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HANOI'S RISE

*Vietnam's capital brims
with youthful optimism*

SHARP SHOOTERS

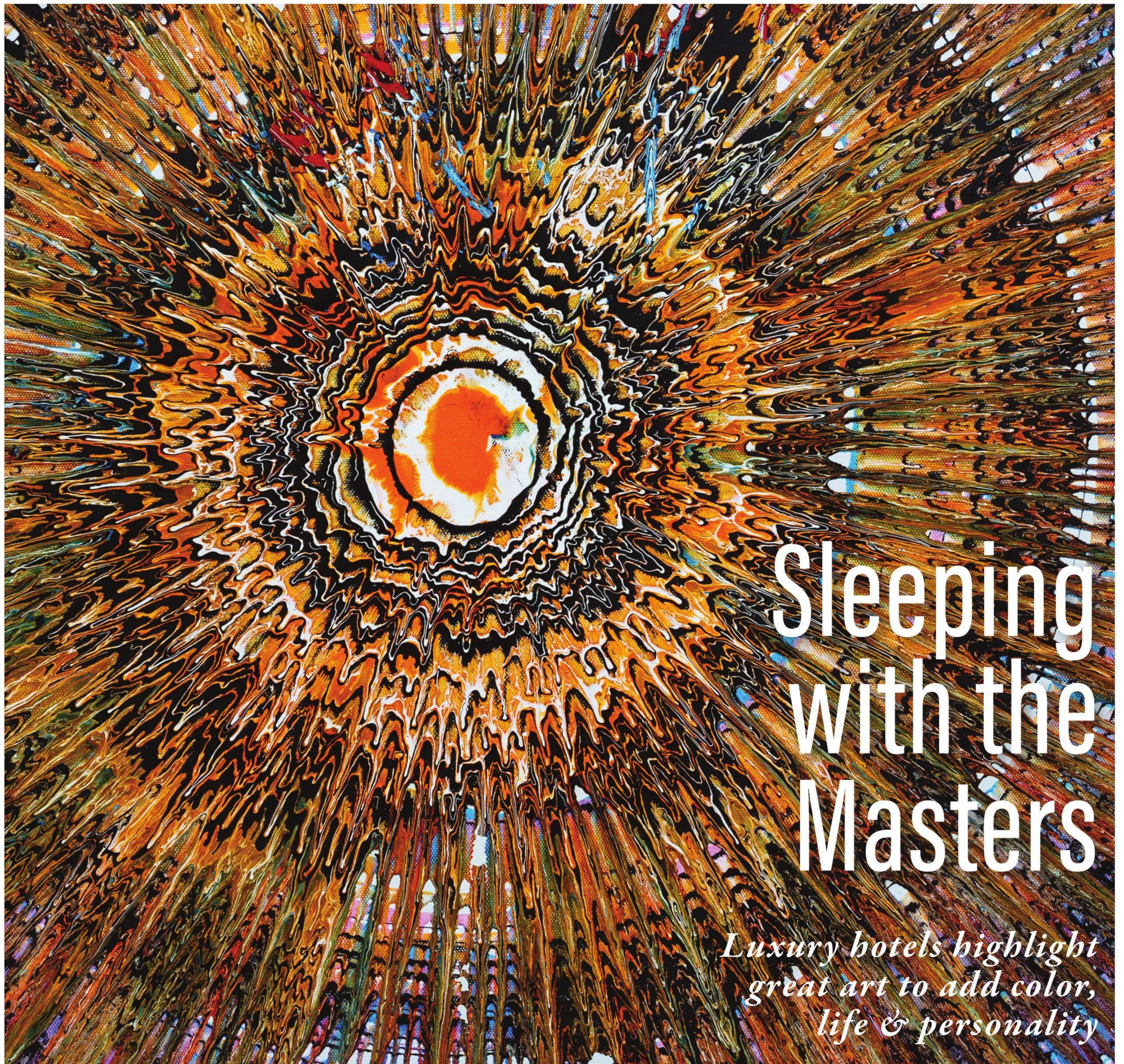
*Compact cameras that
pack great features*

ISLANDS OF PLENTY

*The Maldives resorts
suit all types of travelers*

PLUS

*Announcing the 2019
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*Luxury hotels highlight
great art to add color,
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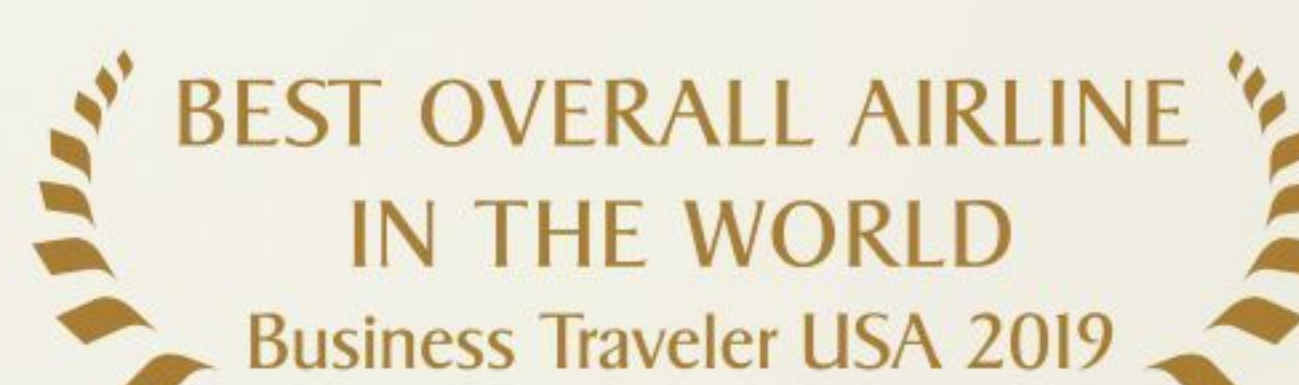
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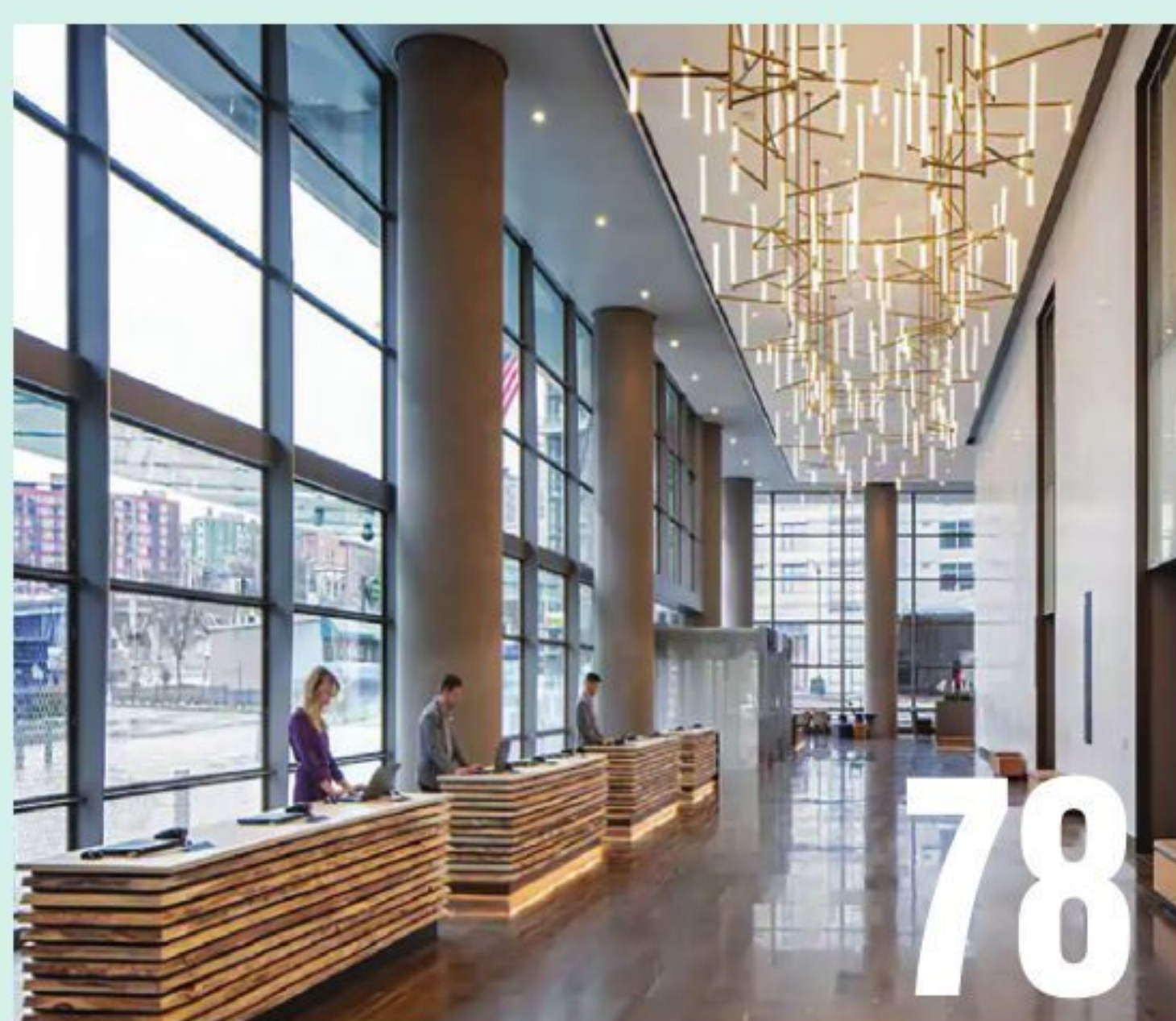
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HANOI'S RISE

Vietnam's capital brims with a youthful, optimistic energy



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Announcing the Best in
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SHARP SHOOTERS

Advanced compact cameras
pack great features in a small
package



ISLANDS OF PLENTY

Resorts in the Maldives
suit all types of travelers

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The history of innovation in travel is so closely tied to human progress that it's not hard to draw a line between the two. In fact, one could go out on a limb and say that without the former, the latter would not nearly as far along as it is today. Oh, certainly some historians more well-versed in the matter might argue that other fields of human endeavor have had greater impact – war, for example, or social upheaval. But it's been advances in how we get from place to place that have either paved the way for, or been a root cause of, many of these other profound changes in the human condition.

So it is with some interest (and not a little amusement) that we share the results of a recent poll from AIG Travel which identifies the top travel innovations of the past century. Not surprisingly, of 1,700-plus travelers surveyed, 79 percent thought the single most innovative travel development of the past century was the Wright brothers' first flight. Other understandable vote-getters included GPS car navigation systems (56 percent) and the first transatlantic flight (50 percent).

Among the other not-so-earth-shaking travel advances in the past 100 years identified by the survey; wheeled suitcases made the “most innovative” list for a third of respondents, 23 percent were enamored of European bullet trains, and 13 percent cited frequent flier programs. Now all these are all important developments to be sure, but frankly I found it rather surprising they made the cut. What's more surprising is, for one in five travelers, the debut of heavier-than-air flight *wasn't* at the top of the list.

The point is, travel innovation is a constant journey, and what's important for some travelers does not necessarily resonate with everyone else. So it's up to the industry to continually forge new trails and bring the right products and most in-demand services to market. That's both the adventure and the purpose behind the Best in Business Travel Awards (page 24) – to discover what's exciting and innovative in the world of the business traveler.

These awards highlight two facets of the journey business travelers value most: Consistency of service and innovation in delivery. Each new turn in the road takes us to higher levels of imagination and inspiration. Taken together, that spells a richer travel experience for you, the business traveler, and that means all of us in the business of business travel are winners in the end.

Dan Booth Editorial Director

Keep In Touch



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LHR TOPS GLOBAL CONNECTIVITY

LONDON HEATHROW AIRPORT has been named most connected airport internationally in OAG's Megahubs Connectivity Index. In the US, Chicago O'Hare was the most domestically connected, and third internationally. There are 15 US airports ranked among the Top 50 Megahubs.

Size alone does not make a Megahub, according to OAG. The index compares the number of scheduled connections to and from international flights with the number of destinations served from the airport. Airports rising in the rankings include Munich, Incheon and Mexico City. Declining hubs were Dubai, New Delhi, Mumbai and Fort Lauderdale. oag.com



Hard Rock NOLA Set for Demolition

THE HARD ROCK HOTEL in New Orleans, which suffered a major collapse in October killing three people, will be completely demolished, according to New Orleans authorities. The structure is unstable and must come down, they explained. The building's owners will be responsible for the cost of demolition. Details and news on the future rebuild are forthcoming.

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BUSINESS TRAVELERS UPBEAT

Business travelers feel that the positives outweigh the negatives at work (92 percent) and at home (82 percent) when traveling for business, according to research from travel management company CWT. Travelers from the Americas are the most enthusiastic at 94 percent and 86 percent respectively, followed by travelers from Asia-Pacific at 93 percent and 84 percent, and Europe at 89 percent and 77 percent.

The research also shows that travelers worldwide feel the top three benefits of meeting with people in person are developing trust (39 percent), getting to know people better (32 percent), and greater efficiencies (31 percent). The survey was based on responses from more than 2,700 business travelers earlier this year. carlsonwagonlit.com



ANDAZ RESIDENCES COME TO T&C GRACE BAY

Grace Bay in the Turks & Caicos Islands will welcome the new Andaz Turks & Caicos Residences in 2021. Andaz will bring a mix of 59 oversized hotel rooms and 74 residences, divided between two buildings, to 5.5 acres of prime beachfront real estate.

The residences range in size from studios to four-bedroom penthouses. The resort will feature two swimming pools, waterfront bar and dining spaces and a spa.



This is a boon for travelers because the majority of accommodations on Grace Bay are condo rentals. In addition, guests and owners can earn and redeem World of Hyatt points during their stays, and original owners will be enrolled in the Founder's Program for special benefits at Hyatt hotels worldwide.

andaztcredences.com

LAX BANS RIDESHARE AND TAXI CURBSIDE PICKUP

LOS ANGELES INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT has banned rideshare companies and taxis from picking up passengers outside its terminals. Instead, passengers will be taken by shuttle to a parking lot next to Terminal 1, where they can book their rides. Drop-offs at terminals will still be allowed.

The decision, according to airport authorities, is a bid to ease congestion at the airport, which is undergoing a \$14 billion overhaul of its road network and terminals. flylax.com



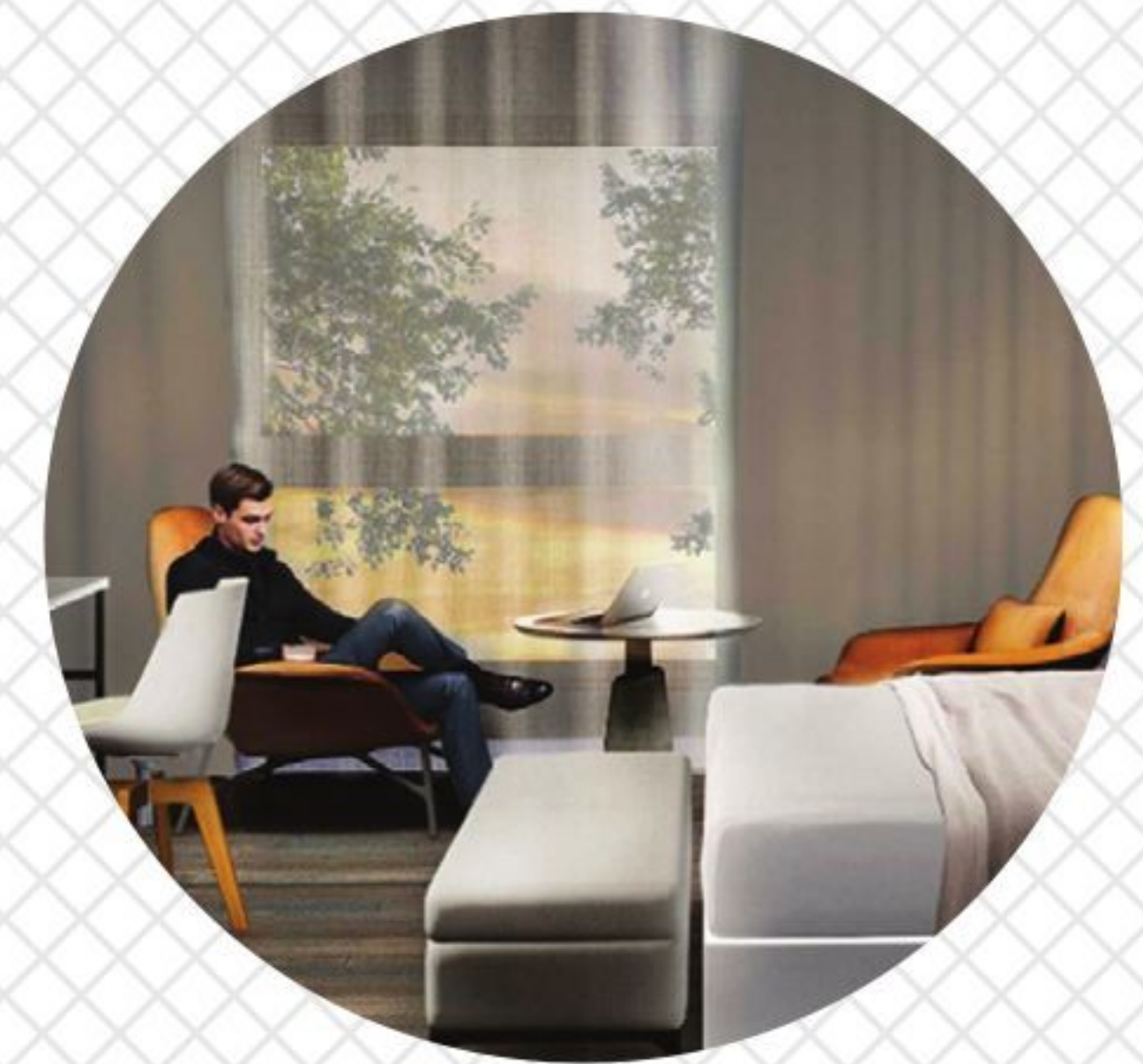
Property Pipeline and Openings



KIMPTON KEY WEST

Kimpton Hotels & Restaurants has announced a new hotel complex opening in the Key West, FL, historic district, slated to debut in early 2020. Kimpton Key West will be the sixth location for the company in Florida and its first in the Florida Keys. The property will actually be five separate hotels, comprising 219 rooms, some in buildings from the turn of the century, with rooms featuring trend-forward design.

ihg.com/kimptonhotels



SORO MONTEVIDEO

Hilton has announced the opening of SORO Montevideo, Curio Collection by Hilton, the brand's debut in Uruguay and third Hilton property in the country. The 40-room boutique hotel is located in the Pocitos neighborhood and has a rooftop jacuzzi, a gym with panoramic terraces, and Tomás, a signature restaurant serving breakfast, lunch and dinner with a chef-driven menu.

hilton.com



SMALL LUXURY HOTELS

Small Luxury Hotels has welcomed five new properties: Lennox Miami Beach, S Hotel Jamaica, KASA Hotel Riviera Maya, KASA Hotel Parota, Tulum, Mexico, and Vista Palazzo Lago Di Como in Italy. Plus SLH member Tokyo Station Hotel, has created its own amenities fragrance, "Est. 1915," with French luxury brand, Histoires de Parfums.

slh.com



THE LIBERTY TRUST ROANOKE, VA

Savara, the hotel brand that owns the Linden Row Inn in Richmond, VA, and the Meadowbrook Inn in Blowing Rock, NC, plans a 2020 opening for The Liberty Trust, a boutique hotel in the First National Bank building in downtown Roanoke, VA. The 1908 building is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

savaraproperties.com



ONE ON ONE

The Sheraton brand is looking to the future and Indy Adenaw, VP and global brand leader, puts the ideas in context

REFRESH PERSPECTIVE

BT: The iconic Sheraton brand is getting a refresh. How did this come about?

ADENAW: Sheraton is the most international brand for Marriott with 530 hotels open or in the pipeline in 75 countries. It is also the third highest in revenue for the company, and in three years, its 157,000 rooms will be in 90 countries. Because of its wide footprint and global recognition, we took a step back and consulted with our owners to determine what the Sheraton of the future should look like.

BT: The test-market hotel is the Sheraton Phoenix Downtown. Based on the changes here, what can travelers expect?

ADENAW: We want a consistent room product across the portfolio so that travelers immediately recognize familiar comfort and design. But our public areas are extremely important to our redesign. We like to say that Sheraton is at the “intersection of Main and Main,” alluding to the many Sheratons in iconic locations. Sheraton is in New York’s Times Square, directly on the Nile River in Cairo, inside the terminal of Paris Charles de Gaulle airport and on London’s Park Lane. These high-profile locations deserve properties that live up to the hype with lobbies that serve as gathering spaces for both guests and locals. We want guests to feel like locals and locals to feel like guests.

BT: You compare the lobby to a public square. What will draw guests there?

ADENAW: We envision bar spaces that attract people throughout the day and not just during happy hour. Think communal work tables, soundproof phone booths and group work studios that people can reserve for free through a new roving lobby manager. The new Coffee Bar Bar concept will offer an all-day menu of drinks from barista-prepared coffee to craft cocktails and light meals. Our research shows that our target customers are team players who enjoy co-working or spending time with like-minded people. That’s what is driving many of our design efforts, which we are rolling out at our test hotel the Sheraton Phoenix Downtown.

BT: Explain the difference between Marriott and Sheraton as brands.

ADENAW: Sheraton’s design is more residential while Marriott’s appearance is typically more elegant and polished. Of course, they intersect to some degree, but Sheraton puts strong emphasis on public areas. Marriott’s business traveler target puts more attention on ergonomic room design. Marriott guests are especially focused on Marriott Bonvoy elite status, which is why club lounges are being relocated to the lobby level in many properties. We might see some of these successful strategies carry over to Sheraton in the future.

BT: What’s the timeline for this brand refresh?

ADENAW: With so many hotels, it can take years, and we have allowed owners to make adjustments over time as their properties come up for renovation. That typically takes place over a rolling seven-month cycle, but many of these initiatives will be implemented sooner. Still, many owners are so excited about the changes, they are implementing them immediately to take advantage of this great momentum.

Flight plan

AUSTRIAN AIRLINES starts direct flights from Boston to Vienna in March 2020. The flights will operate four times weekly, increasing to six a week in April. Lufthansa adds more connectivity from Boston in the summer when its A380 begins flights from Boston to Munich. austrian.com

AIR CANADA will be the first Canadian airline to take delivery of the Canadian-designed and developed Airbus A220 aircraft when it receives the first of 45 aircraft it has on order in December. The A220 features an innovative cabin design, as well as significantly lower emissions and a reduced noise footprint. The A220-300 for Air Canada has a 137-seat dual-class cabin layout. The new aircraft replace the airline’s existing fleet of smaller, narrower aircraft. aircanada.com

LUFTHANSA GROUP has made significant changes to its status program, designed to make it easier for customers to get and maintain Frequent Traveller, Senator and HON Circle levels. All changes to the status program will apply to flights beginning in January. Under the plans, in addition to the award miles for their flight, guests will receive points instead of the current status and HON Circle miles to simplify the different types of credits. Read more details about the changes at lufthansa.com

ETIHAD AIRWAYS has announced a fourth daily flight from Abu Dhabi to Riyadh, the capital of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Flights begin December 8 and will be operated by an Airbus A320 configured with eight seats in business and 150 in economy. etihad.com

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Meet Me in the Bar

London's hotel bar scene offers an eclectic collection of gathering places

WORDS NISHA SHROFF AND SANCHITA NAMBIAR

Whether for a business appointment, a pre-dinner meeting spot or a social soiree, the logical place to connect in most hotels is in the bar, and London's five-star hotels boast some of the most storied watering holes in the capital. Here are some top choices, along with the specialty cocktails for which each is famous.

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THE CHURCHILL BAR AND TERRACE

The Churchill Bar and Terrace serves an interesting set of classic and craft cocktails. Situated at the Hyatt Regency London – The Churchill, the bar highlights the Churchill family's rich heritage. Indulge in cocktail recipes showcasing British legacy and fine wines from prestigious maisons and artisanal producers. Adding to the cocktails and spirits is a delectable food menu, with dishes such as scotch quail's eggs, Cuban sandwich, fried plantains and huevo habanero.

Must try

Specially created in honor of the Winkle Club, which was formed in 1900 to help the underprivileged, The Winkle drink is a mix of Pusser's Rum Gunpowdered, chai syrup, lime and apple juice and Earl Grey tea.

thechurchillbar.co.uk →



AMARANTO BAR

Amaranto Bar at Four Seasons Hotel London at Park Lane is a sophisticated bar, headed by Ivan Arena. Here you can enjoy cocktails with a twist along with light bites. Don't forget to check out their extensive wine list as well. The striking red interiors are sure to catch your attention.

Must try

Enjoy the signature Negroni Trolley Experience, which takes this iconic cocktail and tweaks it into something more unique and modern. Pick one of the 14 gins from the Negroni Trolley and infuse it with Campari and the bar's special blend of six different vermouths. The drink is said to take you on a journey from Florence, the birthplace of the cocktail, to the British capital.

fourseasons.com/london



THE BAR

The Bar at The Dorchester exudes an electric vibe, and is a central meeting place for travelers who seek high-profile socializing in the city. Overseen by Giuliano Morandin, this bar is popular for sourcing the finest range of spirits and wines from small, independent distilleries to established names. The menu features recipes by legendary mixologist, Harry Craddock, a pioneer in the craft of British cocktail making and the original head bartender at The Dorchester, when the bar opened in the 1930s. The Bar is also known for reintroducing forgotten spirits like the Old Tom Gin.

Must try

The timeless Martinez cocktail is highly recommended. The drink uses a special recipe made on commission by Old Tom Gin exclusively for the hotel. Punt e Mes, maraschino and Boker's Bitters are the other ingredients added to this cocktail.

dorchestercollection.com

THE HANSOM

Located in St. Pancras Renaissance Hotel London, this spanking new bar combines modern aesthetics with neo-gothic architecture, thereby staying true to the Victorian roots of the hotel. The bar is done in marble with brass and leather products, complemented by chic furnishing. On the menu are thoughtfully crafted cocktails such as Angel and Bragget Alehouse Flip dedicated to The Alehouse Act and The Beerhouse Act passed in the early 1800s; Livingstone's Boatswain that pays homage to David Livingstone, the celebrated Victorian explorer and Mr. Cratchit's Yuletide Punch inspired by Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*.

Must try

Served over an ice sphere, The V&A Gold Fashioned is made with Chivas Regal 18 gold signature, Chivas 12 years, cardamom-infused St-Germain, bruichladdich port charlotte, calvados, demerara syrup and drops of celery bitters.

thehansom.co.uk



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LANES OF LONDON

One of the hottest meeting destinations on Park Lane, the Lanes of London serves modern British cuisine along with spirits and cocktails. This London Marriott Hotel Park Lane outlet has a bar space with high chairs and comfortable sofas where you can have your official meet and greet. The bar menu includes an impressive spread of signature cocktails like Go With The Flow, Here Comes The Sun, Royal Garden, Red Cloud and Noble Blitz, to name a few.

Must try

Every month, Lanes of London organizes Art Series featuring cocktails inspired by the hotel's bespoke art collection. Seasonal ingredients form a major part of these unique cocktails.

lanesoflondon.co.uk



THE RIVOLI BAR

This glitzy bar at The Ritz London, a part of The Leading Hotels of the World, is the preferred spot for an intimate meet-up. Rich tones, classic artifacts and plush furnishings are some key décor elements of the bar. The Rivoli Bar spoils you for choice with its wide selection of cocktails, wines and champagnes. Some classic Ritz cocktails include Rivoli Vesper, Churchill's Courage, Cesar Ritz and The Escoffier. Their elaborate food menu includes caviar delights, canapés and sandwiches among others.

Must try

The Ritz 110 cocktail celebrates The Ritz London's long and vibrant history. It is crafted with gold infused Absolut Elyx vodka, Grand Marnier and peach liquor, finished with champagne.

theritzlondon.com



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THEO RANDALL AT THE INTERCONTINENTAL

While this Intercontinental London Park Lane outlet is a favorite among Italian food lovers, Chef Theo also oversees the extensive wine list that features 90 percent Italian varietals. Carefully curated fortified wines, dessert wines, vermouths, rum and cachaca are available here. The interiors of Theo Randall at the Intercontinental are subtle with light shades and minimal furnishing. Revamped in 2016, this F&B outlet changes its menu daily, incorporating seasonal ingredients and learnings from Chef Theo's regular trips to Italy.

Must try

Create your own variation of the Negroni cocktail through Negronificio at Theo Randall at the Intercontinental. A list of Italian gins, and bitters are available, with the bar team on hand to guide each guest through their Negroni personalization. Add final touches with a garnish of sweet Sicilian orange or zesty Amalfi lemon peel.

theorandall.com



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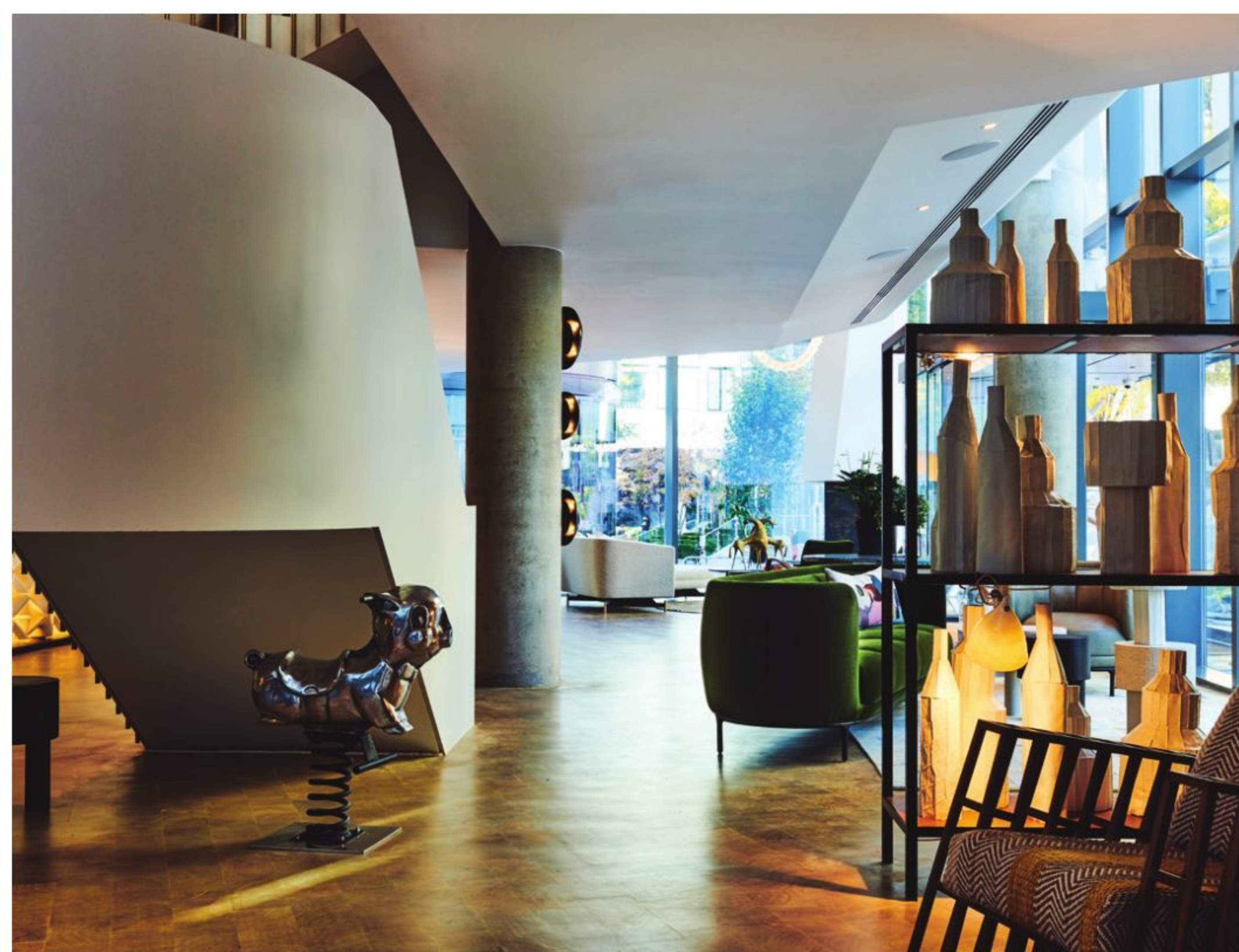
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WORDS MICHAEL ALLEN

Vietnam's capital brims with a youthful, optimistic energy as the country's economy surges ahead

HANOI'S RISE

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When veteran Hanoi-based lawyer Tony Foster went to his office during the last week of February, he had to make his way past machine gun-toting Vietnamese and North

Korean guards, armored cars, and snipers manning the rooftops. It was the week of the two-day summit between Donald Trump and Kim Jong Un that, despite not ending in a favorable outcome for the US President and North Korean supreme leader, drew the attention of the international community to Vietnam's capital.

"Our office is right next to where Kim was staying, so it was a hell of an inconvenience because we were told originally we were not going to be able to go to the office for three days – but we complained and got special passes," says Foster, a partner at Magic Circle firm Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer.

The summit may have been a temporary inconvenience for those working in the area, but it has done wonders for Hanoi's standing on the global stage, showing that Vietnam

and its capital city can be relevant in international politics and economics, according to Filippo Bortoletti, deputy manager of Dezan Shira & Associates' international business advisory in Hanoi. "Even if in that meeting nothing happened specifically, still the fact that they met in Hanoi is significant. It had a big impact, maybe not on Vietnamese people, but on how foreign people perceive Vietnam," he says.

But those already living and working in Hanoi, whether locals or foreigners, didn't need the summit to know that their city, where an incredible 39.8 percent of the population is below 24 years old, is on an exciting economic growth trajectory. First-time visitors to Hanoi cannot fail to notice the buzzing atmosphere of youthful optimism that pervades the city.

While Ho Chi Minh City (commonly called Saigon) is widely regarded as the business capital of Vietnam, Hanoi gives visitors more of a flavor of the "real" Vietnam and a more relaxed environment, while still offering tremendous business opportunities.

"When I first came here from Saigon, I'd been forewarned by a lot of my ex-colleagues

A panorama of Hanoi's West Lake at sunset

ISTOCK/HUYTHOAI





that when you come to Hanoi it's not just another city in Vietnam; you will feel like you're in a different country," says Humayoon (Tom) Shaikhzadeh, general manager of the Oakwood Residence Hanoi.

"If you're looking for that high-paced, energetic lifestyle, then compared with Saigon it's wanting, but on the other hand if you want to engage more with Vietnamese culture, then of course this is the place to be."

Average gross regional domestic product (GRDP) growth between 2016 and 2018 was 7.36 percent, whilst GRDP per capita reached 116 million dong (more than \$5,000) during that period. The unemployment rate was only 2.17 percent in the first quarter of this year.

This has been partly driven by enthusiastic investment from foreign companies, mostly from the Asia-Pacific region. "In Hanoi, there's a huge amount of Japanese and Korean manufacturing investment," says Foster of Freshfields. "Samsung, just as an example, has invested billions of dollars in smartphone factories. The Japanese have all sorts of manufacturing operations in Hanoi in the north. There's an industrial zone that goes through from Hanoi to Hai Phong and it's full of factories, often Asian owned," he notes.

"And if you take a flight – which I did actually last October in a seaplane – you fly fairly low and you see the extent of the investment. Even I was surprised."

Samsung is indeed a prime example of this. The Korean chaebol is in the process of build-

ing its R&D center in Hanoi which, once completed, will employ 3,000 people and become the largest of its kind in Southeast Asia, according to the *Hanoi Times*.

Also, in July, Samsung SDS became the largest shareholder of Vietnamese IT services company CMC Corporation. Samsung plans to utilize the Hanoi-based company as a base to develop software in Southeast Asia.

"The biggest employer at a private level in Vietnam is Samsung, and that's because they employ a lot of factory workers," says Hao Tran, co-founder and CEO of Vietcetera, a bilingual Vietnamese and English media company headquartered in Ho Chi Minh City, population 8.99 million.

"The number one single export from Vietnam is smartphone parts – shipping them to Korea for assembly. Where people once worked mostly on the lower skilled manufacturing side, the trend now is for people making cars, smartphone parts and all that fancy stuff."

Much of that manufacturing is done in high-tech industrial parks. Hanoi aims to build 30 new industrial clusters by the end of 2019, according to the state-run Vietnam News Agency, and the city is now home to 70 industrial clusters covering 3,300 acres and having about 3,100 operational production facilities.

First-time visitors to Hanoi cannot fail to notice the buzzing atmosphere of youthful optimism

By 2020, there will be 138 industrial clusters with an area of more than 6,481 acres in the city, according to a report by Dezan Shira.

Industrial complexes in the northern districts prioritize electronics and IT, engineering, automobiles, textile, pharmaceuticals and cosmetics, according to a Dezan Shira report.

Down south, the focus is on the biological industry for high-tech farming and supporting industries, while in the western areas the focus is on bio-industry for agriculture, high tech industrial production, construction materials and high-end furniture production.

"Many high tech industrial parks there are flourishing, with companies from Japan and Korea producing electronics and telecommunications equipment," says Thomas Joseph Treutler, managing director of the Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh offices of law firm Tilleke & Gibbins. "Many people working at these industrial parks live in Hanoi and travel to the industrial parks each day for work."

Hao Tran says that "the country is definitely moving toward services rather than products or manufacturing, but in the grand scheme of things Vietnam is still about agriculture and lower skilled manufacturing."

Hanoi also has a nascent start-up culture. Duong Do Son, founder and CEO of Toong, a co-working space provider that began

DESTINATIONS



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT PAGE:
Truc Bach Lake, where the late John McCain was shot down during the Vietnam War; the Old Quarter; and a typically lively Hanoi bar scene



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operations in August 2015 and now has three locations in Hanoi and two upcoming, says it took time for Vietnamese to come around to the benefits of co-working spaces over traditional working spaces, but that since 2016 there has been a “co-working wave” and the market has witnessed the impressive development of co-working spaces in Hanoi.

When Toong began operations, setting up a co-working space was regarded as a “far-fetched idea” in Vietnam, particularly since the market had recently witnessed the shutdown of several co-working spaces.

“Thus, we were overwhelmed with doubts, ridicules, criticism. Even the most optimistic person predicted that we could not last more than three months. During the first few

months, we only had a handful of short-term customers and day trippers,” Duong says. But Duong didn’t give up.

He adds: “It took us quite a long time to educate the market about the concept of co-working space and its advantages over traditional working space.”

THE CHANGING FACE OF THE CITY

Economic growth invariably alters the face of a city. Just look at China, where coastal metropolises in particular have metamorphosed into economic powerhouses over just a couple of decades.

The pace of change in Hanoi is similarly stark, though unlike in Chinese cities, where a new skyscraper seems to pop up every week,

construction here is a little more pedestrian. As I’m checking out of the Pan Pacific Hanoi, opposite the hotel’s entrance the skeleton of a half-built skyscraper looms over us. The 16-story building was begun in November 2010 by Hanoi Housing Development and Investment Corporation, according to Vietnamese online news website Dan Tri. But the building now sits abandoned, rusting and overgrown with grass and moss.

Ken Atkinson, executive chairman of Grant Thornton Vietnam, says the Vietnamese government’s style is different to that of the Chinese government. “Once the government approves something in China, they just steam ahead and do it, whereas here it’s still driven by consensus,” he says.

“Occasionally, you catch yourself thinking: ‘Was I really here, or am I in a different place?’ – it’s not comparable at all”

RIGHT: Aerial skyline view of Hanoi at Hoang Cau Lake



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Construction delays aside, Foster of Freshfields has seen huge changes in Hanoi since his arrival in 1992 when the US embargo ended. “Occasionally, you catch yourself thinking: ‘Was I really here, or am I in a different place?’ – it’s not comparable at all,” he says.

“They’re in the process of digging into the foundations of a building they’ve torn down next to us in order to build the HQ of a bank, and just a block away I’m looking at another construction site where they’ve just torn down a lovely colonial building and I’m not sure what’s going to go in there – probably another tower,” he says sardonically.

Foster may lament the changing face of the city, but he understands well its necessity for economic growth. “All this construction is changing the fabric of the city, so it’s not as charming as it used to be, which is quite sad, but you can understand it,” he says.

Hanoi is developing so quickly that some streets are being constructed before they can be officially named. Local residents are taking it upon themselves to (illegally) name the streets themselves, says *Vietnam News*.

A GROWING MIDDLE CLASS

While Hanoi’s old-time charm may be being partly eroded by development, those who visit cannot fail to feel the infectious sense of optimism among Vietnamese, especially those who have gained a toehold in the burgeoning middle class and are benefiting from the rapid economic growth.

“Generally in Vietnam there’s an emergence of – I don’t like to call it Western – but there’s an acknowledgment of a taste for brands and new experiences that’s driving these consumption patterns, and Vietnamese people are earning more money than ever and are able to afford these things,” says Hao Tran of Vietcetera.

There are now at least 15 shopping malls in the city, notable examples being Vinhomes Times City, which boasts its own aquarium, and the Aeon Mall in Long Bien, which with its plethora of luxury brand stores wouldn’t look out of place in Hong Kong or Singapore. Additionally, Hanoi has nearly 20 international schools. You’ll also find supermarkets stocked with Japanese and Korean goods to feed the nouveau riche. “I have a Vietnamese girlfriend and if we are at the supermarket we choose the Japanese product, even if it’s more expensive,” says Dezan Shira’s Borotelli. “You can’t argue with them. They just think the Japanese product is the best.”

Foreign fashion brands are fast entering the Vietnamese market too. “Uniqlo is launching in Vietnam for the first time in October – Ho Chi Minh City first and Hanoi will follow after,” says Hao Tran. “They will go nuts over Uniqlo. H&M opened a year ago to a lot of fanfare, and Zara was before that.”

The rise of middle-class consumer culture alongside a working class still living on low wages makes for some strange contrasts in

price points. For instance, I found myself paying over \$10 for a cocktail in a trendy Old Quarter speakeasy, then afterwards slurping down a bowl of roadside *pho* for about 75 cents.

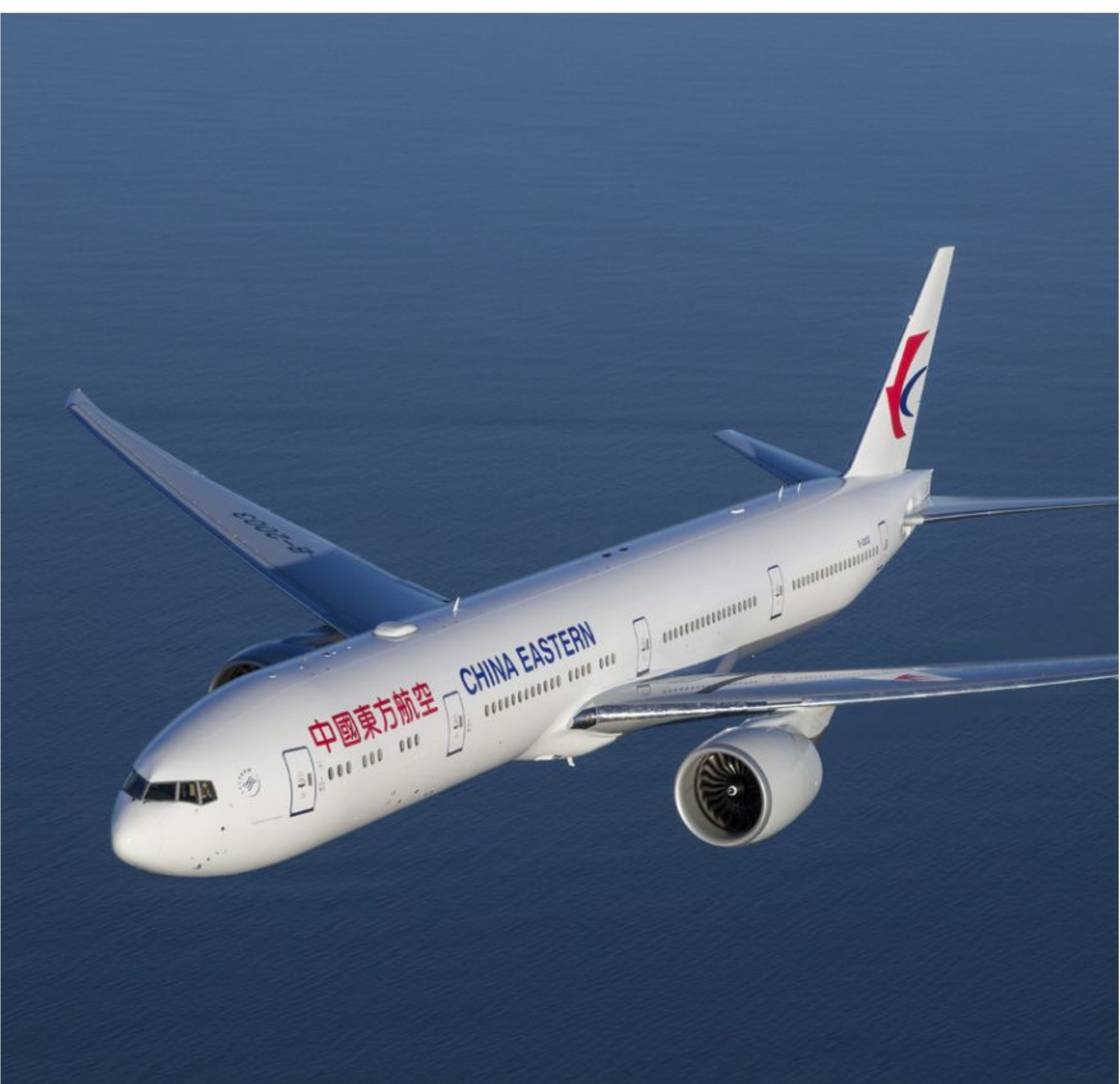
“When I first moved back to Vietnam, my colleagues mocked me for living a luxury lifestyle because I would grab a 90,000 dong (\$3) Starbucks coffee every day before work rather than a more local coffee for around 25,000 dong,” says Henry Vo, a Vietnamese who grew up in the UK but returned to Hanoi this year to work for start-up airline Bamboo Airways.

Hanoi’s middle class has enjoyed steady growth since the US-Vietnam embargo was lifted in 1994.

“At that time, the bicycle was a primary means of transportation. Then, step by step, more and more families had motor scooters. Now, many people, not just the wealthiest, are buying cars,” says Treutler of Tilleke & Gibbins.

“People’s income has increased a lot, and people have the means to travel a lot on weekends – checking out Vietnam’s fantastic seaside and mountain resorts, or visiting neighboring countries. The value of real estate has grown a lot in the past 25 years – thus, many local Hanoians have done very well in the real-estate market and obtain extra income by renting out some properties. Additionally, back in the 1990s, most people you met would be working for a government





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LEFT: scooters and motorcycles crowd Hanoi's streets; and a branch of Highlands Coffee on Le Duan Street



If you're brave enough, riding on the back of a motorcycle is the only way to see Hanoi like a local

22

agency and it would be rarer to meet someone working in private industry. Now, that is no longer the case."

A CITY OF BIKERS

So if you're visiting Hanoi for business and want to take in as much of this impressive development as quickly as possible, what's the best way to do it? As long as your life insurance policy is up to date and you've got a taste for adventure, it's without question on the back of a motorcycle.

Cruising Hanoi's streets on the back of a Vespa Sprint Nette on a Sunday afternoon with Henry Vo, the expat returnee, the notion hit me that it sure beats the indignity of being rammed into an overcrowded subway train, everyone staring down at their mobile phones. We share the road with rebellious bikers pulling wheelies in the middle of the highway, young couples engaging in public displays of affection while riding, men with propane gas canisters attached precariously to the sides of their bikes – everyone deftly avoiding each other, including the taxi drivers watching television whilst driving.

It couldn't be described as exactly safe (though most Hanoians will insist it is), but if you're brave enough, this is the only way to see Hanoi like a local. Pretty much everyone in the city rides a motorbike, whether driving

themselves, being driven by a friend or partner, or hailing a motorbike taxi through the Grab app.

The motorbikes are an evolution from the bicycles that flooded the city in the late 1980s and 90s. "If you stand on a street corner you'll see 500 motorbikes; in 1990 you would have seen 500 bicycles – that's the difference," says Antony Slewka, director of sales and marketing at the Metropole Hanoi, the hotel where Trump and Kim had their summit meeting.

The future of Hanoi's transportation system – if the frenzy of motorbikes interspersed with a few cars and the occasional bus can be called a "system" – is uncertain. It could go the way of Beijing, where the middle class all start buying cars and the roads get clogged up, or people might cling to their bikes because of their relative speed over cars. Or the upcoming but delayed subway might be a raving success, allowing the city to become more like Singapore or Hong Kong.

"Frankly, I'm looking forward to the subway because it's a better way of moving, but I'm not confident it will be finished soon," says Dezan Shira's Bortoletti. "This segment" – he points to a portion of the subway under construction just outside the Highlands Coffee shop on the corner of Le Duan Street and Tran Hung Dao Street where we are relaxing

– "they planned to finish in 15 months. They started two weeks ago. Frankly, I don't think they will finish in one year. It will take some time."

Says Grant Thornton's Atkinson, "With the metro lines being developed and better public transport, it should become more organized, and once there's adequate public transport they'll start restricting traffic into the main areas. It's going to be hard to implement because people have become so used to having scooters and being able to drive them right from where they've been to their living rooms at home – which is actually where they park them," he explains. "It's going to be a lifestyle change for a lot of people."

Cruising a loop around the West Lake, the wind in our faces as we pass Hanoians, out-of-towners and foreigners alike out on their motorbikes for a Sunday joyride, some stopping for a cool lakeside beer, one can't help but feel that something would be lost if this city's transportation network became more like that of Hong Kong or Singapore.

"Riding a motorbike is quite fun," admits Tony Foster. "Most of the drivers are actually incredibly careful and I'm amazed how few accidents there have been. I cycle around the city and it's quite fun once you know the rules of the road – it does give you a little adrenaline, I suppose." BT



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Top of the Class

The votes are tallied, and the results are in. It's time to announce the Best in Business Travel Awards for 2019

AWARDS

For over three decades, you, the readers of *Business Traveler*, have had the opportunity cast your votes for the top providers from the entire spectrum of travel – those who have brought you exceptional products and services that have made your lives on the road easier, more valuable and more profitable.

The Best in Business Travel Awards are the product of an independent survey, the voice of the business traveler. Each nominee is chosen by reader votes, and no one from our staff has any part in pre-selecting companies or picking the recipients. All data from the voters is analyzed by an outside research firm to determine the winners.

This year, the awards honor travel providers in 46 different categories. In recognition of the continually rising tide of innovation and excellence in the industry – in technology, service levels, and in the sheer volume of travelers – this year's recipients include the top three vote-getters in each category, both winners and finalists. In addition, in response to the increasing demand among business travelers for truly extraordinary leisure experiences, two new categories have been included: Best Luxury Cruise Line and Best Golf Resort.

This more inclusive list pays tribute to the growing number of travel providers who taking the lead in the industry – those who have successfully adapted to the constantly changing demands of their most exacting customers: The readers of *Business Traveler*. →



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AWARDS

AIRLINES

BEST IN GLOBAL TRAVEL

Best Overall Airline in the World

Winner

Singapore Airlines

Finalists

Delta Air Lines

Emirates

Best Airline in the World for International Travel

Winner

Etihad Airways

Finalists

Singapore Airlines

Delta Air Lines

Best Airline Alliance

Winner

Oneworld

Finalists

SkyTeam

Star Alliance

Airline with Best First Class Service in the World

Winner

Emirates

Finalists

Singapore Airlines

Cathay Pacific Airways

Airline with Best Business Class Service in the World

Winner

Singapore Airlines

Finalists

Qatar Airways, Emirates

Airline with Best Premium Economy Service in the World

Winner

Lufthansa

Finalists

Singapore Airlines

Cathay Pacific Airways

Airline with Best Economy Class Service in the World

Winner

Delta Air Lines

Finalists

Singapore Airlines

Emirates

Best Airline Cuisine in Business Class

Winner

Singapore Airlines

Finalists

Delta Air Lines

United Airlines

Best Overall Inflight Experience in the World

Winner

Singapore Airlines

Finalists

Emirates

Delta Air Lines

Airlines with Best Overall Customer Service

Winner

Delta Air Lines

Finalists

Singapore Airlines

United Airlines

BEST AIRLINES BY REGION

Best North American Airline for International Travel

Winner

Air Canada

Finalists

Delta Air Lines

United Airlines

Best Airline for North American Travel

Winner

JetBlue

Finalists

Delta Air Lines

American Airlines

Best Airline in Africa

Winner

South African Airways

Finalists

Ethiopian Airlines

Emirates

Best Airline in Asia

Winner

Cathay Pacific Airways

Finalists

Singapore Airlines

JAL Japan Airlines

Best Airline in the Middle East

Winner

Emirates

Finalists

Qatar Airways

Etihad Airways

Best Airline in South/Latin America

Winner

Avianca

Finalists

LATAM

Aerolineas Argentinas

Best Airline in Western Europe

Winner

British Airways

Finalists

Lufthansa

Swiss International Airlines

Best Airline in Central and Eastern Europe

Winner

Lufthansa

Finalists

LOT Polish Airlines

KLM Royal Dutch Airlines

BEST AIR TRAVEL EXPERIENCE

Best North American Airline for Business Class Service

Winner

United Airlines

Finalists

Delta Air Lines

American Airlines

Best North American Airline for Premium Economy Service

Winner

Delta Air Lines

Finalists

American Airlines

United Airlines

Best Business Class to Africa

Winner

South African Airways

Finalists

Emirates

Qatar Airways

Best Business Class to Asia

Winner

Singapore Airlines

Finalists

Cathay Pacific Airways

Korean Air

Best Business Class to Western Europe

Winner

British Airways

Finalists

Lufthansa

KLM Royal Dutch Airlines

Best Business Class to Central and Eastern Europe

Winner

LOT Polish Airlines

Finalists

Lufthansa

KLM Royal Dutch Airlines

Best Business Class to the Middle East

Winner

Emirates

Finalists

Qatar Airways

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AWARDS

Best Business Class to Australia/ New Zealand/South Pacific

Winner

Qantas

Finalists

Air New Zealand

Cathay Pacific Airways

Best North American Airline for Inflight Experience

Winner

JetBlue

Finalists

Delta Air Lines

American Airlines

Best Airline for Transpacific Service

Winner

Cathay Pacific Airways

Finalists

Singapore Airlines

ANA (All Nippon Airways)

Best Airlines for Transatlantic Service

Winner

Virgin Atlantic

Finalists

British Airways,

Lufthansa

HOTELS

BEST HOTEL EXPERIENCE

Best Luxury Hotel Brand

Winner

Ritz-Carlton

Finalists

Four Seasons

Mandarin Oriental

Best Boutique Hotel Brand

Winner

Kimpton Hotels & Restaurants

Finalists

Autograph Collection

Leading Hotels of the World

Best Business Hotel Brand in the World

Winner

Marriott Hotels & Resorts

Finalists

Hilton Hotels & Resorts

Hyatt Hotels

BEST HOTELS BY REGION

Best Business Hotel Brand in Asia

Winner

Shangri-La Hotels & Resorts

Finalists

Mandarin Oriental

InterContinental Hotels &

Resorts

Best Business Hotel Brand in Europe

Winner

Hilton Hotels & Resorts

Finalists

Marriott Hotels & Resorts

Four Seasons

Best Business Hotel Brand in the Middle East

Winner

Jumeirah Hotels

Finalists

Marriott Hotels & Resorts

Hilton Hotels & Resorts

Best Business Hotel Brand in North America

Winner

Marriott Hotels & Resorts

Finalists

Hilton Hotels & Resorts

Hyatt Hotels

Best Business Hotel Brand in South/Latin America

Winner

Marriott Hotels & Resorts

Finalists

Hilton Hotels & Resorts

Four Seasons



Singapore Changi Airport

LOYALTY

Best Frequent Flyer Program

Winner

Delta Air Lines – SkyMiles

Finalists

United Airlines – MileagePlus

American Airlines – AAdvantage

Best Hotel Loyalty Program

Winner

Marriott Bonvoy

Finalists

Hilton Honors

World of Hyatt

AIRPORTS

BEST CONNECTIONS ON THE GROUND

Best Airport in the World

Winner

Singapore Changi Airport (SIN)

Finalists

Hong Kong, Chek Lap Kok

(HKG)

Amsterdam Schiphol (AMS)

Airport with Best Duty-Free Shopping

Winner

Seoul Incheon International (ICN)

Finalists

Dubai International (DXB)

Singapore Changi Airport (SIN)

GROUND

Best Car Rental Company in North America

Winner

National

Finalists

Hertz

Avis

Best Car Rental Company in the World

Winner

Hertz

Finalists

Sixt

Enterprise

LEISURE

BEST LEISURE EXPERIENCES

Best Luxury Cruise Line

Winner

Silversea Cruises

Finalists

Celebrity Cruises

Royal Caribbean International

Best Golf Resort

Winner

Pebble Beach Golf Links (US)

Finalists

Bandon Dunes / Trails Resort (US)

Trump National Doral Miami (US)



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PASTURES NEW

Nairobi is branching out of the city center and into new industries

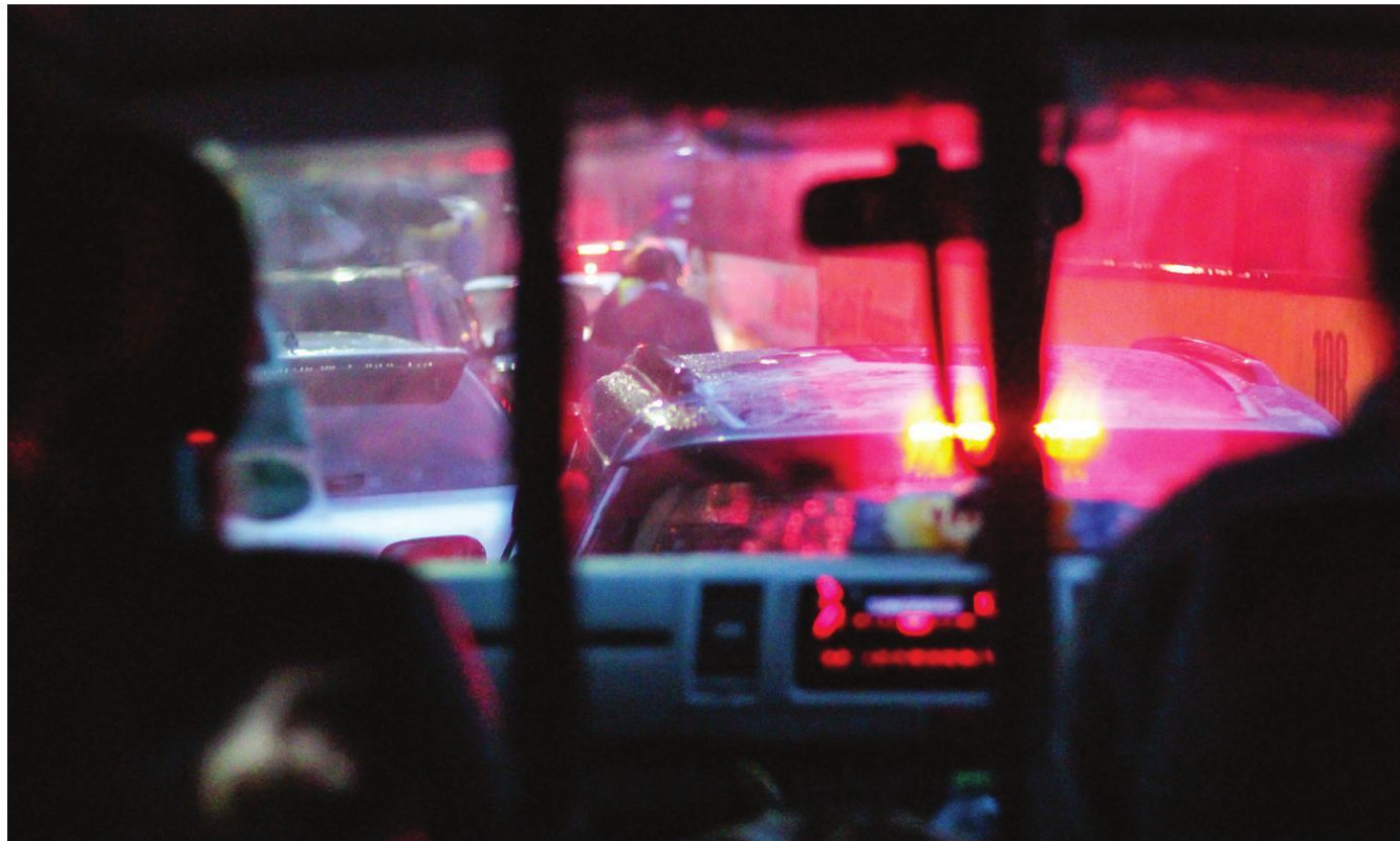
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LEFT: A giraffe surveys the view on the city outskirts **ABOVE:** Improvements to roads will hopefully make Nairobi's jams a thing of the past

“It’s rush hour but nobody’s rushing,” chuckles Godfrey, a Nairobi-based Uber driver, as we sit static at a roundabout on a Wednesday morning, only motorbikes managing to wind their way through. On either side of us, the brightly decorated matatu buses each filled with dozens of commuters certainly aren’t going anywhere fast.

Gridlocked roads are a stereotype that still rings true about the Kenyan capital, although Godfrey insists – perhaps a touch optimistically – that in five years’ time the jams will be a thing of the past. He says that the past half-decade has seen a big improvement thanks to new roads and bypasses. Out of 17 years as a driver, he’s spent the last one working for Uber and is full of praise for the company.

It’s standard back-of-the-taxi chat, but as such conversations are prone to do, it reveals a lot about the changes this city of 4.5 million people is in the midst of. For one, there’s the rise of ride-hailing. Ubiquitous mobile phones and fast Internet speeds make this a big convenience for many in Nairobi. For foreigners, it negates the need to carry extra cash or haggle prices. Uber has been in the market since 2015, and in 2018 had 216,000 active riders and 6,000 drivers split between the capital and the coastal city of Mombasa.

Alon Lits, Uber’s general manager for sub-Saharan Africa, says the company has found that Kenyan cities are “defined by agility, creativity and adaptability.” It has introduced features such as Uber Chapchap, a lower-priced option served by a fleet of budget vehicles, and Uber Lite, a simpler version of the app designed to work in low-connectivity areas and on any Android model. It’s competing with local players such as Bebabeba, which was launched last year by an association of drivers, and Little, which is backed by Kenyan telecoms giant Safaricom.

Then there’s the technology factor. Kenya has its own version of the overused “Silicon” moniker, in this case Silicon Savannah, and national statistics put the ICT sector’s contribution to the economy at \$1 billion in 2017. Nairobi’s popularity as a regional base for international firms is well established, with high-rise offices housing world-renowned multinationals such as IBM, Cisco, Oracle, Google and Visa.

The country has long been a leader in mobile payments thanks to the popularity of M-Pesa, a money transfer and microfinancing service run by Safaricom, which is used by tens of millions to pay for everything from cars to morning coffees. Kenyans moved the equivalent of almost half of the country’s GDP through their smartphones last year.

The start-up and SME scene is also vibrant. “Agri-tech” is one notable sub-sector – news site Disrupt Africa says the number of start-ups in the market has increased by 110 percent over the past two years, with apps such as Farmers Pride, M-shamba and Taimba finding innovative ways to connect farmers with agricultural suppliers and use data to improve their yields. Other start-ups attracting international attention include BRCK, which makes solar-powered, waterproof modems and routers; AB3D, which uses waste electronics to build 3D printers; and Twiga, a food delivery app that raised more than \$10 million in seed funding last year.

This culture has led to a rise in the number of innovation labs and incubators here, such as i-Hub, FabLab and NaiLab, as well as co-working spaces, some of which look like they’ve come straight out of Brooklyn or San Diego. Their numbers are

Kenya maintains a clear lead in the World Bank’s Ease of Doing Business ranking



LEFT AND BELOW: Ikigai co-working space was founded by sisters Nyambura and Wachuka Gichohi

“growing rapidly,” according to Nyambura Gichohi, who set up office brand Ikigai with her sister Wachuka in 2016. They currently have two venues in the leafy suburbs of Westlands and Lavington, and have had little issue filling more than 100 desks as well as several private higher-end offices in each.

The Westlands branch has two-and-a-half acres of garden space with desks, terraces and even old shipping containers where events can be held. It’s popular with development consultants and NGO workers, as well as global companies that want to host gatherings in a more unusual setting. The Lavington one is more traditionally corporate and is mainly used by start-ups and venture capitalists, Gichohi says. Still, it is furnished with locally crafted pieces, has views of lush greenery, and offers flexible spaces such as a silent room and a room for breastfeeding mothers, plus an excellent coffee shop serving Kenyan roasts.

INVESTMENT POTENTIAL

Back on my ride with Godfrey, heading out towards Lavington, a roundabout emblazoned with a large 3D logo of Chinese telecom behemoth Huawei gave an indication of who was paying for a lot of these roads. Loans from Chinese banks, contractors and the government to Kenya amounted to \$9.8 billion between 2000 and 2017, according to the China Africa Research Initiative at Johns Hopkins University. Further big projects are on the horizon – Huawei has promised \$170 million to revive stalled plans for a data and media hub called the Konza Technopolis on the outskirts of Nairobi, while the Chinese government will provide an additional \$500 million for a new expressway between Jomo Kenyatta International airport and the suburbs.

As with much Chinese investment in Africa and Asia, this has raised eyebrows, with accusations that it is a tool of so-called “debt-trap diplomacy.” Kenya’s debts are rising, and there are doubts that it will ever be able to pay back a \$3.6 billion loan from China Eximbank, which funded a new standard gauge railway along the old colonial line from Nairobi to Mombasa (by most accounts a lovely new way to



travel from capital to coast). Other concerns surround these companies’ low rates of hiring domestic labor and tensions between the new workforce and locals.

At the same time, the local government is funding civic improvements, and at the popular Crowne Plaza hotel in the skyscraper-filled Upper Hill district, staff are excited about a new road being built up to their front entrance. This area has long been a hub for corporate HQs, as well as organizations including the World Bank and African Development Bank.

Still, activity is spreading outwards, and some feel Upper Hill is losing its appeal. Local investment analysis firm Cytonn blames a lack of retail and residential space as well as insufficient infrastructure (something the new road is intended to change).

“The city is expanding,” says Joyce Ann Wangui, sales director at the Sankara Nairobi hotel in Westlands. “It used to be much more about the central business district; now there are smaller commercial centers on the outskirts and lots of construction there.” KPMG, PwC, Barclays and even the European Commission have all moved their offices to Westlands, while Coca-Cola has moved from its sprawling Upper Hill complex to Lavington.

Another suburb growing in popularity is Karen. Once considered more of a residential enclave with a colonial feel (it's a common misconception that it takes its name from the Karen Blixen portrayed in *Out of Africa*; in fact, it's named after her cousin, Karen Melchior, whose father owned the Karen Coffee Company), better roads have attracted numerous local businesses, trendy office spaces such as 45 Karen Road, and shopping centers containing international brands such as Carrefour and Yves Rocher.

This is having a ripple effect on the hotel scene. "There wasn't much competition in Westlands when we opened nine years ago," says Krishna Unni, Sankara's group general manager. Conceived as a "boutique business hotel," it was independently owned and managed until it joined Marriott International's Autograph Collection this year. Recent arrivals to the suburb include the Villa Rosa by Geneva-based Kempinski; Pullman, Movenpick and Ibis Styles properties from Accor; and a Park Inn by Radisson.

BOUNCING BACK

Westlands is also home to the Dusit D2 hotel, which reopened in August following the January terror attack by

al-Shabab militants that killed 21 people. It came just after Kenya reported a 37 percent increase in visitor numbers for 2018, raising questions about what the impact would be. Tourism is vital to the economy, contributing \$7.9 billion last year and accounting for 8.3 percent of jobs.

While a PwC report predicted a temporary dip in visitors of about 13 percent, the African Travel and Tourism Association reported that the market was "booming" by the busy summer season. Michael Metaxas, the Dusit D2's general manager, is now optimistic, promising a new "positive energy" as well as "enhanced security" certified by international bodies. Tight security is part of the experience at any quality Nairobi hotel, with arriving cars subject to thorough searches of trunks and undersides, and guests passing through airport-style scanners.

This is even the case at the bucolic Hemingways hotel out in Karen, which has views over the Ngong Hills. "We call them the giant hills because the ridges look like they were pressed by the knuckles of a giant," says Richard Kimenyi, the hotel's general manager, over a delicious lunch of ostrich carpaccio and Creole-style red snapper in a curry sauce. Guests at the five-star property range from tourists who stay



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EXPLORING THE CITY

WHAT TO SEE: The best-known of Nairobi's must-visit attractions is its national park, which provides the chance to see wild lions, rhinos and cheetahs only 4.4 miles south of the city. Nearby is the Karen Blixen Museum, located in the former home of the *Out of Africa*

author; the Giraffe Centre, where you can feed the long-legged creatures from an observation tower; and the Sheldrick Wildlife Trust, which helps to raise orphaned elephants and other animals. For an inner-city refresh, stroll in the Nairobi Arboretum or Karuka Forest.

kws.go.ke, giraffecentre.org, sheldrickwildlifetrust.org



WHERE TO EAT:

Nyama Mama is an affordable restaurant and bar with four branches that by day offer stylish meeting rooms and by night are about barbecued meats, beers and live music. Nairobi's large Indian-heritage population means the cuisine is well represented – try Tandoori Patio in Westlands. For a daytime meeting or coffee, head for one of the numerous

branches of regional chain Java House, with air conditioning and WIFI. Le Grenier à Pain on Riverside Drive and Boho Eatery in Karen are also great daytime spots.

WHERE TO STAY: Crowne Plaza Nairobi and Sankara Nairobi are excellent for business. For leisure, Fairmont the Norfolk, in the heart of the city, is steeped in history.



for a few days before flying from the small Wilson airport to Hemingways' other outposts in the Masai Mara and Mombasa, to business travelers who will sometimes book the entire 45-suite property for an event.

The serviced apartment sector is continuing to grow, with investment firm Cytonn expecting more than 1,000 additional units to enter the market by 2020. Nairobi also has top-quality airport hotels at last, with a Crowne Plaza, Four Points by Sheraton and Hilton Garden Inn all opening in the past two years.

POLITICAL LANDSCAPE

For many foreign investors, there is a sense of calm after the storm this year. Tensions flared during the 2017 national election, which saw the supreme court overturn the victory of incumbent Uhuru Kenyatta, son of the first president of Kenya, Jomo Kenyatta. A second vote several months later returned the same decision, and almost 100 people are estimated to have died in election-related violence.

In March 2018, Kenyatta and opposition leader Raila Odinga reached an uneasy truce, restoring stability and improving business confidence. GDP growth, which had dipped from 5.8 percent in 2016 to 4.8 percent in 2017, rebounded last year to 6.3 percent. Foreign direct investment (FDI) rose 27 percent to a record high of \$1.6



billion, into industries including manufacturing, oil and gas, chemicals and hospitality. The Kenya National Bureau of Statistics says the number of international conferences rose by 6.8 percent.

Long the de facto center of East African business and development, Kenya is facing competition from a northern neighbor. Ethiopia is now the greater FDI recipient, attracting \$3.3 billion last year. And while Ethiopian Airlines and Kenya Airways are both leading carriers, the former is now the continent's most profitable, while the latter is being nationalized to rescue it from a debt crisis.

Kenya maintains a clear lead in the World Bank's Ease of Doing Business ranking, where it has jumped from 129th place to 61st in five years. However, corruption still "penetrates every sector of the economy," according to anti-corruption portal GAN. Kenya was the first country to ratify the UN's Convention Against Corruption under former president Mwai Kibaki, with the struggles of Kibaki's first anti-corruption chief, John Githongo, chronicled in Michela Wrong's book *It's Our Turn To Eat*. This summer saw the arrest of finance minister Henry Rotich on corruption charges with allegations that his ouster was politically motivated.

Keeping up with the rollercoaster of Kenyan politics and business is made easier through the tenacious local press,

ABOVE: Nairobi's urban sprawl is spreading out to the Ngong Hills, immortalised in *Out of Africa*

with frank coverage appearing in Nation Media Group's *Business Daily* and *Daily Nation*, as well as magazines such as the *Nairobi Law Monthly* and the *East African Business Times*. Even so, with Kenya placing 100th in the annual World Press Freedom ranking from Reporters Without Borders, there are clearly issues at play here, too.

Driving along the city's smooth new roads, stark

reminders remain of inequality amid the rapid development. On the way to Hemingways, you pass the Kibera slum and its hundreds of thousands of residents. Asked about the biggest issues facing Kenya, many locals will mention youth unemployment, which stands at 18.4 percent.

Still, this is also a city of creative young people. One night in Westlands, watching local band Switcharoo perform ahead of a European tour, an audience member tells me that the live music scene here is the best in Africa. Add this to the launch of art collectives such as Brush Tu and the Nest, plus a nascent local film industry, and you can't help but feel that Kenya – and Nairobi in particular – is ready to capitalize on its many multi-faceted talents. **BT**

Loans from Chinese banks, contractors and the government to Kenya amounted to \$9.8 billion between 2000 and 2017



WORDS LARK GOULD

SLEEPING With the MASTERS

Great art is adding color, life and personality to the traveler's luxury hotel experience

Art and hospitality make great bed-fellows at hotel properties that have found a satisfying focus on the art world. No matter who the master on the wall may be, guests get a chance to revel in works they might not get to experience otherwise and often in the luxury of quiet and privacy.

Hotel walls offer the perfect backdrop for works that tell stories of deep and current history, provide fodder for thought and add a pleasant sense of place. Guests get to enjoy these moments without elbowing others for a better view or feeling the pressure to get through a warren of galleries before closing time.

In many hotels, such as Vik Retreats, a boutique chain of design, wine and art-centric stays in Chile and Uruguay, art, flair and style breathes through every space. The properties are owned and operated by a husband and wife team of high value art collectors and the guest rooms are but canvases on which prominent regional artists are commissioned to lay out their vision.

Also in the region, in Santiago de Cali near the West Andes mountains in Colombia, stands a giant architectural landmark. The Hotel Spiwak Chipichape was inspired by New York City's Guggenheim Museum and houses an noteworthy collection of regional artworks. The 226-suite property is modern, minimalist, circular and unconventional in design, and greets guests with a dizzying array of art pieces and impressive sculptural works in the lobby.

NEW YORK-MADE MOMENTS

However, nowhere is the intersection of art and hospitality more visible than in New York, long at the epicenter of the international art world. Until now, that world was given to museumgoers and denizens of the social elite. But these days, you can wake up to the art of legendary painters and sculptors past and present at several of New York City's trendy hotels.

Many of Manhattan's hotels are boutique by most standards, but big things come in small packages as some

of America's top artists have their masterworks hanging in lobbies, lounges and restaurants of these otherwise unassuming places.

"'One of a kind' defines what boutique hotels should be," says Peter Yeung, general manager of Gramercy Park Hotel. "Displaying original works of art allows a hotel to create the feel and mood it wants. It tells the guest exactly what kind of hotel they are and creates loyalty from guests, who connect with it, or not."

Located across from Union Square Park, Gramercy Park Hotel is one of several chic properties in New York City that places art at the epicenter of its message. "This has been part of the bold culture at the Gramercy Park Hotel and what has made our hotel unique," Yeung says.

BELOW: The Hotel Spiwak Chipichape was inspired by New York City's Guggenheim Museum





ABOVE: One of a kind art at the Gramercy Park Hotel and ceiling blanketed in dangling light bulbs **BELOW:** monumental mural at 11 Howard Hotel



The hotel is an 18-story Renaissance Revival property that dates back to 1925 and has hosted such guests as John F. Kennedy, the Rolling Stones and other luminaries.

However, it took a purchase by art collector and real estate developer Aby Rosen in 2006, plus the brilliant eye of Oscar-winning film maker and artist Julien Schnabel, to become the castle of Goth it is today with bold, modern flourishes and curated furnishings, paintings and sculptures.

Works include art by Jean Michele Basquiat, Fernando Butero, Michael Scoggins, David Salle, Jean Michel Basquiat and Richard Prince. The continuously revolving collection spreads from the lobby to the bar and lounge to guest rooms and to the rooftop bar and event space. Andy Warhol is in force here with his fierce profiles in neon hues of actor Sylvester Stallone, Rudolph Nureyev, Jerry Hall, the Shah of Iran, Giorgio Armani and others.

Also find Damien Hirst's haunting études, such as his 2007 painting "Oral Cancer, Light Micrograph," hang in a public reception area. The painting bursts in an explosion of hot pink healthy cells infused with deadly gray flecks on a canvas that is all mouth hanging on the wall beneath a ceiling blanketed in what seems like a million dangling light bulbs.

"Art is the core pillar of Gramercy Park Hotel – it is embedded in our history and weaved into the guest experience," says marketing director Danielle Choi. "Business travelers tend to be the type of guests who are in a rush, compared to leisure travelers who are staying at hotels just as much to use the property as a 'base,' than they are to soak in every aspect of the guest experience. To cater to both types of travelers, this is why our art experience

starts right when guests enter the front door, so whether or not guests are rushed, they are able to enjoy the gallery nonetheless," Choi explains.

"We're fortunate to have access to some of the greatest works of art. Not every hotel can do this," she adds.

A sister property owned by Rosen called 11 Howard opened in SoHo with a monumental mural on its south-facing side. The 150 by 50-foot mural depicting the grit and glories of SoHo history in white, black and blue,





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was designed by a group of young artists under the mentorship of Jeff Koons. In it see a whimsical working man's vision of SoHo: the brawn that built it, the brilliance that created it and the culture that now defines it rising up from the streets where it all started.

The property is a magnet for young artists and designers who gather in the hotel lounge as complimentary wine pours and conversation flows at the end of the day.

The Edition on Madison Avenue in the Flatiron District focuses on fine art photography. It blankets the walls of its lounge and fine dining areas with a curated collection of black and white photographs of prominent figures within baroque gold leaf frames. Guests will recognize profiles of Bob Dylan, Audrey Hepburn and the Rolling Stones amid iconic street and rooftop scenes that are quintessentially New York.

At the bottom of Manhattan in Battery Park, just around the corner from the new World Trade Center, the Conrad New York Downtown has possibly the most impressive lobby in the city when it comes to contemporary art and design.

It's hard not to be overcome by Sol LeWitt's 100 by 80-foot Loopy Doopy in the expansive 15-story atrium. Illuminated from the sky by day and by changing tones of indigo and magenta by night, this work is the largest by the late artist and puts all patrons wandering the lobbies and room corridors inside the art.

Shapes of the lobby furnishings, windows and stark décor become part of what's inside the frame in a shifting focus of exteriors, interiors, colors and light that never allows this endeavor to be the same artwork twice. There are more than 2,000 works throughout the hotel's public spaces and 463 luxury guest suites, and highly acclaimed

pop-up galleries are always in motion around the neighborhood.

Another inspiring find among the city's art hotel habitats is The Chambers, where each floor offers its own artistic submersion as blank corridor walls have been turned into canvases for prominent New York artists.

THE WORLD OF ART

Nearby, the Peninsula Hotel New York has kept a revolving masterwork collection through recent years, curated through Circa 1881 (named for the year the French Government withdrew its support for the Salon de Paris and sparked an independence push that led to the modern art movement).

The Peninsula brand launched a commission-based contemporary art program, Art in Resonance, Hong Kong last March as the Official Hotel Partner of Art Basel Hong Kong. There, the Hong Kong property unveiled a multi-year, global art initiative with a stunning array of new immersive commissions at its flagship.

Artists recently on view in Hong Kong included Iván Navarro (b. 1967 Chile), Janet Echelman (b. 1966 United States), MINAX (founded 2005, China) and Timothy Paul Myers (b. 1972 Australia). The



“Displaying original works of art allows a hotel to create the feel and mood it wants”



ABOVE: At the Chambers each floor offers its own artistic submersion; **RIGHT:** lobby at the Conrad New York Downtown's Loopy Doopy atrium



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“Beyond simply art for the sake of decorating,” hotel art programs become true innovators of culture

program returns to Peninsula Hong Kong next March for Art Basel before then traveling on to Peninsula Tokyo in April with more inclusions. Art in Resonance will make its way around the world this way with programs for London, Istanbul and Yangon already in the planning.

“Art has always been extremely important to The Peninsula Hotels, and our Art in Resonance program allows us to exercise a deeper level of commitment, beyond simply acting as a venue to display art for the sake of decorating, and instead act as originators and true innovators of culture,” says Carson Glover, vice president, brand marketing and communications, The Peninsula Hotels.

In the American heartland, C21 Museum Hotels is a recent museum-meets-hospitality concept with branded properties taking root in cities across the South and Midwest. Founded by collectors of art, each of the now 11 properties features collaborations with artists worldwide providing the perfect setting for stunning exhibits complemented by a robust cocktails and food and beverage convention throughout the brand.

As North America’s only collecting museum dedicated solely to art of the 21st century, 21c Museum Hotel’s goal seeks to promote accessible, unexpected contemporary art experiences in its range of programming – and viewing the works is always free to the public.

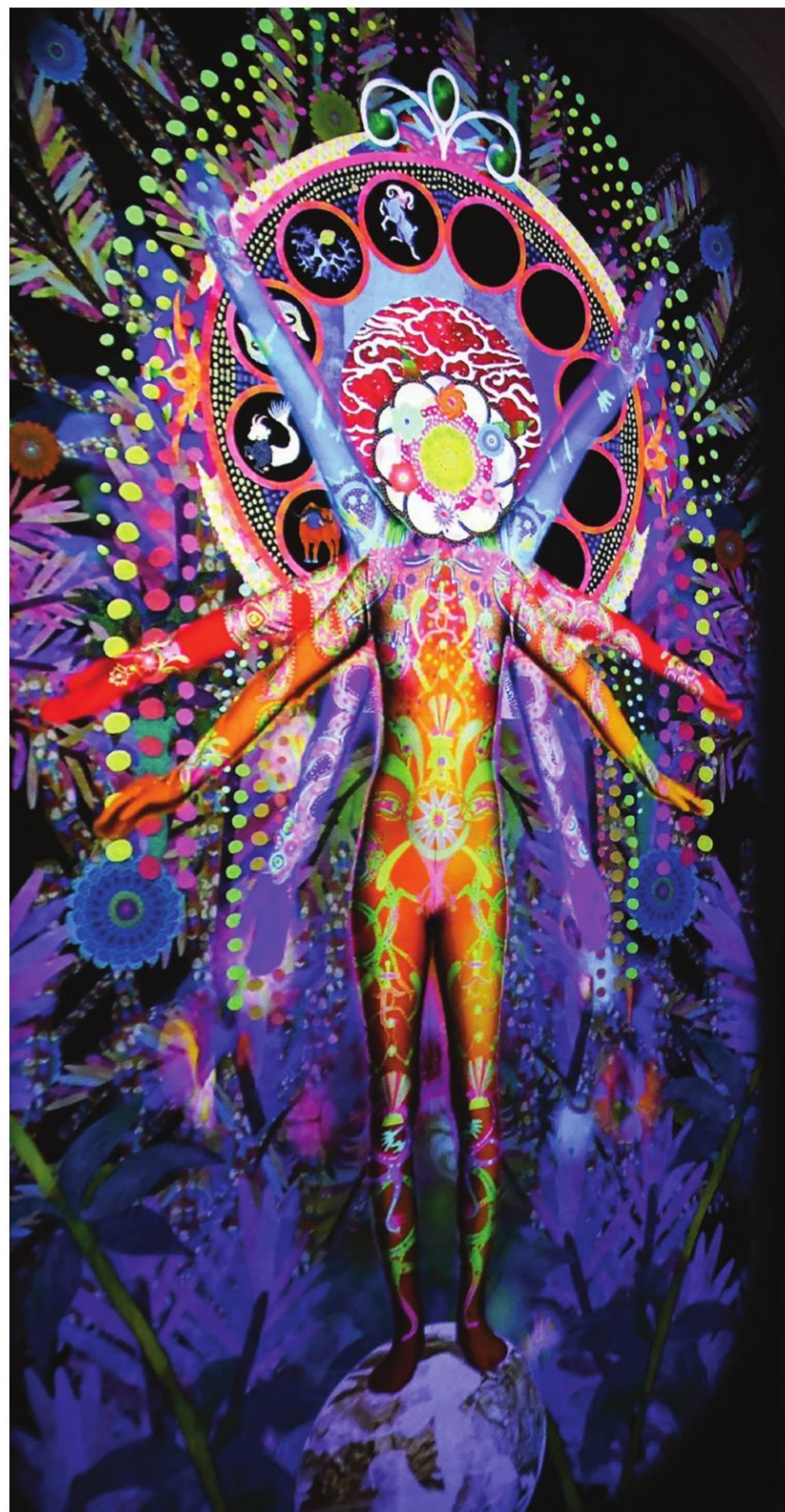
In similar style, Raffles, an Accor property, places its own imprint on this hospitality concept in Istanbul.

Opened in 2014, Raffles Istanbul presents a design inspired by Istanbul’s storied and bejeweled past with works illuminating the Byzantine era in Turkish history. Sculptures, photographs and paintings contribute to the overall theme of the hotel, which is encapsulated in the concept of “The Dream of Istanbul,” that draws together the lobby, lobby lounge, the Champagne Room, spa and other corners of the property. The location connects to the Zorlu Center, a highly energized and reimagined bazaar of high fashion, fine dining and performance art in the Besiktas district of Istanbul.

The 185-room-and-suite hotel is a beacon of the city’s historic and continued grandeur, all highlighted by some 224 curated pieces by local and international artists. Raffles Istanbul recently began offering complimentary guided tours by knowledgeable art historians to those who are interested and willing to commit by making a reservation for the tour.

“Our aim when designing Raffles’ signature spa, the destination restaurant, Isokyo, and the Champagne Room was to reflect the energetic new vibe of Istanbul as avant-garde, cosmopolitan and full of optimism,” says Inge Moore, principal and creative director of The Gallery HBA, which designed the property’s interiors and guest rooms. “Modern interpretations of ancient artistry and rituals create fresh and welcoming spaces that are in tune with today’s forward-looking guests.” **BT**

FROM TOP:
stunning exhibit
at C21 Museum;
Hotels Zorlu
Center at Raffles
Istanbul



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As the hues of the Green Mountains
change from season to season,
Vermont entices any time of the year

45

A State of Peace

WORDS MICHAEL ALPNER

One trek through Vermont is enough to make it obvious why it is named the Green Mountain State. Summer landscapes are verdant with shades of green, from the light green of a leaf in sunlight whose edges are nibbled by a hungry caterpillar to a deep green of the woods when the sun begins to fade and night creatures emerge.

In the fall, verdant turns vibrant as a flamboyant crazy quilt of yellows, golds and reds covers the hills, creating those iconic picture-postcard settings of quiet country lanes in a New England autumn. Whatever the season, Vermont proudly wears its bucolic cloak of nature.

However, as the hues of autumn give way to the frosty whites of winter, a different set of postcard images are revealed, this time peaceful scenes of covered bridges spanning icy streams and sparkling slopes framed by snow-laden trees. For business travelers in search of an idyllic winter getaway from the city chill, the towns of Killington, Brattleboro and St. Albans City are only a few from a long list of rustic destinations.

Killington is known as one of the largest ski areas on the East Coast. When the green turns to white, and the mountain grows its whiskers to the delight of winter sport enthusiasts, Killington has become one of the hottest – or coldest – destinations in all of Vermont.

From professional ski tournaments to themed weddings, the slopes of Killington are alive from early November to late in May. In addition, if all play and no work is a concern, Killington proudly hosts groups, meetings and conferences in the 40,000 square feet of dividable space at Grand Hotel and Snowshed Lodge.

Stowe is called the Ski Capital of the East, and is home to Stowe Mountain Resort, which runs its ski activities between Mount Mansfield and Spruce Peak, challenges skiers with a drop of 2,630 feet. Speaking of mountains in Stowe, here one can visit the Trapp Family Lodge Outdoor Center, final resting place of Maria Von Trapp. She was governess of the Von Trapp family, depicted in the Academy Award winning 1966 movie, *The Sound of Music*. The lodge offers accommodations, dining, a brewery and a wine cellar. In addition, the lodge offers massage services, meeting spaces and wedding receptions platforms.

Brattleboro is one of the gateway cities into Vermont. Sitting ten miles above the north border of Massachusetts, Brattleboro offers hiking and biking trails in its 218 acres of protected forest at Fort Dummer State Park.





Burlington, the most populous city in Vermont, is the first city in the US to run entirely on renewable energy

PREVIOUS PAGE: Milky Way over lake in Stowe; **THIS PAGE:** View from The K1 Mountain in Killington; Burlington at Church Street Marketplace

Though Brattleboro sees its own retinue of skiers and snowboarders, it is nearby Mount Snow and Stratton that get more notice. Brattleboro's scenic vistas, especially viewed from the banks of the Connecticut River, might have been the inspiration for writers Rudyard Kipling and Saul Bellow to live here for a time.

St. Albans City is in the northwest region of the state, only 16 miles south of the Canadian border. It is known as the Maple Sugar Capital of the world, and even has a maple festival in late April.

MELT INTO SPRING

Speaking of April, as the winter retreats, one of the most interesting and secluded spots in the area is found by arranging a boat ride (there is no dock) to Woods Island State Park. Here, the views are remarkable but since it is so remote, there are minimal sanitary facilities and no potable water. Together with the camping reservations, one might want to make other "roughing it" arrangements as well.

Along Lake Champlain, though, a variety of local cruises aid travelers who want to discover the pastoral New England countryside. The Lake Champlain region is rich with wildlife, historical attractions and watersports.

For families, couples, and others looking for a more touristy vacation, the cities of Burlington, Stowe and Essex can offer a variety of experiences to match any taste and interest. From famed companies to steep inclines to intoxicating moments, these three locations bring surprising excitement in small town packages.

Burlington is the first city in the US to run entirely on renewable energy. An easy flight of one hour and ten minutes from New York City, (all major carriers fly nonstop) Burlington offers business travelers a variety of meeting and event spaces large and small.

Its historic downtown is highlighted by the Church Street Marketplace, a four-block pedestrian retail and dining enclave. To cap off a day of bargain hunting and gallery hopping, great food and drink choices abound, like prime steaks at EB Strong's, craft beer at Vermont Pub and Brewery, or – what else? – ice cream at Ben and Jerry's, a company that got its start in Burlington.

Essex might be slightly less well-known than Burlington and Stowe, but it is no less attractive to visitors looking for all five senses to be included in the journey. Despite it being only half the population of Burlington, Essex has the busiest Amtrak Station in the state. Yet another Vermont locale with great natural vistas and small town charm, Essex is also home to The Essex (essexresort.com), Vermont's culinary resort and spa.

This sprawling property combined natural beauty with homespun comforts and a healthy serving of luxury. One of the features of the experience is the culinary aspect of the resort, which not only offers gourmet dining using many homegrown ingredients grown on site, but also classes in cooking, perfect for couples, families or business groups as a fun team-building activity.

In fact, The Essex Corporate Club is specially curated with business travelers in mind. In close proximity to both Burlington airport and downtown Burlington, the Essex Corporate Club is convenient and economical with its discounts and incentives. All guests can enjoy a spa, workout room, hot tub and a myriad of creature comforts within a landscape fully Instragamable. The Essex Resort and Spa is reason alone to visit Essex.

SERIOUS GREEN

The picturesque landscape is just one of the attractions for new residents and businesses to the area. In fact, the state has recently been stepping up its efforts to attract new residents through its Remote Worker Grant Program, in which eligible applicants can receive grants worth up to \$10,000 to move to Vermont and work remotely.

In addition, the city of Burlington, Vermont's most populous at nearly 43,000 (the least 'most populous city' in any state), has seen triple digit growth from 2017 to 2018. Certainly high-profile presidential candidate Senator Bernie Sanders has been nothing but a net positive for his state. First the mayor of Burlington and later state senator, Sanders has enjoyed great media visibility and enthusiastic crowds in both the 2016 and 2020 presidential election campaigns.

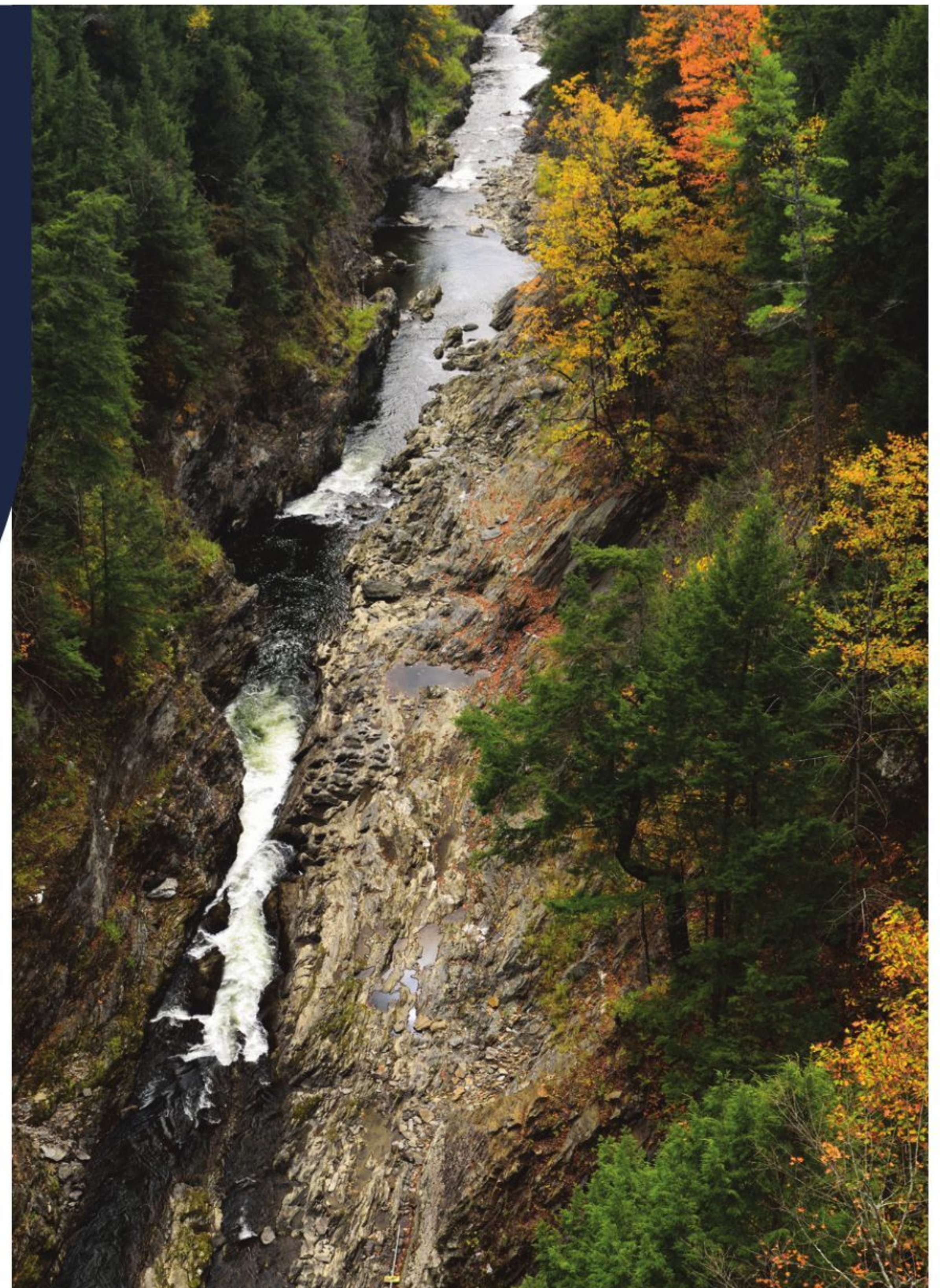
However, make no mistake – the greatest draw to Vermont is the sheer beauty. Those who grew up with Sesame Street may remember the song, "It's Not Easy Being Green." However, Vermont was obviously not listening. Whatever the color on the hillsides, the Green Mountain State lives up to its name.

While one stands at the banks of Lake Eden near Johnson, and hears the haunting call of the loons at dusk, or from the top of a ladder while picking apples at Shelburne Orchard, one realizes that green comes in many forms and textures.

Some proud and ambitious states try to be everything, boast that they have lush countryside, roaring rivers and thundering cities. But Vermont owns its specialties, the breweries, farms, rolling hills and hiking trails, foliage and fauna, progressive politics and green energy. From maple products, often sold in quaint shops with a variety of jams and homemade soaps, to the chance of crossing paths with a larger than life moose, to the sharp twang of Cabot's cheddar cheese, Vermont is, if nothing else, a state most at peace with itself. **BT**

The picturesque landscape is just one of the attractions for new residents and businesses to the area

THIS PAGE:
Ottawquechee river at Quechee Gorge Vermont in the Fall; Late afternoon rural village stores





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SHARP SHOOTERS

Advanced compact cameras pack great features in a small package. We zoom in on seven of the best

50

Sure, it's tempting to take photos on your smartphone – after all, it's right there in your pocket. But there's still a gulf between the capabilities of a phone and a dedicated camera. First off, the zoom on a camera is optical, not digital. Even the most advanced phones with multiple lenses can only snap the best-quality image at certain points. The rest is digital zoom, which is really just a way of cropping the image which loses resolution. With a camera's adjustable lens, every shot has full resolution.

Second, the image sensor on a camera is much bigger than a smartphone can manage. A bigger sensor means bigger pixels, capable of drawing in more light faster. No smartphone can match this – for the light from the lens to cover the entire sensor, you need a bigger distance between sensor and lens than is possible if the phone is to be anything like slim. Look for camera sensors that are an inch or bigger in size for outstanding results.

Basic compact cameras are cheap, but that often means average quality. Advanced compacts, however, boast larger sensors, usually found on even pricier models such as SLRs and compact system cameras. Unlike those, compacts don't have interchangeable lenses – which in turn means there's no danger of dust getting into the camera body.

The latest advanced compact cameras offer a remarkable combination of features, size and price, and are ideal for taking on your trips. Here are some to consider.

SONY RX100 MK VII

Sony's range of RX100 cameras is impressive and the Mk VII model offers an 8x zoom lens – good for homing in on that shy wildlife specimen. It's all contained in a very compact body (4.0 x 2.4 x 1.6 inches; 10.7 oz.) – the flash and viewfinder pop up when needed. The one-inch, 20.1-megapixel sensor is responsive and effective. There are better cameras for low-light photography but, overall, this model is hard to beat. The electronic viewfinder is bright and the LCD screen tilts for angled shots and flips around for selfies. It has a fast autofocus and can keep focus on moving objects, which works brilliantly. It also locks on to eyes in the shot so the subject is always in sharp focus. You can even record videos in superior 4K HDR resolution.

\$1,533; sony.com/electronics/cameras



PANASONIC LUMIX DC-LX100 II

The image quality on this camera is terrific, not least because of the big sensor – it uses a format called Four Thirds that is more than one-and-a-half times bigger than a one-inch sensor. The sensor has 17-megapixel resolution and the lens offers 3x zoom, which makes it pretty versatile. It's full of features, including a burst mode that can shoot very fast, for much longer than a phone could manage. Similarly, the black-and-white effects here are much more accomplished than on a smartphone. Unlike some compacts, the handgrip means it's easy to hold securely. The touchscreen display is clear and effective, with simple controls to fix the focal point with one tap (be careful not to do this accidentally). The results it delivers are low on picture noise and high on rich, sharp detail. Measuring 4.5 x 2.6 x 2.5 inches, it weighs 13.8 oz.

\$1,020; na.panasonic.com/us

FUJIFILM XF10

Fun to use and with an attractive retro look, Fujifilm's XF10 is especially pocketable thanks to its tiny size (4.4 x 2.5 x 1.6 inches) – although this means there's no viewfinder, so you have to frame your shots on the touch-sensitive LCD screen. The sensor is big, a size called APS-C that measures 23.5 x 15.7mm. It delivers images that are sharp to the edges of the frame (whereas some other lenses leave the corners a little soft). Note that there's a fixed rather than a zoom lens: a fixed lens means you can have the most precise glass of all, whereas adding a zoom to the mix can mean a compromise in quality. Fujifilm has a series of settings designed to make digital images look like they were taken on film cameras. It's a particularly lightweight option, too – 9.8 oz., the second-lightest on test.

\$573; fujifilmusa.com →



CANON G7X MK III

The just-released update to Canon's G7X range is slick and effective with a one-inch, 20.1-megapixel sensor and plenty of processing power. This camera is particularly good for video fans, with 4K recording, including for slow-motion effects. At 4.1 x 2.4 x 1.6 inches and 10.7 oz., it is easily small enough to slip in your pocket, and has a useful sculpted handgrip so is comfortable to use. Autofocus can be where a camera stands or falls and here it's quick and precise, with face detection helping you to focus on your subject. The 4.2x zoom is useful and doesn't bulk the camera up too much. As with some other models, the rear LCD screen (there's no electronic viewfinder here) pops out for greater flexibility.

\$894; usa.canon.com



LEICA Q2

If money is no object, this is a remarkable compact camera. It has a full-frame sensor, meaning it's the same size as a frame of 35mm film in a film SLR camera. It's the kind of sensor found only in DSLR cameras, and the most expensive ones at that, but here it's crammed into a small body (5.12 x 3.15 x 3.62 inches, although quite heavy at 25.3 oz.). It is astonishingly high-resolution, too, at 47.3 megapixels. While the lens is a fixed focal length, a button switches it to longer lengths, although bear in mind that

this reduces the resolution.

The electronic viewfinder is detailed and a joy to use. This is a highly sophisticated camera, as you would expect from the price; it works brilliantly and reeks of class thanks to a gorgeous solid-metal body with immaculate build quality.

\$5,429; leicacamerausa.com



CAMERA TYPES EXPLAINED

With the wide array of cameras on the market, it can be hard to work out exactly which type to go for. The top of the photographic tree in every respect is the digital SLR, or DSLR. Premium build quality and interchangeable lenses are among the standout features. For the best professional-level shots, this is what you need.

Still, the DSLR isn't small, not least because of the single-lens reflex mirror system that gives the camera type its name. Enter the CSC (compact system camera), which is like the DSLR but significantly more petite because it uses an electronic viewfinder instead of mirrors. Although it's not yet quite as good as a DSLR, the gap is narrowing and the latest models are pretty sumptuous.

Then there's the bridge camera (so-called because it's bridging the gap between compact and DSLR). The key features here are a chunky build and a long zoom lens that is fixed to the camera. For many, the bridge is the perfect balance of advanced capabilities and ease of use.

Oh, and then there's the basic point-and-shoot camera, which in most ways is still several steps up from even the best smartphone, although not as small as a phone. A compact camera is cheap, too. It's good for having in your pocket or bag, ready to be whipped out when an unexpected Kodak moment occurs. Here are examples of outstanding cameras in each genre.

DSLR

The perfect DSLR combines solid ergonomics, breathtakingly fast performance and the best-quality lens. If it's not actually perfect, the Canon 5D comes as close as you're likely to get. Boasting a 30.4-megapixel sensor and advanced autofocus, this handsome all-rounder is great for video as well, offering the right balance of advanced features with intuitive ease of use.

From \$3679; usa.canon.com



NIKON COOLPIX A1000

Nikon's latest camera is what's called a superzoom compact – when you hear it has a 35x zoom lens, you'll understand why. Such a mammoth zoom means you can photograph in great detail from a long distance (although bear in mind that at higher magnifications, camera shake is especially evident, so consider using a tripod). The electronic viewfinder is good although no match for the one on the Sony – and the LCD screen folds down so you can see it underneath the camera if you're taking a self-portrait. There are a lot of manual controls to finesse every detail of your shot, and a proficient automatic setting that will sort everything out for you. In short – it's small (4.5 x 2.9 x 1.6 inches; 11.7 oz.), powerful, easy to use and good value. **\$522; nikon.com**



OLYMPUS TOUGH TG-5

As the name suggests, this compact is advanced in one particular way – it's a ruggedized camera, designed to survive a bang. Waterproof to a depth of 50 feet – useful if you're swimming or skiing – it is also freeze-proof, and you can drop it from a height of more than six feet. As well as a competent 12-megapixel sensor, it has plenty of neat extras, such as a thermometer and compass for outdoor pursuits. The 4x zoom is good for a range of situations and is quick and reactive. Tough cameras are traditionally poor for image quality but this one is good, even if no match for cameras with bigger sensors. Both this camera and the Nikon have sensors measuring 1/2.3 inches, the smallest on test. It measures 4.4 x 2.6 x 1.2 and weighs 8.7 oz.

\$536; olympusamerica.com

COMPACT SYSTEM CAMERA

Panasonic Lumix DC-S1

Panasonic's mirrorless cameras are hard to beat, combining extraordinary image quality with a simple interface and attractive looks. The smaller size is made possible by the CSC design and means the DC-S1 has everything a DSLR has apart from the bulk and weight.

From \$3,831; na.panasonic.com/us



BRIDGE CAMERA

Nikon Coolpix P900

Bridge cameras can be had for less money but this model is beautifully built and works well. It has the convenience of a long zoom (a remarkable 83x), a rotating screen, WIFI and GPS. The 16-megapixel sensor is not huge but is effective, and the camera delivers good results whether you're shooting landscapes, wildlife or portraits.

\$611; nikon.com



BASIC COMPACT

Sony W830

A basic compact is highly pocketable and offers strong image quality for very little money. Nobody makes better compacts than Sony. This 20.1-megapixel model has a useful 8x optical zoom and image stabilization. It's slim and has scene options that can work out what you're shooting and adjust the exposure accordingly.

\$152; sony.com





CHECKING IN ON WHAT'S NEXT

Hotels are finding intriguing new ways to thrill, pamper and tech you up

A recent survey by the Global Business Travel Association found 50 percent of travelers surveyed want to try a mobile app to control room settings; 38 percent are eager to try rooms with body sensors to control services; 34 percent want to experience rooms that are personalized by scent, linen choices and other amenities; and 25 percent want to use robotic services.

These days, business travelers expect higher tech in their hotel rooms and lobby work spaces. WiFi is table stakes for most hotels; beyond that, robotics, motion sensors and ambient lighting are all becoming standard.

Take the Sinclair, an Autograph Collection Hotel in Fort Worth, TX, for instance. The hotel, opening this winter, is right at the bleeding edge of technology. The back-up power for the entire art deco-era building is now provided by a battery rather than by a diesel generator, the first hotel in the world to be so equipped.

Light fixtures in the hotel are juiced by something called Digital Building Switches to replace regular high-voltage electricity and are shut on and off over the

Internet. Mirrors in the bathrooms have speakers that connect to users' Bluetooth. Showers can flash different colored lights and will set the temperature of the water using the control pad on the wall in the bathroom.

Finally, going to the gym and powering the building's battery by using a cardio machine for over 20 minutes will not just get you fitter, it will get you Marriott Bonvoy points. And just for good tech measure, the Sinclair has a rentable podcast studio in its lobby.

The new Loews Hotel 1000 in Seattle is equally high wattage in its technology. The property has a fully converged IP infrastructure giving travelers options of choosing and personalizing their room, temperatures, artwork and music. Infrared detectors let housekeeping know when someone is in the room or if it's vacant. The Hotel 1000 also has Microsoft Surface tablets in every room, touchscreen VoIP phones and a virtual reality golfing room.

OF APPS & ABS

Meetings facilities in hotels around the world are also being amped up. The Diplomat Beach Resort in Holly-



wood, FL, for example, has a customizable video wall that greets attendees on check-in with customized images. The resort also uses the Kipsu app to direct message meeting participants about upcoming events, meals, galas and check-out times

Hotel spas, too, are moving forward to use increasingly sophisticated technology, even edging into areas formerly the exclusive preserve of med spas. The Four Seasons Denver, the first hotel to use EMSculpt, is offering guests the option of getting washboard abs in a couple of (pricy) sessions with this new electronic system that uses mild electric shocks to push muscles into fast fitness. The process doesn't hurt while it's being administered but you might feel like you've done a lot of sit ups afterwards. The innovation here is the merging of medical spa technology into hotel spa offerings.

Innovation also doesn't have to be tech-driven. Service-focused innovation is being promoted by NH Hotels with their new City Connection service, a new benefit where customers, who during the course of their sightseeing or business appointments, can "stay in one hotel and enjoy them all," according to a statement.





PREVIOUS PAGE: Left to right: Loews Hotel 1000 in Seattle; Sinclair in Ft. Worth, TX; Georgie at the Fairmont Washington, DC; **THIS PAGE:** NH Hotel Group, Amsterdam; Loews Hotel 1000 in Seattle; Four Seasons, Costa Rica

Guests receive a passport which allows them to make use of services like lobby work areas, gyms, concierges, luggage storage and a 10 percent discount in participating sister property bars and restaurants. The passport explains which NH properties offer the service, where they are located and how long the guest can use them.

Isidoro Martínez de la Escalera, chief marketing officer at NH Hotel Group, says the new service “lies in delivering beyond what our guests need, exceeding their expectations before, during and after their stays.”

ENVIABLY GREEN

Sustainability is also an innovation that most hotels are embracing whole-heartedly.

Edition Hotels, for instance, has made a pledge to be single use plastic-free by 2020. Hotels in the group will be offering bamboo toothbrushes in place of plastic ones. Plastic lids, single-use-amenity bottles and those ubiquitous straws will all be a thing of the past. Hilton, Iberostar, Fairmont, Four Seasons, Marriott groups have all announced similar initiatives to ban or reduce plastics.

Four Seasons Costa Rica, a property centered in the middle of an intensely eco-centric destination has created

a Sustainability Manager position that will oversee property accountability. Knowing that someone has this responsibility will help travelers feel confident about taking a journey to a country which has pioneered eco-sustainable tourism.

Finally, a feature low in tech but high in emotional support shines in the Fairmont Washington, DC. Here, the hotel can offer the presence of a comfort canine for guests and staff. George, a female Labrador, was born to be a guide dog for the blind but when she was tested at her birthplace, the Guiding Eyes for the Blind Development Center, it was decided she was far too friendly and people-centric to be a work-focused, no-touch guide dog.

Mark Huntley, the hotel’s general manager, adopted Georgie in 2018 and put her to work in a new career as a part-time hotel lobby comfort dog. Similar to the comfort dogs brought to people in need of emotional connection during crisis, Georgie is available to socialize with guests and attend meetings to help de-stress and calm participants.

Traveling kids who form a bond with Georgie can buy a small plush toy in her image or a Georgie coloring book to take home. **BT**

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WORDS DAN BOOTH

1

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Fremantle

More than just charming and quaint, this old port town still brings a vibe that's upbeat and fresh

1 Western Australia Maritime Museum

Fremantle is a compact little slice of Western Australia just across the Swan River estuary south of Perth. For generations the indigenous Noongar people have called the place Walyalup and gathered her for cultural ceremonies and trading. The town is imminently walkable, with plenty to see and do.

Since Fremantle Harbor is a major port that serves Perth, it's only fitting that we begin at the Western Australia Maritime Museum on Victoria Quay. The billowing modern architecture is a reminder of Fremantle's connection to the sea, a history that predates the arrival of Capt. Charles Fremantle in 1829. Exhibits cover the natural wonders of the Indian Ocean and the history of maritime warfare and trade, and include the *Australia II*, the racing yacht that won the America's Cup in 1983. A tour of the *HMAS Ovens*,

reveals what life was like aboard a Cold War-era submarine. The vessel is perched on the historic World War II submarine slipway, which was the Allied navies' largest submarine port in the Southern Hemisphere. Hours: 9:30-5:00 PM, admission A\$15 (\$10). Western Australia Maritime Museum, Victoria Quay, tel: 61 8 9431 8334; museum.wa.gov.au

2 Fremantle West End Heritage

Just outside the museum, the Welcome Wall, a series of over 400 bronze panels engraved with names, commemorates the migrants who have come to Western Australia by sea over the years. It was here we met Michael Deller from Fremantle Tours, our guide and unabashed Fremantle enthusiast, who started us off with a stroll down Mouat Street into what's known as Fremantle West End Heritage. This warren of narrow streets is home to an impressive

collection of 19th and early 20th century architecture dating from Fremantle's early days as a center of commerce. Today the area, which includes some 250 historic buildings, is on the State Register of Heritage Places, and is home to coffee shops, bookstores and bistros. Many of the buildings are now part of the University of Notre Dame Australia campus. If time permits, a visit to the Shipwrecks Museum in the 1852 Commissariat Buildings on Cliff Street provides a fascinating glimpse into the region's seafaring disasters.

3 Fremantle Markets

Fremantle's charming historic architecture and varied cuisine are by no means confined to the West End; an amble down South Terrace presented us with a jumble of food and beverage options with names like Gino's and Pizza Bella Roma, not to mention Mexican Kitchen and the Sail and Anchor Pub. At Parry Street,



we came upon another Victorian confection in brick and wrought iron, the Fremantle Markets. Once a wholesale market, this 1897 structure now houses over 150 craft shops, fashion and home goods stores and restaurants in the Hall, with fresh produce and food retailers in the Yard. Adding to the lively air, buskers share their talents on a carefully controlled schedule (to avoid chaos). Open Friday through Sunday, plus holidays and special trading days. The Yard opens at 8:00 AM, the Hall at 9:00 AM, closing time is 8:00 PM Fri, 6:00 PM Sat-Sun; fremantlemarkets.com.au

4 Fremantle Prison

Just across Parry Street from the market is the Fremantle Oval, historic home to a game called Australian Rules Football, less formally known simply as 'footy.' On the other side of the oval is the infamous Fremantle Prison. While this may not sound

like a must-see venue for the casual visitor, the former prison is a World Heritage Site and one of the country's most significant cultural settings owing to its ties to Australia's early days as a penal colony. Built in 1854 by convict labor, the foreboding gatehouse welcomed prisoners to the 'gaol' for 140 years, until it was decommissioned in 1991. Since then it has been welcoming tourists by their thousands; today the prison offers a number of tours that cover the prison's history, a convict's daily life and more gruesome true crime stories. The tours last about an hour and 15 minutes and cost A\$22 (\$15). Lengthier tours include the spooky Torchlight Tour and the Tunnel Tour exploring the shafts and submerged passageways dug from the limestone by the prisoners themselves. Open 9:00 AM – 5:00 PM, 7 days a week; Fremantle Prison, 1 The Terrace, tel: 61 8 9336 9200; fremantleprison.com.au

5 The National Hotel

Wrapping up our prison tour, we doubled back toward the harbor, taking the long way round via Point Street to get a look at the statue of the late AC/DC front man and Fremantle favorite son Bon Scott. Our destination is the National Hotel, another one of the town's Victorian-era gems. Back in the day, it was home to the National Bank of Australasia; when the bank moved out in 1886, the building became a hotel but retained the National moniker. The current building dates to the early 1900s, so needless to say, it's undergone some considerable modifications over the years. The latest of these was the stunning rooftop bar, which opened in 2018. It was the perfect end to a few hours in Fremantle; the drinks were cold and the sunset over the harbor was spectacular. The National Hotel, 98 High Street, tel: 61 8 9335 6688; nationalhotelfremantle.com.au BT

SHUTTERSTOCK

Present Perfect

'Tis the season to think about that just-right gift for the travelers on your list

It's that time of the year when the holidays beckon and the hunt is on for that perfect gift. Whether you're looking for something that would delight your family and friends, or perhaps an ideal gadget for the business traveler – or yourself, here are some suggestions to make your search a little less stressful this year.

WORDS YVONNE YORKE

60

SHUTTERSTOCK



SKINMEDICA

SkinMedica's LUMIVIVE system is for anyone whose skin is exposed to large amounts of blue light – and in this digital age of smartphones, tablets and computer screens, whose isn't? LUMIVIVE Day Damage Defense Serum offers all day protection against pollution and blue light aggressors which accelerates skin damage and aging, while the Night Revitalize Repair Complex enhances your skin's ability to repair itself at night.

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QWERKYWRITER

With the look and sound of a typewriter, this mechanical keyboard mixes a cool retro vibe with modern technology that makes it a show-stopping gift. The durable Qwerkywriter S constructed from scratch-resistant aluminum alloy features an integrated tablet stand, Bluetooth connectivity for up to three devices, wired USB mode, and dual function scroll knobs. You can use the carriage return lever to start a new line instead of hitting the enter button, or even program it to copy and paste or generate signatures. There's something satisfying about the click-clack sound of the typewriter-inspired keys that many traditional wordsmiths would love. Get ready to write the next Great American novel on this baby.

querkywriter.com



CYNTHIA ROWLEY

If you never want to hear the words "arctic blast" ever again and you're already planning a vacation to somewhere more tropical, pack this gorgeous tiered tulle dress by New York designer Cynthia Rowley. The high-low hem with ruffles, pin-tuck detailing and the eye-popping green color makes this a festive show-stopper whether you're on an island getaway or at your office Christmas party. The brand is also known for their surf leisurewear with signature color-block wetsuits and neoprene swimwear using recycled materials.

cynthiarowley.com

C'EST MOI

While we're careful what we put inside our bodies, what we put on our skin is equally important. C'est Moi is a clean ingredients brand with makeup, skincare and body products EWG verified, free of toxic hormone-disruptive or allergenic ingredients such as parabens, pythalates, mineral oil, talc and chemical sunscreens. Their holiday makeup set like the Holi-Sleigh makes a beautiful stocking stuffer with an eye shadow palette, mascara and a versatile crayon which can be used on the eyes and lips. cestmoi.com



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GIFTS THAT GIVE TRAVELERS PEACE OF MIND

SMART CATCH

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Smart Catch is especially great during activities such as skiing, biking, boating or simply traveling. Designed to fit the most common smartphones. thesmartcatch.com

MEDJET

For travelers in an uncertain world, there is always the possibility that an accident, illness or personal security concern may prompt an unplanned – and costly – return trip home. Medjet is a global air medical transport and travel security membership program for travelers.

Medjet memberships come in a variety of packages, including MedjetAssist which provides hospital-to-hospital medical transfers to the member's choice of facility. It applies to business or personal travel both overseas, and in the US more than

150 miles from home. MedjetHorizon adds worldwide travel security, crisis response and evacuation services. Medjet coverage includes short-term options up to 30 days or an annual membership fee, for either individuals or families. medjet.com

RICARDO BEVERLY HILLS

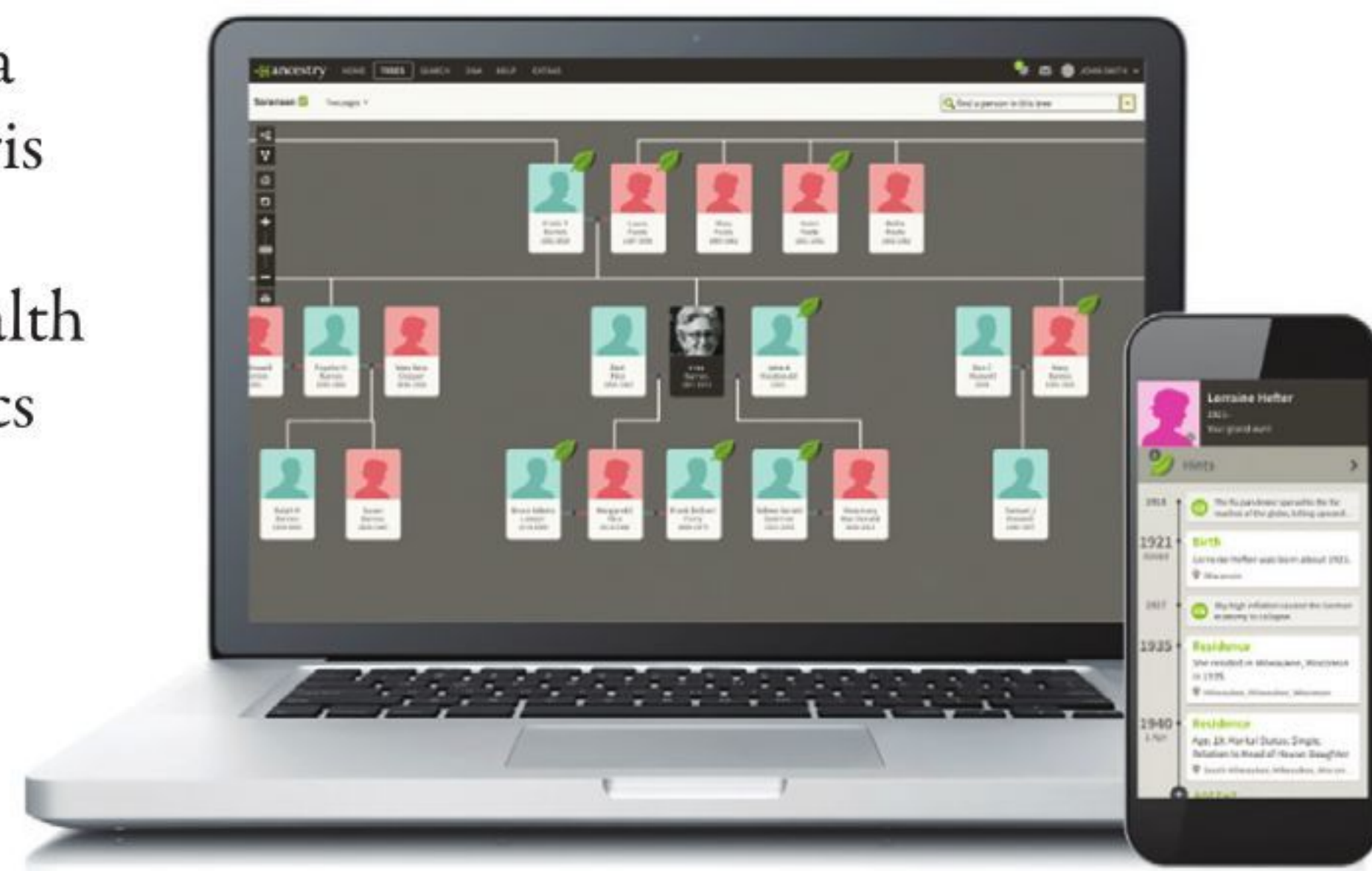
The Cupertino collection offers travelers the versatility of a durable hardside luggage with an outside pocket for quick access storage, TSA combination lock and a convenient covered USB port for charging your electronic devices. The 20-inch, three-compartment, carry-on case features a scratch-resistant polycarbonate alloy exterior and 360-degree dual wheels.

The spacious interior has a pouch for a removable battery, TSA-friendly water-resistant toiletries pouch, two zippered accessories pockets and a pocket to hold tracker technology. The complimentary recovery tag has a unique ID number which you register at ReturnMe and attach to your suitcase for lifetime global lost and recovery service. ricardobeverlyhills.com

ANCESTRY HEALTH

This holiday season, connect with family members and learn details of past generations with a subscription to Ancestry – the world's largest collection of online historical records and DNA database. AncestryDNA provides ethnicity information about your geographic origins across 1000-plus regions. Who knows? You might even uncover a long-lost relative with a lovely pied-a-terre in Paris that you can visit.

The new AncestryHealth can discover how genetics might influence some health conditions in your family, and reveal steps you might take for a healthier new year and beyond. ancestry.com



STORIARTS

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knit, the circular infinity book scarf wraps around you in cozy softness. Perfect for those chilly plane rides, plus you have instant reading material as a bonus. You can even custom design your own book scarf with text, colors and fonts of your own choosing. storiarts.com

WELL TOLD HEALTH BOTANICALS

If you're not eating as healthy as you should, try founder Monica Ruffo's 100 percent natural clean supplements. Well Told Health's dietary supplements are made with whole foods (certified organic botanicals), free of synthetics, fillers, isolates, soy and gluten. For an immunity boost, try the Stress Fighter or the Antioxidant Booster formulation with organic raw cacao or D Booster for strong bones, Energy Booster with organic matcha tea, Tumeric Booster to combat inflammation, Relaxation Booster with organic Goji berries, and lemon balm, a non-habit forming sleep aid. cwelltold.com



DISCOVER THE SOUL
of the MEDITERRANEAN



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BELOW: Cheval Blanc Randheli;
Intercontinental Maldives
Maamunagau Resort
OPPOSITE: JW Marriott
Maldives Resort and Spa



When it comes to sheer escapism, it's hard to beat the Maldives, a small country in South Asia,

located in the Arabian Sea of the Indian Ocean. But with so many resorts to choose from, how do you decide the right one for you? Here are some suggestions, whether you are planning a family holiday, a pampering break or even a corporate gathering.

BEST FOR... SPA LOVERS

In terms of wellness, it's hard to match Four Seasons Resort Maldives at Landaa Giraavaru, set in the UNESCO Biosphere Reserve. Landaa's Spa and Ayurvedic Retreat is one of the most comprehensive spas in the country and offers Anti-Gravity yoga, a Yoga Energy Trail, and Panchakarma, an ayurvedic cleansing program.

Request one of the redesigned and extended over-water villas, each with a 40-foot private pool, and sign up to Manta on Call so the resort team can contact you immediately as soon as these graceful creatures are spotted.

Part of the exclusive LVMH hotel group, Cheval Blanc Randheli comes with an entire spa island all to itself, accessible only by boat and featuring Guerlain treatments, its own pool, hammam and Spa Bar. Elsewhere, Huvafen Fushi features the world's first-ever underwater spa, with treatments that match the location in their brilliance.

BEST FOR... FAMILIES

With its Explorers Kids Club – a circus-themed area with trampoline, splash park, gourmet kitchen and a stage for performances – Niyama has one of the most comprehensive family offerings. Four different “tribes” are welcomed at its kids’ clubs: Globetrotters →



Islands of plenty

There's more to the Maldives than honeymoons – this escape offers resorts to suit all types of travelers



(12-24 months), Adventurers (three- to four-year-olds), Voyagers (five- to seven-year-olds) and Pioneers (eight to 12), with activities ranging from lullabies in Dhivehi, the local language, to dolphin spotting and cooking lessons.

Another option is the Residence Maldives at Dhigurah, a new 173-villa resort linked to a sister island by a half-mile bridge. The Turtle Kids Club has a raft of daily activities, there's movie time daily at 4 PM and a Bubblemaker Dive program (eight years and up). Another child-friendly option is the Sheraton Maldives Full Moon Resort and Spa on Furanafushi Island, North Malé Atoll, a 15- to 20-minute speedboat ride from the international airport. It recently completed a \$20 million renovation and has cottage accommodation designed for families, plus the Sheraton Adventure Club for kids.

Look for resorts offering all-inclusive packages to help manage the budget – Angsana Velavaru offers Live for Family Fun, which includes daily breakfast, lunch and dinner (free meals for kids under 12), ice cream and snorkeling lessons, among other things.

BEST FOR... PARTY LOVERS

Not all resorts in the Maldives are full of honeymooners. With its contemporary style, Amilla Fushi has always set out to be a place where groups of friends and families can hang out together. The focus is on combining toes-in-the-sand relaxation alongside DJs, live acts and the best parties in the Maldives – last year's festivities included Rita Ora appearing on New Year's Eve with Nick Grimshaw DJing.

Finolhu is another equally sociable island choice, with regular events encouraging guests to gather, such as pool parties, movie nights and the weekly White Party, where all guests dress in white, enjoy sunset drinks and dance into the early hours. If a group of friends want space to spread out – and splash out – try the Rock Star Villa at the Hard Rock Hotel Maldives, which has its own infinity pool, a tuk-tuk bar on the terrace and, via the Sound of Your Stay, the chance to curate your own soundtrack.

BEST FOR... MEETINGS

A country made up of small islands, space is at a premium in the Maldives, so don't expect to be able to hold a huge conference here.

FROM TOP: Niyama;
Hard Rock Hotel
Maldives; Finolhu





However, new on the scene is Crossroads, the country's first integrated resort development and one of its most ambitious projects to date. Close to the capital, Malé, and the international airport, the project includes easily one of the largest rentable spaces in the country, the Crossroads Event Hall, a state-of-the-art, multipurpose 3,509-square-foot venue that can host 400.

Also part of the nine-island development are newcomers the Hard Rock Hotel and SAii Lagoon Maldives Curio Collection by Hilton, which are both connected to the main Crossroads island by bridge or the inter-island water transportation system. Dining venues at both hotels can host large group dinners and the Hard Rock also has 14,000 square feet of indoor and outdoor event space, including a poolside terrace and function lawn. A ten-minute speedboat ride from the airport is the long-established Kurumba Maldives, a 180-room resort with eight restaurants, three bars and Bougainvillea Hall, holding 200 guests.

BEST FOR... SURFERS

The Maldives might not be the first place you think of for big surf breaks, but it's gathered quite a reputation for it in recent years. Como Maalifushi has embraced the trend, offering one of the country's most comprehensive and geographically diverse surfing program. The only resort in the entire Thaa Atoll, its Surf Pass sees surfers travel between three atolls in a speedboat in search



NEW PROPERTIES

INTERCONTINENTAL MALDIVES MAAMUNAGAU RESORT

This 81-villa resort opened in September close to the coveted Baa Atoll, classified as a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, which means more chances to play among incredibly rich marine life. Designed by Singapore-based Eco-ID, the resort comes with a six-room overwater spa and six restaurants and bars, including the Retreat, an adults-only

enclave with an infinity pool.
maldives.intercontinental.com

BAGLIONI RESORT MALDIVES

Bringing Italian flair to an island idyll, Baglioni opened its 96-villa tropical escape on Oct. 1. Expect bed linens by Frette, sparkling wine by Ferrari Trento, and spa treatments by Insium, an Italian vegan spa brand. Hang out at the pool bar, enjoy three restaurants and explore the beautiful waters of the surrounding Dhaalu Atoll.
baglionihotels.com

HARD ROCK HOTEL MALDIVES

Open since September, this mega hotel is so close to Malé that you could be on the beach within 15 minutes of leaving the airport. Part of the new Crossroads integrated resort, the 178-room property aims to keep you busy with the Hard Rock Cafe, Body Rock fitness center, Rock Spa, Hard Rock Roxity Kids Club and Teen Spirit Club. You can even order a Crosley turntable to play records or borrow a Fender guitar. A marina with shops is

nearby too.
hardrockhotelmaldives.com

JW MARRIOTT MALDIVES RESORT AND SPA

Opened Nov. 1, JW Marriott's Maldives property on the Indian Ocean wows with impressive gourmet offerings across six restaurants, including one in a treetop setting, Kaashi and Rum Baan. There are 60 villas with private pools, a wine room housing 300 labels, an open-air cinema, an adults only pool and club, a kids' club and spa.
marriott.co.uk



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ABOVE: Joali
BELOW: St Regis
Vommuli Resort



of breaks such as “Surf Machines” at Laamu, “Kasabu” at Dhaalu, and “Farms” at Thaa. A full-time guide from high-end surf brand Tropic Surf is based at the resort from April to October, when the biggest swells come through.

Also worth a look is Six Senses Laamu, the only resort in the Laamu Atoll and also a partner with Tropic Surf, whose team can take you out to tackle the mighty Yin Yang, one of the country’s most famous breaks.

BEST FOR... GOING GREEN

Eco-minded travelers should head for Soneva Fushi, where sustainability and ethical practices are core values, from auditing its impact on the environment and counterbalancing this via a carbon tax, to teaching local children to swim. Soneva Fushi has its own glass factory, which takes in glass from neighboring resorts and upcycles it into attractive tableware, ornaments and pieces of art.

Gili Lankanfushi is one of the country’s other best-loved eco-resorts, and is set to reopen Dec. 1, with ten of its 45 villas having been totally recreated and accredited to silver standard by Earth Check. A newer contender for the eco crown is Joali, which opened last year and offsets all carbon emission from guests’ stays with tree planting on local islands.

BEST FOR... FOODIES

The days of the Maldives being stuck in a culinary cul-de-sac are long gone; top island resorts come with top dining concepts. The St Regis Maldives Vommuli Resort has six restaurants but is bringing a global roster of gourmet chefs to the island to make it even more of a foodie haven. Chefs booked to visit between November and March include David Gil Rovira from Tickets in Barcelona, Dutch Michelin-starred chef Jonathan Zandbergen and French two-star chef Guillaume Bracaval.

Elsewhere, vegans are increasingly being catered to. Amilla Fushi has paired up with chef Tora Olsson to launch dishes combining molecular gastronomy and organic plant-based ingredients, while the little resort island of Mirihi now has vegan cookery classes. For authentic local food, head to Milaidhoo Island, where Ba’theli serves only Maldivian dishes, including curries of lobster, slow-braised beef and chicken. **BT**

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EXPANDED HORIZONS

The improved Muscat International airport
has ushered in a new era of aviation for Oman

70

WORDS DOMINIC ELLIS

AIRPORT IN NUMBERS

15.3 MILLION

Passenger throughput in 2018

20 MILLION

First-phase annual passenger capacity

3.71 MILLION SQFT

Terminal building area

120

Check-in counters

40

Jetbridges

29

Jetbridges Contact Stands

30

Remote stands

8

A380 stands (2 contact, 6 remote)

24/7

Operation

25%

Percentage of low-cost carrier flights

A hairdryer-like wind blows fiercely near the top of the 318-foot-tall air traffic control tower at Muscat International airport. The narrow terrace has a see-through design that sparks some mild acrophobia. From here you can see the decommissioned airport on the other side of the old runway and, directly beneath, the three-pier new terminal, which opened in March last year. Even at the height of a humid summer's day, it is a striking view and all the more powerful for its symbolism – uniting Oman aviation's past, present and future.

Seasoned business travelers will have fond memories of the old airport, as chauffeur transfers took you directly from plane to immigration, and you could be out in a taxi in minutes – although economy passengers won't miss the bus transfers. Only a fraction of flights now require remote transfers and most passengers arrive and leave swiftly via 40 jetways. As for car transfers, that's now strictly for VIPs.

The former airport, which opened in 1973, became inadequate as Oman's economy grew and more leisure travelers flocked to the Sultanate's abundant natural wonders. Still, the construction journey at the new one wasn't without its challenges, which led to delays.

A year and a half on, memories are fading. Terminal duty manager Ashraf Amir Ali Al Hinai shows me around the 3.7 million-square-foot facility, which is about seven times the size of the former Seeb International airport. My favorite then-and-now is the elevators – three then compared with 118 now.

It has been well received, jumping from 75th spot in Airports Council

International's Airport Service Quality rankings in the last quarter of 2017 to 14th a year later (among airports with 15-25 million passengers). The goal is to climb into the top ten. Last year it handled 15.3 million passengers and this year it is forecasting 16.3 million. Oman Air handles 60 percent of all flights here with services throughout the region and as far afield as London Heathrow, Mumbai, Guangzhou and Kuala Lumpur.

GROWING AMBITIONS

Historically, such ambition would sit uneasily with conservative Omanis. There is still a will to develop gradually and they forever reject comparisons with Dubai, an hour's flight, and an aviation world away, to the northwest.

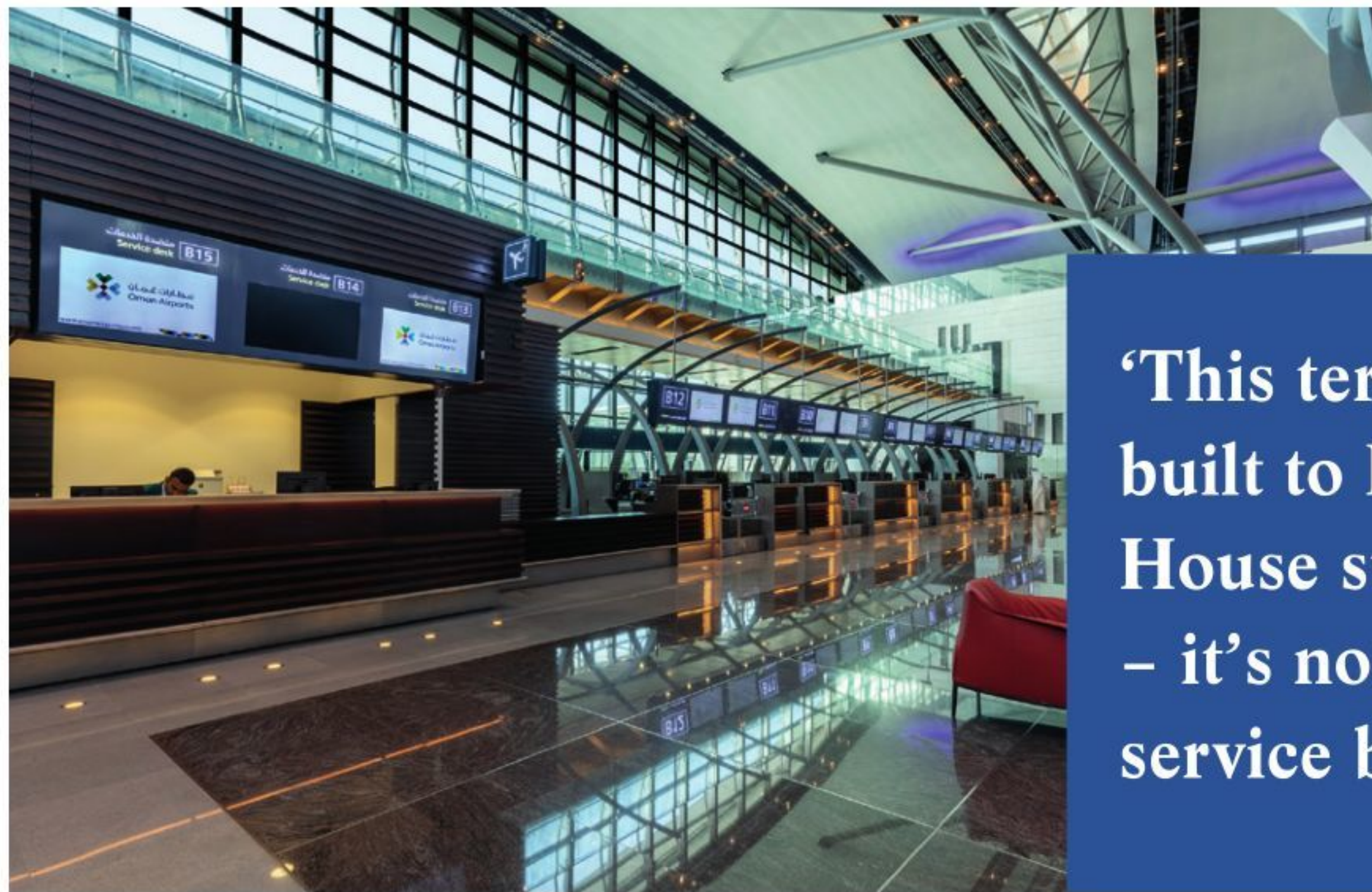
Nearby corporate magnet, the Oman Convention and Exhibition

Centre, has seen further developments, with Crowne Plaza opened and JW Marriott coming soon. Amid uncertain oil markets, MICE and tourism is becoming critical to Oman's growth.

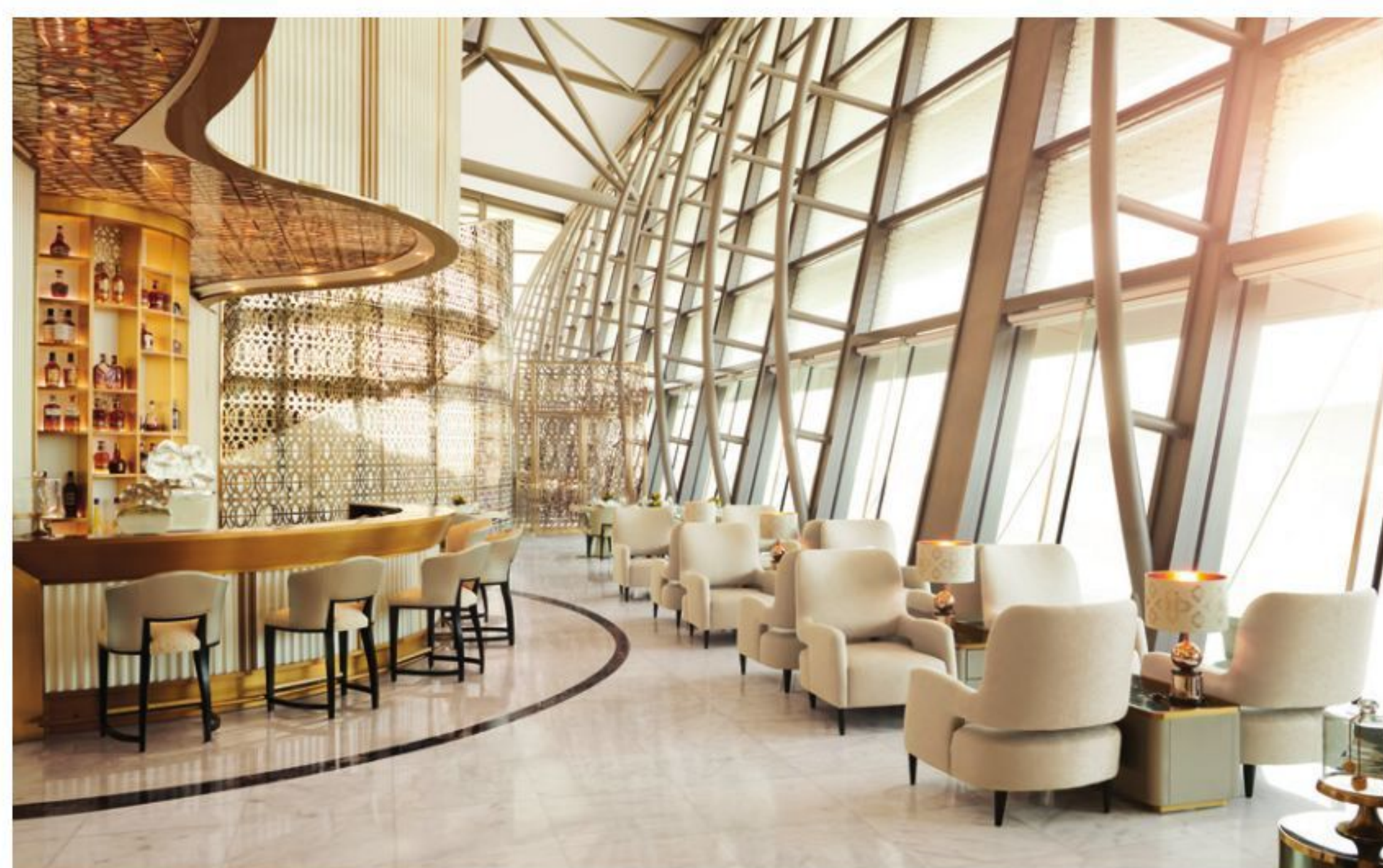
While the goal is to increase point-to-point travel, about 58 percent of the airport's traffic is transfer, predominantly between Europe and the Indian subcontinent, so it means there aren't departures and arrivals pressure points even though numbers are growing.

Beside the tower terrace is the stretch that will serve as the phase-two extension; this will increase capacity to 24 million and a fourth phase will ultimately have space for up to 48 million passengers. Still, David Wilson, chief operations officer for Oman Airports, says that while passenger numbers are growing, it is "some way off" reaching the first-phase capacity of 20 million passengers. "Rather than initiating a large spend for phase two, we shall be

The new terminal is about seven times the size of the former airport, with 118 elevators rather than three



'This terminal is built to Royal Opera House standards – it's not a public service building'



72

introducing new technologies such as self-service check-in and bag drop, thereby maximizing available space," he says.

SMOOTH FLOW

Oman Air's first class and business cabin check-in area is located in Zone A. Alongside a series of seating areas are 12 check-in desks with opulent finishes. Premium travelers walk through a short corridor to four immigration counters and dedicated security screening. Altogether, there are 120 check-in counters, with Zone B reserved for international airlines and C and D for local Oman Air economy.

For all the capacity jump, the terminal could still be described as "Gulf airport in miniature" compared with its rival hubs in the region. All the same, the generous use of dark sheesham wood, white marble and elaborate three-shelf exterior mashrabiya designs indicate a huge capital investment. One standout feature is a silver shimmering sculpture that evokes Oman's nearly 2,000 miles of coastline.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: The mezzanine level; first and business check-in; duty free; Oman Air first and business lounge

Arrivals has interlinked escalators to Departures and a mezzanine level, which has a smattering of food and beverage outlets which will be developed further. There are ten enclosed public lounges, some of which are converted to convenient prayer rooms during Hajj.

From the Departures area on level four, premium passengers take an elevator up one floor to the expansive Primeclass (international common-user) lounge, the gold and white Oman Air first class and business class lounge (first class is in a separate area behind silver doors) and a 90-room Aerotel transit hotel.

A new Majan lounge is coming on level seven, which will give international airlines and their passengers more choice.

For bargain hunters, duty-free below is a little cramped and not easy to navigate for first-timers, but passengers will find accessible brands at the center and more high-end names, such as Montblanc, at the North pier. Home-grown brands include Amouage, which enjoys a prime spot, and Kahwaji cafe.

REGIONAL FORCES

Oman's political neutrality is being tested with the ongoing UAE and Saudi blockade of Qatar, and war in neighboring Yemen, but the surge in direct and transit business from Qatar Airways has brought benefits.

Emirates introduced two daily A380s in July – breaking its own record for the world's shortest superjumbo flight – while retaining one 777 service. A spokesperson said it had "nothing to do with political issues" and was in response to Oman/UAE demand. Other reports claimed the move was motivated by the grounding of codeshare partner Flydubai's 737 Max aircraft.

In any event, the superjumbo's arrival, together with the new terminal, has heralded a new aviation era in Oman. "The opening of the new terminal will support Oman Air's fleet and network expansion program, and allows us to offer a thoroughly enhanced service," an airline spokesperson says. "Such expansion means we will be able to operate more international and domestic flights out of Muscat." **BT**

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**SAS A330
Business Class**

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TRIED AND TESTED

**The Nines
Portland, OR**

77

TRIED AND TESTED

**Hyatt Regency
Seattle**

78

SMART TRAVELER

Avoid DVT
Traveler tricks to
sidestep the pain
80

SAS A330-300 Business Class NEWARK – STOCKHOLM



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76

CHECK-IN I checked in at a United kiosk (my first of two flights was on United), which also printed my SAS boarding pass. After visiting the renovated and expanded SAS lounge in Newark, I made my way toward the gate where there was a dedicated lane for business class and Star Alliance Gold travelers.

BOARDING Once on board, I found my seat while flight attendants passed around trays of water and sparkling wine before takeoff.

THE SEAT Arranged in a 1-2-1 configuration, the lie-flat seats have ample storage space with a side shelf and pocket for smaller items like cell phones with easy access to charging. Simple buttons control the seat recline, but I found that it was easy to push these buttons inadvertently altering my seat position on occasion. Another important point is that some of the window seats alternate between being closer to the aisle or closer to the window (the side table separates them), which makes those closer to the window preferable for light sleepers.

THE FLIGHT Once in the air, some of the flight attendants donned chef uniforms,

a thoughtful touch that indicated their added familiarity with the menu and wine pairings. Each aisle had a two-tiered cart rolled around with appetizers and salads made to order. I really enjoyed selecting what I wanted on my salad and how much dressing, a rare treat not found in most business class cabins. The main dishes were all displayed on the cart so that passengers could decide their preferred option. Initially, I was concerned the dishes would be cold when they were displayed on the cart, but mine was still piping hot. Ninety minutes before landing, breakfast was served consisting of a hot egg dish, plus fresh fruit, yogurt and cold cuts. If one feels peckish midflight, there was a snacking station with an illy espresso machine, fresh fruit, chocolates, and other munchies.

ARRIVAL Descending through the thick billowy clouds toward Arlanda Airport,



known for its striking verdant surroundings, we touched down right on time with a short taxi to the gate.

VERDICT SAS says it plans to reduce its CO2 emissions by 25 percent by 2030, and has made great strides toward achieving that goal, including allowing travelers to offset their inflight carbon emissions by purchasing carbon credits when making reservations and many other initiatives. This flight would seem to prove that environmental stewardship and great service can go hand-in-hand. *Ramsey Qubein*

The Nines Portland, OR

BACKGROUND This former department store has been repurposed into The Nines, a Luxury Collection Hotel. The eighth-floor lobby, once the centerpiece of the Portland shopping experience, surprises with its trendy atrium-style space.

WHERE IS IT? Next to downtown's Pioneer Square, this is one of the city's most iconic addresses. However, even though it's a luxury option, The Nines has always maintained a casual perspective toward its guests. This is Portland after all, and the hotel is far from pretentious.

WHAT'S IT LIKE? Guests are welcomed on the ground floor and whisked to the lobby on floor eight where they can lounge in cozy sofas with a drink in the atrium where natural light streams in. There's also a library with billiards table for quiet contemplation.

ROOMS The rooms have benefited from a complete renovation with fresh fabrics and new furnishings. The views vary from interior-facing atrium vistas (Superior) to city-facing rooms (Deluxe Exterior View). The crystal pendant lamps help to make the rooms feel bright, and Tiffany blue lounge chairs add a pop of color. Especially appreciated are power outlets by the bed. Bathrooms feature BeeKind toiletries from eco-friendly dispensers, Frette robes, and



Even though it's a luxury option,
The Nines has always maintained
a casual perspective



steel basin sinks on elegant vanities. Club floor rooms are treated to lounge access with a continental breakfast spread, all-day refreshments, and evening appetizers and dessert with free beer and wine. Several suites are in the mix including the Nines suite with its own fireplace.

FOOD AND DRINK Departure on the 15th floor is a city landmark and a sought-after reservation by many locals. You'll find a delicious variety of Asian fare to enjoy indoors or on the popular al fresco terrace with its city views. The tasty Korean bibimbap, sushi, and wok-fried garlic broccoli were spectacular. Urban Farmer in the atrium serves a modern steakhouse menu with Oregon-grown beef and a selection of regional produce. The lobby bar offers a 200-strong wine list representing

the West Coast's best vineyards. The unique video installation by a local artist displays images of the Oregonian countryside.

MEETINGS AND FITNESS FACILITIES

Wireless Internet is free for all guests. Modern art decorates the 14 eclectic meeting venues for groups of all sizes including a ballroom for 600 people. Workout fiends will be pleased with the gym's modern equipment, including extras like headphones and a fridge with chilled towels and bottled water.

VERDICT This pet-friendly hotel is a visitor favorite and deserves top accolades for its exceptional dining, on-point service, and rewarding Marriott Bonvoy benefits. Portland steps it up here, and big time.

Ramsey Qubein

BEST FOR

The rooftop pan-Asian restaurant Departure

DON'T MISS

Relaxing with a drink in the spacious eighth-floor atrium

PRICE

Internet rates for a traditional room start at \$143.

CONTACT

The Nines, 525 SW Morrison, Portland, OR, 97204.
Tel 877-229-9995.
thenines.com

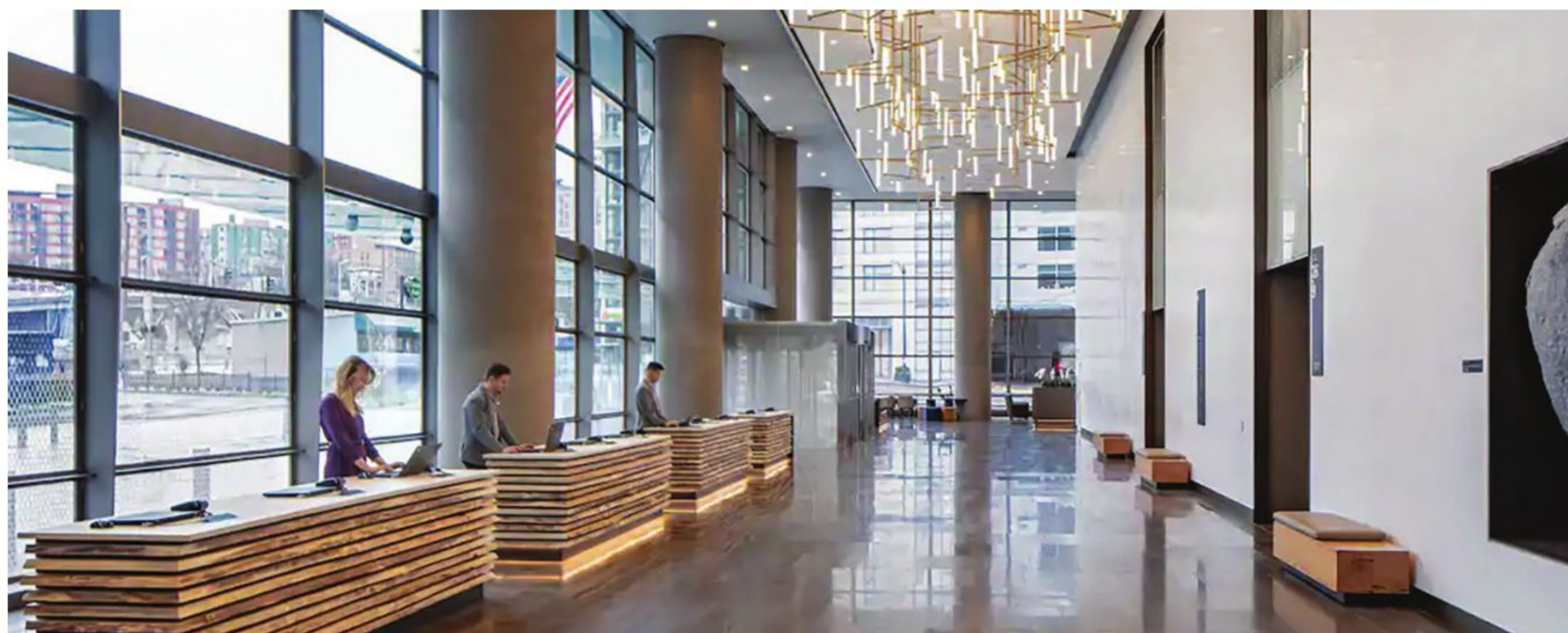
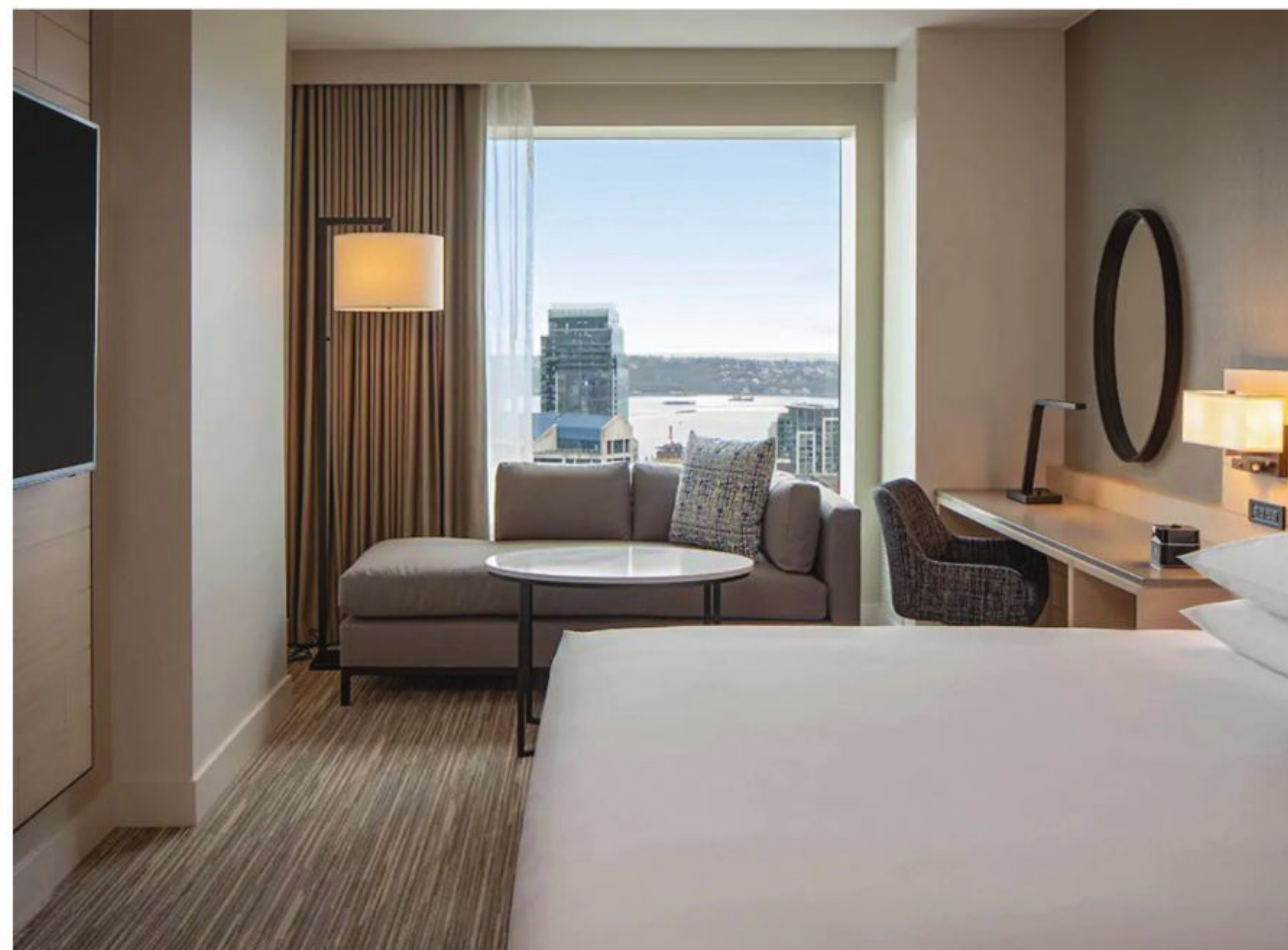
Hyatt Regency Seattle

BACKGROUND Hyatt Regency Seattle opened in December 2018 as a new 45-story gleaming glass imprint on the burgeoning Seattle skyline.

WHERE IS IT? The property is one of three Hyatt-branded hospitality options in a short corridor leading up to the Washington State Convention Center. The Hyatt Regency is located in the central downtown area known as Denny Triangle, a neighborhood teeming with dining spots and shopping, offering easy access to Seattle's light rail line and a relaxing amble away from famous Pike Place Market.

WHAT'S IT LIKE? The Hyatt Regency is light and airy and convenient above all else, delivering an assortment of dining choices, room conveniences and public spaces. Natural light plays a large role in the hotel's overall design with floor-to-ceiling windows, light wood accents and neutral color palettes.

ROOMS The clean and comfortable guestrooms offer lots of built-ins, including ample cord and USB housings, an alarm clock with tech ports and Bluetooth speakers, in-room refrigerator and web check-in with mobile key. The Keurig coffee maker's intuitive set-up brews up hot Starbucks at a moment's notice. The



bathroom came with plenty of perks: a glassed-in shower with a separate tub providing the right ergonomics, and a tub-to-ceiling window over the rooftops and waterways.

FOOD AND DRINK Guests have their choice of Daniel's Broiler, a high-end steakhouse with prime cuts, premium spirits and a piano bar. The restaurant serves all the meals of the day and offers a secret kitchen for special dinners warranting a "chef's dining experience" with custom menus, wine pairings included, complemented by a floor-to-ceiling window overlooking the lights of Seattle. For lunch and dinner, Andare serves up northern Italian specialties like wood fired pizza,

and for all else, The Market, is a 24-hour premium grab-and-go retail space.

MEETINGS AND FITNESS FACILITIES

Meetings are front and center here, with a total of 103,000 square feet of function space, including two ballrooms, two junior ballrooms and a total of 46 meeting rooms, and complimentary WiFi. An added plus is the property's LEED Gold rating, the first and only for the Seattle area.

The 8th floor Hyatt StayFit gym is outfitted with state of the art cardio and strength training equipment by Technogym and Peloton exercise bikes, as well as trainers who can teach guests how to use them.

VERDICT The Hyatt Regency Seattle is full of surprises – from the convenient location to the stunning views to the smart room design and thoughtful amenities. Add in an attentive, friendly staff, and even the most critical guest will be at a loss for complaints. *Lark Gould*

BEST FOR

Soaring views of the Seattle's skyline and Puget Sound

DON'T MISS

The chef's special table at Daniel's is a home run

PRICE

Standard rates start at \$199.

CONTACT

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How to avoid DVT

Deep vein thrombosis (DVT) can be a worry for frequent travelers. It occurs when restricted blood flow leads to the formation of a blood clot in a deep vein of the leg. Symptoms include a swollen or painful calf or thigh; in rare cases, part of the clot moves to the lungs, possibly causing a pulmonary embolism (blocked blood vessel) that, if severe, may cause the lungs to collapse.

FLYING AND DVT

Of course, DVT/PE events (also called venous thromboembolism) aren't caused only by traveling. Each year it occurs in as many as 900,000 people in the US, according to the CDC, and can be fatal in up to 10 percent of the cases.

Still, Professor Mark Whiteley, a consultant venous surgeon and phlebologist, warns that clots are caused by Virchow's Triad [named after German physician Rudolf Virchow]. "These are changes in the blood, changes in the blood flow and changes in the vessel wall. Any one of those can cause a clot."

According to Whiteley, "When you fly, you have a change in the flow, since you're just sitting there, so the blood isn't flowing as it should, and you're up in the air, so you have decreased oxygen and have changed the blood, and then, finally, if you have varicose veins, then you've changed the wall of the vein as well. So when you fly, you've got the perfect storm for DVT."

WHO GETS IT?

Anyone can develop DVT, but it becomes more common over the age of 40. As well as age, there are a number of other risk factors, including:

- Having a history of DVT, pulmonary embolism, or a family history of blood clots
- Being inactive for long periods of time

- Having blood vessel damage – a damaged blood vessel wall can result in the formation of a blood clot
- Having certain conditions or treatments that cause your blood to clot more easily than normal – such as cancer (including chemotherapy and radiotherapy treatment), heart and lung disease, thrombophilia, and antiphospholipid syndrome, sometimes known as Hughes syndrome
- Being pregnant, as a mother's blood clots more easily
- Being overweight or obese

HOW TO AVOID IT

When flying, make sure you:

- Hydrate – drink plenty of water and avoid drinking excessive amounts of alcohol
- Do calf exercises at least every half-hour – raise your heels, keeping your toes on the floor, then bring them down ten times. Then raise and lower your toes ten times

- Avoid taking sleeping pills because they can cause immobility
- Take occasional short walks when possible
- Wear loose, comfortable clothes and elastic compression stockings. These are usually knee-length but can also be thigh-high. They work by putting gentle pressure on your leg and ankle to help blood flow. They come in various sizes with different levels of compression. Class 1 stockings have the lowest compression (with a pressure of 14-17 mmHg at the ankle) and are generally sufficient to prevent DVT. To state the obvious, it's important that medical compression stockings are worn correctly as designed. Ill-fitting ones could further increase the risk of DVT.

SUPERFICIAL VEIN THROMBOSIS

SVT – superficial (or shallow) vein thrombosis – is an inflammatory condition of the veins caused by a blood clot just below the surface of the skin. Symptoms include painful, hard lumps underneath the skin and redness of the skin. "If you have SVT, you should have a scan," Whiteley advises. "If that clot is within 5cm (0.4 inch) of a junction to the deep vein, it can turn into a DVT. If it is close to a deep vein then an anticoagulant [blood-thinning medicine] should be offered. Unfortunately, in many cases patients are given antibiotics, which are useless for this condition, and advice about wearing flight socks."

On a wider point (and something for a future article), Whiteley points out that while it is known that people with varicose veins are at risk of both SVT and DVT, a significant proportion of the population are unaware of whether they have varicose veins or not, because most instances are not on the surface and so don't show. People who have varicose veins, leg ulcers or who have a family history that might suggest these problems are likely to be present should consider having a preemptory scan, Whiteley recommends.

thewhiteleyclinic.co.uk





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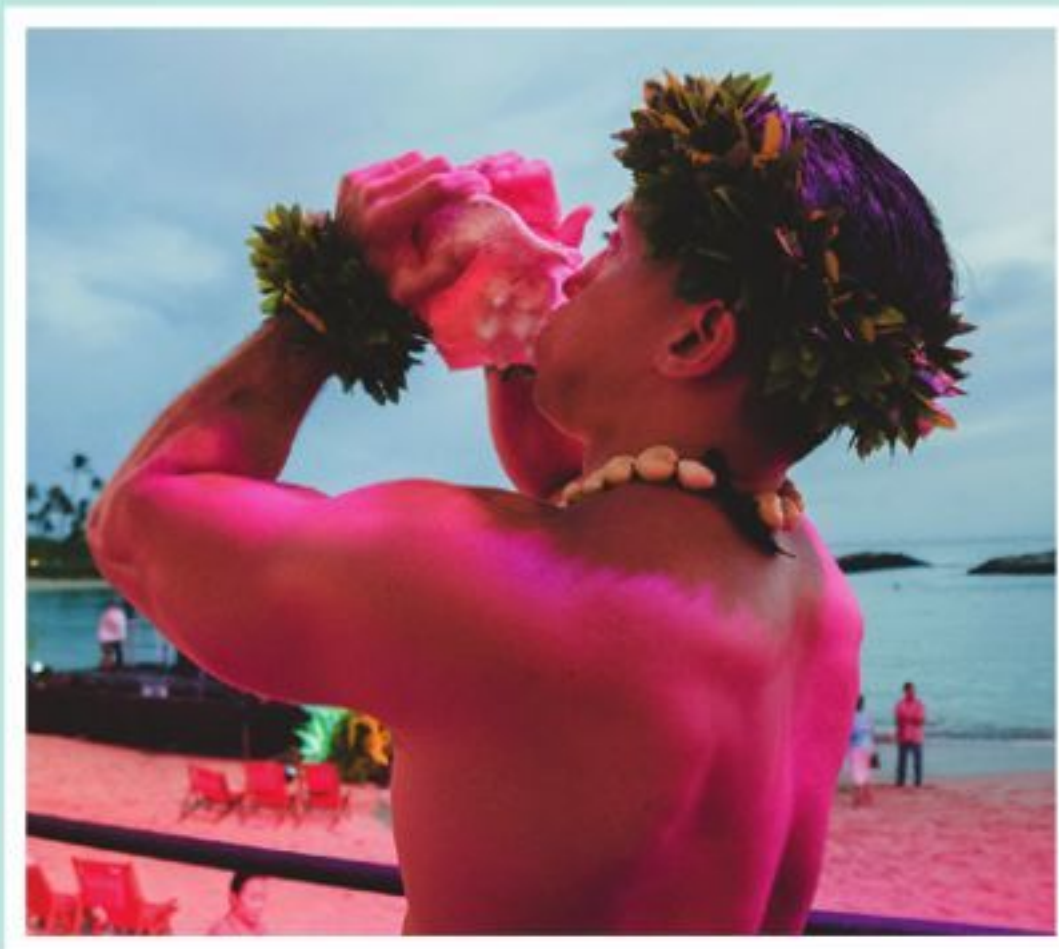
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How one culinary festival became a community financial engine



WORDS RAMSEY QUBEIN

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Festival tourism is taking off worldwide; the concept encourages destinations to center marketing efforts around annual events that can benefit from visitor attendance. This leads to meaningful economic growth for communities through a new source of tourism, similar to the way sporting events like the Olympics or World Cup might spur growth.

That's what makes the Hawaii Food & Wine Festival so interesting. What started as a casual discussion between Chef Roy Yamaguchi and several other chefs has grown into an economic engine for the state. The brainchild of Yamaguchi and his festival co-founder Alan Wong, the event is considered a significant contributor to the spread of Hawaiian culture through cuisine globally.

They decided to host a food festival to benefit local farmers. It was a small event held in a parking lot. But it was a hit.

Today, the festival is gearing up for its tenth year in 2020. It has expanded from one weekend to a series of events on the Big Island, Maui and Oahu that includes 120 chefs, 30 winemakers, and 30 mixologists. Last year's festival was a major foodie event drawing nearly 9,000 attendees from around the world. There are wine-paired dinners, craft cocktail events, and one-on-one mingling opportunities with big-name chefs like Michael Chiarello, Dean Max, and Chris Cosentino to name but a few.

According to Wong, Hawaiian food is more than what is served at a tourist luau. He says it's really a fusion of cultures including Portuguese, Spanish, Filipino, Japanese, Chinese, and Korean flavors among many others.

This one annual event has led to an economy surge in Hawaii's culinary and farming

industry, and the idea is one other communities may be able to benefit from.

NONPROFITS BENEFIT

The 2018 festival benefited 23 non-profit organizations like the Hawaii Agricultural Foundation, the Maui County Farm Bureau, the Culinary Institute of the Pacific, and eight public high schools. In its first eight years, the festival donated more than \$2.5 million to area organizations.

The Hawaii Agricultural Foundation promotes farming and sustainability through educational assistance and outreach programs while the Hawaii Farm Bureau acts as an advocacy organization for farmers who would otherwise not have as much collaborative influence individually.

The festival's primary goal, says Denise Yamaguchi, executive director of the Hawaii Food and Wine Festival and Roy's wife, is to highlight the rich variety of native crops and equally diverse culinary talent available from the islands. She says that most chefs from outside Hawaii have no idea the range of produce, herbs, spices, and other ingredients Hawaiian farmers offer.

"We procure 100 percent of the ingredients for chefs," Denise says. "They choose from our list of hundreds of local ingredients, and we reach out to local farmers to source what they need at our own expense. This assures quality while supporting local farmers."

There's even an annual "emerging crop" recipe contest where participating chefs submit innovative recipes using a native ingredient with the goal of increasing its distribution to restaurants and hotels around the state.

Proceeds from the festival also support culinary education programs and allow

area students the opportunity to work with big-name chefs. Over the years, the number of James Beard Award semifinalists and nominees from Hawaii has almost doubled, which is testament to the benefit the festival has on local students.

TOURISM BENEFITS

The food festival has seen an uptick in attendance, which helps hotels, restaurants, and tour companies. The latest statistics show that there was a \$2.45 million visitor expenditure over the nine days of last year's festival alone. In media exposure, the 2018 festival generated close to \$9 million in advertising value, which for many communities is far more than they would be able to spend on their own.

The bigger picture is even more exciting, says Denise. Before the festival, Hawaii had few Michelin-starred chefs, but this has steadily increased. Chefs like Michael Mina and Takeshi Kawasaki of Maru Sushi have come here, realized the range of exciting culinary options on offer, and decided to open their own outlets in Hawaii.

Awareness of Hawaiian cuisine grows, too, as mainland chefs take notice and bring popular items to their other restaurants. Denise says the proliferation of poke on menus around the world is a great example of Hawaiian food becoming more mainstream as a result of the food festival.

Named one of Travel Channel's best food and wine festivals and a top 15 North American contender by Fodor's Travel, this food festival has been a boon to the community. As travelers look for more immersive experiences, festival tourism can contribute benefits to the communities that host them, and great experiences for the travelers who attend them. **BT**

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