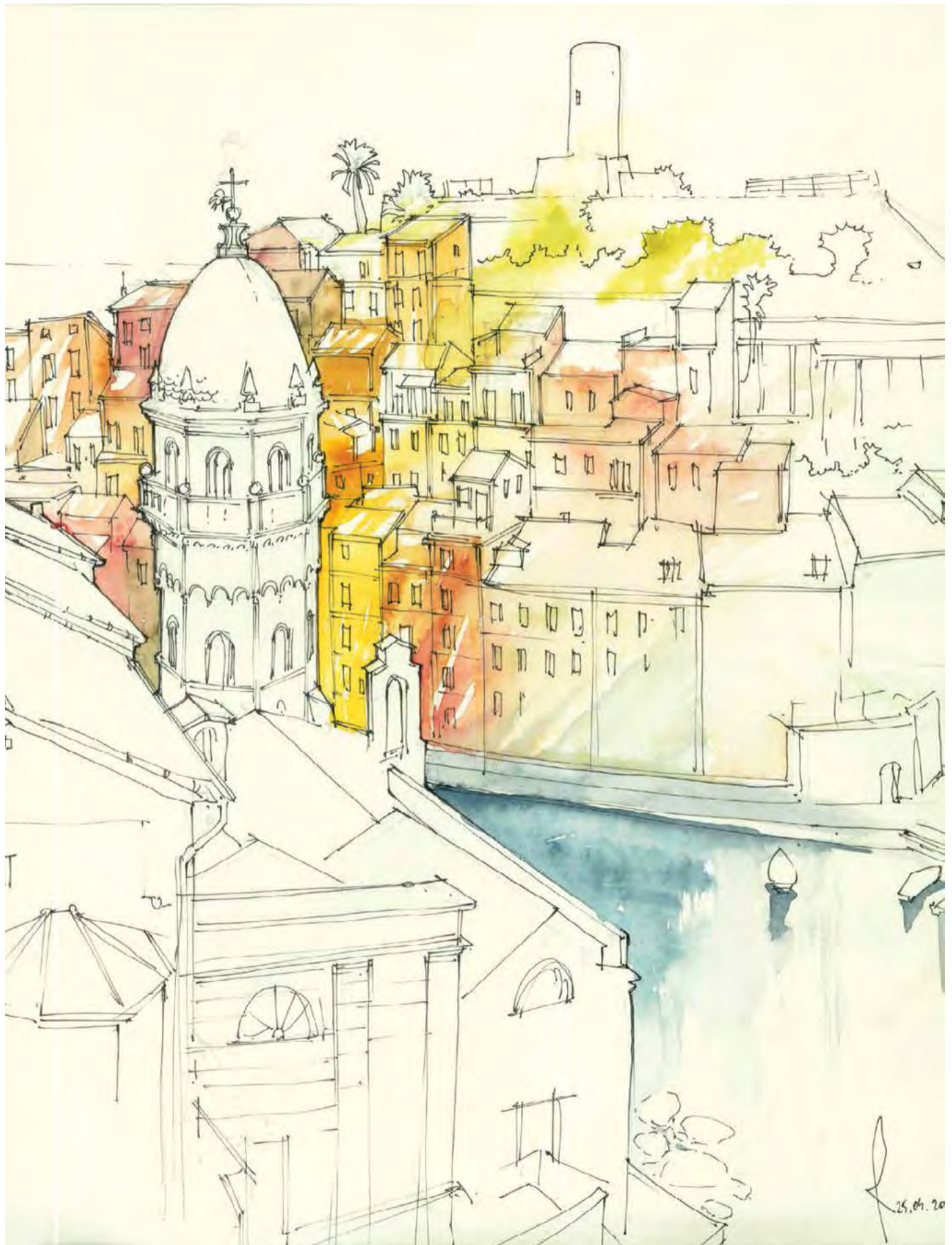


© Celebrating a milestone, *DestinAsian* magazine's 10th annual Readers' Choice Awards luncheon was held on March 11 at Restaurant Petrus on the 56th floor of the Island Shangri-La Hong Kong, treating guests not only to lofty views of Victoria Harbour, but also to a fine three-course meal and a speech by *DestinAsian* publisher Ronald Liem, who extended his compliments to all 35 winners. Awards, in the form of elegant crystal vases by Zwiesel, were presented in categories including best hotels and resorts, serviced residences, spas, top airlines and airports, and favorite leisure and island destinations. Congratulations to all!





/WHO'S WHO/ 1. *DestinAsian* publisher Ronald Liem with Benjamin Chan and Harry Chu of Singapore Airlines. 2. Cary Gray of W Taipei with Rachel An and *DestinAsian* editor-in-chief Christopher Hill. 3. Phyllis Sio of Sofitel Greater China with Janet Lim of The Venetian Macao. 4. Anthony Khoo of The Ascott Limited and Kenneth Law of Banyan Tree Hotels & Resorts. 5. Helena Tam and Luca Deplano of Shangri-La Hotels & Resorts, Kim Kenchington of MediaWorks Asia, and Lori Lincoln of Shangri-La Hotels & Resorts. 6. Ming Lui and May Pendraat of Rosewood Hotel Group. 7. Carina Chorenge of Hyatt Hotels & Resorts, Franz Donhauser of Island Shangri-La Hong Kong, and Melanie Foo of Mandarin Oriental Hotel Group. 8. Ronald Liem with Giovanni Viterale of The Fullerton Heritage. 9. Wanna Tonak of Tourism Authority of Thailand, Pornthap Akravorakulchai of Bangkok Metropolitan Administration, and Titiporn Manenate of Tourism Authority of Thailand.



ITALIAN IDYLL

“There isn’t a single place there that isn’t perfectly laid out to draw or paint,” says Artur Stępnia, an architecture student and sketch artist in Warsaw, of the quintet of northwestern Italian fishing villages known as Cinque Terre. Huddled atop the jagged cliffs bordering the Ligurian Sea and inaccessible by car, the villages appear little changed from a century ago and are known for their traditional way of life. In Stępnia’s sketch above—splashed with watercolors of the villages’ vibrant hues—he captured the octagonal bell tower of the Church of Santa Margherita di Antiochia, originally built in 1318 and still the focal point of Vernazza, the second town in line from the north. “It’s like another world, with a completely different charm than the rest of Italy,” Stępnia says. “You really get to see a different way of living.” ●

Keep tabs on the latest travel news and updates at

DestinAsian.com

or follow us on:



facebook.com/DestinAsian.Mag



[@DestinAsian_Mag](https://twitter.com/DestinAsian_Mag)



youtube.com/DestinAsianMag



[@destinasianmagazine](https://instagram.com/destinasianmagazine)



pinterest.com/DestinAsianMag



vimeo.com/DestinAsian



gplus.to/DestinAsianMag



The 2014 SOPA (Society of Publishers in Asia) Award for Excellence in Lifestyle Coverage



Two-colour Cerachrom bezel

GMT-Master II / g • m • t • m a s •

ter • two /: 1. A legend of the jet age, the original GMT-Master was embraced by airline pilots as their on-board navigation chronometer. 2. An iconic two-time-zone watch with an arrow-tipped 24-hour hand and a graduated rotatable bezel. 3. The first Rolex to feature a Cerachrom bezel, impervious to scratches and harder than steel. 4. The perfect way to navigate a connected world in style. 5. The Rolex Way.



OYSTER PERPETUAL GMT-MASTER II
IN 18 CT WHITE GOLD



ROLEX

More Rolex watchmaking at ROLEX.COM