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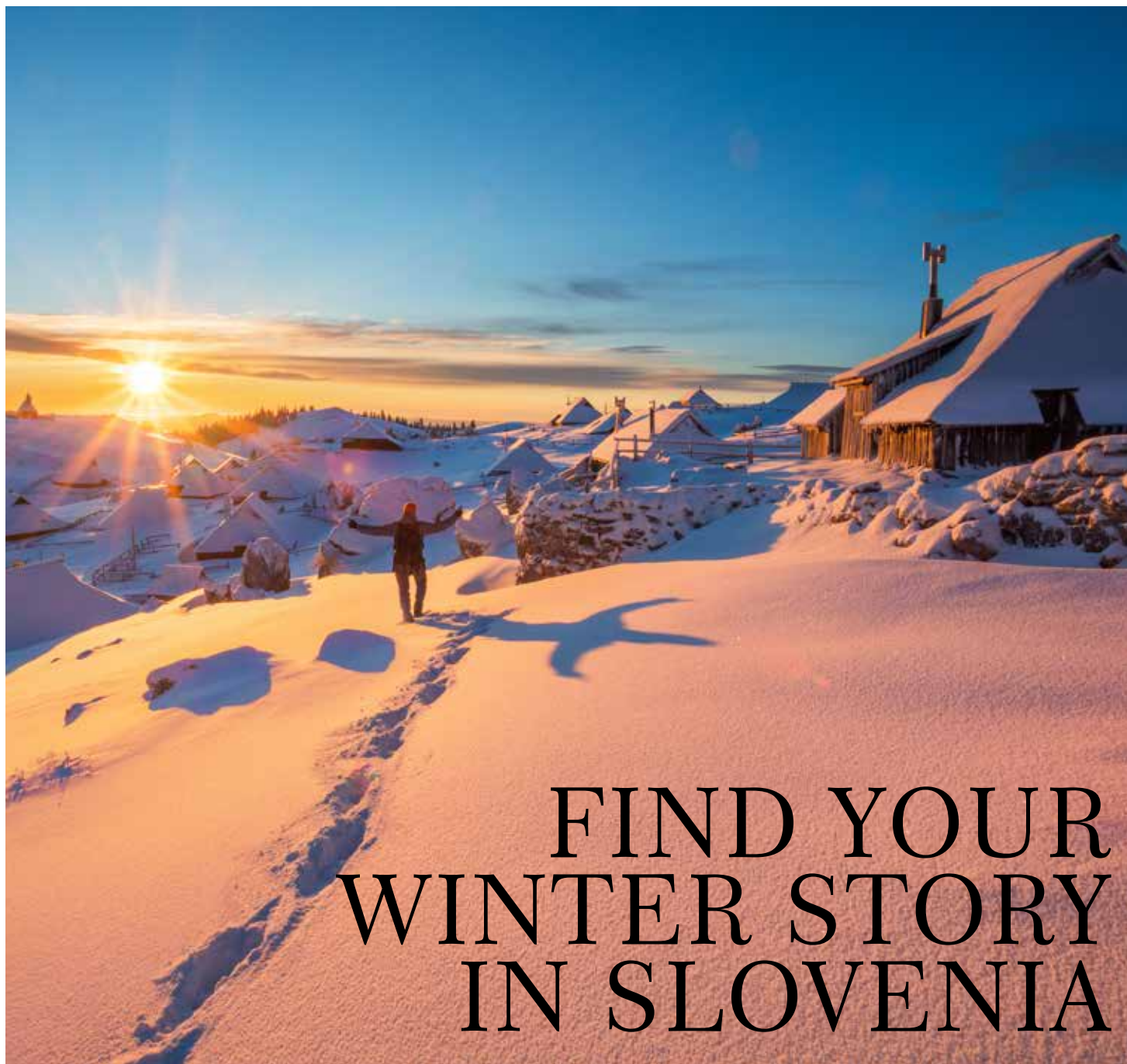
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IN SLOVENIA



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Zapraszamy do nowo otwartego 5-gwiazdkowego hotelu Bachleda Luxury Hotel Kraków MGallery by Sofitel. W bogato zdobionych wnętrzach Goście przenoszą się w świat elegancji i wyjątkowego luksusu, gdzie tradycja spotyka się z nowoczesnością i dyskretną elegancją. Z okien stylowych apartamentów rozpościera się widok na Wisłę, a położenie w samym centrum królewskiego miasta czyni hotel idealnym miejscem zarówno dla Gości biznesowych, jak i turystów.



W Restauracji Gavi króluje wyrafinowany smak, a kameralna atmosfera oraz wystrój zachęcają do kulinarnej podróży w stylu fine dining. Po długim dniu pracy lub zwiedzania Goście mogą zrelaksować się w królewskim Spa, a wieczorem spędzić czas w Opus Lounge Bar, rozsmakowując się w szlachetnych alkoholach z różnych zakątków świata.

DESTINATIONS

32 ONWARDS AND UPWARDS

Chongqing, one of the richest and fastest-growing places in the world.

24 NEW FACE OF INDIA

With its diverse economy and strong local workforce, Chennai is proving to be a draw for foreign investors

64 4 HOURS IN... VENICE BEACH

LA's boho enclave is ripe for exploration on wheels



COVER STORY



12

WINTER IN SLOVENIA



6 EDITORIAL

8 IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Hotel, restaurant, and airline news

24 SAVING THE EARTH

Making the airline industry more sustainable is a growing priority

40 THE ART OF PROFESSIONAL EVENT PLANNING

42 INVESTING IN CONDO

44 CONDO VILLAS WARMIA RESORT

- a commercial success of a unique project

46 DESIGNS FOR LIFE

History of design in the Czech Republic

50 BED & BOARD

Hotels at Heathrow Airport

54 LINE OF ASCENT

Blancpain has presented a new limited-edition pilot's watch

TRIED AND TESTED

60 Yotelair Singapore Changi Airport

61 Pentahotel Moscow, Arbat



62 AC Hotel New York Downtown

66 ASK PETER

Piotr Kalita answers readers' questions



56

LIGHT TOUCH

We review some of the top models available on the market

18

STAY GREEN

Hotel industry goes eco



DISCOVER MORE: MALE

z linią lotniczą, która lata do
największej liczby krajów na świecie.



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LAND OF OPPORTUNITIES

Why is Slovenia a particularly attractive place to visit this winter? This you can learn from our cover article, listing numerous attractions of this European country of many faces and possibilities.

Summer in Slovenia is, of course, all about beautiful beaches and the sea. The Adriatic coast isn't long, but it's perfectly prepared to cater for the needs of tourists coming here from all over the world. The most beautiful of the Slovenian coastline is probably Piran, which is considered to be the biggest attraction of Istria. Its historic part is a real maze of narrow streets, squares, alleys, and above all, the St. George's Church situated on the rock. Izola is yet another unique town situated on the Slovenian Riviera and famous for the best fish restaurants on the coast.

Winter, on the other hand, is all about wide and long ski slopes, perfectly groomed as early as December. Each year, Slovenia hosts a number of world cup events in alpine and cross-country skiing, as well as snowboarding. For adventure, seekers who wish to have an even closer contact with nature there are excellent possibilities for ski touring. Walking through the unspoiled areas of the Alps covered with a thick layer of snow, you can enjoy scenic vistas and crisp, clean mountain air. On top of that, there are numerous charms of winter days in Ljubljana and the opportunity to see Postojna, one of the most beautiful caves in Europe.

Marzena Mróz

MARZENA MRÓZ
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF



Nowe Audi A4 Tworzymy przyszłość

Nowe Audi A4 to perfekcyjna kompozycja sportowej stylistyki i zaawansowanych technologii jutra. Odświeżony, dynamiczny design znakomicie podkreśla jego charakter, a innowacyjne systemy wsparcia kierowcy oraz najnowsze cyfrowe rozwiązania, takie jak system infotainment z dotykowym ekranem MMI, gwarantują komfort i pewność prowadzenia.



Od 1 września 2018 r. wszystkie nowe pojazdy wprowadzane do obrotu w Unii Europejskiej muszą być badane i homologowane zgodnie z procedurą WLTP określoną w rozporządzeniu Komisji (UE) 2017/1151. WLTP zapewnia bardziej rygorystyczne warunki badania i bardziej realistyczne wartości zużycia energii w porównaniu do stosowanej do tej pory metody NEDC. W zależności od wariantu i wersji zużycie paliwa w cyklu mieszanym od 5,0 l/100 km do 8,0 l/100 km, emisja CO₂ od 131 g/km do 181 g/km (dane na podstawie świadectw homologacji typu). Zużycie paliwa i emisja CO₂ zostało określone zgodnie z procedurą WLTP. O szczegóły zapytaj Autoryzowanego Dealera Marki Audi lub sprawdź na stronie audi.pl/danewltp. Montaż akcesoriów w pojeździe może mieć wpływ na poziom zużycia paliwa i emisji CO₂. Informacje dotyczące odzysku i recyklingu pojazdów wycofanych z eksploatacji znajdują się na stronie www.audi.pl.



NEW TECHNOLOGIES

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The Prime HD IncBOOK ebook reader has been designed for fashion-forward users who value the highest quality of e-paper technology and the ability to carry thousands of books in a device the size of a chocolate bar, weighing mere 168 grams.

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travellers will be happy to know that the device's battery can last several weeks before you need to charge it. The device runs on Android system, which means that it can also work as a mobile device running numerous apps, such as audio players, dictionaries or map viewers. InkBOOK Prime HD has 8GB of internal storage (sufficient to store about 5000 books), but if that is not enough, you can always expand the device's memory with microSD or use cloud storage solutions. Built-in Wi-Fi connection allows you to stay in full contact with the world, so if you somehow manage to read all the books and magazines stored on it, you can download a new batch via e.g. Legimi service.

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WITH LOT TO DELHI

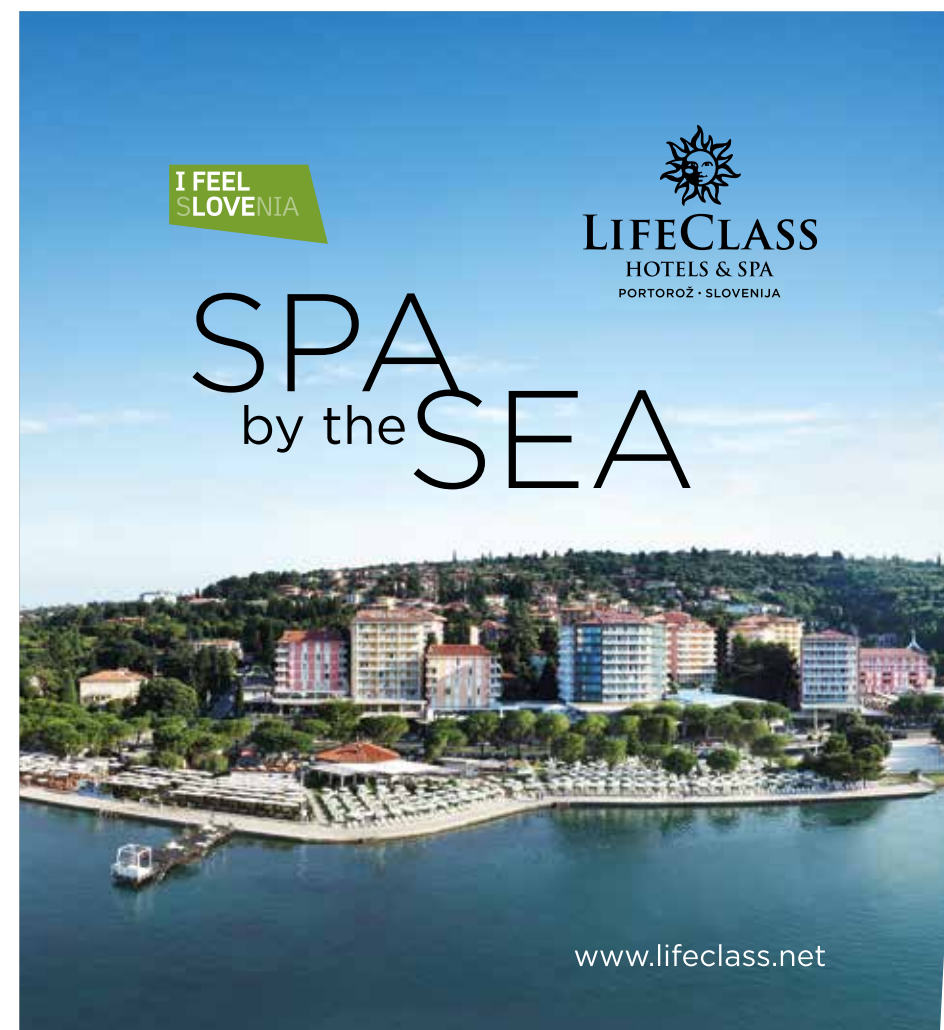
On 11 September Poland's flag carrier will launch a non-stop service between Warsaw and New Delhi. The connection to the north Indian city will be LOT's sixth connection to Asia. Passengers will have a choice of five weekly services operated on board the comfortable Boeing 787 Dreamliner. New Delhi was chosen not without reason as the next LOT destination in Asia. India is inhabited by over 1.3 billion citizens and is the world's 7th biggest economy worth US\$2,439 billion. After Singapore, India is the second centre of direct investment in Asia for Polish entrepreneurs. In turn, for Indian business Poland has cost-effective and profitable investment environment. Geo-location of Poland with LOT's extended network of connections rank Warsaw hub as a gateway for Indian passengers enabling them access to all countries in Europe. "The new service will not only enable the shortest and most comfortable air trip between Poland and India. Our flights allow passengers travelling both from and to India, to connect to key cities within Western and Central Europe. The potential for this flight is huge - over 8.9 million passengers travelled between India and Europe in 2017," says Rafal Milczarski. Aircraft serving the Warsaw-Delhi route will be covering the distance of 5,271 kilometres in 7 hours and 8 minutes.



SWITZERLAND

Although over 60 percent of the Swiss territory is mountainous, Switzerland is also a country of large waters. Numerous lakes not only shape the landscape, but also everyday life of the country's citizens. You can go swimming in the largest and most popular water reservoirs, but also in small mountain lakes, ponds and bays. When in Switzerland, it's worth visiting Lake Lucerne, the romantic forest Lake Blausee and, of course, the famous Lake Geneva. The most famous rivers in Switzerland are the Rhine and the Rhône, which flow through charming towns and villages. Their waters are so clean that bathing in them is a real pleasure, both in summer and autumn; mojaszwajcaria.pl

businessstraveller.pl



www.lifeiclass.net



New series of durable cases

Thule's novelties are durable, trendy and designed with frequent travellers in mind. The Thule Revolve series consists of four models, including a carry-on and a registered suitcase. All of them are ideal for both air and train travel. Their main features include extremely durable polycarbonate impact-resistant shell, over-sized rear wheels for greater control over rough terrain, as well as built-in save lock, and tough telescopic handles. Thule Revolve cases are well-prepared for the hardships of even the roughest journey. The damage-resistant construction with a reinforced front panel, stiffened frame and reinforced corners has been designed to withstand the rigors of travel and extremes of cold and heat. As a result, the cases are durable and very comfortable to use. All cases in the series are made of polycarbonate, a material combining the highest mechanical resistance, durability and excellent appearance. The designers have also made sure that they are easy to navigate from doorstep to destination with oversized rear wheels that easily glide over rough terrain and smaller, recessed front wheels that increase interior space. The series consists of four models with different capacities, available in three colour versions: black, grey and navy blue. Thule Revolve Carry On Spinner, capacity: 33 l, size: 55 x 35 x 23cm, weight: 3.8 kg weight; price: PLN1699



RESTAURANT FOR GOURMETS

You can order here a delicious pikeperch with crayfish neck and mussels, as well as fried catfish and sturgeon. Meat lovers will certainly go for such dishes as a leg of lamb, cabbage rolls with lamb filling or halušky with veal cheeks in cream sauce. The restaurant's real hit is steak foie gras with caramelized pear and cherry-wine sauce. Many gourmets return here to enjoy delicious pierogis, especially the ones with black dough and stuffed with pikeperch, smoked bacon or rabbit meat and hazelnuts. In summer season, the most popular are pierogis stuffed with strawberries, rhubarb and cherries. It's also one of few spots in Warsaw, where you can order fresh oysters, caviar from sturgeon or pike. Kanapa, an elegant restaurant featuring new Ukrainian cuisine, is housed in the villa of Feliks and Inna Siedlanowscy in Warsaw's Mokotów district. The work on designing this unique venue took two years. Today, this multi-storey restaurant, located in an old villa with a beautiful garden, can hold a party for up to 150 people. Kanapa is exploiting the gastronomic principles established from the very beginning: using as many seasonal local products as possible, researching culinary traditions and combining them with innovative techniques.

MORE FLIGHTS FROM CRACOW TO AMSTERDAM

From 2 September to 26 October 2019, KLM will start operating four flights a day on the Cracow-Amsterdam route. The additional, evening service will vastly improve the accessibility of the route prior to the autumn season.

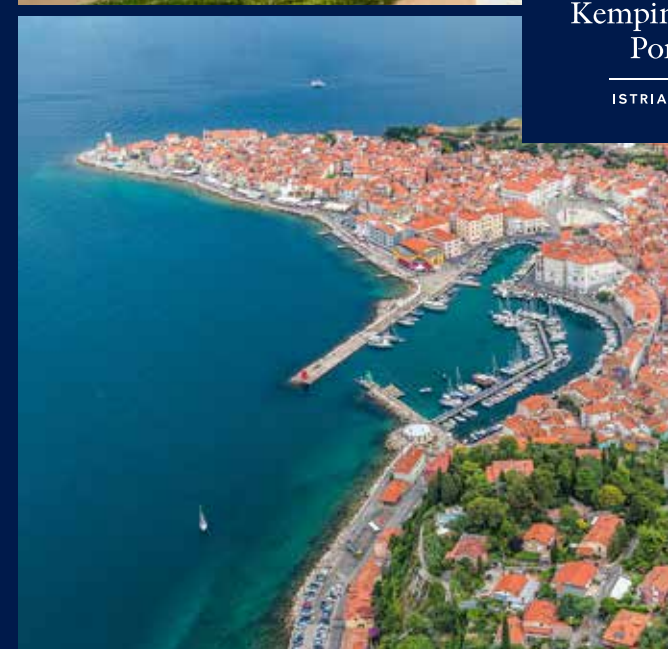
The fourth daily flight (KL1998), scheduled to depart from Cracow at 19:15, will land in Amsterdam at 21:15. Hours may vary depending on the days of the week. The flight from Amsterdam to Cracow (KL1997) is scheduled for 16:40 with an arrival in the capital of Lesser Poland at 18:35. The route will be served by the same type of aircraft as the other KLM flights on Cracow-Amsterdam route. Passengers will travel on board the comfortable Embraer E190; airfranceklm.com Kraków John Paul II International Airport is the only regional airport in Poland handling nearly 7 million passengers a year.



PRESS MATERIALS




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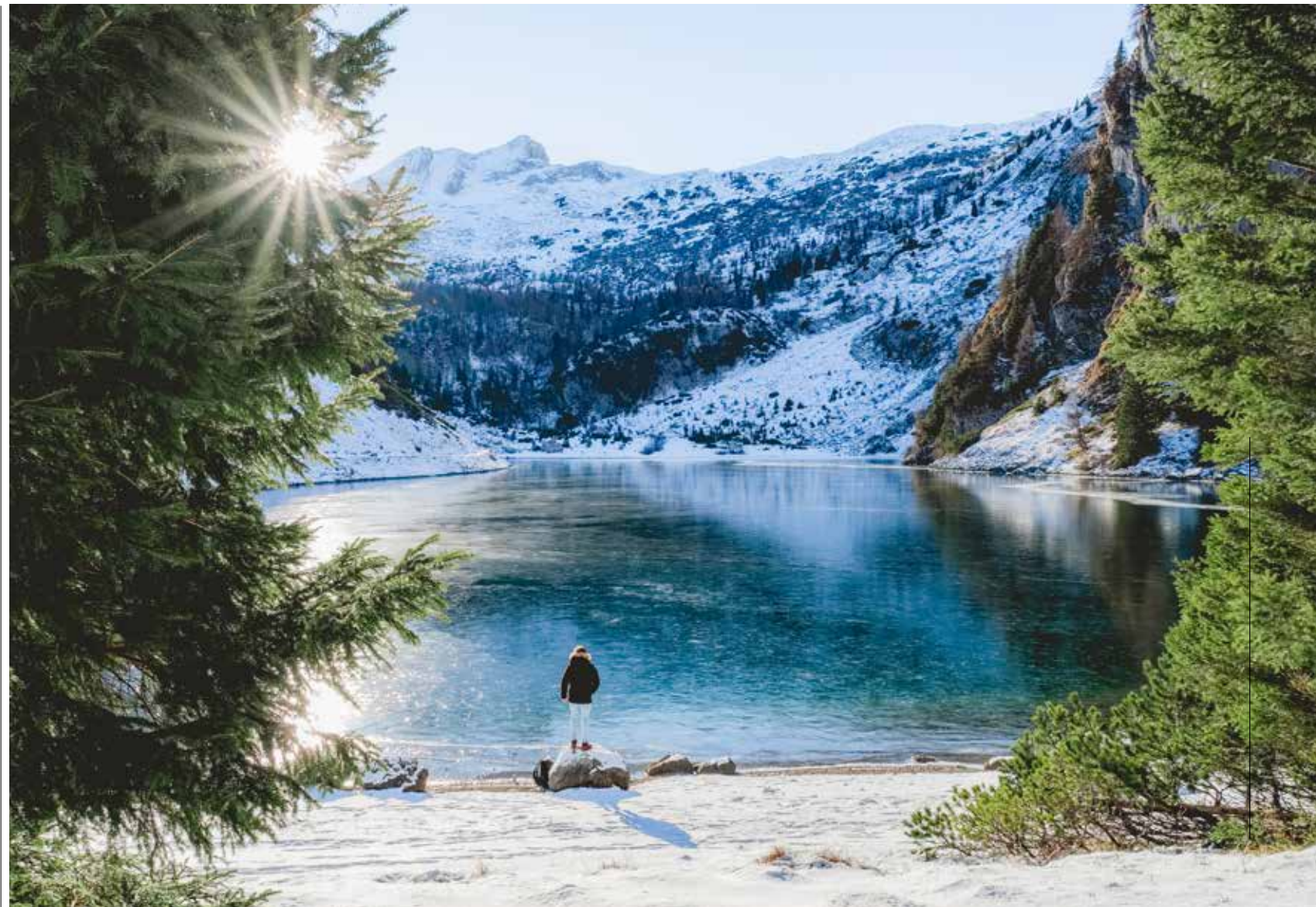
WORDS MARZENA MRÓZ

FIND YOUR WINTER STORY IN SLOVENIA

Four seasons, four charming faces of Slovenia. In the summer, Slovenian green landscapes are a real feast for the eyes, while in the winter the country turns into a haven for alpine skiers, snowboarders and cross-country skiing aficionados. Here are some reasons, why this winter you should visit this unique land.

MAIN PICTURE:
Bled in October

FRANČERAN



In Slovenia, everything that is charming starts with a song – also in winter. For example, in the *Toboggan Polka*, you may hear a distinctive “shshshts”, which is the sound of skis turning on freshly-fallen snow. This hit song composed by the Avsenik brothers known worldwide as “the kings of polka” and the founding fathers of the popular folk music, is one of those evergreens, you can also hear around ski lifts and at apres-ski parties on Slovenian slopes. Slovenia is probably one of the few countries where you can take to a slope even in the middle of a working day and then return to the town on the same day.

Slovenians are excellent skiers, which is partly due to the mountainous landscape of the country. They are also widely credited to have been the first to use wooden skis to move across the winter landscape, be it for the purpose of hunting, daily errands or simply for pleasure. The activity was especially popular with the inhabitants of the Bloke

Slovenia is a very picturesque and geographically diverse alpine country.

Plateau, who are now considered ski pioneers in Central Europe.

SKIING IN FRESH SNOW

It's hard to find a more enjoyable activity in Slovenia in winter time than a ride down a snowy slope and basking in the sun in front of a traditional mountain hut amid snow-covered peaks. Adrenaline lovers and those seeking this unique feeling of utter freedom, can go on a ski-mountaineering trip or climb frozen waterfalls. And if you want to experience fairytale-like winter atmosphere, you can take a trek on snowshoes in deep snow or sled down an illuminated slope in the picturesque Julian and Kamniško-Savinjske Alps.

You will find more information about Slovenian ski resorts at <https://slovenia-outdoor.com>

PRESS MATERIALS: TEDDY VERNEUIL, BOŠTJAN ODAR, IZTOK MEDIA

THE ALPINE CAPITAL OF WINTER SPORTS

Slovenia is a very picturesque and geographically diverse alpine country, as well as one of the world's major winter sports powerhouses. Each year, Slovenia hosts a number of world cup events in alpine and cross-country skiing, as well as snowboarding competitions. In winter, Slovenia abounds in natural snow. Its modern ski centres boast a total of more than 300 km of ski runs and 280 km of winter cross-country trails. To sum up, almost every bigger place has a ski centre in its vicinity.

ALPINE SKIING AND NORDIC DISCIPLINES

For adventure, seekers who wish to have an even closer contact with nature there are excellent possibilities for ski touring in Slovenia. Walking through the unspoiled areas of the Alps covered with a thick layer of snow, you can enjoy scenic vistas and crisp, clean mountain air.

FROM LEFT: Krnsko lake in the winter; Mountain pasture Vogar in Bohinj above the sea of fog; Ski touring; Velika Planina in Winter

It's a good idea to hire a certified guide who will guarantee your safety and show you the most picturesque spots around Kranjska Gora, Lake Bohinj, Vršič or Pokljuka where ski touring is especially popular. The Triglav National Park is an excellent starting point for cross-country skiing. The Pokljuka Plateau above Bled features more than 30 km of well-prepared cross-country ski trails. The plateau surrounded by forests has frequently hosted the Biathlon World Cup and is a popular training centre for athletes. Zreško Polje, the Rogla Cross-Country Centre, offers seven various polygons for each type of cross-country skiers. Both Pokljuka and Rogla offer accommodation supplemented by an excellent catering service.

Slovenians also love ski jumping events, and Planica where the Slovenian eagles learn how to fly, is well known for its Nordic Centre and the World Cup Ski Jumping Final held here every year.

In Slovenia, there are a number of sports travel agencies offering group sledding tours.



FROM LEFT: Kranjska Gora at night; Mountain peaks at night

NIGHT SLEDDING AND TORCH HIKES

There are a number of sports travel agencies in Slovenia offering group sledding tours. The participants of such an event are driven to a hilltop to take an amusing ride to the very bottom of the hill. The feeling of speed, cold fresh air and peace in the snow-covered nature is a truly unique and invigorating experience. Note that you sled down the hill in almost complete darkness, illuminated only by the pale light of the torch and the stars above. The attractions of the Slovenian winter landscape can be discovered by taking a trip on dog sleds or in horse-pulled sleigh. Other exciting winter adventures include ice climbing, winter fishing and skating. One of the most beautiful natural ice rinks can be found in the idyllic Jezersko region in the northern part of the country. The ice frequently covers several Alpine lakes, the most popular being Lake Bohinj and Lake Bled. Several Slovenian towns feature small outdoor artificial ice rinks located near sport and shopping centres and adding a special touch of magic to the festive holiday atmosphere.

In the Alpine and Sub-Alpine parts of Slovenia, hiking and mountaineering has been an integral part of the lives of the local people. Today there are more than ten thousand kilometres of well-maintained mountain paths. Climbing to the top of Slovenian two-thousanders, you are guarante-

ed breath-taking views across other peaks and valleys. Night hikes with torches through winter landscapes are an especially romantic and memorable experience, helped by hospitable mountain hut keepers, who are happy to offer hikers homemade Alpine tea, hot jota (bean and pickled turnip soup) or delicious sour milk. During the traditional event called Castles of King Matthew, which has been held at the foot of Mount Peca in Koroška since 1993, teams from Slovenia and abroad build sculptures and castles made of ice and snow. Also in Kranjska Gora, which is on the other side of the mountain, there is an Ice Park where you can try your hand at ice carving.

MEMORABLE DECEMBER IN LJUBLJANA

During the Advent time, the Slovenian capital transforms into a magical city of lights, holiday aromas, and joyous atmosphere.

During this time, the entire city is decorated with Christmas lights, its streets resound with Christmas melodies, and the aroma of mulled wine and roasted almonds fills the air. On the banks of the Ljubljanica River and on major squares there are numerous market stalls selling souvenirs, and across the whole capital there are a number of venues where there is always something interesting going on.

PRESS MATERIALS, IZTOK MEDIA, NINA KURNIK



Festive Ljubljana

Even the festive illumination, when all the Christmas lights lighten up the city as if it were a day, is a truly wonderful event. Music fills Ljubljana's squares in December. Throughout this month, you can have fun at concerts of well-known Slovenian musicians and bands. Most musical events take place on Kongresni Trg, Po-gačarjev Trg, Novi Trg and Trg Francoske Revolucije. The highlight of the outdoor music events is, of course, New Year's Eve, when there is a magnificent fireworks display above Ljubljana Castle.

ABOVE: Living Nativity Scenes in Postojna Cave



LIVE NATIVITY SCENE IN POSTOJNA CAVE

Visited by 38 million people from Slovenia and abroad, Postojna is Europe's most popular cave. Close to Postojna Cave is Predjama - the largest cave castle in the world. Postojna is the world's only karst cave with its own railway built more than 140 years ago and taking tourists to the underground network of karst corridors and halls. During a 1.5-hour guided tour, you will learn about all of the most important karst features: the largest, 16-metre-high stalagmite known as the Skyscraper, the crystal white symbol of Postojna Cave - the Brilliant, the oldest underground post office in the world and the most famous underground animal - the olm or the human fish.

Postojna Cave boasts incredible subterranean halls. In one of them, at Christmas time more than 500 performers take part in the largest live nativity play held underground.

HOW TO GET THERE?

How to get to Slovenia? The fastest, but also the best option is to fly with LOT Polish Airlines to Ljubljana in just 1 hour and 40 minutes. You can also drive with a car which will take around 10 hour from Warsaw to capital city of Slovenia, Ljubljana.

More info about the destination at slovenia.info



18

Hotel groups are recognising the need to do more when it comes to sustainability – but there are steps we can take as travellers, too

Stay green

PICTURED:
1 Hotel Central Park
in New York

HOTELS

WORDS HANNAH BRANDLER

We all want to be good citizens of the world, but how do we reconcile travelling around the planet while at the same time not harming it?

CHOOSING YOUR HOTEL

A property needs to be in a convenient location, at an affordable price and with the facilities and services you require, but once those factors are satisfied, how do you judge whether it is environmentally friendly? Keeping track of a hotel's sustainability progress is not easy, but here are some things to look out for.

There are various certifications and classifications available for properties worldwide, but the global nature of the hotel industry, and the fact that different countries have different standards, can make this a confusing area. Bear in mind also that most hotels have been built by developers, may be operated by a third party, and are then perhaps marketed and branded by one of the well-known chains. In such circumstances, finding out just how green your hotel is can be a daunting task.

First, as a rule of thumb, new hotels will have been built to higher environmental specifications than was required for older properties, and will have better technology at their disposal. Some of these properties will market themselves as having a LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) rating. Awarded by the USGBC (the US Green Building Council), this globally recognised certification must be applied for and covers eco new-builds, renovations and interior fittings. Marriott International, for instance, is pursuing LEED certification or equivalent at 650 of its newer or refurbished hotels.

Other groups have taken a different route. Accor is a founding member of the Association pour le Développement du Bâtiment Bas Carbone. This

organisation is developing a low-carbon building certification (BBCA) accounting for a building's greenhouse gas emissions throughout its lifecycle, from construction through to operation and eventual demolition and recycling. This building standard was applied throughout the construction of the new Jo&Joe Paris-Gentilly.

To meet the targets required by certification boards, hotels need to be rigorous in monitoring their greenhouse gas emissions and waste production. Accor's Gaia tool, launched in 2016, allows its network of hotels to create plans and monitor sustainability progress. Marriott International promises that all properties will have a Serve 360: Doing Good in Every Direction section on the website displaying hotel impact metrics by the end of next year, while IHG's Green Engage platform has four levels of certification and offers hotels "200 Green Solutions" – ways to report and manage their carbon, energy, water and waste. The group says that last year almost 8,000 solutions were implemented globally, with those using the platform avoiding a total of US\$67 million in costs.

Systems, however, are not always centralised. Iberostar Hotels and Resorts has invested more than €33 million into improving energy consumption behaviour across its 100 properties, but has a more localised approach. For example, the Iberostar Selection Cancun has an Intelligent Building System that monitors and controls temperatures in the hotel, while the Iberostar Selection Playa Mita in Mexico installed elevators that collect kinetic energy from a moving lift; this reduced energy consumption by 50 per cent.

HOW TO BE A GREEN GUEST

Other than taking note of green accreditations, guests trying to be more eco-conscious should abide by the "small is beautiful" motto. Budget stays are more sustainable because of their modest nature; smaller rooms and fewer

restaurants are conducive to low energy consumption and waste production. Take Accor, for instance, whose 4,800 hotels range from luxury to budget. In terms of food waste alone, the upscale properties average 47 tonnes per year, while its economy hotels pale at 17 tonnes.

When travelling, there can be an element of "out of sight, out of mind", with guests viewing holidays as a break from conscious eco-friendly behaviour. Booking.com reported this year that 46 per cent of travellers struggle to make sustainable choices on holiday compared with everyday life. Lights are left on, fresh towels are requested daily and miniature toiletries are relished.

That's where monetary incentives can come in. As suggested by its name, eco-friendly Hotel Verde in Cape Town (see overleaf) encourages "green" behaviour by rewarding guests with Verdinos, its in-house currency. Verdinos can be used towards your bill or at the hotel bar and deli, or you can donate them to a good cause.

IHG Rewards Club members staying at one of the group's properties for two nights or longer can choose "A Greener Stay", opting out of housekeeping services in exchange for points. "It's a triple win – allowing the hotels to run more efficiently and save costs, enabling guests to lower their travel footprint, and reducing IHG's overall impact on the environment," an IHG spokesperson says.

Accor has also incorporated sustainability into its loyalty programme. As explained by the group's sustainable development director, Arnaud Herrmann, "guests can both earn and burn their points by participating actively in meaningful sustainable causes", such as a light housekeeping service.

Where hoteliers and guests lose their momentum, governments can steer them in the right direction. The Shanghai Municipal Administration of Culture and Tourism, for example, will begin issuing fines of up to US\$725 from

19

July this year if hotels equip rooms with disposable amenities such as toothbrushes, nail files and shower scrubs. Reception can still provide such products if requested, referring accountability to the guest.

Behavioural changes are paramount to the success of sustainability programmes. As hotel groups strive for loyalty, frequent travellers have a huge amount of power when it comes to driving change in the industry. And many are willing to do so, with 55 per cent of travellers more determined to make sustainable choices than last year according to Booking.com.

What's crucial, says Gloria Fluxa, vice-chairman and chief sustainability officer of Iberostar, is that guests "do not underestimate the power of small steps", whether that be using reusable water bottles, keeping informed about green activities (beach clean-ups, for example), or ordering sustainable fish in a hotel's restaurants – Iberostar is the first chain in Southern Europe to be certified with the Marine Stewardship Council. Fluxa adds that sustainable measures are "not taking away the excellence of the experience", instead making it more enriching.

Disposable plastics have been a great source of shame for hotels and customers alike. "Single-use plastic is a topic our guests are increasingly concerned about", says Hemma Varma, senior

manager of social impact and global responsibility for Europe at Marriott International. The group will remove plastic straws and stirrers from all properties by July this year, eliminating more than one billion straws per year and about a quarter-billion stirrers when fully operational.

IHG has also eliminated an average of 50 million straws annually from its properties, and uses recycled plastic to its advantage. The group is working with supplier Ege to trial its 100 per cent recycled yarn carpets, crafted from industrial nylon plastics and fishing nets salvaged from the ocean.

Iberostar has gone one step further with its Wave of Change initiative, which focuses on the conservation of oceans through the elimination of single-use plastics, promotion of sustainable fishing, and improvement of coastal health. Oceans have "always been a part of our DNA", stresses Fluxa, with 80 per cent of its properties located on a seafloor. The chain has already replaced all single-use plastic products in its 40 Spain hotels.

"We intend to become single-use plastic free up to the limits that the legislation allows by the end of 2020," she says – legislation differs in the 19 countries in which the chain operates – but she stresses that "we're doing our homework and want to move towards a circular economy". How is Iberostar doing this? "We did an extensive audit of products internally and looked at how they could be substituted and the operational implications of this," Fluxa explains.

STAFF ENGAGEMENT

Just as guests can apply pressure from outside, hotel employees have an influence internally. As Fluxa puts it: "The most important stakeholder for this movement is our staff. If they don't understand [the framework], they won't be able to explain it to guests." Iberostar staff have accordingly been trained by NGO Fishwise about the responsible consumption of seafood.

Other companies have launched imaginative initiatives to get employees on board. Scandic, the largest hotel operator in the Nordic market, has involved



'Guests can earn and burn points by participating in meaningful sustainable causes'

staff in its sustainability endeavours since 1993, when a team member's "hang up your towel" policy became standard practice worldwide. Last year, it wanted to "add a fun spin" to its efforts, according to Vanessa Butani, Scandic's director of sustainable business, with 18,000 team members participating in a "sustainability hackathon". Staff submitted 400 social and environmental ideas, which were voted on before facing a jury.

Turn off the Tap, the winning environmental idea, will pilot this summer in Norway. Guests are advised to switch off the tap when brushing their teeth, aiming to save more than 200 million litres of water per year.

Accor similarly engages staff through its Acting Here app for employees, which launched in April last year. The app includes both educational and activity elements, allowing staff to receive rewards for publishing selfies of their sustainable actions, or doing quizzes to boost their knowledge.

CUTTING FOOD WASTE

While sustainable initiatives may seem altruistic, there is a financial incentive, too. Accor's food and beverage accounts for half of its waste, 40 per cent of its global water consumption, and is the second-largest contributor to its carbon footprint.

In fact, one-third of all food produced in the world is lost or wasted. To address this, chains such as Accor and IHG have partnered with Winnow, a company

LEFT: Paper straws are used at Marriott's St Pancras Renaissance

ABOVE: IHG staff clean up the Thames in partnership with the Rivers Trust

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using smart meter technology to record and analyse food waste. Winnow's co-founder, Marc Zornes, says: "Although the scale of the problem is enormous, it presents a huge opportunity for businesses to recover value and become more efficient." Through Winnow's real-time reports, "businesses and chefs can adjust their food purchasing decisions accordingly, reduce their spending and tackle a fundamental problem of food waste: overproduction".

Accor's Sofitel Bangkok Sukhumvit piloted the system in 2015, resulting in a 50 per cent reduction in food waste within four months, and estimated annual savings of more than US\$60,000. In fact, charity WRAP and the World Resources Institute found that a typical food manufacturing, retail or hospitality business could achieve a 14:1 return on investment by reducing food waste. Such technology will prove useful in helping Accor to achieve its aim of reducing food waste by 30 per cent by next year.

Scandic is working with digital platforms Karma and Too Good to Go to sell leftover food at half the cost price. Last year the group saved more than 125,000 portions of unsold food using such digital platforms.

It's not all about technology. Accor's Novotel Nantes Carquefou creates puddings from breakfast pastries while the Pullman Auckland uses peel from juiced oranges to make marmalade. Through a combination of behavioural changes, technology and creativity, it is entirely possible to meet the UN's Sustainable Development Goal 12.3, the reduction of global food waste by 50 per cent by 2030.

Cooperation between companies will be crucial in meeting targets. "Fully aware of our environmental footprint, we are convinced that eco-responsible hotel management is a collective concern", says Accor's Herrmann. Its Planet 21 online platform shares studies, research and best-practice analyses regarding sustainable development in the hotel industry. IHG, meanwhile, is a founding member of the International Tourism Partnership, which brings hotel companies together for collective action on social and environmental responsibilities.

And in the meantime, there's plenty of small steps you can take yourself to travel more sustainably – see Smart Traveller, page 88, for more tips.

5 ECO-FRIENDLY HOTELS



The Brando, Polynesia

Located on the small Tetiaroa atoll, this luxury resort – Marlon Brando's former private island – honours its natural surroundings through the use of local or certified renewable materials. A deep seawater air-conditioning system runs cold ocean water throughout, providing low-energy cooling for all buildings and reducing energy demands by almost 70 per cent. The resort is fully biofuel capable and is close to achieving its goal of net zero carbon impact. thebrando.com

1 Hotel Central Park, New York

This 18-storey hotel boasts a three-storey living green façade. Interiors feature reclaimed barn wood and antique bricks, room keys are crafted from recycled wood, and glasses and carafes are made from recycled wine bottles. Showers have a five-minute timer to encourage mindful water use. 1hotels.com

Islas Secas, Panama

This island resort's four villas were built with sustainable wood. Its

energy is entirely solar generated, its food waste is turned into fertiliser, wastewater is reused for irrigation and there are no single-use plastic water bottles. Flights there aren't quite so eco-friendly but a staff rotation schedule minimises boat trips from mainland Panama. islassecas.com

QO, Amsterdam

This IHG hotel is an architectural eco feat, with almost one-third of the concrete used sourced from Amsterdam's Shell building. Its façade is built from thermal panels that react to the outdoor climate to regulate the indoor temperature. An aquifer thermal energy storage system stocks unused heated water underground until it's needed up top, while a greywater scheme means all water is reused to flush toilets. qo-amsterdam.com

Hotel Verde Cape Town Airport

While only 400 metres from Cape Town airport, an undeniable source of pollution, this hotel decked out in 220 photovoltaic solar panels is certainly eco. Rooms have LED lights and spectrally selective windows, which let in daylight but block heat. A greywater system saves, on average, 6,000 litres of water per day, and the gym equipment pumps power back into the hotel. On checking out, guests get a certificate to show their carbon offset. The neighbouring wetlands are home to more than 100 types of vegetation. verdehotels.com

FROM TOP: The Brando; Hotel Verde Cape Town Airport; 1 Hotel Central Park



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24

FUELLING CHANGE

As the news on global warming heats up, making the airline industry more sustainable is a growing priority

WORDS JENNI REID

The latest aircraft types have more efficient engines, lighter frames and reduced wing drag

First-class hypocrite! blared the Mail on Sunday's front page after Emma Thompson was spotted on a flight to New York. The reason for the outrage? The actor was travelling days after attending the Extinction Rebellion protests in London, which called for radical action to tackle climate change. Concern over the effects of carbon emissions on the planet are not new, but as scientific warnings get more dire and schoolchildren around the world strike to demand change, it has never been so urgently discussed. Aviation's role in all of this is no secret – it causes about 2 per cent of manmade global emissions, a figure that is predicted to rise rapidly. And the more pleasant your airborne experience, the worse your contribution is likely to be (those flying ten-abreast in an A350 can feel a little less guilty than those relaxing in a private jet). But whatever class we sit in and however much we care about climate change, most of us still feel we can justify our need to fly in the first place. Like Thompson, our readers would likely

argue it would be impossible to do their jobs without it. The aviation industry is aware of the part it needs to play in helping to reconcile our reliance on flying with its harmful effects. The UN's International Civil Aviation Organisation is implementing a carbon offsetting and reduction scheme that requires all operators to monitor, verify and report their emissions on international flights. Meanwhile, the International Air Transport Association (IATA), which counts some 290 airlines among its members, has committed to capping aviation's net CO2 emissions from next year and reducing its net CO2 emissions by 50 per cent by 2050, relative to 2005 levels. The latest aircraft types have more efficient engines, lighter frames and reduced wing drag. Boeing says that its new B777X model will be the most efficient twin-engine jet in the world, helped by its folding raked wingtip and GE9X engine. Business jets such as Gulfstream's G600, Bombardier's Global 6500 and Embraer's Praetor 600 will all be able to travel further than their predecessors on less fuel. And advances in air traffic control are also helping, with automated systems able to provide pilots with more detailed information at quicker speeds, reducing the likelihood of planes queuing in the air.

25

Still, efficiency won't be enough to meet the goals being set by the industry as well as governments and other global agencies – much greater transformation will be required. Eventually, that could mean travelling on aircraft that are radically different to what we have now. There has been much discussion of “electric vertical take-off and landing” aircraft, for example, which are somewhere between a helicopter and a flying car. KLM recently partnered with a Dutch university to help develop a fuel-efficient plane that would put its passengers, cargo hold and fuel tanks within its wings, creating a large V shape. But first will come a rethink about what's powering the aircraft we already have.

BOOSTING BIOFUEL USE

The immediate problem facing an industry seeking to reduce its emissions quickly is that it will be decades before more efficient models replace older aircraft entirely. A widely touted solution is to turn to sustainable aviation jet fuels (SAJF) or biofuels, non-petroleum-based fuels that are blended with conventional fuels up to an industry-standard limit (currently 50 per cent, although in practice significantly less).

In a May 2018 report, the General Aviation Manufacturers Association (GAMA), the National Air Transportation Association (NATA) and others explained that to fall under the definition, the fuel must be resourced in a manner that avoids depletion of natural resources and mitigates its contribution to climate change. It must also meet current certification requirements for use in turbine-powered aircraft engines.

SAJF can be derived from various sources, such as cooking oil, plant oils, municipal waste, industrial off-gas, sugars and agricultural residues, and be processed in alternative ways, including thermochemical and catalytic production processes. Five production pathways have currently been certified by ASTM, an industry body, and several more are pending approval. Burning the fuel still creates emissions, but the result must be a net reduction



in CO₂ emissions across its life-cycle relative to fossil fuels.

Biofuels have been around for some time – in 2008, Virgin Atlantic used a blend made from coconuts and Brazilian babassu nuts to fly between London and Amsterdam; the following year Continental tested a blend that used algae and jatropha seeds. ANA and Singapore Airlines have powered flights with cooking oil blends, and last year Qantas used a 10 per cent biofuel blend processed from brassica carinata, which is a relation of rapeseed, on a flight from Los Angeles to Melbourne. Lufthansa, Norwegian, Finnair and others have targets in the field. As of June 2019, more than 180,000 commercial flights using SAJF had been completed.

Nonetheless, it can hardly be said to have gone mainstream. What has been holding it back? For one, there are still relatively few producers – they include World Energy, SG Preston, Gevo and LanzaTech in the US, Neste in Finland, and SkyNRG in the Netherlands. They are expanding capacity, but doing so is expensive, and they don't have the guarantee of much higher demand just yet.

At the recent European Business Aviation Convention and Exhibition (EBACE) in Geneva, Tim Obitts, chief operating officer of NATA,

Biofuels have been around for some time in the aviation industry.

said: “We really have to make sure as an industry that we come up to a critical mass of production, because operators are asking for the product and are being told, ‘Let's talk about it later’ because the volume is not available. We have to find ways – maybe mandates, maybe other ways – to grow that supply.”

Mike Zayas, marketing manager at World Fuel Services, which provides logistics for the aviation industry, said that while demand was outpacing supply, concrete demand also needed to grow so that economies of scale could lower the costs of production and distribution, and the price for buyers. “Right now, biofuels are not at a price that makes them 100 per cent viable,” he said. “Last year they were around four times more expensive than traditional fuel; that's now coming down to three times.”

Supply issues were apparent at EBACE, where 23 business jets arrived part-powered by biofuels. Twelve of those came from business airport TAG Farnborough, but the fuel for them had been shipped to the UK from the US, which had its own environmental impact. “There's going to have to be more availability of this

ABOVE: A business jet is refuelled with a SAJF blend at TAG Farnborough

THE INDUSTRY IN NUMBERS

- 2% Aviation's contribution to global emissions
- 4.5% Annual growth of the civil aviation industry
- 180,000 Number of commercial flights powered by biofuel blends as of June 2019
- 170 Number of companies working on electric aviation projects
- £1 MILLION Value of the prize Heathrow is offering to the first electric-hybrid aircraft in service at the airport
- 300MPH Target speed of the all-electric aircraft that Rolls-Royce plans to fly next year
- 82% Percentage of Qantas frequent flyers who say they want to offset their carbon emissions

fuel, particularly in Europe, and it needs to be at a price that operators can afford to pay,” said Farnborough chief executive Brandon O'Reilly, who has committed to making the airport more sustainable – since last year, its ground operations have been certified as carbon-neutral. “We're at a turning point now, as far as education and uptake are concerned. We want to help in the education process by showing that this fuel can be put on to planes like ours. But the fuel needs to be available and cost-effective. There needs to be incentives in place, perhaps through taxes or other means.”

The education component was something addressed by other attendees at EBACE. According to Obitts, “Pilots are still afraid of SAJF. They shouldn't be, but misconceptions are still there. It's certified as jet A1 fuel so there is no difference.”

Zayas agreed: “It's safe, it has all the same characteristics as jet fuel. That's what we want everybody to be aware of.” World Fuel Services has so far sent about 13 million gallons of sustainable fuel to commercial projects and half a million to business; it wants to help make sustainable fuels mainstream by 2050.

Many believe the 20,000 aircraft-strong business aviation industry could pave the way for this. “The scale that refineries can produce at the moment is better for business aviation,” according to Charles Etter, staff scientist at Gulfstream Aerospace,

ce. “We're not as price-sensitive to jet fuel as commercial.”

TARGETED ACTION

Juergen Wiese, chairman of the European Business Aviation Association, suggested that new fuels “might not only be the licence to grow but the licence to operate in future.” Governments including Sweden, France, Spain and the Netherlands are already starting to set targets on SAJF adoption. From the start of next year, Norway will require all aviation fuel sold to be 0.5 per cent SAJF, although “problematic” sources such as palm oil are ineligible.

The latter point taps into an important concern – that claims to “sustainability” can become muddled when accounting for the processes used to obtain SAJF, even if net carbon emissions go down. Friends of the Earth has argued that biofuels will compete with food production for land and water, with companies potentially making land grabs to grow crops and clearing forest land. The International Civil Aviation Organisation has been working on measures to address such concerns, but the industry currently lacks global standards in the area.

The International Council on Clean Transportation states in a 2019 report that it is crucial to use low-carbon sources or no carbon gains will be achieved. It also notes that biofuels are in high demand not just in aviation but also in power, plastics, road vehicles and other industries, with most biofuels currently being used by the road sector.

“Realistically, there may not be enough low-carbon bioenergy available to significantly decarbonise aviation fuel until well beyond 2050,” the authors write. “Any long-term approach to decarbonising jet fuel must involve both reducing liquid fuel demand across all sectors and transitioning to and ramping up a global sustainable biomass-derived fuels for the transport sector”.

Nonetheless, the report is optimistic that while its limitations must be understood, there is still “substantial opportunity for greatly increased production of sustainable, low-carbon biomass-derived fuels for the transport sector”.

LEFT: Easyjet is collaborating with Wright Electric on new aircraft



SAJF adoption looks likely to continue to be a slow burn. The International Energy Agency anticipates biofuels reaching about 10 per cent of aviation fuel demand by 2030, and close to 20 per cent by 2040. Still, airlines are stepping up their commitments. Virgin Atlantic is working with LanzaTech to build a UK facility for converting ethanol from waste emissions into biofuel, supported by a government grant. In May, United said it would buy 38 million litres of biofuel from World Energy over the next two years. And KLM says that from 2022 it will purchase 75,000 tonnes of SAJF per year for ten years from SkyNRG, calling it a “necessary short-term option for the commercial aviation industry to reduce CO₂ emissions”.

forcing legacy companies to think more like start-ups – Embraer has set up a vertical called Embraer X dedicated to “the development of disruptive business”, for example.

Partnerships are proving crucial. Rolls-Royce, Airbus and Siemens are working together on the E-Fan X, a two-megawatt, hybrid-electric engine for commercial aircraft that is due to power test flights next year. An electric unit will be powered by an onboard generator using jet fuel, which will replace one – and if successful, two – of a plane’s four gas turbine engines.

At the same time, Airbus is collaborating with SAS on research into infrastructure to support hybrid and electric engines. Rolls-Royce is working with UK manufacturer YASA on the most energy-dense

“There needs to be more availability of biofuel at a price that operators can afford to pay”

and thermal management to systems integration complexity,” Stein says. “These technologies also need to meet safety and certification standards in aviation, which are significantly higher than many other applications.”

But he believes that new forms of regional aviation could revolutionise intercity mobility by as early as 2030, owing to electric vertical take-off and landing aircraft (known as “E-VTOLs”) and hybrid-electric regional aircraft.

Low-cost carrier Easyjet is positioning itself as a leader in the race towards the first commercial electric planes. It is partnering with US start-up Wright Electric on a battery-powered nine-seat aircraft that it wants to test this year, and has filed a patent for a motor that will be used in a larger aircraft. The carrier’s chief executive, Johan Lundgren, has said that he thinks all-electric commercial flights are “in sight”, and is looking at where Easyjet could establish “electric flyways” on key short-haul routes such as London-Amsterdam.

Across the Atlantic, US-based Zunum Aero and Boeing are aiming to build a 12-seat hybrid plane by 2022 with a 700-mile range. And the University of Illinois has announced that NASA is underwriting a project to develop a cryogenic hydrogen fuel cell system for powering all-electric aircraft.

Kyle Martin, director of European regulatory affairs at the General Aviation Manufacturers Association, pointed out at an EBACE seminar: “The power-density issue of aviation fuel means the early adopters of electric and hybrid propulsion will be smaller, shorter-range aircraft. You’re looking at operations up to 500-1,000km in range, journeys of an hour or 90 minutes in the next five years at the most... maybe regional aircraft operations in 20 to 30 years.”

According to Mathias de Dampierre, director of the Starburst Aerospace

Accelerator in Paris, venture capital money in the start-up space is mainly going into developing EVTOL-type aircraft. “When you look at the amount of money invested, you still have a lot of room for improvement,” he said at the same seminar. “Development of new batteries has so far been largely financed by the automotive industry. Now the auto industry is reaching what is required, there will be a need to add a lot of money dedicated to the aerospace industry. The step-change required is enormous.”

As with SAJF, that could mean that it is business aviation that pioneers the new technologies. Of the 170 or so companies working on projects, about 40 per cent are for business and general use, not commercial.

What other steps are airlines taking to improve their eco-credentials? Many are making commitments to waste and plastic reduction – Qantas has pledged to eliminate 75 per cent of its onboard waste by the end of 2021 and use 100 million fewer single-use plastics by the end of 2020. Etihad, Portugal’s HiFly, Delta Air Lines, Vir-

Electrification will play a greater role in propelling smaller aircraft and increasing large aircraft efficiency

gin Australia and others have all made their own commitments to reduce plastic waste.

Meanwhile, carbon offsetting schemes, while criticised by some as an excuse to keep polluting, are offered by several carriers. The concept sees airlines promise to invest in environmental projects such as tree planting. However, recent research by the BBC found that more than half of the world’s major airlines didn’t even offer the option of offsetting flights, while the ones that did saw only about 1 per cent of flyers pay more for it.

Qantas bucked this trend, with 10 per cent of passengers opting to offset. Andrew Parker, the airline’s group executive for government, industry, international and environ-

ment, said: “We’ve been carbon offsetting for a decade; we now have the largest airline offset programme in the world. A Qantas customer offsets every 59 seconds, and the number of offsetting customers is growing.” Its projects involve improving water quality in Australia’s Babinda Reef, and funding rangers who prevent deforestation in Kimberley and New Zealand’s Maori Rainforest.

However, other airlines provide much less information about what carbon offsetting schemes are actually funding, and there is no industry-wide regulator of them, leading some passengers to believe they are pointless or even harmful.

Given the complexity involved, making aviation truly sustainable can feel like one flight forward, two flights back. Still, there are clear signs of progress. In the words of Emma Thompson: “We’re often involved in situations where we will be hypocritical. But if we don’t address this, we are failing our children and our grandchildren.”



ELECTRIC AVENUES

With a mixed outlook for new types of jet fuel, what about aircraft that could do without them altogether? While most agree that electric aircraft are not going to be commonplace for a few decades at least, stories emerge frequently about new projects and breakthroughs in the field.

The number of companies working on electric aviation schemes worldwide is approaching 200, with legacy manufacturers working on ambitious projects alongside start-ups. It’s also

battery pack ever used in an aircraft to power the fastest-ever electric plane, while Siemens is developing several new battery types geared towards engines.

Rolls-Royce’s chief technology officer, Paul Stein, says that while the company’s core capability will be in gas turbine engines for many years to come, electrification will play an increasing role in propelling smaller aircraft and enabling new approaches to large aircraft efficiency.

“There are many challenges from a technical perspective, from battery life



ABOVE: Rendering of an electric aircraft by Zunum Aero, which is working with Boeing

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ONWARDS AND UPWARDS

Once one of the world's fastest-growing cities, Chongqing is adapting to changing economic times

DESTINATIONS

WORDS CRYSTAL REID

A forest of skyscrapers blocks the mountain views in Chongqing, where the emerald Jialing River meets the great Yangtze. From here, throngs of tourists clamber aboard cruise ships headed for the Three Gorges Dam, the world's largest hydropower project and an awe-inspiring feat of humanity harnessing nature.

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

Home to more than 30 million people, at one point Chongqing was one of the fastest-growing cities in the world, with double-digit GDP growth for 15 consecutive years from 2002, peaking at just over 17 per cent in 2010. Last year, however, it missed its 8.5 per cent growth target, clocking up 6 per cent, which was below the national average of 6.6 per cent. On a list of the country's fastest-growing regions compiled by China's National Bureau of Statistics, Chongqing dropped from first place in 2016 to 24th last year. All the same, that still puts it on a par with 2018's fastest-growing US state, Texas.

ECONOMIC CENTRE

One of just four Chinese cities under direct control of the central government, and the only one not located on the affluent east coast (the others are Beijing, Tianjin and Shanghai), Chongqing served as the capital during, and briefly after, the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945). Its geographical remoteness made it the obvious choice for military bases and weapons manufacturing, but that in turn rendered its export sector practically non-existent. Even when local industries started to diversify into textiles, food, chemi-



Chongqing is the retail and wholesale centre of south-west China, home to Carrefour and Walmart

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

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

DIGITAL FUTURE

Financial services are another component of the economy. ANZ, HSBC, Citibank, Deutsche Bank, Scotiabank and Standard Chartered all have a footprint in the city, while preparatory approvals for Fubon Bank were granted at the start of the year.

US firm Citibank established an office in Shanghai in 1902 and became one of the first international banks to be locally incorporated in China in 2007. It is now in 13 Chinese cities. It arrived in Chongqing in 2009 as part of expansion plans along the Yangtze River Economic Belt. Citibank is also partnering with Chinese tech giants such as Alibaba and Tencent – non-financial intermediaries shaking up the banking landscape. More than 90 per cent of Citi China customers use WeChat for their daily banking needs, and in 2018 the bank won The Asset magazine's Triple A Award for Best Social Media Banking Enterprise.

Having thrown its weight behind digital in China by way of necessity, Citibank is now looking to export such practices globally. "Digitisation in China leads the world in many ways, and many of our successes in China are being introduced to other parts of the world," says Teng Hongjun, executive vice-president of Citi China. Established infrastructure, new business parks and relatively low tax and operational costs have for years proved attractive to foreign companies looking to invest in this often overlooked part of the country. At the close of 2018, 287 Fortune 500 companies had a presence in Chongqing, no doubt tempted by housing, labour and land costs much lower than the megacities of eastern China.

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

cals and electronics, the focus was on the domestic market. The government spent RMB4 trillion (£455 billion) on fixed assets and infrastructure in Chongqing from 2013 to 2015, amounting to 94 per cent of the city's total GDP. It is now the economic centre of the upstream Yangtze basin, dominating manufacturing and helping to spur investment in the region.

While heavy industry is still very much present, the landscape has slowly started shifting towards high-tech and service industries, with Honeywell, Cisco, IBM and Hewlett-Packard all setting up in the city. But while state investment in China's manufacturing hubs has propped up their economies for years, it has also made them susceptible to changes in domestic and global policies.

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

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

Ford, which partners with state-owned automakers Changan and Jiangling Motors, has felt the local slowdown and the squeeze of the US-China trade war at its huge plants in Chongqing. The company's China-based workforce is being cut by 2,000 personnel, roughly 10 per cent, after sales drop-

ped by 37 per cent in China last year. They're not alone: GM, VW and Jaguar Land Rover have all seen their China sales fall. Despite the slowdown, however, sales of electric cars are soaring in China thanks to government incentives aimed at quelling pollution.

Matt Moran, a spokesperson for Ford China, says that while the company still sees Chongqing as a dynamic and fast-growing business centre with "a vibrant local economy and supportive regulatory environment", he realises it must adapt to the Chinese consumer if it is to survive. "We are focused on ensuring Ford's products and services reflect China's rapidly changing market environment," he says.

In a bid to usher in a return to profitable growth, the "Ford China 2.0" blueprint, announced in April, will see more Chinese leadership and global talent with Chinese expertise installed at the mainland arm. Thirty new vehicles tailored to Chinese consumers, ten of which will be electrified, will be introduced over the next three years, with in-car infotainment offerings designed in partnership with Baidu's artificial intelligence technology.

OVERSEAS INTEREST

Chongqing's foreign trade shot up 15.9 per cent year-on-year in 2018, hitting RMB522 billion (£59 billion). China's next generation of workers are also seeing the benefits. According to a report on the Employment Market for Graduates cited by business magazine China Briefing, 40 per cent of Chinese graduates hoped to work in so-called "emerging first-tier cities" such as Chongqing, Hangzhou and Chengdu, while only 27 per cent were considering actual first-tier cities.

Chongqing is also still the retail and wholesale centre of south-west China, home to foreign enterprises such as Carrefour and Walmart. Metro was one of the earliest foreign wholesale retailers to enter China, staking its claim in 1996 and now boasting 13 million registered customers and more than eight million professional purchasing partners across 59 Chinese cities. The group opened its first Chongqing store in 2001, a second in 2003 and hopes to expand further within the municipality – which is twinned with Metro's German home city of Dusseldorf – in the coming years.

ADOBE STOCK

MOTORING AHEAD

WORDS AMAR GROVER

With its diverse economy and strong local workforce, Chennai is proving to be a draw for foreign investors

Formerly known as Madras, Chennai is the state capital of Tamil Nadu, one of the largest of India's southern states. Unless driving through this sprawling city in its dead-of-night calm, the first thing you're likely to notice is the traffic. Dense, seemingly relentless and apparently governed by the simple maxim that everyone always has right of way, it might prove a stern test of newcomers' nerves, as well as their vehicles' horns.

Set by the Bay of Bengal alongside a vast sandy beach, it was here that Britain's East India Company first gained a toehold on the Coromandel Coast in 1639. Fort St George initially dominated its leased strip of land and its subsequent expansion reflected both sporadic threats (from the French and various regional rulers) and the company's increasing dominance of South India. The city gradually became the South's principal naval base and administrative hub.

Today, Tamil Nadu is India's second-largest state economy. It contributes 8.4 per cent to national GDP and ranks fourth in terms of foreign direct investment. It has more factories and Special Economic Zones than any other state, and ranks third in terms of both gross industrial output and overall exports (which in 2017-18 exceeded US\$46 billion). Per-capita income is 31 per cent higher than the national average.

Independent indices also place Tamil Nadu among the country's most "successful" states. The 2018 Public Affairs Index, published by India's Public Affairs Centre think-tank, ranked it the second best-governed state. For the second year running, Frost and Sullivan's 2018 Growth Innovation Leadership Index for Economic Development in India – which evaluates 100 indicators across parameters such as economic prosperity and investment attractiveness – ranked Tamil Nadu second for overall economic development.

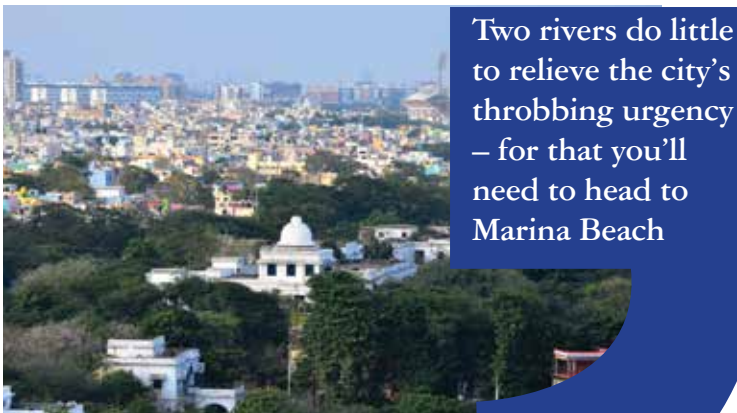
Much of this productivity and output is centred on Chennai. With a population of around ten million, it's the country's fifth-largest city. The Chennai Metropolitan Area (CMA) currently covers about 1,200 sq km, comprising the city proper plus extensive suburbs. Unchanged since 1974, there are plans to expand the metropolitan area into surrounding districts (just as New Delhi and Bengaluru have done), possibly adding more than 8,000 sq km.

Many of the country's largest business entities have anchored their regional or southern headquarters here, and it also hosts 61 Fortune 500 companies. Home to three modern ports (including one of India's oldest and largest), for decades Chennai has been a vital gateway for the movement of goods in the entire South. Along with Mumbai and Delhi, it's a significant logistics hub with excellent connectivity by air, road and rail.

Modern Chennai seems more preoccupied with looking ahead than preserving the past. Its George Town quarter, which corresponds to the original British enclave alongside the fort, still boasts several once handsome Raj-era buildings in various states of preservation and decay. Elsewhere, immaculate churches, the huge Ripon Building, imposing Egmore and Chennai Central stations and the university's extraordinary Senate House remain as splendid as they are functional.

Two sadly insalubrious rivers do little to relieve the city's throbbing urgency – for that, you'll need to head to the 6km-long Marina Beach (although at weekends you'll likely be sharing it with up to 50,000 locals). Neighbourhoods such as Triplicane and Mylapore

NICK MOORE/ALAMY



Two rivers do little to relieve the city's throbbing urgency – for that you'll need to head to Marina Beach

reveal the city's more easygoing atmosphere, their bazaars and markets satisfyingly colourful, earthy and a world away from the region's high-tech corporate sheen.

WHEELS IN MOTION

The city's largest sectors include automobile manufacture, IT, pharmaceuticals and biotechnology, and textiles. While Tamil Nadu is often referred to as India's "Yarn Bowl" – producing 40 per cent of India's yarn and accounting for about a third of its textile business – Chennai's epithet as the "Detroit of Asia" is firmly pegged to its automotive success. Now in the global top ten for automobile manufacture, 45 per cent of India's vehicle exports originate here, as does just over a third of auto-components. It can produce three cars a minute, one truck every two minutes and a motorbike every six seconds.

Raj Manek, executive director of Messe Frankfurt India, which organises Chennai's well-established Automotive Engineering Show, says: "The city plays host to a number of global automotive giants who continue to make significant investments in the state." These include Ford, which opened its first Indian factory here in 1995, Hyundai, BMW and Mitsubishi; France's PSA Group, which includes Peugeot, Citroen and Vauxhall, is the region's latest entrant.

Manek notes that these companies have steadily fuelled the city's huge auto-components industry. "Chennai is still so attractive for major auto-players because of the superior infrastructure facilities, ease of doing business and strong policy support – even tax cuts for certain sectors," he adds.

Meanwhile, the aerospace and defence sector is rapidly

expanding. Between 2013 and 2017, India was the world's largest arms importing country; by next year its aerospace industry is expected to be the world's third largest.

The long-planned Aerospace and Defence Corridor, which envisages Chennai as one of several major nodes, aims to attract about \$US15 billion in the next 15 years. Part of this ambitious project includes Aerospace Park, a 200-hectare site in Sriperumbudur (about 40km south-west of the city but still within the CMA) with an advanced computing and design engineering centre.

OVERSEAS INTEREST

Richard Holt, head of global cities research at Oxford Economics, notes that future global GDP growth rates forecast between now and 2035 "suggest that 17 of the world's 20 fastest-growing cities will be in India. Chennai is likely to be among the strongest performers." Earlier this year the city hosted the second Tamil Nadu Global Investors Meet. Held in the Chennai Trade Centre – India's first such venue for international fairs to be built outside of New Delhi – the event welcomed delegates mainly from the UK, France, Japan, South Korea and Australia.

The UK's 45-member delegation was led by Crispin Simon, trade commissioner for South Asia. According to him, between August 2017 and August 2018 more than two-thirds of UK foreign direct investment into the country went to South India, with Tamil Nadu receiving nearly a third of that. Since 2000, UK companies have created about 55,000 jobs in Chennai alone.

Vijay Krishna, executive committee member of the British Business Group Chennai – a private entity supporting UK trade and business interests here – says that many UK businesses have found opportunities in the automotive, advanced manufacturing and precision engineering, banking, finance and insurance services, and healthcare sectors. He advises: "Any new business entering Chennai will need some preparation and guidance on the various norms, procedures, permits and clearances for specific industries. Its well-established maturity means there are plenty of business-enabling services plus trade and commerce counselling and guidance bureaux that can smooth the process."

Over and above that, recent legislation such as last year's Tamil Nadu Business Facilitation Act aims to simplify procedures for new and existing businesses. Part of the act's regime includes convenient online portals that, given the importance

CITY SIGHTS

The Government Museum's cluster of Raj-era buildings holds an array of exhibits but the collection of astonishingly beautiful, ancient Chola bronze sculptures are a highlight. Fort St George was pivotal in securing the East India Company's foothold in South India. Although much of it remains off-limits, the small museum and St Mary's (Asia's oldest Anglican church) welcome visitors and are key historical sights.

Built over the tomb of St Thomas the Apostle, San Thome Cathedral also houses his relics. On the city's southern fringes stands St Thomas Mount, a small hill with a church that marks the spot where St Thomas was murdered.

Food-wise, Taj Connemara's Raintree restaurant (tajhoteles.com) serves distinctive Chettinad cuisine inspired by the Chettiars, the region's celebrated merchant and trading community. For no-frills but excellent and authentic meals, branches of the Saravana Bhavan chain dot the city.

A worthwhile day trip 60km to the south is Mahabalipuram (aka Mamallapuram), a small coastal town whose seventh- and eighth-century temples are a UNESCO World Heritage site. Once a thriving ancient port, tourism and stone carving are today's economic mainstays. En route you can pause at Dakshina Chitra, a fascinating folk museum showcasing the architectural and craft traditions of South India.



of the IT industry to the state and Chennai, have been long overdue.

India is the world's largest outsourcing destination and as a whole the sector accounts for about 9 per cent of its GDP. Tamil Nadu ranks third in software exports and generates about 10 per cent of the country's entire IT exports. The state's IT and ITES sectors generated US\$18.51 billion in revenue and drew US\$6.15 billion in investments in 2017-18. "Chennai currently accounts for around 80 per cent of that [output]," says Senthil Kumar, Tamil Nadu senior manager and regional head of NASSCOM (India's National Association of Software and Services Companies).

In all of that, the city is aided by its strong local workforce. Kumar says: "Chennai's and other regional educational in-



stitutions supply a vast pool of young talent, so there's huge scope for their involvement in the industry." The state boasts more than 570 engineering colleges and more than a third of their graduates are from IT and related disciplines. Almost half of its Special Economic Zones are IT/ITES-specific and more than 240 IT parks are slated for development. The government's Vision 2023 masterplan broadly aims to make the state India's IT capital by providing the best business climate with world-class skills.

Almar Siddiqui, general manager of Taj Connemara – one of South India's oldest hotels, which reopened last autumn after an extensive refurbishment – agrees that this is an academically oriented city. "Chennai's education system is renowned across India," he says "Its alumni find their way into the top echelons of business, government and medicine."

Pravin Shekar, an entrepreneur based in the city for 20 years, has witnessed all of these changes at ground level. "One thing that's really helped Chennai is the availability of good-value real estate; it's unlike Delhi or Bengaluru, although prices are on the up again – usually a good indicator of the local economy's health."

Still, Shekar notes that rapid growth has tested the city's infrastructure. Even as a second airport is still under consideration, the existing one is being upgraded with a large new integrated terminal. Planned to be completed in 2023, the aim is to increase annual passenger capacity to about 30 million.

Yet traffic congestion probably remains the biggest issue. The CMA has recently come under pressure particularly from the IT sector (much of it based in the so-called "IT Corridor" along the Old Mahabalipuram Road) to improve side roads, pedestrian bridges and subways, tollbooths and even drainage. Shekar says: "The best thing to happen here is the metro – another [important stretch of] line opened in February which even executives are using; it just saves so much time." More than 100km further track is planned.

As for Shekar, he still uses a bicycle – so he's not just brave in terms of entrepreneurship.

FROM TOP:
The Shore Temple in Mahabalipuram, 60km to the south; Taj Connemara's Raintree restaurant

ADOBE STOCK

The art of professional event planning



National trade fairs, a lavish banquet, a formal gala, a business conference, company meeting or a family picnic. Each of these events requires appropriate preparation and individual approach in order to meet all the requirements and needs of the participants. Whether it's a private or a corporate meeting, it's best to entrust professionals and let them take care of everything. This way you can rest assured that the whole meeting will run smoothly and that all details will be properly worked out. Opting for the right company, you might want to take into account its experience and previous projects it worked on. Only in this way can you be sure that you have hired a competent and proven team of specialists. Enter the Sheraton Catering Service - a group of experts in the field, responsible for organizing major events for more than 20 years, and knowing that event planning is not as simple task.

SHERATON CATERING SERVICE

For more than 20 years now Sheraton Catering Service has been providing top quality catering service at numerous outdoor and indoor events held in Warsaw and throughout Poland. The head chef of the hotel supported by an experienced team of cooking aficionados, as well as excellent dining facilities - all of these are a guarantee of a professional service and unique culinary experience. With an individual approach to each client and their needs, it's possible to customize the menu to suit a given occasion or modify the dishes proposed by the chef, to ensure that even the most sophisticated palates are fully satisfied with the food.

In addition to the excellent menu, Sheraton Catering Service also offers comprehensive and professional service at outdoor events, food delivery to

The head chef of the hotel supported by an experienced team of cooking aficionados, as well as excellent dining facilities - all of these are a guarantee of a professional service and unique culinary experience.



As the 20-year history shows, regardless of the scale of the event, Sheraton Catering Service makes every effort to meet the needs of its customers and exceed their wildest expectations.

any address within Poland, as well as delivery of any necessary equipment including round, buffet or cocktail tables, chairs, porcelain tableware, decorations etc. Exquisite dinner organized by Sheraton Catering Service is a guarantee of the highest quality products and impeccable waiter service.

CATERING FOR ANY OCCASION

During 20 years of its operation, Sheraton Catering Service has been involved in a number of projects. The services are provided throughout



Poland, both indoors and outdoors. Many of them have gone down in history, such as the sumptuous wedding at Malbork Castle organized for the niece of David Lynch. Costumes from the period, stylish decorations and royal menu, helped guest immerse deep in the atmosphere of this magical place and made the event truly memorable.

The high quality of services provided by Sheraton Catering Service is proved by numerous flattering recommendations and a group of regular customers, as well as, of course, new projects. Some of the most prominent clients of the company include Samsung, Triumph, McDonald's, Toyota or KMPG.

Talking about creativity, you can't forget about the head chef Marcin Sasin, whose culinary sense and inspiration drawn from long journeys are simply irreplaceable. His talent is highly-valued by clients, including those performing public functions both in Poland and abroad.

As the 20-year history shows, regardless of the scale of the event, Sheraton Catering Service makes every effort to meet the needs of its customers and exceed their wildest expectations.

The Sheraton Catering Service is the guarantee of perfect service and delicious menu! To find out more or to book service, go to: sheratoncatering.pl

Investing in condo

WORDS WIKTOR ŁUCKI

Condo system is becoming increasingly popular in Poland. What is it exactly? Why is it worth investing in a hotel room or villa and how profitable is such investment? For several years now one can observe in Poland the dynamic expansion of condo hotel model, which is known worldwide for over 20 years and is a popular way of investing capital.

APARTMENT WITH A VIEW

Condo buildings are usually built in exceptional places, on plots located by the Baltic Sea, in Masuria or near mountain trails. Individual investors purchase apartments, rooms or villas, which are then rented out. According to financiers, condo is a safe and attractive alternative to bank deposits, if only because this type of investment yields a constant annual profit, which is substantially higher than what you are offered by banks. At the same time, the value of the purchased property is constantly

FROM THE LEFT AND THE TOP:

the Polish sea coast; Masuria; the showroom of an investment in Międzyzdroje

growing. This form of investment is also chosen because once making a decision to purchase a property, the individual investor doesn't have to devote time to manage it afterwards. They can take advantage of the 'owner's stay' option for several days a year, while rental of the property for the rest of the year is handled by a specially assigned operator.

PROFITS AND PLEASURES

One of the most important factors to consider when choosing a condo apartment is its location. The proximity of a lake, beach, sea or mountains largely increases the popularity of the property, which, in turn, makes it more attractive for tourists willing to rent it. The experience and effectiveness of the operator who manages the facility on behalf of the owners is also important. A profit of 6 per cent per year is certainly a tempting proposition, especially considering the offers offered by banks.



Condo buildings are usually built in exceptional places, on plots located by the Baltic Sea, in Masuria or near mountain trails.

ADOBE STOCK, PRESS MATERIALS



BOOM NA NADMORSKIE NIERUCHOMOŚCI CIĄGLE TRWA!

GREEN HOUSE DEVELOPMENT JEST DUMNY Z 30% SPRZEDAŻY, POMIMO WCZESNEGO ETAPU REALIZACJI INWESTYCJI. OTWARCIE LUKSUSOWEGO SHOWROOMU DODATKOWO WZMOCNIŁO ZAINTERESOWANIE KLIENTÓW.

Nowo otwarty showroom jest żywym dowodem na potencjał Wave Apartments – mówi Wioleta Lipska, Dyrektor Marketingu – W skali polskiego wybrzeża to unikalna realizacja, którą śmiało można porównać do najlepszych w kraju – dodaje. Nadmorskie kurorty przeżywają renesans, głównie dzięki stale poszerzającej się ofercie apartamentów na coraz wyższym poziomie. Urlop nad Bałtykiem jest popularny zarówno wśród turystów z całej Polski, jak i z sąsiednich Niemiec czy Skandynawii. Zjawisko to bardzo korzystnie wpływa na inwestorów, którzy doceniają atrakcyjną lokalizację inwestycji położonej w Międzyzdrojach, bezpośrednio nad morzem. Świetnie zlokalizowany apartament w wysokim standardzie to zyskowny, bezpieczny i popularny sposób lokowania środków. – Ważnym atutem inwestycji jest również całoroczny charakter obiektu, zagwarantowany dzięki bogatej infrastrukturze przewidzianej w projekcie. Są to restauracje, spa, baseny, strefa sportów wodnych, boisko i wiele innych, dlatego serdecznie zapraszamy do naszego showroomu, aby ocenić potencjał miejsca i już dziś poznać standard w jakim realizujemy projekt – mówi Wioleta Lipska.



Adres showroomu:

Międzyzdroje, Gryfa Pomorskiego 70, wejście od Bohaterów Warszawy 1

☎ 691 131 213, 691 135 136

✉ sprzedaz@wavemiedzyzdroje.pl

GREEN HOUSE
development



CONDO VILLAS WARMIA RESORT

- a commercial success
of a unique project

Poland's first resort of year-round villas sold in condo system has confirmed a dynamically growing popularity of this segment of the market.

The first seven villas at Warmia Resort were sold almost on the spot, and the high occupancy rate in the first season of the resort's existence proved that tourists value a comfortable holiday in independent villas. The investor has now raised the bar, putting up for sale Deluxe Villas with an outdoor jacuzzi, and expanding the onsite leisure offer.

Properties sold as part of condo system enjoy growing popularity in Poland. What makes villas at Warmia Resort stand out? Firstly, the fact that the developer, Adept Investment company, sells year-round villas together with the plot, so the buyer has full ownership not only of the property, but also of the land on which it's built. This significantly increases the security of the investment for the buyer. - *This is where our advantage lies over our competition. The owner buys a separate house with land, not a hotel room he can hardly do anything with. Warmia Resort completely protects them from the risk which arouses concern among those buying hotel rooms,* admits Michał Oziębala, the CEO of Adept Investment.

The market response has confirmed the expectations of the company's CEO. The first seven villas were sold in just three months. Recently, the company has started sales of a new segment of the resort. Deluxe Villas will offer a higher standard of finish and amenities, including a year-round jacuzzi situated on the terrace. The concept behind Warmia

PRESS MATERIALS

Resort is different from other condo offers available on the market. First of all, the main goal of the developer is to provide maximum comfort and privacy. *"It's a place for those who don't want to stay in big, crowded hotels. In our investment, each plot, on which villas are built, has several hundred square meters, which ensures privacy,"* explains Michał Oziębala. The Resort covers a total of 3 hectares of picturesquely situated land. The cosy beach at Lake Giltwa is just 100 meters away.

At present, the complex also features Resort Bar with fireplace and pool table, a pond with a pier and deckchairs, a playground, a chillout zone for adults and a separate chillout area for children and teenagers, a relaxation zone with hammock set among trees, a volleyball court, a barbecuing spot and a fire pit. The investor promises that next year the range of attractions will be further expanded with an outdoor spa area featuring sauna and Russian banya, as well as a zip line, a multifunctional pitch and an outdoor swimming pool.

The Resort's location has one more advantage. Just a few kilometres from the complex, in Gietrzwałd, stands one of the most prominent catholic sanctuaries in Poland. According to Michał Oziębala, the church is visited by nearly one million tourists every year. *"Religious tourism in Poland is on the rise. Travellers look for accommodation as close as possible to the place of the pilgrimage. It's a constant, reliable segment in the apartment rental market,"* he points out.

FROM LEFT:
Chillout area with sofas; a kitchen in Premium and Deluxe Villas; Terrace jacuzzi in Deluxe Villa; Resort Bar

A THREE-BEDROOM VILLA FOR THE PRICE OF ONE HOTEL ROOM

The second important feature is the prices of the villa. The plot and a fully equipped, comfortable two-storey house with an area of 82 sqm and three bedrooms will cost the buyer PLN550,000 net. The ground floor in each house comprises a living room, a kitchen with a separate dining area, a bedroom and a bathroom with underfloor heating. The other two bedrooms with a toilet are located on the first floor. All the villas have a terrace, garden and fireplace, while Deluxe Villas have a year-round jacuzzi on the terrace. As the president of Adept Investment points out, this is a new quality real estate and lakeside holiday. *"We focus on the highest quality of interiors, equipment and land development,"* says Michał Oziębala.

So far, 14 villas have been built, of which 10 are now in use. The other 4 will be completed by the end of the year. A total of 7 villas are still on sale.

RENTAL PROFIT - 6% PER YEAR

Under the condo system the developer provides a constant profit of 6 per cent per year calculated from the net amount of the property on the basis of a contract concluded for 5 or 10 years. This means that a retail investor who buys a year-round premium class house in Warmia Resort at a net price of PLN550,000 will receive PLN33,000 of annual revenue. A Deluxe Villa, which costs PLN630,000 net yields nearly PLN39,000 of profit per year. As part of the ownership package, buyers can use their villas for 21 days a year. The maintenance costs as well as the costs of repairs of the villa are fully covered by the management company. This ensures a constant and predictable income for the investor.

The complex is managed by Adept Hotels, the developer's subsidiary with more than 15 years of experience. Currently, it manages apartments in Warsaw, Gdynia and Zakopane, boasting a very high occupancy rate in those properties.

The investor, in turn, is the Polish company Adept Investment, which for over 8 years has been operating in the commercial and residential real estate sector. So far the company has completed over 20 investments in Warsaw, Gdynia, Zduńska Wola, Radomsko, Radzyń Podlaski, Sandomierz, and is constantly expanding its portfolio.

condoville.pl warmiaresort.pl

With its rows of concave and convex saucer-shaped panels, ice-smooth glass walls and audacious colour schemes, the Prague metro always piques visitor curiosity. Tourist attractions in their own right, the retro-futuristic stations provide an accessible introduction to modern Czech design, which deserves a much higher profile. This year, 30 years since the 1989 Velvet Revolution, offers the perfect opportunity to get acquainted.

There is much to explore, including interior and product design, and glassware, all of which have long enjoyed strong reputations. With their new thinking, young designers are reinvigorating these disciplines and showcasing Czech creativity, consequently attracting global exposure. "Today's generation is successfully integrated into the design world, and everyone has the same chance to succeed in a Europe without borders," notes Jan Nemecek of leading design studio Olgoj Chorchoj.

This echoes the internationalism of the celebrated interwar period, which coincided with the first two decades of Czechoslovakia's existence. Functionalism swept the country, resulting in the likes of Prague's

Design for life

effortlessly sleek Trade Fair Palace, which was built in the 1920s. Meanwhile, product design icons from the period included the Tatra 77 car, worthy of any sci-fi epic, and Jindrich Halabala's armchairs, with sweeping armrest curves and pioneering use of tubular steel.

Everything changed in 1938, when the Nazi occupation set about eradicating the Czech national identity. The design scene was further plunged into darkness following 1948's Communist putsch, which cut the country off from its Western neighbours, making it much more parochial.

Conversely, the communists adopted a money-no-object approach towards the public realm, most notably the Prague metro. Constructed mainly in the 1970s and 1980s, the stations boast lashings of natural materials, including marble, granite, limestone and aluminium. Meanwhile, at Karlovo Namesti (Charles Square) station, the tubular glazed walls by Frantisek Vizner celebrate the centuries-old Czech glassware tradition.

After the Velvet Revolution, designers naturally wanted to catch up. Big names such as Borek Sipek and Otakar Diblík, who had fled communism, re-established connections and taught at art and design schools. "This sped up the process of revitalising product design. Encouraging students to gain experience abroad was invaluable for further high-quality development," says Jan Jaros of product design and architecture firm Cohnstudio. He also explains that long-esta-

The Czech Republic has a rich design heritage, and today's generation is doing it proud



WORDS DAVID CREIGHTON



FROM FAR LEFT:
Jindrich Halabala
armchair; Prague
metro; Muffin lights
from Brokis

'Small studios are not afraid to take risks and are becoming a driving force of trends'

blished companies, for instance furniture producer Tón and crystal glass producer Moser, have been reinvigorated since 1989.

FRESH THINKING

When it comes to current trends, designers cite upcycling and taking a new approach to traditional crafts. "And, yes, we really love minimalism. I am also interested in the craze for concrete, in everything from speakers to jewellery and baths," says Vaclav Cajanek, co-owner of product designer Clap Design. He and others observe that the design scene has moved much closer to that of Western Europe.

Nemecek says: "Small studios are not afraid to take risks and are trying to promote themselves on the European scene. They are becoming a driving force of trends. Today, lots of renowned brands are just standing still, but in the Czech Republic I see an opportunity for new brands and also designers' studios."

Every October in Prague, practitioners showcase their work at the international Designblok festival, at which "the strength and variety of Czech designers is evident", Jaros says. Designblok also provides a chance to meet the new cohort of Czech interior designers born after 1989. They are bringing a new perspective, observes Professor Jiri Pelcl, a leading interior designer. "I see inventiveness particularly in the interiors of young creatives, whose boutiques and workshops show evidence of a new visuality based on the rediscovery of traditional products and materials combined in unusual situations," he says.

Czech glassmakers, traditionally based in the regions beyond Prague and long enjoying worldwide renown, are also taking new approaches to their craft, fusing glass production with other disciplines to great effect. The industry has received a boost from high-profile practitioners such as UK-based Czech architect Eva Jiricna, famous for her spiral glass staircases.

Another well-known figure, Maxim Velcovsky, creates simple, elegant glassworks, and collaborates with Lasvit, known among other things for bold, abstract chandeliers resembling ice sculptures. Velcovsky is optimistic about current trends. "Czech glass is again some of the best in the world, even when it cannot compete price-wise with producers from China and Turkey," he says.

DESTINATIONS

CLOCKWISE FROM RIGHT: Maxim Velcovsky at Designblok; the Tatra 77 car is one of Czech design's most famous creations; a vase by Lukas Novak;



Glass designer Lukas Novak feels similarly positive. "I hope that there will be a further deepening of the glassware tradition, which today in the Czech Republic tends to involve small, family-owned companies, where a great passion for this national 'family silver' prevails."

In the product design sector, craftsmanship in wood also has a strong Czech tradition, particularly in areas such as toy making. Such products are more likely these days to originate from China, but global competition has in turn boosted designers who are emphasising local tradition and sourcing.

One company doing so is BeWooden, which produces fashion accessories from natural materials. "I spent my childhood at the sawmill at my father's and fell in love with the texture and smell of wood," says Ctirad Sara of BeWooden. "We come from the foothills of the Beskydy mountains, and you can see the forests when you look out of the window. Around you are talented people who are masters in their field."

So what lies in store next for Czech design? Professor Michal Fronek, of Prague's Academy of Arts, Architecture and Design, sees the future in the context of past achievements. "We have something local to draw upon and have our heroes. I appreciate the work of Ladislav Sutnar, who systematically built up awareness of design before 1939."

Product designer Matej Chabera stresses the need to continue this tradition. "It is easy and necessary for young designers to travel, study and gather experience worldwide. But it is equally important that they bring this value back home to build strong relationships with Czech brands and grow together while doing their best work," he says.

One designer who has done just that is Prague-based Lucie Koldova, who specialises in product design and furniture. Like many of the younger generation, she epitomises the easy fusion of local tradition and the global. Spending time in Paris and exhibiting extensively abroad, Koldova rapidly established an international reputation but has returned to Prague. "I work with glass, and glass is why I came back. I discovered what discipline we are good at, and am trying to develop this even further. I feel honoured to continue the tradition," she says.

Koldova collaborates with Brokis, which specialises in lighting and often creates strikingly simple forms. Founded in 2006 by the acquisition of a struggling glassworks, the company enjoys a global reputation and works with Czech and international designers. In this anniversary year, the Czech Republic is currently experiencing a retro revival; by happy coincidence, with their chunky shapes and brown and orange hues, many Brokis products also have a retro look themselves.



ABOVE: DOX Centre for Contemporary Art

WHERE TO BUY IT

To acquire some Czech design of your own, try the following Prague boutiques: Czechdesign provides a good introduction to the local scene and showcases both new talent and veteran practitioners. Vojtesska 3, Praha 1; shop.czechdesign.cz

At Deelive, the pared-down space provides a backdrop to home accessories, glass and jewellery. Smetanovo nabr. 334/4, Praha 1; deelive.cz

Maxim Velcovsky founded the Qubus Design Studio; the Qubus Design Gallery stocks both his work and that of other big-hitters. Ramova 1071/3, Praha 1; qubus.cz/en/qubus

For glass, jewellery, furniture and other items from the early days of Czechoslovakia, try Modernista, which specialises in reproductions, including Halabala armchairs. Vinohradska 50, Praha 2; also at the Museum of Decorative Arts, Municipal House and House at the Black Madonna; modernista.cz

Beyond the centre, in Prague's recently designated Art District, the shop at the DOX Centre for Contemporary Art stocks design literature and work by Borek Sipek and Frantisek Vizner. Leading names such as Lukas Novak have exhibited here. Poupetova 1, Praha 7; dox.cz/en

ZWIEDZAJ ŚWIAT WYGODNIE



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We round up the latest new and revamped hotels in and around Heathrow

WORDS HANNAH BRANDLER

While the third runway is still a distant prospect, there is plenty to report when it comes to Heathrow's hotel stock. Here are the latest new and recently refurbished properties to consider. Bear in mind that there are dozens of hotels convenient for Heathrow, so when choosing, decide whether you want to pay a premium for one connected to the airport, or slightly less for one close by. If it's the latter then opt for a property within the Heathrow Free Travel Zone (see panel overleaf). Failing that, there's the Hotel Hoppla Bus, from £4.50 one way.

HOTELS

ATRIUM HEATHROW HOTEL →

Opening on August 1, 2019, this modern new-build five-storey hotel features 581 guestrooms (starting from 20 sqm) equipped with free wifi, desks, fridges and ironing boards. It's a three-minute walk from Hatten Cross Tube station, which is one stop from Heathrow Terminals 2 and 3 and Terminal 4, and is also located in the Heathrow Free Travel Zone. Facilities include a swimming pool, gym, sauna and steam room, along with an underground car park with 120 spaces. The hotel can accommodate events for up to 700 guests in its assembly hall and has 36 separate meeting rooms all located on the same floor. There's also a restaurant and a round-the-clock coffee shop. atriumhotelheathrow.co.uk



CROWNE PLAZA/HOLIDAY INN EXPRESS T4 →

Open since October last year, these co-located IHG properties have 761 rooms between them and share a lobby and facilities. Owned by the Arora Group – whose Heathrow properties include Holiday Inn T5 and Sofitel – the hotels are connected to Terminal 4 by a covered walkway on the Departures level (don't confuse them with the Crowne Plaza Heathrow and Holiday Inn Express Heathrow, both located a few miles from T4). Reach the other terminals via what was the Heathrow Connect, now TfL Rail. The Crowne Plaza (pictured) has 304 rooms (from 27 sqm) with good-sized workdesks, international plug sockets and ample charging points. The Holiday Inn Express has 457 rooms (from 22 sqm), some with runway views. There are plenty of good dining options in both hotels, including the all-day Holiday Inn Express Bar and Café, the Tea 4 salon, the well-designed Destinations bar and the Urban Brasserie, which serves modern British cuisine and Asian street food. The Crowne Plaza has a gym and four meeting spaces, the largest for 65 people. There's also a 130-space underground car park. ihg.com



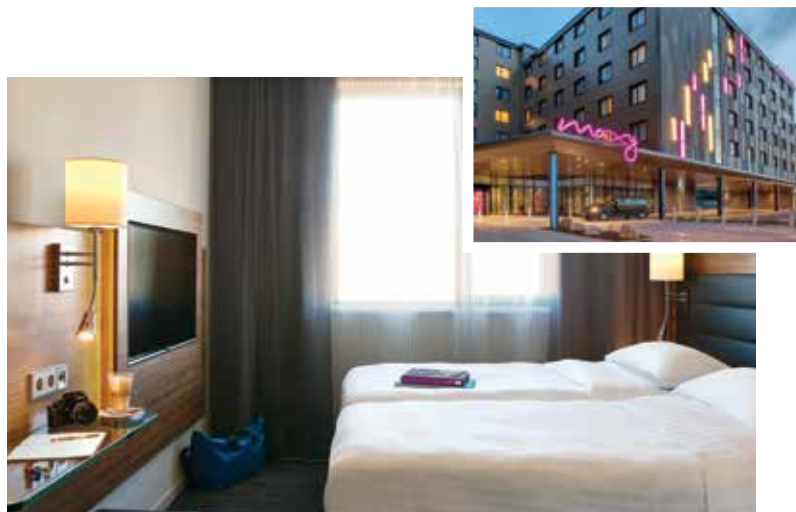
HYATT PLACE LONDON HEATHROW AIRPORT →

The former Heathrow Hotel Bath Road rebranded as Hyatt Place in December 2016, and completed a multimillion-pound refurbishment in July 2017. A five-minute drive from T2 and T3, and 12 minutes from T5, it's located in the Heathrow Free Travel Zone, with regular buses to these terminals. The property now has 349 sleek rooms (from 24 sqm) with improved wifi, triple-glazed windows, blackout curtains, 42-inch HDTVs, fridges, irons and safes. The restaurant has been expanded and there are 11 meeting spaces, the largest for 120 delegates. There's also the 24/7 Gallery Market for snacks, and the Coffee to Cocktails Bar. hyatt.com

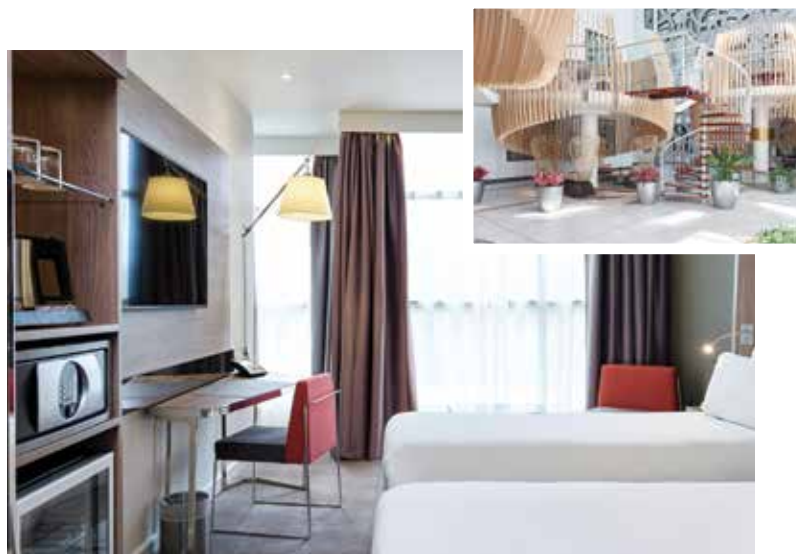


MOXY HEATHROW

Marriott International opened this 437-room hotel under its budget lifestyle brand in April last year. Located on Bath Road, it's close to T2 and T3, accessible via the Hoppa Bus Service, but is not in the Heathrow Free Travel Zone. Rooms start from 16 sqm and have free wifi, desks with USB ports, and 42-inch HDTVs. The hotel also has a 24-hour gym, a neon-clad bar and colourful dining area with spray-painted artwork, and snacks can be picked up around the clock from vending machines. Guests are given a complimentary drink with their room key when they arrive and there's also a small meeting room for six people, and parking for 122 cars. moxy-hotels.marriott.com

**NOVOTEL HEATHROW AIRPORT T1, T2 AND T3**

Housed in the former HQ of the British Airports Authority on Bath Road, this 166-room property opened in April last year and features plenty of natural light and contemporary aviation-inspired interiors to echo its surroundings. Rooms start from 23 sqm and come with desks, 55-inch LCD TVs, irons, safes and fridges. The hotel is located within the Heathrow Free Travel Zone and is served by several buses. Alternatively, it's a five-minute drive from Terminals 2 and 3. Food and drink options include the Runway Rooftop Bar and the all-day Nest Restaurant. There's also a fitness suite with a steam room. Free wifi is available throughout the hotel and a business and family space has iPads, a library area and board games. The hotel has two meeting spaces – the Sky Pod, which holds up to ten people, and the 150-capacity Nest Suite. novotel.com

**SHERATON HEATHROW HOTEL**

This 426-room property is located off Colnbrook Bypass, accessible to Terminal 5 via the Hoppa service within 15 minutes. While it's not a newcomer, the hotel underwent a phased multimillion-pound renovation in 2017. The redesigned rooms, which start from 26 sqm, are decorated in soft grey furnishings, while bathrooms have full-height coloured glass features. Soundproofing and blackout blinds ensure a good night's sleep and the workdesks have ergonomic chairs. Club room guests can use the plush Club lounge, which offers free all-day refreshments and evening hors d'oeuvres. Food and drink venues include the Orchard restaurant, the Discovery Bar, with travel-inspired interiors, and the self-service Link Café, which has PC workstations. There's also a gym and 21 meeting rooms. sheraton.marriott.com

**STAYBRIDGE SUITES/HOLIDAY INN BATH ROAD**

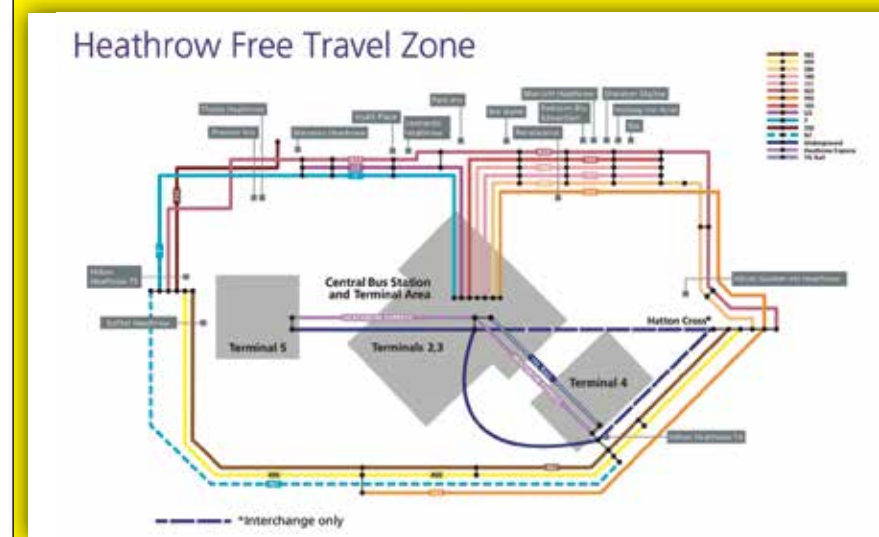
This dual-branded IHG property is a five-minute drive from all terminals and is in the Heathrow Free Travel Zone. Staybridge (pictured) opened in January and has 145 studios (from 30 sqm) and 45 one-bedroom 41 sqm suites, all with kitchens. A 24-hour store offers snacks and drinks, and a buffet breakfast is included. The Den hosts meetings for ten, and there's a business centre and laundry room. Evening socials with free drinks and canapés are held three times a week. The 433-room Holiday Inn next door has an Italian restaurant, a sports bar and six meeting rooms. Rooms start at 23 sqm. Both hotels have free wifi and they share a gym. ihg.com/staybridge; hiheathrowbathroad.com

**HILTON GARDEN INN HEATHROW T2**

Opening on July 1, 2019, the 369-room Hilton Garden Inn is directly connected to Terminal 2 via a walkway. Rooms start from 22 sqm and have HD-TVs, fridges and desks; some have runway views, as does the rooftop bar. Other facilities include a full-service restaurant, a 24-hour business centre and five meeting rooms, the largest of which is 729 sqm. hiltongardeninn3.hilton.com


HEATHROW FREE TRAVEL ZONE

Bus travel is free within the Heathrow Free Travel Zone that surrounds the airport. Buses serving T2 and T3 depart from the Central Bus Station. T4 and T5 buses depart outside the arrival halls. They stop along Colnbrook Bypass, Bath Road, Northern Perimeter Road, Eastern Perimeter Road, Envoy Avenue, Great South West Road, Southern Perimeter Road and Western Perimeter Road to serve the various hotels. Buses include the 482, 490, 285, 140, 111, 423, 555, 105, U3, 7, 350 and N7.

**COMING SOON...****AEROTEL LONDON HEATHROW**

Located in the east wing of T3 arrivals, and in walking distance of T2, Plaza Premium Group's short-stay Aerotel has been the subject of much confusion during its more than year-long delay, which has been attributed to health and safety requirements. Its signage has been in place for some time, but as we went to press the opening date was still unconfirmed. The 82-room hotel will allow customers to arrive at any time of day and pay for between six and 24 hours. Rooms will start from 10 sqm and have showers, TVs and free wifi, with light refreshments available in the Library Lounge. myaerotel.com

VIVANTA HEATHROW

The Indian Hotels Company Limited is due to open a Vivanta property near T2 and T3 in 2021. It will have 108 rooms, an all-day restaurant, a bar and lounge, a gym, banqueting space, and an outpost of restaurant brand Bombay Brasserie. theindianhotels.com

WORDS CHRIS HALL

Blancpain has dug deep into its archives for its new limited-edition pilot's watch

Close followers of the Swiss watch industry will know that it enjoys a somewhat capricious relationship with its history. On the one hand, the centuries of watchmaking experience and tradition are what give modern-day brands their value and position at the top of the luxury tree. However, it has been known for those same brands to take a selective view of 20th-century developments, especially when they don't align perfectly with the current marketing strategy.

In the 1990s and early 2000s this was less pronounced, because companies were concerned with surging forward, creating new designs and styles (not all of them successful). Since then, however, bound symbiotically to an enormous uplift in the vintage watch market, the brands' strategies have crystallised around recreating models from their glorious past – primarily the 1960s and '70s – throwing greater attention on to what was actually going on back then.

A cursory search for Blancpain will reveal the claim that it is the world's oldest surviving watch brand, dating its inception to 1735. Few top-line summaries, and certainly not the official corporate history, will mention that it was one of the hardest-hit victims of what the Swiss refer to as the "quartz crisis", when at the start of the 1970s battery-powered watches decimated the market.

Blancpain went completely out of business for close to a decade; in 1983, the name was purchased by marketeer Jean-Claude Biver and watchmaker Jacques Piguet for SFr 22,000 (£17,000). The pair restarted the business, marketing it with the bold claim that: "Since 1735 there has never been a quartz Blancpain watch. And there never will be." They sold it in 1992 for SFr 60 million (£47 million). (Funnily enough, this comes up rather more frequently in profiles of Mr Biver.)

Today's watch is as faithful
a replica as
you can imagine



STORIED PAST

If you're wondering how this is germane to the picture of the handsome chronograph opposite, we're getting there. This is the Blancpain Air Command, a 500-piece limited edition high-end chronograph (£15,170) announced to the world in May as Blancpain's hero piece for 2019. Its story is an interesting one, made all the more so for being shrouded in uncertainty. Blancpain in the 1950s was riding high; it had developed the Fifty Fathoms dive watch for the French Navy in 1953 (a year before Rolex's Submariner) and supplied it to elite naval units across the world, including the US.

Soon after, the story goes, the Americans came calling again, looking for an aviation watch. It had to have a flyback chronograph function (the ability to stop timing, reset to zero and restart again in one integrated action; useful for synchronising timing across a team), and a black dial with legible, luminous markers and hands. Blancpain modified its Fifty Fathoms and supplied about a dozen prototypes to its US distributor, Tornek.

That's about as much as anyone knows with any real certainty. The watch wasn't commissioned by the US Air Force and, the consensus is, never went into production or saw the light of day commercially.

A couple of originals have surfaced at auction (fetching six-figure results in light of their rarity) but what's lacking is any official documentation confirming their specifications or precise dates of production. Some vintage Air Commands have movements from Swiss manufacturer Valjoux and others are Blancpain-signed, implying some may have been retrofitted at a later date, but no one knows for sure which is period-correct.

If Blancpain really had enjoyed 284 years of unbroken history, chances are the backstory of the Air Command would be more complete. Records would not have been lost; the institutional memory of employees would have been retained. It would probably still be something of a curio, and I expect it would have been brought back to life all the same – perhaps earlier, perhaps not. One thing is for sure: the international community of hardcore collectors would have been deprived of a good argument over how many exist and their original specification, and as that's one of the things that keeps me gainfully employed, perhaps I should be thankful things panned out this way.

Today's watch is as faithful a replica as you can imagine; it's half a millimetre bigger (42.5mm) and boasts clearer, larger numerals on the dial, but retains the overall layout, rotating bezel (unusual for a pilot's watch) and lack of a date window. Inside is a high-frequency, top-grade chronograph movement, capable of timing to one-tenth of a second, and visible through the sapphire crystal on the underside of the watch. Here you'll also see a somewhat kitsch propeller-shaped winding rotor (jet engines being ubiquitous by the early 1950s), overlooking a movement that is – as usual from Blancpain – superbly finished.

MAIN PICTURE:
The new (left) and
vintage Blancpain
Air Commands

ABOVE:
The new watch's
caseback

LINE OF ASCENT

WORDS DAVID PHELAN

Light touch

An easily portable laptop is a business travel essential, but which will suit you?

TECHNOLOGY

The best laptops for business travellers pack serious power into a lightweight frame. In the past, lighter computers were either expensive and powerful or affordable but less effective. These days, happily, there are several options that deliver both portability and good performance.

There are still plenty of decisions to be made. Do you want utilitarian or chic? Is screen size the most important feature? Do you need Windows or will a Google Chrome operating system suit? Do you want it to sync perfectly with your iPhone? Whatever your preferences, all-day battery life should be a non-negotiable.

The laptops here were all chosen with portability a primary concern, so there are no 17-inch screeners (they all have 13-inch displays unless otherwise stated). However, design, performance and value for money have been given due weight.

Three operating systems are covered: Microsoft's Windows, which has the most programs available; Apple's Mac OS, which is arguably the most intuitive; and Google's Chrome OS, which works best with internet connectivity.



Dell XPS 13

From £1,299

dell.com

Dell's laptops have been solid performers for years, and this latest model has added further improvements including a noticeable uptick in battery life. Up to 21 hours is possible, although if you opt for the model with a super-high resolution 4K screen, then four hours is more likely. The XPS 13 is a well-priced Windows machine that performs strongly and has great build quality. The display has a narrow bezel, so a 13.3-inch display fits into a laptop that is more the size of an 11-inch model. Dell products are highly customisable so you can choose, for instance, between a Full HD or 4K display for viewing images in ultra-high resolution. There are also three colours to choose from: rose gold, silver-on-black and a fetching frost-on-white combination. Neat software extras include Dell Power Manager, which helps to control battery usage, and a program to connect the laptop to your phone. It weighs 1.23kg.

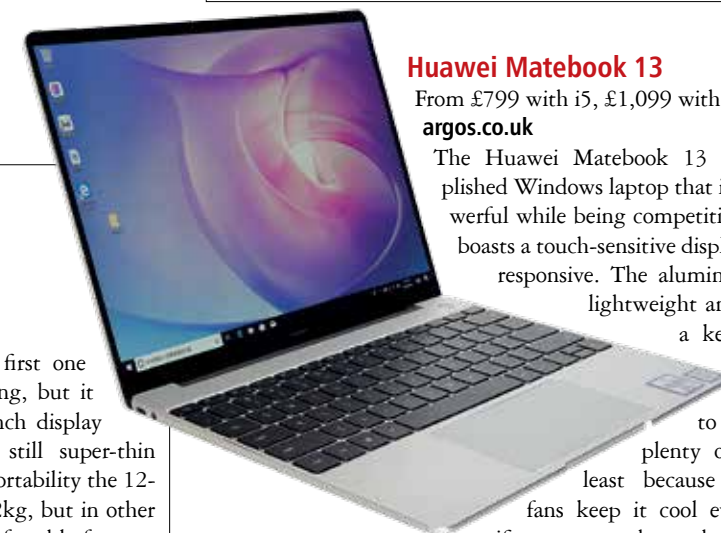


Apple MacBook Air

From £1,199

apple.com/uk

The new MacBook Air is stunning. When the first one was revealed a decade ago it was ground-breaking, but it had slipped behind since – until now. The 13-inch display is high-resolution, bright and immersive. It's still super-thin and, at 1.25kg, very light (note that for ultimate portability the 12-inch MacBook is even more featherweight, at 0.92kg, but in other respects the Air edges it). The keyboard is as comfortable for tapping out a quick email as for that doorstop novel you know you have in you. There's also a fingerprint sensor in the power button so only you can see your business-critical information. The battery lasts a full working day, in fact up to 13 hours. Choose from silver, the darker Space Grey and a gold-coloured finish. Note that the old-style MacBook Air is also still available (£949) but it doesn't have the fingerprint sensor or high-resolution display of the new incarnation.



Huawei Matebook 13

From £799 with i5, £1,099 with i7

argos.co.uk

The Huawei Matebook 13 is an accomplished Windows laptop that is slim and powerful while being competitively priced. It boasts a touch-sensitive display that is very responsive. The aluminium casing is lightweight and classy, with a keyboard that's firm but pleasing to use. It packs plenty of punch, not least because the internal fans keep it cool even under significant power demand. At ten hours, the battery life is decent, not quite matching the MacBook Air, but it has a secret weapon: fast-charging. Connect it to the mains for 15 minutes and you'll get two and a half hours of use. A fingerprint sensor in the power button allows for quick, secure unlocking. It's also only a smidgen heavier than the Apple laptop, at 1.28kg.



Google Pixelbook

From £999

store.google.com

Google's operating system, Chrome OS, leans on connection to the internet for some of its features – bear in mind these may be temporarily absent when you're in the air. Many of the apps are familiar from phones, such as Gmail, Google Drive and Google Calendar. While some Chromebooks are cheaper than Windows computers, the design, build, speed and vivid 12.3-inch display of this one make it pricier. It also works as a tablet, with a 360-degree hinge allowing the keyboard to fold back on itself. The battery lasts up to ten hours and it weighs 1.1kg.



HP Envy 13

£799

hp.com

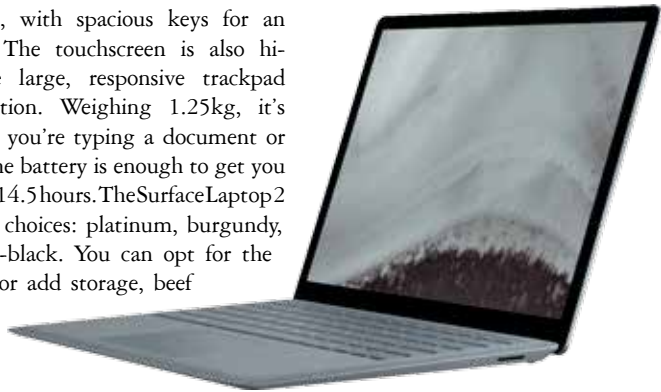
The Envy 13's distinctive styling includes a hinge to the display that angles the keyboard when in use. There are plenty of security features, from the fingerprint sensor to a display that is hard for others to read over your shoulder. There's even a physical "kill" switch for the webcam. The display is bright and sharp, making it great for watching movies if the in-flight selection doesn't suit. And make the most of the stereo speakers, which have been tuned by Bang and Olufsen for great sound. Battery life is good, claimed at up to 14 hours, or at least eight hours in tests. It's especially lightweight, at 1.18kg.

Microsoft Surface Laptop 2

From £979

microsoft.com

This attractive laptop from Microsoft includes a keyboard covered in a soft Alcantara fabric that acts as a comfortable wrist rest, with spacious keys for an easy typing experience. The touchscreen is also high-resolution, while the large, responsive trackpad has multi-touch recognition. Weighing 1.25kg, it's a fast performer, whether you're typing a document or playing back video, and the battery is enough to get you through a day's use, at up to 14.5 hours. The Surface Laptop 2 also comes in cool colour choices: platinum, burgundy, cobalt blue and black-on-black. You can opt for the entry-level configuration or add storage, beef up the memory or change the processor.



Acer Swift 7 SF714-51T

£1,499

uk-store.acer.com

The Acer is super-thin, even by the standards of its rivals here, at under 1cm. It squeezes in a 14-inch display and while it's not cheap, it's certainly beautiful. Like others here, there's a fingerprint sensor in the power button, and the webcam is tucked into the keyboard to make the display bezel as thin as possible. This current model includes 4G LTE so you can stay connected almost anywhere, with the right sim card. It's hard to put an exceptional battery in a gadget this slim but expect ten hours' power. Still, thin means light – it weighs only 1.2kg.



Asus ZenBook 3

£1,149

asus.com

With its head-turning gold detailing, the ZenBook 3's design is its standout feature. Then, when you pick it up, you realise how much work has gone into keeping its weight down: it's the lightest laptop on test, at just under 1kg. Like the HP Envy 13, the ZenBook 3 has a hinge that angles the keyboard to make typing easier and increase airflow underneath. It sounds good, thanks to audio features from hi-fi company Harman Kardon, and an ultra-slim bezel ensures the full HD display shines. Battery life is up to nine hours.

ADOBE STOCK, PRESS MATERIALS



TRAVEL GADGETS

Anker PowerCore+ 26800 portable charger

£90

amazon.co.uk

Most battery packs are only powerful enough to pep up a phone, but this one from Anker can charge a laptop, and also has USB and USB-C connectors for even greater versatility. Ideal when you can't get near the power socket in the airport lounge, for example.

TwelveSouth Plugbug Duo

£50

apple.com/uk

The Plugbug Duo is a multi-purpose charger that is designed for international use. You can plug in two USB cables to charge, say, your tablet and phone, but you can also attach a Macbook Air to the same plug. The pack includes five different adapters for use in multiple countries.



Microsoft Surface Arc Mouse

£80

microsoft.com

If the one thing you miss about your desktop is a proper mouse, this one from Microsoft may suit. It is an ergonomically pleasing shape and snaps flat when not in use, which also powers it down. The battery lasts up to six months.

Moshi Symbus Q Compact USB-C Dock

£155

moshi.com

This is like an electrical Swiss Army knife. Many new laptops only have USB-C sockets, so all the gadgets that used to connect via their regular USB cables won't fit. This dock connects to the USB-C connector on the laptop and has two full-size USB sockets. It connects to the mains so you can charge your laptop, too. If your phone has wireless charging capability, you can rest it on top to power it up.

Yotelair Singapore Changi Airport

BACKGROUND The Yotel brand is on a roll at the moment. It has a core brand – Yotel – and then an extended-stay brand called Yotelpad. And then there are the Yotelair properties, which are in or near airports, both landside and airside. Yotelair recently opened not only at Singapore Changi's new Jewel complex but also both landside and airside at the new Istanbul airport, adding to properties at London Heathrow, Gatwick, Amsterdam Schiphol and Paris Charles de Gaulle.

WHAT'S IT LIKE? Check-in is via easy-to-use automatic kiosks, although seeing that I was well past millennial age, a member of staff came over and showed me how it worked. It takes a scan of your passport, then you swipe your credit card and generate your keys on a pad. Reception is on level 4 of the Jewel building and most of the rooms (called cabins) are on level 4M, one floor up. Staff are very helpful.

Bear in mind that there are no storage facilities, so if you want to leave luggage somewhere after check-out you'll need to go down one level and pay for the airport storage facility should you need it – about S\$15 (£8.50) a day for checked bag size. The rooms can be booked for a minimum of four hours and if you extend your stay it's around S\$25 (£14.40) for every two hours. The showers can be used without staying – currently S\$20 (£11.50).

WHERE IS IT? To reach level 4 of the Jewel building, take the link bridge from Terminal 3 and then go up one level either via the escalator or lift. The hotel entrance is on the right. If you are coming in from Terminal 4, for instance, you'd have to use the free hotel shuttle bus to get here.

ROOMS The 130 rooms have adjustable mood lighting that can be controlled through four separate switches. All are en suite with two showerheads (power and rain), and the upper half of the beds can be raised to watch the large TV.

I was in an entry-level Premium Queen Cabin (10 sqm), which the site says can cater for two people – it would be a tight fit but was



fine for one – and there are larger Family Cabins (21 sqm) sleeping up to four. There are also fully accessible cabins.

To make the most of the space, you can push your bag under the bed, and there are hangers on the wall. The bed was comfortable and soundproofing was very good. There were lots of power points and USB sockets. Free wifi is fast, and you can stream your own content from your device on to the TV. There is a sliding door between the bedroom and bathroom for privacy. Two small bottles of water and tooth-brushing kits are provided. There are shelves in by the door, and hooks in the bathroom. It's all carefully thought out.

Food and drink There is a good self-service café called Komyuniti on the lobby level, which has a great view out into the Jewel from an open balcony. The Rain Vortex – the world's

BEST FOR
A ringside view of the Jewel and a comfortable and affordable stay

DON'T MISS
Having a free coffee in the evening and watching the light show on the central waterfall

PRICE
Internet rates for a flexible midweek four-hour stay in September started from £116 for a Premium Queen Cabin

CONTACT
Yotelair, Level 4, Lobby H, Jewel Changi Airport; tel +65 6407 7888; yotel.com

tallest indoor waterfall – can be seen from here. Free coffee, tea and water is served all day, and the breakfast is exceptional value for money – S\$10 (£5.50) when I was staying.

If you want to eat in the evening, go down to the second basement level of the Jewel and head into Five Spice, which has lots of Asian and Western options. I had a delicious three-course meal there for S\$12.50 (£7.20).

MEETINGS There is no event space.

LEISURE The property has a small but well-equipped fitness centre.

VERDICT This is an excellent option for a one-night stay and access to the Jewel. The rooms are comfortable and I would certainly stay in another Yotel if it was in the right location and for the right price. *Tom Otley*

Pentahotel Moscow, Arbat

BACKGROUND This is the 29th property in the Penta portfolio, a “neighbourhood lifestyle” brand from Hong Kong-based Rosewood Hotel Group. Pentahotel Moscow had its soft opening in December last year and officially opened on February 28. It's situated in one of the four “Book Houses” on Novy Arbat Avenue, which are designed to resemble open books. It occupies the lower 11 floors of the 26-storey mixed-use building.

WHERE IS IT? The hotel is about a 10- to 15-minute drive from Red Square, the Expocentre and Moscow International Business Centre. Arbatskaya metro station is less than ten minutes' walk away. Sheremetyevo International airport is about a 50-minute drive.

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

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



A 'lifestyle lobby' serves as reception, lobby, bar, café and restaurant

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

ROOMS The hotel has 228 guestrooms, spanning levels 6 to 11. They are divided into three categories: the Penta Standard room, ranging from 18 to 23 sqm; the 27-31 sqm Penta Plus, which features a separate living area; and the 33 sqm Penta PlayerPad, which is equipped with games consoles including a Playstation 4. There are also two accessible rooms.

The rooms have an industrial loft-style design. Each is decorated with Moscow map wallpaper, in accordance with the neighbourhood feel that the brand is aiming for. Unlimited free wifi, described as “free oxygen” on the hotel's website, is provided, as are tea and coffee facilities and a bottle of water. The minibar is stocked on request with paid-for items. Rooms also have desks and safes.

I stayed in an eighth-floor Penta Standard room, which had a king-size bed and a nice view facing the busy Novy Arbat Avenue – fortunately there wasn't much noise at night. Add to that the blackout curtains and I managed to enjoy some good sleep during my stay.

The bathroom was rather small but functional. It had a rainfall shower, as well as sycamore fig-scented shampoo and body wash from Dutch brand Zenology. Note that conditioner is not provided so bring your own.

FOOD AND DRINK A buffet spread is served at Breakfast Box on level 2. On weekdays, it is open 6.30-10.30am; on weekends, it ends at 11am. A decent selection of food and drink is on offer, along with self-service hot drinks. Service is good and staff members are friendly.

BEST FOR
A central location and well-equipped meeting rooms with flexible seating

DON'T MISS
A game of pool in the Pentalounge

PRICE
Internet rates for a flexible midweek stay in September started from 8,700 rubles (£106) for a Standard room

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

Meals can also be ordered in the 24-hour Pentalounge, which features lounge chairs and communal tables. TVs, bookshelves and a number of paintings adorn the walls, creating a cosy atmosphere. The à la carte menu includes a range of choices including starters, sandwiches, salads, hot dishes, pizzas, burgers and desserts, although you can also choose from a local menu.

LEISURE There's a 24-hour gym on the third floor, although it's not very big. The Pentalounge also has a pool table.

MEETINGS Four rooms on level 3 can be combined into two larger spaces, ranging from 61 to 82 sqm.

VERDICT A modern, stylish and well-kept property in an ideal location for getting to both city attractions and business hubs easily. *Jackie Chen*

AC Hotel New York Downtown

BACKGROUND One of two AC hotels in New York (the other is in Times Square), this opened in October last year. AC is a select-service brand, which means properties don't have a concierge or 24-hour room service. Many, though, offer additional services, and this hotel has a bar, a lounge for relaxing and working in, a breakfast area, a good fitness centre and even a meeting room.

WHAT'S IT LIKE? Designed by Peter Poon Architects, this 33-storey new-build has an entrance on Maiden Lane. For the first few floors the exterior is fairly nondescript but look up and you'll see how the windows and façade have been alternated to allow the maximum number of rooms to offer East River views. It also gives a pleasant rippled look to the tower's profile. Under construction next door, by the same builders, is a thin 57-storey skyscraper called the Seaport Residences.

There is some lovely art in the hotel. Ann Weber's Personages sculpture in the lobby is in mixed media using the likes of found cardboard and polyurethane, and is intended to mimic the tall buildings surrounding the property. In reception is a store selling snacks including local chocolate (Raaka from Brooklyn). Check-in was quick and my room was ready at 1300, which I appreciated since I'd just flown in from Frankfurt. There are three swift lifts. Staff are very helpful, offering advice on everything from restaurants and bars to the

quickest and most affordable ways to get to Newark for a morning flight.

WHERE IS IT? Next to the Seaport Historic District and the Financial District. Fulton Street station is about a ten-minute walk and the World Trade Centre about 15 minutes. New York JFK is about a 40-minute drive, although I took the Air Train and then the A train and got there in about 75 minutes, and for only US\$7.50.

ROOMS There are 274 rooms (76 Double Doubles with two double beds, and 198 Kings), roughly ten per floor right the way up to the 30th storey (some floors are for back-office functions). A few rooms on the sixth level have balconies, but at the time of writing they hadn't yet opened. All rooms are a good size – from 22 sqm – and have laminate floors, material wall coverings in an arty brown, and a good-sized workdesk with

This is a great hotel in a good location for the Financial District

two power points and two USB points. There were also power points on both sides of the bed in my King room. Free wifi is super-fast and you can stream content from your own device through the 50-inch TV. The shower had a choice of rain and power showerhead; the latter certainly was powerful – when I turned it on it hit me in the face and drove me out of the bathroom. Korres toiletries from Greece are supplied.

Rooms also have a coffee machine (you can make tea with it, too) and an empty fridge (two small bottles of water are provided). There's a "hydration station" on floor two and in the basement, where you can fill your own bottle.



FOOD AND DRINK The second-floor AC Lounge acts as a co-working space in the day and a bar in the evening, and serves a buffet breakfast in the morning. It also offers tapas, a choice of tarts and some cheeses, breads and meats. The artwork of colourful threads here is by Rachel Mica Weiss and is called Tilted Plane, evoking how the tall buildings change colour during the day. There is also a library area and a computer with a printer.

BUSINESS A small boardroom-style room in the basement seats 10-12 people.

LEISURE The fitness centre in the basement has a good selection of equipment.

VERDICT This is a great property in a good location for the Financial District and Downtown. Select service it may be, but I found the staff helpful and I didn't miss the concierge or 24-hour room service. *Tom Orley*

BEST FOR

Good-sized modern rooms close to the Financial and Seaport Districts

DON'T MISS

Using the gym in the morning – it's a great size, and is the perfect place to warm up before a morning run along the East River

PRICE

Internet rates for a flexible mid-week stay in September started from US\$163 for a King room

CONTACT

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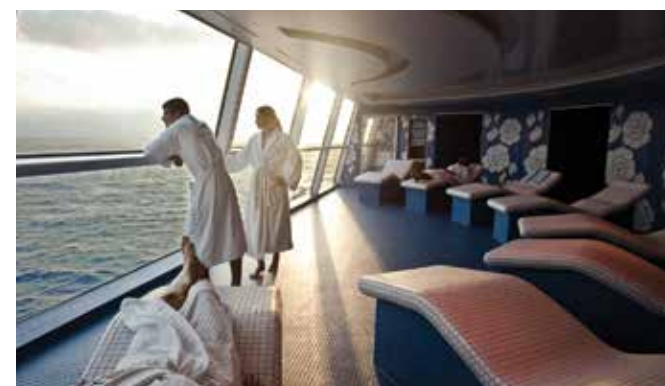


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WORDS JENNY SOUTHAN

Venice Beach

LA's boho enclave is ripe for exploration on wheels

1 VENICE CANALS

Start your tour of this quirky Los Angeles neighbourhood with a stroll along its tidal canals, which were inspired by Venice in Italy. Now a historic residential district, located south of Santa Monica, they were built in 1905 by New Jersey-born developer Abbot Kinney, as part of his vision to create a "Venice of America". At the time, visitors would come for gondola rides, amusements, a rollercoaster and freakshows, much like those in New York's Coney Island. Today, there are only six canals left – four running east-west, two north-south – with little wooden bridges that take you from one side to the other. After decades of neglect, the canals were cleaned up in the 1990s and have now become a desirable place to live. The low-rise buildings exhibit an array of architectural styles, from colo-

nial villas to yellow modernist cubes, and instead of cars, locals have rowing boats, kayaks and pedalos moored on the water.

2 THE BOARDWALK

The "micro-mobility" trend has taken off in LA and there is no better place than flat, pedestrian-friendly Venice to try it out. As you walk around, you'll notice dockless electric scooters left standing by palm trees, walls and lampposts for anyone to take. There are three brands – Bird, Lime and Jump, the last of which is operated by Uber. (You need a US driver's licence for Jump, however.) To rent one, download the associated app, create an account, put in your credit card details and scan the QR code on the scooter to activate it. You can also use the app to locate scooters nearby (they have built-in GPS trackers).

Stick to bike lanes but by starting on the 2.5km seaside Boardwalk, you can practise zooming along without fear of cars getting in the way. The stretch has a hippy vibe with lots of souvenir stores, ice cream parlours, marijuana dispensaries, tattoo shops and street performers. There's also Muscle Beach, where you can watch ripped locals working out in the sun. Price: US\$0.15 a minute plus US\$1 to unlock (Jump is free to unlock). bird.co, jump.com, li.me

3 THE SKATEPARK

Scoot over to the famous Venice Skatepark to observe the skills of local boarders as they perform stunts on the undulating dips and swells of concrete lagoons and bowls. They always draw large crowds, who gather to take photos and admire the bravery of the younger kids



who seem to take to it so naturally. Back in the early 1970s, college graduate Frank Nasworthy, who had moved into town to surf, noticed that skateboard wheels were made of hard steel or clay composite, which limited what riders could do. Recognising there was room for improvement, he began selling softer, grippier polyurethane wheels that had been developed by a friend's father for roller skaters. Alongside the rise of the legendary Z-Boys surfer-skaters (documented in the film Dogtown and Z-Boys), his Cadillac wheels became hugely popular, giving birth to a new wave of skating culture.

4 ABBOT KINNEY BOULEVARD

Cut down Westminster Avenue on your scooter and you'll come to Abbot

Kinney Boulevard. One of the trendiest streets in the entire city, it's lined with shops such as Le Labo for perfume, Marine Layer for casual apparel, Aviator Nation, which sells locally made 1970s-style hoodies and tracksuits, Four Sigmatic for superfoods, Will for leather goods and Med Men, which is an upmarket cannabis dispensary designed like an Apple Store.

There is also lots of street art to enjoy, as well as a fantastic ice cream shop called Salt and Straw that always has a queue out of the door – gourmet flavours served include avocado and Oaxacan chocolate fudge, and honey lavender. Before continuing all the way east down Abbot Kinney, stop off at Blue Bottle Coffee at number 1,103 for an iced coffee made by serious brewing experts. bluebottlecoffee.com

5 GJELINA RESTAURANT

Finish with a meal at Gjelina (1,429 Abbot Kinney) – if it's busy you can put your name down and they'll text when a spot becomes available (it will be worth a short wait). The inventive menu – frequently described as "New American cuisine" – changes but there is always an abundance of charcuterie, cheeses, unusual salads at US\$15 (the snow pea, radish, mint and mandarin – a cross between a mandarin and a kumquat – with tahini dressing is glorious), plant-based small plates (US\$12) and superb Italian-style pizzas (US\$15-20). If you're lucky enough to come across the roasted Japanese sweet potatoes with jalapeno yoghurt and scallions (spring onions) then order them; likewise the nettle spaghetti cacio e pepe. Open daily 8am-12am. gjelina.com

LAST MINUTE TICKET

Could you, please, explain why it's impossible to buy a cheap plane ticket in the last minute system? In the past, travel agencies used to advertise that you could buy a ticket cheaper by booking it before your departure. Now you have to pay a lot more for a ticket like this. In Ryanair all seats are sold, and when I fly with LOT, often many seats are unoccupied. Wouldn't it be better to simply sell them at a lower price?

Mariusz

Dear Mariusz
You've raised an important and very complicated issue of managing costs and revenue in the aviation industry. There are a lot more differences than similarities between traditional airlines (LOT Polish Airlines, Lufthansa, British Airways) and low-cost carriers (Ryanair, Wizzair), because they use two completely different business models.

The general rule for all airlines is that the sooner you buy a ticket, the better the chance of a lower price. Closer to departure the chances of getting a cheaper ticket are reduced to a minimum. For several years now, carriers have been trying to convince passengers to plan their trips in advance.

Airlines have different forms of seat sales management. Low-cost (sometimes referred to as 'no frills') airlines usually base their strategy on a very high occupancy rate (also called 'the load factor'). In such a business model you can sell the seats at a lower price, because almost all the seats on the plane are occupied. Their offer is aimed at a specific segment of the market, as they don't offer any complex fares, as well as many onboard products or services. The costs of low-cost lines are much more predictable and additional profits are generated by very active sale of services not directly related to the flight.

The model of operation of traditional airlines is completely different, based on a diversified offer addressed to the business and leisure segments. As a result, the costs are incomparably higher (differentiated fleet type, advanced sales systems, interline agreements with other airlines, business class lounges, very expensive airport charges, etc.). In the traditional model, it's more profitable to sell more business or premium class seats, even at the expense of unoccupied economy class seats. This looks slightly different in case of travel agencies that sell seats for charter flights. Tour operators can control the price until the last minute, because they bear the full cost of the chartered aircraft. In such a situation there is a chance to buy a last minute ticket.

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.



STANSTED - IS THIS A GOOD AIRPORT?

I often arrange trips for our Dubai employees. They fly mainly to Warsaw and London. Recently they asked me for tickets to Stansted Airport instead of Heathrow as usual. Is this a good airport? I remember that it's used mainly by low-cost carriers. Is it far from downtown London? How do you get from there to the City, where our office is located?

Lucyna

Dear Lucyna,
Stansted Airport is the third largest airport in London Metropolitan Agglomeration, after Heathrow and Gatwick. It's indeed associated primarily with low-cost airlines, but more and more traditional carriers are relocating part of their operations there, too.

The airport is located north of the city centre, relatively close to the city of Cambridge. Stansted is the alternate airport for London City airport, where special operations are performed (for example, that's where US Air Force One lands).

Emirates launched a direct connection between Dubai and Stansted Airport last year. The flights are operated once a day on board Boeing B777. From the airport it's very easy to get to the north of London, especially to the City and the business district of Canary Wharf.

A taxi ride takes about an hour and depends on the intensity of traffic. The route is also served by National Express buses, which reach downtown London in around 60 minutes. The best solution is to use a Stansted Express train. In peak hours it runs every 15 minutes and the journey takes about 45 minutes. The train station is situated under the airport terminal building, and the final stop in London is Liverpool Street Station. From here you can change to a few London Underground lines. Some business passengers prefer Stansted Airport, because of its quick and hassle-free access to the City.

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