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# FAR & AWAY

SPRING 2018 • PUSHING THE BOUNDARIES OF BUSINESS TRAVEL

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Jimadors (or harvesters) cut agave piñas from their stalks in the fields between Arandas and Jesús María in Jalisco, Mexico, for the Tequila Ocho distillery.  
*Photograph by Corey Arnold*



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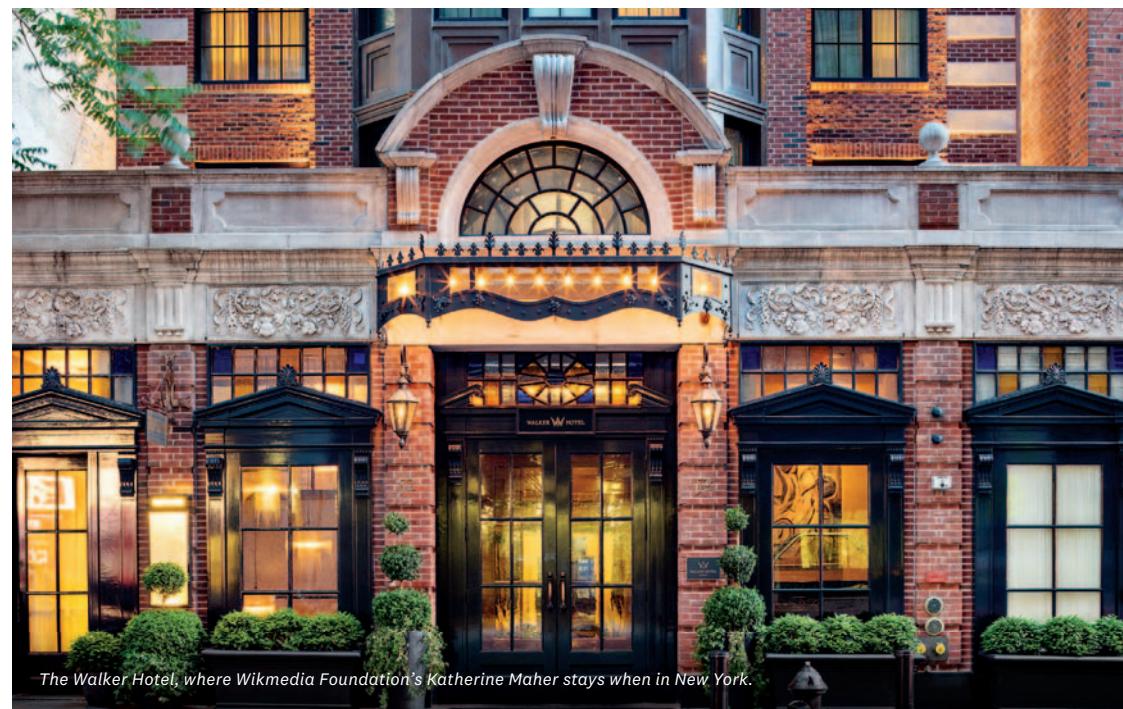
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## DOWNTIME



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**ON THE COVER:** Riders from local stables exercise their horses on oceanside gallops in Barka, Oman. Afterward, they cool them down in the sea. *Photograph by Anastasia Taylor-Lind*



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# WELCOME

This magazine is about what to do when your meetings are over. *Far & Away* brings together the photojournalism of *National Geographic* and the reporting of *The Wall Street Journal* in a magazine for globalists on the go who are as curious as they are tireless, and who look for adventure around every corner. —*Susan and Gerry*

*How do you travel? Send us your travel tips at farandaway@wsj.com*



**Susan Goldberg**  
*Editor in Chief, National Geographic*  
*Washington, D.C.*



**Gerard Baker**  
*Editor in Chief, The Wall Street Journal*  
*New York City*

## I am just back from...

The Arctic (*below*), on a National Geographic Expeditions trip to Svalbard. Abu Dhabi for business. And, for my husband's birthday, a lovely, long weekend in Amsterdam.



## Inside my suitcase, you will always find...

An extension cord so I can plug in my phone. There are still many hotel rooms where the outlet is nowhere near the bed, and I have to sleep with my phone. Sorry! TMI!

## When it comes to packing, I've learned...

Nothing. I'm a terrible packer. I bring everything. The upside is that admitting you are a terrible packer has relieved a lot of stress—I no longer even try.

## I will always return to...

Northern Michigan. I love it. If you hold up your right hand, palm toward you, go to the tip of your ring finger: Petoskey.

We go every July (this hand-map thing is not weird—everyone from Michigan does it!).

## When the meetings are over and someone's in my town, they should...

Go to the Lincoln Memorial. I don't know how many times I've been there, but seeing Lincoln, reading his words, never fails to move me. It gives me hope.

## I am just back from...

Short visits to London and Hong Kong, where I hosted *Wall Street Journal* conferences for CEOs and tech mavens, respectively. For all the talk of a stultifying convergence among the world's international financial centers, these two great cities retain their distinctive cultures, economies and sensibilities, and are among my favorite places on earth.

## Inside my suitcase, you will always find...

My running gear. I get antsy and feel slightly suffocated if I don't run most days. In my more athletic moments, I could actually survive anywhere without anything but a pair of running shoes, a shirt and shorts.

## When it comes to packing, I've learned...

Pack light. Avoid checking anything; checked-bag claims are like lottery tickets these days. A pleasant surprise if they're redeemed, but don't count on it.

## I will always return to...

Oxford (*below*). I spent four blissful years there and it never fails to delight and lift me and prod my aging, fading mind toward higher things.



## When the meetings are over and someone's in my town, they should...

I would always nudge them in the direction of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, for some artistic inspiration and a moment to indulge some awe at our history.

# CONTRIBUTORS

*Our authors offer their best travel insights*

## Peter Gwin

**FROM SEA TO SAND**

**What I do...** I'm a staff writer for *National Geographic*. **Where I live...** Virginia. **My favorite way to travel is...** By motorcycle, except at night in Africa. **When I'm in the mood for room service, I order...** For breakfast, it's camel's milk. This sounds pretentious but you can find it in parts of North Africa and the Middle East. It's an elixir of health and wellbeing. Late night, it's a Japanese whisky called Hibiki, which allows me to dream Samurai dreams—I know that's definitely pretentious.



## Nina Adam

**DEUTSCHE TREATS**

**What I do...** I am a senior reporter at *The Wall Street Journal*. **Where I live...** Frankfurt. **I am just back from...** Lake Maggiore in Italy. My family goes every spring and stays in the same Airbnb overlooking the lake and the snow-covered Alps. **One of my favorite places to return is...** The Middle Rhine Valley, with its striking cliffs and steeply terraced vineyards. **Inside my suitcase, you will always find...** A yoga mat.



## Jessica Flint

**THE ACCIDENTAL HOTELIER**

**What I do...** I'm a writer. **Where I live...** San Francisco. **I am just back from...** A two-month mountaineering expedition throughout East Africa, where I climbed seven of the continent's tallest peaks. **Inside my suitcase, you will always find...** A Patagonia R2 fleece jacket, Nike LunarEpic Low Flyknit running shoes and Zoe Organics Everything Balm.



## Anastasia Taylor-Lind

**FROM LAND TO SEA**

**What I do...** I'm a photojournalist. **Where I live...** Stoke Newington, Hackney, North London. **To get away from it all, I go...** Home. I travel eight months of the year for work. It's a real treat to be in my apartment, sleeping in my bed, making my coffee. **My favorite way to travel is...** By horse. I grew up horse-drawn in a Gypsy wagon traveling the South of England with my parents. **Inside my suitcase, you will always find...** Coffee and a small French press.



## Scott McCartney

**SUPersonic REDUX**

**What I do...** Try to be the best friend to the frequent traveler by writing *The Wall Street Journal*'s weekly column "The Middle Seat." **Where I live...** Dallas. **To get away from it all, I go to...** The cockpit of my single-engine Cirrus. There's no better way to escape than to be flying alone above the clouds. **My never-fail travel strategy...** Use the bathroom on the plane shortly before landing rather than stopping in the terminal. You're quicker to taxis, Ubers or shuttle buses.



## Corey Arnold

**TEQUILA ROCKS**

**What I do...** I'm a photographer and a seasonal commercial sockeye salmon fisherman in Bristol Bay, Alaska. **Where I live...** Portland, Oregon. **I am just back from...** Documenting life at sea aboard a rock lobster fishing boat off Western Australia. **To get away from it all, I go to...** A small cabin in Lofoten, Northern Norway. **My favorite way to travel is...** In my 1987 Chevy Astro Tiger Camper Van.

# FAR & AWAY

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*Editor in Chief,*  
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Clay Burnston, Drew  
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# S E C R E T S I N G

TIPS,  
TACTICS  
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OF THE  
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CLASS



## Airportraits

Photo-composites by Mike Kelley

We tend to lose our fascination with airports as we grow older. They become portals of necessity for work, or the unpleasant bookends of vacation. Not so for Mike Kelley. The L.A.-based photographer spent the better part of two years making pictures of airplanes right after takeoff or before landing at some of the world's busiest airports, creating composite images of what it might look like at each runway if all those aircraft were aloft at once. (More, next page.)



## AIRPORTTRAITS

Here, the results of hundreds of images taken at JFK (previous page) and Heathrow (above). For the JFK shot, Kelley positioned himself for eight hours on runway 31R; for Heathrow, he stood on 09L for three hours. Then he spent days doing painstaking photoshop work. His photos take you back to that first childhood trip to a departures lounge, nose pressed to the glass, gazing at those metal behemoths somehow lifting into the air, like magic. —Austin Merrill

# Supersonic Redux

**By the end of the year, the small, new Boom plane could start to change the transoceanic flight game.** By Scott McCartney

OF ALL THE JOYS of a bygone era of luxury air travel, Concorde was in a class by itself: supersonic flights that shrank the globe and made the hands of clocks tick backward. Now we're closer than ever to a return to supersonic flights on commercial airlines, at prices far more affordable than Concorde ever was.

By the end of this year, a bluntly named aircraft manufacturing startup, Boom Technology, says it will fly a one-third size model of its supersonic airliner. The plane is called Baby Boom and it will test design and performance. The full-scale Boom airplane is scheduled to start three years of testing and certification in 2020. Many hurdles lay ahead, but the jet could be flying passengers in late 2023. Virgin Atlantic has ordered the first 10 of the \$200 million jets. Other airlines have signed on, Boom Technology says, and a total of 76 orders are on the books so far.

Boom Technology says its Mach 2.2 plane will be able to get from New York to London in three hours, 15 minutes with round-

trip tickets priced at about \$5,000. Day-trips across oceans for business meetings would be possible. San Francisco to Tokyo would be five and a half hours instead of 11 hours today.

The plane will be roughly the length of a 737, only skinnier, and carry up to 55 passengers. Most rows will have a single seat on each side of the aisle with under-seat storage for carry-on bags. Seating will be about the same size as domestic first class today—38-inches for each row. While lie-flat business-class beds may be an option, there's no need for them when you're in the air as long as it currently takes to get from New York to Dallas.

The Denver-based company, founded in 2014, is backed by Silicon Valley investors and future airline customers, including Japan Airlines, which has preordered 20 aircraft. Boom Technology says it will use mostly off-the-shelf airplane technology—conventional turbofan engines, three on each plane, and no afterburners, for example. The key enabler, says



## POWER POINT

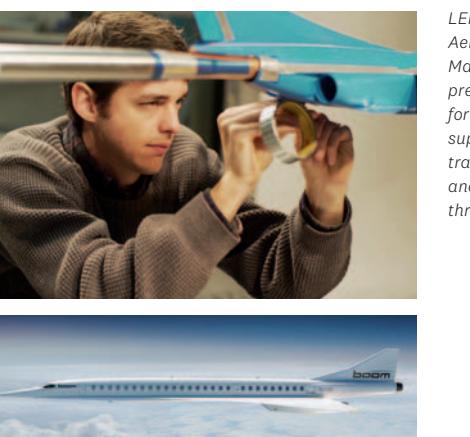
*Even on the same plane, not all seats are created equal. Business class A, E, F and K seats on Emirates Airbus A380 recline to beds that are more than 8 inches longer than others in the cabin.*

founder and CEO Blake Scholl, is building airframes out of carbon-fiber composite materials instead of aluminum, as the Boeing 787 and Airbus A350 have done. Composites are lighter, stronger and don't expand when heated the way aluminum does. "There's no fundamentally new technology on the plane," says Scholl.

Traveling faster than the speed of sound creates a window-rattling boom. Today sonic booms are banned over the continental U.S., meaning the company could fly supersonic only over oceans. An effort is under way to reverse restrictions in Congress, but many lawmakers are reluctant to lift the ban without testing.

Scholl says the aircraft's shape and size means its sonic booms won't be as loud as Concorde's. At a cruise altitude of 60,000 feet, or about twice as high as conventional airliners, the booms won't rattle windows and will be about as noisy as motorcycles or weed-wackers. Even if the U.S. boom ban isn't modified, the jet will still be financially feasible with over-ocean flights only, he says.

Supersonic travel has become a hot



LEFT: Boom Technology Aerodynamics Engineer Marshall Gusman prepares the XB-1 model for a wind tunnel test; its supersonic airliner will travel between New York and London in just over three hours.

topic again in aviation. NASA and Lockheed Martin are working on a new breed of supersonic aircraft that will greatly minimize sonic booms. Those planes likely won't get to commercial use until years after Boom Technology starts. Several makers are also developing supersonic private business jets.

High maintenance costs, a fiery crash in 2000, and other factors killed Concorde. Boom Technology thinks it can break the supersonic barrier again for airlines with per-seat costs 75 percent lower than Concorde's were, in today's dollars. If it works, it'll turn back the clocks once again. ■

## RISING STARS

As Silicon Valley gets saturated, three under-the-radar towns jockey to be the next tech hotspots.

THE RECENT HIGH-PUBLICITY effort by Amazon to place its second headquarters anywhere but the Bay Area underscores a bigger trend: Major corporations, especially techy ones, are moving away from the coasts and planting flags in smaller but fast-growing U.S. metro areas in order to cash in on lower operating expenses and cost of living, not to mention less traffic.

"You're getting this relatively sophisticated workforce that's being encouraged to move," says Sean Worker, CEO of BridgeStreet Global Hospitality, a company that assists with business travel. "In turn, the towns start to get the financing and infrastructure." With more than 160,000 accommodations in 81 countries, BridgeStreet studies where development dollars are headed, including these surprising boom towns. —Patrick Thomas



## SPARKS, NEVADA

① The once-quiet 98,000-person neighbor of Reno (10 minutes away by car) is humming because of Tesla Motors and Panasonic's joint construction project: a large-scale battery manufacturing plant for the carmaker's electric vehicles and stationary storage products (above). The so-called Gigafactory, which broke ground in 2014, will be 5.5 million square feet ("large enough for a hundred 747 airplanes," Worker says) and aims to employ about 6,500 people by 2020. Worker notes that the town is known for its authentic diners and bars, like Squeeze In—"not the fancy stuff!"



## HUNTSVILLE, ALABAMA

③ Alabama's third-largest city, 75 miles north of Birmingham, has long been known for its engineering prowess. The city is nicknamed the Rocket City for its role in U.S. space missions associated with the area's U.S. Space & Rocket Center. In January, Toyota and Mazda announced plans to build together a \$1.6 billion auto plant in the city of 193,000; it will eventually employ 4,000 people and assemble 300,000 vehicles a year. Huntsville is tracking to overtake Montgomery and Birmingham to become the state's biggest city within the decade. "It's a place with lots of Southern charm," says Worker, who mentions that Twickenham, the city's historic district, is a big draw.

## CLARKSVILLE, TENNESSEE

② Worker believes the skillset of the people, access to clean energy and strong partnership opportunities are what led to a major investment in the city with 150,000 residents on the Kentucky border. "Google broke ground in February on a \$600 million data center on 1,300 acres," he says. "And LG is spending \$250 million to build an 829,000-square-foot home appliance factory slated to employ 600 workers." There's plenty to do, from strolling the riverfront and hiking the Clarksville Greenway to wandering the Customs House Museum & Cultural Center (above)—but Worker's pick is D&D Black Light Mini Golf for a round of golf.



## ON THE RADAR



## Decision Time for Marriott and Starwood

Marriott's takeover of Starwood hotels has gone well for travelers so far. Members of either hotel company's loyalty program get to earn and redeem points at more than 30 different hotel brands. Loyalists of Starwood (comprising 11 brands, including St. Regis, Luxury Collection, W, Sheraton and Westin) get to book Marriott hotels (its 19 brands range from Bulgari Resorts & Hotels and The Ritz-Carlton to Edition and Courtyard) at a favorable 3-to-1 conversion rate. Almost two years in Marriott is finally getting to the heart of the merger: In August, the loyalty programs will combine into one as-yet-unnamed program. Some details have been released and changes don't seem as dire as Starwood loyalists feared. You'll still be able to transfer points to airline programs, often with a 20 percent bonus in airline miles like before. Elite status levels will be mostly unchanged and more hotels will count toward elite-status qualifying. There will be some devaluation of points earned through existing American Express credit cards tied to the Starwood program. When the companies first combined, Marriott's CEO, Arne Sorenson, said that the hotel giant has many reasons to keep its program popular with travelers so they'll keep buying hotel rooms. For now, he seems to have followed through. Travelers will want to look closely at their favorite perks, however, to see if they want to check in to the new program, or check out. —S.M.



## Plug This In

I've been traveling for work for 33 years. Readers of my column, "The Middle Seat," often write and ask: What's always in your bag? My GeekPro power converter. I bought it after frying a BlackBerry in Qatar when, in a jet-lagged state, I plugged it in with no voltage converter. While the GeekPro is no longer available, I've tested the **Bestek Travel Adapter Voltage Converter** (above) and it works similarly. Both have several power plug-in and USB ports and come with international adapters. In a hotel, you only have to get behind furniture once—one plug gives you multiple outlets (I usually travel with two phones and two computers). And both are also power converters, so handy in foreign countries, and surge protectors. —S.M.

## Hotels Partner With Local Restaurants

Forget cold breakfast buffets and soggy room-service sandwiches. Major hotels are aligning with nearby restaurants and delivery services to offer guests a taste of the local area, and some even offer loyalty-points bonuses to boot. Guests at the Chicago Athletic Association can order via room service from the on-property Shake Shack. Hyatt Centric's pilot Restaurant To Go program allows guests to order takeout-style room service from Grubhub restaurants directly through the hotel website of nine participating properties like the Hyatt Centric Fisherman's Wharf in San Francisco. IHG Rewards Club, the loyalty program of brands including InterContinental Hotels, partners with Grubhub and OpenTable, so members earn bonus points on food deliveries during stays at certain U.S. properties and for restaurant reservations booked through IHG channels like the mobile app. —Eric Rosen



## Decoding the Codes

YOU CAN BUY a ticket to NBA or NFL, but you won't get to a sporting event. For that matter, a trip to HEL may not meet expectations, either. Those are airport codes, three-letter designations unique to each airfield, governed by the International Air Transport Association. The codes define itineraries for airline tickets and route baggage to destinations. IATA wants the codes to reflect the first three letters of the city name, if possible. That creates some intriguing baggage tags. BUD (Budapest) has nothing to do with beer. DOH (Doha, Qatar) has nothing to do with *The Simpsons*. POT, though, seems somehow appropriate for an airport in Jamaica.

There are plenty of exceptions that seemingly have nothing to do at all with city names. Most travelers know Chicago's O'Hare International Airport is ORD, but why? The site was originally Old Orchard Field and the code never changed, IATA says. Orlando International, originally McCoy Air Force Base, can't change from MCO to ORL because that's taken by Orlando's Executive Airport. OIA might make sense for Orlando International Airport, but the name and location are too close to MIA—Miami. Airports within 200 nautical miles of each other have to be more than one letter different under a Federal Aviation Administration rule.

Some airports started with a two-letter code in the early days and when IATA upped it to three, airports added an X to the end: LAX, PHX, PDX.

My personal favorite: CIA (Ciampino, Italy). Kinda cool when your bag is tagged CIA. ■ —S.M.



## POWER POINT

**Place a business card inside your suitcase.**  
As bags move down conveyor belts and get thrown into carts and onto airplanes, name tags and airline routing tags can get mutilated.  
**When that happens, airlines open the bag to look for identification.**  
**Leaving a business card on top of your clothes can save that bag from getting lost.**

# Katherine Maher

THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR of the Wikimedia Foundation was on the road 200 days last year, crisscrossing the globe from Buenos Aires to Cairo. Up next? Berlin, Lyon and Cape Town, for Wiki's annual conference. Here's how the 35-year-old travels.

In a given month, I might fly to New York to meet with the Metropolitan Museum of Art about making its collection more accessible online to Wikipedia, then head to Tunisia to meet members of the Wikipedia community. A big reason why I spend so much time on road is that we support nearly 300 languages. We're committed to the idea that Wikipedia should be this essential knowledge infrastructure for the world.

I used to be really aggressive—walk off the plane and go straight into meetings. Because we're a nonprofit, we travel economy class everywhere; getting off a long flight can be tough. I've learned to build in a little time for recovery. If I need a nap, that's OK. You have to be nice to yourself.

One of the first things I do in a city is go for a run. It's a great way to orient yourself—even if it's just for a mile or two. And I usually listen to NPR podcasts. Those tend to keep me company, although for the most part, I have a no-earphones approach to travel. I think when you wear earphones you're not able to see as much of a place.

I'm not super loyal to any hotel brands. I often stay at the Hilton London Bankside near the Tate Modern or in



New York I like the **Walker Hotel (6)**, not far from Union Square Park. I like a hotel to be well located. For me that means close to a neighborhood I want to visit, rather than one that's central.

I have a super beat-up Samsonite Spinner carry-on. The handles ripped off and the wheels are destroyed. I'm definitely in the market for a new one, but I haven't quite brought myself to make the investment.

I fly with an eye mask from Bucky. It's heavy, filled with buckwheat seeds, and made of a silky material. I'm asleep five minutes after I put it on. And I bring a soft, spiky **massage ball (5)**; it's nice during a long flight—and after a run.

When I get dressed for a flight, I walk the line between relaxed and presentable. I once got off in Nairobi wearing very casual clothes, and I ran into people from the State Department, which was awkward. These days, I fly in comfortable jeans, a nice cashmere sweater and leather **Kenneth Cole Calvin sneakers (2)**.

My phone is loaded with apps from the airlines. I use Tript for my itineraries and Oanda for currency conversions. Those are essential.

Beirut is one of my favorite cities. I like the culture, the activism, the tension between the new and the old—and I don't mean the mosques and the high rises. I mean between young and older generations. It has accepted a huge number of Syrian refugees in recent years. It's a fascinating place to be.

I also find myself in **Berlin (1)** a lot. It's a very important city for our community, but it's also a really fun city, with a big arts and creative presence.

Similarly, I love **Mexico City (3)**. Its food scene is obviously phenomenal, and it's another a vibrant, young, interesting city that's constantly remaking itself.

I try to spend as much time eating and exploring a city through its food. **Naschmarkt (4)** in Vienna is fantastic. In one place you can eat Balkan food, Bavarian-influenced food, Turkish food.

I have these beautiful rugs from Adnan & Hasan in the Grand Bazaar in Istanbul. They were a real stretch for me at the time. Every morning when I wake up at home in San Francisco, I look at them. They remind me of all the wonderful places I've had the opportunity to visit.  
—As told to Elizabeth Sile





# Made (Better) in Tokyo

**There's far more to the dining scene than sushi and soba. In fact, the Western food in Japan's capital is some of the world's best.** By Stan Parish • Photographs by Takashi Yasumura

IN 2007, IVAN ORKIN, a self-described "Jewish guy from Long Island" became the first American to serve ramen in Tokyo—ramen that earned him instant acclaim and endless lines. Today, Orkin is chef-owner of the equally slammed Ivan Ramen and Ivan Ramen Slurp Shop in New York. His Instagram account (@ramenjunkie) acts as a kind of restaurant guide to New York and Tokyo, which he visits often. "I get asked for recommendations all the time," Orkin says, "and I'm always pushing people to go beyond sushi and yakitori and tempura. The Neapolitan pizza in Tokyo is as good or better than anything you'll find in Naples. Same goes for French pastry." The Japanese are known as expert copyists, but don't expect an exact facsimile of Western food. "When you eat foreign cuisine in Japan," Orkin says, "it's always filtered through the sensibility of the Japanese."

## PIZZA

### The Tamaki Pie at Pizza Studio Tamaki

Tsubasa Tamaki has never set foot in Italy. The 39-year-old chef honed his craft at Tokyo pizzerias Savoy and Strada—both of which have been called the city's best. In February 2017, Tamaki struck out on his own. The smoked mozzarella on his signature Tamaki pie is a revelation, but no order is complete without a marinara pizza, because any cheese is ultimately a distraction from the towering achievement of his crust. It's lightly blistered and blackened at the edges—crisp and charred in contrast to the chewy, supple center which, unlike the Neapolitan version, never goes soft. The extra pop of flavor comes from the salt Tamaki scatters in the oven, where it bakes into the uniformly crisp undersides of his pies. Toppings are meticulously distributed to offer the perfect ratios in every bite. Is this the world's best pizza? You'll be hard-pressed to say no.

## BURGER

### The Double Burger at Henry's Burger

Sampling the grilled Wagyu beef of chef Kentaro Nakahara used to involve a reservation (made months in advance) at Sumibiyakiniku Nakahara. At his latest venture, Nakahara (middle name: Henry), offers two items: a burger (single, double or triple patty) and fries. The 100 percent Wagyu patty is roughly chopped rather than finely ground, formed into a ball, and cooked smash-burger style on a flattop. The effect is that of a burger made from perfectly cooked Wagyu steaks as some individual chunks take a sear but remain medium-rare on the inside. The accouterments are carefully chosen to showcase the beef: a whisper of a bun that almost disappears between your fingers; a single disc of ripe tomato; crisp lettuce; and a slice of cheddar that melts into the meat. The Thousand Island-like sauce has just enough tang to underscore the beef's richness without masking the flavor. This is the hamburger distilled to its fundamental pleasure points. It's also shockingly light for a dish that packs this much texture and flavor. Put another way: You can, should and probably will have more than one.

## STEAK

### The Filet and Steak Sandwich at Shima Steak

There's no street-level sign for Shima Steak, and no writing on the door that sits below a branch of the Japanese chain Tully's Coffee. The easiest way to find the restaurant is the occasional narcotic waft of roasting Wagyu beef, which chef Oshima Manabu imports from his native Kyoto, wet-ages, and cooks on rotisserie skewers in an oven of his own design. The steaks are plated with sides—three underseasoned string beans, bland mashed potatoes, a solitary hunk of carrot—that look like



OPPOSITE TOP LEFT: Tokyo's skyline, dominated by the Eiffel Tower-inspired Tokyo Tower. CLOCKWISE FROM TOP RIGHT: Outside L'Effervescence; the French restaurant's pigeon with guts sauce; the squid ink pasta at Bulgari il Ristorante-Luca Fantin; inside the Italian restaurant; the Tamaki pie from PST; its chef, Tsubasa Tamaki. BELOW RIGHT: Bartender Takao Mori makes his signature drink, the martini, at Mori Bar.



cafeteria food but taste slightly fresher. You are not here for the vegetables. You won't find the mineral tang of dry-aged steak at Shima, and you won't miss it: the rich, clean flavor of the beef is a revelation, and the texture is pure decadence. The ludicrous amount of marbling on the filet melts over the coals, resulting in steak that could be cut with a plastic spoon. Skip dessert in favor of Shima's Instagram-famous steak sandwich: two slices of Pullman bread slathered in house-made secret sauce and stuffed with grilled Wagyu scraps. It's sliced into thirds and packed into a bento box for the road—the takeout of emperors. According to the hostess, the sandwich should never see the inside of a refrigerator, and should be consumed within 24 hours. It's doubtful that anyone has waited that long.

## PASTA

### The Squid Ink Pasta at Bulgari Il Ristorante-Luca Fantin

Chef Luca Fantin—native of Treviso, Italy—imports very little from his homeland for the thrilling, modern, *molto italiano* dishes he's serving above the Bulgari boutique in Ginza Tower. Yes, the dry pasta comes from Italy. So does the top-notch wine selection, the Parmigiano-Reggiano and aged carnaroli rice. Almost everything else, though, is sourced in Japan which—according to Fantin—has more in common with Italy than you might think. "They have the same seasons, they're on the same parallel," he says. "The climate is quite similar." There are no misses on his multicourse tasting menus, and the high points combine the best of East and West. Jet-black, squid-ink spaghetti is slicked with a squid stock, a sweet scallop puree, and a rucola sauce that hits a balancing bitter note. The dish is topped with raw *aori ika* (reef squid), which melts in your mouth thanks to meticulous knife work that Fantin hones with everyday practice. You close your eyes and you're not sure if this is Italy or Tokyo or some delicious, imaginary place in between.

## MODERN FRENCH

### The pigeon with guts sauce at L'Effervescence

L'Effervescence is nominally French, a designation that doesn't much interest chef Shinobu Namae. "I don't care how it's categorized," he says of the food that earned him two Michelin stars. "I want to be free and I want you to feel free." Freedom, in this case, means blending techniques and traditions for maximum pleasure and effect.

French training (he was mentored by the legendary Michel Bras) and also digs into his personal heritage. Pigeon, grilled over straw for a sharp, woody smokiness, was served over a rich "guts sauce" and finely diced piles of gingered clam from Hokkaido. It was paired with a juicy, complex Côte-Rôtie and sommelier Akio Matsumoto is as smart about sake as he is about wine. Pro tip: The eight-course lunch is probably the best \$100 you can spend on a meal in this city—or anywhere else.



## DON'T MISS THESE PERFECT DRINKS...

**The Martini at Mori Bar** Takao Mori, 71, is considered the grandfather of the martini in Japan. In his signature version—served at the tiny, windowless, 10th-floor bar bearing his name in Ginza—Boodles gin is tempered by a touch of vermouth, a drop of orange bitters, and a faint mist of lemon. It's a potent and perfect take on the classic, and the elegant, diamond-etched coupe is bigger than it looks, so order more than one at your own risk.

## THE BARTENDER'S CHOICE AT BAR HIGH FIVE

### The pigeon with guts sauce at L'Effervescence

Five

The encyclopedic selection of spirits takes up an entire wall at Bar High Five in Ginza. Give one of the talented bartenders a few points on your preferences and prepare to be surprised by exotic local liqueurs that elevate the classics and create entirely new cocktails found nowhere else.

**The six-cocktail tasting at Gen Yamamoto** Six drinks sounds excessive, but spirits take a back seat to seasonal fruits and vegetables at this eight-seat bar. On a recent night, fresh plum juice was spiked with cherry brandy and a touch of wasabi, while grated Kabocha squash was enlivened with toasted squash seeds and smoky Japanese whiskey. Six drinks here feels like not enough.—S.P.

# Deals on Wheels

**The art of negotiation has shifted gears: Golf clubs are gone, road bikes and group rides are the new boardroom.** By Kris Frieswick

ONCE CONSIDERED an obscure sport for kids, commuters and hardcore fitness fanatics, cycling has evolved in the past few years into both a powerful networking tool for executives and an activity that corporations are increasingly using to connect with their client base. One example, Adobe Systems, the San Jose, California-based maker of design and publishing software, organizes formal cycling events for clients and partners at many Adobe and partner conferences around the world. They've become a big draw.

"I have executives say, 'Send me your cycling calendar.' They're using it to decide which conferences to attend," says Ben Rabner, Adobe's head of experiential marketing, who founded the bike program five years ago. The company hosted 15 group cycling events in 2017—ranging from short beginner coffee rides to challenging multihour suffer-fests (including a ride up the challenging Mount Ventoux in France before Adobe's participation in Cannes Lions). The company provides bikes and helmets for those who don't bring their own and offers a postride social, all accompanied by a specially tricked-out, Adobe-branded Mercedes Sprinter van.

Michelmores, a 130-year-old law firm with offices in London, Exeter and Bristol, England, hosts a monthly cycling event that targets clients and potential clients. The cycling club's founder, Louise Edwards, director of marketing and an avid cyclist, started the program in May 2016. "When potential clients are choosing a law firm," says Edwards, "chemistry is important. If we can get to know them in a more informal setting, like on a bike, it's a good way to find out if you get along." Clients are invited to join the morning rides, which push off at 7:30 a.m. and end two hours later back at the Michelmores cafeteria with a hearty breakfast.

Aside from the health benefits and accessibility to anyone with a bike (no

memberships required), early-morning group rides are the sport's norm. This makes it a good workout for executives with packed daily schedules. It's also an inherently social sport, thanks to drafting—following in a tight "pace line" formation where a lead cyclist (or two, side by side, in a double pace line) cut the wind for the cyclists behind them. Every few minutes, the lead rider moves to the end of the paceline and the second rider moves up.

Each rider shares the work and spends less total energy than they would if by themselves. However, in a pace line, one wrong move by the rider ahead could mean disaster for all who follow. As such, there are few bonds greater than finding a "good wheel," that man or woman you know you're safe cycling behind because he or she is predictable, consistent, and strong. And it's a lot easier to chat on a bike than it is with other sports, like running. It's no wonder cyclists have been praising their sport as the "new golf" for business networking.

This is why a raft of new companies have sprung up to cater to executives who want to ride and network with other power-brokers wherever they go. International Cycle Executives, or ICE, was founded by former consultant and triathlete Ryan O'Neill after he realized, while still a consultant, that the conversations he had with potential clients while cycling were "deeper than what I'd experienced in other business settings. We could pitch and win more work more successfully more often."

O'Neill quit his job to build out ICE, now 1,000 members strong. Sponsors (like Vodafone Global Enterprise and EY's Data and Analytics Practice) get their brand on the club's "kit" (cycling gear), website and social-media presence and

have the chance to offer sessions at the breakfast that follows the rides. Sponsors can also seed the club with a couple of their own cycling employees. (O'Neill says sales talk is frowned upon by sponsors unless it springs up naturally.) There are ICE chapters in Australia, Singapore, Hong Kong and the U.K., and there are plans for seven more cities by 2023, including at least two in the U.S.

The Rapha Cycling Club, created by cycling apparel maker Rapha, offers members of its 25 chapters access to group rides based out of their 19 global stores, says Hillary Benjamin, director of North America sales and marketing. There is a bicycle coordinator in each city, who can find members the best rides wherever they travel, or connect them with a local group that matches their ability. High-end Canyon bikes can be rented daily for \$25; an annual membership costs \$200.

"You spend so much time together when you ride with a club," says Cedric Tonello, a regional manager for an international luxury brand and a RCC member. "Some of my best friends are people I've met cycling in new cities."

Strava, the social-networking app for athletes, has some features that are custom-made for the traveling cyclist. On the web, anyone can search a specific location for local cycling clubs and their scheduled rides. By tailoring your search to corporate clubs, you can find fellow riders in your industry, or in the industry where you fish for clients, says Strava CEO James Quarles.

Be warned—it's bad form to join a ride with a posted average speed that is either well above or below your abilities. You can check out the skill levels or the average speed of a club ride through the Strava's club leaderboards, says Quarles. And when you hop into a new club or group ride, don't start talking about yourself or your company or what you sell. Just ride. Cyclists like doing business with each other, but they hate talking about business while they're trying to hit a P.R. Connections will form over time and over miles. ■



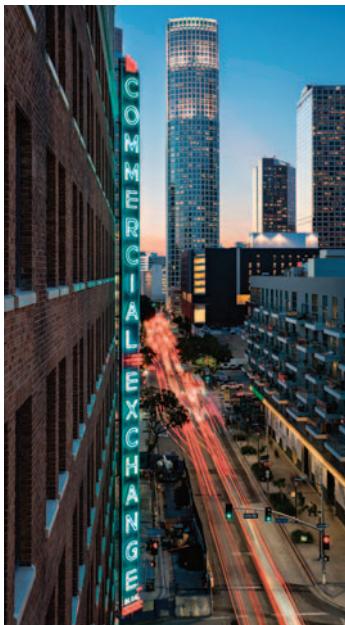
TOP: Photographers Eric Bouvet (top left), and Frederic Lafargue (bottom) and Adobe's director of editorial content Santiago Lyon (right) fix a flat during a ride near Perpignan in the south of France. OPPOSITE: Cyclists climb the Alps in Montvernier, France.



## POWER POINT

*Arriving at the airport without a passport is a real trip killer. Keep a shoe in your hotel room's safe with your passport or other valuables. When packing up, the missing shoe will be a reminder to clear out the safe.*





## CHECK OUT

## TOWN AND COUNTRY

Luxury hotels are having an identity crisis: Those known for their far-flung settings are edging into business hubs, and those that pride themselves on their city-centric locations are creeping into remote destinations.

**Aman** junkies no longer have to go the ends of the earth to experience the brand's tranquil oases traditionally found in places such as Bhutan. Following its first urban Aman in 2014, in Tokyo, Amanyangyun opened this winter in Shanghai's Minhang district near downtown. Next up: A New York Aman, in 2020.

Meanwhile, **Six Senses**—think the Maldives and Seychelles—is eyeing a 2019 New York opening. Then there's the **Park Hyatt**, with locations in finance capitals such as Beijing. It recently unveiled its first Caribbean island hotel, on St. Kitts. **One&Only**, in business beach towns like Dubai and Cape Town, has launched a nature brand (think Rwanda and the Australian wilderness). Not to be outdone, the **Ritz-Carlton**, which already has Ritz-Carlton Reserve resorts in places like Bali—is extending from on-land to at-sea, with cruises via a 149-suite yacht coming in 2019.

HARD HOTEL CITIES  
STEP IT UP

Some business locations have so many workable places to stay that it's impossible to pick what to book. Others cities, not so much. Here, three cities that are upping their hotel games.

**Rome** has plenty of boutique hotels (J.K. Place Roma, D.O.M. Hotel) and apartment-like stays (Fendi Private Suites, the Portrait Roma, PiazzadiSpagna9), but Rome's grand dames needed facelifts. First came last year's renovation of Dorchester Collection's iconic Hotel Eden, which has been a high-end Roman retreat since 1889. Now the

**St. Regis Rome**, in a historic 1894 palazzo, is undergoing a full renovation to be finished this year.

**Barcelona's** upscale game has long been dominated by big hotels—the Majestic Hotel & Spa, the Hotel Arts and the Mandarin Oriental—though a crop of smaller offerings has opened more recently, including the Serras Hotel and Cotton House. A very recent addition to the latter group, the **Almanac Barcelona**, is where to stay now. It opened late last year steps from the Passeig de Gràcia. Opt for a room with a terrace.

**Nashville** has never had great places to stay. Up to now, the top choice was downtown's boutique 21C Museum Hotel—which opened last spring. This summer, the **JW Marriott Nashville** will bring

elegance to the SoBro neighborhood with 533 guestrooms, a 10,000 square-foot outdoor pool and, on the 33rd floor rooftop overlooking the city, an outpost of chef Michael Mina's award-winning Bourbon Steak restaurant. —J.F.

## A Sleeper Hit in Los Angeles?

**The city's formerly rundown downtown has seen an influx of high-end housing, shops, restaurants and bars. Enter, the hotels.** By Jessica Flint

ABOUT TWO DECADES ago, downtown Los Angeles was gritty and worn out. But between 1999 and 2015, \$24 billion was invested in the neighborhood, and the area blossomed: More than 700 businesses moved in, the Arts District came alive and a luxury housing construction boom followed. Now the trendy hotels are arriving.

Take the four-month-old **NoMad Los Angeles** (*room from \$335; thenomadhotel.com*), from the Sydell Group. Located on the corner of 7th and Olive streets, the first offshoot of the New York flagship is housed in Giannini Place—formerly the Bank of Italy—with Italian-inspired interiors by Frenchman Jacques Garcia. The property has 241 rooms and suites, a library, a rooftop pool and a food-and-beverage program by chef Daniel Humm and restaurateur Will Guidara (their first venture outside of New York, where they run Eleven Madison Park, among other culinary venues). Meanwhile, on South Santa Fe Avenue and Bay Street, the **Soho Warehouse** (*sohohouse.com*), an outpost of the Soho House club that was still under construction at press time, will also have guest rooms. These

two follow in the footsteps of such hipster hotels as downtown pioneer the **Ace Hotel Downtown Los Angeles** (*rooms from \$241; acehotel.com*), which opened in 2014, and another Sydell Group property, the year-old **Freehand Los Angeles** (*rooms from \$209; freehandhotels.com*).

But will people choose to stay downtown, especially when L.A.'s hotel scene is upping the ante elsewhere? The **Waldorf Astoria Beverly Hills** (*rooms from \$675; waldorfastoriabeverlyhills.com*), for example, debuted in June with 170 rooms and suites at the perfectly positioned intersection of Wilshire and Santa Monica boulevards. Plus, its rooftop bar, with a menu by chef Jean-Georges Vongerichten is a hit.

Expect a downtown migration—at least to the NoMad. Because the hotel has a card to play that trumps the adage location, location, location: It recruited Philip Pavel, the Chateau Marmont Hotel's managing director of 21 years, to run the property. He's brought with him a loyal following, therefore surely proving the other saying that it's not about what you know but who you know—which rings particularly true in L.A. ■

FROM LEFT: Rudolph's Bar & Tea, at the Freehand Los Angeles, located in the historic Commercial Exchange building. BELOW RIGHT: A villa at Amanyangyun, in Shanghai. Saved from demolition, these Ming- and Qing-dynasty era dwellings have been reassembled, brick by ancient brick.



## POWER POINT

*Hotel thermostats can't always be manually controlled. Sidestep the front desk—which may need to send someone. Instead, Google the thermostat brand and "override code." It can be as simple as pressing a few buttons in the right sequence.*





## America's Coolest Drinking City

WITH A SURPRISING NUMBER of Fortune 500 companies (17) for such a small metropolitan area (Minneapolis and St. Paul together have only 725,000 residents), there's a good chance you've been to the Twin Cities for a meeting. But you may have missed their greatest asset: drinking innovations that come from a long winter. When temperatures drop below freezing, locals at these bars get busy developing award-winning beverage programs to spark their homegrown spirits. —P.T.

### MARVEL BAR

① Look for a bouncer working a crossword puzzle next to the basement door of the James Beard Award-winning The Bachelor Farmer restaurant, and you've found Marvel Bar. Order the Oliveto, a drink featuring gin, lemon, Licor 43, extra-virgin olive oil and an egg white. Developed by the founding bartender, Pip Hanson—who went on to oversee the beverage program at London's famed cocktail

bar Artesian—this unexpected—ahem—marvel will win over the most hesitant client. For a more recent creation, try a Fashioned By The North, a gin-and-rye-based cocktail.

### GRUMPY'S BAR & GRILL

② Once you break through the crusty exterior at this aptly named dive, the bartenders will provide insider's expertise on local liquors like J. Carver Distillery's Runestone Straight Rye and unmissable craft brews like Surly Brewing's Furious IPA. Plus, you'll likely run into local legends from the music scene (Grumpy's owner runs a small record label), including Soul Asylum or punk legends Dillinger Four.

### RESTAURANT ALMA

③ Not everyone is a cocktail aficionado. For a stand-out wine list, grab one of the 12 seats at Alma's restaurant bar, and James Hirdler, the sommelier since the restaurant's opening in 1999, will take you on a journey through unexpectedly excellent pours, possibly including Carlos Creek Winery's Vidal Blanc from Alexandria, Minnesota, which he describes as tasting of peach, mango, and apricot with Trockenbeerenauslese-like bright acidity.



### TATTERSALL DISTILLING

④ When your Lyft finishes bouncing over the scattershot potholes in the alley behind the historic Thor Building, the dimly lit tools of the trade behind Tattersall Distilling's bar will banish any doubts about this out-of-the-way gem. Don't miss the house-made, award-winning Aquavit—what they call the "Scandinavian rival" to their equally award-winning gin.

### SAINT DINETTE

⑤ While St. Paul may be older, its younger (but bigger) brother across the river has it beat in the cocktail game. The former's Saint Dinette is looking to turn those tables, however, by drafting a team from two highly decorated restaurants that closed too soon: La Belle Vie in Minneapolis (RIP 2015) and The Strip Club in St. Paul (RIP 2017). General manager Laurel A. Elm—acolyte of the godfather of the cocktail movement in Minnesota, Johnny Michaels—leads a team with something to prove and the means to do it. Try a classic whiskey sour, with their housemade sour, or the Well Dressed Man, made with Campari, Dolin Dry, Lafleur Mallet Sauternes, herbes de provence and oleo saccharum.

### LAST CALL

#### FOUR PLACES AROUND THE WORLD TO DROP IN FOR A DRINK

##### New York City

Before Dinner

The **Club Room** at the Lowell hotel, on Manhattan's Upper East Side, is hidden away in the back of the recently rebuilt property's first floor. Designed by interior designer Michael S. Smith, it's reserved for hotel guests until 5 p.m.; any time after that (up until midnight) the public can sit in the intimate, living room-style lounge and order cocktails and light bites.

##### Sydney

Dinner and Drinks

The city's beloved back-lane wine bar, **Love, Tilly Devine**, recently underwent more than just an interior makeover: It also got a new executive chef, Ben Abiad. In doing so, the bar tightened up its wine list to focus on more up-and-coming Australian producers and made the menu more local and vegetarian-friendly.

##### Paris

After Dinner

Like the Club Room at the Lowell, **The Duc de Morny Library** at the La Réserve Paris hotel, a short walk from both the Avenue des Champs-Élysées and the Grand Palais museum, is reserved for guests only during the day; they can drink afternoon tea and enjoy an honor bar. But come evening, the antique-book lined library turns into a jazz bar that recently became open to the public.



### POWER POINT

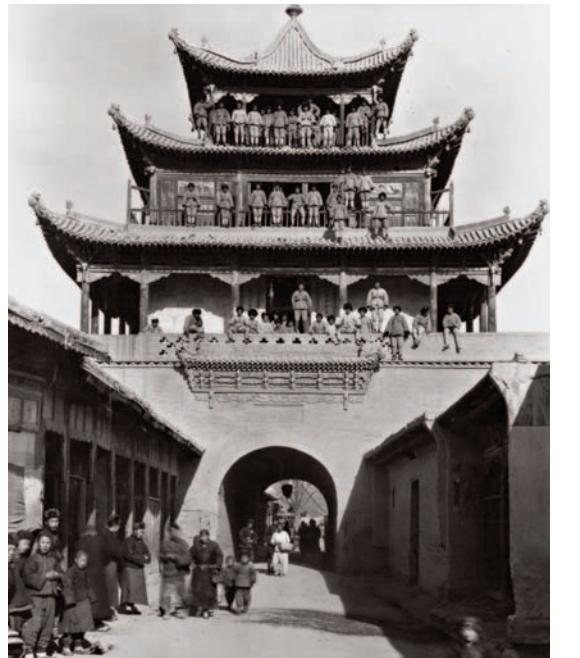
*The MiFlight app crowdsources security checkpoint waits in real-time at over 200 airports globally. Input your airport, terminal and gate to get your estimated wait time.*

##### London

Late Night

In a town where finding a drink past midnight can be a challenge, **Joe's**, in Camden, stays open until 3 a.m. Yes, it's a dive bar. Yes, it has a retro theme. Yes, it has...hot dogs. But it's a place where you can sing along to rock 'n' roll into the wee hours every night of the week. —J.F.

# 1931: The Silk Road Meets the Auto Age



LEFT: Soldiers gather at the central tower at Suchow, in Jiuquan, Gansu Province, People's Republic of China, 1931. OPPOSITE: The expedition travels outside the walls of Farah, Afghanistan. Once a prosperous city, Farah was destroyed by Genghis Khan in 1221 and by the Persians in 1837. In 1931, Farah had few inhabitants.

GEORGES-MARIE HAARDT was one of those latter-day explorers who completed the first journey on wheels across Central Asia. Covering 8,000 miles, the trip's purpose was to open up the Silk Road to cars. "Across desert wastes and windswept plateaus, over snow-clad mountain passes, through strange lands where ancient civilizations flourished, and into vast, mysterious, teeming China—such will be the route of the Citroën Trans-Asiatic Expedition, which left [Beirut] in April....," began Haardt in his June 1931 story for *National Geographic*, which co-sponsored the trip and sent along Maynard Owen Williams, its chief of foreign staff, as expedition photographer. (The magazine would publish five stories from 1931-1940 and three more from 1988.)

Political uncertainties led to a change in the itinerary; impassable routes in Kashmir led to splitting into two to increase the odds of success. Haardt's group went through the Himalayas, where it encountered unimaginable hardships; often the mechanics had to dismantle and reassemble their vehicles due to the cruel mountainous trails. Still, the groups met up in October to set out together to Beijing, arriving on Feb. 12, 1932. Although Pakistan isn't an obvious choice for travel, part of this journey can be re-created these days in the peaceful region called Hunza Valley, with its stunning variety of landscapes, from glaciers to flowering meadows. ■

—Bill Jones, National Geographic Expert



PHOTOS: MAYNARD OWEN WILLIAMS/NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC CREATIVE (X2). MAP: SOREN WALLJASPER, NGM STAFF

# From Sea to Sand Beyond the modern skylines of Arabia and into the ancient expanse of Oman on the trail of the horses that changed history



By Peter Gwin • Photographs by Anastasia Taylor-Lind



### The Enchanted Horse

**T**HE ARABIAN BOLTED at the moment I least expected and, now as I think about it, that's exactly how the djinns must have plotted it out.

He was muscular and chalk white, with a head that curved slightly upward like a scimitar, giving way to wide, flaring nostrils that seemed to inhale me, reading my odors as I stood before him in the paddock. He neighed and shifted his stance as a groom cinched a saddle around his sleek belly.

"From Amreeka, like you," said the trainer, Qaboos. His name was Scarzo, a former racehorse that the stable had imported to Oman from the U.S. some years back to boost its Arabian bloodstock.

Qaboos and I had met through a daisy-chain of acquaintances after I'd told a friend that one of my lifelong desires was to ride Arabian horses in the birthplace of the breed. That morning, before dawn, an aging pickup rumbled up to my guesthouse in Muscat, Oman's capital city, and out stepped a handsome young man in his 20s wearing riding pants and tall black boots, his hair freshly cut, his mustache neatly trimmed. "I am Qaboos," he said and off we went through the darkened streets.

As we drove to his stable in Barka, about an hour up the coast, I discovered that Qaboos often mixed up words. Certainly, his English was better than my Arabic, which consisted of 20 or so words, only six of which I could properly pronounce. Listening to him, I realized that when he said *here*, he sometimes meant *there*, *right* could mean *left*, *near* was more like *very far*.

We sped along the main road, past the moonlit silhouettes of the jagged mountains that define this part of the Omani coastline and our conversations veered wildly, as I guessed what he meant by phrases such as "You fly in water?" After a long interrogation and some pantomiming, it turned out that he was asking if I could swim. "Yes," I finally answered.

"Yes," he nodded emphatically, yet offering no explanation for why he was asking.

We were preparing to mount the horses when Qaboos announced: "Horse little crazy." He said this nonchalantly, as if he were saying this horse is white. *Crazy*. What was Qaboos's definition of crazy? Crazy as in dangerous crazy? Or crazy as in crazy fun? Or was it a word that rhymed with crazy. Lazy? Maybe Scarzo detected my confusion.

He turned his scimitar head and regarded me with one ebony eye. Or perhaps he was considering the scents I exuded—deodorant and breath mints, ibuprofen and middle-age angst.

Perhaps these smells reminded him of his life on American race-tracks. I pictured sweaty men in fedoras sticking large syringes into the rope-like veins that pulsed along his neck. Or jockeys whipping him mercilessly toward a never-ending parade of finish lines.



**PREVIOUS SPREAD:**  
A traditional Omani rider at the Bahla Horse Festival. Held in March, in Bahla, some 115 miles west of Muscat, the festival is a showcase of artistic and heritage equestrian events.

**THIS SPREAD, LEFT TO RIGHT:** A horse in a traditional Omani bridle at the Royal Calvary in Muscat. The sprawling Calvary complex was founded by the Sultan of Oman, Qaboos bin Said Al Said, to preserve and promote the country's horse culture. Its stables breed and train horses in many disciplines; clay is used to cool a horse's tendons after exercise; a horse rests in its stable at the Royal Calvary; mesh hoods are worn by horses to protect their eyes from flies.

Or maybe the horse discerned something more profound—the real reason that I was sitting atop him now—that I hoped to resolve a patchwork of personal mysteries that revolved around horses, Arabia, and magic, the origins of which lie buried in the deep folds of my childhood memories. Whatever the case, several hours later—as I dangled off Scarzo's rump, one foot tangled in a stirrup, vainly trying to regain my balance as he rampaged across the beach toward a family that had just spread out a picnic blanket—I understood exactly what Qaboos had meant by crazy. But let's freeze here in the midst of this peril and return to the origin of this calamity to see how the djinns had been plotting this moment from long ago.

### My Grandfather's Missing Thumb

GROWING UP IN Georgia, I'd learned to ride horses, though none of them had been Arabians. Far from them. Rather they had all been trail-weary horses—"more ass than horse" as one codger had put it. I'd seen an Arabian only once. My two little brothers and I had visited our grandfather's farm one summer when I was about 12, and he'd taken us to a neighbor's ranch where we stood before a coal black stallion kept separate from the other horses. It was as majestic a creature as I'd ever encountered, with a long narrow head, glistening eyes and flaring nostrils. It threw its mane, stamped its hooves and produced a deep, vibrating neigh that seemed to go right through my chest. My brothers and I scampered back from the fence.

"You boys want to ride him," the rancher had joked. "He ain't too friendly. That's an Arabian for you. Hot-blooded horses."

In the years to come, I would learn, as I immersed myself in the literature of Arabians, that breeders regard their potent blood as some sort of equine nitroglycerin, infusing Arabians with agility, speed, endurance and a spirit that has beguiled humans the world over for millennia. Forged in the brutal conditions of the Arabian desert, these horses could withstand extreme heat, cold and thirst and were prized by Bedouins. Camels were reliable for carrying loads across the desert, but on a raid or in battle, a Bedouin would trust his life only to an Arabian horse.

As such, Bedouin breeders began noting lineages of mares and stallions thousands of years ago. They ruthlessly selected for stamina, speed, soundness and courage, allowing only the very best horses to breed. When possible, they fed them dates and camel milk. During birth, foals weren't allowed to touch the ground, were lovingly bathed and sheltered with the mares in the family tent. Over the centuries, this process produced a super breed, defined by its oversized nostrils and large lungs, which allowed Arabians to run far longer than other breeds. Arab poets dubbed them "drinkers of the wind" and "swallowers of the ground." The Prophet Muhammad declared them sacred.

Initially, Arabs recognized the military advantage their fast, light horses gave them, especially compared to the large, slow horses ridden by heavily armored European knights during the Crusades, and they were reluctant to trade them to potential enemies. But eventually Arabian blood would course through the veins of the cavalries of the Far East, the Ottoman Empire, Europe and the New World. Genghis Khan, Alexander the Great, Napoleon, the Spanish conquistadors,

George Washington—all rode Arabians. Today, the world of racing is completely dominated by Arabian blood. The entire Thoroughbred breed derives from three pureblood Arabian stallions imported to England, which means the winner of every Kentucky Derby, Preakness, and Belmont Stakes owes it winnings, in some measure, to the inspired toil of ancient desert nomads. But I didn't know any of that then.

As my brothers and I stared in awe while keeping our distance, my grandfather remained at the fence, implacable under his ever-present straw hat. He had been born to a hardscrabble farming family in 1901, and to him horses were strictly beasts of burden, the precursors to cars and tractors, intended to pull plows and wagons and carry folks into town.

That same summer I'd excavated a moldering copy of *Tales From the Thousand and One Nights* from my grandparents' basement and became immersed in the world of Ali Baba, flying carpets, and mischievous spirits called djinns, which sometimes took pleasure in exploiting the hubris of unsuspecting mortals, seducing them with visions of beauty and pleasure and luring them into elaborate traps. But it was the tale *The Enchanted Horse* that ever since has remained firmly lodged in my imagination. In it a young prince jumps onto the back of an enchanted horse, knowing only how to make it fly but not how to make it land. The horse carries him to far kingdoms where he has many adventures and meets a powerful princess.

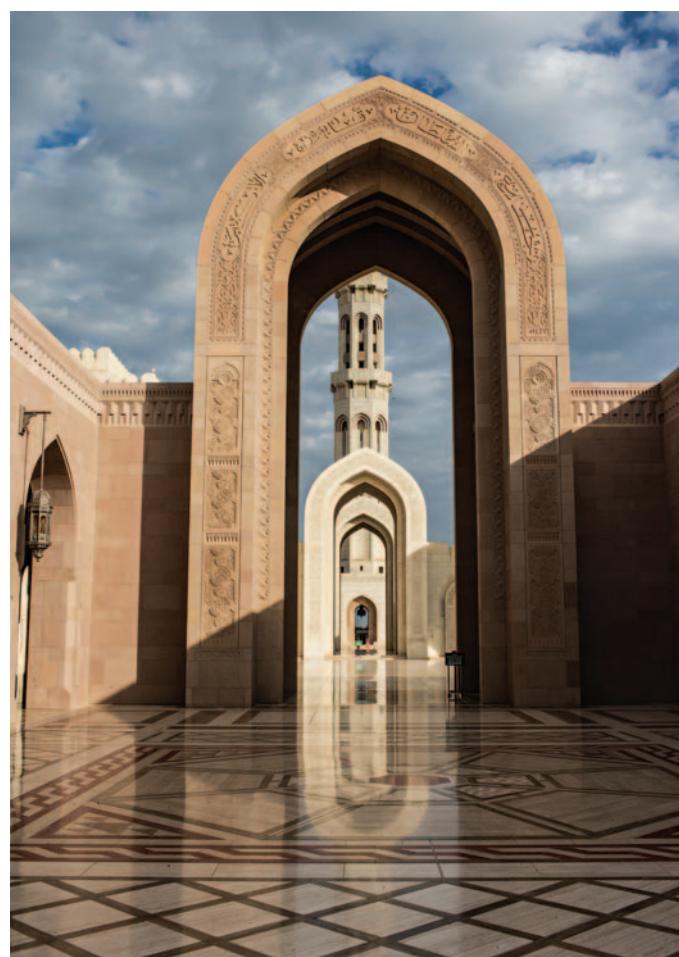
During those summer afternoons, I would climb as high as I could into the cottonwood tree behind my grandparents' house and among its swaying branches pretend to ride the flying horse. In the evenings when my grandfather came in from the fields, I'd ask him to take me to see the Arabian again. But he said once was enough. I wasn't bold around my grandfather, a taciturn man who held no romantic notions about animals. He'd lost the tip of his right thumb in a roping accident and knew all too well the power of large animals. My mother told us it wasn't polite to ask people questions about scars or missing pieces of their body, which as a kid seemed illogical. Shouldn't those be the very first questions? But somehow, the only info about the missing thumb I could coax out of anyone was that it had been a roping accident.

Absent any other information and imbued with the encounter of the Arabian and the other Arabian stories, I spooled together my own tale in which my grandfather lassoed an Arabian and set off on a gallop only to fall off with the rope wound around his thumb. The horse had fled, taking the tip of his thumb, which was why he didn't love horses and why he wouldn't take me back to the Arabian for fear I would come under the spell of djinns, and they would use my ardor for the beautiful stallion to entrap me someday. Or something like that.

And that's what had brought me to Oman: A chance encounter on a ranch, a missing piece of thumb, a fertile imagination and a germinating story—those ingredients had created a lifelong desire to ride Arabian horses in Arabia. And here I was, on the back of Scarzo, following Qaboos through the streets of Barka.

#### I Almost Trample a Boy

MANY PLACES IN the Middle East are known as hotbeds for Arabian horses. According to legend, the breed originated



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP:  
Misfah, a hamlet in the mountain foothills west of Muscat, overlooks a green gorge filled with agricultural terraces and gardens. Some of the area's mudbrick houses are centuries old; one of the only mosques that allows non-Muslim visitors, the Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque in Muscat, was inaugurated in 2001; a man stands for a portrait wearing his ceremonial Omani riding attire.

FOLLOWING SPREAD:  
Horses and their riders train at the public sand tracks along the beach in Barka.

from the "south wind," which some have interpreted as meaning they came from Yemen. Others credit the Bedouin tribes on Saudi Arabia's Nejd plateau as the nucleus of breeders from which the horses arose. Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, Jordan, Syria and Egypt can all point to famous stables that have produced refined and prolific Arabian lineages.

In addition to the horses, I had come to Oman for its topography. I imagined riding into the Al Hajar Mountains and deep into the twisting gorges of Wadi Nakr, galloping for miles along its Oman Gulf beaches and into the endless red dunes of the Rub al Khali. But I also chose Oman because of its monarch, Sultan Qaboos bin Said Al Said, a devoted horse lover. In recent years, he has sought to restore the horse culture that once helped define his kingdom, sanctioning both distance and flat races to revive interest among his people and importing Arabians back into the country to bolster its breeding population.

My guide Qaboos had been named in honor of the sultan, and he certainly seemed to possess the monarch's affinity for horses. As we rode through the quiet streets of Barka, he and his mount, a chestnut mare, moved as one, as though, like a centaur, the horse was an extension of his lower anatomy. Compared to such grace, I felt self-conscious about my rusty horsemanship, awkwardly adjusting to the English-style saddle and cantering clumsily. The horses seemed a bit nervous, but they weren't crazy horses, as Qaboos had seemed to suggest.

We arrived at the beach and the sea was flat, with only the faintest ripples for waves. Its immense calm seemed to soothe the horses. For the first several miles, we had the empty beach to ourselves, but Qaboos kept us at a slow trot. I could feel him watching how I handled my horse. I seemed to win slight approval when a cast of crabs scuttled out of the surf and startled Scarzo. He started to rear up, but I firmly reined him in, and Qaboos nodded approvingly. After that, we galloped the horses for long stretches and it became very clear this was Scarzo's preferred mode. His powerful muscles seemed to uncoil, and his shoulders, like oversize pistons, drove us forward, springing over the sand as though a 160-pound man weren't on his back. And then it happened. We found the perfect horse-rider balance and rhythm, where the hooves no longer seem to touch the ground, and we undulated over the terrain like a dolphin skimming the surface of the ocean.

After a glorious while, we slowed to let the horses cool down. Qaboos motioned to the sea, and we waded the horses into the water. Soon the water was up to Scarzo's neck, and I had to grip the saddle to keep from floating off his back. It dawned on me then why Qaboos had asked whether I could swim, but there really wasn't any need. Scarzo chugged along, his white head nodding rhythmically. We swam the horses for a few hundred yards, emerging slick and wet. Scarzo's dazzling white coat shimmered in the midday sun. And there we stopped to eat lunch at a small park. A few Omani families spread blankets on the beach and their children chased the surf. If the day had ended there, it might have been perfect.

An outside observer might say that what happened next was due to the heavy lunch of grilled lamb kabobs and homemade yogurt, which made me a bit sleepy and less vigilant. Or that I had succumbed to the vanity that I was a better horseman than I really was. Or point to Qaboos's penchant for mixing up



## OMAN MADE EASY



On the southeastern edge of the Arabian Peninsula, Oman is known for its limestone mountains, blue fiords, limitless deserts and unspoiled beaches. What's lesser known, however, is that it's a surprisingly luxurious destination—and one that's simple to access. Head to the sleepy Musandam Peninsula, a two-and-a-half hour drive from the Dubai International Airport for the perfect beach weekend tacked onto a trip to the United Arab Emirates. The **Six Senses Zighy Bay** (rooms from \$1,800; [sixsenses.com](http://sixsenses.com), pictured above and below) is located on a soft, white-sand beach below the Al Hajar Mountains and next to a tiny fishing community, is built in the style of a traditional Omani village. There are 82 standalone villas, the highlight of which is that each comes with a large outdoor sandy terrace, complete with a private plunge pool, sun loungers, a shady *maqil* (seating area), and a dining space. The resort has six dining venues, two pools and a world-class spa. While beach time is the reason

to visit Zighy Bay, there is no shortage of things to do around the property, including rock climbing, mountain biking and paragliding. Just a 70-minute flight from Dubai is the charming capital city of Muscat. Its ancient history can be explored while staying at one of the numerous luxurious hotels or resorts. The newest, the **Kempinski Hotel Muscat** (rooms from \$350; [kempinski.com](http://kempinski.com)), blends Omani hospitality and European allure. The lobby takes its inspiration from the Sultan of Oman's ceremonial Al Alam Palace. There is the PGA-standard Al Mouj Golf course and the 1897 Cigar Lounge & Bar. The Kempinski even boasts a bowling alley. About 20 minutes outside Old Muscat lies the Asian-Zen style **The Chedi Muscat** (rooms from \$363; [ghmhotels.com](http://ghmhotels.com)), offering 21 acres of pristine beaches, gardens and ponds. Or there's the **Al Bustan Palace Ritz-Carlton** ([ritzcarlton.com](http://ritzcarlton.com)), about 45 minutes from Muscat's airport. The palatial hotel on 200 acres, with the longest stretch of private beach

in Oman, will reopen after an extensive renovation in September 2018. —*Jessica Flint and Hope Brimelow*

**Plan an Omani Horse Adventure** Though horses are ingrained in Omani culture, horse-riding tourism is still developing. It's best to enlist an experienced guide and those can be tricky to find. Check out **Oman Horse Riding Holidays** ([oman-horseridingholidays.com](http://oman-horseridingholidays.com)), run by Emmanuelle Jahshan, an expert equestrian. She requires an intermediate level of horseback riding skill, and she is adept at matching riders with the proper mounts. Her multiday camping tours include rides deep into the red dunes of the Wahiba Sands desert and along the coast of the Gulf of Oman. Weather plays a crucial role as well. The best season to ride is December through mid-April, when temperatures are in the 70s and 80s. This is also the season for racing, show jumping and other horse-related events held around the country. —*P.G.*

words, in this case using the word "loosely" when he meant "tightly." But the 12-year-old boy in me knows beyond any shadow of doubt that it was djinns.

It was late afternoon and we had just mounted our horses to ride back to Barka. The sun was hot, and we noticed a man nearby selling cold drinks out of a cooler. Qaboos dismounted and bought a few bottles of water for us to carry. As he approached, Scarzo shifted nervously under me. I gripped the reins and murmured reassuringly in his ear. "Pete, loosely," Qaboos said. "Loosely." I thought he meant I was holding the horse too tightly, and it was making him uncomfortable. I loosened my grip, slightly.

What happened next unfurled in a twinkling: the shriek of the horse, the flash of fright in Qaboos's eyes, the sudden ignition of nitro-infused horsepower as Scarzo reared up. I was thrown back on the saddle. My left foot came out of the stirrup, but the right one was somehow twisted in the other. I grabbed the top of the saddle with my left hand to keep from falling off and snatched the rein hard with my right hand. But by now the horse was flying down the beach. And like the prince on the enchanted horse, I couldn't make him stop. That's when I saw the picnicking family. I frantically tried to right myself, but I was so off balance. The women screamed and abandoned the blanket. The children ran into the sea. Except for one little boy. To my horror, he stood there wide-eyed staring as the frightened horse and its spastic rider bore down on him. His expression was the same I'd seen on my brothers' faces that day at the rancher's fence, a mix of wonder, astonishment and primal fear. I'll never be sure how the horse missed him. Maybe spirits more powerful than the djinns intervened.

### The Magic Carpet Ride

SCARZO FINALLY DUMPED me in the shallow surf and raced down the beach with Qaboos in hot pursuit on the mare. Covered in wet sand, I walked back up the beach and apologized profusely to the family, who didn't speak English but seemed to shrug off the incident as the kind of thing that just happened. The terrified little boy, however, clung to his mother, peering at me from behind the folds of her chador.

Qaboos called me the next day, wanting to go riding again, but I declined. I kept rewinding the moment I'd lost control and thinking about the little boy and what could've happened. Instead I hired a car and half-heartedly visited some of the ancient oasis towns in the mountains and tried to forget about horses. Then I got a text from a friend who knew a Bedouin breeder in the desert north. "He has the most exquisite horses. You have to see them." We drove to the man's home, in a little province called Bidiya, in the Wahiba Sands, arriving before dusk. He offered us dates and coffee per tradition, and then his grooms brought out the most beautiful horses I've ever seen. Among them were elegant mares the color of butterscotch, mahogany and fresh snow. These were classic Arabians, said the old Bedouin, not too big. By my description, he said, Scarzo was much too tall to be considered a classic Arabian.

His horses, though on the shorter side, had very wide chests. "That means big lungs," he said. Their tails were held high and their heads were large and slightly curved. And finally, he



*ABOVE: Visitors at the Bahla Horse Festival, in Bahla, take photographs with the horses and their riders between Omani displays of traditional horsemanship.*

pointed to their small ears. “Large ears are bad,” he said, a hint the animal has some donkey blood in its lineage.

The sun set and the Milky Way came into view as we sat outside. For hours, the old man indulged me with horse stories, the colts he’d bred for sheiks from all over the Gulf, one thrilling night when as a boy he’d joined his uncles to take horses from a rival tribe. When I told him that I’d come to Oman just to ride an Arabian horse, his eyes seemed to twinkle, and I thought he’d offer to let me ride one of his sublime horses. Instead, his nephew asked for my notebook and wrote down a name.

A few days later I stood in the cool shade of a date plantation outside the oasis town of Al Hamra, west of Muscat. Thanks to another daisy-chain of contacts, I met Al Sher, a trainer from stables owned by Sultan Qaboos himself. He’d agreed to take me on a ride while he was visiting his home village. He arrived on the back of a dark brown mare, riding barefoot and wearing loose cotton trousers, a long white shirt, and an immaculate Omani prayer cap. He led behind him another brown mare, and I noted that both horses fit the old Bedouin’s description of classic Arabians—not too tall, wide chests, short ears. I also noted each was outfitted with a traditional Omani saddle, little more than a blanket without stirrups, forcing a rider to maintain perfect balance.

I had a bad feeling. Unlike the beach, there were no soft landing spots to be seen. The path through the groves was paved with stones and children darted about. But Al Sher smiled and motioned me to mount up. I tried to bury my nerves as deeply as I could, remembering the old saying about how a rider’s

emotions are transmitted through the reins. Off we set, the date palms gave way to groves of mangos and bananas, until we entered the old mudbrick town. We began winding our way up a series of switchbacks, finally reaching a plateau that overlooked the town. Al Sher pointed to a long, flat stretch. “We come here to race.” He spurred his horse and motioned me to follow, but I kept the mare reined tightly. I kept picturing the moment when Scarzo had bolted, that queasy feeling of losing control.

“I’m good,” I called. “No racing for me.” He trotted back. “This horse is good,” he said in a quiet, reassuring voice. “No problems.” Then he leaned over and slapped my mare violently on its flank and barked, “YI!”

The mare flexed, but she didn’t bolt. It was as if she knew to wait for a signal from *her* rider. That was the unyielding loyalty Bedouin breeders had sought to instill in their horses. I could feel my chest tighten with adrenaline, and in a split-second impulse, I kicked her flanks. She leaped forward and almost threw me, but I caught myself and forced my weight forward, trying to lean over her neck. It was ugly riding. Without stirrups or a proper saddle, I was bouncing all over her back.

“YI,” Al Sher yelled again, and I felt the mare accelerate. Then suddenly, it happened. We found our rhythm, rider and horse. I wasn’t bouncing on her back; we were gliding together. The two Arabian mares raced side by side. A chill went up my spine and my spirit rose. I looked over to smile at Al Sher. But he wasn’t sitting in his saddle. As his horse galloped, he stood on its back, his hands raised to the heavens, as though he were riding a magic carpet. ■



#### KAURI COVE

Julian Robertson Jr.'s newest retreat, Kauri Cove is a villa rental located on a private white-sand beach on Moturua Island in the Bay of Islands.

**Where:** A 50-minute helicopter ride from Auckland or a 10-minute helicopter ride from Kauri Cliffs, one of Robertson's other lodges.

**Accommodations:** Designed by New Zealand architect Pete Bossley, the main residence has four bedrooms and a two-bedroom guest house. The property comes with a chef and an island caretaker-concierge. "It has every kind of aquatic toy to play with," Robertson says of the motor boat, sailing yacht, paddle boarding, kayaking, snorkeling, fishing and more on offer.

**Don't miss:** The hiking trails around the island, Maori archaeological sites and bird watching.

**Price:** \$18,000 per night, minimum three nights.

# THE ACCIDENTAL HOTELIER

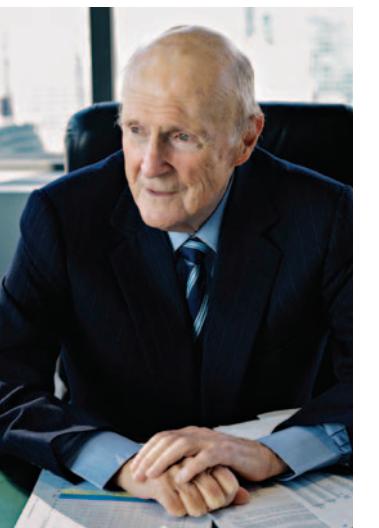
New York hedge-fund pioneer Julian Robertson Jr. never planned to own a suite of luxury lodges across the globe in New Zealand. But now, the 85-year-old billionaire can't get enough of them. *By Jessica Flint*

JULIAN ROBERTSON JR. is sitting on a lemon chiffon-colored chair in his Park Avenue office. He is rattling around ice cubes in a tall glass tumbler filled with Cheerwine, a cherry-flavored soft drink. "I'm a geography nut," says the legendary investor. His comment is apt, as from this vantage point, 48 floors up, New York City's geography and topography unfold expansively below. The buildings comprising Manhattan's skyline look like toy Legos boxed in by the Hudson River.

From here, one can glance south to the Financial District, where Robertson made his name in the 1980s and 1990s by being the one of the best stock-pickers in town. During an 18-year run starting in 1980, when he founded Tiger Management—one of the first hedge funds, and one of the most successful ever—Robertson turned an initial \$8.8 million investment from family and friends into nearly \$22 billion, with an annual compound rate of return of 31.7 percent. He mostly exited the game in 2000 (after a series of setbacks, from choosing to stick with "value" stocks over the then high flying dot-coms), and now, at age 85, the Giving Pledge signer with a reported net worth of \$4.1 billion is focused on philanthropy through his Tiger Foundation.

Shifting to look southwest, to where the Hudson River flows by 14th Street, one can imagine the geography about 8,800 miles and nearly a day away, where an island country lies in the South Pacific Ocean, hosting Robertson's other big business venture: He is, in fact, a hotelier with an expanding empire of New Zealand luxury hotels, Robertson Lodges, begun in 2001.

There hadn't been a new property opening since 2010, but in fall 2017 Robertson unveiled the



Julian Robertson Jr., in his New York City office.

company's fourth, **Kauri Cove**, a villa rental in northern New Zealand; it's a 10-minute helicopter ride from Kauri Cliffs, his first lodge. And now, talking to me in a rare interview, Robertson says he's not slowing down, but rather he's exploring further hospitality opportunities at the world's end.

JULIAN ROBERTSON JR. WAS BORN on June 25, 1932, in Salisbury, North Carolina, home of Cheerwine. The son of a textile executive, Robertson graduated from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill with a business administration degree in 1955 and went on to serve as an officer in the U.S. Navy until 1957. He then moved to New York, where he worked as a stockbroker for Kidder, Peabody & Co., a now-defunct Wall Street securities firm.

In 1978, he persuaded his wife, the late Josephine Robertson, to travel with him on a yearlong sabbatical to what he thought was the most ideal spot to take in geography: New Zealand, whose North Island's central plateau is simmering with volcanic craters, hot springs and spouting geysers, and whose South Island is known for its Southern Alps and fiords. Traveling with the couple were their 4-year-old son Spencer Robertson and 1-year-old son Jay Robertson; their third son, Alex Robertson, came along not too long after the trip. The Robertsons fell in love with the country, particularly with Northland, on the northern tip of the North Island. When they came back to Manhattan, Julian started Tiger Management.

In the mid-1990s, a friend of Robertson's called. "He'd dispatched his real-estate person down to New Zealand," he says. "My friend said, 'Have you got any interest in real estate?' I said, 'Well, my wife and I loved Northland, and if you found some coastal property there, I'd be very interested.' To make a long story short, he found such a property and I bought it." Robertson decided to build a golf course on his 6,000 acres. His wife suggested they also construct a hotel because there would be nowhere for golfers to stay. "I said, 'Ridiculous! If we build a good enough golf course, they will come regardless!'" Robertson says. "As in so many things, my wife was right. Lodges are a good way to make a buck. Golf courses have been a horrible way to make a buck."

Kauri Cliffs golf course, designed by David Harman, opened in 2000, and its hotel, **The Lodge at Kauri Cliffs**, followed in 2001. It was the first luxury lodge to open in New Zealand since Irishman Alan Pye founded Huka Lodge in 1924, close to Taupo, a lakefront town near the North Island's center. The Robertsons enjoyed running Kauri Cliffs so much that they purchased a second 6,000-acre plot in the Hawke's Bay wine region near Napier on the North Island's east coast. There they built Cape Kidnappers Golf Course in 2004 and opened **The Farm at Cape Kidnappers** a little over three years later.

I ask Robertson whether it's true that after playing Bandon Dunes' Pacific Dunes course, in Oregon, he knew he had to have the course's architect, Tom Doak, design Cape Kidnappers course. Robertson smiles and demurs. "I played Bandon Dunes," he says, "and we did get Tom Doak to design my course."

Following Cape Kidnappers, Robertson turned his attention to the South Island, near Queenstown, where in 2010—three months after his wife died from a long battle with breast cancer—he opened **Matakauri Lodge**, an already-functioning hotel that he extensively renovated and placed under the Robertson Lodges umbrella. Now the company is getting into the villa-rental arena with the six-bedroom Kauri Cove in Northland. "It's your own personal island—a good-sized island," Robertson says. He won't reveal what his next property will be—"The other place we have not closed on, so I don't think I should mention it," he says—but he confirms he's looking into further opportunities.

Robertson's son Jay, 40, worked at the lodges for 11 years, and ran them for about eight. He left in 2015 to move to Florida, and now Robertson's youngest son, Alex, 38, is helping oversee the family business. I ask Alex to define the



### MATAKAURI LODGE

"I don't really think there's a whole lot about Matakauri that would remind you about Kauri Cliffs or Cape Kidnappers," Robertson says.

**Where:** A seven-minute drive from Queenstown on the South Island.

**Accommodations:** The 12 suites and four-bedroom owner's cottage overlook the blue-green Lake Wakatipu. As opposed to the country house feel of his other lodges, Matakauri has a sleek alpine ambience. Book the owner's cottage, which has an outdoor hot tub that looks out over the Southern Alps.

**Don't miss:** Matakauri's helicopter ride around the Milford Sound, including landing on both a 10,000-foot glacier and a beach at sea level—all within two hours.

**Price:** From \$1,000.

### THE FARM AT CAPE KIDNAPPERS

"Pictures do not do the land justice," Robertson says of the green rolling ripples in the North Island earth that lead to a rugged cliff line that overlooks the Pacific Ocean.

**Where:** After an hour flight southeast from Auckland, the drive from the property's gate up to the lodge takes 15 minutes on a windy road through ravines and gullies flanked by tall pine trees.

**Accommodations:** The 22 suites and a four-bedroom owner's cottage are decorated with a farm feel, have pretty porches and the bathroom bathtubs have stunning views.

**Don't miss:** From September to May, Cape Kidnappers is home to the world's largest accessible mainland gannet bird hatching ground; make sure to take a Can-Am tour to see the colony.

**Price:** From \$1,200.



### THE LODGE AT KAURI CLIFFS

"Kauri Cliffs has more of my wife in it than any of the others," Robertson says. "I think that's why it's so beautiful. It's always been my favorite."

**Where:** A 50-minute helicopter ride north of Auckland.

**Accommodations:** 22 suites in cozy, neutral-tone cottages. The one-bedroom standard suites have armchairs by the fire and east-facing balconies; the one-bedroom deluxe suites are elevated for sweeping views of the Pacific Ocean.

**Don't miss:** Book a barbecue picnic on the pink beach. "Everyone goes to the pink beach," Robertson says.

**Price:** From \$1,200. (All properties can be booked at [robertsonlodges.com](http://robertsonlodges.com).)



DNA of his father's hospitality brand. "All the properties start with as pretty a piece of land as you can find in the world with a minimalist approach to the lodging that accentuates the natural beauty," Alex says. "The glue is the high level of the service."

SOME GUESTS THOUGHT Kauri Cliffs was too golf-oriented when it opened. "What I respect about Julian is that he's learned from each project," says Cari Gray, founder of Canada-based luxury tour operator Gray & Co. "Kauri Cliffs was very golf-centric, but Cape Kidnappers has a separation of hotel and golf so travelers could feel like they could go there and not be a golfer." Today fewer than 50 percent of Robertson's visitors play the sport. "These hotels happen to have a world-class golf course, but they are not golf resorts," Alex says.

In fact, Kauri Cliffs and Cape Kidnappers are also working farms. "For people who have never been to a farm, to see 500 or 700 sheep rounded up by two dogs with a whistle is pretty unreal," Alex says. Meanwhile, Cape Kidnappers has a world-class kiwi bird sanctuary; Julian says going with a guide in search of one of the threatened birds native to New Zealand is "probably more unique than you even realize." He adds, "I'd say only 10 or 15 percent of Kiwis—meaning New Zealanders—have ever seen a real kiwi in the wild."

Former NBC news anchor Tom Brokaw, who has stayed at Cape Kidnappers, remembers going kiwi tracking. "Julian is a citizen of the world and that is best demonstrated by his investment in and affection for New Zealand," Brokaw says. "Cape Kidnappers, his seaside resort, golf fantasy land, and kiwi habitat is one of those magical places you dream of but never really expect to visit. But I did and it exceeded all my enlarged expectations. And, as a bonus, I held a baby kiwi bird—and later caught the largest rainbow trout I'd ever hooked."

Robertson put New Zealand on the high-end map by charging for high standards. "New Zealand lodges cost as much as the top African safari lodges," Gray says. "That's amazing for such a small island destination. Julian has never been shy of putting a big price tag on a great experience, and the world paid attention." Gray notes that the spate of New Zealand luxury lodges that have opened in the last several years—including Helena Bay, a \$50 million-plus, 800-acre Northland lodge developed by Russian billionaire Alexander Abramov that debuted in 2016—would never have had the vision or the price point without Robertson. "He has a global perspective," she says.

Which brings us back to Robertson sitting in New York City, talking about the contrasts between being a New Zealand hotelier and an American financier. "I would say they are utterly different," he says. "I think it's good in both instances to surround yourself with good people whom you like and try to have a pleasant place in which to work. I think we've done that in both places." In New Zealand, he has never felt any pressure against him because he's an American real estate-developer. "As a matter of fact, the Kiwis have been extremely generous to me in every way," he says. "They made me a knight."

The conversation turns toward Robertson's New Zealand-oriented philanthropic endeavors, ranging from his Aotearoa Foundation, which supports only New Zealand social causes, to his contribution of 15 works of art from his private collection valued at up to \$150 million to the North Island's Auckland Art Gallery in 2009. "When I die, a number of good paintings that I have will go in the Auckland museum," he says. "It will be a meaningful factor to the New Zealanders because they love art and they don't have these artists."

Any kind of an ending seems long in the future. "We're still learning about tourism," Alex says. "You have a real expert here in finance and investing—my father has been doing it for 63 or 64 years—but he's just 15 years into being a hotelier." ■

# HIDDEN PLEASURES ON PRIVATE ISLES

New properties offering the ultimate in seclusion, space and solitude are cropping up everywhere, from the Maldives and Madagascar to Fiji and Indonesia. What's driving the boom? *By Olivia Lee*



*Song Saa Private Island, in the Koh Rong Archipelago, Cambodia.*

**A** PRIVATE ISLAND is a modern-day king's castle, with palm trees for turrets, and an empty ocean for a moat. Each offers a sense of privileged isolation that says more about the word "exclusive" than any first-class lounge or luxury hotel. To rent one all to yourself is to own a piece of the earth, even if just for a few days. But they don't come cheap. **Musha Cay** ([mushacay.com](http://mushacay.com)), part of the Exuma islands in the southern Bahamas, for instance, costs \$210,000 for five nights (the minimum stay for up to 12 people). More accessible is a suite on a private island resort—expect to pay closer to \$1,000 per person a night—with more choice available than ever before.

At the head of the private island trend was **Amanpulo** ([rooms from \\$1,100; aman.com](http://aman.com)), the first private island property from cult hotelier Adrian Zecha, which opened in the Philippines in 1993 with fewer rooms than usually found at resorts, on a piece of land 1,650 feet across at its widest point. Several resorts followed suit, including **Soneva Fushi** ([rooms from \\$1,036; soneva.com](http://soneva.com)) in the Maldives and **Fregate** ([rooms from \\$4,000; fregate.com](http://fregate.com)) in the Seychelles. Guests could lie back in hammocks in these isolated parts of the world, safe in the knowledge that they were alone save for the person on standby to make them margaritas. "It was like backpacking for billionaires," says Alice Daunt, of Daunt Travel. "Except the sheets were blissful and the taps gushed hot water."

In the Maldives alone, there are now nearly 120 private island resorts, with a record number of visitors reported last year. It's a trend that has spent the past decade spreading into even the most remote corners of the world, from **Song Saa Private Island** ([rooms from \\$890; songsaacollective.com](http://songsaacollective.com)), in Cambodia, to **Anantara Medjumbe Island Resort** ([rooms from \\$565; medjumbe.anantara.com](http://medjumbe.anantara.com)), in Mozambique. "The growth is remarkable," says Farhad Vladi, of Vladi Private Islands, a German broker who has sold more than 2,500 in his career. "A few decades ago private islands were extremely rare, like diamonds. Today, everyone wants a piece."

Part of the allure is the opportunity a private island presents to cut oneself off from the world, and sometimes

even from technology. At **&Beyond Mnemba Island** ([rooms from \\$1,270; andbeyond.com](http://andbeyond.com)), in Zanzibar, rooms have been designed without televisions. It's a way for guests to escape, to live out the ultimate Robinson Crusoe fantasy.

For some, just being on a private island isn't enough; they hanker after the bling of *Dr. No* rather than the simplicity of Crusoe. "Instead of a 60-minute massage, guests want a masseuse for the week. Instead of a one-off yoga class, they want an expert yogi to work with them every day," says Four Seasons' regional vice president, Armando Kraenzlin. Fiji's **Laucala Island** ([rooms from \\$4,800; laucala.com](http://laucala.com)) has a submarine for its guests; **Manta Resort** ([rooms from \\$248; themantaresort.com](http://themantaresort.com)), off the coast of Zanzibar, has an underwater bedroom that floats 270 yards from the shore.

Philanthropy is also a factor in private island life. Many want to be seen helping both their communities and their changing environments. When Song Saa opened in 2012 it was considered a pioneer in fostering a sustainable operation in collaboration with locals, which it supports through its Song Saa Foundation.

In 2014, **The Brando** ([rooms from \\$3,190; thebrando.com](http://thebrando.com)) opened on French Polynesia, promising Marlon Brando's vision for an entirely carbon-neutral resort. American entrepreneur Chris Burch's **Nihi Sumba** ([rooms from \\$795; nihi.com](http://nihi.com)), on a world-class surf break in Indonesia, followed a year later with a foundation-driven model similar to Song Saa's. In 2017, the big news was **Time + Tide Miavana** ([rooms from \\$2,900; timeandtideafrica.com](http://timeandtideafrica.com)), in Madagascar, protecting the native forests, oceans and unique species that inhabit them. In 2018, all eyes are on **Wa Ale** ([rooms from \\$500; waaleresort.com](http://waaleresort.com)) in Myanmar, opening in October, as a conservation effort for Lampi Marine National Park, with 20 percent of net annual profits going back into the Lampi Foundation.

Vladi reports that the motivation for buying private islands to focus on conservation and sustainability has rocketed in the last decade. "It's unbelievable how quickly it's gone from ownership to protection," he says. ■



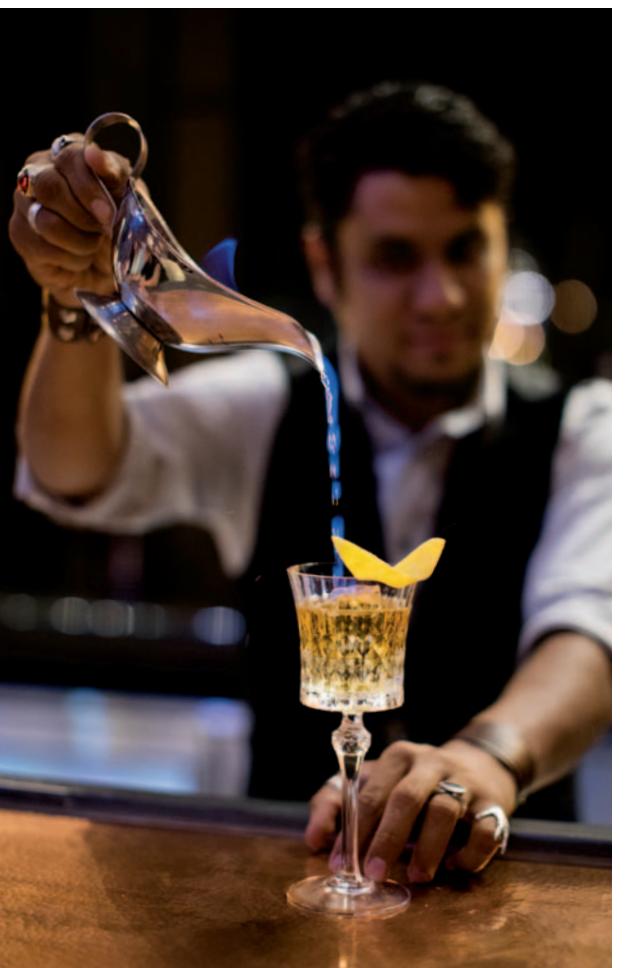
# T E Q U I L A • R O C K S



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Stefano Francavilla, an employee at Tequila Fortaleza Distillery in Tequila, Mexico; views of the agave fields at Tequila Fortaleza Distillery; dancers perform in a street parade during Feria Tequila, a celebration held in the days leading up to the Feast of the Virgin of Guadalupe, in December 2017; Hacienda Patrón bartender Oskar Murillo makes a "Blue Fairy" cocktail; agave piñas; visitors in the tequila tasting cave at Tequila Fortaleza Distillery.

When George Clooney and Rande Gerber's tequila company, Casamigos, sold for \$1 billion last year, it begged the question: How did the once-humble swill become so swank? A trek through Mexico distills all.

*By Mark Seal  
Photographs by Corey Arnold*



**O**NCE UPON A TIME in Guadalajara, there lived two competing tequila-making families, Sauza and Cuervo,” read a March 1967 *National Geographic* story. “They had always quarreled and for a generation they had exchanged both insults and pistol shots. Sauza children never met Cuervo children in Guadalajara. But then young Javier Sauza went to a small university in Chicago...”

There, the third-generation heir to the Sauza tequila dynasty met and secretly married a beautiful, red-haired Cuervo relative. This so enraged Javier’s father—who, according to folklore, shot a Cuervo dead in the 1900s in the streets of Tequila, the town about 40 miles northwest of Guadalajara that gave the spirit its name—that he banned his son from the family business, leaving the him to toil as a Mexico City tour guide and sustain a string of odd jobs before being allowed back into the company shortly before his father’s death in 1946.

Javier elevated tequila’s status, creating upscale brands such as Tres Generaciones, to honor his Sauza forebears, and fighting off imitators, most vehemently the Japanese. Then in 1976 Javier did the unthinkable: He sold the family tequila company—at precisely the wrong time. The peso devaluation gutted his profits. Worse, the Sauza brand was sent spiraling through increasingly foreign hands and is now owned by... Beam Suntory, a Japanese-owned conglomerate.

“I am sure my grandfather regretted selling the company that had been in our family three generations,” says Guillermo Sauza, a fifth-generation member of the pioneering tequila clan. For 20 years, Guillermo, now 65, was a Sauza without a tequila to call his own. In 1999, he took over the last family-owned distillery, which had been shuttered since 1968. His grandfather also left behind the distillery’s name—Fortaleza, meaning Fortitude. It now adorns the label of his grandson’s small-batch brand, sold and acclaimed world-wide, and seems to be an apt description for what it takes to survive, much less thrive, in the spirit industry’s most overheated field.

Standing on Calle José Cuervo, in the center of the gold-rush city of Tequila, Mexico (pop. 40,000), I’ve spent the day and most of the night tasting tequila at distilleries. And the hallucinatory spirit that has made a fool of many a mortal is making a monkey of me. My head is swimming. Not from the alcohol, but the acrimony. I have listened to tortured tales of family feuds and corporate lawsuits, of trade secret banditos and tequila larceny. I’ve heard whispers from representatives of one brand and curt denials from the other—or cold refusals to respond.

“Be very skeptical of the Kool-Aid they’re pouring,” one tequila aficionado said of one brand. “That’s history that brings back bad memories,” said a second. “The story of tequila involves generations of Mexican families and there are some stories not able to be spoken openly about, much less printed,” added a third.

There’s so much turmoil in Tequila that I need another drink—which one can find on every corner. Here, the air is perpetually smoky sweet with the scent of tequila being made, poured and consumed. Almost every building’s outer wall advertises a brand and every lane holds a distillery, tequila shop, stand, statue or bar. Two museums tell the spirit’s tumultuous story back to when it was called Mexican Whisky Brandy.

Tequila was born in fire, according to legend. Its birthplace is right outside of town, 9,580 feet atop Volcán de Tequila, where a spiky blue agave, the cactus plant from which tequila is made, supposedly exploded after being struck by lightning, and the Nahua tribe tasted the plant’s sweet nectar, which, both holy and blessed by Mayahuel, goddess of agave, became the spirit

that would intoxicate the world: tequila.

Centuries later, tequila has exploded again, in a gusher that has turned unlikely gringo wildcatters into tequila billionaires. Last June, the British spirits conglomerate Diageo paid \$1 billion for Casamigos, the five-year-old tequila company co-founded by actor George Clooney and model-turned-entrepreneur Rande Gerber, husband of supermodel Cindy Crawford. In January, Bacardi astounded the industry by acquiring, in a deal valued at \$5 billion, the tequila giant, Patrón, founded on a lark in 1989 by California-based home-furnishings importer Martin Crowley and his partner John Paul DeJoria, billionaire co-founder of the Paul Mitchell Systems hair-care company.

These buyouts are merely part of tequila’s raging bull market, whose players include most of the major international wine and spirits conglomerates, and are powered by international tequila connoisseurs willing to pay \$7,500 for Patrón in a Lalique crystal decanter, to \$30,000 for the 15th anniversary bottle of Clase Azul, its bottle studded in 24-karat gold. Once the rotgut demon choice of hungover spring-breakers and hell-raisers, tequila has been elevated to, as the Mexican Chamber of the Tequila Industry literature trumpets about its annual festival, “Regalo de México para el mundo,” Mexico’s gift to the world.

**I**T ALL BEGAN in this tiny town, whose landscapes and ancient industrial facilities were declared a Unesco World Heritage site in 2006. For centuries there was an imagined wall in the world of Tequila. It separated Mexico from the U.S., tequila from what would become its biggest marketplace. Today, tequila is booming in America, where about 80 percent of the world’s production is sold. *Tequileros* (tequila makers) had long tried to break through this wall, beginning with Don Cenobio Sauza, the first to bring tequila to America by horseback, after founding the Sauza distillery in 1873. Tequila began to take off when the margarita became popular in the 1960s. Next, the tequila-shooting rock bands, most notably the Rolling Stones on their 1972 tour, pushed U.S. tequila sales up 300 percent, according to a 1976 *Rolling Stone* story. But this was such poor-quality tequila that by the 1980s, tequila makers were mostly met with disdain. “Nobody wanted to hear about tequila,” says master distiller Carlos Camarena, whose family has been growing agave since 1888. “Everybody remembered coming to Mexico on spring break, drinking tequila and having a big hangover.”

We are touring Camarena’s distillery in the Highlands of Jalisco, the new tequila frontier three hours east of Tequila town. Fields of blue agave fill the horizon and the nearby properties are occupied by the industry’s giants such as Don Julio,



Once the choice of spring breakers and hell-raisers, tequila has been elevated to Mexico’s gift to the world.



as well as proud concerns that cling to their rich heritage, including Camarena, whose various brands include Tequila Ocho. Created in conjunction with foremost tequila emissary Tomas Estes, Ocho is an artisanal tequila: each vintage produced from a single agave field with its own distinctive terroir, like wine.

Camarena is a true tequila pioneer. In 1983, “the original importers,” Robert Denton and Marilyn Smith, began bringing the first 100 percent agave boutique tequilas—Chinaco and Caliente—to the U.S. By 1988, they were importing Camarena’s El Tesoro brand, and he helped them with promotion, striving to break the wall between Mexico and America. It was a start, and 100 percent agave tequila began to sell in America. But despite his family’s six generations in the tequila trenches, it wouldn’t only be Camarena who would be a beneficiary of tequila’s current global bounty. And it wouldn’t only be Cuervo or Sauza, whose volume exceeds all other brands, that would reap the financial bonanza. The fortune would be seized by of all people...a gringo.

**T**O HEAR THE STORY of that, I drive an hour and a half out of Guadalajara, through the flat landscape of Jalisco, to the town of Atotonilco el Alto. A long lane leads to an extravagantly columned hacienda on 222 acres, its various wings serving as a distillery, grand marketing showcase and private guesthouse. I have arrived at Hacienda Patrón, where invited guests—distributors, opinion leaders, media, bartenders—enjoy complimentary overnight stays in 20 suites while being entertained and educated about Patrón. On its landscaped grounds stand three life-sized bronze statues: Patrón’s co-founder John Paul DeJoria, its CEO, Ed Brown, and its revered master distiller, Francisco Alcaraz. To meet Alcaraz is to watch the statue step down from its pedestal and tell you a story, which, Alcaraz says, began with a stranger standing in front of Siete Leguas distillery, a short drive from Hacienda Patrón.

His name was Martin Crowley and, according to Alcaraz, “He asked, ‘Can you help me?’” Crowley had been trying to meet the González de Anda family of the Siete Leguas tequila company in Los Altos. “But they don’t pay me any attention,” Alcaraz recalls the gringo saying.

Named for Mexican revolutionary Pancho Villa’s horse, which rode seven leagues, or *siete leguas*, in one day between Mexican towns, the brand was, then and now, owned by seven González family members who honor the tradition set forth



TOP: Carlos Camarena, third-generation Tequilero and owner of Tequila Ocho, with his daughter, Fany Camarena, in the agave fields surrounding Tequila Ocho’s La Alteña distillery. BOTTOM: A roadside stand advertising Tequila Ocho.

## TEQUILA: HISTORY AND LEGEND



**1500s:** The Aztecs drink pulque, a beverage made from fermented agave and considered to be tequila’s predecessor. Believed to have been discovered by the goddess, Mayahuel, it’s reserved for special ceremonies like weddings, funerals and warriors’ rites of passage.

**1619:** A Spanish cleric stationed in western Mexico is thought to be the first to document the distillation of agave. Scholars still debate whether distillation was available in Mexico before the Spanish arrived or brought over from Europe, but they do know that European settlers called the locals’ fermented agave drinks mezcal wine.

**1758:** José Antonio de Cárdenas Valdés receives land to produce tequila in the town of Tequila. In 1795, it becomes the first distillery to obtain a license from the Spanish government to legally produce and distribute it.

**1857:** Mezcal from Tequila is advertised for sale in Los Angeles.

**1873:** Cenobio Saúz buys his first distillery after cutting his teeth with the Cuervos.

**1910-1920:** The Mexican Revolution spurs tequila to become the national spirit and the symbol of *lo mexicano* (Mexicanness).



**1944:** Decreased production of European spirits like brandy and whiskey during WWII temporarily spikes up tequila demand—4.5 million liters were exported in 1944 compared to 21,621 liters in 1940.

**1949:** The first tequila regulation is passed, and officials decide that the spirit can be made only from blue Weber agave.

**1974:** Tequila receives a designation of origin—joining the ranks of spirits like cognac—mandating that it can be produced only in Jalisco and parts of the states of Guanajuato, Michoacán, Nayarit, and in 1977, Tamaulipas.



by satellite and its DNA is lab-tested to ensure authenticity. Later, fields are inspected via drones.

**2000:** A three-year shortage of agave slashes the number of agave plants by almost 51 percent. This ends up boosting business. The price of tequila climbs and it’s considered a top-shelf liquor.

**2006:** Unesco designates more than 86,500 acres of Jalisco’s tequila-producing region a World Heritage Site.

**2007:** 4 Copas becomes the first tequila to be certified organic (even though when there are pest infestations farmers will use pesticides).

**2011:** Musician Carlos Santana partners with Casa Noble Tequila, which seems to spark celebrity interest in the spirit. Soon, stars like George Clooney and Justin Timberlake roll out their own tequilas.

**2016:** Sales of tequila jump 7.4 percent, beating out almost every other liquor category, according to the International Wine and Spirit Record.

**2018:** Tequila’s upward momentum shows no signs of slowing: In April the investment bank BDT Capital Partners joins forces with Casa Dragones to “fund its next stage of growth.” —Magdalena Puniewska

by their father in 1952. Today, their tequila is sold throughout Mexico and the U.S., soon to be in the European Union and U.K. But in 1987, its sales were limited to Mexico. “Like most people in the industry back then, they were making tequila for the Mexican market; the U.S. market wasn’t quite ready for a super-premium brand” says their U.S. representative David Grapshi.

**A**LCARAZ HAD BEGUN his career in the distilleries at 21. Educated as a chemical engineer, he served two years as a government tequila inspector. When he met Crowley in 1989, Alcaraz was a consultant, working in production for the González family, and he didn’t recognize Crowley as anything but a stranger. He didn’t know that while Crowley visited Mexico regularly on buying trips for his home furnishings company, his obsession was the newfangled 100 percent agave tequila called Chinaco, when imported tequila was mostly *mixto*—agave mixed with up to 49 percent of sugars from another source. Crowley and his friend DeJoria “began speculating about which tequila the aristocrats of Mexico drank,” wrote Ilana Edelstein, Crowley’s longtime partner, in her book *The Patrón Way*. It was a question Crowley had been trying to answer by tasting tequilas, which was why he was standing outside Siete Leguas, whose tequila he had deemed perfection.

Alcaraz went to Siete Leguas family member Lucretia González and told her of the American. She said she knew of him and just like that Crowley was inside. He soon struck a deal for the company to produce tequila for him through the auspices of Francisco Alcaraz.

Alcaraz stresses that he “created the process and blend different from Siete Leguas” for Martin Crowley and Patrón. And while he says “the two have always been separate and different tequilas,” Siete Leguas still promotes Patrón in its marketing materials as its own: “Today Siete Leguas can correctly claim that it was the original formula for Patrón from 1990 to 2002....” (The González family declined to comment on this and any other aspects of their relationship with Crowley, Alcaraz or Patrón.)

But what propelled the brand wasn’t made in Mexico; it was 100 percent American: the marketing. Back home in California, Crowley and DeJoria went forth, two tequila Johnny Appleseeds. DeJoria was introducing it in his celebrity circles, while Crowley would carry Patrón wherever he went, setting it on a bar in front of a restaurant or bar owner and insisting they do a comparative taste test until he got the inevitable answer, which, Edelstein wrote, was always, “Wow.” In their wake came

the Patrón Girls, advertising the brand, beginning in 1990 at the company’s first booth at the Wine and Spirits Wholesalers of America Convention in Las Vegas. By day two, “the crowd grew so big it blocked the entrance to the convention. ... Patrón had stolen the entire show,” wrote Edelstein.

“It took off like a rocket,” says Alcaraz. “And it hasn’t stopped since.” Today, Patron sells 3.2 million cases each year, making it America’s best-selling ultra-premium tequila. Two breakups didn’t stop the momentum: First with Seagram’s, with which the brand had entered into a distribution deal, as well as an agreement to build a distillery together, which later collapsed and ended in lawsuit; then Siete Leguas, in whose distillery Patrón was produced until shortly before Crowley’s death in 2003. “For reasons of their own, they broke relations with us,” says Edelstein.

The stunning success of Patrón inspired “copycats,” says Grover Sanschagrin, a former photojournalist who arrived in tequila country in 2010 with his wife, Scarlet. They spent two years studying the industry and returned to San Francisco to develop an app that would open a curtain on tequila. It’s called Tequila Matchmaker. Designed to match drinkers with the tequilas most right for them, the app also enables users to type in a tequila brand and discover its distillery—with surprising results: Patrón ushered in the world of “contract brands,” in which “tequila brands leave the production of their tequila to someone else,” says Sanschagrin. “Someone who doesn’t even know how to make tequila will come down to Jalisco and say, ‘I have the brand name, bottle design and logo. Put your tequila in my bottle and send it to me to sell as my own.’ Patrón was an early contract brand.

“Interestingly enough, Patrón got so successful they built their own distillery,” Sanschagrin continues, “but they inspired everyone to be the next Patrón. Distilleries were set up to support and supply the demand for those wanting to be the next big thing. The largest contract distillery produces 80 different brands, which usually means all of their tequilas are pretty similar, except for the price point.” While some tequilas made at shared distilleries are only housed at the contract distillery and have their own master distiller, special formula, sourced agave, proprietary yeast, independent equipment and distinctive flavor profile, others are merely “using a stock, or house recipe from a distillery that is the same as other brands they produce and it’s all about marketing, branding and logos,” he says.

Only 13 distilleries are currently dedicated to producing a



In Tequila town, the air is perpetually smoky sweet with the scent of tequila being made, poured and consumed. Almost every lane holds a distillery, tequila shop, stand, statue or bar.

**TOP:** Energetic locals sing and dance in the renowned La Capilla, one of the town's oldest bars. **BOTTOM:** A young girl rides the Tequila Fortaleza Distillery float in a street parade through downtown Tequila.



single brand, says Sanschagrin. "There are 1,200 tequilas in the market being produced at distilleries that make product for more than one brand, which is roughly 98 percent of the market." He says the 1,200 contract brands include leaders in the ultra-premium field: Clase Azul, Casa Dragones, Avión, Casa Noble, and tequila's mega-success story, Casamigos.

**T**HE STORY OF CASAMIGOS is best told not in Mexico, but in the brand's headquarters in Malibu, California, a sunny, second-floor office suite a block from the Pacific. Nine blue Casamigos surfboards fan out on a wall, a metaphor for the company that made George Clooney and Rande Gerber even wealthier, surfing on a sea of tequila. Their tequila adventure began in Cabo San Lucas, where then-single Clooney and married-with-two-children Gerber built vacation homes, two "sister houses," which "feel like one," says Gerber. They called the house Casamigos—house of friends—and into this communal, convivial world they poured tequila. For more than a year in Cabo bars, the two sampled the bartenders' suggestions. After trying infinite variations, they could not find perfection. Clooney, an international film star accustomed to the impossible, said to Gerber, "Why don't we just make our own?"

Michael S. Meldman of Discovery Land Co., whose 18 resorts feature vacation homes ranging from \$1 million to \$50 million, developed the Cabo property where Gerber and Clooney owned their houses. He had friends in Mexico who had friends who owned tequila distilleries. Gerber soon flew to Jalisco, telling one master distiller how he and his Oscar-winning buddy wanted to make their own private drinking tequila. The master distiller, whose name Gerber won't divulge, began sending samples. There was no deadline, of course, so they kept tasting, until after "about two years and 700 samples, we got this bottle," Gerber says. "George and I tasted it. We looked at each other and we were like, 'Oh, my, it is literally perfect.'"

It became their house tequila. When the number of bottles they received as samples grew to 1,000 a year, the distiller called. "He said, 'Either you're selling it or you're drinking way too much,'" Gerber remembers. "Either way, we can't keep calling it samples and sending it to you. You need to get licensed."

They were licensed in 2013. Southern Wine & Spirits became their distributor. As for the price, Gerber says it wasn't "about the money. We just want everyone drinking it. So we put a number on it and they said, 'That's too cheap. You need to charge more.'" (The price was kept low, between \$45 to \$55 a bottle.)

Next, like Patrón, came the marketing. Clooney had proven his advertising power though the coffee company Nespresso, which, with him as global brand ambassador, saw sales accelerate by at least 30 percent. What Clooney did for Casamigos catapulted the brand into the stratosphere. First came the infamous television "bed ads," one showing Gerber walking in on his wife in bed with Clooney, a bottle of Casamigos to blame at their bedside. Print ads featured the two on a buddy trip in Jalisco, touring fields of agave by motorcycle. And advertising that money can't buy: photographs that went global of 100 cases of Casamigos being loaded onto Casamigos's private jet being flown to Clooney's wedding to Amal Alamuddin in 2014.

Casamigos was quickly sold in 20 countries, becoming part of what *AdAge* would call the new tequila "gold rush." With its

profits growing 54 percent the past two years, Casamigos is the fastest-growing ultra-premium tequila in the U.S., says Gerber. Not only in orders, but more importantly "depletions" reorders. "We own a proprietary recipe for Casamigos Tequila that can't be duplicated," Gerber says.

Then, just as the rum giant Bacardi bought Cazadores, and the champagne colossus Moët Hennessy bought Volcan de mi Tierra and the American wine and spirits king Brown-Forman bought Herradura, and other liquor conglomerates entered the tequila market by buying local concerns, a giant came calling. Last June, Diageo, the world's biggest producer of spirits outside of China, whose brands include Don Julio and Johnnie Walker, contacted Casamigos CEO Lee Einstidler. "We weren't interested in selling," says Gerber. But when Diageo offered up to \$1 billion, \$700 million up front and \$300 million based on performance, they accepted. For Gerber, the price represents a bet: "Some of the larger companies, they are only going to buy something that they think has potential in the future to grow even more," he says. Terms of the sale included Gerber, Clooney and Meldman continuing to run the company. In April, they expanded, introducing Casamigos Mezcal.

In the center of Guadalajara, I visit the most expensive contract brand: Clase Azul, whose ornate ceramic bottles—created and hand-painted by native Mazahua indigenous artisans in Clase Azul's facility in Santa María Canchesdá—sell for as much as \$30,000 apiece, with its lowest-priced bottle going for \$80. And its story is, as CEO Jorge Berrueta tells me, of a brand born "backwards."

In 1997, Clase Azul's founder, Arturo Lomeli, began producing what he described to CNN as a "terrible" tequila, its bottles festooned with a sombrero and a mustache. He returned to college for his master's degree in the field that is the key to so many tequila fortunes—marketing—and in 2006 joined forces with tequila wizard Jorge Berrueta, a Stanford University-educated chemical engineer. "I was president of the Tequila Chamber from 1991 to 1992," Berrueta says. "In 1994, with Cuervo and others, we founded the C.R.T., Tequila's regulatory council. In 1995, I was Sauza's general director. After that, I went into consulting and finally started with this company 12 years ago."

He and Lomeli created the bottle first, eventually encrusted in pure platinum, silver and gold. Originally envisioned as a momentary novelty, an outrageously expensive \$1,200 black-and-platinum bottle of tequila with a 24-karat gold label in Los Cabos was launched. Into these fancy flagons, they pour a tequila that their representative says is "independently produced" at Productos Finos de Agave SA, which produces 27 other brands. Berrueta says Clase Azul is created by a supreme master distiller: himself.

We enter the tasting room, the table strewn with thousands of dollars worth of Clase Azul. The tequila is lovely, at least to this gringo's tongue, and the bottles are undoubtedly beautiful.

The next dawn, I drive out of Tequila. As the sun rises over the giant mist-enshrouded stone tequila bottle statue that welcomes and bids farewell to pilgrims to the fountainhead, I try to recall the differences between the countless tequilas I'd tasted. Dizzy from the litany of various brands' bouquets, aging effects and flavor profiles, I remember most the one attribute that all tequilas share: They're selling. ■

## ON THE TEQUILA TRAIL

Fly into Guadalajara and drive 32 miles to Tequila town, or drive 58 miles from Guadalajara to the Highlands town of Anonilico Los Altos.

**Where to Stay:** In the epicenter of Cuervo World, the tequila company's hotel/restaurant/distillery district, is Tequila town's, **Hotel de Las Solar Animas** (rooms from \$130; [hotelsolarde lasanimas.com](http://hotelsolarde lasanimas.com)). Opened by Cuervo in 2015, the 93-room Relais & Chateaux property is close to the distillery and in the middle of everything.

**Where to Watch Tequila Being Born:** Most of the 17 distilleries in Tequila town are available for tours, including the two giants, **Cuervo** and **Sauza**. The smaller brands are also available for tours, many by appointment. In the Highlands, La Altena distillery, which produces, among others, **Tequila Ocho** is open daily. In the nearby town of Arandas, have lunch at **Carnitas Jaime's**, which has authentic fare and an informal mini-museum to the great *tequileros*.

**Where to Drink:** Two bars in Tequila town give visitors the two ends of the tequila spectrum: first, the traditional, **La Capilla**, an old-school cantina offering a few bottles, with music and authentic atmosphere; second, the present and future, **La Cata**, which calls itself a "tequila tasting room" and has a mind-bending list of, well, almost all of tequila's thousands of brands: 52 blancos, 53 reposados, 43 añejos, 15 extra añejos, all served in hand-blown tequila snifters by erudite experts.

# EPIC ADVENTURE

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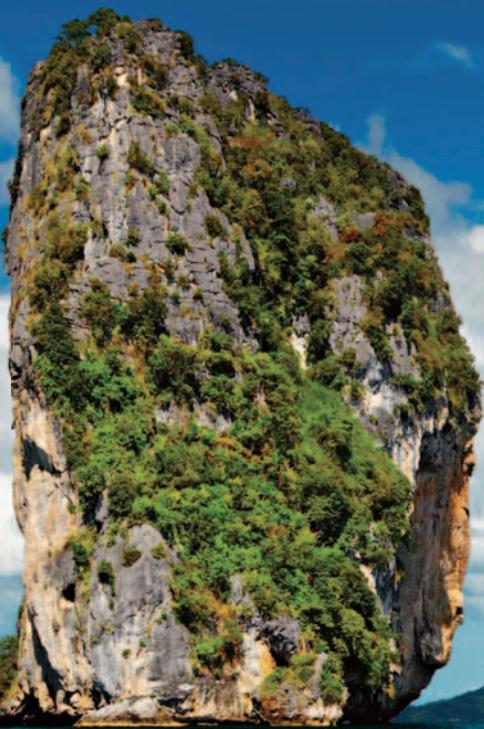
MEETINGS  
OVER

THE BRIEF ON  
**Frankfurt**

THREE JAUNTS FROM  
**Singapore**

STAY ON IN  
**Paris**

WHERE  
TO GO  
WHEN  
YOUR  
MEETINGS  
ARE  
OVER



Snorkeling in the  
Andaman Sea, in Krabi  
province, Thailand.

SHUTTERSTOCK



# IN FRANKFURT Deutsche Treat

DESPITE AN INFLUX of people (Frankfurt's population swells to over a million, from 750,000, each day with commuters and business travelers), Germany's financial hub has maintained its small-town character. The city is highly walkable and Frankfurt Airport is a 10-minute metro ride away (it's easy to navigate, opt for it over a taxi). The city's parks offer green relief, including a 40-mile hiking track around the city. And with reports of as many as 10,000 Brexit refugees relocating from the Thames to the Main River, Frankfurt is in the middle of a building boom, which is contributing to rising house prices but also revitalization: New restaurants have sprung up around the train station, an area formerly frequented by prostitutes and drug dealers. Here, a guide for time-pressed business executives and those with a little time to spare. —Nina Adam

## SLEEP

Apart from the European Central Bank, occupying two avant-garde towers in Frankfurt's Ostend (East End), most financial institutions are within a roughly one-mile radius in the city's western parts and close to the main train station. For luxury and location, head to the 119-room, 31-suites **Sofitel Frankfurt Opera** (rooms from \$296; [sofitel.com](http://sofitel.com)). Facing the historic opera in the heart of the city, it's the latest addition to Frankfurt's burgeoning hotel scene. French designer Nicolas Adnet has proven a keen eye for detail, creating a hotel inspired by the French mansions of the 17th and 18th centuries without missing any of today's luxuries like Hermès amenities and Tesla charging stations. References to Frankfurt's virtuoso son, the writer and poet Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, can be found all over, including in the cozy Lili's bar, named after Goethe's first great love. Tucked away in the city's lush diplomat quarter, the **Union International Club** (rooms from \$206, [union-club.com](http://union-club.com)) offers

comfort and privacy. With only six rooms and a sprawling garden with an outdoor pool and a tennis court, the guesthouse is ideal for discreet deal making or longer stays (some regulars even leave toiletries and books). The rooms are thoughtfully decorated with all the expected comforts and amenities, like free Wi-Fi. Katrin Mattuschat, the caretaker, makes sure nothing is amiss (she's even been known to run off to buy a guest's forgotten shaving cream), while Michelin-starred chef André Großfeld whips up lunch and dinner. Those with more of a hipster soul should travel over the Main River to **Libertine Lindenbergs** (rooms from \$122, [das-lindenbergs.de](http://das-lindenbergs.de)), which, located in a turn-of-the-century house, is best described as a cross between a design hotel and premium youth hostel, with a late-night bar with recording studio attached. Its 27 rooms boast installations by Berlin deconstruction artist Kathi Kaeppel and the bright communal kitchen on the fifth floor stocks homemade jams, pesto and other goodies.

## EAT

There is a palpable mix of languages and cultures in the city, supported by the presence of the Frankfurt Stock Exchange, the European Central Bank and the fact that the U.S.'s largest consulate general is found here. The best way to take in the full range of regional specialties is at **Kleinmarkthalle**. Busy all times of day, the indoor food market has more than 60 market stalls. Grab a homemade potato salad for lunch, or wash down a dozen oysters with a glass of crisp local Riesling after work at the oyster bar on the second floor. For breakfast, check out **Chinastadt**, a funky day bar in the banking district and close to the historic opera. Its eggs Benedict and a Bukowski (a small café latte named after the German-American writer) should set you up for the day. For a New York cart-style lunch, try **Best Worscht in Town**, up on Grünburgweg, where people line up for a currywurst, or a cut-up sausage (pork or beef) with a helping of ketchup and sprinkled with curry powder.



TOP: People sit along the bank of the Main River across from the financial district. ABOVE: A traditional blue stoneware jug used to hold apfelwein (apple wine). OPPOSITE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: Oper Frankfurt, one of the leading opera houses in Europe; the kitchen staff works within view of diners at Mon Amie Maxi; Frankfurt's historical center, called Römerberg. The city was totally bombed out during WWII, so the quaint half-timber houses are largely reconstructions, yet superb ones.

If steak is on order, then it's **Sur'n Turf** in the affluent Westend. The upmarket meat mecca is a solid affair and popular with business executives. Regulars tuck into USDA Nebraska prime corn-fed filets, using their own engraved knives. Equally good on quality and ambience is **Mon Amie Maxi**, a French brasserie and oyster bar run by the same restaurateur as Sur'n Turf, Christian Mook. It's an ideal place for a client lunch or dinner, as the tables in the elegantly furnished room—located in historic Villa May—are set up in a way that prevents eavesdropping. **Weinsinn** is among the city's many high-end eateries that recently set up business in the now trendy red-light district, or the area around the main train station. With a menu of just 10 items, the modern European menu is refreshingly brief, while the presentation and quality of the food score. For the traditional Frankfurt fare, go to **Atschel**, magpie in local dialect. The laid-back tavern has been serving apfelwein (apple wine) and traditional meat dishes

for almost 170 years. Here visitors and locals happily squeeze onto the long wooden benches. End the night with a small glass of Calvados mit Mispechen, or apple brandy with a medlar fruit. For coffee, avoid the big chains and go for the local roasters, such as **Wacker's Kaffee**. The tiny but busy coffee spot is a gem. It's been around for over 100 years. Make sure to add a piece of cheesecake to your coffee order.

## EXTRACURRICULARS

Take in an opera at **Oper Frankfurt**, which is not to be confused with Alte Oper, the historic opera that today serves as a concert hall and hosts some of the world's finest conductors, musicians and jazz artists. Housed in a drab-looking building from the early 1960s, Oper Frankfurt is renowned for its modern and innovative productions and the outstanding quality of its singers. Make sure to pre-order a beer and a soft pretzel at the main bar (it'll be waiting for you at intermission). Also worth checking out is the **Städels Museum** for one of Europe's leading art collections. While the special exhibitions are always a winner, the permanent collection is more than deserving of getting its own close look. Artworks to seek out include, *Goethe in the Roman Campagna* by Johann Heinrich Wilhelm Tischbein, Claude Monet's *The Luncheon* and Max Beckmann's *The Synagogue in Frankfurt am Main*.

**ESCAPE FOR THE DAY (OR WEEKEND)**  
The Rheingau, a wine region famous for its dry Riesling, is an easy drive from the city that can be done in less than one hour. Stroll through the historic vaults of **Kloster Eberbach**, a 13th century monastery; or enjoy the view from **Schloss Johannisberg**, a castle and winery overlooking the vineyards of the Rheingau and the Rhine river. If you want to make a weekend out of it, stay at the Relais & Châteaux hotel **Burg Schwarzenstein** (rooms from \$235; [burg-schwarzenstein.de](http://burg-schwarzenstein.de)), a restored castle surrounded by vineyards and overlooking the Rhine Valley.



#### 2 HOURS TO ADVENTURE

#### KRABI, THAILAND

① A family-friendly, nearby alternative to too-popular Phuket, Krabi has emerald waters, limestone cliffs and sugary beaches—but not the moon parties and neon lights. Stay for three or four days of outdoor adventure. On the same arm of Thailand that dangles along the Andaman Sea as Phuket, Krabi (both a large province and often overlooked tourist city) has more than 100 islands off its shores, like the Koh Phi Phi Islands (above). Paddle a kayak through mangrove forest, to empty beaches or into waterlogged caves to see prehistoric paintings. While the shallow, calm waters may not satisfy surfers, they're great for kids. Several beaches have coral outcroppings just yards from the shore, so snorkeling is no more than a wade away. On land, you can hike to waterfalls and overgrown temples, or climb the 1,200 steps to Wat Tham Sua (Tiger Cave Temple). The modern, child-friendly **Rayavadee Resort** (rooms from \$375; [rayavadee.com](http://rayavadee.com)) is made up of round villas set in the jungle, flanked by beach and striated limestone cliffs. Another lodging option, two hours from Krabi airport, is **Pimalai Resort & Spa** (rooms from \$212; [pimalai.com](http://pimalai.com)), the first five-star property in Koh Lanta.

#### 3.5 HOURS TO SERENITY

#### BAWAH ISLAND, INDONESIA

③ It takes some effort to reach one of Indonesia's newest private island retreats (see also "Hidden Pleasures on Private Isles," page 38), a tiny archipelago that rises out of the South China Sea between Malaysia and Borneo. Even from Singapore, the easiest departure point, guests must take a ferry, a seaplane and a launch. Yet the reward is not a break from the workaday modern world, but an actual escape that's worth at least a long weekend. **Bawah Island** (rooms from \$1,780; [bawahisland.com](http://bawahisland.com), below) has 13 whitewashed beaches, three coral-ringed lagoons and dive sites full of needlefish, triggerfish and feather stars—shared among 35 villas and overwater bungalows spread over its six verdant little islands. Though the setting and quietude may be extravagant, by design the resort itself is not; it incorporates bamboo pillars, driftwood and recycled teak flooring. And while Bawah might seem like an obvious choice for a romantic escape, you don't have to leave all kids behind—unless you want to: children over 12 are welcome.



#### 2 HOURS TO CULTURE

#### SIEM REAP, CAMBODIA

② Long a dusty, overlooked tourist gateway to Angkor Wat, Siem Reap has blossomed into a vibrant cultural center. You can spend days in the sandstone remains of the Khmer Empire at Angkor Archaeological Park, where the 12th-century Angkor Wat (above) is the undisputed star. To avoid crowds, see it at dawn or lunchtime, then take a tuk-tuk to less-trafficked parts of the complex. Similarly, the most sensitive way to see Tonle Sap lake, with its stilt architecture and floating fishing villages, is to take a day trip to farther-flung communities, rather than packing into overcrowded spots closer to Siem Reap. The top restaurant in Siem Reap—and, arguably, the country—is Wat Damnak, where French chef Joannès Rivière gets creative with local ingredients and flavors, like tossing a frog-leg salad with cashew emulsion. Make your base at **Phum Baitang** (rooms from \$415; [zannierhotels.com](http://zannierhotels.com)), 15 minutes west of town. Inspired by Khmer villages, the property has 45 stilted villas set in 8 acres of gardens, rice paddies and lemon-grass meadows.



## FROM SINGAPORE Asian Flings

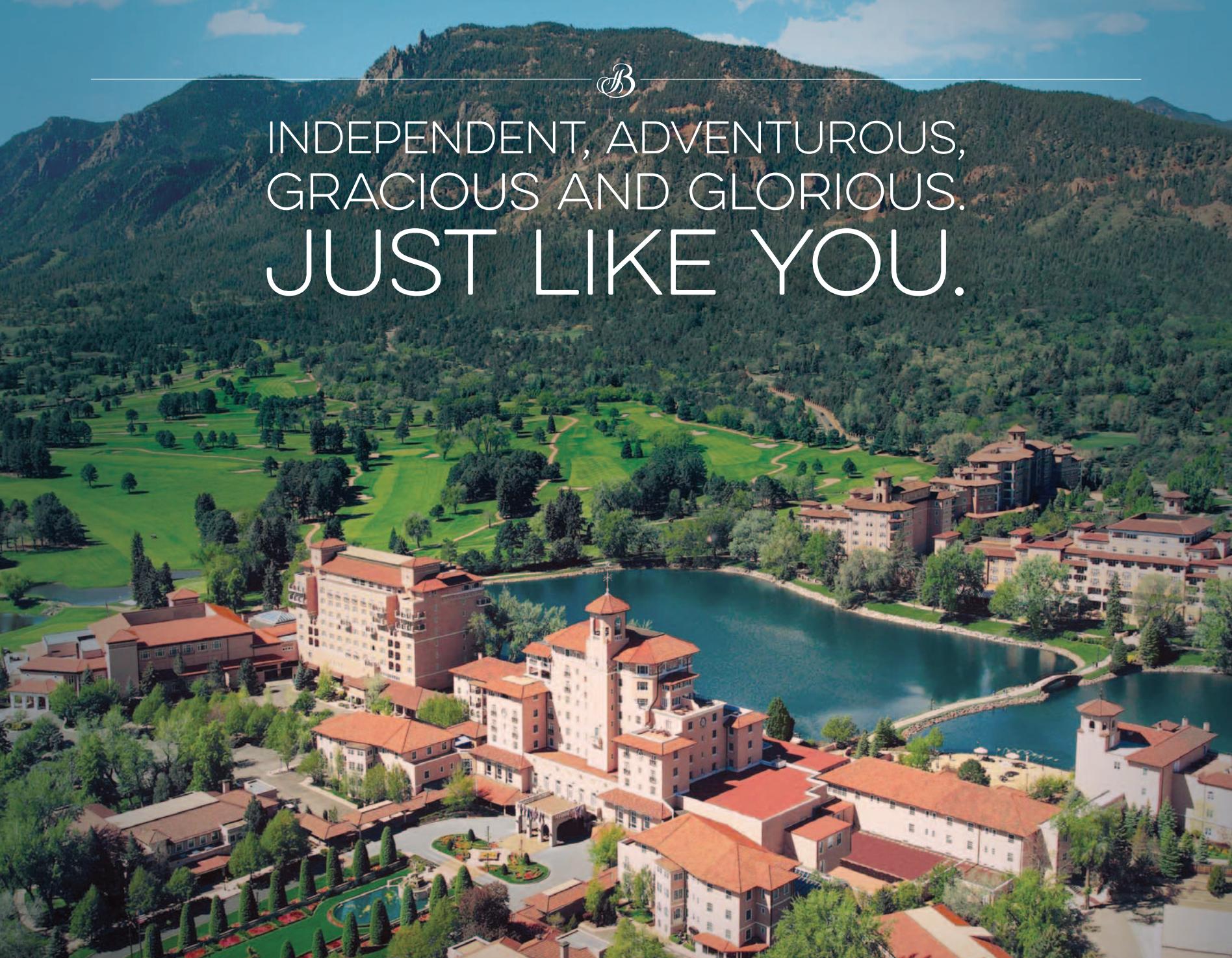
HALF THE PLANET's consumers are within six flying hours of Changi, which many travelers consider to be the world's best airport. But commerce isn't the only thing that soars here. Holidays to Thailand, Indonesia and Cambodia take flight from this futuristic hub, some from the airport's Terminal 4, which opened last year. —Sara Clemence

#### GETTING THERE

Though there are no nonstops from New York to Singapore for now, the options for flying between the two cities are manifold. To split travel time between two flights, fly via the Middle East on Emirates, Etihad or Qatar Airways, or Singapore Airlines flies via Frankfurt. Those who would rather have one long flight and a shorter connection can opt for EVA Air via Taipei or Cathay Pacific via Hong Kong. Cathay even operates its next-generation Airbus A350 out of Newark Liberty International Airport now. Singapore offers four daily nonstops out of London's Heathrow compared to British Airways' two. The two Singapore flights operated by Boeing 777s have the airline's newer, superior business-class seats to those currently aboard most of the airline's A380s. While only United Airlines operates a nonstop from Los Angeles to Singapore, both United and Singapore Airlines now offer daily nonstops from San Francisco. United flies a Boeing 787-9 with new Polaris amenities but with its usual seats in business class. Singapore flies an Airbus A350 with its newest business-class seats, which are more private than United's. And there's its Book the Cook gourmet meal preordering service. —E.R.



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# Time Travels

**Eleven worldly ways to fit fun into your next business jaunt**

1 30 MINUTES IN...

**Hong Kong:** If the weather is clear, book a 15-minute helicopter tour of the city that takes off from the China Clipper lounge on the rooftop of the Peninsula Hong Kong hotel.

**Sydney:** Get to the airport early to visit the carefully curated exhibition on the history of flight and Qantas's own 97-year legacy at the Qantas Heritage Collection near Gate 13 of the T3 domestic terminal.

1 ONE HOUR IN...

**New Delhi:** Spend your free time before dinner at Public Affair in Khan Market browsing boutiques like Good Earth for local handicrafts or Symetree for designer jewelry.

**St. Louis:** Blow off steam at the St. Louis City Museum, where a 10-story former shoe factory has been converted into an adult-size playground made from salvaged materials.

**Zurich:** Head to the two-year-old FIFA World Football Museum, which cost \$140 million to build and, over three floors, details soccer's history, with memorabilia from every single FIFA men's and women's World Cup.

1 TWO HOURS IN...

**Austin:** Get out in nature right in the heart of the city with a kayak or paddleboard excursion along Lady Bird Lake.

**London:** Instead of \$150 for a multihour tasting menu at dinner, head to Shoreditch's Michelin-starred Clove Club for a quick-paced five-course lunch for \$105.

**Mexico City:** The trendy Roma neighborhood is bursting with homegrown boutiques, including Goodbye Folk, which stocks unique Mexican-made men's items and boasts one of the city's best selections of shoes.

1 FOUR HOURS IN...

**Lima:** Look for fashion inspiration at photographer Mario Testino's MATE Museum before buying a bespoke pair of shoes at La Zapatería. Finish with ceviche at Isolina in the beachy, bohemian barrio of Barranco.

**Munich:** Lufthansa partners with Porsche on three-hour specialty rentals for first-class and elite fliers, and even provides route maps and itineraries to local sights.

**San Jose:** Superstitious rifle heiress Sarah Winchester's mansion has become one of the country's quirkiest house museums. Guests can tour 110 of the home's 160 rooms.—E.R.

## STAY ON IN PARIS Seine Sense

IF PARIS HAS A PROBLEM, it's the "been there, done that" problem. The Louvre? The Michelin multistars? Montmartre? Paris's greatest hits are the world's greatest hits. As Louis Jourdan sang in his ode to ennui to Maurice Chevalier from the movie *Gigi*, "It's a bore." No one needs to have their arm twisted to prolong a business trip in Paris (more than 11,200 foreign companies operate in the city), but if you want to get off the *sentier battu*—French for "the beaten path"—it helps to ask the locals. This doesn't always yield the unexpected. Unlike, say, New Yorkers, who are always in search of novelty, Parisians adore their classics because, well, duh! But Parisians like their hidden gems, too. Herewith, a mix of both from some knowing residents. —Joshua Levine



JULIE DE LIBRAN, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR, SONIA RYKIEL

**La Palette**

I love that this bistro in the Saint Germain neighborhood, in the 6th arrondissement, has been here forever. Cézanne drank here. So did Picasso. And Jim Morrison. Order a wooden planche of cheese with your wine and watch the students from the École des Beaux Arts around the corner.

**Musée Bourdelle**

Everybody flocks to the Rodin museum, but nobody goes to the former studio of sculptor Antoine Bourdelle, in the 15th arrondissement. His *Hercules the Archer* is monumental, but I like to sit in the lovely garden and read. They've recently restored the whole thing and added a new wing.

**Le Syndicat**

Everything about this cocktail bar is unexpected. The area, Faubourg St. Denis, isn't terrific, but the place drips cool. An Irish mixologist and a French guy use only French liqueurs to make interesting concoctions, and the crowd is perfect.



SARAH ANDELMAN, CO-FOUNDER, COLETTE, AND PHILIP ANDELMAN, MUSIC VIDEO DIRECTOR

**Musée de Montmartre and Jardin Catherine-Labouré**

Sarah: I like to sometimes escape the bustle of the city without leaving the city, so I head to green spaces, which there are fewer of than in London. Two of my favorites are the little garden at the Musée de Montmartre (skip the museum) and the big Jardin Catherine Labouré park near Le Bon Marché on the Left Bank.



NOËL LINGE DE MAISON  
FRANCE AND PART OWNER,  
*LE MONDE*

**Noël Linge de Maison**

Sarah: Simply the best place to buy sheets. Everything here is so Old France—it was founded in 1883. We have the sheets embroidered with dragonflies.

**Abri**

Philip: This small bistro is my latest food obsession. It's run by a Japanese man and a French woman, so in addition to wine pairings, you get tea pairings. Lunch is barely \$30 for four courses, and it will blow your mind wide open.



CAROLINE SARKOZY, INTERIOR DESIGNER, AND JACQUES LACOSTE, GALLERIST

**Il Vicolo**

Fantastic Italian food, which isn't so easy to find in Paris. The charming owner, Loredana Schettino, has become a friend. In the 6th arrondissement, it's our favorite lunch place, a stone's throw from Jacques' gallery.



**Gaya**

I'm a little biased about this great Left Bank fish restaurant: Jacques and I fell in love here. But Pierre Gagnaire is the chef—it's his second place—so how wrong can you go? The designer Violaine Jeantet added sapele wood paneling not so long ago, which makes it cozier.

**Musée Nissim de Camondo**

One way to discover how France got to be France is to visit Comte Möise de Camondo's house. He was a wealthy collector who built a 19th century townhouse to display his spectacular 18th century furniture and paintings. Everything is intact, down to the kitchen and bathrooms. This is how to live, except almost no one can afford to anymore. I love taking my daughter and her American friends here. It's always a hit.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP:  
Alizé's Embroidered Boudoir pillowcase from Noël Linge de Maison; music and performing arts center La Seine Musicale; a bridge within the Japanese garden at Musée Albert Kahn; the Oyster Violine dish from Gaya. It's comprised of oysters, Violine sauce (red cabbage, red beetroot, tamarillo), treviso salad and split peas.

OPPOSITE: Inside Musée Bourdelle, the former studio of sculptor Antoine Bourdelle.





## FRAME WORK

# To Catch a Cat

THE BARAFU GORGE LIES on the eastern border of Serengeti National Park, in northern Tanzania. Michael “Nick” Nichols worked there from 2011 to 2013, making some of the most intimate photographs of lions ever seen. He had to get close—but being physically close was too dangerous, and telephoto lenses didn’t capture the nuance of the cats. So he relied on his go-to solution: technology. “I used the crap out of it—infrared, camera traps, robots,” says *National Geographic’s* former editor-at-large for photography. “Drones were just being put together,” Nichols, 65, says. “It was cutting edge.” But he never found the right situation to use it. Until one day he came upon the Vumbi pride, resting on a kopje at sunset. The wind was blowing 40 mph, double what was considered safe for the drone. “I said it’s now or never. We lifted it off and fought the wind.” The lions lie among the rocks in the resulting photograph; some of them seem to be looking up at the drone, mildly curious. This is the only drone image from the project to be published, and it’s seen here for the first time. “We carried the drone for two years. Spent thousands of dollars on it,” Nichols says. “Was it a waste of time? No. It didn’t advance my story, but it laid the groundwork for other photographers.” —A.M.



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