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CUBA LIBRE?





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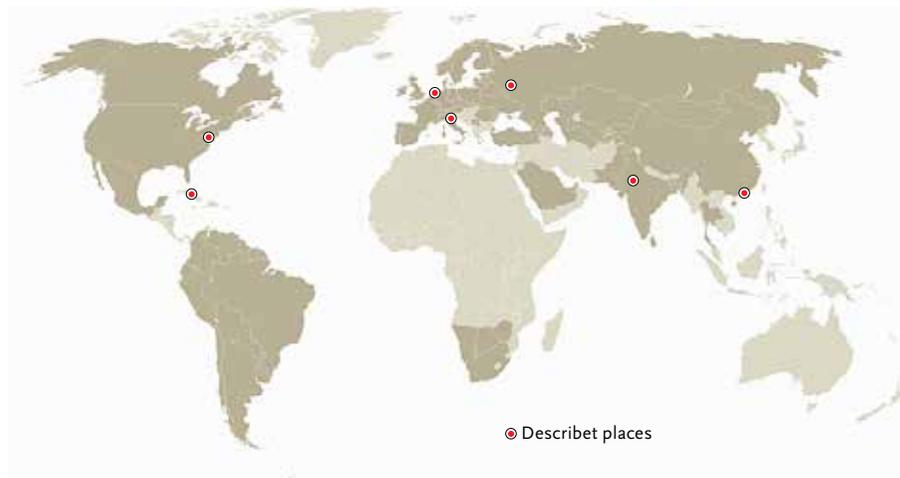
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WATCH THAT ISLAND

Cuba is one of the most fascinating countries in the world today, where everything is possible, both economy and politics wise. A brief détente with the US under President Obama saw Havana flooded with American visitors for a few years, but that more convivial phase was hastily torpedoed by Donald Trump. The Trump Administration's restrictions have vetoed US citizens from staying in any military-run hotel, resulting in a tourism lull that has been a sucker-punch for the sector.

Tourism has suffered a seven per cent drop in the first quarter of this year, the first fall in a decade. The allegations of "sonic attacks" on US Embassy staff in 2016 – still an unsolved mystery – resulted in 60 per cent of the American diplomatic staff being dramatically evacuated and Cuban diplomats expelled from Washington. Cuba is now back in the old, familiar position of being bullied by its bigger neighbour.

Then there are the natural disasters, such as Hurricane Irma in autumn last year, which battered the island furiously and caused many million pounds worth of damage. To make matters worse, recent flash flooding in Cuba's centre destroyed yet more homes. Perhaps it's no surprise then that the economy is in the doldrums, too. Despite all this, the world is looking again at Cuba, hoping it will overcome its difficulties. If you wish to find out even more about this remarkable country and its economic potential, I encourage you to read our cover article.



Marzena Mróz

Marzena Mróz
editor-in-chief



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Car

Audi Q8

THE NEW FACE OF THE Q FAMILY

The Audi Q8 combines the elegance of a four-door luxury coupé with the practical versatility of a large SUV. Richly equipped, comprehensively connected and tough enough for off-road duty, it is a confident companion for business and leisure. The Audi Q8 exudes sporty dynamics and upscale prestige like no other SUV from the brand with the four rings. 4.99 meters long, 2.00 meters wide and 1.71 meters tall, the SUV coupe is wider, shorter and lower than its Q7 sister model. With a wheelbase of nearly 3.00 meters, it offers a spacious interior that beats of its direct competitors in most relevant dimensions, including interior length and headroom. There is a three-seat system in the rear with longitudinally adjusting upon request. With the seatbacks folded down, the luggage compartment under the power rear hatch holds up to 1,755 litres.

With the imposing Singleframe in octagonal design, the Audi Q8 is the new face of the Q family. The elegantly sloping roofline terminates in gently inclined D-pillars and rests against the quattro blisters above the wheel arches, which house up to 22-inch wheels.

Numerous details hint at the design of the original quattro. Strong contours and athletically tight surfaces convey a feeling of power, sophistication and the special dynamics of the permanent all-wheel drive. The spoiler, wheel arch trims, door trim strips and diffuser are in a contrasting color, to further emphasize the off-road look.

Airline

Finnair

THREE DAILY FLIGHTS FROM WARSAW

Finnair will add two more weekly services between Helsinki and Warsaw in summer 2019, and will fly three times a day on this route. In total, in the summer season of 2019, Finnair will offer a record number of up to 44 flights a week between Helsinki and Warsaw, Gdańsk and Cracow.

The two added weekly frequencies between Helsinki and Warsaw will be operated on Saturdays and Sundays from 31 March to 25 October. Finnair will fly daily between Helsinki and Cracow at the peak of the summer season from 24 June to 7 August with two flights a day on Thursdays and Sundays. The carrier will operate seven services a week from 31 March to 25 October. The Helsinki-Gdańsk route will be operated twice a day throughout the summer season from 31 March to 25 October.

“The two additional weekly connections to Warsaw and earlier



morning departure times to and from Warsaw are aimed at further enhancement in connections from Hong Kong, Singapore and Bangkok, as well as from Warsaw to Chicago and New York,” says Arunas Skuja, Finnair’s General Manager for Eastern Europe and Baltic States. The early morning departure time from Helsinki has also been introduced with business passengers in mind, who will now be able to land in Warsaw as early as at 08:20 am.

finnair.com



Event

USA

NEW HRS HQ IN DALLAS

The world’s leading provider of hotel services to corporate clients is strengthening its presence on the American market by opening two new offices there. In addition to a regional office in New York, the company has recently opened an office in Dallas, Texas, which soon will be followed by a new office in San Francisco, CA.

North America has become one of the most important regions of the company’s growth. Thanks to the concept of outsourcing all processes connected with the purchase of HRS hotel services, it was possible to convince leading American companies to implement this business model. HRS’ clients currently include more than half of the 20 largest global corporations (according to their stock market value). The services provided include professional hotel acquisition and negotiation of special rates, rate audits, booking and electronic billing for hotel and conference services.

Bristol Art & Medical SPA



Bristol Art & Medical Spa to kwintesencja pielęgnacji ciała i duszy.
To miejsce, w którym tradycja łączy się z nowoczesnością,
a holistyczne podejście pozwala odzyskać utraconą
w codziennym pośpiechu równowagę.

Bristol Art & Medical Spa is the perfect place to look after your body and soul.
This is where tradition and modernity unite, and a holistic approach allows
you to regain the balance you might have lost in the daily buzz.

Hotel Bristol**** to perła luksusu otulona malowniczym krajobrazem parku zdrojowego Busko-Zdroju. Architektura kompleksu łączy w sobie elementy zabytkowe i współczesne, dzięki czemu do dyspozycji najbardziej wymagających gości pozostaje 71, wyposażonych we wszelkie udogodnienia, komfortowych pokoi oraz kawiarnia, restauracja, basen, ogród rzeźb, taras w koronach drzew czy salon kominkowy z biblioteką. Nowoczesne Centrum Medical & SPA posiada zaś 42 gabinety zabiegowe wyposażone w najwyższej klasy sprzęt rehabilitacyjny i SPA, oferujące szeroki wachlarz usług medycznych i kosmetycznych opartych m. im. o walory naturalnych wód siarczkowych Busko-Zdroju. Kuchnia Hotelu Bristol****? To połączenie nowoczesnych koncepcji kulinarnych z tradycyjną kuchnią regionalną. Nie można nie wspomnieć także o blisko 200 dziełach sztuki polskich artystów, które można podziwiać na czterech kondygnacjach hotelu. To część autorskiego programu praktyk Terapii Art & Spa, który stawia na uzdrawiającą moc sztuki i fakt, że człowiek, który obcuje z jej przejawami, czuje się lepiej i szybciej wraca do zdrowia.

Bristol**** is a luxurious gem surrounded by the picturesque landscape of the Busko-Zdrój wellness park. The hotel's architecture combines historical and modern elements, and it has 71 comfortable rooms fully equipped with modern amenities, as well as a café, a restaurant, a swimming pool, a sculpture garden, a terrace hugged by tree tops, and a library with a fireplace. The Medical & SPA Centre has 42 treatment rooms with high-end rehabilitation and SPA equipment, and offers a broad range of medical and cosmetic services that use the natural sulphide water native to Busko-Zdrój. The Hotel Bristol**** kitchen combines contemporary culinary trends with traditional regional cuisine. And there are nearly 200 works of art by Polish artists on display on each of the four floors of the hotel. These are part of the hotel's proprietary Art & Spa Therapy program, which endorses the healing power of art and the fact that being surrounded by art makes us feel better and recover sooner.

BRISTOL** ART & MEDICAL SPA**
ul.1 Maja 1, 28-100 Busko-Zdrój Polska
+48 41 33 030 33 repcja@bristolbusko.pl





Travel

Peru

RULES FOR VISITING MACHU PICCHU

The Ministry of Culture of Peru has introduced new rules for visiting Machu Picchu, the best-preserved Inca city in the world. Tickets with a time limit are already in force.

Tourists who want to visit one of South America's biggest attractions can choose either morning (for Machu Picchu from 06:00am to noon) or afternoon (from noon to 5:30pm.) entrance times. If you want to spend more time admiring the famous ruins, you will have to buy two tickets - for both time slots.

In the morning, the ruins of the Inca city will be visited by up to 3,600 visitors, while in the afternoon Machu Picchu will be opened to another 2,700 tourists. In 2016, the historic city was visited by 1.4 million people.

Technology

Philips

BETTER AIR QUALITY

Let's face it: you have no influence on what quality of the air you breathe outside, but you can make it healthier at home, effectively getting rid of the symptoms of allergies, asthma, headaches, respiratory problems or dry skin. All this thanks to the new Philips AC3829/10 device, which purifies and humidifies the air at the same time. The device removes the harmful PM2.5 particles, as well as allergens such as pollen, dust, mites, mould spores and animal hair. It is both a high-performance purifier and humidifier, designed for areas up to 80 sqm, and can be controlled with a mobile application. The device utilizes completely natural methods of purifying and humidifying air, it neither ionizes it nor uses any harmful chemicals. philips.com



Airline

KLM

NEW SERVICE IN ECONOMY CLASS

At the start of an intercontinental flight, Economy Class passengers will receive a bottle of water, a refreshing towel and earphones. After this welcome service, passengers will be offered an extended choice of meals on flights out of Amsterdam. On intercontinental daytime flights out of Amsterdam, the new meal service will include a choice of warm dishes, a large, well-filled salad, and a dessert. On medium-range and longer intercontinental flights the selection of snacks will be further extended with ice-creams, sweets, and savoury snacks. Passengers will also be welcome to collect these snacks in the galley. The new service will be introduced on the following nine destinations on 1 July 2018: Bonaire (via Aruba), Entebbe (via Kigali), Fortaleza, Osaka, Hong Kong, Vancouver, Seoul, Rio de Janeiro and Houston. From the start of our winter schedule on 28 October, the service will be available on all our intercontinental flights.

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CUBA LIBRE?

The appointment of a new president in April hasn't yet ushered in a new era of liberal policies for the colourful Caribbean country. But there is some cause for optimism...

Summer in Cuba, and as the fire-red flame trees cascade into bloom on suburban streets in Havana, a humid, brain-fogging heat kicks in. Seen from Havana's Malecón seawall, the sky is a perfect cornflower blue. Lean on the wall and gaze across the ocean that stretches to the horizon, and there seems to be hardly a ripple on it.

But, under the surface of Cuba's easy tropicalia, there has been suffering of late. A brief détente with the US under President Obama saw Havana flooded with American visitors for a few years, but that more convivial phase was hastily torpedoed by Donald Trump. The Trump Administration's restrictions have vetoed US citizens from staying in any military-run hotel, resulting in a tourism lull that has been a sucker-punch for the sector. Tourism has suffered a seven per cent drop in the first quarter of this year, the first fall in a decade. The allegations of "sonic attacks" on US Embassy staff in 2016 – still an unsolved mystery – resulted in 60 per cent of the American diplomatic staff being dramatically evacuated and Cuban diplomats expelled from Washington. Cuba is now back in the old, familiar position of being bullied by its bigger neighbour. (Indeed, it's a comfort zone of sorts. Some Cuban officials found Barack Obama's overt friendliness disquieting.)

Then there are the natural disasters, such

as Hurricane Irma in autumn last year, which battered the island furiously and caused many million pounds worth of damage. Recent flash flooding in Cuba's centre destroyed yet more homes; and there was a horrific plane crash in May 2018, which took 112 lives, highlighting Cuba's dilemma with renting ageing planes from other airlines to meet increasing tourist demand, and putting off foreign travellers from flying domestically. Perhaps it's no surprise then that the economy is in the doldrums, too.

In part the economic problems have been induced by the far greater problems of Venezuela, which had been providing a sweet oil deal in exchange for the provision of Cuban healthcare and financial services since 2000. With Venezuela's implosion in recent years, and the drop in oil prices, Venezuela's ability to continue to service Cuba's crude oil needs is now in question. But there remains no other country with whom to forge a mutually beneficial relationship. Domestic production in Cuba is at a low. Cuba's gap between rich and poor, a result of wealth generated by private businesses since 2011, is deepening. (The haves created start-ups with family remittances; the have-nots had no such luck.) State wages still sit at around US\$20 per month, and welfare is being chipped away at through lack of funding. In the last three years, imports have plummeted by one-third, which could explain why

there doesn't seem to be anything in the shops. Revenue from exports has dropped about 23 per cent since 2014.

Famously, the state provides free universal health care and education since the revolution in 1959, and the subsidised economy includes monthly food-ration allowances, amenities such as electricity and, bizarrely, ice cream (important for Cubans). But Cubans fear these provisions are already under threat, as quality has been diminishing over many years due to lack of funds.

"The whole economy is suffering from lack of investment; investing yearly around 10 per cent of GDP is not enough," says Dr Oscar Fernández, professor of the University of Havana's Department of Economics. And the cursed US trade embargo remains.

Still, its possible the winds – or gentle breezes, perhaps – of change are again stirring. For there is a new president. For the first time since 1959, someone who doesn't have the name Castro is at the top. Raúl Castro, the late Fidel's younger brother (aged 87) and president from 2008, has handed the reins to Miguel Díaz-Canel, the former vice-president, who is nearly three decades his junior (Raúl will be staying on as head of party until 2021). Observers are not clear on whether Mr Díaz-Canel, an engineer, is going to be more progressive economically. The current message is one of continuity, ostensibly to warn off external threats. But,



FOTOLIA, ISTOCK



while the new president remains surrounded by old-generation officials, his relative youth is a “source of hope”, according to Ricardo Torres of the Centro de Estudios de la Economía Cubana. Will Díaz-Canel follow in the wake of Vietnam and China’s elites – socialist brethren who prioritised political over economic control, thereby presiding over the generation of wealth? It’s hard to know. The government, so far, says not. “They do not [even] like to label the changes in Cuba under ‘reforms’ to avoid linking Cuba with its Asian peers,” explains Torres.

NEW PRESIDENT, NEW ERA?

Díaz-Canel certainly has a job on his hands. A sprightly 58, he was 29 when the Berlin Wall came down. This signalled the start of Cuba’s Special Period, when subsidised petroleum and other products from the former Soviet Union dried up. A sudden and huge drop in GDP, black-outs, economic privations and hardships defined life after the collapse of the Soviet benefactor. The task of continuing the revolution became harder; the generation below Díaz-Canel is consumer and not politically oriented – some might say, conveniently politically apathetic. The current generation seem more focused on social media than social welfare, and that’s despite the paucity of wifi.

Since Díaz-Canel hit middle age, Cuban society has moved through a series of waiting rooms, as if on the verge of something just about to happen. Yet the one-party system and quasi-Soviet outlook, the curtailed

freedoms in regards to political opposition or expression, these all remain.

Díaz-Canel’s appointment as president does, however, mark the end of an era that began with the death of Fidel in 2015. The Castros dominated Latin American politics for six decades. Resistance to US hegemony and lauding of the socialist populist revolutions in Latin America defined their outlook. Education and social services, free healthcare and near-universal literacy were their achievements, and these factors remain unparalleled in Latin America.

Officially president from 2008, Raúl Castro was a quieter president than his brother, not as charismatic, intellectual or dashing. But Raúl acquiesced to global reality more than unyielding Fidel, allowing the development of around 200 small (and legal) types of businesses, from nail technicians to children’s party entertainers, burger-bar owners to professional photocopiers. This unleashed a privatised economy that now occupies around 12 per cent of working Cubans. But those changes did not induce major growth, according to Torres. “The underlying philosophy of the economic model has not changed enough,” he says, “because of central planning, and majority state ownership, which has reduced the pace and the scope of reforms.”

Cash cows of the economy have been ring-fenced for the state. In tourism, private activity has only been allowed around its edges – for example in transfers, Airbnb-style rentals (known as *casas particulares*), and

Where to stay

IN HAVANA

● **Paseo 206** An old senator’s house has been converted into a ten-suite bolthole by an Italian and his Cuban wife. Paseo 206 is one of the Small Luxury Hotels of the World, and boasts a tiny Italian restaurant and a great central position in Vedado, Havana’s commercial, Republican-era heart. From around £165 for bed and breakfast. paseo206.com

● **Malecón 663** The creation of a chic Frenchwoman and her Cuban musician husband, Malecón 663 is a quirky seawall-facing townhouse with just four characterful bedrooms designed by young Cubans using the artisan skills and materials of the island. The best suite is at the top of the building, with its own bar and terrace. Doubles with bed and breakfast start from 180 convertible pesos (around £135). casasdecuba-en.net

● **Loma del Angel** A tiny, two-bedroom jewel box of a hotel tucked away in Old Havana, Loma del Angel is friendly, wifi-pumped, aromatic and pretty. I like the top room with its bougainvillea-drenched terrace. From around £35 a night. lomadelangel.com

● **La Reserva Vedado** A five-room diamond carved out of a 1914 neoclassical house by a motley crew of Cuban and expatriate architects with bedrooms and bathrooms inspired by recycled materials. The garden is the soul of the place, with its al fresco kitchen-bar. Doubles from around £95 a night. lareservavedado.com

● **Gran Hotel Kempinski Manzana La Habana** Kempinski’s arrival on the scene in 2017 upped the hotel game in Havana. The 246 room five-star hotel has a gorgeous rooftop pool terrace and al fresco restaurant, a Spa Albear by Resense, and mall with a Mont Blanc shop. Bed and breakfast in a patio room costs 400 convertible pesos (around £300). kempinski.com





The government's much more open to the idea of nature tourism these days, so tourist companies are promoting wild camping, long-range horse trips, farm stays, remote diving and out-there beaches.



paladares, which are small private restaurants. In the middle of last year, spooked by the lust for mobility taking root on the island, the state froze new licences for paladares and casas. At the end of the year, they then curtailed the amount of activities per business. The official reason was tax evasion, certainly a problem for business owners in a country where people routinely steal from the state to make a living. But that's not the whole story. "It's more a matter of the party [not] accepting new concepts," argues Fernández. "The last two party congresses cleared the path for the private sector, but certain [parts of officialdom] are unconvinced, and are delaying implementation."

To avoid the creation of an economic elite, the government is seeking foreign, not domestic capital, preferring to extend a huge levy on the lives of Cubans rather than risking home-turf big business developing, which could threaten economic equality and state power. Cubans, though, have had a taster of self-improvement – the genie is already out of the bottle. Action, the government is devastatingly aware, needs to be taken.

Thorny issues surround foreign investment in Cuba. Focuses include tourism (hotel projects), infrastructure (ports, airports and marinas), energy (renewables and conventional, including oil and gas exploration), and biotech. Over the last two years Cuba has sought foreign deals and has signed off about US\$3.5bn of public spending, including airport and railways upgrades, a gas power plant and multiple hotel projects. Projects, however, tend to get passed with alacrity, and are then curdled by cold feet and bureaucracy. Four green-lit golf projects going back a few years for a budget of \$2bn have still not broken ground.

Díaz-Canel is tasked with speeding up these projects, and Cuba's national assembly has just voted to alter the constitution to back the opening up of the economy within the "irrevocable nature of socialism". The new constitution will endorse private property, self-employment, and other new realities for Cuba. It will also affirm that presidents will be elected for five years, and can only be re-elected for five more.

CURRENCY EXCHANGE

Díaz-Canel will also be the man to handle the unification of the country's bizarre dual-currency system of two official currencies, in which the Cuban peso is worth 25 times less than the convertible peso.

The latter was created in 1994 to erase the circulation of US dollars, but allow a currency for spending the sizeable remittances that flow in from the Cuban diaspora. Switching to a single currency and exchange rate, and ditching the convertible peso, is imminent; but again, no one knows when. Inefficient state firms currently propped up by the inflated exchange rate will go under. There will be inevitable redundancies, hopefully saved in part by the private sector.

“In the short term, there could be inflationary pressures, affecting purchasing power in households already under stress. That’s why the government is proceeding very carefully,” says Torres.

“Currency unification is going to be the most transcendental process of Cuba’s current history,” says Fernández. “It is an urgent task to eliminate huge distortions in the accountancy of Cuban enterprises, though in my view, now is not the right moment. In the medium to long term, it will be hard to avoid negative inflation and social impacts. I would increase foreign investment as a direct priority, instead.”

On the home capitalism front, when business licences will be reissued is anybody’s guess. This is not a state known for its transparency, and could be a factor in the tendency of Cubans to opine on subjects they know

nothing about, growing up in a culture in which information is disseminated through hearsay and rumour.

The lack of openness remains a disappointment for many. “Any government needs to ensure wealth creation and progress to remain in power,” argues Torres. “Everything that Cuba needs to be more prosperous is within the country, and so Cuba needs to find a way to fully use its educated labour force and natural resources, and stop looking for external solutions to domestic problems. Neither foreign capital nor the next saviour can substitute tapping into our own talents and resources.”

TOURIST DELIGHT

The current holy grail of redemption is tourism. Despite the recent drop, over the last decade tourism figures have doubled, and the Cubans are investing in the presumption of a solid future. There are four new five-star hotels under construction in Havana – all owned by military-run Gaviota (the state tourism group), but to be managed by foreigners.

Paradoxically, for foreigners, Donald Trump rampaging on the other side of the Florida Strait makes now a pleasant time to visit. The Americans are no longer block-booking all the hotel rooms, and those

who still come are reminiscent of the post-revolution generation of US visitors: intelligent, curious, educated. The disappointing aspects of tourism in Cuba, which include appalling wifi, dramatically hit-or-miss food and annoyingly persistent taxi drivers, are more than compensated for by unspoiled nature, an open-hearted and bright population, and a refined culture that excels no matter what: these things are eternally Cuban.

If you step outside Havana, there are delights to be had. As state tourism ever shifts to more luxury hotels, city tourism, and golf courses, there is quieter magic off the beaten track. A recent launch is Wild Cuba, which specialises in the less explored Cuba, “far beyond the narrow tourist footprint of Havana, the colonial towns along the island’s spine and the keys”, according to its Irish-born creator, Johnny Considine, of Cuba Private Travel, cubapivatetravel.com. The idea, he says, is to explore the rustic beauty of Cuba’s national parks, and the expertise of Cuba’s myriad naturalists. “The government’s much more open to the idea of nature tourism these days,” he says, “so we’re promoting wild camping, long-range horse trips, farm stays, remote diving and out-there beaches.” And over the next few months, that’s where I intend to be.



NORWEGIAN B787-9 PREMIUM CLASS



CONTACT

www.norwegian.com

PRICE

The internet rate for a return Premium Flex flight from Gatwick to New York JFK in August 2018 starts from £1,294.80; Premium return starts from £974.80.

FLIGHT TIME

8 hours

Norwegian is now the second largest long-haul airline at Gatwick, with 13 direct long-haul destinations, including Singapore. It serves 11 routes to the US and will add a third daily frequency on this New York JFK route from October 29, 2018.

CHECK-IN

Norwegian aircraft depart from the South Terminal. I was quickly checked in and then went to the security check, where I used the fast-track option. I had only hand luggage, but it's worth noting that Premium passengers can book in two 20kg cases each. Once through the large duty-free shop, I went up the

escalator and into the No 1 Lounge, which was included in the price of the Premium ticket.

BOARDING

The boarding took place from Gate 1. As you'd expect with a Dreamliner B787-9, the windows were lovely and large. There was also lots of headroom and good-sized overhead lockers.

THE SEAT

The seats look the same as the ones on the B787-8 aircraft and the previously delivered b787 aircraft, but there are more of them in the Premium cabin and they have less legroom. The number of Premium seats has been increased from 35 to 56 (and Economy seats reduced to

282), giving a total of 338 seats. This new configuration reduces seat pitch (legroom) from 46 inches to 43 inches.

The Premium seats are larger than other airlines' premium economy seats, but aren't business class seats. The leg rests rise and the seat reclines old style, so that it moves into the space of the passenger behind (and the seat in front reclines into your space).

I was pleasantly surprised with the functionality of the seats, as they are comfortable to both sit and sleep in. The IFE screens come out of the arm of the seat – which means you can't watch it for take-off and landing, as you can in the Economy seats. The IFE uses a touchscreen, but the-

re's also a small controller in the side of the seat. This controller isn't in a very good position, and is fixed; so if you have the table down, it will be obscured.

There's in-seat AC power for devices, and also a USB port in the IFE screen. Long-haul wifi is planned for the Dreamliner fleet, perhaps as early as the end of this year.

BEST SEAT

The middle seats are the ones to avoid, since they can be very difficult to get into and out of when all the seats are reclined. That said, they also have the most room under the seat in front – useful if you want to put your belongings there. The aisle seats, such as those at 1D and 1F, 2D and 2F and so on, don't have much room, but you can just stand up to access the overhead lockers. So the best ones are probably the aisle seats, around the middle of the cabin.

THE FLIGHT

There was then a delay with the captain keeping us informed of the reason. After 20 minutes we got away from the gate and the captain said we would make up that time; and he was right, we did. And so we did...

No amenity bags are offered (because there aren't any), but earphones were given out after take-off. I have noise-cancelling headphones, and I'd recommend you take some for the flight to get the most from the IFE or your own phone or tablet.

There was a small choice of fairly up-to-date Hollywood films. The tray table comes out of the other arm of the seat to the IFE, and was good and firm. I had no trouble using it for working on my laptop or eating.

Service is delivered from the rear of the cabin, but starts from the front, by trolley. Around 1805 the drinks service came round. The choices were: prosecco; one beer – Heineken; one white wine – a sauvignon blanc from Bordeaux; or one red – a Minervois cabernet-syrah blend. Shortly afterwards, the meal service came round with a choice of three main courses: chicken with potato gratin, hake in a beurre blanc, or lamb rump in a rosemary jus with roast potatoes, grilled asparagus and a mint pea purée. The flight attendant described the meal choices, and like all her on-board colleagues, she was professional and informative – especially considering she was reading from handwritten notes jotted down onto a Post-its.

The food was tasty and hot. The flight attendants then offered other drinks, including a selection of miniature Baileys, cognac or whisky with plastic cups, which were either empty or filled with ice; a nice, yet economical, touch. Tea and coffee came round as well.

After lunch I wanted to sleep for a little while, and although the lights had been dimmed, there was still a lot of light in the cabin so I asked for an eye mask

and earplugs. The staff apologised, but there weren't any.

As an example of how good the service was, a flight attendant said I could use his own eyemask (that he had brought on-board from another airline). I was very grateful, and got an hour's sleep that I needed after an early start that day. The flight attendants never stopped working, walking up and down the aisle delivering the drinks, which had been ordered through the IFE system, and also trays of water.

About 90 minutes before landing, a second, no-choice meal service took place. This included quiche with salad and some slices of salami, cheese, a chocolate bar and more drinks.

ARRIVAL

We landed slightly ahead of schedule at 1950 local time but waited 30 minutes for a stand to become free. Once off the aircraft there was a short walk to immigration, and a queue of about 15 minutes.

VERDICT:

This was an excellent flight, after the initial pain of the check-in. If two things impressed me (and surprised me) it was how good the on-board service was, and just how inexpensive the tickets, even the Premium Flex, are when compared to the competition. It is well worth the extra money over Economy.

Tom Otley

This was an excellent flight, after the initial pain of the check-in. I was truly impressed by the excellent on-board service, and the low price of the tickets.



GRAND HOTEL VILLA SERBELLONI



CONTACT

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This is one of the oldest and most elegant hotels in the region of Lake Como and Bellagio's only 5-star establishment. Located on the stunning headland, it has been hosting visitors from all over the world since 19th century. The property has been owned by the Bucher family for more than a century.

HISTORY

For over a hundred years, Villa Serbelloni has been considered one of the most prestigious hotels in the world. Its neo-classical interiors are a real delight for the eyes: walls and ceilings are decorated with frescoes and paintings depicting mythological scenes, while coffered ceilings are decorated with floral motifs. There are also French-style wallpapers, antique Persian tap-

estries, crystal chandeliers from Murano, empire style furniture, as well as marble stairs, stucco columns, trompe d'oeil... And the salle à manger is a genuine work of art, similarly to the Royal Room illuminated in the evening with gorgeous bronze and crystal chandeliers, which reflect the light in huge mirrors. From the very beginning, the Grand Hotel became popular among the distinguished guests seeking peace and quiet here. These included members of royal families, aristocracy, politicians, as well as films stars. Some of the most famous guests were the Spanish, Romanian, Albanian, and Egyptian monarchs, Sir Winston Churchill, president Roosevelt, the Rothschilds, J.F. Kennedy, Mary Pickford, Maria Schell, Clark Gable, Robert Mitchum, Al Pacino. They often

strolled through hotel gardens, enjoying the unique hospitality of this place.

TODAY

The hotel also offers a luxury spa. Guests can enjoy a luxurious spa, take a speedboat to historic gardens or admire the beauty of the place from a small plane, which lands right at the hotel. Sports enthusiasts can use the hotel's fitness centre and tennis courts, take a long walk or a bike tour to Bellagio headland, and then swim in a pool overlooking the lake. With a bit of luck you can meet in the area George Clooney, Madonna, or Brad Pitt, who have their summers houses here.

ROOMS

The hotel offers 95 rooms and suites with views of the lake,



the park, or the hills. All rooms are tastefully decorated and air-conditioned, have a flat-screen TV, a mini bar, wi-fi, a bathroom with separate shower and two sinks, as well as a separate toilet. The Classic Double is 20 sq m, Deluxe Double – 38 sq m, Executive Double 48 sq m, and Senior Suite 60 or -75 sq m. Guests can use the hotel's fitness room, sauna, hammam, pool, beach, and concierge service. Every evening there are live music concerts.

RESTAURANTS

Dinner at Mistral restaurant located on the main terrace with the extensive views of the lake, is a truly unforgettable experience. The Michelin awarded chef Ettore Bocchia never ceases to surprise. During the day you can try excellent pastes and Mediterranean snacks at La Goletta restaurant situated right to the pool

and open from noon to 11 pm. Guests like to sit here particularly late in the afternoon, sipping fine Italian wine, and watching sunset.

SPA SUITE

The 300 sq m spa is a true oasis of tranquillity and harmony. All treatments performed here are inspired by the principle that well-being is possible with free flow of energy that produces harmony between body and soul. You can order one treatment or buy one day, weekend, or weekly packages.

CONFERENCES AND EVENTS

The hotel's conference rooms can accommodate up to 400 people and feature full AV equipment. There's also a front desk and the press room. The interiors can also be used for various art exhibitions and even fashion

shows with a runway. The Royal Room is 265 sq m, Brevia 119 sq m, Tivano – 114 sqm, Nautilus 55 sq m, and Mistral – 156 sq m. The hotel is also a perfect place for family events, such as wedding or christening receptions, or other meetings.

VERDICT

This hotel is one of the most amazing of its kind in Europe. Immersed in the Alpine waters of Lake Como and the surrounding lush vegetation, it's a magical and unique place. It's elegant, luxurious, and authentic. All antiques there are genuine. The owners care about the beauty of the place and are renowned for their hospitality. It's a perfect place for any occasion, with a grand Italian style. Staying there was the most enjoyable experience.

Marzena Mróz.

For over a hundred years, Villa Serbelloni has been considered one of the most prestigious hotels in the world.

Its neo-classical interiors are a real delight for the eyes: walls and ceilings are decorated with frescoes and paintings depicting mythological scenes, while coffered ceilings are decorated with floral motifs.



A NEW INCARNATION OF NOVOTEL POZNAŃ CENTRUM



CONTACT

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Novotel Poznań Centrum has recently undergone a thorough revamp, the largest such investment in the history of the Orbis Group. How does this unique property, an inextricable part of Poznań's cityscape, look like today? What makes it unique? Here's our review.

CONVENIENT LOCATION

Located in the very heart of the city, Novotel Poznań Centrum is a comfortable haven for both business and private travellers. The Old Market Square, the facilities of the Poznań International Fair or the central train station are easily reachable on foot, and Ławica Airport is only 8 km away from the hotel. Also

an easy access to the city's centres of leisure of entertainment, as well as conference venues and main thoroughfares makes Novotel Poznań Centrum one of the best choices in the "best location" category.

MODERN INTERIORS

The comprehensive revamp of the property has given it stylish interiors, reflecting the spirit of contemporary elegance. The architects from Tremend Studio, who oversaw the project, focused on simple forms, bright colours accentuated by distinctive tones, wooden elements, warm light and plenty of greenery - all this to create the environment, which helps guests work and unwind. The main, and at the same time the most distinct

area of the hotel is its reception, decorated with a colourful mural by Tytus Brzozowski, depicting the vibrant streets of Poznań. The public areas along with the elegant lobby, are designed in such a way as to promote interaction between hotel guests and spending free time there.

UNIQUE DINING CONCEPTS

Located within the hotel lobby area, the atmospheric Wise Cafe is a spot like no others in the city. The venues has been designed in line with the principles of the Planet 21 sustainability programme implemented by Accor Hotels and Orbis groups. The main principles of the strategy are commitment to low-carbon emission and the Zero Wa-

ste approach. The décor of the café is calm and tasteful, with some distinctive elements, such as the on-site professional coffee roaster and hydroponic devices (mini gardens) where herbs can be grown without use of soil. Wise Cafe is an open space for both hotel guests and non-residents. Another unique venue at Novotel Poznań Centrum hotel is its Winestone restaurant, which is a real paradise for gourmets. Its menu includes light and healthy dishes, as well as ecological, gluten-free and vegetarian options, matched perfectly with appropriate wines from all over the world.

EXTENSIVE CONFERENCE FACILITIES

Another advantage of Novotel Poznań Centrum are, undoubtedly, its extensive conference facilities, which allow for almost unlimited possibilities for organizing all sorts of meetings, banquets and other special events. The the 1,200 sqm function zone comprises seven rooms that can accommodate up to 1,100 people. The spacious areas filled with daylight, high ceilings, modern design and state-of-the-art multimedia equipment, make the facility a true hub for numerous events stimulating the development of the region - both locally and nationwide.

VERDICT

Novotel Poznań Centrum in its new incarnation is one of the best options for a stay and a conference in the city, able to satisfy the needs of all types of guests. Its modern, cosy interiors are more than impressive, and the design of the whole property seems to be carefully thought out and customized to provide the highest comfort while taking care of the sustainable development and individuality of the brand. This hotel is definitely worth recommending - both for business and private travellers.

Rafał Sobiech



Located in the very heart of the city, Novotel Poznań Centrum is a comfortable haven for both business and private travellers.



WESTIN PUSHKAR RESORT



CONTACT
www.starwoodhotels.com

Pushkar is one of the most popular tourist cities in the Indian state of Rajasthan. The city, located around the holy lake, offers an amazing spiritual atmosphere, while its narrow cobbled streets are packed with shops, restaurants and, of course... cows basking lazily in the sun. Pushkar, the traditional pilgrimage destination and the place that for several years has been flooded with tourists, practically doesn't sleep.

INTERIORS

Westin Pushkar Resort & Spa is located outside the city centre, making it a true oasis of peace and tranquillity for those seeking some rest away from the hustle and bustle of Indian metropolises. The 15 acre complex, which comprises 98 rooms and suites, entices guests with its simple yet elegant architecture of sandstone buildings, taking

hints from local heritage, but also providing lots of sense of space. The interiors contain many local elements, including traditional rugs, as well as works of art by artists residing in the area. Apart from a full-size bathroom, each suites comes with a sizeable indoor swimming pool, which can be used at any time of day.

HIGHLIGHTS

The main highlight of the resort is its magnificent outdoor swimming pool, surrounded (as well as the whole resort) by lush and meticulously landscaped greenery. Next to the swimming pool there is a bar serving regional and international cuisine. The bar boasts one of just few wood-fired pizza ovens in the area. In the evening, guests can sip here fancy cocktails relaxing on comfortable deck chairs, or head to the panoramic bar on the roof of the main building,

where they can enjoy beautiful views, including the sunset over the Arvali Mountains. A sight you can't miss.

CUISINE

Another highlight of a stay in Westin Pushkar Resort & Spa is its outstanding cuisine. The resort's rich menu is one of the main reasons why the place is so popular. The property has also its own conference facility with several meeting rooms and spaces to organize large events.

VERDICT

Westin Pushkar Resort & Spa is a true oasis of tranquillity, yet situated just off the centre of Pushkar. It's a perfect place to rest after an intense day of sightseeing the city or relax following a trip to the nearby desert. I was especially impressed with the high quality service provided by the staff of the hotel.

Anna Drozdowska

FEELING LIKE A MAHARAJA - RAJ PALACE

Housed in a palace building dating back to 1727, Paradise Palace is one of the most luxurious hotels in Jaipur. Carefully renovated with original elements of décor still in place and furniture from the old era, the property is a true tranquil oasis situated in the centre of this busy city. The palace is impressive both from the outside and inside; its beautiful marbles and abundant gilding, as well as giant mirrors, amazing chandeliers and high ceilings, add to the impression of luxury and grand space. The beautifully landscaped garden is a perfect spot to relax, sipping tea and munching delicious cookies.

INTERIORS

Each room features unique décor with traditional Indian decorative elements, antique furniture, and other objects and accessories matching the

general theme of the place. Moreover, some of the rooms even have sort of mini-museums featuring items that once belonged to members of the royal family. However, the traditional design goes together with modern solutions, such as flat-screen TVs, air conditioning or wireless Internet access. However, they have been discreetly concealed so that guests can enjoy the atmosphere of the past era without the interference of modern technology. In the bathrooms there are luxury toiletries made from natural ingredients. In some rooms there is a collection of old items that were used by the royal family. The windows overlook the garden, courtyard or swimming pool.

HIGHLIGHTS

Guests at the Raj Palace can relax by the outdoor swimming pool or enjoy a massage at the luxurious spa. In the afternoons, there are performances of

a puppet theatre, while in the evening there are traditional folk dances held in the garden. Business guests can use the resort's several meeting rooms, each well-equipped and some with access to the natural light.

RESTAURANT

Swapna Mahal restaurant serves international and local cuisine. Kebab Shop, on the other hand, offers Mughlai cuisine, including grilled dishes prepared at the table. Drinks and fresh baked goods are available at The Royal Lounge.

VERDICT

The Hotel Raj Palace is a real gem and a unique opportunity to stay in a genuine palace situated in the very centre of the beautiful city of Jaipur. Exceptional service and excellent cuisine add to the luxury experience. Guests can for a moment feel here like real Maharajas.

Anna Drozdowska

CONTACT

www.rajpalace.com



The traditional design goes together with modern solutions, which have been discreetly concealed so that guests can enjoy the atmosphere of the past era without the interference of modern technology.

HOTEL POLSKI „POD BIAŁYM ORŁEM”



CONTACT

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Polish Prestige Hotels

PRICES

Double Bed Room
with breakfast - from PLN 370.
More details at:
www.donimirski.com

Discovering the extremely fascinating history of the Hotel Polski, I was keen to explore its interiors and at the same time visit the bustling city of Cracow. Old documents dating back to the 18th century show that there were two tenement houses near the Florian gate by the royal road. One of them served as an inn called “Pod Białym Orłem” (“Under the White Eagle”), while the other was a tavern with a small on-site brewery. In 1913, both buildings were purchased by Prince Adam Czartoryski who

had them thoroughly renovated. This is how Hotel Polski came to existence. In the 1950s the hotel was taken over by the state and returned to its owners in 1990s. Since 2014 the property has been part of the Donimirski Hotel chain, and following a thorough revamp it was awarded four stars.

WHERE IS IT?

Considered to be one of the oldest hotels in Cracow, Hotel Polski is conveniently located within the walls of the Old Town, at the corner of Floriańska and Pijarska Streets. It's close to all

the tourist attractions of the Old Town: only 4 minutes on foot from the Cloth Hall and St. Mary's Church, and 15 minutes away from the Wawel Castle. Opposite the hotel, there is The Czartoryski Museum and Library with an extensive collection of works of art, including the famous “Lady with an Ermine” by Leonardo Da Vinci. The hotel is also within an easy reach from train and coach stations, as well as a tram stop. Those planning to visit the Wieliczka salt mine, can get there by the SKM train from the PKP station. The trip takes 30 minutes.

ROOMS

The hotel offers 60 rooms, including 16 Single Bed, 36 Double Bed, 5 Double Bed Deluxe and 3 Suites. In tribute to the great patriot and the owner of the hotel, Prince Adam Czartoryski, who was the leader of the Polish Government-in-Exile in Paris, the interiors of the hotel are decorated with reproductions of famous paintings and portraits from the collections of the Czartoryski Museum in Cracow. The rooms feature warm décor, and each one was individually designed and furnished. All come with a flatscreen TV, a safe, a mini-bar, a kettle and free Wi-Fi. The bathroom has a heated floor, a hair dryer, a set of toiletries, a bathrobe and disposable slippers.



Hotel Polski is conveniently located within the walls of the Old Town, close to major tourist attractions and the Market Square.

BUSINESS FACILITIES

On the top floor of the hotel there are three state-of-the-art conference rooms equipped with the latest audio-visual equipment, making them ideal venues for various events, business meetings and trainings. The rooms can accommodate groups of 20 to 150 people.



RESTAURANT

One of the highlights of the hotel is its Pijarska restaurant, offering a wide range of delicious dishes of Polish cuisine. For connoisseurs there is an excellent offer of original wines from Polish, Italian and Hungarian vineyards.



AWARDS

- Trip Advisor Travellers Choice 2018

VERDICT

With its fascinating history and stylish, classical interiors, the hotel is a very attractive option for those visiting the royal city of Cracow. I recommend it for a weekend trip, intimate meetings, as well as for events and conferences.

Katarzyna Siekierzyńska



CLUB RULES



Coworking spaces and members' clubs are an alternative to the traditional office or home study. But what are the benefits of signing up and which are the best?

By 2020, it's estimated that as many as one in two workers in the UK will be freelance or self employed, collectively contributing more than £51 billion to the economy. The same trend is being observed in the US. And it's not just the self-employed; being adept at remote working has become an essential skill for anyone frequently operating out of overseas locations.

The parallel rise of coworking spaces and private members' clubs has made it easier for locals to access office environments and professional networks in their home territories, but when you are travelling it is not so easy to find out what your options are or even gain entry to these facilities. Often you make do with working in your hotel room, the executive lounge or a coffee shop with free wifi.

However, finding a temporary workplace is being made easier by platforms such as Copass (copass.org), which gives access to more than 750 hubs around the world from €49-€299 a month, and Coworker (coworker.com), which lists 7,000 spaces in 125 countries complemented by user reviews. Another exciting innovation is the launch of invitation-only website Onda (ondalife.com), which offers entry to private members clubs, health clubs and coworking spaces around the world for £80 a month.

The venues it lists are "carefully vetted", says Luca Del Bono, founder of Onda (and the South Kensington Club in London), and include sites such as Camp David in New York, The Bureau in Paris, The Stack in Cape Town, Griffin Club in Los Angeles and Alma in Stockholm. Del Bono says: "With the ease of remote communication that technology has given us, entrepreneurs and

start-ups are on the rise, and so is the need for a versatile working environment. More people want to share time in places they feel comfortable in, and that offer facilities and activities that suit their lifestyle, while being part of a community."

London undoubtedly leads the way when it comes to clubs and coworking. Recent openings include Allbright (for women only), White City House, Mortimer House and, of course, We Work, which is expanding rapidly with new locations throughout the city. Next year, London's Home House founders will be debuting a new concept called Home Grown (homegrownclub.co.uk), in Marylebone.

Why will Home Grown, which will also have 35 hotel rooms, suit business people? Andrew Richardson, managing director of Home House, says: "Raising capital and growing a business is a skill and we aim to create the exclusive go-to community for enabling this. We will have an extensive events programme that covers how to secure funding, mentoring sessions with renowned business leaders, and collaborations between investors, high-growth entrepreneurs and innovators. The club will also have a range of beautiful private meeting rooms, pitching spaces, executive lounges, a chic restaurant, study café and bar."

TEN REMOTE WORKING SPACES AROUND THE WORLD

1. NeueHouse, Los Angeles

Located on Sunset Boulevard, two-year-old NeueHouse LA (pictured previous page) has become known for hosting Hollywood after-parties. But it has a serious side too. The venue is vast, with enormous industri-

al-sized halls (Studio A was once used for radio broadcasting and is fitted with a high lumen full HD projector, 30-foot screen and theatrical dimming system), stylish work zones, two restaurants, a penthouse with a built-in bar, a cinema and al fresco deck for up to 400 delegates. There are various hyper-slick meeting rooms too and all of these spaces can be hired. If you come to LA a lot, Reserve members can book conference space, sign up for events and use the communal work and social spaces five business days a month plus evenings and weekends. NeueHouse also has a club in New York – day passes are available for members of the LA branch and vice versa.

- Reserve membership US\$400 a month. neuehouse.com

2. Ministry of New, Mumbai

Conceived by a pair of Dutch expats, Marlies Bloemendaal and Natascha Chadha, the Ministry of New was one of the first collaborative workspaces to arrive in Mumbai when it debuted six years ago. In 2016, it relocated to 19th-century building Kitab Mahal on DN Road. Beyond its blue-tiled exterior, there is a boardroom and library that can be rented by the hour, a Skype pod, lockers, a kitchen, restaurant, outdoor terrace, showers, a lounge and even standing desks. Expect white walls offset with splashes of colour, displays of curios, plantation shutters, designer furniture, pot plants, lots of light, patterned textiles and even an indoor swing. Members include coaches, consultants, SMEs and digital nomads.

- One day pass Rs 1,500 (£17), ten days a month Rs 11,500 rupees (£128). ministryofnew.in





The interior design of The Work Project Midtown is a blend of corporate greys and natural wood, with contemporary exposed pipework on the ceilings and living walls of foliage. Coffee is free and members are given a secure keycard for round-the-clock access.

3. Crew Collective, Montreal

Opened in 2016, at the heart of this club is an open-to-all, 100-seat café serving local micro-roasted coffee and a menu that is updated live (you can order online and have your vegan brownie delivered to where you are sitting). Located in the original 1926 Royal Bank of Canada headquarters, the historic hall has long communal tables and free wifi. Crew Collective rents out meeting rooms for up to eight people from C\$15 (£9) an hour and also has private desks. Although anyone can join, the club is aimed at creative professionals – from developers to architects – and has an informal, relaxed vibe. The interiors are stunning, with marble floors, brass light fittings, bronze-plated walled booths and ornately decorated ceilings.

- Access is 24/7. C\$20-30 (£12-17) day passes for weekends/weekdays. crewcollectivecafe.com

4. The Work Project Midtown, Hong Kong

Another club to launch in 2016 was the Work Project Midtown (pictured below and bottom) in Hong Kong's Causeway Bay "Knowledge Hub", where neighbours include Apple, Facebook and Google. It has almost 3,000 sqm of coworking space and serviced offices, a full-service pantry with happy hours, meeting rooms and function space for 120 people. The interior design is a blend of corporate greys and natural wood, with contemporary exposed pipework on the ceilings and living walls of foliage. Coffee is free and members are given a secure keycard for round-the-clock access.

- Day pass from HK\$350 (£34), part-time hot desk (ten days a month) HK\$2,250 (£325). theworkproject.com/hk

5. Tiny Empire, Cape Town

This new arrival entered the scene earlier this year, and resides in a renovated 100-year-old tea warehouse on Buitenkant Street. Catering to "serial entrepreneurs, startup junkies and business gurus", there is a communal Work Lobby and Work Lounge for tapping away on your laptop or sipping coffee with clients. The club has a residential feel with hardback books on coffee tables, whitewashed walls, post-modern Brazilian armchairs, abstract art and Aesop products in the showers. There are individual workstations in the Reading Room for those who visit more often, as well as suites for teams who want a more permanent base. The meeting booths are handy for interviews and taking calls.

- Day pass R250 (£15). tinyempire.co.za

6. The Farm SoHo, New York

NYC can bleed you of money, but this co-working space is surprisingly affordable and even gives discounted rates on conference room hire. Taking its design lead from the farmlands of southern Missouri, there is an emphasis on using oak salvaged from old barns, corrugated tin, sackcloth cushions and cartwheels mounted on exposed brickwork. It's not what you might expect in New York, but it works well. The club is on the second floor of a building at 447 Broad-

way in Lower Manhattan, which should be convenient for most business people, and amenities range from printing and scanning to projectors and phone booths.

- Day pass US\$25, seven days US\$100. thefarmsoho.com

7. Fosbury and Sons, Antwerp

Following the trend for inspiring architectural locations, the Belgian city's Fosbury and Sons took over a portion of 1960s modernist building the WATT Tower in 2016. The 5,500 sqm club is located on the first floor, and like many other ventures described in this feature, is far from being a sterile, uninspiring office environment. Contrasting with the plentiful use of concrete, steel and glass, are timber desks and lush green foliage. There are numerous inviting spots to settle yourself for the day – from bleacher seats to airy mid-century studios – as well as social spaces to congregate in such as the mezzanine zone with its red pool table and in-house bar. The common space includes "focus booths", a silent room, open kitchen, library and changing rooms. Workshops, lectures and forums are scheduled regularly. Fosbury and Sons Brussels is coming at the end of the year.

- Membership from €35 a month for a one day pass, extra days €15 (up to five). fosburyandsons.com

8. The Great Room, Centennial Tower, Singapore

Located on levels 17 and 18 of Centennial



NYC can bleed you of money, but The Farm SoHo is surprisingly affordable and even gives discounted rates on conference room hire.



Tower, this 3,344 sqm communal office has panoramic views of the city, and opened in early 2018. Its modestly priced day pass gives members the chance to work from its comfortable lounge, while reclining on a sofa, or at one of its hot desks. It has the look and feel of a smart, five-star hotel executive lounge. Lighting designers who worked on Four Seasons and Aman projects were brought in to get the illuminations right. There is an on-site café for refreshments. The Great Room also has clubs at One George Street and Ngee Ann City in Singapore, as well as Gaysorn Tower in Bangkok. Day Pass S\$70 (£39). thegreatroomoffices.com

9. Canopy Pacific Heights, San Francisco

Unveiled two years ago by designer Yves Béhar, this boutique space features a combination of shared tables, private desks and dedicated offices depending on your needs. A sophisticated set-up with Herman Miller ergonomic chairs, parquet flooring and black marble, users will find plenty of natural daylight, concierge services, Shinola journals and pens, Blue Bottle coffee, a kitchen, boardroom, and even HD video-conferencing. Canopy also has a club on Jackson Square in San Francisco, as well as one coming to the Financial District soon. Its focus is on building a “diverse community of thinkers, creators, builders and innovators”.

- Nomad membership US\$275 a month for 60 days’ access a year. canopy.space

10. The Office Group, Thomas House, Victoria, London

Luxurious yet functional, Thomas House is one of 33 coworking venues across London, Leeds and Bristol in The Office Group’s portfolio. It was designed by architectural firm Soda, who applied a “clean and simple” philosophy to overhauling the 6,650 sqm open-plan space, which occupies a Regency-era building on Eccleston Square in Pimlico. High-lights include a gym, bar, library, roof terrace, music room and meditation studio, in addition to lots of desks (and power points) to sit with your laptop. There are also dining areas, bike storage and showers so you can freshen up after your commute. Meeting rooms can be booked with ease from £20 per hour.

- Lounge membership £75 per month (32 hours) at a choice of 27 locations. theofficegroup.co.uk



Luxurious yet functional, Thomas House is one of 33 coworking venues across London, Leeds and Bristol in The Office Group's portfolio.



W NASZEJ BRANŻY NAJBARDZIEJ LICZY SIĘ EMPATIA...



Rozmawiamy z Agnieszką Trafas, właścicielką kołobrzeskiego hotelu ProVita oraz Adamem Hokiem – jego dyrektorem. O tym, czego potrzebują Polacy do odpoczynku i jak z sukcesem prowadzić hotel wellness, którego oferta ma trafić do najbardziej wymagających gości.

Jak odpoczywają Polacy?

Adam Hok: Wśród Polaków obserwujemy zmiany w nastawieniu do odpoczynku. Okazuje się, że urlop nie zawsze musi być równoznaczny z dwutygodniowym wyjazdem całej rodziny na wakacje. Coraz więcej rodaków decyduje się na pobyty, które są krótsze i spędzane we dwoje lub w gronie znajomych, oraz które przede wszystkim mają służyć ekspresowej regeneracji. Co ciekawe, widzimy też, że Polacy podchodzą do swojego wypoczynku w sposób coraz bardziej świadomy...

Co Waszym zdaniem oznacza to dla branży hotelarskiej?

A.H.: Nowe wyzwania i zmianę podejścia do gościa. Krótki czas urlopów i większa częstotliwość wyjazdów sprawiają, że przyjeżdżający do hotelu oczekują najwyższego standardu usług, które natychmiast zaspokoją ich potrzeby. Wszystko ma być dopięte na ostatni guzik, a jednocześnie – autentyczne i przyjazne.

Co zatem wyróżnia hotel ProVita na tle tego typu obiektów?

Agnieszka Trafas: Kompleksowe podejście do wypoczynku, dbałość o szczegóły oraz profesjonalizm w każdym aspekcie. Do tego uśmiech oraz uważność personelu na potrzeby gości. Wbrew pozorom, w naszej branży najbardziej liczy się ludzka empatia...

Jak dużą rolę w prowadzeniu tego typu obiektu ma położenie nad samym Morzem Bałtyckim?

A.T.: Położenie naszego hotelu nad Morzem Bałtyckim to niewątpliwy atut. Nie jest to ciepłe morze, które rozleniwia. Bałtyk urzeka swoją surowością, szczególnie jesienią i zimą. Nie ma nic piękniejszego niż rozszalałe wody, które biją o brzeg oraz wiatr rozwiewający wszystkie smutki i oczyszczający umysł. Dlatego tak ważne jest to, by hotel był ciepły i klimatyczny; dawał poczucie bezpieczeństwa. Aby w jego wnętrzu panował spokój, a wystrój nawiązywał do otoczenia – morza, plaży, wydm, parku. Tylko dzięki temu, goście którzy na co dzień żyją w miastach, będą mogli powrócić do korzeni i poczuć regeneracyjną moc przyrody.

Z której atrakcji koniecznie należy skorzystać, podczas pobytu w hotelu ProVita?

A.T.: Oczywiście w naszym hotelu każdy znajdzie coś dla siebie. Jednak absolutnymi „must have” jest wizyta w znajdującej się na dachu hotelu przeszklonej saunie fińskiej, z której rozlega się widok na nadmorski park, a zimą na Morze Bałtyckie. To, co wyróżnia naszą ofertę i po to nasi goście najczęściej wracają, to manualne zabiegi pielęgnacyjne na bazie biocertyfikowanych kosmetyków marki VITALIS dr Joseph. Wieczorem natomiast, proponujemy relaks z kieliszkiem wina, przy kominku w hotelowym lobby barze. Odpowiednie wino oczywiście wybierze dla gości sommelier....

Niedawno hotel ProVita przeszedł gruntowny remont. Stał się również hotelem czterogwiazdkowym. Dlaczego teraz zdecydowaliście się na tak znaczący krok?

A.H.: Kierowała nami przede wszystkim chęć podjęcia nowych wyzwań. Prowadząc dawną ProVitę, tę przed remontem, mieliśmy poczucie, że zrobiliśmy już wszystko i nadszedł czas na zmiany.

A.T.: Brak zmian w biznesie nudzi i prowadzi do stagnacji, podczas gdy konkurencja nie śpi. Na przestrzeni ponad 15 lat pracy w branży, nabraliśmy ogromnego doświadczenia i chcieliśmy coś zrobić z tym potencjałem. Inspiracją do zmian stały się także liczne podróże po Austrii, Szwajcarii i południowym Tyrolu – odwiedzaliśmy szczególnie obiekty, których filozofia wellness stała się nam bardzo bliska. To sprowokowało podjęcie decyzji o pójściu naprzód.

Na atmosferę nowego hotelu ProVita ogromny wpływ ma wystrój wnętrz. Co było dla Was główną inspiracją?

A.H.: Projekt architektoniczny przygotowała zaprzyjaźniona pracownia Dominanta z Kołobrzegu. Spędziliśmy razem wiele godzin, dyskutując o tym, jak powinny wyglądać poszczególne przestrzenie. Przygotowaliśmy nawet dwa typy pokoi wzorcowych, które testowali nasi pracownicy i ludzie zaprzyjaźnieni.

A.T.: Wspomniana już Austria, Włochy czy wpływy skandynawskie spowodowały, że sięgnęliśmy po proste formy, jasne kolory, drewno dębu bielonego, filc, kamień. Wzorem tamtejszych architektów, korzystaliśmy z tego, co daje nam okoliczna natura. Nawet naszemu ogrodowi przywróciliśmy jego (typowe dla tej okolicy) drzewa – sosny, świerki, kosodrzewinę oraz trawy wydmowe.

Jak te zmiany odczuli Wasi goście?

A.T.: Goście się w tym miejscu zakochują i ... wracają.

Jakie są dalsze plany, dotyczące rozwoju oferty?

A.T.: Wierząc, że mniej znaczy więcej, dążymy do maksymalnych uproszczeń. Nasza oferta SPA jest szeroka, ale nieskomplikowana; wybór dań w restauracji – maksymalnie uproszczony, a win – wyrazisty i łatwy, dzięki wsparciu grupy dobrze wykształconych sommelierów. W skrócie – pobyt w hotelu ma pomóc odpocząć i odnaleźć radość



wykształconych sommelierów. W skrócie – pobyt w hotelu ma pomóc odpocząć i odnaleźć radość w prostych rzeczach. Jednocześnie, zdajemy sobie sprawę, że wielu naszych potencjalnych klientów nie wie o naszej ofercie. Dlatego niedługo zmieniamy nazwę hotelu na taką, która będzie lepiej korespondować z naszą filozofią. Pod tym kątem przygotowujemy całą strategię, z którą niedługo wejdziemy na rynek. Jest to ruch odważny, ale nie boimy się nowych wyzwań.

Ostatnie pytanie – co jest dla Was najważniejsze w codziennym prowadzeniu hotelu?

A.T.: Spokój i empatia – tylko tyle i aż tyle.

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HOTELS OF THE IBIS FAMILY

the three passionate brands



The comprehensive offer of ibis properties appeals to everyone, regardless of their personality, personal preferences or the city they are planning to stay in.

ibis, ibis Styles and ibis budget are friendly hotels tailored to different needs and tastes of guests in every corner of the world. With the extensive chain of properties set in convenient locations, affordable room prices, and an individual character of each hotel, the ibis family knows well how to satisfy the needs of its guests. The comprehensive offer of ibis properties appeals to everyone, regardless of their personality, personal preferences or the city they are planning to stay in. What are the differences between the individual brands of the ibis family?

IBIS - CARING AND DYNAMIC APPROACH

The thing that defines ibis brand is the positive mood and homely atmosphere across all its properties, with particular emphasis on making each guest feel special. The brand likes to go against the tide, and changes regularly to adapt to the needs of its customers, including the young ones, who rarely consider hotels as their first-choice option. ibis hotels are gradually introducing mobile check-in service. This means that guest no longer need to check in at the reception desk - instead, they are approached by a member of staff

who helps them complete all the formalities on their mobile devices, while resting on comfortable sofas in the hotel lobby. The public areas in ibis hotels utilize the brand-customized Avanzi décor, which successfully combines modern spaces with cosy, intimate atmosphere. To further satisfy the needs of guests, the brand has prepared the unique Sweet Room concept, as well as heavenly Sweet Beds for the perfect sleep. ibis brand is a unique combination of hotel comforts and homely atmosphere, made up of small, often inconspicuous details, such as freshly baked apple pie baked daily and



served for breakfast. One of the most significant factors ensuring your well-being is suitable music. That is why, all ibis hotel are equipped with Jukebox by Deezer sound system that allows guests to choose what music they want to listen to in public areas. However, the most important element creating the unique atmosphere of ibis hotels, are the members of staff, whose care translates directly into guests' satisfaction.

IBIS STYLES - CREATIVITY THROUGH DESIGN

ibis Styles is all about the unique design concept. Each property of the brand is distinguished by a different, unique theme visible throughout almost all elements of the meticulously designed interiors. Each ibis Styles property has a distinct personality, proving that creativity has no limits and a stay in one of the hotels is a truly unique experience. The interior design of ibis Styles Wrocław is evocative of "Alice in Wonderland", ibis Styles Grudziądz is all about the world of knights and princesses, while in ibis Styles Warszawa City you will find direct allusions to the history of Warsaw tramways. Later this year, the brand will launch yet another property in the capital city. The

main theme of the hotel located on the Vistula waterfront will be riverside activities. The creative, inspiring, surprising and cheerful ibis Styles makes everyone feel like a child, either a big or a small one. Moreover, the chain has an all-year-round special offer for the young guests. Children under the age of 16 are provided free accommodation if they share the room with their parents. Younger children can enjoy numerous surprises and welcome gifts. Hotels of the brand have all necessary accessories for babies, as well as play corners with toys, crayons and board games. Many of them resonate with the main theme of a property, at the same time stimulating creativity and imagination of young and older guests alike.

IBIS BUDGET - A SMART CHOICE AMONG BUDGET HOTELS

What's the best affordable option for a stay in a city? Of course, it's ibis budget! The chain of properties for every budget is particularly loved by those tourists who seek active leisure and appreciate convenient location of their hotel. ibis budget is a truly creative and open-minded brand, reflecting the value of sharing and inde-



pendence. All properties of the brand are situated in city centres, near key roads or airports. The offer includes rooms for one or two guests. Comfortable rooms, buffet breakfasts, vending machines with a wide range of snacks or drinks around the clock, as well as 24/7 availability - these are the most important factors that determine how satisfied you are with your stay. ibis budget hotels guarantee a lot of fun at a low price. They allow you to get to know the city and take full advantage of its charms, but without ruining your budget.

COMPREHENSIVE OFFER

"Everywhere in the world, tailored to every lifestyle... there's a perfect ibis hotel for you." This motto of the ibis family literally refers to the wide range and availability of its facilities. It's not an exaggeration to say with the vast choice of ibis, ibis Styles or ibis budget properties, every guests will find the hotel that suits their needs and preferences - in terms of locations, pricing, décor and amenities. This is a huge asset of the budget segment of the AccorHotels Group, which allows it to build up its competitive position and, above all, is of great value to customers.

"Everywhere in the world, tailored to every lifestyle... there's a perfect ibis hotel for you."

This motto of the ibis family literally refers to the wide range and availability of its facilities.



ORIENTAL FLAVOURS IN THE CENTRE OF WARSAW



In the very heart of Warsaw, at the Three Crosses Square, lovers of culinary art will find a place that will inspire them to discover new flavours. InAzia was created as a continuation of the culinary journey through the flavours and aromas of Asia. The quintessence of this heav-

enly culinary experience are remarkable creations by chef Marcin Sasin.

SIGNATURE CONCEPT

Marcin's passion is the cuisine of Asia - especially its South-Eastern part. He regularly travels around Asia, looking for culinary inspiration in the best

restaurants of the region. He meets local chefs, tries various dishes and then experiments himself, adapting the atmosphere of the Asian street to the Polish reality. He is happy to tell the guests about his experiences, discoveries and exotic adventures. The only thing that remains his secret is his recipes.



CLASSIC DISHES WITH A MODERN TWIST.

The menu of InAzia restaurant features the cuisine of South-East Asia, with a special emphasis on aromatic dishes from Thailand, Vietnam, Singapore, China and Indonesia. All dishes prepared here are based only on genuine Asian products, combining traditional approach with the latest culinary trends. The menu features dishes utilizing century-old recipes and the elements of molecular cuisine or the sous vide method of cooking.

In addition to exquisite cuisine, the dining experience is enhanced here by elegant interiors that reflect the late design trends. Beige, gold and copper

tones have been combined here with huge lamps and illuminated glass elements to create a truly cosy environment.

FOR A BUSINESS MEETING AND FANCY DINNER

InAzia invites guests both at lunch time and for evening meetings. The rich culinary offer of the venue, as well as its prime location make it a perfect choice for those who love dining in unique restaurants with excellent cuisine and professional service. Whether it's a business meeting, a shopping break, a romantic evening or a dinner with friends, InAzia will cater to all enthusiasts of Asian cuisine. However, InAzia isn't the only restaurant situated in Sheraton

Warsaw hotel. A meeting in Lobby Bar or a cocktail in SomePlace Else? Sheraton Warsaw Hotel offers a wide range of venues where you can unwind and meet your friends of business associates. SomePlace Else is a perfect place for business meetings, musical evenings or watching various sporting events. The modern interiors of the restaurant are a perfect environment for dining and trying delicious cocktails.

Guests seeking unique culinary experiences can opt for a unique dinner with the chef in close attendance. The Chef's table situated in the restaurant's kitchen can accommodate up to four guests. restauracja-inazia.pl
warszawa.someplace-else.pl/pl

InAzia invites guests both at lunch time and for evening meetings.

The rich culinary offer of the venue, as well as its prime location make it a perfect choice for those who love dining in unique restaurants with excellent cuisine and professional service.





TAKING THE INITIATIVE

By 2025, the Amsterdam Economic Board has hopes for the city to be among Europe's top three regions for innovation. What is it doing to achieve this?



A short walk from Amsterdam Central station, where the new direct Eurostar service from London comes gliding in, is coworking space Spring House. From the back, you can see the train tracks and hear the rumbling of carriages, while from the front there are views of the River IJ, Amsterdam's waterfront.

The area was once less than salubrious, and associated with drugs and prostitution. But Spring House – a former distillery and tin can factory – was given a new lease of life when it was saved from dereliction by a group focused on creating social change within the city. Open since 2015, Spring House now has more than 200 members, plus a buzzing ground-floor restaurant called Choux that is proving popular with its neighbours.

Spring House was founded by Vandejong Creative Agency, independent curator Joanna van der Zanden and Kennisland, an incubator for societal innovation. With its vibrant red frontage and interior adorned with mid-century leather sofas, art books and pot plants, the aim was to provide a setting for “sharing ideas and putting them into action”. At the very least, it's a pleasant, light-filled place to settle down with a laptop. Over a cup of herbal tea, Thijs van Exel, so-

cial innovation advisor for Kennisland, says: “We got some funding from a very benign government that saw the need for rejuvenation of this area. There is a lot of room for entrepreneurs to do new and innovative things. You can get things done really quickly. And [travel booking website] Booking.com is opening a new office at the end of the street. It has plenty of money, so it must have chosen this site for a reason – there is something interesting going on.”

FUTURE-PROOFING AMSTERDAM

By 2025 the Amsterdam metropolitan area intends to become one of the top-three most innovative regions in Europe. To achieve its goal of becoming smart, healthy and green, it has set itself five ambitious urban challenges: it wants to develop a “circular economy” whereby resources are recycled, reused and repurposed; public transport will become emission-free; it will be a leader in digital connectivity; it will future-proof its jobs market by empowering citizens to develop the skills they need to stay relevant; and inhabitants will be able to expect an additional two, bright-eyed years of life.

The organisation tasked with bringing this vision to life is the Amsterdam Economic Board (amsterdameconomicboard.com),

which was set up in 2010 to bring together businesses, government and knowledge institutes. I speak to Nina Tellegen, director of the board, about the “bottom-up” approach the city has to problem-solving. “We want to be ahead of things – that might have to do with our history; we were always threatened by the water and it meant we had a tendency to collaborate. We are a very non-hierarchical society. It's in our culture to do things together. All the major issues confronting us – climate change, overpopulation – we need innovation to deal with them.”

SMART THINKING

There are dozens of initiatives that are already underway. Schiphol airport aims to become zero-waste by 2030 by using technical fixes such as airside fleets of electric buses, carpets made from recycled KLM uniforms, separating out the plastics used in aircraft catering, and buying electricity from local wind farms. Meanwhile, the Amsterdam branch of French advertising company JCDcaux decided to take back lease cars from employees and instead give them free electric bikes, public transport passes and a pay rise. Elsewhere, the city's rooftops are being turned into gardens, and coding is being taught in schools.



FOT.: MATERIAŁ PRASOWY, ARCHIWUM



In De Ceuvel they have houseboats on land for creative companies and artists, and each one generates electricity from solar panels and composts kitchen waste. They even have their own digital currency.



Five smart

CITY INITIATIVES

1. 3D printing for everyone
Described as an “innovation playground”, the 3D Makers Zone (3dmakerszone.com) allows companies and entrepreneurs to 3D print designs without having to invest in the hardware themselves. People can print prototypes, learn how to use the equipment, and share ideas with others to speed up the development process.

2. Solar panels on roofs
The Solar Coalition (zoncoalitie.nl) is encouraging the owners of buildings with large expanses of rooftop to install solar panels on them. They can then sell the power or use it themselves. This spring, Nissan Motor Parts Centre, for example, completed the largest solar roof in the Netherlands.

3. Putting food waste on the menu
InStock (instock.nl) has set itself the task of rescuing perfectly good food that has been discarded from supermarkets and turning it into tasty dishes in its restaurants. So far there are three outlets. The Amsterdam branch serves dishes such as chipotle nachos, fish burritos made from crooked cuts, and spicy falafel salads.

4. Planting tower block balconies
Supported by donations, Urban Street Forest (urbanstreetforest.com) assists tower block residents to plant trees on their balconies. And for every tree planted in the city, another one is planted in the developing world to help combat desertification.

5. Turning rainwater into beer
Hemelswater (pictured below) is Amsterdam’s first rainwater brewery, taking advantage of the city’s high rainfall by collecting it with specially installed tanks across the city. The aim is to install 200 units that will catch 200,000 litres of water for use before it reaches the sewers.

Visit amsterdamsmartcity.com for more information



Elsewhere, the city’s rooftops are being turned into gardens, and coding is being taught in schools.

Cornelia Dinca is the delegations lead for Amsterdam Smart City (amsterdamsmartcity.com), an EU-funded pilot that has now been incorporated into the Amsterdam Economic Board. She says: “We talk about social and technological innovations but we don’t believe that once you have sensors everywhere you become a ‘smart’ city. We are interested in how the city remains attractive and competitive. A smart city is about engaging community members and organisations in an open, transparent platform.”

One of the projects Dinca highlights is a “living lab and clean tech playground” called De Ceuvel (deceuvel.nl/en) in Amsterdam Noord, on the other side of the River IJ. The De Ceuvel community occupies a former shipyard and now has its own sustainable café, boardwalk, office spaces for rent and floating bed and breakfast accommodation, Hotel Asile Flottant (asileflottant.com). Dinca says: “They have houseboats on land for creative companies and artists, and each one generates electricity from solar panels and composts kitchen waste. They even have their own digital currency.” What she refers to is the Jouliette, a blockchain-based currency that is being used by residents to buy and trade renewable electricity within a localised “smart grid”.

Whether or not you make it over to De Ceuvel, travellers coming to the city will still get a sense of innovation taking place. I was driven around in one of taxi company Biosgroep’s Tesla Model Xs, a state-of-the-art electric SUV with Batmobile-like doors. And for those with flexible travel policies, there are hotels such as the Movement ([\[menthotel.com\]\(http://menthotel.com\)\), which is run by refugees inside a former prison; the Volkshotel \(\[volkshotel.nl/en\]\(http://volkshotel.nl/en\)\), known for its expansive communal workspace; and the Crane Hotel Faralda \(\[faralda.com\]\(http://faralda.com\)\), which has three suites at the top of an industrial crane. IHG also opened the QO \(\[qo-amsterdam.com\]\(http://qo-amsterdam.com\)\) in the spring, which has a rooftop greenhouse and small fish farm that supplies its restaurants.](http://themove-</p>
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To get a sense of how innovation is changing the way we travel, I stopped by the Zoku (livezoku.com), up the road from Marriott’s new Apollo hotel. Now two years old, the Zoku can be called a “hybrid hotel-office” with modular apartments and co-working space on the top floor with panoramic views. Beautiful, fresh food (mainly vegetarian) is served buffet-style throughout the day, there are meeting rooms with whiteboard walls for delegates to write directly on to, and a couple of ping pong tables. The concept is already catching on among corporates, with companies such as Nike, Netflix, Uber and Tesla reportedly putting their employees up in the apartment-hotel.

Zoku co-founder Hans Meyer (who was also one of the founding partners of Dutch hotel chain Citizen M), says: “With Airbnb and coworking coming up, we wanted to create a hybrid of those two models. If people live and work in a city that they don’t know very well and don’t know other people, after a few days they start to feel disconnected. The majority of hotel lobbies are empty in the day, but not here, as people are working.”

Spend a little time in inspiring Amsterdam, and you may just find you have your next creative breakthrough.

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FIT FOR A TSAR

Get a taste of Russian splendour at these Moscow restaurants – perfect for business and pleasure

KAZBEK

Georgian cuisine is arguably the most sophisticated and interesting of all the former Soviet options in Moscow. Restaurateur Andrey Dellos champions the country's food here with a Georgian mother-and-son team in the kitchen. The design of this two-storey restaurant is also a triumph. The top floor (pictured left and above) has aged ceilings, columns and plenty of greenery, as well as a terrace with seating for 150 guests and views of the Moskva River and the Radisson Royal Hotel. Try a starter of khinkali kalakuri, steamed dumplings filled with pork and veal (rubles 100). Mains include options of Megrelian khachapuri, a flatbread filled and topped

with contrasting cheeses (rubles 590); or Black Sea perch with jonjoli, the brine-pickled flowers of a Georgian shrub (rubles 980).

● Open 12pm-12am; 1905 Year Street, 2, Moscow, 123022; +7 495 651 8100; mykazbek.ru

CHESTNAYA KUHNYA

Translating as "Honest Kitchen", this is a modern Russian restaurant by chef Sergey Eroshenko. It succeeds in feeling like the kitchen of a country house, with a Russian tiled stove in one corner upstairs, and a light-filled verandah (pictured below). Sample dishes include Siberian river fish soup served with vorschmack (a salty pâté) on rye bread (rubles 590); Dagestan lamb loin kebab, mar-

inated in herbs (rubles 920); or whole Volga starlet (a type of sturgeon), smoked in a Russian wood stove (rubles 1,450).

● Open 12pm-12am; Sadovaya-Chernogryazskaya, 10, Moscow, 107078; +7 495 607 5090; chestnayakuhnya.ru

BELUGA

Housed on the second floor of the historic National Hotel, Beluga opened at the beginning of 2017. Moscow isn't short of places serving caviar, but this has the most extensive menu of caviar in the city, as well as Russian and International dishes.

The design by Anastasia Panibratova derives inspiration from the Swan Lake story, specifically the Swan Princess as depicted on the canvas of Mikhail Vrubel. It's a beautiful space, with a bar counter in the shape of a giant crystal caviar dish. In the dining room (pictured above), a row of crystal chandeliers leads to a clever artwork at one end of the dining room of Russian models in kokoshniks (Russian headdresses) taking selfies in front of a mirror. Start with a tasting of types of caviar, perhaps, or maybe Sosva Lake

fish with anchovy mousse (rubles 650); then follow that with a main course of salt-baked sturgeon with Abkhaz lemons and thyme (rubles 1,600), or stewed lambs' tongues with bulgur wheat (rubles 920).

● Open 12pm-12am; Hotel National Moscow, 2nd floor, 15/1 Mokhovaya ulitsa, 1, Moscow, 125009; +7 495 901 0336; national.ru/restaurant-beluga

SEVEN

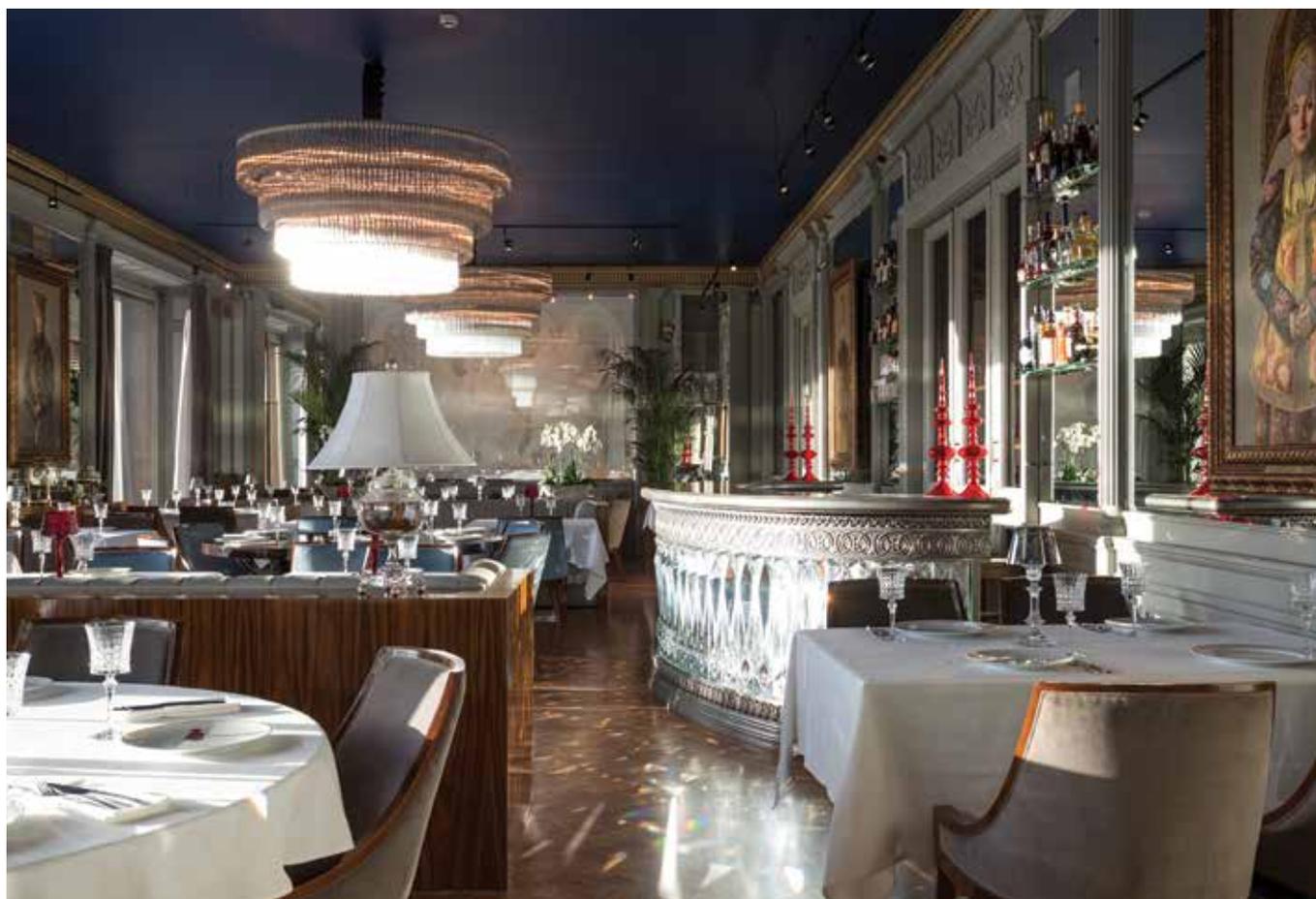
If you're travelling with your family or simply want a relaxing meal with excellent food, Seven is the place. The menu combines dishes from Russian, European and Asian cuisines in a friendly format, meaning even the fussiest of children will be happy. From the grill, try the Astrakhan sturgeon, as pictured below right (rubles 1,100), or chicken breast Romano with mayonnaise (rubles 490). Asian dishes include duck with hoisin sauce (rubles 890). The two floors have been designed by architectural studio DBA-group, with concrete, blackened metals, glass pendants and wood (pictured below left).

● Open breakfast weekdays 11am-2pm, weekends 11am-4pm; main service 11am-11pm; Dmitrovskiy Ln, 7, Moscow, 125009; +7 495 205 0277; sevenrest.ru

CAFÉ KRANZLER

Situated in the Kempinski Hotel, Café Kranzler is a name common to several Kempinskis, including Berlin. This one is styled after a European Grand Café dating from the late 19th century, successfully disguising its more recent construction. You can eat sophisticated mittel-European dishes here (Wiener schnitzel or beef stroganoff), but also more modern creations such as a three-deck caviar starter (served with three different vodkas), or pasta "Kamchatka" – orecchiette with Alaskan king crab, lemon and salmon roe (rubles 1,600). A dessert of Russian blinis with berries, sweetened sour cream and vanilla ice-cream (rubles 500) is suitably calorific.

● Open 10.30am-3am; Hotel Baltschug Kempinski, Ul Balchug, 1, Moscow, 115035; +7 499 503 0043; kempinski.com



Moscow isn't short of places serving caviar, but Beluga has the most extensive menu of caviar in the city.



If you're travelling with your family or simply want a relaxing meal with excellent food, Seven is the place.



BRIDGING THE GAP

The long-awaited opening of the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge heralds a wave of developments aimed at increasing connectivity throughout the Pearl River Delta.



Four man-made islands, a 22.9-kilometre-long stainless-steel bridge weighing some 400,000 tonnes, and the longest submerged sea tunnel in the world... This is the new Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge (HZMB), soon to be the world's longest cross-sea bridge and the jewel in the crown of a new wave of developments aimed at fostering greater integration between the cities of the Pearl River Delta (PRD).

The HZMB project – which totals 55 kilometres in length – began construction in December 2012 as part of a joint effort by Hong Kong, Macau and the Chinese mainland, though the idea for a connection across the Lingding Channel that separates the cities was originally floated back in 1983. Fast-forward 35 years and the bridge is nearly complete, with the opening slated for July 1 at the time of going to press.

NUMEROUS BENEFITS

The benefits of the HZMB will be twofold: a reduction in transportation times, and economic integration. In 2015, the PRD region accounted for 4.3 per cent of China's total population and 9.1 per cent of its GDP, according to the Hong Kong Trade and Development Council. With the Western PRD reachable in three hours from Hong Kong, its appeal for external investment will be given a handsome boost.

The HZMB Authority projects that daily passenger flow across the bridge will be about 56,000 people when it first opens, increasing to 230,000 by 2035. Between 90 and 140 buses, operated by a subsidiary of Hong Kong-based Shun Tak Holdings, which runs the Hong Kong-Macau TurboJet ferry service, will run daily between all three border checkpoints (every five minutes during peak hours). Fares are expected to be HK\$80 (around £8) to get to Zhuhai – significantly lower than the current HK\$220 (£21) ferry and HK\$130 (£12) coach costs using different routes.

The HZMB has been a major undertaking. Starting from Hong Kong, the bridge begins at the Hong Kong Boundary Crossing Facilities on an artificial island to the west of Lantau Island adjacent to Hong Kong International airport (HKIA). From here the 12-kilometre-long Hong Kong Link



Road runs west out into the Lingding Channel to the edge of the Hong Kong border.

The bridge then connects with a second artificial island that leads into the sea tunnel – a necessity to avoid obstructing the nearly 4,000 ships that use the channel daily – which extends 6.7 kilometres under the channel at a depth of 40 metres before emerging once again at a third artificial island. This then leads on to the main 22.9-kilometre stretch of the bridge, comprising a total of 2,156 connected box girders that cross the rest of the channel to the Zhuhai-Macau Boundary Crossing Facilities on the north-eastern edge of Macau. A further Zhuhai Link Road extends beyond this into the Chinese mainland.

TRAFFIC RULES

It's worth noting that drivers in Macau, Hong Kong and mainland China don't share the same traffic rules – Macau and Hong Kong drive on the left side of the road, UK style, but the mainland follows the US by driving on the right. Earlier this year the HZMB Authority declared that the entire bridge will follow mainland China's traffic rules, meaning all vehicles will have to keep to the right while on the bridge. Additionally, all tolls will have to be paid in renminbi, regardless of origin or destination – though you'll be able to pay using non-cash options such as bankcards, electronic wallets such as Alipay and WeChat Pay, and Autopay, which already exists for bridge and tunnel toll collection in Hong Kong.

It certainly hasn't all been smooth sailing for the bridge's development. Originally slated to open in 2016, the project has been plagued by delays and despite its expected opening this year, at the time of writing it still doesn't have a definitive launch date. Bset by workplace accidents as well as investigations into corruption surrounding contractors faking concrete test results, which led to further construction problems,

the overall cost of the bridge has exceeded the initial budget by at least HK\$11.8 billion (£1.13 billion) – around 30 per cent more than the original HK\$38 billion (£3.6 billion) projected cost.

HELPING THE TRADE

However, provided the bridge does indeed open this year, the gains will be seen across the three terminus cities immediately. For example, many of Macau's food imports and other supplies come via Hong Kong – currently a total of up to a day. Once the bridge is open, this transit time will be reduced to about 30 minutes.

Of course trade will be bolstered by greater interconnectivity across the Lingding Channel, but travellers and corporate event delegates also stand to benefit. Speaking with our sister publication Mix Meetings last year, Stephane de Montgros, co-founder and director of Riviera Events, noted that the bridge would open up facilities across all three cities to tourists and event organisers. "We have no doubt the governments of the different areas will continue to upgrade the border crossing experience, which will be key in offering a pleasant and smooth experience when travelling between the three areas. The roll-out of the e-gate system for both locals and foreigners [in 2016] has been a fantastic improvement," he said.

Other facilities designed to capitalise on the increased cross-flow of travellers include the Tuen Mun-Chek Lap Kok Link (TM-CLKL), a dual carriageway connecting the Hong Kong Boundary Crossing Facilities at Hong Kong airport to the city's Tuen Mun district on the western edge of the Kowloon Peninsula, which will improve access to the airport for travellers coming from the Shenzhen border.

Then there's the new SkyCity mixed-use complex at HKIA, set to open in 2020 between Terminal 2 and AsiaWorld-Expo, that will include retail, dining, entertainment

and commercial space, plus a second 1,000-room airport property from Regal Hotels Group.

THE GREATER BAY AREA

As well as providing an economic boost to Hong Kong, Zhuhai and Macau, China's government has broader plans to develop a Greater Bay Area that will comprise cities across Guangdong province including Guangzhou, Shenzhen, Foshan, Zhongshan, Dongguan, Huizhou, Zhaoqing and Jiangmen. The latter's local government, in preparation, plans to invest some RMB100 billion (£11.7 billion) for new industrial and property development to help integrate with its more developed neighbour cities.

Some sectors, though, do not stand to gain from the opening of the bridge, most notably the ferry companies, which are adapting to the likely hit to their business. Some operators such as Zhuhai High Speed Passenger Ferry Co are adjusting their strategies, planning to upgrade and focus more on marine tourism. Others, such as Cotai WaterJet, are partnering with airlines to offer their own form of enhanced connectivity across the channel. In February this year Cotai WaterJet entered into a codeshare agreement with Cathay Pacific (CX) that enables travellers to book a single itinerary through to Macau's Taipa Ferry Terminal on one of six daily ferries via the SkyPier at HKIA. As with air route codeshares, this means you can check your luggage all the way through to the final destination in Macau. Initially open to those travelling from Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Singapore and the US, the service is set to roll out across additional international markets in future.

The SkyPier itself connects to nine ports scattered throughout the Pearl River Delta (including Macau), with approximately 90 ferry trips operating each day between these ports and the airport. "SkyPier also provides

FACT FILE

- Total length of HZMB: 55km
- Length of primary cross-sea bridge: 22.9km
- Length of undersea tunnel: 6.7 km
- Length of Hong Kong Link Road: 12 km
- Length of Zhuhai Link Road: 13.4 km
- Macau-HKIA travel time: 30 minutes
- Zhuhai-HKIA travel time: 45 minutes
- Lifespan of HZMB: 120 years
- Bus services: 90-140 buses daily
- Bus fare Hong Kong-Zhuhai: HK\$80 (£8)
- Bus frequency: Peak hours every 5 minutes
Off-peak hours every 10-15 minutes
Night service every 15-30 minutes
- Toll: Cars RMB200 (£23) Trucks RMB200-300 (£23-35)

upstream check-in services for sea-to-air passengers from Macau,” said a spokesperson for the Airport Authority of Hong Kong. This feature is particularly geared towards incentive groups travelling to and from Macau via Hong Kong, especially when it comes to improved check-in procedures for travellers departing Macau.

Back in Hong Kong, the Airport Authority also has initiatives that enable event organisers to set up dedicated meet-and-greet counters for delegates in the terminal area, along with setting up dedicated containers for handling baggage for large groups, thus speeding up the baggage-handling process.

“If a conference is held in Macau and the group is using SkyPier ferries, the Airport Authority can make special arrangements with ferry operators, including chartering ferries tailored to the flight arrival time, shortening times at Hong Kong airport,” the spokesperson added.

These enhancements all make sense and add value, but it’s the HZMB that still forms

the backbone of HKIA’s plan to become the major hub connecting the PRD with the rest of the world. With this in mind, it is developing an Intermodal Transfer Terminal (ITT) at the airport that will connect to the Hong Kong Boundary Crossing Facilities via a bonded bridge.

The proposed location of the ITT is currently to the south of the SkyPier and will operate in a similar fashion, primarily serving tourists to and from Macau and Zhuhai who fly in and out of HKIA. Passengers coming from the western PRD via the HZMB will be able to enter the airport in one or two minutes from the Hong Kong Boundary Crossing Facilities without needing to go through extra border checks.

With travel time from Zhuhai to HKIA set to improve dramatically – from four hours to just 45 minutes – there’s every chance the HZMB will indeed bring about the Pearl River Delta integration that its proponents have long been touting.



Trade will be bolstered by greater interconnectivity across the Lingding Channel, but travellers and corporate event delegates also stand to benefit.



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Only allocated at the time of boarding with the cheapest tickets

FLEXIBILITY

Low-cost tickets rarely allow you to alter or amend flights – “flex” fares are usually more expensive

ENTERTAINMENT

Most airlines provide free in-flight entertainment, though many charge for headphones

ECONOMY À LA CARTE

Long-haul low cost is here to stay, although not in the way you might imagine.
What will future bring?

Confused? Some airlines sell up to six types of economy fares. The advent of Norwegian's long-haul transatlantic flights from the UK in 2014 shook up the aviation industry, and whether Norwegian continues to be independent or is bought by an operator such as IAG, the effect is clear – long-haul low cost is, well, here for the long haul.

Norwegian attracts passengers because of its low fares. It can offer such low prices because it has adopted the low-cost carrier (LCC) model for long haul. Without going into the nitty-gritty of what makes an LCC so efficient, one way of achieving a low ticket price is to strip out the extras and then get passengers to pay for them. Whether it's seat selection, checking-in a bag, or buying something to eat and drink on-board, Norwegian offers these as extras to that headline price that tempted you. And the approach is proving popular.

This success must have come as a bit of a shock. For years, when the bosses of existing airlines were asked whether they thought long-haul low cost was a feasible option, their answer was always the same: people might be prepared to pay for their food on a short trip, but they expected a meal to be provided on long haul. The same for seat selection, checked bags and a level of comfort. The consensus was clear – low cost worked short haul, but wouldn't work long haul. Then Norwegian consistently achieved load factors of more than 80 per cent, and continued to expand – this year alone it will take delivery of a further 11 Boeing 787-9 Dreamliners, as well as 12 Boeing 737 MAX 8s and two Boeing 737-800s, taking the average age of the fleet to 3.6 years. And the legacy airlines have had to change their tune.

A GAME CHANGER

Take British Airways. At first it downplayed the threat. The year before the long-haul operation started, Willie Walsh, chief of BA's owning company, IAG, said that Norwegian's entry was "not significant". Fast forward three years and it was significant enough for BA to launch direct route competition against Norwegian with flights from London Gatwick to Fort Lauderdale and to Oakland; two destinations it had ignored until Norwegian started flying to them. Then IAG announced its own low-cost airline – Level – which would commence long-haul low-cost flights out of Barcelona, traditionally an underserved airport, to Los Angeles, Oakland International, Punta Cana and Buenos Aires, and these flights have, apparently, done well. Finally, IAG has made a number of takeover bids for Norwe-

gian, the final result of which we were still waiting for at the time of going to press. The real effect Norwegian has had is elsewhere, however. It has demonstrated to other airlines that in search of a low price we are prepared to buy a flight-only fare, and then pay for what we actually want on top via add-ons – what the airlines call ancillary revenue. Not surprisingly, they are jumping on this bandwagon.

Lufthansa Group has announced new transatlantic hand-baggage only (HBO) fares this summer, along with its partners Swiss, Brussels Airlines and Austrian Airlines. As you'd expect, it's all about choice, or as Lufthansa puts it, the new fares will be "the least expensive option for price-conscious passengers only travelling with carry-on luggage and who do not require any ticket flexibility".

Alitalia, Delta and Air France-KLM all offer various versions of a "light" fare (HBO), while British Airways has introduced a new "Basic Economy" HBO fare, which includes in-flight meals, two-pieces of hand baggage and the use of Avios (the currency of its loyalty programme) as part payment.

IAG's Aer Lingus, meanwhile, is clear that as a result of competing with Ryanair

for two decades and nearly going bankrupt in the process, it is already very well placed to compete. Declan Kearney, former director of communications at Aer Lingus, said in April that the airline saw itself not as low-cost but as "value". It has offered HBO fares – what it calls a "Saver Fare" – since 2017.

"As far as the low-cost competition goes, we have long experience of this," Kearney said. "Look back to 2001 and we nearly went bankrupt, and our response was to become a low fares carrier. We ploughed that furrow, but we could see that we were also leaving money on the table, since we had a stripped down short haul and a long haul with a business cabin with bells and whistles. So, the model that evolved is that we are competitive on pricing. [Norwegian] might be €99 each way [transatlantic] and we are €159, but we would say that on a seven-and-a-half-hour flight, the extra £50 represents value for money. We think that when you're travelling the Atlantic in the middle of the night and you want a blanket and someone tries to charge you, it leaves a bad taste." Virgin Atlantic, meanwhile, has introduced three forms of economy, one of which is a HBO fare (see the table on page 50-51).

PILING ON THE POUNDS

Of course, whether or not you choose the least expensive fare, the widespread adoption of the practice has a number of implications. The fact that all the airlines have so quickly switched to this model is because of the power of the internet. When we search for a flight, the metasearch engines trawl the internet to find the cheapest price and HBO fares rank higher in the search because cheaper. When you click through to the airline's own website to find this fare, only then do you discover you will have to pay extra to check-in your bags or order a hot meal, but the bargain price has done its job and you are keen to book anyway.

For the airline, everything from this point onwards is a bonus. You are probably already going to pay extra for your bag, so while you are doing so, is there anything else they can sell you? Seat selection is something most cheap tickets now offer for an extra charge – those exit rows, bulkhead seats and simply the rows at the front or at the sides in certain cabins that offer more comfort, or in some cases, even extra legroom.

Then there is the prospect of paying for a better meal in economy – British Airways has been offering this option since 2015 (see a review of it on our website, business-traveller.com). BA's new Basic Economy (HBO) fare does not allow seat selection, but you still get in-flight meals, in-flight entertain-



The fact that all the airlines have so quickly switched to this model is because of the power of the internet. When we search for a flight, the metasearch engines trawl the internet to find the cheapest price.

ment (IFE), headphones and a blanket. In contrast, new low-cost airlines such as Primera and Level assume that passengers will happily bring their own blanket (or do without), already have an iPad for in-flight entertainment, and would prefer to purchase something from a menu rather than having the existing economy food placed in front of them. And how long will it be before the HBO fare – or perhaps any of the fares, even the more expensive ones – also offers the option of wifi at a reduced rate if pre-bought, or of buying premium entertainment over and above that offered on the IFE system? All of which will be great, so long as it doesn't lead to a stripping out of the existing package.

CHANGING TACTICS

Ironically, Norwegian, the airline that started this revolution, at least this time

is realising that although people love low prices, they also enjoy comfort. Norwegian first announced its long-haul low-cost fares in 2014. Fast forward to 2018, and it's clear that it has had more success than it imagined in filling its premium cabin, and that is where it makes the most money. As a result, new deliveries of its B787-9 Dreamliners have a larger premium cabin – 56 seats as opposed to 35. Norwegian also needs a to attract business travellers, who are more likely to pay for this comfort, and so it is increasing the frequencies on routes such as London Gatwick to New York, where a third daily flight will start from October 2018 using these newly configured aircraft. Just as the other airlines borrow Norwegian's low-cost tactics, Norwegian is trying to make some money by flying more people in premium. It's similar to what has happened short haul

with Easyjet, as it has increased its focus on business people who travel frequently, with great success.

For those of you reading this in premium economy or business class and thinking these developments won't affect you, think again. Once airlines get us used to paying for "choice", it will come into every class of cabin. If you could lower the price of your premium ticket by, say, not having the meal you always complain about, and instead have the option of choosing the meal you want, wouldn't you be tempted? The technology is already there to do so, even when you are on-board. IAG's Level airline has launched a new "Pair and Pay" mobile payment option, allowing passengers to purchase in-flight services using their personal devices. The technology enables customers to connect devices to their seat-back screen, and pay for elements including food, drinks, wifi,

LOW-COST FLIGHTS WHAT IS – AND ISN'T – INCLUDED IN AN ECONOMY TICKET

CHEAPEST
CHEAPER
CHEAP

AIRLINE	AER LINGUS	AMERICAN AIRLINES	BRITISH AIRWAYS	DELTA	EMIRATES	AIR FRANCE-KLM
PRODUCT NAME	Saver	Basic Economy	Basic Economy	Basic Economy	Economy Special	Light
BAGGAGE	10 kg	Size limit only	23 kg	Size limit only	7 kg 20 kg	12 kg
FOOD AND DRINK					*	
SEAT SELECTION						
FLEXIBLE TICKET						
EXTRAS						
PRODUCT NAME	Smart	Main Cabin	Economy	Main Cabin	Economy Saver	Standard
BAGGAGE	10 kg 23 kg	23 kg	23 kg 23 kg	23 kg	7 kg 30 kg	12 kg 23 kg
FOOD AND DRINK					*	
SEAT SELECTION						
FLEXIBLE TICKET						
EXTRAS						
PRODUCT NAME	Flex	Main Cabin Extra	Standard Economy	Delta Comfort	Economy Flex	Standard Plus
BAGGAGE	10 kg 23 kg	23 kg	23 kg 23 kg	23 kg	7 kg 30 kg	12 kg 23 kg
FOOD AND DRINK				(premium menu)	*	
SEAT SELECTION						
FLEXIBLE TICKET						
EXTRAS		(34 in+)				
		Similar packages on British Airways, Finnair and Iberia	Economy is called "World Traveller" for long-haul flights		*No alcohol served on Saudi Arabia flights	Similar to packages on Alitalia and Delta

amenity kits and duty-free products. Level is planning to use the technology to allow for the payment of movies, TV shows and music.

So will all the airlines follow suit? Not according to Akbar Al Baker, chief executive of Qatar Airways Group and also a major shareholder in IAG. I asked him if Qatar Airways would start charging for exit rows in economy or for food.

“We don’t want to do this,” he said. “It becomes too complex to administer all these different charges. British Airways has to do it because of the competition. I feel that there will always be people who want to travel on full-service carriers. When you start paying for everything on a low-cost carrier, it is not a very big difference from what you will get in economy on a long-haul aircraft.”

What Al Baker means by this is that if you bought the LCC fare and then added in a

cabin bag, the meals and the rest, it would, in fact, end up costing a similar amount to an economy ticket with a legacy airline.

“There is a perception that it is cheap, but when you buy something and then keep paying more for it, some people don’t like it,” Al Baker added. “Many think going on an LCC is good value for money. Well, maybe on short haul, but on long haul, if you eat two meals you have already paid the price difference to a full-service airline.” He may be right. We will see.

LONG-HAUL LOW-COST FORERUNNERS

Back in 1977, Freddie Laker’s Skytrain broke the transatlantic cartel of British Airways, Pan Am and TWA by ushering in a low-fares revolution. One-way tickets from Gatwick to New York JFK cost £59 (around £400 in today’s money) on a first-come, first-

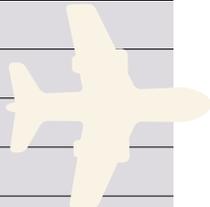
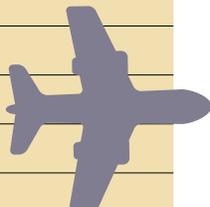
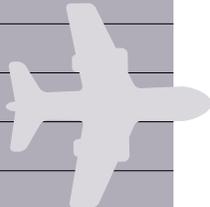
served basis. At the time, it wasn’t uncommon for people to travel from other parts of the UK to London on night trains and buses so they could obtain a good place in the queue at Victoria station, as tickets were only sold there or at Gatwick Airport.

Skytrain was followed a few years later by US low-cost carrier People Express – I once bought a Gatwick-New York Newark return flight for £130; bear in mind that taxes and charges in those days were just a few dollars.

Back then, it was thought that low transatlantic fares were here to stay. But we were wrong. Skytrain and People Express got their sums wrong. Both failed for a variety of reasons, one of which was predatory pricing by rivals. For decades thereafter, cheap fares were only available if you travelled out of season and met restrictions.

Alex McWhirter

🧳 personal item 🎒 carry on 🧳 checked baggage 🍴 meals 🍷 alcohol 🎧 headphones 🎮 IFE 🛏 blanket and pillow
 ✓ included ✗ not included ↔ extra legroom

	LEVEL	LUFTHANSA	NORWEGIAN PORTUGAL	PRIMERA AIR	TAP AIR PORTUGAL	VIRGIN ATLANTIC	
	Level	Economy Light	Economy Lowfare	Light	Discount	Economy Light	
	🧳 Size limit only	🧳 8 kg	🧳 10 kg	🧳 10 kg	🧳 8 kg	🧳 10 kg	
	✗	🍴🍷	✗	✗	🍴🍷	🍴🍷	
	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	
	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	
	🎮	🎮🎧🛏	🎮	✗	🎮🎧🛏	🎮🎧🛏	
	Level Plus	Economy Classic	Economy Lowfare	Comfort	Basic	Economy Classic	
	🧳🧳 23 kg	🧳 8 kg 🧳 23 kg	🧳 10 kg 🧳 20 kg	🧳 10 kg 🧳 23 kg	🧳 8 kg 🧳 23 kg	🧳 10 kg 🧳 23 kg	
	🍴🍷	🍴🍷	🍴🍷	🍴	🍴🍷	🍴🍷	
	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	
	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	
	🎮	🎮🎧🛏	🎮	✗	🎮🎧🛏	🎮🎧🛏	
	Level Flex	Economy Flex	Economy Flex	Flex	Classic	Economy Delight	
	🧳🧳 23 kg	🧳 8 kg 🧳 23 kg	🧳 15 kg 🧳 20 kg	🧳 15 kg 🧳 23 kg	🧳 8 kg 🧳 23 kg	🧳 10 kg 🧳 23 kg	
	🍴🍷	🍴🍷	🍴🍷	🍴	🍴🍷	🍴🍷	
	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	
	🎮	🎮🎧🛏	🎮	✗	🎮🎧🛏	🎮🎧🛏↔(34 in+)	
		Similar packages on Austrian Airlines, Air Canada and Swiss			This new fare structure begins September 1, 2018		



1

CASHMERE TRAVEL SET

Out-class those in business and first with this 100 per cent cashmere set in light grey by Le Kasha. The tube socks, eye mask and blanket come with a cashmere storage bag and will ensure that you arrive at your destination in comfort and style.

Price: The set is priced €885 conranshop.co.uk



6

MUBI

Keeping boredom at bay is difficult on a long-haul flight and some airlines' IFE can be underwhelming. For something a little more intellectually stimulating, try curated streaming service Mubi, which focuses on bringing subscribers arthouse cinema from around the globe. With 30 films a month and a new one added each day, the emphasis is on quality not quantity.



Price: €9/month. mubi.com

CONVENIENT FLIGHT

Upgrade your economy experience with these unique products.

5

EVOLUTION S3 PILLOW

Even if you get a pillow on your economy flight, it's often little more than a token gesture and you won't avoid the dreaded cricked neck. This memory-foam design by Cabeau is one of the best. It can be strapped to the seat, is made from quick-drying fabric and comes in three colours.

Available in three colours.

Price: €35. coolstuff.com



2

SONY WH-1000XM2

Wireless, Bluetooth and noise-cancelling, these headphones measure your head size and the atmospheric pressure to provide the best listening experience. They come with a cable to connect to IFE via small jack connector.

Price: €370. sony.com

3

AESOP

Immediate Moisture Facial Hydrosol Refresh yourself on the go with this facial mist infused with rose petal, bergamot and chamomile.

Price: €18 per 60ml. aesop.com



4

FLARE AUDIO ISOLATE

The hubbub of fellow travellers, in-flight announcements and the monotonous drone of the engines can be oh-so wearisome on a flight. Block it all out with these smart reusable earplugs, which boast a decibel reduction of 35dB. They come with foam buds in three sizes for comfort.

Price: from €28. flareaudio.com



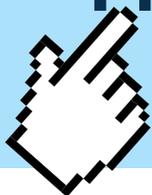


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CARD, DOCUMENT AND PHONE SECURITY

How to minimise the risk and impact of theft while travelling



Theft, especially credit card and identity theft, has been a long-standing problem for business travellers abroad. Be-Travelwise, a UK-based travel risk management organisation, deems petty non-violent crime to be one of the most common risks business travellers face. According to Financial Fraud Action, lost and stolen credit cards cost UK cardholders

£96.3m in 2016, while counterfeit card fraud cost £36.9m. So how can you avoid falling victim to it?

MAKE COPIES

Theft or loss of credit cards and other important documents can happen no matter how careful you are. One of the best ways of reducing stress and inconvenience if this does happen is to make paper copies of important

documents, travel and financial, before leaving home. These usually include passport, credit cards, driving licence, hotel reservations and insurance documents. Seasoned travellers recommend making two copies of each – one to take with you, and the other to leave at home with a family member or colleague.

When making copies of passports or emailing/faxing them, some travellers suggest adding

a watermark to the document for added security. Microsoft Word has a watermark function, and you can add your own wording – “Only for hotel registration purposes”, for example – across the page, to deter identity theft.

PHONE SECURITY

Pickpockets target expensive-looking mobile phones. In countries with high street crime such as Brazil or South Africa, it can make sense to use a cheap local phone and SIM while there and keep your valuable phone back at the hotel or well hidden, not brandishing it in public.

Before leaving, make sure you back up your mobile phone. iPhone users should also set the inbuilt “Find My iPhone” function to work (via Settings: Your Name: iCloud: Find My iPhone: on), so that you can erase the information on it remotely if you need to, as soon as your phone either has service or is connected to wifi. This can be done by signing into iCloud via an internet browser, finding your phone under “All Devices” and selecting “Erase iPhone”. As for Android devices, there are free apps such as “Find My Device” (on the Google Play app store) that work in a similar

way – but make sure you install them first. If your phone does go missing, call your phone provider immediately so they can trace or block it.

DIVERSIFY YOUR ASSETS

Do not keep all of your money or documents in one place. Many travellers advise stowing cash and cards separately. Others suggest taking one credit/payment card out with you and keeping the others in the hotel safe. Storing cash in concealed pockets on your person is also a good idea.

OUTSMART THE THIEVES

Among the measures you can take to prevent petty theft from happening, there are also ways to outsmart your assailant in the event that it does. “Skimming” credit cards is the practice where your card is taken out of your sight for a minute or so, read by a special electronic reader, and cloned before being returned to you. The simple solution to this is to not let the card out of your sight – admittedly that’s not always as easy as it sounds. Some travellers recommend scratching the CCV codes off the back of credit cards to render them useless to criminals who steal

cards. Either remember the final three-digit code or write it down and store it in a safe, separate spot.

An old trick that is simple, but effective is to carry a fake wallet to hand over during a robbery. One could even fill it with out-of-date credit cards to make the ruse all the more convincing.

Another tried and trusted tactic is to conceal valuables in a money belt underneath your clothing.

BE AWARE

Above all, being aware of your surroundings is key to staying safe as a business traveller. This includes the standard warnings of avoiding dark, unpopulated streets and ignoring strangers who might try to harass you, even if the strangers appear to be well dressed and sophisticated.

Most importantly, know the local emergency phone numbers. Although the European Commission advocates 112 as an emergency phone number across the European Union, some countries in the EU have their own numbers. In the US the emergency number is 911.

Olivia Hultgren



Do not keep all of your money or documents in one place. Many travellers advise stowing cash and cards separately.



Oris Hammerhead limited edition

MAKING WAVES

Accessible prices, retro styling and support for environmental issues have shored up Oris watches' sharper, more modern identity

One hundred and fourteen years old this year, Oris was once one of the biggest watch producers in the world. Founded in Holstein, near Basel, by the 1930s it had grown to encompass a network of factories across Switzerland. At its peak in 1969 – before cheap quartz battery watches came into vogue – Oris employed 900 people, making 1.2 million watches a year.

An industry-wide crisis in the 1970s was caused by the European market being flooded with cheap quartz-battery imports; this took the company down to a few dozen employees. That was followed by an ill-fated amalgamation, then by a management buyout. But during the 1980s and 90s, Oris began to enjoy a slow revival.

Oris remains a bit of an outsider, but is not esoteric; its watches are the kind of unassuming, down-to-earth creations that suit almost anyone, and with production still in the tens of thousands, it's not exactly an artisan business either. But in

the last 20 years it has found itself taking a back seat to the likes of Longines and TAG Heuer when it comes to brand recognition.

WIDE RANGE OF WATCHES

To look at its recent creations on paper, Oris might seem unfairly overlooked. It has successfully manufactured a mechanical depth-gauge dive watch; a mechanical altimeter for pilots or mountaineers; quick-set world-time watches; and a return to in-house movement making for its 110th anniversary, with a ten-day power reserve mechanism.

But it has only been with a much less complicated, retro-styled dive watch that Oris has found an identity that translates. The Divers Sixty-Five is a reworking of – you guessed it – a dive watch from 1965. It has been a break-out hit since 2015, spawn-



In many ways,
Oris is the ultimate
watch company for
millennials



Oris Divers Sixty-Five;

ing nearly 50 variations, encompassing different dial colours, typography and sizes, plus the on-trend addition of a limited edition in a bronze case. There was even a model produced last year dedicated to Movember, and while that may make you cringe, the brand's commitment to good causes is impressive. At the core of the company's agenda – mirroring its focus on dive watches, both in the form of the Divers Sixty-Five and the recently redesigned, chunkier and more serious Aquis – are initiatives geared around environmental awareness and conservation.

Since 2010 Oris has partnered with the Australian Marine Conservation Society to work on preserving the Great Barrier Reef; in 2016 it partnered with a non-profit organisation called Pelagios Kakunja to track hammerhead sharks; last year it announced work with the Coral Restoration Foundation to preserve endangered coral (the associated watch even comes in a box made partly from algae, in the name of reducing its use of plastics).

WITH A TAD OF PHILOSOPHY

This year, Oris released the Aquis “Source of Life”, a watch that sounds like it should

come with some sort of elixir for immortality, but instead “invites us to think philosophically about how we care for the world's water sources”.

Such philosophical ponderings might sound a bit worthy, but even if the corporate social responsibility doesn't float your boat (pun intended), the watches are attractive in their own right, and priced competitively; £1,150 upwards for the Diver's Sixty-Five and £2,020 for the Aquis Hammerhead limited edition. Both use automatic Sellita movements: reliable, robust workhorses, and not to be sniffed at, but not the kind of thing you will wax lyrical about to a fellow watch connoisseur. That's not the Oris way – it uses the right tools for the job, and brings it in at a price that's less eye-watering than most mainstream Swiss brands.

In many ways, Oris is the ultimate watch company for millennials, bringing together realistic

pricing, sustainability, well-judged retro-flavoured design and a notable absence of “luxury brand” pomposity or arrogance. But if the “millennial” word turns you off, there's maturity to Oris's catalogue that eases any feelings of hipsterish cash-ins. If there's a criticism to be made of their current offer, it's that some of the ranges haven't kept up with the brand's sudden lurch into trendiness and now look a little stale by comparison, but Oris knows very well that the watches that make headlines aren't always the ones that sell out.

Chris Hall



Oris Staghorn Restoration Limited Edition

4 HOURS IN... NEW YORK

Lower Manhattan may not be packed with iconic sights, but SoHo and Greenwich Village are unrivalled for food, drink and shopping



THE EVOLUTION STORE

SoHo, an abbreviation of south of Houston (Street), is a flâneurs' playground. There's still a slightly bohemian feel, but rather than artists' studios, the cobbled streets are now home to shops of every stripe, from the high-end fashion of Prada to the classic designs of J Crew. Shopping is focused between Broadway west to Sixth Avenue and Houston Street south to Canal Street, but for something a little different, head further north into Greenwich Village. Goods for the Study on 8th Street sells covetable stationery, while The

Evolution Store on Broadway is filled with collectibles on a scientific/natural history theme. Look upon a visit as being in a museum, with the benefit that all the exhibits, which include animal skulls and meteorites, are up for sale. theevolutionstore.com

PARM

Few cities do sandwiches as well as the Big Apple. Whether it's a salt beef Reuben on rye with sauerkraut and Swiss cheese, a bagel piled high with cream cheese and salmon, or a meatball sub, this is a glut-

ton's paradise. Court Street Grocers in LaGuardia Place, Greenwich Village is a contender for the crown of New York's best Reuben. Bagel aficionados should hotfoot it to Black Seed on Elizabeth Street in Nolita (north of Little Italy), which some claim makes the best in the world. If you have a soft spot for Italian-American specialities, head to Mulberry Street in Little Italy and order the Chicken Parm (parmigiana) at the aptly named, retro-styled Parm – crisp breaded chicken, rich tomato sauce and oodles of mozzarella in a soft roll (prepare to make a mess). parmnyc.com

WASHINGTON SQUARE PARK

In the warmer months, get your food “to go” and stroll to Washington Square Park in Greenwich Village. This is a great place to get a sense of the city and its diverse inhabitants. Its location by New York University’s campus means there are plenty of students studying and relaxing, alongside office workers catching an hour of sun, and street artists and musicians – it’s prime real estate for people-watching. The Washington Arch (built in 1892) is a mini replica of the Arc de Triomphe, while those hoping to cool off when the city gets too hot can be found splashing in the fountain. The park’s history is equally varied and interesting – it started life as a cemetery, before becoming a parade ground, then a favoured haunt of the well-to-do, followed by a hotbed of political ferment. nycgovparks.org



HOTEL HUGO

The bar scene in SoHo is something special. In winter, head for one of the underground speakeasies. You could certainly do worse than The Ship on Lafayette Street, with its stylish, contemporary nautical theme. Make a beeline for one of the comfortable white leather booths or perch at the bar and enjoy potent concoctions, in subtler combinations than some of the blousy mixes favoured by many a cocktail bar nowadays. Come summer, drinks are best enjoyed while ogling a city skyline, and New York boasts many pleasing angles to choose from. One of the best can be admired from Hotel Hugo on Greenwich Street. Take the lift up to the top floor and watch the sun sink behind Hoboken across the Hudson River in New Jersey, drink in hand. hotelhugony.com

The Evolution Store on Broadway is filled with collectibles on a scientific/natural history theme. Look upon a visit as being in a museum.



GRAND BANKS

While it’s still just light, walk off the potency of your cocktail with a riverside amble. Around 15 minutes away by foot is Grand Banks – a great dining option, even if you’re not quite ravenous after your earlier sandwich. Open between April and September, this floating restaurant on a boat moored off Pier 25 at Hudson River Park specialises in seafood, with oysters a particular focus. Get your timing right and you can enjoy native oysters grown in the waters around New York State itself. Of course, the slippery shellfish are not for everyone, but those with an aversion will find plenty of other dishes to tempt, from lobster rolls to soft-shell crab or caviar. Bookings are not taken, but visit after 8pm and things should have quietened down. grandbanks.nyc





ASK PETER

Letters

Piotr Kalita is related with air transport market for almost 20 years. He is specializing in corporate and diplomatic travel segment. Have a question? - ask Piotr. Mail your question to: redakcja@businessstraveller.pl

Extra luggage

Some colleagues from my department are flying to India. They are going to have a few days' stopover in London, where they will pick up materials for their presentation. Overall, they will collect seven packages, each weighing about 15-20 kilograms. What fee will they have to pay for taking those additional packages on board? Do I need to report such additional baggage to the airline in advance? Won't there be any problems at the airport? They are flying with British Airways.

Dominika

Dear Dominika,

All passengers travelling on British Airways flights in the Economy Class are entitled to one piece of luggage weighing not more than 23 kilograms and 90x75x43 centimetres in size, as well as two cabin bags: one smaller piece (56x45x25cm) and one slightly larger (40x30x15cm). Each cabin bag must also not weigh more than 23 kilograms. In addition to these limits, you can take additional checked-in baggage, but for an extra charge.

Theoretically, additional baggage should be reported to the airline in advance due to the aircraft's capacity constraints. For some time now there is an option to register and pay for additional luggage online in the "manage your booking" tab. Many airlines have provided this functionality on their websites. British Airways allows you to pay up to 10 extra pieces of luggage.

Please note that the additional luggage should be of standard size, in this case up to 23 kilograms in weight and 90x75x43 centimetres in size. An extra charge of £120 per item applies if you pay online or by telephone, and £140 if you choose to pay at the airport. I suggest you use the first option, as then you will have a guarantee in form of written confirmation of the additional luggage. If you choose to pay at the last minute at the airport, you may find that the luggage holds (cargo bins) are full and that the extra luggage must fly on a different flight.

Concur system

I made a reservation for my boss on the Concur system, but I didn't want to print out a ticket yet. After three days, the system cancelled the booking, so I made it once again, but the boss was still uncertain which flight to choose. The system again cancelled my booking, and now when I try to book the flight, the system offers a much higher price. In addition, I get a message that I need to buy the ticket immediately after booking the flight. Why can't I extend my reservation? I want to pay a lower price, not a higher one.

Wioletta

Dear Wioletta,

In your specific case, Concur system (i.e. one of the systems for booking flights directly by companies or travel agents) worked properly. You have probably unknowingly succeeded in breaking the airline's regulations prohibiting the blocking of seats for purposes other than the purchase of tickets.

Promotional prices require that the final purchase transaction and ticketing take place within three days of the booking being made. Failure to purchase the ticket will automatically cancel the booking. Re-blocking a seat at the lowest fare without the intention of buying a ticket is a prohibited practice as it significantly disrupts the functioning of the sales monitoring and management systems. That's why, the system consistently deleted all subsequent attempts to block cheaper seats.

The lowest fares are addressed to the tourist segment and come with many restrictions, including the necessity of immediate ticket purchase.

You always have the option to book a seat for business customers. More expensive Economy Class fares don't need to be redeemed within three days of booking. Therefore, they are available until the last minute before departure and can be changed free of charge. However, such a flexible ticket is also considerably more expensive.



SIEMENS

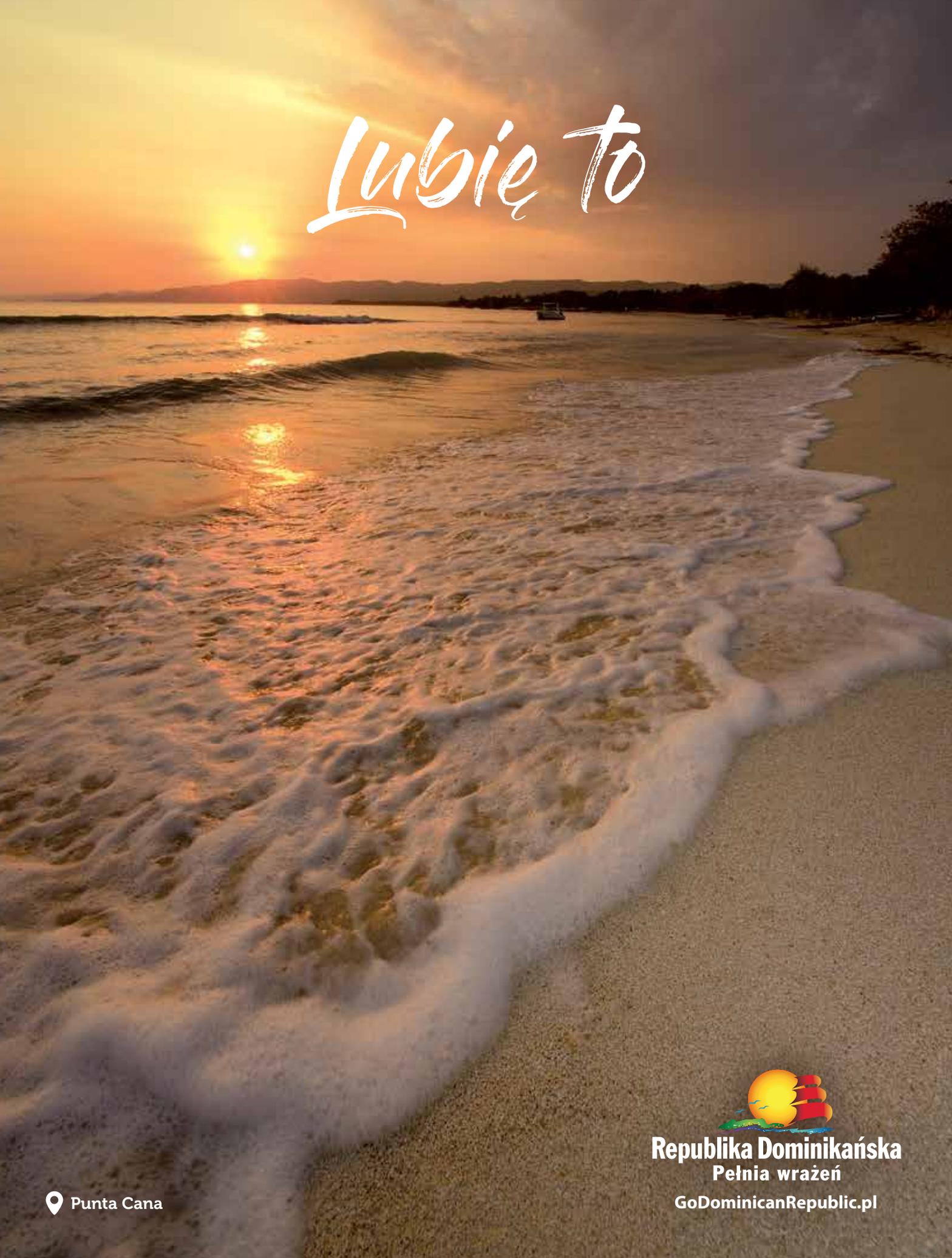
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