

Business Traveller ^{Poland}

AUGUST-SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER 2021 N°8-9-10/2021 (116) 9,60 PLN (8% VAT included)

MEXICO

*The Riviera Maya
is open to tourists*

MICE

*A new area
of business meetings*

BUSINESS TRAVEL

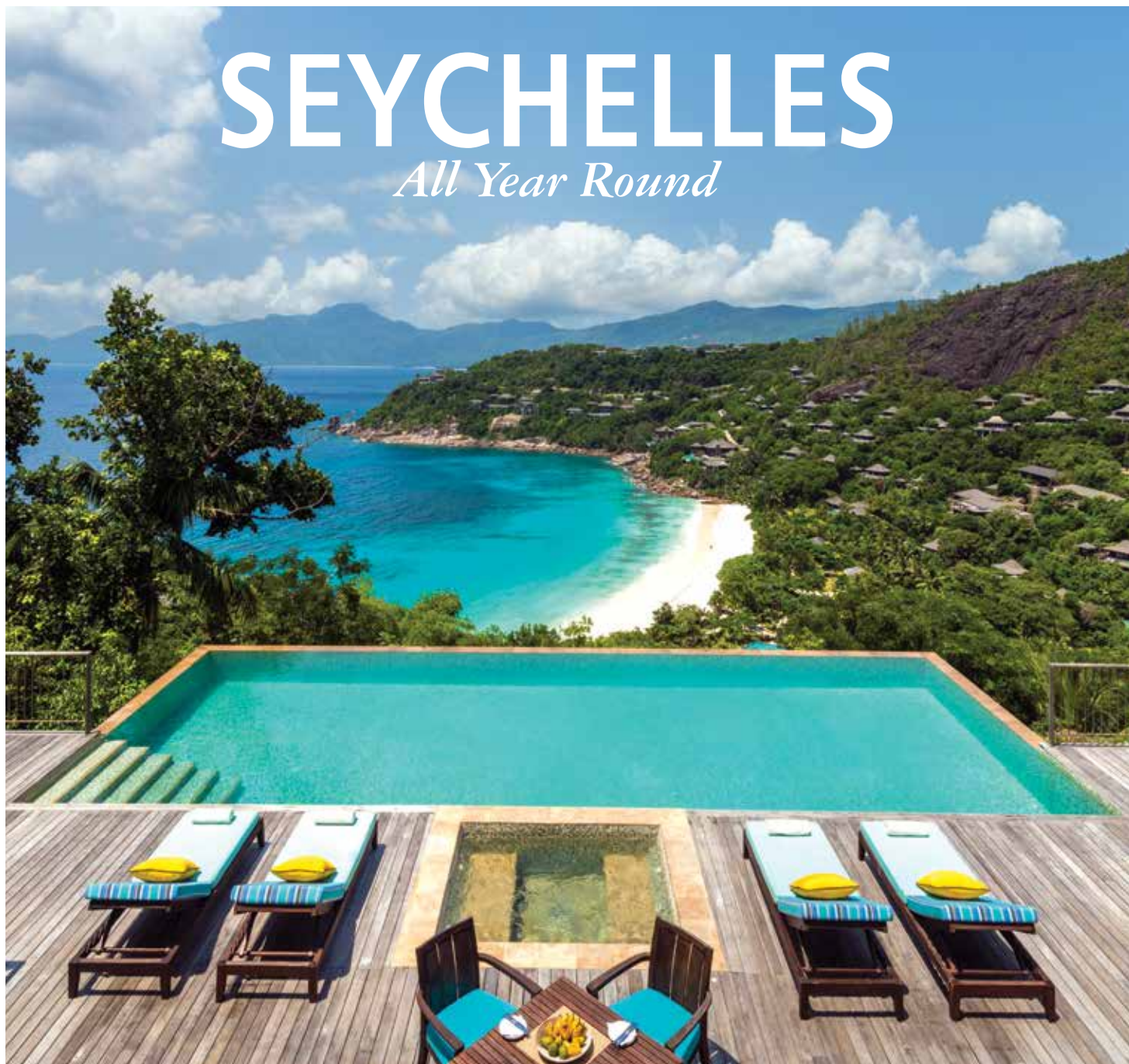
*New safety
regulations*

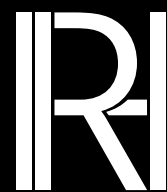
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CONTENT

Business Traveller Poland

AUGUST-SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER 2021

DESTINATIONS

42 TO THE PADDLES!
Pomeranian Kayak Trails

44 MEXICAN WAVE
The rich history and picturesque beaches of the Caribbean coast of Mexico.

64 FOUR HOURS IN...
BRISTOL
The creative south-west city is a true gem of modern creative arts and a model example of Georgian architecture.



COVER STORY



10
Seychelles - One of the world's most scenic destinations



4 EDITORIAL
6 IN THE SPOTLIGHT
Hotel, restaurant, and airline news

18 STAY SAFE

24 ARCHE WROCŁAW HOTEL

26 ARCHE CUKROWNIA ŻNIN

28 MERCURE KATOWICE
CENTRUM A LANDMARK
OF THE VIBRANT CITY

30 RADISSON COLLECTION
HOTEL WARSAW

32 WARSAW'S HEART

34 WESTIN'S SIX
PILLARS OF WELL-BEING

38 BEST QUALITY
FOR 25 YEARS!

TRIED AND TESTED
58 Kingsland Locke, London

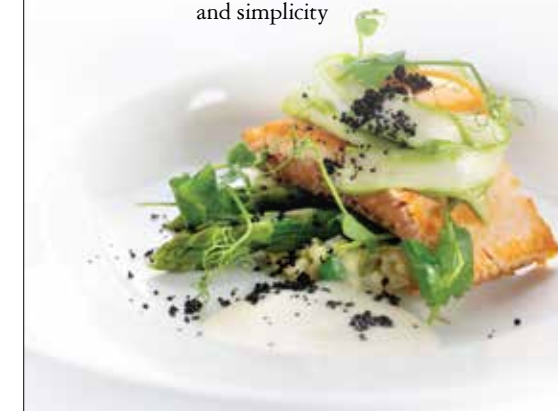
60 Aparthotel Adagio
London Stratford

62 The Mayfair Townhouse,
London

66 ASK THE PILOT
Our undercover captain reveals
what it's like to fly for a living.



36 STRAIGHT FROM NATURE
Cuisine at Dr Irena Eris SPA Hotels
is all about local character, seasonality
and simplicity



50
EVENTS FOR THE NEW ERA
Creative ways for physical and virtual
attendees to get together

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AUTUMN ON ISLANDS

It's the land of hundred-year-old turtles, the magical Coco de Mer plant, pristine beaches, reefs teeming with colours, perfect climate and unique giant granite boulders - as if polished by a divine hand. Seychelles is one of the priciest, but also most exciting tourist destinations. As a result of wise environmental policies, the place still boasts prehistoric tropical forests that are home to many endemic species of flora and fauna. With its favourable, warm climate, consistent temperature and day length throughout the year, as well as numerous small and cosy beaches that rank among the most beautiful in the world, Seychelles is the top choice for a memorable holiday with your loved ones, regardless of the time of the year.

Seychelles hotels are among the most expensive in the world, especially those located on North Island and Fregate Island with only a handful of villas and prices soaring to US\$5,000 per night. There are also several established luxury chains, such as Raffles, Kempinski and Hilton, as well as two resorts owned by the top-rated Four Seasons brand - each one offering an utterly different type of experience. It's therefore a good idea to divide your stay between both those dashing properties. Our top recommendations are the Four Seasons on Mahe and the Four Seasons on Desroche Island. You can read more about such a trip of a lifetime in our cover story entitled "Seychelles All Year Round". Enjoy your reading!

Marzena Mróz

MARZENA MRÓZ
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF



RESTAURANT AT THE SEA

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CITY OF SKYSCRAPERS



Dubai's skyscrapers are some of the most recognisable buildings on Earth. The world's tallest tower is virtually known to everyone. The 162-storey structure with the head-spinning height of 828 metres is an integral part of the city's skyline. The building was designed by the US architect Adrian Smith of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill studio to resemble regional desert flower Hymenocallis Spider Lily. Construction of the skyscraper began in January 2004, and six years later the Burj Khalifa opened to the public. Inside there are several observation decks, including At the Top Burj Khalifa SKY - the world's tallest outdoor observation deck located on the 148th floor. The Address Beach Resort, meanwhile, has the world's highest outdoor infinity pool and a residential skybridge floor. Designed by Shaun Killa, the building consists of two separate towers. The property offers incredible views of Palm Jumeirah, JBR Beach and the distant city skyline.



Traveller's gear

Cameras on board latest smartphones may be getting better and better, but if you want to make sure that photos taken on your trip are stunning, the best choice is to go for a separate camera equipped with a large sensor and interchangeable lenses. One such example is the Olympus PEN E-P7, designed for creative users that seek equipment with advanced photo functions, as well as stylish, classic design. The new camera is packed with numerous options and features including a 20-megapixel Live MOS sensor, advanced colour profile management and five-axis in-body image stabilisation. The PEN E-P7 empowers photographers with their own unique style to capture the most important moments of their lives and to create images and videos of superb quality. The camera's advanced Face Priority/Eye Priority AF algorithm provides constant focus, while the built-in WiFi & Bluetooth connectivity and the tilt LCD screen comes in handy when taking photos and selfies from different angles.

PRESS MATERIALS

KLM UPLOAD@HOME

KLM customers travelling to a selected number of destinations can now have the necessary COVID-19 travel documents checked in advance. With the innovative Upload@Home digital self-service, KLM wants to help its customers as best as possible with the complex entry regulations of the country of destination regarding COVID-19 travel documents. Pre-validating the documents required by the destination via Upload@Home means that customers can be sure in advance that their documentation is in order. KLM's online check of COVID-19 documents is now available for all KLM flights to Amsterdam, and for KLM flights from or via Amsterdam to Curaçao, Dubai, Lima, St Martin, Istanbul, Germany and Spain. The number of destinations for which Upload@Home is available, is expected to increase in



the near future. Participation in Upload@Home is free and voluntary. Customers who have booked a flight to one of these destinations and are eligible for this service will receive an invitation to participate. They collect the required documents and upload them up to five hours before departure. They will be sent the result by e-mail, usually within an hour. KLM staff performing the check are available between 06.00 and 22.00 CET. All customers who need COVID-19-related travel documents for their journey can collect their boarding pass and check in their baggage at the check-in desk at the airport. If they have had their documents checked online via Upload@Home beforehand, all they need to do is show their passport or ID card and any visa. However, KLM recommends always bringing hard copies of the required COVID-19-related documents with them to the airport, as customers may have to show them upon arrival at their destination; klm.com

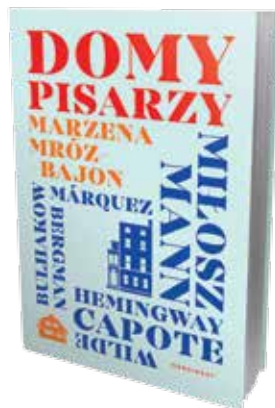


Cycling routes in Moravia

In the East Moravian region you will find hundreds of kilometres of cycling routes of varying difficulty, suitable for both experienced cyclists and families with children. One of them is the route from Kroměříž to Hodonín (87 km), which is linked to the Moravian Wine Routes. You can start the trip in Kroměříž. For centuries the town was the summer residence of the Archbishops of Olomouc. The palace and gardens are a favourite place for filmmakers, including Miloš Forman who shot here several scenes for his Oscar-awarded "Amadeus". In the town of Napajedla it's worth checking out a Baroque palace. In Staré Město near Uherské Hradiště, you can climb the unique Šrotík lookout tower. The next stop is the town of Střážnice with its fascinating exhibition of Czech folk music instruments. The town is also famous for its international folklore festival taking place every year at the end of August. It's one of the largest events of its kind in Europe. On the way back, you board a boat taking you across the Baťa Canal. Another cycling route leads along the Bečva River. It offers cyclists a ride from the mountain springs of Rožnovská Bečva to the confluence of the river with the Morava River. The route is over 141 km long and leads through two regions: Zlín and Olomouc. The sections leading through Hana region are gently undulating, suitable for less advanced cyclists, while the route leading through Moravian Wallachia is hilly and slightly more difficult. The first section leads through the valley of the Vsetínská Bečva River from Velké Karlovice to Valašské Meziříčí, about 60 km. The second one goes through the valley of Rožnovská Bečva, from Horní Bečva to Valašské Meziříčí, 31 km. The third section, from Valašské Meziříčí to Tovačov (where the Bečva flows into the Morava River), is 65 km long.

Business Traveller recommends

No doubt, we all have our favourite writers. But how many of us wonder about this person's dwelling: their house and neighbourhood he or she lived? Can you find there the traces of the protagonists from the author's books? Business Traveller's editor-in-chief Marzena Mróz, who for years has been documenting the changing world with her camera, has decided to visit the homes of her favourite writers. She went to Lithuania to see the view from the window of the house where Czesław Miłosz was born. She checked the height of the barn in a Mississippi town, where William Faulkner, armed with a bottle



of bourbon, wrote his novels. She also went to Lübeck, where Thomas Mann used to race through narrow streets, as well as to Anchiano, where Leonardo da Vinci's house still stands. Admittedly, Ezra Pound's apartment in Venice was out of bounds, but she did manage to visit Vargas Llosa's house in Lima. She also spent the night in the bed where Oscar Wilde died. Finally she arrived in Macondo - the colour-washed but butterfly-filled town of Aracataca, Colombia, where Marquez created the world from scratch. To those asking her, why she decided to leave behind the domestic, illusory order in order to seek mirages, she replies, quoting Marquez: "All I am came from that journey." Published by Marginesy publishing house, this fascinating book gets our highest recommendation.



AIR FRANCE'S NEW BUSINESS LOUNGE

Dedicated to Business customers and Flying Blue Elite Plus members travelling on Air France's short- and medium-haul Schengen network, this lounge situated in 2F terminal is one of the airline's largest, with a surface area of 3,000 sq. m. and 570 seats spread over two levels. In collaboration with teams from Air France and the Group ADP, the entire space and most of the furniture were designed by the Jouin Manku agency, founded by Canadian architect Sanjit Manku and French designer Patrick Jouin. Those who aren't Flying Blue Elite Plus members can use the lounge within availability for a fee.

Food and beverages are provided on both lounge levels, where Air France promotes the refinement and conviviality of French cuisine. The selections on offer change throughout the day but always available are sandwiches, salads, and hot quiches. Air France prefers to use seasonal locally sourced foods and restricts single-use plastics. Renowned sommelier Paolo Basso selected the wine list for the lounge and has provided a wide array of wines and champagnes from which to choose. Once in the lounge proper, Air France passengers will notice the large curved glass windows with runway views. The windows dominate the entire space and let in plenty of unobtrusive natural light. A dedicated area for Flying Blue Ultimate customers, directly accessible from the reception area, offers a fully personalized service and has its own private lounges.

COSMETICS ON THE GO

It's hard to imagine going on a trip without a set of cosmetics.

Whether you are only going on a two-day trip or are planning to be away for a few weeks, you always remember to save some space in your luggage for your favourite beauty products. Some you will only need once you reach your destination, while others may come in handy also on board the plane. Sephora products are a perfect choice for both those scenarios. On board the plane, a good light foundation will help to refresh the skin on your face after landing. Other beauty products, such as coloured eyeliner, mascara, lipstick and powder, can also prove useful. Sephora has also a whole array of highly effective masks considered a "must-have" product by frequent business travellers; sephora.pl



PRESS MATERIALS

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WORDS MAGDALENA BORATYŃSKA

PICTURED:
Four Seasons
Mahé



Undoubtedly, Seychelles is one of the world's priciest, but also most scenic tourist spots. Because of wise environmental policies, the place still boasts prehistoric tropical forests that are home to many endemic species of flora and fauna.

With its favourable, warm climate, consistent temperature and day length throughout the year, as well as numerous small and cosy beaches that rank among the world's most beautiful, Seychelles is the top choice for a memorable holiday with your loved ones, regardless of the time of the year.

HAPPY ISLANDS

The archipelago's nature reserves are its most precious treasure, and the locals are well aware of how to protect this unique gem. Even birds have their own one square kilometre Bird Island here, where they flock from May to October to build their nests. You can explore this remarkable spot, reaching its beaches by boat. As opposed to many tropical islands that are usually quite flat, Seychelles features several considerably high hills. The archipelago's highest peak is the 905-metre Morne Seychellois. Located on Mahé, the mountain is always slightly shrouded in mist, making the climb on tourist routes hardly tiring.

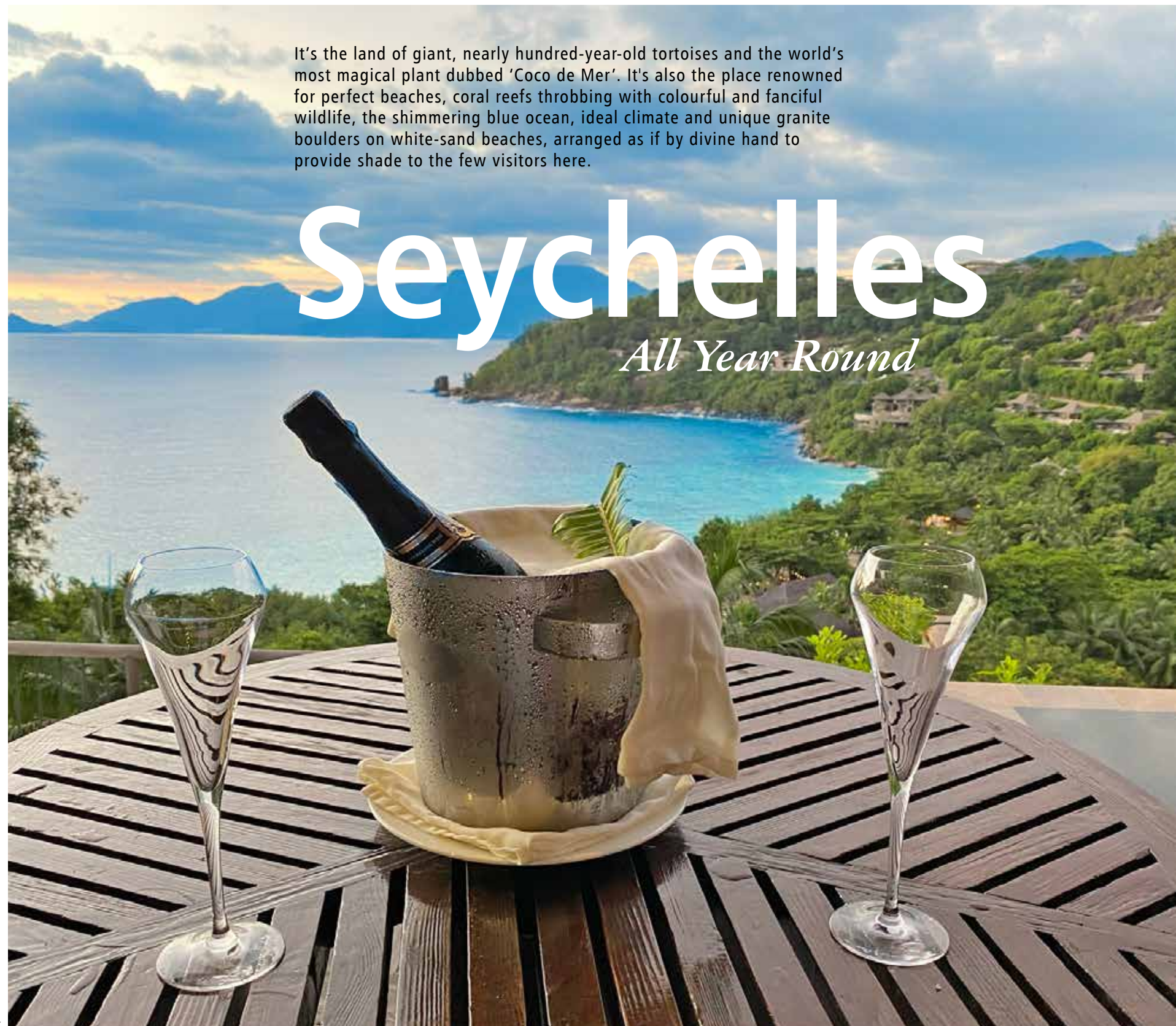
There are fish and plant species that can only be found here, including the country's national symbol Coco de Mer (fruit of the *Lodoicea maldivica* palm tree) that grows in the natural reserve on Praslin Island and on the nearby Curieuse. This endemic coconut palm tree producing large fruit of up to 30kg in weight and 40-50cm in diameter, is resembles a woman's womb on one side and buttocks on the other. It's also the largest seed and the heaviest fruit in the botanic world. Female fruiting bodies bearing these largest fruits and male fruiting bodies with their phallic-shaped catkins live on separate trees, next to each other. Not surprisingly, over the centuries those unusual trees have been the subject of numerous legends.

Back in 1992, on my first trip to Seychelles, I bought such a fruit and still have it, placed in a prominent spot at home. At that time, the giant nut could only be shipped out of the country, if it had a special passport (permit) it received when it was purchased from a

It's the land of giant, nearly hundred-year-old tortoises and the world's most magical plant dubbed 'Coco de Mer'. It's also the place renowned for perfect beaches, coral reefs throbbing with colourful and fanciful wildlife, the shimmering blue ocean, ideal climate and unique granite boulders on white-sand beaches, arranged as if by divine hand to provide shade to the few visitors here.

Seychelles

All Year Round



DESTINATIONS

government-supervised shop. Today this is no longer the case, but Coco de Mer remains the magical symbol of Seychelles and is often used as a decorative element at local hotels.

You could write endless articles extolling the beauty and magic of these islands, but the best idea is just go there and see for yourself.

Seychelles hotels are among the most expensive in the world, especially those located on scarcely inhabited North Island and Fregate Island, where prices soar to US\$5,000 per night. There are also several established luxury chains there, such as Raffles, Kempinski and Hilton, as well as two resorts owned by the top-rated Four Seasons brand - each one offering an utterly different type of experience. It's therefore a good idea to divide your stay between both those dashing properties.

Four Seasons is known for offering exceptional value for money. Both are the perfect choice for a romantic getaway, as well as a family holiday. Be ready, however, to shell out up to 1500 EUR per night in a villa.

If you are planning to travel from Poland, the most convenient option is to fly with Emirates or Qatar, which involves a night layover. You reach your destination early in the morning. For this reason, it's sensible to spend the first few nights on Mahé Island or somewhere where transfer times are relatively short.

FOUR SEASONS MAHÉ

Four Seasons Hotels and Resorts has a number of properties worldwide, including the two in Seychelles. One of them is located on the island of Mahé, about 45 minutes from the airport, while the other one lies on Desroches - an idyllic private island, a 45-minute flight from Mahé. The resorts are as different from each other, as the proverbial chalk and cheese.

The Mahé property is one of the most beautifully located in the whole archipelago. A large forested hillside, which is a characteristic feature of the region's landscape, is home here to 67 villas, which both from a distance and up close look as if they were glued to the steep slopes of the hill. In fact, the houses were built on soaring metal stilts, and among them clever engineers designed winding paths for buggies. Resembling the vehicles used on golf courses, the buggies transport guests around all the attractions of the resort. Simply make a call and a dri-

PICTURED:
Four Seasons
Mahé



ver will pull up in front of your villa in a jiffy, taking you on a ride. It's definitely one of the highlights of the stay, as you ride along a steep maze of paths and sharp bends, admiring fantastic views across the valley on your way. I must admit that I couldn't help but keep ordering those buggy rides again and again: either to a restaurant, to the beach or to the spa. Luckily, guests aren't allowed to drive the vehicles by themselves. It's the sole privilege of the resort staff - young, witty people, who are well aware of the fact that traffic

rules don't apply here. They drove me along those steep paths at fairly high speeds, knowing perfectly where they needed to slow down to check, if there are no other buggies coming from the other direction. The trip itself was a bit like a rollercoaster ride at an amusement park with an additional perk of having your own chauffeur and unique vistas around. It was a truly fantastic experience, though the resort provides plenty of other attractions, such as the wonderful spa located at the very top of the mountain with a wonderful ter-

race and a wide range of treatments. You can also have a treatment in your own villa, including bath rituals prepared by your butler.

All villas are spacious, luxuriously furnished and provide maximum privacy. Each comes with its own large swimming pool, a glass-walled bathroom with a huge bathtub overlooking the valley, a large living room, a bedroom, a dressing room and a vast terrace with a table, where you can enjoy your meals. There is also a dedicated spot for relaxation under the canopy and sun



PICTURED:
Four Seasons
at Desroches
Island

beds, as well as two showers - one in the bathroom and the other out of doors. All villas sport a view of a picture-perfect beach with a large swimming pools and a smaller one for kids.

Another highlight of the resort is its rich culinary offer. This includes a wonderful buffet breakfast served in several rooms. For instance, there is a room with fruit-only options, where, in addition to sliced exotic fruit, you can order a cocktail of your choice or freshly squeezed juice. I especially loved the extremely scarce eggfruit (aka canistel), and the healthy soursop (graviola). The former tastes like a juicy boiled egg yolk, while the latter looks like a hefty piece of cod loin tastes slightly tart and sweet. I miss the flavour of those fruits, as unfortunately you won't find them

in Poland. I've also looked for them in the UK and Austria, but to no avail. Oh well, it's just another reason to return to Seychelles... There is also a separate, air-conditioned room with cold cuts, cheese selection, salads, baked goods and pastries. Since you can order any egg dish, each morning I went for my favourite Eggs Benedict served with prosciutto and topped generously with creamy hollandaise sauce.

Lunches and dinners feature a selection of light salads, local fish and meats from around the world. Surprisingly, the choice included Polish beef, which, in fact, was one of the most delicious dishes.

The wine list is quite extensive. Bear in mind, however, that prices of wine in countries such as Seychelles start at aro-

und US\$100 a bottle, as you need to add 15 per cent tax and another 15 per cent for the service.

FOUR SEASONS AT DESROCHES ISLAND

The 5-kilometre long Desroches Island boasts 14 kilometres of sandy beaches and can be reached by a small aircraft departing from Mahé. The flight, depending on the type of the plane, takes between 30 and 50 minutes. The runway on Desroches was brilliantly designed, as it cuts across the island from one beach to another and is almost as long as the one used by large airlines on Mahé. The island is a perfect spot for guests looking for tranquil rest and privacy. No wonder it sports only one large resort - the Four Seasons, which

consists of luxury villas situated by the beach with access to the ocean and a private pool, as well as huge ultra-luxurious residences with a large pool and their own garden. Each villa comprises a spacious room with a seating area, access to the terrace and a private garden. The bathroom is of impressive size - probably larger than the bedroom and the living room altogether. Sporting an elegantly decorated air-conditioned section, it features a large bathtub in the middle, a shower, two comfortable washbasins and a separate toilet. The outdoor section has a shower and a patio fenced with high hedges.

The residences are real mansions located on extensive grounds of the island. The main building features a spacious, stylishly furnished living room that can be reached via wooden walkways connecting the other two wings. It's an ideal place for large families, groups of friends or those coming to Seychelles with their own household staff. Each residence comes with a large private pool.

In the middle of the island, there are houses of the local community working for the resort or the government and engaged in nature conservation. There is also a research station and a camp where scientists stay. The island can be explored with a buggy driver. They are on call at any time to take you to one of the island's numerous secluded beaches, to a restaurant or the reserve of giant tortoises. Each villa also comes with complimentary bikes that you can freely use. The most fun I had was riding my bike along the runway, which you have to cut through on your way to the restaurant. No worries - a collision with a plane is quite unlikely, as they only land here twice a week with guests and once a day with cargo. But just to be on the safe side, 20 minutes before each landing the paths leading to the runway are closed, and then the only way to get to the other side of the island is via the beach. The island offers a vast array of water sports, including snorkelling and scuba diving on one of the 15 reefs around the island. You can also try your hand at fishing, catch your own dinner and then hand it over to the hotel chef to cook it for you. There are also kayaks, surfboards and a tennis court available to guests of the resort. For young holidaymakers there is a separate play area, sports activities and more than 70 different attractions related to the amazing nature that surrounds you. You can also



16



PICTURED:
Four Seasons
at Desroches
Island



go for a swim in the large beachfront pool with wonderful vistas. Interestingly, during my week-long stay, I didn't meet a single guest there, although the villas were fully occupied. I suspect other guests didn't share my love for swimming before sunset, as they found that time was more suitable for enjoying champagne in one of the beautifully located bars. The most scenic one is situated on the terrace of the Light House restaurant, part of an old lighthouse with stunning views across the island. At the spa, I met a friendly therapist from Bali. Since I'm not a stranger to her native island, I asked about her experience of working abroad. She told me that the Four Seasons Spa is a well-recognized brand and the quality of treatments differs from traditional Balinese massages. You should definitely give this place a try.

I will remember Four Seasons at Desroches not only because of the perfect quality of my stay. Although I've been visiting the world's exotic spots for almost 40 years, this was the first place where I had an opportunity to taste the germinated coconut. On one of the buggy rides, I told my driver that I loved the fermented coconut yoghurt served at the hotel, and he asked me if I'd ever tasted the coconut sprout. I had never even heard of it and he told me that you can easily find it almost anywhere around the island. In the evening, when I returned to my villa after dinner, I found there cleaned, peeled pulp of the fruit, ready to be eaten. It tasted completely different from ripe or dried coconut as you know it. Coconut palm and its fruit can be used to make numerous products, but this one was remarkable, highly perishable and therefore so special.

ATTENTION TO EVERY DETAIL

The two Four Seasons resorts in Seychelles may be completely different, but they both share an extraordinary level of attention to guests' needs, as well as to every detail. All this to ensure that everyone leaves the resort feeling satisfied. These qualities are embodied by the current general manager of Four Seasons Resort Seychelles at Desroches Island. Working for many years for this unique brand, he knows the needs of guests like no one else. He personally welcomes all arriving guests and when they leave, he tells them goodbye already as their good friend. Caring for the satisfaction and well-being of guests is a difficult and exhausting task, which means it must be part of a person's

PICTURED:
Four Seasons
at Desroches Island



character, but Four Seasons knows how to look after those who are the pillars of the company. The same is true of the Four Seasons Resort in Mahé. When the chef of its restaurant asked if we had enjoyed our dinner on the beach, I objectively commented that we had waited too long for our favourite wine they had to bring from the main restaurant, and that we had been served cool sauces for the meat. This was not a criticism or a complaint, just a mere remark about a small shortcoming. To my surprise, the following day, there was a bottle of champagne and delicious canapes waiting for me at the villa, along with a lovely handwritten note. That's when I thought I too would write both a note praising the care given to the guest and an article about this attentive care, which is so characteristic of this brand. There was a book about the brand's founder on my desk, so while on holiday, I found time to read it. It was a truly fascinating story of a little schoolboy who'd often let his mind wander off to dream of luxury and a beautiful world, which was at odds with the way his parents - poor Polish Jews - lived. The dramatic experiences of war, poverty and hard work, shaped in him respect for work and money, while his love for sport showed him that success can be achieved with discipline and perseverance. Isadore Sharp created and ran Four Seasons - the world's largest and most prestigious group of five-star properties, whose strength is based on four pillars: quality, service, culture and brand. ■

17

STAY SAFE

From cleaning protocols to touchless technology, hotels are rethinking every aspect of their operations to protect their guests and staff

As we all know, the Covid-19 pandemic has wreaked huge damage on the hospitality industry. To keep afloat, hotels have had to adapt quickly to new regulations, redesigning spaces and enhancing cleaning to keep customers and staff safe.

Guests, too, have changed their behaviour. Whereas once they may not have thought much about the work that goes on behind the scenes, now travellers prioritise hygiene when booking. According to a survey carried out in the UK and US by Honeywell in December, 48 per cent of respondents said that enhanced cleanliness or health and safety procedures would motivate them the most to stay in a hotel, while 57 per cent of those in the US cited cleanliness as the top deciding factor in choosing a property. Here we explore the new safety measures that have fundamentally changed the guest experience.

KEEP IT CLEAN

All of the major hotel chains have developed robust new cleaning protocols, reviewing each department and providing staff with comprehensive safety and hygiene training. In April last year, Marriott International unveiled its Global Clean-

liness Council, a body comprising specialists in hospitality, epidemiology, sanitation and protective health and hygiene technology. Hilton partnered with the manufacturers of Lysol and Dettol to launch its Clean Stay platform in June 2020, with Alex Humphrey, Hilton's senior director for safety and security in Europe, the Middle East and Africa, using his experience as a medical microbiologist to steer the group in the right direction. "The key thing is it's not just a marketing ploy," he says. "We approached this with a scientific microbiological mindset. We weren't like a rabbit [caught] in the headlights."

Such programmes tend to undergo external certification and auditing. Accor's Allsafe scheme, for example, is endorsed by testing and inspection specialist Bureau Veritas, while last autumn its protocols in the UK and Ireland secured government backing. Radisson Hotel Group has signed a global agreement with inspection company SGS to create a 20-step cleaning and safety regime.

At a local level, some groups have appointed "Covid officers" responsible for making sure that individual properties adhere to guidelines. At IHG Hotels and Resorts, "clean champions" instil a "culture of clean" across its portfolio, while Hyatt ensures that every hotel globally has a trained

hygiene and wellbeing leader. Health and security companies such as International SOS have provided support to the likes of Four Seasons and Oakwood. Medical directors test out the user experience and compile reports with recommendations for properties.

What do these programmes entail? Each varies slightly and is tweaked to meet regulations in different parts of the world but, by and large, the hotel groups have a similar approach to hygiene. First and foremost, traditional cleaning measures have been stepped up. In public areas, high-contact surfaces such as reception counters, lift buttons, door handles, bathrooms, handrails and gym equipment are cleaned more frequently with hospital-grade disinfectant products, and sanitising stations have been set up.

In guestrooms, high-touch areas such as door handles, taps and light switches receive special attention. Groups such as Accor promise deep cleaning of upholstery and carpets and high-temperature washing of bedding. Many chains also pro-

MAIN PICTURE: Accor's Allsafe programme has changed the check-in experience

BELOW: Hilton's room seals reassure guests



POD SPODEM:
Grupa Accor
nawiązała
współpracę m.in.
z firmą AXA przy
tworzeniu nowych
usług dla gości.

vide disinfecting wipes or hand sanitisers in each room.

While much of this work remains invisible, Hilton reassures guests by attaching a Clean Stay seal label to guestroom doors to show that no one has entered since housekeeping. "That helped to reduce anxiety and give great customer confidence," says Humphrey, who previously worked in the NHS as an infection control adviser.

Housekeeping itself has changed, with some guests wanting a full service and others preferring that no one enters during their stay. Rooms are thoroughly disinfected pre-arrival but it is then up to guests to choose the frequency of service. In times of low occupancy, Accor will keep rooms vacant for 72 hours to further reduce transmission risk.

According to Honeywell, 93 per cent of respondents who had stayed in a hotel since March of last year reported a positive experience regarding safety and cleanliness. Humphrey reports that Hilton's measures have "gone down an absolute storm" with customers, while Richard Short, Accor's health, safety and environment director for Northern Europe, encourages guests to shape the future of the hotel experience by providing constructive feedback. "We invite guests to join us on this journey because we all have the same motives. We don't want this virus to spread uncontrollably," he says.

Some hotel groups have gone even further, deploying advanced technologies such as electrostatic spraying. Marriott deployed this in public areas in properties across all of its brands. It works by applying an electric charge

to hospital-grade disinfectant, enabling it to cover a surface more effectively than conventional methods. The rollout was not a simple endeavour – research was undertaken to discover how often it could be used and the consequences of inhaling the fumes. "Like anything that's new, you want to make sure it's safe and that you're not inadvertently causing harm", Arielle Quick, Marriott's chief continent lodging services officer for Europe, the Middle East and Africa, says. IHG has introduced the technology in select hotels.

THE HUMAN ELEMENT

Still, while such methods play their part in stopping the virus in its tracks, it is human behaviour that is most important. The World Health Organisation warns that person-to-person contact is the main way to spread Covid-19, meaning technology is rendered obsolete if basic elements such as hand hygiene, face coverings and social distancing are not observed. As Dr Rodrigo Rodriguez-Fernandez, global medical director of non-communicable disease and workplace wellness for International SOS, puts it: "I can have the best and most expensive air purifier system... but if people are not following the rules then it doesn't really matter." Short agrees that "it's important to use the tried and tested" methods.

Properties have therefore reconfigured public areas to allow for social distancing as well as introducing signage and making mask-wearing in public areas mandatory. Front desks may have Perspex partition screens and one-way systems are often in place, with separate entrances and exits. Gyms and spas may be closed or limited in terms of

'You can have the best air purifier system but if people are not following the rules then it doesn't really matter'



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BELOW: An Ibis property in India prepares a room for the next guest

guest numbers. Some hotels are also using thermal screening and temperature guns.

So what happens in the case of a suspected or confirmed case of Covid-19 on-site? First, the hotel will make sure the individual is safe and quarantined. It will then notify local authorities (in the case of NHS Test and Trace, the guest or staff member can do this themselves) and follow the recommended next steps. Following the guest's departure, the room will be isolated for 72 hours and then deep cleaned.

TOUCH-FREE TECH

The pandemic has accelerated the adoption of contactless technology enabling travellers to control their stay from mobile devices. Apps are increasingly being introduced for guests to check in and out remotely, order room service and amenities, speak with staff using instant messaging and make special requests.

For a few years now, Hilton, Marriott and Hyatt have offered secure digital keys to loyalty scheme members, allowing them to bypass the front desk and unlock their doors using their phones. The global rollout of this technology has been accelerated by the pandemic. As of April 2021, Hilton guests had used the digital key to open 105 million doors world-

wide, with 80 per cent of the group's hotels now using the technology. More than 500 Hyatt properties had the digital key by the end of last year, while 4,500 Marriott International hotels have it.

Accor followed suit in January this year, partnering with mobile key provider Stay My Way to launch the technology at select European, Middle Eastern and North American hotels – Ibis Styles London Gloucester Road was the first in the UK to get it. Accor says 20,000 doors will be equipped with it by the end of the year and that it will be rolled out to at least 50 per cent of the portfolio in the next five years.

Low-touch travel is here to stay – still, hotel groups are adamant that this will not be at the expense of hospitality. Humphrey cites how Hilton team members across the group have adapted their service during the pandemic, adopting different gestures to communicate – one example is staff placing hands on their heart and using expressive eyes when interacting with guests. "I've been bowled over by how our teams have adapted to these new gestures of hospitality," he says – a sentiment I can agree with, having experienced a warm welcome when I stayed at the Hart Shoreditch Hotel London, Curio Collection by Hilton (see [business traveller.com/tried-and-tested](#)).



FROM LEFT: Public areas get special attention in Hilton's Clean Stay regime; Hyatt keyless room entry

FOOD AND DRINK

Whether you're staying at a budget hotel or a luxury resort, you will notice how food and drink services have been affected. Restaurants may have been shut, turned into takeaway outlets or had their menus streamlined to simplify operations. In October, Accor teamed up with London-based software company Bizzon to allow guests to pay online for food from a digital menu or charge items to their room. Active at 91 properties, the plan is to roll it out to 150 hotels across Northern Europe, 72 of them in the UK.

Where restaurants remain open, they have been rearranged to create more space between tables and have introduced disposable, laminated or digital menus. Buffet-style service has survived in some hotels after being adapted for the new era, with cooked food served by staff and guests able to pick up pre-packaged items. Marriott's Quick says: "People love the hotel buffet. As operators and hoteliers, we want to keep our guests safe but also want to provide an experience that feels luxurious or special." Restaurants may even separate teams who touch equipment before or after it has been in contact with customers, as Hyatt does.

WHAT THE FUTURE HOLDS

Following more than a year of – yes, that word – unprecedented scenarios, it may be futile to try to forecast the future. Still, thanks to the rollout of vaccines there is hopefully an end in sight. If there is any silver lining to come out of all of this, it is that "every company has become a healthcare company", Rodriguez-Fernandez says. "Never before have we seen conversations about health in a non-health sector

company. Our hope is that this will remain." Accor has worked with AXA to provide guests with free 24-hour access to telemedicine consultations across its global portfolio of more than 5,000 hotels, a partnership that will continue beyond the pandemic.

There are undoubtedly difficult times ahead. PwC's UK Hotels Forecast 2020-21 predicts that it could take four years for occupancy to return to pre-Covid levels. It forecasts occupancy rates this year of 52.4 per cent for London and 59.2 per cent for the regions, compared with 83.4 per cent and 75.4 per cent respectively in 2019.

"Hospitality is resilient and has proven to be so time and again," says Srdjan Milekovic, Hyatt's senior vice-president of operations for EMEA. "While the industry is in a tough position now, we know it will recover." The group recently announced plans to grow its footprint in Europe by more than 30 per cent. "We know there is pent-up demand for travel and once our guests are ready, we will be ready," he says.

At the same time, the pandemic has generated an increase in remote working lifestyles. "One cool trend that has come out of the pandemic is that hotels need to cater for people who are no longer trapped in an office environment", says Tom Flanagan Karttunen, Radisson Hotel Group's area senior vice-president for Northern and Western Europe, who typically travels for 50 per cent of the year. That's true both for individual guests seeking an alternative space in which to work and for virtual participants in corporate gatherings. See the following pages for how hotels are adapting their meeting and event offerings for the new era. ■

If there is any silver lining to come out of this it is that every company has become a healthcare company



VIBHOR YADAV



HOTELS

Suez - 95 sqm) located on the first floor and sporting spectacular, large windows. The layout of the walls between the rooms can be freely arranged. It's also possible to create one large 250 sqm space for larger events. It can accommodate 190 people for a conference and 100 people for a banquet. In addition, there is a 120-square-metre foyer with sofas in front of the entrance to the conference space.

ABOUT ARCHE GROUP

Established in 1991, ARCHE GROUP is a real estate development company with numerous investments all over Poland. In total, Arche has built 9,000 houses and flats in Warsaw, Żąbki, Piaseczno and Łódź. In addition the group has been the moving force behind 15 hotels, often located in historic buildings. Those include former Żnin Sugar Factory, Łochów Palace and Farm complex, Janów Podlaski Castle, Góra Kalwaria Barracks, Tobacco Hotel in Łódź, and the Uphagen's House in Gdańsk. Currently, Arche is constructing another 10 conference and leisure facilities, one of which is the Monastery (Klasztor) in Wrocław. Built at the beginning of the 20th century, the building of the future hotel on Kasprowicza Street in Wrocław consists of a former children's hospital and the Franciscan Sister's Convent. The site of the former hospital will soon be home to a 90-room property with a restaurant, café, conference room, sauna and mini spa. The building will also include massage rooms and a gym. Several Arche hotels have already opened branches of Lena Grochowska Foundation, where people with intellectual disabilities run workshops in handicrafts, ceramics, painting or confectionery. It's a great addition to both private and business meetings. Interestingly, some rooms in this and other hotels from Arche's collection can be purchased for private ownership. In this scheme, the room owner receives a monthly income derived from the entire working area of the hotel, i.e. meeting rooms, restaurant, spa - as opposed to revenue

The site of the former hospital will soon be home to a 90-room hotel.



ARCHE WROCŁAW HOTEL

Launched in 2021, Arche Wrocław Hotel is the perfect place for those travelling by air. The property is located right next to Copernicus Airport Wrocław and its building is perfectly suited for conferences and other corporate events. ARCHE S.A. is also developing a second hotel in Wrocław at 64-66 Kasprowicza Street, in a former hospital building, with a beautiful chapel and the Franciscan Sisters' Convent still active in one of the wings.

WHAT'S IT LIKE?

The hotel exudes a contemporary and fresh feel. Completed in July this year, it's perfect for spending the night during an extended stopover at the airport, or simply if you want to visit Wrocław, which since 2016 boasts the title of a European Culture Capital. The 3-star property's offer also includes a well-equipped gym and sauna. Entering the building from Graniczna Street, you will see an elegant restaurant and bar ahead, as well as the spacious lobby with comfortable armchairs and sofas. A unique element of the décor here is an old antique tiled stove.

ring the building from Graniczna Street, you will see an elegant restaurant and bar ahead, as well as the spacious lobby with comfortable armchairs and sofas. A unique element of the décor here is an old antique tiled stove.

WHERE IS IT?

The property is located about 400 metres from the airport terminal and 4 minutes by car from the Wrocław ring road. Wrocław's Old Town from here is a little more remote at 12 km away. An additional attraction nearby is the castle in Leśnica. Preserved during WWII, the castle is less than 6 km away from the airport.

ROOMS

The hotel offers 115 rooms, including 69 standard single rooms with 15 sqm of floor space. There are also 40 standard double rooms, 5 studio rooms and one suite. Studio rooms come with a

bathub, a bedroom with a large bed and a lounge with a sofa and desk. Their 38sqm space is the perfect place for both work and relaxation. The spacious, 57 sqm suite comprises a lounge, bedroom and kitchen, as well as two bathrooms. It's located on the top floor, which offers a view of the airport and the picturesque Ślęza Mountain.

RESTAURANTS

The hotel has one restaurant located on the ground floor. It shares space with the reception and the main entrance to the hotel, serving sumptuous buffet breakfasts. As for dinner, the restaurant boasts custom dishes, including pickled bone-in pork loin. The hotel's bar, which offers a range of popular spirits, is also an extension of the reception desk.

BUSINESS FACILITIES

The property has 3 meeting rooms (Bosfor - 88 sqm, Ormuz - 74 sqm, and

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PRESS MATERIALS

ABOVE: Interior rendering of the new ARCHE hotel under construction in Wrocław and the building of the Franciscan Sisters' Convent
ON THE NEXT PAGE: Arche Wrocław Hotel

VERDICT

The hotel is well adapted to pandemic conditions, there are hand disinfection stations in public areas and staff always use protective masks. Arche Wrocław Hotel is the perfect place to unwind while travelling. The building is also well fit for corporate events and conferences. ■

Arche Cukrownia Żnin

Cukrownia Żnin is yet another spectacular hotel property developed by Arche Group. Unveiled in June 2020, the complex is located in the former building of a 19th century sugar factory, with its entire space converted to meet the needs of guests. The old brick warehouses, molasses tanks and other buildings where sugar was once processed, have been turned into restaurants, bars, rooms and even a cinema. To pass between Fabryka 1 (Factory 1) and Fabryka 2 (Factory 2) buildings, guests can use the tunnel, once used to transport beetroot.

WHAT'S IT LIKE?

The interior of the hotel still resembles a factory, as the architects decided to preserve as many original elements of the building and equipment as possible. In the corridors, you will come

across old lathes, mortising machines and grinders, as well as iron beams and pipes sticking out of the walls. Obviously, all of this meets health and safety standards and is properly preserved. Interestingly, sugar production ceased here only 15 years ago. In the middle of the complex, between the main buildings, an original "ghost" structure has been retained where light shows take place at night.

WHERE IS IT?

Cukrownia is located by Żnińskie lake, just 15 minutes' walk from the old town square. The town of Żnin sits 44 kilometres from Gniezno and exactly the same distance from Bydgoszcz. The nearest international airport is in Poznań, an hour's drive away. It takes less than 3 hours to get here from Warsaw, while the historic Biskupin can be reached from here by a historic narrow-gauge railway.

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ROOMS

With 310 comfortable rooms, the whole property offers a total of 650 beds. The rooms, ranging from 15 to 50 sqm, are divided into 6 categories. All feature décor inspired by the atmosphere of an old factory. Suites (there are two types of them) have a mezzanine, which usually is used as a bedroom. Containers that are located on the beach have also been converted into rooms, one of which is part of the above mentioned "ghost" structure. One of the rooms, the so-called Apartament Optymisty (Optimist's Suite) is located in a post-industrial building at the edge of the complex, and at the other end, in a similar building, there is a beautiful café.

RESTAURANTS

The complex features 3 restaurants: Turbinownia with a la carte menu, the main restaurant Melasa where break-

fast is served, as well as the seasonal restaurant that is set up for special events. There are also 3 bars and a local brewery producing 3 types of beer on site. The first, oval bar is cosy and sits next to the reception area. The second one, located in a separate building, is connected to the bowling alley. In the evenings you can enjoy there music, bowling or a game of billiards. The third bar, called Pluczka, is a converted container situated on the beach.

SPA AND RELAXATION

The hotel has a gym, a water park, a children's playroom and a spa. The water park includes, among others, three professional 25-metre swimming lanes, water jets, sun beds, hydro-massages, fountains, a whirlpool and a 60-metre slide with light effects. The Fabryka 2 building also houses Dr Irena Eris SPA. There are occasional yoga classes held at the lake. In the main building, right by the chimney, there is a long slide which is an interesting attraction not only for children.

BUSINESS FACILITIES

Comprising three sections, the 1360 sqm Magazyn Cukru (Sugar Warehouse) room can accommodate up to 1200 delegates. Overall, the property sports 11 spacious meeting rooms, as well as Burakino theatre hall, which is a

perfect venue for various presentations. Some of the rooms in the complex are also offered via an investment scheme. If you purchase one of the rooms, you can then profit from all the areas working in the hotel, i.e. restaurants, bars, meeting rooms. The annual rate of return for the investor is no less than 5 per cent per annum on the net purchase price. Plus unlimited owner stays.

VERDICT

Cukrownia Żnin is an excellent choice for both conference trips and holidays with the family. The hotel offers a wide variety of attractions: from beach activities to a water park and a bar with a bowling alley. You can also book a guided tour with a former worker of the sugar factory as your guide. During the tour, you can climb up the chimney, learn about sugar making, and listen to interesting stories related to the absurdities of communist Poland. For locals, the hotel is, in fact, a real "town within a town". The complex also hosts concerts, bonfire parties and professional barbecues. ■





The Katowice property draws on its Silesian heritage, combining it with contemporary hospitality concepts.

Mercure Katowice Centrum a landmark of the vibrant city

Located in the very heart of Silesia's capital, at Młyńska Street, Mercure Katowice Centrum is a unique property that has become an integral part of Katowice's cityscape. All this is due to the city's largest plant wall on the facade of the building, impeccable design, modern décor and a whole array of solutions tailored to the requirements of the new reality. Owned by Accor, the world's leading hotel group, Mercure Katowice Centrum was launched in early September, offering both leisure and business travellers a modern and committed approach to hospitality. The investor of the new building is a renowned Austrian developer UBM Development.

MODERN HERITAGE

Each Mercure hotel is characterized not only by a unique style, but also by an atmosphere inspired by the local surroundings and culture. The Katowice property draws on its Silesian heritage, combining it with contemporary hospitality concepts. As a result, the building is well-positioned to become not only a tourist attraction, but also a business landmark of the dynamically developing city. Katowice is a city with a rich history of the mining and steel industry, which today is consciously undergoing a green transformation and is becoming a more and more environmentally friendly place. With its environmentally friendly solutions, the Mercure Katowice Centrum hotel is perfectly in line with this trend.

"GREEN AND CLEAN" HOTEL

Mercure Katowice Centrum offers its guests 268 modern, comfortable rooms located on 8 floors. The facility was designed according to Greenan Clean philosophy and its façade is covered with the highest and biggest green wall in Katowice made from natural plants. Undoubtedly, the wall is a real symbol of the new, green face of the city. It's also an example of a socially responsible approach, which is becoming increasingly popular in the new business reality around the world.



"The focus on eco-friendly solutions and a green philosophy when choosing the hotel's leitmotif, was far from accidental," points out Andrzej Kleeberg, the hotel's General Manager. "Being part of the world's leading hotel group and a major player in the business arena, we believe that business plays a significant role in shaping the future. Recent years have shown that modern solutions, developed with the environment, social responsibility and sustainability in mind, are extremely important. This is why, as Mercure Katowice Centrum, we want to

Mercure Katowice Centrum offers both leisure and business travellers a modern and committed approach to hospitality.

set a good example not only for Katowice and the rest of the country, but also for other businesspeople, choosing responsible solutions that address socially relevant issues.

Among the environmentally friendly technologies, in addition to the use of eco-friendly materials and renewable energy sources, the hotel also boasts an advanced rainwater harvesting and power consumption monitoring system for sustainable use. Additionally, the property collaborates with local suppliers and manufacturers, which plays an important role in supporting the business," adds Kleeberg.

CONVENIENTLY LOCATED FOR BUSINESS

Mercure Katowice Centrum is conveniently located next to the train and bus stations with direct connections to the airport. Its close proximity to Galeria Katowicka, the Market Square, as well as the NOSPR music hall and the Silesian Museum, makes it the best starting point to explore Katowice as a tourist. The International Congress Centre, the "Spodek" Event Hall and the KTW Business Centre are all within 1 km, which makes the hotel an ideal place for business guests.

They can enjoy a conference space of almost 100 sqm, accommodating up to 80 participants, and divided into two separate rooms. Naturally, it's possible to combine them into one large hall to provide a convenient environment for business meetings or special events. The business space has also been designed to guarantee a pleasant atmosphere created by natural materials and colours inspired by nature and at the same time helping guests to concentrate. On top of that, guests seeking quiet environment to work, can make use of the hotel's dedicated cosy spaces. There is also an underground car park offering 70 parking spaces.

FOR EVERYONE

The hotel's Winestone restaurant boasts a wide selection of spirits and an extraordinary taste of dishes served on stone boards. The menu consists of local products and a wide selection of wines, including organic ones and those sourced from Polish wineries. The cosy and pleasant atmosphere of the place is perfect for a relaxing moment with friends, a lovely evening for two or as a place for a casual yet rewarding business meeting.

Each of the 268 rooms, as well as the public spaces of the property, have been designed to guarantee a peaceful and harmonious rest amidst natural colours and materials, inspired by nature. There is also a massage and relaxation area and a gym located on the 9th floor, offering an amazing view of the Katowice skyline.

DISCOVER LOCAL WITH MERCURE

Mercure brand is a guarantee of new, unique and unforgettable hotel experiences. Each Mercure hotel is characterized not only by a unique style, but also by an atmosphere inspired by the local surroundings and culture. All this makes every visit to Mercure hotels extraordinary and full of unique experiences. Regional accents, local cuisine and tradition build the awareness of guests about the place they visit. Thanks to this, each of them can fully discover and experience the unique character of the brand. ■

Radisson Collection Hotel Warsaw

MARZENA MRÓZ talks to MARCO EICHHORN, General Manager of the Radisson Collection Hotel, Warsaw

Changes during the pandemic reshaped us and pushed us technologically several years ahead. I have been associated with Radisson Hotel Group since 1997, but the last two years have been the most difficult period in my career. During this period a lot of changes took place in my professional - says Marco Eichhorn, General Manager of Radisson Collection Hotel, Warsaw.

What changes do you mean? Are they related to the pandemic?

Yes and no. Exactly two years ago, in June 2019, ended one of the biggest changes in my career. More precisely, the rebranding of the hotel, for which I was responsible as the General Director to the newly created exceptional Radisson Collection Hotel, Warsaw. The renovation consisted of a complete renovation of the interior, the main lobby, restaurants, rooms and in recent months we have completed works in conference spaces and a Fitness & SPA center with an indoor swimming pool. After the renovation, a challenging time for the entire team, a pandemic ensued, significantly changing the existing hotel industry.

After the renovation, a challenging time for the entire team, a pandemic ensued, significantly changing the existing hotel industry.



PRESS MATERIALS

Are you talking about remote work and online meetings?

Certainly these two aspects were part of these changes. Our team worked remotely or hybrid, and the conferences we organized were mostly online. As a result, we have introduced a number of innovations aimed at increasing the safety of all our guests and team members. On the one hand, the pandemic had a negative impact on the entire hotel industry, and on the other hand, it accelerated some processes and introduced interesting solutions, e.g. those that Radisson Hotel Group and the Radisson Collection Hotel, Warsaw can boast of.

Has there been a lot of talk about Hybrid Meetings and Events lately, has something similar been introduced?

True, our hybrid meetings and events are popular. They come in exactly included in the wide range of Radisson Meetings, which includes support in the efficient implementation of any event: from hybrid meetings in different locations at the same time, to the conference broadcast. Reliable equipment of the highest quality and cooperation with Zoom - a leader in the field of modern video communication, make us perfectly prepared to organize these unusual meetings.

Another solution that allows us to efficiently adapt to the new requirements is the Rapid Testing program, under which we offer quick antigen tests to all our guests and event organizers. In this way, we try to take the next step towards a safe return to travel and business. The new testing program in conjunction with the Radisson hotels security protocol ensures that all our guests and our team of employees can feel calm and safe.

But this is not the end of innovative solutions! The system for mobile check-in and check-out is currently undergoing the testing phase. This means that thanks to the mobile application, all our guests will be able to check in, open the door to the room and check out, all without contacting our reception.

Thank you for the interview. ■



IN PHOTOS:
the interiors of
Radisson Collection
Hotel Warsaw



Warsaw's Heart

The signature feature of InterContinental Warsaw is its indoor swimming pool with jacuzzi and wonderful views of the landmark Palace of Culture and Science next door. Another distinct feature of the property is its cut out shape designed to let light through to adjacent buildings. Its rooftop offers an amazing view of the capital's skyline, and interestingly enough, you can organise a customized dinner or photo shoot there. In other words, at InterContinental Warsaw you can enjoy a glass of champagne, while literally sitting on the "roof of Warsaw" 164 metres above the ground!

WHAT'S IT LIKE?

Built in 2003, the hotel is renowned for its striking architecture. Hardly anyone knows that the property boasts the highest swimming pool in Poland, which overlooks the top floors of the Palace of Culture and Science. With the last revamp completed in 2021, the interiors of InterContinental Warsaw can now compete with the offer of other, newly-built Warsaw high-rise hotels.

WHERE IS IT?

The property is conveniently located at Emilia Plater 49, just 500 metres from

the Central Railway Station and over a kilometre from the Saski Garden. You can get there from Chopin Airport in just 17 minutes. It's also just a 7-minute walk from Sienna 55, where you can see the original, preserved border wall of the Warsaw Ghetto.

ROOMS

The hotel has 414 freshly renovated rooms in several categories, including Standard, Business and Deluxe rooms, as well as Junior, Senior and Presidential suites. The rooms and suites were designed by Alan McVitty of the UK's M Studio London. His designs are highly valued worldwide, as they perfectly combine classic style with functionality. InterContinental Warsaw also offers 24 fully equipped long-stay apartments - a perfect choice for guests who opt to stay in the city for a longer time.

PRESIDENTIAL SUITE

Particularly noteworthy is the Presidential Suite, located on the 40th floor under the mysterious number 4008. Spread across 170 sqm, it sports a truly stunning view of the city. On a clear day, you can see the Poniatowski Bridge and the National Stadium from here. The interior is extremely stylish with new furniture, wallpaper, carpets and rugs in



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a deep sapphire colour. The chandelier in the Presidential Suite was custom-made entirely from Swarovski crystals. The suite has an additional room that is perfectly suited for small business meetings, and an adjoining fully equipped kitchen. Getting into bed in the bedroom of the Presidential Suite, you will never lose track of time. All you have to do is look through the window, to see the giant dial of the clock at the Palace of Culture and Science. Both bathrooms of the suite come with toiletries by L'Occitane. Over years the suite has accommodated many

PRESS MATERIALS

HOTELS

prominent guests, including Halle Berry, Madonna, Rihanna and Sting.

BARS AND RESTAURANTS

InterContinental Warsaw's culinary offer includes two restaurants, a bar and E.Wedel café. Platter by Karol Okrasa restaurant is a refreshing and healthy rendition of Polish cuisine by the prominent chef. In 2019, it once again earned recommendation from the experts of the Michelin Guide. Another great place to dine is DownTown restaurant. Headed by chef Mariusz Jeznach, it serves delicious fresh lobsters, oysters, fish, best quality meats, salads and many other delicacies of international cuisine. The restaurant overlooks the city centre. +One Bar, located on the first floor, is the ideal place for a business meeting or a solitary relaxation with a glass of your favourite wine. The bar also serves signature cocktails made by experienced bartenders.

SPA AND RELAXATION

Located on the 43rd and 44th floors of the building RiverView Wellness Centre comprises a fully equipped gym, aerobics room, sauna, jacuzzi and swimming pool. Pictured in several Polish films,

the jacuzzi and the pool tempt you with their amazing view of Warsaw's centre. Also located on the same level is the cosy Spa For You, offering a wide range of treatments and massages. It's the perfect spot to relax and wind down. Well-trained spa staff individually select treatments based on cosmetics from renowned companies such as



The signature feature of InterContinental Warsaw is its jacuzzi overlooking the Palace of Culture and Science.



Yonelle, M'onduniq, Thalgo or Lycon. Professionally performed, the treatments help improve the condition of the skin of the face and the whole body.

BUSINESS FACILITIES

The hotel has 14 state-of-the-art conference rooms with a total area of 1340 sqm. The most notable venues include the private meeting room in the Club Lounge on the 41st floor, the elegant Boardroom and the 438 sqm Opera ballroom. The hotel's conference facilities are an ideal fit for international congresses, exclusive board meetings and private celebrations. The hotel offers Meeting Concierge service with a dedicated staff member assisting guests attending conferences or business meetings. InterContinental Warsaw is also a popular venue for posh wedding receptions.

VERDICT

With its central location, InterContinental Warsaw is the ideal choice for business travellers, leisure tourists and those seeking ultimate relaxation in the urban environment. It's worth stopping by the swimming pool with jacuzzi on the 43rd floor, which is great place to unwind. The spa is open until 10 pm. The hotel is a frequent venue for professional wedding sessions held on the top floors. Admittedly, this is an excellent idea for documenting one of the most important events in one's life. ■

Westin's Six Pillars of Well-being

The Westin Warsaw - a unique Warsaw hotel - offers its guests stays based on the brand's six pillars of well-being. Those six concepts are: Feel Well - scenic views and nice and relaxed atmosphere in the hotel; Move Well - yoga sessions held on the roof also on special request, a spacious gym, jogging sessions with the hotel general manager, sponsoring sports events, as well as collaboration with sports brands; Eat Well - delicious steaks, menu featuring Asian cuisine and vegan food, products selected by chef Janusz Korzyński, and healthy smoothies served for breakfast; Work Well - luxury Club Lounge on the 19th floor with tasty food, good atmosphere for work and impressive vistas. Sleep well - this is achieved thanks to unique Heavenly Bed mattresses Westin is internationally renowned for. The sixth pillar - Play Well - is incorporated at The Westin Warsaw through various events that bring together different communities: families, Warsaw residents and businesses. The roof of this 20-storey hotel, which offers spectacular views of the Warsaw skyline, is a frequent venue for cocktail parties, photo shoots and yoga classes.

WHERE IS IT?

The building sits at the intersection of Grzybowska Street and Jana Pawła II Avenue, less than a kilometre from the Central Railway Station and 8 km from Okęcie Airport. Those interested in history can visit the nearby Warsaw Uprising Museum and the original walls of the Warsaw Ghetto at 55 Sienna Street and 62 Złota Street. The scenic Saski Garden and the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier are also within an easy reach.

ROOMS

The hotel has 366 rooms in 6 categories: 197 Classic rooms, 62 Superior rooms, 13 Premium rooms, 93 Executive rooms and the Presidential Suite. Each room tastefully combines modern solutions and unpretentious luxury. All guarantee a 5-star quality and a beautiful view of Warsaw centre from different perspectives. Undoubtedly, the hotel is a perfect accommodation both for business and leisure travellers.

PRESIDENTIAL SUITE

This unique 145 sqm space located on the 20th floor of the hotel, offers luxury solutions for the most discerning guests, as well as stunning night views of the Rondo ONZ and Cha-



łubińskiego Street. From the corridor you enter a beautifully furnished lounge with a large table where you can have dinner or hold a small business meeting. There is also an adjoining private, superbly equipped kitchen and a door to connect the lounge with an additional room. The bedroom is located in the corner section of the suite. It comes with a double bed, TV, work desk, armchair and chaise longue. There is an en-suite bathroom adjacent to the bedroom with

Offering spectacular views of the skyline, the roof of the 20-storey Westin Warsaw hotel is a frequent venue for cocktail parties, photo shoots and yoga classes.

a window above the bathtub to let you enjoy the view of the city from the 20th floor.

Both heads of state - the presidents of Canada, Greece and Turkey - and celebrities such as Sharon Stone, Pamela Anderson and Mike Tyson spent nights here.

Sometimes the Presidential Suite is available at a very attractive price, as part of Black Friday promotion. It's then offered in a package including an overnight stay for two guests, complimentary limousine service up to 10 km or free parking, early check in/late check out, a 30-minute massage session for two, as well as a 3-course dinner with a bottle of wine. All this for mere PLN 1299. So look out for the nearest deal!

RESTAURANTS

Located on the ground floor, Fusion restaurant can accommodate up to 138 people. With its own street entrance, it's also a great place for business meetings, while its open kitchen concept gives guests the opportunity to observe the whole cooking process in the making. Fusion is well-known for its delicious steaks, as well as vegan Asian dishes. All products are meticulously selected by chef Janusz Korzyński. On the ground floor of the building there is JP's bar, where in the evenings you can unwind with a glass of your favourite drink and enjoy some snacks. Located on the 19th floor, the Club Lounge is the perfect venue for a climatic dinner.

BUSINESS FACILITIES

The Westin has 11 conference rooms, the largest of which (studio) is 455 sqm and can accommodate up to 560 delegates. The studio is equipped with a large 10x3.5 metre LED screen, as well as advanced sound and lighting systems. It's the perfect venue for both virtual and hybrid meetings, interviews, conferences and presentations. The studio is provided with technical support. Other meeting rooms are Copernicus, Gemini, Orion and Vega. They range in size from 27 to 155 sqm and are equipped with all the necessary conference facilities. ■





Straight from nature

The local character, seasonality, simplicity, as well as the pleasure of eating - this is what defines cuisine at Dr Irena Eris SPA Hotels.

The past few months have given us a new appreciation for nature and its immense power to make things happen. The changes have also extended to the culinary culture. We are increasingly attentive to sustainability and the appropriate use of resources, reaching out more often for local products. Not only are they within easy reach, but they are also fresh, tasty and familiar.

EXQUISITE SIMPLICITY

Today's knowledge and technology favour rediscovering old, traditional

ingredients in Polish cuisine and presenting them in a new light. Chefs at Dr Irena Eris SPA Hotels never cease to emphasize that high quality seasonal products stand up for themselves with their unique taste. They try to bring out the beauty in each ingredient and serve it as it is. Simplicity, in an exquisite form, is currently in vogue, because real food is supposed to be unfussy and just plain tasty.

That is why, chefs at the Dr Irena Eris SPA Hotels search for local food producers who are committed to ecology, preservation of biodiversity and high product quality. The eco-friendly approach of the hotel's restaurants is reflected in the simple menu, the promotion of regional products and the inclusion of vegetarian and vegan dishes.

DR IRENA ERIS TASTY STORIES

A perfect example of the respect for local producers is the Dr Irena Eris Tasty Stories culinary project. Created to transcend any division, the project is a story about food - full of emotions, human experience and work - as well



High quality seasonal products stand up for themselves with their unique taste.

as about the land through which you can admire the unique character of products. It is also a story about the collaboration of chefs who, out of their passion for creating food, prepare the final dinner together. The theme of this year's Dr Irena Eris Tasty Stories is nature - not only as a source of food, since the foraging tradition (mushrooms, herbs, berries) or pickling is still alive, but also as a place of strengthening and vitality for every organism.

Dr Irena Eris SPA Hotels invite you to two exceptional Tasty Stories weekends: on 10-12 September at Dr Irena Eris SPA Hotel Krynica Zdrój Hotel and on 22-24 October at Dr Irena Eris SPA Wzgórza Dylewskie Hotel. The tasty stories are available at DrIrenaErisTastyStories.com. DrIrenaErisSPA.com

PRESS MATERIALS



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Best Quality for 25 years!

It was May 1996. The first Sheraton hotel in Warsaw had just been launched and first guests checked in to their rooms. Situated in the capital's prime spot, at the Three Crosses Square, it offered a real taste of Western civilization. Crowds flocked to the official opening of the property - a grand gala held on 22 September 1996. The residents of the surrounding townhouses came to admire the hotel and the elegantly dressed guests of the event. After all, it was a big thing for them, too.

SHERATON'S BIRTHDAY

And for the past 25 years, people of Warsaw have been coming to the Sheraton to see numerous celebrities who stayed in this unique property. These included: Dalai Lama, Madeleine Albright, Catherine Deneuve, Joe Cocker, Jane Seymour, David Beckham or Moby. The list is very long.

Yes, this 5-star hotel is a bit like a theatre. Its staff, their friendly attitude and rituals, are like actors, while its chic guests resemble art lovers.

ASIAN SPECIALTIES

Warsaw's Sheraton has always been well-known for its exquisite Asian cuisine. As per Tripadvisor's ranking, the hotel's main dining spot, now called inAzia (from 1996 to 2013 it was named The Oriental), is the best Asian restaurant in Warsaw.

Since 2016, inAzia is headed by chef Marcin Sasin, also responsible for other culinary operations throughout the hotel. He knows a lot about Chinese, Thai and Japanese food because he has spent a lot of time travelling around those regions. As an explorer, he thrives on the principle, which ironically is Bill Marriott's motto, "Success is Never Final." He is in a constant search for new flavours and perfect, but simple combinations. For him quality always comes

For the past 25 years, people of Warsaw have been coming to the Sheraton to see numerous celebrities.

first. Sasin's pad thai and duck are literally second to none.

Adored by guests, media, influencers, hotel owners and co-workers, he is also loved by the camera and is takes part in numerous photo shoots and video productions. He has an eye for detail, but also cares for a good atmosphere. He is funny and extremely creative.

COMFY BED

Sheraton Warsaw is not all about comfortable beds, but it's worth saying a word about them. As well as about the rooms, which are spacious and stylishly designed. That is what we love American hotel brands for - their tall, neatly made up beds are known for their extremely comfortable mattresses.

CUISINE WITHOUT BORDERS

Getting back to the cuisine, the quality of food at the Sheraton is stunning. Suffice it to say that when the hotel announced that for this year's Fat Thursday it would offer traditional doughnuts with rose jam, but also Asian-style doughnuts with chilli and mango, and Italian ones with gorgonzola and white chocolate, following a tasting session with several culinary journalists and influencers, the sweet treats sold out in a flash. Guests would come to the lobby late into the evening asking about the Sheraton patisserie (no such thing exists!) - unfortunately only to find out that the doughnuts have already run out. Yes, the hotel boasts excellent cuisine and has many friends who are substantial in spreading the news of good deals at Sheraton.

But how did the idea for Italian doughnuts even originate? This was a deliberate strategy to promote Italian cuisine, which has been served at Sheraton Warsaw since 2019. The site which once



And for the past 25 years, people of Warsaw have been coming to the Sheraton to see numerous celebrities who stayed in this unique property.
IN PHOTOS FROM THE LEFT: Catherine Deneuve, Jane Seymour, Joe Cocker



The hotel is known for its excellent cuisine. InAzia restaurant offers delicious Japanese style Omakase dinners.

was home to American-style eatery called Some Place Else (still present in numerous Sheraton properties worldwide), is now known as Cucina Mia restaurant. Launched two years ago, Cucina Mia offers authentic Italian cuisine. Dishes prepared with high quality ingredients, a mozzarella bar and excellent pastas, as well as seasonal dishes with asparagus or chanterelles, are a true delicacy for the most discerning guests. It's also a real proof that a talented cooking staff can prepare delicious food representing any

cuisine. At least, that's how it is at Sheraton Warsaw.

In 2019, Sheraton Warsaw became the second hotel in Poland after Cracow to incorporate the word Grand to its name, which positions it in the pool of the best hotels in the city.

This autumn, Sheraton Grand Warsaw is planning numerous actions related to its 25th birthday. We can't wait to see who is going to come to the celebrations!

www.sheratongrandwarsaw.pl



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Would you like to have an exciting time and get to know Pomerania from a completely different perspective? Then go kayaking!

TO THE PADDLES!

With a total of 1,600 km of navigable routes on over 30 rivers and modern kayaking infrastructure, the Pomorskie Szlaki Kajakowe (Pomeranian Kayak Trails) are a real guarantee of a great adventure and tranquil relaxation.

LET'S GO KAYAKING, THEN!

A kayaking trip is a great opportunity for practising active leisure and a way to get close to nature. If you are looking for a chance to get away from the hustle and bustle of the city, choose the Pomorskie Szlaki Kajakowe!

Worried you may not be fit enough to paddle and enjoy the whole kayaking experience? Then don't. The region of Pomerania boasts a great number of diverse kayak trails, which means you can easily

plan a trip that suits your skills and allows you to admire exactly what you like best - nature or architecture.

Planning to break away from daily routine? Here is a round-up of the best Pomeranian kayak trails you are sure to enjoy.

CHASING ADVENTURE

If you are looking for a real adrenaline rush, want to get to wild places and challenge the water element, where your kayaking skills do count, the Pomorskie Szlaki Kajakowe will certainly not let you down.

Here you will find wild and picturesque places - full of riffles, shallows, fallen trees and stones or meanders that are no less challenging than mountain rivers!

Fancy tackling the rushing current of a river? Here are some suggestions for a great paddling adventure!

SIGHTSEEING FROM A KAYAK

Would you like to look at the historical buildings of Gdańsk and other Pomeranian cities and towns from a different perspective? How about heading straight out into the Baltic, fighting waves and then land on a beach? All you have to do is get in your kayak and go with the flow of adventure.

Would you like to see known sites from a different perspective? Do it from your kayak! ■

POMERANIAN KAYAK TRAILS



KAYAK TRAIL	km	number of days
PERFECT FOR EVERYONE		
Ruda/Brda (Płocisz – Dolinka – Garbaty Most)	13 km	1 day
Czarna Woda (Czarny Młyn – Ostrowo)	5 km	1 day
Kanał Wdy (Borsk – Cegielnia)	22,5 km	1-2 days
Święta i Tuga (Nowy Staw – Rybina)	27 km	1-2 days
Łeba (Łęczycze – Gać)	55 km	3-4 days
Brda (Świeszyno – Rytel)	116 km	4-5 days
Wda (Lipusz – Żurawki)	108 km	6-7 days
Radunia (Ostrzyce – Kiełpino)	14 km	1 day
MORE DEMANDING TRAILS		
Biała (Jezienik – Dzików)	21 km	1-2 days
Bukowina (Skrzeszewo – Kozin)	19 km	1 day
Kamienica (Tuchomie – Kamień – Gałąźnia Mała)	34 km	2-3 days
Studnica (Miastko – Kawka/Biesowice)	37 km	2 days
Wieprza (Glewnik – Jezioro Obłęskie)	23 km	1-2 days
Czernica (Sporysz – Lubnica)	28,8 km	1-2 days
Łupawa (Łupawsko – Zgojewo)	70 km	3-4 days
Słupia (Sulęczyno – Słupsk)	185 km	5 days
Wierzyca (Kościerzyna – Gniew)	154 km	8-10 days
Reda (Zamostne – Mrzeżono)	36 km	2 days
FOR SIGHTSEEING AFICIONADO		
(Sasinko – Łeba)	14,9 km	1 day
Nogat (Biała Góra – Malbork- Osłonka)	62 km	3 days
Opyłw Motławy (Kamienna Grodza – Most Siennicki)	8 km	1 day
Piaśnica (Jezioro Żarnowieckie-Dębki)	6 km	1 day
Wierzyca (Pelplin-Gniew)	30 km	1 day
Radunia (Straszyn – Gdańsk)	25 km	2 days

PRESS MATERIALS

MEXICAN WAVE

Rich history and stunning beaches make Mexico's Caribbean coast a strong draw for tourists – the challenge will be to manage its development sustainably for generations to come.

One of the most evocative sites – and sights – of Mexico's Riviera Maya is El Castillo. Its pale grey stone blocks stand high above a sandy beach edged by palm trees swaying in the breeze, its façade impassively looking out to the Caribbean Sea. The surrounding temples once protected ships with power from a God whose followers have long departed, and whose rituals have been forgotten.

Well, almost forgotten, although experts have made educated guesses. Information boards with QR codes allow you to read in great detail about the past and purpose of the ancient Tulum site. And, just as historians had to clear trees and bushes from the area to reveal its hidden buildings, so, too, do these boards clear away a lot of misconceptions.

For instance, El Castillo isn't a castle – more probably it was a temple and visual guide for sailors seeking an entrance through the coral reef to the coast. The name of Tulum, meanwhile, merely refers to the protecting wall around the town. The settlement may well once have been called Zama, which means City of Dawn – appropriately enough, since it faces sunrise.

Having a guide, either for the day, for a few hours or simply the pre-recorded kind you can listen to via headset allows you to look for the clues of how these Gods were worshipped. While it's possible that there was human sacrifice – memorably (and bloodily) depicted in Mel Gibson's film *Apocalypto* – the undulating parkland, sandy coves below and cooling sea breezes make it very easy to forget any such unpleasantness.

PICTURED:
El Castillo enjoys a
stunning setting on
the Riviera Maya

WORDS TOM OTLEY



Tankah is locally run and proceeds go direct to the community, members of whom work as guides.

The virtual guide told me that the style of architecture was called “East Coast”, typified by “the use of miniature temples, shrines within shrines [small buildings inside larger ones] and buildings with intentionally collapsed walls”. I liked the idea of the last of these, even if I had no idea what it meant. The plain grey buildings were once decked out in bright colours and wall paintings, now lost, although some sculptures are still just about visible.

The advice for this tourist site, as always, is to get there early, before the heat and the crowds, so you can wander around in a daze, imagining what it must have been like to live here before having all of those daydreams shattered by the research relayed to you by the experts. Leave the impressive but expensive gift shop, as well as the Starbucks, until your departure, swerving the arrival of the tourist minibuses and coaches.

IMMERSE YOURSELF

The Tulum ancient site welcomed more than 1.5 million visitors in 2019. While numbers were hit by the pandemic in 2020, it was still receiving well over 100,000 each month this year. It’s easy to see why – it is charming, has lots of historical interest, enjoys a beautiful setting and also allows

you to explore more of the coast if you are staying in Cancun (located 130km north), including the chance to stop off at luxury resort complex Mayakoba on the way back.

Other day excursions for those based in Cancun or the surrounding area include sailing, diving, snorkelling or deep-sea fishing, but it was the cenotes (deep natural pools) that fascinated me, and so we visited one close by called Tankah Tulum (tankah.com.mx).

A cenote is a natural pit or sinkhole that has collapsed and exposed groundwater. There are thousands across the region, although most are not open to visitors. The advantage of Tankah ecological park is that it is locally run and proceeds go direct to the community, members of whom work as guides and in the open-air restaurant. (You are advised to use biodegradable sunscreen and repellent while swimming since the locals take their water from the cenotes.)

Tankah has four cenotes, including one where bats flew overhead while we swam and another with zip lines across it (I passed on that particular thrill). You can also go canoeing. It’s fabulous to cool down from the heat of the day in these pools (some of them are quite cold) – while I floated around, a large and very tatty black vulture watched from a branch, unimpressed by my incursion into its territory.

PICTURED: Tankah’s cenotes offer a refreshing escape from the heat



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Visit Cancun's Zona Hotelera and you will see the planning that has gone into the destination.

CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE: The Cancun coast; Tankah employs members of the local community

FLIPSIDE OF GROWTH

We all like to think we are giving something back when travelling, and even when being a tourist it's important to work out where your money is going. The reality, though, is that not only is this region completely dependent on tourism but it was planned that way by the Mexican government. Fifty years ago, the coastal area was home to a few fishermen and some beautiful beaches. Today, if you ask those who work here where they are from, younger people will probably have grown up in the region but only because their parents moved here for the tourism jobs. Anyone middle aged will have been born elsewhere.

While 9 per cent of Mexico's GDP comes from tourism, in Quintana Roo, the state in which Riviera Maya is located, it makes up 90 per cent of economic activity. Visit Cancun's Zona Hotelera and you will see the level of planning that went into the destination – still, there are well-documented problems further south as tourism has expanded, especially in areas where infrastructure has not kept pace. Watch *The Dark Side of Tulum* on Youtube (bit.ly/youtubetulum) or read *The Cut* article "Who killed Tulum?" (bit.ly/tulumthecut), which charts the history of the eponymous town close to the ancient ruins, and you'll get a good idea of what has happened to the area. Then there are the plans for a new airport at Tulum, which, while an environmental disaster, is simply part of greater expansion as developers see the future as more of the same – increase the number of tourists; offer new and "unspoilt" locations.

HOTEL EXPANSION

So what is to be done? There's little doubt of the enduring appeal of Mexico for international visitors, and particularly for the North American market. People want to visit this coast, even if, paradoxically, many visitors take pictures of the sea to post on social media but never go in it.

Robert-Jan Woltering is regional vice-president for Accor's luxury brands in Mexico and Central America and general manager of the Fairmont Mayakoba. He is clear that the US market will always be big for Mexico for the simple reason that "it's so close and nearby. It's about two hours from Texas, even less from Florida and direct flights from New York are only four hours."

Juan Corvinos, Hilton's vice-president of development for the Caribbean and Latin America (CALA), reports impressive growth here for the group, which currently has 172 properties in the CALA region. "More than 100 hotels are in the pipeline so we have 30,000 rooms [at the moment] and another 15,000 coming," he says. "Go back to 2013 and we had only 62 properties." A new all-inclusive Hilton Cancun is due to open in November (the previous Hilton was bought by Iberostar in 2011), with a Waldorf Astoria launching next to it in 2022.

Brian King is Marriott International's regional CALA president. He says the group's source markets for the region are overwhelmingly the US, at 80 per cent of visitors, followed by Canada, Colombia, Brazil and then the UK. Pre-Covid, China was in seventh place and rising.

FOT PASHAPXE/STOCK

Chris Calabrese, vice-president and general manager of the co-located JW Marriott Cancun (reviewed on page 77) and Marriott Cancun, had spent the previous decade building up business from China. "Before Covid, China was our number-two market for these hotels," he says. "We went to ILTM [the International Luxury Travel Market trade show] in China and Singapore and had success in attracting major groups. We definitely want to go back to Asia and help to restart that business."

For corporate groups as well as leisure travellers, staying in an all-inclusive resort is proving popular and King believes that the pandemic will ultimately accelerate this trend. "I have never taken friends, family and colleagues for granted but I took access to them for granted, so the ability to gather together for a longer period to enjoy time with one another makes this a long-term trend," he says.

This is something that will be seen globally, King suggests, but is particularly evident in the Caribbean and Latin America. "There are about 870 all-inclusive Marriott hotels worldwide, which is about 325,000 rooms, and 56 per cent of those are concentrated in CALA," he says. "The demand for those has been unbelievable." For people organising family holidays it is understandable, since it is easier to keep to a set budget, although it is not so great for the restaurant owner across the road.

Calabrese says his packages allow groups one night off-property for dining but that generally organisers – and their guests – want the convenience of all-inclusive. With



his hotels offering a dozen or more restaurants and bars combined, there's little reason to leave other than to offer visitors the chance to try a specific experience. While the Fairmont Mayakoba, which hosts ILTM North America, does not currently have an all-inclusive option, Woltering is planning to offer it in future because of demand.

So the development will continue, and the appeal of Mexico will grow as more and more travellers get to experience the weather, the hospitality, the history and the convenience of getting there, both from North America and further afield. The challenge for Cancun in particular, and the region more generally, is how to preserve the beauty of this coast for future generations. ■

Events for the new era

Meetings are going to take a different form for some time to come – but hotels have been coming up with creative ways for physical and virtual attendees to get together

PICTURED:
Hybrid event at
Hilton McLean
Tysons Corner in
Virginia

While most meetings and events are on hold for the time being, the vaccine rollout means we may soon see the return of business gatherings, although they will look a little different from before. Hotels are devising innovative solutions for your next get-together. Here we round up some of the major programmes in place – from hybrid events that combine in-person and virtual participation, to measures such as temperature checks and testing procedures.

HILTON

Hilton has extended its cleaning protocols to its event operations, calling it Hilton Event Ready with Clean Stay. The programme includes meeting room seals and checklists, sanitising stations, a playbook offering guidance and resources for planning events (including testing provider details) and a physical distancing meal service.

Hilton also recently introduced a set of solutions to help event organisers plan hybrid meetings at participating hotels (see meetings.hilton.com/hybrid-solutions). In October 2020, it held its global sales hybrid event at Hilton McLean Tysons Corner in Virginia (pictured). The “hybrid ready” properties offer seamless connectivity, a planning playbook and expertise from dedicated staff.

Select hotels will have “presentation stages” that are pre-built with technology for recording and broadcasting high-quality online events. This currently applies to Conrad Fort Lauderdale Beach in Florida, Hilton Atlanta, the Hilton Anatole in Dallas, Hilton Denver and LA’s Beverly Hilton and is set to be rolled out in other select US locations and across Europe, the Middle East and Africa by the end of the year. Properties equipped with such technology will accommodate between two and six on-site presenters and up to 50 in-person attendees.

Hilton is providing Covid-19 testing and health screening resources for event attendees in the US. Participating hotels will provide a list of third-party providers that can provide handheld temperature check devices, personal screening checklists, self-testing options and same-day on-site testing.

In March, Hilton Prague and Hilton Prague Old Town held a hybrid event showcase for 300 clients from 30 countries, in partnership with AV Media Events. The main stage was set up in the Congress Hall of Hilton Prague, while the Vivaldi meeting room at the Old Town property was used as a breakout space. hilton.com

ACCOR

Last year Accor introduced its All Meet Well initiative at 135 hotels in its Northern Europe portfolio. Meetings and

Hilton’s ‘hybrid ready’ properties offer seamless connectivity and expertise from a dedicated team

WORDS HANNAH BRANDLER

MEETINGS

events are run in accordance with the group's Allsafe programme, features of which include daily cleaning in the evenings and during lunch breaks, including disinfecting light switches, door handles, chairs, tables, hangers and consoles; vacuum cleaners equipped with HEPA filters; and cleaning checklists provided to event organisers.

At the time of writing, the group was set to launch All Connect, a hybrid meetings concept powered by Microsoft Teams technology. The initiative will allow corporate customers and event planners to combine "physical in-hotel meetings with virtual interactions across multiple locations". The concept focuses primarily on smaller meetings (eight to 50 physical participants) and meetings will take place on the Teams platform. Within the hotels' meeting spaces, Microsoft Teams Rooms and Surface Hub 2S will connect on-site guests with remote ones through "industry-leading audio and video device experiences". Bespoke programmes and experiences will be available to attendees.

As of February, 55 per cent of Accor hotels with meeting rooms provided hybrid solutions. The group is aiming for 100 per cent of its hotels with meeting rooms to comply with the new hybrid meetings standard by 2022.

According to research carried out by Accor, 70 per cent of respondents saw hybrid meetings as "an important service in the future". The company says that further sector analysis shows a trend towards remote events and meetings that is unlikely to disappear post-pandemic, especially as customers begin to focus on sustainable corporate travel.

In the US and Canada, the group has partnered with tech

company X.labs to coordinate Covid-19 testing for attendees. Planners can either ask the X.labs concierge to send PCR kits directly to attendees for at-home testing or order antigen rapid tests for doing it on-site. In both cases, they can track results via X.labs' Ready app to see who has been cleared for attendance. group.accor.com

FOUR SEASONS

The luxury group introduced Hybrid Meetings by Four Seasons in April. Hotels follow safety protocols from the group's Lead With Care programme and will implement additional measures for meetings and events, including offering personalised consultations and managing attendee flow. The group's catering teams can organise simultaneous "culinary surprises" for in-person or remote attendees across multiple global venues – this might include individually served menus or interactive mixology kits.

Other services range from a multi-broadcast meeting solution for keynote addresses, to the Hub and Spoke offering for smaller gatherings, which unites regional groups across multiple properties. Four Seasons can also facilitate access to Covid-19 tests at its properties globally, providing guidance on end-to-end testing options and costs. fourseasons.com

HYATT

Hyatt is using a hybrid format to allow meetings to take place simultaneously across various properties in Europe, the Middle East and Asia-Pacific. Content can be broadcast to meeting rooms across multiple hotels, allowing delegates to →

BELOW: Accor events are run in accordance with its Allsafe cleanliness programme

In Accor's research, 70 per cent of respondents saw hybrid meetings as 'an important service in the future'



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MEETINGS

safely connect and engage. Each location can house 15 attendees and features a video monitor, two flipcharts and a dynamic device with multiple built-in cameras and microphones.

Events abide by Hyatt's Global Care and Cleanliness Commitment, which includes sanitisation of meeting rooms before and after use, "care stations" with PPE and sanitiser, social distancing signage, linen-less tables where possible, disinfection of AV equipment between uses, pre-packaged food items, and buffets with plexiglass coverings and staff to serve hot dishes.

In April, the group launched a new collection of services called Together by Hyatt. These include an on-site "support squad" to address real-time technology questions from attendees and help speakers with setting up their talks, recipe cards and shopping lists for remote attendees, and curated content from meditation app Headspace.

The group plans to trial the use of mobile health passport Verify for in-person gatherings, allowing attendees and colleagues to present their Covid-19 test results

and complete all necessary requirements on the app prior to arrival. Delegates who meet the criteria will be able to display a green checkmark on the app for entry into the venue. hyatt.com

IHG HOTELS AND RESORTS

IHG is applying its Way of Clean initiative to its Meet with Confidence programme. Key features include deep and more frequent cleaning of event spaces, hand sanitiser stations, socially distanced room layouts, and single-serve and pre-packaged meal options.

The group is also offering two hybrid options for meetings and events. The Smart Solution is available at participating hotels globally, except in Greater China. In the US, it includes rapid on-site Covid-19 testing in partnership with Wellness 4 Humanity and digital collaboration technology from Weframe. Its Weframe One interactive cloud-based touchscreen allows on-site and remote participants to work together.

Four Seasons offers a multi-broadcast solution for keynote addresses, and Hub and Spoke for smaller gatherings



ROBYG

Wyznaczamy nowy standard na rynku mieszkań

Naszym celem jest budowa mieszkań i osiedli wykonanych w wyższym standardzie niż produkty porównywalne rynkowo: cenowo i lokalizacyjnie. Oferujemy wyższą jakość bez podnoszenia ceny wykorzystując nowoczesne, przyjazne środowisku rozwiązania.



Na osiedlach montujemy **ładowarki dla samochodów elektrycznych**, przyczyniając się tym samym do rozwoju elektromobilności w Polsce.



Oferujemy w standardzie system **Smart House by Keemple** który obniża zużycie mediów nawet o 30%.



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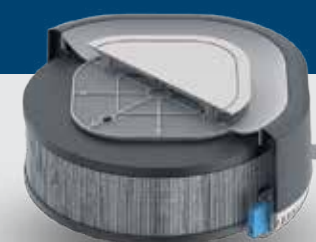
Stosujemy dachy budynków w technologii stropodachu odwróconego z powierzchnią żwirową które pozwalają na **retencjonowanie wody** oraz zmniejszają przegrzewanie.



Sadzimy **pnącza na ścianach** zewnętrznych budynków jako dodatkową izolację termiczną ograniczającą przegrzewanie.



W częściach wspólnych budynków stosujemy energooszczędne oraz ekologiczne **oświetlenie LED** sterowane czujnikami ruchu.



Dbamy o zdrowie mieszkańców! W lobby budynków instalujemy innowacyjne urządzenia **Aura Air by Keemple** które oczyszczają i dezynfekują powietrze pozbywając się wirusów i innych zanieczyszczeń.

[WWW.ROBYG.PL](https://www.robbyg.pl)

MEETINGS

The Expert Solution includes virtual technology experiences and is available at nearly 100 hotels in Europe, the Middle East, Asia and the US. The group has partnered with Williams Sonoma in the US to include “curated” food and drink delivered to off-site attendees. ihg.com

MARRIOTT

Marriott launched its Connect with Confidence programme last year. It comprises enhanced sanitation guidelines, new operational training for associates and increased use of conference technologies.

The group carried out its first hybrid meeting under the programme in November 2020 at the Ritz-Carlton Tysons Corner in Virginia, with 44 in-person participants and 238 virtual attendees. The event made use of thermal scanners, contactless check-in, social distancing signage, hand sanitiser stations and grab-and-go food and drink.

Attendees were grouped into zones and seats were set up at least six feet from each other, with guests able to reserve a “sanctuary seat” at check-in and maintain it for the duration of the event – these included amenities such as a face shield, sanitising products and individually packaged refreshments. Delegates could also choose a green, yellow or red wrist band to indicate their level of comfort with physical contact with others.

Those attending virtually could select their preferred viewing angle when watching a live stream and use free Uber Eats gift cards to order food to arrive at the same time as in-person colleagues, “to further reinforce the shared experiences”. The event used Meeting Play technology to provide multi-view live streaming plus polls and surveys.

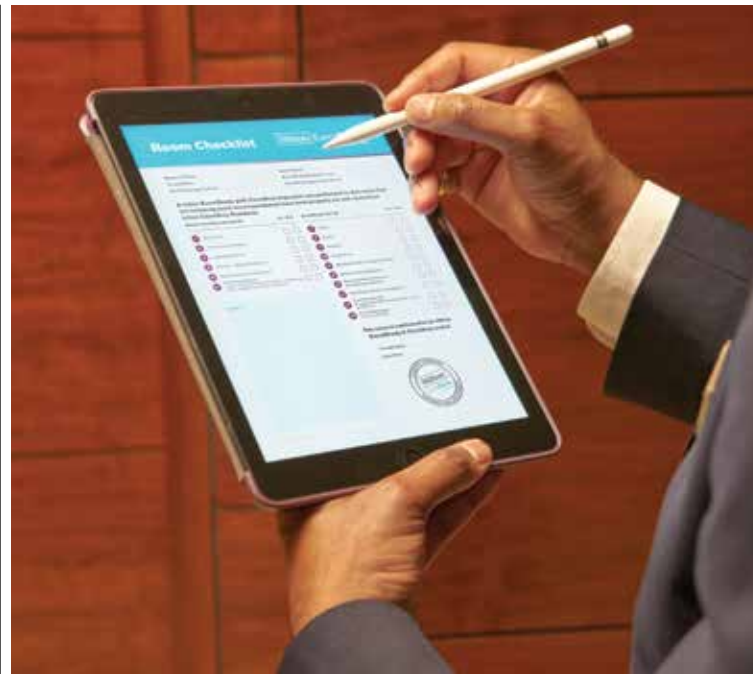
In January, an event took place at Colorado’s Gaylord Rockies Resort and Convention Center for 100 in-person and 803 virtual attendees. Survey results from this gathering revealed that 51 per cent of meeting professionals planned to host a hybrid event in the next six to 12 months. Some 95 per cent of attendees said they would attend another event if it were to be designed with the same principles.

The group has been hosting hybrid events at properties across the world in recent months. In May, Marriott Hotels introduced a Green Screen Package for up to ten participants and a Hybrid Meeting Package for up to 30 delegates across 45 hotels in the UK.

Marriott is offering Covid-19 tests to meeting customers at all Marriott-branded hotels in the US. Additional optional health protocols include daily or pre-arrival health screening questions via app and daily temperature checks to enter the event area. marriott.com

RADISSON HOTEL GROUP

Radisson has partnered with certification company SGS to create a ten-step protocol for meeting spaces in its world-wide locations. Features include sanitising stations, physical distancing, improved air circulation, strict food safety procedures and increased cleaning and disinfection, especially in high-touch areas.



It has teamed up with Zoom to host hybrid events, allowing attendees to connect by video to other satellite meeting locations “with one click”. Radisson has implemented the programme in more than 75 hotels across Europe, the Middle East and Africa, with the goal of expanding this to more than 100 EMEA properties.

In March, it partnered with Hughes Healthcare to introduce rapid testing for meeting attendees at participating hotels in select countries across its EMEA portfolio, including the UK. Trained healthcare providers can carry out lateral antigen flow tests at hotels prior to events, while guests have the option of accessing PCR testing on-site or in the vicinity.

Radisson brand Park Plaza Hotels has launched a Reassuring Meeting and Events initiative to enhance the safety measures in place as part of its Reassuring Moments programme. Park Plaza says that it has been developed alongside Radisson’s ten-step protocol and SGS certification and provides “safe, secure and flexible environments, ideal for retraining teams, working sessions, creative planning, hybrid events and much more”. radissonhotels.com; parkplazahotels.com

WYNDHAM HOTEL GROUP

To protect planners and attendees, Wyndham has implemented social distancing measures and reconfigured meeting rooms, with signage. All food and drink service complies with local guidelines and regulations, event spaces undergo more frequent cleaning and disinfection, meeting rooms at many hotels feature technology for virtual attendance, and tissues and hand sanitiser are provided for all delegates. Depending on local regulations, some hotels will offer temperature screening. wyndhamhotels.com ■

ABOVE: Room checklist at Conrad London St James LEFT: Four Seasons hybrid event

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Kingsland Locke, London

BACKGROUND Open since May, this is the eighth outpost for the design-focused aparthotel brand Locke, which has properties in the UK, Ireland and Germany. It is part of the Edyn group, which also includes Saco serviced apartments.

WHAT'S IT LIKE? The new-build draws inspiration from its surroundings and is aimed at younger business travellers. The design, by Red Deer Architects, features industrial-style elements, bold prints and glass walls that let in light and give the sense of a shared environment. Sustainability is a focus, with eco-friendly amenities and plenty of greenery. To the left of reception is Shaman coffee bar, followed by a co-working area with communal tables, lounge seating and plenty of plug sockets. This space has its own street entrance and an oval bar. Stairs take you down to Kraft restaurant and microbrewery. There's a gym and laundry room on this level, too. Check-in required a photo ID and credit card, while contactless check-out means you drop off your keys in a box at the desk.

WHERE IS IT? On Kingsland High Street in Dalston, East London, home to a variety of bars, shops and restaurants. It's a three-minute walk to Dalston Kingsland London Overground station, or about 15 minutes to Hackney Downs Overground, which is four stops from Liverpool Street station.

ROOMS The 124 apartments range from compact 19 sqm Loft and City studios to the 37



sqm Kingsland suite. Each has a king bed, a kitchen, an iron, a safe and a yoga mat. Locke studios and above have dishwashers, and one-bedroom suites have washing machines. There's no phone but you can contact reception via Whatsapp.

My fourth-floor City Studio felt quite narrow, with the kitchen and bathroom facing each other and the bed and small dining table at the far end. A green velvet sofa continued along the wall to become the headboard, which was a good use of space. Other elements could have been designed better, such as the towel rack being right by the toilet in the bathroom. The room had an internal view, with blackout

Kraft restaurant is a brilliant concept bringing together a microbrewery, a gin company and cuisine from Le Bab

curtains – the soundproofing was not great, however, and I could hear doors shutting at night. While the concrete walls are meant to give a distressed industrial feel, mine appeared run-down, with some water marks. Still, the wifi was fast and free, the smart TV had tips for the area and the room rate included a guidebook to East London.



FOOD AND DRINK Shaman is a health-conscious café serving grab-and-go items and specialty coffee. It's a popular spot, with a hatch open to passers-by. There was a bit of a wait for my breakfast at 9am but it was worth it, and the barista was friendly.

Kraft restaurant, is a brilliant concept that brings together brewery German Kraft, sustainable gin company Jim and Tonic and Middle Eastern and Asian cuisine from Le Bab. The space is airy, with a high glass ceiling and lush foliage. It looks into the microbrewery, which makes some good craft beers. QR codes bring up the well-priced menu from Le Bab, which includes sharing plates and posh kebabs.

MEETINGS No dedicated rooms.

LEISURE There's a gym – you have to book in advance – and 30-day free access to the workouts on fitness app Fiit.

VERDICT Kingsland Locke excels with its locally inspired interiors and collaborative communal areas, which include fantastic dining venues and a stylish co-working lounge that transforms into a buzzy bar by night. I was less impressed with the room, which, despite its newness, relied too much on shabby over chic.
Hannah Brandler

BEST FOR
Inventive kebabs and home-brewed beers at Kraft

PRICE
Internet rates for a flexible midweek stay in September started from £99 for a City Studio

CONTACT
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Aparthotel Adagio London Stratford



BACKGROUND Adagio is a joint venture between Accor and the Pierre and Vacances Center Parcs group. Open since April for essential stays and May to all, this is the brand's sixth UK property. A London Sutton property is due to open in July 2021.

WHAT'S IT LIKE? The four-star aparthotel is set in the former London Olympics Athletes Village. Now called East Village, the area is home to more than 2,000 apartments, numerous independent food and drink outlets and hotels such as the Stratford and, opening next March, the Gantry London, Curio Collection by Hilton.

The 16-floor new-build's design incorporates geometric shapes in teal, pink, grey and blue and contemporary elements that draw inspiration from Stratford's industrial heritage. Check-in was quick and at check-out you can simply drop your key in a box. To the right of reception is the Circle, a shared living space with a large kitchen, table football and plenty of seating areas designed for working, dining and chatting with fellow guests. Weekly socials take place here. There's also a "library of objects" from which you can borrow the likes of plants and games for your stay. The hotel has laundry facilities and a car park.

Where is it? On Celebration Avenue, just down the road from Westfield Stratford City shopping centre. It's a two-minute walk to both



the double bed converts into a sofa, giving you more space to work. All have a kitchen with a dishwasher and Nespresso machine, a table for dining or working, free wifi, a TV that you can pair your devices with, and Keiji bath amenities.

My 14th-floor one-bedroom apartment had a living room with a sofa bed and a dining table for four. There was a safe, plenty of plug sockets and USB points, and blackout curtains. Large glass windows offered views of the Shard and the City in the distance. I had a peaceful night's sleep.

FOOD AND DRINK While the apartments are self-catering, you can use the shared kitchen in the lobby area to prepare meals, or purchase snacks and drinks at the small shop next to reception. There's a Sainsbury's next door. The hotel intends to offer a buffet breakfast from July (when I stayed in early May I could order a grab-and-go breakfast).

MEETINGS None.

LEISURE There's a small gym, or go for a run in nearby Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park.

VERDICT A very well-connected aparthotel in a rejuvenated area of East London that continues to see new developments crop up. The apartments are comfortable, the Circle is an inviting place to work and staff are friendly and approachable. It's close to London City airport and easy to get into central London.

Hannah Brandler



BEST FOR

A comfy home-away-from-home for experiencing East London's independent traders and ample parkland

PRICE

Internet rates for a flexible midweek stay in September started from £148 for a double studio

CONTACT

Celebration Avenue Penny Brookes Street; tel +44 (0)20 4524 7900; adagio-city.com



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The Mayfair Townhouse, London



BACKGROUND Open since May, following an initial launch in December 2020, the Mayfair Townhouse is part of Iconic Luxury Hotels, which includes prestigious country properties such as Cliveden House and Chewton Glen. The site formerly housed the Hilton London Green Park and has been gutted and refurbished.

WHAT'S IT LIKE? Some 15 Georgian townhouses on Half Moon Street have been combined to create 172 individually designed rooms and suites. In the Victorian era the street was popular with bachelors, bohemians and artists and so the townhouses were split into apartments for singletons – in Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest*, Algernon Moncreiff resided in one. Design firm Goddard Littlefair has drawn on this heritage to create flamboyant interiors that pay homage to both real and fictional personalities – from Wilde to Alice in Wonderland.

Guests begin their journey down the rabbit hole as soon as they enter the lobby and are met by Alfie, a peacock adorned with 25,000 Swarovski crystals and named after Wilde's lover. The art collection gives classical imagery a contemporary twist – from Miss Aniel's *Surreal Fashion* photo series to Ant Fox's depiction of Lord Byron with an iPad. The lobby has a dark, moody colour scheme with hints of gold. It leads on to the Dandy Bar, while the lower ground floor houses the Club Room, a lounge area that is comfortable to work in, and the ruby-red Den.

Where is it? On Half Moon Street, just off Piccadilly, a three-minute walk from Green Park Underground station.

ROOMS These range from small 14 sqm Cabin rooms with queen beds to 60 sqm Loft suites with terraces. All have marble bathrooms. Deluxe rooms and above have king beds, and suites have a separate sofa area. Signature suites include arrival transfer from any London airport or station.

The labyrinthine layout adds to the hotel's charm, with each black threshold a sign that you're entering a new house. Hallways feature classical-style portraits of women whose faces are masked by blooming botanicals.

All rooms have free wifi, Nespresso machines, safes, Noble Isle toiletries and free non-alcoholic minibars. My Junior suite was on the fourth



Flamboyant interiors pay homage to real and fictional personalities – from Oscar Wilde to Alice in Wonderland

floor, down a couple of steps at the end of the hallway, and felt like its very own wing of the townhouse. The décor was refined, with a regal navy colour scheme, glimmers of red and gold, and dark wood furnishings. The bed was extremely comfortable. The bathroom had an inviting rolltop tub, a spacious walk-in shower and twin sinks.

Food and drink The Dandy Bar is an alluring destination, with dim lighting, an art-deco bar and marble, brass and glossy timbers reflected in mirrored ceilings. Bespoke cocktails are inspired by the area – I adored the Cloud Nine Fizz, a bubbly concoction presented with a floral decoration. The all-day dining menu includes small

plates and mains such as burgers and risottos. I enjoyed artichoke croquettes and a fragrant lobster curry, a Chewton Glen signature dish. A buffet and à la carte breakfast is served in the Club Room.

MEETINGS The lower ground floor can be privatised, or the Den and Oscar's Study can be hired.

LEISURE There's a gym on the lower ground floor.

VERDICT This grand hotel manages to feel boutique, with thoughtful interiors that marry real-life history with fictional folklore and are playful rather than gimmicky. The staff are excellent and the dining areas double as comfortable workspaces during the day.

Hannah Brandler



BEST FOR

A glamorous city alternative to the hotel group's country boltholes

DON'T MISS

Imaginative cocktails at the Dandy Bar

PRICE

Internet rates for a flexible midweek stay in September started from £250 for a Cabin room

CONTACT

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WORDS HANNAH BRANDLER



From Brunel to Banksy, the creative south-west city has much to marvel at.

1 BRISTOL TEMPLE MEADS STATION

Bristol's main rail hub is located in Redcliffe, about 15 minutes' walk from the city centre, and was designed 180 years ago by Isambard Kingdom Brunel, making it the oldest station in the city. As you exit the main entrance, turn on to the slip road on the left (Lower Approach Road). You'll spy a series of street artworks that juxtapose strikingly with the station's Gothic façade in the background. Highlights include a colourful collaboration between Copyright and Paul Monsters of a woman with butterfly wings, and posters paying tribute to the NHS. These give you a first taste of the city's rich graffiti scene, which exploded in the 1980s and counts Banksy as a participant. The Visit Bristol website lists some of the elusive artist's works if you are interested in seeking them out: bit.ly/bristolbanksytour

2 QUEEN SQUARE

Turn right on to Temple Gate and then left on to Redcliffe Way. As you cross Redcliffe Bascule Bridge, you'll spot a scenic terrace of colourful houses on Redcliffe Parade on your left, elevated above the city's Floating Harbour. Continue on to Bell Avenue and you'll see pretty Queen Square straight ahead. This 2.4-hectare park is surrounded by Georgian townhouses and cobbled streets that lead to the harbourside. Laid out in its current state in 1700 and named after Queen Anne, it's a relaxing spot for a sit or stroll but it hasn't always been the picture of tranquillity. In 1831 it was the focus of a riot after the House of Lords blocked a popular electoral reform bill. There were hundreds of deaths and casualties, and almost 100 buildings in and around the square were burnt to the ground. It was rebuilt over the next 80 years.

3 CLIFTON CUISINE

From here, it's a 25-minute walk to the attractive suburb of Clifton. After the steep trek up Park Street, you'll be ready for a sit-down. Clifton is an affluent area of sweeping crescents and leafy streets that are home to a wide range of independent shops, restaurants and cafés. These include the Italian-inspired Rosemarino (rosemarino.co.uk), which is located on the corner of Clifton Road and York Place. The menu makes good use of local producers and suppliers and includes a tempting selection of cichetti such as arancini, polpetta and calzone as well as brunch dishes – I recommend the lemon and ricotta pancakes with home-cured salmon (£11). Open Tues-Sun 9am-4pm. After an aperitivo, pop into Clifton Road Community Bookshop (number 10) for a browse – set up last year, all of its second-hand books cost £2.

4 THE DOWNS

Continue down Clifton Road and on to Lansdown Road, taking in the magnificent Georgian architecture. Turn left on to Manilla Road, which will take you to the 179-hectare Downs. The area is protected as a Site of Nature Conservation Interest – summer months promise colourful wildflowers in the meadow areas, and you might spot young peregrine falcons leaving their nest and learning to fly at the Peregrine Watch point. The Avon Gorge is home to a variety of whitebeam trees, some of which are endemic to the area and don't grow anywhere else.

5 CLIFTON SUSPENSION BRIDGE

As you head up the footpaths of the Downs, you'll begin to catch glimpses of the incredible Clifton Suspension Bridge before taking in the epic lan-

dmark in its entirety when you reach the clifftop. The engineering marvel straddles lush greenery on either side of the Gorge, connecting Bristol to North Somerset. Brunel designed it in 1831 and described it as "my first child, my darling", although he sadly died before it was completed in his honour in 1864.

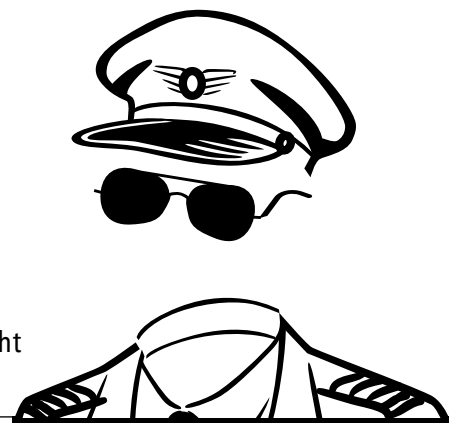
While the clifftop vista itself is remarkable, you can take in 360-degree views of Bristol's cityscape from

the Clifton Observatory, a couple of minutes' walk away and home to one of the UK's oldest working camera obscuras. It's linked by tunnel to the Giant's Cave, set in the limestone face of St Vincent's Rocks. This dates back to 305 AD and sits 76 metres above the Gorge, with a viewing platform offering staggering views – particularly at sunrise or sunset. Combined entry £5. cliftonobservatory.com



Blue sea thinking

Next time you are relaxing on a transatlantic flight, spare a thought for the complex planning that pilots put into every crossing



How many times have you flown across the Atlantic, or any other vast expanse of water, without giving a thought to the challenges involved in such an operation? Every time, I hope – air travel is very safe and there is no need to worry. For those who muse about these things, however, I've found that the two most common questions I get asked are: "What happens if something goes wrong during the flight?" and: "How do you navigate?"

First, a point about the distances involved in long-haul flying. If you fly from London to New York then the journey over the Atlantic is approximately 3,050 km. London to Rio de Janeiro is more than double that, at 6,740 km. These distances are truly staggering. Think of the pioneers of aviation – for example, Sir John William Alcock and Arthur Brown, who were the first to fly nonstop from Canada to Ireland, in 1919. They accomplished this in a British Vickers Vimy, taking 16 hours – a remarkable achievement back then. Nowadays, a typical jet aircraft takes about four hours.

On long-haul flights, the first issue pilots have to consider when planning the journey is where to head if something goes wrong. Take engine failure – if one were to fail on a four-engined aircraft it would not be a big deal, but on a two-engined plane you would lose 50 per cent of your

available power. In such cases the aircraft would be unable to maintain its cruising altitude and would need to descend to a much lower level.

The problem here is that the lower the altitude, the denser the air – consequently, more fuel will be burnt. Similarly, if the aircraft were to depressurise then a descent to 10,000 feet would be required for sufficient oxygen to breathe, as the onboard supply is limited.

Scenarios such as these, as well as medical emergencies, will result in a diversion to a suitable airport. It is therefore required by the authorities that when flying over water a two-engined aircraft must be within a specified flying time of one. For a B777 this is three hours, while for the B787 it is five and a half hours. This can be a challenge for pilots, particularly in winter, when more northerly airports can be affected by high winds and snow.

Where you go depends on your route – to the north it could be Greenland or Iceland, while further south it could be the Azores, Bermuda, Cape Verde or the Canary Islands. Equally, it may be more prudent to turn back or continue to a suitable airport closer to your destination. The objective is always to land the aircraft safely as soon as possible.

MISSION CONTROL

What about navigation and air traffic control (ATC)? Nowadays, navigation is predominantly done by GPS, which is highly accurate. When I started flying in the 1990s it was by gyroscopes; not that many years before that it was done by reading the stars, as the land-based radio beacons used for navigation were out of range over large stretches of water.

Your route over the Atlantic is decided each day by ATC and depends on winds and weather. Routings going east will be constructed to take advantage of tailwinds from strong jet streams (upper-level winds of typically 241-322 km/h generally blowing from the west) to reduce the flight time, or conversely when going west to avoid headwinds. Areas of extreme thunderstorms may also need to be avoided.

With ATC there is no radar coverage as such, so we will need to tell the controller where we are at specified intervals. The VHF radio that we normally use to talk to air traffic control will be out of range so we use HF radio, which has less clear reception. In more recent years, pilots have been able to communicate by computer via satellite using text messages, which can also automatically send our position.

So the next time you are enjoying your G&T over the Atlantic, spare a thought for the planning and complexities involved in the journey. Rest assured, however, that in 25-plus years of making the crossing, I never diverted once. Cheers!

If you have a question you'd like to ask our pilot, email m.mroz@businessstraveller.com

The most common questions I get asked are what happens if anything goes wrong, and how I navigate

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