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JULY/AUGUST 2019 N°7-8/2019 (105) 9,60 PLN (8% VAT included)

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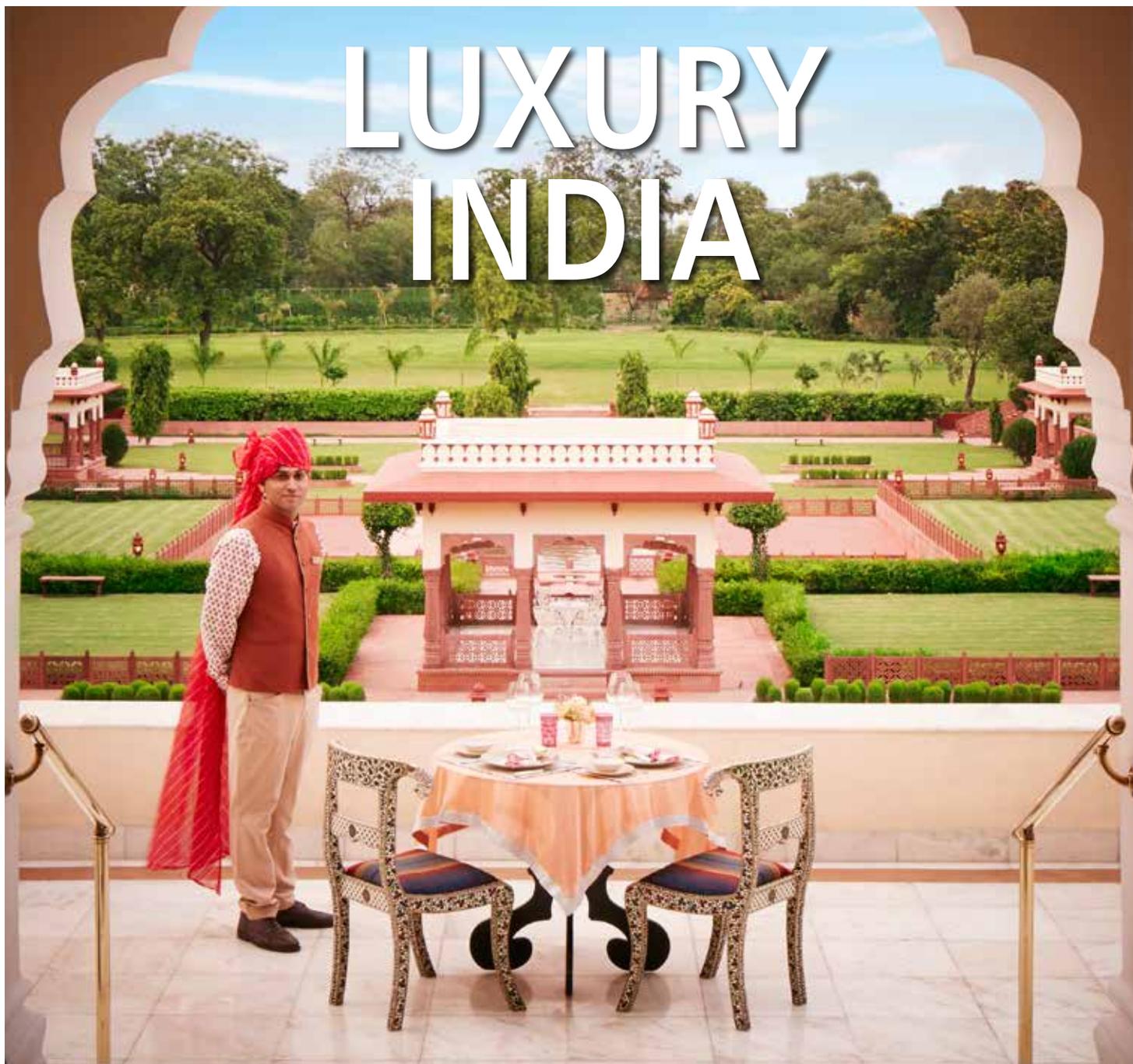
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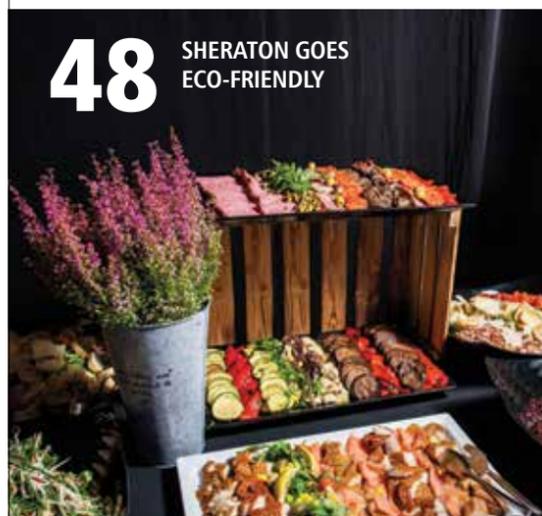


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tel.: +44 20 7821 2700
www.panaceapublishing.com
www.businesstraveller.com

In the US "Business Traveller" is published at 303 Fifth Avenue, 1308, NY 10016, tel.: 1 212 725 3500.
In Germany "Business Traveller" is published at Schulstrasse 34, 80634 Munich, tel.: 89 167 9971, fax: 89 167 9937. In Denmark "Business Traveller" is published at Rymarksvej 46, 2900 Hellerup, tel.: 45 3311 4413, fax: 45 3311 4414. In Hungary "Business Traveller" is published at 1074 Budapest, Munkas utca 9, tel.: 36 1266 5853. In Hong Kong "Business Traveller Asia-Pacific and China" are published at Suite 405 4/F Chinachem Exchange Square, 1 Hoi Wan Street, Quarry Bay, tel.: 852 2594 9300, fax: 852 2519 6846.
In the Middle East "Business Traveller Middle East" is published jointly by Motivate Publishing, PO Box 2331, Dubai UAE, tel.: 9714 282 4060, and Perry Publications. In Africa "Business Traveller Africa" is published by Future Publishing (Pty) Ltd, PO Box 3355, Rivonia 2128, South Africa, tel.: 27 11 803 2040.
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A SPA WITH THE VIEW OF THE HIMALAYAS

India is a country that you can either fall in love with right away, or look at with disbelief. One thing is for sure, India is a captivating place. After all, it's not just a country, but also a whole subcontinent - impossible to fully explore and absorb on merely one trip. For many tourists the very first visit to India is a foretaste of the country's numerous landmarks and attractions, as well as an incentive to want to return here soon. To enter India you need a visa or, more conveniently, the "e-visa", which since recently has also been available for Polish citizens. Forget about long queues at the embassy - now all the visa formalities can be done online.

Starting September 2019, travellers eager to visit India, will also have an option to fly with LOT Polish Airlines on board its state-of-the-art B787 Dreamliner aircraft. The service will be running 5 times a week. Also this year, LOT will offer charter flights on Warsaw-Goa route served by the carrier's fleet of Dreamliners with Business Class cabin.

To meet the expectations of wealthy foreign visitors, Indian investors have built a number of excellent hotels and have done their best to present the country in the most attractive fashion. In this way the world has learnt about the Indian state of Kerala, famous for its Ayurvedic massage and treatment, beaches, national parks, spices and tea gardens. Affluent tourists also head to refined Himalayan spa resorts, offering picturesque views, often located in national parks with the opportunity to see the wildlife in their natural habitats. And to top up your unforgettable visit to India, you can always book a relaxing stay in one of the luxury beach resorts situated in the Andaman Islands.

To learn more about this extremely exciting country, read our cover article and... have a beautiful holiday!

Marzena Mróz
MARZENA MRÓZ
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

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**Luxury apartments
in ♥ of Jurata**

LOT INAUGURATES ITS BEIRUT SERVICE



LOT Polish Airlines has inaugurated its new connection. Flights to the capital of Lebanon, Beirut, are scheduled four times a week in June, September, and October, and five times a week in July and August. One of the planes operating the route will be Embraer 195, which accommodates from 112 to 118 passengers, depending on the version. LOT's new connection is addressed to tourist and business traffic. The estimated time of flight from Warsaw to Beirut is 3 hours 25 minutes and 3 hours 40 minutes from the Beirut to Warsaw. The plane will depart from Warsaw Chopin Airport at 22:30 to arrive in Beirut at 02:55 local time the next day. The return flight will take off at 03:50 local time, with the estimated time of arrival at 06:30 at Warsaw Chopin Airport. The timetable was designed in such a way to allow for a convenient time of transfer in Warsaw on the way to airports in Western Europe, Northern Europe, and the Balkans. lot.com



**World's oldest
airline cares
for the climate**

The Royal Dutch Airlines has officially begun its 100th anniversary celebrations. The world's oldest airline has decided to focus everyone's attention on the future of civil aviation in terms of climate and environment protection. As a leader in introducing changes towards sustainable aviation, KLM has invited other carriers, customers, shareholders and the entire industry to cooperate under the slogan "Fly Responsibly".

Worldwide, the aviation industry accounts for 2-3% of CO2 emissions as a result of human activity. This number is constantly growing, partly because more and more people want to discover the world and for many people air travel has become achievable. Like any other industry, aviation must do everything possible to minimise its impact on the environment while maximising its positive impact on society. As the first airline to celebrate its 100th anniversary, KLM is widely recognized as a pioneer in the aviation industry. One hundred years ago, the greatest concern of aviation - and thus KLM - was flight safety. Over the years, the aviation industry has worked together to implement standards and improve overall safety. One hundred years later KLM feels ob-



MOTEL ONE IN WARSAW

On 1 July, a widely-recognized German chain of budget hotels Motel One opened its doors in Warsaw.

The original and inexpensive (prices at Warsaw property start at PLN259) hotel chain was masterminded by German businessman Dieter Müller. Today the chain has 72 hotels situated in 10 European countries.

Bright and austere in their architectural simplicity, Motel One properties are distinguished by clever and creative usage of space available in the centres of large cities. One example of this concept can be Motel One Berlin-Upper West with its splendid One Lounge bar located on the 10th floor of the building with a breath-taking view of the German capital's cityscape. Offering 333 rooms, Warsaw's Motel One is located on Tamka Street in the centre of the capital, and is very well communicated with the city's major landmarks.



liged to do everything to ensure that the next generations have something to visit on Earth. That is why, the airline calls on the entire aviation industry to work together, as it did a hundred years ago on safety issues. Again, only together, air carriers can face the new challenges to effectively protect the climate and the planet. Read more about KLM's "Fly Responsibly" initiative at flyresponsibly.klm.com



Samsung Galaxy Tab S5e

Samsung Galaxy Tab S5e is a lightweight and slim tablet designed for work and mobile entertainment. Its 10.5-inch AMOLED screen provides superb picture quality and a high capacity battery lasts up to 15 hours of video playback. The tablet also features quad speakers tuned by AKG for a rich surround sound experience, as well as Dolby Atmos technology, which provides 3-D surround sound.

If needed, Galaxy Tab S5e can quickly turn into a mobile office with a dedicated keyboard* that also acts as a protective case. The Tab S5e syncs seamlessly with your Galaxy smartphone, making it extremely easy to answer voice calls or text messages from your tablet. A fingerprint sensor conveniently built in the power button allows you to securely unlock your tablet with a single touch. Depending on the version, Galaxy Tab S5e offers up to 4 GB of RAM and 64 GB of ROM memory, as well as support for up to 512 GB of external memory in the form of a microSD card.

Galaxy Tab S5e is a source of mobile entertainment for the whole family, offering parents the option to filter the content in a non-invasive way. With the start screen function, you can now easily block the access to unwanted content, as well as monitor and limit the time your offspring spends with the tablet.

*Samsung Keyboard Cover is sold separately.

PRESS MATERIALS, FOTOLIA



CERTINA - A NEW EDITION OF THE CLASSIC WATCH

The Swiss watchmaker presents a new version of its popular maritime model from the past. With its stainless steel "mesh" bracelet the DS PH200M looks a truly elegant piece, indeed. The heart of the timer remains the same - it's the Powermatic 80 movement with an 80-hour power reserve. The predecessor to the DS PH200M dates back to 1967. The look of the DS PH200M comes straight from the Swinging Sixties, but its technology, places it firmly in the modern day: the black dial with red accent features, the black unidirectional graduated bezel and the turtle embossed in relief on the

case back, to name a few examples. Yet, the new model leaves no time for nostalgia. The 42.8 mm diameter stainless steel case, the Super-LumiNova coated hands and indices, and the innovative Powermatic-80 automatic calibre with 80 hours power reserve provide a constant reminder that this watch is undoubtedly set in the here and now. Another brand new feature is the pair of straps that come with the watch: made from Milanese stainless steel and blue-grey Nato. The sophisticated quick-change system allows the strap to be replaced easily without the need for any tools. Price: PLN3090; certina.pl

15 YEARS OF MAMAISON LE REGINA WARSAW

For 15 years, Mamaison Le Regina Warsaw hotel has been home away from home for its numerous guests, while La Rotisserie restaurant managed by head chef Piotr Szulc is known to serve some of the most delicious dishes in the city. This five-star hotel is located in the Warsaw's New Town (Nowe Miasto). In the three-storey historical building, faithfully restored in the style characteristic for 18th century palaces, guests can enjoy 61 air-conditioned rooms and suites, stylishly decorated and offering a wide range of amenities. Especially popular are the rooms with a terrace, situated on the top floor. The hotel also features a quiet courtyard with a beautifully landscaped garden and a picturesque fountain, as well as an exquisite, small restaurant called La Rotisserie. One of the cosiest spots in the hotel is its lobby with a fireplace, known for its warm and friendly atmosphere. After a hard day of work, it's worth spending an hour or two in the property's leisure zone designed in style of ancient bathhouses and comprising a swimming pool, a massage room and a sauna.



PRESS MATERIALS



Stworzony z marzeń

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Skyliner, swoimi niezwykłymi zaletami, otwiera nowy wymiar luksusowej podróży w klasie VIP na dwóch pokładach. Wysoko podnosi poprzeczkę pod względem komfortu i bezpieczeństwa. Jego wyjątkowo duża pojemność czyni go ekonomicznym i przyjaznym dla środowiska.

www.neoplan-bus.com





TRAVEL COMFORTABLY WITH CHECKMYTRIP

Technologies have changed the way we travel today. You no longer need to print boarding passes, hotel bookings or take a stack of guides on your trip, because all of this, and more, you can now have on your smartphone. With CheckMyTrip app, every part of your journey is always accessible at your hand, without the need to install multiple dedicated applications.

CheckMyTrip is a multifunctional travel manager app, giving you a quick and easy insight into every stage of your journey: from your flight and hotel bookings to car rentals and train tickets. The application also comes with a wide range of other useful functions. A big advantage

of the tool is the option of direct check-in with more than 130 airlines collaborating with Amadeus (the creator of the app). Moreover, the app reminds you to check-in in due time, for example 48 hours before the flight, and keeps you informed of all potential changes to your journey: delays, cancellations or airport gate changes. With CheckMyTrip you can also order a taxi or transfer directly from the app, as well as book a parking space at the airport car park or the access to airport lounges. In addition, the application comes with multiple guides and detailed descriptions of landmarks along with reviews by other travellers and suggestions for city tours with booking options.



LUXURY VILLA GORSKY

Located in a quiet area of Zakopane, yet just a 15-minute drive from the city centre, Villa Gorsky boasts traditional design combined with modern fittings and Goral-style carvings by the best craftsmen in the area. The 250 sqm villa comprises 6 cleverly designed and well-equipped rooms, including one large children's playroom. The house also comes with a fully-equipped kitchen and a private chef service, as well as a Finnish sauna. Featuring a real stone fireplace, the spacious living room opening to the kitchen is a great place for a business presentation or a family holiday. On the terrace you can admire the dramatic panorama of the Tatra Mountains, while the barbecue hut and the garden fire pit located are perfect places for outdoor parties. It's a space that will appeal to both leisure seekers and those seeking a perfect venue for business meetings. The views of the Tatra Mountains, the unique style of Zakopane and the local Goral cuisine. Is there anything you need more? villagorsky.pl

Code-share agreement

Turkish Airlines and LOT Polish Airlines, the largest airlines and flag carriers of their countries, Turkey and Poland, have announced the enhancement of their current codeshare agreement with additional destinations both from Turkish Airlines' and LOT's flight network. Through this enhanced partnership, Turkish Airlines and LOT will reciprocally add their flight codes on below flights in addition to Istanbul-Warsaw: Cracow, Gdańsk, Szczecin, Poznań, Wrocław, Katowice, Rzeszów. LOT Polish Airlines and Turkish Airlines passengers have also benefit of accruing and redeeming miles in their respective loyalty programmes, Miles&More and Miles&Smiles on all flights of both carriers.

PRESS MATERIALS

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WORDS MARZENA MRÓZ

India is a country that you can either fall in love with right away, or look at with disbelief. One thing is for sure, India is a captivating place. After all, it's not just a country, but also a whole subcontinent - impossible to fully explore and absorb on merely one trip. For many tourists the very first visit to India is a foretaste of the country's numerous landmarks and attractions, as well as an incentive to want to return here soon. To enter India you need a visa or, more conveniently, the "e-visa", which since recently has also been available for Polish citizens. Forget about long queues at the embassy - now all the visa formalities can be done online.

NOT ONLY TAJ MAHAL

Until recently, a vast majority of tourists coming to India wanted to see only the country's most famous landmarks and spots, plus an optional visit to one of its picturesque beaches. This is how the golden triangle route was established, connecting the national capital New Delhi, Agra (Taj Mahal) and Jaipur (Rajasthan). Tourists usually first landed in New Delhi (India's best connected city with the rest of the world), then moved 200km south to Agra and the site of Taj Mahal, which was built as a testament to the great love of Mughal emperor Shah Jahan to his prematurely deceased wife. The next stop was Fatehpur Sikri - the architectural complex of the former capital of the Mughal Empire, and then, further west, the fabulous city of Jaipur representing the magic of the colourful and exotic India. The tourist circuit usually ended with a visit to one of Goa's beautiful beaches. No wonder, this popular route enjoys now the best hotel infrastructure in the country

NEW FACE OF INDIA

A lot has changed in recent years. Middle Eastern carriers have created a dense flight network to India, offering travellers remarkable cabin products. You can now fly to many Indian cities on board a wide-bodied aircraft with an excellent Business Class cabin and even better First Class product, provided you choose a flight via the UAE or Qatar. Starting September 2019, travellers eager to visit India, will also have an option to fly with LOT Polish Airlines on board its state-

LUXURY INDIA

One of the world's most exciting tourist destinations, India is a country full of contrasts, impressing not only with its rich culture, but also the fast-paced economic development. The country is continuously developing its tourism infrastructure aimed at foreign visitors seeking luxury products - a market segment that has also seen a steady growth in Poland in recent years.





-of-the-art B787 Dreamliner aircraft. The service will run 5 times a week. Also this year, LOT will offer charter flights on Warsaw-Goa sector served by the carrier's fleet of Dreamliners with Business Class cabin. To meet the expectations of wealthy foreign visitors, Indian investors have built a number of excellent hotels and have done their best to present the country in the most attractive fashion. In this way the world has learnt about the Indian state of Kerala, famous for its Ayurvedic massage and treatment, beaches, national parks, spices and tea gardens.

Affluent tourists also head to refined Himalayan spa resorts, offering picturesque views and often located in national parks with the opportunity to see the wildlife in their natural habitats. And to top up your unforgettable visit to India, you can always book a relaxing stay in one of the luxury beach resorts situated in the Andaman Islands.

NEW DELHI, THE CITY OF THE NEW ERA

In recent years New Delhi has undergone a major transformation. What is there to see in the capital of the world's largest democratic country - a city populated by the incredible number of 15 million people? It's worth starting the tour with the modern part of the city and Connaught Place - a planned street meant for business with a circular area that is divided into two circles named as inner and outer Con-

naught circle. Connaught Place is also a stone's throw from the iconic India Gate situated in the area where the British administration had its seat. Other tourist attractions in Delhi include, three World Heritage Monuments – Red fort, Humayun's Tomb, Qutb Minar; Purana Qila (Old fort); Akshardham Temple; Bahai Lotus Temple; Chandni Chowk - a well-known wholesale market; Raj Ghat - a memorial dedicated to Mahatma Gandhi; Gandhi Museum, Jantar Mantar - an impressive astronomical observatory; National Gallery of Modern Art and Dilli Haat – famous for its handicrafts stalls and food court from across the country.

Delhi has a large number of luxury hotels run by leading Indian and international hotels chains such as the Taj, Oberoi, Leela, ITC Hotels, Accor, Hyatt, Marriott, Holiday Inn, Shangrila, etc.

RAJASTHAN - IN THE PALACE OF THE MAHARAJA

Rajasthan is India's largest state. It's a colourful, proud and exotic place, visited by tourists from all over the world, eager to find there the traces of its Oriental past. The state with its capital city of Jaipur inhabited by more than 3 million people is well-known for its production of wool, wheat and sugar cane, as well as its greatest treasure - precious stones that once were eagerly collected by maharajahs. However, the most dynamic growth has been seen in tourism indu-

You can now fly to many Indian cities on board a wide-bodied aircraft with an excellent Business Class cabin.

stry. Its savvy rulers no longer engage in large or small politics, don't conquer new lands or wage wars. Instead, they quickly recognized the new trends, transforming their palaces into high-end hotels that have become true oases of luxury reminiscent of the most voluptuous palaces from Scheherazade's tales. The state, with its area slightly larger than Poland, crisscrossed by the chain of the Aravalli Range running diagonally from north-east to south-west, has within its borders both the Thar desert and fairy-tale-like gardens with proud-looking peacocks strolling lazily around. In Jaipur, often referred to as "the Pink City" you can stay in The Oberoi's luxury Raj Villas hotel, Rambagh Palace of the Taj Group, ITC Rajputana and a number of heritage hotels. Another equally exciting option is a stay in Samode Haveli, a traditional Hindu property built almost 200 years ago and situated in lush gardens. Best places to stay in Jodhpur include Ummaid Bhawan Palace Hotel, Taj Hari Mahal, Raas Jodhpur, etc.

Undoubtedly, the most unique place in Rajasthan is the city of Udaipur, situated on the ground of the former Mewar Kingdom. It's It may be hard to believe, but it has been ruled continually by one dynasty for more than

1200 years now! The city is like a mirage: unreal, ethereal and slightly demonic. It seems as if it melted away and disappeared at sunrise and sunset. With its remarkable charm, romantic location, magic light and transparent air, it was highly praised by French impressionists. The desert wasteland that surrounds Udaipur clearly contrasts with all the majestic beauty that is just round the corner. Intricate designs of marble palaces, temples decorated with remarkable carvings, and havelis with their pink-coloured steps, are reflected in the waters of the utterly unreal Lake Pichola. Here you can stay in most luxurious hotels including Udai Vilas, the Leela Palace, Lake Palace and Raas Devigarh. Heading to Rajasthan's Ranthambore National Park in search for Royal Bengal tigers and crocodiles, you may want to spend a night or two at the Vanya Vilas or Aman-i-Khas complex in luxurious tented accommodation or at Vivanta Sawai Madhopur Lodge, a former hunting lodge, now a heritage hotel. In Sariska National Park, known for its excellent safari options, one of the best choices for a luxury stay is the 5-star Hotel Amanbagh, offering a wide range of amenities, as well as homely atmosphere.

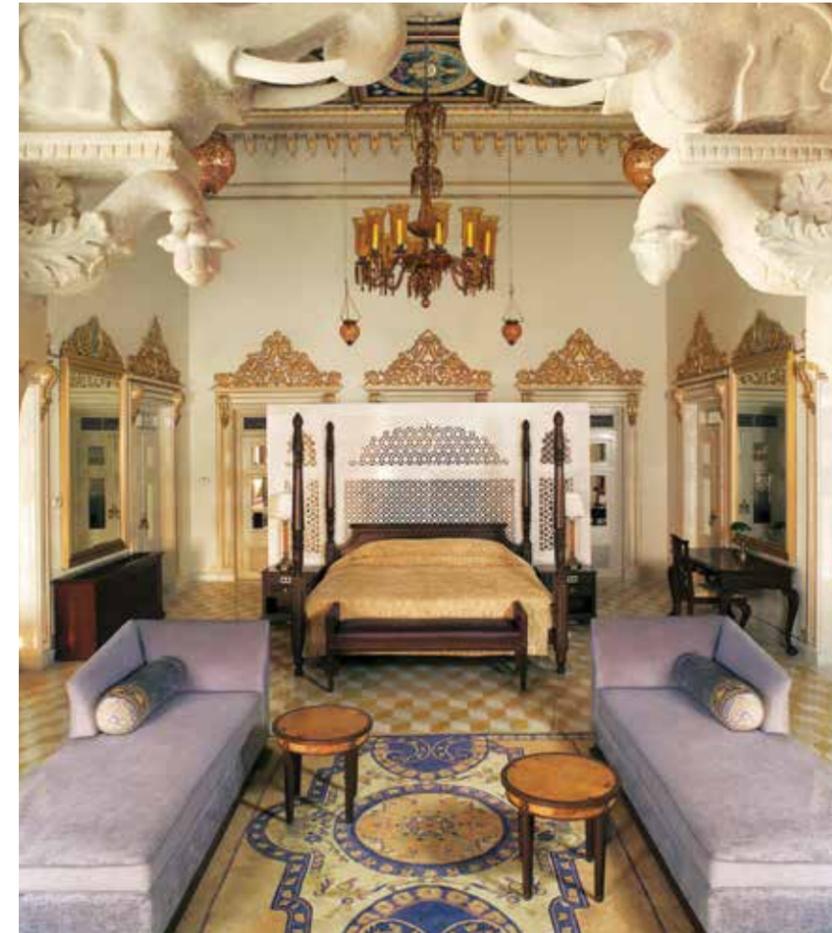
GOA AND THE ANDAMAN ISLANDS - SCENIC BEACHES

In the 1960s and 1970s the 106-kilometre strip of wide, golden beaches situated on the west coast of India, became widely popular with hippies, attracted by the place's cultural isolation, beauty of the tropical nature and the atmosphere of spirituality reigning there. Ironically, the hippie movement gave a power stimulus to development of tourist industry in Goa and today the area is mostly visited by tranquillity seekers, yoga and Ayurveda aficionados, as well as those fed up with mass tourism. They come to Goa believing that it's the last place on Earth where they can be truly happy. As you may guess, the area offers a cornucopia of luxury hotels, offering the highest standard of stay. These include Leela, Taj, Grand Hyatt and Marriott, as well as the boutique Ahilya by the Sea. With more than 500 islands nestled in the Bay of Bengal, of which only 26 are inhabited, the exotic Andaman Islands are a real icing on the cake for tourists searching to find a true face of India. Mountainous, covered with tropical forest, surrounded by coral reefs, the islands tempt with beautiful beaches and their virgin nature. Radhanagar Beach at Havelock Island in Andaman Islands is counted among the most beautiful beaches in Asia. Luxury beach resorts in Havelock Island include, the Taj Exotica Resort & Spa, Barefoot Resort. The luxury offered here is one of refined simplicity and living in harmony with nature and its laws. The place is secluded and utterly unique.

THE HIMALAYAS - SPA FOR DEMANDING TOURISTS

India has so much to offer. One of the unique options for tourists is taking a trip to the north of the continent, to reach the foothills of the famous Himalayas. This is certainly one of the most remarkable routes, leading off the beaten tracks, where you will have a chance to meet the indigenous inhabitants of the region, stay in mountain villages,

India is developing its tourism infrastructure aimed at foreign visitors seeking luxury products.



and, above all, enjoy the amenities of luxury hotels offering the views of the world's highest mountains. Ananda in the Himalayas is one of the most spectacular and iconic hotel properties in the country, rated No. 1 destination spa in the world by Travel + Leisure magazine. Alternatively, you can stay in the modern Shakti 360 Leti in the Kumaon Himalayas. Built on a mountain slope, the hotel offers panoramic views of the Himalayan peaks between India and Nepal. Many travellers also head to Kashmir, where they stay in luxury villas of the Shakti Ladakh Village, overlooking some of the highest peaks of the world.

KERALA - AYURVEDA AND FLOATING HOTELS

Located in South India the state of Kerala is a true paradise for those seeking ultimate luxury in India. Europeans associate this region mainly with palm trees and cultivation of popular spices, such as ginger, vanilla, cinnamon, turmeric and pepper. A legend says that Kerala was retrieved from the sea, by Parasurama, a warrior sage who threw his battle axe into the sea. As a result, the land of Kerala arose, and thus was reclaimed from the waters. Today, the state is also known for its Ayurvedic health centres. Ayurveda is a system of medicine with historical roots in the Indian subcontinent. The World Health Organization (WHO) recognises it as the oldest health care system in the world. Suffice it to say that it has been practiced in Kerala for 5,000 years! You can find here the world's most famous resorts and centres, providing a wide range of options for ultimate leisure and relaxation. Note that Kerala is also one of the wealthiest and most developed regions of India, and its healthcare - partly owing to Ayurvedic traditions - stands here at the highest level. Importantly, the local offer of luxury hotels is extremely impressive. It's worth taking a 9-day tour of the region to enjoy ultimate relaxation combined with active leisure. Sunbathing, sailing, swimming, windsurfing - you can get all this and much more on the Malabar Beach, while those seeking to explore the history of the region can take a trip to Fort Cochin. The escapade begins in a luxury seaside complex called Marari Beach Resort near Alappuzha. From there you can move on to Kochi. Some of the leading hotels in Kochi are, the Gateway Hotel Marine Drive, Le Meridien, Grand Hyatt, Brunton Boatyard, etc. Most of the leading hotels in Kerala offer a wide range of Ayurvedic massage and treatment. Tucked away behind tall coconut trees on a tranquil beach, the luxury Neeleshwar Hermitage leisure complex near Kasargod in Kerala is popular with travellers seeking typical seaside atmosphere. A houseboat cruise in Kerala's backwaters is an unique experience that must not be missed. What is truly magical about a houseboat ride is the breathtaking view of the untouched and otherwise inaccessible rural Kerala and the village life that it offers, while you float in a relaxed way right through it. The houseboats boast of the same comforts of a good hotel including furnished bedrooms, modern toilets, cozy living rooms, a kitchen and even a balcony for angling. However, there is much more to see in South India than just Kerala. Browsing through the hotel options in the region, you may get overwhelmed with the number of



available boutique and heritage properties. On the so-called "South Indian Odyssey" guests stay at the ultra-luxury Palais de Mahe Hotel built in colonial style and situated in the historic French Quarter of the city of Puducherry (formerly Pondicherry).

PENCH - ON THE TRAIL OF THE TIGER

The journey to India "as you don't know it" would be incomplete without a stop or two in one of its national parks. There are more than a hundred of them in the country, many on a par with their American counterparts, which are widely regarded as the world's best. You should definitely visit the Pench National Park, located in the state of Madhya Pradesh in Central India. Interestingly, this place inspired Joseph Rudyard Kipling, an English prose writer and poet, to write an everlasting children's story, "The Jungle Book". The choice was obvious and even today film crews making documentaries about tigers often choose the Pench Park as their filming location. Apart from tigers, you will also find here hyenas, many species of monkeys, leopards and several dozens of species of exotic birds. And you can also go white water rafting here. There are numerous options available at the Park for a luxurious stay to explore the wilderness.

WEST BENGAL - IN THE LAND OF TEA & THE ROYAL BENGAL TIGER

A luxury trip to India would be incomplete without a visit to West Bengal - an Indian state bordering Bangladesh. Some of us probably remember the unique aroma of the famous Darjeeling tea, but tasting Indian finest tea is just one of many local attractions. It's worth paying a visit to Kolkata (formerly Calcutta), the capital of the state, known as the city of contrasts and strongly associated with Mother Teresa,



Maharajas' Express serves five different routes in Rajasthan and Central India.

an advocate of helping the poor and the excluded. You can visit here the Victoria Memorial - a marble palace built in the early 19th century in honour of Queen Victoria. Today it houses a museum showing the complicated history of India. In the vicinity of Kolkata you will also find the famous Hindu temple called Dakshineswar Kali. From there, strolling down the banks of the Ganges, you will reach the majestic Bay of Bengal. Visiting the famous tea-growing state, you can opt to stay at the unique boutique Glenburn Tea Estate, nestled on the banks of the Rangeet River, at the foot of the Himalayas. Here you will learn the tricks of the tea growing trade and have a chance to explore the unspoiled nature of the area.

INDIA'S LUXURY TRAINS

To experience the luxury face of India you don't need to stay only in boutique or Palace hotels. Europe has the famous Orient Express, Africa boasts the Rovos Rail and India has its unique luxury trains namely, Maharajas' Express, Palace on Wheels, Royal Rajasthan on Wheels, Golden Chariot and Deccan Odyssey. These luxury trains offer a weeklong luxury train journey in royal splendour. Each train has a number of itineraries to explore major tourist attractions in the North, West, Central and Southern part of India. All compartments in the trains are cosy and come with a range of modern amenities, dining cars and bar carriage. These luxury trains are normally operational between October and April, since that is the most convenient time to explore India weather-wise. ■

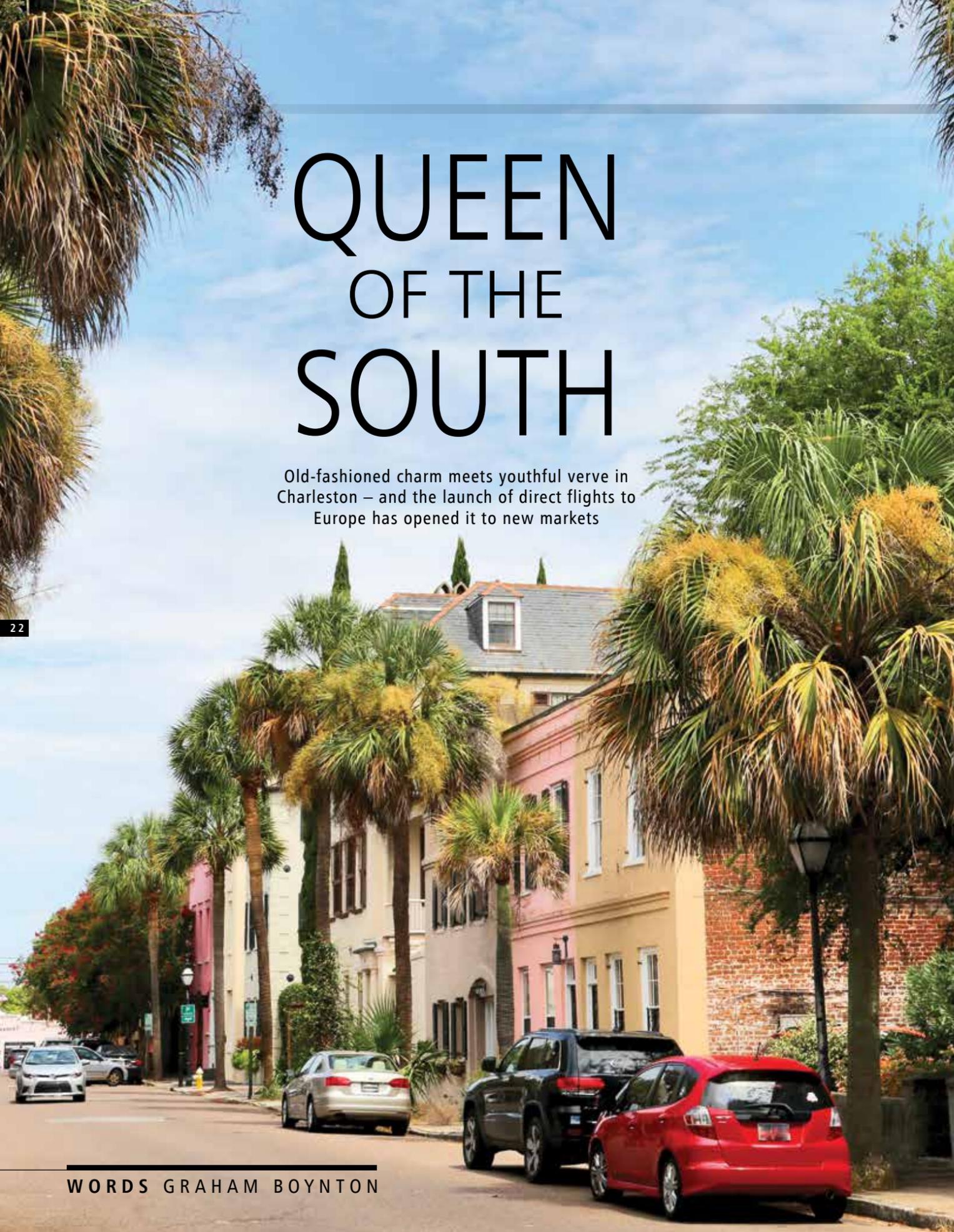
■ For more information on India, visit www.incredibleindia.org and the Incredible India Social Media handles.

■ The authorized portal for e-visa application to India <https://indianvisaonline.gov.in>

QUEEN OF THE SOUTH

Old-fashioned charm meets youthful verve in Charleston – and the launch of direct flights to Europe has opened it to new markets

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WORDS GRAHAM BOYNTON



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In Greenville, South Carolina, they ask where you go to church. In Columbia, South Carolina, they ask who you work for. In Charleston, they ask you what you want to drink.”

Claire Gibbons’ sage, if not sober, observation of her hometown rings particularly true as I wander along King Street on a Saturday night and watch the cool youth of this historic city bouncing from nouvelle Southern cuisine restaurant to media-trending bar to hip club. I suppose it’s like all the other US cities on a Saturday night, only this is with a distinctly Southern accent, y’all.

Charleston is very much contemporary South – young, vibrant, tech-savvy and optimistic about the future. They have a lot to be positive about. According to Yelp, the Charleston area is the fastest-growing region for small businesses in the US; it is fourth on business site Magnifymoney’s “America’s biggest boomtowns” list; and, according to Chief Executive magazine, is the third best place in the US to do business. Added to which, it is regularly voted the country’s favourite tourist city by glossy US travel magazines.

Gibbons is director of global marketing and communications for the Charleston Regional Development Alliance (CRDA), an economic development organisation who-

Boeing opened its factory ten years ago and is the largest private employer in the region

se main focus is managing the remarkable growth of Charleston’s business community. She says CRDA’s role “is to look at the supportive eco-systems that industries need to thrive. At the moment we are focusing on automotive, IT, life sciences and logistics sectors.”

She points out the key role that the young, educated workforce is playing in that growth, a fact that is confirmed in overheard conversations in the King Street bars over cocktails. Boeing, Bosch, Mahle, Blackbaud, Volvo, Mercedes-Benz, the Intertech Group – they are all here and they make up the throbbing engine of economic growth in the Charleston area. And the partying crowd filling the bars on my visit are the very ones employed by these companies and involved in their graduate programmes.

FLYING START

Boeing opened its factory here ten years ago to build B787 Dreamliners – it is now the largest private employer in the region with around 7,000 people on staff. According to its senior director of government operations, Lindsay Leonard, what attracted the aircraft manufacturer →

LEFT: Downtown Charleston

ABOVE: St Michael’s Church



ABOVE: The city's position on the south-east coast ensured its early prosperity

to the region was the fact that “there is a capable and available workforce here that can be trained. We have a robust internship programme and have developed training partnerships with local technical schools as well as the universities.”

Serendipitously, the latest significant development for the area's business community was the launch in April of British Airways' direct Dreamliner services from London Heathrow. Although for the moment BA appears to be sticking its toe in the Charleston market – there are only two flights a week, running initially until October – it is South Carolina's first transatlantic service and has been greeted with great anticipation. Leonard says the route is “particularly exciting for us because it's a thrill to fly on an aircraft that teammates had a hand in building”.

More pragmatically, it has given the region's business people easier access to Europe. Tony Boor, executive vice-president and chief financial officer of Blackbaud – one of the world's largest cloud software and service providers, which opened its Charleston office in 1989 – says the new BA service “is going to change our lives, and the way we do business. Over the years

Charleston has the charm, atmosphere and style so typical of the Deep South of the US.

I don't know how many times I've missed connections flying through New York, Washington or Atlanta. This is a game changer for Charleston business.”

A crucial component of the city's growth and development is the Port of Charleston, the deepest harbour in the south east. It is one of the busiest container ports in the US and during my visit it was announced that a record 215,000 containers had been loaded on to ships in a single month.

As a vivid example, every day you will see the port's parking lot filled with glinting BMW cars fresh off the assembly line in Greenville, Georgia. Every day that parking lot empties as the vehicles are stuffed on to a container ship and sent out across the world. The following day the parking lot is full again. Over the next decade, an estimated US\$2 billion is to be spent upgrading the port and it remains the beating heart of commercial Charleston.

TUMULTUOUS TIMES

This is unquestionably a city of Southern manners. However, while most of the executives I speak to cite “Southern charm” as one of the main attractions of Charleston and its surrounding areas, local historian, preservationist and bespoke guide Leigh Handal warns about taking this at face value. “In the South you can say anything as ugly and cruel as you like as long as you end it with ‘bless her he-

FOOD AND DRINK

Pretty soon after you arrive in the city, you will be told about the Charleston 15. Neither a sports team nor a listing of must-see historic sites, it is, rather, the number of pounds visitors can expect to gain in weight after indulging in the city's famous nouvelle Lowcountry cuisine.

One of the restaurants that put Charleston on the gastronomic map is Husk (huskrestaurant.com). Known for its wood-fire cooking, it was the first of four branches to open in the South and is rated by Diners Club as one of the World's 50 Best Restaurants.

Hotel eateries give serious competition to standalone restaurants when it comes to fine dining – two outstanding examples are Hotel Bennett's Gabrielle (hotelbennett.com) and Belmond Charleston Place's Charleston Grill (charlestongrill.com), which has the best wine list I've seen in the South.

For fresh seafood, try the Darling Oyster Bar (thedarling.com), where you will find the Charleston staple shrimp and grits – which you have to try at least once and to which you may become addicted – and 167 Raw (167raw.com), a tiny, casual seafood restaurant that serves lobster rolls, oysters, fish tacos and ceviche.

For cocktails, there's the bar at the Spectator Hotel (thespectatorhotel.com), where Allen Lancaster mixes impressive concoctions; Felix (felixchs.com) on King Street, where the speciality is Felix Tonique, made with cognac; or the Dewberry Hotel (thedewberrycharleston.com), home to the world's best Old Fashioned – well, that's my take, and I tried a few just to be sure.

Lastly, the greatest contributor to the Charleston 15 has to be Rodney Scott's BBQ (rodneyscottsbbq.com), which serves the best ribs south of the Mason-Dixon line.



FROM TOP: Allen Lancaster of the Spectator Hotel; shrimp and grits are a city staple; classic Antebellum architecture



art’,” she says. “Like, that's an interesting dress – bless her heart. It's not hypocrisy. It's character.” Handal says the key to success in the South is to understand that character.

The city and the region's resurgence have come after a series of historically cataclysmic reversals. In the early 19th century Charleston was the third wealthiest city in the US, but events such as the War of Independence, the American Civil War and, most significantly, the invention of the steam engine in the 1820s conspired against it. Until the steam engine was invented, the trade winds had taken Europe's sail ships to the West Indies and then, caught by the Gulf Stream, deposited them in Charleston harbour. It was the western terminus of the Great Atlantic Highway. The arrival of the steamship changed all that.

Meanwhile, rice and indigo (used in dye for British army uniforms) were principal crops that withered after the American Revolution, the latter for obvious reasons. Rice was big business and during the Colonial period coastal South Carolina was the largest producer of rice in the country as well as being one of the Western world's top producers. It remained a dominant commodity until the

DESTINATIONS

end of the Civil War but by the early 1900s rice farming had all but disappeared from the state.

Decades of underperformance followed and although Charleston was a shabby-chic destination for adventurous tourists through the 20th century, its economic performance remained unimpressive. Then, in 1989, just as the city was beginning to show signs of growth, it was hit by Hurricane Hugo, the deadliest storm in its history, which killed more than 60 people and destroyed 100,000 homes across the regions it hit. The total cost of the damage was estimated at US\$9 billion. In the immediate aftermath, the UK's Sunday Times ran the headline: "Charleston Gone With The Wind".

Happily, nothing could have been further from the truth – with the help of a huge injection of federal relief funds under President George Bush's administration, the city began its dramatic rehabilitation.

Doug Warner, director of media relations at the Charleston Area Convention and Visitors Bureau, says: "In 1989 the streetscape changed and all the older buildings got new paint jobs. Perceptions of who we were started to change and people began to develop pride in the city. In the late 1980s you couldn't give buildings in King Street away. They were strip clubs and beer joints and many were abandoned. The Charleston renaissance began here on King Street." To confirm this, a businessman I met bought a building on the street for US\$80,000 in the late 1980s – it is now worth US\$6.5 million.

BOUNCING BACK

Warner says that the man who led the rebuilding was Joseph Riley, who ended up serving 40 years as mayor, the longest serving mayor in US history: "The renaissance was [down to] Riley, the response to the shooting at the Emanuel AME Church [in 2015] was Riley, and even after he left office he remains a phenomenal leader."

It is Riley who has been the driving force in the creation of an African-American slave museum that is planned to open on the waterfront next year. Previous generations' attempts to sweep the slave trade under the carpet – 40 per cent of those enslaved by the US entered the country through the port of Charleston – have long been abandoned and this confrontation with its inglorious past is one of the things that makes modern Charleston so compelling.

The city's past is also littered with eccentricities and contradictions. For example, it was from the roofs of the gorgeous mansions along the East Battery foreshore that on a spring day in 1861 Charleston's wealthy aristocrats sipped cocktails and watched the Confederate bombardment just across the water. It was the Battle of Fort Sumter, the sea fort in Charleston Harbour, that set off the Civil War. Talk about being a witness to your own funeral... and with cocktails.

You can see the benefits of the city's late-20th century revival as you wander through the pretty centre of the Downtown area, narrow streets of brightly coloured cla-



The city's past is also littered with eccentricities and contradictions.

board houses that reminded me of the Caribbean, nestled alongside grand Georgian and Antebellum architecture. The houses and low-rise buildings on this flood-prone peninsula, known appropriately as the Lowcountry, are surrounded by three major rivers and the ocean, and so are always at risk of flooding.

Church steeples dominate the skyline as it was decreed in the 1930s that to protect the city's architectural integrity, no building should be taller than the spire of St Matthew's German Evangelical Lutheran Church. The elegant streets are lined with palmettos (the state tree), and magnificent oaks draped with the Spanish moss. In the private gardens that dot the city, explosions of pink, red and white camellias vie



SPOTKANIA BIZNESOWE Z WIDOKIEM NA MORZE

WIDOK ZAPADAJĄCY W PAMIĘCI

Centrum konferencyjne o powierzchni 1000 m² to idealne miejsce do organizacji wszelkiego rodzaju spotkań. Stylowe wnętrza dostosowane do potrzeb organizatora oraz gwarancja usług na najwyższym poziomie czyni hotel idealnym wyborem na wszelkie uroczystości.

COURTYARD
BY MARRIOTT

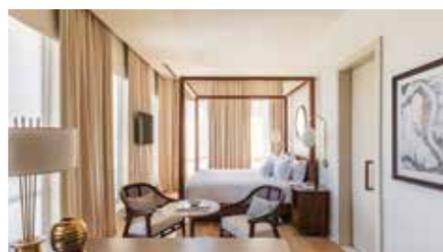
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There has been a boom in hotel openings and expensive upgrades to existing properties



for attention with purple and red crape myrtle trees, and vivid pink oleander bushes.

It is this sumptuous beauty, the preponderance of Southern manners, the rich history and the food and art scene that makes it such a winning posting for international business executives. Bosch has been here since 1974 and Gitta Unger, the factory's technical plant manager, says it is the best international placement in the company's empire. "When it was announced that I was coming to Charleston," she says, "other Bosch executives asked what I had done to get the posting. It is easily the most beautiful place to work in the Bosch corporation."

STAYING POWER

To cater for the growth in popularity both for leisure and business visitors, there has been a boom in hotel openings, and expensive upgrades to existing properties. The top hotels are as luxurious as the best in New York and San Francisco but at half the price. Hotel Bennett on King Street is the newest, opening in February with 179

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: View from the Dewberry's rooftop; Belmond Charleston Place's grounds and grand staircase; Dewberry Charleston Flat room

luxurious rooms, a fabulous rooftop bar and a gourmet restaurant (see panel, page 37).

One of its major rivals is a ten-minute walk along the street. The 434-room Belmond Charleston Place opened in the mid-1980s (another Riley-led initiative) and had the luxury hotel market to itself until recently. Now, smaller properties such as the 155-room Dewberry, housed in a mid-1960s federal building that had been damaged by Hurricane Hugo, and the Spectator, a stylish 41-room art deco hotel in the middle of the tourist area, have given travellers first-class options at Southern prices.

As I prepare to leave, Leigh Handal, having regaled me with tales of pirates, the Civil War and Charleston's painful separation from Britain, reminds me that this was once "the most cosmopolitan colony in America, tied by an umbilical cord to Britain. That's why you Brits feel at home here today."

Then she offers up what she says is a typical Southern farewell. "Y'all be good and tell your momma hello."



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THE MAGIC INCA COUNTRY

The raw and seemingly inaccessible landscape of Peru is the birthplace of one of the world's oldest civilizations. The history, together with the culture and customs of the Incas – who were known as “the Children of the Sun” – dates back thousands of years before the arrival of Europeans on the South American continent.

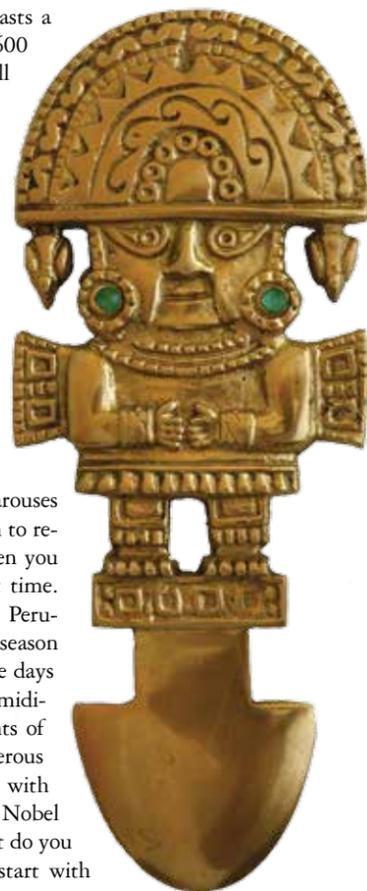
To learn a little bit more about this extraordinary country and its people, you need to visit at least a few sites in Peru. If you fly to Peru from Europe, you will most likely arrive in the country's capital – Lima, where it is worth staying for a couple of days. Then, you need to visit Cuzco –the last capital of the Incas – to see the legendary Machu Picchu and go boating on the turquoise waters of Lake Titicaca. It's also worth noting that Peru is widely considered one of the world's most beautiful places, and it is famous for its diverse natural environment. Out of a total of 103 ecological zones, 84 zones and 28 types of climates can be found in Peru, placing it within the top five countries with the most biological diversity on earth.

WHERE "GREAT" MEANS "REGULAR"

Peru is known for its geographical extremes. The Amazon river, which flows through the country, forms the world's largest basin, Lake Titicaca is the highest navigable lake in the world (3,856 m), the Colca and Cotahuasi canyons, which can be reached from Arequipa, are the deepest on the planet. Furthermore, Lima is considered to be the city which features the most beautiful balconies in this part of the world, while Mount Huascarán is the highest peak in the Peruvian Andes as well as the fourth highest in South America. Peru also boasts a record number of potato varieties - 3,600 of them have been named, and 400 still remain nameless!

LIMA - A CITY OF BALCONIES

Most Europeans begin their adventure with Peru in Lima - the capital of the country, which has at least three faces: the colonial centre with the Plaza de Armas; the green and prosperous district of Miraflores by the Pacific Ocean, and the suburbs inhabited by the poorest people. Whether you are a resident of Lima or just a tourist visiting the city, you can be certain that the place will not leave you indifferent. And I must admit that it arouses conflicting emotions - from admiration to resentment. Everything depends on when you visit the Peruvian capital for the first time. I got there in late March, during the Peruvian early fall, which is a very friendly season to tourists. At that time of the year the days are sunny, the temperature and the humidity bearable, and the charming residents of Lima listen to tango in the city's numerous cafés. What can I say - I fell in love with this city described in such a detail by Nobel Prize winner Mario Vargas Llosa. What do you need to see in Lima, then? You can start with



the very centre of the city and the Plaza Mayor, as well as the cathedral where the founder of Lima - the legendary conquistador Francisco Pizarro is buried. It is also a good idea to visit the area around the University of San Marcos, the boulevards and parks of Miraflores, as well as Rafael Larco Herrera Museum which has a collection of pre-Columbian ceramics, and where you can enjoy delicious lunch. As for ideal accommodation, there is only one perfect choice – Miraflores. I recommend the new Hilton Lima Miraflores (hilton.com), which is well located and serves delicious breakfasts. It's close to Salazar Park, as well as the most beautiful beaches, such as Chorillos, Aqua Dulce and Waikiki. The art district of Barranco, as well as cafes and bookshops are also a short walk from here. There are numerous dining options in the Peruvian capital, but I especially recommend the lovely Rosa Nautica restaurant.

CUSCO – THE CENTRE OF THE WORLD

This ancient capital of the Incas, located 3,300 meters above sea level, is the jewel of the Inca and colonial architecture, as well as a city of numerous churches, and a mecca of... modern day hippies who hang out in this resplendent place for months, gorging in the local delicacies (e.g. fried guinea pig) and sipping pisco sour. In the language of Quechua qosqo literally means the navel of the world, and the Incas believed that their beautiful city was the source of life. It's worth visiting the town's several churches, including the cathedral which is an example of Spanish Renaissance and the local style with an altar made of pure silver. One of the most interesting places is the church of the Dominicans, formerly called "Qoricancha", that is "the Temple of the Sun", whose walls were once covered with 700 sheets of gold studded with emeralds and turquoise. In the past, the courtyard featured cast in gold life-size statues of llamas, the sculptures of trees, and

FOTOLIA



flowers, as well as ears of wheat. Although the wealth of the Inca temple is quite legendary, its architecture still arouses admiration. In Cuzco, which probably is the most beautiful at sunset, it is worth staying at Aranwa hotel (aranwahotels.com). If you want to take a trip to the nearby Sacred Valley, the best option for accommodation would be the Sol & Luna hotel (hotelsolyluna.com).

MACHU PICCHU - A CITY IN THE SKY

To get to this most famous of the Inca cities situated in the depths of the Sacred Valley and hidden from the world until 1911, you can take a train and a bus going along the Urubamba river. The view, which appears at the end of this trip, is truly unforgettable. The romantic ruins of the prehistoric city with mist-covered green mountains of the Andes in the background... Recent archaeological research has proved the theory that Machu Picchu used to be a ceremonial as

Most Europeans begin their adventure with Peru in Lima.

well as administrative centre of probably a large and densely populated region. Wandering among the ruins, it is worth stopping for a while at the Temple of the Sun, the palace of the Princess, the House of the Guardians, the Main Temple and the Temple of the Three Windows. As for your stay, I recommend the town of Aguas Calientes, where you can enjoy the view of Machu Picchu at sunrise and sunset.

TITICACA – CRADLE OF CULTURES

A legend has it that Titicaca lake was the cradle of the Inca civilization. You can reach it by train from Cuzco to Puno, or simply by plane. Its calm waters covered with reeds change colour depending on the time of day, bringing peace and solace. Hotel Libertador (libertador.com), which is situated right by the lake, is a perfect base to set off by boat to the Floating Islands, that is the Islas de los Uros. The 71 islands, which are built of reeds, are inhabited by 2626 people. Every 15 days, each island must be covered with a new layer of reeds so that it does not sunken, and after 20 years, when the island touches the bottom of the lake, people leave it to build a new one. The inhabitants of Uros live in huts made of reeds, and use self-made boats. They fish, hunt ducks and ibises, embroider tapestries, create ornaments and warmly welcome tourists visiting their homes. Throughout their life, they walk around barefoot, and they almost never suffer from depression, although many of them are troubled with arthritis. It's also worth going to the island of Amantani (2.5 hours from Puno) to stay for in a small hut for a few days. It's a perfect place to observe the landscape of the neighbouring Bolivia.

ISLAND OF INDUSTRY

An aerial photograph of a large, multi-decked white cruise ship docked at a harbor in Malta. The ship is viewed from a high angle, showing its complex superstructure with multiple decks, balconies, and satellite domes. The harbor water is a deep blue-green. In the background, the city of Valletta is visible, characterized by its dense, historic stone buildings and fortifications. The scene is captured during the golden hour, with warm sunlight illuminating the buildings and the ship's hull. The sky is a clear, pale blue with a few wispy clouds.

34

Long one of the Med's most appealing tourist spots, Malta is also proving to be a magnet for foreign investment

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There's a rather endearing folk tradition in Malta called *il-quccija*. On a child's first birthday, friends and family gather round while the baby is encouraged to pick from a selection of objects placed on the floor. The choice of object suggests what the baby's eventual career might be. In the old days, on offer were items such as a bible (priest), a pencil (writer), a book (teacher), a boiled egg (lots of children) or a knitting needle (seamstress).

In today's Malta, *il-quccija* is still widely practised, only there are new objects now, reflecting the influx of contemporary industries flourishing on this Mediterranean island. Twenty-first century babies might also be offered a calculator (accountant), a computer mouse (IT specialist) or a credit card (banker).

Ever since Malta joined the European Union in 2004, and the Eurozone four years after that, its economy has been gro-



wing steadily. "In recent years, Malta has seen high GDP growth, strong employment growth, a budget surplus and a buoyant services sector," the European Commission stated in a report in February this year, predicting economic growth of 5.2 per cent in 2019 and 4.6 per cent in 2020. Unemployment rates are low – only 3.8 per cent in January this year, the sixth-lowest across the EU.

The Maltese Business Bureau, part of the Malta Chamber of Commerce, Enterprise and

Industry, offers advice to businesses looking to invest or relocate. "Malta has been welcoming investors since the early 1950s," says Ana Vella, its senior executive, business advisory and support. "Ever since joining the EU, we've enjoyed consistent growth and are fast becoming the country of choice for a number of multinational companies looking for an ideal market within the EU."

She highlights several areas ripe for investment. Financial services is perhaps the most dynamic of these, with banking, financial planning, fund administration, insurance, pensions and – thanks to the country's proximity to North Africa – Islamic finance all healthy and buoyant. International banks such as Deutsche Bank and HSBC have offices on the island, as have fund administrators Apex and Citco, and insurance managers Aon, Marsh and Munich Re.

The European Commission agrees that Malta is a healthy base for finance, but with an important caveat. "Overall, the banks remain profitable," it stated in its February report. "Their capital base is sound, liquidity ample, and the credit risks have been further reduced. At the same time, recent investigations involving money lau-

Valletta's streets are lined with Baroque churches, palaces, forts and townhouses

ndering have revealed shortcomings in Malta's anti-money laundering enforcement."

Despite this, Vella says Malta is "an ideal environment" for start-up companies, especially in IT. Website analysts Horjar, property rental site Quicklets and booking app eCabs are good examples.

Still, it's with online gambling, gaming and e-sports that Malta has made serious headway. Attractive tax regulations have lured many companies in this field, including Gaming Innovation Group, Interwetten, Kambi Group, Kindred Group, Mr Green, Multilotto, Sirplay, TheLotter, Tipbet, Tippo, Unibet and Vie.gg.

What about other industries? Aviation is healthy thanks to the country's simple aircraft registration process and well-established aircraft manufacturing companies. Education benefits from the dozens of English language schools across the island. Life sciences were given a boost when the Malta Life Sciences Park, with its



multiple laboratories, was built in San Gwann, just north-west of the capital, Valletta. In manufacturing, Malta has successfully transitioned from mass production to high-end, and the existing roster of established companies includes STMicroelectronics, Toly Products (packaging), Trelleborg (engineering), De La Rue (printing) and Playmobil (toys).

Health services is an important sector – Barts and the London School of Medicine and Dentistry has set up a teaching facility on the archipelago's second island, Gozo. And the Maltese film industry is thriving thanks to generous tax incentives. The island has provided a backdrop for movies such as *Assassin's Creed*, *World War Z*, *The Da Vinci Code*, *The Count of Monte Cristo*, *Munich*, *Captain Phillips*, *Troy* and *Gladiator*. While filming the last of these, Oliver Reed famously met his end in Valletta after a bacchanalian session of boozing and arm-wrestling.

Although the official rate of corporate tax is a hefty 35 per cent, most companies reduce their burden enormously through the payment of dividends. Expatriate tax is also attractive, with foreigners working in financial services, gaming and aviation sectors paying a flat income-tax rate of just 15 per cent on income up to €5 million, and tax-free above that amount. For smaller companies, Malta's

Health services, another important sector in Malta, attracts to the island numerous companies and institutions.

low minimum wage (€4.24 an hour, compared with the UK's £7.83) is an added incentive.

EMPIRE DAYS

For a century and a half, between kicking Napoleon out in the early 1800s and independence in the 1960s, Malta was part of the British Empire. The British influence is still widespread. Most obvious is the fact that everyone speaks excellent English as a second language. In business transactions and legislation, English has equal billing with Maltese.

"The way we conduct business has a very British flavour," Vella says when asked to describe office culture. "But it's coupled with Mediterranean flair. We're quite formal but very friendly at the same time."

Initial email correspondence and business meetings are punctilious, she explains. "Once trust is built, you start to drop the formal barriers."

Business attire tends to be conservative, too. "Full suit and tie. Dress is quite traditional," Vella says. "But it's starting to change because you see more start-ups in Malta, where it's much more casual attire."

Further evidence of the British influence is driving on the left side of the road. Well, parking on the left side, since the skinny, winding streets of the island struggle to cope with the tens of thousands of cars and regularly get snarled up. (This is the fifth most densely populated country on the planet, with more than 3,900 people per square mile.) The traditional red telephone and post boxes dotted around the island are in the UK style, too.

CROWD PLEASING

Yet you never forget you're in the Med. The rocky coastline is saturated with holiday apartment buildings, restaurants and harbours, which, at the height of the tourist season, bulge at the seams. Prettiest of all is the capital city. The smallest in the EU, Valletta is a gem, protected by limestone fortifications at its western end, and by the sea on the other three sides. In just a few hours you can explore its tight rectangular grid of streets and stairways lined with Baroque churches, palaces, forts and townhouses, and graced by all manner of restaurants, bars and museums. Its UNESCO World Heritage status is well deserved, even taking into account the many abandoned and crumbling buildings.

South of Valletta is the Grand Harbour, with its dockyards, marinas and cruise ship port. Here, Malta's ages-old mariti-

me industry, perfectly positioned at the crossroads of the Med's east-west shipping lanes and with favourable tax regulations, is in full view. The Maltese government claims its ship registry is the largest in Europe and sixth largest in the world. Construction is under way on the Mediterranean Maritime Hub, a huge service hub for the oil and gas industry.

Further out, the capital gives way to a sprawl of residential conurbations, including Sliema, St Julian's and the Three Cities. Here you'll see many more crumbling old buildings



interspersed with modern apartment blocks, often in a state of arrested construction, as if developers have run out of money mid-project. Even as you head into the hills, the streets are teeming with traffic, preposterously busy at rush hour. Always buzzing, this really feels like a country open for business.

The Maltese government has set up several organisations designed to help foreign investors. Vella says a first point of contact for businesses looking to launch is Malta Enterprise (maltaenterprise.com), which offers loans, training grants, investment allowances and tax incentives. There are also a number of sector-specific agencies, such as Finance Malta, Trade Malta, Gaming Malta and Property Malta. To an outsider, it looks like the government is bending over backwards to attract foreign investment.

Too far backwards, according to some. Critics point the finger at Malta's passports-for-sale scheme. The government recently set up what it calls the Individual Investor Programme, allowing anyone to buy a Maltese passport (and therefore EU citizenship) for €650,000, or by investing at least €350,000 in property. The scheme boosted government coffers but caused a furore when it turned out to be a back door for money-launderers.

One of the most vehement critics of this scheme was Maltese investigative journalist Daphne Caruana Galizia. A constant thorn in the side of the island's ruling class, she regularly unearthed stories on government corruption, money laundering, and the links between her country's online gambling and organised crime, ruffling many fe-

Malta is the fifth most densely populated country on the planet.

athers in the process. In October 2017 she was brutally assassinated in a car bombing. A year and a half after her death, three men have been charged with her murder but have yet to be brought to trial.

Despite her tragic death and – according to her friends and family – attempts by the government to brush it all under the carpet, business and foreign investment in Malta continues to grow apace. In 2018, the government passed three bills into law to regulate distributed ledger technology – that's shared digital data such as blockchain and cryptocurrency. It claims to be the first country in the world to do so. Already, major cryptocurrency exchanges such as Binance, OKEx and ZBX have set up bases on the island.

"Our foot remains on the accelerator as we blaze new paths through innovation and technological breakthroughs," Prime Minister Joseph Muscat told the Malta Chamber of Commerce, Enterprise and Industry. "2018 will go down in history as the year... in which Malta established itself globally as the Blockchain Island." Maltese leaders now want to make similar inroads into the business of artificial intelligence.

Given the speed with which these industries are developing, isn't it time the il-quccija birthday tradition was given an update? Maltese babies may need a new selection of objects to choose from. Although quite what might represent blockchain is anyone's guess.



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WORDS ALEX MCWHIRTER



LOW COST, HIGH STAKES

Making low-cost long-haul pay is a difficult business, but airlines continue to try to crack the market

Most people believe that budget short-haul aviation came before long-haul low-cost flying. In fact, the reverse is true. Long-haul low-cost carriers (LCCs) trace their history back to the seventies and eighties, when pioneers Laker Skytrain and US airline People Express took to the skies. After their demise, matters went quiet until the emergence of short-haul carriers such as Ryanair, Go and Easyjet during the nineties.

Long-haul LCCs came to prominence back then because the transatlantic market between the UK and the US was not restricted as with other world regions. The European liberalisation that led to short-haul low-cost travel did not start until more recently.

Short-haul LCCs have proved successful. Every year they carry hundreds of millions of passengers throughout Europe. Although a number of long-haul counterparts have appeared on the scene recently, whether or not they will succeed in the long term is open to debate.

It's important to note that short- and long-haul low-cost business models are not the same. Short-haul carriers make their money by operating more flights within a given time span. In Europe, a typical LCC operates between 6am and midnight. During that time, it would hope to roster up to four return flights or eight sectors. Ancillary fees – anything from checked bags to onboard catering and seat selection – form a large proportion of earnings. Operating eight flights per day provides

BELOW: Skuli Mogensen, former CEO of Wow Air

carriers with eight opportunities to earn such fees.

There are fewer opportunities long-haul. For an airline flying Europe-Singapore, how many sectors can be operated during an 18-hour day? How much ancillary revenue will there be? There are further drawbacks, too: fuel consumption is higher, as are navigation fees. All carriers, both long- and short-haul, get no price breaks for these.

As Azran Osman-Rani, a former executive of Air Asia X, said in 2012, the "sweet spot" is for a flight sector lasting no more than eight hours. Above that time, fuel consumption becomes less economical because of the weight carried. That's a disadvantage for carriers needing to keep costs as low as possible.

Little wonder, then, that no LCC has ever held an ambition to operate over the Kangaroo route between Europe and Australia.

OVERFLYING RIGHTS

LCCs first appeared on the transatlantic routes because they had the freedom to set fares and were warmly welcomed in the US. In addition, because they flew over water, the cost of operating their flights

was lower than if they had to overfly numerous countries.

Once liberalisation spread around the globe, the low-cost airlines extended their wings. But then another issue emerged – they discovered the problems and costs involved in having to negotiate overflying rights and pay navigation fees. The flight path between London and Singapore, for example – a route that Norwegian tried to operate but failed – is a case in point.

Not only that, but LCCs then realised that competition was tough not only from direct carriers but also from indirect carriers. The latter can provide services to a multitude of destinations (at both ends) thanks to their hubs. Conventional airlines, meanwhile, have downgraded their economy classes to compete on price. Indirect or what's termed sixth-freedom carriers often have less interest in selling at a profit so they will dump capacity on the market.

Mainland China carriers are guilty of this. China Southern, for example, sells London-Bangkok tickets via Guangzhou for less than a ticket to Guangzhou in some instances. It's a case of filling seats that would otherwise be empty. Over Easter weekend, mean-

The 'sweet spot' is for a flight of no more than eight hours – after that, fuel cost is less economical



AVIATION



European LCCs had to abandon plans to serve what would have been lucrative Asian destinations

while, Air China was selling return economy tickets (via Beijing) at £426 for Tokyo, £364 for Bangkok and £517 for Sydney. How could any low-cost carrier compete?

And yet, airlines continue to try to crack this market. Skuli Mogensen, the former chief executive of Iceland's now defunct Wow Air, thought his business model could work around the world and that by opening a route between Reykjavik and Delhi, he would be able to cash in on the voluminous market that exists in both directions between India, North America and the UK. Wow Air said it would offer the lowest no-frills fares but did not realise that Indian travellers are particular in their requirements. They're known for wanting amenities at a keen price, which is something that most, if not all, airlines struggle to deliver. This, in a nutshell, explains the failure of Jet Airways (at the time of writing, the Mumbai-based carrier had suspended all flights).

As we reported last September, India's government became concerned by Wow Air's no-frills approach and instructed it to at least offer passengers free water. More than that, the above routings are served by dozens of indirect airlines, all of whom charge the most competitive of fares and offer for free the amenities for which LCCs would charge.

Wow Air was not the first low-cost carrier with Asian ambitions. Norwegian had wanted to expand into the region, and in particular China and Japan, but when faced with the problems of overflying rights and the cost of operating these complex routes, it instead turned its attention to the North Atlantic and, more recently, Latin America.

RUSSIAN ROYALTIES

Both carriers realised (as did Icelandair) that it might be possible to gain Russian overflying rights. But after deducting royalty payments to Russia, fares would then become uncompetitive. Royalty payments to the Russians are kept under wraps but in May last year we reported that it was believed they could amount to US\$100 per passenger per flight. In other words, the LCCs would have to inflate their ticket costs to China or Japan by some US\$200.

How do the conventional carriers manage to offer promotional fares? It's

because profitable premium class tickets offset economy fares. With a London-Tokyo business class return costing around £6,000 when bought close to departure, several times more than an average economy fare, it's not hard to see how.

So why do these LCCs have to overfly Russia, and how can Russia charge so much for it when it's so much less for others? Russia holds the key to the shortest routes between Europe, China and Northeast Asia. And because it never signed the 1944 International Civil Aviation Organisation agreement, Russia is free not only to pick and choose the airlines to which it grants overflying rights but can also charge for the privilege.

So Europe's low-cost carriers have had to abandon plans to serve what would have been lucrative destinations. Instead, they focus on transatlantic routes, such as Norwegian's foray into Latin America.

Likewise with Air Asia X. Besides the cost of fuel, one of the main reasons it retreated from Europe in 2012 was because of competition from indirect carriers in terms of price and convenience. There are Malaysian communities in Manchester and Glasgow as well as in London, from where Air Asia X was operating, so why spend time and money travelling to London when the Gulf carriers could offer a better value product from one's local airport?

It is true that Singapore Airlines' low-cost subsidiary, Scoot, flies between Singapore, Athens and Berlin, but as yet its success is unproven. One could argue that Scoot has absorbed a former SIA destination while Berliners, were it not for Scoot, would have no nonstop service to Singapore.

Ultimately, whether or not there is a future for long-haul low-cost depends on the route, the region and how you define "long-haul". Perhaps in the Asia-Pacific region, where many routes that we would call long-haul are defined as medium-haul, there's a greater chance of success.

No wonder the most successful LCCs in Europe and the US – Ryanair, Easyjet and Dallas-based Southwest – have never ventured long-haul. In the final analysis, their greatest chance of success (outside Asia-Pacific) would be transatlantic.



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Sheraton goes eco-friendly

The need to take care of the environment is no longer a novelty. Right in front of our eyes the world is becoming more eco- and vege-friendly. We have been sorting waste and trying to minimize water usage for many years now. We have also become more aware of what we eat, use natural beauty products, while Warsaw itself has become known for its cornucopia of vegan restaurants.

HOTELS WITHOUT PLASTIC

It seems that the numerous campaigns promoting environmental awareness have finally brought the desired effect. We are moving away

from plastic production on a global scale, replacing it with biodegradable alternatives. Obviously, if the hospitality industry remained blind to such positive eco-friendly trends, this could be perceived as an insult towards hotel guests who themselves are doing their best to care of our planet. Following global trends, the Sheraton Warsaw hotel is constantly implementing changes to minimize the negative impact of the property on the environment. The hotel is going plastic-free, disposing of plastic cutlery, plates and cups, and replacing them with products made of natural materials, such as paper or... bran. It also heavily supports the use of reusable tableware.

Sheraton Warsaw encourages event organizers to make use of daylight during their meetings, and offers eco coffee breaks with natural fruit juices, snacks made with organic ingredients, as well as a special lunch menu.

ECO-PHILOSOPHY

Paper straws, bran plates, wooden cutlery - these aren't the only alternatives to plastic products. The eco-makeover also applies to the hotel buffets, with the use of wooden boxes and pallets decorated with potted plants, herbs and vegetable bouquets. The focus on eco-philosophy means, first of all, shaping the awareness of all hotel employees. Sheraton Warsaw is constantly monitoring its energy consumption. The property uses only energy-saving light bulbs. Sheraton also takes care of its water consumption. All employees are trained in this area and make great efforts to minimize water usage while maintaining all the principles of cleanliness. All rubbish and waste is appropriately sorted. Fats and oils used in the kitchen are returned to a special recycling company. Glass collected in separate containers is reused. Used batteries and light bulbs are collected for proper disposal. Office workers are trained in minimizing paper usage; the hotel has also implemented a digital archiving system in place of the traditional paper archive.

GREEN ROOM AND LUNCH

The hotel also encourages its guests to act in an environmentally friendly way. As part of the "Green Room" programme, bed linen and towels in hotel rooms are changed less frequently, and at the clear request of guests. Moreover, plastic laundry bags have been replaced by reusable fabric ones.

Sheraton Warsaw is also trying to meet the needs of conference and congress organisers eager to contribute to the protection of the environment. For example, the property's



The hotel cuisine is based on fresh seasonal products sourced from proven local suppliers.

conference rooms now feature erasable whiteboards instead of paper flip charts. Whenever possible, the hotel encourages event organizers to make use of daylight during their meetings, and offers eco coffee breaks with natural fruit juices, snacks made with organic ingredients, as well as a special lunch menu. Additionally, Sheraton Warsaw is promoting the idea of sending conference materials by e-mail instead of using paper.

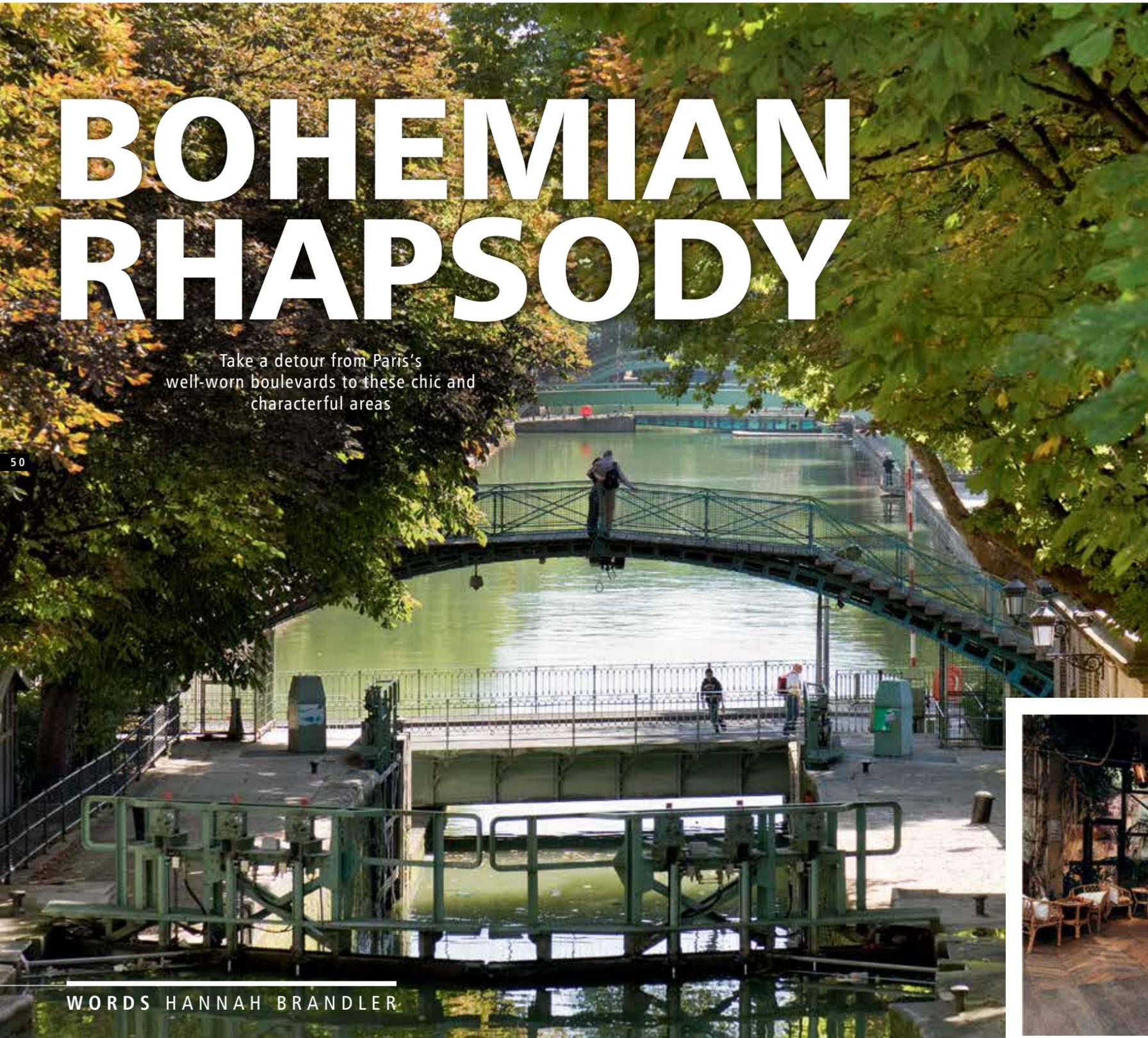


ZERO WASTE IN THE KITCHEN

Since a healthy diet based on natural products is an essential part of the lives of hotel guests, Sheraton Warsaw wants to meet their culinary requirements. The hotel cuisine is based on fresh seasonal products sourced from proven local suppliers. The hotel's culinary offer is so large and flexible that every guest with any dietary condition will find here something for themselves. Moreover, with this variety of dishes and ingredients, it's much easier for chefs to stick to the zero waste principle in the kitchen. Sheraton is well-aware of how important the issue of environment protection is, and it's deeply committed to implementing new eco-friendly solutions.

BOHEMIAN Rhapsody

Take a detour from Paris's well-worn boulevards to these chic and characterful areas



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WORDS HANNAH BRANDLER



The City of Light is justifiably regarded as one of the most beautiful capitals in the world, instantly recognisable for its Haussmann buildings and grand boulevards peppered with chic boutiques, brasseries and boulangeries. What most travellers miss, however, are the grittier arrondissements with arguably more character than the affluent picture-perfect centre of the city.

Off the beaten track, these former working-class areas provide respite from the tourist-packed banks of the Seine. Becoming more gentrified by the day, the neighbourhoods have recently acquired a reputation as “Bobo” (bourgeois bohemian), a product of their burgeoning café and arts scenes. With this, however, has come rising house prices and the danger

MAIN PICTURE: Venetian-style bridges across Canal Saint-Martin
ABOVE: Place de la République

that such quarters will become uniform – a source of anxiety for residents. Here's our guide to three up-and-coming areas worth exploring if you have spare time on a trip.

CANAL SAINT-MARTIN

Located in the tenth arrondissement in eastern Paris, this canalside neighbourhood is one of the city's liveliest. Stretching over 4.5km, the canal links the Port de l'Arsenal with La Villette and was originally used as an artificial waterway to transport fresh water and goods to Paris in an attempt to reduce cholera and other epidemics.

The area has since swapped its practical purpose for a more social one, acting as the rendezvous point for picnics, apéro hour and Canauxrama cruises along the canal. It's located within the Paris Respire zone, meaning cars are forbidden on Sundays and bank holidays from 10am until 6pm, extending to 8pm in summer.

Canal Saint-Martin isn't typically Parisian, boasting more of a shabby-chic aesthetic than pristine grandeur – street art covers every corner, while protesters often use the canal as their (rather picturesque) route to the final staging area at Place de la République; it's likely you'll spot the gilets jaunes demonstrations against the government's tax and social policies. Throw together London's Shoreditch and a splash of Amsterdam's quaint canal setting and you'll get the idea. Repurposed warehouses have been given a new lease of life as stylish restaurants, bars and venues, while the canal's banks and Venetian-style footbridges have been immortalised in films such as *Amélie*.

The area's social reputation sadly made it a target of the November 2015 terror attacks, with diners killed while sitting outside *Le Carillon* and *Le Petit Cambodge*. Residents hit back, continuing to frequ-

ent the very spots that were affected, and the slogan “Je suis en terrasse” began trending on Twitter in the aftermath.

Within walking distance of both Gare du Nord and Gare de l'Est, Canal Saint-Martin has great transport links to the rest of the city and makes for a pleasant stroll if you have some time before your Eurostar departure. If you can't quite switch off, you could visit one of the canal's co-working cafés, Paris's practical solution to small properties. Here, you either pay by the hour, or spend the same amount on food and coffee.

WHERE TO EAT in canal saint-martin: *La Marine* is an all-day café and bistro with classic French cuisine at reasonable prices – a two-course lunch costs €18. Inside you'll find art deco fixtures, while the heated terrace on the quayside is a prime spot for people-watching, facing the canal's swing bridge. lamarinecanalsaintmartin.com

WHERE TO DRINK: *Comptoir Général* (pictured left) is the area's most popular venue, a word-of-mouth spot set back from the canal – the only giveaway being the queues stretching down the quay on a Friday and Saturday night. Recently refurbished, the all-day Franco-African bar is an eclectic mix of vintage furnishings, vines crawling along distressed walls and an outdoor space flanked by hydrangeas. lecomptoirgeneral.com

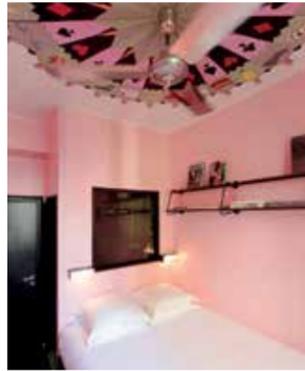
WHAT TO SEE: Canalside arts centre *Point Éphémère* is located in a former fire station and holds exhibitions, concerts and workshops. pointephemere.org



businessstraveller.pl

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RIGHT: Hotel Amour is housed in a former brothel



SOUTH PIGALLE

Formerly the heart of the red-light district, South Pigalle in the ninth arrondissement has swapped its seedy past for a more high-end status, earning the name SoPi along the way – a nod to Manhattan’s SoHo. North of the city, it’s located just below Montmartre and in striking distance of Gare du Nord. Strictly speaking, it stretches from Blanche and Anvers to Notre-Dame-de-Lorette and Trinité – d’Estienne d’Orves.

The area has long been a stomping ground for writers, musicians and artists. Edith Piaf dedicated her song “Elle fréquentait la Rue Pigalle” to the area, while Henri Toulouse-Lautrec had a studio here and Josephine Baker chose to open her first nightclub in Pigalle. The Moulin Rouge remains its most prized possession, celebrating its 130th anniversary this year. But cast your eye beyond the building’s ruby-red windmill and you’ll get a glimpse of the new and improved SoPi.

Wander around and you’ll spy hip cocktail bars, organic cafés and retro hotels paying homage to its risqué past – the area’s most popular hideaway, a Polynesian tiki bar, goes by the name of Dirty Dick, while Hotel Amour is a stylish luxury revamp of a former brothel.

Other parts of the ninth arrondissement give no hint of the area’s gritty history, in particular the peaceful Nouvelle Athènes district. Recognisable for its neoclassical mansions and pretty squares, the area’s main draw is the Musée de la Vie Romantique, which displays works from the Romantic period, with a charming courtyard terrace ideal for après.

WHERE TO EAT: Caillebotte is a small bistro inspired by the painter of the same name. Featuring an open kitchen, vintage posters and pale wooden furnishings, its sophisticated food offering is good value (two-course lunch €19). restaurant-caillebotte.com

WHERE TO DRINK: KB Cafeshop (pictured right) is one of the best examples of the city’s coffee scene, with baristas serving visitors on its bustling terrace, and freelancers tapping away inside. kbcafeshop.com

WHAT TO SEE: Rue des Martyrs is one of the capital’s oldest, and most popular, market streets. Sloping all the way from Sacré-Coeur to Notre-Dame-de-Lorette, it’s lined with 200 shops, cafés, delis and pâtisseries – don’t miss Sébastien Gaudard’s 19th-century façade and irresistible pastries at door number 22. sebastiengaudard.com/patisserie-des-martyrs



BASTILLE

To the east of Paris on the Rive Droite lies the historic Bastille area, easily accessible to business travellers thanks to its proximity to Gare de Lyon.

Despite the area’s notable history, the 11th arrondissement bears little scars of the revolutionary action that took place here. Perhaps not surprising given that the infamous “Storming of the Bastille” in 1789 destroyed the prison that once stood here. Place de la Bastille now marks the spot, with the towering Colonne de Juillet at its centre commemorating the subsequent 1830 revolution (the basis of Victor Hugo’s *Les Misérables*); this year will see the opening of the lower part of the column to visitors.

The main square doubles as one of the city’s busiest roundabouts, characterised by mass demonstrations (a nod to its revolutionary past, and meeting point for the gilets jaunes) and heaving traffic. Currently occupied by roadworks, the square is set to welcome a continuous bike path to the Place de l’Etoile in December.

While the area has an impressive historical legacy, its appearance isn’t quite so dazzling. Bastille is hardly a pretty sight, its contemporary architecture and concrete design at odds with the city’s traditional Haussmann buildings. This is

most apparent when comparing Paris’s two opera houses. Opéra Bastille, the larger of the two, is a postmodern building located at the intersection of the roundabout, paling in comparison with the majestic Palais Garnier in the ninth arrondissement.

Still, the Opéra Bastille has other star qualities, including its success in reaching a younger, more working-class crowd. This year marks the building’s 30th anniversary, and there are plans to build a new foyer, an 800-seat rehearsal and performance space, and workshop facilities, scheduled to be completed in 2023.

Bastille has also become the city’s urban playground, incorporating nature into its more brutalist design. The area’s elevated park, known both as the Promenade Plantée and Coulée Verte René-Dumont, was crafted from a disused 19th-century railway viaduct, beneath which lies a string of artist studios and boutiques. The inspiration for New York’s High Line, it is set to open a larger section next year.

WHERE TO EAT: Septime is one of the city’s most in-demand restaurants, offering inventive cuisine with a waiting list worth signing up to. septime-charonne.fr

WHERE TO DRINK: If there’s no room at the restaurant, head instead to Septime La Cave, its rustic bar offering small plates and wine pairings. septime-lacave.fr

WHAT TO SEE: The Marché d’Aligre, also called the Marché Beauvau, takes place six days a week (closed Mondays). Located between the Place de la Bastille and Place de la Nation, it comprises both a covered market and outdoor stalls and is a paradise for foodies and antique hunters.

FROM TOP: Place de la Bastille; Septime; Promenade Plantée



High fidelity

The latest headphones combine superb sound with sleek looks

Decent headphones are invaluable for travellers. Whether you're on a train or plane, noise-cancelling is essential. While some airlines provide headphones in premium cabins, you almost certainly won't have them if you're further back, and even in business they are rarely anything special.

Note that noise-isolating, whereby the headphones merely form a seal between you and the outside world, is different from noise-cancelling. The latter is a clever electronic system that uses a microphone to measure ambient noise. This noise is then reversed in phase and fed back into the earpieces. The out-of-phase "anti-noise" cancels the real noise. Sounds weird, but it does the trick.

Two pairs here lack noise-cancelling technology: Apple's AirPods and Sennheiser's Momentum Free wireless in-ear headphones. They go loud enough, just, to be heard over a jet engine, but team with a gadget such as the Twelve South Airfly (see overleaf) and you'll have a winner on your hands.

The latest headphones on the market feature rechargeable batteries that can easily last the longest-haul flight, so sit back, tune in and chill out.

WORDS DAVID PHELAN



Sony WH-1000XM3

£329

sony.co.uk

Sony makes some of the best wireless headphones and these are the only ones with better noise-cancelling than that of Bose (far right) – some noise-cancelling technology can feel oppressive to the ears but here it's alive and comfortable. Sony's cans also have exceptional audio even when noise-cancelling is turned off, sounding rich and detailed with plenty of bass that doesn't overwhelm subtler tones. The WH-1000XM3 over-ears fit comfortably for even the longest flight and battery life is up to 30 hours, although a ten-minute recharge gives you five hours of listening time. To hear when someone talks to you, simply rest your hand on the left ear cup and a microphone will let the outside world in. Choose from a discreet black or punchier off-white finish.

Nuraphone

£349

nuraphone.com

Nuraphone headphones are unusual – as well as over-ear fitting, an internal piece juts into your ears, as with in-ear buds. The design takes some getting used to, but the sound is tremendous. First, you have to train them. That's done by the companion smartphone app playing test tones while a microphone inside measures your ears' faint responses. The app then calculates your hearing profile – the difference is striking. Nuraphone headphones gained noise-cancelling functionality through a software update last year and it works well. The update also included "social mode", which turns on an external microphone so you can hear when someone is talking to you, controlled by a touch-sensitive panel or the app. Battery life is 20 hours.

Bose Quiet Comfort 35 II

£300

bose.co.uk

Bose has long ruled the market in terms of noise-cancelling, and still would if it weren't for Sony. The latest Quiet Comfort headphones have lightweight, comfortable ear cups and a cushioned head band. The design was created years ago and has slowly and elegantly evolved. Battery life is 20 hours when used wirelessly. They are compatible with Alexa and Google Assistant if they are plugged into your phone and it has internet access; this is activated by tapping the left ear-cup button. Alternatively, you can set that button to adjust noise-cancelling levels. Audio is consistent: solid and appealing with strong fidelity and satisfyingly good bass notes. There's a classic black option and more delicate silver finish to choose from.

**JBL Tune 600BTNC**

£90

jbl.com

JBL's wireless headphones are a real bargain, combining comfort and strong audio. These are on-ear headphones – that is, they don't fit right over the ears to encase them as over-ears do. They fold flat so can squash into your carry-on, and battery life is 12 hours (jumping to 22 hours if noise-cancelling is off). Noise-cancelling isn't as stellar as on the Sony and Bose over-ears, but it's still good. As you might expect from the price, the build quality is not in the same league as the other headphones here, but they are robust – note, though, that the plastic ear cups can scratch easily and there's no carry case. Still, they work well and are a relaxed fit. You can even choose your favourite colour, providing it's black, blue, pink or white.

Beats Studio 3 Wireless

£299

apple.com/uk

Now that Apple owns Beats, it has put the chip found in the original AirPods in these headphones, too, making for seamless connectivity to Apple gadgets. Beats, though, is best known for its thumping bass and if that's what you're after, these don't disappoint. The headphones use something called Adaptive Noise Cancelling to adjust the level of the sound multiple times a second. Even so, they are no match for Sony. The big, soft ear cups and gently insistent hold of the headband make the Beats great at noise-isolation even before you turn noise-cancelling on. At 22 hours, the battery life is enough to fly you to the other end of the world.

Apple AirPods

£159

apple.com/uk

Apple's wireless in-ears have been upgraded with a new chip that means you can summon Siri, plus extra features including a faster connection with your iPhone. They are also available with an optional case that charges wirelessly and costs £40 more. Excellent for hands-free phone calls, they now offer talk time of three hours rather than two. Battery life is five hours, plus another 19 hours of charge in the case, while 15 minutes of charging gives three hours of listening. Audio quality is great, and there are clever touches: if you remove one of the pods to talk to someone, the music stops until you put it back. AirPods work with all Bluetooth-capable phones but are best with Apple devices.

**Sennheiser Momentum Free In-Ear Wireless**

£170

sennheiser.co.uk

These small headphones fit snugly in your ears and the tight fit helps with noise isolation in the absence of active noise-cancelling. The cable wraps around your neck, which helps to stop them from getting lost if they fall out. Where these little headphones really stand out is in irreproachably good sound quality with deftly accurate bass and convincing detail throughout. Arguably the best-sounding in-ears, they are sophisticated and easy to use. Battery life is six hours but there's no charging capability in the handsome leather carry case.

Sony WF-SP700N

£180

sony.co.uk

In-ear noise-cancelling headphones are rare, but Sony has managed it with this wireless set. These fit well thanks to the range of ear-tip sizes supplied with them. The sound is good and the price competitive. Because they're so small, battery life is much less than some of their rivals, at three hours, although the carry case provides another six hours' charge. The other downside is a slightly fiddly pairing process that requires you to take the left earbud out of the charging case to link to your device, but leave the right one inside until pairing is complete. Still, as they are sweatproof, they are great for working out in a hotel gym. Available in white, black, pink and yellow.

AUDIO GADGETS**Bose Sleepbuds**

£230

bose.co.uk

It can be hard to sleep in an unfamiliar hotel but Sleepbuds can help. These tiny, super-light in-ear devices nudge you towards slumber using gentle sounds. They fit tightly and you can choose from different ambient noises, including gentle rain, a babbling stream and white noise.

Flare Audio Isolate Earplugs

£25

flareaudio.com

Sometimes what you really want to listen to

is silence, and those earplugs in the amenity bag just don't cut it. These block sound using a solid metal core, while long-lasting foams ensure a snug fit. The ear foams are replaceable and come with three sizes of tips. There are also ones designed for sleeping, called Sleep, and you can opt for earplugs with titanium or even gold cores, for a price.

**Twelve South AirFly**

£40,

amazon.co.uk

This neat gizmo allows you to use your wireless headphones in the air. It has a jack that plugs into the in-flight entertainment system and connects wirelessly to your Bluetooth headphones. It's simple and effective, and it works with entertainment systems in gyms as well, for instance.





DEEP THINKING

Few watches offer as high a depth rating for as low an outlay as the Christopher Ward Trident range



MAIN PICTURE: C60 Trident Elite 1000
INSET: The C60 Trident Pro 600

WORDS CHRIS HALL

On my desk, I have a Christopher Ward Trident Pro 600 dive watch. The third generation of the Trident family, it is relatively unremarkable as an object – 40mm from one side to the other, with a rubber strap and thick bezel both in functional, high-contrast black to match the dial.

The “600” refers to its depth rating in metres, and that is what I’m currently contemplating with no small sense of wonder. It’s not the first watch to cross my desk that can make such a claim, and indeed there are watches whose construction will allow them to withstand much greater pressures – the likes of Rolex, IWC and Hublot have all built deep-sea monsters capable of surviving at 4,000 metres.

But, still, just consider it for a moment. Six hundred metres under water is, to put it mildly, a long way down. What this watch is telling me is that if, all of a sudden (perhaps as the premise of an epic-scale blockbuster), my office block were to be ripped from its foundations and plunged headlong into the Atlantic, sinking deep into the Mesopelagic zone, past the sunlight’s penetration into the territory of giant squid, luminous jellyfish and who knows what else; if that were to happen, pot plants and desks and laptops and posters – and, unfortunately for us, several hundred people, as well as a branch of the Lego store – all terrifyingly submerged into the mighty deep, the only thing likely still to be capable of doing its job properly is this watch. (And perhaps some Lego bricks, but let’s be fair, their job is somewhat simpler.) It is in every sense a totally unfathomable proposition.

Overengineering, you may call it. For what do I need a watch that can brush off a stroll along the bottom of the English Channel (175 metres deep, in case you’re wonde- →

ZEGARKI



Here we've got a watch that will go deeper than its nuclear submarine namesake

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FROM TOP:
The Trident GMT;
the limited-edition
Trident Elite 1000

ring)? Deep-dive watches were invented in the sixties and seventies to cater to the needs of professionals, but even from day one they have been about more than that. You don't build a global luxury powerhouse on the strength of the few hundred or so individuals paid to tinker with oil rigs.

Those with the buying power want extremely capable tools, of course, but I'm still impressed by the enduring success of the dive watch. When Christopher Ward set up his eponymous brand in 2004, one of the first models he introduced was a diver (it became the Trident in 2009), not because the world needed another dive watch, but because this is the most resilient currency of the watch fan.

And while this may reduce the intricacies of product development, design, sales and marketing strategies just a tiny smidgen, it's true to say that the quality of a brand's core dive watch is a reliable barometer for the strength of the brand itself. A lot of watch specs are somewhat arcane, but a depth rating of 100 metres or more: that's something honest and fundamental.

Over time, in fact, the Trident has improved doggedly, constantly, inexorably. A decade after its introduction, we are now looking at version three, and by any yardstick it is an extremely capable tool indeed. The bezel is ceramic-filled, for superb resistance to damage; the movement a perfectly reliable and easily serviced Sellita SW-200. The design continues to improve, with a new set of sharp hands and detailed, bevelled hour markers. The build quality, too, is impressive – you can confidently set the £695 Trident Pro 600 side-by-side with watches costing several times as much.

Perhaps in doing so you highlight the brand's only real drawback – a sense that it is still yet to develop a character, a flair, a distinct personality that it can truly call its own. But it will come in time, and it is fair to observe that the vast majority of its rivals in the same price bracket are not overly blessed with charisma themselves.

The more salient point is that to find another 600-metre dive watch you have to reach deeper into your pocket. The "value proposition", as watch nerds call it, doesn't stop there, either – alongside the Pro 600, Christopher Ward is launching a new GMT model (£895) and a limited-edition 1,000-metre rated "Elite" in jazzy blue and orange (£1,250). Never mind giant squid – here we've got a watch that will go deeper than its nuclear submarine namesake.

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LIDZBARK WARMIŃSKI



Vintry and Mercer, London



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

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

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

All rooms have free wifi, bathrobes, tea and coffee facilities, desks with plug sockets and USB points, and a minibar with snacks and non-alcoholic drinks. There is both a retro rotary telephone and a Handy mobile

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

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lower ground floor. Check-in was quick and staff were friendly.

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

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



that could be used in the room and outside of the hotel. With no charge for data or making local and international calls, it should prove popular with overseas visitors. Superior rooms and above have a Marshall speaker and Nespresso machines.

My sixth-floor Deluxe Studio (22-28 sqm) had a comfortable king-sized bed and sliding floor-to-ceiling windows, which filled the space with natural light. They led out to a balcony that ran the width of the room and offered breathtaking views of the city. Bathrooms are particularly luxurious, with CO Bigelow products, underfloor heating, marble walls and teal geometric tiles. Stan-

dard rooms have walk-in showers, while Deluxe and above have freestanding baths with a shower above, although mine had a faulty plug so I couldn't use it. The built-in TV at the end of the bathtub was a nice touch.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Hannah Brandler

BEST FOR

Elegant décor and superb skyline views

DON'T MISS

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

PRICE

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

CONTACT

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

The Dixon, Autograph Collection, London



BACKGROUND A truly impressive re-imagining of an old magistrates' court, the Dixon opened in December last year as part of Marriott's Autograph Collection.

WHAT'S IT LIKE? Named after John Dixon Butler, who designed the Grade II listed building in 1905, this property is a great example of what can be achieved within the strict rules imposed by the heritage authorities. First impressions are good – you walk up some steps and the doors swing open to reveal the grand staircase, with lots of art at the top. The lobby has restored original flooring, oak wall

A few rooms have views of Tower Bridge – the Shard is even visible from a couple

panelling and a chandelier with 60 gold-leaf handcliffs set into it. Another chandelier in the bar is made of 193 spheres, representing the number of guestrooms.

Reception is on the right – check-in was quick (certainly quicker than check-out), and then to find the lift you walk back into the lobby and down a corridor to the far left. On the way you'll see three large portraits (George Orwell, Ernest Shackleton and Charlie Chaplin), plus casts of graffiti that were scrawled on benches in the old court.

WHERE IS IT? On Tooley Street, a ten-minute walk from London Bridge station. I should say that despite the unbelievable makeover the area has been given, and its proximity to

sites such as Tower Bridge, Butler's Wharf and the vibrant street markets of Bermondsey Street, some parts of the neighbourhood can seem unnervingly deserted at night, particularly the south of Tooley Street.

ROOMS The six-storey property comprises two buildings joined together cleverly, with nearly all of the rooms located in the new-build at the back. The 14 suites are located in the historic part and vary in terms of size and ceiling height; some have fireplaces. The hotel is bounded by Boss Street on one side and Queen Elizabeth Street at the back, so many rooms are outward facing and a few have views of Tower Bridge – the Shard is even visible from a couple – but some look into an internal courtyard.



All are a good size, starting from 20 sqm for a Dixon room, with other categories including Superior (from 25 sqm) and Executive (from 26 sqm). They feature Murdock toiletries, minibars, and free water and wifi, and are bright and smartly decorated with grey timber furniture and blackened steel and oak accents.

FOOD AND DRINK The Courtroom Bar, one of two former courtrooms in the hotel, features framed mugshots on the walls and serves great cocktails (try the New York Nightcap – pumpkin seed-infused bourbon, Amaro Averna, Kahlua and cherry and orange bitters).

Provisioners restaurant is overseen by Clive Watson, who also runs Blixen in Spitalfields and Lorne in Victoria. The food is superb, both in the evening (main courses are £15-£28) and in the morning, where a large buffet is on offer as well as à la carte dishes. It also has a café area towards the back on Elizabeth Street and blends its own Shake-down coffee, which is excellent.

MEETINGS The hotel's second courtroom (the Dock) on the first floor is now a meeting room for ten people boardroom-style. There's also the wood-panelled Chambers for 24 guests boardroom-style.

LEISURE There is a small 24-hour gym in the basement.

VERDICT Although this is part of the Marriott group, it feels very individual with a keen sense of its locality. It is also a pleasure to stay in, with excellent staff and an impressive food and drink offering.

Tom Otley

BEST FOR

Fascinating history and delicious food

DON'T MISS

A cocktail at the Courtroom Bar

PRICE

Internet rates for a flexible midweek stay in July started from £220 for a Dixon King room

CONTACT

The Dixon, 211 Tooley Street; tel +44 (0)20 3959 2900; thedixon.co.uk

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WORDS JENNI REID



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Phnom Penh



65

Cambodia's capital is a lively thrum of markets, temples and unrivalled people watching

1 Russian Market

Begin in the south of the city with a wander through the bustling covered market (known by locals as Psar Toul Tum Pung) and the grid of leafy streets that surround it. My favourite roads are on the eastern side, from 440 to 456. You'll spy carts selling everything from snails to sweet coffee, tuk-tuk drivers napping in hammocks, plus signs of gentrification – students packed into cafés Tini and Deja, queues for smart restaurants Nesat and Eleven One, and trendy bars Intégrité and Long After Dark. The market is a great place to take in the hum of daily life, as locals slurp lunchtime noodles, hardy grandmothers chop up slabs of meat, and seasonal fruit is handed over by the bag. Open dawn to dusk.

2 Sundown Social Club

Take a break from the heat at this relaxed rooftop bar and restaurant, which can be reached via a staircase on the Street 440 side of the market. Despite the towering condos springing up all around, it's one of the only places for a drink with a view in this part of town, even if it is just three floors up. Take a balcony seat and look down at the action on the street below, across the colourful, haphazard tin roofs of the market, and up at the rapidly changing skyline. As the name suggests, it's also a good place for sunsets. The menu offers fruit juices, cocktails and other drinks, while the spicy fish tacos are excellent. Open 12pm-11pm; [facebook.com/sundownsocialclub](https://www.facebook.com/sundownsocialclub)

3 Olympic Stadium

Ride-hailing apps have transformed how people get around the city. As well as the classic method of hopping into the nearest tuk-tuk, you can now use Grab or local rival Passapp to get a pre-set price in a smaller Indian-style rickshaw. Take one or the other to the Olympic Stadium, designed by the country's best-known architect, Vann Molyvann, dubbed "the man who built Cambodia". Explaining his fascinating life story and school of New Khmer Architecture – which fuses traditional Southeast Asian styles with the modernist principles he picked up in Paris – would make a whole article in itself. Sadly, many of his beautiful yet painstakingly practical des-

gns have since been pulled down or compromised because of poor urban planning (including the stadium itself, which was initially designed with ponds along the perimeter to prevent flooding, all of which have now been filled in). Some of his other works in the city include the Chaktomuk Theatre, Institute of Foreign Languages and Independence Monument. English-language tours guiding you around the highlights can be booked at ka-tours.org

4 Wat Ounalom to Wat Botum

Ride another tuk-tuk to Wat Ounalom ("wat" means temple) for a quick look inside its peaceful grounds. Then stroll south along the river, past the Royal Palace and the fan-

-shaped Chaktomuk Theatre, to Wat Botum. En route, take a small detour one street back from the river, along Sortheas Boulevard, to walk past the Mansion – a dilapidated yet stunning building from the French colonial period that now hosts events. If time permits, this is a walk best done around sunset. Areas that by day can be unforgivingly hot and all but deserted come alive in a city lacking in pleasant public spaces, and by dusk the atmosphere is electric. Along the riverfront, monks and smartly dressed locals place orchids and incense at the Preah Ang Dorngkeu Shrine, while at Wat Botum catch everyone from older folks doing their evening aerobics to teens practising skateboard tricks around the central fountain.

5 Meta House

Going beyond your four hours and into the evening, a 20-minute walk north to Street 178 will lead you to Meta House. Recently moved to a new home, this German cultural centre also hosts local and regional exhibitions, documentary screenings and talks on topics such as journalism, the environment and international development. If nothing appeals there, hop in a tuk-tuk to the Rosewood Hotel in Vattanac Capital Tower, Phnom Penh's tallest building, for a drink at its sophisticated rooftop bar. If it's been a few years since your last visit to the city, the changes observable from this vantage point are staggering. meta-house.com; rosewoodhotels.com

FOTOLIA, ISTOCK

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 Peter.



A FLIGHT TO THE ANTIPODES

My mother is going on a long journey for the first time in her life, as she wants to visit her family living in Australia. She's an elderly person. I've heard there is a direct connection to Australia from Warsaw. Is it a non-stop flight? Also, how should my mum prepare for such a long journey? My cousin, who has recently visited Australia, experienced a very bad case of jet lag. How can one prevent those negative effects of crossing several time zones?

Paweł

Dear Paweł,
A flight from Europe to Australia is indeed long and tiring, especially for an elderly person travelling in the Economy class cabin. Of course, it is necessary to prepare for the flight properly. First of all, please check the offers of airlines offering connections with no more than just one change of aircraft. For example, you can book a flight with Qatar Airways via Doha, Emirates via Dubai or LOT via Singapore. This will minimize the travel time and the aircraft change won't be a big problem, either. The only non-stop connection from Europe to Australia is provided by Qantas. This is a relatively new service departing from London and arriving in Perth on the west coast of Australia. The flight takes about 17 hours. Opinions are divided, some passengers love the option to travel without any stops; others prefer to divide the journey into shorter sectors. Some travellers opt for a stopover for a few days at an intermediate airport to have a rest before the final stage of their trip. It's worth considering such an option.

For many travellers sudden change of time zones is an extremely unpleasant experience. This phenomenon is referred to as a jet-lag and involves experiencing such undesired symptoms as headache, insomnia, irritability, fatigue, or even gastrointestinal problems. It gets even worse if you travel from west to east, because then the day gets unnaturally shortened. Travelling west when the day is extended doesn't cause such serious side effects.

It's a good idea to prepare for the journey beforehand, modifying slightly the hours of sleep. A light diet, avoiding coffee and alcohol, can also be helpful. When booking a flight, I recommend opting for an aisle seat, while during the flight it's good to stand up and move around as much as possible, as well as drink a lot of fluids. Also, when your mother finally arrives at her destination, she should switch to the new daily cycle as soon as possible. If she's on a medication, her doctor should determine the new hours for taking them.

A CAR ON HOLIDAY

I want to rent a car in Spain. What car insurance should I take? The offer is very favourable - it's just one euro per day. I can't figure out all those car insurances, but I know that I don't want to pay the deductible. When I rent a car, is this fee blocked on my credit card? A friend of mine who lives abroad, has bought a yearly insurance with the so-called "zero deductible". It's very cheap. Can I buy it at the rental station?

Krzysztof

Dear Krzysztof,
I've checked the link to the offer you sent to me. I must say it's pretty unconventional, as it reminds me of the famous (or rather infamous) flights for PLN1. Let's face it, it's impossible to rent a car at such a low rate. While one can agree that a car rental company may freely choose the rental fee, insurance premiums must remain at the market level. The basic insurance covering civil liability, accident, theft and personal injury is €24 per day with the deductible of €1500. To reduce the deductible to €700 you would have to pay another €18 per day and zero deductible would lighten your wallet by yet another €30. So the total cost of rental rises dramatically if you opt for full insurance coverage and is comparable to the offer of traditional car rental companies. When you sign the contract, you can choose the final version of the insurance. I always recommend going for a full package with zero deductible. This is particularly important in countries with high rates of accidents or damage caused by third parties. If you don't buy full insurance, the amount of the deductible on your credit card will be blocked by default. The sum may be blocked even up to 30 days after the end of the contract.

Some insurance companies offer separate, special deductible protection (also called Zero Deductible Coverage). This is a year-round insurance covering the individual driver. In the event of a collision, the rental company will normally charge you to the amount of your deductible. You can apply for reimbursement of this cost from this additional policy. However, it's quite a long and tedious procedure and doesn't protect you fully from incurring additional costs.

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