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- 1 noclegu objętego promocją uprawnia do 10% zniżki od ceny dnia

Every day there's an ongoing festival somewhere in the world, with fireworks going off and people going out on the streets.

Festivals are ubiquitous and are a good occasion to earn decent money. Organizers of incentive trips do know about it and their offers include numerous trips to the most distant parts of the world. We have decided (not only because of the approaching New Year) to have a closer look at those offers.

A journey is of course inseparably connected with a hotel stay. Finding out that a hotel in which we are going to stay is a five star property, can lure us into believing that we know exactly what we can expect from it. It turns out, however, that granting stars is a complicated matter, sometimes quite inconsistent and not always regulated by any norms. Therefore it's worth checking page 46 and read the article in detail.

Similarly, hotel mini bars are a true mystery to lots of hotel guests. We open the refrigerator to get a bottle of mineral water and suddenly find out that the hotel set its price as high as if there was liquid gold inside. How come hotel mini bars offer products at such maxi prices? You'll find it out on page 50.

I also recommend reading our features on interesting trips – in this issue we write about hotels in Budapest, Berlin, and in Tenerife. We also flew across the ocean to New York and Miami. Namibia seems equally distant, but it's definitely worth going there because an incentive trip

organized to such a place is always a truly unforgettable experience.

If you feel like having a short break to relax (which seems so necessary in the life of a businessperson), visiting Maradiva Villas Resort or going on a cruise on board Allure of the Seas – the world's largest passenger cruise liner, seems to be the right choice.

Enjoy your reading, and since it's our last issue this year, I would like to wish you, on behalf of the whole editorial team, all the very best in your personal and professional life. Have a Fruitful New Year!



Robert Grzybowski
Publisher BT Poland



Read more details! Visit businessstraveller.pl

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LOT TELEGRAM LOT TELEGRAM LOT

Winter Charters

The beginning of December marked the introduction of LOT's winter schedule aimed at ski lovers. The Polish airline will operate charter flights to Grenoble and Verona until April 2011.

The flights to Grenoble will be run every Saturday at 1.25 pm. During Christmas holiday, the dates for Saturday flights (on 25 December and 1 January) will be shifted to 26 December and 2 January. Flights to Verona, Italy, will also be operated on Saturdays between 15 January and 9 April, twice daily (at 10.50 am and 12: 00). Two additional flights to this Italian city are scheduled for 11 and 15 December.

The prices of tickets for both connections start at PLN 740. Undoubtedly one of the greatest conveniences on those flight will be the possibility to carry your own skiing gear up to 10 kilograms free of charge. Other luggage allowances stay the same.

2 Millions in Gdańsk

Flight PLL LOT LO 3835 from Warsaw to Gdansk, which took off on 18 November, was a remarkable one. The plane carried 2 millionth passenger handled by the airport in Gdańsk this year. The celebration, which was very festive, was attended by many notable guests like Marcin Pirog – the President of the Management Board of LOT Polish Airlines, Michał Marzec – General Director of Polish Airports State Enterprise, and the passengers were being congratulated by Lech Wałęsa himself who was also on board of the aircraft.



Great Returns

Following a two-year suspension, LOT has resumed flights on Warsaw-Bydgoszcz route. The first aircraft landed at Ignacy Jan Paderewski Airport in Bydgoszcz on 26 November. The flights are operated twice daily (from Warsaw at 7.30 am and 7.10 pm, while from Bydgoszcz at 8.55 am and 8.35 pm) by ATR 42 aircraft. On Saturdays there will be only the morning flights, while on Sundays only the evening ones. The prices of round-trip tickets start at PLN 172.

Also, 35 years after the last LOT's flight to Hanoi took place, the Polish airline has now decided to restore the connection. The first flight on this route took off in mid-November. The connection will be operated three times weekly — on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Saturdays with Boeing 767-300 aircraft. The prices of return tickets start at PLN 2,257.

The first flight made by LOT to Hanoi took place on 25 June 1972 on an IL 18 aircraft. Due to the aircraft's range, the flight took place in stages: Warsaw-Moscow-Karachi-Calcutta-Hanoi. There were two crews on board the flight, who alternated shifts on the successive stages of the flight.

Avis Is a Strategic Partner

Avis Budget Group – one of the world's largest and most popular car rental companies – has signed another significant agreement. The company has been chosen by American Airlines to be its preferred car rental media partner. The new agreement provides Avis Budget with an exclusive opportunity to promote its Avis Rent A Car and Budget Rent A Car brands, products, services and special offers to the more than 105 million business and leisure travellers that fly with American Airlines and American Eagle Airlines each year.

In Poland Avis continues its promotion on weekend car rental. Starting each Thursday (at mid-day) until Tuesday's afternoon, the company offers special promotional tariffs for its clients who are willing to rent a car for 2-5 days (including obligatory Saturday and Sunday). The tariff includes unlimited mileage, the basic insurance and the airport charge. The prices start at PLN 98 a day.



Premium Voyageur Triumphs

Over the past year, 400,000 Air France passengers have chosen to travel in the Premium Voyageur cabin.

This new intermediate cabin located between the Voyageur (Economy) and Affaires (Business) cabins is now available to over 50 destinations. The Air France Airbus A380s will gradually be equipped with the Premium Voyageur cabin starting in April 2011.

The passengers are especially pleased with the new seats which offer 40% more room than in the Voyageur (economy) cabin. Each seat features: an electric plug for a laptop, a wide tray, an individual directional reading light, and a noise-reducing headset for optimum enjoyment of audio and video programmes. Each passenger in the cabin also receives a blanket, a pillow, a set of cosmetics, and a bottle of water. Other advantages include separate check-in desks, and larger luggage allowances (2 x 23 kg for hold luggage, and 18 kg for hand luggage). All of these for a price which is only slightly higher than the price for a ticket in a regular economy class.



POZNAJ NOWĄ KLASĘ PREMIUM VOYAGEUR



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40% dodatkowej przestrzeni w atrakcyjnej cenie

KOMFORT I SPOKÓJ

To co wyróżnia Premium Voyageur, to przede wszystkim prywatna przestrzeń podczas lotu, wydzielona dzięki separującej obudowie fotela oraz 40% więcej miejsca w porównaniu z klasą ekonomiczną.



Fotele w klasie Premium Voyageur są wyposażone w indywidualny 26-centymetrowy ekran, słuchawki redukujące hałas, duży rozkładany stolik oraz osobistą lampkę punktową do czytania.

PIERWSZEŃSTWO W OBSŁUDZE NA LOTNISKU

Na lotnisku pasażerowie Premium Voyageur korzystają z pierwszeństwa przy odprawie, wejściu na pokład i dostarczeniu bagażu. Dodatkowo w klasie Premium przysługuje zwiększony limit bagażowy: 2 sztuki bagażu po 23 kg oraz bagaż podręczny.

OSZCZĘDNOŚCI

Dzięki Premium Voyageur pasażerowie mogą podróżować w kabinie o wyższym standardzie po przystępnej cenie. Za loty w tej klasie członkowie Flying Blue otrzymują 25% więcej mil, a firmy w programie Bluebiz – 400 PLN zwrotu (w postaci punktów).

ROZKOSZ DLA PODNIEBIENIA

Serwis w klasie Premium Voyageur rozpoczyna aperitif z szampanem włącznie, następnie pasażerowie wybierają jedno z dwóch dań ciepłych. Na rejsach trwających dłużej niż 10,5 godziny działa też samoobsługowy bufet oferujący przekąski, owoce, kanapki i lody Haagen-Dazs®.

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Warszawa – Mexico City: od **4510 zł**

FIRST A380 FOR JAPAN

Skymark Airline the third largest Japanese airline has signed a memorandum of understanding with Airbus for the purchase of four A380s. The aircraft will be operated mainly on main international routes from Tokyo. Airbus says Skymark's engine choice and cabin details will be revealed at a later stage.

It's good news for Airbus, especially following the information that Australian airline Qantas grounded its fleet after serious problems it had with A380 engines.

Up to now 17 airlines have ordered a total of 234 A380s.



A NICE GADGET A NICE GADGET

A Glass House

Since the 50s each business class passenger on intercontinental flights receives a Delftware miniature. This year, this is the "Antilles House" in The Hague. Since 1994, the number in the collection matches the age of KLM. Since then every year on October 7, KLM's birthday, a new one is added to the collection.

These houses are replicas of specific buildings in the Netherlands and are filled with Bols gin.



Seafood in Fusion

Janusz Korzyński — the main chef of The Westin Warsaw hotel has prepared for the hotel's Fusion restaurant a new seasonal menu which will be valid until the mid-December. The offer is aimed mainly at seafood lovers.

The dishes include: scallops and parrot fish baked in za-baglione of green tea and lime, baked fennel with spicy mango and carici sorbet, fresh oysters served with shallot in wine vinegar and ponzu & ginger dressing, or skewer with grilled tiger prawns, scallops and oysters served with bok choy tempura.



Hilton Gdańsk among the Best

The second Polish hotel of Hilton Worldwide chain and also the first 5-star property on the Polish coast – Hilton Gdańsk – has been presented a prestigious CiJ Awards in two categories: Best Hotel Development and Best Overall Development. The awards are granted by one the leading English-speaking monthly magazines for the property development & real estate industry in Central and Eastern Europe – "Central & Eastern European Construction & Investment Journal". This year the awards were announced for the 9th time in 11 categories related to the real estate market in Poland.



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FINNAIR FROM GDAŃSK TO HELSINKI

Finnair will open a daily connection between Helsinki and Gdańsk on 27 March 2011. Gdańsk will once again be Finnair's third destination in Poland in addition to Cracow and Warsaw. The flights will also provide quick and easy access to all our great destinations in Europe, Asia and beyond.

"Economic growth in the Tri-City region of Gdansk, Gdynia and Sopot is among the fastest in Poland, as is reflected in the number of Polish and foreign companies

in the area as well as the income level of inhabitants", says Juhani Nuoramo, Finnair's Sales Director in Poland. "Our fast connections via Helsinki to key Asian destinations such as Shanghai, Hong Kong, Beijing, Singapore, Tokyo, Nagoya, Osaka, Seoul, Bangkok and Delhi will now become available also from the north of Poland, serving the needs of business and leisure travellers alike", Nuoramo continues.

The route from Gdansk to Helsinki will be flown dai-

ly, with departures from Gdansk on Mondays, Wednesdays and Saturdays at 11.15 and on Tuesdays, Thursdays, Fridays and Sundays at 18.10. Flights from Helsinki to Gdansk depart on Mondays, Wednesdays and Saturdays at 09.45 and on other days at 16.40. The flight time will be just under two hours.

The route will be operated by Finnair's partner Finncomm Airlines and its modern ATR 72-500 fleet that has an average age of approximately two years.



The Radisson Blu Hotel Kraków is the first hotel in the world, and the first company in Poland, to have been awarded the prestigious BS 8901 Certificate. Only approximately 30 firms in the world have been awarded such certificate so far. The principle of sustainable meetings management included in BS 8901 was worked out in 2007 by British Standard International. Today, it is the most demanding standard in the area of sustainable Meetings and Events Management, based on three priorities 1. Reducing negative impact on natural environment 2. Positive impact on local community 3. Reduction of production and exploitation costs.

The 2012 London Olympics are being prepared according to the principles of BS 8901, which are being developed to the ISO standard.

New York in the Red Guide

Only 86 restaurants in the world currently hold three stars granted by the famous Michelin guide. Of them, 5 are in New York City. In the MICHELIN guide New York City 2011, 5 restaurants earned three stars, 10 restaurants earned two stars and 42 restaurants earned a single star. Ten new NYC restaurants earned stars over the past year.

The latest edition for New York includes 95 Bib Gourmand restaurants – more than any other city in the world. The Bib Gourmand category is known as the "inspectors favourites", and delivers everyday excellence at a reasonable price.

715 restaurants were selected for inclusion this year. Among them, MICHELIN inspectors included 55 different types of cuisine. The MICHELIN guide New York City 2011 also offers a selection of 29 restaurants in the "Small Plates" category. Restaurants in this category offer a unique menu, ambience and service. The MICHELIN guides in the United States are the only guides in Michelin's global library to feature the Small Plates category.



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Again Closer with Lufthansa

Lufthansa wprowadziła nowy rozkład lotów z Poznania do Frankfurtu. Dzięki tej zmianie polscy podróżnicy będą mogli skorzystać z jeszcze większej liczby połączeń międzynarodowych z największego portu tranzytowego w Niemczech. Samolot Lufthansy startuje z Poznania o 10:50 i ląduje we Frankfurcie o 12:10. Z kolei wylot z Niemiec został zaplanowany na 9:00, zaś przylot na lotnisko Poznań-Ławica na 10:20.

Z kolei od marca przyszłego roku Lufthansa rozszerzy ofertę przelotów na trasie Gdańsk – Monachium poprzez uruchomienie dodatkowego, codziennego połączenia. W letnim rozkładzie lotów na rok 2011, Lufthansa zaoferuje 33 bezpośrednie loty w tygodniu z Gdańska do trzech portów lotniczych w Niemczech: Frankfurtu, Monachium i Düsseldorfu. Dodatkowe połączenie obsługiwane będzie przez odrzutowiec CRJ-900 Lufthansa City Line.

Winter with Orbis

Nie prześpij zimy byle gdzie (Don't sleep just anywhere through the winter) – is the slogan promoting affordable winter stays at hotels of Orbis Hotel Group at even half of the regular rate. It is an excellent occasion to leave daily duties behind, or spend your family Christmas away from home. The choice of destinations is impressive, as guests can take advantage of the promotion at all hotels of Novotel, Mercure, Ibis, Orbis, and Etap brands in Poland. The prices are also attractive, starting at PLN 59 for a double room in Orbis Solny Kołobrzeg hotel, when booking at least 5 nights. The longer your stay is, the bigger the discount – from 10% for a one-night stay to 50% when you stay for five nights. You can book your room until 28 February for the period from 17 December 2010 to 28 February 2011. For more details and booking go to: accorhotels.com

Golfing Triumphs

A team of 19 golfers participated in recent World Golfers Championship and World Golfers Invitational tournaments taking place in Thailand. Łukasz Ostaszewski, Krzysztof Materna, and Bogdan Janas returned from the tournaments with bronze medals.

The tournaments were held on four golf courses, including the renowned Black Mountain and Banyan. Playing on courses of such a class is especially rewarding, but is also a real challenge. Even more so, because the greens on both courses are covered with unusual type of grass (Bermuda), which causes problems in reading the putting line and predicting the speed of the ball roll.

In World Golfers Poland Championship Poland was represented by: Piotr Robelek, Rafał Majchrzak, Sylwester Chrzanowski, Łukasz Ostaszewski, and Marek Tymiński.

In team classification, where four best net results of each day were counted, Poland took 15th place ex aequo with Germany and the total result of 1203 strokes. In individual classification, the best result from the Polish golfers



was achieved by Łukasz Ostaszewski who won bronze medal in hcp 16-20 group, following a very good round with a total of 66 strokes, outstripping the golfers from Switzerland, Nigeria, and RSA.

In World Golfers Invitational tournament, the teams competed individually in handicap groups and in pairs.

In category 21-25, the bronze medal went unexpectedly to Krzysztof Materna, who displayed an excellent strategy. Another surprising result was produced by Bogdan Janas who took the

third place in hcp 26-36 category. Also Mariusz Czerkawski was close to reaching the podium in 16-20 group. In the end, he had to settle for the 5th position with only one stroke difference to bronze medal.

Bogdan Janas and Mariusz Czerkawski – the winners of World Golfers Poland Championship – were also quite high in Celebrities classification. They took 7 place leaving 38 other teams behind. The first elimination round of World Golfers Poland Championship 2011 will take place in Egypt in January.

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ON BOARD: WARSAW – MADRID – TENERIFE

PLL LOT Embraer 175 IBERIA Airbus A340 economy class

INFO PLL LOT flies from Warsaw to the Spanish capital everyday (except Tuesdays and Wednesdays) with LO 433 flight at 10.05 am.

CHECK-IN I arrived at the Warsaw airport a few minutes past 8.00 to immediately witness the great chaos resulting from the ongoing renovations. I admit that I don't know what made me arrive there so early. Well, the older you are, the more cautious you become. The morning rush hour was at its peak. The memories of the recent alarming events in Athens, where terrorists had been planning new bomb attacks, were still fresh and you could feel the tension in the air. The sight of the border guards in black uniforms with ready to use machine guns (they were guarding the check-in of El Al's flight to Tel Aviv) wasn't too optimistic, either.

There were a few check-in desks for PLL LOT's passengers flying in economy class, so the queues were really short. I was travelling to Tenerife via Madrid where I would change from PLL LOT to Iberia flying to the island. Up to recently the problem with this solution was that either of the two airlines belong to different alliances (LOT in Star Alliance, Iberia in oneworld). This meant that you had to check-in you

luggage only to the place of transfer, then reclaim it and repeat the whole check-in procedure from the very beginning. I found it positively surprising then, that in Warsaw my suitcase was checked-in already to the final destination. In Madrid I only had to collect a new boarding pass, produce my baggage identification tag, and receive a baggage check.

The security control procedure went remarkably fast. Three out of four security control desks were open, and there was one additional scanner provided for business passengers. We were checked thoroughly, but fast. The procedure took just a few minutes.

BOARDING Gate 22 is on the left side of the terminal, almost at its end. Boarding began at 9.52 am. The first to board were business class passengers, the owners of Miles & More gold cards, and those whose seat were behind row 10. I had seat 9C, so I had to wait for my turn at the end of the queue. After a short while, I produced my boarding pass and ID, and went through the boarding bridge on board the Embraer 175.

THE SEAT Asking for a seat next to the emergency exit, which gives you an extra few centimetres of space, is pointless here – a nice lady at the airport had

informed me that this aircraft doesn't have such "privileged" seats. Seat 9C is an aisle one. The first three rows, configured 2+2, were allocated for the business class which was separated from the other passengers with a dark blue curtain.

The seat was upholstered in grey leather and was quite wide (the condition of the aisle seats suggests that they are often exposed to "attacks" of other passengers and food trolleys). There's enough space (the seat width is 46.3 cm, with the pitch of 78.7 cm), but when you put your bag under the seat in front of you, it's quite difficult to stretch your legs completely.

THE FLIGHT Before we took off, the purser announced that our flight to Madrid was bound to take 3 hours and 15 minutes. It's almost 30 minutes less than the schedule – what a nice surprise. We took off according to the schedule. 15 minutes into the flight, the "fasten your seatbelts" lights turned off. A flight attendant handed out refreshing wipes and a few moment later we were served our meal. It consisted of two pieces of bread (after a while the purser also served bread rolls), a few slices of ham on lettuce, a piece of pickled pepper, frozen butter, plum jam, and a chocolate candy – all of these served in a plastic box. The selection of drinks included white and red wine, juices, water, and tea and coffee.

ARRIVAL We landed at Barajas airport in Madrid at 1.40 pm. There was a bus waiting for us on the apron. We got into it crammed like sardines (Embraer accommodates 82 passengers, the bus only 75). Luckily, the trip to the terminal was very short.



VERDICT It's one of the longest European routes on which the Polish air carrier operates, but it's run with a nice and comfortable aircraft.

TRANSFER Barajas is a huge airport. It's worth remembering about it when you plan to change you planes there, because moving between the terminals and gates there is time consuming. I was taken to Terminal 1, but now I had to reach T4 for the plane to Tenerife. The distance is quite large, so I decided to take a shuttle bus which stops at each of the terminals. Terminal 4 is large and very modern. It consists of two separate sections (T4 and T4Satelite), which are connected with an underground rail.

INFO There are numerous connections between Madrid and Tenerife. The island, although not that large, has two airports (northern and southern one) to make life easier – especially for tourists. My flight IB 958 took off at 4.40 pm.

CHECK-IN Having completed the necessary formalities – collecting my boarding pass and baggage identification

tag, I made my way to Terminal 4S. It took me quite a lot of time, despite the fact that the airport's transport system is excellent. When I finally got off the underground train, I quickly went up to gate M29 for my flight to Tenerife.

BOARDING The procedure of boarding starter at 3.45. There were quite a lot of passengers, but everything went smoothly. I entered a long boarding bridge which wound upwards to get me on board Airbus A340-300.

THE SEAT Seat 11C is located next to the aisle in the 4th row of the economy class where seats are configured 2+4+2 (the business class consists of seven rows in 2+2+2 configuration. There are two exceptions though – rows 8 and 33 have one seat less (2+3+2), so it's worth asking for one of them as it provides you with more space.

The classes were separated by a partition with displays showing information about the height and speed of the plane, as well as the approximate arrival time.

The seats in the economy class are

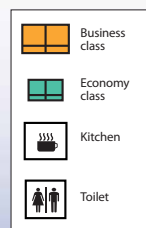
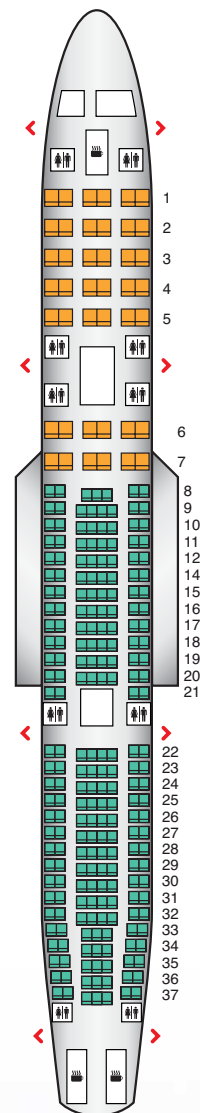
configured quite densely, as for an aircraft which carries over 200 passengers. The seat pitch is 81 centimetres and the width 43 cm.

THE FLIGHT A few minutes into the flight, when the "fasten your seatbelts" lights turned off, the flight attendants began the in-flight service, selling sandwiches and beverages (a can of Coke cost €2.5, beer €3, a sandwich €6-8). The passengers could choose the products from a special booklet which was placed in the pocket of each seat.

ARRIVAL The flight took slightly more than two hours. In the meantime the captain informed us about the weather conditions and ensured that we would land in Tenerife according to the schedule. And so we did... When we were landing, the dusk had already fallen, but we could still see the Teide volcano which overlooks the island and is the highest Spanish mountain.

VERDICT It was a quick and quite comfortable journey from Madrid.

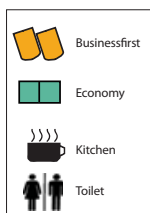
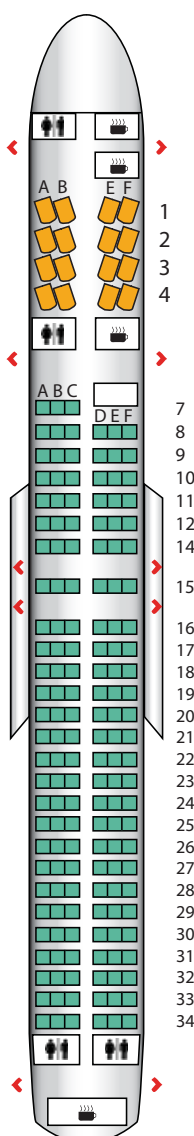
Wojciech Chetkowski





FLIGHT CHECK LONDON – NEW YORK

Continental Airlines B757-200 Business class



BACKGROUND Continental flies four times daily from Heathrow to Newark, three of which flights are served by B757-200 aircraft and one by a B777-200ER. It is adding a fifth on October 31. As of June, all London flights featured the carrier's new fully-flat bed in Business First (business class), which is being rolled out across the two fleets. The 777s are due to be completed by the end of this year, with the 757s, which also serve all the carrier's other UK-Newark routes, to be finished by the end of May next year. Installation on its B767-400ERs and 767-200ERs is due to begin next year, and at this point that is not expected to be affected by the carrier's forthcoming merger with United Airlines.

CHECK-IN I arrived at Heathrow Terminal 4 at 0915 for my 1115 flight CO113, proceeding to Zone E. Both business desks were quiet. I showed my passport at a small station prior to the desk then completed check-in at the main counter. The process was thorough, with staff checking my US visa status and where I would be staying. I was through the fast-track lane at security in five to ten minutes.

THE LOUNGE Continental defected from Skyteam to Star Alliance last October, but while it remains in T4 it uses the Skyteam lounge opposite Gate 10, a few minutes to the right of security. (For facilities see "50 top airport lounges", business traveller.com/archive/2009/july-august-2009). It was quiet, with food on offer including waffles and bacon rolls.

BOARDING At 1030 my flight was called and I walked for five minutes back past security to Gate 5. I used the priority channel and once on board was offered a drink and newspaper, and given a menu and amenity kit. Crew introduced themselves.

THE SEAT There are four rows of business on the B757, configured 2-2 (A-B, E-F) in a subtle herringbone formation with seats slightly angled towards the window (see plan, right). Seats are upholstered in blue fabric and encased in a fixed shell, with an adjustable headrest and controls for recline, lumbar support and leg rest. They are 21 inches (53cm) wide and join with an ottoman in front to make a 76-inch (193cm) fully-flat bed (on the B777 the width is 23 inches/58cm and length 78 inches/198cm). I was in seat 3B. The bed was comfy, and while I didn't sleep on this flight, I slept well on my night flight home on the B777.

The seat-back in-flight entertainment (IFE) screen measures 15.5 inches and has iPod connectivity, and below this was a shelf. A good-sized table folded out of the shared armrest – it bounced a bit when I used my laptop. Behind my left shoulder was the so-called "tower of power", with in-seat charging, and USB and headphone sockets, along with storage space for small items. There was a fixed privacy screen, and my right armrest lowered to be flush with the seat. The touchscreen IFE system was audio-video on-demand with 40 films, eight of which were new releases – the B777 has more.

WHICH SEAT TO CHOOSE?

All seats have the same legroom, though as row one is the bulkhead, the ottoman and shelf are slightly wider (the shelf is not as deep). Window seats are more protected from footfall but do not have direct aisle access. There are galleys and toilets in front of row one and behind row four.

THE FLIGHT We took off at 1135 and soon after were offered hot towels,

a drink and warm nuts. The food offering was generous. First came a selection of breads and three appetizers – potato and chicken soup, shrimps and spring rolls. I tried all three and enjoyed them. Then came a salad, followed by the mains – fillet of beef with spaetzle noodles (quite nice), roast chicken, halibut, or pasta. There was no wine menu but the choice included a Bordeaux and Burgundy.

After cheese, dessert and tea and coffee, plates were cleared, allowing me to work – there is an executive meal if you want more time, comprising an appetizer, salad and main served together at any time. Crisps and drinks were offered later, as were milk and cookies. There was also a pre-arrival meal of a chicken tortilla and fruit salad. Service was friendly and attentive.

ARRIVAL We landed at Continental's "Global Gateway" at Terminal C3 at 1355. Immigration took about 15 minutes and my bag was waiting for me on the carousel.

VERDICT An impressive new product from Continental – the seat is comfortable and well thought-out and the service impeccable.

Michelle Mannion

SEAT CONFIGURATION 2+2
SEAT LENGTH 76in/193cm
SEAT WIDTH 21in/53cm
 (25in with armrest lowered)
SEAT RECLINE 180 degrees
PRICE Internet rates for a return business class flight from London Heathrow to Newark in September started from US\$3,144.
CONTACT continental.com



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ONBOARD: WARSAW – ZÜRICH – MIAMI

Swiss International Air Lines Fokker 100/A340 klasa biznes

INFO You can get from Warsaw to Zurich five times daily, by means of one of the flights run together by Swiss and PLL LOT (in the past the two cooperated very closely). The first flight takes off at 7.40 am, and the last one at 7.45 pm. The Swiss subcontracted Contact Air to operate this route with Fokker 100 aircraft.

CHECK-IN I arrived at the airport in Warsaw one hour before the planned take off of flight LX 1343 at 9.40 am I was able to turn up relatively late as the day before I took advantage of online check-

in option, which is available up to 24 hours before the flight. Also thanks to this option I was able to choose the seat – this time it was 2C.

There were only a few passengers waiting at the security control for business class passengers, so the whole procedure took me just a few minutes. I had enough time to visit Ballada business lounge (a medium-sized room with comfortable furniture, and offering light snacks, and beverages), before making my way to gate 21. Punctually at 9.15 board-

ing was announced. The Swiss airline is known for its punctuality and the boarding time was just another example of this.

BOARDING After I had my boarding pass and ID checked, I entered an apron bus which transported the passengers to Fokker 100. At 9.30 I was already sitting comfortably in my seat, waiting for the take-off. The flight attendants handed out refreshing wipes and the morning press.

THE SEAT Fokker 100 100 is a modern and quite comfortable aircraft, es-





pecially on short-haul routes. It accommodates 100 passengers, and the seats are configured 3+2 (the seat width is over 46 cm, while the seat pitch almost 79 cm). 2C – where I was sitting – was an aisle seat. The travel classes are not separated – there wasn't even any curtain which would separate the first five rows allocated for business class. It seems to be a wise choice, because the difference is felt anyway immediately the in-flight service starts. The push back procedure took place on time, and the plane took off without any problems.

THE FLIGHT The aforementioned in-flight service began several minutes into the flight, when the “fasten your seatbelts” lights turned off. We were offered non-alcoholic drinks (I chose orange juice) and served an omelette with fruit. There was also a broad range of other non-alcoholic and alcoholic drinks, including champagne. For the dessert I was given a small bar of Swiss chocolate. Each passenger got one also on leaving the plane. That's a very nice tradition.

VERDICT A quick and reliable connection with the Swiss metropolis.

TRANSFER/CHECK-IN We landed at Zurich at 11.40 – a few minutes before the scheduled time. I had over one hour of time to my next flight to Miami, which is just enough to reach the right terminal and gate without unnecessary haste and nervousness.

The airport is huge and I had to make my way to terminal E. I went down the stairs and a second later I was blocked by a long queue of people waiting for their passport control. Fortunately, there was a lift nearby which helped me bypass the obstacle. After my check-in I got on a train which took me to my terminal. There I underwent a trouble-free security control (there is a special fast track for business class passengers), and an additional document control where my American visa was checked.

BOARDING When I reached gate 35, boarding had already started. The flight to Miami (LX 64) takes off once a day

at 1.05 pm. I took advantage of a separate lane for business and first class passengers, and quickly got on board of Airbus 340-300.

THE SEAT A340-300 is a flagship aircraft of Swiss International Air Lines. It accommodates 228 passengers and presently has two different seat configurations. During my flight the first two rows were allocated for first class (four seats in a row). Then there are rows 4 and 5 reserved for business class (no mistake here – there is NO row 3), configured 2+2+2 (A, B+D, G+J, K). Then there are toilets and the galley and another 6 rows for business class. The other rows are allocated for economy class – mostly in 2+4+2 configuration.

My seat was 8D and it was located in the middle section with a free access to a quite wide aisle. It's a real blessing to be able to walk along the aisle to stretch your bones a little – especially on long-haul, intercontinental flights. The blue and beige seat is really comfortable – 52 cm wide, and the seat pitch is impressive 154 cm, providing quite a lot of comfort. When fully reclined it makes an almost flat bed, although a very tall person may have small problems with finding an appropriate position. It's easy to adjust the seat, the trays are unfolded from the armrests, and there is an individual spotlight for reading, while in the back of the seat in front there is a compartment for newspapers and beverages. There is also a small space provided for your shoes. The seat also features a socket for plugging in your laptop.

THE FLIGHT We were welcomed with champagne and a selection of beverages. We were also given a small bag with a travel kit including an eye mask, ear plugs, toothpaste, a toothbrush, and beige socks. You could always call the cabin crew (which was extremely nice) to provide you with other things e.g. a comb, a shaving set, or a needle and thread.

The take-off was delayed because of a failure of the aircraft which was due to take off before us, and we had to wait

for it to be towed away. The captain informed us that the flight would take exactly 10 hours. Just after the take off, which took place half an hour later, I decided to have a look at the menu. The main theme of the menu was “The Tastes of Switzerland” and all the dishes were prepared by Swiss chef Edgard Bovier. Among them there were: cooked beef with vegetables and potato salad, or pan-fried cod in red curry and coconut sauce. I chose salmon for an appetizer, chicken breast with artichoke and pea lasagne verdi for the main dish, and for the dessert a selection of cheese with fruits and Swiss chocolates. I also ordered red Bordeaux Clarendelle 2005 to go with the meal. A wide selection of excellent wines also included Mont-Sur-Rolle 2009, Chianti Poggio al Sole 2007, and white La Colombe Fechy 2009 or Falesco 2009. Of course the selection was much wider than that.

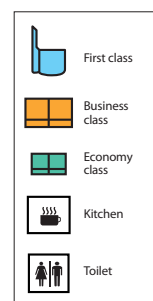
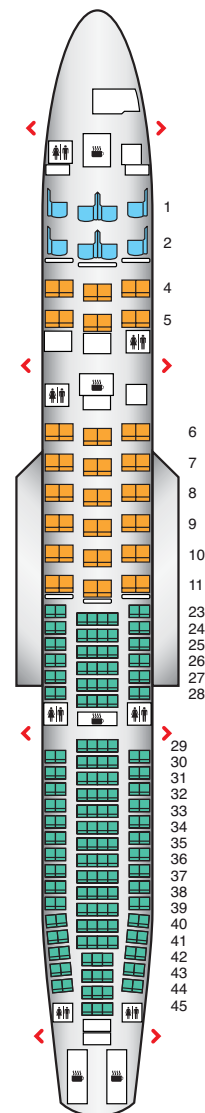
Later during the flight we were also served delicious ice-cream, and just before landing ham with potato salad, beans and mustard sauce.

The in-flight entertainment provided by Swiss is unique as it offers a huge selection of entertainment options. The retractable display provides good image quality and the menu offers several dozens of films, documentaries, music programmes, or games. In this way you spend your time on board in a state of full relaxation. Even more so because my fellow passengers turned out to be very nice people.

ARRIVAL Despite our delay in Zurich, we arrived in Miami 10 minutes before the scheduled time, at 5.40 local time. The Swiss precision was once again confirmed.

VERDICT It was a very pleasant flight in comfortable conditions and professional service.

Jakub Olgiewicz



SEAT CONFIGURATION 2+2+2
SEAT WIDTH 52 cm
SEAT PITCH 154 cm
CONTACT swiss.com



HOTEL: BUDAPEST

Sofitel Chain Bridge

WHAT'S IT LIKE? The Sofitel chain, managed by Accor, is becoming more and more refined and attracts attention with its creative projects. And Budapest is no exception. The hotel has its own character, inspired largely by French architecture – a fact which is emphasized on every occasion. The hotel was restructured under the supervision of Jean-Philippe Nuel, and as a result it is a mixture of tradition and modernity. The lobby decorated in brown and crimson colours, original furniture and paintings by Soni Delaunay is impressive. As is the “pearl fountain” made with the participation of Svarowski.

WHERE IS IT? Just by the Danube river, on the Roosevelt Square. The hotel windows overlook the river and the magnificent Széchenyi Chain Bridge. It was the first bridge to ever connect Buda and Pest together. The bridge looks fabulous, especially at night when illuminated. The

hotel is 22 kilometres from the Budapest airport, and 3 kilometres from the railway station.

ROOM FACILITIES There are 350 bedrooms, including 54 suites. Standard Superior and Luxury Room (what differentiates them is the view – the latter ones overlook the Danube and the bridge) are 28 sq m. They are decorated in pastel subdued colours with the armchairs being beige and red. The furniture is light with gloss finish. They come with individually-adjusted air conditioning, a laptop safe, a mini bar, a flat LCD TV set and tea and coffee making facilities. The centre of the room is occupied by a huge, comfortable bed called MYBED – an original hotel's concept – but there are also rooms with twin beds. The beds are made of natural materials and come with a thin, but warm quilt, an excellent bonus for business travellers wanting to catch up with their sleep. What is more, the rooms are soundproof and come with darkening curtains. Access to WiFi is charged extra.

Business travellers are advised to book Luxury Club Sofitel rooms, – which come

with additional bonuses like free WiFi, Nespresso coffee machine and audio system by Bose, as well as the access to the hotel lounge. In the lounge you can have continental breakfast, a meeting over a cup of coffee, or work on a computer.

The suites are much bigger. Junior Suite is 46 sq m, whereas Prestige Suite is 49 sq m.

BUSINESS FACILITIES The Sofitel's conference potential is so huge, that it is considered one of the best places of this sort in the whole of Budapest. All of the 17 meeting rooms come with air conditioning, Internet access, professional sound system, and video and audio equipment. On request there is a possibility of hiring conference interpreters. The biggest one, Ballroom (333 sq m) can accommodate up to 400 participants. A few rooms are more than 100 sq m (Bellevue – 233 sq m – it is possible to divide it into three spaces, Vaszary – 126 sq m), but there are also smaller ones for about 20 to 50 people. Such diversity allows conference organizers for more flexibility and creativity when planning events.

BARS AND RESTAURANTS The well known Paris-Budapest restaurant is the culinary heart of the hotel. With Andreas Mensch at the helm, the place offers a fusion of national Hungarian and French cuisine. There is also a bar, open until 2.00 am., where you can come and have a meeting with some friends over a fabulous cocktail.

LEISURE FACILITIES Their leisure facilities are really impressive: two saunas, a swimming pool with heated water, well-equipped fitness room, and a wonderful Spa with a couple of treatment rooms.

VERDICT A five-star hotel in the heart of Budapest meeting all the requirements of a business traveller.

Jakub Olgiewicz



CONTACT Sofitel Budapest Chain Bridge; Roosevelt ter 2, 1051 Budapest; Tel. +36 12661234; sofitel.com

PRICE Internet rates for a Superior room (without breakfast) in the first week of December started at PLN 501.

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SIEMENS



WHAT IS IT LIKE? Set on several hectares of land, this complex will surely leave its guests with a lasting impression. Due to its enormous size, it is be advisable to stay cautious so as not to lose one's bearings while staying on the hotel's premises. The original vision for the establishment varied greatly from what it represents now – having been inspired by the glitz and glamour of the Las Vegas, the former construction plans were abandoned altogether when a several years ago, on the beginning of the construction work, it was discovered that the area was once inhabited

by the aboriginals called Guanches. Having uncovered a number of priceless artefacts, the excavations came to an end and there were no more obstacles standing in the way of the construction work, and so the decision was made that the hotel would rather be of the Berber, ethnic design, with a special touring area on site. At present, Sands also features the Multi-media Interactive Museum equipped with cutting edge technology, the Historic Experience Tunnel consisting of several rooms, where the history of the Tenerife Island is presented to guests in a highly attractive way, a golf court, several sea-water swimming pools, direct access to the ocean and plenty of the architectural innovations – the facilities are surely impressive.

WHERE IS IT? Situated on the southernmost tip of the island, the property is located amidst ravines in San Miguel de Abona, within easy reach of the Tenerife South Airport (just 10 minute drive) and Santa Cruz (approximately an hour) – the main city of Tenerife, with the

harbour and the Tenerife North Airport located nearby. You may also reach other islands (La Palma, La Gomera and El Hierro) via ferry which departs from Los Cristianos Harbour (less than an hour drive from the hotel).

There is a large free car park in front of the complex.

ROOM AMENITIES This 5-star hotel complex comprises 331 Deluxe Rooms, including 50 Junior Suites. While each room may be reached from the reception area through a vast tangle of orange corridors, it should come as no surprise that, on the very arrival, each guest is provided with a hotel map, which proves to be useful during the stay at the hotel.

The Deluxe Room I had the opportunity to stay in was much larger than 30sqm. On entering, there were 2 wardrobes on the right side – one with hangers, some extra quilts for those who are constantly cold and a rack that I could put your shoes on. The other wardrobe contained a safe deposit box with laptop, shoe cleaning kit, slippers, bathrobe and some bath towels, plus there was a mini-bar right next to it. The room featured an air conditioning controller on the wall.



CONTACT Sands San Blas Hotel Environmental Reserva & Golf; San Miguel de Abona, Tenerife, Canary Islands, Spain, CP 38639; Tel: +34 922 74 90 10; sandsshotels.com

RATES The price for a room booked online for the beginning of December was €134.



Behind the workdesk there was a comfortable sofa of considerable size, and 2 comfortable large beds on the other side of the room that could be separated in no time thanks to the castors attached, creating a double-room. An impressive large recess in the wall above the beds featured a floral theme.

Located more or less in the centre of the room, the spacious bathroom had glass walls which could be covered with wooden panels, and it was equipped with 2 washbasins, hydro-massage bathtub, hairdryer, and 2 opaque-glass doors allowing access to the shower cubicle or to the toilet with bidet.

The unique large terrace, with its table and 2 comfortable soft deckchairs, was a perfect place both for the evening's relaxation and for the time spent working on my laptop.

My Deluxe Room also featured an extra door leading to the adjacent room, thereby giving the possibility of creating a family studio.

Although the lack of ironing and tea making facilities may prove to be of some inconvenience, in this type of the room guests may take the advantage of

the complimentary high-speed wireless Internet access.

BUSINESS FACILITIES With coffee breaks and catering service provided, the space that Sandos has to offer to the business travellers can be arranged in various ways to suit the wide variety of business events, depending on their preferences – the cinema, where the history of the Tenerife Island is projected, can seat more than 100 delegates, and the largest of the rooms can be divided into 2 smaller meeting rooms. Also, the organizers of any business event have several restaurant buildings and the hotel's club at their disposal (the club building can serve as a venue for several hundred delegates). Business facilities are well-equipped, from projectors to highly professional sound system.

BARS AND RESTAURANTS The hotel's main restaurant, La Cueva de Atxona, consists of several rooms and it serves breakfast in the form of buffet from 7:30. Tourists may take advantage of their all-inclusive packages and enjoy here the rest of their meals. Offering a wide range of delightful meals which make up for a slightly "scatterbrained" staff, The La

Proa à la carte restaurant is located a little further, inside an architecturally outstanding cylindrical building surrounded by water – seafood and Mediterranean cuisine are the specialties here.

Additionally, guests have at their disposal several snack bars serving alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages, including the one adjoining the swimming pool, with a volcano-shaped roof.

LEISURE FACILITIES Sandos offers a wide choice of leisure activities – thanks to the 2 heated swimming pools you may take a bath whenever you wish, irrespective of the time of day or night, and those who enjoy canoeing may spend their time rowing a boat on the artificial lake, which is located at the rear of the complex. Moreover, the establishment provides a sports pitch, tennis court, hiking/biking trails; and those in search of more sophisticated forms of leisure may enjoy a round of golf on the nearby course, or relax in the fitness facility or Boutique Spa which offers an extensive list of body treatments.

You can also hire a guide which will show you around the ancient settlement of the aboriginal Guanches, plus you should take advantage of the Historic Experience Tunnel – through these activities you'll learn about the island, the history of which is presented in a nutshell.

VERDICT A good choice for those travelling on business (venue suitable for conferences or business meetings) or for pleasure with a pleasant ambience.

Wojciech Chelchowski



HOTEL: BERLIN

All Seasons Berlin Mitte



WHAT'S IT LIKE? The newly open All Seasons hotel is already a 100th property belonging to this hotel operator. They are developing in an enormous pace, as the first hotel was opened less than three years ago. Their hotels can currently be found in five European countries (France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy and Belgium) and five places outside the Continent (Indonesia, Thai-

land, Australia, New Zealand and Norfolk Island). Plans have been made to open new hotels in Spain, Luxemburg, Sweden and the Netherlands, and by the year 2015 the company wants to have 350 hotels around the world.

Each of them surprises with fusion of creativity and traditional culture of a particular country. The newly launched All Seasons Hotel Berlin Mitte is a great example of this. Upon entering you will be surprised with the interior bustling with colours. All the walls are covered with graffiti, which serves not only as a decoration, but also provides the guests with information about where the stairs or toilets are. The reception desk is in the middle of the ground floor, opposite there are two lifts going between 7th floor and -1 level, from where you can reach the underground parking space for hotel guests (charged extra). The other side of the reception desk is used as a lobby bar.

WHERE IS IT? In the centre of Germany's capital, next to the underground Rosenthaler Platz station. It takes a couple of minutes to get there from the main square in Berlin, where the TV Tower is.

The Berlin-Tegel airport is 11 kilometres away, while Hauptbahnhof – less than 3 kilometres away. Excellent location is one of many All Seasons hotels' features.

ROOM FACILITIES There are 145 up-to-date rooms spread across seven floors. They are intended both for families with children, people wanting to spend a weekend in Berlin, as well as business travellers. There is a ban on smoking throughout the whole hotel, so you may be sure you will not feel cigarette smoke in the corridors. All the rooms come with big, comfortable beds with special mattresses, which induce relaxation and help you to unwind — and it really works! A huge TV with 32 channels was designed in such a way so that it resembles a fireplace. You can connect your own equipment to it (laptop, iPad, MP3 player, Playstation), which can really facilitate your work. The rooms are between 24 and 60 sq m – the biggest ones are family-oriented and consist of two separate rooms. Each room has a separate toilet and a shower, while a basin is to be found... in the room. What also makes it more functional is the possibility to arrange the furniture in line with your needs. The table, lamp and bedside tables are wheeled, so you can move them every time you feel like changing something. The bed is much bigger than a standard one, so that you can hide your suitcase underneath. Despite being simple, the rooms appear to be harmonious and cosy.

RESTAURANTS AND BARS In the hotel there are no restaurants nor relaxation rooms — but the staff may organize a visit to such places for their guests. A separate part of the reception desk plays serves as a bar, where between 6.30 am to 11.00 am you can eat breakfast, and during a day have a cup of coffee, tea, hot chocolate, cold beverages or just sit and read a newspaper.

OCENA Excellent location in the centre of Berlin. Nice atmosphere for young business travellers.

Olga Chelchowska



FACTS **CONTACT** All Seasons Hotel Berlin Mitte; Brunnenstrasse 1-2 10119 Berlin; Tel: +49 30/4849110; all-seasons-hotels.com
PRICE Standard room rates with breakfast and Internet access start from about €61.



RESTAURANT: WARSAW

Polska Różana

INFO Some time ago the Polish enthused about sushi, pasta and five spice duck. But when we satisfied about the appetite for Japanese, Italian or Chinese food, we switched back to traditional Polish cuisine. Of course I'm talking about restaurants here, not about in-home eating habits. Restaurant owners captured this trend, and now we can encounter restaurants with traditional Polish food almost everywhere. While not every restaurant can boast superb quality, Polska Różana is one of the most interesting and beautiful eateries of this kind in the capital city.

WHERE IS IT? Polska Różana restaurant is situated in the Mokotów district, near the Morskie Oko park. Although it is quite close to the busy Puławska street, the very place where the restaurant is located is unusually calm, snug or even intimate. Thanks to the intimacy, in summer season a very friendly and elegant tea garden is open here. Because of the way it was designed, it fully deserves to be called a garden.

THE INTERIOR It is one of the strongest points of Polska Różana. Its designers have achieved what most restaurant owners dream about – an atmosphere which attracts clients. Once you go inside you feel like sitting and coming back there – and it is an opinion shared not only by us, but also other Różana clients. It is enough to just browse through the comments on their website. The interior is designed in warm, home-like style, there are plenty of flowers, a the tablecloths make you think of your grandma's house. The paintings on the walls, stylish

sofas and armchairs, candlestick, a piano and the lighting also contribute to the atmosphere. The restaurant is often visited by foreigners, as it is a nice place for a business meeting.

MENU The restaurant has the word “polska” (Polish) in its name, and the Polishness is further emphasized in the menu. Among cold appetizers you will find cold trotters, pâtés, beef tenderloin tatar or pickled herrings. Among the hot ones: dumplings with veal and mushrooms, dumplings with cottage cheese and potatoes or potato-blinis with caviar and smoked salmon. There are also crapes – stuffed with spinach or crayfish. Soups are also traditional and typically Polish. You can order broth with meat dumplings, borsch with vegetables and beans, White vegetable cream with a creamy cloud and Silesian leaven soup with sausages and boletes. There are a few salads to choose from, but the “Green gardens” salad is especially worth recommending – with spinach and garlic flakes. You should also try green lettuce leaves with crab claws and fresh fruit. The Polishness is also emphasized in the names of dishes. For instance: baked farmhouse duck served on apple and forest cranberry sauce, or Polish-style stuffed golden chicken. There is also homemade vermicelli with stewed tomatoes. Do not forget about baked salmon on tomato mousse, veal liver with onions and sour cherry



sauce or deer saddle with gnocchi. The restaurant is also famous for high quality of their desserts – their cakes are often ordered on special occasions. You can try fluffy meringue layer cake with orange or coffee cream, apple pie with vanilla sauce or homemade cheesecake – the latter seems ordinary, but it can really provide you with unforgettable gustatory experience.

PRICES Cold appetizers cost between PLN 22 and 44 – the latter being the price of salmon tartar. Hot appetizers are between PLN 26 (dumplings with cottage cheese and potatoes) and PLN 49 (crapes stuffed with crayfish). Green salads cost between PLN 25 to 44, while soups are between PLN 15-17. The prices of main courses are between PLN 34-79, the latter is the price of deer saddle with gnocchi. Desserts cost between PLN 16 and 23.

VERDICT Stylish, very pleasant restaurant – an excellent place for a business dinner with a partner.

■ Restauracja Polska Różana;
ul. Chocimska 7, 00-791 Warszawa;
Tel. 22 848 12 25;
restauracjarozana.com.pl

Tomasz Wilczewski

Festival **Fiesta**



Somewhere in the world, there's a place that's throwing a party. While joining in the revelry, Bianca Reyes and Olga Chelchowska explore how incentive travel planners can take advantage of such occasions.



Festivals embody a country's soul and mirror traditions that hark back to the beginning of its collective memory. Year in and year out, they are celebrated, perhaps now even with more gusto as people search for reasons to seize the moment in these volatile times. The party keeps growing as travel bodies and tour operators keenly promote these events to attract much-needed arrivals who may boost their economies. And among their targets are lucrative incentive groups.

CARNIVAL OF NICE

NICE, FRANCE

WHEN: From February 18 to March 8, 2011.

WHAT IT IS LIKE: It's French Riviera's biggest winter bash. Rich in history, the carnival became more organised and bigger in 1873 when a steering committee was formed. This is when a parade of dolls with characteristic large heads was created with the dolls carried on large floats decorated with flowers. 2011 will mark the 127th edition of this festival. This time the main theme is the King of the Mediterranean. The city will come aglow for two weeks with a spectacle of fireworks, balls and masquerade parties, rock concerts and impromptu street performances enlivened by buskers and bands. The big parade features colourful paper mache giants that provide a wealth of photo ops, mysterious Venice women wearing lace masks, and a big flower battle. The carnival ends with a ceremonial lighting of the Carnival King's effigy.

THE PROGRAMME: French incentive organiser LSO International has designed a seven-day programme based on the festivities. Upon arrival, participants are welcomed by a troupe of clowns, jugglers and men in stilts and led to the reception desk which is done up like a parade float. Bags of confetti and carnival paraphernalia are handed out.

The schedule is packed with activities, starting with a team assignment to produce the most striking photograph of the merrymaking, which will be projected on the big screen during the gala dinner. The winning team gets to kiss the Carnival Queen and receive a purse full of Euros.

For the culminating dinner, guests will be asked to create their own costumes with the help of a bevy of make-up artists, stylists and prop masters. The evening's entertainment will feature live band music and more carnival folk, including fortune tellers. The group will even vote for their own Carnival King and Queen.

In addition to the week's line up, a side tour to Menton, which stages the colourful Fete du Citron, can be arranged.



BIGSTOCK / FOTOLIA / ISTOCK



QUEENSTOWN WINTER FESTIVAL

NEW ZEALAND

WHEN: 24 June – 3 July 2011.

WHAT IT IS LIKE: Nothing beats winter in scenic New Zealand, especially in Queenstown where the Remarkables mountain range and piercing blue skies serve as the backdrop to the Winter Festival, an enduring event that has been running since 1975. This city of madness – as Queenstown is often called – was a place of birth to such extreme sports as bungee jumping, bungee rocket, or shotover jet (a ride on a river by a large speedboat at 85 km/h). Visitors are spoilt for choice with an amazing range of activities including jet boating, mountain biking, sculpting snowmen and ice hockey. And there are street parties, fireworks display, glitzy balls and live concerts galore.

THE PROGRAMME: Incentive and team building specialist Dinamics Destination Management suggests that groups arrive in time for the festival's opening to witness the magnificent fireworks over Lake Wakatipu, after which, they can have an equally spectacular dinner at a hotel restaurant. It also recommends participating in any of these festival events: The International Whisky for a sampling of the world's best brands. The International Whisky – to degustacja najlepszych gatunków whisky na świecie.

Dog races at Coronet Peak to enjoy a spirited multi-event derby of shepherds and their hardworking mutts zoom down the slopes, followed by an obstacle course and finally, a canine version of New Zealand Idol (yes, really), complete with a panel of judges.

Lindauer Jazz night for an exciting mix of jazz, dub (a form of Jamaican music), funk and soul.

Mediterranean culinary inspiration, a food experience conducted by Ray McVinnie, an accomplished food writer, presenter, chef, editor, judge, lecturer, stylist and cuisine consultant.

Celebrity Ball, a black-tie event that offers the opportunity to dance the night away.

Those wanting to get away from the crowds for a few hours can fly to Milford Sound and try their dexterity handling a snow mobile or tour the local wineries.





**EDINBURGH
INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL**
EDINBURGH, SCOTLAND

WHEN: 12 August – 4 September 2011.

WHAT IT IS LIKE: The Edinburgh International Festival has over 60 years of tradition. The first International Festival took place in 1947, in the wake of the end of the Second World War, with an optimistic remit to “provide a platform for the flowering of the human spirit” and enrich the cultural life of Scotland, Britain and Europe.

About ten other festivals are held in Edinburgh at about the same time as the International Festival. Most notable of these is the Edinburgh Fringe, which started as an offshoot of the International Festival and has since grown to be the world’s largest arts festival. In the recent years Fringe offered almost 2,000 spectacles, musicals, concerts, exhibitions, and cabaret performances. The programme is so extensive that it will satisfy everyone’s needs. Additionally, until the end of summer holidays Edinburgh will host the International Book Festival, Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo, and since last year, the Festival of Politics.

THE PROGRAMME: The secrets of the Eastern civilizations were an inspiration for Jonathan Mills – the director of the Edinburgh International Festival. That’s why he invited to the festival the greatest artists from China, Japan, Korea, Taiwan, and Vietnam to share with us their passions. The



National Ballet of China and the Shanghai Peking Opera Troupe are two of the companies set to make their Edinburgh debut. The opera company will perform an East-meets-West adaptation of Hamlet, The Revenge of Prince Zi Dan, while the National Ballet of China will perform the classic love story Peony Pavillion. The Seoul Philharmonic Orchestra and Vietnamese choreographer Ea Sola’s company complete the four-strong group appearing in the Scottish capital for the first time next summer.



ATI-ATIHAN

KALIBO, PHILLIPINES

WHEN: Third weekend of January 2011.

WHAT IT IS LIKE: Known to be the wildest of Philippine fiestas, the Ati-Atihan mardi gras is staged ironically to honour the angelic Santo Nino or Holy Infant Jesus. Celebrants daub their faces with black soot to resemble the Ati – the country's indigenous people – and wear bright fantastic costumes as they dance in abandon (sometimes non-stop) during the last three days of this two-week festival. The first day of revelry begins with a Mass, a reminder perhaps by the Church to the faithful not to forget the

religious nature of the festival. The sign to party is then heralded by rhythmic, insistent, intoxicating drumbeats which initiate a tumult of writhing and gyrating by the crowd that shouts from time to time: "Viva kay Senor Sto Nino!"

The second day begins at dawn with a rosary procession and ends again with Mass. Merrymaking resumes. The final day features the main event – a parade of "tribes", each trying to outdo the other in creativity and some, plain outlandishness, using every conceivable material, from seashells to sugar cane and from beads to bamboo. Images of the Christ Child, all lavishly and lovingly garbed by parishioners, are also paraded. Winners for best cos-

tume are announced at the masquerade ball that brings the festival to a close.

THE PROGRAMME: Local incentives operator T. R. I. P. S. offers a five-day incentive Ati-Atihan package, consisting of two nights in Kalibo and Boracay island. During the festival, participants are encouraged to get into the spirit, donning costumes and putting soot on their faces (unless they want passers-by to do it for them – all in the name of fun!). Other activities include a ride on a three-wheeled motorcycle with a uniformed driver who ferries them to a local museum, followed by a visit to a village where they can observe pineapple weaving and a tour of a mangrove farm with lunch.



DRAGON BOAT FESTIVAL

HONGKONG

WHEN: Fifth day of the fifth month of the lunar calendar (usually in June). In 2011 this is on 6 January.

WHAT IT IS LIKE: One of Hongkong's most iconic events has taken on an international flavour with its main highlight, the Dragon Boat races attracting teams from countries far and near. It is the most important event in the whole of China, just after the Autumn Moon and the Chinese New Year celebrations. It attracts teams from countries far and near. Held at Stanley Beach or Shing Mun Pier in Shatin, it draws record crowds each year. The festival's origins recall the story of the respected statesman Qu Yuan, who lived in the corrupt Kingdom of Chu 2,000 years ago. Qu was accused by jealous rivals of treason, and thus, he was banished. Despairing

and perhaps in protest of the injustice done to him, he threw himself in the Mi Lo River. The frenzied paddling of the race rowers re-enact the vain attempts of the fishermen who tried to save him, while the special rice-and-meat dumplings symbolise those which were thrown into the river to prevent the fish from nibbling at Qu's body and appease his spirit.

THE PROGRAMME: This begins with a trip to a boat-building factory, moving on to a special dim sum lunch including sampling the glutinous rice dumpling and followed by an afternoon briefing on the rules and techniques of the sport with a try at actually paddling a boat. But more sports-minded clients, keen to participate, are welcome to do so, provided they registered earlier with the organisers. For the group's private fun – incidentally a great team-building exercise – a boat race of their own can be easily arranged.



HARI RAYA

BRUNEI DARUSSALAM

WHEN: November 2011

(Muslim festivals are celebrated according to phases of the moon, so their dates vary annually).

WHAT IT IS LIKE: This three-day festival marks the end of the fasting month of Ramadan. On the first day, the menfolk head for the mosques to pray (the ladies and kids do so at home), but all don their colourful national dress. Later they partake in a spread of beloved traditional dishes such as satay, spicy beef rendang and rice cakes.

At that time the houses of the inhabitants are open to everyone. Today only children visit the houses, but in the past adults widely practiced this tradition. In this way, they got to know one another and no-one was a stranger anymore. A guest visiting a house of his neighbour could count on a piece of delicious cake, and a cup of coffee, while children received sweets. Today the youngest ones are more interested in getting some money.

It is during this period that Istana Nurul Iman, the official residence of the Sultan of Brunei, flings its stately doors open to the public. This is also the only time that His Majesty Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah and the royal family greet their subjects and foreigners at the palace, which is said to be the world's largest. The "open house" concept is an inextricable part of Bruneian culture, based on the village principle that everyone is welcomed warmly and generously.

THE PROGRAMME: Veteran tour operator Sunshine Borneo Tours & Travel offers interested travellers a peek into this gilded world via an experience that takes place during any of the three visiting days with the highlight being the royal audience, either in the morning or afternoon.

There is a strict protocol, however – the Sultan greets male visitors, while the Queen and her ladies greet the female guests. If you're lucky, they might even strike up a conversation with you. A buffet, served by the Hyatt, which manages the palace complex, follows. As this is only a half-day visit, Sunshine Tours can add on other activities such as a river cruise, theme dinner or a browse around a local handicraft centre at the famous Water Village.



LOI KRATHONG FESTIVAL ALONG CHAO PHRAYA RIVER, BANGKOK, THAILAND

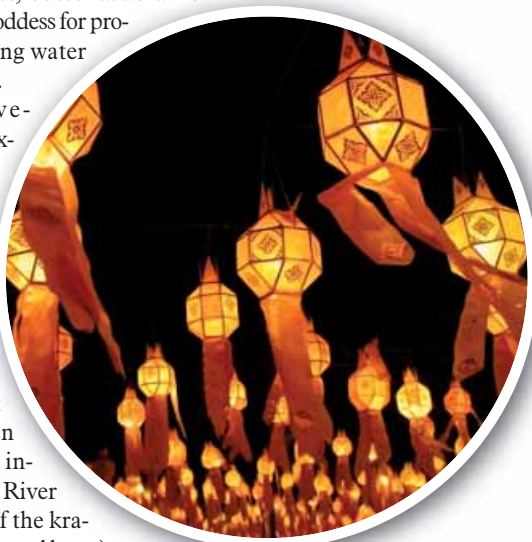
WHEN: November 2011.

WHAT IT IS LIKE: The one-day festival is celebrated all over Thailand, with variations in different regions. Said to be Brahmin in origin, the observance has become part of Buddhist rituals, which devotees perform as an act of reverence and worship of the sacred footprints of Lord Buddha. In other instances, it's seen as a thanksgiving to the water goddess for providing life-sustaining water throughout the year.

Celebrated every 15th day of the waxing moon in the 12th lunar month, the Loi Krathong festival celebrates traditions handed down from the days when Sukhothai was once the capital of ancient Thailand. The main event is the release into the Chao Phraya River and its waterways of the krathong (little swan-shaped boats) or blooming lotus flowers with lanterns or incense placed within. Activities start from 10.00 to 21.00 and feature exhibitions on Loi Krathong customs, handicraft fairs, musical fountain displays and food stalls. Fireworks on this day are seen to equate the act of lighting candles for worship, and hence the preponderance of pyrotechnics kingdom-wide.

THE PROGRAMME: Companies like Hongkong-based Swire Travel can custom-make an incentive itinerary incorporating the Loi Krathong. Many of the five-star hotels along the river such as the newly-opened Millennium Hilton, Peninsula, Oriental, Bangkok Resort & Spa, Shangri-La and Royal Orchid Sheraton benefit from the festivities, offering special dinners and a vantage point from where to view the dramatic ceremonies.

An evening dinner cruise can likewise be arranged and is very popular with both locals and tourists alike. Hence, early bookings are strongly recommended and guests are warned of the surcharges levied by ground handlers due to the peak season. ■



Schiphol seems to be a proof that that it's possible to create an airport which is a real "city within a city". **Piotr Kowalewski** reports.

AN AIRPORTCITY



Those who travel by air can be classified into two categories: those who have already visited, and those who will surely visit the Dutch airport. This is one of the most popular airports in Europe and worldwide. Schiphol is one of the most popular airports in Europe and worldwide. It is one of the leaders as regards the served air traffic, the size (5th in Europe), and the quality of offered services. What's more, it is also a hub of a major importance for the global air transport.

A PORT BELOW A LEVEL

Schiphol Amsterdam Airport is managed by Schiphol Group which also operates in other areas of business and in other countries. For instance, it has 8% share in Aéroports de Paris, and is currently building MXP Business Park at Milan Malpensa airport. It will comprise eight office buildings with a total floor area of over 64,000 sq m. The company employs almost 2,500 people and its revenue in 2009 reached €1.1 bln. Of course the airport near Amsterdam is its apple in the eye and one of few airports in Europe whose location hasn't changed over the years.

The airport was established in 1916 and at that time it served mostly for military purposes. The first civil flight of KLM aircraft took place four years later. Just before the war Schiphol was the second airport in Europe in terms of the number of served flights. The airport was bombed several times in the warfare, and later rebuilt. The construction work on the new airport began in the 1960s. 1978 saw launching a railway connection between the airport and the city. Ten years later a new control tower was built. In 1995 the old train station was replaced by a completely new station, which forms part of Schiphol Plaza and the passenger airport terminal. Today the airport occupies the area of 2,787 hectares.

Schiphol offers almost 300 connections to almost 100 countries worldwide. The number of passengers exceeds 43 million per year which makes Schiphol the fifth busiest port after London, Paris, Frankfurt, and Madrid. It's also worth mentioning that the airport near Amsterdam is also an important, third largest in Europe in terms of cargo (with an annual cargo of 1.28 million tons). The airport possesses six runways ranging in length from 2,000 to 3,800 metres. The annual



The fifth largest airport in Europe has for years been ranked as the continent's best port.

number of operations reaches 391,000 with almost 90 airlines flying to and from Schiphol.

An interesting thing is that the airport in Amsterdam is the second lowest lying airport in the world as it is located 4.5 metres below the sea level. Only the airport in Rotterdam lies lower (at 6 metres below the sea level). Schiphol is home to a number of companies. There are 544 of them located within the area of the airport, including over 200 shops.

A MULTI-MODAL HUB

Schiphol Group is involved in various business activities, but its apple in the eye remains a concept which is called AirportCity. AirportCity is a manifestation of a concept according to which airports are transformed into real cities with shopping centres, various entertainment, numerous car parks and so on. The companies which manage aviation hubs predict that this trend will continue, which seems to be true. Today combining a visit to a cinema and restaurant with an opportunity to watch planes taking off and landing at the airport, seems to be a real source of entertainment for more and more families. This trend has also a real business value, as an airport which offers accommodation, conference facilities, as well as a wide range of entertainment, seems to be a good choice for a businessperson.

In Amsterdam the idea of AirportCity takes a form of large investments (which amounted to € 215 mln in 2009), and in continuous expansion of the airport which leads to creating new solutions in the areas of logistics, business, information technology, commerce, entertainment, and safety. Schiphol group claims

that the airport in Amsterdam is set to be a national hub for air, rail and road traffic. In other words, Schiphol airport will be something which is often referred to as a "multimodal hub". This will be truly convenient for passengers and visitors to Schiphol, as all services at the airport will be available 24/7.

Is the process of creating an AirportCity going well? Yes, it does – and the pace at which the airport is expanding, is a real proof of it. Not to mention the fact that Schiphol is highly valued for its quality of service – since 1980 the airport has received over 160 international awards in various competitions and rankings.

TOWARDS BUSINESS

Businesspeople are a considerable number of passengers visiting the airport in Amsterdam. Not surprisingly then, Schiphol offers a wide choice of services aimed at business travellers. The airport possesses two conference centres: Exchange Avenue and Regus Skyport Meeting Centre. Exchange Avenue features eight conference rooms with the largest one able to accommodate up to 80 people. There are also four smaller rooms for more private meetings – each of them for up to 14 participants. All the rooms feature comfortable and luxurious furniture, as well as high quality audio and video equipment. Regus Skyport Meeting Centre uses a slightly different approach. It is a place with rooms which are customized according to the needs of its guests – starting with furniture and ending with pencils.

The team of Exchange Avenue will make all the necessary arrangements, allowing you to focus all your attention on ►



the meeting. With Exchange Avenue reception desk staff on duty 24/7, you can also make arrangements at the last minute. As far as catering is concerned, the personnel will make sure that refreshments of your choice are served at the appropriate time.

The Airport Business Point is a waiting lounge at Schiphol Plaza which serves as a meeting place for business passengers and their chauffeurs. It offers the ultimate solution in reliable and efficient appointments. Thanks to the lounge the problem of chauffeurs and passengers missing each other in the arrivals halls at Schiphol Airport is now a thing of the past. Meet & Assist provides businesspeople or VIPs arriving at Schiphol with a dedicated service which helps to get through the formalities without delays or annoyance. The airport also offers various arrangements for the assistance of departing or arriving groups, including the speedy and efficient handling of all formalities, assistance and the transportation of all baggage. At Schiphol business travellers will also find business lounges of several airlines – including KLM for which the Amsterdam airport is the main hub. The most impressive is Privium lounge which is accessible for members of Privium loyalty programme. The futuristic decor looks like taken straight from “Space Odyssey” by Stanley Kubrick, and the comfort it offers is undeniable.

Of course, such an avant-garde place as Schiphol airport would not be complete



without WiFi, the access to which is, unfortunately, charged extra. You can pay for the service by credit card using the machines at the KPN Internet Zones or in cash at one of the nearby stores. In KPN Internet Centre you can use stationary computers.

A CHARM OF A CROISSANT

Schiphol seen through the window of a plane looks a bit like a giant croissant. Its central part is occupied by three halls and a shopping centre. The outer part comprises a number of piers where boarding bridges are located. Such a design of the airport helps finding your way inside.

Apart from typical airport infrastructure, we will find there numerous shops, restaurants, and cafeterias. There are such facilities as a Back to Life chair massage, which is an exceptionally pleasant way to start or end your journey in a relaxed manner. (10 minutes of massage cost €16.5) In addition to chair massage, at Back to Life it is also possible to enjoy aqua massage. For those with a bit of

Airport Business Point is a special waiting lounge for businesspeople and their chauffeurs.

a gambling spirit there is Holland Casino in Departure Hall 2, and those who like observing the air traffic can go to Panorama terrace where a number of restaurants are located.

Another original thing is a real museum which is situated on-site. A branch of the renowned Rijksmuseum can be found in Holland Boulevard, between Pier E and Pier F. The museum is open from 7:00 am to 8 pm and the admission is free. It houses a permanent exhibition of ten works by Dutch masters of the Golden Age from the Rijksmuseum's collection. The temporary exhibition changes a number of times a year.

It is also possible to reach Schiphol airport by bike. Specially constructed cycle paths make it possible for you to cycle to Schiphol. You can even follow the special Schiphol cycle route, which takes you around the whole of the airport.

A trip from Schiphol to the city centre takes mere 15 minutes by train and the rail seems to be the best way of travelling from and to the airport. The railway station is located under the main hall as are the ticket desks. You can also purchase your train ticket well in advance. You can either buy one from a ticket machine or ask for a ticket without a date at one of the NS-service desks. All you have to do on the day of travel is stamp your ticket at a machine on one of the platforms. Of course there are also numerous buses, taxis, and shuttles belonging to Mercure, Ibis, Hilton, and Radisson hotels. ■

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Reliability, accuracy, punctuality. The world appreciates and eagerly takes advantage of the services provided by Swiss companies. In 2009 Swiss International Air Lines carried almost 14 million passengers.

The motto and the goal of the Swiss air carrier are quite simple: to be the best airline in Europe. In practice, this translates into reliability and high quality of service combined with great attention to passengers' needs. Marketing materials of the airline try to convince us that Swiss wants its passengers to feel on board its aircraft almost like at home.

The airline operates 72 routes in 39 countries worldwide, including 48 routes within Europe. In its fleet Swiss has 87 aircraft most of which are manufactured by Airbus. The average age of the machines is 10 years. Long-haul flights are operated by A340 and A330, while for short-haul flights the airlines uses Airbus A320 and Avro RJ 100.

Last year the airline served almost 14 million passengers, and in 2010 the number is predicted to be similar, or even bigger because at the end of September it already reached 11 million carried passengers. The company employs 7,500 people, including over thousand pilots. What's interesting, the Swiss are renowned for one of the most rigorous safety standards.

The history of the airline is quite short. The company was created in 2002 on the ground of defunct Swissair which went bankrupt. In 2005 Swiss was taken over by Lufthansa Group, and one year later the airline joined Star Alliance. The alliance with Lufthansa brought in a lot of benefits for passengers - among them were a broader offer of destinations and services. Also the airline's membership in the alliance went hand

in hand with joining Miles & More loyalty programme.

It's worth mentioning that Swiss International Air Lines is very much concerned to environment protection, which is now a common trend in the industry. In 2002 the fleet of Swiss used 4.5 litres of jet fuel for every 100 passenger-kilometres; by 2008, it was only using 3.85 litres. Swiss applies the latest technological innovations in fuselage design, aerodynamics, materials, engines, electronics, etc. to its own fleet wherever possible. This reduces fuel consumption and CO2 emissions.

A CLASS OF ITS OWN

Swiss offers three travel classes – Economy, Business, and First. In SWISS Economy, all passengers, also including short flights, are served a choice of drinks. Depending on the time of day and the duration of the flight they are also offered a snack. This is a hot snack on longer flights and cold snack on shorter flights. On Airbus aircraft there is on board entertainment system, and the seats are very comfortable - on intercon-

The goal of Swiss is simple, but ambitious. To be the best European airline.





tinental flights the seat pitch is 81 cm, and their width 44 cm. You can also enjoy delicious cheeses of Switzerland together with your hot meal. Right before landing, you will also be served hot towels, just like in business class, and Swiss chocolate as a goodbye with the best wishes for your onward journey.

In Business class there is more space for the passengers as middle seats remain empty. Of course, the special treatment

(including champagne). Not to mention separate lounges where they can relax and escape from the hectic business routine.

On intercontinental flights Business class passengers are welcomed with a drink (champagne, orange juice, or water), and their meal consists of five dishes. Between meals, they are also served a fine glace (ice cream) or other snacks. The seat width on Airbus A330-300 is 57 cm. It reclines to fully to the length of 2 metres allowing for comfortable sleep.

starts already at the airport where special priority lanes are prepared for the check-in. Business class passengers can take more luggage and Miles & More participants collect twice as many miles as they would in Economy Class. They also have a wider choice of meals and drinks (including cham-

pagne). Each seat features large monitors, electronic connectors, USB port and iPod connector.

Another interesting offer for business passengers is service called Business Jet – it is an extended version of the well-proven Boeing 737-800 which flies from Zurich to Newark (New York). The aircraft seats 56 passengers who travel in comfortable conditions (the seat pitch is incredible 152cm). They are served high quality meals and have perfect conditions to work as well as rest. The highest class is Swiss First. Comfort, luxury, tranquillity and privacy – these are the greatest advantages of the class. Add to this, fine food and drinks, triple miles for Miles & More participants, priority check-in, a separate lounge at the airport, and individual personal passenger care by flight attendants.

ALL FOR BUSINESS

A business lounge at an airport is a very important thing for almost every business traveller. Swiss has its own lounges, and thanks to being a member of Star Al-



liance also provides its passengers with access to lounges of other airlines. Zurich is the main hub for Swiss, so not surprisingly this is where the airline has its most important lounges. Swiss First Lounge is 650 sq m and can accommodate up to 80 people. It offers meeting rooms, individual private offices, free WLAN, sleeping facilities, showers, and a limousine service. Swiss Senator Lounge spreads over 634 sq m on two floors with a Business Center and 12 workstations and printers, free WLAN, showers, and access to the Smoker's Bar (91 seats) Swiss Business Lounge has 216 seats spread over 1,100 sq m, internet corner, free WLAN, showers, SONY Playstation, and access to the Smoker's Bar. SWISS Arrival Lounge has 50 seats spread over 295.5 sq m, 8 showers, 2 relaxation rooms, and free WLAN. All the lounges have elegant design and luxurious ambience. They are indeed perfect places to sit back and relax. Interestingly enough, Swiss has also one of the world's largest business lounges. It is located at the airport in Basel and spreads over 1,700 sq m.

Comfort, luxury, and utmost privacy. The airline's first class is truly unique.



Swiss International Airlines is also a reliable partner for various business events. The offer of the airline includes providing transport for delegates to various conferences organized in Switzerland - fares can be reduced by as much as 25% for event organiser and visitors. The airline also promotes its conference centre in Basel with conference rooms which can accommodate up several hundred people, as well as an excellent restaurant.

Swiss International Airlines also offers its passengers a number of useful services which are slowly becoming a standard in civil aviation. These services include



a boarding pass on your mobile phone, online check-in, or flight information via text message and an e-mail. It's also worth mentioning the online booking system. Now via the airline's website you are not only able to buy your ticket, but also book a room in a hotel, or rent a car. This tends to be more and more common method used by air carriers who wish to provide their business customers with comprehensive services. Very convenient, indeed. This is what I call Swiss reliability. ■

Grzegorz Napierala



More **than** Miles

Three thousand miles for a ticket in business class, and one thousand for economy class - these are some of the most recent novelties in the loyalty programme of LOT Polish Airlines. Let's have a closer look at the offers and privileges of the renowned Miles & More programme.

It seems like a cliché, but a good loyalty programme should provide its participants with a number of notable benefits, but at the same time surprise them with new interesting offers. This seems to be obvious, but when we have a closer look at different loyalty programmes, we will see that many of them don't propose anything novel. They have their principles and nothing more besides them. On the other side of the fence we have new offers which are to attract new customers and retain the current ones. Those offers are very often prepared in collaboration with other companies. It is exactly the case in LOT's Miles & More programme: additional miles in

business class, 10,000 miles for ordering a business tariff (Pakiet dla Biznesu) in Era mobile phone network, or 3 miles for every 1 złoty spent on Wittchen products — these are just a few examples of invigorating the loyalty programme of our national air carrier.

Miles & More is one of the world's largest loyalty programmes. It was launched in 1993 and today it has about 19 million members. Undoubtedly, one of its greatest advantages is its multi-branch nature. You earn you miles first of all when travelling by air, but among the numerous partners of the programme you will find such businesses as hotel chains, car rental companies, mobile phone networks, shops, and other airlines.

The programme offers three types of miles. Award miles can be spent on awards and remain valid for 36 months. Status miles determine your Frequent Traveller and Senator status and are counted in the calendar year in which they are credited. Every status mile is also counted as an award mile. HON Circle miles. These count towards achiev-

ing HON Circle status. They are counted over two successive years.

Miles can be redeemed in many different ways. One of them is spending them on tickets. For instance, a flight within Europe by an airline which belongs to the programme, will cost you 45,000 miles in business class, while a flight to the USA – 90,000 miles. Do you want to fly just one way? This will cost you 75% of the miles charged for a regular return flight. For example, a one way flight award from Europe to South Africa in Economy Class costs 45,000 miles instead of 60,000. You will get a similar discount for children aged between two and eleven.

You can also decide to spend your miles on a flight round the world. In order to receive such a ticket, you need to spend 180,000 miles in economy class, or 280,000 miles in business class. One of the conditions is that a maximum of ten flight segments (maximum of nine connecting flights), and seven stopovers is allowed.

You can also get a discount, booking your ticket online. It's so called Fly Smart option. Book online between a maximum of two weeks and a minimum of two or four working days prior to departure and you can save up to 46% of the award miles normally needed for a flight award. For example, for a return flight between two European destina-



tions you save 13,000 award miles, paying 15,000 award miles instead of 28,000. Another way you can spend your miles is to pay your taxes, fees and airport charges with them. In 2010 you could spend in this way a lump sum of 15,000 miles.

The Senator Premium Award allows you, as a Senator, to book any seat still for sale, even when it is no longer possible to book a flight award on the desired flight. The members of HON Circle can take advantage of Senator Premium Award, as well. Award flights and full fare paid flights can be combined for Senators and accompanying persons. The prize is available for 50 percent of a regular rate. One of the conditions is that the member of Miles & More is travelling on a full fare paid ticket.

Members of the programme can take advantage of the offers prepared by the most popular car rental companies, where they can redeem their miles. In case of Avis this means over 5,000 available car rental stations, while in case of Budget — 3,500. In Europcar the cost of renting a car for a week starts at 23,000 miles. Renting a car with a baby seat costs 30,000 miles per week in Hertz.

Traditionally, members of Miles & More loyalty programme can take advantage of the offers prepared by hotel chains and resorts. And they are aplenty. For example, booking a double room for one

night in London's Stafford hotel by Kempinski costs 55,000 miles. The offer called "a million miles" (milion mil) means 3 nights in a luxurious suite of NY Mandarin Oriental hotel including breakfast and dinner for two. One of the most interesting initiatives is the one by Hilton chain. For 21,000 miles we can buy out cookery lessons for children aged 7-14.

Talking about kids, it's worth remembering that the miles in Miles & More programme can also be donated to charitable causes. There are numerous options, but the Polish members of the programme will surely appreciate the possibility to donate their miles to SOS Children's Villages. The organisation has been standing up for children's needs and rights since 1949 and focuses on abandoned, dispossessed, orphaned children and disadvantaged families. You can also donate the miles to Social Center Jutrzenka (Haven) in Lublin which helps poor children and their parents. Currently the Haven project provides support for 43 children aged from 7-17, coming from 30 different families. 10,000 miles will cover one month food costs, monthly expenses for education and school equipment or will cover monthly expenses for pedagogical and psychological support. So, is it worth earning the miles? Of course, it is! ■

Tomasz Tobiasz





Christmas delicacies

While at the time of Christmas and New Year's Eve the tables at every hotel's restaurant are full of traditional cuisine with a modern touch, the menu dishes prepared by the chefs at the Orbis Hotels will satisfy even the most sophisticated and demanding of the palates.

With all the shopping, cleaning and preparing of the dishes, more and more people decide to simply get away from all the hustle and bustle of the Christmas rush and spend some quality time with their families somewhere out in the open. For a few years now in Poland there has been an increasing tendency for the employers to organise company meetings during Christmas time. As a result of the above, chefs are composing the Christmas Eve's menus which are to satisfy the requirements of every guest, regardless of whether they are organising a company staff party or just want to spend Christmas away from their homes and have their Christmas dinner at a restaurant.

TASTE THE TRADITION IN MAZURY

Beetroot soup with mushroom pockets, carp served with mushroom sauce,

chocolate mousse, plus the colourful pancakes and dumplings for the little ones – all these specialties await the guests who have chosen to spend their Christmas at the Mercure Mrogonia Resort&Spa. "During this time of the year families with children constitute most of our clientele and that is the reason why we are inclined to traditional cuisine, with the beetroot soup, carp in aspic, or in mushroom sauce. Additionally, guests may choose among some elements of the Chinese cuisine that are included in the menu, indulging their palates with a taste of sushi and others", says Łukasz Jabłoński, with a note of pride in his voice. "At Christmas we offer to our guests a buffet with changing themes, so on the first day they may for instance enjoy Italian cuisine and then, on the following day, we can provide them with the possibility of discovering for themselves L'Oriente Indian cuisine, etc. We always organise so called live cooking where meals are prepared in

front of our guests. The event is of great appeal for people in general", he adds.

TRY THE EXOTIC RHYTHMS IN Sopot

Sofitel Grand Sopot also defends traditional qualities of the magic Christmas time, but with the New Year's Eve coming round, it switches to more exotic dishes. Those who can't imagine Christmas without traditional Polish cuisine may order some of the specialties, such as roast duck with fondant potatoes in cranberry sauce, served on apple tart and with red cabbage cooked in red wine, sprinkled with clove and cinnamon. However, the Christmas menu also includes dishes from distant places.

"Goose liver terrine with red onion marmalade and apple mousse, smoked salmon cooked in cherry jam, served with green pea purée and wasabi, decorated with parmesan and honey mustard dressing, plus *Buche de Noel* – a traditional French dessert made from poppy sponge cake frosted and filled with buttercream, flavoured with gingerbread and served in raspberry and pistachio sauce, will make dining an exciting adventure even for the most discerning of guests", assures Leszek Pakota, the



main chef of the hotel's restaurant. And when it comes to the New Year's Eve, the guests will take part in the journey to the exotic parts of the world, with Cuban cuisine and rhythms – the tables will be full of dishes like mushroom empanadas with salsa roja, Cuban black bean avocado soup, a selection of cheese from Latin America and the Iberian Peninsula, Cuban flair beef chuck eye steak baked in banana leaves, and chilli chocolate mousse with raspberries.

SPRINKLED WITH THE MODERN

The main chef of the Novotel Gdańsk Centre Hotel, Kamil Sadowski, combines traditional and modern cuisine to create a unique fusion, later served on the Christmas table. "When I cook, I try to give my dishes the traditional taste with a note of the contemporary", he explains. More and more businesses take advantage of the services that Novotel Gdańsk Centre has to offer, including organising the pre-Christmas company meetings. "This trend is steadily growing in Poland, but in France and Germa-

Company Christmas parties organized in hotels are becoming more and more popular.

ny such Christmas Eve parties organised for the staff are enormously popular. Also if some individual guests decide to organise Christmas supper for their families at the hotel, they know exactly what kind of service they may expect, and we prepare for them a special menu, on request", adds Kamil Sadowski. For Christmas he highly recommends dishes made from fresh products in season. "The creamy pumpkin soup on coconut milk, which brings out its taste, is my own recipe. We also serve carp with gingerbread sauce, while the most delicious meat dish is wild boar tenderloin in juniper sauce", claims Sadowski. For the dessert you may try something more innovative – a carrot in honey and cinnamon or mulled wine with fresh seasons. Companies and the individual guests may take advantage of the special Christmas offer provided by the Novotel Warsaw Airport – they serve specialties like a carp fried in cream sauce with boletus mushrooms, thin slices of cod served with vegetable mousse, and roast veal seasoned with sage, served with mayonnaise, ca-

per and artichoke. For the dessert prune mousse, gingerbread with nuts and raisins, with a touch of rose, or a light and fluffy cheesecake packed with raisins.

SPOIL YOURSELF WITH THE FRENCH SPECIALTIES

Even when you decide to enjoy your Christmas at home, it is always advisable to have something special to put on the table, and the Madame Walewska confectionery located in the Mercure Warszawa Fryderyk Chopin is just the perfect place to go. For instance, *Bûche de Noël* which is one of the unusual items on the offer here would certainly cause your family to stare in amazement – it's a traditional dessert served with chocolate mousse during the Christmas holidays, with its shape resembling a tree trunk. There is a truly interesting history standing behind the dessert, connected with the tradition of using fire logs so as to keep the fire burning in the fireplace on the Christmas Eve. Every Christmas Madame Walewska adds linzer tart to its offer. ■

THE RATING GAME

A lack of unified standards around the world makes working out hotel star ratings a real puzzle, says
Sara Turner.

Navigating global hotel star ratings can prove surprisingly tricky. A one- to five-star measure seems simple enough, but many will testify that standards of service can vary a considerable amount, especially when traveling outside Europe.

In some countries the rating system is run by governments, in some by volun-

tary bodies, while in others there are multiple schemes. So how can you know what to expect?

In the UK, official star ratings have for the past three years been run jointly by the AA and government-funded tourist boards Visit England, Visit Scotland and Visit Wales. Before 2007, the boards ran their own schemes separately, so the criteria for a five-star hotel in Scotland would have been different to that in England.

Under today's scheme, hotels in England, Scotland and Wales can pay to be star rated. A 64-page document outlines exactly what it takes to win each star, and it is pretty complicated. To achieve one star, the hotel must have a dining room or restaurant serving a cooked breakfast every day of the week and an evening meal five days – unless it's a "metro hotel" (a sub-category reserved for properties in towns or cities), in which case it doesn't have to provide dinner.

In the UK scheme, a lot of emphasis is placed on eating. Take breakfast – at a two-star hotel, it must be served for at least an hour, while at a five-star a three-hour service is mandatory. A three-star must provide at least one meal via room service and a seven-day restaurant or dining room offering breakfast and dinner. Four-star properties must offer lunch and 24-hour room service, while a five-star needs added extras, such as afternoon tea or a second restaurant.

Bear in mind, though, that the rating doesn't tell you anything about the décor. Hotels with decades-old wallpaper and carpets can achieve five stars with the right facilities, but an immaculately turned out boutique property might barely be able to muster three if its facilities are limited.

Higher ratings don't necessarily mean larger bedrooms, either. To achieve one star in the UK, single rooms must be at least 5.6 sqm, doubles 8.4 sqm, and twin rooms 10.2 sqm. But for higher ratings, no mention is made of room size – instead, it's about variety. To be a four-star you need at least one suite, and a five-star "a number of permanent luxury suites".

Go across to mainland Europe and it's a different story – what makes a hotel five star can be very different. In Germany, for example, a double room in a one-star hotel must measure at least 12 sqm, while a four-star double room needs to be at least 22 sqm.

So is there any chance of a regional system being brought in? It's unlikely, says

Jeremy Brinkworth, head of industry services at Visit England. "The various organisations across Europe do get together to discuss these things, but there is no pan-European rating at the moment primarily because, although we all use stars, the type of scheme varies," he says. "We look more at facilities and service in hospitality, but some other countries, such as Italy, are purely facilities-based".

And while it might be difficult to gauge a hotel by its star rating, it can be even harder to work out on price, with lower rated properties often more expensive than higher ones. Trevor Elwood, chief executive of hotel booking agency BSL, says: "It's horribly subjective. There will be times when a four-star is more expensive than a five-star, or a three-star more expensive than a four. It's not reflective of the end product".

Things have got even more confusing as the line of luxury has become blurred. While not so long ago five-star properties

'It's so subjective – there'll be times, when a four-star is more expensive than a five-star'



were once the height of opulence, there is now a "seven-star" hotel in Milan, and a few in the Middle East. But who gets to decide if a hotel has six or seven stars? Apparently, as no official rating goes that high, it's up to the hotel, which is somewhat less than objective. At the Townhouse Seven Stars Galleria hotel in Milan, it is based on factors such as being able to request gym equipment for your room and having a personal butler on call.

For James Berresford, chief executive of Visit England, such ratings are merely a promotional tool. "Personally I'm not a fan of six- and seven-star hotels, because where do you stop?" he says. "There's no room for that in our system. For a system to be credible, it has to have strong ground rules".

According to Margaret Bowler, director of global hotel relations at travel management company HRG, one of the problems

is that anyone can publicise themselves with a star rating, as the stars carry no trademark. "I could put a website up tomorrow for Margaret Bowler's hotel and list it as five-star," she says. "Then, when somebody looked at it, they would [take it as read]. Star ratings will give you an indication of what to expect but it won't necessarily be what you imagine". To combat this, in England you should look out for the patented Quality Rose mark, which all officially accredited properties have.

In a bid to add to the official scale of luxury, Dubai, home to Jumeirah's "seven-star" Burj Al Arab hotel, is in the process of adopting a new rating scheme. From the end of this year, five-star properties will have three categories – platinum, gold and silver. A spokesperson for the Dubai Department of Tourism and Commerce Marketing says: "Hospitality properties will continue to be rated on the scale of one to five stars, but new categories have been added to highlight their uniqueness. The new classification system has taken into consideration several factors to provide a system that matches international standards".

The system will also categorise properties as beach, desert, heritage and



business. The last will be helpful as Nigel Turner, director of UK public sector for travel management company Carlson Wagonlit, says business travellers have previously been neglected by rating schemes. "I think many people will have stayed in four- or five-star hotels that haven't got wifi, or even broadband access in the room", he says. "There are lots of things that business travellers see now not as luxuries but as basic requirements".

What about in the US? Here there are several competing schemes, all independently run but, according to one hotelier, the travelling public pays little attention. Richard Millard, chief executive of Miami-based Desires Hotels, has been in the hospitality business for 45 years. He says that in America it's all about branding. "Very few people use the term five-star", he says. Instead, they plump for fuzzier descriptions. "It's either the brand des-

ignation or the product type – whether boutique, lifestyle, limited service or full-service”, he explains. “They designate the quality level by either the brand or the affiliation it might have [to a group such as the Leading Hotels of the World]”.

But to add to the complexity, globally, even brands can vary – for example, Park Inn properties in the Middle East would tend to be full service with a choice of restaurants and sometimes even pools. HRG’s Bowler says: “With some brands you will get a completely different product in Europe than in North America. I’ve spoken to a lot of the hotels and asked if it’s going to change, if they’re going to make it consistent, and the answer is ‘no’”.

This is why many people are looking to other sources to judge a property and find out the views of the honest punter. Websites such as tripadvisor.co.uk have hundreds of traveller reviews on individual properties, but these tend to be based on perceptions of quality and value rather than the luxe factor. For example, as we went to press, the Premier Inn London Victoria had more than 60 reviews on Tripadvisor giving it an overall rating of 4.5 out of 5, while the luxury Grosvenor House’s 275 reviews gave an average of only 4 out of 5. Also, business travellers should bear in mind that reviews are as likely to be from a holidaying family or couple who would be rating a hotel on different criteria.

Recognising the growing popularity of online reviews, Visit England is thinking about linking its star scheme with social media in some way. Berresford says: “The world is changing, and we are looking to consider how we can better promote the star system in the future by linking it to socially generated media content, because that has changed the way people make their decisions”.

All the same, Berresford maintains that there will always be a need for a concrete star system. “It’s hugely important that England can promote itself as a quality destination, and if we’re to give both domestic and international visitors the confidence that English accommodation is good, to have inspection schemes is vital”, he says. Just do your homework before you book to ensure you’re getting what you’re paying for. ■

ORIGINS OF THE STAR SYSTEM

Using stars to denote the quality of hotels can be traced back to the UK, and to the nation’s love of brandy. In 1908, three years after the Automobile Association (AA) was founded, members complained about how difficult it was to find reasonable meals and accommodation. So the AA stepped in by including “about 1,000 of the leading hotels” in its members’ handbook.

These were required to provide only lunch and overnight accommodation, and to show a bulletin board. By 1912, the AA realised a more critical approach was required to show the types of hotels included. The then AA secretary Stenson Cooke thought the star rating system used for brandy would work well with three stars being the top standard (for brandy, this meant aged for three years in a wood barrel). Hotel inspectors would have to pay their own way and accept no favours – a principle that still exists today, the AA says.

The RAC was also involved in running the scheme, having formed a hotel rating alliance with the AA in 1945, but cut its losses in 2005. Until 2003, the system rather confusingly involved diamonds as well as stars. Hotels were rated with one to five stars, while “guest accommodation”, referring to bed and breakfasts or campsites, was rated using diamonds. Now all accommodation is rated using stars.

Polish Stars

In Poland, it is committee appointed by the marshal of a voivodeship who decides how many stars a certain hotel is given. The committee is usually comprised of officials, hotel industry specialists, Fire Department and National Labour Inspectorate representatives and architectural and construction supervisors. There is a long list of requirements, specifying how many stars a hotel may receive. In a one-star hotel, a bathroom may be situated outside the room, in the corridor, there has to be a bedside table next to each bed, and the hotel needs to provide the guests with hot drinks. A two-star hotel needs to offer more services (e.g. have a restaurant or a fast food bar and serve breakfast); to obtain three stars a hotel must have an access road for suppliers, air conditioning in the public section of the hotel, and double rooms have to be at least 14 sqm.

Four-star hotels should have a business centre, conference rooms, one or two restaurants, a bar, a night club, a swimming pool, a wellness centre, a gym, Internet access in the rooms, and soundproof rooms and windows.



People are looking to other sources to judge a hotel and find out the punter’s view



A day in the life of...

Magnus Hannukainen, who looks after Finnair's onboard catering and tax-free sales, speaks to Sara Turner

ONBOARD DINING & SALES

6: 30 I usually get up and have breakfast, then drive my kids to school on the way to the office. I work in the car, on the phone. It's a 30-minute journey, and you can do a lot – change meeting times, set up new ones and check how things are going.

9: 00 Some of the guys are already in the office at 7am, but I don't arrive until now. I'm not an early bird. My mum told me that the early worm gets eaten. The first thing I do when I arrive is go through my emails – I get a huge amount every day.

9: 30 As business unit director, I have a lot of meetings. You have to be well prepared for them, otherwise you don't get any results. They can be about any number of things: how to market goods, how to plan the shop, or about human resources – that's a big part of the business.

I don't usually lead from the desk. I talk to people or go to the place where the problem or opportunity is. That, I think, is wiser than starting an email rally that is going to continue for two weeks and still doesn't produce a result at the end of it. I like it if people are actively doing things, and making mistakes is a part of that. By doing nothing, you make no mistakes, but you don't achieve anything either.

A big part of the work is selecting our wines. I change the business class wines every six months – I choose one champagne, two whites, two reds, a port and a sweet. For this I put aside at least two days, with no meetings and no interruptions. I have been in the alcohol

business since I was 19. I believe I have tasted about 25,000 wines, and I usually try between 1,000 and 1,500 different ones a year. I do it on my own and I do it blind, so I can really concentrate. Some of the labels are too famous – it's pretty easy to buy wine just by looking at the labels. I also have to think about the customers – for long-haul flights, more than 55 per cent of our business is to Asia. I need to choose a wine that goes with Asian food and one that goes with Western food. I have no favourite, but life is too short to drink bad wine.

12: 00 If I eat lunch, I have it about now. It might be salad, but mostly I just drink coffee. There's no time for a proper lunch. I'm also always checking emails on my phone.

12: 30 In the afternoon I might have a meeting about our in-flight duty-free – that is also a huge job. It's not just about putting a catalogue in the seat pocket. You have to think about how much you can sell – the more there is, the more space it takes up on the plane, and the plane gets heavier and needs more fuel, so the costs go up. We also offer pre-ordering of about 500 items, where you buy it on the outward trip and it is waiting on your seat on the return journey. It's nice to see what is selling and what is not, and change accordingly. People tend to go first for what's new, and then what is on offer.

After, I might have a meeting about the new Finnair airport shop, which will open in February. It is larger than the current one and will offer a greater variety of alcohol, cosmetics and gifts. Or I may meet

with our parent company to discuss the future of onboard catering. Every airline is thinking about what is served on board and what can be sold – we are currently looking at different concepts.

16: 30 Before going home, I often walk around the factory where we process all the onboard catering and duty-free. There is a lot to think about – we are operating about 20,000 flights per year where we are serving something. We make about 10,000 meals per day. From May it will be more, as we are starting flights to Singapore and increasing the number of services to Hong Kong. I might also have to go downtown for a meeting with a supplier who wants me to buy their wine or product.

19: 00 I finish work between now and 7pm, it varies. When I get home I help my kids with their homework, then perhaps work in the garden. In the summer months especially, as there are up to 19 hours of sunshine a day, I have to do something. You can't go to bed before midnight.

Even after a busy day, it's very seldom I just sit down and don't think about anything. I enjoy it when it's a tough day, otherwise I get bored. I like it when things are happening, when we have to do something, develop something. There is no ordinary day for me. ■

Visit finnair.com



From returning to the hotel room tired and thirsty after a hard day of meetings, to waking up dry-mouthed in the middle of the night, we have all wrestled with the minibar conundrum. In most four- or five-star hotels, that small fridge humming away in the

Some of those may raise a few eyebrows but what won't register even a flicker of surprise is that 84 per cent of British people surveyed thought minibars were too expensive. But why is this? One can understand that hotels are businesses like any others and want to make money from their customers, but when you consider that hotel chains are reliant on repeat customers – otherwise known as business travellers – gouging them for a €7 500ml bottle of Perrier seems a little short-sighted.

QUANTITY
CONSUMED

€ 15.00
€ 13.00
€ 14.00
€ 13.00
€ 13.00
€ 13.00
€ 16.00
€ 12.00
€ 10.50
€ 12.00
€ 33.00
€ 12.00
€ 8.00
€ 5.50
€ 7.00
€ 6.00
€ 6.00
€ 6.00
€ 6.00

CHAMPAGNE & WINES

Laurent Perrier, Brut, NV
Gloria Ferrer, Brut, Sonoma, NV
Ramey Chardonnay, Carneros
Joseph Phelps Chardonnay, Napa Valley
Fiddlehead Sauvignon Blanc
Happy Canyon, Santa Ynez Valley
Lancaster Meritage, Alexander Valley
Whitehall Lane Winery Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley
Calera Pinot Noir, Mill's Vineyard, Mt. Harlan Estate
Terre Rouge Syrah, Sierra Foothills

BEERS

(1) 1/2 champagne veuve clicquot
(1) Moët et chandon rosé impérial - 20 cl - 65 €
(1) Vin Bandal rosé - 37,50 cl - 40 €
(2) Johnnie Walker black label - 5 cl - 25 €
(2) Johnnie Walker red label - 5 cl - 18 €
(2) Martini rouge - 5 cl - 14 €
(2) Martini blanc - 5 cl - 14 €
(2) Fine de cognac Hennessy - 5 cl - 14 €
(1) Rhum bacardi - 5 cl - 18 €
(1) Vodka grey goose orange - 5 cl - 14 €
(1) Vodka grey goose nature - 5 cl - 20 €
(2) Gin gordon's - 5 cl - 14 €
(2) Bière de monaco
(1) Bière heineken 9 €
(2) Evian - 50 cl - 9 €
(1) Badoit - 50 cl - 7 €
(1) Perrier - 50 cl - 7 €
(4) Jus de fruits BIO - Cynil Larouzière 8 €
(2) Coca-cola 7 €
(2) Coca-cola light 7 €
(2) Coca-cola zero 7 €
(1) Schweppes tonic 7 €
(2) Red bull 7 €
(2) Boral Kreek's - 65 g - 11 €
(1) Chips de riz Tamari 10 €
(3) Bonbons haribo 8 €
(1) Croquant au chocolat 10 €
(1) Tablette chocolat - menthe 13 €
(1) ESPA - Huile de bain 7 €
Starbucks Mocha 38 €
Red Bull
Fiji Water

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(2) Martini blanc - 5 cl - 14 €
(2) Fine de cognac Hennessy - 5 cl - 14 €
(1) Rhum bacardi - 5 cl - 18 €
(1) Vodka grey goose orange - 5 cl - 14 €
(1) Vodka grey goose nature - 5 cl - 20 €
(2) Gin gordon's - 5 cl - 14 €
(2) Bière de monaco
(1) Bière heineken 9 €
(2) Evian - 50 cl - 9 €
(1) Badoit - 50 cl - 7 €
(1) Perrier - 50 cl - 7 €
(4) Jus de fruits BIO - Cynil Larouzière 8 €
(2) Coca-cola 7 €
(2) Coca-cola light 7 €
(2) Coca-cola zero 7 €
(1) Schweppes tonic 7 €
(2) Red bull 7 €
(2) Boral Kreek's - 65 g - 11 €
(1) Chips de riz Tamari 10 €
(3) Bonbons haribo 8 €
(1) Croquant au chocolat 10 €
(1) Tablette chocolat - menthe 13 €
(1) ESPA - Huile de bain 7 €
Starbucks Mocha 38 €
Red Bull
Fiji Water

BEVERAGES

(1) 1/2 champagne veuve clicquot
(1) Moët et chandon rosé impérial - 20 cl - 65 €
(1) Vin Bandal rosé - 37,50 cl - 40 €
(2) Johnnie Walker black label - 5 cl - 25 €
(2) Johnnie Walker red label - 5 cl - 18 €
(2) Martini rouge - 5 cl - 14 €
(2) Martini blanc - 5 cl - 14 €
(2) Fine de cognac Hennessy - 5 cl - 14 €
(1) Rhum bacardi - 5 cl - 18 €
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(2) John

	LONDON SUPERMARKET	LONDON PUB	LONDON MINIBAR	
Coke	55p (330ml)	£1.60 (284ml)	£4 (330ml)	
Water	55p (500ml)	£1.50 (500ml)	£4 (500ml)	
Beer	£2 (660ml)	£3.50 (568ml)	£6 (330ml)	
Wine	£6 (750ml)	£2.75 (175ml)	£22 (375ml)	
Spirit	£3.50 (250ml)	£2 (50ml)	£8.50 (50ml)	
Peanuts	95p (200g)	£1 (50g)	£4 (50g)	
Chocolate bar	50p	n/a	£3.50	

■ Because of the amount of theft that takes place from them. Guests empty the minibar, leave without settling that part of the bill and then dispute any subsequent charges the hotel makes. The hotel finds it difficult to prove and so refunds the money, then charges the rest of us to make up for the loss.

and the overheads of this make the unit cost per sale of merchandise very high. This sets up a vicious circle, as the high unit costs then means hardly anyone buys anything, which in turn means the fixed costs of fitting the fridges and maintaining the stock has to be borne on fewer and fewer sales"

■ Installing automated minibars that record all removals instantly is an expensive fixed cost, pushing up prices further.

■ The cost of restocking is comparatively high – usually it is done by a different member of staff from housekeeping, who keeps a daily record of removals to try to counter guests who deny having taken anything during their stay.

■ Not many people use minibars, which also increases the prices. As Cedric Statherby puts it on our forum: "I suspect that it is much the same reason as why hotel phones are so expensive. The hotels have all the expense of equipping the rooms, filling the minibars and maintaining them,

■ Sheer profiteering on the part of some hotels. In the US some hotels charge a minibar restocking fee (on a daily basis).

**“I stayed last week at Holiday Inn, Zurich Messe and was in an executive room that included free soft drinks from the minibar – fantastic idea. The hotel builds it into its costs/room rate and everyone’s a winner”.
(BABenji)**

“Leave the fridge in the room and charge a fee for those who want to use it. I for one am quite happy to stock a hotel fridge with my own drinks and food for a nominal charge per night. Minibars are like in-seat phones on an aircraft – a nice touch but not used because of the cost”. *(MartynSinclair)*

**“Hotels could add drinks to centrally located vending machines. Prices at the moment are set at a level comparable with drinks in an upscale bar rather than a shop. I would rather have an espresso machine. Thank you Novotel Birmingham, of all places, for providing one of these”.
(MichelAngelo)**

“I always insist that the hotel empties the minibar. It drives them mad but I have never been refused. I then put my own stuff in there – very useful when you have kids. One very painful experience in Hong Kong cost me £12 for a bottle of water left by the side of the bed (and clearly marked that I would be charged). The kids opened it because they were thirsty. So now I ask at check in!” *(Binman62)*

	DUBAJ MINIBAR	MUNICH MINIBAR	SAN FRANCISCO MINIBAR
	Dhs 20/£3.80 (330ml)	€5 (200ml)	US\$5 (330ml)
	Dhs 18/£3.40 (500ml)	€6 (500ml)	US\$5.50 (500ml)
	Dhs 35/£6.60 (330ml)	€6 (330ml)	US\$7 (330ml)
	Dhs 90/£17 (375ml)	€15 (375ml)	US\$24 (375ml)
	Dhs 50/£9.40 (50ml)	€9 (50ml)	US\$8 (50ml)
	Dhs 35/£6.60 (50g)	€5 (50g)	US\$7 (50g)
	Dhs 35/£6.60	€6	US\$3

Minibar
Mini Bar

Mineralwasser / Mineral
Bad Brücknerauer medium
Bad Brücknerauer medium
Bad Brücknerauer still

Wein / Wine
Rotwein / Redwine
Weisswein / Whitewine
Sekt

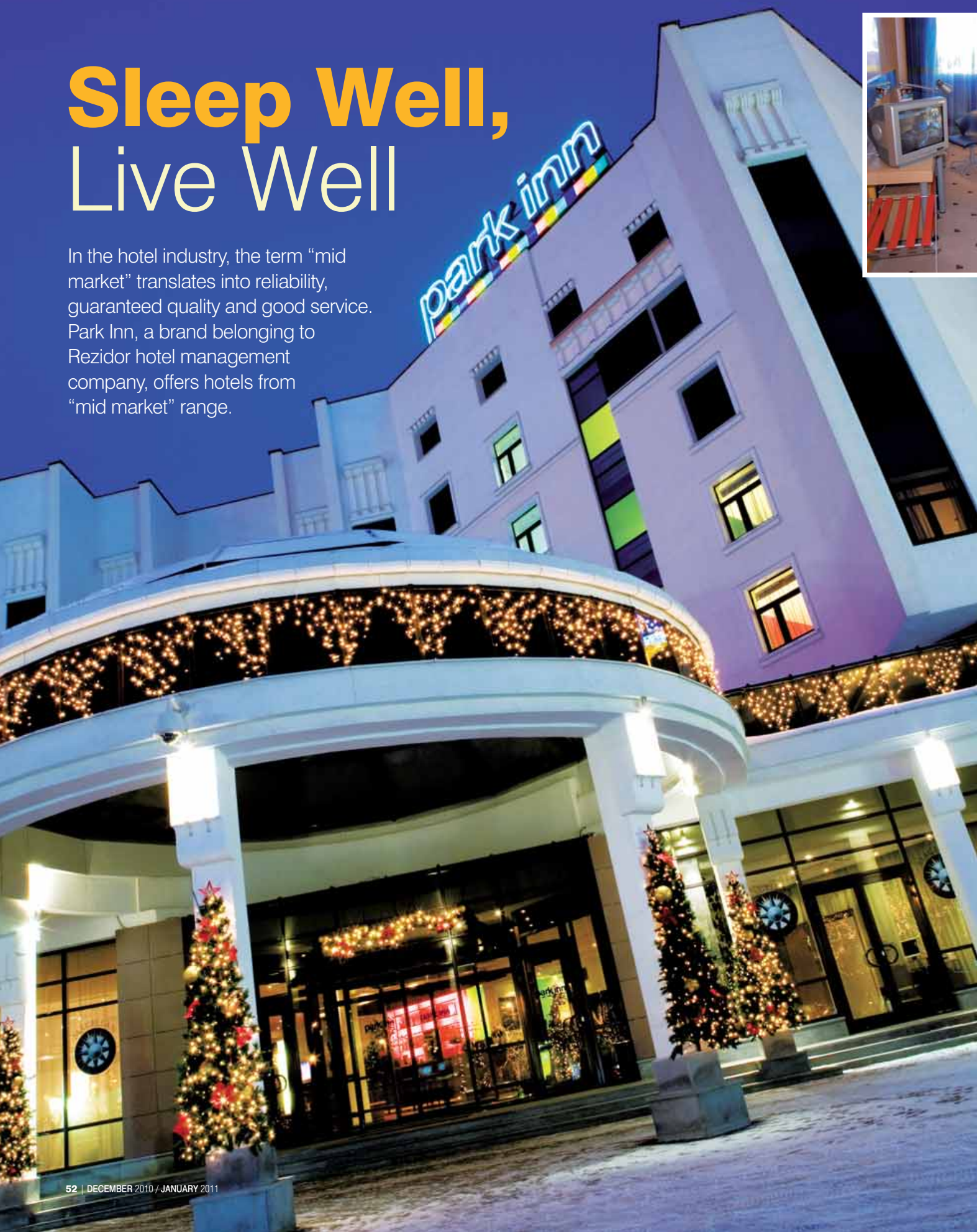
Soft Drinks / Soft Drinks
Apfelschorle
Coca Cola

0,25 l	1	
0,25 l	1	5,50
0,2 l	1	5,50
		4,60

DECEMBER 2011

Sleep Well, Live Well

In the hotel industry, the term “mid market” translates into reliability, guaranteed quality and good service. Park Inn, a brand belonging to Rezidor hotel management company, offers hotels from “mid market” range.





To tell you the truth, the title is not our own idea. It is a slogan which can be found in the Park Inn advertisement brochures, and it applies to providing guests with excellent conditions of their stay at reasonable prices. Park Inn's policy is so easy, one would have a temptation to say there is no policy at all. The hotels concentrate on what is the most important from a guest's perspective: comfortable accommodation and fine service. The development of the brand proves they do it very successfully. Today, Park Inn has over 100 hotels in 50 countries in Europe, the Middle East, Africa and North America – one of them (the only one so far) is to be found in Cracow, Poland.

AROUND THE WORLD...

Park Inn is quite a new brand. It was founded as a Carlson Hotels subsidiary. In 2002, the company signed a contract with the Rezidor group to develop Park Inn, Country Inns 7 Suites, and Regent in the EMEA region. Their first product was a hotel in Berlin, which was opened in 2003. The subsequent expansion was rapid – Rezidor took over 14 hotels from Winn company in Sweden, modernized and renamed them. In 2006, the first Russian Park Inn was launched – in Yekaterinburg. The last two years saw new hotels opened in Poland, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Lithuania, Nigeria and Oman.

What is more, an independent report made by JD Power And Associates (a marketing information services firm) says that Park Inn hotels are highly appraised by its guests. The 2009 study, which measured 42 brands, was based on responses from more than 13,000 guests who stayed at a hotel in Europe between May 2009 and September 2009. Park Inn received the best mark among

three- and four-star hotels in the mid market category.

Why was the assessment so good? The personnel claim they are trying to make the hotels attractive for business travellers as well as holiday makers. All this is reflected in the company slogan – “Yes, I can.” It is a formula accepted by all the employees, and it means that they are always ready to meet the clients' needs, have optimistic attitude and take all the requests very seriously. By staying in Park Inn hotels, the clients may collect points in the global goldpoint plus programme, and use them in various ways – for instance when booking a room in one of over a thousand hotels in the world, or when buying plane tickets from one of 20 airlines.

...IN POLAND

What distinguishes Cracow's Park Inn is its modern style and design. The characteristic logo with colourful underline is visible from a distance. The Park Inn Krakow hotel is nestled in the heart of Krakow's city centre and is within walking distance of famous attractions, such as the historic Wawel Castle and the Jewish district of Kazimierz. Offering 152 cosy guest rooms, 10 Junior suites and a fitness room and sauna, the hotel is an ideal platform to enjoy and explore the sights of Poland. With five modern and well-equipped meeting rooms and an elaborate ballroom, this Krakow hotel is also perfect for business guests.

What is characteristic about the rooms in all Park Inn hotels, is the abundance of colours. The furniture, paintings on the walls, bedspreads and curtains are all kept in intense colours, which makes the rooms look vivid. The rooms come with a single or double bed, tea and coffee making facilities, free WiFi, a safe, satellite TV and a mini bar. The ten suits offer bigger space, bathrooms with both

A report on 17 hotel chains pointed out that Park Inn is highly valued by its clients.

a bathtub and a shower, bathrobes, and Pay TV channels included in the price.

RBG Bar & Grill restaurant caters for the hotel's guests' culinary needs. The restaurant can seat up to 140 people and offers grilled dishes, Mediterranean cuisine, as well as vegetarian food. There is also a wide selection of hamburgers, and business travellers have also access to a lunch offer. The restaurant is open from 6.30 am to 11.00 pm. A hotel bar which serves cocktails and soft drinks completes the culinary offer (open from 10.00 am to 1.00 am).

The business facilities in the hotel leave nothing to be desired – there's enough space to organize both small meetings and large conferences. There are four conference rooms and a banquet room, which can seat up to 460 people. All the rooms are air-conditioned, have access to the natural light, the Internet and all sorts of facilities necessary during a business conference. The hotel's dedicated conference coordinators and customised menu options ensure every event is a success. Park Inn also boasts a fully equipped business centre with photocopying and printing services. ■

Tomasz Woźniak



Champagne on a Desert

Such a journey leaves you with unforgettable memories for years. Wild, pure nature, stunning views – the desert and the ocean. **Jakub Olgiewicz** invites you for an incentive trip to Namibia, where all this is just within a hand's reach.

Occupying the southern part of Africa, Namibia was under colonial occupation for centuries. It was ruled by Dutch merchants and British missionaries. For years Namibia was under German rule, later was bound up with its closest neighbours from South Africa, a country, which, to this day, is Namibia's closest partner. Agriculture, tourism and mining – Namibia is the world's giant when it comes to extracting coal or uranium – is the backbone of its economy.

Upon gaining independence, English was declared an official language – until 1990 it was German and Afrikaans – although only about 7% of people use it on a daily basis. It's the Ovambo dialects which are the most popular here.

It takes about 12 hours by plane to get to this faraway country situated between the dessert and the vastness of the ocean. These are mostly night flights, so the passengers are not exhausted and do not waste their time. There are numerous ways of air travel. Usually, it is a flight through Frankfurt, Munich or Zurich, from where you can get to Johannesburg. Once you arrive there, you change for a plane to the Namibia's capital, Windhoek – the flight is much shorter, but if you are lucky, you can also find a direct flight from Johannesburg to Windhoek. The capital, inhabited by merely 250,000 people, is situated in the

centre of the country. Namibia's climate is warm and dry. The average temperature in summer season (November–March) is about 30 degrees, the rainfall is quite rare.

WHALE BAY

The first attraction is a visit to the Herero tribe, an ethnic group, strongly represented in Namibia, which lives mostly off agriculture and herding. The visit takes place in the evening, over some music – the participants are greeted by women dressed in their characteristic, colourful and meticulously made traditional costumes.

After visiting Windhoek, comes a time to go to the seaside. The destination is the main port, Walvis Bay, situated at Whale

Blue ocean on one side, and vast desert on the other. Namibia is mysterious and colourful.

Bay – these huge mammals attracted whalers here already many years ago.

There, the participants embark on a ship to go in the sea, hoping to get to take a photo of dolphins and whales. There is no doubt they will be able to see enormous seal colonies (sometimes they allow you to feed them), turtles or gracious flamingos.

The next stop is the town of Swakopmund, about 20 kilometres away from the port. During the journey along the ocean coastline, you cannot resist the sight of masses of sand on the asphalt being dragged along by the wind. The town is a holiday resort going back to the times of German invasion – and to this day you can hear German being spoken on numerous occasions. Among all the attractions of Swakopmund, there is an ocean trip for the fishing enthusiasts, kayaking – for fans of active leisure, or hot-air ballooning. The locals also boast, that it was in their hospital that Angelina Jolie gave birth to her daughter, Shiloh.

DOWN THE SAND DUNES

The ocean makes a huge impression on everyone, but once you turn around, you see the dessert – equally impressive and unforgettable.

Namibia boasts the biggest sand dunes in the world, and coming here to see the sun rise is really worth the effort. Quad bike and jeep trips into the vast deserts are equally amazing and in-





spiring. The more courageous may try one's hand at sandboarding — i. e. riding down a sand dune on a board. Hot sand instead of snow — that's what I call fun! To see how it all looks like from the bird's view, it is enough to put on parachute harness, attach it to a jeep, and rise up to try out a new sport.

On the next day, in the desert, different kind of integration competitions are held. Most of the time it is playing hare and hounds — only conditions are rather unusual! The participants receive GPS receivers, cars, and challenging tasks to complete. All the clues are hidden in specific places, and those to first complete the tasks are awarded afterwards. Go-cart races along a specially prepared track are also quite a challenge.

The further you go inland, the more diverse the desert becomes. You can find there bigger rock forms and stones containing large amounts of iron. These are like real instruments — when hit they emit clear sounds of various pitch. If you apply yourself to it, you can compose a nice melody.

RIGHT FROM THE SKY

Before the end of the trip, the participants get into small planes to fly to the National Park of Etosha. To emphasize the incentive part of this trip, another surprise is prepared — when flying, the participants can see the logo of their company on the slope of a dune. The

Etosha park is one of the biggest national parks in the world — over 22 thousand square kilometres — and is over a hundred years old. In the heart of it there is an enormous plain with a lake, where numerous animal species come to drink their fill. Giraffes, elephants, antelopes, black rhinoceroses, lions and cheetahs are a common sight here. No wonder the participants take here thousands of photos.

At the end of all the desert advantages comes a time for a meal. The participants sit at a table by the edge of a cliff and indulge themselves with delicacies like the world-famous Namibian oysters — a real treat for all the gourmets. Other culinary specialties available throughout the trip, apart from the seafood, are game dishes. The only thing missing is champagne. But it is not a problem either. In order to complete the supply a plane with two parachutists is called. This is how this golden alcoholic beverage is provided to the speechless guests.

That is how it is done in Namibia, a beautiful and unpredictable country.

Blue ocean on one side, and vast desert on the other. Namibia is mysterious and colourful. ■



Z Fell for... **Morocco**

Business Traveller interviews

Małgorzata O'Shaughnessy, Senior Vice President, Visa Europe, General Manager – Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia.

I usually travel to...

When on business, it is usually London, Prague or Bratislava. As for private trips, I go to different places, as whole my family like frequent journeys. Because of my lack of free time, these are mostly only very short trips to European countries. It so happens these are usually France and Italy, which have so much to offer when it comes to history, architecture, art, nature and excellent cuisine, that we keep on going back there. Last time we spent a long November weekend in Rome, then we went to Umbria, where, together with friends we rented a house to relax and please our eyes with the sight of this charming, unseen before, part of Italy.

On the plane I like...

I especially appreciate if planes depart punctually. When I'm on business, I also like to have some space for work – it gives more opportunity to stay focused during a flight. When I travel privately, I don't have any special expectations. What matters is the travel logistics – that is, how much time it takes, where my destination is, whether an airline provides transfer. When I travel privately I also use low-cost airlines, which often take me closer to my destination than regular airlines – and for much less money!

My favourite hotel...

I don't have one among the regular hotels. When on business, I usually stay at international hotels. What determines my choice are pragmatic reasons, like the proximity to a meeting point. When I'm with the family and we are outside a city, we usually rent a house or a suite. In city centres — these are usually rooms in small hotels — we don't pay attention to the number of stars, but the atmosphere and location. The hotel must make me feel like I'm on holiday, not at work. In our favourite Morocco, we usually look for small boutique hotels in some interesting places. Two of them, which especially stayed in my memory are Caravan Serai in Marrakech – a lovely place in the heart of poor suburbs, where my daughters immediately made friends with the local kids, and Kasbah Bab Ourika – a small stunning, ecological hotel made of clay, according to the Moroccan tradition. The hotel is situated at the foot of the Atlas mountains and overlooks the beautiful valley of Ourika – I hope to go back there soon.

My remedy for a long journey...

A good book and a bottle of water. If it is a long flight – I try to stand up and walk around the plane.

I always take with me...

Something to read, my blackberry and mobile.

During a flight...

It depends. When on business, I usually work, sometimes have to think over some important matters – the silence on a plane helps a lot. When going on holiday – I try to rest, and always read something.

I regret that...

I wouldn't mind having the Internet access on a plane.

My favourite airport...

Nice and Figari in Corsica. Both provide beautiful views over mountains and the sea. The Nice airport is small, sunny and flier-friendly, while the one in Figari is super small – the building resembles a shed. I think I've chosen these two, because I associate them with numerous unforgettable holiday stays in Corsica, Provence, Liguria or Roussillon in the Pyrenees.

What attracts my attention in hotels is...

When on business I pay attention to the proximity to the meeting points, as well as the pool and gym availability, because I found physical exercise relaxing. When on holiday – it is the location, views, aesthetics and the atmosphere.

When I have a break, I usually...

When on business I usually have short breaks, so I try to explore the neighbourhood to know the place better. If a break is longer, and I'm new to the place, I try to spend my time trying to explore them. When I visit places already explored, like London, where I lived for a couple of years – I visit my family and friends, or go shopping.

The greatest holiday so far...

There were many of them. The decision of where to go with my family is always democratic and carefully thought-out. That is why, we rarely go to uninteresting places. I don't have any especially memorable holidays, and my favourite

places are generally those which I visited several times, like Morocco, the Corsica, Canada – especially Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island or, recently, the beautiful Pyrenees.

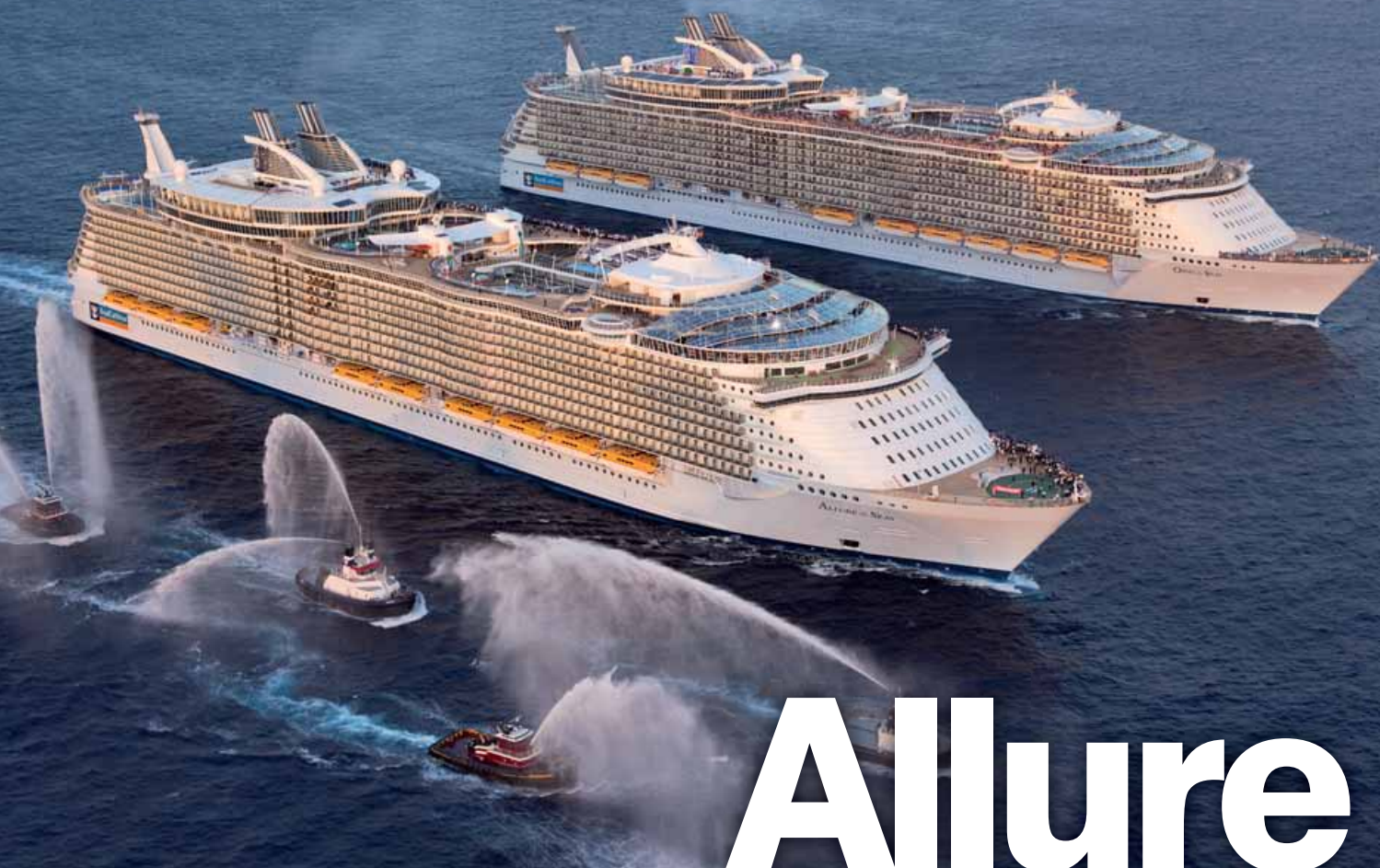
A trip adventure I'd be willing to forget about...

Unfortunately, I sometimes have various problems with personal documents, especially when daydreaming on holiday. The most unpleasant surprise was, already at the airport gate, they didn't allow me to embark on a plane to New York, despite the fact that earlier I had gone through all possible passport controls. It was in the summer, after the memorable September 11. We were flying on holiday to New York and Boston, as well as to the Nantucket Island. My family was the last to embark, a few minutes before the take-off. An airport controller looked at my passport and decided I couldn't go because my passport wasn't biometric! We had three minutes to make a decision what to do – my family embarked on a plane, and I spent two days in the consulates of different countries, but eventually I got to New York. I still think it was worth it, as the Big Apple is a really fascinating city. I will come back there, this time with an appropriate passport.

I know I'm going to visit...

There are many places I would like to see. As for family holiday, we want to go to Africa – probably Kenya and Tanzania where lives Omondi – a 14-year-old boy we've been helping for some time now, and whom we would really like to visit. I would also like to visit some Asian countries, like Laos, Vietnam, or Tibet — where I would go for some yoga lessons, as I try to practise it regularly!





Allure

Nearly six thousand guests, sixteen decks and the length equal to three football pitches. Welcome to a new, giant passenger ship. Ladies and Gentlemen, Allure of the Seas is going on a cruise.

When last year Oasis of the Seas was launched, the excitement was enormous. The biggest ship surprised the general public not only with its size, but also quite unusual shape and numerous technological solutions. However, Oasis is only the first of the series of ships to be built by the Royal Caribbean company, one of the biggest cruise lines in the world. Allure of the Seas, which is bound to go into its maiden voyage in December, is its sister ship, similar in style and design. And what's also important – it makes as good an impression as its predecessor.

SHREK ON THE SEA

If you looked at Allure of the Sea from the bird's view, you would surely say it resembled a huge, floating city. What attracts the attention is something, which

resembles a huge canyon, whose walls are decorated with rows of windows. This promenade, stretches all along the ship until the stern, where the open Aqua Theatre is located. It has an extension stage with a swimming pool underneath, and it can seat more than 700 people. There is also an enormous climbing frame here. To top it all, there is also an aqua park with swimming pools, paddling pools, showers and hundreds of sunbeds. Allure of the Seas is an excellent place to spend your summer holiday, exploring all the ports visited along the way, as well as having lots of fun onboard.

Speaking about entertainment, it is worth mentioning that the cruise line has signed a contract with Dream Works Animation, and is now allowed to use the images of their characters on the ships. This means that the passengers will surely stumble upon Shrek, Fiona





MEANS MAGIC

and penguins from “Madagascar” movie – for instance during theatre performances (there are two theatres, the one mentioned above, and the inner called Amber), or during parades taking place on the promenade. Those will mostly appeal to children, who will be able to take part in games and activities connected with the popular films. In order to move with the times, the cruise line has equipped the Amber Theatre with 3D screens.

Royal Caribbean is known for its attention to details and high quality of performances. The shows always have excellent choreography and world-recognized stage scenery. Allure of the Seas continues the noble traditions and offers an adaptation of the famous “Chicago” musical, the dancing “Blue Planet” spectacle, full of dramatic manoeuvres like jumping into the sea (under the extension stage there is water), the “OceanAria” performance, or “Ice Games” – a breath-

From a bird's
eye view

Allure of the
Seas resembles a large
floating city.

taking ice spectacle – because a skating rink is also one of the ship facilities.

THE LOFT ON WATER

The stay on the ship is nice and comfortable, regardless of the size of your cabin. The cruise line takes pride in the fact that it was the first to introduce split-level lofts, resembling luxurious apartments – only these float on the ocean and offer amazing views through enormous windows. In ►





the lofts there are two bedrooms, a lounge and a comfortable terrace. They also come with a sofa, armchairs, two bathrooms, an LCD TV, comfortable beds and modern ornaments – a characteristic feature of all the rooms on the ship.

Altogether there are 2,706 cabins, and most of them (almost two thousands) come with a balcony. Royal Caribbean has successfully dealt with the problem of windowless cabins. There are 496 inner cabins, whose windows overlook the ship's promenade. A standard cabin of this type is slightly more than 50 sqm, and comes with a double bed, a sofa, a bathroom, an LCD TV set, a safe, a fridge, a wardrobe, and a desk. The rooms with balconies differ in size. Apart from the lofts, there are also suites: Junior Suite, which is 95 sqm and Grand Suite – 120 sqm. An interesting option is Aqua Theatre Suite – a two-room suite with a big terrace, located on the stern – you can watch theatre performances in open space from there. There is also a royal and presidential suite – they come with four bedrooms

There are restaurants serving the world's cuisine, a skating rink, a theatre, and even a casino. There's no time to be bored.

and four bathrooms and 14 people can stay there.

SOMETHING TO BITE

How many places where you can satisfy your appetite does Allure of the Seas have on its offer? A many as 26. Coffee and cookie lovers may choose the Starbucks cafe. Anyone who wants to try out Brazilian cuisine (especially steaks), should visit Samba Grill, while Rita's Cantina is a nice place to have some Mexican food. An interesting innovation is an eatery called The Boardwalk Dog House – a place where you can try hog dogs prepared in many different ways. Naturally, the enthusiasts of cakes and ice-creams will not be disappointed either – especially for them there is an ice-cream parlour and a cake shop. You will also find here a bar, specializing in sandwiches and salads. A quite interesting place is Johnny Rocket – a bar decorated in the style of the 1950's.

The Central Park restaurant is a place where you can taste superb wines. In the Vintages wine bar, you will also have

a chance to try fabulous cheese of various types and the famous tapas. If you are a fan of Italian cuisine, you won't miss the opportunity to visit a typically Italian, family-run the Giovanni's Table restaurant. The steak enthusiasts should try out the Chops Grille restaurant. Izumi is an eatery serving excellent sushi, while at Sorrento's you will eat tasty pizzas.

There are also other eateries (cafes, bistros, bars), but the most popular are definitely Windjammer and Adagio restaurants. The former serves breakfasts and lunches in a form of buffet, while the latter specializes in elegant dinners served a la carte with impeccable service and always excellent wines. Designed in Art Deco style, the Adagio restaurant makes you think of the 20's.

LIFE IN STYLE

Talking about Allure of the Seas, it's impossible not to mention the decor. The whole ship deserves attention and recognition here – not only the cabins. The impressive pieces of art like paintings,



photographs, sculptures are ubiquitous here – Royal Caribbean has even a special department which supplies the ship with these.

What also attracts your attention is the greenery. Yes, the floating giant is an oasis of greenery. Lawns and gardens are nothing unusual here. In fact, even one of the outdoor areas of the ship was called Central Park. Here, you will find all sorts of flora from all over the world, like olive trees, dracaenas, lilies and grapevines, as well as small ponds and benches.

The idea behind the park is not only to please the eye, but also to provide a place to relax. The same applies to extensive recreation facilities. The aqua park called H2O Zone consists of 4 swimming pools, interactive fountains, water cannons and 10 Jacuzzis. Other facilities include basketball and volleyball courts, the FlowRider surfing wave simulator for beginners, a climbing frame, and something really unique: the so called Zip Line – a rope stretched above the promenade on which you traverse while looking at the ship from the level of a few floors.

The Spa and Fitness Centre offer a wide range of beauty treatments, but also professional equipment of about 150 items. If you are interested in yoga, pilates, aerobics or even kickboxing, you can train under the supervision of qualified instructors. There is also a 800 metre-long jogging path stretching along one of the decks. You can make use of the golf course and skating rink as well.

Naturally, the nightlife on the ship is also flourishing – the clubs, discotheques and casinos are open daily until the very morning hours, which is just perfect – such a voyage around the Caribbean Sea is a real occasion to live your life to the full. ■

Paweł Kowalski

Rewolucja na rynku dostawców internetu szerokopasmowego?

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The Pearl of the Ocean



Located on the Western coast of the Mauritius island, the Maradiva Villas Resort & Spa looks as if it was taken out of an advertising brochure: the five-star hotel is surrounded with vivid colours, lush greenery, turquoise sea and golden sand.

Mauritius is often associated with two things – distance and luxury. The former – thanks to the numerous air connections – is no longer a problem, the latter – is nothing but sheer truth. The island is renowned for its giant hotels, where guests can really enjoy themselves and relax in superb atmosphere. One of the places of this sort is Maradiva Villas Resort & Spa, a resort designed in a Hindu-inspired style – the culture, which is omnipresent and cultivated

in the whole of Mauritius. Maradiva is not a typical hotel, as it consists of a number of separate villas. Given this, their excellent service and numerous other attractions, no one should need a further incentive to come here.

The Resort is situated at the Tamarin Bay, by the Western coast of Mauritius – an island known for sunny, hot and dry climate. The island's coastline is about 330 km, which is quite an attraction by itself, and most of it is occupied by hotel resorts. Maradiva offers its guests 65 luxurious villas, two restaurants and bars.



Naturally, you will also find here a spectacular swimming pool, a fitness centre, a spa, a kids club and an impressive beach. It's an ideal place for someone, who wishes to relax in peace and quiet, away from the hustle and bustle of everyday life. It would also be a good choice for anyone interested in learning about Mauritius – all the must-see attractions are not far away from here.

The grey-tiled villas catch your attention thanks to its architectural elegance and good taste. They are located in various parts of the resort to provide the guests with as much privacy as possible –

this is also achieved thanks to the tropical gardens, which surround the buildings. The hotel offers 57 Luxury Suite villas (11 of them face the sea), 6 Exclusive Suite villas and two presidential houses. There are also buildings which can be joined together for a larger family or a group of friends. Each villa is spacious and comfortable and the guests can expect 24-hour dedicated service, quick access to the beach, a private patio and swimming pool, as well as a garden shower – which is an excellent convenience in this climate. It is possible to order a meal to your room at any time of the day.

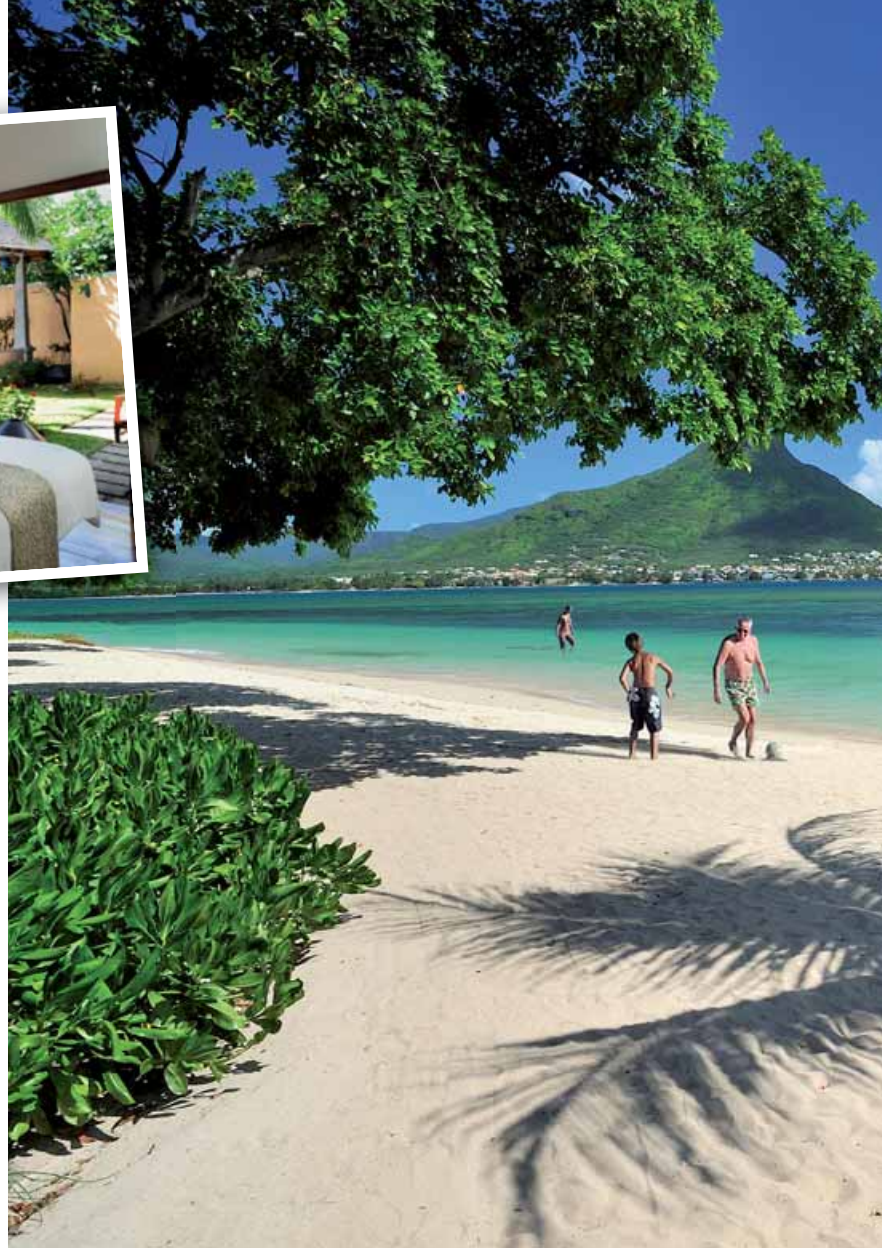
The Luxury Suites Houses are 163 sq m. They consist of one big bedroom, a restroom, a bathroom with a shower and a bath, and a dressing room. The lounge and dining room are located in the outdoor section, on a huge terrace, under the arches. Next to the swimming pool (14 sq m), there is a sunbed, where you can rest during the day. The villas also come with a plasma TV, a DVD player, an iPod docking station, broadband internet access, a safe, a coffee maker, and a Bose CD player. The guests also receive bathrobes, bath towels and beach towels, toiletries, tea, coffee and bottled water. ►



Exclusive villas are bigger (220 sq m) and have an additional lobby and a lounge. There is also a bathtub with Jacuzzi and a swimming pool (25 sq m). The most luxurious are the Presidential Suite villas. They spread over 345 sq m and everything here is double: two bedrooms, two bathrooms, two dressing rooms, two patios and two garden showers. A large veranda leads to the terrace and a vast swimming pool (56 sq m), which you can access via a couple of steps.

Hotels in Mauritius are known for excellent service and customer care. Maradiva is no different in this respect. The reception desk is open 24/7, there is an Air France and Air Mauritius check-in kiosk (you can arrive at the airport only 1.5 hour before the flight, instead of usual 3 hours), a laundry and an ironing room, clothes and jewellery shops, as well as a library and a video shop. They also provide childcare service and airport transfer. The hotel's business facilities include a conference room, which can accommodate up to 40 people, and a Business Centre with computers, printers and wireless internet access. However, those who visit Maradiva resort can scarcely be accused of suffering from workaholicism. They would rather visit the local Spa centre which offers all sorts of treatments in a calm and relaxed atmosphere. Hindu-inspired Ayurveda massage or yoga are especially reviving and refreshing. Ladies will surely be interested in a visit to a beauty parlour. Manicure, pedicure, beauty treatments, therapeutic face mask and massages are only some of the choices. The Fitness Centre also has plenty to offer. You can take part in classic aerobics sessions, water gymnastics, or beach volleyball tournaments. The other sports facilities include a tennis court and several table tennis tables. You can also

The grey-tiled villas catch your attention thanks to its architectural elegance and good taste.





rent a bicycle in the hotel, and visit the resort and the neighbourhood. Speaking of which – some of you might want to know that there is an 18-hole golf course located near the resort. But there are other attractions, too. You can go to the Casela Yem-en Nature Park to observe the lions, or visit the famous Seven Coloured Earths in Chamarel, where you can admire a real miracle of nature – an area of sand dunes with sand of seven different colours.

Crystal clear water and colourful coral reef are real symbols of Mauritius. Maradiva also has a rental point for water sports equipment, and the local instructors will gladly give you a couple of lessons. The guests can use pedal boats, kayaks, snorkelling, sailing and windsurfing equipment or go on a glass bottom boat trips. All these attractions are included in the price, but if you feel like going on a motorboat, catamaran, a fishing trip to fish for marlins, or swim with the dolphins – you will have to pay extra.

There are two restaurants in the resort – Cilantro and Coast2Coast. They offer very diverse meals with an emphasis on the Hindu cuisine – and anyone who has tried this style of cooking, knows that it offers an abundance of tastes, which makes it genuinely unique. Cilantro offers not only Hindu food, but also a selection of the so-called panasian dishes, which means that you will find here some traces of Japanese, Vietnamese and Thai cuisine. The restaurant has also a separate lounge for clients who wish to try one of their delicious cocktails. The other eatery – Coast2Coast – offers Mediterranean and local food, as well as so called international cuisine. It is situated on the beach, has an open terrace where you can admire the irresistible views of the lagoon. To complete the offer, there are two bars: the Breakers Bar and the Beach Bar. Breakers Bar serves excellent drinks and snacks, and you can enjoy there live music. You should also bear in mind that you can order a meal to your room – the service is available 24/7.

Because of the location, and super quality, Maradiva is very often chosen by young couples as a perfect spot for their wedding ceremony. It is, of course, also an ideal honeymoon destination. Not surprisingly though, as there are not many equally romantic places as the Mauritius island. ■

Kuba Rams



Golf-crazy Singapore offers a range of classy courses perfect for sealing that all-important business deal. **Minty Clinch** tees off

SLING SHOTS

SENTOSA GOLF CLUB

WHERE IS IT? 5km south of the city centre.

WHAT'S IT LIKE? Singapore's flagship golf club is an ultra-smart set-up with corporate and political ambitions far beyond the pursuit of the elusive white ball. Opened in 1974 by then prime minister Lee Kuan Yew, and located within 15 minutes of the financial district, it welcomes the international elite with a thoroughly commercial spirit. The Tanjong course came first but the Serapong, opened in 1982 and revamped in 2007, has eclipsed it in recent years. Regularly voted the best in Asia, it hosts the Barclays Singapore Open in November, but its day-to-day purpose is to provide a handsome environment for shaking hands on contracts rather than golf

victories. The courses are impeccably maintained, their velvet fairways bordered by tropical woodland, banks of flowers and sheets of water. The red-roofed, white-pillared clubhouse evokes a colonial elegance that has long been replaced by hard-nosed wheeler-dealing, but it is certainly a place to linger long after the last putt has sunk.

ADDRESS 27 Bukit Manis Road, Sentosa Island

CONTACT Tel +65 6275 0022; sgc_golf@sentosa.com.sg; sentosagolf.com

PRICE Serapong £155 weekdays, £220 weekends; Tanjong £140 weekdays, £195 weekends. Prices include cost of buggies. Caddies are available.

CLUB HIRE £37 (Callaway)

CLUB HOURS 6.45am-7pm

MINIMUM HANDICAP 24 for men, 36 for women

FACILITIES Two 18-hole championship golf courses: Serapong (6,675m, par 72) and Tanjong (6,014m, par 72). Driving range and practice area.

AFTER THE GOLF The food options are as upmarket as the setting, with a choice of Italian at Il Lido, overlooking the South China Sea, or Japanese at the Nogawa.



RAFFLES COUNTRY CLUB

WHERE IS IT? 30km west of the city centre.

WHAT'S IT LIKE? Although unrelated to Singapore's iconic Raffles hotel, this country club is similarly classy. Both courses were designed by Robert Trent Jones Jr. The Palm is a challenge for the thinking golfer, featuring small wooded hills and cunningly placed bunkers to break up the rolling fairways, while the Lake lives up to its name, with the frequent threat of ball-swallowing marshes on the shores of the Tengah reservoir.

ADDRESS 450 Jalan Ahmad Ibrahim

CONTACT Tel +65 6861 7655; rcc.org.sg

PRICE Palm £60-£63 weekdays, £145 weekends; Lake £60-£83 weekdays, £171 weekends. Buggy hire is £10 per golfer.

CLUB HIRE £16 (Japanese)

CLUB HOURS 7am-6.30pm

MINIMUM HANDICAP 27 for men, 36 for women.

Certificate required.

FACILITIES Two 18-hole courses: Lake (6,041m, par 72) and Palm (6,072m, par 72).

AFTER THE GOLF Celebrate success with a Tiger beer on the spacious Golfers' Terrace or a Western-style snack in the Lakefront Café. The Shanshui Palace restaurant specialises in seafood and Chinese dishes and is open for lunch and dinner.



- 1 SENTOSA GOLF CLUB
- 2 RAFFLES COUNTRY CLUB
- 3 ORCHID COUNTRY CLUB
- 4 MARINA BAY GOLF COURSE
- 5 JURONG COUNTRY CLUB

ORCHID COUNTRY CLUB

WHERE IS IT? 15km north of the city centre.

WHAT'S IT LIKE? Two of the three loops of nine can be combined to make 18, although the choice is often limited by seemingly never-ending renovation. The focus is the Sungei Seletar reservoir, a source of irrigation water and a backdrop to many of the holes. Rough is rarely a threat and gentle regulation bunkers are unlikely to damage your score card. The Aranda, set back from the reservoir with hilly fairways and raised tees, is the most hydrophobic-friendly; look for its talking point, an orchid-shaped bunker on the uphill par 5 ninth. Night golf is a religion here, with masses of buggies chugging through shadowy tropical darkness until close to the witching hour.

ADDRESS 1 Orchid Club Road

CONTACT Tel +65 6750 2111; golf@orchidclub.com; orchidclub.com

PRICE £41 weekday mornings; £50 weekday afternoons; £92 weekends; night golf £5 supplement. Buggies cost £10.

CLUB HIRE £22 (Ram)

CLUB HOURS 7am-11pm

MINIMUM HANDICAP Required; 27 for men, 36 for women.

FACILITIES

There are three nine-hole loops: Dendro (3,262m, par 37), Aranda (3,051m, par 36) and Vanda (3,037m, par 36). There is also a four-hole practice course, the Peter Senior and Gary Edwin Golf Academy, and a 160-bay two-tier driving range (7.30am-12am) that is due to re-open next month following a refurbishment.

AFTER THE GOLF Players can stay on-site in the 69-room Orchid Lodge. The Vanda Terrace is open from 7.30am to 11pm for breakfast, lunch and dinner.

**MARINA BAY GOLF COURSE**

WHERE IS IT? In the city centre.

WHAT'S IT LIKE? When it comes to extortionate membership fees, Singapore's private clubs have long been a licence to print money, leaving the rest of the population in a permanent state of golf deprivation. The first light at the end of this tunnel came in 2006 with the opening of the front nine at Marina Bay, the city's inaugural public course. When the back nine were ready a year later, the breakthrough was complete – Singapore was officially a place where anyone could play. Marina Bay is as metro-central as the game can get, overlooked by the Singapore Flyer, the world's largest observation wheel, and within a stone's throw of the new on-street Formula One motor racing track. When the

sandy terrain was reclaimed from the sea, it was completely flat, but the courses have been landscaped to present an intriguing challenge. Irrigation lakes provide additional hazards, along with pot bunkers borrowed from Scottish links.

ADDRESS 80 Rhu Cross

CONTACT Tel +65 6345 7788; golfbookings@mbgc.com.sg; mbgc.com.sg

PRICE £36-£50 weekdays, £45-£90 weekends. For evening/night golf (Wednesday-Friday) there is a £5/£10 lighting supplement.

CLUB HIRE £30 (Callaway)

CLUB HOURS 7am-10pm

MINIMUM HANDICAP Required, 24 for men, 36 for women.

FACILITIES One 18-hole course (6,542m, par 72); driving range (7am-10.45pm, closed Monday till noon); Star Golf Academy.

AFTER THE GOLF The Canopy Café starts with a light breakfast shortly after dawn, then progresses to both Chinese and colonial-style grub.

**JURONG COUNTRY CLUB**

WHERE IS IT? 20km west of the city centre.

WHAT'S IT LIKE? In a place where several rival clubs guard their exclusivity fiercely, Jurong stands out for the warmth of its welcome. The original nine holes, which opened in 1975, are the more interesting, starting with a tough uphill dogleg and progressing to a testing signature hole requiring a long carry over water and a decorative but distinctive fountain at the sixth. The back nine are flat and open, with large lakes and minimal rough – a good example of Singapore's default method of encouraging speedy play. This is necessary in a golf-crazy community that is chronically short of tee times, especially at weekends. Although buggies are available, Jurong is walkable, especially with a caddie to advise on its idiosyncrasies.

ADDRESS 9 Science Centre Road

CONTACT Tel +65 6560 5655; jcc.org.sg

PRICE £41 weekday mornings; £48 weekday afternoons; £82 weekends; night golf lighting fee £6.

CLUB HIRE From £11 (different brands available)

CLUB HOURS 7am-7.30pm (7pm weekends)

MINIMUM HANDICAP 36 for men, 40 for women

FACILITIES An 18-hole course (6,219m, par 72), a five-hole executive course, a two-tier 54-bay floodlit driving range, a practice area and a putting green. Caddies cost £11 plus a tip.

AFTER THE GOLF Golfers' Terrace is open 7am-11pm (8pm on Sundays) for breakfast, lunch and dinner. Time Out Pub (open 5pm-1am) has karaoke on demand, a pool table and happy hour from 5pm to 8pm.



Giftmania

Last year we encouraged you to take the initiative in choosing a Christmas gift that would suit your needs. In other words, you were supposed to tell your relatives what things you would like to receive. This year, however, we return to the traditional procedure. Let's give Santa a chance. This change of approach doesn't only come from the desire to keep the tradition, but more from our own experience.

Let's face it – there's not much joy in receiving a gift when you know beforehand what's inside the box. The emotions connected with opening presents are often more important than the end result itself. Because good intentions do count! To inspire you, we present six, in our opinion, interesting electronic gadgets, which should suit the tastes of even the most refined "gift takers". Merry Christmas!

Philips SensoTouch 3D

It turns out that in the time of 3D revolution not only TV sets or Blu-ray players have entered the three-dimensional world. Phillips has created an electric shaver which proudly carries the luxurious 3D badge. And it is something to celebrate indeed as the mere design of the shaver is truly impressive. When turned on, the shaver cuts everything it meets on its way, adjusting its shaving heads to even the most sulky faces. What is important, both dry and wet shaving is quick and painless, and the

whole procedure is surprisingly pleasant. The shaver is packed with lots of electronic systems: GyroFlex 3D (three independent shaving heads), Super Lift & Cut Action (dual blade system lifts hairs to cut comfortably below skin level), and Jet Clean+ (cleans, lubricates and charges the shaver). As befits a top shelf product, there is also a clear display, indicating low battery state, the need to clean the shaver, or to replace the shaving heads. Although shaving is not one of the most pleasant activities in a man's life, SensoTouch 3D can make it just a little bit more pleasant. Philips set the price for the shaver at **PLN 1799**.

FOTOLIA



Samsung LED TV Seria 9000

Following the success of Avatar movie by James Cameron, the world went nuts about 3D technology. Not surprisingly then the biggest players on the market immediately went down to work. The stake was high – almost “to be or not to be” on the market. Then after the market premiere of the first 3D TV sets, all the excitement subdued. It turned out that the equipment is extremely expensive and requires wearing special glasses. 3D is for sure the future of television, but for now the technology is accessible only for a handful of people – as it’s always the case with different technological novelties. Samsung’s flagship model is not only an excellent TV set, but almost a work of art. Even the greatest names in the business wouldn’t be ashamed of its design – a slender 8 mm thin frame is made of brushed stainless steel. Inside we will find cutting edge electronics: Hyper Real Engine 3D processor which provides compatibility with all the most popular 3D standards, Internet@TV function, wireless connection with devices connected to home WiFi network, and low energy consumption. Together with the TV set the users receive a remote control with a 3-inch touch display (in this way we can watch TV directly on the remote while something else is being watched on the TV). Model 9000 is available in two sizes: 46 inch (PLN 19,900), and 55 inch (**24 999 PLN**).



SonySMP-N100

No more wires! Sony has introduced its newest network media player which takes advantage of Bravia Internet Video technology, home's wireless broadband network, and streaming in DNLA standard. In this way both the sound and the picture may be freely sent all around the house. Music, video, and photos can be directly sent to the player via USB flash drive, hard disk (via USB), or broadcast from the Internet or our home PC.

In order to enhance the quality of videos from YouTube SMP-N100 has been equipped with IP Content Noise Reduction technology. There's also access to “video on demand”, “catch

up TV” platform, and we can enjoy up to Full HD 1080p video quality, with a simple, one-cable HDMI connection to our HDTV. The modern design and the idea of the player which would free our houses from kilometres of wires, deserve the highest marks. However for those, who have already managed to wire up their flats and houses, this wireless media player may turn out to be a useless gadget, so you'd better check first if the person for whom you are planning to buy such a player, really needs one. **PRICE PLN 500 Zł.**





Motorola FLIPOUT

An American experiment. You can see at the very first glance that Flipout is a very original gadget. It will definitely cause a lot of stir among smartphone lovers. If it doesn't succeed, there will be other manufacturers which will "go square", but the fact is that even if FLIPOUT doesn't become a market hit, it, for sure, deserves laurels for courage in design. The square phone features a 700 MHz processor, Android 2.1 operating system, a 3 MP digital photo camera, a 2.8 inch TFT touch screen with 320 x 240 resolution, and a five row QWERTY keyboard. Flipout also features 3G, Bluetooth, and Wi-Fi. Its sizes are: 67 x 67 x 17 millimetres, and its weight is mere 120 grams. In Poland the gadget will be available in six fashionable colours: White, Poppy Red, Raspberry Crush, Brilliant Blue, Licorice, and Saffron. The suggested price is **PLN 1399**.

Harman Kardon Go + Play MICRO

The contents of an iPod or iPhone are often the whole musical life of their owner. In such a case appropriate sound system seems almost indispensable. Harman Kardon packed into its docking station very reliable processors which guarantee sound of the highest quality. The station is powered either by batteries or by AC, thanks to which it will be a regular guest to outdoor parties. Micro is also excellent as a multimedia entertainment centre, sending photos or videos from an iPod to a TV screen. The power of the speakers is sufficient 2 x 15 W (the tweeters) and 1 x 30 (the woofer). The equipment can last up to 22 hours of playing music on batteries, and the remote control has a range of 4.5 metres (it operates both iPod and iPhone). The dimensions are 391 x 267 x 27 mm. Price: **PLN 1299**.



Panasonic HM-TA1

December is definitely the best time for the movie industry as during that period many people become amateur film makers. That is hardly surprising though, because a video camera is an excellent Christmas gift. The newest Panasonic is a compact camera as thanks to its dimensions it resembles a mobile phone rather than a video equipment. To operate it you don't need to graduate from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and access to most functions is intuitive. TA1 records video in Full HD (1920 x 1080/30p) in MPEG-4 AVC format or in iFrame (960 x 540/30p) format optimized for Mac computers. Apart from the video you can also take still photos at resolution up to 8 MP. The camera also features E.I.S. system (image stabilizer), 4x digital zoom, special effects (Soft Skin, Sepia, Monochrome), and LED light useful when recording in the dark. Price: around **PLN 600**.

Lost in the Rhythms of Fado

When it comes to Portugal, you've either already been there or are planning to go, in the future. As a holiday destination it remains in the shadow of neighbouring Spain, but it is this air of mystery which makes it so appealing. This very same feature applies to traditional Portuguese cuisine, thus providing us with the possibility of discovering for ourselves the culinary delights, which this country has to offer.

On the surface, it seems that we could venture to label Portuguese cookery as "Mediterranean," but such simplification would be somewhat inappropriate. All you need to do is delve into the distinctive flavours and variety of Portuguese recipes – then it becomes clear that their "Mediterraneanness" is enriched with intercontinental quality, even when taking the spices, which were originally imported from other lands. The Age of Discovery, together with Henry the Navigator, the founder of the Portuguese Empire, is entirely to blame for the current state of affairs. Henry ordered his sailors to bring back to Portugal any spices from the new land, thus changing the Portuguese diet forever. For higher class this meant tables full of potatoes, tomatoes, chilli peppers, almonds, pineapples, cinnamon, cloves, and cashew nuts, which came from South America, Africa and India, flooding the country. Combined with the culinary passion for fish, typical of the Portuguese from the coastal regions, and with seafood, which is so beloved by those living further inland, it produced a wide variety of flavours and dishes.

Strange as caldo verde may sound, the translation – Portuguese cabbage soup – brings it a bit closer to polish hearts and stomachs (sour cabbage soup is considered a national dish in Poland). With its intense green colour that draws attention, this light and nourishing soup is very popular in Portugal. In order to prepare it, you will need 500 grams of Savoy cabbage chopped into fine strips, an onion, 2 cloves of garlic, finely chopped parsley, sliced smoked sausage (it would be the best to use the traditional Portu-



guese chorizo), ¼ kg of chopped potatoes, and olive oil. First, heat the olive oil in a pot, add the chopped onion and fry until transparent. Then, add the garlic and half of the amount of the chorizo. After simmering for several minutes, add enough water to cover generously and let it boil gently for 20 minutes. Next, mix everything in a blender and place back in the pot, adding parsley and the cabbage. Then, bring to the boil again, and season with salt and pepper. To serve, pour the caldo verde into the bowls and sprinkle with all the chorizo left. Now the specialty is ready to eat.

None of the Portuguese can do without Cozido, which can be prepared in various ways, with the use of different kinds of meat, cold meats, vegetables, and rice. The most popular, Cozido das Furnas, originated from the Azores, and is cooked beneath the earth using the rising thermal heat. You yourself can employ this method of cooking, by burying a pot in your neighbour's garden – this will give you a chance for having a friendly chat, while sipping a glass of port. However, you might want to prepare it in a different way. As for ingredients, you will need 1 kg of beef, 1 kg



Portugal is known for its immensely diverse tastes and culinary specialties.



of pork ribs, half of the chicken, 200 grams of green beans, smoked sausage, black pudding, 2 onions, 2 carrots, 2 turnips, a spring of mint, Savoy cabbage, 6 potatoes, and 200 grams of rice. Start with placing the beef, ribs, chicken and sausage into the pot with boiling water, and simmer it for some time. Next, add salt, the onion, and turnip. When the ingredients are tender, take them out and place in separate bowls, adding a bit of the stock. Strain the rest of the stock through a sieve and pour some of this liquid so as to boil the rice and mint in it. Add the beans and the cabbage to the rest of the broth and simmer. Place the cabbage in the bowl and, after slicing the beef, ribs, chicken, and sausage, arrange the meat on the cabbage. Add the rest of vegetables and rice. Now your dish is ready. But what about fado, which is included in the title? – Well, before the beginning of your culinary adventure, don't forget to put Mariza's album in your CD player. Bon appetit! ■

Artur Kolger

It is difficult to believe that in the world there are a few thousands varieties of the Common Grape Vine – one which is usually used to make quality wines. However, even though we can buy the same Chardonnay, Cabernet Sauvignon or Syrah – especially on the Continent there are still many varieties, which have not won worldwide popularity. They have preserved their traditional character and desired authenticity.

Vitis Vinifera is a Latin name for the Common Grape Vine. It is distinctively different from those grapes usually bought from the fruit stalls. Those intended for consumption are cross-bred to obtain bigger grapes of darker skin and smaller seeds. Vitis Vinifera, on the other hand, except for few exceptions, are not fit for consumption. The grapes are smaller with thicker skin and much more acidity and sugar, which enables to obtain an appropriate

amount of alcohol. Contrary to what you may think, grapes are the sweetest fruit in the world.

The only variety intended for consumption, which also produces good quality wine is the Italian Fragolino. It has gained popularity thanks to its strawberry aroma. The sweet and sparkling wine produced from this variety is virtually impossible to obtain and ve-

ry difficult to distinguish from numerous artificially flavoured poor imitations – though Fragolino is not the highest quality wine itself.

VARIETIES AROUND THE GLOBE

Most varieties commonly grown in “The New World” come from France. Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Malbec and Sauvignon Blanc come from Bordeaux, Chardonnay and Pinot Noir – from Burgundy and Syrah and Viognier – from the Rhone Valley. Even Carmenere, considered by many as indigenously Chilean, also comes from the “Land of Franks”. Limiting the number of varieties available in the New World to only a dozen, however, is very boring in the long run. And even though wine producers are unusually imaginative

BIGSTOCK / DREAMTIME

WINE'S EXPRESSION

GRAPE VARIETIES

PART II

Vitis Vinifera, except for few exceptions, are not fit for consumption.

and ambitious, trying to create something original, due to a number of wines produced from the same variety, their efforts seem to go almost unnoticeable. Especially, as the climate outside Europe is quite stable and minimize all the discrepancies connected with good or bad vintages and the terroir. That is why more and more varieties are “exported” to overseas countries. Today, you will find there even Corvina from Valpolicelli or Barbera from Piedmont.

THE IDENTITY OF THE VARIETY

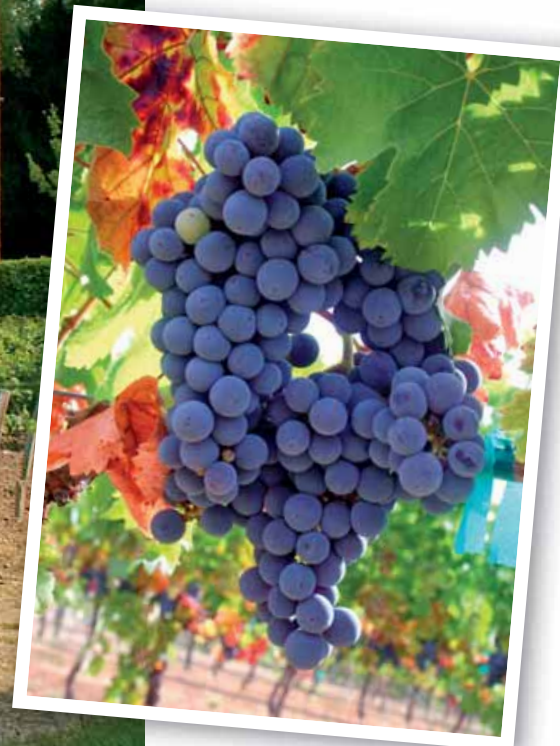
The same variety in two other parts of the world might give wine of totally different character. It is connected with the expression of climate and soil, the so called terroir, which we discussed earlier. However, despite the differences, each variety its own unique identity – that’s why the same

Chardonnay from the appellation of Chablis and one from the Napa Valley in California will differ in almost everything – but it is this “almost” thing which defines the character of the variety. Chablis will be light, resilient and delicate with distinctive mineral acidity, whereas Chardonnay from Napa will be greasy, creamy and dominated by the barrel aromas of vanilla and cream. However, in both types you can distinguish citrus flavour, even though in Burgundy it will be a grapefruit aroma with a bitter lemon pip, while in California it will be a flavour of candied pomelo or lime. The same applies to Cabernet Sauvignon – in which you can trace the tastes of black currant and pepper, and Tuscan Sangiovese with the aroma of tobacco. All this allows us to recognize every grape variety on spec, on condition that a winemaker has not disturbed the wine’s natural expression.

INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

Luckily, there are places in the world, which still oppose the progressive McDonaldization in the viticulture. Italy is such an independent country, where out of 300 grape varieties currently grown, only 7 come from abroad. Other opponents include the indigenous people who closely guard their identity and are reluctant to leave their native peninsula. They are the source of the authenticity. The varieties are so closely connected to the very soil they grow in, that it rarely happens they „leave” their country, or region, or even the valley or hill. They are often used to produce simple wines, although some of the more ambitious producers resist the temptation to follow the fashion, and decide to use the varieties to make high quality wine – good enough to compete with the famous wine giants. This was the case with Elisabetta Foradori, who used the puny variety of Teroldego Rotaliano to make the famous Granato – a real treat for wine enthusiasts from all over the world. But no matter if the local varieties are used to make big or simple wines, you cannot deny how authentic they all are. Such wine is unique and tells the story of the land it comes from. These are the varieties we should be looking for, as they are going to be more and more difficult to find. ■

Michał Poddany & Robert Mielżyński



Only a few SUVs are capable of combining comfort and convenience with the driving precision. That is why BMW X3 can surprise you – it drives like a rally car and can accommodate a whole family with luggage.

Sprinter



Do you know how long BMW has been experimenting with a 4x4 drive? The answer may seem surprising: for almost 25 years. Initially, this drive was installed only in sports vehicles, but later, when so called Sport Utility Vehicles (SUV) appeared, they also acquired this technology. How many types of such a car does BMW have in its offer? As many as four. X1 is ideal for those who are novice at driving the vehicles from Munich. X3 and X5 will be the first choice for more demanding drivers, while X6 is aimed at the rich and the stylish.

THE BIGGER AND MORE LUXURIOUS

The interior finished with leather and simulated wood — the second generation of BMW X3 has be-

come more luxurious in order to surpass X1 model. Soft floor mats, comfortable seats and lots of space (the capacity of the boot is 550 litres), which is often sought by a driver who must spend at least PLN 160,000 to buy this car (the price for the cheapest Diesel version). The drivability is a strong point of X3. Thanks to a multilink rear suspension, the electronics which controls the drive (the four wheel drive!), as well as Dynamic Dampener Control (controls the stiffness of the dampers and learns the driver's style) and Dynamic Drive Control (uses computer-controlled actuators to stiffen or loosen the anti-roll bars, which help reduce body roll in corners but contribute to a rough ride), the Bavarian SUV drive like a sports car. Not like an off-road car, but almost like a rally car. On the asphalt the BMW drives like a dream, but going off road with it would be inadvisable. It would be a pity to torture it so much.

(ALMOST) SPORTS CHASSIS

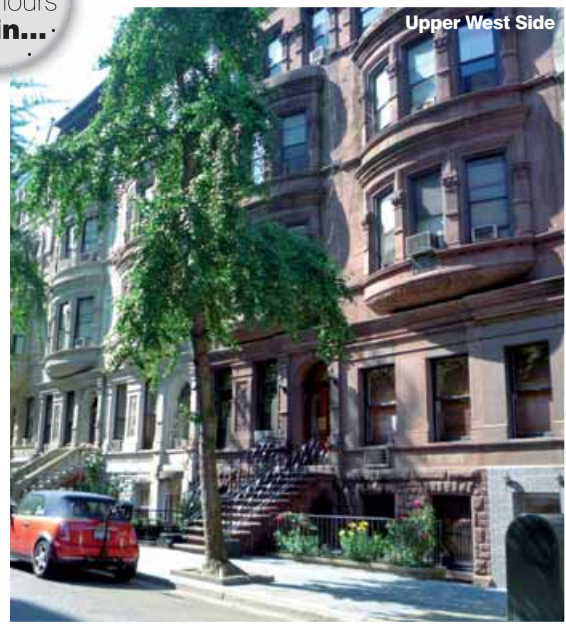
...but a limited choice of engines. At least at the beginning of sales, because later BMW will surely decide to introduce new motors. As for now, we must make the best of what we've got, i. e. a petrol 3.0 litre en-

gine producing 306 BHP (so-called Xdrive 35i biturbo) or a two-litre turbodiesel (Xdrive 20d) which produces 184 BHP. The car, independently of its engine, can be ordered with a 8-speed automatic transmission called Steptronic, and — which is a novelty — also with Start&Stop system. Up to recently such solutions were never used, but BMW engineers have proved that when there's a will, there's a way. If our car is standing in the traffic, it's just enough to press the brake pedal for the engine to switch off. But when you finally want to move, the engine restarts immediately and without any jerking. What is all this for? For the vehicle to consume less fuel and emit less fumes. BMW is very much concerned about it, because being a manufacturer of cars with powerful (i. e. producing masses of CO₂) engines, will have to pay fines for exceeding emission limits. However, the users don't give a heck about the internal issues of the Germans. They rather wonder if buying such an expensive car is a reasonable thing, and whether we will have to spend a fortune on fuel. BMW boasts that the model equipped with the petrol engine can consume less than 9 litres per 100 kilometres if it's driven reasonably. Do you believe in it? Neither do we. It doesn't change the fact, however, that BMW is a solid and reliable car. A family car, but with sporty inclinations, which means that having an X3 doesn't necessarily mean losing every traffic light race. ■

*Rafał Jemielita
is a journalist for Playboy
and a co-presenter
of TVN*



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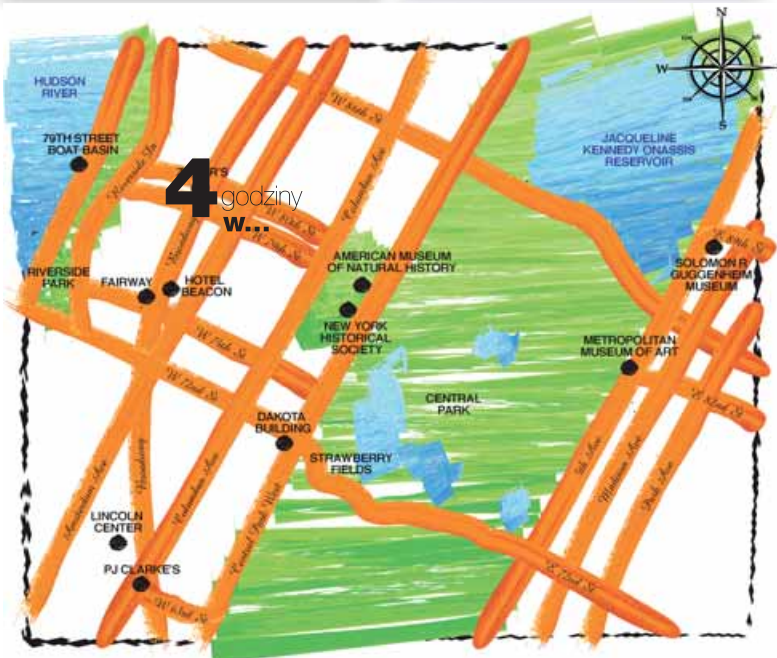
Upper West Side



Sheep Meadow,
Central Park



Boat Basin,
Riverside Park



Michelle Mannion discovers inspiring architecture, indulgent snacks and hysterical Lennon fans in the Big Apple

New York: Uptown Manhattan

RIVERSIDE PARK

Defined as the area north of 59th Street, Uptown encompasses the Upper East and West sides, Central Park, Morning-side Heights and Harlem, although here we venture up only about 30 blocks. While Central Park gets the spoils, the lesser known Riverside is an attractive spot to begin your tour. Stretching 6km north from 72nd Street along the western edge of Manhattan, it was designed in the 1870s by the same team behind Central Park with the aim of encouraging people to move to the Upper West Side. It's less touristy than Central and in the summer you'll see locals stretched out across its greens.

The park is home to various monuments – at 89th Street, the Soldiers and Sailors memorial remembers Civil War dead, while Joan of Arc is commemorated at 93rd. Further north, at 100th, is a monument to the city's fallen firefighters – a particularly poignant spot since the September 11 attacks in 2001. But if you don't want to cover that much gro-

und, simply cut through the park to the riverside at 79th Street, where the pretty Boat Basin is located, and walk along the path with the rest of the runners, riders, strollers and skaters. With so much of Manhattan built up, it's a pleasure to feel the breeze across the Hudson. Visit nycgovparks.org

FOOD ON BROADWAY

Head east a couple of blocks and take note of the attractive brownstone townhouses that line the side streets of the Upper West Side. As well as being a thriving residential area, this part of New York is a foodie haven, and this is nowhere more in evidence than on the section of Broadway that runs through it. At 74th Street, Fairway is a lively market teeming with mouth-watering produce – if you're not hungry, you will be by the time you've had a look around. Outside are racks of colourful fruit and veg, while inside there is a deli selling all manner of freshly prepared delights, cheese and fish counters, a bakery, butchers and a big olive

TOP TIP

If you're a performing arts fan, check out the programme at the Lincoln Center. The huge complex encompasses 12 organisations including the Metropolitan Opera, New York City Ballet and New York Philharmonic. Visit lincolncenter.org

bar. It's as much fun watching the New Yorkers attending to one of their biggest obsessions – good food – as to wander along the aisles.

At 80th Street is Zabar's, a family-run institution in operation for more than 70 years. Its counters are similarly teeming with goodies, especially cheese and coffee – more than 3,600kg of the latter are sold each week, with a wide variety of beans to choose from. It also has a large homeware section if you want to pick up any kit. Across the road from Fairway, Hotel Beacon's 260 rooms all come with a kitchenette, if you want to really take advantage of all that grub. Rooms are spacious for New York and have recently been refurbished. Visit fairwaymarket.com, zabars.com, beaconhotel.com

UPPER WEST SHOPPING

Next, cut across two blocks east for a spot of shopping. Home to numerous independent boutiques and names such as Reiss, L'Occitane, Ugg and Mac, Columbus Avenue is a charming and less fren-

tic alternative to Fifth Avenue. You'll also find many eateries here, including Il Violino (on the corner of West 68th Street), a down-to-earth, friendly Italian serving tasty food (ilviolinonyc.com).

If your shopping bug isn't sated, Broadway has stores such as Banana Republic, Urban Outfitters and the Apple Store, while the Shops at Columbus Circle in the Time Warner Centre (located where Broadway meets Central Park South) showcases all manner of brands. Watching drivers used to grid systems navigate the roundabout here is an amusement in itself. Visit shopsatcolumbuscircle.com

PJ CLARKE'S

You'll no doubt be in need of a cool drink now so head for PJ Clarke's on West 63rd Street, close to where Columbus and Broadway meet. A buzzing bar and restaurant located opposite the Lincoln Center performing arts complex, PJ's has full-length windows that open to the street in summer. Take a seat at one of the tables gaily decked out with red-and-white checked tablecloths, or do as the locals do and grab a stool at the dark wood bar. Staff are incredibly friendly and the menu features salads, sandwiches, burgers, steaks and plenty of seafood. The homemade potato chips (crisps to us) with a warm blue cheese dip is a naughty but moreish snack. Open 11.30am-2am (11am on weekends).

This is the newest of New York's three PJ Clarke's, having opened in 2007. The original, at Third Avenue and 55th Street, has been in operation since 1884 and has hosted everyone from Jackie Onassis to Frank Sinatra. The third is in Lower Manhattan. Visit pjclarkes.com

LENNON REMEMBERED

Go east on 63rd until you hit Central Park West, and turn left. The park was a favourite spot of one of New York's best known adopted sons, John Lennon. At 72nd Street you'll find the Dakota building, where he lived with Yoko Ono in the seventies and outside which he was murdered in 1980. Built in the 1880s, the Dakota's elegant façade is worth a look in itself – one of the Upper West Side's earliest constructions, it remains one of Manhattan's most well-heeled addresses. But if you are looking for a memorial, you won't find one. Instead, head across the road to Strawberry Fields,

NEW YORK PASS

Glif you have time to visit several attractions it could be worth investing in a New York Pass. It offers free access to more than 55 sights, including the Guggenheim, Metropolitan Museum of Art and American Museum of Natural History as well as fasttrack entry to many of them and special offers. It costs from US\$75 for a day to US\$165 for a week online. Visit newyorkpass.com

the area of the park dedicated to his memory. Signs designate this a quiet zone but that's perhaps futile given the masses of tourists and fans that stream here daily – when I stopped by, one disciple was sobbing over the rose-strewn mosaic that forms the memorial's focal point, while a busker played – you guessed it – Imagine. It's a touching spot to ponder on the legacy of the great man.

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM

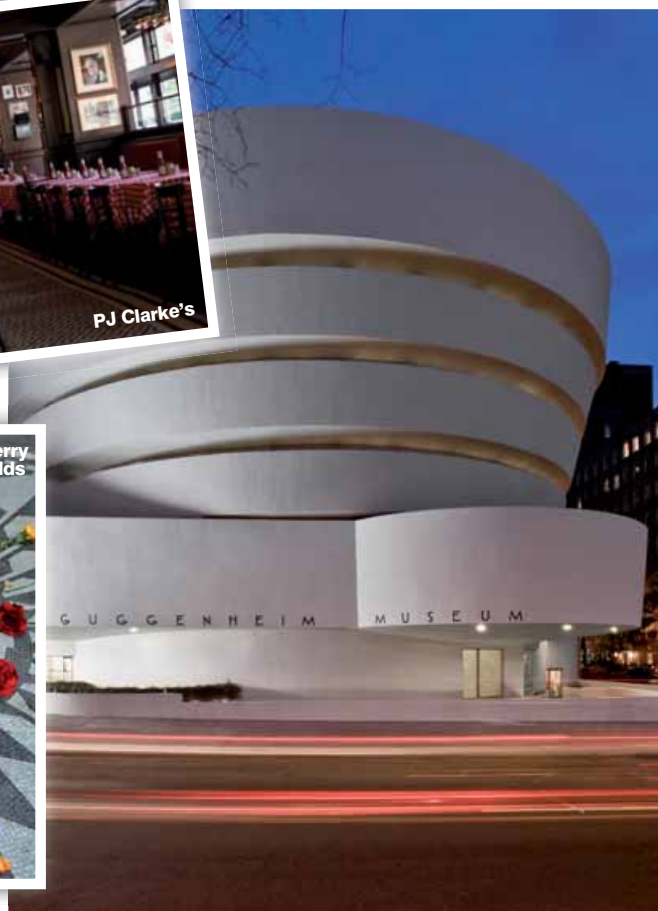
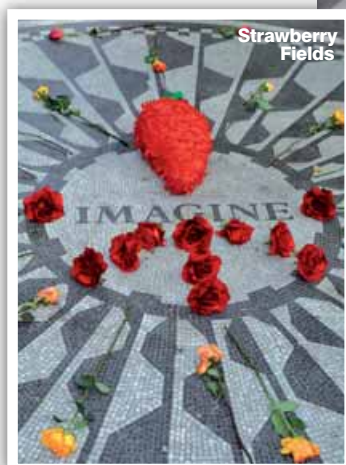
The Upper West Side is no slouch when it comes to museums – just up Central Park West at 79th Street is the American Museum of Natural History (amnh.org), and, next to it, the city's oldest museum, the New York Historical Society (nyhistory.org). The Society's permanent collection of treasures is closed for reconstruction until November next year but it continues to host exhibitions, most recently one celebrating the Grateful Dead – its shop is also a good stop for quality New York memorabilia.

But for the real cultural heavyweights, cross the park to Museum Mile on the

Upper East Side. Running along Fifth Avenue between 82nd and 104th Streets, its ten venues include the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Jewish Museum of New York. Next year the Museum for African Art will become the Mile's 11th when it relocates between 109th and 110th Street, but for now the Solomon R Guggenheim Museum, at 89th, remains its newest addition, being a sprightly 51 years old.

The Guggenheim is a must-see not only for its innovative temporary exhibitions and permanent collection of masterworks but for the building itself – Frank Lloyd Wright's white spiral construction is as much a piece of art as anything inside. Check out the Thannhauser collection, which has paintings by Renoir, Degas, Monet, Van Gogh, Cezanne and – this writer's favourite – Picasso's dreamy Woman with Yellow Hair. Open 10am–5.45pm (Sat until 7.45pm, closed Thurs). Entry US\$18 (free with the New York Pass). Visit guggenheim.org ■

See nycgo.com for more information.



Ask Peter

Piotr Kalita has been associated with the air travel market for almost 20 years. He specializes in corporate and diplomatic travel.
Do you have any questions?
Ask Peter. Send your question at redakcja@businesstraveller.pl



GROUP RATES

Why is a group rate two times as expensive, as the price I can find online? I wanted to find a cheap rate for 30 students for a flight from Warsaw to Paris. On the Internet I found a price of less than 500 PLN per person. I expected to receive a group discount on the price, but instead the price was higher.

Iza

Dear Iza,

I mentioned the issue of group rates already a couple of months ago. Bear in mind, that the airline's task is to make sure each group member gets a seat on a plane. The price is a secondary issue. The thing about the cheapest rates available on the Internet is that the number of seats included in the special offer is very limited (2-6 for each flight). If you book over the Internet, you can take only a couple of seats at lower price. Subsequent seats are booked at higher rates, as the plane gets filled.

The suggested group rate is usually the average rate, including all these parameters. That is why, you cannot expect an airline to offer lower prices for groups, than those already available in the internet super-offers. With a group rate you have probably been given more flexible conditions (like a possibility to change the names of passengers or an extended ticket deadline). It does not come cheap, either.

FREEDOMS OF THE AIR

Until recently the meaning of the word "freedom" was clear to me. And then I read about new flight connections that can be opened because of the introduction of the sixth freedom of the air. Can you explain this term?

Adam

Dear Adam,

Air transportation is subject to many regulations, not only because of its complexity and specificity, but also because the air carriers come from different countries. Even if they are private enterprise, the airlines also, in a sense, represent the countries they have been registered in. What is more, they are considered the basic means of transport to a native country. In recent years we have observed a significant growth in the number of carriers offering flights also outside their native country. The principles of operating flights are defined in detail in international treaties. The most important one is the Chicago Convention from 1944, regulating the basic rights granted by individual countries to foreign aircraft. These rights are called freedoms. The convention describes these freedoms, but the possibility of using them is further specified by international agreements.

To make it easier for you to understand, I will describe each freedom individually and give examples.

The first freedom (basic) – the right to fly and transport passengers and cargo from a native country to a second country, over the territory of another country, without a right to land there. Example: An aircraft registered in Germany may fly from Frankfurt to Moscow over the territory of Poland.

The second freedom – the right to carry out maintenance in a foreign country. A Dutch plane, flying from Amsterdam to Tokyo, may land in Moscow for a technical service (refuelling, crew replacement, repairs). It is, however, forbidden to pick up, or drop off passengers or cargo in Moscow.

The first and second freedoms are typical technical ones, allowing for trade exchange with a country over whose territory the plane is flying, or where a technical stop takes place.

The third freedom – the commercial freedom – the right to carry passengers or cargo from a country where an airline was registered to a foreign country. For example, a plane registered in France may pick up passengers from Paris and drop them off in Zurich.

The fourth freedom – the right to carry passengers (from a foreign country) to a country where an airline was registered. For example a plane registered in France may pick up passengers and cargo from Zurich and drop them off in Paris.

The fifth freedom – also called "beyond rights". It is a right to carry passengers and cargo from a country where an airplane was registered to a second, and then a third country. And the other

way round – it gives a right to carry passengers and cargo from these countries. For example an airline registered in Spain may fly from Madrid to Paris, and then go further to Frankfurt. Also, on the way back, the plane may take passengers and cargo from Frankfurt, land in Paris (where some of the passengers get on, while others get off), and then go to Madrid – the home port.

The sixth freedom – the right to carry passengers and cargo from one foreign country to another, over one's own country. For example, an airline registered in Great Britain starts a journey in Paris, lands in London (own country) and then continues until it reaches Amsterdam.

The seventh freedom is a right to carry passengers and cargo from one country to another, without the need to land in one's own country. For example a plane, registered in Hungary, can fly from Katowice to Barcelona without landing in Budapest.

The eighth freedom – also referred to as consecutive cabotage – the right to fly between two or more points in one foreign country. For example an airline registered in Spain may fly from Madrid to Paris, and then go further to Marseille.

The ninth freedom is an extension of the eighth freedom. It is a right to carry passengers or cargo within a foreign country without the need to continue service to or from one's own country.

Returning to your question – it probably concerned the possibility to fly between two foreign countries with a landing in a country, where an airline was registered.

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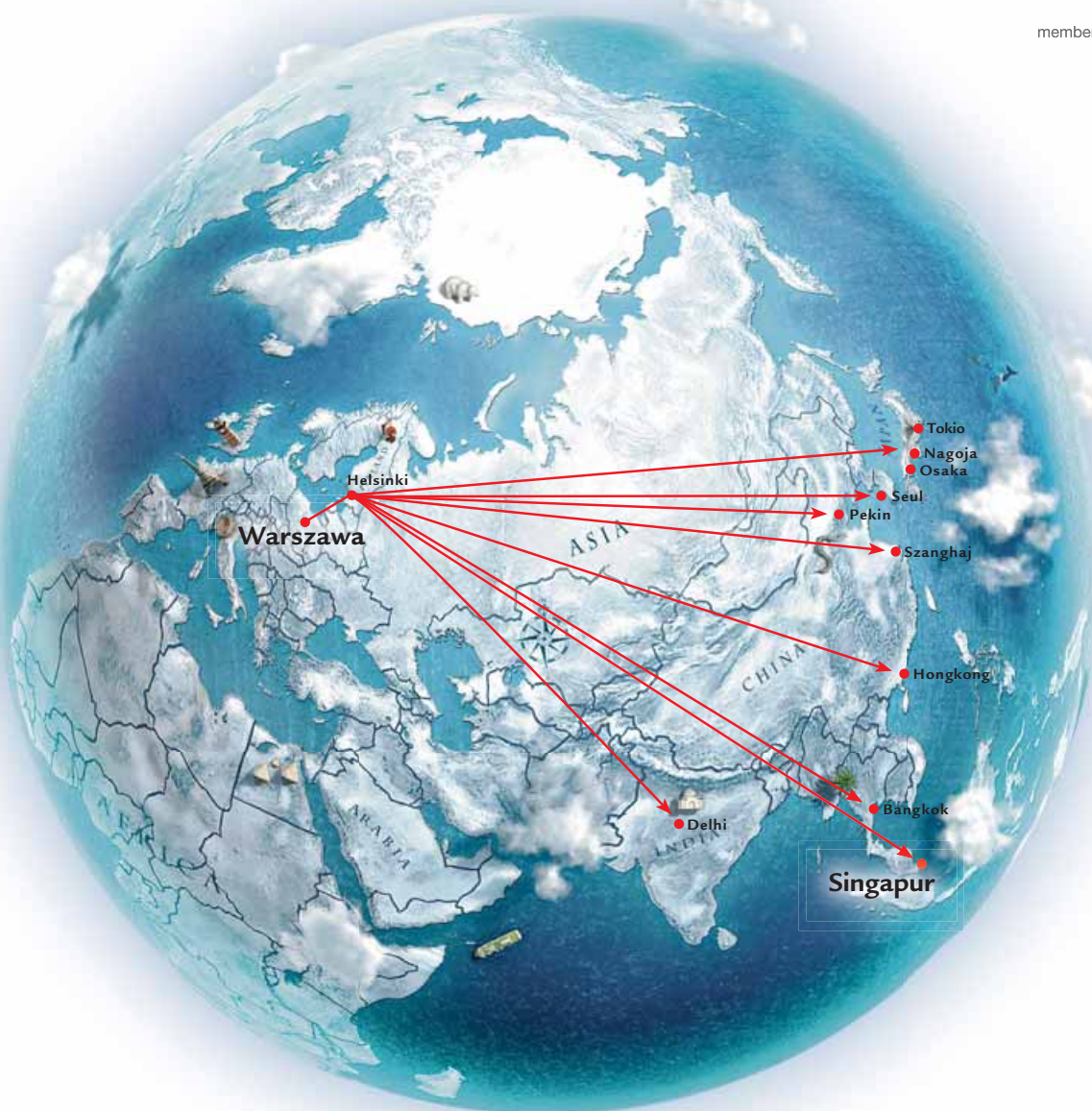
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