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May 2015

Global Traveler

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CHRISTCHURCH

GALWAY PUTS
THE MUSIC IN
THE NIGHT

PAST MEETS
PRESENT
IN **SOFIA**


RIYADH

INSIDE ONE OF THE WORLD'S
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BUDGET AIRLINES
REAL DEALS OR
NO-FRILLS NONSENSE?

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Way to Go?

Budget airlines. It's a subject that sparks debate among frequent travelers. Does the lower airfare justify the no-frills, in some cases bordering on draconian, experience? Is there an invisible line in the sky that determines the answer? Yes, if a flight is less than 90 minutes? Definitely no for flights of two hours or more? Have Europe's low-cost carriers replaced the continent's extensive (and highly functional) rail network as the preferred choice for intra-continental travel?

As U.S. legacy airlines continue their evolution and find ways to monetize à la carte service, will regional budget carriers discover a stronger following among travelers whose primary goal is to get from point A to point B at the lowest fare possible — especially as their once off-putting ancillary fees, like requiring payment for

a seat assignment or a carry-on bag — become the norm among traditional airlines?

It's an interesting conversation likely to pique engagement among both business and leisure travelers. Let the discussion begin: Check out "Value Added: Can budget airlines provide a competitive product for business travelers?" then weigh in with your thoughts at letters@globaltravelerusa.com or tweet your opinions using @gtmag.

When it comes to worldwide travel, we have you covered with articles about Riyadh, Denver, Santiago, Galway, Sofia, Christchurch, The Rhine and Seoul's Gangnam neighborhood. We also take a look at the ways social media is impacting the travel industry.

With *Global Traveler* in hand, get ready to explore the world.

Lisa Matte, Editor in Chief

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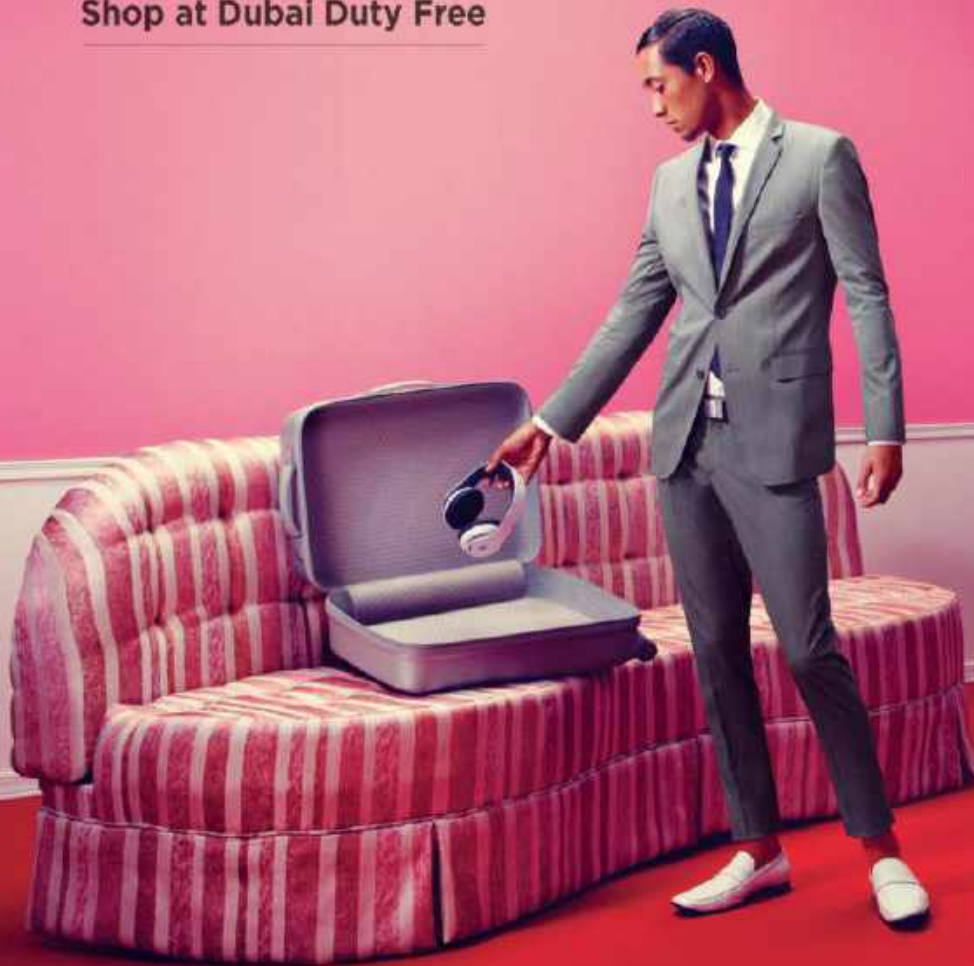
Global Traveler is published monthly by FXExpress Publications, Inc., 310 Floral Vale Blvd., Yardley, PA 19087. The U.S. subscription rate is \$42 for one year; \$79.96 for two years; \$121.95 for three years.

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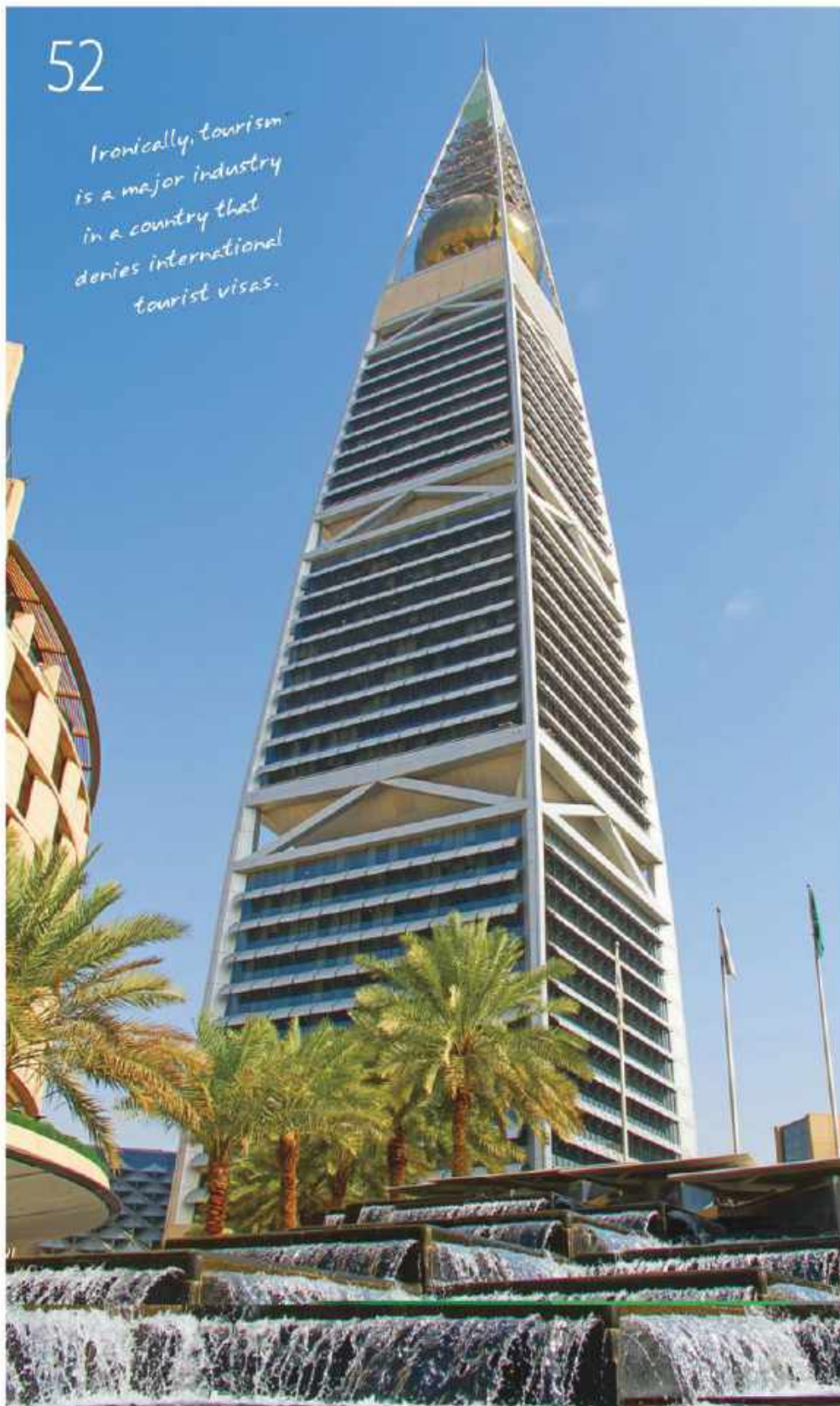
Full of surprises.

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is a major industry
in a country that
denies international
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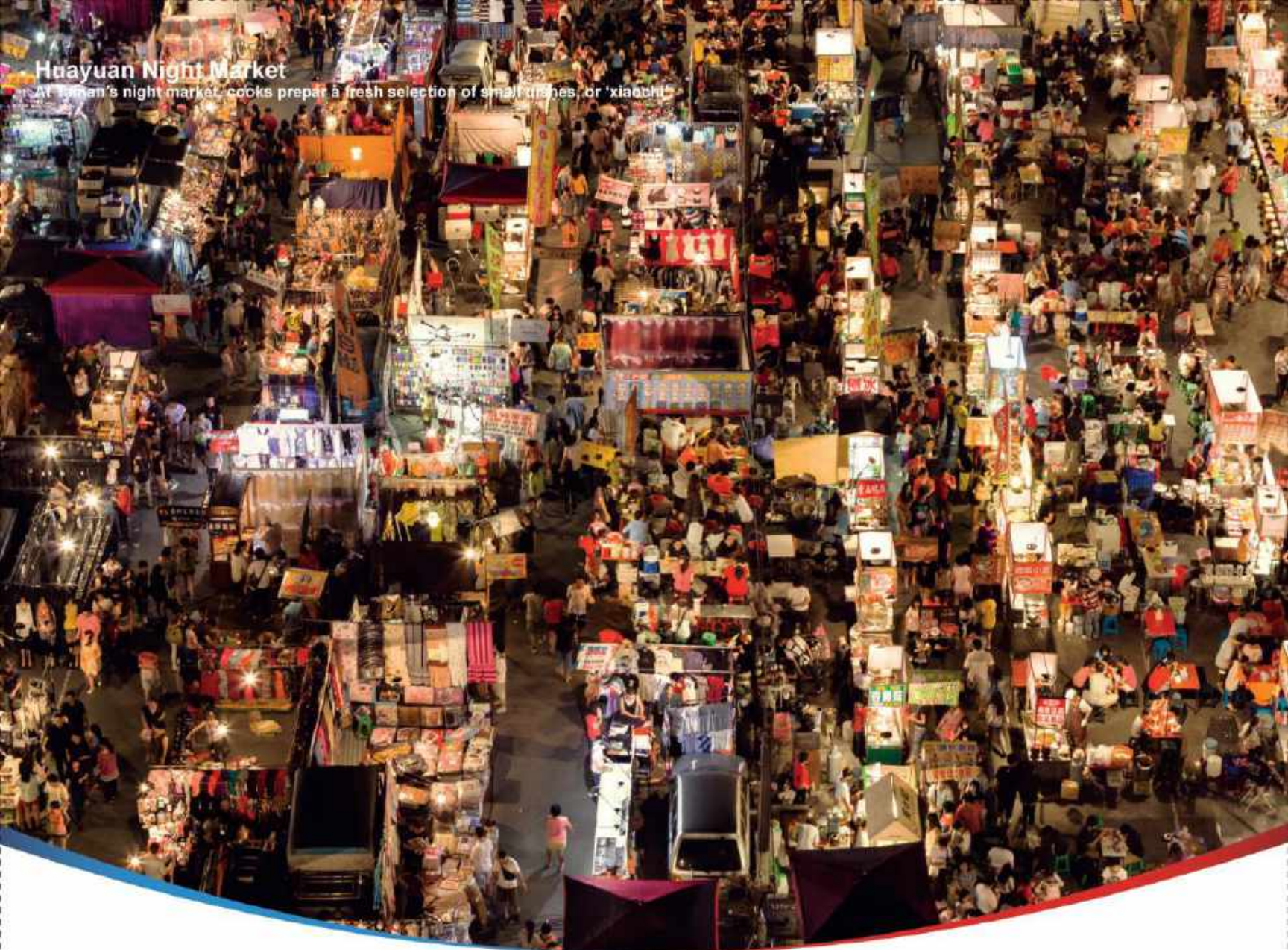


COVER PHOTO: KINGDOM TOWER IN RIYADH
PHOTO: © THINK DESIGN MANAGE | DREAMSTIME.COM

PHOTO: © SWISSHIPP | DREAMSTIME.COM

Huayuan Night Market

At Taiwan's night market, cooks prepare a fresh selection of small dishes, or 'xiaochi'.



The Heart of Food

Food for thought

For gastronomic adventurers, Taiwan offers plenty of surprises to savour. Whether it's sampling indigenous ingredients like the intense green kick of 'nine storey pagoda' basil, tucking into famous oyster omelettes at the night market, or discovering Michelin-starred morsels in the cities' sleek eateries, the abundance of local produce and rich ethnic history makes Taiwan the region's most inviting table. Make time to taste Taiwan.



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Taiwan

THE HEART OF ASIA



CHINA AIRLINES



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March Cover Battle

Our March issue included our annual GT Tested Reader Survey awards event recap, leaving us with a decision: Do we pick a cover honoring the event or a destination cover? In the end, the bright colors and striking mask of our Bangkok cover was the winner. Did you agree? Or did you prefer the picture of our Hall of Fame award?

Great cover! I agree with your decision; the two options — Bangkok or the award — cannot even be compared. The chosen cover is colorful and makes the reader do a double take at first glance. It's a bit frightening at first but overall celebratory — a unique, interesting dichotomy.

Leanne Smart, via email

The Wellesley

I stayed at The Wellesley in January, and I was delighted to see Richard T. Evans' review of the hotel in the March issue. I agree completely that the Jazz Lounge and its "Live at The Wellesley" shows are a true highlight of the stay. The Oval Restaurant is also a must-visit during a stay.

Scott Kulsy, Atlanta, Ga.

Art of the Deal

Thanks to astute Global Traveler reader Hans-Peter Senn who pointed out an error in 9-5: Zürich (February 2015). We dropped a word and inadvertently identified Zürich as the Swiss capital. We meant Swiss commercial capital. — Editor

Why Four Seasons?

GT subscriber and Globility Board member Frank Reilly is a Four Seasons Hotels & Resorts devotee. He shares another great Four Seasons experience with us.

You simply must stay at the Four Seasons St. Petersburg. The property alone, a refurbished palace, is simply beautiful. However, it is the staff that make it. I have never seen this type of service before. At other Four Seasons, some of the staff would know my name. Here, they all did. But more than that, they remembered the name of my daughter — walking in the front door after being out for dinner, even the doorman would say, "Good evening, Miss McKenzie."

Contact GT

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Thoughts on a recent GT article?

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Which Would You Pick?

This is a photo of our alternate cover choice for the May 2015 issue. Which destination should we highlight this month? Do you like the cover we chose better or this option? Share your thoughts; did we make the right choice?

Email letters@globaltravelerusa.com.

globaltravelerusa.com

GT Tested

The Wellesley

Reviewed by Richard T. Evans

After a quick trip to the Wellesley in January, I was delighted to see Richard T. Evans' review of the hotel in the March issue. I agree completely that the Jazz Lounge and its "Live at The Wellesley" shows are a true highlight of the stay. The Oval Restaurant is also a must-visit during a stay.

The Wellesley is a historic hotel that has been completely renovated. The hotel is a true highlight of the stay. The Oval Restaurant is also a must-visit during a stay.

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- 10. The Oval Restaurant is also a must-visit during a stay.

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mail call

By the second morning at breakfast they knew I wanted tea and orange juice, and McKenzie, orange juice and still water. But the service level really helped me with a particular issue. I unfortunately herniated a disk in my back just before this trip. Leaning over to pack is difficult, so the staff packed for me. Upon leaving, I asked about a porter at the airport and they told me there are not any. We were using the house car to get to the airport, so the driver immediately said not to worry about it as he would take care of us. Not only did he put the bags on the trolley when we arrived but also walked us into the airport, took the bags off for the X-ray, put them back on and then took them off again at the check-in desk and waited until they had processed all four bags. That is what I call service, and that is why I am a dedicated, loyal Four Seasons customer.

Frank Reilly, San Diego, Calif.

China Airlines

Another Globility Board member, Dot Wood, is an avid supporter of GT's charity, The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society. In 2014, Wood was the highest bidder on China Airlines tickets in our annual travel auction. She agrees with us here at GT that the airline offers a superb experience from beginning to end.

Checking in at JFK after a long train ride from Virginia, we were excited for our China Airlines journey, but we were met with news the flight was delayed until the next morning because of illness of a pilot. Not only did the airline offer accommodations for the night, they apologized for the delay. The charming station manager was waiting to greet guests with an explanation. Many times with delays airlines offer accommodations but rarely with such a caring apology.

The next morning, we started the 17-hour flight. The new Boeing 777 was absolutely beautiful with fully reclining seats and an abundance of storage areas. The flight attendants were numerous in business class and immediately made everyone comfortable. The menu was, of course, from the night before; however, the late-night snack served at 8 a.m. was delicious and was followed in about four hours with dinner. A complete breakfast was served before landing.

The stand-up bar area was fully stocked with a Nespresso coffeemaker, tea, wine, noodles and many snacks. It seemed to be a popular place for passengers to stretch their legs, and we met passengers

from around the world here. It was interesting to see a window in the spotless bathroom.

On our return flight two weeks later, the station manager greeted us and remembered the delay. It is a treat to have an airline treat you as a valued guest!

Dot Wood, Virginia Beach, Va.

Lifetime Status

I have been a loyal Hilton HHonors Diamond member for many years. I stay at Marriott as a secondary hotel. I have to say, Hilton has been very good to us through the years.

Just recently someone told me Marriott has a program that awards you your status for life if you earn so many points and stays. I thought Hilton would have the same program. I was surprised to hear Marriott did and to learn Hilton did not.

I like Hilton and was treated well through the years, but I am now working at getting my status at Marriott as well.

Jim Mazurek, via email

Revenue-Based Loyalty Models

In the March 11 issue of eFlyer USA, we reported on which types of travelers will benefit most from airlines' shift to revenue-based frequent-flyer programs from mileage-based programs. We asked: Will you be disadvantaged or better off? Will you change your booking behaviors? What are your thoughts on the shift?

Frequent business travelers, who are driven more by the schedule than price, will most benefit from this. For the leisure travelers, who typically consider price as their priority, they will get fewer miles than before.

I flew 3,306 miles recently. As a United 1K member (miles times two), I would typically get 6,612 award miles. Because I paid \$754 for this trip, I received 8,294 award miles (price times 11).

With fares still on the rise, I think many will benefit from this new rewards program ... I'm not going to worry about it. To me, the premier qualification/status is still more important. The more you fly and elevate your status, the more points your money will be multiplied.

Celeste Linhard, Parker, Colo.

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High-Tech Hilton

Global Traveler's Francis X. Gallagher, publisher and CEO, and Olivia Falcione, advertising manager, recently met with Jeff Diskin, executive vice president, commercial services, Hilton Worldwide, to present the three awards Hilton won at the annual GT Tested Reader Survey awards, including Best Domestic Hotel Chain, and discuss what's new with the innovative company and its high-tech hospitality.

To provide guests with more choice and control over their entire hotel stay, Hilton became the first hospitality company to offer room selection and customization via mobile- and web-based floor plans last summer. Guests at more than 4,000 hotels across its portfolio of 11 brands in more than 80 countries now have access to digital check-in and room selection from either digital floor plans or lists via members' Hilton HHonors accounts. With the innovative new digital tool, you can pull up hotel maps and photos of your room and even check the view from a window or balcony.

Committed to a pioneering digital strategy, Hilton is also revolutionizing the way guests enter hotel rooms with unique mobile-key technology services. The hotel company will offer guests at all U.S. hotels across four brands the ability to use mobile devices as room keys by the end of this year, with plans to roll out the convenient functionality across 11 brands globally in 2016.

Hilton is introducing new services to attract and cater to the ever-growing number of Chinese tourists, estimated to reach more than 200 million by 2020. The hotel company is committed to customizing the hospitality experience with its Huanying program, providing a 24-hour interpretation service; dedicated Mandarin television channels; traditional Chinese breakfast options; and in-room amenities including tea kettles, jasmine tea and slippers. Many properties offer Mandarin-speaking team members as well. Hilton plans to expand its Huanying program to more than 110 properties in 30 countries worldwide.

Making its debut later this year is Canopy by Hilton, the company's new lifestyle brand for travelers who value design, social areas and technology. The hotel concept will offer more included value by providing WiFi; an artisanal breakfast; a local welcome gift; and an evening tasting of local beer, wine or spirits. Eleven properties are under development in popular cities such as Portland, Ore.; London; Miami; San Diego; Nashville; Savannah; Indianapolis; Charlotte; Oklahoma City; Ithaca; and Washington, D.C.

Stay tuned for an upcoming GT review of Hilton's mobile-key technology service.

hilton.com



China Connections

As part of a large-scale expansion in North America, Hainan Airlines is boosting service on existing routes this month as well as introducing three new non-stop routes to the United States next month. After increasing service on Beijing routes to and from Boston (BOS), Seattle (SEA) and Chicago (ORD) from May 1, China's largest private airline will launch five-times-weekly service between Beijing (PEK) and San José (SJC) from June 15; three-times-weekly flights between Shanghai (PVG) and Boston from June 20; and four-times-weekly service between Shanghai and Seattle from June 22.

hainanairlines.com

American Expansion

American Airlines' Miami hub offers a new European connection this month with the launch of new non-stop service to Germany. From May 14, the carrier flies daily between Miami (MIA) and Frankfurt (FRA) with Boeing 767-300 aircraft. With the new route, American now has four daily peak season flights to Frankfurt from its hubs in Miami, Dallas (DFW), Charlotte (CLT) and Philadelphia (PHL).

American also adds Birmingham, England, to its ever-growing list of international destinations this month. From May 7, the carrier offers daily service from its hub at New York (JFK) to Birmingham (BHX) with Boeing 757 aircraft.

aa.com



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* According to the FlightStats social statistics service.

** According to ACAS statistics for July 2014, among airlines with active fleet of more than 100 aircraft.

*** Including Aeroflot Group flights and codeshare partners.



<http://manutd.aeroflot.com/top>

Roman Holiday

United Airlines began non-stop service between Chicago (ORD) and Rome (FCO) this month, serving the route on a seasonal basis May 16–Sept. 23. The service will begin with five weekly flights before increasing to daily from June 4. The schedule then shifts to six flights per week from Aug. 18. United's 269-seat Boeing 777 aircraft will operate the route, featuring eight flat-bed seats in Global First and 40 flat-bed seats in BusinessFirst. Chicago–Rome is one of several new trans-Atlantic routes United launches this summer, joining Newark (EWR)–Newcastle (NCL) starting May 23; Newark–Venice (VCE), beginning June 4; and Chicago–Dublin (DUB), commencing June 4.

united.com

Double Debut

Marriott International debuts two new luxury hotels in Macau this month — the all-suite Ritz-Carlton, Macau and JW Marriott Hotel Macau — set within the Galaxy Macau integrated resort. Serving as Asia's flagship hotel, the JW Marriott Hotel Macau offers 1,015 guestrooms and suites featuring views of the famous Cotai Strip as well as ample meeting and event space; multiple Cantonese, regional and international dining options; and access to Galaxy Macau's Grand Resort Deck, including the world's largest rooftop wave pool, the world's longest rooftop rapids and a 250-ton white-sand beach.

The Ritz-Carlton, Macau features more than 250 suites set on the top floors of the integrated resort. In addition to offering Cantonese fare and innovative fine dining, the luxury hotel includes a relaxing outdoor pool with views over Cotai, intimate poolside cabanas, an ESPA and event spaces. Once open, the new hotels join the existing Galaxy Macau, Okura Macau and Banyan Tree Macau in the integrated resort.

marriott.com

New England Expansion

Boston (BOS) becomes Cathay Pacific's eighth destination in North America this month, joining Chicago (ORD), Los Angeles (LAX), New York (JFK), Newark (EWR), San Francisco (SFO), Toronto (YYZ) and Vancouver (YVR). Launching May 2, the route becomes the first-ever regularly scheduled non-stop passenger service between New England and Hong Kong (HKG). The 16-hour flight is scheduled to run four days per week with four-cabin Boeing 777-300ER aircraft.

cathaypacific.com



PHOTO: © WANDERVOLE IMAGES | DREAMSTIME.COM

Route Boost

To cater to continuously growing travel between China and the United States, the largest carrier between the two countries is growing its presence in North America with additional flights between Beijing (PEK) and Los Angeles (LAX). Air China will offer four flights per week May 2–June 30 before increasing the service to daily July 1–Oct. 24. Boeing 777-300ER aircraft will operate the route, featuring full-flat seats in first and business classes as well as a central bar. In addition to Los Angeles, the airline's North American network includes New York (JFK), Houston (IAH), San Francisco (SFO), Washington (IAD), Vancouver (YVR) and Hawai'i (HNL).

airchina.com

Fit for Royalty

Uniworld Boutique River Cruise Collection launched its newest Super Ship, *S.S. Maria Theresa*, this spring, joining sister ships *S.S. Antoinette* and *S.S. Catherine*, two of the most luxurious vessels on Europe's waterways. A floating palace on water fashioned in the spirit of her regal namesake, Empress Maria Theresa, the ship boasts classically Baroque interiors as well as lavishly appointed river-view staterooms and suites with open-air and French balconies and staterooms with made-to-order English Savoir beds and marble bathrooms. The 150-person vessel sails the line's all-inclusive European Jewels, Danube Holiday Markets and Enchanting Christmas & New Year's Cruise itineraries this year.

uniworld.com

Capital Connections

Aer Lingus grows its trans-Atlantic reach this month with a new North American destination and expanded capacity to existing destinations. From May 1, the carrier offers capital-to-capital connections with new service between Dublin (DUB) and Washington (IAD) four times per week. Its summer 2015 schedule also includes a daily flight from Dublin to San Francisco (SFO), up from five weekly, and the addition of a third daily flight from Dublin to New York (JFK) from June through August. From May 1, Aer Lingus also offers four flights to Orlando

(MCO) from Dublin and a 20 percent increase in capacity on its Shannon (SNN) to Boston (BOS) route. Customers flying trans-Atlantic routes have access to the airline's new business class, featuring new, custom-designed Vantage seats that convert into full lie-flat beds.

aerlingus.com

Iceland Addition

Icelandair makes Portland (PDX) its newest destination in the United States this month, launching seasonal service to its hub at Keflavik (KEF) near the Icelandic capital of Reykjavik beginning May 20. The carrier flies between the two cities through Oct. 21 with three-cabin Boeing 757 aircraft. Portland becomes Icelandair's 14th market in the United States and Canada, joining year-round service to Boston (BOS), New York (JFK), Washington (IAD), Seattle (SEA), Denver (DEN), Toronto (YYZ) and Edmonton (YEG) and seasonal service to Newark (EWR), Minneapolis-St. Paul (MSP), Orlando (SFB), Vancouver (YVR), Halifax (YHZ) and Anchorage (ANC). Oregon's Portland International Airport will receive a second new trans-Atlantic route next month from German discount carrier Condor, launching non-stop flights to Frankfurt (FRA).

icelandair.com

condor.com

deals



PHOTO: © HUYTONT/ART | DREAMSTIME.COM

Ride in Style

On your next trip to South Korea, combine business with leisure and enjoy an adventurous family getaway to Grand Hyatt Incheon, offering a deal with a visit to Asia's first BMW Driving Center, set just 20 minutes from the property and featuring a variety of driving tracks, exhibits and a junior campus for kids. Available through June 30, the Driving BMW promotion provides overnight accommodations, breakfast for two adults and up to two children and free access to the BMW Driving Center's off-road course and junior campus, featuring interesting programs designed specifically for children. Guests can also enjoy complimentary access to the hotel's swimming pools, fitness center and sauna. Set three minutes away from Incheon International Airport close to downtown Seoul, Songdo International Business District and the Incheon Free Economic Zone, the 5-star Grand Hyatt Incheon is the largest Hyatt property outside North America, boasting 1,022 guestrooms as well as excellent facilities for family getaways, including three swimming pools and an outdoor playground. Rates for the promotion start from approximately \$321 per night.

incheon.grand.hyatt.com

F&B Credit

Hyatt Gold Passport launched a new promotion offering a complimentary food and beverage voucher for stays at select hotels in Australia. Through June 30, book a minimum stay of two nights using the Hyatt daily rate with special offer code AUS100 and receive a AUD 100 food and beverage credit (approximately \$79) at participating properties, including Park Hyatt Hotel Canberra, Park Hyatt Melbourne, Park Hyatt Sydney, Grand Hyatt Melbourne and Hyatt Regency Perth.

hyatt.com

Book Early, Save Big

Reserve your stay in New York City ahead of time and enjoy Big Apple savings with advance purchase promotional rates at select Marriott hotels through Aug. 31. Book early and pre-pay to receive up to 15 percent off regular rates at participating properties, including locations in Brooklyn, East Elmhurst and New York. Dates must be reserved from three to 21 days in advance of stay with promotional code ADV. Reservations must be prepaid and are non-refundable.

marriott.com

globaltravelerusa.com

Savings, Plus Breakfast

Members of the Starwood Preferred Guest loyalty program can enjoy 35 percent off rack rates and daily breakfast for two at participating Starwood Hotels & Resorts in North America for stays booked and completed through June 30. Valid for stays Thursday through Sunday at hotels and all days of the week at resorts with rate plan SPG35B. Members who book through Starwood's websites will also receive free standard Internet. Some properties offer a daily food and beverage credit in lieu of continental breakfast, with value of the credit varying by property. Advance reservations required.

spg.com

Free Hertz Certificate

Visit a Gaylord Hotels resort on select dates and receive up to \$100 in Hertz certificates for future rentals. Book a stay at participating properties by Aug. 31 in Florida, Maryland, Tennessee or Texas to earn a \$50 Hertz certificate per night, for a maximum of \$100 per stay. Valid for travel through Sept. 7 with promotional code H30.

gaylordhotels.com

rewards

Triple and Quintuple Miles

Choice Privileges features an offer for members of American Airlines' AAdvantage and United Airlines' MileagePlus frequent-flyer loyalty programs on qualifying stays at participating properties this spring. Members can earn quintuple miles (250 base + 1,000 bonus) at Cambria Hotels & Suites locations as well as triple miles (250 base + 500 bonus) at all other Choice Hotels brands through June 15. To earn, provide your American Airlines AAdvantage number or United MileagePlus number at check-in or in your Choice Privileges account as your earning preference.

choicehotels.com

aa.com

united.com

Double Your HHonors

Hilton HHonors launched its Double Your HHonors promotion, offering double points or double miles with any of its more than 60 airline partners on stays at participating hotels in the Hilton Worldwide portfolio through May 31. Hilton HHonors members must first register online prior to check-out of their first stay within the promotion period. To earn double miles, you must select Points and Miles as your Double Dip earning style and a preferred airline in your HHonors profile.

hhonors.com/double

Coast to Coast

To celebrate its refreshing new coast-to-coast onboard experience, JetBlue offers double TrueBlue points this spring for transcontinental flights, featuring world-class seats, new entertainment systems, up to 100 free channels of DirecTV, in-seat power access and Fly-Fi. The promotion is valid for direct flights between Los Angeles (LAX) or San Francisco (SFO) and New York (JFK) through May 27. Offer excludes Mint seats. To earn double points, frequent-flyer loyalty program members must register online for the TrueBlue promotion prior to booking eligible travel.

trueblue.jetblue.com/web/trueblue/2xtranscon

The Ritz-Carlton, Hong Kong

Reviewed by Carly Allen

Arrival/Check-In: I arrived in Hong Kong on a pleasant Thursday afternoon. Due to Occupy Central protesting, I expected some traffic; however, it took only about 40 minutes to travel from Hong Kong Airport to The Ritz-Carlton. The hotel is located on the top floors of the International Commerce Centre in Kowloon, giving a feel of class, business and amazing views. Valets personally greet you at the drive and escort you to the elevator, where you're directed to the 103rd floor. The vast lobby opens into dark marble, wood and soft lighting, and it bustles with guests. Just to the left is the concierge; within minutes I was pleasantly checked in, given instructions to the club level and taken to my room on the 116th floor.



Guest Quarters: My Grand Victoria Harbour room was amazing. Walking into the room, I first noticed the panoramic views and light spilling in from the windows. The natural light plays off the combination of dark wood furniture accents and cream carpets. The king-sized bed dominates the right side of the room with its 400-thread-count linens, down pillows and dreamy mattress that offers an excellent night's sleep. A 42-inch flat-screen TV faces the bed; a marble console built into the wall under the TV runs along the entire side of the room, offering a place to hold your many incidentals. The large desk sits in front of the windows, with numerous electrical outlets and a desk lamp.

The full marble bathroom features an open concept with bright lighting. The cream-accented double sink offers plenty of space for personal items, and extra lighting surrounds the over-sized mirror. The vanity offers multiple outlets, but be careful — the socket blew out my hair tool. Ritz-Carlton's specialized Aspry amenities have a rich citrus scent, delicate and not overwhelming for female guests. The large, stand-alone shower includes a rainforest showerhead, always a favorite of mine. Frosted glass separates the shower and toilet rooms.

Services/Amenities: The Ritz-Carlton's renowned club

level lives up to its name at the Hong Kong property. Situated on one of the top floors of the skyscraper, the club lounge features floor-to-ceiling windows with views of the harbor and skyline. Club guests have all-day use of a buffet area, a lounge section and a library and meeting room. I took advantage of the great breakfast and, even better, lunch/tea service a few times during my stay.

The 24-hour fitness center on the top floor is unmatched at any other Hong Kong property. Guests can run on the many treadmills or swim in the lap pool with full views of the city — quite an incentive to stay awhile.

The hotel also offers premium dining experiences, including Tosca, a unique take on Italian cuisine. Be sure to check out OZONE, a lounge/bar, promoted as the highest bar in the world, which you can access via an elevator off the lobby floor. The outdoor bar and seating area is a treat and a perfect place to relax after a day of meetings.

The Experience: During my entire stay, staff greeted me with a sincere "Hello Ms. Allen," which made me feel special amid the constant rush of doing business in Hong Kong. The hotel is centrally located to most of Kowloon; although not really within walking distance, the MTR is close, and taxis can take you across the harbor quickly. The International Commerce Centre is connected to a high-end mall with premium shopping and even more restaurants to try. Overall, I enjoyed a perfect stay and look forward to a return visit.

GT CHECKLIST

- ☑ Doorman/valet
- ☑ Less than 10 minutes for check-in
- ☑ Separate tub and shower
- ☑ Large vanity
- ☑ High-quality towels
- ☑ Powerful, unattached hair dryer
- ☑ High-quality bed linens
- ☑ Large, flat-screen television
- ☑ Large desk with convenient outlets
- ☑ Large, complimentary laptop safe
- ☑ Complimentary in-room WiFi
- ☑ Complimentary bottled water
- ☑ Stocked minibar
- ☑ Ample lighting
- ☑ In-room coffeemaker
- ☑ Iron and ironing board
- ☑ On-site restaurant and bar
- ☑ 24-hour room service
- ☑ 24-hour state-of-the-art fitness center
- ☑ Turn-down service

The Ritz-Carlton, Hong Kong
International Commerce Centre
1 Austin Road W.
Kowloon, Hong Kong
tel 852 2263 2263
ritzcarlton.com

PHOTO: © RITZ-CARLTON, HONG KONG



I ordered dove as an appetizer for one of our dinners, and Michael, our waiter, expressed concern for the mourning doves that live in the back area, where he takes his break — we all laughed.



The Bushmills Inn

Reviewed by Francis X. Gallagher

Arrival/Check-In: We left Belfast early so I could make my tee time at Royal Portrush, just a stone's throw from The Bushmills Inn. We pulled into the quaint parking area next to the inn and were able to check into one of our two rooms — a real plus, as we arrived many hours before the official check-in time. Within a few minutes, I was unloading the car and unpacking my clubs for my short drive to the course. My family relaxed at the inn, able to check into the other room in a couple of hours.

Guest Quarters: We were booked in two Mill House Deluxe rooms in a newer section of the inn with views of the River Bush, which is more like a fast-moving creek. This may be a newer section of the hotel, but the rooms are no less charming than the rest of the property.

Our room contained a queen-sized bed with lovely carved headboard and footboard, two matching night tables and a large window facing the river. On the opposite side of the room sat a comfortable stuffed loveseat and a functional desk and chair where I set up my base of operations. The rooms at the inn are named for famous past and present Irish whiskeys; ours were called "Cowan's" and "Hand in Hand."

The bathroom was absolutely fantastic with a light green color scheme and a large, old-fashioned soaking tub and separate shower. The "Irish country" motif featured a bowl

sink on top of a stone vanity top with the faucet protruding from the tiled wall and a vanity with wooden batten board doors, painted moss green. A deep, painted wooden shelf off the vanity housed towels and bath amenities by Elemis, a leading British spa and skin care company. Soap, shampoo, conditioner and body lotions enhanced the bath experience.

Services/Amenities: The Gas Bar offers a traditionally Irish venue for sipping a Guinness or a fine Irish whiskey. We enjoyed an Irish smoked salmon plate for lunch here one day, and it also provided a nice place to warm up after a day of touring.

The main restaurant at Bushmills is, in a word, wonderful. We looked forward to every meal, be it breakfast or dinner. Our dinner waiter, Michael, was ready for any request and served us with charm. Whether fish, fowl or meat, we found the cuisine exceptional, including a fine sampling of desserts.

The restaurant and bar décor speak of the history of the inn, which once housed chickens on the upper floors. Exposed wooden beams, fieldstone walls and woods with beautiful patinas decorate the many rooms.

The Experience: The Bushmills Inn is a special place and a must for any agenda in Northern Ireland. I can't think of a more charming and historical spot. It offers a perfect location for touring, very close to the Giant's Causeway, Carrick-a-Rede Rope Bridge, Dunluce Castle and Royal Portrush Golf Course. Or just relax at The Bushmills Inn and let them pamper you with their first-class service and style.

GT CHECKLIST

- ☐ Doorman/valet
- ☒ Less than 10 minutes for check-in
- ☒ Separate tub and shower
- ☒ Large vanity
- ☒ High-quality towels
- ☒ Powerful, unattached hair dryer
- ☒ Large, flat-screen television
- ☒ High-quality bed linens
- ☒ Large desk with convenient outlets
- ☒ Large, complimentary laptop safe
- ☒ Complimentary in-room WiFi
- ☒ Complimentary bottled water
- ☒ Stocked minibar
- ☒ Ample lighting
- ☒ In-room coffeemaker
- ☒ Iron and ironing board
- ☒ On-site restaurant and bar
- ☒ 24-hour room service
- ☐ 24-hour state-of-the-art fitness center
- ☒ Turn-down service

The Bushmills Inn

9 Dunluce Road
Bushmills, Co. Antrim
Northern Ireland BT57 8QG
tel 44 28 2073 3000
bushmillsinn.com

GT tested

Queen Mary 2

New York–Southampton

Reviewed by Richard T. Evans

Arrival/Check-In: The *Queen Mary 2*'s New York home port is the Brooklyn Cruise Terminal. I drove to the terminal and upon arrival found a scene of what looked to be pure chaos — private cars, limos and taxis arriving with outbound passengers and picking up folks who just disembarked from a ship that arrived that morning. I eventually got to where I could deposit my luggage with redcaps who made sure it got to where it should be. I then parked my car and proceeded to check-in. I was impressed at how friendly and efficient the check-in process was. I received a *QM2* credit card to be used on board and a group boarding number. Cunard has the boarding procedure down to a science, and I was soon on my way to my room, No. 4134 on Deck 4. My luggage arrived shortly thereafter, so I was ready to explore the ship.

Guest Quarters: My room included a king-sized bed, a love seat, a desk with desktop outlets and American and European plugs, a desk chair, a coffee table and a fridge. The bathroom was compact and included a shower with a handheld showerhead. The toiletries were Gilchrist & Soames. A cutout balcony featured two recliners and a coffee table.

Services/Amenities: The ship is classless except for the three Grill rooms and Grill lounges. Having a room on Deck 4 meant I dined in the Britannia Grill. (Queens Grill and Princess Grill are more exclusive.) Decks 2 and 3 are the main public areas/lobbies, which include the purser's desk, Cunard's travel agents for booking future cruises, duty-free shops, a casino, several restaurants/bars, the planetarium, the Royal Court Theatre, an art gallery, the Queens Room ballroom and the disco G32.

The ship offers a plethora of restaurants/bars/café's throughout. Two of my favorites were the Commodore Club in the bow on Deck 9, where you can have a drink and enjoy a fantastic view of the ocean as the ship plows through the seas, and the Chart Room on Deck 3, a watering hole which hosts a great jazz band every night. I love jazz, so I was in heaven! The gym and Canyon Ranch Spa are on Deck 7, which also offers several dining venues such as the Winter Garden (perfect for tea/coffee and nosh).

I spent a part of each morning in the Library in the bow on Deck 8, where you will also find the Bookshop. The Library stocks more than 8,000 volumes and offers a serene spot to while away an hour or two with your nose in a book or staring at the sea.

One thing, or should I say several things, I was not expecting to find on the *QM2*: dogs. Several times a day I met several companion dogs being walked on the Promenade Deck (Deck 7). In fact, there is a 12-dog kennel (Deck 12) always fully booked. I visited it and found a facility that any vet would approve of. The dogs I met were a happy, tail-wagging bunch, and each had its own life vest.

The Experience: When I was on board, Cunard was still celebrating the *QM2*'s 10th anniversary, so there were several notable individuals about who were instrumental in making the ship a reality. They were present at several receptions and approach-



able for a private chat. Every other evening was formal, so the ladies were in ball gowns and the gents in tuxes, which made the whole experience special.

There is so much to do on board, one review does not do the voyage justice. The nice thing is you can immerse yourself in all that is available, or you can sit and relax with a book or stare at the ocean. Experts in their fields conduct the lecture series and enrichment programs. If you love theater, a company of actors from the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art is there to entertain you. The food at all levels is excellent, from the grillrooms to the Todd English restaurant on Deck 8.

My brothers and several friends decided to take a trans-Atlantic crossing after hearing me rave about it. I sailed the eastbound New York-to-Southampton crossing. Now I want to experience the westbound.

GT CHECKLIST

- ☒ Doorman/valet
- ☒ Less than 10 minutes for check-in
- ☐ Separate tub and shower
- ☐ Large vanity
- ☒ High-quality towels
- ☐ Powerful, unattached hair dryer
- ☒ High-quality bed linens
- ☒ Large, flat-screen television
- ☒ Large desk with convenient outlets
- ☒ Large, complimentary laptop safe
- ☐ Complimentary in-room WiFi
- ☒ Complimentary bottled water
- ☐ Stocked minibar
- ☒ Ample lighting
- ☒ In-room coffeemaker
- ☒ Iron and ironing board
- ☒ On-site restaurant and bar
- ☒ 24-hour room service
- ☒ 24-hour state-of-the-art fitness center
- ☒ Turn-down service

Queen Mary 2

Cunard Line
cunard.com



United Airlines | BusinessFirst

Newark (EWR) to Shannon (SNN)

Reviewed by Wendy O'Dea

On the Ground: After arriving from LAX, I had a good chunk of time at Newark Liberty International Airport before departing on United Airlines flight 25 to Ireland, so I headed straight to the business-class lounge. The Terminal C lounge is the largest at EWR, offering plenty of seating, workstations, showers and a large bar area. I booted up my computer in one of the many private cubicle spaces — accessing the WiFi to check email and chat with family via Face Time — then headed to the main lounge to check out the provisions. The food options were snacks, consisting mainly of individually wrapped cheese and crackers, fruit and cereals. I was disappointed to find few gluten-free options (medically necessary for me), even upon request. At boarding time, I hoofed it to my gate and quickly boarded the Boeing 757-200 from the priority group line.

Pre-Flight: Flight attendants provided beverage service upon boarding, but they had already poured the last of the pre-flight Champagne before I arrived at my seat. I was requested to change seats to allow a couple to sit together and agreed without hesitation.

I had to move again mid-flight to provide an empty seat next to the pilot's rest seat (required under the new rest regulations) — inconvenient and somewhat annoying but obviously

important to ensure focused and well-rested pilots at the controls.

In-Flight: Meal service included an appetizer of sushi or salad; a main course of chicken, beef, fish or pasta; a cheese course with Port; and ice cream sundaes for dessert. Unfortunately, the gluten-free meal I'd requested was not available, even though I'd added it to my reservation and called twice to confirm before my trip. I did receive a gluten-free meal from the economy cabin that was quite good on the outbound flight; the one on the return trip was somewhat disappointing. However, gluten-free side dishes and a variety of snacks and fruit were available throughout the flight.

The roomy, 180-degree flat-bed seats made the six-hour overnight journey a comfortable one. A small footrest under the entertainment center, coupled with the leg riser, provided ample space for sleep. Pillows and blankets were sizeable and a better quality than those in other classes of service, and power sources for laptops and phones were located to the side of the headrest. Although the three-pronged outlet at my seat wouldn't power my laptop, I arrived with my phone — and body — fully charged.

The Experience: Despite some missteps, flying direct to Shannon was worth its weight in gold for traveling to western Ireland. I'd fly this United 757-200 again, assuming I would receive my requested meal. United flies from Newark year-round and from Chicago O'Hare seasonally (June 4–Aug. 17, 2015).

GT CHECKLIST

- ☐ Less than 10 minutes for check-in
- ☒ Friendly and helpful agents
- ☒ Priority tagged bags
- ☒ Airport lounge
- ☒ Complimentary in-lounge food
- ☒ Priority boarding
- ☒ Helpful and courteous flight attendants
- ☒ Pre-flight beverage service
- ☐ Pre-flight newspapers and magazines
- ☒ Extensive on-demand entertainment
- ☒ Amenity kits
- ☐ Slippers
- ☒ Lie-flat seat/bed
- ☐ Turn-down service
- ☒ In-flight menu with three entrée choices
- ☒ Top-shelf wine and liquors

United Airlines
united.com



Montage Beverly Hills

Reviewed by Rob Setzman

Arrival/Check-In: The 2014 GT Tested Awards gala took place in sunny Los Angeles, and I had the pleasure of staying at the beautiful Montage Beverly Hills during the trip. I arrived at the Montage on Sunday afternoon, and several members of the hotel staff greeted me as I stepped out of a taxi. The lobby was decorated for the holidays, and I admired an elaborate gingerbread house during the brief wait to check in. A staff member showed me to my room, and I settled in to the elegant space.

Guest Quarters: My room at the Montage was among the best I have stayed in and provided ample space to both work and relax. The marble bathroom featured a separate glass shower and bathtub and an intricately detailed vanity with two sinks. The large, walk-in closet provided an easy place to hang all my clothes as well as room to keep my bag out of sight. A cloud-like bed featured monogrammed pillows, and a panel next to the bed allowed me to control the window curtains. An ornate desk that doubled as a TV cabinet sat across from a comfortable L-shaped couch. A large, double-stemmed orchid adorned the full minibar.

Services/Amenities: The Montage offers all the amenities one expects at a posh Beverly Hills hotel. Dining options include a lobby-level bar with a great cocktail selection, a rooftop grill and the Italian restaurant Scarpetta from celebrity chef Scott Conant. The property also features a full-service hair salon as well as 24-hour concierge, laundry and dry cleaning, fitness facility and room service. Spa Montage is ready to pamper those who want to relax.

My favorite amenity was the courtesy car service, a Rolls-Royce Ghost — convenient for getting around Beverly Hills and driven by some of the friendliest folks I have met on the West Coast. Sean, the Monday morning driver, and I had a long conversation about football after we discovered we grew up not far from each other in Philadelphia.

The Experience: My experience at Montage Beverly Hills was second to none. The comfort of the room, amenities, overall aesthetics of the hotel and friendliness of the staff made for a fantastic stay. I would be happy to return and recommend it to anyone planning to travel to Los Angeles.

GT CHECKLIST

- ☒ Doorman/valet
- ☒ Less than 10 minutes for check-in
- ☒ Separate tub and shower
- ☒ Large vanity
- ☒ High-quality towels
- ☒ Powerful, unattached hair dryer
- ☒ High-quality bed linens
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- ☒ Large, complimentary laptop safe
- ☒ Complimentary in-room WiFi
- ☒ Complimentary bottled water
- ☒ Stocked minibar
- ☒ Ample lighting
- ☐ In-room coffeemaker
- ☐ Iron and ironing board
- ☒ On-site restaurant and bar
- ☒ 24-hour room service
- ☒ 24-hour state-of-the-art fitness center
- ☒ Turn-down service

Montage Beverly Hills

225 N. Canon Drive
Beverly Hills, CA 90210
tel 888 860 0788
montagehotels.com



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GLOBAL TRAVELER'S "BEST LEISURE AIRLINE" 2015



HAWAIIAN
— AIRLINES —

Michael Rutter | Chief Revenue Officer, Aer Lingus



Name: Michael Rutter
Title: Chief revenue officer
Company, city: Aer Lingus; Dublin, Ireland
Number of employees: 4,000
Recent project: Re-imagining and re-launch of Aer Lingus business class
First job: General secretary, U.K. students' union
Little-known fact about you: I ran the European launch of Ray-Ban's *Men in Black* campaign, dressing up as Tommy Lee Jones to deliver the launch show to 1,000 European opticians.

YOUR BUSINESS

Essential business philosophy: Treat business like sport. Inspire your team with clear goals and motivate each member differently depending on their needs. Lead by example; do and be seen doing, don't just delegate. Keep it simple and constantly ask what "good" looks like and what we need to do to be good.

Best way to keep a competitive edge: Set up a benchmarking approach with competitors across the globe and a listening process for feedback from at least 2 percent of your customer base every month. Become the customer; regularly fly the product and the competitive product, not as a VIP but as the punter. Foster a risk culture which supports blue-sky thinking. Such a culture allowed me to be the first to introduce baggage charges which transformed aviation profitability in 2005.

Yardstick of success: Shareholder return generated, our Net Promoter Score, the level of risk my team takes and the level of business my team generates

AS A TRAVELER

What is the most important item you take when traveling? My Wenger backpack as a carry-on, with compartments for power cables/plugs, MacBook/iPad/Kindle and other essentials

How do you spend your time on board? I largely spend my time working. In-flight WiFi keeps me productive; I am lucky Aer Lingus has WiFi across the Atlantic to keep me in control of things.

What is your favorite restaurant in the world? Jing Fong Restaurant, New York City; I love dim sum and old, chaotic Cantonese restaurants.

What is your favorite destination in the world? La Manga Club, Murcia, Spain, where we bought a house; I've watched my kids grow up there, and I can kick back and forget the everyday pressures.

ABOUT YOUR BRAND

Aer Lingus recently debuted a refreshed business-class product. Tell our readers about the new cabin.

The stunning new business cabin features a 6-foot, 5-inch fully lie-flat bed; quiet nighttime flights; a best of modern Ireland food platform; a new 16-inch HD touch-screen entertainment system with major increases in film and TV content; free WiFi across the Atlantic; and fantastic in-seat features including laptop storage and massage functions. Aer Lingus remains the best value business class between Europe and North America (prices are 20 percent below the European average) but now with no compromise on product.

What can premium travelers expect from the on-the-ground experience?

First, a new arrivals lounge opened at Dublin Airport with facilities for showering, changing and pressing clothes, allowing business-class passengers to freshen up. A dedicated business-class check-in area will be unveiled at Dublin Airport. A brand-new business-class lounge opening at JFK's Terminal 5 offers the airline's first pre-dine service for business-class guests. Finally, guests can pre-clear U.S. Immigration and Customs in Dublin and Shannon airports, saving hours and avoiding lines upon arrival in the United States. Ireland is uniquely positioned to take advantage of this service; nowhere else in Europe offers it, making Dublin a great choice as a European transit gateway.

What can North American travelers look forward to from a visit to Ireland in 2015? My top 10: Literary Dublin, Killarney National Park, The Wild Atlantic Way, Rock of Cashel, Kilmarnock Gaol, Brú na Bóinne, Giant's Causeway, Dingle Peninsula, Cliffs of Moher and a perfect pint with perfect music



- ✓ Arnold Palmer
- ✓ Jack Nicklaus
- ✓ Lee Trevino
- ✓ Phil Mickelson
- ✓ Fred Couples
- ✓ Raymond Floyd
- ✓ Hale Irwin
- ✓ Paul Azinger
- ✓ Lee Janzen
- ✓ Fuzzy Zoeller
- ✓ Gary McCord
- ✓ Craig Stadler
- ✓ Andy North
- ✓ Chris Dimarco
- ✓ Rocco Mediate
- ✓ Billy Andrade
- ✓ Hunter Mahan
- ✓ Brandt Snedeker
- ✓ Mike Tirico
- ✓ George Blaha
- ✓ Paul W. Smith
- ✓ Charlie Rymer
- ✓ Matt Ginella
- ✓ Glen Rice
- ✓ Jerome Bettis

Our Guest List Has Some Serious Lineage – One Look At Our Spectacular Courses & You'll See Why!

When you look at a guest list of people who can stay and play anywhere in the world, it tells you something about the pedigree of the resort they choose.

Spectacular golf, world-class instruction, spa, downhill skiing, snowmobiling, meetings and fairytale weddings are just some of the reasons people visit Treetops Resort. Let's start with golf for Treetops Resort, it is truly the Midwest's "Must Play" resort and arguably the best collection of golf anywhere in the country. Our awards and accolades from the nations top golf and travel publications seem to agree.

Treetops Resort is home to 81 holes of Championship Golf and features five distinctly different courses by renowned designers Robert Trent Jones Sr, Tom Fazio and Rick Smith. Dramatic views, contours and rolling terrain provide a beautiful setting for world-class golf.

In addition to our four championship courses, Rick Smith's par three layout has received national recognition since it opened, consistently ranked as the #1 Par Three Course in America. It's the perfect setting for your most spectacular emergency nine ever!



855-231-8789 :: Treetops.com
3962 Wilkinson Road, Gaylord, MI 49735-9800

Packing a Punch | The best things really do come in small packages.

BY ALEXANDRA KIRKMAN



Mazzo Mobile PowerDrive Slim

This sleek, new, pocket-sized, certified hard drive amps up the power for iOS devices with more than 15 hours of backup charging and 128 GB backup storage. While it boasts the same amp output as Apple iPad chargers and the same core processor as the iPhone 5s, it features a built-in app for managing files between devices. Save your files, such as several full-length movies and music, to your devices and access them through your iPhone, iPad or iPod while traveling. The PowerDrive app lets you manage files with just a tap. Available in 16 GB, 32 GB, 64 GB or 128 GB. From \$79.

mazzomobile.com

Samsung ATIV Book 9

The most streamlined Book 9 ever, Samsung's latest Ultrabook weighs in at a feather-light 2 pounds and a blade-thin 0.46 inches, with an Intel Broadwell Core M processor designed for ultra-portable devices and a battery life of up to 10.5 hours, making it a mobile user's dream. Its ergonomic keyboard offers comfortable, efficient mobile typing, while its WiFi Amp enables Internet connection speeds up to 20 percent faster. With seamless sharing between devices, effortlessly share files and make and receive phone calls from the unit without having your mobile device on hand. A WQXGA (2560 x 1600) display and integrated Digital Natural Image Engine technology provide discernibly sharper text, images and video content. From \$1,199.99.

samsung.com



B&O PLAY Beolit 15 Bluetooth Speaker

Drawing upon the storied Danish brand's reputation as the go-to source for serious audiophiles, Bang & Olufsen unveils its latest Bluetooth speaker, a portable powerhouse. With 24 hours of continuous playtime from a single battery charge, True360 omni-directional sound and top-notch materials like anodized aluminum and full-grain leather, it pairs the best of Scandinavian design with unparalleled performance. Bring the Beolit anywhere you want — its 240 watts of peak power pack enough punch to fill the largest of rooms. \$599.

beoplay.com



Helios Smart Solar Charger

The first solar-powered charger designed for on-the-go use, the pocket-sized Helios Smart charges three times faster than any other portable solar charger, capturing enough energy in just 90 minutes of direct sunlight to fully juice a standard smartphone (compared to nine to 10 hours for standard solar chargers). Designed with a patent-pending tri-fold style and ultra-high-efficiency solar panels, it can charge your mobile device in a variety of real-life settings, from a windowsill to a table at an outdoor café to a car's passenger seat while you're driving. And if solar isn't always an option, it includes two USB ports for charging devices the old-fashioned way. \$159.

solpro.com



PHOTOS: © MAZZO MOBILE, © SAMSUNG, © BEOPLAY.COM, © HELIOS

South of the Border | Enjoy AsomBroso's top tequila, made from 100 percent blue agave. BY EUNICE FRIED



Tequila takes its name from the town of Tequila in the Mexican state of Jalisco.

Tequila has come a long way in a short time. From a low-priced, shudder-producing, raw alcohol, many have moved up the quality scale to become everything they were not before. All tequila is made from the blue agave plant, grown in Mexico and produced in the state of Jalisco and a few surrounding areas. But whereas less expensive *mixto* contains a minimum of 51 percent blue agave, premium tequila is made 100 percent of the plant. And while cheaper tequila is aged solely in used bourbon casks, the elite is often aged in such containers as used Bordeaux and Napa Valley barrels.

Tequila comprises four main categories. Blanco (also called silver, platinum or plata) is a clear tequila aged less than two months. Golden-shaded reposado is aged from two to 12 months. Añejo, the color of whiskey, is aged one to three years. The fourth category, added by the Tequila Regulatory Council in 2006, is extra añejo, aged more than three years.

And that is where AsomBroso, a small, family-owned tequila maker, comes in.

Tasting three of AsomBroso's extensive line, all 40 percent

alcohol, I began with El Platino, or silver, the base of the entire AsomBroso line. Water-clear, it presents an aroma that reminds one of herbs with a mild almond and orange undertone. The smooth body accompanies a flavorful taste reminiscent of vanilla and a slight touch of anise, followed by an aftertaste that lingers. The least expensive of this upscale brand, El Platino sells for \$75.

La Rosa Reposado, aged in Bordeaux oak, features a delicate pink tone and an equally delicate, aromatic nose. In the mouth, it is full and supple with a light sweetness and a floral undertone. Price: \$85.

And from AsomBroso's Ultra-Premium collection I tasted The Collaboration. A tawny-shaded tequila, The Collaboration is aged 11 years, partly in American oak barrels that previously held the Cabernet Sauvignon of Silver Oak Cellars in Napa Valley. The inviting, complex aroma evokes a mingling of vanilla, caramel and butterscotch. The texture is full, round and velvety smooth, and the finish leaves a long memory. Presented in a crystal decanter housed in a humidor, it is priced at \$1,800.

And these are only three of AsomBroso's premium tequilas.



A REDEFINED IMAGE

FIESTA AMERICANA PUTS A NEW FACE TO MEXICAN HOSPITALITY.

FIESTA AMERICANA, MEXICO'S most recognized hotel brand, embodies the best in architecture, traditional Mexican hospitality, service and consistency — with a liberated, cutting-edge sensibility. At the end of 2014, the brand renewed its image, modernizing the concept while remaining committed to guests, and to ensuring a great time for the whole family.

The fresh Fiesta Americana concept introduced the Show Kitchen, bringing adventure to dining and

a feast for the guest's every sense. Acclaimed firm Niz + Chauvet redesigned the guestrooms and common spaces, focusing on comfortable furniture presented in a sophisticated style. Large communal spaces foster rest, relaxation, entertainment and work. The refreshed concept debuted with Fiesta Americana Cozumel All Inclusive.

Fiesta Americana Hotels & Resorts' thriving collection of 5-star hotels can be found in Mexico's top cities, including Monterrey, Mexico City, Cancún

and Los Cabos, offering travelers bustling big-city properties and top-notch beach resorts. Travelers can always expect upscale amenities, state-of-the-art technology and facilities and consistent quality. Fiesta Americana delivers everything needed for a productive stay, no matter its purpose.

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NEXT TIME YOU TRAVEL, STAY WITH US
FIESTA AMERICANA, IT'S A PLEASURE

Having a Ball

The Second Annual Red & White Ball raises funds on behalf of The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society of Eastern Pennsylvania.

BY KIMBERLY KROL | PHOTOS BY CHRISTOPHER P. OTTAUNICK

On Saturday, March 22, the Second Annual Red & White Ball was held in Philadelphia on behalf of The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society of Eastern Pennsylvania. More than 450 attendees from the greater Philadelphia area enjoyed the event, which included a silent auction, a Mercedes-Benz raffle and live entertainment from Love 77.

Global Traveler's publisher and CEO Francis X. Gallagher served as co-chair of the event, helping raise \$500,000 for the fight against leukemia, lymphoma and myeloma. LLS is the world's largest and fastest-growing voluntary health organization dedicated to funding blood cancer research, education, patient services and advocacy for life-saving treatments.

Held at The Westin Philadelphia, one of the evening's biggest highlights was Karlee Hofmann, a 15-year-old acute lymphoblastic leukemia survivor. Karlee shared her inspiring journey with the crowd as the event's Mission Moment honoree. Attendees participated in the live Mission Moment, donating more than \$35,000 to the cause in just minutes in Karlee's honor.

One lucky winner walked away with a brand-new Mercedes 2015 GLA250 4MATIC SUV, donated by local Mercedes-Benz dealerships, while others bid in the silent auction, featuring more than 150 packages. All had a great night, especially the *Global Traveler* staff in attendance, enjoying delicious food, drinks and entertainment in support of an excellent cause.

1. Matt Breidenstein, campaign specialist, Team in Training, Leukemia & Lymphoma Society of Eastern Pennsylvania; Gregory Seitter, director of marketing and communications, Leukemia & Lymphoma Society of Eastern Pennsylvania; Janet Butler, director of operations, Leukemia & Lymphoma Society of Eastern Pennsylvania; Ellen Rubesin, executive director, Leukemia & Lymphoma Society of Eastern Pennsylvania; Katie Bolton, senior campaign manager, Light the Night, Leukemia & Lymphoma Society of Eastern Pennsylvania; Vanessa Broome, administrative assistant, Leukemia & Lymphoma Society of Eastern Pennsylvania; Lauren Ianucci, director, Light the Night, Leukemia & Lymphoma Society of Eastern Pennsylvania; Katie Freind, director, Team in Training and School & Youth, Leukemia & Lymphoma Society of Eastern Pennsylvania; Sarah Hopkins, senior campaign manager, Man & Woman of the Year, Leukemia & Lymphoma Society of Eastern Pennsylvania

2. Allison Rosta; Karlee Hofmann, 2015 Mission Moment Honoree, Red & White Ball Philadelphia

3. Michele Gallagher; Francis X. Gallagher, publisher and CEO, *Global Traveler* and co-chair, Red & White Ball Philadelphia; Laura Gallagher

4. Rob Setzman, digital sales manager, *Global Traveler*; Jenna Leibowitz



With the help of the Global Traveler team, our readers and travel industry partners, the Second Annual Red & White Ball raised \$500,000 for The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society of Eastern Pennsylvania.



1. George Hofmann, co-chair, Red & White Ball Philadelphia; Francis X. Gallagher, publisher and CEO, *Global Traveler* and co-chair, Red & White Ball Philadelphia; Kevin Ryan, treasurer, GT Advisory Board and co-chair, Red & White Ball Philadelphia
2. Linda Lane
3. Paris Kalemis, campaign assistant, Leukemia & Lymphoma Society of Eastern Pennsylvania; Katie Freind, director, Team in Training and School & Youth, Leukemia & Lymphoma Society of Eastern Pennsylvania
4. Vince Papale; Carmel Ottaunick
5. Lori Vitale; Fred Vitale, vice president of oncology marketing, Teva Pharmaceuticals; Kim Schusao; Scott Schusao
6. Francis X. Gallagher, publisher and CEO, *Global Traveler* and co-chair, Red & White Ball Philadelphia; Jaci Brown; Wendy Saltzman, 6 ABC Philadelphia and emcee, Red & White Ball Philadelphia
7. Bill Lawlor, president, Board of Trustees, Leukemia & Lymphoma Society of Eastern Pennsylvania; Francis X. Gallagher, publisher and CEO, *Global Traveler* and co-chair, Red & White Ball Philadelphia
8. Anthony Chawstyk; Katie Skrzek, digital director, *Global Traveler*; Richard Evans, senior vice president, *Global Traveler*; Monique Barrett, associate editor, *Global Traveler*; Brett Guzzi; Carly Allen, vice president, *Global Traveler*; David Katz, director of sales and marketing, *Global Traveler*

1. Olivia Falcione, advertising manager, *Global Traveler*; Pedro Marzanillo

2. Milva Galati; Andrea McGonigle, executive committee, Red & White Ball Philadelphia; Melissa Shelley; Alicia Leonardo

3. Flo Celender; Rick Celender

4. Michele Gallagher; Carly Allen, vice president, *Global Traveler*; Janis Donahue; Dorie Tallman; Eileen Bolger

5. Caitlin Tanner; Matthew McNeal, account executive, *Global Traveler*; David Katz, director of sales and marketing, *Global Traveler*

6. Francis X. Gallagher, publisher and CEO, *Global Traveler* and co-chair, Red & White Ball Philadelphia; Mark Seltzer, executive committee, Red & White Ball Philadelphia; Kevin Ryan, treasurer, GT Advisory Board and co-chair, Red & White Ball Philadelphia; Michael Donahue, chairman, GT Advisory Board; Wayne Tallman, vice president, Europe, GT Advisory Board

7. Jean Earhart; Steve Earhart, Board of Trustees, Leukemia & Lymphoma Society of Eastern Pennsylvania

8. Kate Ambrose; Marta Corbitt, silent auction committee, Red & White Ball Philadelphia; Kimberly Krol, managing editor, *Global Traveler* and chair, silent auction committee, Red & White Ball Philadelphia; Laura Gallagher; Julie Tokar

9. Francis X. Gallagher, publisher and CEO, *Global Traveler* and co-chair, Red & White Ball Philadelphia; George Hofmann, co-chair, Red & White Ball Philadelphia

10. Kimberly Krol, managing editor, *Global Traveler* and chair, silent auction, Red & White Ball Philadelphia; Francis X. Gallagher, publisher and CEO, *Global Traveler* and co-chair, Red & White Ball Philadelphia; Andrea McGonigle, executive committee member, Red & White Ball Philadelphia; Anthony McGonigle

11. Richard Evans, senior vice president, *Global Traveler*; Francis X. Gallagher, publisher and CEO, *Global Traveler* and co-chair, Red & White Ball Philadelphia



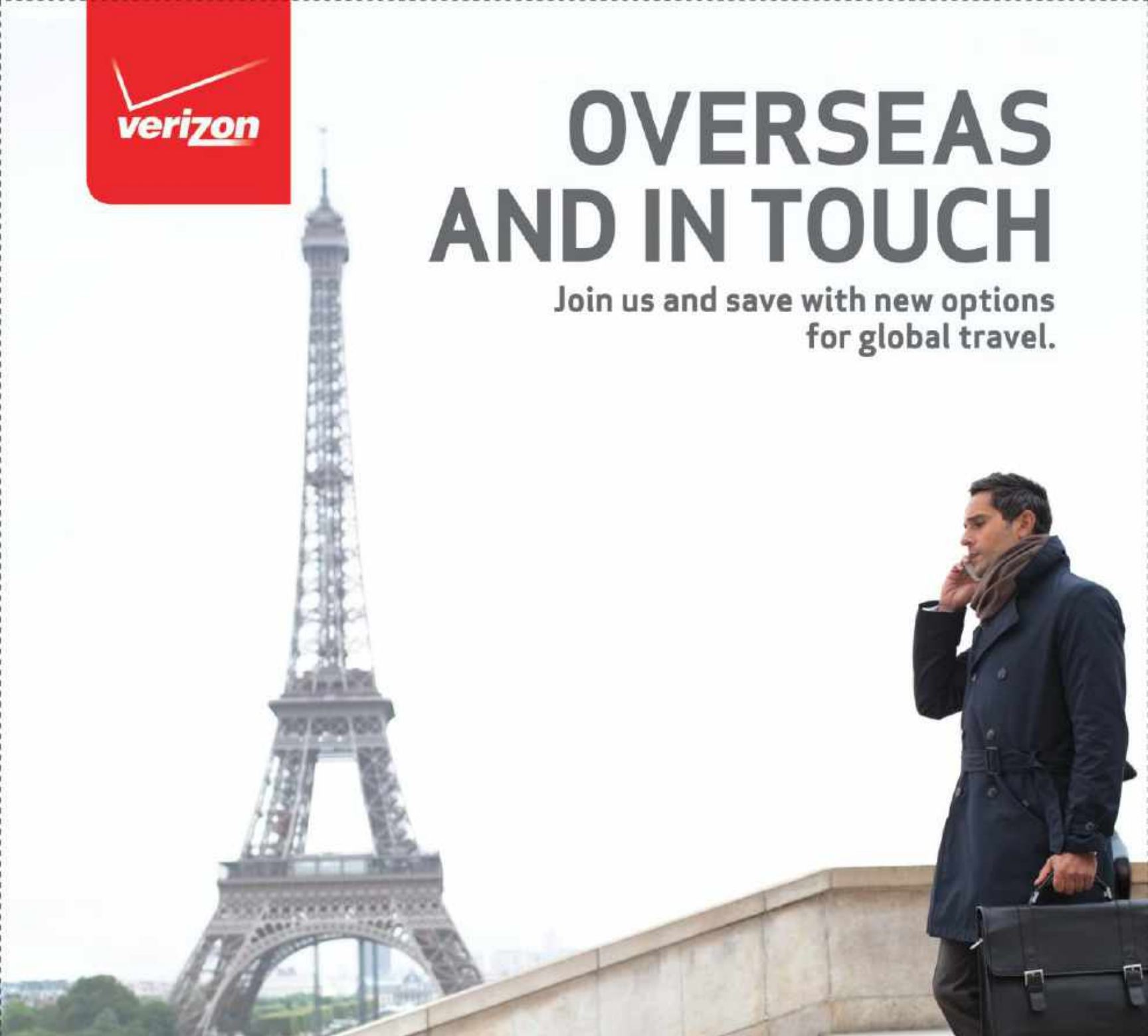
A special thank you to our travel partners who generously donated items for the Red & White Ball's silent auction. Your special contributions helped in our efforts to raise \$500,000 in the fight against cancer.

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Serendipity in San Francisco

Remède Spa at The St. Regis offers a perfect spot to recharge and refresh.

BY KIMBERLY KROL



WELCOME:

Spa reception

PHOTO: ©JOE FLETCHER

My friend Megan and I were 30,000 feet in the air somewhere over middle America, on our way to a girls' getaway in San Francisco and Napa, when we looked at one another, both thinking the same thought. As girlfriends are wont to do, we read each other's minds and said, "We should get spa treatments while we are away."

We had a jam-packed itinerary. I don't like to leave any stone unturned when I travel, and I planned to keep us busy. But there's always room for spa treatments. Right?

Upon landing at San Francisco International Airport, we started to explore our options. As we quickly learned, there's no better option in the City by the Bay than the Remède Spa at The St. Regis San Francisco. Luckily, the spa could accommodate us that afternoon at 4 p.m. — the only 90 minutes in the day we had available. The stars were aligning; it seemed we were meant to have these much-needed treatments and a few moments of tranquility.

After checking in to our hotel, we set out to explore San Francisco, acquainting ourselves by walking up six steep blocks — the running joke for the rest of the trip was that we scaled a mountain — to Lombard Street, the curviest street in America. After winding down the hill (much easier going down), we had lunch in the city's North Beach neighborhood before wandering up and down the city streets, through Chinatown, eventually making

our way to The St. Regis.

It's easy to see why the hotel's Remède Spa is touted as the best in the city. It's spacious, the staff is friendly, it's elegantly decorated, and the therapists are experts. Megan was booked for the 60-minute customized massage. Depending on a patron's problem areas, the technician customizes the experience, using specialty products and techniques. I opted for the 60-minute Remède customized facial, focused on providing a professional-grade deep cleansing, which works for all skin types. Therapists determine the areas of concern to leave the skin glowing and refreshed. Both are among the spa's most popular; other treatments include the Urban Radiance Facial, the Distinguished Gentleman's Facial, a hot stone massage, body wraps and polishes, manicures, pedicures and waxing. All treatments are based on the skincare of Laboratoire Remède.

The reception area welcomes spa-goers to the experience. Mostly white with black metal accents, it's clean and modern but also soothing. Tempting, as well, because of all the high-quality skincare products on display and for purchase. I think I smelled every candle in the store before I left. The peaceful, sleek look continues throughout the facility.

Once we signed in, we were directed to the large locker room. After a long day of early-morning, cross-country travel and a fair

amount of walking around the city (those hills!), it felt wonderful to slip into the fluffy spa robes and slippers. The locker room is stocked with amenities for post-treatment showers and getting ready, if need be, and there are separate whirlpools, steam rooms and saunas for men and women as well as a co-ed infinity pool.

The attendant led us to the lounge. Decorated in tones of white with pops of color, the hushed room reminded me of floating on a cloud. We both settled into a white banquette with glasses of chilled Champagne as we waited for our attendants. Cheeses, truffles and other light snacks, as well as fruit-infused water, were available.

Both therapists arrived simultaneously to whisk us away to the treatment rooms. My room was just across the hall, so my facial began quickly. Facials can be a bit uncomfortable, particularly the extractions, but the feel of your skin and the glow of your face afterward cannot be beat. My therapist had a light touch which felt wonderful as she tapped my pressure points and massaged my face. A mask applied felt heavy while it dried, but the sensation of it being peeled off and the cool air finally reaching my skin was refreshing. My therapist kept me abreast of each step of the process as we went, identifying my

problem areas and working on the areas — like my dark under-eye circles — I requested, but in a gentle whisper that was not disruptive to my semi-conscious state. She also massaged my feet and hands, welcome after all the walking. As light music played in the background, she massaged my scalp, which I love.

I re-entered the lounge to find Megan blissfully relaxing. She looked like a new person when I found her. As we both enjoyed another glass of Champagne and a few more moments of serenity, we raved about the quality of the treatments. As with my facial, Megan's masseur worked on the areas she requested, personalizing the treatment to her trouble spots and alleviating tension.

She also managed to get his entire life story in the process; he happened to be a fan of the restaurant we had reservations for that evening, Waterbar, citing it as one of his favorites in the city. He assured her the tranquility of overlooking the water and the glittering lights of the Bay Bridge, coupled with the decadent cuisine, would help us maintain our newfound Zen. Buoyed by his recommendation, the prospect of getting ready for dinner and those reservations finally pulled us from our seats and back to reality.

REMÈDE SPA

The St. Regis San Francisco
125 Third St.

San Francisco, CA 94103

tel 415 284 4000

starwoodhotels.com

GIRLS' GETAWAY:

Ladies' locker room

PHOTO © JOE FLETCHER



Lofty Pursuits

Chef Anne-Sophie Pic continues the family culinary tradition on the ground and in the skies. BY KIMBERLY KROL



Cooking is, quite literally, in Chef Anne-Sophie Pic's DNA. The daughter and granddaughter, respectively, of acclaimed chefs Jacques Pic and André Pic, she is also the first French woman to achieve three Michelin stars and only the fourth female chef in the world to receive such an honor.

Pic is bringing her signature style of respect, flavor and simplicity to New York City, both on board Air France flights and with a new restaurant, slated to open later this year. (She currently owns eight restaurants, including La Dame de Pic in the 1st arrondissement of Paris.) Through August, Pic's creations will be served on board Air France's new business-class cabin before she develops a new menu for the first-class cabin in late 2015.

In crafting the menus, Pic worked carefully to bring her talent for combining different flavors to the skies, noting the differing palates of French and U.S. passengers as well as the challenges in taste, space and capabilities at 30,000 feet. Pic gave the

staff specific instructions and training on preparing the dishes, and on a recent trip to New York City, she delighted in seeing the menus in action.

Pic's gourmet creations on board flights currently include a lobster and celery appetizer with juniper berries; guinea hen with Swiss chard ravioli; cod with forbidden rice and vegetable pearls; salmon, lentils with sweet spices and pickled onions; and quinoa flan with pineapple and red bell pepper coulis. Pic's l'amuse-bouche is a marinated shrimp and vegetable brunoise with orange vinaigrette.

When asked about her culinary trend of the moment, Pic spoke about the importance of combining the right flavors to bring out the emotion of the diner. In her restaurants, she is working to make sauces to order, rather than prepping them earlier in the evening, to bring together the ingredients five minutes before plating and create a different taste profile. Air France passengers can be guaranteed a brand-new flavor sensation each time they step on board.

WHAT THREE GO-TO INGREDIENTS ARE ALWAYS IN YOUR HOME KITCHEN?

Only three? It's tough to choose, but definitely butter, olive oil and vegetables. And eggs. Plus, I always need to have tea and coffee on hand.

WHAT'S YOUR FAVORITE SEASON FOR COOKING, AND WHY?

All of them, as they are each different with new, seasonal ingredients and vegetables. Springtime is a rebirth; March brings about the best end of winter/beginning of spring vegetables.

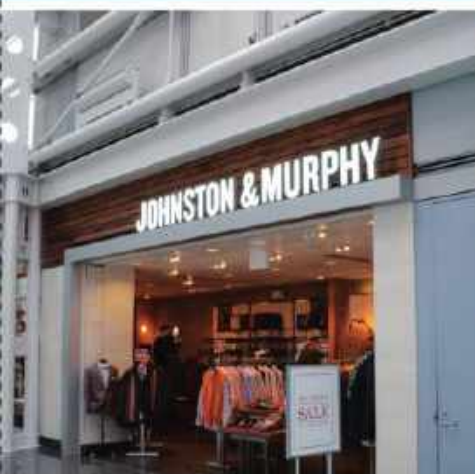
WHAT'S THE FIRST MEAL YOU EVER COOKED?

When I was younger, I focused more on pastries. I loved working with my father as a child; smelling, hearing and tasting the creations in the kitchen.

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Continental Drift

Get a fresh perspective of Europe on a cruise along its Atlantic coast. BY J.D. BROWN AND MARGARET BACKENHEIMER



ANCIENT BEACON:
Tower of Hercules in
La Coruña, Spain

PHOTO: © ANIBAL TREJO |
DREAMSTIME.COM

Western Europe, from Amsterdam and Paris to Berlin and Barcelona, is familiar ground for many a traveler, but a cruise along the Atlantic coast provides a fresh view of the continent's riches. Even in the peak coastal cruising season from May through October, sightseers seldom overrun the harbors, islands, towns and villages along Europe's west coast, and they offer plenty of breathtaking sights and experiences. Moreover, a west coast cruise can be the most cost-efficient and convenient way to explore several countries in a single, carefree trip. Passengers can move from country to country without changing planes, trains or hotel rooms. In addition to hassle-free transportation, superior room and board, free entertainment and other enrichments, a luxury cruise along the Atlantic coast brings the opportunity to explore an exotic, rarely visited location nearly every day.

Regent Seven Seas' Copenhagen-to-Barcelona cruise down the Atlantic seaboard Sept. 20–Oct. 12 includes unique ports of call: Saint-Malo, France, a port in Brittany near enough for a shore excursion to the fabled cathedral of Mont Saint-Michel; Brest,

France, home to Océanopolis, the only ocean discovery center of its kind in Europe; Bordeaux and Le Verdon, in the heart of France's most famous wine region; Bilbao, Spain, a venerable Basque city with its own Guggenheim Museum; La Coruña, Spain, where the light emitted by a 2,000-year-old lighthouse, the Roman Tower of Hercules, is visible 32 miles out to sea; and Porto, Portugal, the world's Port wine capital and site of a UNESCO World Heritage-designated old town. This 22-day cruise also calls on Northern Europe (St. Petersburg; Malmö, Sweden; the English Channel) and the Mediterranean (Lisbon, Seville, the Strait of Gibraltar). Regent Seven Seas is also slated to make a quicker, 10-night sailing from London (Southampton) to Barcelona Oct. 4–14, 2016, with similar stops along the coast. In either case, the vessel, the 700-passenger *Seven Seas Voyager*, is an exceptionally luxurious one; its fares include round-trip airfare, unlimited shore excursions and drinks and gratuities.

Like Regent Seven Seas, most luxury cruise lines sweep up or down the coast of Western Europe as they reposition their

vessels to the far more popular sailing destinations of Northern Europe and the Mediterranean. Atlantic coast cruises are, in fact, something of a rare treat. Windstar Cruises will be sailing its 312-passenger *Wind Surf* just once next year from Dublin to Lisbon on a Best of Europe's West Coast cruise. The eight-day passage departs Dun Laoghaire on Aug. 31, 2016, and weighs anchor at Ireland's Waterford and England's Isles of Scilly before reaching Brest, France, and two marvelous ports along Spain's Atlantic coast: Vigo, with its medieval El Berbes Quarter, and El Ferrol, once the Spanish Armada's base of operations, now the maritime realm of the twin antique cities of San Felipe and La Palma. The *Wind Surf* continues down to Portugal, with overnights in Porto and Lisbon.

Another luxury line, Azamara Club Cruises, offers a Western Europe cruise designed for wine enthusiasts, but passengers won't be able to pop the cork on this trip until Sept. 4, 2017. The 12-night Wines of Western Europe cruise on the 686-passenger *Azamara Journey* leaves from Southampton near London and stops at St. Peter Port, Guernsey, in the Channel Islands before indulging in three nights in Bordeaux and two nights at Saint-Jean-de-Luz, the Basque beach town where France's Sun King, Louis XIV, married Spain's Marie-Thérèse in 1660. The cruise saunters on to Pasajes, Spain, gateway to the wines and tapas of San Sebastian, and from there to Bilbao, Porto and Lisbon, where wines and brandies are at the forefront of each shore excursion.

Celebrity Cruises will sail the same Southampton-to-Lisbon route along the Atlantic coast on a 14-night voyage this fall, embarking Sept. 13. The emphasis, however, is not so much on wine regions as on the warm islands of Western Europe, namely the Azores and especially the Canaries, Western Europe's tropical surprise. Travelers on the 2,852-passenger *Celebrity Eclipse* will spend their days ashore at Ponta Delgada in the Azores and then at many locations across the Canary Islands, including Tenerife (site of a Baroque church, lush gardens and a park that served as a setting for *Star Wars*), Las Palmas (where Columbus made his last overnight stop before setting out for the New World), Fuerteventura (a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve of mesmerizing sands and winds) and Lanzarote (home to museums, galleries, a grand castle and beaches, all encapsulated in a primeval volcanic setting).

Some of the most frequent cruises along Europe's western coast are offered, not surprisingly, by English-based lines, which cater to British passengers but take along plenty of North Americans and Europeans. P&O Cruises offers roundtrips out of Southampton from September to January, transporting visitors a week at a time to Spain, Portugal and the Canary Islands. Cunard Line does likewise. A 12-night roundtrip from

While Western Europe is a prime destination for millions of landlubbers, only a few fortunate cruise passengers have discovered its coastline.



Southampton on Cunard's 2,620-passenger *Queen Mary 2* sailing Dec. 3–15, for example, calls on Madeira and Lisbon in Portugal, Tenerife and Lanzarote in the Canaries and Vigo in Spain. Cunard's 2,014-passenger *Queen Victoria* makes similar 12-night passages with slightly different ports of call. Such roundtrips from Southampton, with their emphasis on sunny ports in the Canaries, make for a refreshing extension after a European business trip, tour or vacation.

While any cruise along Europe's west coast remains a bit off the beaten course compared with a sailing in the adjacent Mediterranean or the far reaches of Northern Europe, such an in-between voyage gives passengers a wide new perspective on what the continent can offer. Thus, Viking Cruises, the monarch of European river cruising, which this year undertakes its first ocean cruises aboard the all-new 930-passenger *Viking Star*, is making the Atlantic coast the centerpiece of its inaugural 15-day Passage Through Western Europe itinerary. Featuring five countries and 11 ports, private veranda staterooms and an onboard cultural curriculum, the *Viking Star* sails from Bergen, Norway, to Barcelona with stopovers in London; Paris (Le Havre); Cherbourg, France; La Coruña, Spain; Porto, Lisbon; and Seville. The Aug. 8 departure should sell out soon, but already three more Viking sweeps along Western Europe's beguiling coastline are scheduled for 2016.

WINE AND DINE:

Azamara Club Cruises

PHOTO: © AZAMARA CLUB CRUISES

Azamara Club Cruises

azamaraclubcruises.com

Celebrity Cruises

celebritycruises.com

Cunard Line

cunard.com

P&O Cruises

pocruises.com

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rssc.com

Viking Cruises

vikingcruises.com

Windstar Cruises

windstarcruises.com



Value Added

Can budget airlines provide a competitive product for business travelers? BY LAURA DAILY

As mainline carriers withdraw from shorter routes to cut costs, discount carriers step in. Business travelers, accustomed to the amenities that come with frequent-flyer elite status, face a conundrum. Do they stick with their airline alliance and possibly face higher ticket prices, fewer nonstops and inconvenient flight schedules, or join the masses and embrace no-frills air travel?

Houston-based Kristie England, general manager, Universal Travel, offers her clients a low-cost carrier "if it meets the client's needs. Not only are budget airlines a good value for the cost-conscious, but many operate efficiently, offer flexibility for changes and cancellations and fly into airports abandoned by the big carriers," she says.

Those are many of the reasons business travelers look to carriers such as Flybe, Ryanair and easyJet when moving around Europe. "Low cost doesn't have to mean cheap and nasty; it's about how you treat people,"



EUROPEAN CONNECTIONS: Ryanair (top) and easyJet (bottom) are popular carriers among business travelers moving around Europe.

PHOTOS: © JIRI SENOHRABEK | DREAMSTIME.COM, © PCRUCCIATTI | DREAMSTIME.COM

says Paul Simmons, chief commercial officer, Flybe. "Everyone is raising their game in Europe, recognizing you have to stay attractive and actively court the traveler."

For Flybe, which boasts that 50 percent of its passengers are business travelers, that means interline agreements with American Airlines, Delta Air Lines, Etihad Airways and United Airlines and codesharing with Cathay Pacific, among others. Tickets can be purchased through travel agents and, while a "Just Fly" fare is bare bones, the "Get More" and "All In" options add perks such as lounge access, security fast track and in-flight food and beverage credits.

Though it built its success on low fares, Ryanair was once known more for its outrageous and headline-grabbing cost-saving "ideas." (Remember the notion of coin-operated lavatories?) The airline can now lay claim to Europe's biggest route network, connecting 189 destinations in 30 countries, and is actively courting the business traveler.

Last year, it introduced Ryanair Business Plus, a tailored suite of services. Starting at €69.99, or about \$75 (added on to any fare, even one for €9, or about \$9.60), it gives passengers the flexibility of ticket changes, a 40-pound checked bag allowance, free airport check-in, fast-track airport security at select airports, priority boarding and premium seats. So keen is the airline to capture the American market, it launched a U.S. website so travelers can book in dollars.

"The modern-day business traveler doesn't care about cheap Champagne and the blue curtain," says Robin Kiely, spokesperson, Ryanair. "As flag carriers have cut back on short hauls, we have jumped in." Business travelers like what they

see. With low fares, 25-minute turnarounds, punctuality (90 percent of flights are on time) and few cancellations, Ryanair has grown its business traveler share to 27 percent.

Even more important to business travelers, many low-cost carriers offer high-frequency, business-friendly schedules between major cities and get you into the right airport, such as London City instead of Gatwick Airport, to cut down on travel time. Often, business can be completed in a day with no need for an overnight stay.

According to Anthony Drury, director, head of business, easyJet, one in five of the airline's 65 million annual passengers is flying on business. The airline covers 741 routes across Europe, the Middle East, North Africa and Russia. Once business travelers try the airline, about 62 percent fly easyJet again. Drury attributes the retention rate to fares up to 40 percent cheaper than legacy carriers; flights to more of the major airports on the top 100 European routes; punctuality; and FLEXI Fares offering unlimited date changes, checked luggage, up-front seat selection, airport bag drop, fast-track security and speedy boarding. "EasyJet is helping make business travel easy and affordable for everyone," he says.

Does the à la carte system appeal? To budget-conscious business travelers, yes. Juan María Solare, a pianist in Bremen, Germany, says Ryanair made it possible for him to work and perform. "I can fly to London, Seville, Graz or Madrid to give concerts or do recordings because I can keep flight costs under

SOARING BUSINESS:

A Flybe plane takes off.

PHOTO: © FLYBE



€100, sometimes €60," he says. "I don't need extra services or any luxury in a one-hour flight, as long as it takes me safely to my destination. And, for me, it doesn't make sense to pay twice the amount to have some juice and a free newspaper."

San Diego-based Timothy Trudeau, CEO, Syntax Creative, a music distribution company, agrees. Trudeau travels two weeks of every month almost exclusively on Southwest Airlines. "I've found that their pricing and Rapid Rewards plan work well for me," he says. "I'm not flying to be pampered; for that, I check into a nice hotel. Instead, I squeeze into a window seat, put on my headphones, use the in-flight WiFi and get my work done. Even a four-hour flight from San Diego to Nashville passes quickly." Trudeau calls Southwest a "no-nonsense" airline with good customer service. And if he needs to alter his flights, there's never a problem.

But there is a line in the sand for many U.S. business travelers. For example, Frontier Airlines switched to an ultra-low-cost carrier model in April 2014, characterized by stripped-down economy-fare tickets and à la carte service offerings. It even opted out of the TSA's PreCheck, so passengers can't bypass long security lines. The pushback has been incremental but growing as once-loyal business customers seek other options.

According to Paul Berry, spokesperson for ultra-low-cost Spirit Airlines, "We don't cater to the corporate business traveler. Our main customer is the person who purchases their own tickets and price is their No. 1 factor in choosing an airline — in most cases the leisure traveler looking to save money."

Spirit's fares average 40 percent lower than those at other airlines. "Our fare covers your seat and a personal item that fits under your seat," adds Berry. Anything else costs extra. Even after you add on checked and carry-on baggage fees and other charges, Spirit's total price is still 35 percent lower, on average, than other airlines' total price for similar routes, he says.

Spirit doesn't have a first or business class, but for \$25 you can upgrade to a business-class-sized seat with extra legroom. If you pay for a carry-on bag to go in the overhead bin, you are guaranteed space in the bin. Says Berry, "There is one type of business traveler that does enjoy flying Spirit — and we have a lot of them — they are the people who own their own small businesses and pay for their own tickets."

Regardless of where they fly, business travelers are likely to find a proliferation of competitive low-cost options. In Europe, Ryanair, easyJet and Flybe are among the largest, but also gaining ground are niche airlines with more limited route systems

COST-CONSCIOUS:

*Southwest Airlines
Boeing 737*

PHOTO: © DREAMSTIME |
DREAMSTIME





such as airberlin, Condor Airlines, Vueling Airlines, Transavia Airlines, Germanwings and WIZZ Air. AirAsia has a sizable market share in the Far East. Flydubai operates more than 1,200 flights per week across the Middle East, Gulf, Africa and Europe.

One of Kristie England's clients travels to mainland China for business three times a year. While he flies a mainline carrier internationally, she books him on Hong Kong Express to get around China. "The service is good. The flights are reliable, and they fly the routes he wants," she explains.

Though it seems like a no-brainer to fly a low-cost carrier if you want to save money, value is in the eye of the beholder. Tickets are usually nonrefundable and non-changeable (Southwest being the exception). If you cancel your flight, too bad. About half the low-cost airlines take only online bookings, not through a travel agent or by phone, so there may be no one to talk to if you have an issue. Unless you purchase a higher-priced fare or "package," expect to pay extra for seats, carry-on and checked luggage, food and beverages or in-flight entertainment (if it is even available).

Budget carriers, especially in Europe, may use secondary or obscure airports that require long, sometimes costly, transfers into the city center. For the most part, few have interline agreements, so you can't check your luggage through to your final destination if you are changing carriers in mid-travel. Not that you want to connect with another airline, as most point-to-point budget carriers operate schedules that aren't in sync with the big boys.

"Check out who operates in the market to which you are traveling. There are dozens of new options, so many that travelers haven't heard of," advises England. "If the route, market and price work, I can't see why you wouldn't use them."

Perhaps Ryanair's Kiely best sums it up: "Low-cost carriers are the way forward and are only going to grow," he says. "On a long haul, luxury counts, but not when the flight is shorter than the commute to the airport."

ASIAN EXPANSION: Boarding an AirAsia airplane at Don Muang International Airport, Bangkok

PHOTO: © MIRO VITALI / DREAMSTIME.COM

AirAsia
airasia.com

airberlin
airberlin.com

Condor Airlines
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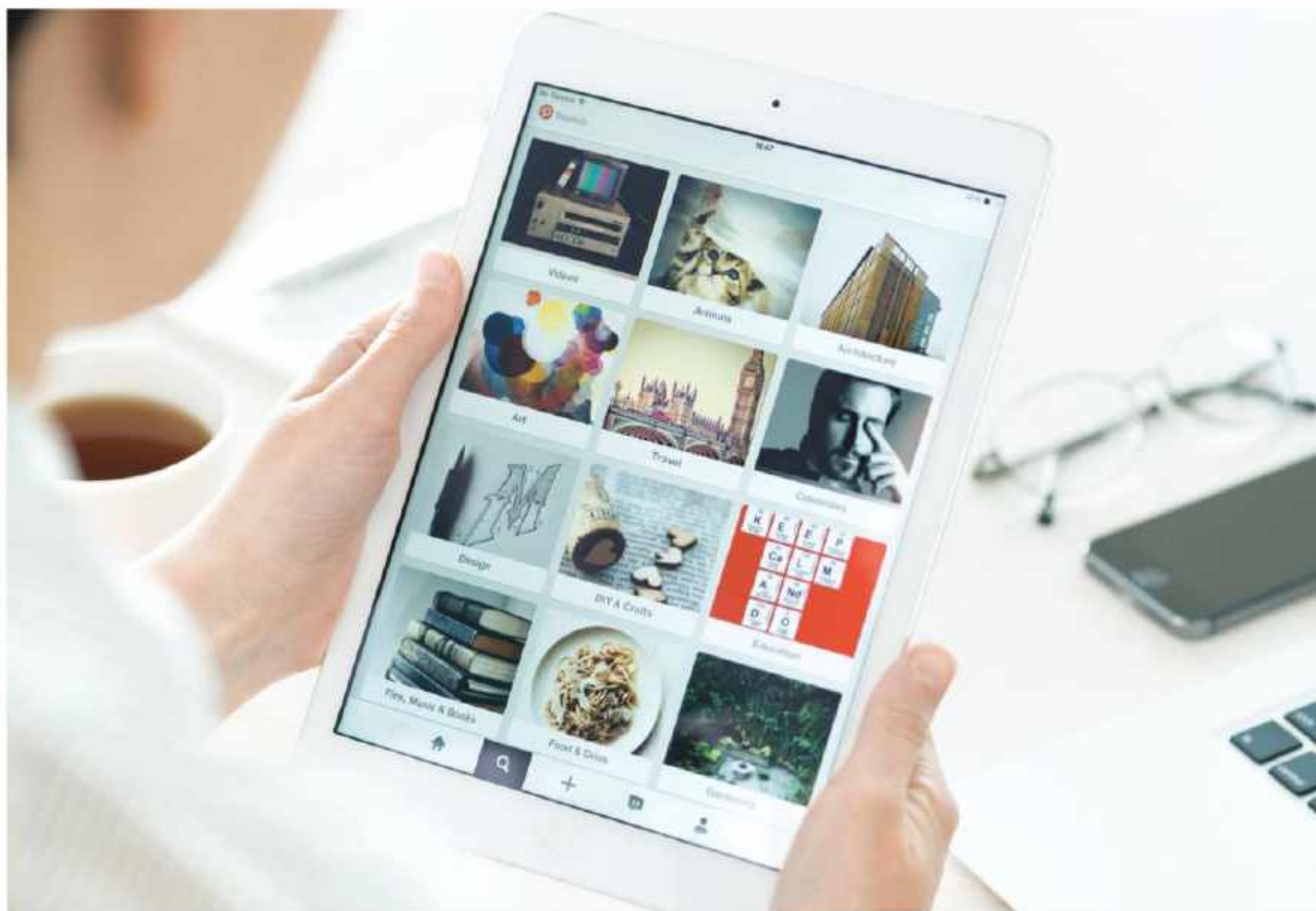


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Social Impact

The world of social media is transforming the travel industry for providers and consumers.

BY BETH BLAIR

Social media has changed the way we travel. Real-time customer service minus the on-hold elevator music, chances to win trips, discounts at restaurants, insider travel tips and interesting Twitter party conversations offer just some of the ways travelers gather information and share personal travel experiences. Today, we'd be hard-pressed to find a travel company *not* engaging on the social media front.

"I believe that social media in the travel industry gives travel sites instant brand recognition," says Jonathan Alonso, SEO analyst, GoPortCanaveral.com. "For example, our customer loyalty and retention grew about 30 percent in the end of 2014 planning for trips of 2015 when we applied 're-marketing' tools for Facebook. Social media lends a hand in affinity marketing [gender, location,

age, income, for example] in which brands can target their target market, and once captured, they can be re-engaged over and over again with content that interests them."

Hotels, attractions, restaurants and even rental car services easily maintain customer relations through social media, avoid crises and maintain awareness in the industry. But most of all, they help their guests have a pleasant experience. One such example is Mall of America in Bloomington, Minn., the largest shopping mall and entertainment complex in the United States, drawing more than 40 million annual shoppers. The MOA social media staff helps shoppers throughout the day by conversing with patrons, answering questions, announcing newsworthy topics like celebrity appearances and, the most helpful, tweeting the latest parking situations (full lots or traffic jams) for the sake of managing traffic flow and helping customers get in and out of the mall more quickly.

Sometimes social media communication covers an unexpected event or emergency. In February 2014, news headlines announced a sinkhole swallowed eight cars at the National Corvette Museum in Bowling Green, Ky. The marketing and communications team kept its audience of 183,000-plus social media followers engaged and updated on the progress of retrieving and salvaging automobiles and reconstruction.

THE TERM "HASHTAG" became official when it was added to the Oxford English Dictionary in 2014. In summary, a hashtag is a word or phrase preceded by a hash symbol and used to identify messages relating to a specific topic. Using the hashtag (example: #travel) in social media helps travelers classify, search and share their experiences, while businesses use it as a way to promote their offerings, connect with customers and monitor their areas of expertise.

Montage Beverly Hills calls on guests to share their experiences by tagging their Twitpic or Instagram photo with #MontageMemory. Tagged photos are reviewed for inclusion in the site's gallery.

During spring 2014, Explore Minnesota launched its largest travel marketing effort in the state's history with the "Only in Minnesota" campaign. Designed to promote all that is special to Minnesota, the endeavor is used across all forms of media, but it's on the social media front that locals and tourists alike joined in the conversation by using the #OnlyinMN hashtag. By early 2015, the tag had been used more than 65,000 times across the various social media channels.

Hong Kong Adventure Tours Limited uses social media to reach out to travelers abroad. The company scrolls through Twitter hashtags like #sports, #activities, #travel, #whattodo, #HK and #HongKong. "We find this is a great way to find potential customers who are interested in what we have to offer," says managing director Paddy Williams. "In addition, we launch specific competitions like free trips to Hong Kong for everyone who shares our page on Facebook or Twitter to boost our audience and reach. We also keep a blog and write guest posts on other blogs to generate new leads and potential customers across the West."

Jessica Lawlor of Visit Bucks County, the official tourism promotion agency for Bucks County, Pa., says her team uses social media to connect with relevant audiences to increase overnight visitation, and they also monitor multiple hashtags and keywords relating to Bucks County and area attractions around the clock. Lawlor explains, "Visit Bucks County's Facebook posts are short and snappy, featuring a snippet of information, a link to learn more to drive traffic to VisitBucksCounty.com, and a question to engage followers."

Lorna Davidson, the "social butterfly" for The Roman Guy, a leading tour operator in Rome, says each social media format has a different audience. The Roman Guy Twitter account audience engages with mostly media, businesses and bloggers. "We connect with people who work in the industry and share similar interests with us by tweeting regularly and directly reaching out to people," she says. "Our relationships have resulted in articles



in mass media and popular travel blogs."

The Roman Guy's Facebook page reaches previous and prospective customers. Therefore, postings are created to attract new followers and maintain relationships with previous clients through organic and boosted (paid) posts. Davidson says the company's Instagram account is mixed. "Taking part in Instameets in Rome and regularly posting pictures of Italy and 15-second videos (taken by various members of staff as they travel across the country) helped increase our followers. We regularly alert our followers to our website link found on our Instagram homepage to increase referral traffic," says Davidson.

The easy access of images, aka eye candy, dominates the social media scene as Instagram has proven, passing Twitter in number of users in late 2014. The classic saying, "A picture is worth a thousand words" today could mean a photo on social media is worth a thousand dollars or more. The spring and summer #OnlyinMN campaign alone generated 3.12 million trips, which resulted in \$320.2 million in visitor spending and \$29.7 million in state and local taxes.

"Since Twitter introduced in-line images in recent months, Visit Bucks County has begun to incorporate more tweets with both a link and a photo included. Anecdotally, these tweets receive

The search and discover app Foursquare allows customers to connect, review and take photos of the places they visit while being rewarded with virtual badges and sometimes free offers or coupons from vendors. Visit Bucks County engages with more than 20,000 followers on Foursquare and was one of the first destination marketing organizations to offer a check-in special on Foursquare to receive a discount at the Bucks County Visitor Center.

Stephanie Slagle, public relations representative, North Little Rock Visitors Bureau, says that of the social media options, Instagram has been the bureau's strength. Slagle alternates between

her own photos and curating photos submitted through the bureau's #exploreNLR. "We run contests based on the seasons — #SpringNLR, #FallNLR, #WinterNLR — which increases engagement with our followers, attracts new followers and brings attention to a local attraction giving away the prize. I use the geotags on photos to track photos at different locations around town to like photos and start conversations. We've tried to make the voice for our destination informal, personal and authentic, less of a business and more of a friendly person with whom you might want to hang out."

Airlines also recognize the influence of social media. American Airlines has an impressive 21-member social media team and uses its social media presence to announce weather delays or respond quickly to passenger needs.

"American Airlines has become a leader across all social platforms," says Katy Philips, senior analyst of social communications. "Devoting the majority of their social manpower to enhancing customer experience, American Airlines has begun monitoring all conversations 24/7 and responding to them in real time. To ensure they are accurately and efficiently monitoring all social interactions, American Airlines uses NetBase, an enterprise-scale social media analytics company.

"In addition to using the tool to increase customer satisfaction, American Airlines has also used NetBase's word cloud function to analyze posts and shift word choices away from negative words and toward action-oriented terms like 'Please follow' or 'Take a look.' They have also begun tracking their top influencers and interactions through NetBase, giving American Airlines the chance to show appreciation for some of their biggest fans."



more retweets than tweets without photos," Jessica Lawlor points out. Pinterest is another visual social media form that has proven successful for tourism, and Lawlor says, "Visit Bucks County interacts with fans of Bucks County by sharing their beautiful photography on a '#BucksCounty Through YOUR Eyes' pinboard."

Destination D.C. media relations manager Kate Gibbs says the organization uses social media to map potential neighborhood itineraries with Instawalks (@visitWashingtonDc). "We held one in December with Lonely Planet, the esteemed guidebook who ranked D.C. the No. 1 place to visit in 2015 for its free museums, burgeoning food scene and emerging neighborhoods," she says. "We took a group of professional travel bloggers and enthusiastic (non-professional) Instagrammers on a food tour of Capitol Hill, down Barracks Row and to the Capitol Riverfront on Saturday, Dec. 6. We generated more than 1,200 glorious new images of the public market, bakeries, bistros, craft beer works and sights along the way. It increased not only the size but the quality of our inventory."



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MAKING LIGHT WORK: Meeting room at the Ethniki Conference Hall.

PHOTO © INTERCONTINENTAL HOTELS GROUP

participants deluxe hotel rooms with a view of the Acropolis at bargain prices was too good to pass up.

As a result, the total number of foreign visitors to Greece reached 20.8 million in the first 10 months of 2014, a 21.9 percent increase over 2013, with tourism revenues rising 10.6 percent. The Association of Hellenic Tourism Enterprises expects more than 27 million annual foreign visitors by 2021.

The country's strong tourism market, which represents 20 percent of Greece's GDP, is especially noticeable in its capital city. "Athens is a very vibrant, contemporary city," said Olga Kefalogianni, Greek minister for tourism. "The year 2014 marked the complete comeback of Athens, with an increase in visitors of almost 30 percent, and the outlook for 2015 looks very positive," she said, shortly before the January national elections. The country's new government leaders have been meeting with their E.U.

partners to renegotiate Greece's huge loan, and this sea change in Greek politics will likely cause hospitality prices to drop even further.

With leisure and MICE travel to Athens thriving, Athenians are so appreciative of visitors that shop owners may offer unmarked discounts on local products or waiters may comp your glass of excellent Santorini white wine. There are other reasons to visit. In addition to the city's classical Greek, Byzantine and Ottoman monuments, there is also a modern Athens with new hotels, high-tech meeting venues, contemporary art museums and a spiffy metro system — plus enough buff-colored hills, fine-pebbled beaches, palm trees and seaside tavernas to saturate the city with a wonderful Mediterranean ambience.

Several 5-star hotels downtown and outside the city offer excellent accommodations and extensive meeting facilities. The 543-room InterContinental Athenaeum Athens Hotel recently opened new banquet venues on the sixth floor, including the Acropolis Terrace for outdoor dining. Located just south of the Acropolis, the property offers 28 meeting rooms, plenty of exhibit space and beautiful Greek artwork throughout. The hotel also manages the Ethniki Conference Centre, a two-minute walk down the block, with additional meeting and conference facilities.

The 141-year-old Hotel Grande Bretagne, across from Constitution Square, is an Athens landmark and a choice property among international VIPs and upscale leisure and business travelers. The hotel re-opened in 2003 after a three-year, \$100 million restoration modernized all 320 guestrooms and suites, meeting facilities and function space. The property is part of Starwood Hotels' Luxury Collection.

For groups wishing to meet outside the city, The Westin Athens

Classical Comeback

Planners find incentives to book events in Athens.

BY RON BERNTHAL

During the past several years, news articles about Greece have been tinged with phrases like "economic turmoil," "bailout packages" and "austerity measures." Although the Greek economy ended six years of recession in 2014, with unemployment easing and projected gross domestic product growth rates of 2.9 percent in 2015 and 3.7 percent in 2016, foreign investors and lending organizations remain cautious. "The situation is still very difficult, but there is hope," said Pierre Moscovici, the European Union's economic affairs commissioner.

For international meeting planners, especially those with U.S. dollar travel budgets, the economic problems in Greece offer a silver lining: lower lodging costs too tempting to ignore. The average overnight hotel rate in Greece was €84 (\$92) at the end of 2014, making Greece the eighth least expensive hotel destination among 24 countries in Europe, according to the online travel booking site trivago.

Similarly, Athens, the major meetings destination in Greece, ranked 10th least expensive destination among 50 major European cities, with an average daily rate of €79 (\$86), even when room rate increases of 11.3 percent from the previous year are included. At 5-star hotel properties in Athens, the average daily rate was just \$166 in January compared to \$513 in London, \$490 in Paris and \$324 in Rome, based on a survey by the travel site KAYAK. For conference and incentive group planners, the ability to offer

MICE:
meetings,
incentives,
conventions and
exhibitions

Astir Palace Beach Resort offers a 5-star resort/meeting venue near the seaside town of Vouliagmeni, 15 miles south of Athens. Perched on a cliff overlooking the Saronic Gulf, all 159 guest-rooms feature private balconies and easy access to pool and beach. With a dozen meeting rooms, a large congress hall and exhibition space, the hotel can accommodate groups of 1,000 participants.

Other 5-star properties suitable for groups include the Hilton Athens (506 rooms), Divani Caravel (471) and the Athens Ledra (314); suitable 4-star properties include the design-driven New Hotel Athens (79) and the Radisson Blu Park Hotel (150).

The newest (2010) and largest conference and exhibition venue in Greece is Metropolitan Expo, located close to Athens International Airport and offering 538,000 square feet of single-floor exhibit and meeting space for up to 20,000 participants. Other professional meeting venues include the Megaron Athens International Conference Centre, a modernist-style building opened in 1991 with 18 meeting rooms in the city center for 8,000 meeting delegates; and Zappeion Exhibition Hall, a historic structure which hosted fencing events in its circular atrium during the first modern Olympic Games in 1896 and has been an iconic city landmark ever since.

The 5-year-old Acropolis Museum, designed by Swiss architect Bernard Tschumi, displays artifacts from the Acropolis and makes a good venue for off-site group events. The museum offers private group tours, conference space and a 204-seat auditorium. Its second-floor restaurant, with views of the Acropolis, can seat 300 guests, with additional space in the outdoor section.

The National Museum of Contemporary Art expects to move into the former FIX brewery building mid-year. Originally designed by noted Greek architect Takis Zenetos after

World War II, its signature, linear, horizontal glass windows were restored by architectural preservationists who created a stunning, eight-level gallery of Greek and European modern art. The entire museum, along with the top-floor restaurant with a view of the Parthenon, will offer another good venue for events.

Leaving Athens for one-day excursions is easy with the services of tour operators and the Athens Convention & Visitors Bureau. It is possible to visit Hydra, Aegina and Poros in one day by ferry and be back in Athens for a late dinner. Or schedule a three-hour, round-trip sail by private yacht to the nearby island of Fleves, with snorkeling in the pristine waters of the Saronic Gulf. Daytrips to the UNESCO World Heritage site at Delphi include touring the ruins of the Temple of Apollo and the Archaeological Museum. Closer to Athens, groups can drive one hour down the coast to Cape Sounion and the Temple of Poseidon, overlooking the Aegean Sea.

Having gained valuable experience hosting the 2004 Summer Olympic Games, the Convention & Visitors Bureau provides information for local conference, accommodations and transportation suppliers. Major upcoming conferences in the city include the International Conference on Energy and Environment in Ships (May), the International Conference on Geography (June), the 2nd International Conference on Demography and Population Studies (June), the 22nd International Congress on the Education of the Deaf (July) and the 29th European Federation of Food Science and Technology International Conference (November).

The 14-year-old Athens International Eleftherios Venizelos Airport has steadily increased its international routes to 82 cities. Visitors can access the airport, located 19 miles from downtown, by a suburban railway line (40 minutes, about \$8.80) and taxi service (30 minutes, about \$38).

Acropolis Museum

theacropolismuseum.gr

Athens Ledra Hotel

athensledrahotel.com

City of Athens Convention & Visitors Bureau

athensconventionbureau.gr

Divani Caravel Hotel

divanis.com

Greek National Tourism Organization

visitgreece.gr

Hilton Athens

hilton.com

Hotel Grand Bretagne, a Luxury Collection Hotel

grandbretagne.gr

InterContinental Athenaeum Athens Hotel

ihg.com

Megaron Athens International Conference Centre

maicc.gr

Metropolitan Expo

metropolitanexpo.gr

National Museum of Contemporary Art

emst.gr

New Hotel Athens

designhotels.com

Radisson Blu Park Hotel, Athens

radissonblu.com

The Westin Athens Astir Palace Beach Resort

westin.com

Zappeion Exhibition Hall

zappeion.gr

HISTORIC HALL: Zappeion Exhibition Hall

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Luxury car buffs head to Cité de l'Automobile in Mulhouse, France, to view the largest private car collection in the world, displaying nearly 450 cars, some dating to the 1870s.

BUSINESS destinations

52

RIYADH

58

DENVER

60

SANTIAGO

62

GALWAY



LEISURE destinations

64

SOFIA

68

GANGNAM

70

CHRISTCHURCH

74

THE RHINE

Wealth of Opportunity

Riyadh welcomes business as it balances progress with tradition. BY SHARON KING HOGE

Don't let the office towers and looping freeways mislead you into thinking Riyadh is your run-of-the-mill urban metropolis. While the gleaming skyscrapers and multilane highways may look typical, interspersed spires, minarets and domes betray procedures and customs different from those in most other parts of the world. Saudi Arabia's largest city is a thriving business center built around a strait-laced society in which Islamic beliefs are the law: Women and men don't comele in public, alcohol is banned, only men are allowed to drive, and public floggings and executions are not uncommon.

A late-20th-century "boom town" with pre-Islamic roots, centrally situated Arriyadh was named capital in 1932 after King Abdul Aziz consolidated the kingdom, and it is still the location of the Royal Court and most central government agencies. While expansion started in the 1940s, in the 1970s the kingdom set about full-scale modernization and industrialization. In 1972, the High Commission for the Development of Arriyadh was established to enhance quality of life by officially developing the economic, social, cultural, urban and environmental aspects of the city. From a historic walled oasis, Riyadh emerged as one of the world's fastest-growing cities, the regional headquarters of numerous international companies and an urban center of 5.6 million people, 34 percent under age 15.

North of the remnants of the original walled town lies Olaya, the city's commercial center crowned by the 44-story Al Faisaliah and 100-story Kingdom towers. To the west, parks, restaurants and nature trails in the sprawling triangular Diplomatic Quarter, or DQ, scatter among embassies designed by renowned international architects. Interconnecting the city sectors, a major highway system outfitted with speed bumps and cameras attempts to control traffic in the car-oriented city. Pedestrians are scarce, although a metro system is being developed.

From 2003 to 2013, the city privatized water, electricity and telecommunications, and desalinated water piped from the coast supplements the local artesian wells. Landscaped parks and botanical gardens thrive on the sand. A four-stage plan for sanitary waste disposal is on track to launch its final stage in 2021. "Arriyadh Future Vision" strategies for economic development, public services, public utilities, transportation, environment and

CROWNING GLORY: Al Faisaliah Tower

PHOTO: © SWISSHERP/DREAMSTIME.COM



LODGING

AL FAISALIAH HOTEL

Located on seven floors of the city's landmark tower, this Rosewood hotel is centrally located in the business district with meeting rooms, an ESPA spa and seven international restaurants. *King Fahad Road* \$\$\$\$\$

FOUR SEASONS HOTEL RIYADH AT KINGDOM CENTRE

Guestrooms' wall-sized windows overlook the central city in the hotel located in the "bottle opener" Kingdom Tower which also features three restaurants, a lobby lounge, meeting venues and an all-men's spa. *King Fahad Road* \$\$\$\$\$

THE RITZ-CARLTON, RIYADH

Life-size horse statues in the lobby greet guests arriving at the Versailles-like palace on 52 acres convenient to the city's Diplomatic Quarter. Six restaurants and a fitness center are similarly opulent. *AlHada Area, Mekkah Road* \$\$\$\$\$

DINING

AL NAKHEEL

Middle Eastern and North African specialties, regarded as the country's best Arabic food, are served in authentic ambience with spectacular views and a seasonal terrace for evening dining. *Al Khozama Center, 7th floor* \$\$\$

THE GLOBE

The three-story sphere atop the Al Faisaliah Tower provides the dramatic setting for Arabic and international cuisine served with signature strawberry-watermelon "fireball" cocktails, skyline views and a cigar lounge retreat. *Al Faisaliah Hotel, King Fahad Road* \$\$\$\$\$

MONDO

Curry, lentil soup, lobster risotto and prawns tempura are among Asian and Western fusion dishes served with non-alcoholic Cabernet Sauvignon or Chardonnay in a tropical poolside setting. *InterContinental Riyadh, Al Maather Street* \$\$\$\$

housing are more than two-thirds complete.

With few historic sites and a hot, arid climate, the city focuses on business, and managing the country's oil resources is the prime concern. Oil and gas production and refining accounted for almost half of the country's economic activity in 2013, leaving the gross national product highly vulnerable to fluctuations in oil prices. To relieve that dependence and add employment opportunities for the growing population, the government has undertaken an elaborate path of diversification.

Created in 1974, the Saudi Industrial Development Fund was the first government agency organized to provide interest-free loans for setting up industrial plants in agriculture, industry and construction. With headquarters on

MODERN MARVEL: *The Kingdom Centre tower*

PHOTO: © SWISSHIPPO | DREAMSTIME.COM - KINGDOM TOWER PHOTO

CHECKING IN WITH LYLE WHITE

Vice President, Power Generation,
Black & Veatch

What is it like to do business in Saudi Arabia?

The Saudis are what you'd call "tough clients," but in a good way. They've had a tremendous amount of money over the years running OPEC, so they often dictate the meeting — they're less collaborative. For example, we're a big international engineering and construction company and they know us well, but they required a certain license in place; and even though they had worked with us before, the rules state you need it. It takes a long time, but you have to play their game. Once you get through the red tape, they are good people to do business with.

How is the protocol different, and what adjustments are required?

You can't assume Saudi businesspeople think as internationally as you would imagine. You have to speak to the right people and go through the proper channels. If you're working on a specific project and know someone one or two levels down, here in the States you might call the guy up or go to dinner and talk about it. There, you have to see the proper person first; you can't go around. It takes a lot of patience. It's also a different pace. Business adjusts to prayer hours, so they don't negotiate straight through until it's over. Maybe just when you're getting wound up, they're taking time out for sweet tea.

How do you deal with women in business?

Women are still kind of in the back seat. I have not met with or called on anyone in business who is a woman. You see them on the street, all covered, and you might attend an event with wives invited, but it's structured.

How do businesspeople relax after work?

You can't just go out for beer and pizza. The expats have private clubs where they can have dinner and cocktails and dance and have parties. Soccer, camel racing and cricket are available, but Saudis are not huge on sports. Expats tune into U.S. sports via the satellite airwaves.

What are the advantages of working in such a restricted environment?

It's a rich country needing international involvement, so there's a lot of opportunity.



BOOMING BUSINESS: Greenery in Riyadh with Al Faisaliah Tower in the background

PHOTO: © ELGRU | DREAMSTIME.COM

Abdul Aziz Road in Riyadh, the SIDF helped launch thousands of new factories and enabled expansion of existing facilities, permitting private sector and foreign investor participation. Another key agency, the Saudi Arabian General Investment Authority, dating from 2000, encourages foreign direct investment.

Different aspects of economic development are concentrated in designated sectors of town. Riyadh houses two industrial cities with almost 800 factories producing foods, fertilizers, metal parts, garments, paper, plastics, detergents and building supplies. The King Abdullah Financial Center now under construction will contain 59 office towers with more than 3 million square feet of space to accommodate local and foreign financial firms. At King Saud University's Riyadh Techno Valley, scientists develop profit-generating products by collaborating with Nobel Prize winners to incubate and foster research in the fields of chemicals and materials, agriculture and environment, and information and communications. Ranking No. 1 in patents in the Arab world, Riyadh Techno recently earned a U.S. patent on digital authentication in cybersecurity.

The defense sector manufactures small arms and provides airframe, jet engine and hydraulics maintenance and repair, plus a computer center at Riyadh's King Khalid Airport. With the growing demand for

housing and office space, the real estate and construction sectors continue to flourish. Thirty-five percent of the kingdom's production of grains, dates, vegetables, fodders and fruit, plus camels, sheep, cows, goats, bees and dairy products emanates from Riyadh, making it a center of agricultural distribution. Joint stock mineral resources company Ma'aden operates five gold mines and is exploring development of phosphates and aluminum.

One of the largest and most modern medical facilities in the Middle East, King Fahad Medical City is the centerpiece of 10 hospitals, 63 primary health and preventive care centers, and anti-smoking clinics, providing free diagnosis and treatment beside research with a focus on diabetes causes and care. Educational programs at three government and five private universities provide technical, vocational and college training. With more than 42,000 students, Riyadh's Princess Nora bint Abdulrahan University is the largest all-female college in the world. Supplementing the local institutions, King Abdullah's scholarship program annually sends thousands of students to schools overseas with full tuition.

While overseas visitors are denied visas unless on missions of work or pilgrimage, tourism is a major industry. Riyadh boasts more than 331 travel agencies,

44 tour guides, 19 museums and 60 top-grade hotels, 16 of them 5-star. Promoting regional tourism, the Saudi Commission for Tourism and Antiquities launched a program of 29 tourist festivals held throughout the country. The state-of-the-art Riyadh International Convention and Exhibition Center hosts trade shows and conferences, and recently the country's borders began opening to some specially selected groups.

A member of the World Trade Organization since 2005, Saudi Arabia was cited by the World Bank in 2013 as the 22nd most economically competitive country in the world. The orderly succession of King Salman after King Abdullah's death in January projected an impression of stability and the expectation of maintaining strong ties to the United States. But the new king faces the challenges of finding new revenue streams, cutting public spending, reversing the system of entitlements and finding jobs for a rapidly growing and unemployed youth population.

Barring major Middle East upsets, the International Monetary Fund projects continued high growth rates and strong future prospects for the Saudi economy. While the World Bank rates the country high in ease of doing business, and despite government incentives promoting joint ventures with Saudi firms, confronting the combination of absolute monarchy, feudal fealty and modern political patronage can be frustrating to overseas businesses. While English is widely spoken, shops must close during prayer times, which shift through the year, and working hours adjust to observe the torrid daytime tem-

peratures. Passports or local IDs should be carried all the time. Interchange between genders must observe strict protocols.

Despite lifestyle drawbacks, the prospects of no income tax, free housing, generous salaries and frequent paid holidays minimize the hardships of a posting in Riyadh. Since years of oil windfall and a Saudi tradition lacking in manual labor have deteriorated the incentives for local workers, the overseas guest workforce will continue to be in demand. Nonprofit agencies such as the U.S.-Saudi Arabia Business Council and the American Business Group of Riyadh foster business alliances with members including prominent U.S. firms such as Alcoa, Bechtel, Black & Veatch, Citibank, Chevron, Dow, Exxon, Honeywell, Pratt & Whitney and Raytheon. Despite the clash of cultures, U.S. companies are expected to continue pursuing financial opportunities as Riyadh endeavors to balance progress with traditions of the past.

DIVERSIONS

Given strict religious regulations, Riyadh's entertainment opportunities are limited. Sightseers may want to visit what remains of the historic section of town. Al-Thumairi, one of the city's nine original gates, ornately restored, rises among scattered sections of the old mud-brick city wall. Nearby lies the maze of rooms and courtyards of the partially restored Masmak Fortress, one of the country's most significant monuments and the site of Ibn Saud's daring raid to recapture control of Riyadh in 1902.

JUST THE FACTS

Time Zone: GMT + 3

Phone Code:

Country code: 966

City code: 11

Entry/Exit Requirements:

Only people on official business are allowed into the kingdom. Visitors must arrive with a visa, a passport valid for six months and a return ticket. Women are required to be met at the airport by their sponsors or husbands and must have confirmed accommodation for the duration of the stay.

Currency: Saudi riyal

Official language: Gulf Arabic

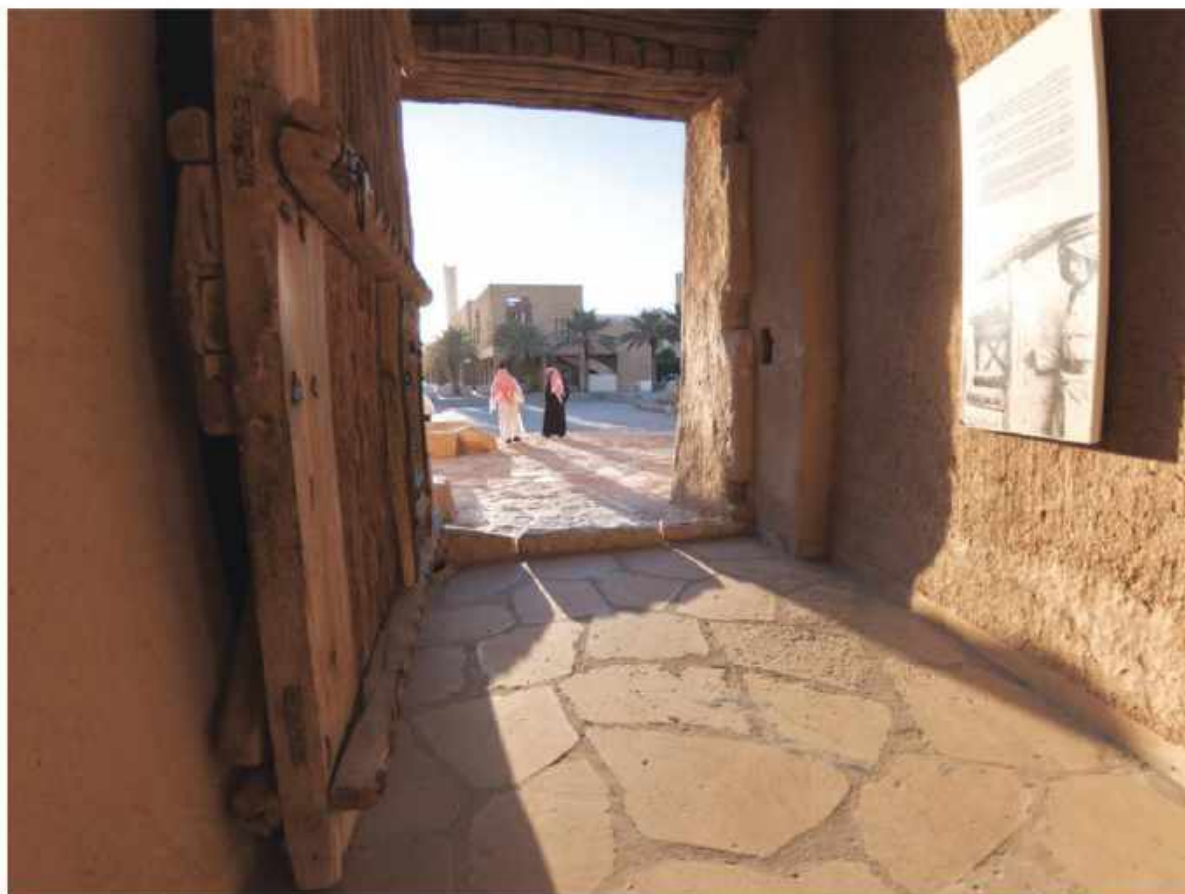
Key Industries: Oil, petrochemical, financial, transportation, agriculture, communication

INFO TO GO

About 20 miles north of the city, Riyadh's vast and extravagant King Khalid International Airport (RUH) utilizes three terminals: international, domestic and one for Saudi Arabian Airlines. Visitors must state their religion; luggage is apt to be inspected; and customs officials target pork, alcohol or drugs for confiscation. Metered taxis into town charge a purported flat rate; a metered ride should cost \$20-25. More reliable hotel limousines charge about the same for the ride into town, which takes about half an hour in good traffic. Return passengers should allow plenty of time for X-ray screening before and after check-in and after passport control.

WAY OUT: Exit gate of Masmak Fortress

PHOTO © RAGARWAL123 | DREAMSTIME.COM





WRITING ON THE WALL: Ancient well (top), and Arabic inscription detail in Masmak Fortress (bottom)

PHOTOS: © RAJARWALLI23 | DREAMSTIME.COM

Also close by is the clock tower of Deera Square, surrounded by the Great Mosque and other public buildings. The square is where public executions occur.

The King Abdul Aziz Historical Centre features the Murabba Palace complex where traditional clothes, crafts, camel saddles and carpets are on view. The architecturally modern National Museum uses virtual and interactive displays to chronicle the history of Arabia, dating from the creation of the universe.

Some of the best shopping in Saudi Arabia is found in Olaya's mammoth multistory malls stocked with electronics and international luxury goods. One floor of the Kingdom Tower is designated for women only. The gold souk is near Deera Square, and just south of Masmak Fortress sits the bazaar Souq al-Thumairi with its conglomeration of booths selling Bedouin bags, half-moon pendants, silver daggers, coffee pots and dangling earrings.

While some restaurants, particularly in hotels, do not enforce gender segregation, in most places unrelated men and women must dine separately. Much of the entertaining takes place in private homes where the hospitality is warm and the atmosphere more casual. Hotel fitness facilities tend to be men-only, with some offering masculine facials, massages and body treatments. DQ's Al Manahil Spa and Salon provides similar spa services and swimming for women only. Two English-language newspapers, the *Saudi Gazette* and the *Arab News*, may list concerts, theater performances and cultural events organized by the diplomatic community.

ONLINE EXTRA

Jump to gtravmag.com/d1riyadh to read about keeping cool at Snow World.

**Al Faisaliah Hotel,
A Rosewood Hotel**
rosewoodhotels.com

Al Manahil Spa and Salon
almanahil.com.sa

**American Business Group of
Riyadh**
abgr-riyadh.com

Arriyadh City
arriyadh.com

**Four Seasons Hotel Riyadh
at Kingdom Centre**
fourseasons.com

The Globe
rosewoodhotels.com

Mondo
ihg.com

The Ritz-Carlton, Riyadh
ritzcarlton.com

**Riyadh International
Convention & Exhibition
Center**
ricec.com.sa

**Saudi Arabian General
Investment Authority**
sagia.gov.sa

**Saudi Commission for
Tourism and Antiquities**
scta.gov.sa

**Saudi Industrial
Development Fund**
sidf.gov.sa

**U.S.-Saudi Arabian
Business Council**
us-sabc.org

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Learn more at www.saudiairlines.com





PUBLIC ART: A giant blue bear sculpture peeks into the Colorado Convention Center in downtown Denver.

PHOTO: © ARTNAHACHOS/DREAMSTIME.COM

Unsinkable City

The Denver spirit soars with youthful energy and optimism. BY GREGORY D. MCCLUNEY

The Unsinkable Molly Brown of *Titanic* fame embodied the lively character of new money, Denver-style. With all her assets, Molly didn't always get respect. Similarly, Denver made the transition from cow town to a sophisticated, multicultural urban metro area befitting the nation's 10th-largest downtown. Cow town no more, Denver has come of age with a distinctive brand of mountain sophistication brought to town via high-tech and energy businesses.

Denver, like Molly, wears its success well. A commitment to the mountain lifestyle shows in its more than 800 miles of biking, hiking and jogging trails and 200 parks for residents and visitors to enjoy. There are lots of days to play, too. With 300 days of sunshine per year, Denver boasts more bright days than many cities in California and Florida. It's an outdoor enthusiast's city — youthful, optimistic, full of energy, open and gregarious to visitors. To taste the spirit of Denver, be prepared to get outside and experience your brand of a Rocky Mountain high.

In 2014, Mayor Michael B. Hancock described the state of his city as "vibrant, thriving" to the Denver Metro Chamber, noting that 27,000

jobs had been created in the last three years. But with strong growth come challenges. "Housing remains a problem. ... We are hamstrung by this [development] state law, and I stand with my fellow mayors as we move to address these limiting laws," Hancock stated, referring to Colorado's construction defects legislation that is hampering building new condominiums and townhouses.

With more than 1,000 restaurants and bars within two miles of downtown, Denver offers an in-town nightlife that exceeds that of cities twice its size. Called by some the "Napa Valley of Beer," Denver is enjoying a craft beer craze. You can drink your way through the Denver Beer Trail, boasting no fewer than 20 active breweries and 100-plus brew pubs, more than any other urban region in America.

Before you hit the trail, some other popular spots downtown include shopping at the 16th Street Mall and the open-air Denver Pavilions. Check out the restoration of the city's classic Union Station, which has been reinvented to handle public transit as the city struggles with its own success. Browse the LoDo neighborhood, home to historic Larimer Square, the center for shopping, restaurants and entertainment near Wynkoop Street and 14th Avenue. The shops are mostly locally owned and unique. The light rail system makes a trip to the Old South Pearl Street neighborhood near Buchtel and East Iowa streets quick and easy. If you enjoy browsing bookstores, galleries and clothing stores with plenty of access to restaurants and coffee shops, you can spend the better part of a day here.

Yet another hip Denver neighborhood is SoBo, South Broadway and Ellsworth Street. SoBo gets its name from the main street, which is on

the rebound thanks to the energy of the young and hip who hang out here. Cruise the shops to find the unusual clothing you won't see in the big malls. If size matters, with more than 500 shops, the classic Cherry Creek shopping district is the largest between Chicago and San Francisco.

Some of Denver's most popular destinations are indoors, perfect to fill a rainy day, even if there aren't many in this dry climate. If you fly into the city, you'll get your first taste of the Denver arts scene in the spectacular airport itself, mostly displayed in the main terminal. Civic leaders have chosen to invest in art throughout the city. It's impressive, even if you never pass through a museum's doors. Find the city's most popular and largest collections at the Denver Art Museum and Museum of Contemporary Art Denver. But some of the smaller venues show more eclectic art, such as the Dikeou Collection

of international pop art and the Kirkland Museum of Fine & Decorative Art. If you're into trains, the Forney Museum of Transportation shows the world's largest steam locomotive. The American Museum of Western Art, housed in a landmark historic building, is not to be missed by fans of this type of work.

As one of America's fittest cities, Denver residents' commitment to exercise at this mile-high altitude extends to professional sports. Depending on the time of year, visitors can catch a Colorado Rockies baseball game at Coors Field, NBA's Denver Nuggets at Pepsi Center, the NFL's Denver Broncos at Invesco Field or the Colorado Avalanche hockey team. If you visit in January, the mother of Western rodeos, the National Western Stock Show, takes over the city for two weeks. In major league sports as well as planned development, the Mile High City keeps on climbing.

Named the No. 1 beer city in America by USA Today. Denver breweries craft more than 200 beers every day.



SCENIC DRIVES

About 60 miles south on I-25, Colorado Springs offers a lot for an hour's drive that features spectacular mountain vistas. Tourists fly here from around the world to see the Garden of the Gods alone, and other sites include the Will Rogers Shrine, Pikes Peak, the U.S. Air Force Academy and the famous Broadmoor resort.

Boasting its own identity, the university town of Boulder sheds any idea it's a 'burb of Denver. Just 30 miles west of the city, the mountains are up close and personal and offer every kind of outdoor recreation. In downtown Boulder, head to the Pearl Street Mall, an outdoor shopping area with ethnic food, music and more. From here, a short walk takes you to the Boulder Museum of Contemporary Art or the Fiske Planetarium. End your visit with dinner in the mountains at the famous Flagstaff House — worth the drive, and the views are complimentary.

Few Colorado towns exemplify the largess of the 1860s gold rush as much as the towns of Central City and Blackhawk. Once called the "Richest Square Mile on Earth," the two towns built the Central City Opera House in 1878 and Teller House in 1872. It's less than an hour up I-70 west of downtown. The modern casinos provide stark contrast to these beautiful Victorian structures. Try your luck between sightseeing or catch a live performance during the season at the opera house.

American Museum of Western Art
anschutzcollection.org

Boulder Convention & Visitors Bureau
bouldercoloradousa.com

Boulder Museum of Contemporary Art
bmoca.org

Central City
centralcitycolorado.us

Central City Opera House
centralcityopera.org

Cherry Creek North
cherrycreeknorth.com

City of Colorado Springs
springsgov.com

Denver Art Museum
denverartmuseum.org

Denver Convention & Visitors Bureau
visitdenver.com

Dikeou Collection
dikeoucollection.org

Fiske Planetarium
fiske.colorado.edu

Flagstaff House
flagstaffhouse.com

Forney Museum of Transportation
forneymuseum.org

Kirkland Museum of Fine & Decorative Art
kirklandmuseum.org

LoDo District
lododistrict.org

Museum of Contemporary Art Denver
moadenver.org

OLD AND NEW: Metropolitan Cathedral of Santiago in the main square, Plaza de Armas.

PHOTO © JAMESREPPUNY | DREAMSTIME.COM



Appetite for Commerce

Discover the flavor of doing business in Santiago. BY KRISTY ALPERT

Nestled deep in a valley just beyond the foothills of the Andes Mountains, Chile's capital city of Santiago is a cultural destination that means business. Don't be fooled by the relatively small population of 6 million: This petite metropolis recently transformed itself from an unassuming Andean mountain town into one of the most important financial centers in Latin America.

Boasting more free trade agreements than any other country except Singapore, Chile has become one of the world's foremost centers of business. As one of the most stable and prosperous of the developing nations, Chile's democratic development makes it an ideal location to do business, especially in Santiago.

Despite the astounding urban rebirth and new position in the modern market, Santiago remains true to its South American roots,

maintaining its charming customs and idiosyncratic ways of doing business.

It's been more than 20 years since Santiago felt the first business boom, welcoming numerous multinational corporations within the city limits including LAN Airlines, Microsoft, Nestlé and Yahoo. The city rallied to embrace the new additions by creating an urban scene with fashionable restaurants, mammoth museums and, most notably, South America's most extensive metro system. The system boasts more than 64 miles of revenue service, making it easy for business travelers to get the most out of a short trip to the city. However, it's wise to avoid using the transit system during rush hour, or *horario punta* — 7–8:59 a.m. and 6–7:59 p.m. — due to packed trains and more expensive ticket prices.

Luckily, transit times aren't normally an issue for business workers, as Chile has one of the highest averages of working hours per person in the world. Although a typical office may post hours from 8:30 a.m. to 6 p.m., it's generally frowned upon to leave work on time, and most workers stay until around 8 p.m. Despite the long hours, the working scene is generally relaxed, and siestas are still widely

practiced throughout the city. Many businesses lock their doors during this time, and lunch breaks generally last one to two hours, depending on the level of worker.

Lunch is the main meal in Santiago, and for workers who don't go home for the break, most restaurants serve a fixed-price special (*menú del día* or *menú ejecutivo*) for business workers, costing \$6–11 and including an appetizer, main course, beverage or wine, coffee and dessert. One of the most typical lunch places in the city is Osadia, off Avenida Nueva Costanera, where the service is delightfully slow, giving you and your associates plenty of time to unwind with a glass of wine on the patio. (Alcohol during lunch is not taboo in Santiago and generally consists of a single glass of wine or a Pisco sour per person.) For a more upscale lunch, Km0 is a favorite among the business crowd for its amazing wine list and consistent service in a trendy atmosphere.

Although lunches are informal in nature, hierarchy remains an important part of Santiago's culture (Chileans still use the formal "*usted*" for those in higher positions), and, generally, higher-level executives do not associate with lower-level co-workers or employees outside of the office. While in the office, interacting with co-workers is important, and it's essential to start any meeting with a handshake and exchange of business cards. Kissing on the cheek for women and embracing among men is reserved for closer associates and longtime colleagues. Most Chileans include two surnames on their business cards (father's and mother's), but they only go by their father's surname, which is listed first on the card.

Not surprisingly, aside from the frequent dining that takes place throughout the typical Santiago week (with afternoon tea normally observed 5–7 p.m.), the biggest cultural difference to adjust to in the office is communication. For instance, in Chile, "yes" doesn't necessarily mean "yes." Chileans tend to avoid unnecessary confrontation and use the word "yes" to mean they understand that point of view — not necessarily that they agree. For this reason, it's important to follow up with co-workers and clients to make sure you're on the same page. As it's not a common practice to acknowledge receipt of emails or phone calls, you may find yourself following up more frequently, anyway.

Dinners are rarely scheduled before 9 p.m. and often last well until midnight during the normal working week, giving plenty of time for you and your guests to fill up on all the delicious seafood and wines for which this city is famous. One of the best spots for Chilean seafood is Aquí Está Coco restaurant in the Providencia neighborhood, where the raw bar starts the evening before courses of fresh seafood prepared in Chilean sauces and spices grace the table (along with delicious Patagonian beef for the meat lovers). After dinner, the best way to wrap up the night is with a glass (or a flight) of Chilean wine at the hip Bocanariz Vino Bar in Lastarria. Note that a 10 percent tip is standard in Santiago, and although it's not necessary to tip your cab driver, it is customary to tip your parking and gas station attendant 100 to 200 pesos.

Santiago isn't all business, though; with nearby vineyards, internationally acclaimed ski resorts, fresh seafood markets and beautiful beaches acting as the natural frame for this



scenic city, Santiago offers an immersion into a delicious world of flavor and adventure.

After business hours and on weekends, find sightseeing and cultural options within walking distance of the major business districts and hotels, like the newly opened 5-star luxury hotel The Singular. Located in the Lastarria neighborhood near Iglesia de San Francisco, Gran Torre Santiago and the Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, The Singular is one of the top-rated hotels for business travelers and features high-speed WiFi, a full-service spa, 24-hour room service and a great onsite restaurant. At the Plaza de Armas, visitors can feel the pulse of the city as they walk around the sculptures and fountains while sipping the local street food favorite *mote con huesillo*, a fruity and filling peach juice with wheat kernels and dried peaches.

The absolute must-visit for anyone looking to get a taste of Chile's signature flavor is the famous Mercado Central, consistently rated one of the best markets in the world and showcasing the country's diversity with seafood stalls, grocery stores, herbs, butcher shops, liquor stores, restaurants, delis, bakeries, pharmacies, dairy stands, jewelry makers, artisans and more. It's a great place to take adventurous clients to sample local delicacies like *caldillo de congrio* (conger eel soup), ceviche and *empanadas de mariscos* (seafood empanadas).

Although U.S. travelers to Chile do not generally need to obtain a visa, most are required to pay a reciprocity tax at the airport (about \$131). But even the small tax is worth every penny to discover the delicious side of doing business in this Chilean city.

MUSICAL INTERLUDE: Singers entertain lunch guests at Mercado Central.

PHOTO: © MVIDEOSOLA | DREAMTIME.COM

Aquí Está Coco
aquiestacoco.cl

Bocanariz Vino Bar
bocanariz.cl

Chile Tourism
chile.travel

Mercado Central
mercadocentral.cl

The Singular Hotel
thesingular.com

ONLINE EXTRA
Jump to gtravmag.com/santiago to read about cultural immersion tours for business travelers.

Good Times in Galway

Musicians tune up as the sun goes down in the most Irish of cities. BY WENDY O'DEA

One by one, local men stroll leisurely into The Crane Bar, just across the River Corrib from Galway's more popular Latin Quarter. They sink into a corner of the small pub, as if meeting for a pint after a long workday. But they're not here for the drink, they're here for the music. (Well, maybe both.) Each pulls out an instrument and begins to play. Magically, toes are tapping and the nighttime atmosphere throughout the historic pub becomes uniquely Irish.

The Crane is one of a handful of traditional Irish pubs that business travelers seek out to hear live music, meet the locals or just experience some good old-fashioned Irish *craic* (fun). Galway, considered by many to be Ireland's most Irish city and cultural heart, has a consistently vibrant nightlife, particularly in warmer months. In fact, the city was recently awarded a "Purple Flag" for its safe, vibrant and diverse nighttime scene.

In the Latin Quarter, along the pedestrian-only Quay, High and Cross streets, other pubs get in on the action. Taaffes Bar and Tig Cóili also offer music nightly while visitors and locals mingle at The Quays Bar, Tig Neachtain and The Front Door, to name a few. The bar scene at The g Hotel is also worth a visit.

If you're in a dancing mood, there are a few nightclubs (Halo Nightclub, Central Park and Karma), most attracting the younger university crowd. Other live music venues include The Róisín Dubh and Monroe's Live, the latter offering lively Irish set dancing every Tuesday.

Gay travelers generally mingle at the same pubs, although those seeking a like crowd may want to stop by The Pub (formerly G Bar) on Dominick Street or schedule business during Galway's August Pride Festival, the longest-running Pride parade in Ireland that attracts throngs of locals and visitors alike.

The foodie scene is also alive and well despite the recession that followed the Celtic Tiger economy of 10 years ago. Just a few doors from The Crane lies the critically acclaimed Kai Café + Restaurant, which uses local, sustainable food sources to create a new menu daily. Another that doesn't disappoint is Ard Bia at Nimmos, housed in a stone boathouse alongside the Spanish Arch where the original Claddagh village once stood.

If you visit in summer, hit one of Galway's many festivals. Some of the more popular include the International Arts Festival and Galway Races, both in July, and the Oyster Festival in September.



SUMMER NIGHT: Crowds gather in the Latin Quarter to celebrate Independence Day during the Volvo Ocean Race.

PHOTO: RIHARDZZ | DREAMSTIME.COM

Ard Bia at Nimmos
ardbia.com

The Crane Bar
thecranebar.com

The Front Door
frontdoorpub.com

The g Hotel & spa
theghotel.ie

Galway Pride
galwaypride.com

Halo Nightclub
halonightclub.com

Kai Café + Restaurant
kaicaferestaurant.com

Karma Nightclub
karma.ie

Monroe's Live
monroes.ie

The Róisín Dubh
roisindubh.net

Tig Neachtain
tighneachtain.com

Tourism Ireland
ireland.com



TAHITI LOS ANGELES PARIS TOKYO AUCKLAND SYDNEY

On Air Tahiti Nui, “going above and beyond” takes on new meaning.

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Global Traveler - Best Airline in the South Pacific 2011 and 2012

Conde Nast Traveler - Readers' Choice Award Recipient 2011

Travel + Leisure - World's Best Airline Award Recipient 2011 and 2012



CITY ICONS: The St. Alexander Nevsky Cathedral (left), and cascading flowerpots along the Yellow Brick Road near the Presidency building in the downtown square (right)

PHOTOS: © MEUNIERD | DREAMSTIME.COM, © ANNAHRISTOVA | DREAMSTIME.COM

Keeping the Faith

Post-Soviet Sofia reclaims its cultural heritage and looks to the future. **BY MARLENE GOLDMAN**

A relic of Sofia's Soviet era towers above us, the nearly 12-foot-high Monument to the Soviet Army. On top stands a Red Army soldier flanked by a Bulgarian man and woman, while an array of figures lines the base — Bulgarians greeting soldiers of the Soviet Red Army, who invaded the country in 1944.

The monument, erected in 1954 to honor the role of the Soviets in defeating fascism in World War II, stands guard in the middle of Borisova Gradina, or Boris' Garden, one of the largest parks in Sofia. It is also the first stop on our tour of Bulgaria's capital city — a stark reminder of the Communist control over Bulgaria from 1946 to 1989.

The park is where my partner, Panos, used to jog every day during his three-year stint helping build the country's infrastructure in the mid-1990s after the fall of the Iron Curtain. This is the Sofia he remembers from his past and, for me, the Sofia I expect, as we take a break from a business trip to witness the changes in the city.

Reminders of that era still stand, from weathered buildings to Soviet-style apartment blocks outside downtown, but in 21st-century Sofia, this monument feels out of place. Over the last decade, Bulgaria's rapid transformation and more recent embracing of its place in the European Union render its Soviet past a fading memory.

Today, the area around the statues is a gathering spot for young

skateboarders, while downtown Sofia spills with bars, upscale boutiques, nightclubs, beer pubs, trendy restaurants and sprawling shopping malls.

We head from the statue through the park, constructed in the late 19th century, and stroll the trails and walkways, passing dog walkers, babushkas deep in conversation and students from nearby Sofia University glued to their smartphones.

Many of Sofia's highlights lie within walking distance of the park or else are easily reached by tram, metro train, bus or trolley. We stop at the 1897-built Battenberg Mausoleum, its single copper dome reflecting the sunlight. This is the mausoleum and final resting place of Prince Alexander I, the first head of state of modern Bulgaria.

Sofia's most famous Bulgarian Orthodox church, the gold-domed St. Alexander Nevsky Cathedral, is an icon of the city. Built in the early 20th century in memory of the 200,000 Russian, Ukrainian, Belorussian and Bulgarian soldiers who died in the Russo-Turkish War of 1877–1878, the structure stands as one of the largest and most important Eastern Orthodox cathedrals in the world. A crypt below the cathedral houses the old Bulgarian art collection of the National Art Gallery, depicting Orthodox church art — namely, icons.

The cathedral sits adjacent to St. Sophia Bulgarian Orthodox Church, the church for which the city of Sofia is named. Built in the

sixth century at the site of an ancient Roman theater, it was temporarily converted into a mosque by the Ottomans.

Behind the cathedral, the National Gallery for Foreign Art, housed in the former Royal Printing Office, holds a unique collection of Christian sculpture of the Indian province of Goa, among other works from afar.

Running south and west of the cathedral, most of Sofia's other important buildings are linked by Sofia's "Yellow Brick Road," including the 1914-era revival-style Russian Church (aka the Church of St. Nicholas the Miracle-Maker), known for its colorful frescoes and crypt housing the remains of Russian Saint Archbishop Seraphim. The Viennese yellow cobblestones are believed to have been a wedding gift to Bulgaria's Prince Ferdinand in the late 19th century.

We stop at the Antiques Market and sort through odds and ends, from dusty old cameras to Russian lacquered dolls. Adjacent small streets are also filled with hawkers selling Communist-era memorabilia, among other items.

Past the Yellow Brick Road, the Central Synagogue, the second-largest Sephardic synagogue in Europe, rivals the grand exteriors of Sofia's myriad churches. As we arrive, we are fortunate to find a worker to let us in and take us on a tour. Built between 1905 and 1909, the design was based on the Sephardic synagogue in Vienna, which was destroyed during World War II. Its large menorah inside and brass chandelier as well as other items were imported from Vienna. Although the bombing of Sofia in 1944 partially destroyed the synagogue, it has since been restored to its former grandeur.

Our guide takes us inside to the Jewish Museum of History-Sofia, where we learn about the history of the Jewish community in Bulgaria. Special attention is devoted to the rescue of the Jews in Bulgaria during World War II, who were protected by the government from deportation. About 50,000 Bulgarian Jews were rescued, most of whom left when the State of Israel was established in 1947.

Completing the Western religion triad, nearby is the Banya Bashi Mosque, one of the oldest mosques in Europe, completed in 1576.

LODGING

ARENA DI SERDICA HOTEL

The 63 guestrooms and suites at this hotel and spa sit on the site of a Roman amphitheater. A section of the ruins lies within the lobby. 2-4 *Budapeshta St.* \$\$\$

GRAND HOTEL SOFIA

The sophisticated 105-room hotel draws celebrities from Antonio Banderas to Scarlett Johansson. Patrons luxuriate in the hotel spa solarium while food connoisseurs dine at upscale Shades of Red Restaurant. 7 *Gurko St.* \$\$\$

SUITE HOTEL SOFIA

Located in the Student City area of Sofia, this 122-room contemporary hotel offers free WiFi and panoramic views from its Zest Restaurant. 1A *Yordan Yossifov St.* \$\$

DINING

HADJIDRAGANOVITE KASHTI

Enjoy traditional cuisine served in a complex of restored 19th-century houses, each in the architectural style of the towns they represent: Bansko, Melnik, Zheravna and Koprishitsa. 75 *Kozloduy St.* \$\$

POD LIPITE RESTAURANT

Priding itself as one of the oldest restaurants in Sofia, the eatery serves up mainly locally sourced Bulgarian dishes, including home-made yogurt, cheese, bread and jams, along with live folk music. 1 *Elin Pelin St.* \$\$

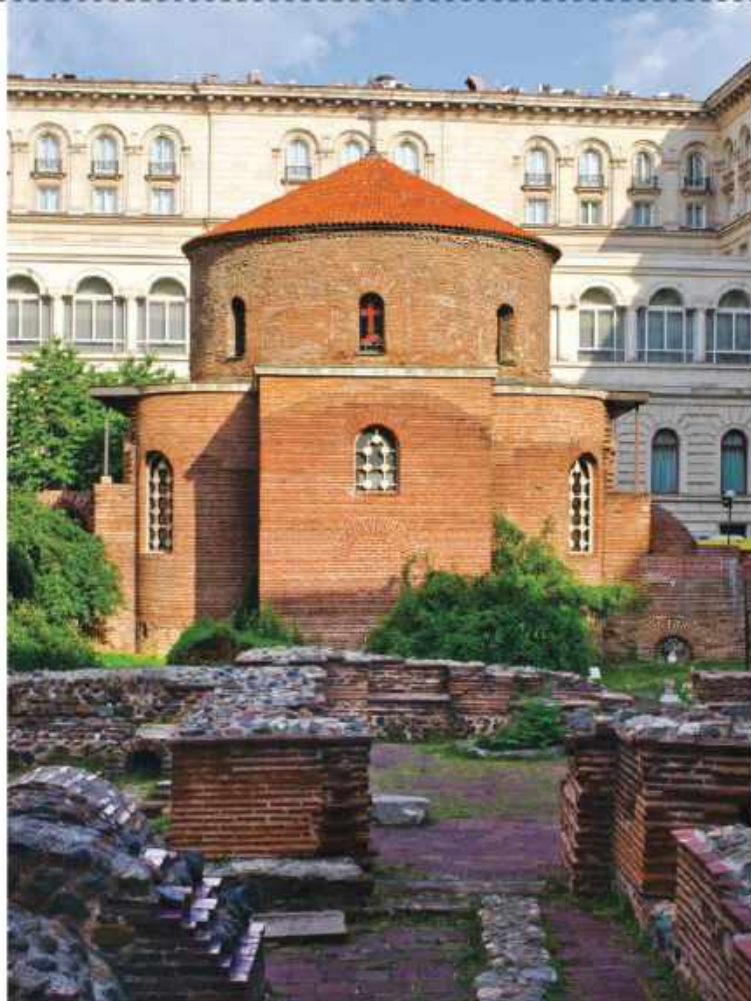
THIRSTY DRAGON INN

The cozy, understated spot serves local food and Czech lager in what feels like an old house with its homey wooden décor. *Ulitza 13 Marzo 2* \$\$

ON THE MENU: *Street café in Sofia (left), and shopska salad (right)*

PHOTOS: © ANTONCHALAKOV | DREAMTIME.COM, © ANETKATA | DREAMTIME.COM





ROMAN HISTORY: Rotunda of St. George

PHOTO: © CCAT52 | DREAMSTIME.COM

While we pass the days taking a break from business to sightsee and relive some of Panos' past, we spend our evenings with his resident friends, sampling the local food and nightlife.

Our first night, I am introduced to Bulgarian cuisine at the tourist-friendly Manastirska Magernitsa, a *mehana*, or traditional restaurant, with an overwhelming menu of local dishes. We start with *shopska* salad and other veggie options, paired with some potent *rakia*, the traditional Bulgarian libation served with the first course.

Following a long and hearty dinner, our next stop is Bar Up, a cozy spot for a fruity cocktail before heading to Sofia's notorious late-night clubs. The bar sits at the edge of Rakovski Street, Sofia's version of Broadway, with its multitude of theaters.

I had read about the *chalga* clubs in Sofia, Bulgarian pop folk music with hints of Serbian, Turkish and other Middle Eastern influences. The club Sin City is a hot spot for *chalga*, where the scantily clad young nouveau riche take to the dance floors well into the wee hours of the morning.

Looking for a more classic cultural experience during our stay, we try to squeeze in as many museums and historic attractions as possible. At the Bulgarian Council of Ministers, where Panos worked decades ago, an underpass houses the archaeological remains from the East Gate of the ancient fortress of Serdica. With all the Soviet reminders, Sofia's Roman connection is often forgotten. The Thracian tribe originally founded Sofia about 2000 B.C., whose settlement was called Serdica.

In a courtyard of the Presidential Palace and Sofia Hotel Balkan lie more remains of Serdica, as well as the restored Roman Rotunda of St. George — Sveti Georgi — currently housing St. George Church. Also impressive is the ancient amphitheater in the Arena di Serdica Hotel.

Nearby, the National Institute of Archaeology with Museum at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, located in a former Ottoman mosque, displays relics of the Roman past and other eras from Thracian treasures to ancient tools and sarcophagi.

The highlight of the National Art Gallery, our next stop, is the building itself, which takes residence in the former Royal Palace of Bulgaria. There are rooms full of medieval paintings and modern Bulgarian art, as well as more classic works dating to Ottoman times.

We make a detour to the booksellers' square, or Slaveykov Square, named after father and son poets Petko and Pencho Slaveykov. Panos recalls the endless tables of pirated CDs and computer programs once sold here, but that era is long gone. Instead, some 40 stalls overflow with everything from sci-fi to travel guides.

On our final day, we make an excursion to Boyana Church at the foot of Mount Vitosha, a UNESCO World Heritage site renowned for its icon paintings and frescoes. The site with three buildings, the oldest dating to the 10th century, is considered one of the most complete and perfectly preserved monuments of Eastern European medieval art.

At the nearby National Museum of History, more than 650,000 exhibits comprise one of the largest history museums in the Balkans. The museum occupies the former residence of the country's last Communist leader, Todor Zhivkov, which seems a fitting end to my tour of a city keeping its sightlines on the future rather than lingering in the past.

ONLINE EXTRA

Jump to gtravmag.com/bpsofia to read about the Monastery of Saint Ivan of Rila.

INFO TO GO

Although there are no direct flights between Bulgaria and the United States, travelers can connect through major European gateways such as London, Rome, Frankfurt or Paris. Bulgaria Air, the national carrier, operates out of Sofia Airport, the main international airport. The No. 84 and No. 384 public bus lines connect the airport to the central city, as well as to underground metro stations.

Arena di Serdica Hotel

arenadiserdica.com

Boyana Church

boyanachurch.org

Bulgaria Tourism

bulgariatravel.org

Central Synagogue of Sofia

sofiasyagogue.com

Grand Hotel Sofia

grandhotels Sofia.bg

National Art Gallery

nationalartgallerybg.org

National Gallery for Foreign Art

foreignartmuseum.bg

National Institute of Archaeology with Museum

naim.bg

National Museum of History

historymuseum.org

Pod Lipite Restaurant

podlipitebg.com

St. Alexander Nevsky Cathedral

stalexandernevskycathedral.org

St. George Rotunda Church

svgeorgi-rotonda.com

Sofia Hotel Balkan, a Luxury Collection Hotel

sofiabalkan.com

Suite Hotel Sofia

suitehotels Sofia.bg



Fashion Forward

Seoul's Gangnam district sets the latest trends in music, technology and style. BY RICHARD NEWTON

There is an elephant in the room. Well, not so much an elephant. More a chubby fellow in a natty suit and sunglasses dancing as if he's riding an imaginary horse.

Gangnam is not the largest district of Seoul. (It ranks third.) It's not the most populated. (With half a million inhabitants, it ranks fourth.) It's not the most scenic. (Other areas of Seoul enjoy panoramic mountainside views; Gangnam occupies the flatlands on the south bank of the Han River.) And it harbors few historic sites. (Elsewhere in Seoul there are magnificently ancient palaces and monasteries.)

But Gangnam has Psy, South Korea's first international pop superstar, and Psy introduced the world to Gangnam Style, the chic, playful hedonism that defines this affluent corner of the South Korean capital.

Gangnam's most important thoroughfare is Teheran-ro (Tehran Boulevard), lined with shiny skyscrapers housing many of the most prestigious Korean corporations and multinationals. This is the powerhouse not just of Gangnam but of South Korea, with sky-high real estate prices to match. (Estimates say the real estate value of Gangnam exceeds the entire real estate worth of South Korea's second city, Busan.)

Standing proud at the western end of Teheran-ro is a complex of mirror-glass buildings known collectively as Samsung Town, the world headquarters of the Samsung conglomerate. At Samsung d'light, a three-floor annex accessed directly from Gangnam Metro Station, visitors can discover new and upcoming products from Samsung Electronics as well as max out their credit cards in the shop.

Just as Samsung d'light offers a window on the future of consumer electronics, so the riverside area of Apgujeong-dong provides a peek into the future of Korean (and Asian) fashion. Rodeo Street is Apgujeong-dong's answer to Rodeo Drive. Here trends are set, the spiritual epicenter of Gangnam Style.

By day, Gangnam presents its corporate façade. By night, it transforms into a gaudy riot of neon. Gangnam's restaurants and swanky nightclubs act as magnets for Seoul's wealthiest fashionistas. But don't come here expecting to hear Psy blasting out from nightclub sound systems while people crowd the dance floors on their imaginary horses.

Gangnam never rests on its laurels. Technology, music and fashion are in a constant state of change. By the time the rest of the world catches on to the trends started here, Gangnam has long since moved on.

SWANKY SEOUL:

Skyscrapers (left), and Gangnam Style installation (right), in the Gangnam district.

PHOTOS: © VINCENTSTHOMAS (DREAMSTIME.COM), © ANDREY GONCHAROV (DREAMSTIME.COM)

Gangnam Tourist Information Center
tour.gangnam.go.kr

Korea Tourism Organization
visitkorea.or.kr

Samsung d'light
samsung.com/us/experience/dlight

Visit Seoul
visitseoul.net

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ASIANA AIRLINES

A STAR ALLIANCE MEMBER





Thrills and Chills

Tackle your bucket list of adventures on New Zealand's South Island. BY ALLISON VOIGTS

Twelve thousand feet above the New Zealand countryside, I watched my friend Ashleigh disappear out the rear door of a plane. My stomach somersaulted, and I tugged again at the metal bolts connecting my harness to the skydiving instructor's.

"Our turn," he said, inching us toward the opening.

A split second later we were in free fall, and my panic dissipated as I took in glittering Lake Wanaka and the glacier-crusting peaks of the island's Southern Alps.

Ashleigh and I had driven to Lake Wanaka from Christchurch, arriving at the airfield in our rented station wagon 20 minutes earlier and watching a brief safety video before being ushered onto the plane. Our plan was to cram as many bucket-list experiences as we could into a five-day stay on the country's South Island, making a loop around its center, beginning and ending in Christchurch.

Though British in design and considered New Zealand's most conservative city, Christchurch is strategically positioned within

several hours of every adrenaline-pumping activity possible, including skydiving, bungee jumping, ice climbing, cave tubing and swimming with dolphins. The city offers mild, sunny weather; expansive parks and gardens; and a vibrant art scene — all of which helped it bounce back from the 2011 earthquake that killed 185 people and damaged much of the city.

After recovering from a red-eye flight from Sydney with a late start and a hearty brunch, we set out to explore Christchurch's walkable downtown on a warm February morning. Cathedral Square, which serves as the city's center, lost its Gothic Revival-style cathedral during the quake, but Pritzker Prize-winning architect Shigeru Ban designed a transitional Cardboard Cathedral — built from cardboard tubes and seating 700 people — that sits several blocks away.

A few blocks in the other direction we discovered the Botanic Gardens, shaded by enormous, prehistoric-looking trees and burst-



While looking for a place to land on his 1770 discovery voyage of New Zealand, Capt. Cook sailed past Christchurch's Banks Peninsula because he thought it was an island.



ing with red and pink late-summer roses. With one-eighth of its land dedicated to parks and reserves, it's easy to see the influence of the English green thumb in New Zealand's Garden City.

The following day, we picked up our rental car from a friendly local family who had equipped it with a tent, sleeping bags, camping stove and cooler, and we set off on our first excursion out of the city: Mount Cook National Park — or as it was first known to the Māori people, Aoraki. A swath of the country's tallest mountains that is more than one-third blanketed by glaciers, the park is home to 12,316-foot Mount Cook, whose Māori name means "cloud piercer."

Though we initially felt nervous driving on the opposite side of the road (New Zealand follows the British system), we realized shortly after leaving Christchurch how little traffic we'd encounter. Apart from the occasional RV or flock of sheep, the two-lane highway was completely empty, allowing us to stop on the shoulder to photograph pastoral vistas, eat lunch and swim in the aquamarine water of Lake Tekapo.

The drive from Christchurch to Mount Cook National Park is only 200 miles, but after a slew of leisurely stops, we arrived late in the afternoon as dark, ominous clouds drifted over the mountains. As New Zealand's highest

peak, Mount Cook has attracted alpinists — including the country's most celebrated, Sir Edmund Hillary — since it was first summited in the 1800s. With limited time, we opted for an hour-long hike to Kea Point, where the panorama of green-and-black mountain faces ribboned by waterfalls was spectacular.

We awoke to a cold mist at the campground the next morning and packed in a hurry to ensure a timely arrival for our skydiving appointment at Lake Wanaka. Two hours southwest of Mount Cook, the town of Wanaka is slightly slower-paced than nearby Queenstown. But it's still a major destination for outdoor thrills set against the backdrop of glacier-capped mountains and azure lakes. After returning to terra firma, we decided to push on through Mount Aspiring National Park on the island's west side.

Leaving Lake Wanaka, the road began to climb, and lush green rainforest replaced the rolling farmland. Brief, heavy showers produced rainbows that peeked out from behind the mountains. At close to a million acres, Mount Aspiring is the country's third-largest national park, and its roads only skirt the edges of its diverse terrain. Following the surging Haast River out of the park, we headed north along the coast to Fox Glacier.

Located on the west side of Mount Cook within West-

MONUMENTAL: Lake Wanaka panorama (left), and The Chalice sculpture in downtown Christchurch (right)

PHOTOS: © HUGOHT | DREAMSTIME.COM, © PIERRE JEAN DUBIEU | DREAMSTIME.COM

INFO TO GO

Christchurch International Airport is located six miles northwest of Cathedral Square; shuttle buses and taxis make the trip between the airport and the city center in about 20 minutes. Limited rail service exists between Christchurch and Greymouth or Picton from the Christchurch Railway Station. The InterCity bus service covers many of the South Island's popular sights and major cities. Renting a car is the most convenient way to get around, but bear in mind that New Zealand follows the British driving system.



ON THE ICE: Helicopter on Fox Glacier

PHOTOS: © HARLZ | DREAMSTIME.COM

land National Park, Fox Glacier and neighboring Franz Josef Glacier are the only glaciers outside of arctic regions that end just 1,000 feet above sea level. Though retreating for most of the past 100 years, Fox Glacier ends only 7.5 miles from the sea amid temperate rainforest. The 8-mile-long glacier proves one of the most accessible in the world, its terminal face just a short walk from Fox Glacier Village. It receives hundreds of visitors each day for helicopter tours, guided glacier walks and ice climbing.

The weather can be unpredictable, however, as we discovered when we awoke at the campground the next morning to a fine, steady rain. When we arrived at Fox Glacier Guiding for a group ice-climbing course, the guide told us everyone else had canceled, but we could still climb if we were interested. Not to be deterred from crossing “ice climbing” off our bucket list, we geared up with waterproof parkas, helmets and crampons and set off after him to the mouth of the glacier.

Fortunately, overcast weather brings out a glacier’s most beautiful colors, and we gaped at the aquamarine hues that seemed to glow from beneath the ice’s dirty surface. The guide pointed out dark crevasses and bottomless-looking holes as we walked — reasons that tourists are urged not to explore the glacier on their own. After a quick lesson in how to use our crampons and axes to drill into the ice, he set up a top rope and we began to climb, advancing like slow-moving stick insects with each swing of our axes into the glacier’s crust.

Sluggish and sore, we continued north along the coast the following day to the town of Hokitika, where we sprawled out on the windy beach and napped in the sunshine among the driftwood. In the afternoon, we turned inland on Highway 73 and passed through the South Island’s first national park, Arthur’s Pass. Initially constructed in the 1800s as a route to gold fields on the west coast, the tortuous road passes through dense rainforest before giving way to beech forest and alpine meadows.

Closing our loop around the island’s midsection, we continued on past Christchurch to the peninsula that juts into the Pacific east of the city. Within a harbor created by the collapse of an extinct volcano, the fishing village of Akaroa is populated with historic homes and sunny sidewalk cafés. It’s also home to Hector’s dolphins, a small, rare dolphin found only in New Zealand.

Drawn by the chance to swim with the dolphins, we donned thick rubber wetsuits and boarded a tour boat to scour the harbor for friendly cetaceans. After an hour fruitlessly scanning the water, we spotted a rounded gray dorsal fin beside the boat. Within seconds, the handful of tourists were shrieking and gasping in the frigid ocean, and the lone dolphin was nowhere to be found.

Our spirits buoyed by piping-hot fish and chips (and a partial refund for the dolphin swim), we turned back toward Christchurch to return the station wagon and board our flight home. We approached the city as the sun was setting, the last rays hitting the mountains to the west and casting their peaks in pink and gold.

ONLINE EXTRA

Jump to gravmag.com/ccbungee to read about bungee jumping in New Zealand.

Aoraki/Mount Cook National Park

doc.govt.nz/parks-and-recreation/national-parks

Arthur’s Pass National Park

doc.govt.nz/parks-and-recreation/national-parks

Cardboard Cathedral

cardboardcathedral.org.nz

Christchurch Botanic Gardens

ccc.govt.nz/cityleisure/parkswalkways

Christchurch Tourism

christchurch.org.nz

Fox Glacier Guiding

foxguides.co.nz

Mount Aspiring National Park

doc.govt.nz/parks-and-recreation/national-parks

Tourism New Zealand

newzealand.com

Westland National Park

doc.govt.nz/parks-and-recreation/national-parks

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LEGENDARY RHINE: Fireworks display "Rhine in Flames" in Koblenz (left), and Father Rhine and His Daughters sculpture in Düsseldorf (right)

PHOTOS: © JULIANE JACOBS | DREAMSTIME.COM, © HELD30808 | DREAMSTIME.COM

Romancing the Rhine

Myths and fairy tales come alive along the legendary river. BY ILONA KAUREMSZKY

A kaleidoscope of color bursts above the Rhine River as flotillas of brightly lit boats ply the storybook setting. The crowd goes wild. The fireworks display, called Rhine in Flames, is one of many annual festivals along the ancient waterway. But there's always been great fanfare in this European region whose spectacular scenery has fueled generations of poets, painters and composers.

This major European border river — whose Celtic name *Renos* means "raging flow" — spills into the North Sea from its source, a glacier in the Swiss Alps. Roughly 820 miles long, the nautical lifeline winds through Liechtenstein, Austria, Germany, France and the Netherlands as it tugs at visitors' heartstrings through a string of historic cities.

Cradled in a landscape mired in mountains, plateaus and terraced viniferous slopes, this chunk of Europa is molded as much by manmade forces as by nature. The wondrous scenery encompasses some of the Continent's oldest wineries, fortresses, ancient castles and medieval villages. No river in Europe is richer in legends and myths than the Rhine.

No wonder a young Beethoven drew inspiration from its ebb and flow at his home in Bonn, Germany. The Middle Rhine from Bonn to Mainz courses 760 miles past medieval castles and villages, while the Upper Rhine Valley affords an easy way to visit Switzerland, France and Germany.

So kick back and get a feel for the Rhine. Experience romance and nostalgia in guided or self-guided tours via a scenic river cruise, culinary and wine tours, or cycling if time permits. Any major hub like Frankfurt, Basel, Strasbourg or Düsseldorf serves as a good launch pad for the legendary Rhine excursions.

The Neo-Baroque sculpture *Father Rhine and His Daughters* in Düsseldorf makes a fabulous introduction to the Rhine-Romantic Route, a 364-mile stretch from Düsseldorf to Mainz linking Germany's best-loved tales. Stop in Bonn to visit the Beethoven-Haus museum. Listen to an audio guide of Beethoven recordings as you view manuscripts and mementoes. In autumn, music fans gather for the annual BeethovenFest Bonn, which heralds an international ensemble of acclaimed performers.

As you pass by the craggy Siebengebirge, myths come alive. Learn the story of how the dwarves digging up lakes and throwing the dirt over their shoulders created the "seven mountains." The natural beauty of rugged cliffs and steep slopes holds a commanding sight as you enter the narrows of the Upper Middle Rhine Valley.

A UNESCO World Heritage site since 2002, this 35-mile section between Koblenz and Bingen is the most popular Rhine sightseeing spot with a patchwork of 40 castles of the 12th to 15th centuries. Meshed

between quaint villages and crumbling ruins, this protected area boasts the most castles and palaces in the world. Tour Marksburg Castle, the only intact castle in the Rhine Valley, and Burg Rheinstein, a symbol of Germany's Romanticism period.

Some 20 million visitors wander the Upper Middle Rhine Valley every year. Explore quaint villages like St. Goar for cuckoo clocks and beer steins, then ascend the hillsides to fairy-tale places. High atop a cliff looms the Rhine's largest castle, Burg Rheinfels, open for tours. In Koblenz, ride the cable car for stunning panoramas across the river to the Ehrenbreitstein Fortress. Nicknamed "The Guard of the Rhine," the Prussian-built structure built in 1817–1828 overlooks the confluence of the Rhine and Moselle rivers.

Around the river's narrowest point rises the Loreley, the rock named after a legendary mermaid whose song caused innumerable shipwrecks that still captivates those who pass by. At the Loreley Valley Visitor Center get information on nature, hikes and wine tasting tours. In summer, enjoy a concert at the Loreley Open-Air Theatre.

Ever since the Romans introduced grapevines here, oenophiles have enjoyed extraordinary vintages. In the Middle Rhine, one of Germany's famous wine regions, sample fruity, tart Rieslings at the Weingut Bastian in Bacharach and meet eighth-generation winemaker Friedrich Bastian, known as the singing winemaker.

Sightseers flock to the round-trip river cruises from Bingen and Rüdesheim for enchanting Loreley and castle-themed tours at the UNESCO southern gateway to the Upper Middle Rhine Valley. Bingen is laden with quaint cobbled streets and vine-growing slopes, while neighboring Rüdesheim boasts castles, regal residences, churches and eclectic museums. Diners retreat to quaint taverns for local delicacies and to sip Asbach brandy, produced in Rüdesheim since 1892.

In the Upper Rhine Valley, which attracted 20 million visitors in 2013, rolling hills rise gently on both sides of the river to the German Black Forest and French Vosges. Bound by Germany, Switzerland and France, this area remains rich in traditions, history, wine and food. Enjoy some of the finest cuisine in a region the size of Tuscany, and save room for the luxurious spas where the Ancient Romans once indulged.

SKY-HIGH: Marksburg Castle atop the mountain (left); and the Koblenz Cable Car over the small town of Ehrenbreitstein (right)

PHOTOS: © SERRNOVIK | DREAMSTIME.COM, © ANDREW CHAMBERS | DREAMSTIME.COM.

LODGING

BRENNERS PARK-HOTEL & SPA

Offering unparalleled luxury, this legendary spa hotel from the Belle Époque situated by the green-fringed Lichtentaler Allee features exquisite amenities with fine service. *4-6 Schillerstrasse, Baden-Baden, Germany* \$\$\$\$\$

THE GRAND HOTEL LES TROIS ROIS

Overlooking the Rhine River by the Old Town in Basel, one of Europe's oldest 5-star hotels boasts 110 luxurious guest-rooms and a bevy of famous guests. *8 Blumenrain, Basel, Switzerland* \$\$\$\$\$

HÔTEL DES BERGES

Along the tranquil L'Ille River in Alsace, this 5-star family-run hotel between Colmar and Strasbourg blends opulent romance with a ravishing Romeo and Juliet suite. *4 Rue de Collonges au Mont d'Or, Illhaeusern, France* \$\$\$\$\$

DINING

AUBERGE DE L'ILL

At one of the oldest 3-star restaurants in France enjoy a menu inspired by acclaimed founding chef Paul Haeberlin with handpicked wines by the "best sommelier in the world," Serge Dubs. *Hôtel des Berges, 4 Rue de Collonges au Mont d'Or, Illhaeusern, France* \$\$\$\$\$

AU CROCODILE

Legendary Michelin 3-star chef Emile Jung has left the building, but this temple of gastronomy still conjures the finest Alsatian fare with Chef Philip Bohrer's classic French cuisine. *10 Rue de l'Outre, Strasbourg, France* \$\$\$\$\$

STÜBERS RESTAURANT

Enjoy an extraordinary farm-to-table experience overlooking the Rhine. Celebrity chef Andreas Steuber celebrates the world heritage region in his locally infused menu. *Rhein-Hotel Bacharach, 50 Langstrasse, Bacharach, Germany* \$\$\$\$\$





BON APPÉTIT: Cafés in La Petite-France, Strasbourg

PHOTO: © SERGEY KELIN | DREAMSTIME.COM

The world-renowned hot springs around Baden-Baden once attracted guests like Dostoevsky and Tolstoy for the healing qualities of the thermal spas and the gaming tables of the casino. Entertainment remains a common pastime in this playground of the rich and famous. Head to Germany's oldest casino, Casino Baden-Baden, built in 1824, or watch an opera at the Festspielhaus Baden-Baden, Germany's largest opera house. Exquisite private art collections are on display at the Fabergé Museum and the Richard Meier-designed Museum Frieder Burda.

In a 120-mile strip of land in northeast France bordering the Rhine and the Vosges Mountains lies Alsace, France's smallest region. The hilltops possess 400 castle ruins, Europe's richest region of feudal castles. By the forest of Sélestat rises the fabled Château du Haut-Koenigsbourg, a restored fort that remains one of the most frequently visited in France.

Blessed by fertile soils and a good climate, Alsace's white wines are highly sought after along the flat-lying Route des Vins, where Sylvaner, the most widely grown grape, produces a light and sparkling wine. Many winemakers offer wine tours and free tastings. The charming town of Colmar, the capital of Alsace wines, boasts the nickname "La Petite Venice" because of the half-timbered houses lining

the canals. It carries another big claim as the birthplace of Auguste Bartholdi, the designer of the Statue of Liberty. Visit his nascent home to view personal mementoes and models.

Along the Franco-German border lies the Alsatian capital of Strasbourg. The historic town center of Grand Ile is a UNESCO World Heritage site, and the Cathédrale Notre-Dame de Strasbourg is currently celebrating its millennial anniversary. The Gothic structure, once the world's tallest building, is situated in the lively Cathedral Plaza. Stroll by a warren of tightly woven cobbled streets in the quarter La Petite France with its whimsical, half-timbered buildings and stop by the waterways replete with fine taverns and shops. Sightseers can easily walk across a bridge linking Germany and France to watch the sailing ships.

Foodies, meanwhile, hone in on the thriving culinary scene as 66 Michelin-starred chefs dazzle the Upper Rhine Valley. Strasbourg, one of France's great gastronomic cities, boasts such institutions as Au Crocodile, renowned for its fine Alsatian fare. Baden-Baden lures culinary highbrows to its newly anointed Michelin 2-star Brenners Park Restaurant.

Wherever in the Rhine region, visitors discover quaint taverns and cafés around for generations that have their own charm and rightfully need to be sampled, one spoonful at a time. The profusion of customs, tastes, sights and sounds along these fabled riverbanks will no doubt make any visitor kick back and stay awhile.

Auberge de l'III
hoteldesberges.com

Beethoven-Haus Bonn
beethoven-haus-bonn.de

Brenners Park-Hotel & Spa
brenners.com

Burg Rheinfels
st-goar.de/17-1-.html

Burg Rheinstein
burg-rheinstein.de

Casino Baden-Baden
casino-baden-baden.de

Château du Haut-Koenigsbourg
haut-koenigsbourg.fr

Fabergé Museum
faberge-museum.de

Festspielhaus Baden-Baden
festspielhaus.de

Germany Tourism
germany.travel

The Grand Hotel Les Trois Rois
lestroisrois.com

Hôtel des Berges
hoteldesberges.com

Koblenz Cable Car
seilbahn-koblenz.de

Loreley Valley Visitor Center
loreley-info.com

Marksburg Castle
marksburg.de

Museum Frieder Burda
museum-frieder-burda.de

St. Goar am Rhein
st-goar.de

Stübers Restaurant
rhein-hotel-bacharach.de

Tourism in Alsace
tourisme-alsace.com

Weingut Friedrich Bastian
weingut-bastian-bacharach.de

INFO TO GO

You can explore the Rhine River Valley from several hubs. To start a Rhine River cruise, regular train service runs from Frankfurt Airport (FRA) to towns along the Rhine. Rüdesheim, Bingen and Koblenz are popular port towns for day cruises.

ONLINE EXTRA
Jump to gtravmag.com/rhine to read about the oldest wine in the world.

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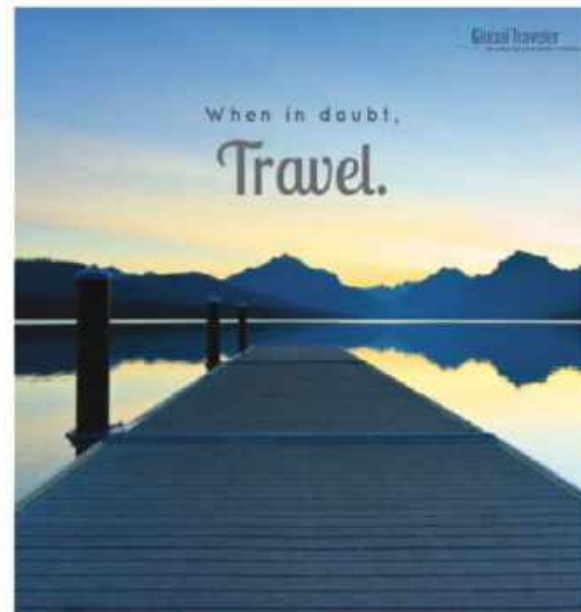
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PHOTO: © CHRISTOPHER P. OTTALUNCK



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MARCH 25, 2015

The Second Annual Red & White Ball was held March 21 at The Westin Philadelphia. Francis X. Gallagher, publisher and CEO, *Global Traveler*, was co-chair of the event, which raised \$500,000 for The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society of Eastern Pennsylvania.

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MARCH 23, 2015

When in doubt, travel.



MARCH 23, 2015

Waterfront dining surrounded by an infinity pool at the Conrad Resort in Koh Samui
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MARCH 7, 2015

Lantern Festival in Taichung, Taiwan. What an amazing experience.
@CarlyInLA #lunarnewyear #globility



MARCH 16, 2015

Nothing says welcome home better than 10,000 square feet of spa (complete with salt cave!) @HealthhouseLD t.co/KRpox6shQh #travel

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MARCH 20, 2015

Keep an eye out for Nicole Kidman, the new face and narrative for #Etihad's evocative new "Flying Reimagined" brand campaign! [instagram.com/p/0dnb77iU/?taken-by=globaltravelermag](https://www.instagram.com/p/0dnb77iU/?taken-by=globaltravelermag)

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MARCH 5, 2015

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Dancing in the Street

The tango world returns to its roots for the Tango Buenos Aires Festival. BY BARBARA RADCLIFFE ROGERS

At any time of year you'll find tango in Buenos Aires, but for two weeks each August this sensuous, seductive dance becomes an obsession. Its provocative beat permeates the air and seems to drift into the streets from every window. It's the annual Tango Buenos Aires Festival, running Aug. 12–25 this year, when half a million dancers and enthusiasts take over in the city where tango was born.

The main event of this two-week extravaganza is the Mundial de Tango, where top *tangueros* from all over the world compete in the Salon Tango and Stage Tango competitions at the city's Luna Park. It's the world's most important tango championship. But first comes the nine-day La Festival, a city-wide celebration that kicks off with a massive open-air *milonga* where thousands tango through the streets.

This street dancing brings tango back to its local roots: It was born in the streets of the San Telmo and La Boca barrios in the 1870s, a music and dance of lower-class Porteños. After half a century it moved from those rough immigrant barrios of Buenos Aires to worldwide fame in the Roaring Twenties, and from the streets to upper-crust ballrooms.

Throughout the August celebration, enjoy tango shows (*tangos de salon*), tango film screenings, free tango classes, concerts, dances and even exhibitions of tango-related art. Be prepared to relinquish the street at any time of day or night to couples breaking into a tango; for top-flight choreographed performances, go to the Teatro Astor Piazzolla. For spontaneous dance, live music and recordings of legendary tango singers like Carlos Gardel, go almost anywhere.

You don't need to be able to dance to enjoy watching the pros perform their measured moves or to applaud the spontaneous street dancers in the barrios. But it won't take long before you'll want to do more than watch. If you already tango, you can take to the dance floor at a *milonga*, the neighborhood dance halls scattered throughout Buenos Aires. If you don't tango, look for one like El Beso, run by La Academia del Tango Milonguero, where they give lessons. El Museo Mundial del Tango — The World Tango Museum — also gives lessons on weekday afternoons.

The competitions and most events are free, but you'll need to pick up tickets in advance. Ask your hotel concierge where and when they are available; he or she may be able to get them for you.

Between performances and dancing classes, practice your sultry glances as you feast on world-famous Argentinean steaks and sample wines from Mendoza or less-familiar Argentinean vineyards of San Juan, Salta and Río Negro.

La Academia del Tango Milonguero
laacademiatango.com

Argentina Tourism Promotion
argentina.travel

Buenos Aires Tourism
turismo.buenosaires.gob.ar



*In 2009, UNESCO inscribed tango
as an Intangible Cultural Heritage.*



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Big Changes

Major upgrades at Singapore's Changi Airport enhance the travel experience. BY LISA MATTE

Just in time for its 50th anniversary, Changi Airport is upping the ante with infrastructure improvements designed to enhance the 21st-century traveler experience.

In March, Changi Airport Group, the management company that oversees airport operations, awarded a \$238 million contract to Takenaka Corp. for projects related to the expansion of Terminal 1. Takenaka was involved in the 2012 upgrade of T1, in addition to upgrades at T2 in 2006 and ongoing construction of T4.

This most recent project, slated for completion in 2019, involves revamping the departure check-in hall, including the installation of two new check-in ports to increase processing capacity. While travelers may experience some minor inconvenience due to the necessary closure of five retail and dining venues during the second quarter of 2015, the closures will expedite the renovation timetable. The T1 project also includes upgrades to the terminal's baggage handling system, moving from semi-automatic to fully automatic, which enhances sorting capability to enable a streamlined self check-in and bag-drop procedure.

T1 redevelopment coincides with the construction of Jewel Changi Airport, a joint venture between Changi Airport Group and CapitaMalls Asia. The mixed-use complex, to be located in front of T1 on land previously used as an open-air parking lot, will feature visitor attractions, retail outlets, a hotel and facilities for airport operations.

When the stunning glass-and-steel structure opens in late 2018, the 10-story complex (five above ground and five below ground) will lure visitors with shopping, dining and attractions set amid lush greenery — Jewel will showcase almost 237,000 square feet of indoor landscaping, including Forest Valley, a five-story garden featuring thousands of trees, plants, ferns, shrubs and waterfalls. Located at the core of the complex, a 130-foot indoor waterfall will set a relaxing tone during daylight hours and transform to a captivating light and sound show in the evening.

Throughout its 50th anniversary year, dubbed SG50, Changi Airport plans a line-up of events centered on the theme "Changi, I'm Home." Features include displays showcasing curated icons and artifacts, and a campaign to encourage Singaporeans to share their memories via an online photo-sharing contest.

Changi Airport is the world's sixth-busiest airport for international traffic. It served a record 54.1 million passengers from around the globe in 2014.

Changi Airport Singapore
changiairport.com



FRESH DESIGN: Changi Airport departures hall (top), and arrival sign with a beautifully manicured display of live plants (bottom)

PHOTOS: © TKTCTK | DREAMSTIME.COM; © IMPANAHMEDSG | DREAMSTIME.COM

To Vape or Not to Vape

Are e-cigarettes a safe alternative to conventional cigarettes? BY MARY B. GALLAGHER, RN, MSN, CCRN

Like gun powder, the electronic cigarette is a Chinese invention. Electronic cigarettes, also known as e-cigarettes or e-cigs, are battery-operated devices that deliver liquid nicotine, flavor and other chemicals inserted in cartridges. An atomizer heats the liquid into a vapor that is inhaled (called "vaping") and creates a vapor cloud resembling tobacco smoke. Most e-cigarettes are manufactured to look like conventional cigarettes, cigars or pipes, including a glowing tip. Some resemble items such as pens, USB memory sticks or flash drives. The first e-cigarettes came out on the market in 2004.

E-cigarettes are marketed as a safe alternative to smoking tobacco-based cigarettes and as a way for a smoker to get nicotine in locations where smoking is not permitted. However, they are not necessarily a safe alternative. E-cigarette makers claim the ingredients are safe, but this only means they have been found to be safe to eat, not to inhale. Since e-cigarettes are not labeled with their ingredients, it is unclear how much nicotine and other substances a person gets from each cartridge. E-cigarettes contain known carcinogens and toxic substances such as formaldehyde and acetaldehyde as well as potentially toxic metals and nanoparticles from the vaporizing mechanism.

Besides being an addictive drug, nicotine is toxic in high doses. Once used as an insecticide, nicotine affects the brain, nervous system and heart, raising blood pressure and heart rate. The larger the dose of nicotine, the more a person's blood pressure and heart rate go up. This can cause an abnormal and irregular heart rate (arrhythmia). In rare cases, especially with large doses, rapid, irregular heartbeats can cause heart failure and death.

After the initial effects wear off, the body starts to crave nicotine. An e-cigarette user may feel tired, depressed or crabby due to nicotine withdrawal and crave more nicotine to perk up again. Over time, nicotine can lead to serious problems, including heart disease, blood clots and stomach ulcers. Studies show e-cigarettes can cause short-term lung changes like those caused by regular cigarettes.

E-cigarette products are not regulated by the Food and Drug Administration, so there are no accepted measures to confirm their purity or safety, and long-term health consequences remain unknown. When the FDA analyzed samples of two popular brands of e-cigarettes, it found variable amounts of nicotine and traces of toxic chemicals, including known carcinogens, prompting the FDA to issue a warning about the potential health risks. The National Institute on Drug Abuse is developing research programs to help answer these questions.

An adverse event is an undesirable side effect or unexpected health or product quality problem that can be reported to the FDA. Consumers, health professionals and concerned members of the public have reported adverse events involving e-cigarettes including hospitalization for illnesses such as pneumonia, congestive heart failure, disorientation,

seizures and hypotension.

Until more is known about the potential risks, the safe plan is to avoid electronic cigarettes. If you want to stop smoking, many FDA-approved medications are safe and effective for this purpose.

In a recent study, Penn State researchers concluded users of e-cigarettes report fewer cravings, less irritability and believe they are less addictive than regular cigarettes. However, e-cigarettes are not shown to be effective with smoking cessation. It has also been suggested they could continue the nicotine addiction and actually interfere with quitting.

Since 10 states and the District of Columbia still permit e-cigarette sales to minors, more than 16 million U.S. children can buy them legally. A 2013 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention study showed e-cigarette use among middle school and high school students doubled between 2011 and 2012, with 10 percent of high school students and 3 percent of middle school children using them and risking addiction to nicotine. Among high school e-cigarette users, 80 percent smoked regular cigarettes as well.

Because nicotine is so addictive, the best way to avoid health problems is to never start smoking or vaping. While children and teens do not consider how their current behaviors affect their future health, it is important to talk with them about it. Focus on immediate drawbacks such as less money to use on other things. If your teen smokes and wants to quit, e-cigarettes are not the way to go. Using an e-cigarette mimics the experience of smoking regular cigarettes more closely than any other quitting options. Instead, encourage your teen to try nicotine gum or a nicotine patch, which will prevent withdrawal symptoms.

Children are quick to observe the contradictions between what their parents say and what they do, so if you smoke or vape, consider quitting. It's not simple and it may take a few attempts and the help of a program or support group. Your children will be encouraged as they see you overcome the addiction.

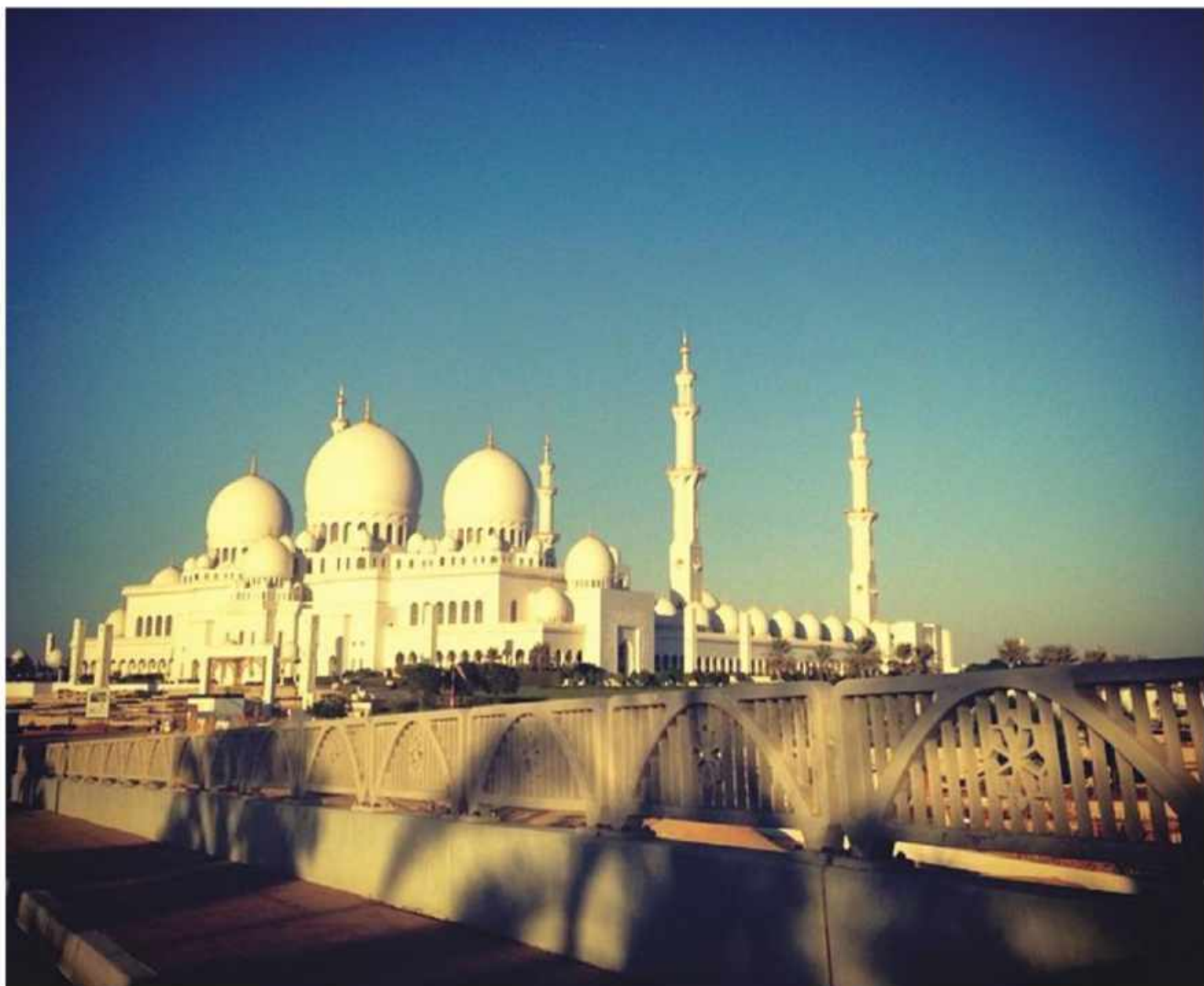
Expect to see more information and research studies about e-cigarettes and their health effects. California already declared electronic cigarettes a health threat and urges tougher regulations. Other states including Oklahoma, Tennessee and Arkansas issued advisories cautioning about the use of e-cigarettes.

The e-cigarette boom is spawning the sales of electronic cigars, e-hookahs and other devices using vaporized liquids to mimic different types of smoking. Even less is known about their ingredients and safety, and they need to be researched and regulated.

National Institute on Drug Abuse
drugabuse.gov

National Institutes of Health
nih.gov

The content of this article is for informational purposes only. It is not intended to be a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis or treatment. Always seek the advice of your physician or other qualified health care provider with any questions you may have regarding a medical condition.



ABU DHABI, UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

In the midst of business travel, I was fortunate to experience a peaceful moment and a glimpse of the beautifully designed Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque, the largest mosque in the U.A.E. and the country's key place of worship. The marble-clad structure is stunning.

OLIVIA FALCIONE

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