

Business Traveller Poland

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HELSINKI

The Baltic's cultural treasure chest

SKIING

Winter madness in Ischgl

HOTELS

Affordable hotel options in London

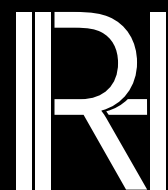
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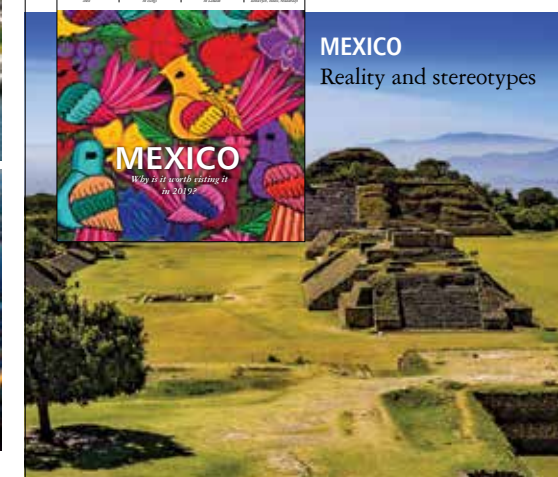


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BUSINESS TRAVELLER POLAND X 100!

This is the 100th issue of "Business Traveller", the Polish edition of the prestigious British monthly, where we focus on business travel, MICE and suggest the best holiday options for wealthy and discerning holidaymakers. In addition to the 100th issue, we also celebrate the 10th anniversary of our existence on the Polish market.

During that time we have visited and described more than 200 countries and over 500 cities. We have reviewed 600 hotels for you, wrote about several hundred holiday destinations, tested dozens of applications, cars and electronic equipment.

We have an exciting year ahead of us. It's worth noting that in 2019 Poland will be the largest recipient of investments in hospitality industry in Europe. The country will see premieres of properties by many international brands, including Crowne Plaza, MGallery by Sofitel, Raffles, Moxy, Radisson Red and the legendary Nobu Hotel. This is, in large part, due to Poland's record-breaking economic growth (reaching 5 percent per year), as well as favourable business environment and skilled workforce.

"Business Traveller" is read by decision-makers from the MICE sector, travel managers from large corporations, we are present in over 170 hotels, in business class on board LOT's Dreamliners, as well as digitally via the Polish national carrier's in-flight entertainment system. You can also read BT Poland in numerous VIP lounges across Poland, the best Polish restaurants and cafes, as well as at Media Boxes in 4200 hotels in 110 countries.

Thank you for being with us. Enjoy your reading!

Marzena Mróz

MARZENA MRÓZ
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

businesstraveller.pl



A STAR ALLIANCE MEMBER



SINGAPUR – DOSKONAŁY WYBÓR NA START TWOICH WSPANIAŁYCH WAKACJI

Ciesz się niezapomnianymi doznaniem w Azji, Australii i Nowej Zelandii, dokąd zabierzemy Cię, abyś mógł odkryć ponad 100 różnorodnych kultur i kilka z najbardziej egzotycznych miejsc na świecie. Poznaj bogactwo tego regionu dzięki ponad 900 rejsom tygodniowo do 65 miast w 16 krajach oferowanych przez linie Singapore Airlines i SilkAir.

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A great way to fly

TIME FOR THE WINTER CRAZE



SKIING IN AUSTRIA

Situated in Carinthia, the sunny and charming town of Nassfeld is known for its Italian climate and Austrian style. The town's ski resort offers 110 kilometres of well-groomed pistes, 30 modern ski lifts, as well as 25 on-slope restaurants with spacious terraces where you can soak in the sun. It also offers freeride areas, a snowpark and night skiing opportunities. Cross-country skiers can enjoy here 80 kilometres of trails and those seeking comfort will find in Nassfeld a number of luxury hotels, including those situated right on the slope. Many of them offer wellness services. Nassfeld is a perfect destination for a winter holiday, both for advanced skiers and families with children who are only starting their exciting skiing adventure. nassfeld.at



WITH FINNAIR TO SAPPORO

Finnair is launching a new seasonal service to Sapporo, Japan this winter that will operate twice a week from December 15, 2019 until March 27, 2020. Describing Japan as a "key market" for the Finnish carrier, Christian Lesjack, senior vice president of network and resource management at Finnair, said: "Finnair is the only European airline to fly a scheduled route to Sapporo, and with five key Japanese cities in our network, we are now the largest European carrier flying to Japan." Finnair will also launch new weekly connection to Punta Cana in the Dominican Republic. The flight to Punta Cana will be operated by Airbus A350 once a week between 13 December and 27 March; finnair.com

Nobu Hotel in Warsaw

Known for its lifestyle hotels and original restaurants, Nobu Hospitality is a global brand founded by Robert De Niro and his business partners - a film producer and a renowned chef. A new five-star hotel of the brand will be built on the site of the existing Rialto hotel in Warsaw, currently owned by Tacit



Investment - a recognized investor in the premium real estate market. Warsaw's Nobu Hotel will delight with its minimalist yet elegant design. The property will feature 120 guest rooms, spacious event spaces, a fitness zone and the renowned Nobu restaurant. The value of the investment is PLN 100 million. Nobu Hospitality will be the operator of the property developed by Tacit Investment. The hotel will received first guests at the beginning of 2020.

4 new summer destination from Air France



For the upcoming peak summer season, in July and August, Air France will launch several new routes. The new connections will serve four popular tourist destinations: Heraklion (Crete, Greece), Palermo (Sicily, Italy), Olbia (Sardinia, Italy) and Split (Croatia). The services will depart from Paris



Charles De Gaulle International Airport. Tickets are now on sale. Heraklion, the capital of Crete, is the ideal starting point to discover this sunny island. It's worth visiting Palermo, shaped by many different cultures, including Roman, Arab, Punic and Norman. Olbia, which means "happiness" in Greek, is



the starting point in Sardinia, its turquoise waters and unspoiled scenery. With sandy beaches and turquoise waters, a historic centre with sumptuous monuments and a port to sail to the beautiful islands of Dalmatia, Split is an ideal holiday destination. In addition, in the summer season Air France



will increase frequencies for four holiday routes launched last year. In July and August, flights to Cagliari (Sardinia, Italy), Dubrovnik (Croatia), Bari (Italy) and Ibiza (Spain) will take off up to eight times a week, while for the rest of the season - every weekend; airfranceklm.com

PRESS MATERIALS



LG STYLER STEAM CLOSET FOR A BUSINESSPERSON

This item will certainly be popular with businesspeople. The steam closet from LG is a novelty that has the potential to become an object of desire for both men and women. The LG Styler is a perfect solution for those who'd like to refresh their clothes without the need of dry cleaning. Not only will it refresh your coat, sweater or suit, but it will also keep your trousers legs creased, reduce wrinkles on your shirt, and easily dry clothes that can't be dried in a tumble dryer. It also removes unpleasant odours and refreshes sportswear.

And all this with the use of steam and pure water, without applying any chemicals. The steam and warm air generator eliminates bacteria, kills allergens and has a disinfectant effect on all kinds of fabrics, bedding and plush toys. The innovative TrueSteam™ technology helps wash and refresh clothes, but as certified by the British Allergy Foundation, it eliminates 99.9% of germs, dust mites, and allergens in your washing. For more info about the product go to lg.com/pl/styler



Available in two colours: white and espresso. Dimensions 445mm x 1850mm x 585mm

JOY OF TRAVEL

The ships from Costa Cruises line exude Italian atmosphere and the nightlife on board is just as varied as the day time activities. In onboard bars you can enjoy live music and popular San Remo hits, while the air in onboard restaurants is soaked with the smell of spaghetti allo scoglio. Delicious cuisine, affordable prices and relatively young clientele - these are the key reasons why Poles are so fond of Italian cruise lines.

May Festival in the Mediterranean Sea The beginning of May is the perfect time to take a cruise around the Mediterranean Sea. We recommend the route from Savona, Italy, where you board the 293-metre long Costa Fascinosa ship, built in 2012. On board there are 4 swimming pools, 5 jacuzzis, a theatre, 12 bars and many other attractions. During the cruise you will visit Naples in the south of Italy, as well as Sicily and Malta, before heading towards Spain and France. There is an option to book a transfer flight, or alternatively a coach from Warsaw to Savona.

Ocean of possibilities Cost Cruises cruise ships sail around the world, and the fares for weekly cruises start at €349 per person including port charges. Importantly, the price of the cruise includes full board and attractions on the ship. Comprehensive offer of cruises is available at tanierejsowanie.pl



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W celu rezerwacji zapraszamy do kontaktu z Deluxe Travel Club – naszym preferowanym partnerem na polskim rynku turystyki luksusowej. Gwarantujemy profesjonalną obsługę, inspirujące pomysły na wyjazdy oraz preferencyjną cenę na resorty One&Only na całym świecie.



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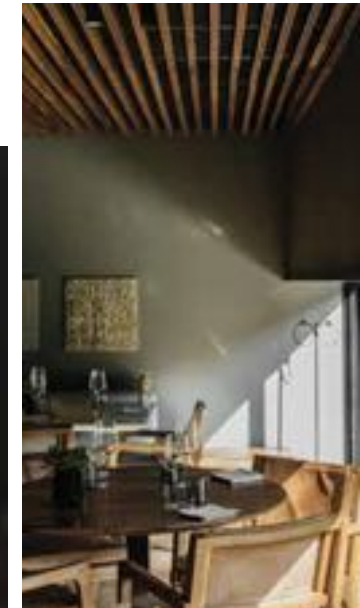


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WORDS CHRIS MOSS

PUSHING BOUNDARIES

Recent media attention may have focused on president's Trump wall aimed to curb the flow of immigrants into the US, but there is much more to Mexico for both tourists and investors.



All nations are to some extent caricatured by lazy stereotypes and headline-grabbing sensationalism by the media. Few, however, get as bad a press as Mexico. You'd never guess, in the slew of lurid stories on drug and gun trafficking, horror-film criminality, Trump's wall and immigration, that the United Mexican States, one of the oldest territories settled by Europeans in the mainland Americas, is the world's 15th biggest economy, second biggest in Latin America, home to the largest Spanish-speaking population in the Americas – and a powerhouse of literature, the arts, architecture and gastronomy.

Any visitor to Mexico City – perhaps the most misrepresented of all Mexican destinations – is quickly apprised of the fact that life south of the Rio Bravo (its name in Mexico, not Grande) can be pretty wonderful. The range of hotels is perhaps the widest in Latin America, from five-star chains to boutique properties. Gastronomy is world class, as suggested by the fact that six of the top 50 Latin American restaurants, including long-revered eateries Pujol and Quintonil, are in Mexico City. (Another five are found elsewhere in Mexico.) In the capital, art is showcased at shimmering buildings such as the MUAC, Museo Jumex and Carlos Slim's Museo Soumaya, while the city's Zona Maco and Material Art Fair are among the Western Hemisphere's most important art gatherings.

Home to 8.9 million inhabitants, it's perhaps no surprise that Mexico City should have big-city attractions. But there are draws in smaller destinations, too, from Guadalajara's film and arts scenes to Oaxaca's innovative cuisine and colonial centre.

Mexico is a powerhouse of literature, the arts, architecture and gastronomy.

WHEELS OF INDUSTRY

Underlying the cultural diversity is an industrial giant. Mexico's US\$1.15 trillion economy (IMF) is built on petroleum, iron and steel. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) rates Mexican people as the hardest-working in the world. One of the most diversified economies in its region, it is also the only Latin American nation to edge into the economic complexity top rankings.

Mexico is always near the top of the table of global tourism. According to the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO), 39.3 million people visited Mexico in 2017, making it the sixth-ranked tourism destination; admittedly, the numbers are pumped up by busy borders such as Tijuana-San Diego, but with a 12 per cent increase on 2016 figures, Mexico was among those countries recording the greatest increase.

Growth has taken place in spite of crime and security problems in states such as Durango and Michoacan and, above all, in cities close to the US frontier. May 2018 was widely reported as "the deadliest month" recorded in Mexico since the government began releasing homicide data in 1998.

Tourists to Chiapas, Oaxaca, Yucatan and the silver-mining cities of Guanajuato, San Miguel de Allende and Zatecas may be blithely unaware of the tensions of the marginal zones even of the cities they are visiting. Quantifying the impact of security issues on commerce is difficult, to say the least. Who stays away? Which countries withhold investment? How problematic are perceptions as compared with hard facts?

"Security and crime costs are immense from a social and business perspective," observes Enrique Dussel Peters, economics professor at the Universidad Nacional Autonoma de Mexico (UNAM).

"Organised crime in Mexico and most of Latin America, however, is a regional problem and particularly related to the US. Unless the region as a whole, including the US, acknowledges it as such, there are few changes for starting to solve it in the long term. Organised crime includes not only money and drugs, but also arms, persons and body parts, and it's a two-way street mainly with the US."

In August, US and Mexican law enforcement authorities announced a joint venture, setting up a team based

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in Chicago targeting the leaders and finances of drug cartels that ship opioids into the United States. But, earlier in the year, business leaders in Mexico's powerful Consejo Coordinador Empresarial (CCE) business lobby issued a statement that "the high levels of violence have become the greatest obstacle to (economic) activity." This came on the back of Mexican dairy producer Grupo Lala shutting a distribution centre in the northern state of Tamaulipas and the world's biggest Coke bottler, Coca-Cola Femsa, indefinitely closing a 160-employee distribution centre in south-western Guerrero state.

NEIGHBOURLY RELATIONS

To outsiders, it can appear bizarre that the richest country in the world cannot work closely with its neighbour to resolve crime – and drug-related matters. But Mexico's relationship with the US has been troubled since even before the Mexican War of 1847, which saw Mexico lose about one-third of its territory to the US. When Donald Trump took over in Washington DC, there was a noticeable cooling-off in diplomatic relations and the language, at least from the US side, hit a new low.

In principle, of course, Mexico's proximity to the US represents an enormous opportunity in terms of value-added employment, learning processes and general development. The problem, says Professor Dussel Peters, is that the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), →

Mexico is always near the top of the table of global tourism.



signed in 1994 by the US, Canada and Mexico, has been at best uneven and, in some sectors, totally ineffectual.

“NAFTA has substantially polarised Mexico’s economy, in that only a small group of households, firms, regions and global value chains have integrated through exports to the US, the vast majority not.”

According to Peters, the newly renegotiated NAFTA, now known as the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement, or USMCA, which was formally agreed on October 1, has few new and relevant topics. In fact, the most significant aspect of the agreement is that that it was signed at all.

The most surprising issue of the USMCA, Peters says, “is that it does not counter the increasing disintegration within NAFTA”. According to Peters, intra-NAFTA trade increased from 42 per cent in 1994 to 46 per cent in 2001, but dropped to 39 per cent in 2017, a fall particularly noticeable in global value chains, such as auto parts and automobiles. He concludes: “The main challenges for NAFTA are not intra-NAFTA issues, but those that lie beyond NAFTA members, particularly with Asia and China.”

Surprising no one, Trump claimed a US victory on the deal, but some observers believe it will be good for Mexico and will lead to increased trade volumes within the three countries. USMCA also ended months of uncertainty that compelled Mexico’s central bank to maintain high interest rates in case of a run on the peso. The country is now able to loosen monetary policy, giving a short-term boost to GDP that’s already expected to grow by 3 per cent in 2018.

fresh thinking

On July 1, 2018, Mexico elected a new president, Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador, a former mayor of Mexico City, standing for Juntos Haremos Historia, a coalition of the left-wing Labour Party, right-wing Social Encounter Party, and social democratic National Regeneration Movement. Nicknamed “AMLO” in the local and international

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press, he’s regarded as a populist, a nationalist and something of a maverick, and has been described as a “foil” and “natural enemy” of Trump as well as “Juan Trump”, allegedly by Trump himself.

But AMLO is no upstart and certainly not a political novice, having been active across various left-wing parties for more than 40 years. He ran for president in 2006 and lost by a hair to Felipe Calderón. As mayor of the megalopolis, he was, on the whole, a successful and occasionally inspired leader.

Eric L Olson, deputy director of the Wilson Center’s Latin American Program and senior advisor to the Center’s Mexico Institute, believes there is some room for optimism.

“Like all new governments, there is a problem of vagueness about the policies to be pursued upon taking office. AMLO’s government is no exception. Nevertheless, there are some broad outlines taking shape. AMLO won an overwhelming mandate from the voters who were sick of the traditional parties, record levels of violence and outrageous corruption at every level of government. So there is a general sense of optimism that AMLO will take a fresh approach to these problems and be able to attack them in a new way.

“In my view, an emphasis on the ‘soft side’ of security – economic investments, development and opportunities for youth – is much needed, but will mostly have long-term impact and may not be adequate to address the current pressing problems of high levels of violence and lack of public trust in the institutions of state, such as police and prosecutors.”

Olson points out that a planned amnesty for small producers of illicit drugs, and the possibility of creating regulated markets for some drugs, may well be a worthwhile consideration, but could fail to satisfy Mexicans’ expectations of the new government. “What is needed... is a very specific strategy to rebuild the state at local level,” argues Olson. “A centralised top-down approach, limited to building a strong federal police or a military police, does not address local pro-

blems where the state is not providing security and where it is actually crumbling.”

ECONOMIC GROWTH

Ultimately, social injustice and inequality is Mexico’s main and enduring problem. In addition to security measures, the country desperately needs economic agility, a much fairer distribution of wealth and even greater diversification.

Some major changes are already afoot. Mexico’s energy reforms, signed off by outgoing president, Enrique Peña Nieto, in 2013, ended 75 years of state monopoly in the local oil and gas sector. With USMCA settled, for now at least, there is cautious optimism that private capital and technical expertise will rebuild the Mexican energy industry, maximise oil and gas revenue, and boost economic growth in the long term.

Startup innovation has traditionally been centred in Mexico City, as well as Monterrey and Guadalajara, but is now spreading wider. The northern city of Chihuahua, for instance, is emerging as a potential tech hub, with campus-led initiatives from the Tecnológico de Monterrey (TEC), often referred to as the MIT of Mexico.

On the downside, shrinking wages, falling growth and a weakening peso were 2017 trends that need to be reversed. A lot is hanging on the incoming Mexican president as well as the current US one.

But Mexico doesn’t do Brexit-style doom and gloom. In fact, says Enrique Dussel Peters, the main problem may be a tendency to be too rosy about the nation’s future prospects.

“In Mexico we are witnessing huge optimism and huge expectations; these expectations, however, have to be dealt with cautiously, since no government in Mexico, including AMLO, will be able to solve most of the structural problems of Mexico’s society and economy – from corruption and inequality to poverty and security – in the short and medium term.”

STAYING IN MEXICO CITY

Las Alcobas Beautifully designed and subtly luxurious, this hotel is on a smart avenue in the upmarket Polanco district. A member of Marriott’s Luxury Collection, it provides guests with highly personalised service and boasts one of the best restaurants in Mexico City. Interiors are by celebrated design duo George Yabu and Glenn Pushelberg. Rooms from US\$297 (£229). lasalcobas.com

Habita Hotel Minimalist, contemporary and very cool, Habita pioneered boutique stays in Mexico City. In the heart of Polanco, the hotel with its frosted-glass façade (right) still impresses. Inside, it’s all white, and the rooftop bar and pool are great for evening socials. Rooms from US\$135 (£104). hotelhabita.com



St Regis Hotel In the landmark 31-storey Torre Libertad – built by Cesar Pelli – on the throbbing Paseo de la Reforma, this is a very well-run, luxurious leisure property, with seven dining options, the Remède Spa, and an indoor swimming pool. Rooms from US\$500 (£385). stregishotelmexicocity.com

W Mexico City This 237-room tower in smart Polanco has the W brand’s colourful, funky décor (Frida Kahlo cushions, vibrant hues, big artworks) and a cool Hispano-Mexican culinary offering at in-house restaurant J by Jose Andres. Guests are mainly corporate, but the Living Room Bar draws in local hipsters. Nine meeting studios and a spa complete the bill. Rooms from US\$257 (£200). w-hotels.marriott.com



WORDS JEREMY TREDINNICK

NORTHERN HIGHLIGHT

Even a short sojourn in Helsinki provides the opportunity to explore one of the Baltic's cultural treasure chests.

It's early morning in Helsinki's Market Square. At the quayside a small fishing boat has moored and a fisherwoman selling fresh fish is calling out to locals. Behind her tiny vessel, large ferryboats are lined up next to piers, ready to whisk commuters and tourists to one or more of the many islands that form a barrier between the city and the Gulf of Finland, a giant inlet of the Baltic Sea. In deeper water on both sides of the harbour, massive cruise liners are docked – the Baltic is said to be the second most popular destination for cruises after the Caribbean.

Close by, and for a few hundred metres along the harbour front, stall owners are busily setting up at the open-air market in readiness for the day ahead. Some sell a cornucopia of fresh fruit and local produce, while others offer the typical souvenirs of the region – from razor-sharp Finnish knives sheathed in soft reindeer leather to carved wooden spoons and bowls. Ice cream and coffee stalls compete with those selling heartier fare such as merenherkkulautanen or “sea gourmet plate”.

Though it's only 7am, the city's residents all seem to be up and eager to make the most of the good weather and long summer day – Helsinki gets an incredible 22 hours of daylight in midsummer... of course, the downside of that is in the depths of winter only two hours of daylight are on offer, so summer can take on a real “party hard” atmosphere.

FINNISH FOCAL POINT

Helsinki may lie on the northern fringes of Europe, but thanks to Finnair's successful expansion into Asia, the city →



Helsinki's atmospheric streets remind me of Vienna, although it was in fact modelled on Paris and St Petersburg



LEFT: One of the country's national symbols - a brown bear sitting by the stairs up to the museum's entrance.

has become a popular hub for travellers between Western Europe and Asia. Since 2016, Finnair has partnered with Visit Finland to tempt travellers to break their journey – if only for a few days – with a StopOver option at no extra cost to its air ticket. It offers a range of suggestions on interesting activities that can be neatly bundled into a short space of time.

Landing at Helsinki airport very early in the morning, I take the easy and efficient train into the city (lines I or P; €5), arriving at Central railway station 30 minutes later and walking to the stylish Hotel Lilla Roberts to drop my bags, before heading straight down to Market Square and the harbour. I wander past the city's famous Allas Sea Pool, a spa complex with large swimming pools of different temperatures (from a constant 27°C to bone-numbingly cold) on pontoons that jut out into the sea, as well as saunas, cafés and outdoor decking offering panoramic views over the city. On a small knoll nearby stands the impressive Uspenski Cathedral, a Russian Orthodox creation of gilded onion domes that's one of the largest in Western Europe, with an interior that's just as colourfully decorated as any you'd find in Russia.

A short walk away, the inside of Helsinki Cathedral is plain by comparison, notable for a statue of Martin Luther gazing seriously down on visitors. The cathedral towers over the broad slope of Senate Square, which is bordered by atmospheric streets and alleys that remind me somewhat of Vienna, though Helsinki was in fact modelled on Paris and St Petersburg.

I walk up Aleksanterinkatu, passing the grand Kansallissali building that houses the Sibelius Finland Experience multimedia show, as rattling trams pass me by, then I turn back through Esplanade Park. This long expanse of green boasts a 200-year history; once the domain of wealthy merchants

and their families, who promenaded up and down its paths enjoying the colourful flowerbeds, green lawns and statues of famous local luminaries, today it plays host to office workers grabbing lunch and soaking up the sun. The bar inside Hotel Kamp on its northern side was where independence was fomented early in the 20th century, while at its eastern end Café Kappeli has attracted the great and good of Finnish society for 150 years and was a regular haunt of the composer Jean Sibelius.

Back on the waterfront the Old Market Hall houses traditional shop stalls selling gravlax and other tasty foodstuffs, much as it has done since 1888.

HOPPING AROUND

In order to see as much of the city as I can during my brief stay, I buy a 24-hour myHelsinki Card (helsinkicard.com; €48) that gives free travel on public transport and access to regular hop-on hop-off sightseeing buses making a circuit of the city's major attractions. Helsinki has the highest concentration of early 1900s Art Nouveau buildings in Europe, and

a top-deck drive through districts filled with Art Nouveau and Art Deco architectural highlights is a great start to the tour.

I hop off just down the road from the Temppeliaukio Church (Rock Church), an architecturally unique place of worship quarried out of a solid rock hillock, with an incredible copper ceiling dome comprising 22 kilometres of wound copper tape. Its curious design comprises more than 600 hollow pipes of gleaming silver metal that create a humming noise when the wind is right. It looks like a dozen church organs have had their pipes mashed together.

The bus curls round onto the city's main thoroughfare, Mannerheimintie, and I jump off between Finlandia Hall, created by the legendary architect Alvar Aalto, and the grey stone edifice of The National Museum of Finland. One of the country's national symbols is a brown bear, and a large stone statue of one sits by the stairs up to the museum's entrance. Inside, the various exhibitions lead you through the story of Swedish and Russian domination, the struggle for independence, and elements of modern-day Finland, thro-



FROM TOP: The Sibelius Monument comprises more than 600 steel pipes Tempeliaukio Church, Kampi Chapel



Allas Sea Pool juts out into Helsinki's main harbour and includes both a hot water and seawater pool

ughout which the uniquely Finnish concept of *sisu* – meaning “guts”, “grit” or “hardiness” – shines, highlighting the courage and resilience needed for people to survive in the harsh climate and conditions of this northern land.

Come evening I board a Beautiful Canal Route water tour, which is also part of the myHelsinki Card deal. For 90 minutes the open-topped ferry sails through Helsinki's harbour and waterways, passing the dramatic Suomenlinna island fortress, chugging through the forest-lined Degerö Canal, skirting Korkeasaari island where the zoo is situated, and finally slowing for a look at Finland's impressive icebreaker fleet – the country's nautical engineering is very advanced and some of the best icebreakers in the world are made and stationed here. Loudspeakers provide a commentary in four languages, but the wind off the water can be cold, so underdressed tourists are given blankets to keep warm as they gaze from side to side at the scenery.

ISLAND LIFE

On my final morning I walk down to Market Square water-side one more time and jump on a JT-Line waterbus for an island-hopping experience (from May to September). First stop is Vallisaari nature reserve, on the eponymous island that has been left in its wild state, and was only opened to the public in 2016.

It's a lovely taste of a typical northern European forest, with oak, linden, beech and silver birch trees growing along

side evergreen larch and pines. Songbirds warble everywhere you go; in June the meadows are carpeted with flowers in yellow, violet and white, attracting insects that in turn feed thrushes, wagtails and other birds, which flit around fearlessly in front of walkers. This was an idyllic life for 200 villagers in pre- and post-war days, but now the houses have been abandoned. At the southern end of the island the 19th-century Alexander battery faces out to the open sea, the direction from which danger invariably approached.

Next is the Fortress of Suomenlinna, a UNESCO World Heritage site and one of Finland's top attractions. A naval bastion stronghold spread across six islands, it was begun in 1748 during the period when Finland was still part of the Kingdom of Sweden. Designed to command the sea approach to Helsinki, its most famous sites are the King's Gate, the Great Courtyard and the large cannons dating from Russian rule, which are located in the southern part of the largest island, Kustaanmiekka.

However, there's much more to see: the main museum explains the building of the fortress and former life for those living on the naval base; there are interesting boat yards, a large church and beautifully restored wooden houses that were once the residences of the merchants who supplied the naval garrison. Add to this Arts and Crafts shops, cafés, a toy museum and a dry-docked submarine that you can explore, and it's clear a whole day could be spent here alone.

finnair.com/stopover; finlandtours.fi; visitfinland.com

od **599** EUR/os.



REJS ŚRÓDZIEMNOMORSKA MAJÓWKA



SAVONA ■ NEAPOL ■ KATANIA ■ VALLETTA
BARCELONA ■ MARSYLIA ■ SAVONA

8
DNI

POLSKI PILOT

PEŁNE WYŻYWIENIE

Statek: Costa Fascinosa ****+

Terminy: 27.04.2019 - 06.05.2019

od **599 EUR/os.** + 160 EUR/os. opłaty portowe

AUTOKAR Z POZNANIA

SAMOŁOT Z WARSZAWY

REJS FIORDY NORWESKIE Z NIEMIEC



WARNEMÜNDE ■ KOPENHAGA ■ GERAINGER
BERGEN ■ STAVANGER ■ GÖTEBORG ■ WARNEMÜNDE

8
DNI

PEŁNE WYŻYWIENIE

Statek: Costa Favolosa ****+

Termin: czerwiec - lipiec - sierpień

od **739 EUR/os.** + 150 EUR/os. opłaty portowe

DOJAZD WŁASNY

REJS PERŁY OCEANU INDYJSKIEGO



MAURITIUS ■ SESZELE (3 DNI) ■ MADAGASKAR (2 DNI)
REUNION (2 DNI) ■ MAURITIUS (2 DNI)

15
DNI

POLSKI PILOT

PEŁNE WYŻYWIENIE

Statek: Costa Mediterranea ****

Terminy: 08.11.2019 - 24.11.2019

od **1299 EUR/os.** + 260 EUR/os. opłaty portowe

SAMOŁOT Z WARSZAWY

TWÓJ BON NA KOLEJNY REJS



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CAPSULE COLLECTION

Originating from the megalopolis of 1970s Greater Tokyo, pod hotels were created to provide refuge for exhausted salarymen on the frontline of the post-war Japanese economic boom. These compact capsules, often stacked one on top of the other, offer stripped-back accommodation for the traveller – a bed and the bare (but comfortable) necessities for rest, such as a reading light, storage space and access to bathroom facilities.

The first example was the Capsule Inn in Osaka, which opened in 1979 for men only. Designed by the influential Japanese architect Kisho Kurokawa, it offered overnight accommodation to guests who did not require the trappings of a traditional hotel. Often cheaper than the long bullet train ride to homes in the suburbs, they were used by commuters as a place to crash.

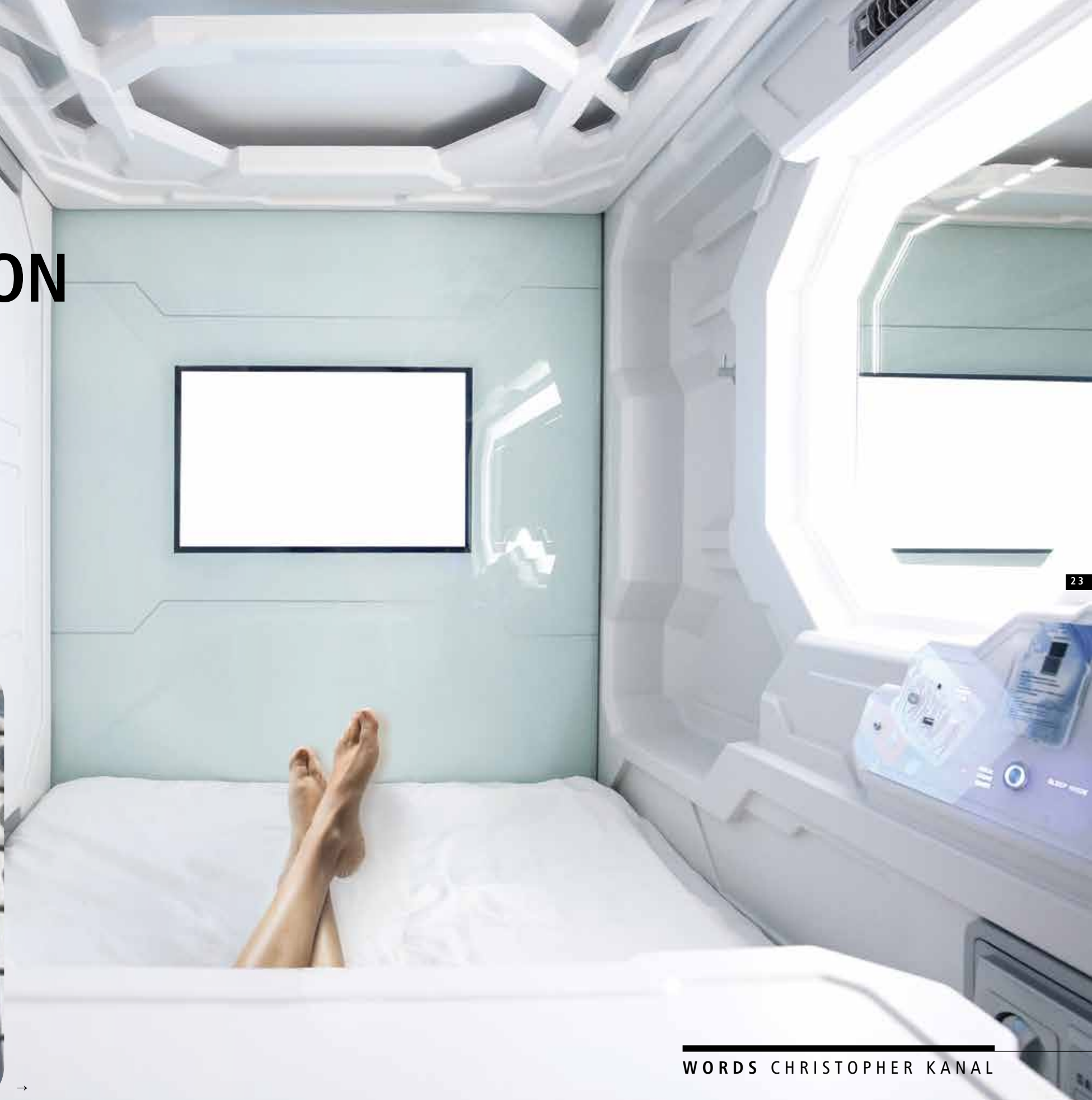
The design of the first pod hotels stemmed from the Metabolism movement. These extraordinary sci-fi style buildings of the early 70s – perhaps best showcased by Tokyo's Nakagin Capsule Tower – demonstrated the potential of this type of architecture. Consisting of 140 capsule apartments, the building was designed by Kurokawa and erected in just over 30 days.

Kurokawa believed that the buildings of the emerging Japanese megacities, which rose out of the devastation caused by aerial bombing in the Second World War, required flexible, adaptable designs that could evolve as cities expanded. This approach was particularly suited to the rapid building that took place after the war in Japan. Architecture needed to adapt to a modern post-industrialised world and the changing nature of society.

With an ever-greater premium on space in cities throughout the world, an expanding business travel market and more tourists looking for no-frills accommodation owing to the economic slowdown, the market for pod hotels is growing, particularly in Europe and the Far East. Small wonder – prices hover at around US\$60 (£46) a night, and they provide a reliably uniform experience with wifi, somewhere to charge gadgets, washing facilities and workspace.

The concept is outgrowing its humble origins, with luxury options now offering more creature comforts within a smaller footprint than your average hotel room. While many are still practically located near transport hubs, such as airports and railway stations, these glamorous cousins can also be found in more bucolic destinations, twisting the concept by veering away from the cheek-by-jowl set-up into single structures in dramatic natural settings. On the following pages, our top five pod hotels highlight the growing diversity of this diminutive style of accommodation.

Forty years after the first one appeared, the small but perfectly formed pod hotel is becoming more popular



WORDS CHRISTOPHER KANAL

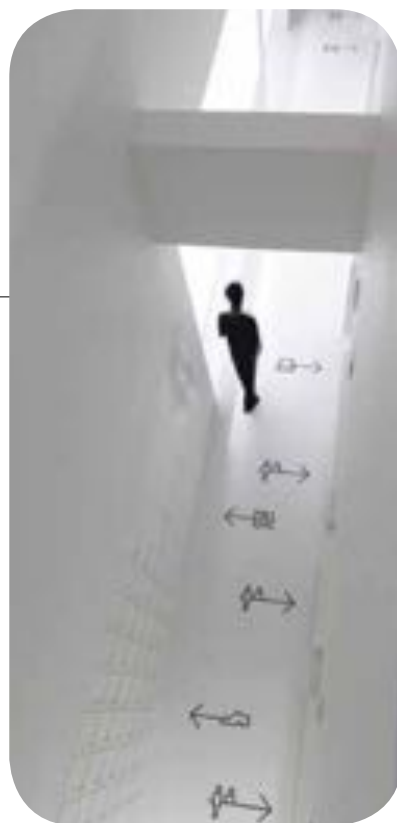
POD HOTELS: FIVE OF THE BEST

1

NINE HOURS, KYOTO

Opened at the end of 2009, this is the brainchild of Fumie Shibata and her Design Studio S. Today the chain has branches in ten cities across Japan and is perfectly suited to both business travellers and backpackers on a budget. The Nine Hours Kyoto branch has a spaceship-like design of clean lines and calm spaces in a monochrome palette and is located within walking distance of Kawaramachi train station and Kyoto's renowned Yasaka shrine. The hotel has separate floors for men and women, and each custom-designed capsule includes an alarm clock that wakes you through the use of light rather than sound; specialised pillows designed to maximise the space available; and high-quality Japanese woven linen sheets for comfort.

From ¥4,900 (£33.50); ninehours.co.jp



2

GALAXY POD HOSTEL, REYKJAVIK

Located in central Reykjavik, the Galaxy Pod Hostel opened in 2015, offering 42 sleeping capsules in a bright and futuristic space inspired by Tokyo's pod hotels. The open-plan lobby has striking views across the mountains, while pods are decorated in a minimal black-and-white colour palette with a comfortable mattress, reading light, mirror and shelf, television, light alarm clock and separate storage locker. Guests can use a self-service kitchen, while the hostel's location on Laugavegur, the city's main street, ensures you aren't far from plentiful restaurants and bars, as well as the downtown business hub.

Pods from ISK6,850 (£43); galaxypodhostel.is



3

YOTEL GATWICK AIRPORT

Conveniently located within the South Terminal building of Gatwick airport, and with 24-hour access, this accommodation is a boon for weary travellers, with simple, effective cabins in standard and premium categories, bookable by the hour. All rooms have desks, rain showers and free wifi, while premium cabins work the 10 sqm footprint hard, featuring an adjustable bed that can also be used as a sofa. Yotel has sister hotels at Heathrow inside Terminal 4, Amsterdam's Schiphol airport and Paris Charles de Gaulle.

From £130; [yotel.com](https://www.yotel.com)



4

ST CHRISTOPHER'S AT THE VILLAGE, LONDON

London's first pod hostel opened in February 2018, providing basic accommodation on Borough High Street, just a short walk from London Bridge and Borough tube stations. The 26 Japanese-style capsules have plug sockets, USB ports and mood lighting, with a heavy curtain providing privacy, and lockers for secure storage. Bathrooms are minimalist with wall-mounted hairdryers.

From £29.80; [st-christophers.co.uk](https://www.st-christophers.co.uk)



5

PUREPODS, SOUTH ISLAND, NEW ZEALAND

These freestanding glass pods offer an immersive experience of nature in six locations, all within two hours' drive of Christchurch, including the Kaikoura mountain range (top) and Banks Peninsula. Each self-contained retreat has been designed to minimise its impact on the environment using solar power, filtered rainwater and natural waste composting. There is glazing throughout – even bathrooms have a glass floor, walls and roof. Stargazers can revel in the clear night skies of the Southern Hemisphere, where light pollution is virtually non-existent.

From NZ\$590 (£300); [purepods.com](https://www.purepods.com)

DEEP BLUE

WORDS DAVID WHITEHOUSE

Used since ancient times for its pigment, cobalt is now an essential ingredient in aircraft manufacture. But how ethical is the process of mining this precious metal?

Cobalt is one of those magic ingredients that we may not often think about, but use every day. It is found in the rechargeable batteries needed to power everything from iPhones to electric cars, but it is also used in superalloys, which are valuable because of their resistance to high temperatures and corrosion. Cobalt, therefore, finds its way into aircraft engines.

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) is the principal supplier. In 2017 around 67 per cent of the world's cobalt was mined there, according to Darton Commodities. Many of the mines are unmechanised, so work is done by hand – and those hands can be children's. So it's worth asking, where does the cobalt used in engines come from?

Aircraft makers, it seems, are not the right people

to ask. Boeing did not respond to requests for information. Airbus did, but only to direct us to the engine makers themselves. Catherine Malek, head of corporate media relations at the French aircraft-equipment maker Safran, replied that direct suppliers must sign a charter that forbids forced or child labour. Safran, she wrote, does not buy cobalt directly, only in alloy form. Nevertheless it is still in the engine. So where does it come from?

Jenny Dervin, of US aerospace manufacturer Pratt and Whitney, also said that the company "does not purchase raw cobalt, but some engine parts, and some alloys used to manufacture engine parts, include cobalt. We do not require that suppliers report the origin of the cobalt that they may use in the manufacturing process." Though, she added: "Suppliers are required to comply with a code of conduct that bans child or forced labour."

Rolls-Royce commented that the company "fully supports the principles of regulations that

These companies either don't know or don't want to say where a specific supply of cobalt comes from

promote socially responsible sourcing of minerals. We request our suppliers to only provide us with raw materials, components and subassemblies derived from responsibly sourced minerals that can be certified in accordance with OECD guidelines." Again, responsibility is deferred elsewhere.

Bady Balde, Africa director at the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative in Oslo, points out that OECD guidelines alone are not enough. "There is partial information on small-scale miners' level of compliance with the OECD's due diligence guidelines," he says, "but this information is not sufficient to certify all cobalt producers in the DRC. It's almost impossible to be sure that a mineral produced from the DRC is free from child labour."

Perry Bradley, director of media relations at GE Aviation, referred me to the Aerospace Industries Association: "It is best positioned to talk about how the industry thinking is evolving on this issue." The question, though, was not about industry thinking, but cobalt...

AVIATION

AN ETHICAL MINEFIELD

Hear the word artisanal and you'll likely think of sourdough or cheeses; however, it has a more sinister connotation when it comes to cobalt mining. Promoted as an alternative to industrial mining, which has serious environmental consequences, artisanal mining frequently sees poorly paid workers engaged in a back-breaking process of gathering cobalt by hand, often without protective equipment such as gloves or masks. The threats posed to workers are grave and numerous: physical injury from tunnel collapses are common, as are breathing difficulties from the dust created from breaking up rocks, while there is growing evidence of a link between the toxic fallout from mining and birth defects. And it's not only adults enduring these conditions, Amnesty International and CBS News have reported on the use of child labour in the mines, with even those too young to work subjected to the hazards on their mothers' backs while they work. Becky Ambury



"GE Aviation is actively involved in an aerospace industry-wide effort regarding conflict minerals, including cobalt, under the auspices of the Aerospace Industries Association," Bradley said. "In addition, GE is strongly committed to support conflict mineral initiatives and proactively involved and engaged with the Responsible Minerals Initiative (RMI), including a working group focused on the responsible sourcing of cobalt and, in particular, risks related to instances of child labour in cobalt mining in the DRC."

"GE Aviation's supplier terms and conditions address use of conflict minerals and the human rights of workers, including banning use of underage labour, prohibiting use of forced labour or labour subject to any physical or psychological abuse, or other forms of exploitation or coercion. Suppliers are required to have a sound conflict minerals policy that promotes procurement practices in accordance with Section 1502 of the Dodd Frank Act, and GE Aviation conducts an annual conflict mineral campaign with significant suppliers to monitor compliance with these requirements."

On, then, to the Aerospace Industries Association, which responded as follows: "AIA and its members work in collaboration with the RMI to push suppliers of the 3TG minerals (tin, tantalum, tungsten and gold) towards smelters who've demonstrated sound mining processes that adhere to international standards for responsibly sourced minerals."

Right, but what happened to the cobalt? "Across our work, we've encouraged smelters to develop supply chains where minerals are sourced from smelters or refiners validated as compliant with the RMI's Responsible Minerals Assurance Process (RMAP) or a similar programme. In doing so, companies can build supply chains from a list of approved suppliers who've undergone RMI's third-party auditing to ensure conformance with RMAP protocols and global standards."

On the whole, it seems aircraft makers either don't know or don't want to say where their cobalt comes from. But we do know about two-thirds of it is from the DRC. Since 2015, Amnesty International has been working to track the cobalt from mines there. I spoke to Mark Dummett, a human rights researcher at Amnesty International in London. Aircraft manufacturers "absolutely have a responsibility for everything that goes into the plane", Dummett said. "They have an obligation to understand where everything comes from, especially when possible human rights violations are concerned."

Dummett argues that cobalt is in fact easier to track than, for example, sweatshop garments, because there may be only four or five stages from

mine to end user. The question is one of corporate will, rather than of tracking technologies, he says. "What questions are companies asking their suppliers?"

For those who know their history, much of this may seem familiar. It's now almost 130 years since the creation of Dunlop Rubber. The rubber came from what was then called the "Congo Free State", which, from 1885 to 1908, was the private property of King Leopold II of Belgium. Millions were forced into unpaid labour, and faced torture and murder.

We don't know what would happen to the child miners if they were all thrown out of the DRC mines but, as a start, it would be good to know if they are in the supply chain. It seems that some engine makers are asking the questions, but don't want to share the answers. One group of people to whom manufacturers do listen is travellers. Especially business travellers.

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Najlepsze lokalizacje na stokach Alp



Wspaniały program i opieka dla dzieci

London for less

A new generation of hotels offers comfort and style at reasonable prices

32

Welcome to our round-up of eight affordable and stylish London hotels. The selection is necessarily subjective, partly because so many interesting lower-cost hotels have opened in the past decade, and partly for reasons of space. The brands represented here are a range of well- and lesser-known names, all in central London, and some with several locations in the capital. Exact prices differ depending on the time of the year and the day chosen, along with the level of flexibility you require regarding cancellation policies. Nevertheless, we believe these all offer excellent value for money. As ever, these are the edits – the full reviews, with many more pictures, can be found on our website at businesstraveller.com.

CITIZEN M LONDON SHOREDITCH

This Shoreditch property, just off the Great Eastern Road, is a ten-minute walk from Liverpool Street train and underground station. The entrance to the building has a small foyer, then you take either the lift or a circular stairway up to the first floor for the reception, bar and restaurant. Check-in is via computer terminals.

The 216 rooms are all identical. My room has Vitra furniture, including a small desk with stool, and three power points – UK, EU and US – though I would have liked more, and one by the bed. The free wifi was fast and effective.

The bed takes up one end of the room, and the curtain and blackout blinds can be controlled by a bedside switch as well as the tablet, which also controls the room's lighting, television and air conditioning. The tablet worked for me some of the time, while at others it was almost completely unresponsive.

There is a large choice of TV channels and free films, including some fairly recent ones. You can also stream your device through the TV so you can watch your own content. There were complimentary bottles of water in the fridge, then above that a safe and some

hangers in an open wardrobe area. You could also hang your clothes on the wall close to the door. The bed was large, firm and the room quiet – I had a good night's sleep.

The bathroom has a rainshower and power shower, as well as Citizen M toiletries – shower gel and shampoo combined.

The bar and restaurant/café are on the first floor, and are impressive both in design and the selection of food and drink on offer. You can choose snacks and canned drinks from an open-plan shop, while in the evening there's a staffed bar selling everything from draft beers to mocktails. There are long, well-lit tables, comfortable sofa seating and individual chairs. The whole area is lovely and spacious, with floor-to-ceiling windows and even a balcony where you can enjoy a drink.

Breakfast (£13.95 in advance, £16.95 on the day) was delicious, with a wide range of hot and cold food, and lots of stuff I wouldn't have normally tried (quinoa granola, for instance, which isn't as bad as it sounds). The hotel has guest use iMacs on the first floor, but there aren't any dedicated meeting rooms. Note also that there is no gym.

Tom Otley



VERDICT Fashionable, trendy and well executed, this is a smart choice for those wanting to impress. Thankfully, Citizen M isn't pretentious, and neither are the staff, who were friendly and helpful. The bar in the evening was really something, too.

Price From £184 for a double room on a weeknight in November.

6 Holywell Lane, EC2A 3ET; citizenm.com

→

IBIS STYLES LONDON SOUTHWARK

The best-known name here, Ibis Styles is one of three Ibis brands in the Accorhotels stable. The “Styles” part indicates that this is the top of the Ibis range and is “all-inclusive”, which means breakfast and wifi are built into the price.

From the outside, this is an Ibis. Inside, the “Styles” bit has been taken to the point where it’s frankly baffling. I walked into the hotel and wondered if I’d stumbled into the props room of a film studio. There were assorted chairs, a mini grand piano, a bar area hidden behind a pillar and menus hanging from the wall, yet only a few seats gathered around a coffee table where someone would be able to drink or eat. After a while an employee – unidentifiable as such other than his badge – came to my assistance, checked me in and was very helpful showing me around and providing reassurance.

Indeed, throughout the stay the staff were friendly and helpful but, because the lobby was so dark, I was often unsure whether I was asking the right person for help.

The 114 rooms, including eight suites, continue the dramatic theme, with red curtains and large black-and-white pictures covering an entire wall in the bathroom (which

had a shower only) and, as a Gold member of the Accorhotels programme, I got extra toiletries in the room, a bottle of water and a bathrobe and slippers.

Rooms are either Queen or a Duet (twin). Mine had a small flat-screen TV and looked out to the Shard at London Bridge, although judging by the construction going on behind the hotel, that might not be the case for much longer. The table was easily large enough to work at. I slept well since my double bed was firm but comfortable and the room was quiet, unlike the previous Ibis Styles I had stayed in where there was noise from guests in neighbouring rooms and the corridors. I liked the way it was easy to turn out all the lights from the bed.

On the ground floor, towards the rear of the property, there is a large restaurant and café area, which is hidden from the lobby and is where the continental buffet breakfast is served. The choice was good – pastries, hot and cold drinks, cheese, boiled eggs, toast and a selection of jams. The movie theme continues in here and there is a mix of communal and individual table seating.

The hotel also has two meeting rooms with a combined capacity of up to 70, but no gym.

Tom Otley

VERDICT Once I got used to the bizarre theme, this hotel grew on me, though the price is higher than the others featured here – proof of the power of being part of Accorhotels, perhaps. If you’re looking for something quirky, it will appeal, but I didn’t see the connection between the area and the theme chosen.

Price A midweek stay in November is around £204 per night.

43-47 Southwark Bridge Road, SE1 9AH; accorhotels.com



POINT A LONDON SHOREDITCH

Point A launched in 2017 with the remit “central, comfortable, affordable”. The brand has six London hotels, which includes this Shoreditch new-build.

Its location on Paul Street is very quiet for the area. It’s about ten minutes’ walk from Old Street underground station, with the City between five and ten minutes’ walk.

The open-plan ground floor offers a shared work/social space and has a clean, pared-back look, with white walls enlivened by illustrations that reference the local area.

There are 131 rooms (doubles and twins all en suite, from 8-12 sqm) set over seven floors. All have free wifi, Hypnos beds, blackout curtains, power shower, safe, mood lighting and a 40-inch flat-screen Smart TV.

My seventh-floor double had tall windows with views of the City. The no-frills functionality put me in mind of an aircraft interior. Yet I found it an easy space to be in. Despite its small proportions, mirrors, off-white décor and the generous windows ensured it never felt cramped.

There was no wardrobe, just a few hooks with coat hangers and space under the bed for larger items. A stool folded into the wall and a couple of fold-down ledges functioned as a desk – a good idea but, in my room, the door handle to the en suite prevented one

of the desks coming down. There were also AC and USB sockets.

The Hypnos bed was comfortable, but my pillow was hard and the bedclothes not very soft. Air con was quite loud and fierce, even on low.

My bijou bathroom was satisfactory. The shower head was fixed and there was no cap, which annoyed me as I was unable to wash without getting my hair wet. Basic toiletries were provided in tubes fixed to the wall. Rooms are serviced every three days.

There is no restaurant/bar, but snacks and non-alcoholic drinks are available from the lobby work/social space, which is also where a buffet breakfast is served. Priced at £9, it included cereals, fruit, yoghurt, pastries, fruit juice and great coffee.

Guests who sign up for the loyalty scheme get discounts on local amenities, bars and restaurants.

Becky Ambury



VERDICT A stylish and functional hotel that doesn’t feel soulless. It has cut out unnecessary trappings, such as a bar, wardrobe and daily room service, to offer good value in a great location instead.

Price A midweek stay in a double costs from £129 a night for members of the A-List scheme (it’s free to join) and £144 if not.

8-10 Paul Street, EC2A 4JH; pointahotels.com



Z HOTEL TOTTENHAM COURT ROAD

Z Hotels is a fast-expanding brand with central locations, which achieves low prices by offering small rooms (9-11 sqm in this case) and limited service. Each is very different; this is a conversion of an office block in Soho about two minutes' walk from Carnaby Street.

The 121 rooms are on six floors (the ground floor is just the reception). Z Inside Double rooms are inward facing and Z Doubles have windows. Queen doubles are the largest. The windows kept out the noise from the street.

I was in a Z Double room, which was almost entirely filled by the bed; if two are sharing, one will have to clamber over the other to get out. The room has strong, quiet air conditioning, and an en-suite shower room with decent toiletries. The shower wasn't the strongest, but was adequate.

There is a 49-inch HD TV with the complete Sky package. Blinds are electronically controlled. There is complimentary bottled water, tea, coffee and hot chocolate, and a kettle on the bedside table, along with power points and USBs. There is no wardrobe, but hooks and clothes hangers instead. Design de-



tails such as the pine backboard for the television, prevent the scheme from looking too sparse. The bed was firm and very comfortable.

The Z café serves wine, cheese and bread in the evening, and a continental breakfast, plus bacon sandwiches in the morning (£9.50). You can also buy simple food and coffee here during the day. There are no business or leisure facilities. *Tom Otley*

VERDICT You don't feel like you are staying in a budget property – it is good value, too.

Price £171 for a Z Inside Double midweek in November.

52 Poland Street, W1F 7NQ;
thezhoteis.com

MOTEL ONE LONDON – TOWER HILL

Motel One was founded in 2000 and has 65 hotels across Europe. This hotel is in the City of London, 500m north of Tower Hill. You enter the glass-fronted, one-storey One Lounge bar and restaurant with reception towards the rear.

All the rooms are 16 sqm, but there are several categories (and price bands) among the 291 rooms because of the good views from the higher floors (up to the 15th floor).

My corner room on the 12th floor had three floor-to-ceiling windows, with good blackout curtains, so I wasn't disturbed by any light, but had great views in the morning. The room was larger than many I've stayed in at this price point, with a small desk and even a comfy lounge chair. Perhaps because there were so many windows, the Loewe TV was above the desk and so was difficult to watch from the bed – not a problem since I was either working, asleep or staring out the window at the dawn over London.

The room had tea- and coffee-making facilities. My bed was good quality, the air conditioning ferociously effective and there were plug points everywhere, including by the bed. Lighting was good and bright, something that many luxury hotels might do well to emulate, and could be completely turned off from the bed, leaving only a reading lamp, which is set into the bed's wood-

-effect backboard, a nice touch

Back downstairs on the ground floor, the One Lounge has a design inspired by the nearby Tower of London. It is open 24 hours a day, and serves toasties and snacks, and then a continental breakfast in the morning (priced at £9.95). The area is full of seating better suited for relaxing and drinking than eating, so be careful eating in your smart shirt and trousers. That said, it is a comfortable and friendly space, and when I walked through in the evening, seemed a good place to spend some time. I had a look at the bar menu, which had a very good range of drinks, including a whole list of local (or at least UK distilled) gin. The breakfast choice was limited, but of good quality.

There are no business, meeting or leisure facilities.

Tom Otley

VERDICT Offers value for money, though the hotel has a minimum two-night stay on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays. Larger than expected room and a great location.

Price Around £238 for two nights midweek in November.

24-26 Minories, EC3N 1BQ;
motel-one.com



DESTINATIONS



red more creature comforts, including a Lavazza coffee machine, hair dryer and iron. It was stylishly decorated in a palette of grey and blue, and had views of The Gherkin, with a reasonable desk for working. I slept well in the good-quality bed.

There were also a couple of pleasant surprises. One was the bottle opener attached to the desk. Another was the bath, a rare treat in a London hotel. A good raindance shower was over this, with basic toiletries for body and hair.



TRAVELODGE PLUS LONDON CITY

Opened at the end of July 2018, this is Travelodge's largest new-build hotel and the flagship for the Travelodge Plus brand, which claims to offer a "budget chic" experience.

The location is great; seven minutes' walk from 30 St Mary Axe (aka The Gherkin) and three minutes' walk from both Aldgate and Aldgate East underground stations.

Smart and contemporary inside and out with lots of windows, the building certainly doesn't have a budget look – light wood flooring and mainly white walls, with splashes of colour.

Reception is on the right, with both a check-in desk and automated check-in machines. When I arrived, the hotel was fairly busy with a mix of families, tourists and business people.

The 395 rooms fall into two categories – Standard and Super. All feature a king-size bed, Samsung freeview TV, blackout curtains, desks and USB and AV sockets. My Super room cost around £20 more than the Standard and offe-

Wifi was free for 30 minutes, thereafter it cost £3 for 24 hours.

The ground-floor Bar/Café has an array of seating, some with USB and AC power. It serves a selection of burgers, pizza, curries etc all priced at under £10. The buffet breakfast (£8.95 and free for children) was perfectly good, with continental and hot options.

Becky Ambury

VERDICT I was unexpectedly impressed with the Travelodge Plus, and the extra £20 or so for a Super room seemed money well spent. It has a much more chic feel than you might expect from the no-frills chain, and a pleasant, vibrant Bar/Café.

Price £153 for a midweek Super room in November.

20 Middlesex Street, E1 7EX;
travelodge.co.uk

HUB BY PREMIER INN LONDON GOODGE STREET

Hub by Premier Inn launched in 2013 and there are currently ten in operation, the majority of those being in London, with two more scheduled to open at Berwick Street, Soho, and at Bank in the City during the financial year 2018/19.

This one on Torrington Place, which runs east off Tottenham Court Road, is close to Goodge Street underground station. Check-in is on the first floor accessed by a lift. You come out into a surprisingly spacious area, which contains the hotel's reception, café and lounge.

Reception has a traditional desk, but the receptionist showed me how to check-in using one of the self-service kiosks, which just needed my name to find the reservation. You then programme your own key card, which is necessary to operate the both lift to the floors and then to access the room corridors – an impressive and reassuring amount of security. As the building is a conversion, the route to my third-floor room was a rabbit warren of twists, turns, and steps.

My room was a good size, with space to walk around both sides of the bed – this isn't true of all the rooms, and it's hard to specify your requirements from the website, since there only seems to be the choice of one room type. There are lots of power points and USB charging. On arrival, the duvet was rolled up on the bed to indicate that it is fresh.

The design of the room is clever, with a smart, clean look, and yet clearly constructed out of tough materials to withstand the knocks it must get. The back wall above the bed had a giant London mural, and beneath the bed there was room to stow bags to make the most of the floor space there was. The wardrobe was open, and had a full-length mirror, which was both useful and added to the feeling of space.

On the first floor next to reception is the Lounge café where breakfast is served. Free coffee and tea are also available 24 hours a day and there is a range of drinks, both soft and alcoho-

lic, available to buy. There's a limited range of hot and cold food, too, though with the West End within a ten-minute walk, it was never busy.

Breakfast is available for £5, which though the choice is limited, is pretty good value in London, where a coffee and croissant can cost you as much. There are no business or leisure facilities.

Tom Otley

VERDICT I've always liked Premier Inns, and this first try of a Hub by Premier Inn confirmed that the brand knows what it is doing. This is a good hotel at a price hard to beat. I would recommend it to anyone who wants to stay in the centre of town but save money.

Price From £129 for a night midweek in November.

Brook House, Torrington Place, WC1E 7HN; premierinn.com



Prezent na każdą okazję, dokądkolwiek lecisz...

Zapraszamy do naszych sklepów w strefach wolnocłowych (Aelia Duty Free) i ogólnodostępnych (Aelia Beauty), zlokalizowanych na największych polskich lotniskach.

Znajdziesz nas także na:

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aelia **DUTYFREE**
The Art of the Gift

With LOT to India

Poland's flag carrier will launch a new non-stop service between Warsaw and New Delhi, starting 17 September 2019. Delhi will be LOT's sixth connection to Asia. The new service will be operated five times a week. Tickets are available as from today.

As with all of LOT's long-haul services, the connection will be served by state-of-the-art Boeing 787 Dreamliners, according to the following schedule:

- LO 071 WAW-DEL 22:40 – 09:00(+1) Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday
- LO 072 DEL-WAW 11:15 – 15:50 Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, Saturday, Sunday

"The long-awaited flight between Poland and India is becoming a fact. I am pleased to announce that this magnificent destination is being added to LOT's growing network today, and in September our first Dreamliner will land in the heart of India, at Delhi Airport. This is a great moment in our 90-year history and also evidence of our dynamic development," says Rafał Miłczarski, CEO of LOT.

New Delhi was chosen not without reason as the next LOT destination in Asia. India is inhabited by over 1.3 billion citizens and is the world's 7th biggest economy worth US\$2,439 billion. After Singapore, India is the second centre of direct investment in Asia for Polish entrepreneurs. In turn, for Indian business Poland has cost-effective and profitable investment environment. Geolocation of Poland with LOT's extended network of connections rank Warsaw hub as a gateway for Indian passengers enabling them access to all countries in Europe. The new LOT's connection will be a key element in strengthening economic ties and developing business relations between the two countries.

The connection has also been launched to provide an even easier access to India for European tourists wishing to explore this remarkable country. Stretching from the Indian Ocean to the Himalayas, India is known for its unique cultural diversity. It is also distinguished by its delicious cuisine. The direct air connection between the two countries is set to release the tourist potential between Poland, Europe and India.

The new Warsaw-Delhi connection will also benefit passengers from Western and Central Europe, including such cities as Brussels, Hamburg, Düsseldorf, Prague and Budapest, for whom Chopin Airport will be a convenient hub with connecting times of even merely 40 minutes. LOT has

New Delhi was chosen not without reason as the next LOT destination in Asia. After Singapore, India is the second centre of direct investment in Asia for Polish entrepreneurs.

The connection will be operated by state-of-the-art narrow-body Boeing 787 Dreamliners aircraft.



entered into a code-share agreement with Air India, which it intends to expand in the future. From now on, LOT's flights to and from Frankfurt also include the flight codes of the Indian carrier.

"The new service will not only enable the shortest and most comfortable air trip between Poland and India. Our flights allow passengers travelling both from and to India, to connect to key cities within Western and Central Europe. The potential for this flight is huge - over 8.9 million passengers travelled between India and Europe in 2017," says Rafał Miłczarski.

Aircraft serving the Warsaw-Delhi route will be covering the distance of 5,271 kilometres in 6 hours and 50 minutes. The Delhi-Warsaw service will take 8 hours.

PRESS MATERIALS, FOTOLIA

The new connection will be operated exclusively by the most modern wide-body aircraft in the world – the Boeing 787 Dreamliner. Each aircraft will feature three travel classes: LOT Business Class with seats which recline to the position of a flat bed and a galley akin to one at a top-class restaurant; LOT Premium Economy Class with larger personal space, comfortable seats with footrests, thigh support, cocktail tables and a rich menu, as well as LOT Economy Class with modern seats with personal in-flight entertainment screens and USB sockets, and fresh and diverse meals served during flights. Also present on board will be products containing regional elements, such as an Indian-style menu.

The launch of the connection from Warsaw to New Delhi is part of the profitable growth strategy which LOT has been implementing since the beginning of 2016. As result, over three years, LOT has become the fastest growing airline in Europe, doubling its fleet size and launching over 60 new connections worldwide (the carrier now operated 34 Embraer aircraft of four different types). This year, deliveries of the next nine B737 MAX are scheduled, increasing their number by the end of this year to 14. Also by the end of this year, four more B787 Dreamliner aircraft will be included in the fleet, which will increase their number in the LOT fleet to 15.

In the previous year, LOT broke its record carrying on board over 8.8 million passengers, which is 2 million more than a year earlier. This year, it plans to cross the barrier of 10 million passengers carried onboard. Today, LOT Polish Airlines operates 80 state-of-the-art aircraft. The carrier's flight network comprises 100 routes.

The connection has also been launched to provide an even easier access to India for European tourists wishing to explore this remarkable country.



Sheraton Warsaw Hotel - the urban business zone

Every year Warsaw is home to thousands of business events, such as congresses, conferences, fairs and trainings. The capital is teeming with life, and its dynamic development is accompanied by the expansion of the hotel scene. Located in the very heart of the city Sheraton Warsaw Hotel has been collaborating with event organisers for over 20 years. Its luxurious rooms, extensive conference and entertainment facilities, as well as world-class cuisine, greatly contribute to the prestige of the property and strengthening the brand's reputation.

The hotel's 12 meeting rooms are equipped with all necessary equipment for presentations and workshops. The event and banquet space extends over two floors and the area of more than 1,000 sqm., and the largest room - the Ballroom can accommodate up to 500 guests. The meeting rooms are equipped with all necessary equipment for presentations and workshops. The hotel staff make every effort to ensure that every event held at Sheraton is perfectly organized. In addition, the top floor of the hotel houses the luxury and

Enter the Sheraton Catering Service - a group of experts in the field, responsible for organizing major events for more than 20 years, and knowing that event planning is not as simple task.

newly refurbished Sheraton Club - a private space with complimentary wifi, breakfasts, drinks and snacks offered during the day, as well as evening cocktails with a large selection of alcohols and refreshments.

The culinary offer for business includes coffee breaks, but also a catering service that guarantees the success of your event regardless of the venue.

HOW TO ORGANIZE A PROFESSIONAL MEETING

National trade fairs, a lavish banquet, a formal gala, a business conference, company meeting or a family picnic. Each of these events requires appropriate preparation and individual approach in order to meet all the requirements and needs of the participants. Whether it's a private or a corporate meeting, it's best to entrust professionals and let them take care of everything. This way you can rest assured that the whole meeting will run smoothly and that all details will be properly worked out. Opting for the right company, you might want to take into account its experience and previous projects it worked on. Only in this way can you be sure that you have



The high quality of services provided by Sheraton Catering Service is proved by numerous flattering recommendations and a group of regular customers, as well as, of course, new projects.



hired a competent and proven team of specialists. Enter the Sheraton Catering Service - a group of experts in the field, responsible for organizing major events for more than 20 years, and knowing that event planning is not as simple task.

SHERATON CATERING SERVICE

For more than 20 years now Sheraton Catering Service has been providing top quality catering service at numerous outdoor and indoor events held in Warsaw and throughout Poland. The head chef of the hotel supported by an experienced team of cooking aficionados, as well as excellent dining facilities - all of these are a guarantee of a professional service and unique culinary experience. With an individual approach to each client and their needs, it's possible to customize the

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

menu to suit a given occasion or modify the dishes proposed by the chef, to ensure that even the most sophisticated palates are fully satisfied with the food.

In addition to the excellent menu, Sheraton Catering Service also offers comprehensive and professional service at outdoor events, food delivery to any address within Poland, as well as delivery of any necessary equipment including round, buffet or cocktail tables, chairs, porcelain tableware, decorations etc. Exquisite dinner organized by Sheraton Catering Service is a guarantee of the highest quality products and impeccable waiter service.

CATERING FOR EVERY OCCASION

During 20 years of its operation, Sheraton Catering Service has been involved in a number of projects. The services are provided throughout Poland, both indoors and outdoors. Many of them have gone down in history, such as the sumptuous wedding at Malbork Castle organized for the niece of David Lynch. Costumes from the period, stylish decorations and royal menu, helped guest immerse deep in the atmosphere of this magical place and made the event truly memorable.

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

Talking about creativity, you can't forget about the head chef Marcin Sasin, whose culinary sense and inspiration drawn from long journeys are simply irreplaceable. His talent is highly-valued by clients, including those performing public functions both in Poland and abroad. As the 20-year history shows, regardless of the scale of the event, Sheraton Catering Service makes every effort to meet the needs of its customers and exceed their wildest expectations.

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

SKIING IN ISCHGL

Ischgl is one of the best ski destinations in the Austrian Alps. The town bustles with life 24/7 and there's a reason why it's been dubbed the "Alpine Ibiza".

DESTINATIONS

Skiing in Ischgl is a real fun for winter sports enthusiasts. This stylish town of only 1600 inhabitants, offers 10,000 beds in guest houses and hotels ranging from three to five stars. It's also renowned for its excellent restaurants where you can enjoy exquisite dishes praised by "Gault Millau" and "Guide a la Carte" restaurant guides. The charming town is also packed with atmospheric bars, cafes and stores, and, above all, is known for several kilometres of well-groomed ski runs. It's good to know that the two parts of Ischgl are connected by a large tunnel carved out of a hill, acting as a useful shortcut for skier and snowboarders alike.

SKIS, JUMPS AND HIKES

You can reach Ischgl by car or, alternatively take a plane to Innsbruck, followed by a 90-minute drive by a taxi or a rented car.

The Silvretta Arena Ischgl-Samnaun is a dream come true for any skier. From the valley where Ischgl sits you can get to the mountains by three gondola lifts: Silvretta-bahn, Fimbabahn i Pardatschgratbahn. The first two meet at Idalp station at 2300m, in the very centre of the Arena. The place is packed with numerous ski academies, bars and good restaurants; it's also here where most first-time visitors to Ischgl begin their adventure with this unique town.

Silvretta Arena connects two ski resorts - Austrian Ischgl and Swiss Samnaun. The lifts serve the slopes situated right on the border of the two countries, with skiers crossing it (often unknowingly) several times a day, trying to master their skills. Meticulously groomed, the pistes offer skiers challenges of varied difficulty. Nearly 240 kilometres of ski runs in the area are served by 44 lifts. The area is also home to the most famous and at the same time the longest piste in the Alps dubbed the "red eleven", which, as the name reveals, offers 11 kilometres of skiing fun.

During the peak season, sometimes you have to wait several minutes in a line to get into a gondola. Luckily, queues to chairlifts are a rare occurrence, so choose one if you wish to have an uninterrupted fun throughout the day.

However, the region where Ischgl is situated is also a perfect spot for cross-country and Nordic skiing. You can find well-prepared cross-country trails and good instructors on Galtur slope (situated 10 kilometres from Ischgl), which you can reach by a free shuttle bus.

You can also decide for a hike along the charming Fimba Valley, which is a fairly undemanding route with several picturesque lakes you'd be passing by on your way.

It's also worth exploring the famous Smugglers Route, which you can do either on foot or on skis. As the Austrian Ischgl is only 10 kilometres from the Swiss Samnaun, in the old days people used to smuggle cigarettes, coffee and sugar from one village to another, as those goods were considered a real luxury at that time. Today, Ischgl and Samnaun are connected by both ski lifts and huge crowds of tourists who arrive in the region in winter and summer,



WORDS MARZENA MRÓZ



PlayStation Vita snowpark is one of the largest and best freestyle areas in the Alps. The town is also renowned for its spectacular music concerts held here at the beginning and at the end of the season, on a stage built at an altitude of 2320 metres.

DESTINATIONS



provides you with access to three other areas with excellent pistes and ski lifts, which significantly extends the region's offer to a total of 350 kilometres of ski slopes served by 71 lifts.

Galtür offers 40 kilometres of well-prepared runs and unlimited areas for enthusiasts of off-piste skiing. This small town is also home to an impressive museum built with the aim to commemorate the tragic events that took place there 20 years ago. In 1999, Galtür was buried in a giant avalanche that claimed the lives of 31 people. Luckily, today the town is well protected by special metal fences combined with ultra-modern technology, to make sure that such tragedy will never happen again.

THE ALPINE FEAST

From Galtür we return to Ischgl for a special dinner in Schlosshotel. The dinner is exquisite, as you may expect it from a restaurant awarded with three chef's toques by the esteemed Gault-Millau guide. The food is simply delicious. Headed by chef Gustav Jantscher, the restaurant serves a wide range of regional dishes based on old recipes with a Tyrolean twist.

There are a number of excellent restaurants in Ischgl. For good Tyrolean lunch head to Sunny Mountain Restaurant situated right on the slope. I also recommend Walserstube and the sophisticated Alpenhaus Mountain VIP Club on a slope near the Silvretta and Fimbabahn cable cars. Located on the first floor of a glass-fronted building, it has several fireplaces and a cloakroom where skiers can store their boots and for the time of lunch put on comfortable slippers instead. It is a very special place, an oasis of peace, relaxation and luxury, with an excellent menu and an impressive wine list.

Being in Ischgl you simply must stop by Pacha nightclub to dance the night away. The two red cherries in the club's logo look beautiful against the background of the snowy Alps, and with the DJ playing catchy tunes, the international crowd and delicious cocktails served by experienced bartenders, the place feels more like a bar in Ibiza than an Alpine watering hole.

Skiing in Ischgl is a real fun for winter sports enthusiasts.

but the former Schmugglerweg is still there, waiting to be explored. It takes 5 hours to cover it on foot, but for a skier it's literally just one quick run.

CORNUCOPIA OF FUN

Every year Ischgl is home to "Shapes in White" Snow Sculpture Festival. The monumental works carved in ice by skilled and creative artists can be admired from early January until they melt.

PlayStation Vita snowpark - one of the largest and best freestyle areas in the Alps with nearly 70 hills, is yet another attraction you simply can't miss in Ischgl! Watching the incredible stunts performed by young daredevils on the snowpark's countless kickers, ramps and rails, can really take your breath away!

The town is also famous for its spectacular music concerts, held here at the beginning and at the end of the season, on a stage built at an altitude of 2320 metres. The list of artists who performed here is long and includes such famous names as Elton John, Tina Turner, Mariah Carey or Rod Stewart. Interestingly, all the events are non-ticketed. All you need to attend them is a valid skipass.

But skiing on the slopes of Ischgl is just one of many attractions of the Paznaun Valley region. The Silvretta Skipass

ON TOP



SHOOT TO THRILL

GoPro Hero 7 has become the face of adventure filmography for a reason. The company's latest design includes new voice control features and improved video stabilisation software, which allows you to capture super-smooth time lapse. £379.99; shop.gopro.com



THE BOOT FITS

Italian brand Roxa combines the knowledge of athletes and engineers to create its products. The Freeride R3 110 hybrid ski boots, for use on and off the slopes, demonstrate the

LOCK YOUR STOCK

Braided steel cable makes the Master Lock Keyed Cable Street Cuff lock flexible and secure, perfect for protecting skis or snowboards. It comes in a range of bright colours, too, if you want something that stands out a little more. £28; masterlock.eu

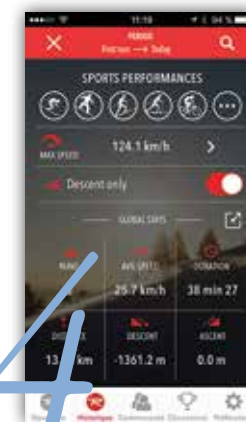


Peak performance

Clever products for the slopes

SKI SOCIAL

Bringing social media to the slopes, Ski Pursuit lets you map your runs, track your total vertical descent, and monitor your average speed and performance. Or perhaps just boast about them to the app's 85,000 members. Free; available on the App Store and Google Play



WHATEVER THE WEATHER

The Patagonia men's Powder Bowl ski trousers allow good movement while being wind resistant, water repellent and insulating. Made from recycled Gore-tex, you can also wear them with a clear conscience. £270; eu.patagonia.com



HANDY DESIGN

Pricy, but these KJUS Bluetooth gloves could be a game changer if you need to stay in contact on the slopes. With a built-in microphone and speaker they connect to your phone via Bluetooth, allowing you to take calls through the glove

WHEELEY GOOD

The upright duffel from Briggs and Riley provides the convenience of a wheeled suitcase or carry bag, while ensuring you have enough room for bulky skiwear. £450; briggs-riley.com



One&Only Royal Mirage Dubai



INFO

One&Only Royal Mirage is situated on the private, sandy Jumeirah beach, which stretches for over one kilometre. As a luxurious oasis in a big city, it also boasts the most beautiful garden complex in Dubai. Hotel guests can choose the standard and style of accommodation that suits them best by choosing rooms or suites in one of the three hotel wings. The hotel is completely unique, considered by many to be the most stylish property of this type in the whole of the UAE.

ROOMS AND SUITES

There is a large selection of rooms, suites and villas, spread over 26 hectares of private gardens.

The Palace section is the ideal choice for those looking for true palace splendour and ti-

meless elegance with a hint of oriental atmosphere. Arabian Court will satisfy enthusiasts of Arab style, beautiful and symmetrical gardens as well as fancy fountains. Part of the prestigious Luxury Hotels of the World collection, Residence&Spa, was created for those looking for tranquillity, relaxation and harmony.

CUISINE

In eight on-site restaurants of the complex, world-renowned chefs prepare classic Mediterranean, Moroccan, international, Middle Eastern, grilled and seafood dishes. They are served both al fresco with a view of the gardens or Dubai panorama, as well as in the lavish interiors of the hotel. There are also four bars where the world's best bartenders serve fancy cocktails and the most exquisite champagne.



CONTACT

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dtc@deluxetravelclub.pl
www.deluxetravelclub.pl
www.dubaideluxe.pl

PRICE

from US\$2390 per 2 people
for 7 nights with breakfast,
between May and August

ACTIVE LEISURE

The luxurious on-site spa and Dubai's famous traditional hammam will pamper all your senses. In addition to hair and nail salon, as well as a well equipped fitness centre, fans of active leisure can use here volleyball, basketball and tennis courts, practise a wide range of water sports or master their skills at a nearby golf course. The youngest holidaymakers will have a great fun in the hotel's KidsOnly mini club.

VERDICT

One&Only Royal Mirage is a hotel recommended for the most demanding travellers.
Marta Domagala, Deluxe Travel Club



One&Only Le Saint Geran Mauritius

INFO

Long hailed as the iconic luxury retreat in Mauritius, One&Only Le Saint Geran has recently been reopened following extensive renovation, which has taken this unique hotel to an even higher level of luxury. Its perfect location near the most beautiful beach stretching for almost two kilometre, makes it a favourite choice for travellers arriving on the island. Not without significance is the fact that the hotel is surrounded by warm waters of the Indian Ocean from the west and by peaceful lagoons from the east, overlooking sugar cane plantation and several mountain peaks.

ACCOMMODATION

The luxurious rooms and suites decorated in local style, which resonates with the exotic views of the lagoon, the ocean or the beach, guarantee a fantastic holiday. The balconies and terraces adjacent to the rooms come with comfortable chairs, allowing you to enjoy warm evenings and nights. The hotel also offers suites with two or three bedrooms, as well as a beautiful villa with two bedrooms and a private swimming pool.

CUISINE

There are five on-site restaurants, serving international, Asian and local cuisine, as well as BBQ dishes and steaks. There are also several quiet places where you can order a light salad or sip a cocktail at sunset. In the evenings, the hotel offers live music performed by local artists.



It's the world-class hotel and the favourite choice of customers of Deluxe Travel Club who visit Mauritius.



CONTACT

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PRICES

From €3490 per 2 people
for 7 nights with breakfast,
from May to August

ACTIVE LEISURE

The renovated luxury spa with a hair salon and massage rooms, offers an extensive choice of services by beauty experts. If you want to calm down, you can take a yoga class held in a beautiful pavillion opposite the main building. Active leisure enthusiasts can use three on-site pools and the water sports centre. The youngest holidaymakers will have an unforgettable time in the KidsOnly miniclub, while for teenage guests there is a dedicated OneTribe club.

VERDICT

A spectacular hotel, perfect for special occasions and celebrations. It's considered one of the most luxurious in the world and justly so. Excellent service, stylish rooms and suites, and the offer of the restaurant will leave no one indifferent. It's a good place for both an exotic holiday for two and for families with children.

Marta Domagala, Deluxe Travel Club

York Hotel Singapore



BACKGROUND

The four-star York Hotel is a perfect choice for both those wishing to explore the bustling city of Singapore and business travellers. Undoubtedly, the hotel's biggest selling points are its convenient location and excellent service.

WHERE IS IT?

The hotel is situated about a 25-minute drive from Changi International Airport. It only takes nine minutes to reach York Hotel from the Orchard Mass Rapid Train station (MRT), and Singapore's lively retails and entertainment belt of Orchard Road and the central financial and business districts are also right at the doorstep of the hotel. The hotel building is situated in a picturesque green garden with a pool, where guests like to unwind on scorching mornings and sultry exotic evenings. Strategically located on Mount Elizabeth, the hotel offers ultimate comfort, tranquillity and convenience.

INTERIORS

The hotel is very modern, stylish and functional. The marble-lined lobby takes guests to the on-site restaurant and further to fast, efficient lifts. The hotel offers a total of 407 rooms located in two wings of the property: the Annexe Block and the Tower Block.

The 21-storey Tower Block served by two lifts, offers rooms for non-smoking guests. Annexe Block, in turn, is a 13-storey building with three lifts.

ROOMS IN TOWER BLOCK

The impressive Tower Block, which is undoubtedly the most elegant and luxurious part of the property, sports 64 Premier Rooms, each with the floor area of 50 sqm. The rooms are spacious and come with king size beds, as well as a desk, table and two armchairs. The commodious bathroom is equipped with all necessary toiletries and cosmetics. To provide guests with maximum

CONTACT

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www.yorkhotel.com.sg



privacy and comfort, there are only four Premiere Rooms on each floor.

ROOMS IN THE ANNEXE BLOCK

The Annexe Block comprises 343 rooms and suites of different categories. All 268 Superior Rooms offer 27 sqm of floor area and come with a comfortable queen-sized bed (plus an extra bed for one person) or with twin beds. The latter option is more common, as it's available in 182 rooms. The in-room amenities include free wifi, iron and ironing board, mini-fridge, air-conditioning, flatscreen TV with satellite channels, workdesk with chair, and a safe.

Deluxe Rooms (a total of 61) range from 37 to 46 sqm and are available with king-size, queen-size and Hollywood twin beds. Upon request the hotel can also provide an extra bed at a nominal fee. Deluxe Rooms also offer all the amenities available in Superior Rooms.

The Annexe Block also houses six 92 sqm Deluxe suites, providing exceptional comfort of stay, as well as one York Suite (98 sqm) featuring a bedroom with a king-size bed, a sitting room and a second bedroom with twin beds and a sitting area. It's by far the most luxurious accommodation in the hotel.

BARS AND RESTAURANTS

At White Rose Cafe you can enjoy delicious and varied breakfast (served from 6.00 am to 11.00 am), both in its continental and Asian iterations. These include a choice of egg dishes, savoury curry and spicy soups, as well as fresh fruit, coffee and juice.

Coffee Bar, open from 11.00 am to 11.00 pm, is a chic and enjoyable venue serving aromatic



The strongest points of the four-star York Hotel are, undoubtedly, its excellent location and perfect service.

coffee and a tasty selection of homemade pastries, curry puffs and chicken pies.

SPORTS AND LEISURE

The swimming pool is open from 7.00 am to 10.00 pm. You can unwind here on comfortable loungers, ordering a snack or a drink from the bar. After soaking in the sun, you can then visit the well-equipped fitness centre to do some workout.

CONFERENCE FACILITIES

The hotel is a perfect venue for a conference or business meeting. The 560 sqm Carlton room can accommodate up to 450 people. Rose Ro-

oms I and II, as well as Marie I and Marie II, are an ideal choice for a function for up to 80 guests. By combining those four, an event organizer obtains the 400 sqm Rosemarie Hall accommodating up to 380 people. Another beautiful venue to hold an unforgettable meeting is the 180 sqm Top of the York room, which offers a gorgeous view of the city skyline.

AMENITIES

Hotel guests can fully enjoy a wide range of amenities, including free wifi, 24-hour room service, laundry service, safes in rooms and at the reception desk, as well as the business centre, and a range of useful facilities (especially for a business traveller) such as a hair and beauty salon, or a spacious car park. Guests can check in as early as 2.00 pm and the check-out time is 12.00 pm.

VERDICT

York Hotel is an excellent hotel situated in the very heart of the city-state, within an easy reach of both Orchard Road and the business district. The property's strongest points are excellent service, spacious, stylishly designed rooms, a swimming pool with comfortable lounge beds, as well as an exceptionally delicious buffet breakfast. All in all, York hotel is a perfect choice for both business travellers and those wishing to spend a few enjoyable days with their family in the exciting city of Singapore. The highest note from me.

Marzena Mróz



PRESS MATERIALS

Transatlantic hand baggage

We guide you through the latest size and weight allowances

The rapid growth of low-cost carriers operating transatlantic routes has forced more established airlines to compete on price by offering cheaper hand baggage only (HBO) fares. This presents such HBO passengers with quandaries: how much, exactly, can I carry on board; and how does this differ between airlines?

Of the carriers offering nonstop flights across the Atlantic, British Airways offers the most generous hand-baggage size allowance. The rest of the airlines' size restrictions are anywhere from 1-10cm less than BA, often only differing in one dimension (length, width or height). Contrary to what you may think, this can be a problem if you purchase a carry-on bag specifically designed to fit BA's overhead bin, but then end up on a flight with Delta or United, which both have the same length limit as BA (56cm), but only allow widths of up to 35cm (compared to BA's generous 45cm).

These seemingly small differences in size restrictions are often enforced, and that further complicates which is the best carry-on suitcase to

buy. A bag that meets the smallest requirements can be used everywhere, but you could be missing out on up to 10cm of space when you fly certain airlines. If you're hoping to travel with only a carry-on, that extra 10cm makes a difference.


The weight limit of a carry-on also varies, though this is easier to plan for. The most common cut-off is 10kg. The largest allowance is a generous 23kg, again with British Airways. None of the three major American airlines (American, Delta, United) gives an official weight restriction for carry-on baggage, although they do clarify that anything too heavy for you to lift is too heavy to take on board. Primera Air and the trailblazer of the low-cost transatlantic fare, Norwegian, both give a maximum weight limit for the carry-on bag and personal item combined (10kg or 15kg depending on ticket).

Most airlines also allow you to carry a "personal item" (handbag, satchel, etc), but its size threshold also varies by airline. Delta and Virgin both shy away from specifying how big is too big, instead suggesting the item be a "purse, briefcase, camera bag, diaper bag, laptop computer or an item of a similar or smaller size". Other airlines are clearer. The generous allowance on American Airlines (45x35x20cm) can easily accommodate a backpack, while the smaller limits on Aer Lingus, Norwegian and Primera leave far less wiggle room. Currently, none of the airlines count a jacket, book, umbrella, or other similarly small item you may happen to have in your hand while boarding as your personal item.

The easy solution to this confusion would be for the airlines to agree on a universal baggage size and weight limit, but that day may never come. Until then, check the exact restrictions for your forthcoming flight, and observe them. With low-cost flights, the penalty fees for not following directions can add up.

Laura Miserez

HAND-BAGGAGE SIZE AND WEIGHT RESTRICTIONS ON MAJOR AIRLINES FOR TRANSATLANTIC FARES:

	Airline	Carry-on	Personal item
	Aer Lingus	55x40x24 cm, 10 kg	33x25x20 cm
	Air Canada	55x40x23 cm, 10 kg	43x33x16 cm
	American Airlines	56x36x23cm, kg limit not specified	45x35x20 cm
	British Airways	56x45x25 cm, 23 kg	40x30x15 cm, 23 kg
	Delta	56x35x23cm, kg limit not specified	Maximum not specified
	Norwegian	55x40x23cm, 10kg or 15kg (combined)	33x25x20cm, combined kg limit: 10kg for LowFare, LowfarePlus and Premium; 15kg for Flex and PremiumFlex
	Primera Air	54x45x25cm, 10kg (combined)	33x25x20cm, combined kg limit: 10kg
	United Airlines	56x35x22cm; kg limit not specified	43x25x23 cm
	Virgin Atlantic	56x36x23cm, 10kg; Upper Class passengers can bring two pieces, which can weigh a combined total of 16kg	Maximum not specified



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WORDS DAVID PHELAN

SLIPPING THROUGH THE NET

Whether to enhance the security of online transactions or to enable access to certain websites wherever you are in the world, VPNs are a useful tool for travellers



You'll have probably heard the abbreviation VPN, and you may know that it stands for virtual private network. Perhaps you are aware of its reputation for enabling illegal downloads or other dodgy stuff. Although this reputation is well-earned, VPNs can also be used for legitimate purposes, such as making sure blockchain transactions are about as private as they can be. The deep web, comprising those sites not found via standard search engines, can also be accessed more securely using a VPN.

So what, exactly, is a VPN? At its simplest, a VPN is a series of computers networked together across the internet. It creates a virtual tunnel between your computer and a server operated by the VPN company. This tunnel is encrypted so external internet traffic can't see your data.

When your computer is connected to the VPN, your IP address (the network address for a computer on that network at that moment) is masked by the IP address of the VPN server, so your identity is hidden, too.

SECURE CONNECTION

Most of the time, we don't think about any of this and just connect to a hotel or coffee shop's wifi network. It's very hard to know who might be watching the traffic on these networks. In extreme cases, it's possible that a nefarious party could have set up a network in order to steal personal data. This could be passwords, credit card details or even just the email you're sending to change your return flight. While a reputable hotel may be trustworthy, using an internet café is less certain.

Once a VPN is in place, however, neither those operating the network nor those trying to hack into it are able to intercept your data. So, that soppy message to your significant other remains as private as you'd like it to be. The same is true for the business-critical information you're sending as well.

ACCESS ALL AREAS

Additionally, in countries where certain websites are blocked, using a VPN means access to them is possible. In a country such as China, where it's hard to get on Facebook or even Google, a VPN provides a way around this.

A VPN disguises where you are in the world, so if you are trying to access data only available to US residents, then an American VPN gives the impression you're there and not in Tottenham or Timbuktu. This could be for something as simple as accessing the dollar prices on products in an online store instead of being repeatedly redirected to the European or UK sites.

On the other hand, it might be that you want to watch Netflix, iPlayer or Sky Sports overseas – even work trips →

need to have downtime. Streaming services such as Netflix try to prevent users watching UK content overseas due to varying rights issues between countries. However, some VPNs allow you to slip under the net. If you do want to use one, an online search for “VPNs that work with [insert name of site]” will offer up a few options. Be aware that you may be breaking the rights agreements if you decide to do this, however.

In countries such as China, Egypt and Turkey, which have less liberal attitudes, the government may ban some VPNs without warning. Earlier this year, Apple ejected several VPNs from the App Store because the Chinese government ruled them illegal, not surprisingly as they're a way of leapfrogging the Great Firewall of China. ExpressVPN, however, is apparently ignored by Chinese authorities because its more expensive pricing and lack of Chinese-language support mean that Chinese customers don't use it.

One rule of thumb is to download VPN apps and software before you travel to countries that have strict rules. In such countries, you may also find that hotels aimed at foreign tourists have fewer restrictions on which sites you can visit, though don't imagine that means your traffic is not being monitored.

In countries with less liberal attitudes, the government may ban some VPNs without warning

CHOOSING A VPN

VPN connections tend to be slower than standard connections, not least because data is encrypted and routed through multiple servers. Generally speaking, the more servers the VPN offers, the better chance you have of finding one near you, which helps speed-wise. It's hard to predict speeds because that depends entirely on your line, but a good VPN shouldn't slow it too much.

Speaking of which, should you be paying a price at all or are free VPNs good enough? This is a matter of debate. VPNs are not cheap to run, so the organisations need to pay for them somehow. This can be through ads, which may not be the experience you're looking for, or even by selling data to third parties, which rather defeats the point.

There are also paid-for VPN companies, which have a free tier, say 500MB a month. You'd be surprised how quickly this data is used up and then you'll be invited to pay for an upgraded service.

A VPN isn't perfect: if all you are trying to do is catch the latest Netflix or Sky Sports programme it may be rather more hassle than it's worth. However, the value it offers in terms of privacy of data and identity means, at the least, it's worth considering.



FOUR OF THE BEST

ExpressVPN

ExpressVPN stands out because of strong server speeds and great versatility; that is, it functions on lots of devices. It has over 2,000 servers in 94 countries. It works (currently) with Netflix and iPlayer, though not in every country, and is compatible with PC, Mac, Android, iPhone and BlackBerry. There's no free trial, but a 30-day money-back guarantee applies. It's US\$12.95 (£9.90) per month or US\$8.32 (£6.35) a month if you commit for a year. expressvpn.com



Tunnel Bear

The cutely designed Tunnel Bear is simple to use and if you're a low-data user, the free plan may suit, though you'll hit the free ceiling quickly if you're streaming video. Speeds are not noticeably slower than non-VPN traffic. It has been blocked by iPlayer but works, sometimes, with Netflix and is compatible with numerous devices. It offers 500MB a month free; unlimited data, US\$9.99 (£7.60) a month or US\$59.99 (£45.75) for a year. tunnelbear.com



NordVPN

This is a very well-regarded VPN service with wide device compatibility, strong reliability and fast speeds. It currently works with Netflix and iPlayer. Pluses include easy set-up with advanced settings if you want them. It costs US\$11.95 (£9.10) a month, but drops as low as US\$2.99 (£2.30) a month if you commit for three years. nordvpn.com



Invincibull

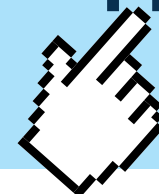
Invincibull is one of the newer services. It's easy to use and has no limit on how many devices you can connect to at a time: handy if you have a phone, tablet and computer when you're travelling. It offers 1GB a month free; unlimited data is US\$7.99 (£6) a month or US\$4.99 (£3.10) a month if you commit for a year. invincibull.io



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BEST IN SHOW

SAMSUNG Q900R 8K TV



If you're just getting used to the super high-resolution screens that are 4K televisions, also known as Ultra High Definition TVs (UHD TVs), well, it's now time to get ready for 8K. It means four times as many pixels as 4K and 16 times as many pixels as full HD. Although there have been prototypes of 8K for several years, Samsung's new range will actually go on sale soon, around mid-October at the time of going to press. The image quality will be as high as the price, with figures of more than £5,000 being mooted. As there are no movies or TV programming in native 8K resolution yet, viewers must rely on the TV's processors to upscale the images to look almost as impressive. Thankfully, the upscaling on the Q900R is very good, with highly nuanced colours and crisp, clean images. Price TBC, pre-order from [samsung.com/pl](https://www.samsung.com/pl)

SONY WH-1000XM3



Sony's noise-cancelling headphones have been consistently good, with its engineers aiming to create a quiet place as subtle as a moment's pause in a concert hall – that is, a live, resonant silence, unlike the dead space some noise-cancelling delivers. The latest WH-1000XM headphones use a significantly enhanced processor to quell voices as well as engine noise. When you touch the right earcup it lets in the outside world, so you can hear the question: "Chicken or beef?" When you're done resting and want to listen to music, the headphones can reproduce a full range of frequencies up to 40kHz, and they are comfortable to wear for even the longest journey. Plus, though they are wireless, they can be connected to in-flight entertainment systems with a supplied cable. £330, [sony.pl](https://www.sony.pl)

HUAWEI MATE 20 LITE



The Chinese manufacturer Huawei's unveiling of a large-screen smartphone was one of the show's more unexpected developments. The "lite" in the name indicates that it's not the most powerful or expensive phone in the company's portfolio but, nevertheless, its design is elegant, it has great build quality and it's powered by a long-lasting 3,750mAh battery. The screen is very large at 16cm, but the curved frame makes it a comfy fit in most hands. Photography is a big feature here: there are twin cameras on the front and rear of the phone and both sets use AI to automatically adjust the exposure according to which of 22 scenes it recognises. These range from beach to blue sky, with different settings for animals – cats, dogs and even pandas have their own exposures. £379, [carphonewarehouse.com](https://www.carphonewarehouse.com)

NETGEAR ORBI VOICE



Developed in conjunction with hifi company Harman Kardon, this speaker has great audio quality, with a front-facing woofer. But there's more. With Amazon's voice assistant Alexa built in, you can control your music by speaking, get a weather forecast or ask for the lights to be turned on. If you already have the Netgear Orbi hub router for your broadband, this gadget also cleverly includes a wifi router extender so you can play your music and pump wifi to the furthest corners of your home at the same time. You can also buy a deluxe pack with both router and speaker and there is also a downloadable app through which you can tweak sound quality. Orbi Voice (Orbi tri-band wifi router, Orbi Voice smart speaker and wifi) £399, Orbi Voice smart speaker add-on (for those with an existing Orbi wifi system) £279, [netgear.co.uk](https://www.netgear.co.uk)

SONOS AMP



You'll have heard of Sonos, makers of outstanding speakers, which connect wirelessly to each other and play audio from your smartphone, online music service or TV, for instance. But supposing you have your own speakers, thank you very much, and want to connect those to the Sonos system? Well, now there's the Sonos Amp. It's an update to what was previously called the Connect:Amp, though this model is sleeker and way more powerful. You plug your wired speakers into the new Amp and they will wirelessly connect to any other Sonos speakers. The Amp is compatible with 100 music streaming services, including Spotify and Apple Music. It works with the most demanding speakers and can power up to four of them. Available from early 2019. £599, pre-order from [sonos.com](https://www.sonos.com)

CASIO PRO TREK WSD-F30



If you like running or walking in the great outdoors, Casio's new Pro Trek WSD-F30 smartwatch is an excellent piece of kit that can track your progress, and even help if you lose your way. That's because it has built-in GPS, and allows access to maps when offline to show your position so, should you lose your signal, you won't necessarily be lost as well. Battery life is impressive at up to three days, and it's shock-proof, dust-proof and water-resistant, so suitable for a range of activities whether trekking, riding, surfing, swimming or golfing. There's a second screen mode where the colour display switches to black and white for the best battery life. It's a big, chunky watch, but its features add brain to the brawn. Around £500 when it launches in January, available to pre-order soon from [protrek.co.uk](https://www.protrek.co.uk)

GLOWING PRAISE

The appeal of the Datograph by A Lange & Söhne shows no sign of dimming – in fact, it only gets brighter

WORDS CHRIS HALL

Chronographs are everywhere. Most watch brands make at least one, and several – TAG Heuer, Zenith, Omega and Breitling – have built their modern reputations on them. A lot derive their status from crucial endorsements in the pre-digital age when things needed to be timed: motor racing, bombing raids, space flights and the like. But the appeal is wider and, to watch fans, also purer.

Chronographs are popular because they are significantly challenging to engineer: a perpetual calendar is often seen as impressive because of its rudimentary “brain” that knows when a month has 28, 29, 30 or 31 days, even in a leap year, but it is at heart a logical expansion of keeping time for hours, minutes and seconds. Making time stop and start at will – and in doing so subjecting a miniature engine, that is at all times delicately poised and lubricated, to repeated blunt shocks ad infinitum – well, that is the watchmaking equivalent of behaving like an Old Testament God.

For a long time, not many companies actually made chronograph movements. It was the work of specialists: names like Venus, Valjoux, Lemania and Minerva. While the automatic watch was invented by the British watchmaker John Harwood in 1924, it would be a further 45 years before the combined (and competitive) efforts of the world’s biggest watch brands managed to marry automatic winding with a chronograph movement.

Nowadays, the majority of chronograph watches are still powered by a third-party movement, or a clone thereof: the Valjoux 7750, Sellita SW 500 and ETA 2824 are at the root of most mid-market chronographs. What was true in the 1960s is still true today: you’ve got to be brave, or a little bit stupid, to invest in your own chronograph calibre. Even more so at the upper levels of watchmaking, where the pinnacle of chronograph craft is to produce an “integrated” hand-wound movement. (There are two ways to make a chronograph: one is to

WATCHES



A Lange & Söhne's limited-edition Datograph Up/Down has a mechanism with 451 parts and a semi-transparent sapphire crystal dial

add a module to an existing movement that just does basic timekeeping, the other is to design a new movement from the ground up with the chronograph functions built in. Hence, integrated.)

And why hand-wound? Given all the energy expended in creating automatic chronographs, it seems perverse, but then much of watchmaking is. A hand-wound movement is more traditional, and has one other clear advantage in the modern age of watches with sapphire crystal casebacks: it's easier to see what's going on, and with chronographs there is always something going on, as the various levers, springs and wheels do their thing, slicing time up into neat little chunks.

All of which is a very long-winded way of saying that if you want to be taken seriously at horology's top table, bringing out an in-house manual chronograph is the way to do it. In 1999, a mere six years after re-emerging from the ashes of the Cold War, that's exactly what A Lange & Söhne, part of the Glashütte brand, did with the Datograph. It looked great from the front – modestly sized at 39mm, a mixture of technical and classical influences – and spellbinding from the back, a multi-layered labyrinth of curves and points, polished and engraved to the very highest standard. No less a heavyweight than Patek Philippe – 160 years in continuous business – had only released an equivalent movement the year before. A Lange & Söhne had just walked across the playground and given it a bloody nose.

Nearly 20 years on, the Datograph is one of many su-

Chronographs are popular because they are challenging to engineer

perb watches to the Glashütte name. But it stands alone as the watch that really gave the brand its footing in the haute horlogerie world, and successive versions have done nothing to dilute its appeal. On the contrary, it now glows brighter than ever – literally, in fact. The dial has been replaced with a disc of smoked sapphire crystal, through which enough UV light can penetrate to charge a veritable festival of SuperLuminova: the edge of the dial has an entire ring of the stuff, making the tachymeter scale glow in the dark; it is joined by the two chronograph subdials, the date discs at 12 o'clock, the filling for the hour and minute hands, and the entirety of the chronograph seconds hand. Oh, and the power reserve indicator – that's what the "Up/Down" of the name refers to. On a lesser base design, it might have been overwhelming – gimmicky, even – but the Datograph can take it. The end result has a life and character – albeit of a dark, moody sort – rarely found in watch brands that take themselves this seriously.

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Guayaquil



WORDS ISOBEL FINBOW

Ecuador's powerhouse port is much more than just the gateway to the Galapagos Islands

1 Cerro Santa Ana lighthouse

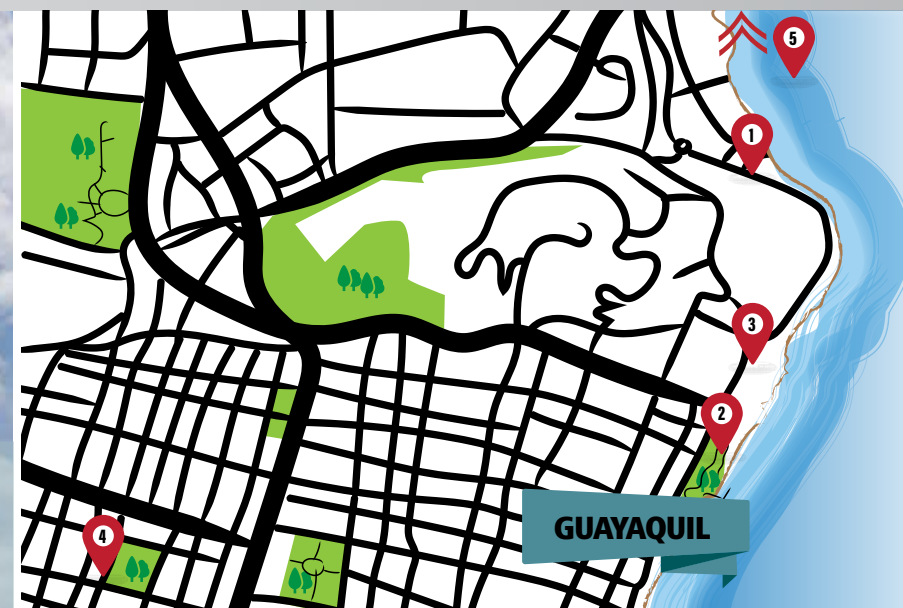
The best way to begin your exploration of Ecuador's Pacific port city is from above – 444 steps up above to be precise – at the lighthouse on the peak of the Santa Ana hill. In the 28°C equatorial heat, the climb past the colourful houses of the Las Penas neighbourhood can be punishing, so take your time. Striped in the blue and white of the city's flag, the lighthouse is the perfect lookout from which to observe the point where the Daule and Babahoyo rivers converge to form the great Guayas River, as well as the network of islands formed by the tide. To the north in Puerto Santa Ana rises Ecuador's highest building, known locally as El Tornillo ('The Screw'), which was completed in 2010; to the south, wild mangroves line the river that brought French and British pirates to pillage in the 17th and 18th centuries.

2 Malecon 2000

Back at river level, head south along the Malecon 2000. The smartly paved boardwalk along a 1.5-mile stretch of the Guayas River is the city's strongest symbol of urban regeneration; less than a century ago it was nothing more than crocodile-infested mudflats. Join the locals in a stroll along the verdant promenade, dropping into shops and museums and watching great container ships go by on their way in and out of the port – the port handles almost two million TEU a year, making it one of the busiest in Latin America. Wander far enough to the south and you'll come to the 840-metre bridge connecting the city to the biodiverse wetlands of Santay Island. The bridge was recently reopened after needing repairs costing US\$3 million when a boat smashed into it last October. malecon.org.ec

3 Museo Antropologico y de Arte Contemporaneo (MAAC)

Enticed by the promise of the port's mercantile riches, centuries of immigrants from such far-flung lands as Lebanon and Palestine have moulded and re-moulded Guayaquil's diverse society. However, its rich culture began to take shape many centuries before the arrival of Spanish colonists in 1538, with aboriginal communities all along the coast. The Museo Antropologico y de Arte Contemporaneo pulls together thousands of pieces of Pre-Columbian art and archaeological finds, shining a light on the city's indigenous ancestors. But it's not all ancient history: the MAAC (at the northern end of the Malecon 2000) is also the place to discover current artists and stock up on books by Ecuadorian authors. guayaquilesmidestino.com



4 Picanteria El Pez Volador

Anthony Bourdain took a particular shine to this rough-and-ready restaurant when he filmed his 2010 CNN show No Reservations. The late chef-turned-TV presenter chatted with owner Angelica Cujilan Aragones (who has run the joint for 40 years) over encebollado, a robust fish soup that has a special place in Guayaquilenos' hearts. Locals eat it for breakfast – it's also acceptable to order it for lunch. El Pez Volador makes the most of seafood treasures fresh from the Pacific Ocean: lime-spiked shrimp ceviche, crab claws and fish cooked in plantain and peanuts are regulars on the menu. Wash it down with a national lager alongside locals discussing the city's rival football teams, Emelec and the curiously named Barcelona Sporting Club. facebook.com/elpezvoladorpicanteria

5 Parque Historico

Take a break from the urban rush in Parque Historico, a peaceful oasis ten minutes by taxi from the centre – try local taxi-hailing apps Cabify or Easy Taxi. Paths meander through eight hectares of glorious wildlife, with festoons of orchids, waving palm trees, and spider monkeys and Pacific parrotlets overhead. An animal sanctuary is home to rescued exotic creatures, such as ocelots and blue-hued harpy eagles, while original Republic-era buildings have been reconstructed and a streetcar stands by to showcase the city's history. Guests of Hotel del Parque, an elegant boutique hotel – once a 19th-century nursing home, moved board-by-board to the park and restored – have 24-hour access to the grounds, otherwise it is open Wednesday-Sunday, 9am-4.30pm. hoteldelparquehistorico.com



A TICKET FOR POINTS

I have collected a lot of points in an airline's loyalty scheme. The problem is I always have a problem with obtaining a prize ticket. There are a lot of tickets on the website, but I can't pay for them with points, only with a card. To make matters worse, prize tickets are offered mostly for indirect flights, and their departure times are extremely inconvenient. Why is it so hard to redeem points for a valuable prize?

Anna

Dear Anna,
Loyalty schemes are usually constructed in a similar way - there are many possibilities to accrue points quickly, but their conversion into rewards is subject to certain restrictions. Airlines are very keen to promote ticket sales, but obviously are much less interested in distributing free seats. The availability of tickets from the free pool (non-revenue) is strictly controlled by the seat sales management systems. Depending on the forecasts, the pool may be greater or smaller, but usually doesn't exceed 5 per cent of the total number of seats. The availability of free tickets is much lower than the cheapest promotional fares.

Direct flights are always very popular, especially long-haul ones and those that depart at convenient times. According to the basic economic principles, on such flights higher prices are usually maintained, so the availability of cheaper seats or those given for free is always very limited. Increasing the number of low-cost seats on the most congested routes would result in lower profits of air carriers and would be economically unjustified. Another situation applies to combined flights. In order to promote transit connections, airlines are increasing the pool of low-cost and free seats. For this reason, we have a much better chance of getting a free ticket on indirect connections.

Please consider the possibility of using your points for upgrades, which means that you will travel in a higher, much more comfortable travel class. Of course, the points can also be used to book a hotel, rent a car or buy prizes from the loyalty scheme's catalogue.

PIOTR KALITA is related with air transport market for almost 20 years. He is specializing in corporate and diplomatic travel segment. Have a question? - ask Piotr.



TRAVEL TAXES

I bought a few plane tickets, which later I had to return. Some of the tickets were non-refundable, but I found out at my travel agency that I could get my taxes back. How can I apply for a refund? What will the amount be? I'd always thought that you don't pay VAT on air tickets.

Krzysztof

Dear Krzysztof,
In Poland, air transport is subject to a reduced VAT rate. This applies to tickets issued on domestic routes. International tickets are treated as export of services and the VAT rate is 0 per cent. Prior to the introduction of the VAT Act, the sale of airline tickets was subject to a stamp duty of 2 percent of the fare value.

In addition to the charges directly related to the sale, you can also find other charges on your airline ticket, usually referred to as taxes. The first group are the fees charged by the airline, also related to the costs of the sales process, such as the cost of credit card fees or the cost of sales distribution systems. The second group are the so-called fuel charges (YQ), or, in principle, insurance charges, aimed at safeguarding against fuel price fluctuations.

The third group are all the fees levied on behalf of other parties. These include airport departure and arrival charges, state aviation security charges, as well as fees related to the costs of immigration and customs control. Most US airports also charge fees for the development of the municipalities where the airports are located (passenger facility surcharge).

As for your tickets, some of those additional fees should definitely be refunded to you. Fuel charges are not refundable, but most of the charges transferred to third parties should be refunded. Refunds of airport charges are made by the agent who issued the original ticket.

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