

Business Traveller

MIDDLE EAST

JULY/AUGUST 2019

CALM WATERS

Tourists flock to rebuilt Caribbean islands

ADVANTAGE ZHUHAI

Coastal mainland city buoyed by location and diversity

WAY FORWARD

Tech advances changing the airport experience

PLUS

Tried and Tested • Singapore
• Dunedin

P R E M I U M W A V E

Maldives juggles resort growth and sustainability



UAE DHS12 OMAN RO1.30
BAHRAIN BD1.30 SAUDI ARABIA
SR12 KUWAIT KD1



6291100745012

@magztore



DISCOVER THE UNFORGETTABLE

Indulge in our debut offer with exclusive privileges and be amongst the first to experience an unforgettable luxury escape in the sunny side of the world.

waldorfastoriamadives.com



WALDORF ASTORIA®
MALDIVES ITHAAFUSHI

REGULARS**06 UPFRONT**

Airline and hotel news worldwide

44 COLUMN: ALLIANCES

How China Southern's SkyTeam exit will impact Asian aviation

54 COLUMN: HOTEL SURVEYS

The focus on guest experience shouldn't spark a feedback frenzy

56 4 HOURS IN ...

The key attractions in Singapore when time is of the essence

FEATURES**20 CALM WATERS**

The 'rebuilt' Caribbean is drawing tourists in droves

26 ADVANTAGE ZHUHAI

Coastal city is prospering from location and industrial diversity

32 DOWN BUT NOT OUT

Chongqing's foreign businesses are undeterred by slowdown

36 NEW BEDS IN BANGKOK

Premium brands make their moves on the Thai capital

THE REPORT**TRIED & TESTED HOTELS****60** Hotel Danieli, A Luxury Collection Hotel, Venice**61** Waldorf Astoria Maldives Ithaafushi**62** Pentahotel Moscow, Arbat**63** Vintry and Mercer, London**64** The Ritz-Carlton, Berlin**65** InterContinental Grand Stanford, Hong Kong**66** SNAPSHOT flydubai celebrates 10th anniversary**42 WAY FORWARD**

Four key advances in airport technology

46 JOIN THE CLUB

BA's new Club Suite debuts this summer

50 DELICIOUS DUNEDIN

New Zealand city caters to adventurous eaters

ON THE COVER**14****PREMIUM WAVE**

The Maldives is opening a second runway and more five-star resorts but can it keep environmental pressures in check?

32**50****46****36**



As it's summer, we've swapped our office shoes for flip-flops, enjoying a break in the Maldives. I know, it's a hard life – and it is for hotel operators with new and established properties busy battling it out for five-star business.

As we sailed past Waldorf Astoria's private island – which will open in September (the main resort opens in July) – you wonder how far luxury can go. It will cost around \$75,000 a night. It's billed as 'a resort within a resort' though it must be bigger than some waterside properties and packed with amenities.

The fact that more resorts keep opening tells you something – there is clearly demand, and despite its remote location, the Maldives is in a sweet spot appealing to rising middle class Asians, luxury-loving Middle Easterners and affluent westerners.

In fact, the world descends on Malé's narrow strip. I was surprised by the number of South Americans I saw – until I realised the ease with which they can connect at DXB. You don't know who you will rub shoulders with in the cosey seaplanes.

The Maldives has a long list of environmental challenges: power, waste management, maintenance and global warming. A green tax (\$6 per visitor per night) supports conservation but there is no denying that more visitors adds pressures to an already delicate ecosystem. Inevitably with so many new resorts, more materials shipping in, dodging coral reefs.

But it's not all doom and gloom. The marine life remains varied, hotels are taking sustainability seriously and the presence of more high-end brands is a sign of a buoyant market. A rising tide lifts all boats – and there is much to marvel in this one stretch of ocean. Malé's second runway will be warmly welcomed by airlines and hotels.

With sensible management, visitors will continue to flock to these beautiful islands for years to come.

Dominic Ellis, Editor

THIS ISSUE'S PICKS



PREMIUM WAVE

The Maldives is opening more five-star resorts amid pressures on sustainability
(Page 14)



ADVANTAGE ZHUHAI

Coastal city is prospering from benign location and broad range of industries
(Page 26)



WAY FORWARD

Four key tech advances that are changing the way we travel through airports
(Page 42)



HEAD OFFICE: Media One Tower, Dubai Media City, PO Box 2331, Dubai, UAE.

Tel: +971 4 427 3000, Fax: +971 4 428 2270, E-mail: btme@motivate.ae

DUBAI MEDIA CITY: Office 508, 5th Floor, Building 8, Dubai, UAE.

Tel: +971 4 390 3550, Fax: +971 4 390 4845

ABU DHABI: PO Box 43072, UAE. Tel: +971 2 677 2005, Fax: +971 2 677 0124,

E-mail: motivate-adh@motivate.ae

LONDON: Acre House, 11/15 William Road, London NW1 3ER, UK.

E-mail: motivateuk@motivate.ae

Panacea Publishing International Ltd

41-43 Maddox Street, London, W1S 2PD
 Tel +44 (0)20 7821 2700 businesstraveller.com

Panacea Publishing Asia Ltd

Suite 405, Chinachem Exchange Square, 1 Hoi Wan Street, Quarry Bay,
 Hong Kong, Tel: +852 2594 9300, Fax: +852 25196846

SUBSCRIPTIONS: email subscriptions@motivate.ae; tel +971 4 427 3542

**BOOK A REWARDING EVENT WITH US AND MAKE
MEETINGS EXPERIENCES MORE ENGAGING.**



Engage your business meetings with more rewards

Host up to 1,200 guests in eleven meeting rooms & our Assultan Ballroom. WiFi, High Speed Internet a business center & an onsite professional meeting team to ensure each event is a great success.

To reserve in advance or for more information, please contact us at +966 12 229 5555. Or send an email to Intercontinental.jeddah@ihg.com. Or visit www.ihg.com





EMIRATES UNVEILS UNBUNDLED BUSINESS CLASS FARES AND POWERS INTO MUSCAT

THE PRACTICE OF unbundling fares is filtering through to premium cabins after Emirates introduced a 'Special' business class fare last month.

Passengers booking a Special Fare are not eligible for chauffeur drives and lounge access, though Skywards benefits apply along with 40kgs baggage allowance. It's another case of *caveat emptor* with the new tier joining Saver, Flex and Flex Plus tiers.

An Emirates spokesperson said the new fares will be offered "on certain routes based on seasonal trends in travel demand".

The eye-catching operations news is the launch of double-daily A380 Muscat flights from July 1.

Two of its Boeing widebodies give way to the three-class superjumbo for the new summer schedule (one B777 service remains), which

marks Emirates' shortest scheduled A380 flight at just 340km each way. The A380 schedules are:

- EK862 departing DXB 0825 and arriving Muscat 0940
- EK863 departing Muscat 1115 and arriving Dubai 1225
- EK864 departing Dubai 1610 and arriving Muscat 1725
- EK865 departing Muscat 1905 and arriving Dubai 2015

Alongside Emirates' flights, Oman Air operates extensive DXB operations, in and out of Terminal 1, and last month operated A330-200s/300s, amid B737 MAX groundings.

- Emirates has introduced paper straws on all its flights as it aims to reduce single-use plastics

GULF AIRLINES RE-ROUTE FLIGHTS

THE PROSPECT

OF longer flights and increased fuel burn are the unfortunate scenario for passengers and airlines as Gulf carriers re-route flights amid escalating tensions with Iran. The move follows the FAA directive banning US-registered aircraft from flying in Iranian-controlled airspace.



Gulf Air to link Malé and Colombo

GULF AIR WILL start five-times weekly flights between Bahrain, Malé and Colombo on A320neos from October 26. Flights will depart Bahrain 2320 and arrive in the Maldives 0625, continuing onto Colombo at 0725 and landing at 0925. Return flights depart the Sri Lankan capital at 1655, arriving in Malé 1755, before departing 1855 and landing in Bahrain 2205.

Turn to page 14 to read our feature on the Maldives

HOTEL NEWS

HYATT PLACE DUBAI/WASL DISTRICT has opened, the select service brand's third property in the city (all three are in Deira district). The newcomer has 202 rooms, including 10 suites, and 105 apartments (studio apartment pictured). Hyatt has also unveiled a new upper midscale hotel brand, UrCove (styled UrCove), aimed at China's frequent business travelling "road warriors".



LE MÉRIDIEN DUBAI HOTEL AND CONFERENCE CENTRE

has completed the room renovations it started in 2017 – this summer has seen 140 refreshed plus nine Specialty suites (Classic Deluxe Suite pictured) and lounge.



H HOTELS is to enter Bahrain with new 5-star hotel and residences at the Harbour Row waterfront project in Manama.

The Párisi Udvar Hotel Budapest has opened, joining **HYATT's Unbound Collection**.



MARRIOTT's Autograph Collection has debuted in Athens with the opening of the 60-room Academia of Athens.

Loews Regency San Francisco will be rebranded **FOUR SEASONS Hotel** San Francisco at Embarcadero in 2020 following renovations.



@magztore



www.t
adver

Your place is right here

... amidst the powder-soft sand, by the cerulean waves, under the tropical shade. Our premier villa resort offers the very best of luxurious living with its curated experiences and all-inclusive offering.

T: +960 6640375
E: res.oarah@heritancehotels.com
www.heritancehotels.com/oarah

H
HERITANCE
AARAH

Aitken Spence Hotels



W MUSCAT SPLASHES LIFESTYLE COLOUR AND BLEISURE APPEAL

FROM LIPSTICK-PARTING lifts to rhino-backed chairs – one of 15 Marvelous Suites is pictured – the recently opened W Muscat has made a characteristically colourful entrance.

The hotel (251 rooms and 28 suites) enjoys a prime location in the Shatti Al-Qurum beach area, behind the Royal Opera House and next to InterContinental Muscat.

My fourth-floor Wonderful room had a handy wireless charging bedside device, and some trademark 'W' design touches such as the mini-corridor to the room, direct access from bath to bedroom (sliding door) and compact minibar. Designs blend old and new with Omani patterns and "cultural nuances" (eg slanting ceiling to evoke a desert tent). A small terrace afforded resort, pool and sea views.

F&B includes CHAR (grill), Harvest (all day dining), Ba Ban (Chinese), Siddharta Lounge by Buddha-bar, Living Room, WET DECK and WET. Leisure facilities encompass the 10 treatment-room AWAY spa and large outdoor pool (300sqm one on the rooftop too) while MICE guests can access 1,000sqm of meeting space.

Online rates for Wonderful rooms (1 King, seaview with balcony) range between OMR81-119

CONCORDE CAIRO UNVEILS BALLROOM

CONCORDE EL SALAM

Hotel Cairo has unveiled the Adam Ballroom which features an 11-metre dome, crystal chandelier and 620sqm function room. Two private guest suites and reception are on the first floor of the new facility which will host corporate events, weddings and social soirees.



Atwell Suites meets flexibility demand



IHG IS POSITIONING its new Atwell Suites brand between traditional extended stay and select service hotels. The all-studio suites, which contain distinct zones, are designed to give guests more flexibility for work, eating and sleeping, typically on four-to-six-night stays.

Guests can connect their smartphones and personal devices to 55-inch TVs. The versatility extends downstairs with meeting rooms integrated into the lobby alongside 'huddle areas' and public-private working spaces. All hotels will offer free hot breakfast as well as grab-and-go options.

Sheraton refreshed, Wyndham Grand opens in Tbilisi

THE SHERATON GRAND Tbilisi Metechi Palace has completed a renovation of its rooms and public spaces. The 28-year-old hotel has 220 rooms, indoor and outdoor pools, meeting spaces and a Sheraton Club Lounge.



Wyndham Grand has opened its first property in the Georgian capital and the 158-room hotel includes 19 suites, five conference spaces, a ballroom, indoor pool, spa, lounge bar and three restaurants.





UNSPOKEN DETAILS LET'S TALK ABOUT THEM.

Having defined luxury travel for over 70 years and in over 180 hotels worldwide, we understand that it is the little, unspoken details that transform a stay into an experience. Like enjoying your favourite blend of tea while relaxing in the exclusive Club InterContinental Lounge at InterContinental Cairo Citystars, we have created Club InterContinental® for our most discerning travellers. Discover how you can experience luxury travel as it should be with InterContinental® Hotels & Resorts, part of the IHG® family of hotels. Visit intercontinental.com

SAN FRANCISCO

BOSTON

LONDON

PARIS

DAVOS

DUBAI

CAIRO

HONG KONG

TOKYO

SYDNEY



WINNER

BEST BUSINESS HOTEL
IN CAIRO

Live the InterContinental® life.



INTERCONTINENTAL®
CAIRO CITYSTARS



A321 GAINS TRACTION WITH AIRLINES AND HOTELS

10

LUFTHANSA, SWISS AND Austrian Airlines are now operating the A321neo on short and medium-haul routes. The aircraft contains 215 seats with 24 in business class and 191 in economy and the seat configuration is 3-3 in both cabins.

Economy passengers have a 20-degree backrest incline, rising to 26 degrees on business class seats, which have been developed by Italian manufacturer Geven. Seats have USB ports and 'in future' will have tablet holders.

American Airlines' A321neo has taken off, the first of 100 on order. The aircraft is configured with 196 seats including 20 seats in first class, and it also features the new Airspace XL overhead luggage bins, for which it is the launch customer. French all-business class carrier La Compagnie has also taken delivery of its first A321neo, which is operating the Paris Orly-Newark route, and Canada's Air Transat has received the first of 15 planes.

Four Seasons Hotels and Resorts has chosen the A321LR as its private jet for luxury worldwide travel itineraries, which will enter service in 2021.

LOUNGE UPDATES

MARHABA HAS OPENED a new lounge in Singapore Changi Airport Terminal 3. The 24-hour facility can hold up to 130 guests and costs S\$55 to enter if you're not a member of lounge loyalty card programmes.



MUSCAT INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT – now firmly bedded in following its March 2018 opening – plans to open a new Majan Lounge on Level 7, two floors up from the Oman Air First and Business Class Lounge, Primeclass Lounge and Aerotel Transit Hotel. Gates C1-4 are for A380 flights.

SAUDI ADDS AMENITIES AND AIRBUSES Saudia has rolled out a set of 'collector edition' amenity kits under the 'Fly Through Our Heritage' theme. The mosaics reflect the Kingdom's five regions (northern, southern, eastern, western and central). The airline, which has placed a firm order for 65 A320neos, has added Athens, Malaga and Marrakech to its network this summer.

ROUTE NEWS

ASCENT

AIR ARABIA starts four-times weekly flights between Sharjah and Bishkek from July 4 (Sundays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays).



ETIHAD AIRWAYS is flying to Salalah four-times weekly between July 2 and August 31, the peak of the *Khareef* season.

EMIRATES and **CHINA SOUTHERN AIRLINES** have recently started to codeshare between Dubai and Guangzhou.

INTERNATIONAL AIRLINES GROUP and Boeing have signed a letter of intent for 200 B737 Max aircraft, in a boost for the manufacturer's grounded single-aisle jet. But Boeing's new 777X aircraft will not fly until late autumn due to an issue with its GE9X engines.

Bric's Milano builds global profile

The chic Italian brand enjoys a strong presence in the UAE and is popular with the Hollywood jet set

Founded in 1952 by Mario Briccola, Bric's Milano has been the leader of the luxury travel goods market for over 65 years. What began as a family business, dedicated to crafting the finest luggage and leather goods has become the most popular and stylish Italian brand for travellers.

As Hollywood's favourite brand, its products have appeared in movies such as *Mamma Mia* or *Twilight Saga*, and sponsored the Oscars too. New York socialites, fashion designers and business executives seek its coveted handmade craftsmanship.

Using only the finest materials on each of our exquisite collections such as vegetable-tanned leather from Tuscany (Life Pelle) our unique mustang fabric (Life) or 100 per cent pure Makrolon (Bellagio), Bric's Milano is in constant development, where research and Heritage, Innovation and tradition, functionality and elegance are intertwined and balanced with skilled craft, advanced technology and interpretation of new trends, creating a perfect fusion between shape, function and design.

Its biggest store, at Dubai Festival City Mall, stocks the widest range of luxurious fashion products, such as Italian handmade leather handbags, small leather goods, briefcases for your office and unique travel trolley cases with the most special features in the UAE.

The brand's presence extends to other top-class malls such as Dubai Mall, Mall of Emirates, Al Ghurair Center and Arabian Center, and Yas Island in Abu Dhabi.



Bellagio trunk, new to the collection in 2019



Capri and Pelle, the perfect match



Bric's Milano at Galleria Emanuele, Milan



For more information visit

BRICSMILANOUE

+971 58 551 3137

customercare@beyonds.ae



BOEING 747 TOUCHES DOWN IN BAHRAIN UNDERWATER PARK

THE FIRST PHASE of the world's 'largest underwater theme park' has been launched by Bahrain Tourism and Exhibitions Authority (BTEA). Covering an area of over 100,000sqm, the dive site features a 70-metre long decommissioned Boeing 747 as its centrepiece, the largest aircraft ever to be submerged.

WHATSAPP YOUR BUTLER AT JUMEIRAH PROPERTIES

GUESTS STAYING AT Jumeirah Hotels and Resorts can now access a personalised e-butler service on WhatsApp. The operator said the roll-out was completed in June but note the service is available on WeChat in China while guests staying in Burj Al Arab can use either platform.



MORE ASIAN FLAVOURS AT DXB

ASIAN STREET KITCHEN has opened in Dubai International Airport's Concourse A, Terminal 3. The menu includes Double Fried Chicken, Ramen & Dumplings, rice & noodles.

LUGGAGE FOR SUMMER BREAKS



VICTORINOX
CONNEX LARGE
HARDSIDE
Priced AED1,699



KIPLING CYRAH M
ACTIVE DENIM
priced AED1,199



DELSEY CARNOT
Priced AED429

Available in Jashanmal Home and Travel



OMAN AIR HAS unveiled new crew uniforms inspired by the Sultanate's colours, culture and heritage. Female uniforms include a turquoise one-piece dress and stewards will wear a modern dark teal suit with a turquoise tie.

magz
The easy way to get magazine

Enviable beachfront setting.
Breathtaking interiors.
Unmatched levels of service.

For more information or to book your stay call +971 4 777 2222 or
visit mandarinoriental.com/dubai



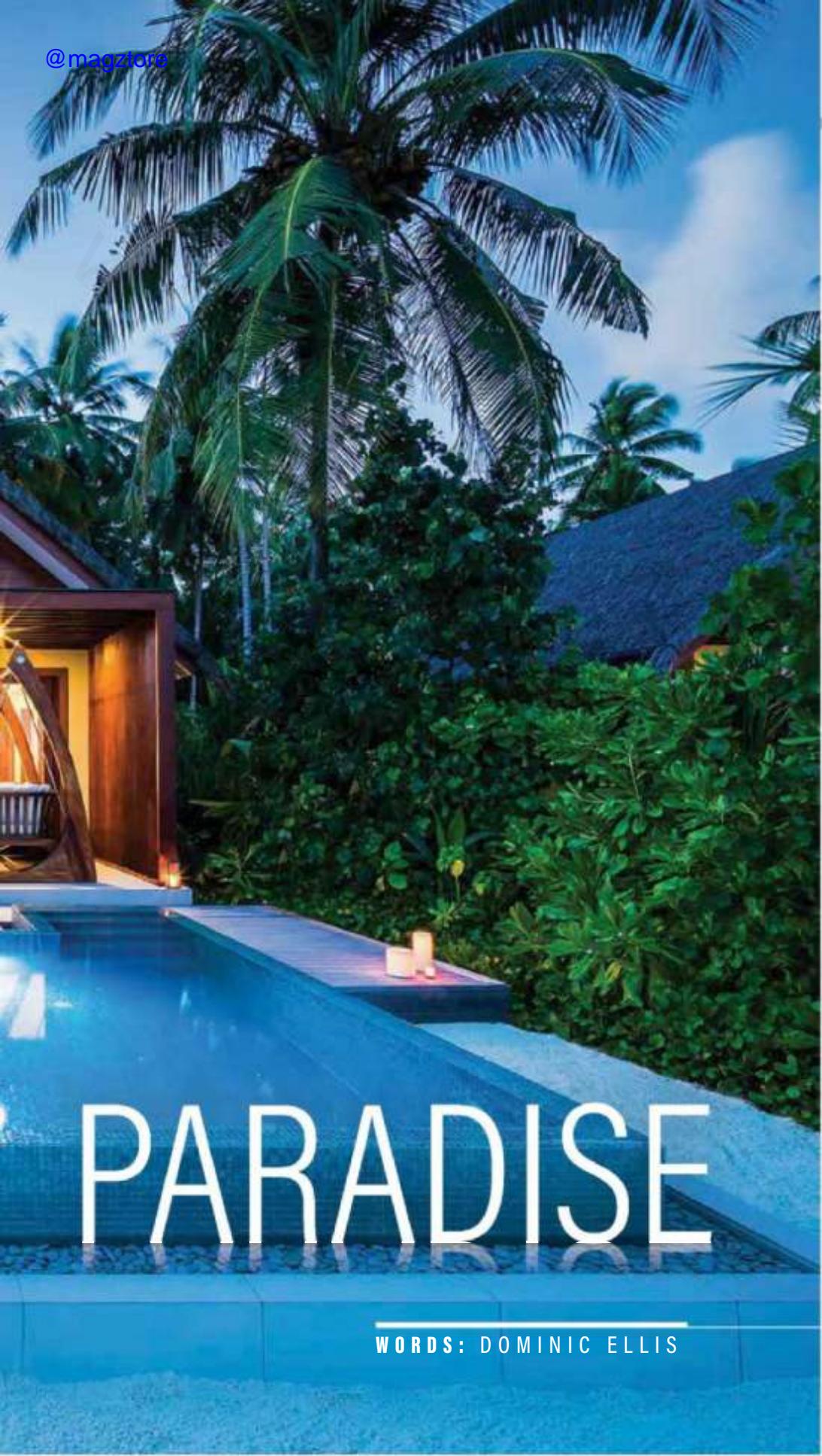
MANDARIN ORIENTAL
JUMEIRAH
DUBAI

Niyama Private Islands
Maldives Beach Pool Villa

14

STRETCH OF

THE MALDIVES IS OPENING A NEW RUNWAY AND MORE FIVE-STAR RESORTS TO KEEP PACE WITH TOURISM DEMAND – BUT CAN ENVIRONMENTAL PRESSURES BE KEPT IN CHECK?



In the hour before departing Malé, I spotted three Gulf widebody planes, one SriLankan A330, an Aeroflot aircraft and Air India B737 – all twisting and turning like cumbersome whale sharks around the single, water-flanked runway. Velana International Airport is a bit of a time warp, outwardly and inwardly looking much the same as when I first came here in 2003, though in a commercial sense the Maldives is unrecognisable.

Change is in the air, or more precisely, on the ground. A second runway is complete, adjacent to the first. Etihad sent down an A380 to mark the completion last September, indicating its superjumbo handling capabilities, but we await an official launch date. A \$350 million passenger terminal is also in the offing.

They can't open too soon. Alongside alleviating operational pressures, adding slots and the prospect of more premium seats, the capacity boost will be equally welcomed by hotel operators and businesses in the hemmed-in capital city, providing foundations for future growth.

Last year's visitor numbers are expected to weigh in around 1.5 million and there are now over 130 resorts – with around the same number in the pipeline.

China, Germany and the UK spearhead the tourism charge though while the Chinese lead the table with 266,376 visitors, their numbers have been sliding (down 23,000 2018 on 2017) while UK is on the rise (up 10,625). Sandwiched between the Asian and European titans, the Middle East accounts for a small 4 per cent but it remains eagerly courted in terms of revenue spends. Gulf carriers are busy funneling European passengers through their Middle Eastern hubs, with loads evidently healthy in the current 'low' season as much as the peak December-to-March period.

CHILL AND PLAY AT NIYAMA

Our week of escapism began with a seaplane transfer to Niyama Private Islands Maldives. We passed

a sign advertising Beijing Urban Construction Group – cementing its presence here literally and metaphorically – and stopped off briefly for lounge refreshments before taking off (on the return, transferring to Naladhu, we were escorted to a separate Anantara office-come-lounge inside the terminal which scanned our passports and offered drinks).

As it was the last flight of the day, we touched down at nearby Kandima to drop off two guests. The last leg, barely five minutes, must have been the shortest flight of my life.

The crew member adeptly hopped from plane to raft to plane – the only time in aviation where no-one bats an eyelid seeing someone hanging outside while the aircraft is moving.

This versatile seven-year-old resort, divided into 'chill' and 'play' islands – inscribed on the flip-flops should you forget – is well known regionally and internationally. Initially part of the Per Aquum brand, it's now a stand alone within the Minor Hotels portfolio – which majors on the Maldives with three Anantaras: Dhigu, Veli (cover photo) and Kihavah as well as the exclusive Naladhu, and its fast-growing Avani brand is due to make its Maldives bow this year.

Niyama is a spacious resort so the bikes outside every villa are useful for exploring both sides, though they have no brakes and some over-eager guests, particularly on the narrower decking on the water villa side, have been known to take an unscheduled dip.

We had the best of both worlds; two nights in the beach villa with pool and direct beach access and one in a water villa which had a pool, jacuzzi and steps to the ocean – where the only peril was watching out for the coral and rocks under foot.

We were shown a glimpse of 77, a solitary central villa separating each side, complete with lounge and long pool – a premium space with rates to match the 180-degree ocean views.

Other premium options include stand-alone villas in The Crescent which command premium prices –



ranging from US\$17,590 before taxes per night – and popular with Middle East travellers for their privacy.

At the edge-of-resort Surf Shack, I caught up with General Manager Hafidh Busaidy, who was formerly at IHG in the Middle East for 20 years. Niyama's 134 rooms are only one side of the equation as Busaidy oversees a 504-strong team from 30 countries – and as befits most luxury resorts, you would never know, though there are plenty of 'private' paths, reserved for staff, as you're cycling around.

"The message I like to get out is the team is extremely genuine – it's a fun island with lots to do, and we're family friendly," he says.

It's true. We were warmly welcomed at every turn and even the masseuse popped in to chat to us at breakfast, which I think was a travel first.

In 20 minutes we cover the importance of waste and energy management; how more biodegradable materials are going in room (eg toothbrushes); Minor's plastic reductions programme; ongoing maintenance challenges; and crucially, whether you can watch the



DESTINATIONS



INSET PHOTO: CHINADAILY.COM.CN



CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE: Naladhu Private Island offers Middle East travellers high levels of exclusivity; Malé's second runway has been built and can handle A380s; pool and sea views at Naladhu; Niyama features luxury overwater and beach villas; dine with the fishes at Subsix restaurant.

Champions League final in the middle of the Indian Ocean (you can).

"The biggest question for the Maldives is energy," he says. "It's still a little too expensive for resorts to retrofit but we're looking at solar power and seeing how viable it is. We try and recycle everything and convert food waste into fertilizer for the gardens."

NALADHU EXCLUSIVITY

One sedate seaplane back to Malé and rapid boat ride out later, we disembark at Naladhu – the most exclusive island of three, connected to Anantara Veli (adults only) and across the water from Anantara Dhigu.

Under candlelit dinner on the beach, General Manager Giles Selvies says while the Maldives sells itself and remains "massively aspirational", he predicts next year will be tough. "Back in 2014-15, there was under supply and rates were generally higher but now there's so much opening and the challenge for established hotels will be competition with the new resorts."

On the second night, there isn't a



spare seat at the signature Thai Baan Huraa ('House of Coral') which stands imperiously between Naladhu and Veli. Staff seem oblivious to the torrential tropical downpour and for a second I think I'm out at sea. The menu is extensive – as are the names. You could try your luck with 'Gaeng Poo Bai Cha Ploo gab Sen Mee' or alternatively opt for 'crab meat with southern curry paste'.

WALDORF ASTORIA JOINS PREMIUM RESORTS CHARGE

The Maldives has seen a raft of new hotels, stoking the competitive fires in an elongated archipelago already studded with premium hotels.

Newcomers include LUX North Malé Atoll, Raffles Maldives Meradho, Riu Atoll (four star), Hotel Riu Palace Maldivas (five star all inclusive), Nautilus Maldives, The Residence Maldives, Joali, Hard Rock Hotel Maldives, Faarufushi, Baglioni Resort Maldives, Emerald Maldives Resort & Spa, Waldorf Astoria Maldives Ithaafushi and JW Marriott Maldives Resort & Spa. Westin Maldives Miriandhoo opened towards the end of last year along with Movenpick Resort & Spa Kuredhivaru.

Daniel Welk, Vice President Luxury and Lifestyle, Asia Pacific, for Hilton, is definitely in the pre-opening hot seat. A few weeks prior,

I met him in the 50th floor Royal Suite at Waldorf Astoria Dubai International Financial Centre – another newcomer this summer – to talk through the brand's accelerating growth, and four hours south, here he is checking on this new resort which spans 3.5 kms (see Tried & Tested review, page 61). Globally Waldorf is up to 31 hotels and 20 more are coming.

"For every Waldorf, location is paramount and we're blessed with this location," he says. "We're elevating the whole experience – particularly with the private island, which will be a resort within a resort."

With entry level villa pools spanning 235sqm, Welk believes the space and privacy that the resort offers consistently throughout is unmatched in the Maldives. Deep-pocketed guests will be able to rent the island for events. "You could have an event for 100 to 150 people and it wouldn't detract the exclusivity that guests receive at the resort."

For a brand with an 88-year legacy, Waldorf is now riding the development wave. Welk maintains Waldorf Astoria can be a "pioneer for tomorrow's travellers" – though he's keen to stress it remains faithful to its core service principles.

"You can't look in the rearview mirror all your life," he added.

CRÈME DE LE CRÈME

Prices quoted are subject to change and before taxes



**Private island,
Waldorf Astoria Maldives Ithaafushi**
Price: \$75,000 (opening September)



**The Muraka Suite,
Conrad Maldives Rangali Island**
Price: \$50,000



**Grand Sunset Residence,
One&Only Reethi Rah**
Price: \$32,768



**John Jacob Astor overwater villa,
St. Regis Maldives Vommuli Resort**
Price: \$20,000



**The Crescent,
Niyama Private Islands**
Price: \$17,590



**Velaa Private Island
Residences**
Price: \$16,000 in July, \$19,000 in August

BELLOW: JA Resorts & Hotels takes sustainability seriously at Manafuru by operating its own glass bottling plant, organising 'House Reef' cleaning trips and ensuring its beaches are kept pristine.

"Luxury travel is changing rapidly across Asia Pacific and travellers are seeking experiences more than 'things'. Digital enhances the hospitality experience but it doesn't take it over – ultimately we're in the business of people serving people."

As the saxophonist plays *Your Latest Trick* in the quiet but airy Peacock Alley, General Manager Etienne Dalandon said it marks the first luxury resort close to Malé for many years. "We have 24-hour transfers, so there's no headache," he said. "When we talk about luxury, it's about time, space and choice. You can stay in your villa pool or meet in the main pools, and dine differently every night."

He is confident the private island will be occupied "at least 15 days a month," driven by interest from the

Middle East, Russia and China. In time, it will look to offer twin stays with the Conrad Rangali.

RECONCILING TOURISM AND CONSERVATION

If ever a destination sums up the challenges of global tourism growth, it must be the Maldives.

More travellers bring more dollars but also more strains to an environment on the front line of global warming. No island is taller than 2.4 metres – and it's not just rising sea levels which are a concern, but all the associate marine challenges, from overfishing to pollution.

In our three-resort stay, the state of the coral looked patchy; good in parts, bleached in others. The recovery remains slow, 15 years after

the tsunami. Having watched recent TV reports from the Seychelles, I boarded the flight with some trepidation – but over the course of a week, I fished out one yellow rubber glove and small blue plastic bag. The clarity of the turquoise waters, even in low season, is remarkable.

We saw innumerable crabs larger than outstretched hands, dozens of dolphins, swam with nurse sharks, stumbled upon a turtle and snorkeled among hundreds of fish. There is much to celebrate and protect.

The Maldives government, working with hotels, has levied a \$6 green tax against every visitor per night stay which is channelled into conservation. Scientists increasingly stark forecasts leave little room for complacency but there is hope for the Maldives. ☀





Zero Halliburton draws on its unrivalled 81-year-old heritage to create a wide range of luxury travel goods for modern travellers

Zero Halliburton dominates luxury space

Luggage, attaché cases, small leather goods, business cases and day bags feature in established supplier's luxury travel collection

Bred to survive the American Midwest oil fields in 1938, Zero Halliburton was the first to introduce travelers to the strength and security of aluminium cases.

The original 'Halliburton' aluminium travel cases were hand made for Earle P. Halliburton's personal use. A globetrotting oil field engineer by trade, Halliburton was often disappointed with luggage that failed to protect his wardrobe and documents when exposed to the harsh conditions of extreme dirt, heat and dust.

Drawing upon the engineering knowledge of his staff, Halliburton guided the development of the world's first aluminium cases. These unique cases, equipped with smooth sides and an air-tight sealed gasket kept moisture, dirt and dust out.

The distinguished look and unsurpassed durability of Zero Halliburton cases have led to unique opportunities. Over the years, its cases have appeared in over 300 films and TV shows including *Lost*, *Mission Impossible*, *Inception*, *Ocean's Eleven*, *Men in Black* and *The Secret Life of Walter Mitty*.



For more information visit

[Zerohalliburton_uae](#)

+971 58 551 3137

customercare@beyonds.ae

In addition, Zero Halliburton provided slightly modified cases to NASA in 1969 to use on Apollo 11. The aluminium cases were used to safely carry moon rocks back to Earth.

It landed in the Middle east more than 20 years ago and since then, has been on the front line of luxury travel goods. Its historic Mono brand opened in the GCC in 2014, and today's flagship store on Yas Island in Abu Dhabi features a unique and incomparable location.

Luggage, attaché cases, small leather goods, business cases and day bags are some of the luxury products available in its stores.

Comprising high-end luxurious and durable materials such as Aircraft Aluminium, Carbon fibre or Cordura nylon, all collections offer a unique and unmistakable design, and suitable for the office, meetings and holidays,

Today, Zero Halliburton's presence covers all premium UAE malls including Dubai Mall, Mall of Emirates, Al Ghurair Centre and Arabian Center.

CALM WATERS

20

WORDS NIGEL TISDALE

PICTURED: Auberge
Resorts' Malliouhana
on Anguilla



As destructive as they were, the Caribbean hurricanes of 2017 have provided a chance for the islands to rebuild and renew

At first it seems like just another convivial ferry crossing in the Caribbean. Tourists are lapping up the sunshine, a cheery crew dispenses beers and rum punches, Bob Marley's singing *Coming in from the Cold*. Yet as we sail out of Simpson Bay Lagoon in St Maarten, bound for the paradise beaches of Anguilla, I sense things aren't quite right. Why don't those yachts have masts? What's that shipping container doing in the water? How does a car get so mangled?

This is the grotesque debris that lingers from the onslaught of Irma, the Category Five hurricane that stormed across the northern Caribbean on September 6, 2017, causing more than 40 fatalities and US\$14.8 billion worth of damage. Some 12 days later,

the equally strong Hurricane Maria brought a similar misery to the south, pounding Dominica, the US Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico, where just under 3,000 people died.

It was a devastating double tragedy for the region, but as the Caribbean Tourism Organisation pointed out, more than 70 per cent of it remained open for business, including destinations such as Barbados, Jamaica, Grenada and St Lucia. Down the centuries, however, every island here has felt the sour kiss of malevolent weather, and it says everything that the word "hurricane" was born in these tropical climes – derived from *burakan*, meaning "god of the storm" in the language of the indigenous Taino people.

No one doubts there are more 185mph winds and terrifying storm surges to come, and climate change seems to be making

things worse. "The warmer the upper ocean, the more powerful a hurricane can become," a study by the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory concluded in May last year.

"Irma was so powerful," sighs Kenroy Herbert, an Anguillian who runs a lifestyle management company on this tiny British Overseas Territory. "No one could prepare for something as strong as that." Every islander here has a tale to tell and it's a grim montage – children huddled under propped-up mattresses, villagers forming human chains, 4x4s flying through the air.

Tim Foy, governor of Anguilla, had taken up his post only a few weeks before Irma hit. He is proud of the UK government's response. "We paid for 40 Canadian linesmen to help restore power, and we've put close to £70 million into the island's recovery," he says.

Foy explains to me how a hurricane is not just about the physical damage that dominates the news reports – there's the economic loss, too. For a high-end holiday island with a short season such as Anguilla, it was essential to reopen the airport quickly to welcome the private jets that traditionally flock here over Christmas and New Year. A makeshift control tower was ingeniously fashioned out of upended shipping containers, and within a month the vital flights were coming in.

OPEN FOR BUSINESS

Strange as it seems, such hard blows can have their positive side. Once calm descends, you are left with an unscheduled opportunity to rebuild and improve. This was the case for Cuisinart Golf Resort and Spa on Anguilla's south-west coast. "We had to close for a year of reconstruction," says managing director Stephane Zaharia, as he proudly shows me a dazzling all-white beach resort with a host of "new bells and whistles". These include 91 suites and a state-of-the-art children's "Splash Pad" playground.

It's a similar story on the minuscule French playground of St Barths, where Irma's blasts were so strong that they broke all of the machines for recording wind speed. "I felt I was being suffocated," recalls Gary Monteremard, a cheery valet working at Hotel Le Toiny. He admits that the ensuing days were "very scary" because of the shortage of food and water.

Some 20 months on, visitors today will see little sign of damage here. Most hotels have reopened, with only a few, such as Eden Rock and Le Guanahani, taking longer to get back to the superlative standards demanded by their well-heeled customers.

Some of the islands affected now boast the most stylish and attractive escapes in the Caribbean



FROM TOP: Belmond La Samanna, St Martin; damage caused on St John, US Virgin Islands; Cuisinart Golf Resort and Spa on Anguilla



Ironically, while tourism figures on the hurricane-hit islands inevitably took a dent for the 2017-18 winter season, some now boast the most stylish and attractive escapes in the Caribbean. Belmond La Samanna on St Martin, Auberge Resorts' Malliouhana on Anguilla and Secret Bay on Dominica are some starry examples.

JOINT EFFORT

Another positive legacy is the sense of community that is born when islanders come together to face a crisis. Within hours, fishermen from Guadeloupe had launched their boats to speed essential supplies to St Barths, while Anguillians proudly relate how they didn't wait for outside help but just got straight on with the clearing up.

Nature seemed to offer support, too. On Dominica, where Maria stripped the trees as bare as the bristles on a toothbrush, islanders were amazed at how quickly the rainforest burst back into life, and there was joy when the endangered sisserou, an endemic parrot that forms the centrepiece of their national flag, was finally sighted 13 hours after the storms had passed.

Today, tourism is booming in many parts of the Caribbean. In February the Anguilla Tourist Board announced that visitor numbers had hit a 26-year high, while Antigua, Jamaica and Grenada have also reported record growth.

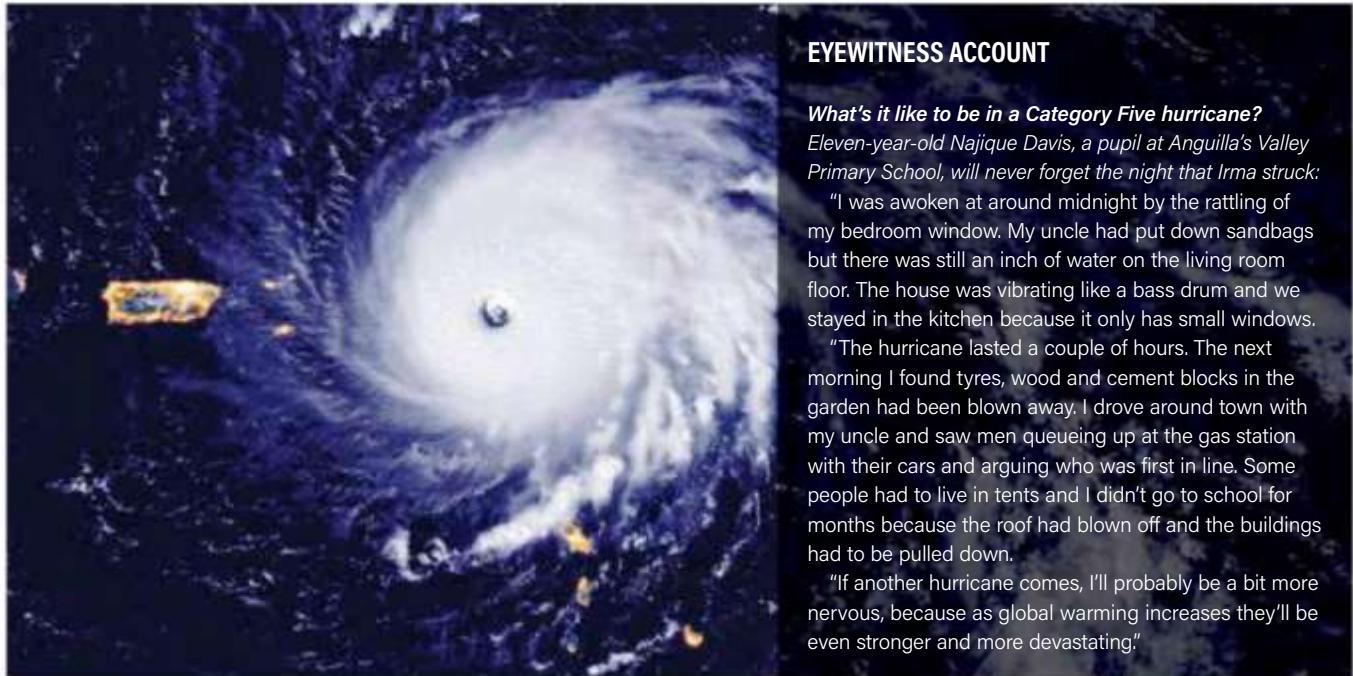




ONE MORE REASON
TO SAY THANK YOU

BEST AIRLINE IN CENTRAL ASIA AND INDIA 2019

 air astana



EYEWITNESS ACCOUNT

What's it like to be in a Category Five hurricane?

Eleven-year-old Najique Davis, a pupil at Anguilla's Valley Primary School, will never forget the night that Irma struck:

"I was awoken at around midnight by the rattling of my bedroom window. My uncle had put down sandbags but there was still an inch of water on the living room floor. The house was vibrating like a bass drum and we stayed in the kitchen because it only has small windows."

"The hurricane lasted a couple of hours. The next morning I found tyres, wood and cement blocks in the garden had been blown away. I drove around town with my uncle and saw men queueing up at the gas station with their cars and arguing who was first in line. Some people had to live in tents and I didn't go to school for months because the roof had blown off and the buildings had to be pulled down."

"If another hurricane comes, I'll probably be a bit more nervous, because as global warming increases they'll be even stronger and more devastating."

24

It was a great blessing when the 2018 hurricane season passed without further catastrophe, and the likelihood of further natural disasters has done little to stop the cranes swinging over new developments such as Kempinski's 160-room Cabrits Resort in Dominica, which is due to open late this year, or to deter major carriers such as American Airlines and Delta Air Lines from launching new flights.

CONTINGENCY PLANNING

Is the Caribbean ready for the next big one? I witness preparations at many levels, from back-up power supplies being installed for Anguilla's critical services to a hotel in St Kitts conducting a practice drill for tsunami evacuation. Three months ago, Jamaica's tourism minister, Edmund Bartlett, opened a new Global Tourism Resilience and Crisis Management Centre in Kingston that will face up to region-wide challenges such as climate change, disaster management and cybersecurity. It is a recognition that no island can cope with such issues in isolation, for while those that are wealthy or have long-standing ties with other countries have been able to rebuild fast, elsewhere the road to full recovery is looking long and hard.

Puerto Rico is still struggling, while Barbuda, Antigua's sister isle, was caught in the eye of Irma, resulting in the complete evacuation of its 1,800 residents. It was a year before they could return, and even now its settlements are a jumble of decapitated buildings and yards festooned with tents and tarps bearing tell-tale names like USAID, World Food Programme and Samaritan's Purse.

All of this could be depressing, yet I'm struck by the warmth and resilience of its islanders, their lifestyle still



FROM TOP: Hurricane Irma arriving in Barbuda; Secret Bay, Dominica

rich with the music, colour and charisma that makes so many of us visit the Caribbean time and again.

"It took us eight months to get it back in shape," says Barbara Petit, the French co-owner of Barbuda Belle, a barefoot luxury escape on the north coast. After 27 years here and with 14 local staff to support, even a mighty puff like Irma wasn't going to make her give up.

As we stroll along the blissfully deserted beach, she sees me staring with astonishment at a strange, rosy glow beneath our feet. "We didn't have pink sand here before the hurricane," Petit explains, and it's impossible not to see this enchanting blush, which is created from millions of shell fragments, as just another form of rainbow. Irma was a beast, for sure, but she also left a little beauty. □

IT'S TIME
FOR A TRAVEL
MOVEMENT.



STAY.
VISIT.
GET TO KNOW
MAURITIUS.

We are
salt

saltresorts.com



ADVANTAGE ZHUHAI



With its diverse industries, leisure resorts, compact size and strategic location near Hong Kong and Macau, this coastal mainland city boasts plenty of drawcards

WORDS MICHAEL ALLEN

On the 42nd floor of the 330-metre-high Zhuhai Tower, in the reception of the opulent St Regis Zhuhai hotel, an enormous mural occupies an entire wall opposite the reception desks. The mural depicts part of Zhuhai in the early 1900s, showing a beautiful village at the bottom of a verdant hillside. Rong Hong, the first Chinese student to graduate from an American university (Yale), is strolling away from the town and towards the viewer of the painting. Not far behind him, two children can be seen playing. Behind the town, the ocean is filled with sailboats.

This, one of the hotel staff tells me, is what the area surrounding Zhuhai Tower used to look like, but now it's unrecognisable when compared with the painting. All traces of the village seem to have disappeared, and the area is now being developed by state-owned enterprise Zhuhai Huafa Group. There are three major hotels (including the St Regis) in the vicinity, as well as a huge convention and exhibition centre.

"When I was little, Zhuhai was just a very small city, very few people were here, and I could not see a lot of high buildings. It was just like the countryside, but now it's quite different, especially in this area," says Angel Huang, marketing officer at the Zhuhai International Convention & Exhibition Center.

The centre's largest and most prestigious function room, the 4,500 sqm and 12.6-metre-high Zhuhai Hall, tends to be rented for provincial government functions. Even some large multinationals have balked at the expense of renting out this expansive area, PR officer Lehong Chen tells me during a tour.

The centre occupies a footprint of 269,000 sqm and a gross floor area of around 970,000 sqm (split into two phases). It has recently hosted events including The 3rd China-Israel Investment Summit, Walmart's New Year Celebration Meeting and a FAW-Volkswagen New Sagitar Press Conference.

Zhuhai is now a city of around 1.6 million people, which may seem large but is relatively small by Chinese standards. By comparison, Beijing and Shanghai are home to well over 20 million people each. However, Zhuhai is likely to rise in prominence both in China and internationally in the coming years, due to its integral positioning in the Chinese government's Greater Bay Area (GBA) initiative. The city also has a unique advantage over the other cities in the GBA: the 55-kilometre Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau bridge, opened in October 2018, makes Zhuhai the only mainland Chinese city linked directly to both Macau and Hong Kong by land.

Major industries in Zhuhai include digital information, biomedicine, home appliances, electric energy, petrochemicals, precision machinery and travel, says Harley Seyedin, president of The American Chamber of Commerce in South China. "We can observe from this unique blend that the city is ready to become the dark horse of the Greater Bay Area," he says.



'When I was little, Zhuhai was just a very small city, very few people were here, and I could not see a lot of high buildings... Now it's quite different'

Zhuhai is one of those areas that's been under-utilised – understated. It's not really been known what its direction would be. They've dabbled in every kind of industry you could imagine, but it's not been the immediate sought-after focal point for any particular industry. The GBA will change that."

THE ORLANDO OF CHINA

A major contributor to Zhuhai's success is likely to be Hengqin, an island to its south that is about three times the size of Macau. Little known outside of China, much of the island now resembles a giant construction site, but its strategic location right next to Macau means it can take advantage of Macau's lack of spare land by building attractions to lure more tourists over the border.

Billy Chan, director, international affairs office at Macau University of Science and Technology's faculty of medicine lives in Macau and often observes Hengqin Island when he takes coffee on his balcony each morning. He believes Hengqin has potential, but is definitely still in its early stages of development.

"They have a lot of bricks and mortar and glass and steel, and buildings standing up and half-finished," he says. "Hengqin is a great spot, it's really close to Zhuhai. I'm sure the government will give lots of incentives [for development], but I don't see a lot of activity yet – besides a lot of buildings. It's like the lights are on but nobody's home."

ABOVE AND
OPPOSITE PAGE:
Zhuhai International
Convention &
Exhibition Center,
with Macau in the
background;
and Zhuhai Tower



Given time, though, Hengqin Island is likely to grow into a major entertainment centre for southern China. Already, those involved or observing its development are dubbing it “the Orlando of China”.

“They have lots of empty space, very good traffic infrastructure with the [Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau] bridge, they have a high-speed train and their own airport, which can be developed. Basically, there’s a lot of infrastructure and a lot of land,” says Dr Markus Schuckert, an assistant professor at the School of Hotel and Tourism Management at Hong Kong Polytechnic University.

In a May 2019 visit to the Chimelong Hengqin Bay Hotel, *Business Traveller Asia-Pacific* toured the expansive 1,000-plus room property. Eight towering dolphin statues encircle a luminescent red anemone statue in the lobby. At the rear of the property, in front of the expansive swimming pool, is a smaller pool housing real-life dolphins for guests to observe. Even on the overcast day on which we visited, plenty of guests were poolside, with children floating in the pool on inflatable swans and flamingoes. A vast, then-empty car park opposite the hotel was expected to be filled with the shiny new automobiles of the Chinese middle classes come summer.

The property is just one of the hotels in the Chimelong International Ocean Tourist Resort, owned by Chimelong Group, a Chinese theme-park operator active in southern China since 1989. (The company also has a major tourist resort in Guangzhou.)

Guests at the resort on Hengqin can also choose to stay at the themed Chimelong Circus Hotel or Chimelong Penguin Hotel. (A fourth hotel is also under construction.) From these, hotel guests have easy access to the Chimelong Ocean Kingdom theme park, which features rides, a 5D theatre and animal exhibitions.

“Actually, Ocean Kingdom is one of the best parks in China because they imported a lot of know-how from Hong Kong and Macau. It’s really one of the first homegrown parks which really lever on an international scale,” says Dr Schuckert. “The guys who are running Chimelong [Ocean Kingdom] are partially from Disney and partially from Ocean Park [a theme park in Hong Kong], so they are coming with a solid know-how in the business.”

Another major tourism development in Hengqin is Novotown. At the time of writing, Novotown, which is being developed by Hong Kong company Lai Sun Group, is still very much a building site and feels like it’s in the middle of nowhere. But later this year, the 260,000 sqm site is set to be transformed into a multipurpose entertainment and meetings space.

Features will include Lionsgate Entertainment World, which will be Asia’s first movie-themed indoor experience centre and aims to bring to life some of the most successful Lionsgate productions, including *The Hunger Games*, *The Twilight Saga*, *The Divergent Series*, *Now You See Me*, *Gods of Egypt* and *Escape Plan*.



30

Then there's the National Geographic Ultimate Explorer, which will be an "edutainment centre" that "combines and presents wonders from science, exploration and adventures using state-of-the-art technology". Visitors will be able to stay at the 494-room Hengqin Hyatt Regency Hotel, and there's also an event venue called Hall of Inspiration that can hold up to 1,500 people.

With Chimelong Ocean Kingdom just down the road, some may feel the theme-park market here will become too saturated, but the government and developers are betting that the parks will complement rather than cannibalise each other. "They try to have a cluster of theme parks over there, including what they have in Hong Kong [Disneyland and Ocean Park]. As you can see from Orlando, the theme parks do not necessarily cannibalise each other, they subsidise and support each other," says Dr Schuckert.

"If you have more theme parks people stay longer. People swap from theme park to theme park and increase travelling there because there are a lot of new attractions. The advantage of Zhuhai is that shopping, gaming and entertainment are very close to each other. It's all within one hour's drive: you can go from 'Orlando' [Zhuhai] to 'Las Vegas' [Macau], and for shopping Hong Kong is like New York or San Francisco. Basically, in one hour you can jump between one, two, three cities."

All this development in Zhuhai is indeed very promising, but it needs to be put into perspective. China is a country of nearly 1.4 billion people, with a wide range of economically



important cities. In the Greater Bay Area alone, Zhuhai is already dwarfed by economic powerhouses like Guangzhou and Shenzhen. Still, Zhuhai's unique charm as a coastal, green city could be its standout characteristic.

"Zhuhai is quite small. It cannot compete with Shenzhen or Guangzhou," says Huang from the Zhuhai International Convention & Exhibition Center. "It's still a small city, but our feature is we have wonderful beaches, we can see the ocean and we can go to Hong Kong and Macau very conveniently, so this is our advantage." ■

THIS PAGE FROM
TOP: Chimelong
Hengqin Bay Hotel;
Novotown; and
Hengqin Island
skyline

Jumeirah
VITTAVELI
MALDIVES

BREATHLESS AT BEING SWEPT AWAY

Float along the white sandy shores of Jumeirah Vittaveli Maldives while you contemplate your next indulgence, from overwater fine dining to underground salons, the sheer volume of activities will take your breath away, leaving you yearning for more.



WORDS CRYSTAL REID

DOWN BUT NOT OUT

Despite a dramatic economic slowdown,
Chongqing's foreign businesses are undeterred



A forest of skyscrapers blocks the mountain views from both sides of the emerald Yangtze River that snakes through Chongqing, a second-tier city of more than 30 million people in central-western China. From here, throngs of tourists clamber aboard cruise ships headed for the Three Gorges Dam, the world's largest hydropower project and an undeniably awe-inspiring feat of humanity harnessing nature.

The dam, more than 600 kilometres away in neighbouring Hubei province, has done more than put Chongqing on the bucket lists of domestic sightseers. It also supplies the landlocked city with unlimited green energy and allows oceangoing ships to access its river port. The dam's completion, improvements in road and rail connections to the rest of China and beyond, and government initiatives to spur growth in western and central China have all led to a flurry of direct foreign investment over the past 20 years.

At one point Chongqing was one of the fastest-growing cities in the world, with double-digit GDP growth for 15 consecutive years from 2002, peaking at just over 17 per cent in 2010. In 2018, however, the city missed its 8.5 per cent growth target by a long shot, clocking up just 6 per cent, thus relegating it to the realms below the national average of 6.6 per cent. On a list of the country's fastest-growing regions compiled by China's National Bureau of Statistics, Chongqing has dropped from first place in 2016 to 24th last year.

Of course, that still puts Chongqing on a par with 2018's fastest-growing US state, Texas. But given China's breakneck development, can Chongqing still claim to be a viable investment for foreign companies, especially compared to first-tier business havens such as Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou, on China's affluent east coast?

One of only four Chinese cities under direct control of the central government, and the only one found away from the east, Chongqing served as the capital during, and briefly after, the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937–1945). Its geographical remoteness made it the obvious choice for military bases and weapons manufacturing, but that in turn rendered its export sector practically nonexistent. Even when local industries started to diversify into textiles, food, chemicals and electronics, the focus was very much on the domestic market.

The government spent RMB4 trillion (US\$600 billion) on fixed assets and infrastructure in Chongqing from 2013 to 2015, amounting to 94 per cent of the city's total GDP. Chongqing is now the economic centre of the upstream Yangtze basin, dominating manufacturing and helping to spur investment in the region. While heavy industry is still very much present, the landscape has slowly started shifting towards high-tech and service industries, with Honeywell, CISCO, IBM and Hewlett-Packard all setting up in the city. But while state investment in China's manufacturing hubs has propped up their economies for years, it has also made them susceptible to changes in domestic and global policies.



34

According to a Chongqing-born equity fund manager who requested to remain anonymous in order to speak candidly, the city's recent economic slowdown is caused by the risk-averse nature of local government officials. "In the east [of China] the officials are more open, more daring and their families have good economic backgrounds, so if they fail they can fall back on other businesses. Here officials are just officials. If they fail, they have nowhere else to go." He added that he feels Chongqing's economic structure is too focused on heavy industry and less fluid when compared to other provincial cities like Chengdu and Wuhan.

Contributing to its heavy credentials, the city was once the largest automobile manufacturing base in China, producing three million vehicles a year. Although Chongqing is still home to domestic manufacturers Changan and Lifan Motors, and foreign players Mazda, SWM and Ford, a saturated market saw growth in the China-wide auto industry – the world's largest – fall from 6.2 per cent in 2017 to -17.3 per cent in 2018.

Ford, which partners with state-owned automakers Changan and Jiangling Motors, has felt the local slowdown and the squeeze of the US-China trade war at its four massive plants in Chongqing. The company's China-based workforce is being cut by 2,000 personnel, roughly 10 per cent, after sales dropped by 37 per cent in China last year. They're not alone: GM, VW and Jaguar Land Rover have all seen their China sales fall. Despite the slowdown in the overall auto market, however, sales of electric cars are soaring in China thanks to government incentives aimed at quelling pollution.

Matt Moran, a spokesperson for Ford China, says that while the company still sees Chongqing as a dynamic and



'The market has been growing rapidly with huge potential,' says Claude Sarraill of METRO China

fast-growing business centre with "a vibrant local economy and supportive regulatory environment", he realises it must adapt to the Chinese consumer if it is to survive. "We start 2019 with a new mindset," he says.

In a bid to usher in a return to profitable growth, the "Ford China 2.0" blueprint, announced in April, will see more Chinese leadership and global talent with Chinese expertise installed at the mainland arm. Thirty new vehicles tailored to Chinese consumers, ten of which will be electrified, will be introduced over the next three years, and the company's new in-car infotainment offerings have been designed in partnership with Baidu's artificial intelligence technology. "We are focused on ensuring Ford's products and services reflect China's rapidly changing market environment," says Moran.

Despite the overall slowing GDP, Chongqing's foreign trade shot up 15.9 per cent year-on-year in 2018, hitting RMB522.26 billion (US\$77 billion). China's next generation of workers are also seeing the benefits. According to a report on the Employment Market for Graduates cited by business magazine China Briefing, 40 per cent of Chinese graduates hope to work in so-called "emerging first-tier cities" such as Chongqing, Hangzhou and Chengdu, while only 27 per cent are considering actual first-tier cities.

Chongqing is also still the retail and wholesale centre of southwest China, home to several foreign enterprises, such as METRO, Carrefour, Walmart and Gome. METRO was one of the earliest foreign wholesale retailers to enter China, staking its claim in 1996 and now boasting 13 million registered customers and more than eight million professional purchasing partners across 59 Chinese cities.



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT PAGE TOP:
Huaxin Street Paradise Walk shopping area; Chongqing is focused around the confluence of the Yangtze and Jialing rivers; Teng Hongjun; and Claude Sarrailh

The group opened its first Chongqing store in 2001, a second in 2003 and has no plans to leave. In fact, it hopes to expand further within the municipality – which is twinned with METRO's German home city of Dusseldorf – in the coming years.

METRO saw 2 per cent growth across its China operations last year, which the company credits to its focus on food safety, an ever-present concern for China's rising middle class, and their enthusiasm for the Retail 2.0 era. METRO has entered a strategic partnership with Alibaba to facilitate online shopping, is collaborating with third-party food delivery platforms Ele.me and Meituan, and communicates with millions of customers over China's ubiquitous social media platform WeChat.

"The market has been growing rapidly with huge potential, and there have been many opportunities for developing business," says Claude Sarrailh, president of METRO China. "The environment for doing business is good in Chongqing, the government takes economic growth very seriously, and the business and investment policies are also favourable for foreign investors."

Financial services are another component of Chongqing's economy, greatly buoyed by foreign direct investors. HSBC, Standard Chartered, ANZ, Scotiabank, Deutsche Bank and Citibank all have a footprint in the city, while preparatory approvals for Fubon Bank were granted at the start of the year.

America's Citibank established an office in Shanghai in 1902 and became one of the first international banks to be locally incorporated in China in 2007. It is now in 13 Chinese cities, including Chongqing, where it arrived in



'Many of our successes in China are being introduced to other parts of the world,' says Teng Hongjun of Citi China

2009 as part of expansion plans along the Yangtze River Economic Belt. Citibank too is partnering with Chinese tech giants such as Alibaba and Tencent – non-financial intermediaries shaking up the banking landscape. Over 90 per cent of Citi China customers use WeChat for their daily banking needs, and in 2018 the bank won *The Asset* magazine's Triple A Award for "Best Social Media Banking Enterprise".

Having thrown its weight behind digital in China by way of necessity, Citibank is now looking to export such practices globally. "Digitisation in China leads the world in many ways, and many of our successes in China are being introduced to other parts of the world," says Teng Hongjun, executive vice president of Citi China.

Established infrastructure, new business parks and relatively low tax and operational costs have for years now proved attractive to foreign companies looking to invest in this often overlooked part of China. As a result, the country's lower-tier cities are increasingly giving their first-tier counterparts a run for their money. At the close of 2018, 287 Fortune 500 companies had a presence in Chongqing, no doubt tempted by housing, labour and land costs much lower than the megacities of eastern China.

Chongqing's growth may be slowing along with China's economy, but companies that are able to weather the changing policies, adapt to shifting tastes and adopt new technologies quickly seem to flourish in this strategic position along the Yangtze River. "Citi is optimistic about the development and prospect of China's Yangtze River Economic Belt," says Teng. "We look forward to contributing to the overall advancement of China." ☐

18+

@magztore

WHAT IS AVAXHOME?

@magztope

AVAXHOME -

the biggest Internet portal,
providing you various content:
brand new books, trending movies,
fresh magazines, hot games,
recent software, latest music releases.

Unlimited satisfaction one low price
Cheap constant access to piping hot media
Protect your downloadings from Big brother
Safer, than torrent-trackers

18 years of seamless operation and our users' satisfaction

All languages
Brand new content
One site



We have everything for all of your needs. Just open <https://avxlive.icu>

New beds in BANGKOK

Capital stays in Thailand



The Thai capital has long offered an excellent range of hotels – often at great value compared with the likes of Singapore or Hong Kong – and an influx of new properties is adding even more choice to the mix. At the same time, some of its long-standing addresses are reinventing themselves. Here is a selection of new and forthcoming openings.

NEW...

ROSEWOOD

The newest luxury addition to the capital is Rosewood Bangkok, a 30-storey building inspired by the wai gesture of Thai greeting (slight bow, palms pressed together) on Ploenchit Road. Directly connected to the BTS Skytrain station, the hotel opened at the end of March and has 159 rooms and suites. Standout options are the Sky Pool studios and three “Houses”, which come with outdoor terraces and plunge pools. Reception can be found seven floors up, along with European brasserie Lakorn. Signature Chinese restaurant Nan Bei is on the 19th floor; its interior design is inspired by the Chinese legend of the Weaver Girl and

the Cowherd, and includes an illuminated “bridge of magpies” sculpture suspended in the atrium. A waterfall cascades down ten floors underneath the sculpture into the outdoor pool on level nine, where there is also a Sense Spa and a café. Lennon’s speakeasy is on the 30th floor. rosewoodhotels.com

HOTEL NIKKO

Set in an area known as “Japan Town”, it’s no surprise which demographic is a key focus for Hotel Nikko. Part of the same Japanese group that is behind the Okura Prestige, only a few stops away on the BTS Skytrain, it opened in mid-January. As with all of the brand’s hotels, the concept of Japanese omotenashi hospitality runs throughout. Alongside the 301 rooms and suites is a



WORDS PAUL J DEVRIES



OPPOSITE PAGE FROM TOP:
Marriott the Surawongse;
Rosewood Bangkok
THIS PAGE, CLOCKWISE
FROM TOP LEFT: Hotel
Nikko; Waldorf Astoria;
Hyatt Regency

signature Japanese restaurant with a sake and tempura bar, a pool and fitness centre, and meeting facilities. nikkobangkok.com

HYATT REGENCY

Hyatt has quadrupled its portfolio of Bangkok hotels in the past few years. Two years ago it opened a 222-room Park Hyatt on top of the Central Embassy luxury shopping mall on Wireless Road, around the corner from sibling Grand Hyatt Erawan. Among its facilities are the Penthouse Bar and Grill with a hidden Whiskey Room on floors 34-36 and a spa with an outdoor pool overlooking the city. Later in 2017, it added Hyatt Place Bangkok Sukhumvit, with 222 rooms and suites, a 24/7 grab-and-go outlet, and a 28th-floor rooftop bar.

At the end of last year, a fourth property arrived in the form of Hyatt Regency Bangkok, also located in Sukhumvit. It has 273 rooms and suites (accessible using your phone) plus a 27th-floor Regency Club lounge, a pool and gym, and meeting space including a ballroom for 850 people. Market Café is a casual Thai restaurant, while Spectrum Lounge and Bar is set across the top three floors and focuses on seafood and meat. hyatt.com

WALDORF ASTORIA

There isn't much space on Ratchadamri Road, which is lined with hotels and residences facing the green expanse of the Royal Bangkok Sports Club. Nonetheless, Waldorf Astoria Bangkok opened in

summer last year between the Grand Hyatt Erawan and Anantara Siam hotel, part of the 60-storey mixed-use Magnolias development. True to the Waldorf Astoria brand, the Peacock Alley serves light meals and afternoon tea on the lobby level. Its 171 rooms and suites are designed by André Fu. Most of the high-rise contains private residences, but on floors 55-57 are the Loft Bar, the Champagne Bar and restaurant Bull and Bear, specialising in grilled meat and seafood. waldorfastoriacollection.com

MARRIOTT HOTEL THE SURAWONGSE

Marriott International has a range of hotels to choose from in the Thai capital, including Marriott, Marriott Marquis and JW Marriott options. Just over a year ago, it

Hyatt has quadrupled its portfolio of Bangkok hotels in the past few years

FROM TOP:
Capella;
the Sukhothai



added Marriott Hotel the Surawongse, in the Si Phraya neighbourhood, roughly midway between Lumpini Park and the Chao Phraya river. It offers more than 300 rooms and suites (including extended-stay options) dressed in a mix of greys and whites and with light wooden floors. Facilities include a Club lounge, an outdoor pool with views over the city, and a 32nd-floor restaurant and rooftop bar. marriott.com

IMPROVED...

THE SUKHOTHAI

The Sukhothai Bangkok started 2019 by cutting the ribbon on its Club wing, the rebirth of its former Terrace wing. It has 33 new rooms and suites by the original designer, Ed Tuttle, a sixth-floor Club lounge and a new gym. Additional work gave a fresh look to its swimming pool and Italian restaurant La Scala. The opening of the Club wing is the first phase of a comprehensive renovation of the 28-year-old property, which got its first international sibling in the Sukhothai Shanghai in April last year. sukhothai.com

MANDARIN ORIENTAL

Having celebrated its 140th anniversary a few years ago with the renovation of its Author and Garden wings, Mandarin Oriental Bangkok kicked off the next phase of its transformation in March. That involved closing the River wing (its largest), as well as the main lobby, pools, and three of its restaurants. Over seven months, the number of rooms in the River wing will be reduced from 338 to 301 (the suite count will go up from 30 to 46) as they get a complete overhaul by Jeffrey Wilkes of Design Wilkes. The Author and Garden wings will remain operational. A full reopening is planned for October. mandarinoriental.com



COMING SOON...

CAPELLA

Due within the next few months is Capella Bangkok, part of the Chao Phraya Estate in the Charoenkrung neighbourhood, down the river from the Mandarin Oriental and Shangri-La. It will have 101 suites and waterfront villas, a signature restaurant by chef Mauro Colagreco, and Auriga Wellness centre. Capella will expand further with openings in the Maldives in 2020 and Sydney in 2021. capellahotels.com

FOUR SEASONS

A few months after Capella, Four Seasons will open the successor to its previous long-term home on Ratchadamri Road (now the Anantara Siam) in the same riverside development. With interiors by Jean Michel Gathy, it will have 299 contemporary rooms and suites, as well as a Chinese restaurant, riverfront French

brasserie and expansive outdoor pool. A 73-storey residential tower in between the hotel and Capella will have 366 branded residences. fourseasons.com

AVANI SUKHUMVIT

Minor Hotels opened its first purpose-built Avani hotel here in 2016, behind its sister property Anantara Riverside, on the western riverfront of the Chao Phraya. By the middle of the year, it will complete a second new-build (and third in total) Avani hotel in the city, this time along the Sukhumvit artery, next to the On Nut BTS Skytrain station. Set within the Century the Movie Plaza 2 complex, the 382-room Avani Sukhumvit Bangkok will have a spa with a skyline pool and gym, and an all-day restaurant. avanihotels.com

ORIENT EXPRESS

Originally meant to become the Bangkok Edition, the hotel inside Thailand's tallest

WHAT'S **40N**
years

AWARDS **2019**

REGISTRATION
NOW OPEN

WhatsOn.ae/awards

THE REGION'S FAVOURITE RESTAURANT,
LEISURE & ENTERTAINMENT AWARDS



WhatsOnDubai

#WOawards





By the middle of the year Minor Hotels' Avani brand will open its third property in the city

40

FROM TOP:
Four Seasons;
Avani Sukhumvit;
Sindhorn Kempinski



tower will open as Orient Express Hotel Bangkok towards the end of this year, the first in a collection under the Accor umbrella – part of an agreement between Accor and SNCF Group to develop the brand. Designer Tristan Auer is responsible for bringing the Art Deco influences and plant motifs of the original Orient Express carriages inside architect Ole Scheeren's futuristic pixelated 78-storey high-rise. What that looks like is still under wraps, but in addition to 154 rooms and suites, there will be Thai and Cantonese restaurants, a rooftop restaurant and bar on level 76, and a spa by Guerlain. accorhotels.com

STEIGENBERGER HOTEL RIVERSIDE

Mandarin Oriental has had its home along the Chao Phraya river for well over a century, but in the first quarter of 2020 it will welcome a new neighbour in the shape of the Steigenberger Hotel Riverside. The 259-room property, a conversion of an existing building, will be the first in South East Asia for the German group. Facilities will include a spa with indoor and outdoor pools, a 17th-floor restaurant and a roof terrace one floor further up. steigenberger.com

KIMPTON

Capella and Four Seasons Bangkok are not the city's only two new hotels sharing one master development. Sindhorn Village, a 8.9 hectares mixed-use complex close to Lumpini Park, will bring both the first Kimpton and a second Kempinski hotel to the capital by summer next year. Kimpton Bangkok will have 349 rooms and suites, two

restaurants, a gym, pool and spa, as well as 124 serviced residences. The hotel is part of the aggressive expansion plans Intercontinental Hotels Group (IHG) has for the Kimpton brand, with future properties in Asia in the pipeline for Shanghai, Tokyo, Bali and more. kimptonhotels.com

SINDHORN KEMPINSKI

Meanwhile, the Sindhorn Kempinski – sibling to the Siam Kempinski, just north of the Royal Bangkok Sports Club – will have 280 rooms and 225 serviced residences when it opens in July next year. Exact details of the facilities are still to be confirmed, but they will include a spa. Its second Bangkok hotel will follow recent openings in Singapore and Bali, with properties in China's Guangzhou and Hangzhou still planned for this year. kempinski.com

VOCO SUKHUMVIT 11

Kimpton isn't the only IHG brand coming to Bangkok – in 2021, the 300-room Voco Bangkok Sukhumvit 11 will arrive. Voco is a new upscale brand in the IHG stable that started life with Voco Gold Coast in Australia in late 2018 (see also our review of the new Voco in Cardiff at businesstraveller.com). ihg.com/voco

MELIA BANGKOK

In 2022, Spanish group Melia Hotels will open its first Bangkok property, also in Sukhumvit. Part of a mixed-use development, it will have 315 rooms, various food and drink outlets, a spa and gym, and meeting space. melia.com

5 MILLION PASSENGERS EVERY MONTH

NATIVE MARKETING OPPORTUNITIES
AVAILABLE ON EMIRATES



- Tourist Attractions
- Entertainment
- Dining
- Activities
- Golfing

From restaurants to golf courses,
places to go and things to see,
promote your leisure attractions
with bespoke videos on the new
Emirates promo-guide channels

FOR ENQUIRIES:
+971 4 427 3000 | sales@motivate.ae

MOTIVATE
MEDIA GROUP
motivatemedia.com

WAY FORWARD

Four advances in airport technology to look out for

WORDS JENNI REID



Airport solution providers – the people who make just about every part of your journey possible, from shops and security to airbridges and bag handling – gathered in London in March for the annual Passenger Terminal Expo. The exhibits provided an insight into what you can expect to find in the airports of tomorrow, and developments that should make travel a more seamless and enjoyable process. This is what's in store...

1

BETTER BAG TRACKING

Fewer bags are getting lost by airlines and airports – only 5.57 per thousand in 2017, according to aviation tech specialist SITA's most recent report. Happily, that figure looks set to improve even further. Last year, the International Air Transport Association (IATA) passed Resolution 753, which requires members to track bags at four points – handover from the passenger, loading on to the aircraft, delivery to transfer area and return to the passenger – and share tracking information with interline journey partners as needed.

While this hasn't created a sudden

Dennison, Custom and Seikodo, explained that while the printing is more expensive, the machines used to scan them come considerably cheaper than the ones that scan barcodes (around US\$2,000, compared with US\$10,000), and economies of scale should mean the printing itself becomes cheaper as more airlines opt for the technology.

The labels contain passive chips with no internal power source that become activated when an antennae "shines" on them, after which they communicate information back. This means they can be read more easily, unlike a barcode that may be concealed or damaged.

In its 2018 survey into passenger attitudes, SITA found that 95 per cent of respondents would like an app that notified them about where their bag was along the journey (like Delta's does, using RFID tags). The IATA resolution could see this become more commonplace.

SITA is also adapting its World Tracer database, which shares information about lost bags between 510 airlines and 2,800 airports, into a public information source. Passengers can use a website or app to submit details of their lost luggage and enter a return address, instead of having to wait at an airport counter. They can track the bag's progress via the app.

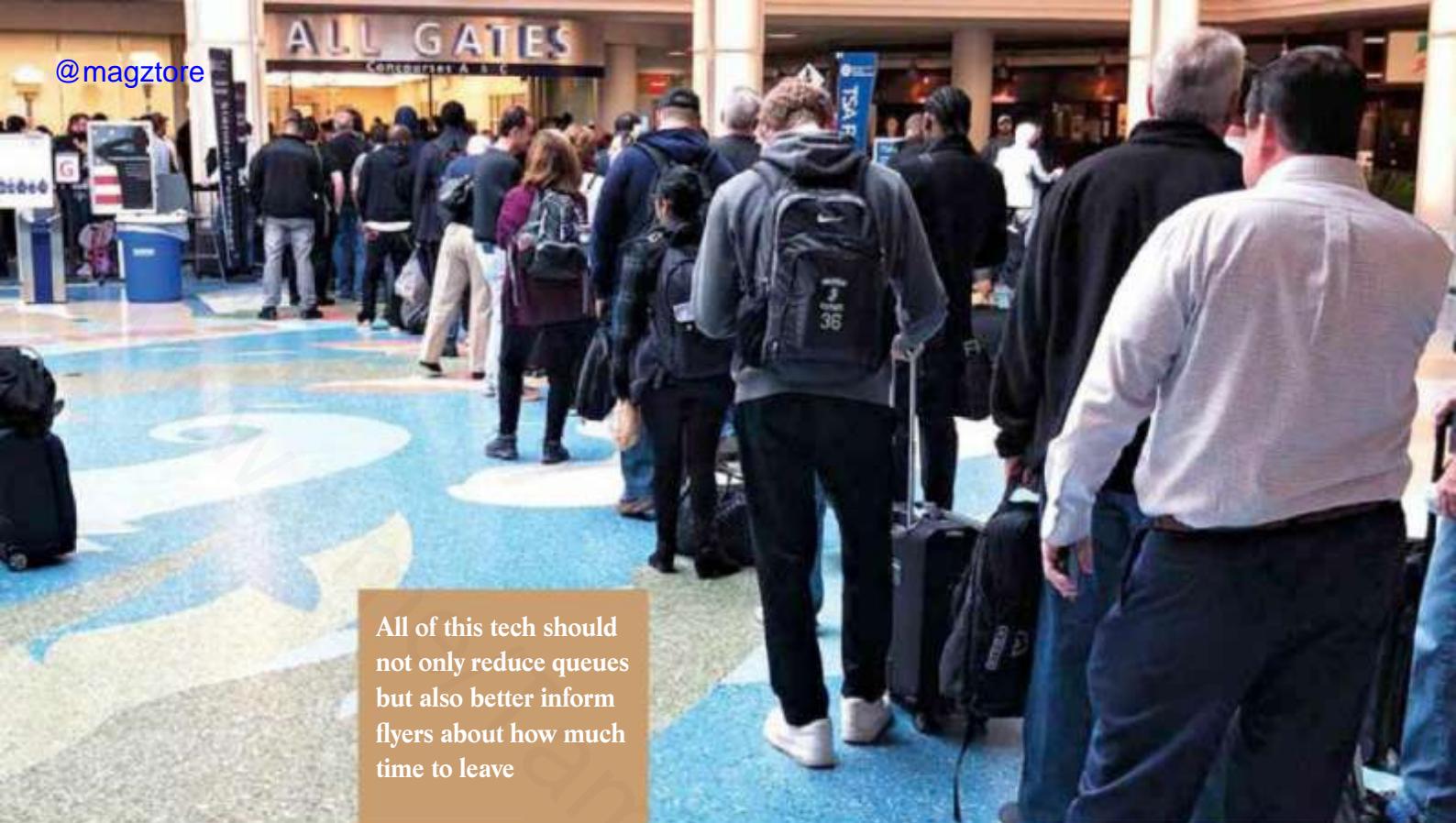
2

SHORTER QUEUES

The data that airports compile on how people move through them is becoming much more detailed. Numerous companies offer hardware and software to help airports reduce queues, optimise space and better allocate and position staff. Abu Dhabi International Airport, for example, partnered with Pads4 to use smart sensors to siphon people into efficient queue patterns, while London City worked with Arcport to create simulations of passenger

transformation in practices, it is leading airports, airlines and ground handlers to invest in new technology that allows them to better track the 4.65 billion bags they carry each year.

RFID (radio-frequency identification) is one of the best ways to track bags but is still not used by a majority of airlines. Several exhibitors showing machines that can print RFID labels, such as Avery



All of this tech should not only reduce queues but also better inform flyers about how much time to leave

movements to lower the average journey time from airport arrival to the departure lounge to 20 minutes.

Futuristic-looking crowd monitoring systems at the Expo showed everything from an individual's gender and height to whether they were a passenger or airport staff, even using facial recognition to ascertain how they might be feeling. All are creating anonymous databases that airports can use to understand where customers are going and when.

It's not just your face that airports are interested in – Italian seat company Tecno displayed seats that track how long someone sits in them. They also monitor when passengers are using tables and plug sockets, all aimed at allowing better decision-making on where to place them.

3 IMPROVED TIME MANAGEMENT

All of this should not only reduce queues but also better inform flyers about how much time to leave. US company Iinside uses lidar scanners to detect human shapes at a dozen US airports.

It passes that data on for the calculation of average queue times that can be sent to a phone or app, predictive queue times based on current events and past patterns, and queues at places such as traffic stands. Such systems are in place at New York JFK, Iceland's Keflavik, Amsterdam Schiphol, Manchester and Birmingham.

It could mean an airline or ride-hailing app suggesting what time to leave home to catch your flight, incorporating current traffic, vehicle queues around the airport and predicted security wait times a few hours ahead.



"When you don't know how long a line is, the experience tends to feel between 20 and 30 per cent longer than it is," said Iinside chief executive Sam Kamel. The technology is all about "taking the unpredictability out of the airport experience", he added.

4 MORE BIOMETRICS

We've recently written about the use of biometrics ("Face of the future", March 2019 issue), and it is clear that there is a boom in companies providing such

services. These include "end-to-end" or partial biometric systems that use facial recognition at check-in, bag-drop, security and boarding, as well as some that use iris, fingerprint and even voice recognition.

Panasonic had an impressive range of facial recognition technologies at the Expo. They included an information screen that will highlight your flight number and gate as you look at it, and a robot on trial at Tokyo Narita that will provide information such as how to get to your gate based on the flight information it matched up with your face (you provide the biometric data and your passport information at a kiosk during check-in).

Airline alliances are in for a shake-up

The departure of China Southern from Skyteam is likely to lead to a wider restructuring of alliances in Asia



PROFESSOR DAVID YU
IS AN ADJUNCT PROFESSOR OF FINANCE
AT NEW YORK UNIVERSITY SHANGHAI AND
MANAGING DIRECTOR OF INCEPTION AVIATION

Last November, China Southern Airlines (CSA) announced it was leaving Skyteam. This has resulted in a mad dash among other airlines, especially those in the other two major alliances, Oneworld and Star Alliance.

Before the announcement, Skyteam had two Chinese major carriers, the other being China Eastern. Star Alliance also has a strong presence in Greater China, with Air China and Shenzhen Airlines, and its newest Connecting Partner, Juneyao Airlines. Oneworld has Hong Kong-based Cathay Pacific (CX) and Cathay Dragon servicing the Greater China region. This dynamic has been awkward as the two carriers are in different alliances, but Air China holds a 29.99 per cent stake in CX.

CX has many existing ties to Oneworld members. The airline recently received US\$200 million (a 2.76 per cent investment) from American Airlines, and Qatar Airways took a 5 per cent stake in CSA in December 2018. CSA already has commercial arrangements with Qantas, BA, Japan Airlines and AA, and has just signed a codeshare with Finnair starting this month. These factors all seem to make joining Oneworld attractive and easier with these existing relationships. But not so fast...

CX has the trump card in this arrangement: a veto right for any new airline joining the alliance. Would it exercise that right? Or perhaps CX would leave Oneworld altogether and join its large shareholder, Air China, in Star Alliance. I think the latter is the more likely outcome:

we will see a wholesale restructuring and shift of the major alliance members, with CX opting to leave Oneworld in favour of Star Alliance, and CSA entering Oneworld. Blocking CSA's membership only makes sense if CX stays in Oneworld. CSA and CX have similar international hub business models with bases very close to each other in Guangzhou and Hong Kong, respectively. Having both in the same alliance does not make sense with so much overlap. Both airlines also have big fleets. Their network coverage also overlaps on many major international destinations. In this situation, CX, with its power of veto, has the leverage of choosing what to do first, even though it is the smaller of the two airlines. CX's recent poor financial performance heightens its need to re-evaluate its own business, as well as realign its network and cost basis with its owner partner in Air China and Star Alliance, which will continue its direct competition with CSA but now with different alliance teams. CX already has commercial arrangements with many Star Alliance members including Air China, Air New Zealand, Air Canada and Lufthansa.

The biggest challenge for passengers is which home airline-based alliance they end up with, and whether that best serves their connectivity and flight option needs.

For Hong Kong-based customers focused on Asia, CX joining Star Alliance would be good: the connectivity within Asia will increase, adding Air China and SIA along with its other worldwide partners' networks. This change would not be as good for those who travel more frequently with BA and AA.

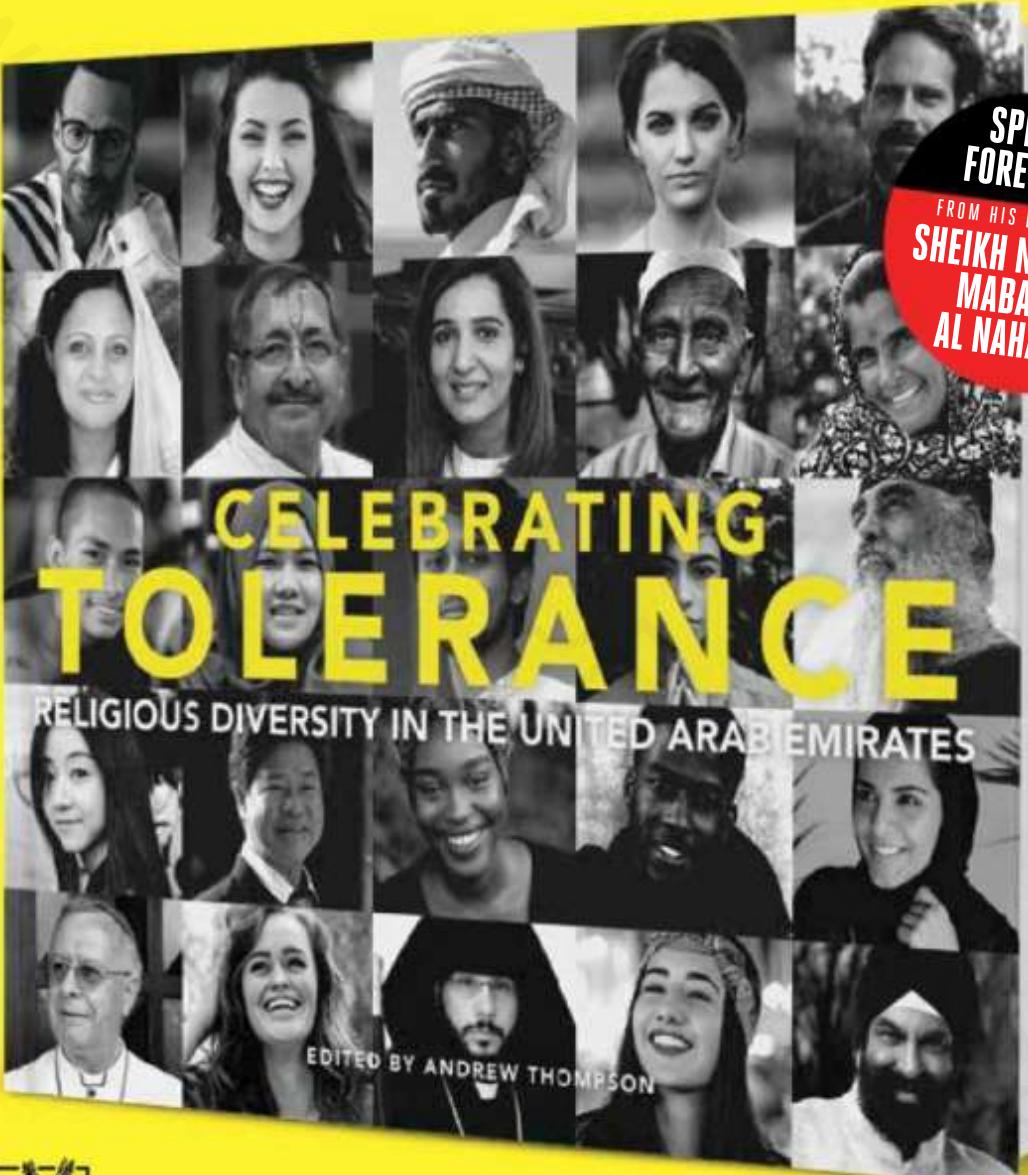
For travellers based in mainland China, especially those more likely using Star Alliance in Beijing, adding CX will enhance travel options. For mainland customers, this is a good net move as existing Star Alliance customers will have expanded reach globally with the entry of CX. Existing CSA customers will have a larger reach out of Guangzhou through the expanded network of Oneworld partners than if the Chinese carrier remained outside of any alliance. Overall, such a shake-up would be good for customers. It will increase the global competitiveness and respective reaches of each of the three major alliances and their Asian members.

The downside is that with a change in alliances, frequent flyer miles racked up on partner airlines might not count as they did before. This might not be as big an issue if you are a frugal buyer aiming solely at the lowest cost fares. Though, as always, it's better for frequent travellers to stick with one or more alliances with home hubs that suit travel destination and frequency selection. □

Cathay Pacific has the trump card: a veto right for any new airline joining Oneworld

CELEBRATING TOLERANCE

RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY IN THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES



2019 YEAR OF TOLERANCE

AVAILABLE IN ALL LEADING BOOKSTORES AND AT BOOKSARABIA.COM



JOIN THE CLUB

46

British Airways has unveiled its new business class seat – the Club Suite. In advance of its debut in July, we take a look at the future of business class flying with the airline

WORDS TOM OTLEY

The new British Airways Club Suite is coming any day now. Details have been released about the roll-out of the seat on the new A350-1000 aircraft that the airline will begin receiving from July, and the retrofit of the product starting with the B777 fleet. This year you will find it on four A350-1000s and two B777-200s, first on a few short-haul flights to Madrid in August and September, and then on select services to Toronto and Dubai from October.

For BA passengers used to flying in business class (or simply walking through it on the way to premium economy or economy), what's initially striking is the new configuration. All seats face forward in a herringbone layout, replacing Club World's familiar forward/backward-facing yin-yang formation.

Herringbone takes its name from the angled look of the seats when viewed from above on a plan. Many airlines use this configuration since it allows seats to face forward while at the same time efficiently using the limited space in the business class cabin. The seat is the Collins Aerospace Super Diamond, which can be found on several carriers – we took a look at these in the business class seat guide in our previous issue, and the feature is available at businesstraveller.com to subscribers.

The current configuration of eight seats across (2-4-2) has been replaced by 1-2-1, but perhaps most surprising is the addition of a door, allowing BA to call the new Club World seat the Club Suite. British Airways' in-house designers and product development team have been working on the seat since 2016 in close collaboration with Collins Aerospace at Winston-Salem in North Carolina.

BA boss Alex Cruz says: "We had a choice between a 100 per cent bespoke seat, an evolution of the existing Club World seat, and what we have selected [a bespoke version of the Super Diamond]. Each of those choices offered different types of challenges, but probably the criterion that overruled everything was speed to market, as well as it being a great product for our customers. As much as I'm not in love with the roll-out process, we will continue to work with the manufacturers to see if we can speed it up."

The new seat addresses many of the complaints frequently levelled at the existing one – it now has direct aisle access, plenty of storage (see overleaf) and ample privacy courtesy of the door and the 30-degree oblique angle the seat is set at.

The door is unique, and provides the all-important differentiation with other airlines' business class products. It will be fixed in the open position for take-off (and landing), after which flight attendants will release the locking mechanism. You can then leave it open or closed. For safety certification reasons the customer isn't



Perhaps most surprising is the addition of a door, allowing BA to call it the Club Suite

allowed to unlock the door during take-off and landing.

The latest Panasonic X3 in-flight entertainment system (the same as on BA's newly renovated Gatwick fleet) has an 18.5-inch screen. The fact that this is fixed into the shell of the seat in front (or the bulkhead for the front seats) means that you also get gate-to-gate entertainment, because the screen doesn't need to be popped back into place. There is also a control panel for the seat presets, plus a fine-tuning option so you can have the angle of recline that you prefer.

For take-off and landing, there is a shoulder strap. This means that there's no need for an airbag in the waist seatbelt, enhancing comfort for the rest of the flight.

The seat converts into a 79-inch bed and has a width of 21 inches, half an inch more than the existing product. The A350 will have 56 Club Suites, 56 World Traveller Plus (premium economy) seats and 219 World Traveller (economy) seats.

On which aircraft will it be fitted?

All of British Airways' long-haul aircraft, apart from the B747s, which are gradually being retired (the A350 is being introduced to replace the B747). This year, it will be on four A350-1000s (and eventually all 18 of them) and a couple of B777-200s.

Will it be more expensive?

BA is adamant that despite the new configuration being less dense, the price of the seats will not increase. In the case of the aircraft it is being retrofitted on, the number of Club seats will either stay the same or rise slightly. For instance, on the four-class B777, the number of Club seats will rise from 48 to 49. This is achieved by reducing First from 14 seats to eight, keeping premium economy the same, and taking some rows from economy class. Bear in mind that the number of economy seats will also rise as the aircraft goes from nine-across to ten-across.

MATERIALS

These have been carefully chosen. As well as satisfying stringent safety specifications, they also have to satisfy the colour palette of the new cabin, which is dark on first impression and then light inside the suite, with warm silver, grey and charcoal hues. UK company Hainsworth was used to provide the seat fabrics. There is also a nice touch of felt lining around the inside of the suite, intended to help dampen noise.

ARMREST

The stitched leather you see here is from Scottish company Muirhead (it's also on the ottoman footrest). The armrest has a button to lower it after take-off, not only providing comfort but also increasing the amount of room around your shoulders when the seat is fully reclined into a bed.

48

STORAGE

The existing Club World seat has only a foot drawer for any substantial storage. The new seat has several areas including three distinct lockers with lids, one of which contains the power points for charging your devices, and a fourth space for a water bottle.

SEAT CONTROLS

The controls have some easy presets but there are also more options (accessed through the touchscreen) for fine-tuning your seat. Note the anodised trim, which also frames the door on the aisle, and the wood grain-effect panel below the seat controls. The surface above the seat control, in fact, lifts to reveal another of the several storage areas incorporated around the seat.

**DOOR**

BA is the first airline to add a door to the Collins Aerospace Super Diamond and it helps it to justify calling the new seat a "Suite". The door has to be open for take-off and landing but can be closed afterwards if you want privacy or left open if you prefer.



PRIVACY SCREEN

Between the centre two seats is a sliding privacy screen. Keep it open if you want to talk to a travelling companion or shut for privacy. It can be adjusted throughout the flight to suit your preference, including take-off and landing.



TABLE

Every traveller wants a table large enough to dine and work at. British Airways has gone further, however, by tailoring the design so that, when not in use, it recesses fully under the IFE screen, giving you more room and ensuring it does not impinge upon sleep space. It is a bi-fold design with a strong support underneath.



BEDDING AND AMENITIES

The new seat sees the continuation of BA's partnership with the White Company, including a new larger pillow and cotton pillowcase, a blanket with satin trim, a duvet and a padded mattress cover. The big bag that the bedding comes in can now be stowed under the ottoman footrest for take-off and landing. The amenity bag is also by the White Company and includes sample-size products. □



WORDS ALANA SCHETZER

You may not have heard of the New Zealand town of Dunedin, but it packs a lot of flavour. Located at one of the southernmost points of the South Island, it is the sort of place that seems designed for hearty drinks in front of a fire, a gourmet picnic in its green woods and experimental degustation.

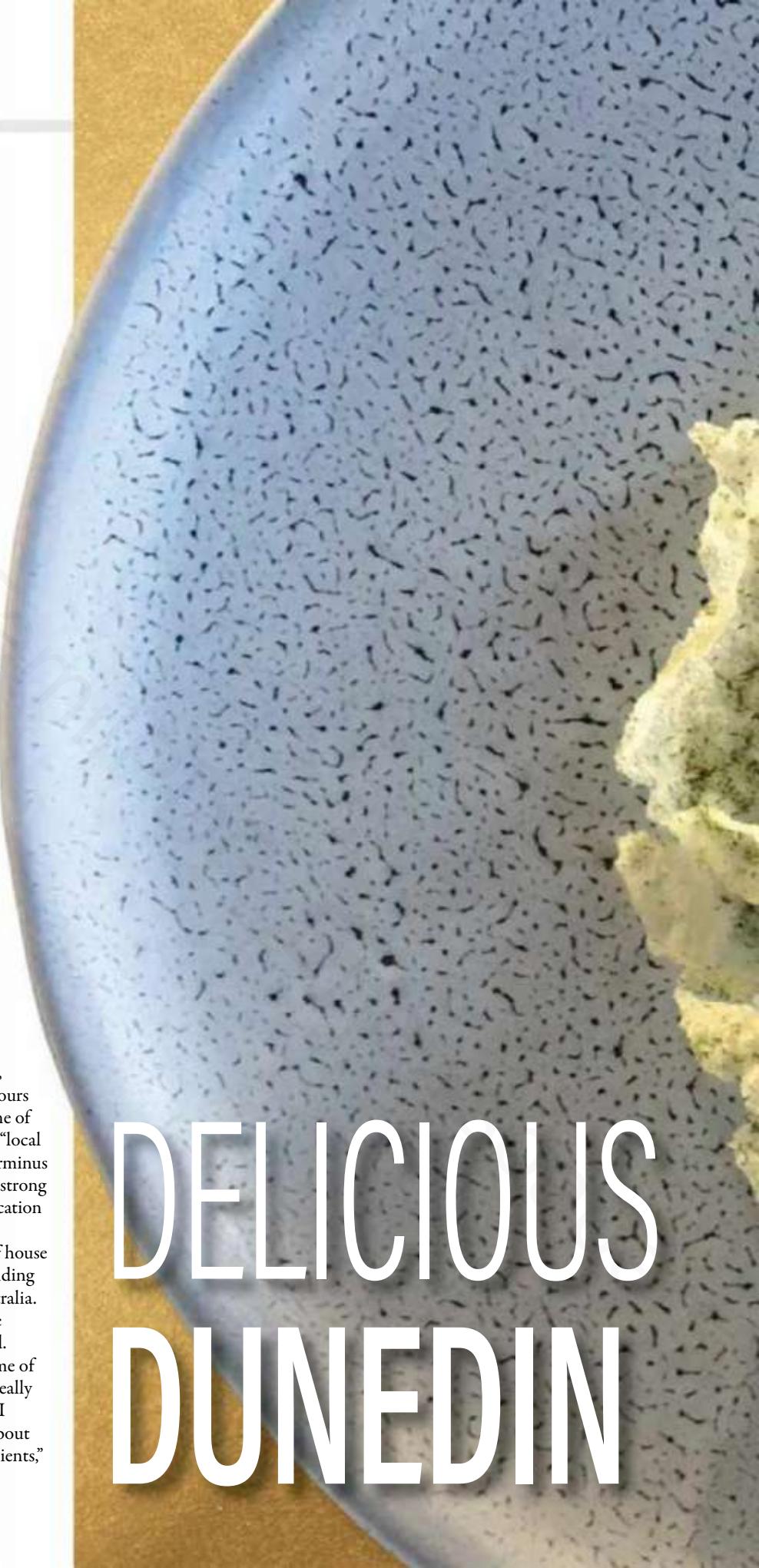
With a population of just under 130,000 but sprawling across 3,314 square kilometres, Dunedin is small enough to feel like a genuine getaway from big city life, but not so small that your options are restricted. Dotted with 19th-century buildings, an NRL stadium and university, it's a big city bundled into this southern pocket of New Zealand.

Along with food, Dunedin's natural environment is its calling card for visitors. Be prepared for bracing fresh air while wandering the intense greenery of the surrounding hills, where huge parcels of land are dotted with trees and bushes, or take a scenic train ride with Dunedin Railways through Taieri Gorge, a 40-kilometre-long canyon of exceptional natural beauty in Central Otago's wilderness.

Dunedin is emerging as a fresh foodie destination, where local produce is mixed with international flavours and a broad range of creative culinary influences. One of the town's newer restaurants, Moiety, illustrates this "local but global" approach. Created inside the historic Terminus building, a former 19th-century hotel, Moiety has a strong Japanese influence that is expressed through its dedication to using fresh, local ingredients.

Chef Sam Gasson, along with partner and head of house Kim Underwood, opened Moiety in 2018 after spending six years abroad, including stints in Europe and Australia. Both Dunedin natives, they returned home to create something that reflected their own approach to food.

"I've always really enjoyed Japanese food, with some of the chefs I worked with during my early days being really big on Japanese, so that came through to me. When I travelled to Japan, it really reaffirmed what I loved about the food, their techniques and respect for the ingredients," says Gasson.

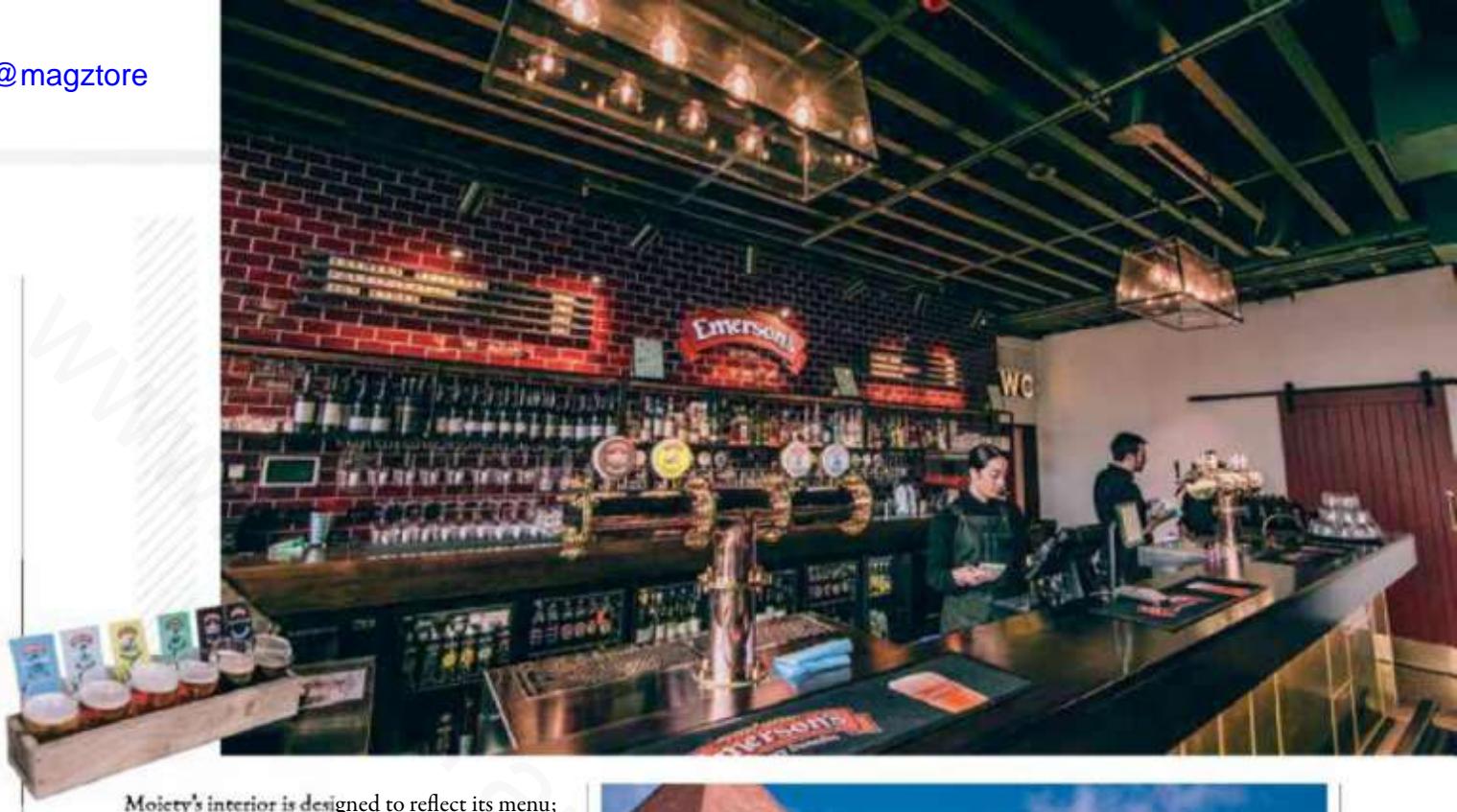


DELICIOUS DUNEDIN



From chocolate mixed with bee pollen to craft beer infused with deer's anatomy, this town on New Zealand's South Island has a lot to offer the adventurous eater

MAGZ
magztore.com
The easy way to get magazine



Moiety's interior is designed to reflect its menu; inside, exposed brick walls both contrast but also blend with the otherwise sleek, minimalist design of colour-block padded chairs and benches, and Scandinavian-style touches. That contrast is repeated in its stripped-back menu, which features just a single five-course degustation and a handful of snacks.

Using as much local produce as is practical, Moiety rotates its dishes regularly, with at least one dish a week making way for a fresh spin on its hybrid Japanese cuisine. "We want to keep it interesting for our customers; it's a small, concise menu and we already have a lot of loyal, regular customers so it's all about keeping it interesting and getting their feedback," Gasson says.

Sitting at the bar, which overlooks the kitchen, I'm served a delicate plate of salmon that's been gently grilled, with a brush of nori paste and a garnish of thinly sliced radish, laid out to mimic the scales of the fish. The salmon melts in the mouth, with the nori paste giving it an umami whack that makes it scrumptious.

For dessert, the rather opaquely titled "chocolate peanut butter, milk, mandarin" comes out as a chocolate and peanut butter bar of semifreddo that's topped with a crunchy milk powder and droplets of intense mandarin gel. It's fresh, creamy and exquisite. When creating new dishes, Gasson lets what local produce is seasonal at the time drive his creativity, saying: "There are no limitations to what we can do."

BOOMING BREWERIES

Dunedin's booming brewery scene is full of contrasts, from small, highly experimental outlets to local craft breweries that have grown into big businesses.



THIS PAGE:
The main bar and exterior of Emerson's brewery; its six-brew sampler; and a can of craft beer

OPPOSITE PAGE FROM TOP LEFT: Emerson's interior; inside Moiety restaurant; on the Ocho tour; and a piece of Ocho chocolate



Emerson's is a craft brewery that kicked off with craft-sized goals but has grown into one of the giants of the New Zealand beer scene. Respected late English beer journalist Michael Jackson even named Emerson's 1812 India Pale Ale as one of the top 500 beers in the world.

Cementing its reputation as a big player, Emerson's opened a custom-designed brewery that's also home to a restaurant, bar and cellar room. As well as being a practical, multipurpose space, it doubles as a homage to the brand's humble roots and its connection to Dunedin. Mementos from the brand's early days dot the wall, including a handwritten note from founder Richard Emerson to his grandmother, stating that he wanted to one day own his own pub. Although it has an industrial design, much work has been done to give the restaurant and bar side of the building a cosy, vintage-inspired look. There are dark woods, plush couches and atmospheric lighting. Its broad but refined menu matches with Emerson's brews, much as wines have traditionally been matched with food.

A popular option is the six-brew sampler, which comes with a mix of its popular regulars and seasonal offerings. The highlight for me is the low-hops, Chinese-inspired Gaitan Dragon, which has a tingle of spice flavour.



On the other end of the scale is New New Brewery, which at just three years old, has the adventurous spirit and devil-may-care attitude that matches its young age perfectly. Set up in a small warehouse that's recently welcomed a new beer garden, its design mimics its unorthodox approach. Head brewer Brendan Bransgrove has a knack for taking the most random of ingredients and finding a way to make them not only palatable but tasty.

During my visit, I'm presented with the option of trying its smoked eel stout – that's not just its name, but also its key ingredient. With the same warm amber glow of most brews, it looks fine, but what does it taste like? I gulp down a mouthful, waiting for a fishy taste to plunder my mouth... but there is none. It has the smokiness, and a saltiness to it, that makes it unusual but surprisingly drinkable.

Manager Dallas Synnott says smoked eel is by no means the most unusual ingredient that's been used. That honour goes to... the male part of the deer. "It was very drinkable," Synnott says as she laughs. "We obviously had to warn vegans but it was a nice drink."

"We're called New New because we like invention and continuously creating something new. Our head brewer always has at least one experimental brew going on; he's like a chef, he just loves to invent new things," she says. "He uses a lot of fruit and seasonal produce in his beers – like our chilli pilsner – and makes lovely sours, like peaches, nectarines and cherries. Anything is possible."

CRAZY FOR CHOCOLATE

Another craft scene that's taken off in Dunedin is chocolate. Ocho Chocolate has taken the principle of single origin and put it into chocolate bars. Its cacao beans are sourced from Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands and Fiji in the South Pacific, and are then brought to Dunedin to be crafted into its chocolate bars.



Ocho's marketing manager, Anna McDonald, explains that the different types of cacao beans provide distinctively different flavours. "We roast the beans at a lower temperature to maintain the flavour of their origin, and all our bars are made from single origin beans, so you get the flavour profile from where it came from, much like wine," she says.

Tasting their dark chocolate bars, there's a big difference in their taste, depending on where their beans were grown. I take a bite of the 66 per cent Cacao PNG, which has a real punch of fruitiness to it and is extremely enjoyable to eat. The 100 per cent Cacao Solomon is perhaps for the more adventurous chocolate-lover; its only ingredient is cacao and it's therefore extremely rich and dense.

McDonald says the trend in craft chocolate is getting stronger as more people, including travellers, want to know where their food comes from and what went into making it. "We feel really passionate about using local products and pushing the boundaries, experimenting with different flavours," she says.

Unwrapping one of their Beekeeper bars – milk chocolate mixed with bee pollen, New Zealand Manuka honey and puffed amaranth – what started off as a small bite quickly advances to my almost frenzied eating of the whole bar. The smooth, silkiness of the milk chocolate and the sweet-but-not-too-sweet punch of the honey makes it the sort of chocolate worth flying to Dunedin for. The flavours of Dunedin are wild but refined and reflect Dunedin's natural creativity. And they'll stay with you long after you leave. ■

I can't get no satisfaction

One way hotels could improve the guest experience is by refraining from flooding our inboxes with feedback surveys



DEREK PICOT

A HOTELIER FOR MORE THAN 30 YEARS
AND AUTHOR OF *HOTEL RESERVATIONS*

Feedback, I am told, is the ambrosia of the gods for service providers. That's all very well for those that receive it, but where is the reward for those that give it?

I'm pretty tired of getting back from a business trip and finding my inbox cluttered with every supplier that I used asking for my commentary on their services. The airline, car hire and the hotels I stayed at all use their possession of my email address to send their requests for my opinion.

If I am sufficiently bothered to click into their surveys, I reckon I could waste a good half an hour ticking boxes and adding remarks. Some of these requests for my observations suggest I might win a prize by being added to a draw. Who, I wonder, ever wins? Are there lists of those who benefit? I doubt it, with data protection prohibiting the dissemination of anything remotely personal.

DUBIOUS MOTIVES

Why are we getting this constant deluge of requests to help businesses improve themselves? Hotels are the worst. It never happened 30 years ago and I blame the internet. Ever since that innovation, hotel chains have been using electronic survey tools to track guest satisfaction and monitor quality among their properties. Based on an analysis of chains that have purchased the industry guest satisfaction surveys by JD Power (a US-based global marketing information services company), hotel brands with higher scores apparently make more money than those with lower ones.

Well, that makes sense, and it proves that these surveys are just a cheap way of asking me to improve someone else's enterprise. And while the business traveller might

wistfully think that their suggestions are being taken into account to improve their future experiences, it's actually only the scores in the boxes that are being used by an anonymous head office to monitor operational management's effectiveness.

The pressure is on the operator to keep satisfaction high, and numbers can be manipulated by the design of the questions and the focus of the form. Trend history shows that respondents consistently rate facility higher than service.

Removing some of the questions about service and adding a few about the quality of the bedding and so on can spin the overall scores positively.

Wherever service is involved, it appears that satisfaction scores dip. The School of Hotel Administration at Cornell University in the US has produced a number of studies of such surveys that show a 20 per cent drop in approval ratings between physical facilities and, for example, the food and drink offering.

All of this seems to indicate that questionnaires can be designed to fit whatever the originator wishes to hear.

LIMITED RESPONSE

On top of that, the demographic of respondents indicates that it is mainly leisure travellers who complete questionnaires. Most are frequently galvanised to action only by either a very good or a very poor experience. Consequently, most guest satisfaction scores do not reflect wide

opinion, and business travellers, for reasons of time and focus elsewhere, probably do not have their opinions reflected to any significant extent.

A new Cornell study – *Hotel Performance Impact by Socially Engaging with Consumers* by Chris Anderson and Saram Han – indicates that many travellers wish to be left alone. Their research shows that hotel operators are badgering customers to such an extent that questionnaires are becoming

a major turn-off for consumers. In the wider context of responses to guest commentary on sites such as Tripadvisor, they strongly suggest that less is more. Hoteliers who overreact to guest comments are creating negativity among potential new customers and are better advised not to provoke ongoing dialogue about satisfaction issues.

Satisfaction scores appear therefore to reflect only a specific segment of the total business and it is probable that corporate travellers account for only a minority of the input. Are hotels now recognising that the whole exercise of guest solicitation is probably flawed by the structure of the questions and the demographic of the respondent? I hope so.

Hotels should judge their performance not by irritating me with their email requests but by reading the unsolicited commentary from guests who post it on third-party websites.

With luck, the ubiquitous guest questionnaire may soon have had its day. ■

POEMS BY

HIS HIGHNESS SHEIKH MOHAMMED BIN RASHID AL MAKTOUM



IN STORES NOW



booksarabia.com

المكتب الإعلامي
لحكومة دبي
GOVERNMENT OF DUBAI
MEDIA OFFICE





3

Singapore

WORDS MICHAEL ALLEN

A cultural and culinary hop around Singapore's Downtown Core



1

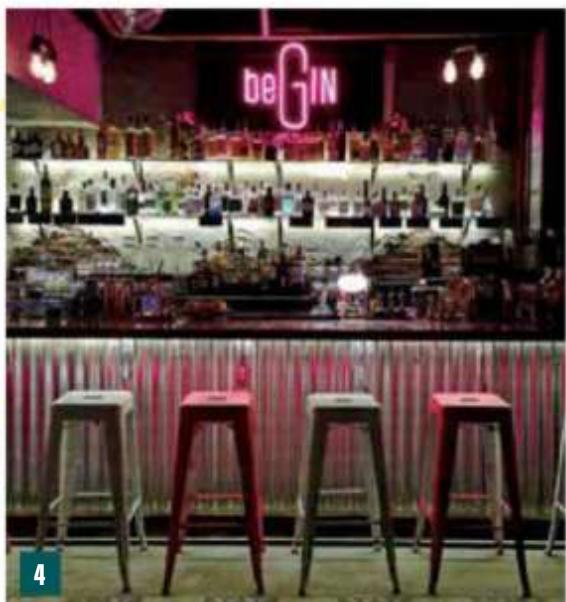
1 Singapore Philatelic Museum

Opened on August 19, 1995, the Singapore Philatelic Museum is the custodian and curator of Singapore's philatelic materials – in other words, the country's stamp collection. The museum's collections range from stamps and archival philatelic material of Singapore from the 1830s to 2019, and stamps from member countries of the Universal Postal Union. The museum is housed in a century-old, double-storey colonial building that was designed by Tomlinson and Lermit Architects. Don't miss the Straits Settlement Collection, which documents Singapore's early philatelic history and heritage.

spm.org.sg

2 MINT Museum of Toys

Located within walking distance of the JW Marriott Hotel Singapore South Beach and established in 2007 by avid toy collector Chang Yang Fa, the MINT Museum of Toys houses a world-class collection of vintage toys and collectable items. The museum has amassed more than 50,000 items, 8,000 of which are on display. MINT actually stands for Moment of Imagination and Nostalgia with Toys. The collection ranges from Batman and Dan Dare, all the way to Japanese characters and space-related toys and collectables. In addition to toys, the museum houses a collection of vintage confectionery tin boxes, Mobo horses and pedal cars, as well as original enamel advertising signs. emint.com



2



3



4

57

PARKROYALHOTELS.COM

3 The Clifford Pier

Stop by this all-day dining restaurant at The Fullerton Bay Hotel for a spot of afternoon tea. The restaurant offers novel teatime treats that are spun off from familiar Singapore dishes with distinctively local flavours. Each afternoon tea set, called Singapore Heritage Afternoon Tea, comes with traditional local kopi, teh tarik or air bandung. Among the food items to savour are bak gwa jam sandwiches, “cruffin” with masala potato and curry leaves, and chilli crab bao. The afternoon tea menu also offers traditional English scones with a twist: tropical fruit scones studded with dried pineapple, mango, lychee and coconut. fullertonhotels.com

4 BeGin bar

Tucked upstairs above Singapore's oldest traditional English pub – The Penny Black – BeGin is an “illusory industrial gin wonderland” with a collection of over 50 gins from different countries. The rustic interior alludes to the time period during Britain's Industrial Revolution and the Gin Craze from the late 1760s to the 1850s, when elixirs were produced in run-down workshops to evade the impending ban on the then newly derived “medicine of choice”. The bar offers a tasting flight of four gins at S\$28 (US\$20). While sipping on your gin, you can nibble on some contemporary British-Indian small plates. begin.com.sg

5 Lime restaurant

Located within the impressively designed Parkroyal on Pickering Hotel on Upper Pickering Street, Lime has recently launched a meatless menu. The restaurant has scoured the markets to find not only beef, but pork and seafood guilt-free, plant-based proteins for its new menu. There are a total of seven vegan dishes to try, from appetisers to desserts. For those wanting to indulge in a burger guilt free, the restaurant offers the popular plant-based Beyond Burger that is known for its uncanny similarity to meat both in look and taste. There is even a fishless fish & chips that's guaranteed to keep you hooked and coming back for more. parkroyalhotels.com/lime

GRAND MILLENNIUM DUBAI HOTEL

DUBAI The 340-room five star hotel features award-winning restaurants and bars, spa and health club, state-of-the-art meeting rooms, a magnificent ballroom and exceptional banquet facilities.

+971 4 429 9999

reservations@grandmill-dubai.com
grandmillenniumdubai.com

MIRFA HOTEL

AL MARFA Away from the bustle of city life, overlooking the azure blue waters of the Arabian Gulf, the Mirfa Hotel offers 114 newly renovated rooms. The hotel provides excellent accommodation for the business and leisure traveller, state-of-the-art conference facilities, a fully equipped gym and ample parking.

+971 2 8953009

rsvn@mirfahotel.com

WALDORF ASTORIA RAS AL KHAIMAH

RAS AL KHAIMAH Cradled by the Hajar Mountains, a championship golf course, sandy beaches and the azure waters of the Arabian Sea, Waldorf Astoria Ras Al Khaimah is 50 minutes from Dubai Airport and brings true Waldorf service to the most alluring beachfront location in the UAE.

+971 7 2035555

rasalkhaimah.info@waldorfastoria.com
waldorfastoria.com/rasalkhaimah

CROWNE PLAZA MUSCAT OMAN CONVENTION & EXHIBITION CENTRE

OMAN Adjacent to the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre, this 295-room hotel is an integral part of Madinat Al Irfan, a product of an exciting ambition to establish a new urban centre within Muscat. Situated 10 minutes from the new Muscat International Airport, Al Mouj and Muscat Hills Golf courses and overlooking a Wadi - a natural reserve and home to about 260 variety of Oman's exotic birdlife during the season.

+968 2425 2000

rooms.cpmuscatocec@ihg.com
crownepiazza.com/muscatocec

CROWNE PLAZA DEIRA, DUBAI

DUBAI Located in the cultural heart of Dubai, Crowne Plaza Dubai - Deira lies at the convenient gateway between the old and new districts of the city. Featuring 300 guest rooms and suites, and an array of meeting rooms, 6 restaurants and bars, a dedicated and fully equipped fitness centre with outdoor swimming pool, the hotel is the perfect place for both leisure and business guests.

+971 4 262 5555

cpdeira.info@ihg.com
crownepiazza.com/deira

SHANGRI-LA HOTEL, DUBAI

DUBAI The award-winning Shangri-La Hotel, Dubai offers luxurious accommodations, exceptional dining and gracious hospitality in the heart of one of the world's most dynamic cities. The hotel's 302 superbly appointed rooms and suites offer a combination of traditional luxury and modern functionality. Spatial elegance, awesome views and thoughtfully selected furnishings create an experience of unparalleled style and comfort.

+971 4 3438888

shangri-la.com/dubai

GULF BUSINESS

GET YOUR BUSINESS FIX - ANYWHERE.

f GOfficial in Gulf Business tw GulfBusiness o GulfBusinessMagazine

Download the digital edition now.



MOTIVATE
MEDIA GROUP

Business
Traveller
Middle East

the report

**Tried,
Tested,
Tasted.**

TRIED AND TESTED

- Hotel Danieli, A Luxury Collection Hotel, Venice

60

- Waldorf Astoria Maldives Ithaafushi

61

TRIED AND TESTED

- Pentahotel Moscow

62

- Vintry & Mercer, London

63

TRIED AND TESTED

- The Ritz-Carlton, Berlin

64

- The InterContinental Stamford, Hong Kong

65

SNAPSHOT

- flydubai celebrates 10th anniversary

66



Hotel Danieli, a Luxury Collection Hotel, Venice

BACKGROUND Split across three adjoined sites, the opulent original building, Palazzo Dandolo, began life as the home of the Doge Dandolo and his family in the 14th century. In the 1800s, it was turned into a hotel, and towards the end of the century, the adjacent "Casa Nuova" building was annexed to the Palazzo Dandolo, and the hotel was split over two buildings. In the 1940s, another building was built next door, Danieli Excelsior, to complete the current triple offering. Today it operates under Marriott International's Luxury Collection portfolio.

WHERE IS IT? Right on the waterfront of the Venice Lagoon, just steps from the San Zaccaria stop on the Vaporetto. For a grand arrival, book the hotel's private water taxi, which comes complete with its own dedicated entrance off the water canal. A walk of under five minutes takes you to Piazza San Marco.

WHAT'S IT LIKE? The 14th century splendour of the original has been lovingly maintained throughout the centuries, and its rich history and connections to Venice



are everywhere. Sunlight streams through colourful stained glass windows and historic artworks dating back to the 14th and 15th centuries line the walls. The lobby truly has the wow factor. The lofty entrance hall spans several storeys and Murano glass chandeliers light the way up the original staircase that forms the centrepiece. Upon entering, it's easy to understand why the hotel has served as the backdrops to so many films – it's truly a work of art.

ROOMS Surprisingly spacious and steeped in more history, it's worth requesting a room in Palazzo Dandolo or Casa Nuova for the step-back-in-time feel, although it's worth noting that rooms in the newest building, Danieli Excelsior, are in keeping with the rest of the hotel. I stayed in a Deluxe Lagoon View room, which came with floor to ceiling windows that offered expansive views of the lagoon and neighbouring island, Giudecca. Antique furnishings, marble bathrooms and vintage

fabrics give an authentic feel, while an electronic safe, heated towel rails, flatscreen Satellite TV and mini-bar are welcome touches for the modern traveller.

FOOD AND DRINK Three to choose from: Terrazza Danieli is the jewel in the crown, thanks to its unrivalled lagoon views and delicious Mediterranean cuisine. Bar Dandolo, next to the lobby, remains open throughout the day but best serves as a cosy spot for an Aperitivo in the evening, accompanied by the resident pianist. My favourite spot was the alfresco terrace of Restaurant Terrazza Danieli. Weather permitting from May to October, it boasts sweeping views and serves a lavish daily buffet breakfast, as well as opening for lunch and dinner à la carte. Sadly, not open on my visit was Danieli Bistro (Tuesday to Saturday) which offers a more informal dining option.

MEETINGS There is an impressive range of function space, from intimate rooms for smaller business meetings to the Renaissance-inspired Marco Polo Banquet Halls, which can cater to up to 150 guests.

LEISURE A small fitness centre contains a handful of Technogym equipment and weights for those looking to squeeze in a quick work out.

VERDICT Despite its generous size and lavish décor, Hotel Danieli retains a welcoming, cozy feel, and successfully blends history and modernity. *Alice Holtham*

BEST FOR

Rich, unwavering history, and panoramic views of the Venice Lagoon

DON'T MISS

Sunset cocktails at Restaurant Terrazza Danieli

PRICE

Internet rates for a Deluxe Lagoon View Room in mid-July start from EUR989 (US\$1,121) per night

CONTACT

Riva degli Schiavoni, 4196, 30122 Venezia VE, Italy. Tel: +39 041 522 6480, hoteldanieli.com

Waldorf Astoria Maldives Ithaafushi

BACKGROUND This all-villa resort, opening July 1, marks the Hilton luxury brand's fifth property in Asia.

WHAT'S IT LIKE? The most obvious observation is the scale – spread over 3.5kms, it resembles a giant 9 with water villas at each end, beach villas near the grand open-air entrance and 'reef' villas in the middle (so a different feel to the split-island Conrad Rangali). At launch 121 villas will open, and '122' – a 32,000sqm private island targeting elite travellers with chef/concierge services, gym, spa, five pools and entertainment centre – will open in September. Other premium features include two stand-alone Stella Maris ocean villas, between the resort and private island.

WHERE IS IT? A key attribute is its proximity to Malé, so you don't have to take a seaplane. I was told it is 'half an hour' away but the leather-seated yacht transfer took nearer 45 minutes – allow time during the current low season when the weather is changeable.

ROOM Our one-bedroom King Reef Villa (pictured) was beautifully designed with spacious lounge, bedroom area (both featuring supersized TVs) and large bathroom with steps out to the outdoor shower (one indoors too).

Sliding doors lead out to the deck, which is framed around a decent-sized pool with swinging daybeds and two hammocks, next to steps leading to the ocean. Two- and three-bedroom villas come with design extras such as see-through glass on the floors and Jacuzzis.

There are plenty of buggies for getting around – special shout out to Mahmoud for his prompt and professional service – and the room had iPads and phones for communication and room features.

FOOD AND DRINK I tried the casual Tangled (Asian) with its tender black cod



Ramen; Chinese Li Long – dominated by a centrepiece bell-like hanging vase – and for the ultimate indulgence, breakfast was brought to the deck.

Glow's emphasis on tasty, healthy food was a highlight, and the surrounding garden (cucumbers, herbs, pineapples, papaya) will yield fresh produce.

Middle Easterners will head to Yasmeen, an authentic stone and ornament-clad outdoor restaurant, where you can taste Mediterranean, Levant, Maghreb and Turkish flavours.

The most striking restaurant is the treetop-dining Terra, and look out for Dave Pynt's special wood-fired oven which will elevate the poolside dining experience. Fresh lobster rolls anyone?

LEISURE We took a short boat ride out to snorkel above two reefs where we saw abundant fish. Another good spot for snorkelling is by the spa – itself grandly designed with an outdoor lawn and overwater and garden treatment villas.

BEST FOR...

Being cut off from the world, yet accessible to every terrestrial comfort. The 'best' aspect must be the private island, even if most guests won't see it.

DON'T MISS...

Snorkeling off the resort

PRICE

Best Available Rate for a King Reef Villa with pool is \$2,033 in July

CONTACT

Waldorf Astoria Maldives Ithaafushi, Ithaafushi Island, South Male Atoll, Male 20009, Maldives. Tel: +960 4 000300, waldorfastoriomaldives.com

The gym is stocked with plenty of machines, weights and natural light, and there are more than enough leisure facilities to keep everyone happy – adults can burn off calories in the 40-metre mirror pool (or kick back in the main lagoon pool), while the 'Young Discovery Park' has a small water park and a combined water sports/PADI dive center is available.

Honors members earn an additional 5,000 Points per minimum stay of three nights, for bookings from July to September, when booking direct.

MEETINGS AND EVENTS

I was told the private island is being lined up for upscale corporate events – there are some small islands offshore which might be converted at some later stage – but this is really a place you come to turn off from work pressures.

VERDICT Fabulous. Sure to raise the luxury stakes in the Maldives and will appeal to premium Middle East travellers and Honors members. *Dominic Ellis*

Pentahotel Moscow, Arbat

BACKGROUND This is the 29th property in the Pentahotels portfolio, a neighbourhood lifestyle brand under the Hong Kong-based Rosewood Hotel Group. The hotel had its soft opening in December 2018 and officially opened on February 28, 2019. It's situated in The Book, one of four "Book Houses" – buildings designed to resemble an open book. Pentahotel Moscow occupies the lower 11 floors of the 26-storey, mixed-use building.

WHERE IS IT? Near the city centre on Novy Arbat Avenue, the hotel is close to landmarks including the Red Square, St Basil's Cathedral, the Kremlin and Bolshoi Theatre. The Arbatskaya metro station is eight minutes' walk away and the hotel is a 10-15 minute drive from the Expocentre and Moscow International Business Centre. Sheremetyevo International Airport is 50 minutes away by car.

WHAT'S IT LIKE? Its location within a residential building gives the hotel an understated charm – it doesn't boast a grand entrance nor a huge logo recognisable from way off in the distance. Entering the lobby, there's a spacious seating area and a long reception desk, which doesn't provide check-in or checkout services. Instead, you'll need to take a transparent lift directly to the Pentalounge – a multifunctional "lifestyle lobby" that serves as a reception, lobby, bar, café and restaurant – on Level 3.

Once check-in is done, you'll get your key card in a special holder, which is actually a pocket-sized "insider's guide to Moscow" with a map that shows nearby attractions, restaurants and bars along with detailed information on each location. There's also a



Unlimited free wifi, called 'free oxygen' on the hotel's website, is provided

QR code that guests can scan to view the digital version.

ROOMS The hotel has 228 guestrooms, spanning levels 6 to 11. The guestrooms are divided into three major categories: the Penta Standard room, ranging from 18 to 33 sqm; the 27 to 31 sqm Penta Plus room that features a separate living room area; and the 33 sqm Penta PlayerPad room equipped with in-room games consoles, including a PlayStation 4. There are also two wheelchair accessible rooms on levels 6 and 7.

The guestrooms feature an industrial loft-style design. Each is decorated with wallpaper of the same Moscow map as the one printed on its special keycard holder, recalling the neighbourhood lifestyle feel that the brand is aiming for. Unlimited free wifi, described as "free oxygen" on the hotel's website, is provided as well.

I was staying in a Penta Standard room on Level 8 with a king-size bed. My room had a nice view facing the busy Novy Arbat Avenue – fortunately there wasn't much noise at night. Add to that the room's blackout curtains and I managed to enjoy some good sleep during my stay.

The minibar is stocked on request with paid-for items.

The bathroom is rather small but functional. There's a rainfall shower, as well as sycamore fig-scented shampoo and body wash from Dutch brand Zenology. Unfortunately, the hotel doesn't provide conditioner.

BEST FOR...

Central location and well-equipped meeting rooms with flexible seating.

DON'T MISS...

Enjoying a game of free billiards in the Pentalounge.

PRICE

Internet rates for a Standard room in mid-August start from 6,375 rubles (US\$98) including tax and surcharges.

CONTACT

15 Novy Arbat Avenue, 119019, Moscow; tel +7 495 787 4433; pentahotels.com

FOOD AND DRINK Buffet breakfast is served on Level 2 at Breakfast Box. On weekdays, the breakfast restaurant is open 6.30-10.30am; on weekends, it ends at 11am. A decent selection of food and drink is offered. There are also self-serve coffee- and tea-making facilities. Service here is good and staff members are friendly.

Meals can also be ordered in the 24-hour Pentalounge, which features lounge chairs and communal tables. TVs, bookshelves and a number of paintings adorn the walls, giving the space a cosy and artistic atmosphere.

Lunch and dinner are both served in the Pentalounge – Breakfast Box, as its name suggests, is only open for breakfast. The à la carte menu offers a range of choices including starters, salads, hot dishes, burgers and desserts, though you can also choose from a local menu if you want to try authentic Russian dishes. The bar serves all the usual liquid fare.

LEISURE There's a 24-hour Pentagym on Level 3, to which in-house guests have free access, though it's not very big. There's also a free-to-use pool table in the Pentalounge.

VERDICT The ideal location allows you to get to both major city attractions and business hubs easily. The property itself is clean and has a modern, stylish design. *Jackie Chen*

Vintry and Mercer, London

BACKGROUND A sister property to the Ampersand in South Kensington, Vintry and Mercer opened in February. It pays homage to its historic location in the City and the trading guilds found there. Vintry is the association for wine merchants, while Mercers is the guild for general merchants, which once traded fine fabrics in the area.

WHAT'S IT LIKE? Tucked away at the end of the cobbled Garlick Hill, the new-build hotel is nestled among historic landmarks and glass skyscrapers. Its interiors reflect this setting, blending classic and modern décor with vintage-style trading maps and bespoke fabrics. In the reception, every windowsill is filled with foliage, while the lobby area is dominated by a copper spiral staircase and ornate light fitting leading down to the hotel's lower ground floor. Check-in was quick and staff were friendly.



WHERE IS IT? Only a minute's walk from Mansion House underground station, the hotel is also a short stroll from Cannon Street and Bank stations. Despite being in the heart of the City, the property is quiet thanks to its backstreet location.

ROOMS The 92 rooms range from 14.5 sqm to 32 sqm in size – Standard rooms are small but fit a queen-sized bed; Superior and Deluxe rooms are more spacious with a king bed; and Deluxe Studios and Studio suites have balconies or floor-to-ceiling windows. Velvet furnishings dominate, from the upholstered headboards



to the cushions, plush chairs and heavy curtains. Some rooms are papered with reproductions of old maps of London, with colour schemes dependent on the room category (my Deluxe Studio featured red accents).

All rooms have free wifi, bathrobes, tea and coffee facilities, desks with plug sockets and USB points, and a minibar with snacks and non-alcoholic drinks. There is both a retro rotary telephone and a Handy mobile that could be used in the room and outside of the hotel. With no charge for data or

A balcony ran the width of the room and offered breathtaking views



making local and international calls, it should prove popular with overseas visitors. Superior rooms and above have a Marshall speaker and Nespresso machines.

My sixth-floor Deluxe Studio (22-28 sqm) had a comfortable king-sized bed and sliding floor-to-ceiling windows, which filled the space with natural light. They led out to a balcony that ran the width of the room and offered breathtaking views of the city.

Bathrooms are particularly luxurious, with CO Bigelow products, underfloor heating, marble walls and teal geometric tiles. Standard rooms have walk-in showers, while Deluxe and above have freestanding

baths with a shower above, although mine had a faulty plug so I couldn't use it. The built-in TV at the end of the bathtub was a nice touch.

FOOD AND DRINK Vintry Kitchen is a casual all-day dining spot on the ground floor. Breakfast takes place here, comprising brunch-style dishes or a buffet (not included in the room rate). It becomes an Asian tapas bar in the evening, with wines served straight from the barrels lining the gantry.

The seventh-floor Mercer Roof Terrace offers British food that can be enjoyed indoors or al fresco (awnings can be rolled out if it rains), with views of St Paul's Cathedral and the Shard. I opted for a seared cod fillet with wild garlic and leeks (£19.50) and a chocolate mousse (£6), which were both excellent.

Hidden away on the lower ground floor, the speakeasy-style Do Not Disturb whisks you off to 1920s New York with barrel-aged cocktails and cosy alcoves.

MEETINGS There are three small event spaces, the largest of which seats 14 people, and a breakout area with computers and printers.

LEISURE A small gym is located on the lower ground floor.

VERDICT Vintry and Mercer suits those looking for a boutique-style alternative to more run-of-the-mill business hotels. Staff are warm, rooms are luxurious and well equipped, and the views and food at Mercer Roof Terrace are sure to impress. *Hannah Brandler*

BEST FOR

Elegant décor and superb skyline views

DON'T MISS

Dinner at Mercer Roof Terrace followed by a nightcap in Do Not Disturb

PRICE

Internet rates for a flexible midweek stay in June started from £275 for a Standard room

CONTACT

Vintry and Mercer, 19-20 Garlick Hill;
tel +44 (0)20 3908 8088; vintryandmercer.com

The Ritz-Carlton Berlin



BACKGROUND The Ritz-Carlton Berlin opened in 2004 as part of the huge rebuilding of Potsdamer Platz. It has recently re-emerged from a three-year €40 million renovation.

WHAT'S IT LIKE? You never forget the first time you see the buildings of Potsdamer Platz, with their plain façades and clean lines, a simple version of art deco that the hotel redesign has now brought inside. Occupying the first 11 floors of one of these buildings, the Ritz-Carlton has always been refined, but was looking a little dated, particularly the bars and public areas. Not any more. The GA Group has created a homely feel that nods towards 1920s cinema, while at the same time remaining very modern.

The old chandelier has been removed from the lobby and instead there are multiple exploding globes, designed to remind you of the pop of flashbulbs, with the glass elements of the chandelier evoking champagne flutes. There is elegant furniture in the side seating area and behind the marble staircase, while recurring geometric patterns combine with a lit sculpture at the back of the lobby that is covered in the evening, the most obvious example of the night and day theme that runs throughout the hotel. The colour palette is mainly champagne gold and chrome with touches of grey, although the rooms have some purple as well. Service is superb – all staff are helpful, guiding you to whatever you are searching for and even walking out of the hotel to give directions.

WHERE IS IT? In Potsdamer Platz, which has access to the regional rail, S-Bahn and U-Bahn. The main station, the Hauptbahnhof, is about a five-minute drive away, while Berlin Tegel airport is about 25 minutes and Berlin Schonefeld 40 minutes.

ROOMS There are 303 rooms ranging from Deluxe (40 sqm) to the 205 sqm Ritz-Carlton suite. The art deco-style rooms feature Marlene Dietrich-inspired paintings, Nespresso machines, small sofas, good-sized tables, and ample plugs (although not UK ones) and USB sockets. All have Italian marble bathrooms with separate showers and tubs. Ritz-Carlton Club rooms (also 40 sqm) are located on the 10th and 11th floors and are available at roughly a €100 supplement, with access to the 11th-floor Club lounge included.

Soundproofing in my sixth-floor room

The revamp has created a homely feel that nods towards 1920s cinema



was faultless, although one night I was woken by drunks outside in the street as the large central window had been left open by housekeeping. The positive aspect is you can open the window and get some fresh air.

FOOD AND DRINK A good choice here. Pots restaurant offers a modern interpretation of German cuisine courtesy of head chef Frederik Grieb and three-Michelin starred patron Dieter Muller, plus a German wine selection featuring more than 200 choices.

There's also the lobby lounge, and two excellent bars that you could quite happily spend several hours in – the Curtain Club, open all day, and Fragrances, a cocktail bar open only in the evening. Here, resident mixologist Arnd Heissen will create a bespoke cocktail for you inspired by your favourite perfume, and if you wish, tell you what it says about your personality – don't worry, it's always complimentary.

MEETINGS Located on the first floor, facilities include a ballroom that can host 600 guests for a banquet, plus seven smaller rooms. The hotel can work with the neighbouring Marriott to accommodate larger events.

LEISURE There is a small spa, pool and gym in the basement.

VERDICT A very thoughtful renovation and a truly luxurious place to stay. I was particularly impressed with the service and the two bars and restaurant. *Tom Otley*

BEST FOR

Seamless service and attention to detail

DON'T MISS

Having a cocktail in Fragrances, then listening to some live music in the Curtain Club

PRICE

Internet rates for a flexible midweek stay in June started from €455 for a Deluxe room

CONTACT

The Ritz-Carlton Berlin, Potsdamer Platz 3; tel +49 (0)30 33 777 6026; ritzcarlton.com/berlin

InterContinental Grand Stanford Hong Kong

BACKGROUND The InterContinental Grand Stanford completed a US\$43 million renovation of its 572 guestrooms in November 2017. The redesign, led by John Chan Design, aimed to introduce a "brand-new, sleek design combined with efficient technology, ensuring the most modern and user-friendly experience for guests", according to the hotel, which also promises "exquisite upholstery" and "hand-tufted carpets and curtains" that are "carefully chosen in a warm palette of earthy tones to establish a welcoming ambience".

WHERE IS IT? A seven-minute walk from Tsim Sha Tsui (TST) East MTR station's P1 exit, or a ten-minute walk from Hung Hom MTR station.

WHAT'S IT LIKE? Despite being nearly 40 years old, the hotel is far from its dotage. Management keeps the hotel trendy and modern with things like a Nespresso bar pop-up in the lobby, while maintaining classical touches like a tasteful flower arrangement and a pianist who sits a floor above the lobby so his gentle tinkling of the keys trickles down agreeably to guests reposing on the sofas below.

ROOMS The hotel has 572 rooms split between 13 types. I stayed in a Premier Harbour View suite. At 65.5 sqm, this is a very good sized room for Hong Kong and more than double the size of the hotel's most basic room type, the Premier room. Strategically placed mirrors also help make the room feel even bigger than it is.

This suite is split between a living room, bedroom and bathroom. Wifi is provided for up to four devices; if you need wifi for extra devices, you need to ask the hotel staff to assist. There is also a Handy-brand smartphone that you can carry around with you outside the hotel free of charge.

The harbour view from this room ought to be quite splendid, though it was spoiled by the bad air pollution during my stay, which clocked in close to "high" on the government's Air Quality Health Index. The



The very good in-house food and beverage options make dining and drinking in a real pleasure

buildings on the other side of the harbour were obscured by the haze, though it was still nice to see some of the passing pleasure boats and cargo ships plying this part of the harbour. The bed was soft and comfortable, and there is a pillow menu from which you can choose from six different types of pillow.

Overall, this is a very comfortable room and it would be easy to spend a week or more here without feeling claustrophobic. Perhaps if you stayed for that long you might be treated to at least one non-polluted day so you could enjoy the harbour view to its fullest.

LOUNGE The lounge was not busy when I arrived around 4.30pm on a Saturday. The tables and seating areas are spaced generously apart, ensuring a good deal of privacy. Delicate piano music was playing, creating a relaxing atmosphere. There is a great selection of reading material, both newspapers and magazines. The lounge also has workstations with PCs. When I returned to the lounge on Sunday morning for breakfast, I was impressed by the large menu from which you can order. I went for the omelette, which was light and fluffy. I also ordered the pancakes, which were just

BEST FOR...

Rooms and lounge with a great view of the harbour (on less polluted days).

DON'T MISS...

Having a superb Italian dinner at in-house restaurant Theo Mistral.

PRICE

Internet rates for a King Bed Premier Harbour View suite in mid-August start from HK\$4,657 (US\$595) including tax and surcharges.

CONTACT

hongkong.intercontinental.com

as light and fluffy as the omelette. Besides the extensive menu, there was also a great selection of items to be had from the breakfast buffet.

FOOD AND DRINK The main watering hole is the atmospheric Tiffany's New York Bar. I didn't get a chance to drink there, but when I poked my head inside I immediately enjoyed the ambience and was impressed by its size. I was lucky enough to have excellent dinners at two of the hotel's in-house restaurants, Hoi King Heen and Theo Mistral by Theo Randall, both located on the B2 floor of the hotel, and both top quality.

LEISURE Unfortunately, the hotel's Sun Court Pool was closed during my stay, though upon request guests were being brought to other hotels in the area to use their pools. The 24-hour gym is of medium size and has a decent amount of equipment.

VERDICT The room, food and service during my stay were outstanding. The very good in-house food and beverage options – especially Theo Mistral and Tiffany's Bar – made dining and drinking in a real pleasure. The lounge, especially during breakfast time, was a wonderful place to relax.

If your meetings are on Hong Kong Island, you may find the location a little out of the way, though if you're planning to be in Kowloon for most of your trip you can't really go wrong with this hotel. *Michael Allen*

2009

flydubai celebrates 10th anniversary

The premium-come-low-cost carrier has flown more than 70 million passengers in the last decade – and business is on the up with the support of codeshare partner Emirates



Before June 1 2009 – when flydubai's first flight took off between Dubai and Beirut – passengers didn't have many home-grown options beyond Emirates.

But its arrival shifted the dial in three key ways: it brought low fares to Dubai residents, connected many previously unserved destinations (across central Asia, in particular) and helped fuel DXB's overall passenger growth. In the last decade, it has flown more than 70 million passengers to 90 destinations and 47 countries.

Four years into operations, it installed business class on its B737s, appealing to passengers who wanted more than 'no-frills' services.

But as with any airline, it has wrestled with challenges. Chief among them was the March 2016 tragedy when FZ981 crashed during an aborted landing at Rostov-on-Don, with the loss of 62 passengers and crew.

More recently, the global grounding of the B737 MAX – designed to spearhead future growth, with 225 orders placed in 2017 – is an operational conundrum.

But the codeshare tie-up with Emirates has provided efficiencies and security at times of rising fuel prices and pressurised yields, and reduced route overlaps. Between January and December last year, the two airlines jointly carried 3.29 million passengers across 84 destinations. This summer sees a burst of European expansion with Budapest and Naples new to the network. ☐





Mohammed Ghobary
WBFF PRO
Fitness Model

Jatin Sapru
ESPN Star Sports
Presenter

Shane Warne
Australian
Cricket Legend



With a powerful international history of over 45 years, Advanced Hair Studio upholds the reputation of the world's biggest hair restoration company, providing treatments and hair retention solutions for any type and stage of hair loss.

1 LIFE 1 OPPORTUNITY 1 SHOT

1 STOP SHOP FOR HAIR LOSS SOLUTIONS

WORLD'S LARGEST HAIR RESTORATION
AND HAIR RETENTION COMPANY
HAIRLINE: +971 4 345 1233

- * OVER 300 STUDIOS & ALLIANCES WORLDWIDE
- * REPUTABLE HOLLYWOOD & SPORTS CELEBRITIES
- * CLOSE TO 1 MILLION SATISFIED CLIENTS

Villa#2, Al Wasl Road,
Umm Suqeim 3, Dubai, UAE
www.advancedhairstudios.com



ADVANCED
Hair Studio
U.S.A. • AUSTRALIA • MEXICO • U.K.
NEW ZEALAND • HONG KONG



Life is about treasuring memories,
not possessions.

Rare Life

MALDIVES | THAILAND

For reservations contact: +91 124 451 1000

reservations@soneva.com

soneva.com