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is ready for business*

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*How to navigate
the new normal?*

FRANCE

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TRAVEL SAFE

No subject is of greater importance to business traveller these days than travel safety. The time of the Covid-19 pandemic has taught us new behaviours and procedures at airports, hotels and on aircraft. In this issue's article entitled "Navigating the new normal" we have a closer look at robot cleaners, health screening and contactless technology that have become a natural sight at airports worldwide.

Is travel in the time of Covid-19 pandemic safe enough? Some of us swear not to return to travelling until a vaccine has been found, but most are just looking for reassurance that the travel industry is doing its best to make air travel as low-risk as possible. In an IATA (International Air Transport Association) survey in July, travellers identified concerns such as queuing at check-in/security/border control and boarding. They also stated that they would feel much safer if there were Covid-19 screening at departure airports.

We will still be travelling in the future, but there is no doubt that in the post-pandemic world the way we travel will change significantly. I wish you lots of exciting journeys in the future and see you soon at the airport!

Marzena Mróz

MARZENA MRÓZ
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

PARTNERSKIE RELACJE



AN IDEA FOR AN AUTUMN TRIP

Here are some of the most picturesque spots in the Czech Republic, which seem perfect for an autumn trip. You can go the Czech Republic by car or plane, and it's a well-known fact that Czechs are remarkably hospitable people.

One of the unique spots of the Bohemian Paradise are the Bozkovske Dolomite Caves - the most extensive cave system in the country. The total length of the passageways discovered so far is 1060 metres. To see real gems of nature including agates, jaspers, chalcedonies and amethysts, visit the picturesque Kozakov Mountain. Lovers of historic sites will find in Czechia numerous picturesque towns, castles and palaces, as well as gems of folk architecture.

The Bohemian Switzerland National Park lies on the border with Germany, which also separates its second part called the Saxon Switzerland. There was a sea here millions of years ago. After it retreated, the unique landscape remained. Although it's the lowest area in the country, it resembles mountains. You will find here high sandstone walls and towers, rock gates, ravines and table mountains. It's also a land of pine forests and deep valleys with amazing rock mazes.



inkBOOK Calypso or your travel library

inkBOOK Calypso is a new Polish e-book reader, which, despite its dainty dimensions - it weighs only 155 grams and measures 159x114x9mm - can store thousands of e-books. A perfect travel companion, one may say. The device comes with a 6-inch e-ink touch screen, which resembles paper and offers effective backlighting (you can adjust its intensity and colour), making inkBOOK Calypso a great choice for reading both outside (even in full sun), and indoors - in your bedroom, hotel room or onboard an aircraft. The reader's case is elegant and stylish, available in five trendy colour options.

The device's interface works quickly and smoothly and is comfortable and intuitive to use (all key functions and tools are directly accessible from the main screen). The built-in battery lasts up to several weeks.

Importantly, the Calypso inkBOOK is Poland's only e-book reader that is fully integrated with the Legimi service offering the user access to a huge library of books (you can read many items simultaneously) within a small monthly subscription. The devices also boasts integration with Empik Go and Publio services. Price: PLN 499.

FOR FEMALE TRAVELLERS

Thule Spira is a stylish range of bags and suitcases, aimed mainly at female travellers. We especially recommend the Thule Spira Vertical Tote - a stylish everyday tote suitable for any situation from the office to after-work drinks to weekend adventures.

The quilted, padded sleeve will protect a laptop up to 14.4"m while its padded slip pocket can store a 12.9" tablet. Tote stands up without tipping over thanks to metal feet for stability; price PLN 699.



MASKS ONBOARD

Lavido facial masks are the perfect choice for those wishing to pamper their skin quickly and effectively, also on the go. Moisture Boost Antioxidant Mask is a natural regenerative mask that works great with dry skin. It nourishes it and brings immediate relief, thanks to its formula rich in antioxidants, vitamins, fatty acids and vegetable oils. Deep Detox Clay Mask deeply cleanses oily and mixed skin, evens out its colour, reduces sebum secretion by 24% and effectively reduces acne breakouts. Lavido skin products are available at the online store www.lavido.pl



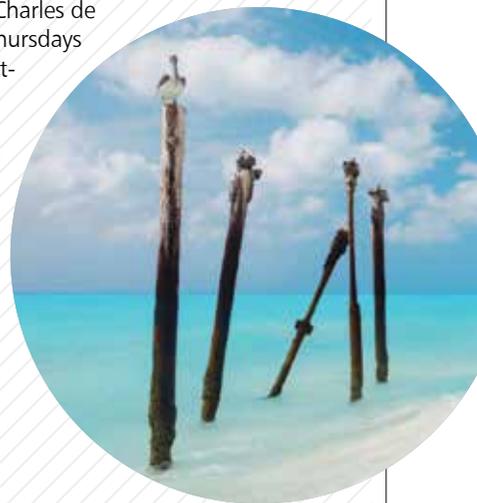
PRESS MATERIALS



AIR FRANCE

Air France is about to increase flights to the two Caribbean islands of Guadeloupe and Martinique, which are overseas departments of France. Starting from 21 December 2020 and for the remainder of the winter season, the company will operate flights between Pointe-à-Pitre (Guadeloupe) and Fort-de-France (Martinique) and Paris-Charles de Gaulle, in addition to its frequencies on departure from Paris-Orly. In total, up to three flights will be operated daily between Paris and each of the two islands. Pointe-à-Pitre and Fort-de-France will thus be connected to the two Air France hubs, giving customers connecting opportunities throughout the company's short, medium and long-haul network.

Flight schedule from 21 December 2020 will feature 21 weekly direct flights, including 17 weekly direct flights to Paris-Orly, and 4 weekly direct flights to Paris-Charles de Gaulle on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays. The schedule for Fort-de-France (Martinique) destination comprises 19 weekly direct flights, including 16 weekly direct flights to Paris-Orly and 3 weekly direct flights to Paris-Charles de Gaulle on Mondays, Fridays and Sundays. Flights will be operated by Boeing 777 equipped with Business, Premium Economy and Economy cabins. Under the terms of its commercial policy, Air France currently offers modifiable tickets at no cost, irrespective of the selected fare.



GRAN CANARIA A MINIATURE CONTINENT

It's a unique island offering a cornucopia of attractions for every traveller. With spectacular landscapes, scenic walking trails, more than 60 kilometres of beaches washed by the Atlantic Ocean, as well as excellent food and centuries-old history, Gran Canaria is a truly unique tourist destination.

WORDS MARZENA MRÓZ



The variety of landscapes and microclimates make Gran Canaria feel like a miniature continent, which is why UNESCO declared more than 40 percent of the island a Biosphere Reserve in 2005. The island is a place full of contrasts, famous for its fabulous beaches, good hotel infrastructure and vast opportunities for practising almost any water sport. With its mild, spring-like climate and temperatures rarely dipping below 16 degrees Celsius, it's a perfect holiday destination for all year round. Not to mention numerous secluded coves with crystal clear water, spectacular gorges and the long tradition of spa and thalassotherapy, which make Gran Canaria a real haven of relaxation. It's also a good choice for family holidays.

LAND OF OPPORTUNITIES

Gran Canaria offer an array of thrilling ways of spending your time actively, including sailing, surfing, bodyboarding, snorkelling or recreational fishing. No wonder the island is a hotbed of many sports greats, including 30 world champions and 6 Olympic gold medallists. With more than 236 kilometres of coastline, clear water and →





MAIN PHOTO:
Playa del Inglés

LEFT: Mountains of Gran
Canaria



gentle winds, it's also the perfect spot for pursuing your sea-related hobbies. The island has 128 beaches! You can also go trekking, mountain climbing or cycling here. To top it all, Gran Canaria is an ideal setting for golfing enthusiasts, especially as it's home to Real Club de Golf de Las Palmas - the first golf club in Spain opened in 1891. In total, there are 8 excellent golf courses on the island, all located within a radius of just 50 kilometres.

ISLAND OF FLAVOURS

Acting like a bridge between three continents, Gran Canaria witnessed one of the most significant events in the world's history - the discovery of the New World. The island's towns boast a 500-year history, are widely renowned for their colonial style architecture and have a strong Atlantic identity.

On Gran Canaria you will find numerous quality food and culinary products, including tomatoes, cheeses, olives, tropical fruit, bienmesabe cream (made with crushed almonds), sweet bananas and of course seafood. It's also home to Europe's only coffee bean plantation, as well as several rum distilleries and vineyards growing unique grape varieties and producing exquisite wine. ■



FROM TOP:
Playa del Ingles;
carnival in the
sun; Santa Brígida;
Maspalomas
lighthouse





FROM TOP:
Tejeda; town of Tejeda;
dunes of Maspalomas

WORDS MARZENA MRÓZ

As some of the travel restrictions begin to ease, Singapore is looking to restore confidence of organizers and delegates in safe meetings and conferences, at the same time reimagining itself and MICE industry in post-COVID time.

SINGAPORE STAYS RESILIENT

With a long history of hosting Asia's major events, as well as world-class facilities, Singapore has been known to deliver numerous innovative solutions, as well as exciting experiences for delegates of corporate meetings and incentive trips.

However, when the COVID-19 pandemic hit at the beginning of the year, most economic activities, including business-to-business (B2B) events in the Lion City were put on hold since March 2020. This has forced the sector that caters to a decidedly international audience to quickly adapt and even re-think its business model.

SAFETY FIRST

On the government level, Singapore has dealt with the COVID-19 crisis with

an evidence-based approach, providing frequent public communications, and stepping up its health and safety measures. This includes expanded capacity for testing, contact tracing abilities and healthcare facilities, all to help contain the spread of the virus.

Singapore was also one of the first destinations to introduce a comprehensive national response to COVID-19, with the launch of their SG Clean campaign. A national mark of excellence, the SG Clean certification has been awarded to more than 20,000 establishments, from hotels, tourist attractions, shopping malls, to F&B outlets, conference venues and transport hubs, after they were independently assessed to have met the campaign's highest standards of cleanliness. It's worth noting that 90% of the establishments on the popular Sentosa island resort off Singapore, visited by almost 19 million people every year, have been certified SG clean.

To be certified SG Clean, businesses must fulfil a seven-point criteria. For

hotels, this includes appointing an SG Clean manager to oversee the property's practices, conduct temperature and health screening of employees, oversee arrangement for engaging external suppliers and contractors, implement cleanliness and hygiene practices, and ensure compliance with health and travel advisories as well as government orders on Covid-19.

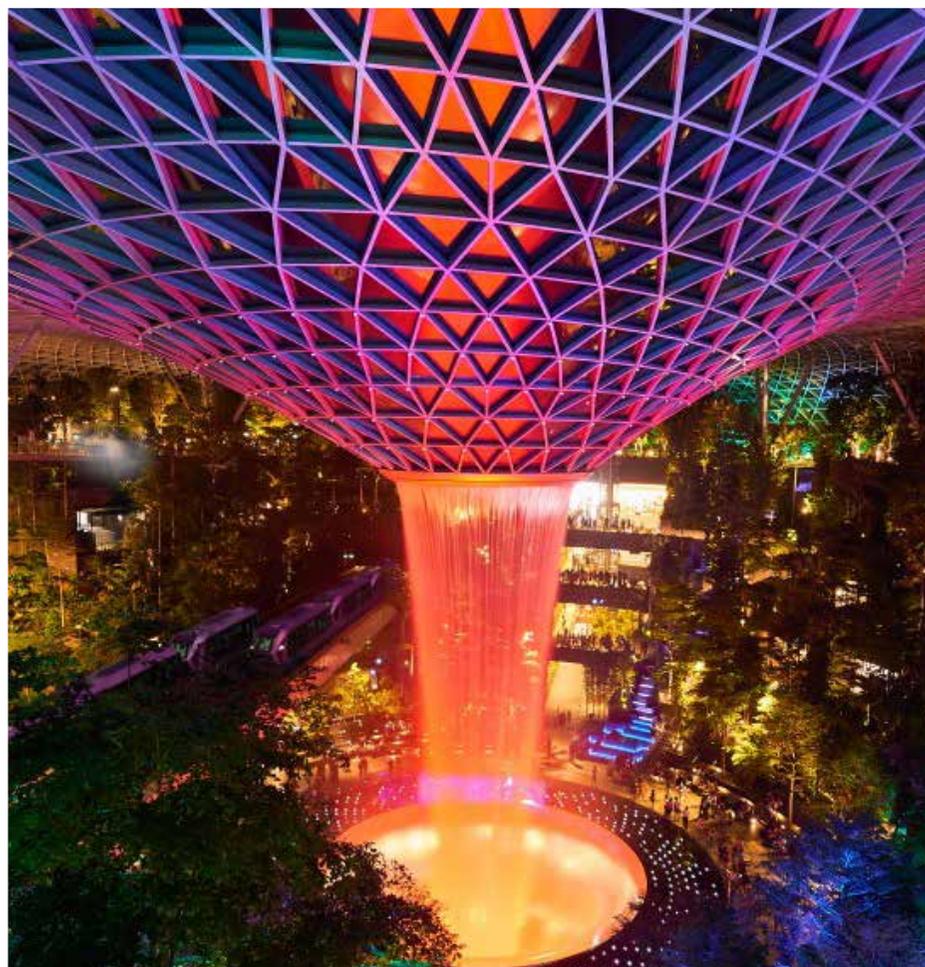
What's more, Singapore's Changi Airport has recently been crowned the World's 'Safest' Airport by Safe Travel Barometer. The airport has taken several proactive measures, including introducing touchless technology, to enhance the passenger experience and make it safer for travellers, visitors and employees.

PILOT MICE EVENTS

From 1 October 2020, the Singapore Tourism Board will start accepting applications for organisers to pilot Meetings, Incentives, Conventions and Exhibitions (MICE) events of up to 250 attendees.

ABOVE:
Sungei Buloh
Wetland Reserve





INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS FOR POST-PANDEMIC TIMES

Singapore's MICE businesses have also experimented with innovative digital solutions such as technology to support the creation of virtual and hybrid business events. One such event was the International Dental Exhibition and Meeting (IDEM), which converted its physical trade show and conference into a fully virtual event in June 2020. Featuring a digital conference and exhibition, it attracted close to 4,000 participants, with over 300 exhibiting brands from over 50 countries, demonstrating how virtual engagements can augment face-to-face events safely and effectively.

Singapore icon, Marina Bay Sands, is adopting new ways of business, as well. As another SG Clean-certified venue, the resort has optimised processes across its hotel, convention, and retail spaces. These include the introduction of Safe Distancing Ambassadors to make sure groups don't exceed five persons, thermal cameras for remote temperature checks, and increased cleaning of high-traffic zones. The resort's popular venues, such as the ArtScience Museum and SkyPark Observation Deck, as well as its numerous restaurants, have also implemented these new measures.

Marina Bay Sands has also launched a state-of-the-art hybrid event broadcast studio at Sands Expo and Convention Centre in a first for the industry, as the award-winning venue paves the way to redefine the future of meetings. Designed to accommodate a live studio audience with a maximum capacity of 50 persons at any one time, the hybrid broadcast studio – which offers broadcast-quality live-streaming capabilities and hologram functionalities – will act as the central hub for event planners looking to produce hybrid meetings in the new era. ■



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT:

Jewel Changi Airport; Chinatown; Marina Bay Sands' state of the art broadcast studio

Organisers who apply to pilot events with up to 250 attendees must demonstrate their ability to implement Safe Management Measures to meet a set of health and safety outcomes. The decision to accept applications to pilot MICE events of up to 250 attendees comes on the back of STB's Safe Business Events Framework for business events of up to 50 attendees, which was first announced in July 2020 - one concluded successfully, the STB said, in August and another set to take place in late September.

As more insights and data are obtained through these pilot events, the tourism board will work with the MICE industry to adapt and adjust our protocols for safe business events. This move to start accepting applications to pilot events of up to 250 attendees also takes into account the importance of the MICE industry as well as the strong industry interest in and demand for business events.



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NAVIGATING **THE NEW NORMAL**

Robot cleaners, health screening and contactless technology – here's how the coronavirus pandemic is reshaping the airport experience

WORDS TOM OTLEY, SEHER ASAF



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: Face masks are the new norm in departure lounges; SITA's Smart Path technology; Air Asia contactless kiosks

good idea at all. Some people will not return to travelling until a vaccine has been found, but most are looking for reassurance. In an IATA (International Air Transport Association) survey in July (see box overleaf), travellers identified concerns such as queuing at check-in/security/border control and boarding, and said Covid-19 screening at departure airports would make them feel safer.

For those potential passengers, there is a recognition within the travel industry that for confidence to return, there needs to be a consistent approach to the various protocols that have been put in place.

travel and tourism that are vital to jumpstarting national economies," says Alexandre de Juniac, IATA's director general and CEO.

One of IATA's suggestions is to discourage passengers from travelling if they are unwell. It says airlines are helping to make this possible by offering travellers flexibility when booking, allowing them to adjust dates and avoid being penalised if they do not fly at the original time.

It also says health screening should take place "in the form of health declarations" and encourages measures which many airports have introduced including temperature checks, which may, in turn, "act as a deterrent" to those who might otherwise consider travelling despite feeling ill.

For travellers coming from countries perceived to be higher risk, IATA advocates considering Covid-19 testing prior to arrival at the departure airport – a measure adopted by France, Austria and Iceland – with documentation to prove a negative result, so as not to add to airport congestion and avoid the potential for contagion in the travel process. It admits that for this to be viable, "tests would need to be widely available and highly accurate, with results delivered quickly. Test data would need to be independently validated so as to be mutually recognised by governments and securely transmitted to the relevant authorities."

In addition, IATA is promoting the "Take-Off" guidelines published by the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO). These include mask wearing throughout the travel process, sanitisation, health declarations and social distancing where possible. Here's a closer look at how Covid-19 is changing airports around the world, including some of the initiatives being put in place.

LOW-TOUCH TRAVEL

It looks as though the coronavirus crisis could speed up the adoption of technology that offers a low-touch



IATA has been lobbying governments to avoid quarantine restrictions, promoting what it calls a "layered approach of measures" at airports and national borders. "There are policy alternatives that can reduce the risk of importing Covid-19 infections while still allowing for the resumption of

As border restrictions begin to ease, airports and airlines are looking to restore confidence in travel. To use corporate speak, they are "redesigning the passenger journey". Before Covid-19, there was already a push for technology to help speed us through the airport – self-service check-in, for instance. Now, with the added incentive of minimising interaction between staff and passengers, that momentum has become even stronger. (Airport and airline executives talk a lot about "frictionless" travel. Unfortunately, Covid-19 has also introduced lots more friction.) A word, first, about whether travel at such a time is a

IZUSEK/ISTOCK

or even touch-free airport experience. Many airlines are introducing contactless kiosks and payment systems so that passengers can check in and make purchases without touching anything.

For those airports hoping that technology will provide the answer, the risk is increased congestion if passengers aren't used to the technology or it breaks down. One solution may be that a lot of the activities that happen across airports could entirely be pushed out of terminals in the future, according to Sumesh Patel, president of Asia Pacific at SITA, an IT company that provides services to the air transport industry. An early example is the way that physical check-in desks have been partly replaced by online or mobile services.

"Your mobile will become your boarding pass, and you will be more comfortable with trusting your own device at the airport, rather than touching other devices at airports," Patel says. Although boarding passes have been available on our phones for some time now, the pandemic could make the use of electronic passes more pervasive across airports, he adds.

Biometric technology that relies on facial recognition could also offer a potential solution to airports looking to minimise touch during the passenger journey. This type of technology scans and captures a person's biometric details to verify their identity. Once checked against the passenger's travel documents, a secure digital ID is created that can be used all the way from self-service check-in to boarding.

"[As] you walk through the terminal, your face is your passport so you don't need to touch anything. So when you go to the bag drop, you just stand next to it and it recognises you. You don't need to produce any documents; your face is good enough," Patel explains. He says SITA's product that relies on biometrics, Smart Path, is operating at airports including Beijing Capital International, Hamad International in Qatar and Kuala Lumpur International.

In July, Singapore Changi upgraded its automated clearance immigration lanes to a touch-free option. The airport's new biometric system uses



According to an IATA survey:

57% of respondents planned to return to travel to see family and friends

56% to take a holiday

55% to do business as soon as possible after the pandemic subsided

66% said they would travel less for leisure and business in the post-pandemic world

64% indicated they would postpone travel until economic factors improved (personal and broader)



face and iris recognition technology to match passengers with their travel documents, replacing the need for traditional fingerprint-scanning.

TEMPERATURE CHECKS

Temperature checking has been in place in some airports, such as Hong Kong, for many years. Now a growing number are screening passengers for potential fever before they board. Heathrow, for example, has been trialling thermal screening to detect elevated temperatures, using camera systems capable of monitoring the temperatures of multiple people as they move through the airport. If successful, it may be rolled out across the airport "to further stress-test its capabilities".

Canada now requires temperature screening before boarding across all of its airports, while at Hamad International staff don thermal screening helmets to assess whether travellers have a fever. According to the airport, the helmet uses advanced technologies such as infrared thermal imaging, artificial intelligence and AR (augmented reality) display.

Temperature checking is not without problems, however. According to a report from the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), such screenings are not the most effective approach because people can have Covid-19 and show no symptoms. In addition, at the end of July, Brussels airport admitted that even when travellers were flagged as having a

high temperature, they were allowed to travel provided they could convince a doctor and airport authorities that they did not have the virus. In other words, if they said they did not have symptoms such as a dry, persistent cough, they could travel.

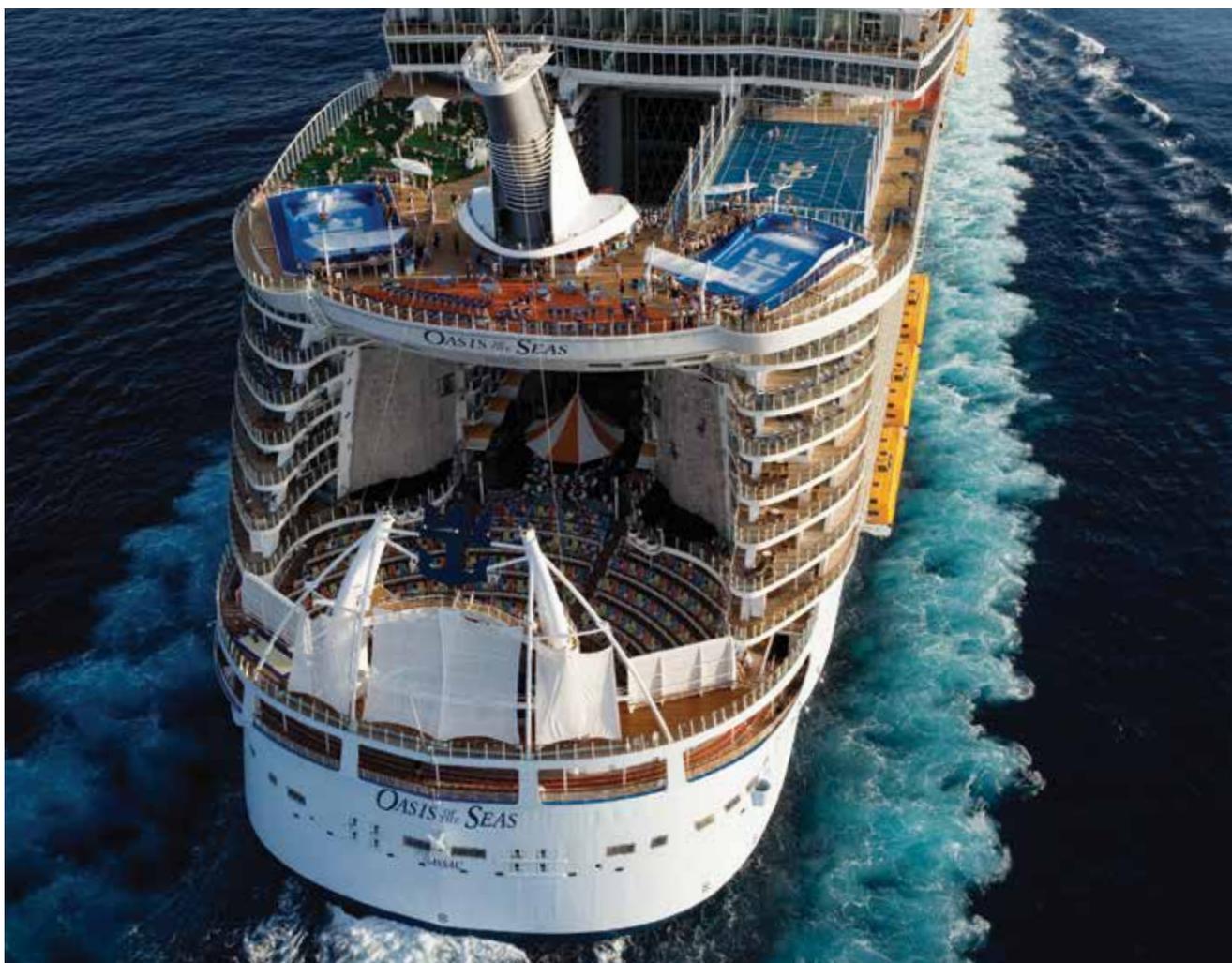
COVID-19 TESTS

IATA has recognised that Covid-19 testing could become the new normal as travel resumes. It recently called on governments looking to introduce such testing for travellers to deliver the results quickly and accurately, saying it needed to be cost-effective and not create an economic or logistical barrier to travel.

Heathrow has also called for it to be introduced, saying it could have it up and running within two weeks. It has already run a trial with Swissport and Collinson (see [businesstraveller.com/tag/london-heathrow](https://www.businesstraveller.com/tag/london-heathrow)).

Ethihad Airways has been trialling contactless health screening kiosks that can monitor one's temperature, heart rate and respiratory rate to help identify those that might have early Covid-19 symptoms. According to the UAE carrier, the self-service check-in or bag-drop process would automatically be suspended if the tests showed potential symptoms. It would then divert to a teleconference or alert airport staff, who would make "further assessments" and "manage travellers as appropriate". Ethihad's neighbour, Emirates, has been offering Covid-19 tests at Dubai International, but both of these initiatives →

ZWIEDZAJ ŚWIAT WYGODNIE



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were, in some sense, superseded by UAE authorities insisting that from August all passengers travelling to and from, or transiting, the UAE would be required to carry a negative Covid-19 test result. This applies to all airlines operating in the UAE. The test must be taken a maximum of 96 hours before departure. It excludes children under 12 and passengers who have a moderate or severe disability.

ROBOT CLEANERS

Passengers will also notice more cleaning measures in place. Airports such as Hong Kong have introduced robots to clean public areas. These Intelligent Sterilisation Robots (ISRs) are tall, self-moving and equipped with a UV light steriliser, air filters and a disinfection spray to kill bacteria. Each ISR has a head that can spin 360 degrees to spray disinfectant and a body that is lined with bulbs that emit ultraviolet lights to zap germs.

Heathrow is introducing UV cleaning robots that it says “quickly and efficiently kill viruses and bacteria”. It is installing UV handrail technology on escalators to “ensure continuous disinfection” as well as fitting lift buttons and trolley and door handles with self-cleaning antiviral wraps. These work by coating high-touch surfaces in a material with “long-lasting” antiviral protection. Heathrow is re-training 100 colleagues as “hygiene technicians” who disinfect the airport and answer passenger queries on the methods being used.

Singapore Changi says it has “at least doubled” the frequency of all of its cleaning efforts in its terminals and Jewel complex.

SOCIAL DISTANCING

Passengers will see more physical barriers such as plastic shields at service counters and will be expected to socially distance when queuing.

CONTACT TRACING

IATA says there are also measures governments can take to mitigate risk, including contact tracing. “Rapid identification and isolation of contacts contains the risk without large-sca-



le economic or social disruption,” it says. “New mobile technology has the potential to automate part of the contact-tracing process, provided privacy concerns can be addressed.”

So is it all worth it? The World Travel and Tourism Council estimates that travel and tourism accounts for 10.3 per cent of global GDP and 330 million jobs (direct and indirect). The economic effects of the pandemic are only now becoming clear, and may worsen as the year ends and there is a threat of further “waves”. There’s no doubt travel has been changed profoundly, perhaps forever, but it will have to restart, and if it is to do so, such measures will be crucial, vaccine or not.

“Safely restarting the economy is a priority” says IATA’s de Juniac. “That

FROM TOP: Thermal screening at Heathrow; Emirates offers “hygiene kits” to passengers

includes travel and tourism. Quarantine measures may play a role in keeping people safe, but they will also keep many unemployed. The alternative is to reduce risks through a series of measures. Airlines are already offering flexibility so there is no incentive for sick or at-risk people to travel. Health declarations, screening and testing by governments will add extra layers of protection. And if someone travels while infected, we can reduce the risk of transmission with protocols to prevent the spread during travel or when at the destination. Effective contact tracing can isolate those most at risk without major disruptions.”

It’s a sentiment that those who want travel to restart will be hoping governments respond to. ■

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- Całodobowa recepcja
- Sala spotkań biznesowych
- Prywatna siłownia



Wizualizacja pogładowa



The Green Velo East of Poland Cycling Trail is, by far, the most impressive bike trail project implemented in Poland so far. It comprises 2,000 kilometres of a specially marked out route, which has been thoroughly prepared to give joy of travelling and exploring Poland on your bicycle



EXPLORING EASTERN POLAND

GREEN VELO CYCLING TRAIL

The trail leads through five provinces of eastern Poland (Warmian-Masurian, Podlaskie, Lublin, Subcarpathian and Świętokrzyskie). Each of those regions is a real treat to explore individually, but now you get the chance to discover their beauty one by one, from the saddle of your two-wheeler.

TRAIL OF GREAT ADVENTURES

You can get onto the trail at any point, travel alone or with your family and friends. You can also freely choose the direction of your journey: either southwards or northwards, stopping at numerous landmarks, historic sites and other points of interest. It's all up to you. Green Velo shows the beauty of eastern Poland at its best. With a whole palette of colours, scents and flavours that you won't find anywhere else. Go and explore Poland, basking in its beauty and nature.

THROUGH FIVE PROVINCES

The Eastern Green Bicycle Cycling Trail is the longest consistently marked bicycle trail in Poland. It leads through picturesque areas of eastern Poland and along quiet asphalt roads of five coun-

DESTINATIONS

try's provinces: Warmian-Masurian (397km), Podlaskie (598km), Lublin (414km), Subcarpathian (459km) and Świętokrzyskie (210km). Almost 580km (29% of the trail total length) are sections leading through forest areas, while 180km (9%) run along river valleys.

SMOOTH 300 KILOMETRES

New and rebuilt cycle paths, and pedestrian and bicycle trails account for about 300 kilometres of the route, and unpaved roads for around 150 kilometres. More than 30 bridges and footbridges have been created or renovated for the Green Velo Trail, and more than 20 key junctions have been rebuilt. Also, 228 so-called Cyclist Service Points have been constructed, each equipped with bicycle racks, sheds and benches, as well as with rubbish bins and information boards.

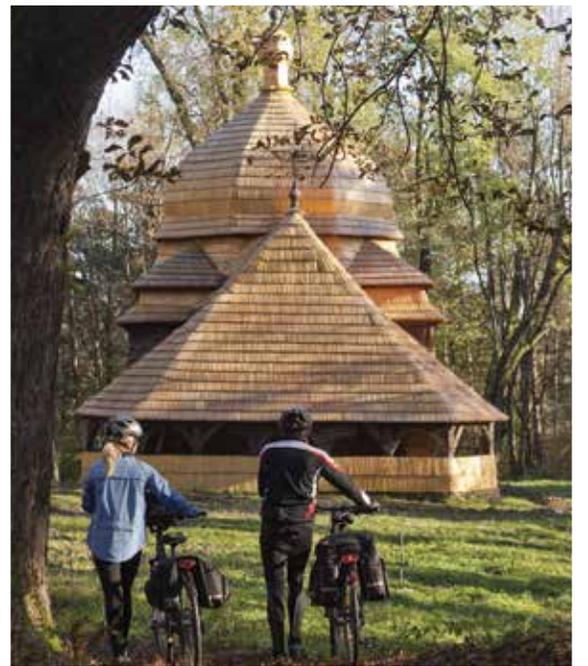
HISTORIC SITES, TOWNS AND NATURE

The uniqueness and diversity of the regions where the trail runs is highlighted by numerous tourist attractions, both those located directly on the trail and those within the 20-kilometre around it. Those include a number of historically significant sites, such as the Cathedral in Frombork, the castle in Lidzbark Warmiński, the monastery complex in Supraśl, the towns of Tyko-



cin and Leżajsk (once predominantly Jewish), as well as Chelm, Włodawa and Szczepieszyn known for their multicultural heritage. Other highlights include sanctuaries of various religious denominations built on the banks of the Bug River in Kostomłoty, Kodeń and Jableczna, the old town of Przemyśl, the castle in Łańcut, the medieval town of Sandomierz and the ruins of the Renaissance castle in Ujazd. So, mount your bike and explore!

greenvelo.pl
Facebook: @greenvelo
Instagram: @green_velo



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PRESS MATERIALS



WEEKEND IN

24

WORDS PIOTR GRZYBOWSKI

THE FRENCH ALPS

No doubt, once the Covid-19 fever has gone and we become fed up with long queues to ski lifts in Polish ski resorts, we will be pining for the endless Alpine spaces. Dubbed by many “the sunny island”, Alpe d'Huez comprises 250 kilometres of ski slopes climbing up above the clouds. Add to this 300 sunny days a year (confirmed by meteorologists), excellent French cuisine, a stay in one of the area's beautiful hotels, and you already know you must go there.

DARIA-I NOR

Opened in December 2018, the five-star Daria-I Nor hotel sits directly on the slope of one of the main lifts of Alpe d'Huez. With its spacious, tastefully furnished rooms offering mountain views and a relaxing spa zone, the property is a truly welcoming place. The hotel has a bar and two excellent restaurants. I especially recommend the one, which is opened only for dinner. You can order here gourmet dishes chosen from an exquisite tasting menu. A great emphasis is put here on local and seasonal ingredients, such as fish from the creek, herbs from mountain slopes or forest mushroom. All dishes taste and look outstanding. The hotel also has a swish boutique ski room with a foot scanner to find a pair of boots that fit your feet perfectly. When you are ready, you just leave the building to find the nearest ski lift only 20 metres away. Talk about convenience!

www.hotel-dariainor.com/en

LA SARENNE

Who haven't heard about the world's longest black ski run called quite innocently La Sarenne? It starts at the top of Pic Blanc at an altitude of 3300 metres and descends with the Sarenne Glacier, ending after about 17 kilometres after reaching the town. During such a run you will cover the jaw-dropping vertical descent of 1810 metres. Sounds exciting, but I guarantee that the run is ten times more thrilling if you decide to do it at night. The whole adventure begins at sunset with a welcome drink at the top. Once it gets dark, a group of daredevils

Looking at the sharp ridge of the Pic Blanc peak, you take a deep breath of mountain air. You detach your ski skins, set the bindings to the downhill mode, snap your boots into the skis, hearing the distinct clicking sound. Then you rush down the hill, making gentle turns every now and again. You float into the distance, falling gently onto the sunny land of snow, surrounded by a carpet of fluffy clouds.



(under the watchful eye of instructors, of course) starts an uneven fight with moguls, bumps and ice. Each adventurer is equipped with a headlamp, but it's still incredibly easy to fall. After a while, the line of skiers spread all over the width of the slope, and all you can see is a chain of flashing lights in the dark. It's an extremely tiring exercise, but at least you are consoled with the thought of the hot sauna and a glass of delicious regional liqueur Chartreuse waiting for you in the hotel.

ON FRESH SNOW

It's hard to find a better place for off-piste (freeride) skiing aficionado than the sunny slopes of Alpe d'Huez. If you have never tried ski touring, then this is the day! Interestingly, boots for ski touring are much more comfortable than those used for regular downhill skiing, and they also come with a special walking mode. The skis themselves have wider tips and are quite lightweight. Skiing with them on ice is far from pleasant, but once you reach fresh, ungroomed snow, you will see all their advantages. To get off the marked run, you simply need to reach a proper height by ski lift, put the skins (strips that attach to the bottom of skis to help while ascending) on your skis, clip your boots into your telemark bindings (which leave the heel free to flex off the ski), and head towards the area of your choice. Then you simply take off your skins and clip the boots into the bindings like into regular alpine skis, and a few moments later you slide down the slope, thinking of a glass of champagne waiting for you later, preferably Kir Royal with a hint of blackcurrant juice.

Once it gets dark, a group of daredevils (under the watchful eye of instructors, of course) starts an uneven fight with moguls, bumps and ice.

BY A SNOW-GROOMER TO YOUR MEAL

The all-day skiing craze can easily whet your appetite. One of more interesting ideas is a ride by snow-groomer that takes you to one of on-slope restaurants.

The snow-groomer has a large cabin that can accommodate up to 20 passengers. It's a good idea to hold onto something while the vehicle is moving, because at certain points it climbs steep slopes almost vertically. Once the ride is over, you are treated to a scenic winter landscape, especially if it happens to be during the full moon. You enter the warm interior of La Cabane restaurant, where a real battle begins: how to navigate through dinner to make it to dessert. The cuisine is excellent and the portions more than ample. You can't eat it all (what a shame), so after the meal you catch yourself regretting that you hadn't eaten the whole bowl of heavenly onion soup with baked chesse on toast.

LES 2 ALPES

Once you have skied all of the surrounding slopes, it's worth changing the landscape and going to the resort located less than an hour's drive away. If you buy a six-day ski pass, you are entitled to use ski lift located within four adjacent valleys. Unlike Alpe d'Huez, which lies on a plateau 1860 metres above sea level, Les2Alpes is situated between two mountains at 1650 metres. However its lifts take you much higher, up to 3600 metres, where many skiers are prone to altitude sickness. The Mont de Lans Glacier offers a breath-taking view of the snow-granite alpine peaks, including Mont Blanc.



THE EARLY BIRD CATCHES THE WORM

To fully experience the skiing craze, you should get up early in the morning. At Les2Alpes you can now become a member of Ski Patrol for a day and take some of their duties. As soon as the sun rises and the surrounding mountains become distinguishable from the night-time sky, the patrouille (ski patrollers) begin their day's work, checking for potential avalanches and opening slopes. Each piste must undergo a thorough security check before the first skiers arrive. In addition to exploring the vast infrastructure protecting the region against avalanches, such an expedition also means the opportunity to ride on the so-called corduroy. Can you dream of anything better for a skier than a piste carefully prepared by a snow-groomer with a visible pattern of long corduroy-like lines stretching all the way down? Add to this the thought that you are the first skier blazing the trail for the others... and you can't find a better way to start the day.

CHAMOIS LODGE

One of the best places to stay in Les2Alpes is Chamois Lodge - a hotel with minimalist décor and modest, but practical guest rooms. All this becomes unimportant though, once you taste the on-site cuisine. One of the delicacies that blew my mind was the typically French foie grass paired with excellent Saint-Joseph wine. Sheer bliss. If, in turn, you crave a good steak, then pop into the excellent Les 2 Saisons restaurant with impeccable service, cosy décor and atmosphere, as well as the most delicious steak

To take a short breath from skiing craze, it's worth going on an e-bike ride.

from seasoned iberico pork. To say it melts in the mouth is simply not enough.

After the main dish you are offered the regional genépi herbal liqueur made of an aromatic plant of the genus *Artemisia* that grows at high altitudes in the Alps. For the best crème brûlée in the region head on to Le Trappeur restaurant, while lover of cider should pop into Crepes a Gogo.

E-BIKE

To take a short breath from skiing craze, you can go on an e-bike ride. The winter incarnation of a mountain e-bike is fitted with wide tires with metal studs. Such an equipment along with powerful battery can take you up the snow-covered slopes, even the steepest ones! An e-bike has a power-delivery adjustment and gears, so you don't need to sweat a lot. This means you can also easily reach an on-slope restaurant for a cup of hot chocolate. The return trip down the hill may be a bit scarier, but no worries, the studded tires provide lots of grip. Feeling the rush of air down you go like a real daredevil, already planning another Alpine expedition! ■



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THE VIEW FROM NEW YORK

Manhattan's hotel scene is experiencing turbulence, but when travel returns, visitors will have a host of new options to try out

HOTELS

Before Covid-19 brought almost all travel to a halt, we had a look at the latest in hotel development in New York City: recent openings, renovations, and future arrivals planned for the Big Apple. Welcoming more than 60 million domestic and international visitors per year in normal times, the city was on track to add 20,000 further hotel rooms, taking total inventory close to 140,000 by the end of next year.

The future is uncertain as New York deals with the devastating impact of the pandemic. We're sharing the overview written at the time below, without estimates of opening dates for new arrivals, in the hope that it can perhaps provide some inspiration for when it will be possible to travel again. Note that some properties may be temporarily closed or access to some facilities may be limited at the time of reading.

NEW MOXY EAST VILLAGE

In the space of a few years, Marriott International's millennial Moxy brand went from opening its first New York hotel in Times Square to having more than 1,200 rooms on Manhattan across three properties, with additions Downtown (298 rooms) and in Chelsea (349 rooms).

In September last year, it continued with a 286-room hotel in the East Village, each floor drawing inspiration from the surrounding area's history. Rooms pack a lot into their footprints, and food and drink options include an all-day bar and café and a French-Mediterranean restaurant. Moxy properties in the Lower East Side and Williamsburg are due to follow in the next few years. [moxy-hotels.marriott.com](https://www.marriott.com/moxy-hotels)

RENAISSANCE NEW YORK CHELSEA HOTEL

In February, Marriott also added the Renaissance Chelsea in a new 39-storey tower on West 25th Street with 341 rooms and suites. On the site of a former flea market, it's the brand's

third Manhattan hotel. Art is a major theme, with video projections in the hallways and a two-storey installation featuring more than 2,000 antique knobs, locks and keys.

Still to open are Restaurant Cotto, serving Italian food, and Somewhere Nowhere, a rooftop lounge and bar with an outdoor pool. Marriott also has a Le Méridien under development on Fifth Avenue.

[renaissance-hotels.marriott.com](https://www.marriott.com/renaissance-hotels)

THE ARTEZEN

An office conversion two blocks from One World Trade Center, the Artezen opened in April last year. Its 89 rooms are decked out in a contemporary mix of greys, whites, blues and tan leather, and some have terraces. Its two-storey lounge and restaurant at the top of the building is still to come.

[artezenhotel.com](https://www.artezenhotel.com)

TWA HOTEL AT NEW YORK JFK

In May last year, the 1962 Eero Saarinen-designed TWA Flight Center at JFK airport finally began its new



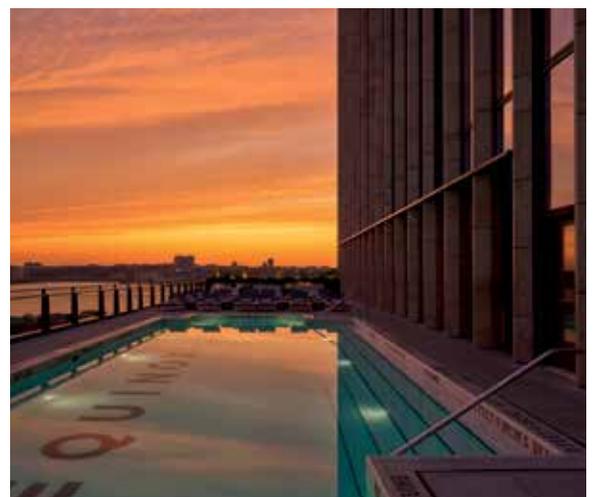
CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: Moxy East Village; Conrad Midtown; Equinox; Hotel Hendricks; Hyatt Place Times Square; Renaissance Chelsea left: TWA Hotel

life as part of the TWA Hotel, flanked by two new wings containing 512 rooms with mid-century furniture. The former terminal has restaurants and lounges, and the 1958 Lockheed Constellation aircraft outside houses a vintage-style cocktail bar. The observation deck has a pool for plane watching. [twahotel.com](https://www.twahotel.com)

HOTEL HENDRICKS

Opened in summer last year, Hotel Hendricks is a few blocks from Bryant Park and is part of the Fortuna Col-





lection, which includes Hotel Hugo in Soho. Interiors in the property's 176 rooms mix mahogany panelling with bursts of animal print. Restaurant Paloma serves pan-Latin cuisine, while Hendricks Rooftop offers views Downtown towards One World Trade Center. hotelhendricksny.com

HYATT PLACE NEW YORK CITY/TIMES SQUARE

In November, Hyatt cut the ribbon on Hyatt Place Times Square, the second property for its upscale select

service brand on Manhattan and its largest worldwide. In addition to its 520 contemporary guestrooms, there is the Market, which offers all-day dining plus sandwiches and salads to go, the Bar serving hot drinks, wines and cocktails, and the Breakfast Bar, plus a gym. hyattplace.co

CONRAD NEW YORK MIDTOWN

Taking over what was the London NYC, Hilton's Conrad Hotels opened its second Manhattan property

on West 54th Street in October after a full renovation. There are 562 suites in the 54-floor hotel, starting at 39 sqm. All-day dining is available at Dabble. conradhotels.com

EQUINOX HOTEL NEW YORK

Part of Hudson Yards, the largest development in New York since the Rockefeller Center, the first hotel for this high-end fitness chain opened in July last year. The 212 rooms and suites feature floor-to-ceiling windows and are designed to be "dark, cool respites" to optimise rest. There is a 5,574 sqm Equinox club with both indoor and outdoor pools that guests can access, as well as Electric Lemon restaurant and bar. Equinox is also planning hotels in Chicago, Houston and Los Angeles. equinox-hotels.com

PESTANA PARK AVENUE

Portuguese hotel group Pestana opened its 100th property, and its first in New York, in early February. On East 39th Street, near the Empire State Building, the 28-storey new-build has 95 rooms, including a limited number with balconies and one junior suite. A 24-hour Grab and Go in the lobby offers healthy snacks and meals. pestana.com

REFRESHED

THE RITZ-CARLTON NEW YORK, CENTRAL PARK

In June last year, this hotel completed a year's worth of renovations, tackling all rooms and suites, as well as the public spaces. An all-day "gastro lounge" now occupies the ground floor, while the mezzanine is dedicated to wellness with a gym and studio. Being right on Central Park South, many of the 253 rooms and suites have park views, with telescopes by the windows. ritzcarlton.com

THE CARLYLE, A ROSEWOOD HOTEL

Towering over the corner of Madison Avenue and 76th Street on the Upper



East Side, the Carlyle is undergoing a refurbishment of its rooms and suites. Full details are yet to be released, but the Tony Chi design will offer a modern take on art deco with geometric carpets, soft golden panelling, and contrasting marble in the bathrooms. A number of suites will keep their individual designs.

rosewoodhotels.com

TOP AND RIGHT:
Ritz-Carlton Central
Park
ABOVE: The Carlyle

COMING SOON HYATT CENTRIC 39TH AND FIFTH NEW YORK

Hyatt will open a 162-room Hyatt Centric on 39th Street and Fifth Avenue, the second Manhattan property for its lifestyle brand. One of its six suites will have a balcony with Empire State Building views; there will also be a restaurant and rooftop bar. hyattcentric.com

ARLO MIDTOWN

Arlo Hotels will expand its New York presence with a property on West 38th Street and 9th Avenue. It will have 489 rooms designed by Meyer Davis, taking "design cues from the natural world". Its Midtown property is the budget-chic brand's third on Manhattan; it is also working on a second Miami property and one in Washington DC. arlohotels.com

PENDRY MANHATTAN WEST

The third hotel for this luxury boutique brand is planned as part of the Manhattan West mixed-use development, located in between the redeveloped Penn station and Hudson Yards. The property will comprise 134 rooms and 30 suites, with facilities including a restaurant, a lounge and an open-air terrace bar. pendry.com



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VILNIUS GRAND RESORT

Situated conveniently near the capital of Lithuania, Vilnius Grand Resort offers a wide range of amenities that will appeal to many guests, but one of its main strengths is its excellent location. There are two scenic lakes and a forest, as well as a perfectly groomed golf course. Guests can also rent a boat or a canoe, use the water ski lift and enjoy exhilarating views of the area.



Stretching over 280 hectares of land, the complex is an excellent choice for business and leisure travellers, newlyweds and families with children. Importantly, getting there from Vilnius International Airport takes only 25 minutes. At the back of the building, guests come across a wonderful, calming landscape and a nearby beach. The cosy interiors of the hotel, together with its restaurants, bars and, of course, spacious spa, can appeal to the most discerning guests, even if it's raining outside. The vast area also attracts visitors from the nearby city of Kaunas (100 km) and Polis guests seeking leisure and relaxation opportunities, as the Polish-Lithuanian border is only 175 km away.

ROOMS

All 240 spacious rooms and suites are very cosy. As you may expect it from a four-star property, the rooms come with such amenities as underfloor heating and air purification systems, while the whole area around the complex is guarded. In addition to standard rooms, Vilnius Grand Resort also offers spacious apartments and villas. Room sizes range between 28 and 110 sqm.

It's worth noting that this year the resort opened its new wing with 52 well-equipped designer rooms. Room categories are: Presidential Suite, Premium Suite Apartment, Family Apartments, Deluxe Room (situated in the new wing), Executive Room, Superior Room, and Classic Room.

BARS AND RESTAURANTS

There are five dining options on site. Overlooking a lake surrounded by lush forest, Le Paysage restaurant offers a creative menu, which combines classic French cuisine with local specialities. Sunset Lounge & Bar is a perfect place to enjoy a pre-dinner aperitivo. Meanwhile, Bora Bora summer bar exudes Polynesian atmosphere. Its covered jetties resting on wooden stilts seem ideal for a relaxing drink before sunset or afternoon coffee. Trattoria Verde is located near the golf course and specializes mostly in Italian fare.



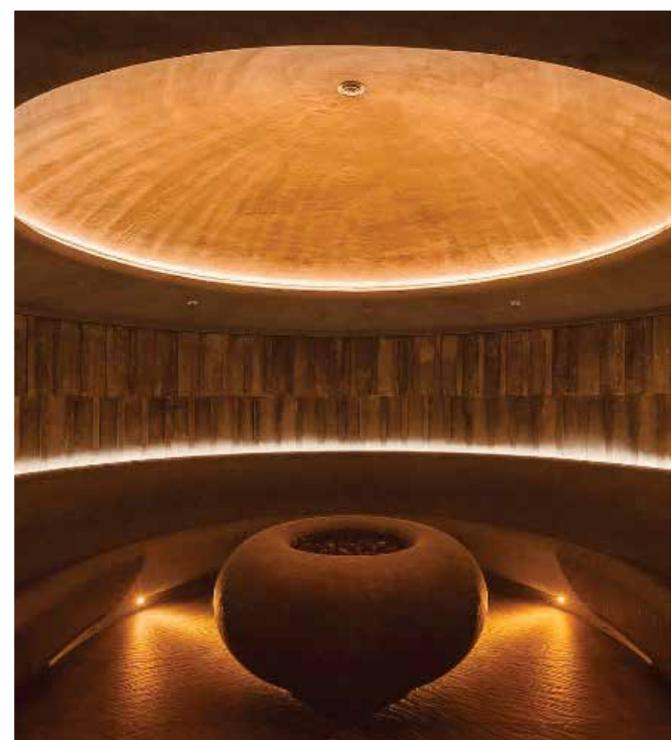
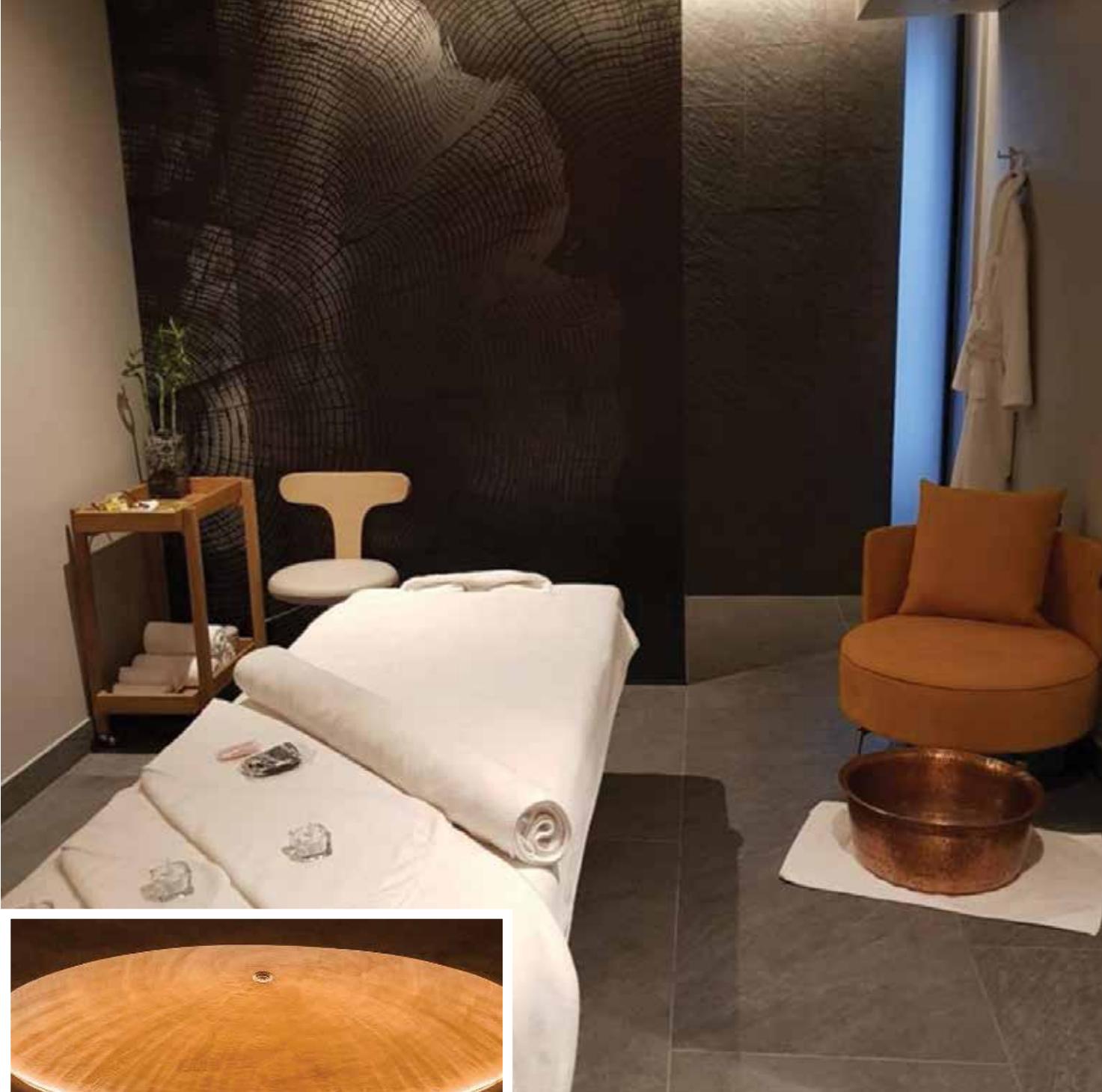
All 240 spacious rooms and suites are very cosy.



FOTIMATERIAI PRASOVI



The cosy interiors of the hotel, along with its restaurants, bars and, of course, spacious spa, can appeal to the most discerning guests.



Finally, Spa Healthy Japanese is the place to go not only for delicious Japanese dishes, but also healthy, organic food. The hotel can also organize alfresco dinners for guests.

RELAXATION AND SPA

One of the highlights of the whole resort is its “V Spa & Wellness” zone, as well as therapeutic pools. The décor of the spa is inspired by sounds, smells and the spirit of the surrounding landscape. In total, there are 18 treatment rooms, three luxury treatment rooms for couples, a relaxation zone, two indoor and outdoor Jacuzzis, several

thermal zones and a well-equipped fitness centre. The complex offers rejuvenating and detoxifying treatments, a whole range of Ayurvedic procedures, as well as therapeutic baths and massages. Importantly, the hotel has a trained staff of therapists from the Far East.

The resort boasts one of the best 18-hole golf courses in the region. Created by a prominent golf course designer Bob Hunt, it has won many awards and is a member of Preferred Golf programme. The complex also feature tennis, volleyball and basketball courts.



BUSINESS FACILITIES

Vilnius Grand Resort offers 8000 sqm of function space (25 conference and banquet rooms) with a maximum capacity of 3000 people. All rooms have access to the hotel gardens and balconies, while the largest space - the Grand Opera - occupies 810 sqm. It's one of the largest conference centres in all of the Baltic States and, I must admit, it looks impressive. In addition to regular function spaces, the resort also offers a 490 sqm semi-circular tent, which can accommodate up to 500 guests. One of the spaces on the ground floor has a larger door, which makes it suitable for car launches. It also has a separate reception and driveway for large buses.

VERDICT

With a varied offer of accommodation options spread over a large area, Vilnius Grand Resort is an excellent choice for both team-building trips and a tranquil holiday with the family. One of the biggest advantages of the complex is its location with scenic lakes and picturesque lush nature surrounding the resort. Add to this five excellent dining options and a wide range of spa treatments, and you can easily say that the resort is a must go spot for those seeking leisure and relaxation.

CONTACT

Ežeraičių km, Ežeraičių g. 2,
Vilnius 14200, Lithuania,
phone +370 5 273 9700





The complex also feature tennis, volleyball and basketball courts.



The resort boasts one of the best 18-hole golf courses in the region designed by the renowned course designer Bob Hunt.



Conferences at Krasicki Hotel

Krasicki Hotel**** has managed to establish itself as a recognized business brand in Polish hospitality market. The property has proved many times it's the perfect venue for conferences with special or non-standard requirements.

The events held in the hotel in recent times included international symposia requiring simultaneous interpretation into many languages; an octagon cage for MMA fights set up in the Courtyard, or a banquet taking place in a heated tent in February with the temperature outside as low as -15 degrees Celsius.

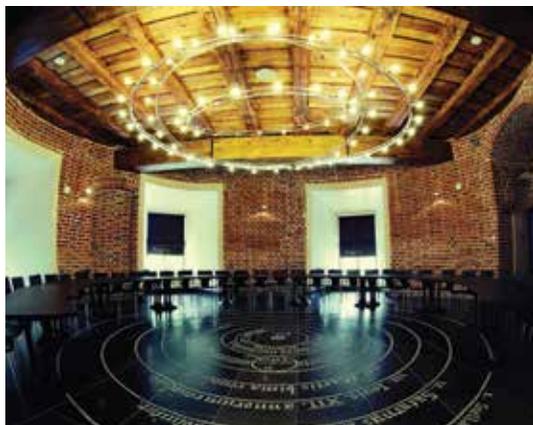
The property has four conference rooms, with the largest one fully-equipped and able to accommodate up to 450 participants. If necessary, the hotel can provide comprehensive assistance in organizing events tailored to the needs of the client. It's basically a standard offer of conference space rental, but with one significant difference. Some of the rooms exude history, which adds to the overall appeal of the place.

TRIBUTE TO COPERNICUS

It wouldn't be exaggeration to say that Krasicki Hotel boasts some of the most beautiful function rooms in Poland. Not only are they stunning, but also... round! The climatic Copernicus room located in the former Gunpowder Tower impresses with its original medieval bricks and sand-blasted floor with the solar system as seen in the famous "De Revolutionibus" by Nicolaus Copernicus. The room's arrangement is a tribute to the great scholar who lived in Lidzbark for several years. It was at that period that he began to write his heliocentric theory.

WHERE KRASICKI LOOKED FOR INSPIRATION

According to historians and experts in literature, the famous Polish poet and bi-



Business meetings at Krasicki Hotel**** are always packed with good emotions, uniqueness and even magic.

shop Ignacy Krasicki looked for his inspiration, spending time in the Gunpowder Tower, which now has a room bearing his name. Decorated with tapestries depicting Krasicki, and featuring an intricate chandelier, this bright and spacious room has its own kitchen, which makes it a perfect venue for formal banquets at the end of a conference.

BUSINESS-FRIENDLY

The elegant and luxurious Kromer room is designed for small meetings and VIP guests. Business talks accom-

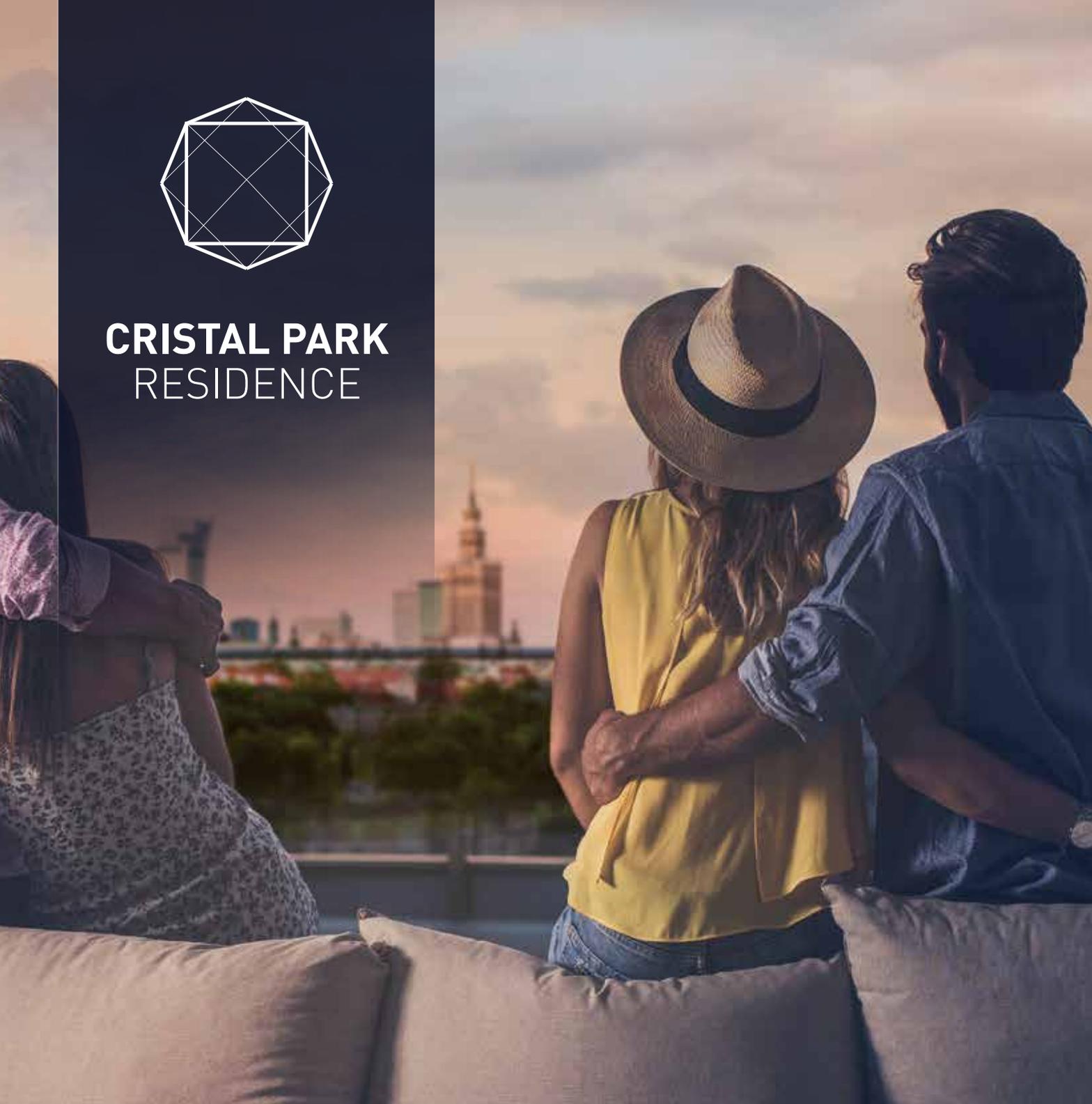
panied by high quality cognac and good coffee, are always a "win-win" situation. As the room is situated near the Lobby Bar and the Restaurant, you can wrap up your negotiations with a delicious dish, such as the mouth-watering Warmia Bishops' Duck.

The hotel's Library is also often used as a venue for business meetings. With its cosy décor, a rich collection of old prints and the aura of mystery, it's a perfect place for making important decisions.

Business meetings at Krasicki Hotel**** are far from ordinary. They are always packed with good emotions, uniqueness and even magic. After all, holding a conference in the place where Copernicus' and Krasicki's spirits are still vividly felt, is an experience you won't find anywhere else. ■



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Popular Sunday brunches return to Sheraton Grand Warsaw

Following a long Covid-19 related break, as well as summer holidays, Sheraton Grand Warsaw is now returning to its popular concept of Sunday brunches. Although it is hard to compete with Sunday chicken soup at Grandma's, many Warsaw families can't imagine a proper Sunday without strolling around the city and having lunch at one of the capital's restaurants.

This seems like a nicer alternative to spending a whole day in the kitchen and cooking a meal for the whole family. For many people, Sunday brunches at a hotel has become a weekly ritual and a good way to spend quality time with children. It's also a good idea for occasional meetings, a way to celebrate your offspring's christening, First Communion or birthday. Not to mention that you no longer have to worry about your eldest daughter's dietary choices, the uncle's dairy intolerance and your mother-in-law's tendency to evalu-

ate all dishes. It's hardly possible to please everyone's tastes, and even if you try, your valuable day off turns into a nightmarish working Sunday, where you need to prepare and serve a dozen or so dishes. Add to this coffee and tea. Then comes dessert and, of course, it turns out that someone is allergic to lactose in your ice cream. And so, before you even serve last hot drinks, you find yourself wishing the evening would finally end, because you didn't even have time to sit at the table with your guest and entertain them. To make matters worse, after the last guests have left, you still need to do washing up.

UNIQUE DISHES.

Brunches at Sheraton will appeal to anyone, regardless of their culinary tastes. In two restaurants located on the ground floor of the hotel, chef Marcin Sasin serves fresh fish, seafood, a selection of meats, Italian dishes, as well as those popular in Central and Eastern Asia. Sasin has successfully dispelled the myth that

hotel restaurants are likely to serve only standardized dishes that taste the same anywhere in the world.

At inAzia you can try several types of fish prepared according to various recipes, as well as try the restaurant's sushi and oyster buffet. You will also have a chance to try such delicacies as carpaccio with octopus, squid salad, fresh mussels, shrimps cooked in white wine sauce, tuna tataki, salmon tartare, as well as dishes strongly inspired by Thai and Chinese cuisine. Don't miss out on the excellent duck, mouth-watering bao buns, the signature pad thai, and delicious fish and meats prepared on Japanese robata barbecue. You will be taken to heaven and back trying the traditional Japanese turbot or marinated tuna served in mango sauce.

At Cucina Mia, you will be taken on a trip round most delicious Italian dishes, the restaurant is famous for. At brunch-time you will also find here buffet tables with traditional Polish dishes prepared with a modern twist, as well as many other options prepared from seasonal products.

At inAzia you can try several types of fish prepared according to various recipes, as well as try the restaurant's sushi and oyster buffet.





Following a long Covid-19 related break, as well as summer holidays, Sheraton Grand Warsaw is now returning to its popular concept of Sunday brunches.

FISH, MEAT AND DESSERTS

All ingredients used in both restaurants - including fish, seafood, meat, cheese, and vegetables - are sourced from reputable suppliers known for the highest quality products. All of them are stored in optimal conditions.

You will also be able to enjoy a wide selection of exceptional desserts that not only taste great but also look like small works of art. The price of brunch includes hot drinks, many types of coffee and tea, as well as unlimited white and red wine and water.

What we, personally, value in Asia and Cucina Mia for (apart from food, obviously) is the unique atmosphere in both the establishments. Not to mention the chef, who serves dishes made to his own recipes, entertaining his guests with culinary trivia and stories from the back of the kitchen. Sunday brunches are also a real treat for vegans and vegetarians. The hotel restaurants are fully prepared to serve all kinds of guests, including those who don't tolerate dairy or gluten, as well as those opting for a white pea burger instead of the one made with meat.



You will also be able to enjoy a wide selection of exceptional desserts that not only taste great but also look like small works of art

FAMILY ATMOSPHERE

You can choose the table to your liking. If we feel like having a meal in a lively atmosphere and a place filled with natural light - Cucina Mia is your eatery of choice. In turn, in Azia's interiors ooze more elegance and cosiness. Of course, during the brunch guests can visit both restau-

rants, as they are connected to each other. This way everyone can enjoy the entire culinary offer of the hotel and try the wide selection of buffet dishes. What's more, for the youngest guests the hotel has prepared a dedicated menu and a play corner where you little ones can have fun under the watchful eye of fun promoters.

Sunday brunches at Sheraton Grand Warsaw have already become iconic. Dishes cooked by the hotel's executive chef Marcin Sasin and his team are second to none. We guarantee that after you have enjoyed your Sunday brunch at Sheraton, this will become your new family tradition. Sheraton brunches are served every Sunday from 13.00 to 17.00. Prices: PLN 195 per adult, PLN 98 per child. Children under 4 years enjoy the meal free of charge. You can book your table by phone at: 22 450 67 06. Sheraton Grand Warsaw is located at Three Crosses Square, ul. Bolesława Prusa 2, Warsaw. www.restauracja-inazia.pl www.cucinamia.pl @sheratongrandwarsaw

Exclusive menu



Meals can be fun as long as we treat them with appropriate reverence and try to celebrate them. Therefore, to give it a festive dimension, one of Dr Irena Eris SPA hotels has introduced a new, separate menu featuring exclusive dishes.

The art of eating has a long tradition, but as early as in the 19th century the French lawyer and writer Anthelme Brillat-Savarin shared the idea publicly in the 1825 book entitled “The Physiology of Taste”, which was packed with anecdotes about the culinary culture. It’s there where he also stated that “the discovery of a new dish confers more happiness on humanity than the discovery of a new star.”

In an effort to meet the culinary expectations of the guests of the five-star SPA Hotel Dr Irena Eris Polanica Zdrój, the elegant on-site Restauracja Art Déco has introduced a dedicated menu featuring exclusive dishes. The new menu complements the existing

offer with lunchtime and dinner menus and weekly “seasonal” inserts, as well as the vegetarian menu, which also includes vegan dishes. In this way, guests spending their quality time in the luxury hotel, can try something different every time they visit Art Déco, from starters, through main dishes (meat and fish), pastas and salads, to desserts.

Exploring each of the menus, you can clearly see that the restaurant’s head chef Augustine Nsai, who specializes in Italian cuisine, loves to work in harmony with nature and tries to highlight the unique taste of Polish local products. At the same time, he makes sure that all dishes prepared in the restaurant are made from scratch.

The head chef is a great aficionado of everything that exudes the local spirit.





Guests who expect top notch culinary experience and love celebrating their meals, will now be able to enjoy the delicacies included in the new Exclusive Menu, which is short, but features sophisticated dishes served by the chef himself.

Currently the offer includes lobster cooked in butter with broccoli purée and pickled red onions; beef tenderloin with foie gras, chanterelles, black summer truffles and demi-glace sauce, as well as oyster salad with ceviche sauce. Each dish can be served with perfectly paired wine. The hotel's other dining option, Décompression

Restaurant, offers equally memorable culinary experience provided by the establishment's head chef Kamil Kit. The main card is short, concise and changes every 3-4 months. You won't find here fancy exotic ingredients, because the chef is a great aficionado of everything that exudes the local spirit. Some of the highlights include pasta with seriola fish, courgette noodles, roasted quinoa and saffron sauce; or roasted pheasant with millet, broad beans, rapeseed and spruce shoot sauce. More adventurous gourmets who like food experiments and surprises, should go for an occasional tasting menu

Art Déco restaurant has recently introduced a new exclusive menu. The new menu complements the existing offer with lunchtime and dinner menus and weekly "seasonal" inserts, as well as the vegetarian menu, which also includes vegan dishes.

with 5-7 retrospection to explore the full taste of primarily local products and those seasonally available. When planning a tasting dinner, you'd better rely on the chef's artistry and trust his choice, because every day you can find here a completely different set of dishes paired with excellent wine.

The credit for the unique character of the restaurant also goes to the staff, which provides top notch service. No wonder, the establishment can now boast two chef's toques awarded by the highly-esteemed Gault&Millau culinary guide.

DrlrenaErisSPA.com

Hotel with heritage

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Located in the picturesque Old Town of Vilnius, the historic Pacai Hotel was the first member of the Design Hotels collection in the Baltic States region. Reopened in May 2018, following a thorough renovation, the hotel is housed in a former 17th-century palace remembering the times of King John III Sobieski, Peter III of Russia and Napoleon Bonaparte, who used to stay here. The palace was originally owned by Mykolas Kazimieras Pacas, the Field Hetman of Lithuania and the founder of the renowned baroque church of St. Peter and Paul in Vilnius, where, according to his last will, his body was buried under the stairs. Today the palace houses a boutique hotel. The property is located just a 7-minute walk from the Gate of Dawn, close to the Vilnius University, the Presidential Palace and the Lithuanian Museum of Art. In fact, the whole Old Town is within a walking distance from the hotel. Strolling the climatic streets of Vilnius, get ready to explore numerous old churches, old bookstores and traditional florist's shops. It takes 15 minutes to get to the hotel from the airport.

ROOMS

Each of the 94 rooms and 10 suites is an independently designed, unique space matching the historic 17th century interior. From intricate wall details such as columns and raw brick, to original wooden beams and frescoes, all elements have been beautifully exposed and preserved so that guests can literally experience the history with their own senses. All the furniture in the hotel is modern and the whole space has a designer's vibe. Rooms are available in seven different categories, ranging from 22 to 123 sqm and overlooking either the classically baroque courtyard or the Old Town. The hotel's luxury bathrooms come with three different marble

tile finishes, transparent glass showers, and even a free-standing bathtub in the bedroom.

MUROS RESTAURANT

The hotel restaurant, run by the famous Lithuanian chef Liutauras

Ceprackas, provides an amazing culinary experience and specializes in serving best steaks sourced from such places as New York or Madrid. It also has a long 250-item wine list - all selected with utmost care and out of respect for tradition.





It's also a perfect place for those guests who feel slightly bored with ultra-modern hotels and new-fangled architecture.



BUSINESS AND LEISURE FACILITIES

The hotel spa offers a wide range of treatments, including body scrub with black soap in Turkish bath, Dead Sea mud wrap, as well as facial and whole body massage with tangerine and clary sage oils. There is also an on-site gym, as well as two 100 sqm conference rooms with AV equipment and IT connectivity.

VERDICT

The property will certainly appeal to art historians, architects and anyone interested in beautiful designs. No do-



ubt, every minute spent in the hotel is a truly pleasant history lesson. One of the biggest highlights is the convenient location in the very centre of the Old Town of Vilnius. It's also a perfect place for those guests who feel slightly bored with ultra-modern hotels and new-fangled architecture. The whole hotel staff comprise young, well-trained people who are the added value of this impressive property.

CONTACT:

Didžioji g. 7, Vilnius 01128, Lithuania, phone: (+370) 12 422 5,277 0000

Radisson Hotel Group has introduced a new concept of rooms and hybrid meetings in its properties. The idea is to combine traditional business meetings with state-of-the-art virtual technology.

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HYBRID ROOMS AND MEETINGS

at Radisson Hotels

Radisson Hotel Group's Hybrid Meetings combine the best of meeting in person and virtually, offering a reliable image, sound and video conferencing system, dual screens, wireless presentation clicker, high-speed internet connection, and more.

VIRTUAL MEETINGS

As the world continues to adapt to "new normals" and ongoing travel limitations, meeting and event organizers can now choose to offer virtual participation options and hybrid formats that allow for small local gatherings, while also broadcasting to remote attendees and satellite locations.

Tim Cordon, Area Senior Vice President, Middle East & Africa, Radisson Hotel Group, said: "We are thrilled to announce the launch of our Hybrid Meeting Solutions, which directly addresses some of the meeting and event challenges the pandemic has created globally. With the various government imposed restrictions, travelling to meet in person has become somewhat impossible. However, as a hotel group with hospitality at its core, we certainly understand the importance of connections and the need to adapt and exercise flexibility, which has led to the creation and introduction of Hybrid Solutions."

PARTNERSHIP WITH ZOOM

Radisson Hotel Group has partnered with Zoom, the leader in modern enterprise video communication, to provide a smooth experience for their clients' virtual and hybrid meetings and events. Specialist in-house event teams will assist clients in delivering a range of events from hybrid multi-site meetings to broadcasting events,



IN PHOTOS:
The interiors of Radisson Collection Hotel in Warsaw - a pilot property in the Hybrid Meetings and Hybrid Rooms project.

ensuring events are efficient, effective, and engaging, with flawless execution and no audio / visual problems.

HYBRID ROOMS

Hybrid Rooms perfectly combine the facilities of a state-of-the-art office with the comforts of a superior hotel room to create a productive, dedicated, and quiet workspace for the business traveller, leisure guest, and local day-guest alike.

Hybrid Rooms offer easy connectivity to second-screen devices, video-

conferencing facilities, wireless enabled keyboard, mouse and loudspeaker, printing services, stationery, unlimited coffee and tea, access to on-site wellness facilities, and many other benefits.

Radisson Hotel Group's Hybrid Solutions are currently available across 50 select hotels in Europe, the Middle East and Africa, to better meet the rapid lifestyle changes of today's travellers and their evolving expectations when they stay, work and meet in our hotels. The roll-out will continue through 2020 and 2021.

**RADISSON
HOTELS**
Safety Protocol

In partnership with
SGS



Safety measures at Radisson Hotel Group

Radisson Hotel Group has introduced its Radisson Hotels Safety Protocol, a new program of in-depth cleanliness and disinfection procedures, in partnership with SGS, the world's leading inspection, verification, testing and certification company.

One of Radisson Hotel Group's highest priorities is the continued health, safety and security of its guests, team members, and business partners. The company has conducted a thorough review of all existing health and safety processes and worked with a team of experts to develop and validate additional protocols. "Radisson Hotels Safety Protocol will further strengthen Radisson Hotel

Group's existing rigorous sanitation, cleanliness and disinfection guidelines at hotels globally," says Olof Karlsson, Regional Director Poland and South East Europe at Radisson Hotels.

TWENTY STEPS

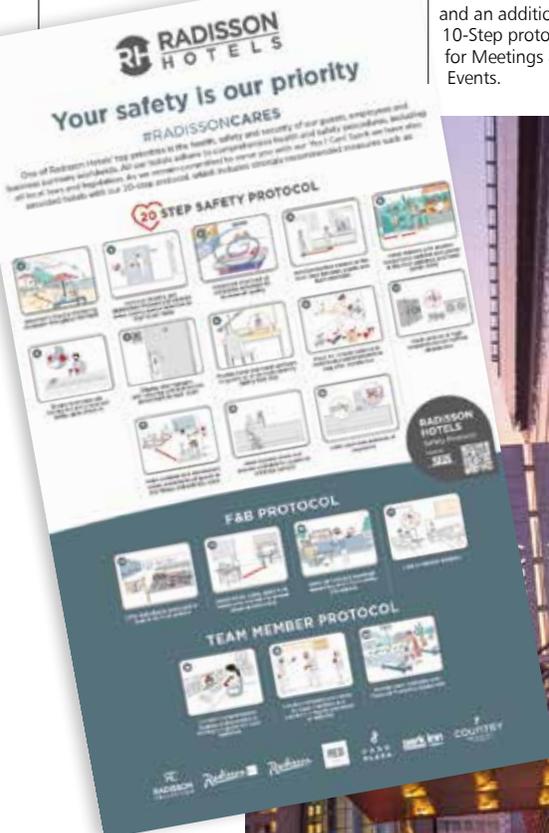
The protocol includes 20 Steps and an additional 10-Step protocol for Meetings & Events. Principles under consideration include increased cleaning and disinfection frequency of all hotel areas, paying special attention to high-touch items; stations installed with alcohol-based hand sanitizer and gloves at the front entrance and hotel public areas; all room keys disinfected and presented safely upon check-in; express check-out process available for guests to minimize contact; cash-free methods of payments available and encouraged; and comprehensive hygiene and prevention training programs for team members.

The protocol includes 20 Steps and an additional 10-Step protocol for Meetings & Events.

VOUCHERS FOR MEDICAL PROFESSIONALS

However, the new security protocol isn't the only activity of the Radisson Group related to the Covid-19 pandemic. Polish Radisson hotels have also been involved in providing hotel vouchers for medical facilities. In Poland, they offer support to Emergency Service and Medical Transport Station (WSPRiTS) "Meditrans" in Warsaw. The vouchers can be used for weekend stays in 11 Radisson hotels located in 8 Polish cities.

"Those brave people are on the first line of response in the fight against Covid-19, and we believe they deserve rest and relaxation. That is why, we have decided to use the strength of the Radisson chain in Poland to offer stays not only in Warsaw, but also in other cities where our hotels are located," says Marco Eichhorn, General Manager at Radisson Collection Hotel Warsaw. ■





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MEETINGS

AUTUMN BY THE SEA



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HOTELS

The timeless nature and the iconic status of the famous seaside resort are still an inseparable part of Sopot's image. However, it's worth looking at this seaside resort also from a different, less obvious perspective.



When summer season ends, Sopot reveals its second, largely unknown face, and the enthusiasts of autumn outings (whose number is growing year by year) can enjoy here the unhurried, much cosier atmosphere of a big seaside resort.

This unique climate can also be seen in the recently launched Radisson Blu Hotel Sopot. Located in a more tranquil part of the city, which benefits from the lush greenery of Sopot Blonie Park, this four-star luxury property stands just 250 metres from the beach. With its exceptional architecture and unique location, the hotel is a perfect choice for those seeking autumn battery recharge. Whether

travelling with family, friends or for business, this is where you can experience full relaxation to get you going for the rest of the year.

This unwinding process is vastly helped by the convenient location of Radisson Blu Hotel Sopot, among soothing greenery, which, at this time of the year turns into a tapestry of warm colours. Close to the hotel there is a seaside park with bicycle trails and a promenade. The city's iconic attractions, including Europe's longest wooden pier and the famous "Monciak" promenade, are also within walking distance. The central location of the property means also easy access to the historic part of the city of Gdańsk with its Długa Street, Neptune Fountain and St. Mary's Basilica.

CLOSE TO NATURE

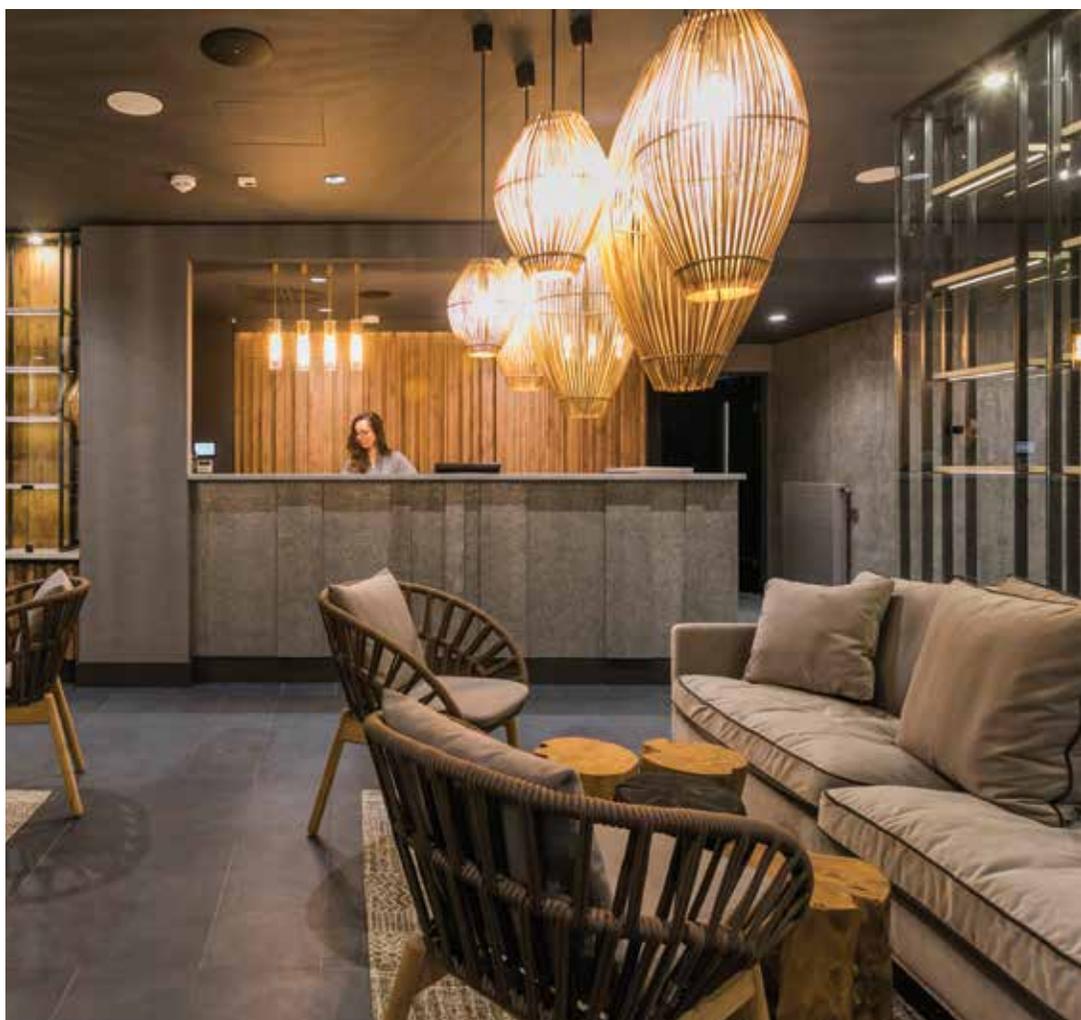
Sopot's wide beaches are perfect all-day walks or runs, which, in addition to health benefits also guarantee unique views of the Baltic Sea. The seaside air is rich in iodine, known to have beneficial properties for the body, especially for the thyroid gland and our respiratory system. And after a dose of fresh air, you can unwind in the hotel's Wellness&Spa zone with 12 treatment rooms where you can undergo numerous cosmetic and beauty procedures. Another perfect option for unwinding is the pool area with whirlpool tubs, a swimming pool and saunarium, as well as well-equipped fitness area and Yoga House. When it gets colder outside, a visit to the sauna, a soothing bath in a whirlpool or a pampering massage with hot stones, guarantee the perfect end to your day.

The hotel has 219 comfortable rooms featuring signature décor. The colour palette and the details of the interiors are inspired by nature - sand and sea water - with some materials looking as if scorched by the sun or even dried by the sea wind. The décor is dominated by relaxing combinations of earth tone shades, accentuated by contrasting elements.

RESORT WITH HISTORY

Interestingly, Sopot was founded primarily as a leisure town, initially functioning as a small seaside resort. With its dynamic development and expansion, the town's architecture inspired by charming holiday homes, became more and more spectacular in form. Experts in the subject refer to the style of pre-war Sopot "romantic historicism", because it involved drawing boldly on many architectural patterns. This is evidenced by numerous historic villas or spa buildings dating back to the Wilhelmine Period. However, this unusual style mixture has its own charm, oozing German "Ordnung" philosophy.

The autumn atmosphere of the city is attractive both to tourists and residents alike. The streets are no longer crowded, as they are usually in summer, thanks to which the re-



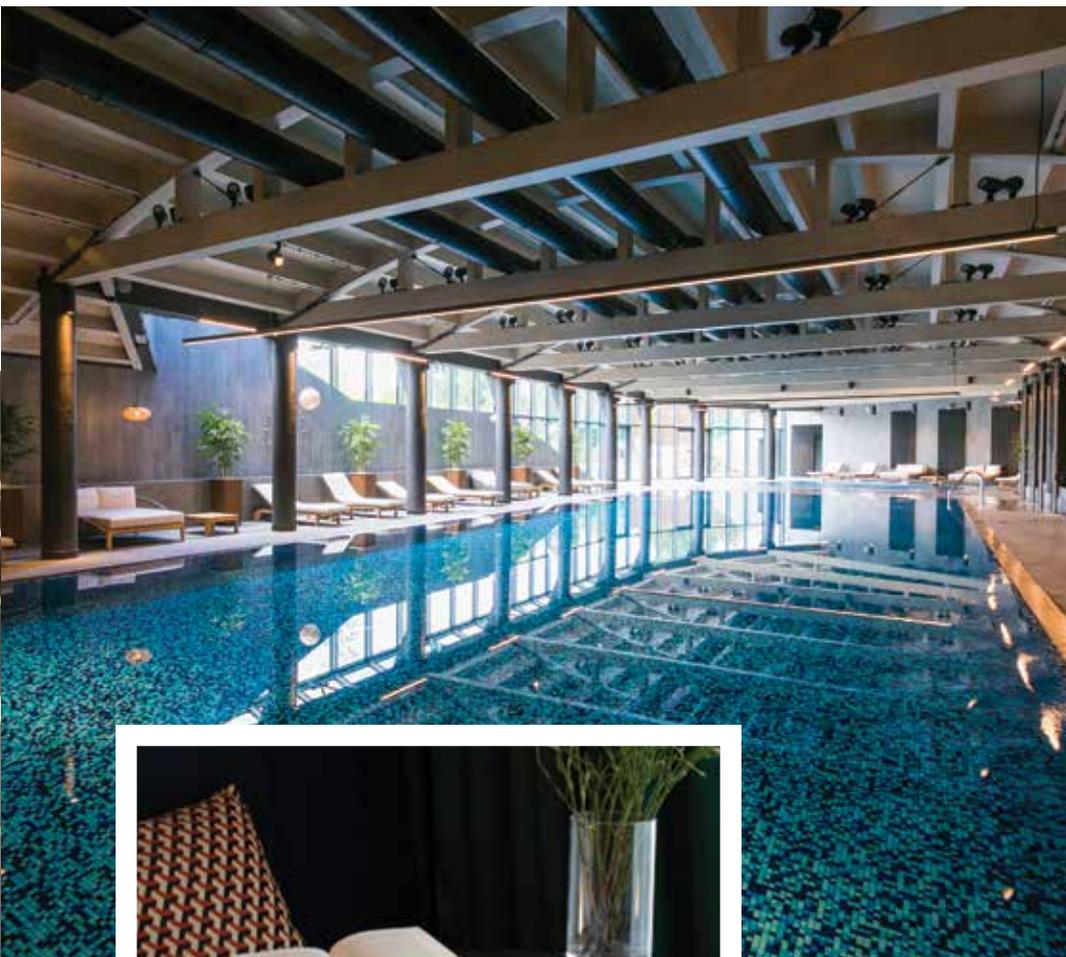
sort regains its intimate character. It's the perfect time to experience Sopot's unique creative climate, which is so highly praised by writers, filmmakers and intellectuals, many of whom you can come across in Sopot's cafes and pubs. Widely understood culture and art is also present throughout the hotel. Evenings with live music, wine tastings, and themed dinners: this is just a foretaste of an ambitious cultural programme of the property aimed not

only at its guests but also the residents of the Tri-City.

ATMOSPHERIC EVENING

Radisson Blue Hotel Sopot offers a truly unique setting for both unwinding and spending quality time. The evening is a perfect time for an exquisite dinner with good wine. The hotel's cuisine is inspired by nature and seasons, so the dishes served here feature aromatic herbs, vegetables and

HOTELS



fruits from the hotel's garden, as well as fresh fish caught in the Baltic Sea. The ingredients also include many seasonal and regional delicacies. Guests can enjoy here a number of delicious home-made products, including cold cuts, cakes and bread, as well as exquisite Château Isolette wine produced in the brand's own vineyard in the Rhone Valley, France.

MEETINGS IN THE TRI-CITY

Radisson Blu Hotel Sopot offers a new approach to business meetings and other events. The property boasts the larger conference space in the Tri-City, offering more than 2,000 sqm of floor area. The rooms can be configured in 30 different ways and arranged to the organizer's preference and needs. In the near future, the property will also have a dedicated pavilion with a stage that will be able to accommodate up to 1,000 guests. Also, the adjacent 22,000 space is a perfect spot for various outdoor events. Go to www.radissonblusopot.pl to check the hotel's latest offer and plan your autumn trip to the seaside. ■

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Avis guarantees safety



MARZENA MRÓZ talks to **MARTIN GRUBER**, managing director of Central Europe at Avis Budget Group

Tourism industry has been one of the most heavily affected by the Covid-19 crisis. How has Avis Budget Group responded to the market and customer needs related to the pandemic? What measures have you taken to ensure the greatest possible security for your customers?

That is true. The travel restrictions and the concerns over the Covid-19 pandemic have affected business, particularly the tourism industry. At Avis Budget Group, during the period of the gradual lifting of the lockdown, our primary objective was to provide our customers and employees with the sense of security and comfort. We have announced and implemented the "Avis Safety Pledge" and "Avis Budget Safety

Pledge". These programmes, introduced in our rental stations, are extensive procedures for washing and disinfecting vehicles, which we carry out in collaboration with Reckitt Benckiser, the manufacturer of Dettol disinfectants. Every vehicle is carefully cleaned and disinfected after every rental to ensure maximum safety for future customers. Of course, we have also implemented security measures at the rental stations themselves. For example, we adhere to the rules of social distancing, provide our employees and customers with hand disinfectants, and use special screens to limit contact between our customers and employees.

We are also aware of the fact that the pandemic situation is changing very dynamically. Therefore, we want to guarantee our customers the maximum booking flexibility. If you have booked your car in Europe directly with Avis or Budget for the period starting before 15 December 2020, you will be able to modify or cancel it for free, as we are waiving cancellation fees. We have done it so that the customer, when booking a car, won't have to be afraid of incurring additional costs if security measures are tightened up in a particular country or region or if they find that, due to the growing number of cases in a particular destination, they prefer to cancel the trip.

We have also introduced the Digital Check-In done online. This new service offers customers the ability to speed up their check-out process by pre-entering some of the information needed to rent a vehicle before the customer arrives at the rental station. This solution greatly reduces the time the customer spends in the rental station and limits contact between all people involved in the rental process.

Are there any new trends in travel and transportation that can be observed during the pandemic?

As we all know, currently the number of air connections worldwide is much lower than before the Covid-19 pandemic, and the restrictions on foreign travel haven't been fully lifted. Therefore, we see that a significant number of customers have moved away from airport rentals in favour of car rentals at rental stations located in city centres. This can be observed not only in Poland, but also other countries worldwide, both for business and leisure travel.

Research and statistics indicate that during this year's summer holidays we opted mostly for domestic destinations. This, in turn, meant an increase in car travel. Before the summer season, Avis Poland conducted a survey among representatives of departments of tourism and promotion at institutions of the local government.

As many as 88% of those surveyed predicted that this year more tourists would visit them by car.

We intend to take further measures to support the market after the lockdown period.



When it comes to travel and transport in the business segment, we see that our corporate clients are increasingly interested in long-term rental. Such an offer gives companies flexibility, for example, they can adjust the number of cars they use depending on the season. This helps in cost optimization.

Will these trends become stable and remain in the market for longer?

Some of them certainly will. We can expect that the car, being an individual means of transport that seems to be safer in times of epidemics, will enjoy a greater popularity in years to come. Many travellers know the undeniable advantages of travelling by car. Not only is this safer in the time of the epidemic, but it also provides greater freedom and flexibility - we can get almost anywhere, and set off at any time.

As we have mentioned before, the tourism industry has been heavily affected by the current pandemic crisis, both in the leisure and business segment. Which of these segments do you predict to bounce back faster, once the lockdown restrictions have been gradually lifted?

In the summer months, we observed a rebound primarily in the leisure segment of the market. However the business travel is also on the rise. Of course, some of the meetings and talks are still held via videoconferencing, but there are industries, such as trade, where a live business meeting proves

much more effective. For this reason, we expect that the rebirth of the business travel segment will soon be significantly accelerated.

What are the plans for Avis' expansion once the pandemic is over?

Today it is difficult to predict when this will happen. In the coming months, however, we intend to take further measures to support the market after the lockdown period. We have implemented a number of measures to ensure maximum safety for our customers - both in terms of avoiding the risk of infection and ensuring that they won't have to bear additional costs in the event of cancellation. We are also trying to modify our offer to make it as attractive as possible. To further stimulate the market, we offer a number of promotions and special offers. In recent weeks, we have introduced, among others, the Avis Inclusive service, which resembles all-inclusive packages offered by travel agencies. By opting for Avis Inclusive, the customer receives an insurance package - collision insurance, theft protection and glass damage coverage at a 25% discount, and the premium assistance service is provided free of charge.

Thank you for the interview.



CHARGING AHEAD

The latest crop of electric and hybrid cars combine high performance with strong eco-credentials

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VOLVO XC40 RECHARGE

Price: from £53,155

With the XC40 plug-in hybrid already in showrooms, Volvo will go a step further early next year with its Recharge Pure Electric model. As the name suggests, there's only battery power under your right foot, but it boasts a decent 400km-plus range on a full charge.

This is Volvo's first all-electric car, and the Swedish firm's first step towards its aim of half of all of its global sales to be purely electric by 2025. The XC40's sustainability goes further than skin deep too, with the door linings and carpet made from 97 per cent recycled plastic bottles. The lack of a traditional engine makes room for a small extra 30-litre boot under the bonnet.

The hefty £53,155 price tag might make you wince a little, but with so many XC40s likely to be bought as company cars or on finance, its ultimate success will come down to a competitive monthly payment. And, given the history of the rest of Volvo's excellent XC range, this could be its biggest hit of 2021.

JAGUAR I-PACE

Price: from £65,195

With more than 80 global awards, including three covered World Car of the Year 2019 accolades in the trophy cabinet, the Jaguar I-Pace has set the tone for the latest breed of electric cars since it arrived in summer 2018.

And now it's even better, with Jaguar having introduced a host of updates to the I-Pace collection. The 470km fully-charged range is still present, as is the speedy 4.5-second 0-60mph time, but there's now an improved onboard charger fitted as standard, which gives drivers faster on-the-road charging than before – a 50kW charger can add up to 63km in 15 minutes.

A new infotainment system makes it easier to use public charging points, showing you in real time whether they're available and an estimate of charging time. There's greater connectivity, with wireless mobile charging and Bluetooth technology that can pair two phones simultaneously, plus a host of design improvements, too.

RENAULT ZOE

Price: from £26,495

Three generations on and the Renault Zoe is the most popular electric car in Europe. The styling might not have altered much during that time – no bad thing to our eyes, as the Zoe has always been a looker – but the chan-



ges under the skin have been considerable. It now boasts a 52kWh battery capable of up to 394km on a full charge (which can cost less than £5), and it can also accommodate a rapid charge. There's a new regenerative braking B-mode that, like many EVs, enables you to drive almost without touching the brake pedal.

The Zoe's green credentials extend beyond its battery power, too, with some of the interior plastics and seat fabric being made from recycled plastic.

KIA XCEED PHEV

Price: from £30,695

With its brilliant new Soul EV and E-Niro models, Kia – along with its sister firm, Hyundai – is taking the electric car market by storm. Kia had already enjoyed record sales of its electrified models in the first quarter of 2020 and is aiming for more than a fifth of European sales to be fully electric by 2026.

The latest in the range to help achieve that ambition is this plug-in hybrid XCeed. A 1.6-litre petrol engine is allied to an 8.9kWh battery, giving the XCeed an all-electric range of 58km and emissions from only 32g/km. The touchscreen sat nav can tell you where the nearest charging points are in your vicinity or en route to your destination. Bearing in mind the huge sales success Kia has had with the smaller Stonic and larger Sportage models, plus the growing popularity of crossovers, it would be a brave person to bet against this XCeed – especially in this plug-in form – proving another winner.

TESLA MODEL 3

Price: from £40,490

No round-up of electric cars could be complete without at least one mention of Tesla. Whate-

ver your perceptions might be of its co-founder and chief executive, Elon Musk, there's no question that his company has shaken up both the electric vehicle market and the car industry as a whole beyond measure. For all the bluster up until now, however, it's this smaller Model 3 that is really helping the brand to take great strides into the mainstream.

It's still not cheap, or perfect, but the build quality – a notable weak point on past Teslas – is notably better, while the entry-level Standard Range Plus's 409km range and 5.3-second 0-60mph time are not to be sniffed at. Dig deeper into your bank balance and you can bring the acceleration time down to 3.2 seconds (that's supercar speed) or raise the range to 560km. As a company, Tesla still isn't entirely without its issues, and the dealer network still needs better coverage, but the Model 3 has already been seen in the UK's top-ten bestseller lists and is sure to become a more popular sight on British roads.

PORSCHE TAYCAN

Price: from £83,367

Back in our February issue, when previewing the likely biggest cars of 2020, we predicted that the all-electric Porsche Taycan might win the World Car of the Year Performance Car award. Turns out we were spot on, although what we didn't guess was that it would pick up the World Luxury Car prize as well.

A deserving double win for Porsche's first fully electric four-door saloon? You bet. Any concerns that fans of the German sports car manufacturer might have had with the Taycan have been swiftly allayed thanks to its superb performance and range – a 0-60mph time of only 2.6 seconds and a range of 412km-plus. Even better, though, is how the Taycan handles on the road, feeling more like an old 911 than a 2.3-tonne four-door saloon. A game changer for both Porsche and the electric car market.





AUDI E-TRON/ E-TRON SPORTBACK

Price: from £60,650

After the E-tron's initial introduction, Audi has now expanded the electric line-up on both the original car and the newer Sportback version. New models range from the 50 Quattro, which has a range of 314km, up to the sportier "S" models offering higher performance – the first electrified car to wear Audi's famous S badge.

As with traditional petrol or diesel models, with the newly expanded E-tron collection you simply choose your level of performance, range and equipment according to your budget. The

German firm has already promised the arrival of a Q4 E-tron SUV coupe next year, its seventh electrified model.

FIAT 500 LA PRIMA

Price: from £26,995

Electric cars always make the most sense as city models, and few more so than the latest generation of the classic Fiat 500. Called La Prima, it has grown marginally in terms of its dimensions and comes in both hatchback and convertible 500C forms, with a 42kWh battery providing a creditable 320km fully-charged range. The 500's onboard technology and infotainment systems have taken a

notable step forward, which is just as well given the convertible's sizeable price tag of £29,000. Even the hatchback will leave you with just a fiver in change from 27 grand.

BMW iX3

Price: est. from £60,000

There's no question that BMW has been at the forefront of electric car progress with its fantastic i3 hatchback and i8 supercar – some might even say it was too early with technology that is only now starting to catch on with mainstream buyers, the i3 having been introduced back in 2013.

The forthcoming iX3 is a different matter, though – it's BMW's first fully electric SUV, which, given the global appetite for them, is something of a no-brainer to introduce. It offers all of the practicality of the current X3 but with a 459km range and zero emissions. When it arrives on UK roads in summer next year, it will be available only in rear-wheel drive, rather than four-wheel drive like the conventionally powered X3. ■





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Aerotel London Heathrow



BACKGROUND Aerotel is an airport hotel brand run by Hong Kong-based Plaza Premium Group, best known for its lounges. The first Aerotel debuted at Singapore Changi in 2016 and there are now properties in ten countries, with more in the pipeline. After some delay, the 82-room Heathrow location opened at Terminal 3 in October last year. Bookings are by the hour, with a starting price of £50 for six hours. Nine-hour, 12-hour and overnight packages are available, and the maximum stay is 24 hours.

WHERE IS IT? Landside in the arrivals hall at Terminal 3. If coming by Tube, the walk is a little under ten minutes – follow the signs to Arrivals and keep an eye out for the right turn halfway. In the main hall, look for yellow signs directing you to Aerotel – it's next to the Emirates chauffeur service.



WHAT'S IT LIKE? Once you've spotted the reception over in the corner, it really stands out and looks quite welcoming, especially given the uninspiring setting. Up close it looks even bet-

Rooms are well-designed and equipped and the location is as convenient as it gets if you are flying out of Terminal 3

ter, with tasteful artwork and light fixtures, a grey and taupe colour scheme and some plants. The member of staff who greeted me at reception was friendly, although didn't really explain the layout of the hotel or the facilities, even after prompting.

ROOMS There are two floors of rooms, which are a mixture of 10 sqm singles, 14 sqm doubles and 21 sqm family rooms. I was pleasantly surprised by my ground-floor single room – sure, it was windowless and the bed took up most of the space, but it was softly lit, everything looked clean and new, and the bathroom was bright and well-stocked with amenities. I only had a small suitcase so there was plenty of room for me for one night. Double rooms have more floor space and a small table to work at, while family rooms have two beds and include a sofa. There were three hangers for my coat and clothes for the morning, a stand for my suitcase and a couple of shelves for smaller items. The room also had a TV, free and fast wifi, tea and coffee and some milk. There were USB points,

plug sockets and light switches by the bed. The bathroom was fitted to a high standard and had a hairdryer, a toothbrush and paste, plenty of towels, and amenities by Urban Skincare Company. In short, it had pretty much everything I could imagine you'd want for a short stay.

Soundproofing was good and it was easy to control the temperature. The bed was comfortable, with crisp white sheets. I did notice a green light around the fire alarm on the roof that created a faint glow during the night. It didn't bother me, but if you're a sensitive sleeper it might be intrusive.

FOOD AND DRINK I had arrived at 7pm and at about 9pm I ventured to the 24-hour Library Lounge, which also serves as a café. The reasonably priced à la carte menu included soup for £5, vegan Thai green curry or vegetable lasagne for £8, and chicken tikka masala or beef bourguignon for £10. There were also sandwiches, soft and alcoholic drinks and a free coffee machine. Service for hot meals ends at 10pm. A hot and cold breakfast buffet (£10) is served from 6am, although the pastries and hot plates were a little sad. I'd go for the all-day cooked breakfast plate for the same price, or the à la carte veggie breakfast (£8), bircher muesli or porridge (both £4). It would be a good place to work when it's quiet, and a departure screen showed flight updates. A TV was playing silently in one corner.

MEETINGS/LEISURE

No facilities.

VERDICT This addition to Heathrow airport's hotel stock was worth the wait. Rooms are comfortable, well-designed and equipped, and there are decent food and drink options. The location is as convenient as it gets if you are flying out of Terminal 3. *Jenni Reid*

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PRICE

Internet rates for an overnight midweek stay in April started from £143 for a double room

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WORDS HANNAH BRANDLER



London Paddington

The bustling transport hub has plenty of options for eating, drinking and exploring

1 Grand Union Canal

Exit Paddington station via South Wharf Road and turn left into the cobbled pedestrianised street that runs alongside St Mary's hospital. Follow the sign to the right for Paddington Basin and snake around the building until you reach the Grand Union Canal. Stretching 220km from London to Birmingham, it was once a major artery for bringing goods and freight to the capital from the Midlands and the North. Today, Paddington remains an important transport hub, as the London terminus of GWR and a future Crossrail station – but it has also invested in a cultural future. More than £1 billion has been spent on regenerating the ne-

ighbourhood, transforming the banks of the canal into a lively area buzzing with restaurants, bars and community spaces, while its waterways have become tourist attractions. Head to the year-round Floating Pocket Park at Merchant Square – overlooked by glass and steel buildings, this lush green space was created by garden designer Tony Woods and offers respite from the industrial architecture, its series of lawns connected by decked platforms and walkways, with plenty of bench seating amidst floral planters.

2 Go Boat

Take a break from London's Tube and rail rides and instead cruise down the

canal in one of Go Boat's electric self-drive vessels. Starting at the pontoon at Merchant Square, you'll be able to visit the likes of Regent's Park and Camden Lock with up to eight people (depending on current government "bubble" guidance). Fret not, you won't need any captain experience as a member of the crew will run through the controls before you set off. On your travels you'll pass the Thomas Heatherwick-designed Rolling Bridge on your right, an octagonal structure that unfurls across the towpath every Wednesday and Friday at noon, and on Saturdays at 2pm. From £79 for one hour; online booking only. goboat.co.uk

4 HOURS IN...



65

3 Little Venice

Once you've safely returned the boat in one piece, turn right into Hermitage Street and continue through a tunnel under the Westway, stopping to appreciate ceramicist Robert Dawson's wall mural. The blue-hued tiles pay homage to the area, featuring a pattern based on the Crossrail logo and a portrait of Isambard Kingdom Brunel, the engineer behind the network of tunnels, bridges and viaducts for the Great Western Railway. Turn left down St Mary's Terrace until you reach Maida Avenue. You're now in the heart of Little Venice, one of London's most coveted residential areas, famed for its Regency white stucco villas and quaint houseboats along Regent's Canal. Walk left and cross over to the peaceful

Rembrandt Gardens for leafy views of the waterways and narrowboats.

4 Darcie and May Green

Now that you've worked up an appetite, head back to the Paddington arm of the canal to experience one of its many eateries. Highlights include Darcie and May Green, an Antipodean restaurant housed in a barge on the canal. This floating hangout could easily be mistaken for an art installation, with its colourful façade designed by Sir Peter Blake – of the Beatles' Sgt Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band album cover fame – and its 50 metre-long upper deck is a prime spot for canal-watching. Another option is London Shell Co, which runs seafood cruises aboard the Prince Regent, offering set menus

for lunch and dinner. If you're prone to seasickness, its neighbouring sister restaurant, the Grand Duchess, is safely moored on land. daisygreenfood.com; londonshellco.com

5 Pergola Paddington

End your fleeting visit with a well-deserved aperitif. From Darcie and May Green and London Shell Co, take a left turn into Sheldon Square and then continue on to Kingdom Street until you reach Pergola Paddington. This picturesque, partially open-air food court is set over two floors and is clad in a leafy canopy of flowers and fairy lights. It has four self-service street-food vendors that change seasonally, plus two bars, daybeds for lounging, and weekend DJ sets. pergolapaddington.com



LOYALTY REWARD

The company I'm now working for is based in Frankfurt and has offices in Germany and Austria. This year I've flown a lot with Lufthansa and Austrian Airlines. What are the new rules regarding claiming rewards in the airlines' frequent flyer programme? I've heard they have introduced some changes there. Is it worth waiting until the last minute to claim my reward? How many points do I need to get a prize ticket to the US? Can my miles expire due to the Covid-19 pandemic?

Adam

Dear Adam,

Airlines affiliated with Lufthansa Group (Austrian Airlines, Lufthansa, Swiss, Brussels Airlines) are also partners in the Miles and More programme. In addition to the standard awards, you can also take advantage here of other promotions, such as Fly Smart or Early Bird. Fly Smart is addressed mainly to those travellers, who like to take their travelling decisions at the last minute. You can book prize tickets on European routes no later than 14 days before departure and for fewer points/miles. In contrast, with the Early Bird offer you book tickets at least 90 days before departure, but also redeeming fewer points than you would do usually. Note that some changes to these offers have recently been announced. Fly Smart offer will be cancelled and will no longer be valid on Lufthansa, SWISS and Austrian Airlines flights. Early Bird offer, on the other hand, will be available as early as 30 days before departure, instead of the previous 90 days.

It's worth monitoring the website of Miles and More program, because it often displays discounts on free tickets on selected routes in all classes of travel: economy, premium, and business. Tickets for European routes can now be booked for 10 or 15,000 miles, while tickets to North America for 30,000 miles in economy class, or 55,000 miles in business class. Airport fees and taxes are paid separately. Note that previously to buy a prize ticket for a flight on the same route, you needed 60,000 miles for economy class and 112,000 miles for business class cabin.

Don't forget to check upgrade offers, as well. You can buy a premium economy class ticket and use your miles to upgrade to business class. I know that a lot of passengers use this option. The fact that most air operations were put on hold due to the pandemic, doesn't mean that your points will expire. Although most loyalty schemes haven't extended the expiration dates on miles, they have introduced special measures to make it easier for members to maintain their programme status. For example, Delta and United have now less strict rules in their loyalty programmes. All elite statuses and benefits will be extended for one year, regardless of whether or not a member fulfils the requirements during this calendar year.

PIOTR KALITA jest związany z rynkiem przewozów lotniczych od blisko 20 lat. Specjalizuje się w segmencie podróży korporacyjnych i dyplomatycznych. Masz wątpliwości? Zapytaj Piotra.



COVID-19 AND TICKET CHANGES

I often fly with LOT Polish Airlines. What amenities has this carrier introduced for business travellers following the Covid-19 pandemic?

Jadwiga

Dear Jadwiga,

Passengers flying with LOT can now change their flight date and destination as many times as they want and free of charge. This applies to tickets purchased between 10 September and 31 December for all flights with the Polish carrier, at any available fare, including the cheapest saver option without additional baggage.

Any potential surcharges only apply to the difference in ticket prices in case of non-availability of the fare at which the initial booking was made. Passengers who booked their tickets by 10 September may change their route and date of flight only once, but also free of charge.

If you choose a new travel date on the same route, you can modify it on your own on the lot.com in the 'Manage Your Booking' tab. You can also change the destination on your booking by contacting the LOT Contact Centre or travel agents directly.

LOT Polish Airlines has implemented a number of technological changes in its offer, to properly deal with the current pandemic. You can use the new form available on lot.com to request a change or refund of your ticket without having to contact the airline by phone or e-mail. There website also has a dedicated chatbot, which automatically answers questions asked by passengers. With the new TIME2THINK service, passengers can temporarily booking a ticket at a specific price for up to 72 hours.

The Polish national carrier has recently replaced paper press by sharing over 1,000 digital press titles for all passengers, regardless of class and travel destination. The carrier also extended its free in-flight service to include new snacks. A novelty on domestic flights is a sweet bun, a 0.5 l bottle of water for each passenger, and a disinfecting tissue. On short-haul flights, passengers are also offered a selection of salty and sweet snacks (pretzels, nuts, and sweet buns) free of charge. At lot.com, you can order a free special meal (there are 25 different meals to choose from, including: meals for small children, kosher, gluten-free, and seafood meals) on long-haul flights in all booking classes and in LOT Premium Class as well as LOT Business Class on short-haul routes.

Innowacyjna technologia. Perfekcyjny efekt.



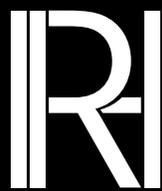
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*Statki Europejskie, październik & listopad 2015.



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