

FINANCIAL TIMES

# HTSI

29 OCTOBER  
2022

## Eternal Egypt

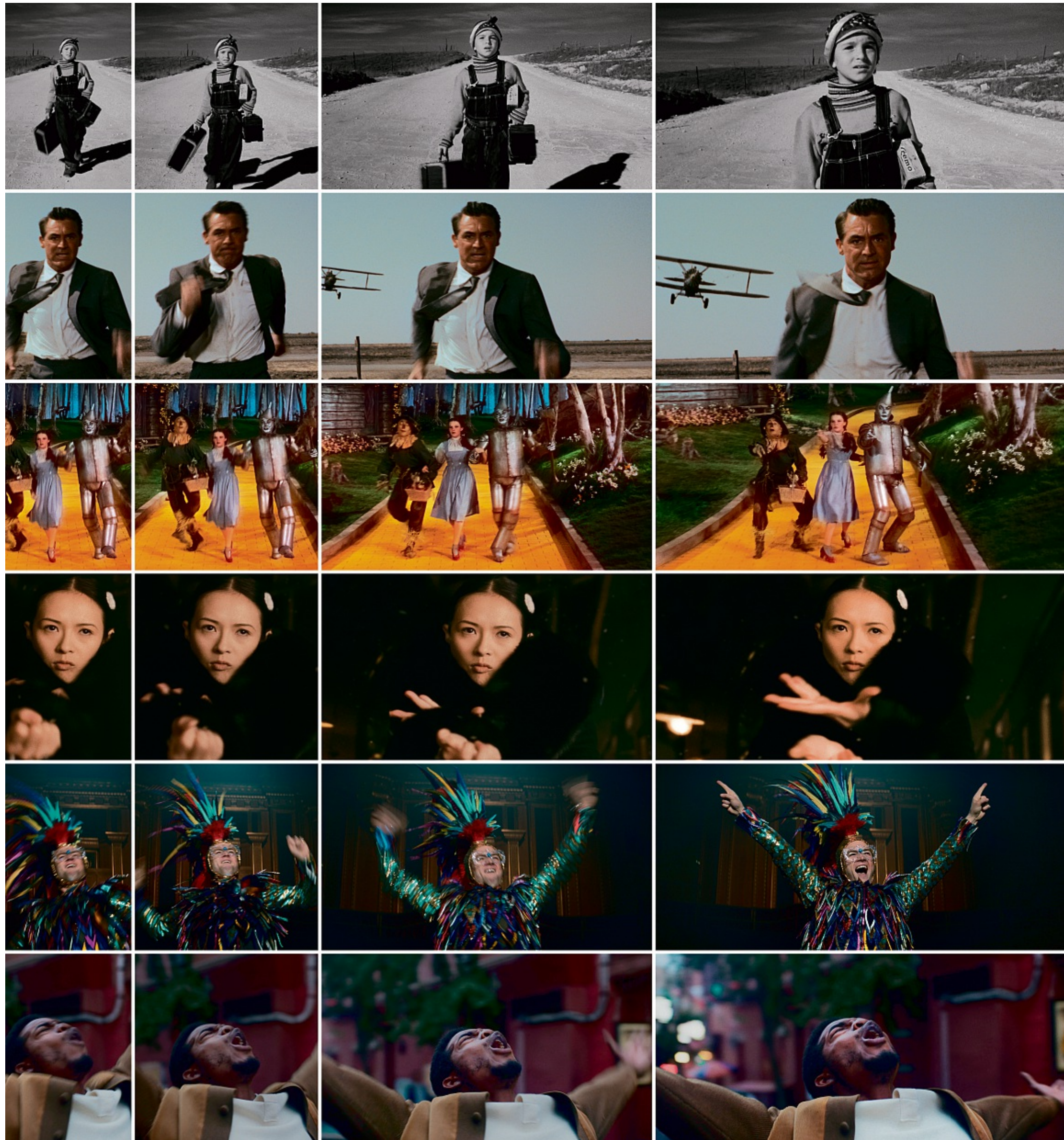
JOURNEYS THROUGH TIME

AUTUMN  
TRAVEL SPECIAL

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BHUTAN  
HONG KONG  
SYDNEY  
MARRAKECH  
THE MALDIVES





## A MOMENT OF ETERNITY

It's more than just 24 frames flickering every second. More than an epic retelling of our collective past or an exploration of our possible futures. Each new masterpiece questions our deepest nature and fuels our highest aspirations. It's a testament to what truly moves us, an invitation to always aim higher, and a legacy perpetually reinvented. **It's cinema.**

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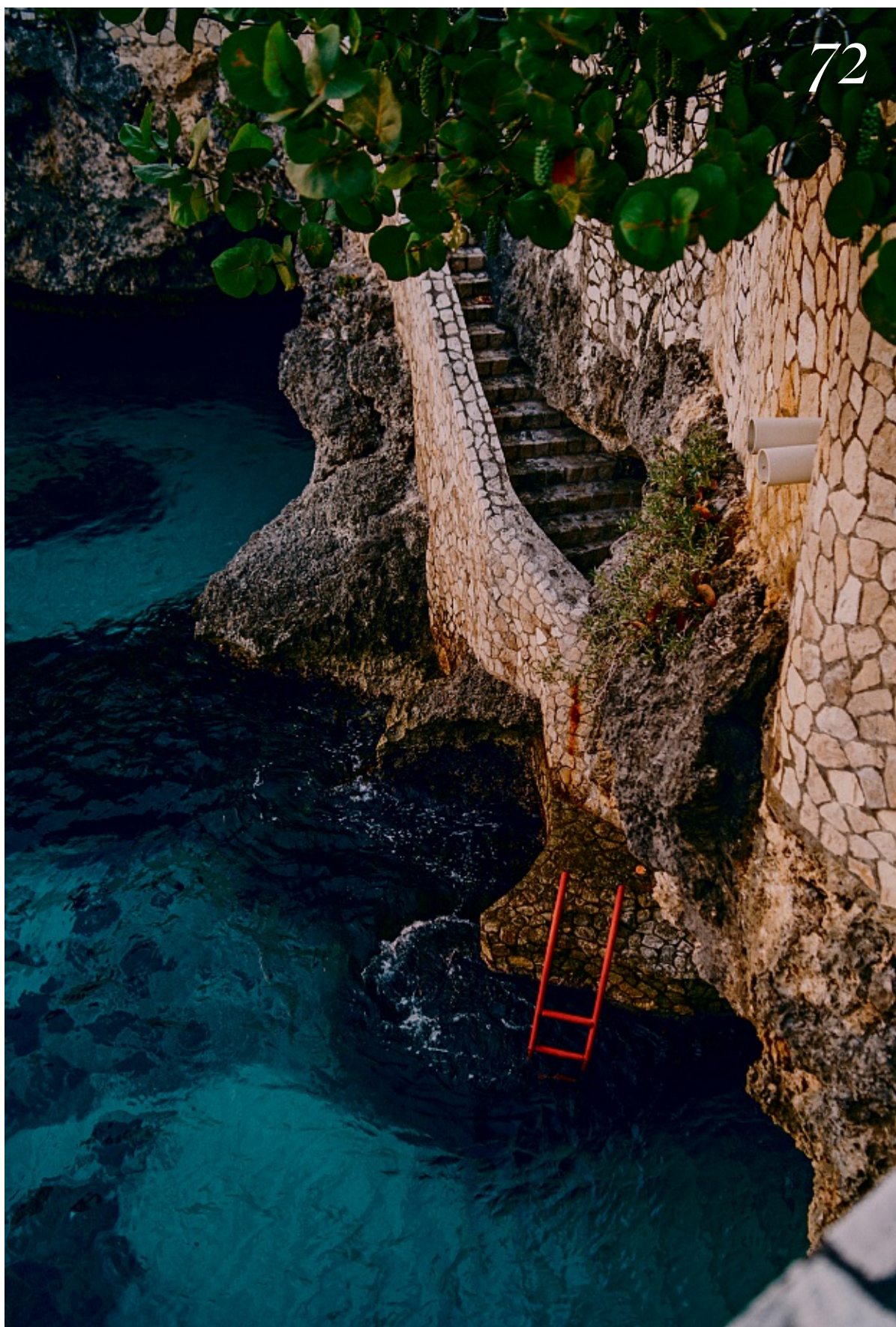
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ON THE COVER:  
Photography by  
MAKRAM BITAR

The Temple of Khnum  
at Esna in Egypt

PHOTOGRAPHS: PARKER WOODS, SISEER CHETTTRI, YANNICK REID

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# OPENING SHOT



A photograph taken by the Heyerdahl expedition on Rapa Nui (Easter Island)

## SAILS IN COMPARISON

Norwegian anthropologist Thor Heyerdahl's re-enactment voyages find new relevance

In 1947, Norwegian archaeologist and anthropologist Thor Heyerdahl travelled 8,000km from Peru to the Polynesian islands on a boat emulating prehistoric designs. His mission was to prove that the original inhabitants of such faraway lands could have migrated from South America. He went on to carry out myriad other experiments in ancient travel – from Morocco to South America, and

Iraq to Djibouti – seeking to better understand routes of cultural exchange.

Seventy-five years on from that adventure, a new book, *Thor Heyerdahl: Voyages of the Sun*, newly appraises his life and ideas through unseen photographs, logbooks and essays. Although his theories haven't been accepted into the academic canon, the book explores their insights into how and why people might

have crossed seas, which could hold new relevance for conservation and migration studies. Despite advances in marine science, for instance, Heyerdahl believed that ancient cultures' understanding of the ocean remained a far "truer one than ours". **BAYA SIMONS** *Thor Heyerdahl: Voyages of the Sun, The Kon-Tiki Museum Archive* by Kingston Trinder is published by Atelier Editions at \$50

## CONTRIBUTORS



PARKER WOODS

"I'm a photographer living in New York, here for the dollar slice," says Woods, whose pictures examine themes of self, counterculture and intimacy. He's worked on commercial projects with brands such as Stella McCartney and Erdem, and recently published a book, *Opening Body*. For this issue he shot model Carolina Burgin at The Sea Ranch Lodge, on California's dramatic Sonoma County coastline: "I loved being with friends and without cell service."



MAKRAM BITAR

Born in Beirut and based in Paris, the fashion stylist captured Egypt for Gilles Khoury's piece this week – the first time he's worked as a photographer professionally. "It was a fun adventure," he says. "Everything was going well until I was about to get on a *felucca* to take some pictures of the Nile in Cairo. Suddenly a man with a huge snake appeared in front of me and I totally panicked, especially when I realised there was nowhere to hide."



ENUMA OKORO

The New York-born Nigerian writer was raised in four countries on three continents, so curiosity about the world and a love of travel, she says, are in her blood. For this issue she travelled to Jamaica, a Caribbean island that has piqued her interest since childhood. "It was a stirring experience to feel so quickly at home in a country I had never visited before, but with which I found deep likeness to other places I've called home," she says.



DAVAANYAM DELGERJARGAL

"While everyone else is going digital, I'm going back to analogue," says the photographer, who shot this week's *How I Spend It In...* Mongolia. Based in the capital, Ulaanbaatar, this year he established a processing lab to develop film – he says it is currently the only one of its kind in the country. He also set up a photo agency, Noise Art Media, and founded the Batzorig Foundation, which trains and supports fledgling photographers in Mongolia.

*Chopard*

THE ARTISAN OF EMOTIONS – SINCE 1860



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Scott Eastwood

GIORGIO ARMANI



# EDITOR'S LETTER

# HTSI

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# F

ew events have tickled the public imagination so much as the discovery of Tutankhamun's tomb in November 1922. The unveiling of an ancient burial site crammed full of some 5,000

relics was the zenith of Egyptomania, further establishing a series of tropes that are found everywhere from Verdi's *Aida* to Steven Spielberg's *Indiana Jones*.

Combining magic, fortune, ancient mysticism and imperial fervour, the pharaoh's tale still holds us in its thrall. The intervening years have allowed much controversy over the ownership and subsequent dispersal of the tomb's treasures; this great discovery defined the politics of imperial privilege in what even then was a fast-eroding age. But there are still few visitors to Egypt who do not seek to see its wonders for themselves. In this autumn travel issue of *HTSI*, Gilles Khoury traverses a country that in recent years has experienced revolution, political upheaval and economic hardship. Yet rather than finding a nation that jumps between historic paradigms, he sees that Egypt's modern sensibilities and ancient stories are still entwined. "From one instant to another, a city that seems so turbulent, so tense and intense, offers up something akin to sweetness... This is what most likely accounts for Egypt's endless magic: that it has somehow outlived time." Read his report on page 48.

In other travel stories, Maria Shollenbarger visits Castello Sonnino, a magnificent 16th-century retreat in Tuscany that Gucci has designated as one of its seven global palaces. Run by the de Renzis Sonnino family, the castle has not had an entirely smooth story. When the family patriarch Baron Alessandro de Renzis Sonnino died of Covid in 2021, it behooved his two children to ditch their early career aspirations and return home to maintain the house and farm. Having to jack in your job in order to go and run the family castle is a dilemma I rather wish I shared, but I empathise deeply with the radical change of direction one's life can take following the unexpected death of a parent, as well as the obligations that such events extend.

Left: Virginia and Leone de Renzis Sonnino (page 66).

Below: Oyuna Tserendorj in Mongolia (page 94).

Bottom: the Great Sphinx of Giza (page 48)



PLANTATION DA HONG PAO TEA CANISTER, HK\$250 (ABOUT £29) (PAGE 33)



## MAGIC AND MYSTICISM: THE PHARAOH'S TALE STILL HOLDS US IN ITS THRALL

Leone and Virginia have since brought their own impressions and aspirations to the running of the castello; Leone is moving on from his father's orthodoxies in winemaking while Virginia has joined her mother to expand the castle's education programme, giving academics and students free rein to pick through

their archive. The property embodies a timeworn elegance that emerges only after observing the customs of a country and respecting centuries of tradition (page 66). And yet the current Sonnino proposition is also modern and forward-looking: no wonder Gucci was seduced.

For many, travel is as much about capturing the flavours of one's destination as it is about the views. In Bhutan, now reopened following Covid-induced isolation, Ajesh Patalay goes on a food odyssey around the Land of the Thunder Dragon that takes in some of the world's most fiery foods. Not all of it sounds appetising: I won't be eating cordyceps on Ajesh's recommendation any time soon. But his descriptions of the dumplings, noodles and soups at Momo Corner, or the ema datshi (cheese and chillies) he eats during his café hops are something to behold (page 89).

Meanwhile, in Hong Kong, Zoe Suen has decided that after having "been drawn to the powerful caffeine kick of an Americano or the ease of PG Tips" for much of her life, it is time to learn more about one of the world's oldest drink cultures: the art of Chinese tea (page 33). It's a beverage awakening. I'm not sure I can afford to keep myself in high-grade Pu'er – prices for which can reach into the thousands – but Zoe has offered many options, so when I'm sitting at my desk in London I can imagine myself in the Wuyi Mountains, or on a lush tea plantation in Yunnan. ■ HTSI

@jellison22

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# RIMOWA

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SEIT 1898\*



\*THE ART OF ENGINEERING SINCE 1898





Will Cooper in his New York apartment

# Will Cooper

The hotelier and co-founder of design firm ASH NYC buys crystals in Pantelleria, white pants from Texas and is in love with Vienna

INTERVIEW BY **MARIA SHOLLENBARGER**  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY **CLÉMENT PASCAL**

Below: crystals and ceramics in Cooper's "energy centre". Right: JAR Golconda scent among his collection of cameras



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**MY PERSONAL STYLE SIGNIFIER** is wearing all white, year round. It's funny how much it really stands out because the majority of the population wears dark clothing. White is easy and it cleanses my eyes and mind. And I always have on a crystal bracelet or two to keep me protected – usually rainbow obsidian, or amethyst if I need to open my third eye, or tiger's eye if I need to protect my energy. Some come from Pantelleria, and some from this amazing place called Crystals Garden on 10th Street in the East Village.

**THE LAST THING I BOUGHT AND LOVED** was a pair of Stan Ray OG Painter pants. White, of course. They are made in my home state, Texas, and I wear them nearly every day.

**THE BEST SOUVENIR I'VE BROUGHT HOME** is patè di capperi e pistacchio from Pantelleria. You cannot find it anywhere else in the world, and I always bring some home for myself to use in the morning on eggs, to pretend I'm still in Italy. [saporidipantelleria.it](http://saporidipantelleria.it)

**MY STYLE ICONS** are a trio: architect Renzo Mongiardino, dapper and divinely talented and influential. Ward Bennett, a chameleon who was able to work between mediums of decoration and modernity, and created some of the most beautiful homes in the world. And Gianni Agnelli. No explanation needed.

**THE BEST GIFT I'VE GIVEN RECENTLY** is one of my new ASH scented candles. I worked with an amazing nose in Paris developing this scent; the brief was to create a transportive feeling – ceremonial, sultry, a romantic Dorian Gray vibe. It has nutmeg, carrot seed and white amber, and a base of patchouli and tobacco. The top burns off fast and you get this really beautiful wood essence. The vessel is modelled after the base of a Doric column, and is meant to live with you for ever – as a vase, a coin holder, a glass, whatever you want it to be. [ashnyc.com](http://ashnyc.com)

**AND THE BEST GIFT I'VE RECEIVED** is always intangible – a trip or an experience. In December 2020 I was taken to Machu Picchu. It was barely open; no one was travelling. The people working there said the only time it had previously been that quiet and deserted was when the Pope came. Not to sound woo-woo, but it really was life-changing. The place is like a vortex – very mystical. So to be there, almost all alone, was absolutely a gift.

**THE LAST MUSIC I DOWNLOADED** was Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto No 1. He wrote only three or so piano concertos in his life. I first heard it performed by Yuja Wang, and it was the middle of the night; I was awake and found it on YouTube. It's this beautiful, narrative musical progression that takes you through so many hills and valleys. In the video, this pianist is almost moved to tears as she plays it. Now I listen to it when I need to detach from the chaos.

# THE AESTHETE



Above: the rosary that was his grandmother's. Above right: a recent read on a Cristina Moreno for Ombia Studio Slab Table 02. Right: blue suede Charvet slippers. Below: surrounded by books in his bedroom



THE TOMB OF I'TIMĀD-UD-DAULAH IN AGRA

"MACHU PICCHU IS LIKE A VORTEX, VERY MYSTICAL"



Above: Arianna Occhipinti SP68 Rosso 2021 in Cooper's fridge. Left: his collection of ashtrays and matches



**I HAVE A COLLECTION OF** myriad ashtrays from all over the world, and matches to match. And another one of various *objets d'art* in the form of small animals – I try to bring one back everywhere I go. An elephant from India, a bull from Peru, lots of others.

**IN MY FRIDGE YOU'LL ALWAYS FIND** good parmigiano reggiano, organic eggs, organic avocados, Acqua Panna, coffee from Morettino in Sicily – I like the Mediterranean blend – and an organic chilled red, ideally one made by Arianna Occhipinti.

**I'VE RECENTLY DISCOVERED** Vienna, which I'd never been to and which, oh my God, I loved. I was taken around by Thomas Reiner, who's an artisan floormaker specialising in historical woods – he does all the parquet restorations for museums and palaces there and he made the parquet floors in the lobby of Ulysses hotel. It's like a secret European dream: so clean, so beautiful. The people are so nice.

**THE THING I COULDN'T DO WITHOUT** is eight hours of sleep a night. I love to be asleep by 9.30pm and wake up before 6am. The morning hours between 6am and 8am are my favourite time of the day. I make a moka coffee and start writing ideas down or chip away at an idea from the previous day.

**AN INDULGENCE I WOULD NEVER FORGO** is summer in Italy. It's the people, and their strong sense of national identity, how they all rally around this central idea of a way of life. And the fact you can be in so many different, distinct places, Milan and Venice and Umbria, and then you get to the south and it's a whole different world. I love how the country is endless worlds within worlds, but the people share this central mandate of how to actually live. None of this American rat-race bullshit.

**THE LAST ITEMS OF CLOTHING I ADDED TO MY WARDROBE** are socks and slippers from Charvet; I recently stocked up when I was in Paris. And a beautiful suit from Dior – it's a deep navy with a very subtle stripe. A classic line, as always with Dior menswear, but in an unusual fabric.

**AN OBJECT I WOULD NEVER PART WITH** is my grandmother's rosary, which my mum gave me when my grandmother passed. She was from Spain, extremely religious, and said the Hail Mary several times a day. I feel like having the rosary planted an early seed in my life, creating my ties to the Med. It makes me feel she's always with me.

**THE ONE ARTIST WHOSE WORK I WOULD COLLECT IF I COULD** is Vilhelm Hammershøi. He paints still lifes in this austere, 19th-century Danish style. They have this elegance of light. The interiors are often very decorative and ornate, but with his rendering of that light they become subdued. They're intriguing, and very moving to me. I relate to that in my work, because that's the hardest thing to capture in a dimensional way: how do you make someone want to be in a space? When I look at his paintings I want to understand what kind of life is happening in that room.

**THE GROOMING STAPLE I'M NEVER WITHOUT** is Golconda by JAR, my scent. It reminds me of Paris, particularly Paris in June, when it is light until 11pm. And QMS Epigen Pollution Defense Day & Night Gel-Cream and Intensive Eye Care Day & Night Eye Cream. They keep my skin so firm that several people have asked if I get Botox. I don't. *QMS Epigen Gel-Cream, £118 for 50ml, and Eye Cream, £128 for 15ml*

**MY FAVOURITE ROOM IN MY HOUSE?** In the mornings I sit in a little slip-covered slipper chair in my living room and have coffee, then move to the floor to start writing and working at the coffee table. If I am not doing Muay Thai, I will do yoga in the same room. When I get home from the office, I will lie on the banquette and just stare into space for a while to decompress. Everything is white, so it is very calming to be in that space.

**MY FAVOURITE BUILDING** is the "Baby Taj", aka the Tomb of I'timād-ud-Daulah in Agra, India. It is often thought of as the draft for the Taj Mahal, and I find its intimacy and handpainted walls very appealing.

**MY GROOMING AND WELLBEING GURUS** are Neighborhood Barbers on 9th Street in the East Village, where I have gone since I moved to New York almost 15 years ago. And Helena Radulovic, my trainer at Fit Ritual, around the corner from my house, who I do Muay Thai with. We'll first catch up on neighbourhood gossip – mostly about how many cruffins she ate the prior day from C&B on 7th Street – and then get to work.



SAPORI DI PANTELLERIA PATÈ DI CAPPERI E PISTACCHIO, €6

**THE WORK OF ART THAT CHANGED EVERYTHING FOR ME** is *The Cardsharps*, painted c1595 by Caravaggio. I grew up in Fort Worth, Texas, and as a young kid I would visit the Kimbell Art Museum, designed by Louis I Kahn, built in 1972. I have a vivid memory of seeing that painting at a very young age, probably around second grade. The subject was intriguing for a kid, as it depicts a young boy in quite a theatrical costume, cheating his fellow player out of a card game. I revisit the painting every year at Christmas, and today I understand it as a life lesson in deception and loss of innocence.

**MY CARRY-ON ESSENTIALS** are earplugs and an eye mask, always – I actually love the ones Air France gives to you, they're pillowy and soft. And definitely a book: my mom is a life coach, and she was always plying me with Eckhart Tolle and those kinds of people when I was younger. As a result I find I like to have a grounding book on a plane, which has such a groundless atmosphere.

**THE BEST BIT OF ADVICE I EVER RECEIVED?** Creativity is constant contradiction. I saw it, rather than heard it, years ago in Williamsburg, where the office used to be. I was at my desk and I remember so distinctly seeing those words in a book. Creation comes from being able to live comfortably in the tension that exists between two things that themselves exist in contradiction. The truth of it just hit me. ■HTSI

ART DIR: PAUL MARCIANO PH: VICOOLYA & SAIDA © GUESS, INC. 2022



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# TOD'S



# THE FIX

ACCESSORIES

## ON THE CASE

Time to upgrade your travel style

PHOTOGRAPHY BY **CHRISTOPHE SCHUMACHER**  
STYLING BY **ELSA DUROUSSEAU**



MODEL: GWEN WIELERS AT WOMEN PARIS, CASTING: CHOUAIBARIE HAIR, KEVIN ROUX, MAKE-UP: RUBEN MASOLIVER, PHOTOGRAPHER'S ASSISTANT: ENNA JAIDANE, STYLISTS ASSISTANTS: ARINA KUCHEIEVA AND LEO BOYERE

RALPH LAUREN COLLECTION wool coat, £2,255, cotton Elske jacket, £1,960, cotton Adrien BF shirt (just seen), £515, cotton Stamford trousers, £915, and Celia suede pumps, £460. HERMÈS leather Cabine 55 RMS suitcase, £7,320, and leather Galop d'Hermès Sport Swift bag, £4,830

## THE FIX



ISABEL MARANT ÉTOILE nylon raincoat, £410. MARGARET HOWELL cotton shirt, £395. PAUL SMITH cotton trousers, £260. BIRKENSTOCK suede leather mules, £120. FALKE wool socks, £20. BENNETT WINCH leather Weekender bag, £1,450. RIMOWA polycarbonate Essential Trunk Plus case, £975



OFFICINE GÉNÉRALE wool coat, £550, cashmere merino jumper, £295, and denim trousers, £175. MANOLO BLAHNIK leather Scusii shoes, £695. CARL FRIEDRIK polycarbonate Check-In suitcase, £435. ETTINGER canvas and havana-leather trims Cotswold Weekend bag, £635



LORO PIANA cashmere jumper, £1,535, cashmere scarf, £450, matching skirt, £1,895, and leather and cashmere Storm System ankle boots, £1,355. LEMAIRE leather water-bottle carrier, £495. RIMOWA aluminium silver Original Cabin case, £1,020



LOUIS VUITTON cotton 3D Monogram parka hoodie, £2,620, cotton 3D Monogram Trompe L'oeil mini shorts, £970, leather Ruby flat ankle boots, £1,100, coated canvas and leather Keepall Bandoulière 45 bag, £1,690, and leather Horizon Soft Duffle 55 case, £1,860



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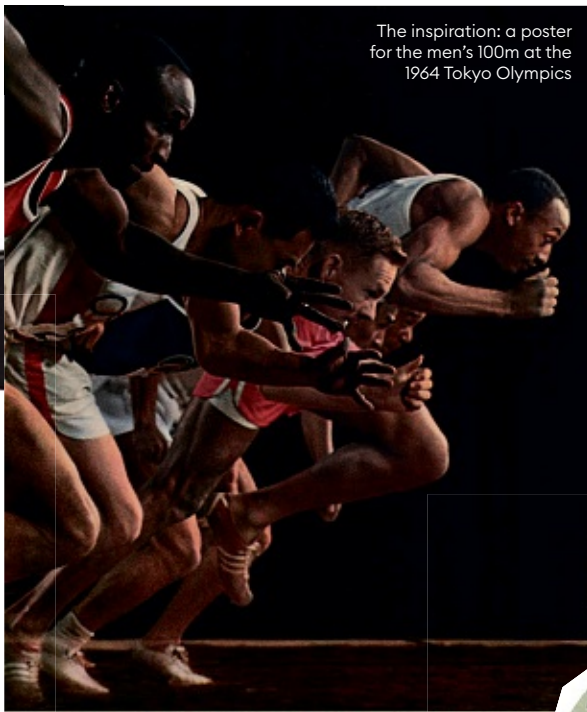
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SHOPPING

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# ANGELUS



# SUNSPEL

ENGLAND 1860



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Despite having spent my childhood in Hong Kong, I grew up knowing close to nothing about Chinese tea. Sure, I enjoyed varieties such as Tie Guan Yin (Iron Buddha) and Longjing (Dragon Well) as palate-cleansers with dim sum, or stole sips from my father's brews at home. But it always seemed too serious, ceremonial and daunting to really get into; and after studying in London, I was instead drawn to the caffeine kick of an Americano or the ease of PG Tips. It was only when visiting my parents recently – and admitting, not for the first time, that coffee put me in an anxious frenzy – I decided to learn the basics.

A number of accounts detail the origins of Chinese tea. One traces its roots back to around 3,000BC, when legend says tea leaves fell into water boiled for Emperor Shen-Nung. Juyan Webster, the London-based founder of The Chinese Tea Company, places the drink's discovery closer to 4,000 years ago, when herbalists foraging for medicinal plants came upon *Camellia sinensis* and recorded its invigorating properties. Over the years, locals identified methods of

harvesting, preserving and brewing tea for the best flavour. During the Tang dynasty, which spanned AD618 to 906, tea was China's national drink; it soon made its way to Japan and Korea, and by the 1800s, tea was introduced to the Middle East via the silk road, as well as Britain and its colonies India, Sri Lanka and Kenya following the Opium Wars.

Yet today, Chinese tea remains a niche luxury abroad, partially due to the dominance of western mass market brands. Another reason is its price: in December 2021, Sotheby's launched its first online tea auction in Hong Kong with more than 20 lots of Pu-erh, a fermented tea traditionally made in China's Yunnan Province; an antique tea cake from 1950 went to the highest bidder for \$71,600.

Even more accessibly priced Chinese teas are a luxury by global standards: at Postcard Teas – a Mayfair speciality store founded by Timothy d'Offay – Longjing, a pan-roasted green, can cost £34.95 for just 10g. The best Chinese tea-makers work on a minute scale and limited land; d'Offay likens the relationship with terroir to that of Burgundy wines. Compare this to Japanese matcha, grown across the country: terroir plays a role but doesn't necessarily dictate cost. "The terroir of Chinese tea absolutely determines the price," says d'Offay. "If you

Right: the author at Plantation's Wan Chai tea studio, Hong Kong. Bottom left: brushing tea leaves into a gaiwan. Bottom right: tools used for Chinese tea ceremonies



THE CHINESE TEA COMPANY  
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WELLBEING

## STEEPING BEAUTY

Tea novice *Zoe Suen* traces her switch from basic PG Tips to beautiful Pu-erh

PHOTOGRAPHY BY **TORY HO**

want Longjing, it can only come from the West Lake area, which at 700 acres is about the size of just one Darjeeling estate."

Enjoying Chinese tea – a luxury in more ways than one – prizes a slowness at odds with the breakneck pace of modern life. But that's also its appeal, says Ip Wing-chi, the founder of Hong Kong's LockCha Tea House. "Tea helps you rest your heart and have a pause in your life. When you're so busy every day, sometimes you forget how to live. Tea reminds you – you have to stop for 10 minutes or so to really enjoy it."

Indeed, with its meditative nature, subtle flavours and health benefits, it's surprising that Chinese tea hasn't been co-opted by Big Wellness. Besides its antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties, Webster cites lowering high blood pressure and cholesterol as perks.

While teas are generally less caffeinated than coffee, both Chinese green and black teas contain even less than Indian black teas. Moreover, the amino acid L-theanine, which is naturally present in tea and particularly potent in green and white varieties, calms anxiety and balances out its energising effects.

A tea's flavour is mainly determined by how long the leaves have been left to oxidise, a process that naturally occurs once they're plucked, says Nana Chan, founder of Hong Kong-based craft tea company Plantation. There are also different ways of processing them: Chinese green teas are heated immediately by pan-frying to halt oxidation; white teas are 20 to 30 per cent oxidised by methods such as sun-drying; and black tea leaves are air-dried, broken, rubbed and crushed to enhance oxidation. Oolong tea, which can be eight to 85 per cent oxidised and is processed in many ways, spans a broad spectrum of flavours, while Pu-erh teas are partially oxidised before undergoing fermentation. Across the spectrum, leaves can also be baked and steamed with flowers and shrubs, which further imbue brews with floral or fruity notes.

Though nothing can top an in-store sampling, hosting a tasting at home requires only a minimal set-up; connoisseurs may invest in tea sets and a gaiwan (Chinese lidded tea cup and saucer) but beginners can make do with what they own. To start, Webster suggests buying a variety of loose whole-leaf teas, and steeping 3g in a small teapot (water of 85° to 90° for green and white teas, and boiling water for black teas) for about two to three minutes, before pouring all the tea into a mug – you'll stop the leaves from over-brewing and can brew them twice more.

When browsing, variation is key. LockCha's Wing-chi recommends starting with oolong teas, which vary in flavour but are packed with taste and aroma. Iron Buddha boasts approachable, refreshing and flowery notes, while Da Hong Pao (Big Red Robe), a rock tea grown in Fujian's Wuyi mountains and favourite of Chan's, has a mineral, smokey profile. Those after gentle, light brews should sample white teas like Silver Needle, White Peony and Yunnan Moonlight White, which

Chan describes as having a mellow, sweet, syrupy texture. Fans of green tea will enjoy Keemun green, which has a subtle melon-like sweetness, says d'Offay. Finally, take on

Pu-erh teas, which elude many due to their mellow, earthy notes but reward with a subtle complexity; being lower in caffeine and great for digestion, they're especially good after a greasy meal. Chan names Rice Scent Aged Pu-erh as a crowd-pleaser with a savoury scent reminiscent of congee and pandan.

Consider me converted: Chinese tea has become a peaceful part of my everyday routine. I prefer green and oolong in the mornings and afternoons, and have come to crave sips of Pu-erh after dinner. What's more, there's no right way to go about exploring thousands of years' worth of tea. "Chinese tea culture feels less accessible because people are fearful of

getting it wrong," says d'Offay. "They shouldn't worry; making tea is the simplest form of cooking, you just have two ingredients and time. Spend less money on teaware, and buy better tea." ■HTSI



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# THE FIND



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EDITED BY CLARA BALDOCK  
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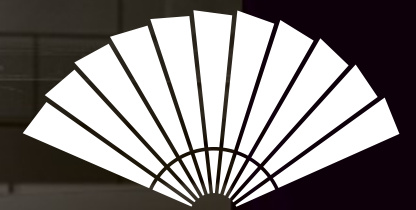


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Nicky (left) and Simone Zimmermann at the brand's design studio, Sydney

FASHION

# HOW SYDNEY STYLE WENT LUXE

With their bubbly, beach-bound aesthetic, sisters Nicky and Simone Zimmermann have created a fashion empire – and a template for Australian design. By *Jessica Beresford*

PHOTOGRAPHY BY PIERRE TOUSSAINT

It's hard to get a word in when Nicky and Simone Zimmermann are together. Over dinner at Sean's, the famously kitsch restaurant overlooking Bondi Beach, the sisters finish each other's sentences, share anecdotes from their travels and giggle at in-jokes. Their bubbly dispositions seem to contradict the seriousness of their achievements in business – the reason for our meeting – which include creating one of the, if not the most, successful luxury fashion brands to come out of Australia. The pair make it seem as if such a feat might be easy.

Entering the world they've created is like diving into a pool of frothy tulle. Zimmermann's signature dresses are often tiered, with over-the-top frills, bows and enough ruching to make your head spin. Super-flared trousers and sweet

pussy-bow blouses give off a decidedly '70s air. The swimwear usually has some sort of flounce, and no shortage of prints.

Zimmermann's immediately recognisable aesthetic, which the sisters have articulated for more than 30 years now, may not be to "classic" fashion tastes, but it does appeal to an undeniably large audience, both locally and internationally. The brand has 52 stores globally, including 21 in Australia and 18 in the United States, and often ranks

**"NO ONE HAD EVER DONE SWIMWEAR WITH CLOTHING"**

among the top sellers on Net-a-Porter and MatchesFashion in the UK and US, particularly in the summer months. Zimmermann's dresses have been worn by Catherine, the Princess of Wales, Beyoncé and Katie Holmes, and according to CEO Chris Olliver (who is married to Nicky),

global top-line sales have increased at an average of just over 30 per cent each year over the past five years. In 2020, Milan-based company Style Capital bought a 70 per cent stake in the business, which was worth approximately \$363.3mn at the time.

Nicky, the younger of the pair, launched the brand in 1991 after studying fashion design at East Sydney Technical College. She initially worked and sold from her parents' garage in Sydney to friends and local customers before graduating to a stall at the city's famed Paddington Markets. "I started out designing shirts with hand-embroidery, which was completely impractical because I was doing it all," explains Nicky, who says she was crafty from a young age. The brand's early success was propelled by an editorial in *Vogue Australia*, in which then fashion director Judith Cook gave one of Zimmermann's shirts a full page.

Simone, who had been living overseas, joined the brand slightly after launch to oversee the business side of Zimmermann. "We'd always had a plan we would do something together," says Nicky. They opened their first store in Darlinghurst but kept the Paddington Market stall because it was so successful, running both for two years. "It was a time when everyone went to Paddington, and it was really fun," says Nicky. "And it's where a lot of other designers started out – Third Millennium, Dinosaur Designs, Wayne Cooper."

In 1996, they helped to launch Australian Fashion Week, together with eight other designers including Collette Dinnigan and



LACE HIGH TIDE MIDL-DRESS, £2,650

Above, from left: enamel and crystal hoop earrings, £285. Denim High Tide Flare jeans, £495



Above: Nicky Zimmermann (left) with her sister at Camp Cove beach, Sydney: "For me, the most important thing is enjoyment"



Above, from left: silk High Tide minidress £1,350, and wicker crossbody bag, £425. Right: cotton High Tide lace-up dress, £685



LEATHER BACKLESS BOAT SHOES, £540



Peter Morrissey. It was a turning point. "We had made up our minds that we wanted a business that was going to be international," says Nicky. Zimmermann was then picked up by London department store Harvey Nichols, which gave the brand a coveted window display, and Net-a-Porter, which launched in 2000, soon followed as a stockist. Further growth came through the Victoria's Secret catalogue, back when it collated products from other brands. "We hit this one bikini that was screen-printed, and it just went on and on and on," says Nicky.

"You couldn't even believe there were that many people in the world," adds Simone. "It was a real eye-opener."

In those early days, Zimmermann's proposition was unique – and one that some international buyers didn't understand. "We decided to do swimwear with clothing, which no one had done at the time," says Nicky. "It was very fashion swimwear, and the prints were the same as the clothes. And it wasn't kaftans. It was jackets and pants and full-on dresses, and it was quite a different point of view."

"In 1996, Australia wasn't on the world map in the same way it is now," adds Simone. "It's considered to be much more sophisticated today than it was then."

By that virtue, Zimmermann paved the way for Australian resortwear, which is today populated with countless brands, from Matteau to Sir the Label and St Agni, which have all amassed international customer bases. "We just get resort, we live it, we grew up with that aesthetic, and I think Nicky and Simone have mastered it," says Yasmin Sewell, the Australia-born, London-based fashion consultant-turned-wellness brand founder. "Having seen them build [the brand] over decades from my time back in Australia, they are growing in confidence in design, taking more risks, being more flamboyant but still so very them."

Much of the brand's success has come from selling an idealised version of the Australian woman – a beachy, blonde and bronzed glamazon from Down Under. But over-reiterating this well-trodden aesthetic hasn't always worked in their favour. In 2020, during the Black Lives Matter protests, social media users criticised the brand's lack of diversity in its casting as well as for an existing "grooming and presentations standards" guide for retail staff that stipulated that workers' hair must be in "soft, textured loose waves or blow-dried straight" with "high buns, top knots, plaits, braids" prohibited. "We've really learnt, since that time when things were highlighted, to do better and be as open as we can possibly be," says Simone. "What we took on board from that is that we can do things better in everything we do, with product and design, how we operate as a business around sustainability and [also] around diversity and inclusion. It's something that we've gotten better at, that we want to be better at... so we just work every day in terms of creating environments that meet our humanity goals."

Other changes of tack include switching from New York Fashion Week, where Zimmermann had shown its collections since 2013, to Paris Fashion Week where it debuted its SS23 range earlier this month. It's part of a move to grow Zimmermann's base in Europe, where there are currently 12 stores, with plans to open more. The brand is also expanding further into knitwear, denim and accessories to complement its bestselling dresses. "We can see the path of growth," adds Nicky. "We talk about accessories, doing more product lines, getting better at what we're doing, while maintaining what the brand is. But for me, the most important thing is enjoyment."

**"A DRESS WILL MAKE ME LAUGH BECAUSE IT LOOKS FUN"**

And, of course, embodying the sunny Australian lifestyle, which Nicky says isn't something she does consciously. "It just happens, in that the things that I gravitate to are things that people assume are Australian," she says. "It's in the colours, the prints. Sometimes a dress will make me laugh because I think it just looks fun – I can just see the girl going out and having fun in it."

Adds Simone: "To an outsider, I think the Australian-ness is kind of intrinsic to your attitude to life and your own personality. The sunniness, the wanting to have fun... I think all of that comes through. It's a natural symbiosis." ■HTSI



BOOKS

First-class reading

Five new books that will transport you.  
By Sara Semic



**Napoli, Napoli, Napoli**  
by Brett Lloyd

Conceived over four consecutive summers, this new book from London-based photographer Brett Lloyd documents the course of a day in Naples, a city he fell in love with after first visiting in 2010. Spanning 135 black-and-white

shots of seaside scenes, from fishermen with their morning catch to young, bronzed *scugnizzi*, the book is a printed paean to the southern coastal city and its people. *Mörel Publishing, €85*



**Chromes** edited by Thomas Weski, Winston Eggleston and William Eggleston III

William Eggleston's colour-drenched shots of everyday scenes have influenced everyone from Juergen Teller to Martin Parr. Drawing together 5,000 Kodachromes and Ektachromes from his archives, this reprint of a monograph first published in 2011 presents Eggleston's early experimentation with colour and composition and his mastery of the poetic snapshot. *Steidl, €380*



**Ernst Haas: The American West** by Paul Lowe

For more than three decades, Austrian-born photojournalist Ernst Haas documented the American west, seeking out the vast, mythical landscapes that fascinated him as a child. From barren, dusty roads and rolling prairie to the dazzling lights of Las Vegas, these richly saturated images offer a poignant portrait of the western frontier and a celebration of one of the pioneers of colour photography. *Prestel, £36*



**No Signal - Living in the Heart of Nature**  
by Brice Portolano

Between 2015 and 2020, Brice Portolano travelled from the remote corners of Alaska to the highlands of Iran to document the daily lives of people living at the edge of the world. From a lighthouse keeper in Norway to a reindeer herder in Mongolia, the resulting series offers a captivating portrait of 10 extraordinary individuals living off the grid. *TeNeues, £35*

**Cartagena Grace** by Lauren Santo Domingo and Johanna Ortiz

Comprising street photography, portraits and landscapes, with accompanying essays by Lauren Santo Domingo, co-founder of *Moda Operandi*, and Colombian designer Johanna Ortiz, this new book is a love letter to the vibrant Colombian port city and its people. "Cartagena never stops impressing me," writes Ortiz, "perhaps because of its persistent air of greatness, which is summed up in its nickname, *La Heroica*." *Assouline, £70*





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HANDMADE IN ENGLAND

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Beneath the watchful eye of Brindisi's towering stone memorial to lost first world war mariners, a lone rower skims across the still waters of the city's harbour. It's a beautiful day and tourists stroll the palm-lined quayside in the late summer's afternoon sun. But the rower isn't the only one on the water. Also in harbour is an Italian warship, the 133m-long ITS *San Giorgio*. Inside, waiting to launch, is an amphibious assault vehicle, and inside her, like a Russian doll, I find myself crammed shoulder to shoulder with my fellow mates. The vehicle's rear door is closed and we are plunged into total darkness. The engine starts and for a moment the only thing to permeate the black is the roar of its 525hp engine and escaping diesel fumes.

Luxury brands have long offered special gifts for favoured clients and friends. But this "backstage visit" is in an altogether different league. For one thing, it's not intended for business clients at all – but rather for customers, in this case those of the watchmaker Panerai who have paid £47,500 for the Submersible Forze Speciali Experience Special Edition, a diving watch that comes with the privilege of having your ass kicked by the Italian special forces.

We lurch forwards as the tracks grind down the ramp into the water. I reach for something to grab but too late, I'm in the lap of the person in front of me, then thrown back again. I am disorientated in the darkness as the driver powers us across the water, and the first wave of seasickness takes hold. My stomach is not as resolute as it might have been, lunch having been the few spoons of Italian combat rations that I could force down. Coming from a country famed for its *cucina*, the tin of medaglioni di carne bovina in gelatina (beef medallions in jelly) was something of a disappointment.

Panerai has a long history with the Italian Navy, having been its official supplier of waterproof timepieces in the '30s, but this is the first time the Marina Militare has opened its doors for a collaboration like this. At first they were not keen on the idea. "When we first contacted them in 2018, the conversation took us 30 seconds because they told us, 'We're not Disneyland. We are serious people,'" says



WATCHES

## FEEL THE FORZE

Who'd spend £47,500 on a watch just to get their ass kicked by Italy's special forces? Tarquin Cooper finds out

Panerai's CEO Jean-Marc Pontroué. "To be accepted, we had to go back to them to explain the historical background."

Other Panerai experiences have taken clients to Bora Bora with the French freediver Guillaume Néry and the Grand Tetons with the climber and photographer Jimmy Chin. Coming up will be experiences with the US Navy Seals and a trip to the Arctic with polar explorer Mike Horn. The goal is ultimately to put on about five experiences a year.

My compatriots are a mix of CEOs, lawyers, tech entrepreneurs, investors and collectors from around the globe, some of them square-jawed alpha males. But not all. Others have been gifted the experience by a generous employer, relative or partner. And

**I MANAGE TO SHOOT THE HOSTAGE, ALBEIT WITH A REPLICA**

it's clear not everyone has followed the advance training plan. One tells me the only exercise he does is swimming and basketball, neither of which will be helpful for what lies ahead.

The experience begins with a welcome dinner among the traditional limestone Trulli houses of Alberobello. At 08:00 hours the next morning we are on parade at the force's Carlotto base. The scene is somewhere between *Full Metal Jacket* and *Dad's Army* as our motley crew stands to attention for the national anthem, the raising of the flag and an address by the brigade commander, Rear Admiral Massimiliano Giuseppe Grazioso. He welcomes us, the way Marines like to welcome guests, by ordering us to do 20 press-ups.

Over the next 48 hours we are thrown into the life of the Marina Militare. There are rides on a high-speed assault craft and machine-gun-mounted armoured vehicles, and low-level flying aboard an NH90 helicopter, which are only just on the right side of the fun-terrifying spectrum. There is hand-to-hand combat training with a man who looks like he'd slit my throat in

the blink of an eye and an introduction to close-quarter combat during which, in my enthusiasm, I manage to shoot the hostage, albeit with a replica. To keep things authentic, there are plenty more press-ups, often in the heat of the day and while wearing 10kg of body armour. It is tough, even for those execs with ripped abs and gym-pumped arms, but absolutely brutal for those who were given the experience as a surprise.

But the experience isn't all physical. Dinner at the end of the first day is at the beachside fish restaurant Saleblu, whose wooden decking and canvas shades give it the feeling of a sailboat at sea. Over gnocchi and cuttlefish with white-chocolate mousse to follow, Panerai's CMO Alessandro Ficarelli explains that the whole point of the experience is to offer something "you cannot find on Google".

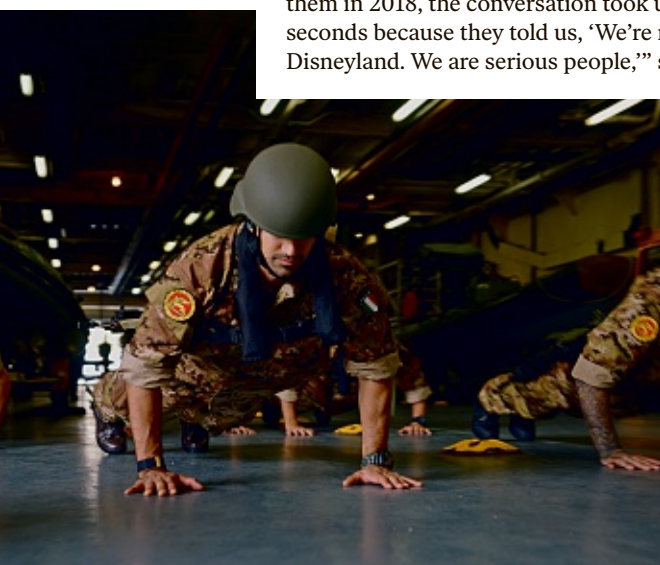
Of course, there are travel operators for high-net-worth individuals like Cookson Adventures and Pelorus who specialise in taking clients – often led by ex-special forces types – to the remotest corners of the globe by superyachts and helicopters. And there are brands that have farmed out their star athletes to paying clients, such as Red Bull, which sells an ascent of Mont Blanc with the former Gurkha and record-breaking Himalayan climber Nirmal Purja. But in the luxury watch market, there is something unique about what Panerai is doing.

Is it worth it? Among the paying clients, one who is struggling to walk says, "Absolutely." A German plumber from Munich in designer jeans pulls a face. "The heart says yes, the head no," he says. ■HTSI For details of the next Panerai experience, go to [panerai.com](http://panerai.com)



Above: Panerai's Submersible Forze Speciali Experience Special Edition. Top: the author gets to grips with the assault course

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# ORLEBAR BROWN



# Rise of the PROMAD

Curious, wealthy and often lonely, the “progressive nomad” is searching for enlightenment in addition to the hotel spa. By *Kate Spicer*

ILLUSTRATIONS BY LALALIMOLA

**H**arvest Kaplankaya, a twice-yearly festival at a community of hotels and villas on the Aegean coast, is a bold proposition. Modelled as a blend of Burning Man and the World Economic Forum, the event weaves together talks and debates with healing sessions, music, dancing and lively candlelit dinners for more than 200 guests. Since its launch in 2018, guest speakers have included ethnobotanist Wade Davis, the Hungarian-Canadian physician and trauma specialist Gabor Maté and Camilla Fayed, a socialite turned vegan activist. Tickets, with accommodation, start at €3,918 and guests jet in from all over the world. This October’s event was its sixth and, like previous incarnations, was sold out.

According to Harvest co-founders Burak Öymen and Roman Carel, the festival’s mission is to lure a new travel crowd, for whom shared experience, big ideas, conscious living and personal growth are central. Call them the progressive or proactive nomads (or promads), a new tier of traveller for whom intellectual growth and community must be as much a part of the experience as a Michelin-starred chef and an award-winning spa.

“We are moving from an experience economy to a transformation economy,” says Chris Sanderson, co-founder of strategic foresight consultancy The Future Laboratory. “It’s not about a holiday where you fall to pieces and relax, eat and drink. It’s not about an experience in isolation – it’s being part of a temporary community.”

Perhaps the first to set its store so close to these values was Habitas, which has places (or is imminently opening) in Mexico, Costa Rica, Bhutan, Namibia, Morocco, Ibiza and, surprisingly, Saudi Arabia. Its website opens with the words “Welcome Home”, the traditional Burning Man salutation. Holidays centre around group events, ranging from wild (sometimes) sober beach parties to

this November’s six-day women’s retreat in Mexico, which will explore female archetypes (from \$2,905), and involve sound healing, meditation and “embodiment activations”.

Habitas aims to create escapes that foster community. Guests “define themselves by mindset and shared values”, says CEO Oliver Ripley. If an unsatisfactory texture of the foam on your cappuccino is a pain point, “Habitas isn’t for you. We don’t put chocolates on your pillow. We are attracting you through the people you are going to meet and the experiences you are going to have.” But, he says, Habitas is inclusive. “The problem I have with hospitality, like an Aman or Six Senses, is you’re surrounded by people who can afford thousands a night,” he argues. “I don’t want to be in some kind of bubble defined by socioeconomic norms.” Habitas rooms start in the low hundreds.

But even high-luxury groups are edging towards the shared experience. “When you pull a tribe together that wasn’t a tribe before, magic happens,” says Anna Bjurstam, whose official title at Six Senses is “wellness pioneer”.

## “PEOPLE SEEK ANSWERS, NOT CANAPÉS”

Her task, with 28 spas worldwide and 35 more on the way, is innovation. As such, she says, “We are intentionally moving towards [creating events that build] community.” Next month, together with Six Senses Ibiza’s director of culture Talana Bestall, Bjurstam will launch the group’s first festival, Alma: three days and nights of “thought leaders” from the wellbeing and fitness spheres, parties, dinners and, of course, spirituality. Says Bestall: “In this day and age, a hotel stay – as lovely as it is – is not enough. People want experiences. It’s the future with millennials and Z.” The event costs from €1,725.

One of the main factors in the growth of such experiences has been a rise in a sense of loneliness. “Loneliness in the affluent community is high,” says Bjurstam. “When we look at the population we serve, 27 per cent don’t have any close friends

they can be vulnerable with, and 22 per cent have none at all.” “Loneliness is the most consistent and long-standing pandemic of our generation,” agrees Habitas’s Oliver Ripley. “The cure is creating community and connection.”

“The big brands know that in the future people will turn to them for community,” says Ben Pundole, hospitality consultant for brands such as Six Senses and founder of travel platform A Hotel Life. “But will they have the sensitivity and emotion required to make it feel authentic?”

At Slow, shared ideas define the hospitality group’s evolution: its developments primarily serve like-minded designers, farmers, writers, artists, artisans or architects – and guest stays at hotels (which it calls “lodgings”) are integrated into this carefully curated community. Its first opening was a regenerative agricultural project, La Granja, in Ibiza, “devoted to discourse on farming and food”. Future launches will include “a farmstead and creative village for living and hospitality” on Portugal’s Arrábida coast, and a “creative campus” with guest rooms, artists’ studios, exhibition and performance space by the river Spree in Berlin. The Flussbad will be home to “ideas that aim to build a kinder, more collaborative world”.

More and more people are seeking places like these, says Sabine Heller, CCO of Sollis Health, a US medical start-up, who has made a career of running businesses that sit at the intersection of community and luxury commerce. Recently, she hosted an event at Etéreo, a hotel on the Yucatán peninsula, with 25 women aged from 30 to 60. Discussions included the reversal of Roe v Wade, there was a talk on stress and gut health and a sound bath was held. There was also yoga, snorkelling and a shamanic blessing. “There were moments of anger, vulnerability and connection mixed with much-needed respite and restoration in a breathtaking location,” says Heller. Reflecting on its success, she says, “After the pandemic people have come back seeking answers not canapés.”

All this can sound excessively earnest, but, says Pundole, travel’s new transformative focus “doesn’t need to be holier than thou. Doing good and having fun are not mutually exclusive”. Habitas is best known for its fantastic parties. There are even morning gatherings for dancing in the sand. In a polarised world of uncertainty, coming together is, it seems, the greatest luxury. ■HTSI

### WHERE TO GO

**Alma** Ibiza, 3-6 November  
sixsenses.com, from €1,725 per person (€2,805 double)  
**Archetype** Tulum and Bacalar, Mexico, 13-19 November, ourhabitas.com, from \$2,905 per person  
**Harvest Kaplankaya** Muğla, Turkey, 10-14 May 2023, harvestkaplankaya.com, from €3,918 per person



Egypt's ancient wonders still hold us spellbound, but its pulsing, intense present is just as intoxicating.  
*Gilles Khoury reports*

**A**s in many Arab cities, a conversation with a taxi driver in Cairo – or sometimes simply a ride in one – takes the pulse of the place. On my first night in the city, I jump in a shaky white cab that is passing my hotel and we enter the tentacular traffic of the Nile Corniche. After examining me in his rear-view mirror for a bit, the taxi driver engages me in a conversation that very quickly drifts from pleasantries (where I am from, what I am doing in Cairo) to his life, his job, then the traffic, then the people. “I don't know why everyone is always running here. The country is not in its best state, but oddly enough tourists are back and things are working without us knowing how.”

This easy familiarity, so improvised and unexpected, turns the encounter into a theatre scene. In a few moments, the driver has condensed the current condition of Egypt into a few words – its perennial hardships and rises and falls since the 2011 revolution that toppled autocrat Hosni Mubarak. He has also summarised the way people feel and behave here, with more or less similarities: their emotional exhilarations, their cautious hope and, of course, the lightness, the comic relief, the forever *joie de vivre*, which they express with the term *maalesh* (“It's fine”).

That same night, I cross the Qasr El Nil Bridge towards Tahrir Square, near which you will find at Shaheen Caviar the most perfect local *batarikh* (bottarga), thinly cut on toasted bread (preferably Egyptian *aish baladi*), with olive oil, sliced garlic and a sprinkle of lemon zest. On my way, I observe a young cotton-candy vendor blowing pink clouds into the wind; motorboats ripple the Nile waters with their neon lights. And just like that, from one instant to another, a city that seems so turbulent, so tense and intense, offers up something akin to sweetness. It's the switch from one state to another that follows me all over Egypt.

It's an intoxicating blend that has stirred the hearts of many travellers. Rarely before 2022 have its monuments and museum institutions attracted so much interest – and so much tourism, local and foreign alike. According to the Central Agency for Public Mobilisation and

# A JOURNEY OUT OF TIME



Statistics (CAPMAS), international tourism bounced back in the first six months of 2022, with almost 4.9 million tourists recorded – an increase of 84.5 per cent compared with 2021. Among the draws are the recent opening of the National Museum of Egyptian Civilisation, with its impressive hall of mummies, 22 in total, transported to the museum amid a grand parade in April 2021; 4 November will mark the centennial of the discovery of Tutankhamun’s tomb by Howard Carter in Luxor. Around the same time, the long-awaited Grand Egyptian Museum is slated to open – a site of almost 500,000sq m, 3km away from the Pyramids, housing a gallery of 100,000 artefacts as well as a colossal statue of pharaoh Ramses II. Most recently, Dior announced that Kim Jones would present his men’s pre-fall collection in front of the Pyramids of Giza on 3 December.

Of course, the renewed appetite for Egyptology has played a significant role in the overall enthusiasm towards Egypt. But despite the majesty of its history, Cairo is oddly a city that doesn’t give the impression of being stuck in the past. On the contrary, it’s morphing and evolving, both on the urban and cultural fronts.

If you include the two recent satellite cities known as New Cairo and 6th of October, Cairo spreads over some 3085sq km. A car ride here feels like a journey through numerous settlements condensed into one – all different in shape, like sediments from different layers of time: Fatimid, Mamluk, Khedival, then the modernist architecture, all connected by their sandy hues and the gleaming desert light. On both sides of the Ring Road, a massive highway that binds the city, the buildings are cut open, revealing pastel interior walls. Maha El Kadi, an Egyptologist who works with local specialists Abercrombie & Kent, tells me: “In early 2021, we woke up from one day to another with a different landscape here: the government had decided to demolish around 400 buildings to enlarge this road, among others. People were evicted and provided with alternative housing.” A year later, amid a so-called road-building campaign, the government also razed large parts of the City of the Dead, Cairo’s oldest cemetery, which doubled as a working-class neighbourhood. Several of the iconic Nile Houseboats were removed, and a few, among them the one on which the Nobel Laureate Naguib Mahfouz wrote, were destroyed.

To counter this arbitrary erasure of treasures from the past, several private initiatives were launched; one that had already been created was Al Ismaelia. Its co-founder, Karim Shafei, describes it as the first company dedicated to finding life for things that otherwise would be earmarked for destruction. “Our focus is in Downtown Cairo, where we acquire and rehabilitate historic buildings [ranging from 80 to 120 years old]. Our vision is very different from the developments in suburbia, where the experience is totally manufactured.”

One of Al Ismaelia’s projects has been the refurbishment of the mythical Cinema Radio, built in 1932, where Umm Kulthum performed several times. Cairo’s Downtown is in general a survey of the abundance of architectural movements that have shaped the Egyptian capital, from art deco to art nouveau, brutalism and postmodernism. In his book *Cairo Since 1900: An Architectural Guide*, Mohamed Elshahed – who also runs the enlightening @cairoobserver Instagram account – has mapped out over 120 years of architectural developments. The book is an invitation to remember the city through its urban fabric, but also a call to arms to protect its inestimable heritage; those buildings that each echo back to a moment in time, or at least remind us of its passage.

I stop for a coffee and chocolate-coated dates at an outpost of the cult Groppi café where, among the pastel meringues, mounted like sculptures on silver platters



IN AN INSTANT  
A CITY THAT  
SEEMS SO  
TURBULENT  
OFFERS UP  
SWEETNESS



Clockwise from top: a young cotton-candy vendor in Cairo. A partially demolished building on the side of the Ring Road. Cinema Radio, refurbished by Al Ismaelia. A window display in the capital. Far right: the Great Sphinx of Giza





and satin tablecloths, poets, writers, journalists and politicians used to gather and rethink the world. Its derelict but somehow chic interiors still hold the memory of an opulent past. Next to it is the Stephenson Pharmacy, founded in the late 19th century by the British chemist George Stephenson and sold to the Samman family in the early '40s. The artist Yasmine ElMeleegy produced a long study on the different objects found in the pharmacy, from apothecary jars and glass syringes to prescription records; today these are presented in a sort of *cabinet de curiosités*. The Stephenson Pharmacy was recommended by my New York-based friend Nadia Gohar, co-founder of tableware brand Gohar World with her sister and HTSI columnist Laila; the Gohars source most of their table linens in Egypt. "There is an overwhelming amount of craftsmanship and expertise in Egypt," says Nadia. "Materials and methods that people have refined and passed down for generations. We want that to last."

One man who was similarly set out to preserve such artisanship was architect Ramses Wassef. At the oasis-like centre he created in 1951 – a paragon of his architectural language with domed mud-brick structures and a garden overrun by bougainvillea and date-tree leaves – Wassef made it his mission to protect the imperilled artistry of weaving. His strategy was to introduce children from the nearby village of Al-Harranya to tapestry making. "But kids with no pre-defined ideas," clarifies Ikram Nossbi, the centre's current director. "[There are] two rules: no criticism and no copying. Why? To allow the kids to be as free as possible and avoid critical correction. Those who are familiar with western art always end up imitating it." Of the 15 first-generation weavers, two are still here, alongside younger ones – all slowly constructing their tapestries in the vaulted workshops next to the museum.

Nurturing and protecting their indigenous crafts is a common concern among the younger generation of Egyptian artists. In a country of so many totemic, ancient icons, these creatives are eager to train our focus on keeping skills alive. Certainly it's what spurred the illustrator and product designer Ahmed Hefnawy to launch Cairopolitan, his gallery and concept store, in 2006. Inside, objects borrow the shapes of prosaic elements of Cairo daily life: taxi signs, traditional *aish* loaves, local cigarette packs. "We're driven by the belief that it's not only our pharaonic history that embodies the spirit of Egypt but also the practical details of contemporary life in Cairo – a city which, after all, has been a home to [various] subcultures for a long time."

**A**fter a lunch at Koshary Abou Tarek – a cornerstone of Cairene cuisine, where people queue for the inimitable *koshary* made of chickpeas, pasta and lentils – I meet Karim El Hayawan, an interiors architect and photographer who in 2014 launched Cairo Saturday Walks. "It's an organic movement that evolved from my spending my Saturdays by myself, exploring and shooting in Cairo's streets," he explains. "Friends joined and it went viral. Now we are 500 members, local and international, and we have an annual exhibition [of photography] with the proceeds donated to one of the visited areas." El Hayawan's atelier is located in the district of Zamalek, which is also home to the Museum of Modern Egyptian Art. "Egypt has one of the oldest Schools of Fine Arts [outside of Europe], and some of the most important modern masters of the Middle East are Egyptian, such as Mahmoud Saïd and Mahmoud Mokhtar," says Mai Eldib, head of Middle East sales for Sotheby's. "One of the auctions I work most closely on is our biannual sale of modern and contemporary art from the Middle East, and Egyptian art is one of the biggest sectors." Here in Zamalek, an ecosystem of galleries has flourished: among the players are Ubuntu, Tintera, Art Talks and, a bit further out in Maadi, the Gypsum Gallery.



## THERE'S A FOCUS ON INDIGENOUS CRAFTS



Above left: a portrait of Abou Tarek in the restaurant of the same name. Top right: a weaving by the architect Ramses Wassef. Above: the Temple of Horus in Edfu. Far left: a *felucca* boat sailing on the Nile at Luxor

Nabila Abdel Nabi is Tate Modern's first international curator to specialise exclusively in the Middle East. "The current cultural landscape in Egypt is incredibly diverse," she says. "Organisations range from those [smaller] galleries to the monumental." By monumental, she of course refers to the historic landmarks and institutions of the likes of the Egyptian Museum, the Mosque of Ibn Tulun – built in the ninth century, with its minaret believed to have been inspired by the lighthouse of Alexandria, it's Cairo's oldest – and the Pyramids of Giza. In each of these, the depth of Egyptian civilisation simply hits you, and reduces shifts in cultures to mere instants. What explains the infinite power of the Pyramids, however, is not the just the grandiosity of those eternal limestone mountains but the mystery of their making: 4,500 years into their existence, archaeologists are still trying to understand how their builders managed to move more than two million limestone and granite blocks, each weighing between 2.5 and 15 tonnes, from the banks of the Nile to Giza, passing through a desert en route.

On my last night in Cairo, I dine with the cultural conservationists Mounir and Laila Neamatalla at their family apartment overlooking the Nile. Epitomising a vanishing Cairene elegance, the siblings have for decades extended their Egyptian roots, and projects, to the Siwa Oasis in the Western Desert, which has been inhabited since 10,000BC. Mounir decided to create a sustainable development in the region in 1996, long before this notion became fashionable and commonplace. His Adrère Amellal is one of north Africa's first ecolodges; meanwhile, Laila founded a programme through which older Siwa women train the younger generation in the craft of embroidery. "It was my way to empower them, and make them feel that they can be independent financially from the men in their families, which is not uncommon in this community," she says. During the pandemic, she also launched the lifestyle brand Ujdat, in collaboration with French designer Louis Barthélemy. "Siwa is a place where you're out of time," says Laila, wearing one of the gorgeous golden necklaces she's been making since 1982 under the name Nakhla, for which she draws inspiration from Pharaonic aesthetics.

I sail south on the Nile from Luxor to Aswan. It's a journey that, like Siwa, makes one feel slightly out of time. Luxor, the legendary Winter Palace – intact, rundown, but as lavish as ever – still echoes with British-colonial influences: the silverware, the untouched furniture, the *mâitres d'hôtel* and the abundant gardens. The Luxor Temple, reopened in November 2021, enchants totally when the setting sun travels through its restored Avenue of Sphinxes. At the Temple of Khnum at Esna, I see the internal pillars, restored and fascinating after being covered for some 2,000 years. Next, the Temple of Horus in Edfu, one of the best preserved and the second biggest

after Karnak. Finally, reaching Aswan in the south, I come to the temple complex of Philae. It was built under Nectanebo (380-362BC), before being moved in the '60s from its original location amid fears that it would become submerged by the waters; it now appears magnificent, as though floating on the Nile.

These milestones in the history of the Egyptian civilisation seem connected one to the other by the landscape: rows of date trees folding over carpets of papyrus, bamboo-like grass and ochre dunes of sand. Sometimes a farmer and his cow; old boats slowly swaying in the waters; mud-brick houses crushed under the sun. Images which have remained unchanged since antiquity are wrapped in that iridescent light that makes the Nile shine differently at each hour of the day.

My trip ends at the Old Cataract hotel, a chic yet understated palace from 1899 with terracotta walls and windows framed in white that overlook Elephantine Island and, further away, a Nubian-era village. Although it is commonly known as the place where Agatha Christie wrote *Death on the Nile* and François Mitterrand fell for the country, the Old Cataract is, still, an underestimated treasure. Atop a granite hill, it's enveloped in the same silence that followed me throughout the cruise, surrounded by the same almost-surreal views. From my room, beyond the date palms, I see *felucca* boats bending in the wind. Here again, I feel out of time. But *out* of time and not *back* in time because Aswan, as everywhere else along the route of the cruise, is not only a door to delve, first hand, into ancient Egypt. It is an invitation to zoom out and collect the layers of different worlds that have accumulated on this land. And this is what most likely accounts for Egypt's endless magic: that it has somehow outlived time. ■HTSI  
Gilles Khoury travelled as a guest of Abercrombie & Kent ([abercrombieandkent.com](http://abercrombieandkent.com)) which offers an eight-night trip to Egypt from £4,500pp including flights, transfers, two nights in Cairo, a Nile river cruise and two nights in Aswan





PROENZA SCHOULER  
velvet knit hood, £390, and  
matching dress, £1,530

Opposite page: LOUIS  
VUITTON wool-mix and  
leather hoop coat, £6,500,  
and wool skirt, £4,200.  
RUSH JEWELRY DESIGN  
gold earring, \$2,650 for  
pair. Stud, model's own.  
Vintage shirt, stylist's own

Sonoma County provides the perfect backdrop for snug autumn styles

Photography by *Parker Woods*

Styling by *Jay Massacret*

Model *Carolina Burgin*



# California cosy



GABRIELA HEARST  
cashmere top,  
£3,490, and  
matching skirt,  
£4,950. PROENZA  
SCHOUER leather  
shoes, POA



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DOLCE & GABBANA neoprene coat, €2,550. REI recycled ripstop nylon hoodie, \$149. Y/PROJECT leather belt, €850, and denim skirt, €595. SAINT LAURENT BY ANTHONY VACCARELLO fishnet gloves, £460. FALKE recycled polyamide tights, \$39. LOUIS VUITTON leather and nylon Connelly loafers, £905. LISA EISNER blackened and hammered bronze California earrings, \$1,400.



Above: SAINT LAURENT BY ANTHONY VACCARELLO cashmere-mix coat, £3,985.  
Y/PROJECT denim dress, €895. LISA EISNER polished bronze and crystal earrings, \$2,200

Opposite page: CHLOÉ recycled cashmere dress, £1,651. FALKE recycled polyamide tights, \$39.  
SCARPA suede Helix climbing shoes, \$125. RUSH JEWELRY DESIGN gold earring, \$2,650 for pair



# Our Forte

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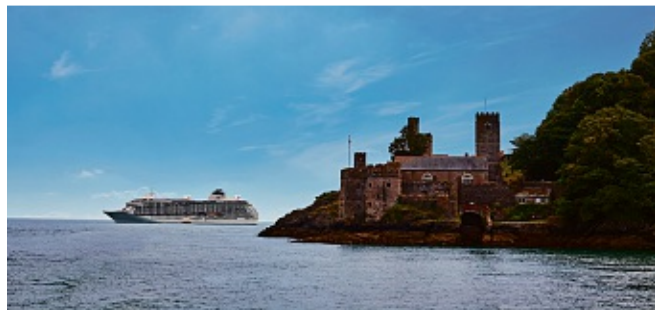
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BROWN'S HOTEL LONDON · THE CHARLES HOTEL MUNICH · MASSERIA TORRE MAIZZA PUGLIA  
HOTEL DE LA VILLE ROME · HOTEL DE RUSSIE ROME · ROCCO FORTE HOUSE ROME · VILLA IGIEA PALERMO  
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ALEXANDER McQUEEN embroidered mohair jumper, £1,370. CHANEL vintage chiffon pleated skirt, \$595, araldavintage.com. CLAUDIA LI paracord fringe vest (just seen), POA. FALKE recycled polyamide tights, \$39. SCARPA suede Helix climbing shoes, \$125

Model, Carolina Burgin at Vision Models. Casting, William Lhoest. Hair, Tiago Goya at Home Agency. Make-up, Sara Tagaloo at Home Agency. Photographer's assistant, Cornelius Martin. Stylist's assistant, Taylor Hubbard. Production, Wes Olson at Connect the Dots. Special thanks to The Sea Ranch Lodge, CA

# A TUSCAN FAIRYTALE

The blend of wine, wisdom and worldliness at the 16th-century Castello Sonnino is so exquisite that even Gucci wants to stay. *Maria Shollenbarger* tells its story

Photography by *Stefan Gifthaler*

Once upon a modern-day time there was a castle, high on a hill in Tuscany, overlooking acres of well-tended vineyards and dense woodland. Its medieval brick tower, rising tall and straight between inky silhouettes of cypresses, was visible for miles in every direction. In this castle lived a family, descended from an illustrious line of adventurers and statesmen and benefactors. They grew grapes for wine, olives for oil and grain for flour, and worked their land the way it had been worked for several centuries, which is to say respectfully, with skill, diligence and prudence in equal measure. And they shared the experience of it: people from around the world would come to stay – for weeks, or sometimes months – immersing in the lessons the landscape held about how to better respect and preserve it.

Baroness Caterina de Renzis and her late husband, Baron Alessandro de Renzis Sonnino, first saw Castello Sonnino – a 150-acre working farm and winery in Montespertoli, 12 miles south-west of Florence – in 1988. The estate, with its 16th-century villa, had just been left to Alessandro by a childless uncle; in its 500 years of existence, it had been variously inhabited by Frescobaldis, Machiavellis and Strozzi, as well as Sonninos. But the house itself, Caterina recalls, was in an almost absurd state of disrepair. No one had really lived there for any length of time for at least 70 years, and it showed. There were holes in the roof; the electricity barely worked; dust cloaked everything like a tarpaulin. But then she walked into a west-facing salon, threw open the shuttered windows and the late-afternoon light revealed a space completely frescoed in ornate garden and botanical scenes. “Everything was suddenly bathed in gold, and the room was like an extraordinary, magical garden,” Caterina says. “And I said, ‘I want to have children here.’”

For decades, the de Renzis Sonninos lived an existence that seemed charmed. Together they restored the house, making a home for their children Virginia, now 32, and Leone, 29, and evolving the estate into an enterprise inspired by, and dedicated to, the traditions of the place.





Left: the courtyard and 13th-century tower at Castello Sonnino. Right: the castle's painted living room

Right: frescoes in the living room. Below: Virginia and Leone de Renzis Sonnino



## “EVERYTHING WAS SUDDENLY BATHED IN GOLD, AND THE ROOM WAS LIKE AN EXTRAORDINARY, MAGICAL GARDEN”

Gucci Places, where VIP clients of the brand can enjoy private visits. The collaboration came about when Gucci's creative director Alessandro Michele was scouting garden locations for a campaign. When he saw the frescoed sitting room, he declared it a perfect backdrop; Caterina ended up featuring as one of the models in a later campaign.

Such was this story's happy exposition, for many years. Then, in March of 2021, Alessandro died of Covid, after an illness of less than two weeks. He was 64, in the prime of his middle age and at the pinnacle of his winemaking career.

Raised in Florence, the great-grandson of two-time prime minister Sidney Sonnino (1847-1922), “The Baron”, as Alessandro was more familiarly known, began his winemaking prowess with no formal portfolio, but a sophisticated palate. An avowed traditionalist, partial to the elegance of red burgundy, he bucked the then fashion, driven primarily by the US market, for big, tannic, high-alcohol red wines, instead producing ultra-traditional Chiantis (with a trace amount of Trebbiano, a local white grape, an orthodoxy that dates back centuries) and IGT blends of exceptional balance and finesse. He also played a seminal role in the creation in 1997 of the Montespertoli sub-appellation, the smallest in the Chianti region. Caterina, who trained as an artist, made a name for herself as a designer of wine labels, working with estates across Italy – Donnafugata, Fonterutoli, Guado Al Tasso – as well as bodegas in Spain and Argentina.

In 2015 Caterina established the Castello Sonnino International Education Centre, inviting researchers, academics and doctorate students to work with her to create curricula that leverage the estate – which is one of Italy's official register of historic residences – as a sort of dynamic campus. People have come from as far away as Canada and Australia to live there or in Montespertoli village, gaining hands-on experience in the vineyards and olive groves and attending lectures on topics ranging from cultural tourism to food security. If the academic interests skew more to history, students and teachers have access to Sidney Sonnino's extensive archives, which are stored in the villa: a splendid room, full of documents, photographs and maps. Since 2018, the castle has been one of seven

As much as any fable consists of its narrative arc, it's always also about the epimythia at its core. Courage, equanimity, resilience in the face of upheaval or tragedy: all of these are things Caterina and her children have for better or worse gained experience of in the past two years. Leone had recently relocated to Berlin from Hong Kong, and was working at a retail startup; Virginia was based in Rome, but producing fashion shoots and events internationally. Both had had vague notions of one day, perhaps, returning home to participate in some capacity in the Sonnino project. But Caterina could not run the estate without help, or without selling off parts of it. The homecoming had been vastly accelerated.

In reconciling the loss and change, however, there has been a revelation. By dedicating themselves to maintaining Castello Sonnino's traditions, Alessandro and Caterina shaped a place that today sits at the intersection of multiple contemporary interests: heritage, sustainable agriculture, active learning – even the vogue for elegant red Italian wines.

On a September morning made soft by *sfumature* of mist and sunlight, I walk with Leone among the vines.



Left: the hunting living room. Right: the castle's library



Left: the blue living room

Having moved home almost immediately after his father's death, he has immersed himself in every aspect of Sonnino's wine concern: viticulture, production, business, promotion.

"He never went to the spices or heavy tannins suitable for the US market," he says of his father's winemaking. "He retained the elegance that reflected the way he wanted to make wine, but also, even more so, the terroir here. At times, that meant he sacrificed success in the market." Now, he says, things have come full circle. "The trends have almost reversed direction: people want that freshness and balance, but also that easy drinkability" that is represented by the estate's Chianti Montespertoli – an "entry-level" wine that nonetheless scores regularly in the 85-90 range.

**H**e was almost anti-commercial at times," Leone says. "But it came from idealism. It was so important to him that the wines truly reflected this place." He takes me to see Sonnino's *vinsantaio* – the airing attic where Malvasia and Trebbiano grapes are laid out on straw mats for months

(known as the *passito*) before being pressed and sealed in casks for a minimum of five years, resulting in the sweet wine that's traditional to Tuscany. It's one of the more uncontrolled, and thus mercurial, winemaking processes, and Alessandro was famously one of its most committed traditionalists (never skimping, as larger producers do, on the many months of the *passito*, and ageing his wines for up to six years), which has paid off in multiple industry awards. Leone reckons Castello Sonnino's *vinsantaio*, wholly unchanged for centuries, is one of only two or three such intact ones left in the region. (When it's not being used to dry the grapes, Caterina has been known to host a yoga or meditation class here.)

Virginia has joined her mother in running the Education Centre. "It felt like the most natural place for me; I'd spent years working in shoot and event production, so to lean on that skill set and put it to work with the programming made sense," she says. In the less than two years she's been involved, she's helped both streamline processes and expand Sonnino's educational remit. Whether with the University of British Columbia or Colorado College (just two of the numerous universities whose masters and doctorate students Castello Sonnino has hosted), "we collaborate on developing the itinerary and curriculum. But once that's signed off on, we run everything here." Excursions around Tuscany, but also to Milan and Rome, are regular features.



Right: the *vinsantaio*, one of only two or three left intact in the region. Below: the kitchen



## "I MADE SURE THE THINGS THAT MATTER WERE VERY GOOD: BEDS, BATHROOMS, FULL KITCHENS"

The apartments are available to let as well, when Institute programmes aren't in residence. "I made sure the things that matter were very good: beds, bathrooms, full kitchens. It was with the students' comfort in mind – they're actually really nice as such accommodations go, so they've worked well for holiday rentals too."

Over coffee one morning in the dining room, sitting next to a metre-tall foliage arrangement she'd fashioned from found branches a few days before, Caterina goes back to the genesis of the education idea. "I wanted to generate an income for us, alongside the wine, without selling or destroying or compromising anything – not one thing." She notes that, in the immediate aftermath of Alessandro's death, when the future of Castello Sonnino as a family home hung somewhat in the balance, she was encouraged to consider selling the vineyards. "But how could I do that, when they are such a fundamental part of this place?"

Likewise, she says, the essence of the house itself: Gucci wanted the Places collaboration because Castello Sonnino has character, not just beauty. Very little in the villa has been changed from the time she herself first threw open those shutters; while rugs have been cleaned, and a few divans and sofas reupholstered, one of the things that makes the interiors so ravishing is their preserved-in-amber sense of place. Many of the original furnishings are still in situ: "It was that that Gucci wanted: the fact that the place hasn't been changed significantly from what it was 10 or 100 years ago; that we live here with it day to day."



Above: view from the *vinsantaio* terrace. Left: Leone de Renzis Sonnino works on the 2022 vintage

She considers. "We had a vision of entrepreneurship in which everything has to be connected; that is what makes it holistic, sustainable." Her hands lift and move in a fluid gesture – one she has made a few times already – as though twisting disparate parts of something together, when articulating what Castello Sonnino is. "All these – the house, the vines, the land, the archives – are linked one to the other. We have always worked with everything we have here. To remove one thing would change the balance of it all." She quotes a mission statement coined for the Institute: "Living history to sustain the future." It's an apt description of the place – and the story she hopes to continue to tell there. ■HTSI  
Castello Sonnino is open for tastings and visits, [castellosonnino.it](http://castellosonnino.it); enquire via email for holiday apartments, [info@castellosonnino.it](mailto:info@castellosonnino.it)



The plane glides smoothly onto the tarmac at Sangster International Airport in Montego Bay, Jamaica, a country renowned for its pristine sun-filled beaches and Blue Mountains, its coffee and rum, and of course, Bob Marley. I share a birthday with the reggae legend, and his music, because of my father's devotion to it, was a soundtrack of my youth. My thoughts on Jamaica are woven from threads of childhood affection, sentimentality and deep curiosity about a country I have never been to until now. This year marks Jamaica's 60th year of independence from the British empire, which took place just two years after my own country of Nigeria.

Within a few minutes of leaving the airport, passing through beautiful stretches of country, thick with dense green bushes and banana trees, I feel strangely at home. Darby, the driver, welcomes me with a quick geography lesson. The lilt in his voice is a small ocean wave, rising and falling in unfamiliar places between syllables. "We in the parish of Saint James. You know, the island divided into 14 parishes. And we gon pass through four to get ya to St Mary's for GoldenEye."

I've come to visit two distinctly different manifestations of hospitality. GoldenEye is in the small north-eastern fishing town of Oracabessa, while Rockhouse is across the island in Negril, a stone's throw from the white sands of Seven Mile Beach. Both places are owned by committed foreigners who love the country; I imagined spending time in each would give me a sense of how they created and maintain a deep and thriving relationship with the Jamaican communities hosting them.

It's a two-hour ride along the northern coastline from Montego Bay east to GoldenEye. On the way I catch an occasional expanse of the Caribbean sea, calm in the late morning sunlight. In St Ann's parish, Darby points out where Marcus Garvey, Jamaica's first national hero, and Bob Marley were born. In St Mary's parish, we pass the small Ian Fleming International Airport, where I see the sign for Oracabessa, location of his famous Jamaican estate.

It's easy to miss the nondescript entrance to GoldenEye – a wrought-iron gate flanked by two stone walls. Down the long, unpaved road is the reception entrance, where the walls in the airy, high-ceilinged Ian Fleming reception room hold framed newspaper clippings and photographs of Fleming and past guests, and stills from scenes of James Bond movies. Large, louvered, wooden windows overlook the blue lagoon, and just steps below the GoldenEye bridge is the beach and the vast turquoise sea. The property feels strangely quiet and empty. I remember what Darby had said in the car: "The place is unique. Even if it's full, it's like there's nobody there." It seems a place where privacy, rest and rejuvenation are more the concern than tourism, but I'm promised that there are plenty of activities to occupy me if I'm given to active holidaying, among them snorkelling, paddleboarding and yoga.

GoldenEye is a mix of private lagoon-front villas, a hamlet of beach huts and a cluster of cottages – with room

for close to 50 scattered amid the lush green plant life. There are private beaches, pools and secluded coves, a spa accessible by foot or kayak, and small open-air restaurants and bars. I spend a few nights in a modestly furnished but beautiful beach hut at the end of a short, winding path inlaid with stone. The small veranda overlooks Oracabessa Bay, with indescribable sunsets each evening. Each morning I rise early to a thick quiet and the soft lapping of water, and can see a small boat of men out in the distance.

During my stay I encounter only a handful of guests, mostly during meals at Bizot, the open-air restaurant right by the beautiful salt-water pool shaped like a blue eye. The surrounding waters, the remarkable quiet, sprinkled only with bird sounds or waves, the lush greenery and open, sandy beaches: I quickly realise that these are the natural elements that make GoldenEye a luxury destination. There are no extravagances in the lodgings; rather there is a clean, natural, unencumbered aesthetic to the place – large windows, airy, white linens and wood floors that offer guests space to breathe and unclutter their minds. It's one of the most peaceful places I have been to in a long while.

But peaceful doesn't mean languishing. The property staff and extended team members are actively busy in the community with the programmes and initiatives of the GoldenEye Foundation at Oracabessa Bay, established in 1995. I spend time with Travis Graham, the executive director of the Foundation. As he shares his experiences leading its commitments to foster more sustainable development in Oracabessa and the environment, it's obvious it's more than just a job. There is a personal investment here in supporting the livelihood and development of members of the Oracabessa community, and helping build educational and employable skills, like the coding summer camp that began this past July and is now offered as an official course.

Last year, the Foundation began a new agro-business and technical-support programme offering staff members and others in the tourism sector the opportunity to start farm businesses as a sustainable livelihood. It's a nine-month-long training, and the initial group of participants graduated in December. As the second class begins, the

## "EVEN IF IT'S FULL, IT'S LIKE THERE'S NOBODY THERE"

programme will be opened to the wider community. The Foundation also has an Oracabessa Bay Fish Sanctuary in partnership with local fishermen, focused on a variety of conservation programs and initiatives. There is a coral reef rehabilitation programme, and the 93-hectare Sanctuary's boundaries mean no fishing is allowed within two miles of the property. The weekend I am there, a community service day has been organised and a large number of staff who are off work, including the resident manager, go out into the town at 8am and begin cleaning the streets and the beach coastlines, with divers also doing an underwater cleanup of debris.

I ask one of the team, Avid, about working at GoldenEye and he confesses that he actually left for a few years to work at another big hospitality property in Jamaica before deciding to return. "It's just so natural here," he says of his decision. "You get to be yourself. Elsewhere is so... Americanised."

It's a four-hour drive across the island to Rockhouse Hotel in Negril, at the westernmost point in Jamaica. Negril is split over two parishes, Hanover and Westmoreland, and freckled between them are small communities. Rockhouse, a boutique proposition, officially opened as a hotel in 1973, passing through a few hands before Paul Salmon, an Australian restaurateur, bought it in 1994. From the outset, Salmon brought real intention to



The author at the Rockhouse Hotel in Negril. Far left, edge of page: produce from Rockhouse Farm. Bottom left: a path through the hotel gardens. Far right, edge of page: signs on the farm

Photography by Yannick Reid

# ISLAND RHYTHM

*Enuma Okoro* makes a long-imagined pilgrimage to Jamaica and discovers a place where hospitality and community come together in dynamic, fruitful ways

The background of the advertisement shows three women sitting at a dining table in a restaurant. They are laughing and talking. The table is set with various dishes, including what looks like sushi, and several glasses of wine and beer. The lighting is warm and ambient, with several large, birdcage-style pendant lights hanging from the ceiling. The overall atmosphere is one of luxury and social enjoyment.

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what a blueprint for a responsible hotel in a developing economy could look like. Today, Rockhouse is a 40-room, Green Globe-certified property, perched on cliffs on the edge of the Caribbean and focused on sustainable and responsible hospitality for both guests who visit and the surrounding community. Rockhouse is retreat-like, with thatched-roof, tile-walled villas protruding out of the cut-stone cliffsides, a cluster of garden villas, large ocean-view suites, and deluxe and standard rooms. There is also a full-service spa, three restaurants, an organic farm and plant nursery, a woodwork shop and separate facilities for producing spa products and candles.

**B**y the third day, I am used to the buzz and vibrancy here. I can hear the splashing as guests jump straight off the small walkway bridge into the bright blue waters of Pristine Cove. Evenings at the Rockhouse restaurant bring in a diverse crowd from the community or other nearby hotels. They come for the slow-cooked pork or the “Old Time Synting” – made with crayfish, calamari, snapper and shrimp – as reggae thumps at a steady volume from the loudspeakers by the bar.

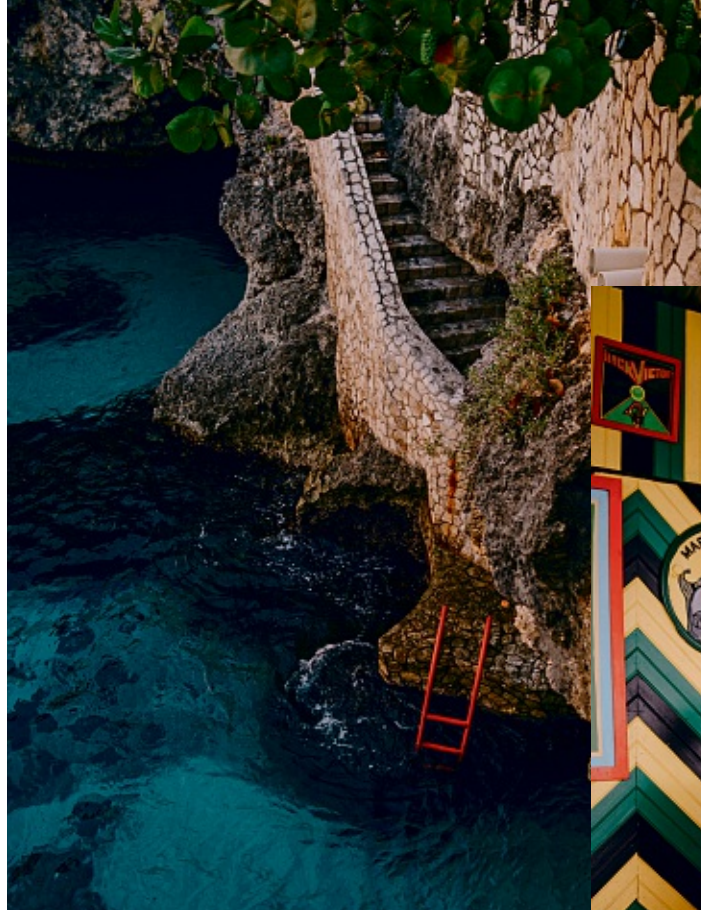
But it’s also a place where the staff members have forged a strong sense of ownership and belonging. I meet with Bally, who oversees landscaping and gardening and tends the hotel’s organic farm, on the morning of my first full day. Short and stout, he’s been working for Rockhouse for 20 years, and this particular morning he is eager to show me around the farm across the road from the hotel.

“You can just pick anything you see.” He points me towards the 12 raised beds. “We have a lot of tomatoes, basil and kale. We also grow scotch bonnet, pineapple, callaloo and avocados.” I see everything from the compost piles to the 13 gallons of harvested rainwater collected for the farm. Bally then adds on a tour of the woodworking shop, where all the hotel furniture is made. Pride permeates his words and bearing, as though he owns a stake in it all. I ask him what has kept him here for 20 years.

“They treat me well. They are good people. Why would I leave good people?” He points over to an older man standing a short distance from us. “That’s Dwight. He the food and beverages man. He been here longer than me.” He motions to Dwight to join us. “She asking, why we stay long at Rockhouse?”

Dwight replies. “I been here 26 years,” he tells me. “It’s like a family. You can’t break up with your family. You gonna have good days and bad days but at the end it’s family and you have to figure it out together. It’s hard to explain the love and connection we have. It’s not because they are the owners or a company. They make you feel a

Below: one of the rooms at Rockhouse. Above right: a ladder down to Pristine Cove. Above far right: the author at the hotel’s Pushcart restaurant. Top right, edge of page: fruit on a mango tree



## “IT’S LIKE A FAMILY. YOU CAN’T BREAK UP WITH YOUR FAMILY”

real part of things. It’s just a vibe I can’t explain. You gotta open my mind to see what I mean.”

As Bally ushers me forward, he touches Dwight on the shoulder and says, “Big up.” I turn to him and ask what that means, because I keep hearing people use it. “It means, everything is good. Love up yourself.”

I come to realise there are ways in which the hotel at times feels like an extension of the wider community. I see this when I meet with Peter B Rose, the president of the Rockhouse Foundation, who picks me up at reception – a thin man with a shaved head, neatly trimmed white beard and moustache, and soft wrinkles at the sides of his eyes. He’s dressed in leather flip flops, well-worn light blue jeans and a navy Rockhouse Foundation T-shirt. He’s promised me a tour of the Savanna-la-Mar Inclusive Infant Academy – Sav Inclusive, for short – a school for both what he terms “typical learning” children and children with disabilities.

Education has always been the core focus of the Foundation, which was created in 2004 in partnership with the Ministry of Education. Rockhouse Foundation supports six schools in the Negril area, investing in communities for the long haul, and only hiring labour and

support from within the communities it serves. On the drive to Sav Inclusive, Paul Salmon tells me how the concept came about. “About eight or nine years ago, one of the staff at Rockhouse came to me and told me she had a son she’d been having challenges with and that he’d finally been diagnosed as having severe autism.” She was essentially left without resources or a suitable roadmap for how to handle the situation. “[Her story] just stayed with me, and I began to think about what we could do. And it became evident to me that having typical learning children and children with disabilities together in the same classroom is the way to go. It’s to the advantage of children with disabilities, and of children who are typical learners. But also good for their families, in the way it destigmatises children with special disabilities.”

Sav Inclusive is what’s known as an infant school in Jamaica, but it is equivalent to a pre-Kindergarten in America, for children aged three to five. There is a warm breeze blowing as Rose and I walk through the school grounds; lemon chiffon-coloured walls divide the open-air spaces, and large-lettered inspirational messages decorate the walls: “We’re in this together,” reads one. We occasionally pop our heads into classrooms; the groups are small by design, with fewer than 20 children per room. “We wanted each class to have three adults. So there’s a lead teacher, an assistant teacher and a caregiver in each classroom,” he tells me. Some of the kids wave affectionately at him as he greets them warmly by name.

**L**ater, back at the hotel, I’m sitting on a deckchair on the small patio-like ledge that’s really just an expanse of rock surface jutting out from a cliff wall. The azure sea is directly below me; to one side is a bright red ladder I could use to climb down into it if I wanted to. There’s a party boat with loud music sailing on the water and moving in my direction. But the noise doesn’t bother me. The scenery is too beautiful. The sunlight glitters as though someone has thrown a handful of diamond chips onto the surface of the water.

I’m thinking also about the events of the previous five days. Darby’s lilting voice telling me about Marcus Garvey and the serene quiet of GoldenEye; the way Avid’s face looked when he said he’d tried other places but found GoldenEye felt like home; the sunsets I’d seen from my villa just a few steps away; Bally answering my question with his own: “Why would I leave good people?”

And then the children at Sav Inclusive: the little girl I met who came to the school in 2017 and couldn’t say a word, and who last week, Rose tells me, called him “Uncle”. I’m thinking about all these things as the boat gets closer and the music gets louder, and people are waving at me from the deck, having the luxurious time of their lives. And I think about how the word “luxury” can mean so many things to so many different people at the same time. I am glad I came here, and got a small taste of the range of it all. ■ **HTSI**  
*Enuma Okoro travelled as a guest of Cazenove + Loyd, cazloyd.com, which tailors trips to Jamaica and across the Caribbean; six nights in Jamaica, including GoldenEye and Rockhouse, from £2,500pp excluding flights*



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# Crèche COURSE

Charlotte Sinclair navigates the highs and lows of holidaying with children

**O**n the way to the Maldives this summer, transiting through Doha, our seven-year-old son accidentally tipped his one-year-old brother out of the buggy onto the floor. Both burst into tears, prompting a man in the queue behind me to mutter, “Happy holidays, huh?”

If an ideal vacation’s definition is relax, revitalise, reset, then “family holiday” – particularly when small children enter the equation – can feel like a contradiction in terms. With dispiriting accuracy, a friend captures the whole farrago of ferrying toddlers and babies abroad, where early starts and tantrums, nappies and nap times continue apace (albeit with better weather), as merely “routine on tour”.

Parents of teenagers report that it gets easier as children leave the era of snack-related meltdowns, though holidaying with teens presents its own unique challenges (swap “snacks” for “WiFi”). Which is not to say that travelling with children is not rewarding or, indeed, fun; only that the magic ingredients to a successful trip en famille are often difficult to predict.

Family travel can feel weighed more toward effort than enjoyment, particularly if a hotel has sold itself on its brilliance for children but laid on nothing to facilitate the actual running of a family holiday: babysitters, top bunk barriers to stop children plummeting to the floor at 2am, blackout curtains, kids’ menus, available meal times (“the kitchen is closed until 7.30pm” is a phrase to strike dread) or family pools. Journeying to London from Switzerland this summer, my husband and I broke up the drive at a hotel in Troyes. Having been trapped in a hot car for five hours, our seven-year-old jumped into the pool and began a game of “pretend” in which his baby brother’s fist contained preternatural strength, enough to send him flying across the pool amid much splashing and noise. Within minutes, all six of the couples who’d previously been snoozing in the afternoon heat had vacated the area. “Oh God,” I whispered to my husband. “We’re *that* family.”

Our destination in the Maldives, Soneva Jani, is intent upon alleviating the pressures (and potential

Right: the author and her son at Soneva Kiri. Below right: the Den at Soneva Kiri. Bottom: Melinda Stevens on a road trip with her daughters in Colorado and (bottom left) on Lake Powell, Utah

mortifications) of parenting on the hoof. An exquisite dot of sand and sea floating in the Indian Ocean, Soneva is owned by Sonu Shivdasani and Eva Malmström Shivdasani, whose first island resort, Soneva Fushi, helped to launch the Maldives as a high-end tourist destination when it opened in the Baa Atoll in 1995. The brand now encompasses three properties; alongside Fushi are Soneva Kiri in Thailand, and Soneva Jani in the Maldives’s Noonu Atoll. Unlike at other Maldives resorts, families make up a substantial proportion of Soneva’s repeat visitors, a significant draw being the brand’s world-beating kids’ facilities. At Soneva Kiri, the Den, as those facilities are known, is housed inside a bamboo manta ray, while at Fushi, a water slide and pirate ship augment a hideout devoted to creative play.

Soneva Jani is huge by Maldivian standards – 150 acres of thick jungle interior crossed by sand paths that guests traverse by bicycle to reach 51 overwater villas topped with swooping shingled roofs. This summer, after five years of planning, Soneva Jani debuted its own Den – the largest kids’ facility in the Indian Ocean. The building resembles a turreted castle of undulating planes, its silvery walls curving like the flanks of a whale. From its heights protrude slides: one dry, one jetting with water, the latter dropping into a pool where a cave-grotto swim-up bar serves fruit smoothies and a zip line runs overhead. Bright, airy rooms offer jewellery making, sensory play and dressing-up. In one, a table heaves with Lego, in another there’s a drum set and guitars. Upstairs, in the teen area, there are pinball



ALL YOU WANT IS TO WALK OUT OF YOUR ROOM TO THE BEACH. EASE IS EVERYTHING



machines and a ping pong table floating in a shallow pool. A skateboard ramp is apparently imminent.

It’s a bold example of how the kids’ club has become as important to a destination’s positioning – and revenue – as the spa. Hotels – particularly those at the ultra-luxe end of the spectrum, which is very much where the Soneva properties sit – now spend vast sums kitting out their resorts with facilities for every age group and eventuality. There are families who wouldn’t summer anywhere but Borgo Egnazia in Puglia, Sani Resort in Greece, Spain’s Marbella Club, or Anassa in Cyprus, such is those places’ provision for children – including pre-booked prams and maxed-out kids’ activities such as sailing camps, movie screenings and pottery classes. At Palmaia in Mexico, staff at the hotel’s “holistic centre for children” are trained in the Steiner education method, and activities foster

PHOTOGRAPH: BENJAMIN CARON





(alongside the patchy connectivity which forestalled screen-time spats) was the fact that when tea was spilt on the carpet or the children tracked mud into the hallway, it was hard

to identify which particular stains were ours.

The appeal of these sorts of getaways is impossible to manufacture (a stained carpet doesn't exactly sound good on paper). A week surfing in Cornwall is one family's bliss, another's rain-soaked, argument-filled disaster. Like all travel, it's the unexpected moments of family vacationing that make for indelible memories. An unanticipated drama of the designer Olivia von Halle's stay on Tresco last summer was the asthma attack her son had in the middle of the night – but it delivered an unexpected highlight in the form of the island-wide assistance rally that, as dawn broke, found her rental cottage filled with local lifeboat crew and medical volunteers chatting over cups of tea. Meanwhile, exquisite Hotel Esencia in Mexico will be remembered in my family not for the superlative food or warm-water waves but for the fact that the baby was allowed to commandeer the beach's communal foot bath as his personal infinity pool.

The dream of family travel, then, is a combination of ideals: a place that anticipates the varying needs of different generations while offering the chance to tap into travel's less quantifiable joys. At Jani, it's the staff who prove themselves indispensable, taking the baby off for a toddle to find hermit crabs and letting the seven-year-old help at the juice bar in the spa, of all places (I know, I know – zones). Everything is easy, from cycling to the overwater silent cinema where my son sits with headphones to watch the kids' movie while my husband and I enjoy a supper of sashimi undisturbed, to accessing the island's more

numinous joys: fruit bats as big as seagulls flying at dusk, eagle rays leaping out of the ocean. The baby, seated in the back of my bicycle, batting a fat fist towards the water – “Sha, sha!” – as a tiny reef shark slips through the shallows.

For all the challenges of travelling with children – which, let us be frank, are born of privilege rather than anything remotely verging on hardship – having them in tow makes travel more enriching. Children generate interesting connections, and can provoke unexpected and sometimes rarely accessible encounters. I would not know, for instance, what the kitchens of Sri Lanka's Amangalla hotel look like had my baby niece not been whisked into them by a member of staff to be shown off like a visiting princess. And even the most impressive kids' club is no substitute for time spent in each

other's company, elbows in the sand, looking for treasure, or playing UNO with sticky, ice-cream fingers. (A tip for a peaceful denouement: always let them win.) ■HTSI  
Charlotte Sinclair travelled as a guest of Abercrombie & Kent ([abercrombiekent.co.uk](http://abercrombiekent.co.uk)), which offers seven nights at Soneva Jani ([soneva.com](http://soneva.com)) from £19,500 for a family of four, including international flights, sea plane transfers, accommodation and half-board

children's spirituality. At the other extreme, kids' entertainment specialists Sharky & George lead raucous water fights at The Peligoni Club in Zakynthos.

The broad-strokes metric is that if the children are occupied for a couple of hours a day, their parents get the same unencumbered time increment to themselves: to open a novel, swim in the pool, have a spa treatment or even an uninterrupted conversation (at Soneva Jani, these were usually spent wondering what the children were up to). “You're either covered in poo or stickers when your children are small,” says Melinda Stevens, creative director of the soon-to-launch travel and lifestyle website Loupe and the former editor of *Condé Nast Traveller*. “All you want is to walk out of your room to the beach. Ease is everything.”

## ONE FAMILY'S BLISS IS ANOTHER'S RAIN-SOAKED, ARGUMENT-FILLED DISASTER

Soneva Jani intuitively works for those families lucky enough to be able to afford it, since the resort's design is evidence of Shivdasani's remarkable child-like imagination. Our villa, which is enormous without being grand, has both a water slide and a huge infinity pool. Inside, there's a rustic aesthetic of sun-bleached wood, paper lamps and chunky, hand-hewn furniture, meaning there's no fear of anything getting scratched or broken by excitable children. A tiny bedroom, disguised as a cupboard just behind the main bed, is a thoughtful addition. “If you have young kids you don't want them in a bedroom far away, especially when there's a pool,” says Shivdasani. A retractable roof is thrilling; at night, all four of us lie in the enormous bed to spot shooting stars, the velvety night sky filling the room.

Such places know their market. Problems tend to arise when a hotel tries to be all things to everyone, families and couples alike, consequently pleasing no one. Jessica Diner, the beauty and wellness director at *Vogue*, tells me that at one English country hotel she was seated outside in a hailstorm to feed supper to her one-year-old, despite her pleas, because his meal time fell outside the hours in which the restaurant accepted children indoors.

By contrast, a child-free friend recalls a summer night at a plush resort in Puglia, watching a couple enjoying their dinner at the other end of the terrace well after 9pm. “We enjoyed ourselves a bit less,” she reports, “given that their very young child was tearing around in that

Above: Eilean Shona House, the Inner Hebrides. Top right: the author's family on a campervan holiday in the Scottish Highlands. Below: a fiesta at Hotel Esencia, Mexico. Bottom right: the Peligoni Club, Zakynthos



state of near-psychosis that attends exhausted kids who are allowed to stay up too late and do whatever they want. The parents were ignoring him, while everyone else's evening was ruined.” She clarifies: “The kids are never the assholes. The parents are. There's a reason there are separate kids' pools, restaurants. That's where to let them run rampant. When you enter the grown-ups' zone, adjust behaviour, and parent accordingly.”

But often the best holidays are those in which no such delineations exist, no eventuality has been planned for, where the pleasures are harder won and the gratifications more ephemeral. A mega-resort of six swimming pools and 15 restaurants is perhaps what you need with children but not always what you want. (A friend recently returned from one such place texts: “Soul-crushing. Obviously the children loved it.”) With older kids, adventurous experiences are newly possible: safari, trekking, horse riding, desert camps. “Some of the best trips I've done with my three daughters have been road-tripping in an RV across America,” says Stevens. “You want them out in nature, with dirty knees, dust in their hair, chasing butterflies in their nighties.” One of the most deeply relaxing aspects of a recent multi-family trip I took to Eilean Shona House in the Inner Hebrides



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Liverpool, a maritime city known for its galleries, museums and music, is one such place. Home to the Beatles, it became a melting pot for arts, culture and fashion in the 1960s, and that spirit of creativity is alive today.

One iconic building, Liverpool's Grade II-listed North Western Hall, was originally designed by Alfred Waterhouse in 1871 – the architect behind London's Natural History Museum – and was one of the original British railway hotels. Steeped in history, the building pays homage to Liverpool.

Now, the building has been transformed to become a Radisson RED hotel, due to open its doors in the coming weeks. Each of the brand's hotels houses an iconic feature relating to its location: in Liverpool, this will be a 1960s-style scooter and sidecar. Original features, such as a six-metre-high stained-glass window and grand sandstone staircase, have been restored to their former glory.

Another original British railway hotel recently renovated and reopened is Radisson Blu Hotel, in Perth, Scotland. Shortly after the hotel's original opening in 1890, the then Prince of Wales and future King Edward

VII inspected and approved it for a visit by his mother, Queen Victoria, who became a frequent guest. She would often break her journey to Balmoral Castle by visiting the hotel for lunch in her private room, and a "royal passage" was created, linking Perth train station with the property.

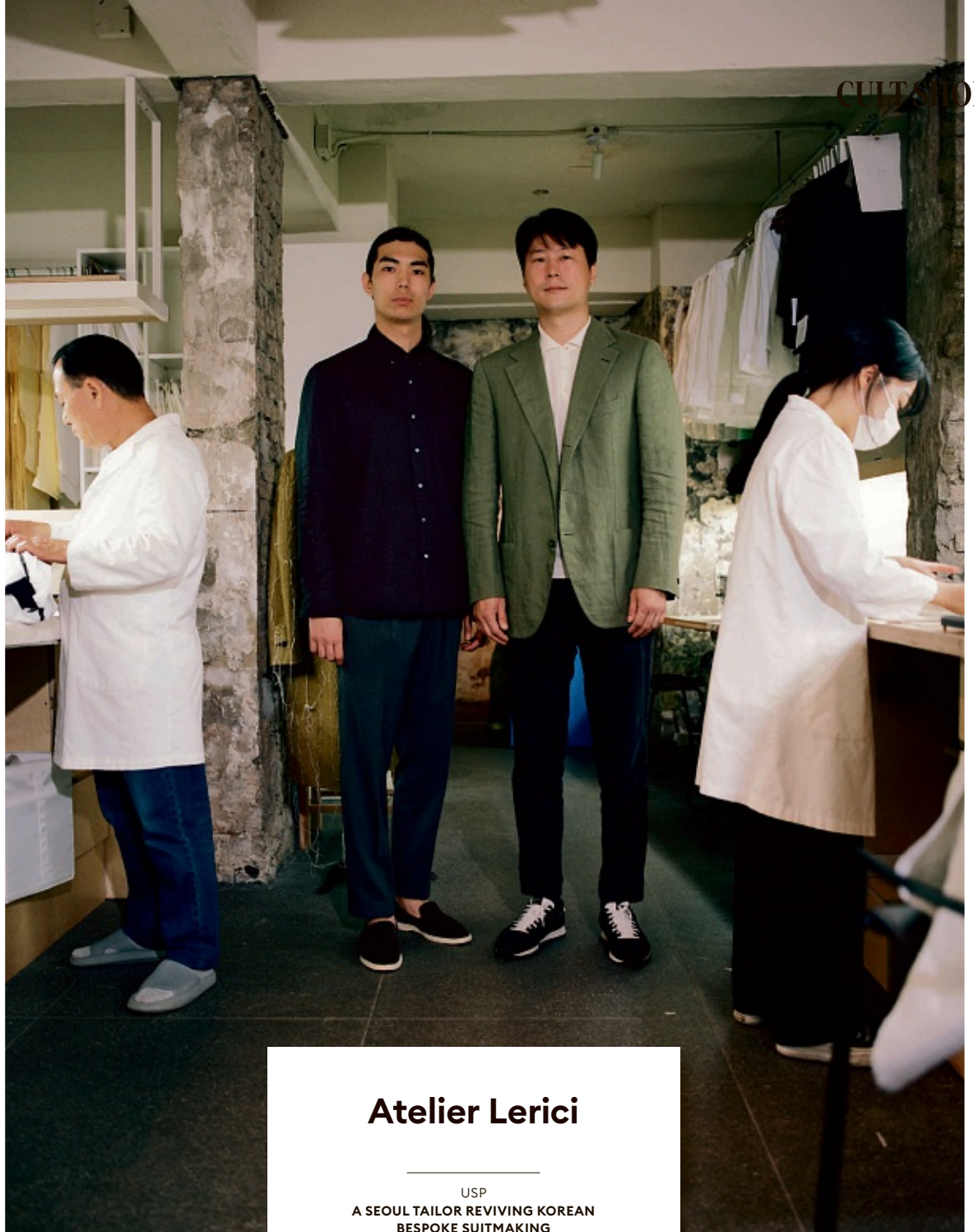
Elsewhere in the Radisson Hotel Group portfolio is The Edwardian Manchester, A Radisson Collection Hotel, a five-star luxury offering set in the city's stunning Grade II-listed Free Trade Hall. Built in the 1850s, the Hall is where the British suffrage campaign began, formed by Emmeline Pankhurst in 1903, and remains part of Manchester's historical fabric. The hotel now features state-of-the-art spa facilities and award-winning restaurant Peter Street Kitchen, whose menu comprises contemporary Japanese and Mexican small plates.

In London, The May Fair, A Radisson Collection Hotel, is an iconic destination that has welcomed guests since 1927. It is home to the sophisticated May Fair Bar, grand event spaces, and a tranquil spa.

Across Europe, Radisson Collection properties have recently opened in Seville, Berlin, Venice, Pula and Bilbao, while Radisson RED has seen new additions in Madrid, Vienna and Oslo. For breaks that encapsulate style, luxury and delicious dining, the choice is endless.

For further information, visit [radissonhotels.com](http://radissonhotels.com)

WORDS BY **CHRISTIAN DAVIES**  
 PHOTOGRAPHY BY **TAEMIN HA**



**W**hen you go to see Kim Dae-chul about a suit, you don't tell him what you want. He tells you what you need.

At Atelier Lerici, the tailoring house he founded in 2005 and now runs from a secluded villa on the side of Seoul's Namsan Mountain, Kim fits his clients out in handmade suits that he hopes will redefine the waning tradition of Korean bespoke tailoring. Rather than adopting a British or Italian taste, Kim's tailoring practice has his own style, and focuses on achieving "perfect harmony between the suit and the human body". Inspired by the gentle lines of Korean ceramics, he wants each of Lerici's suits – created for both men and women – to be subtly unique "like a line drawn without a ruler".

**"MY GOAL IS TO ACHIEVE BEAUTY IN EVERYTHING I MAKE"**

Inside the sparsely decorated house, everything from the front door to the mannequins displaying his tailoring and the wooden boardroom table set on a two-tonne block of granite was designed by Kim. "The goal in my life is to achieve beauty in everything I make," he says.

Each jacket or coat can take up to 110 hours for one of the atelier's eight tailors to produce. After consulting with Kim, customers have three fittings – one after two months, another after three, and a final one after four, before the client receives their suit. "The ambition is to express the subconsciousness of the customer," says Kim of his aesthetic. "It must emerge without a trace of deliberate production or effort". If at the end of the process the

**Atelier Lerici**

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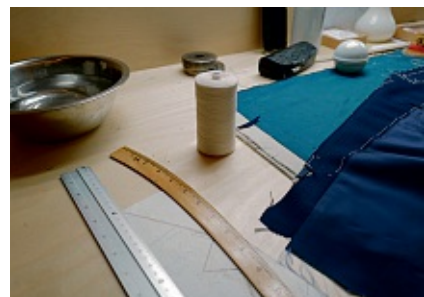
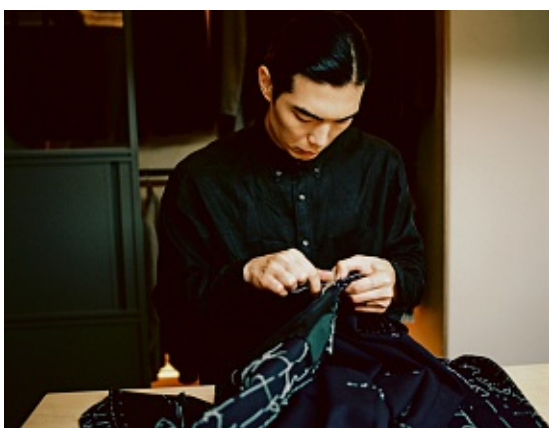
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customer does not want the suit, they get a refund. Kim says that of 300 customers, only one has ever turned a garment down.

The 2000s saw a boom in the country's luxury sector as it came roaring back from the financial crisis in Asia in the late 1990s but, says Kim, very few luxury products were rooted in Korean culture and the country's tailors have largely been driven out of the bespoke business by an influx of foreign brands. A former marketer for the subversive Korean magazine *Deep Well* (which was banned by the country's former dictatorship during the 1980s), Kim hopes the shop will help restore traditions of Korean craftsmanship to the international stage.

Today, Kim's clients are getting younger, with an increasing number of clients in their 20s and 30s, despite prices that are more than double those of most bespoke Korean suits – from Won5mn (about £3,150). Unlike their old money counterparts, says Kim, these Koreans are more wedded to expression than to tradition. Old money "doesn't like to hear from me what might suit them", Kim concludes. They have their own ideas and demands. But his vision is clear. ■HTSI  
*Christian Davies is the FT's Seoul bureau chief*

Top: coats and jackets in progress in the workshop. Below: master tailor Lee Min Yeob at work on a coat



Top: Lerici founder Kim Dae-chul (right) and master tailor Lee Min Yeob. Above: a suit in progress at the atelier. Left: a wool coat in progress



# The sound of champagne

*How composer Ryuichi Sakamoto wrote a three-movement symphony based on a trio of cuvées*

**SYNAESTHESIA – THE ACTIVATION OF ONE SENSE** through the stimulation of another – elicits astonishing effects. For some, words prompt tastes. Others associate colours with sounds, like Wassily Kandinsky, who painted canvases in response to Arnold Schoenberg’s music.

Krug embraces this cross-pollination. Music has long been a stimulus for the champagne house, founded in 1843 in Reims. Cellar master Julie Cavil considers it an ideal metaphor for her work. Each year’s climatic conditions influence the many potential plots of chardonnay and other varieties – her musicians – which she uses to craft that vintage’s champagnes. Like a conductor, she auditions each one and learns its ideal role. A single plot might become an exceptional soloist; many excel instead as ensemble players.

But there’s more to it than just wordplay. Numerous studies suggest that hearing music while drinking impacts a wine’s taste, whether by heightening the impression of particular flavour notes or influencing how one describes its body.

Academy Award-winning composer and environmental activist Ryuichi Sakamoto discovered this synergy in 2019. “I was invited to experience an immersive music pairing with a glass of Krug Grande Cuvée,” says Sakamoto, who has scored nearly 40 films including *The Revenant* and *The Last Emperor*. “It was astonishing. I was immediately impressed by Krug’s authentic music approach.”

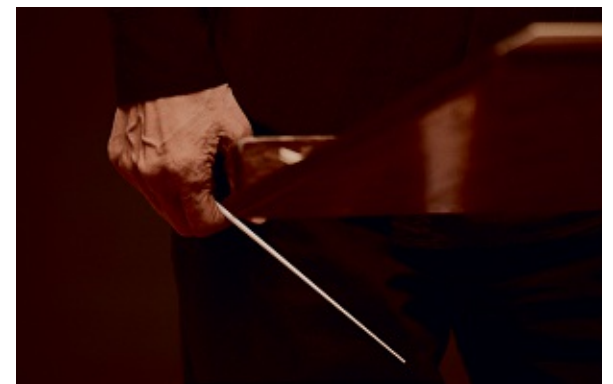
When Krug commissioned Sakamoto to compose his own sonic pairing, it found an ideal collaborator. Throughout his five-decade career, he has changed our experience of the world by altering our soundscapes. In the 1970s and ’80s in Japan, he composed television commercial music and even a Nokia ringtone. He later

curated the playlist of a favorite New York restaurant of his, free of charge, because he found its existing soundtrack unmindful of the space and food quality.

Sakamoto’s *Suite for Krug in 2008*, a three-movement symphony, takes inspiration from a trio of champagnes from that year’s harvest: Krug Clos du Mesnil 2008, Krug 2008, and Krug Grande Cuvée 164th Édition.

In addition to being accessible via Krug.com and streaming platforms, *Suite for Krug in 2008* is the foundation of *Seeing Sound, Hearing Krug*, an immersive symphonic experience which reproduces the live-orchestra sound using 3D music technology and Devialet Phantom speakers. “I like the concept of making the impalpable tangible,” says Sakamoto.

**Featuring a tasting of three Krug cuvées, *Seeing Sound, Hearing Krug* comes to London on 22 & 23 November. Tickets priced at £295 available on Clos19.com**



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When Brooklyn-based cinematographer Eric Schleicher realised he wanted an off-duty way to take personal photographs that wasn't his iPhone, he bought a 1990s Contax G2. "I was born in the 1980s," he says, "so I grew up with film. I wanted a camera that could use the same Kodak stock I use for some of my 16mm and 35mm feature and commercial work, because I know how it reacts to light in any given situation. Also, I wanted to take pictures in a different way. If you're shooting with a DSLR, you take 100 frames just to get the right shot for the client. Shooting with my Contax is special. I take one shot, because it costs about \$1 a frame."

Schleicher is part of the generation that's embracing the anachronism of all things analogue. Compact and rangefinder cameras that you can load up with reels of

silver halides rather than memory cards are among the most romanticised totems of their type. Some are buying them purely as an idea to cherish. The Leica 0-series No 105 sold for €14.4mn at the 40th Leitz Photographica Auction in June; perhaps the holy grail of compacts (the prototype of the world's first commercially produced 35mm camera), it's unlikely film will ever be exposed through its lens again.

But at the other end of the spectrum is the iconic Olympus Trip, which first appeared in 1968.

Andy Cook, manager of the Strand branch of the London Camera Exchange, says that various models of the Trip make up the bulk of the compacts they sell. "They are a great point-and-shoot camera, and you can pick one up for about £85," he says. But for marrying usability and collectability: "I'd say the best vintage compact is the Leica M6, which has a changeable lens. The lens is so sharp. It has full manual control. It's the crème de la crème. They can go for £2,500 to £3,000. The Contax T2, which first came out

LEICA 0-SERIES  
NO 105 OSCAR  
BARNACK  
(1923), SOLD  
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IN 2022



VINTAGE

## 35mm cameras

Our love for all things analogue has turned the point-and-shoot into a collectable

WORDS BY MARK C O'FLAHERTY

Below, from top: Leica Minilux Zoom 18036, sold at auction for €320 in 2019 by Leitz Photographica. Canon Canonet QL19 MKIII Rangefinder, from about £159, mrcad.co.uk



in the early '90s, is also great, and sells for around £1,000."

Cook says most of the customers for vintage compacts are "for want of a better word, hipsters – people in their 20s". Alex Falk, who set up his first Mr CAD Photographic shop 60 years ago in Croydon, adds that a lot of his buyers are overseas: "The majority of our new young customers never had film cameras in the first place. Those in fast-growing overseas countries could not afford film cameras 30 years ago, but now they can." Falk's top three recommendations are the Canon Canonet

**"IT'S SMALL ENOUGH TO PUT IN A SHIRT POCKET, BUT WITH GREAT OPTICS"**

Rangefinder (around £159) for its high-quality exposure meter; the Olympus XA2 with detachable flashgun ("small enough to put in a shirt pocket, but with great optics") and, again, the Olympus Trip.

Schleicher's partner, make-up artist Regina de Lemos, shoots with an Olympus Trip bought for £130 in London's Spitalfields Market. "It is solar-powered," she says. "They are quite rare, because you need to take care not to leave it exposed to the sun. I really love the design; I could never work out why I was so drawn to it, but then I went home to Puerto Rico, and my mother pulled out a big Tupperware box and it had a load of old Olympus Trips that my grandfather used to use. So it has a nice family connection." De Lemos and Schleicher use Photodom in New York to process their film.



LEICA LEITZ M6  
RANGEFINDER RF,  
FROM £2,500

The boutique lab has a 24-hour turnaround time, and sends digital files by email. "We don't actually print many [pictures]," says Schleicher. "It's the dynamic of shooting that's key, the final image remains digital. Although we do print a few things for family, and to put on our fridge door."

Alexander Sedlak, managing director of Leica Camera Classics, points to the rising

prices of certain models as evidence of increased interest in premium compacts. In 2019, Leitz Photographica (which hosts two auctions a year) sold a Leica Minilux Titan for €320; this year the same model sold in the shop for €990. Certain areas of the auction market are particularly dynamic – a Leica MP

black paint went under the hammer for €220,000 in 2015, and €1mn last year.

UK-based filmmaker Toby Amies is obsessed with his three vintage Yashica cameras, originally marketed by the company as a budget option but which now go for between £120 and £1,000 online. "They have a tasty little Tessar lens at the heart of the design," he says. "The flash is fast, the lens is sharp, and with the right film in there, it's excellent for stopping time and giving a sense of the moment. Obviously with its increase in value there's more at stake if it gets lost, but I try to be cavalier in how I use it."

Some big-ticket vintage models are also being used to capture modern moments – even if it isn't the €14.4mn Leica prototype. "It often simply depends if the camera still works and the personal choice of the photographer," says Sedlak. "Like a beautiful vintage Patek Philippe or Rolex, these objects are investment-grade assets – but also have the capacity to bring great joy to the owner, even if only on special occasions." ■HTSI



Top: Queen Elizabeth II using her Leica, 1981. Above, from top: Contax G2 35mm Rangefinder. Contax T2 compact c1996, from about £1,000. Below: 1970s Olympus Trip 35 compact "point and shoot", from about £85

### WHERE TO BUY

eBay ebay.com  
Leitz Photographica Auction leitz-auction.com. Sales take place in June and November  
London Camera Exchange lcegroup.co.uk  
Mr CAD Photographic mrcad.co.uk

### WHERE TO PROCESS

Eye Culture, London E2 225 Bethnal Green Rd (020-7033 4142)  
Metro Imaging, London EC1 metroimaging.co.uk  
Photodom, New York photodom.shop  
Picturehouse + TheSmallDarkroom, New York phtsdr.com  
Richard Photo Lab, Los Angeles richardphotolab.com





TRAVEL

## The great escape

Make a getaway – in the city, at the beach or in the desert

WORDS BY MARIA SHOLLENBARGER

Even some of the heaviest hitters in business have side hustles. Take Leonardo Ferragamo, president of his family's publicly traded fashion and accessories house, who oversees a nice line in hotels. His Lungarno Collection includes some of urban Italy's best, with three boutique properties in Florence; two more exclusive propositions, supra-branded the Portrait Collection, operate there and in Rome. On 1 December, he'll open Portrait Milano, his largest and most ambitious project to date, as such an urban-regeneration initiative as it is a luxury hotel. The building, established in the mid-16th century by Carlo Borromeo and long the seat of the Archdiocese of Milan, is Europe's second-oldest seminary; its loggia – which connects Corso Venezia to the Via Sant'Andrea – will open to the public for the first time, lined with a curation of boutiques, among which are the showroom of Ferragamo's jewellery-designer daughter, Maria Sole, and an outpost of fashion concept store Antonia.

These will be joined by two restaurants and cafés, and, on the upper floors, the 73 suites of the hotel itself, with signature interiors by another enterprising Florentine, Michele Bönan, who has collaborated with Ferragamo since 1995. [lungarnocollection.com](http://lungarnocollection.com), from €935

**MOROCCO'S NEW DESERT REDOUBT** Habitas has emerged as the little hotel company with big experience-travel ambitions: it currently consists of just seven properties, but they're scattered as far and wide as Saudi Arabia, Baja California and Namibia. It has planted a new flag in Morocco's Agafay Desert – less than an hour from the bustle of the Marrakech medina, it's a world of silent, severely beautiful landscapes, with the peaks of the High Atlas as a backdrop. Caravan Agafay's guests will sleep under canvas – there are 20 tents on its five-hectare site – and enjoy the use of two swimming pools,

### GALLOP INTO THE DESERT ON HORSEBACK – OR LOPE ON A CAMEL

(or, alternatively, a lope out on one of its camels). In keeping with the Habitas mission, food is locally sourced, wellness plays a key role and the surrounding Berber villages – which guests can visit for insights into how Morocco's ancient nomadic tribes live in the 21st century – benefit from the support of RISE, Habitas' affiliate impact initiative. [ourhabitas.com](http://ourhabitas.com), from £285

**LIVIN' IT UP AT THE MOTEL CALIFORNIA** Cayucos is one of old California's best-preserved, still authentic beach towns: devoid (gratifyingly) of brand boutiques and Tuscan bistro micro-chains, it offers instead chowder houses, taco stands, fishing and whale-watching excursions, and a main drag lined with 1910s storefronts. If you've ever dreamed of an Airstream trip up Highway 1, it's a can't miss. If you prefer a stationary bed, there's this charming addition: The Pacific, a clever reinvention of a classic old California motel, in the spirit of Malibu's brilliant Surfrider. It opened last month, with 20 rooms that are



THE LOBBY OF SO/ PARIS

spread across a main building and a series of little private bungalows, the latter all with patios, mini-fridges/bars and fireplaces. Inside are timber floors, white-wainscoted walls, midcentury-inflected textiles, pendant lamps and floods of West Coast natural light. The complimentary amenities – from locally roasted Spearhead Coffee to the Linus bikes, fire pits and (of course) Tesla chargers – are pure Golden State. [thepacificmotel.com](http://thepacificmotel.com), from \$299

### IN PARIS, A TALE OF TWO VIEWS

And to Paris, where two new super-central addresses offer variations on City of Lights style. At the Hôtel Dame des Arts, which opens in December in the heart of the sixth arrondissement, Israeli-born designer Raphael Navot (who recently launched his first furniture collection for Loro Piana) has bespoke almost every last interior element, from the wall coverings to the blackened-oak floors. Those on the top floors have private balconies, but if you can't score one, the rooftop bar is open to all. Across the Seine, overlooking the Pont Sully and Île Saint Louis, SO/ Paris, with 162 rooms and suites in a David Chipperfield-designed new build, is a bigger (and, under the Accor umbrella, arguably more predictable) affair. But with that come all the benefits (massive all-day fitness facilities; indoor swimming pool). And this has its own buzzy rooftop bar-club, called Bonnie. [damedesarts.com](http://damedesarts.com), from €375; [soparis.com](http://soparis.com), from €600 ■ HTSI

@mariashollenbarger



THE POOL AT CARAVAN AGAFAY, MOROCCO



PHOTOGRAPHS: COURTESY OF THE PACIFIC MOTEL; GÄLLE LE BOULICAUT; KLEINJAN GROENEWALD; PORTRAIT COLLECTION (2)

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EATING

# Dinner with the thunder dragon

Famed for its mountains and monasteries, Bhutan is also home to the world's fieriest food culture. By *Ajesh Patalay*

PHOTOGRAPHY BY **SISEER CHETTRI**

**F**resh off the plane in Bhutan, and my first taste of the mouth-scorching heat for which the food of this tiny Buddhist kingdom is known comes squirting out of an orange squeeze bottle in a dumpling bar called Momo Corner. The bar is located off the main drag in Paro, a small town on the river Paro Chhu, where the country's main airport is based. It's the first port of call for most visitors.

There isn't much to Paro town centre – a couple of streets lined with wooden shopfronts and cafés. Nor is there much to Momo Corner. Its porch is just about big enough for a table or two. The den inside is as cosy as a broom cupboard with rug-covered benches pushed against the walls and a hatch in the corner that gives onto the kitchen. For all that, the swing door doesn't rest for all the people coming in and out, everyone from crimson-robed monks to office workers to builders in high-visibility vests.

The menu is short. You can have momos (dumplings), thukpa (noodle soup) or koka (noodles). My guide Ugyen Dendup ("UD" for short) recommends one plate of beef



momos and one of potato. The dumplings come five a portion and are best eaten dipped in chilli paste (ezay), squeezed from the aforementioned bottle. The momos are delicious, the ezay even better, stoking my insides and leaving my lips tingly and swollen.

People journey to the Land of the Thunder Dragon in search of many things. Beauty. Wonder. Enlightenment. They make the pilgrimage to its temples and monasteries. They hike its Himalayan trails. They marvel at its largely untouched green vault and wildlife, including endangered species such as snow leopards, takins and red pandas.

They should also come to Bhutan for a food culture that remains distinct from other Himalayan countries. Unique ingredients include fiddlehead ferns (naki), crow's beak (a green pod-like vegetable) and shur kam (white-blanched sun-dried chillies that are just as spicy as the red variety.) Red rice is a staple, as are dried meats such as shakam (beef jerky), yaksha (dried yak) and dried pork belly (sikam). And if you're wondering why the pork is so fatty, it's because wild marijuana grows in abundance here. The swine munch on the foliage and fall into long dopey slumbers, which results in meat that is anything but lean.

Top left: Bhutanese dishes including (top left) ezay chilli paste and (bottom left) nasha sqoosh tshoem, a beef and squash curry. Above: a vegetable market at Punakha. Left: Momo Corner restaurant in Paro

## PIGS MUNCH ON WILD MARIJUANA AND FALL INTO DOPEY SLUMBERS

Embracing the Bhutanese table also means coming to terms with its generous use of chillies. During my stay in September (the beginning of high season), the harvest has just been completed and red peppers are everywhere, piled high in markets, drying on corrugated rooftops and hanging in garlands from rafters. Red and green chillies turn up in countless dishes including sikam tshoem (braised dried pork with sun-dried chilli) and nosha hentshey tshoem (braised beef, mustard greens and dry red chilli curry). Both figure on the menus at the Como Uma hotels in Paro and Punakha (Bhutan's former capital), where I stay during a week-long trip.

The hotels' executive chef Tshering Lhaden returned to her native Bhutan in 2016 after three years as head chef at Como Cuisine Dempsey in Singapore. In Paro and Punakha, she lays on Bhutanese and western menus, where you find fusion dishes such as tagliatelle with slow-braised yak, which tastes as tender and sweet as any red wine beef ragù. It's thanks to Tshering that I get to try dishes like olatshey maru (pork with wild orchid curry) and a deliciously gingery jasha maru (spiced chicken curry). But I can't help feeling she is pulling her punches when it comes to chillies. At times I find the food mild. Being of







Left edge of page: ema kam (dried red chillies). Left: gondo datshi, a dish of egg and cheese fried in butter. Below: dried chillies on sale in Punakha. Below inset: cordyceps on sale in Paro. Bottom right: Taksang monastery



Indian descent, I was weaned on chillies. And so, briefed on my wish to “eat heat” like the locals, UD whisks me off for bathup (a spicy broth with noodles) at a Paro haunt called Kuzu. Here, I slurp from a bowl loaded up with firepower. Packing the sharp heat of green chillies, the deep burn of red chilli powder and the numbing citric bitterness of Sichuan pepper, the dish is sinus-clearing and eye-watering in the most exhilarating way.

Bhutan’s national dish – ema datshi – manages an even greater coup, pairing large green chillies (prepared as a vegetable, not a seasoning) in a buttery broth with another cherished ingredient, cheese. If you ever enjoyed jalapeños with melted cheese on nachos or green chillies on pizza, this fiery cheese concoction will feel like a homecoming. Cheese is ubiquitous in Bhutan. Locals chew hardened and sometimes smoked cubes of it, on sale at roadside kiosks, like gum. (It will break your teeth if you’re not careful.) Datshi also comes in every combination – cheese melted with mushroom, spinach, radish, aubergine, carrot... you name it.

One afternoon, after a short hike along the valley from Punakha Dzong (the country’s most beautiful fort-monastery), we lunch at Happiness Field Village Homestay, a farm run by Karma Yangchen, which you can access via a chain-linked suspension bridge over rapids and across rice paddies. Visitors can camp on the grounds or stay in the farmhouse, where Yangchen cooks up an authentic Bhutanese feast. When we arrive, she is prepping sikam paa (braised dry pork with radish and chillies), plus gondo datshi (egg and cheese) and kewa datshi (potato and cheese). For the latter, she uses sliced potato, great wads of farm-churned butter, wheels of cheese and so many green chillies she loses count. Everything is glorious. I jump up for

**EMBRACING BHUTAN MEANS COMING TO TERMS WITH CHILLIES**

seconds. Best of all is the fresh chilli salad, which is zingy and crunchy and sprinkled with cheese. It turns up the volume on every mouthful.

In the capital Thimphu, I enjoy a respite from traditional cuisine at the food court Flavours by DSP, located within the city’s new riverside market Kaja Throm. The court is run by youth volunteers in orange uniforms, who you see everywhere in Bhutan. Known as De-suups (Guardians of Peace), they belong to the De-suung programme started by the King in 2011 to assist in nation building and charitable projects. During the pandemic, its ranks swelled as recruits trained in disaster relief were called on to assist hospitals, schools and rural communities. Last year, in part to address youth unemployment, the King instituted the De-suung Skilling Programme, which offers courses in everything from construction and digital marketing to CCTV installation and culinary arts. At Flavours they man the stalls, selling burgers, pizza, ramen, Hong Kong-style waffles and slurpies.

When young urbanites crave classic Bhutanese cooking, however, they head to Babesa Village Restaurant, a hugely popular eatery about 6km from the centre housed in a 600-year-old traditional home. Here, you sit on cushions at low tables in what used to be the kitchen. There is an original mud oven in the corner (just for show), a huge rolled-up bamboo mat hung from the ceiling and other historic artefacts including a palang (a moonshine container) on the wall. I order goep paa (cow tripe with chillies) and fried chimpa (liver with spring onion, black pepper and coriander). And though the tripe may have base notes of farmyard, these are still the tastiest bowls of offal I’ve ever eaten.

Next stop is the 3,000m-high mountain pass known as Dochu La to behold its 108 chortens (Buddhist shrines)

and a 15th-century fertility temple dedicated to a famously randy Tibetan saint known as the Divine Madman. Throughout my trip, I see phalluses galore. They’re thought to ward off evil spirits. And on my final day, I trek up to Taksang “Tiger’s Nest” monastery, perched on the side of a cliff, where I commune with monks and am moved to tears.

But before I leave Bhutan, I’m desperate to sample two local specialties. The first is yak hide, which the kitchen at Como Uma Paro prepares with Sichuan pepper, chilli and coriander. I’m expecting hardened, hairy scraps, but what turns up are translucent strips (like softened cartilage) that are spicy and chewy in a way I could get used to. The other is the mushroom – one of many varieties including chanterelle, Himalayan gypsy and matsutake for which Bhutan is renowned.

Cordyceps, however, is the most prized. It sells from \$45 per gram and has become a lucrative commodity for the yak herders and other mountain folk who are permitted to harvest it.

At Bhutan’s National Museum, I discover to my horror that cordyceps are actually dead caterpillars overrun with fungus: the parasitic fungus infects the larvae of ghost moths, grows inside the caterpillar and sends its spore-filled stalk through the head. Among its many properties, cordyceps are thought to boost stamina, libido

and immunity. Mine is brought to me infusing a batch of ara, a rice wine that tastes like sake. It looks like a dead worm. And tastes like a soggy twig. For all those putative benefits, I think I’ll stick to the chillies. ■HTSI

*The author travelled as a guest of Como Hotels and Resorts, \$8,234 for two people for a six-night stay, excluding flights*  
 @ajesh34



**HOT TABLES**

- Babesa Village Restaurant**  
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- Kaja Throm**  
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# THE FIREFIGHTERS OF THE WORLD DESERVE WITNESSES

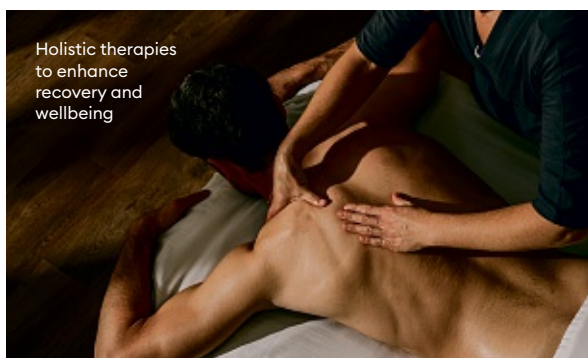


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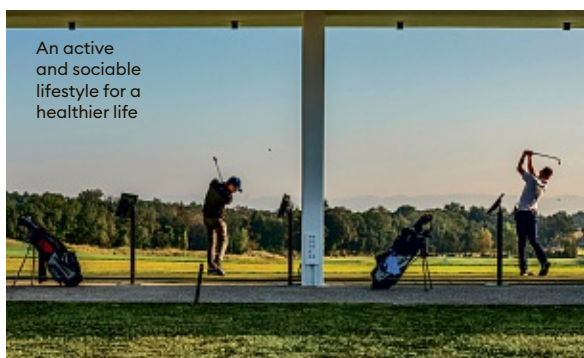
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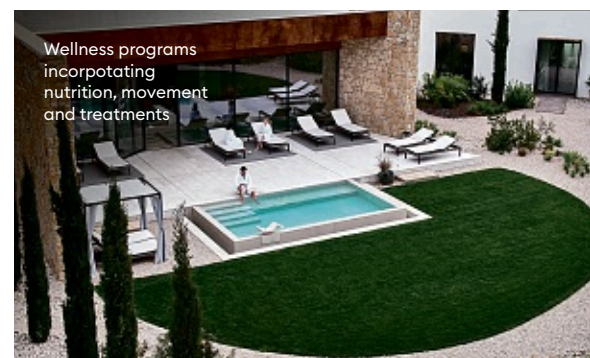
Award-winning courses that are safeguarded as a natural reserve



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# Golf for mind, body and soul

*Can golf bring you benefits beyond the pleasure of a good game well played?*

**THE MODERATE EXERCISE REQUIRED** to walk across hilly terrain and the many swinging, twisting and bending movements that make up a great round of golf have cardiovascular, respiratory and metabolic benefits, according to the British Journal of Sports Medicine. But there are other surprising perks that come with the sport.

Walking around an 18-hole golf course – typically 6.5-8 km – equates to 13,000 steps and 2,000 calories burned. Research from the R&A Golf and Health Report has shown that golf can help alleviate 40 major chronic diseases. To help golfers, PGA Catalunya’s new Wellness Centre combines state-of-the-art technology – from whole-body cryotherapy and IV infusions to hyperbaric oxygen – with holistic therapies that enhance golfers’ recovery and wellbeing.

Research led by the University of Exeter found that spending at least 120 minutes a week in nature is linked with good health and wellbeing. Conscious of the preciousness of these green spaces, the resident biologist, Oriol Dalmau, safeguards PGA Catalunya Golf and Wellness as a natural reserve.

“When golf is planned correctly it can create a

great diversity of habitats and therefore act as host for an incredible range of species,” says Dalmau, whose efforts have been recognised internationally with the IAGTO Sustainability Award for Nature Protection 2020.

Recent times have taught us the true value of spending time with friends and family, as well as the importance of being part of a local community. A truly social sport, golf develops relationships and boosts self-confidence. This is enhanced by PGA Catalunya’s low-density residential communities, located steps from the resort’s two golf courses and featuring homes with smart design perfectly integrated into them. This includes the new Well-Villa concept, an innovative property specifically designed to enrich the wellbeing of its occupants and connect them to nature.

As more people than ever discover the mental, physical and social wellbeing benefits of golf, PGA Catalunya’s green spaces and tight-knit community offer the opportunity to live happier and healthier lives, alongside family and friends.

To learn more, visit [pgacatalunya.com](http://pgacatalunya.com)



Top: a marlin in El Born's Bar Brutal. Above: tapas at Morro Fi vermuteria

For ever there was ever a time to do a bar crawl in Barcelona, that time is now. The city's bar scene is currently experiencing an explosion of creativity. "Barcelona has long been known as a capital of gastronomy, but over the past few years its cocktail scene has really come into its own," says Mark Sansom of The World's 50 Best Bars, which hosted its annual awards in Barcelona earlier this month.

The city has lately enjoyed an influx of bar talent from overseas. "Being near the sea gives the city a different energy, it puts people in a good mood," says Simone Caporale, who left a high-flying hospitality career in London (during his tenure, Artesian at the Langham won World's Best Bar multiple times) to launch Sips in L'Eixample with top Spanish bartender Marc Alvarez. "Good sites are more affordable, there's less red tape and more of a sense of creative freedom. It's easier to do your own thing."

Everything about Sips' "drinkery" seems designed to gently disorientate. Under cover of darkness it takes on the air of a bar adrift in outer space. In place of a menu, there's a QR code. And the uniformed bartenders prep cocktails around a central pod, rather than behind the bar, like a team of Formula 1 engineers.

Many of the drinks are playful. A cocktail of whisky, port and nashi pear is served in a pair of cupped, chrome hands; another comes topped with a bubble of scented smoke. But they also display real technique: one of my favourites was a vodka highball served over nine discs of ice and nine different types of citrus leaves, layered up like a millefeuille.

Out the back is a 14-seater bar, Essencia, where things get even more surreal. "You might, for example, have a menu on the theme of ice," says Caporale, "that includes a snowball inserted with pine needles dipped in pine honey; you suck the tips of needles and pour liquid over the snowball to make a drink that tastes like fresh air in the mountains – you get the wood, the pine, the crisp, clean air. You taste the silence of being in a forest."

As he says this, there's a twinkle in his eye. He knows how to do high-concept, and yet, somehow, keep it light.

Caporale is also behind the rejuvenation of Barcelona's oldest cocktail bar, Bar Boadas. Established in 1933 by an alumnus of Havana's famous El Floridita, this art deco bar achieved worldwide fame, but had grown tired of late. When Caporale was offered the chance to become a co-owner, he didn't hesitate. "We don't want to change anything, just give it a new lease of life," he says. "We'll pay homage to the classics – the Martini, the Daiquiri – and also reintroduce some forgotten vintage drinks."

Another Barcelona highlight is the "five-star dive bar" Two Schmucks. Hidden away down a backstreet in the boisterous El Raval, this tavern-like drinking den does high spirits and great cocktails mixed by tattooed guys and girls who ooze unself-conscious cool. The current menu, designed like a brasserie's carte, was inspired by favourite dishes of the cosmopolitan team, who come from a far a field as Thailand, Poland, the UK, Spain and Sweden.

Sitting on a vintage leather stool at a bar cluttered with memorabilia, I try an anise-y French Polish with calvados, chartreuse, carrot and parsley, and a highball of strawberry, rhubarb and dill oil. A crystal-clear riff on

DRINKING

## Cocktails in Catalonia

Alice Lascelles goes on a bar crawl in Barcelona



the Thai dish Tom Kha made with coconut, lime leaf, Thai basil, lemongrass, rum, smoky whisky and chilli is a mixological magic trick.

The music is loud, and the language is blue, but

service is professional to a tee – they'll decant your Martini into a freshly iced glass if it's getting too warm, but will just as readily serve you a beer and shot of whisky.

Just a few doors down will soon be Dead End Paradise – the latest bar from Jad Ballout, a leading light of Beirut's bar scene. The ground floor will be an all-day bar and terrace doing Iberian cocktails and tapas. Upstairs, meanwhile, guests with a code will be able to access a disco bar with light-up floor: "You'll dive into a loud, fun and colourful room doing modern twists on highballs including Sex on the Beach and Long Island Iced Tea."

New for the trendy Gràcia district is the easy-going Foco. Table-hopping is encouraged, says co-owner Tom Godfrey, especially on the large, plant-filled terrace: "We want it to be all about meeting new people and

### "YOU TASTE THE SILENCE OF BEING IN A FOREST"

swapping stories." Signature drinks include a raspberry Clover Club spiked with menthol and a salted Espresso Martini topped with frothy cream.

Natural wine bar of the moment is the bustling Bar Brutal in El Born – a restaurant that marries distressed concrete walls and red neon light with the warmest of atmospheres. As planchas sizzled and service bells dinged around us, we drank pithy orange wine from Purulio in Andalucía with a succession of pitch-perfect small plates: iberico ham, tiny scallops, oysters and sourdough with labneh and mint.

And you can't leave Barcelona without a pit-stop in at least one vermuteria. The tiny Quimet & Quimet is lined floor-to-ceiling with interesting aperitifs. I leaned on the narrow counter and ate *pan con tomate* with a glass of the local vermouth Fot-Li. At the spartan Morro Fi they write the vermouths in marker on the white-tiled wall. And you know what? That €2.50 glass of house-made *vermut negre* may have been the best drink of all. ■HTSI

📍@alicelascelles

### ADDRESS BOOK

**Bar Brutal** barbrutal.com  
**Boadas Cocktails** @boadascocktails  
**Dead End Paradise** @deadendparadise.bcn  
**Foco** focobcn.com  
**Morro Fi** morrofi.cat  
**Quimet & Quimet** quimetquimet.com  
**Sips** sips.barcelona  
**Two Schmucks** two-schmucks.com

Top: Quimet & Quimet vermuteria. Below: Two Schmucks in El Raval



SIPS IN L'EIXAMPLE



# HOW TO SPEND IT IN...



AN ANTIQUE MONGOLIAN TEAPOT

Left: Oyuna co-founder Oyuna Tserendorj. Above: a herd of goats at a lake beside Zorgol Khairkhan

to me. We must first address people, because only inspired, happy people will take care of the land. There are ways to produce cashmere sustainably, focusing on quality rather than quantity. When goats graze, they take the vegetation out by the root; nomads know this and traditionally it has been managed by rotating pastures, but goat numbers are increasing due to economic pressure. So a return to traditional herding is one of the crucial ingredients for cashmere sustainability.

I go home to Ulaanbaatar – we call it UB – to visit the factory and see family. I'll make time to spin the prayer wheels at Gandan monastery; Mongolia is the only country outside of Tibet and Bhutan with Tibetan Buddhism as the dominant religion. I also always share a meal with friends at Veranda restaurant, a timeworn but much-loved institution known for its great steaks. My advice to visitors is always the same: spend a couple of days in UB when you arrive to decompress and prepare for your trip, then head out into those wide open spaces as soon as you can. Make the most of some hot showers and Wi-Fi at the Shangri-La hotel – then escape our capital's terrible traffic jams for “the land with no fences”.

The camps worth going to all involve a long drive from UB, between four to 15 hours away. But then, the journey really is the point of the trip here. Most camps will provide everything for you along the way, including a guide and food – you can try traditional foods like horse's milk and *buuz* dumplings. Double Lake is the one I love to return to because of my history there, but for a total escape there is the Genghis Khan Retreat. It has sophisticated cuisine and live piano music but the greatest luxury is probably the complete lack of electricity! Then, for the most authentic experience of Mongolia's Gobi Desert, I'd recommend Three Camel Lodge, near Dalanzadgad, which ticks all the sustainability boxes, is staffed entirely by locals and has arranged expeditions for organisations such as the World Wildlife Fund.

The best time to visit is probably July, when temperatures are a reliable 25 to 28 degrees, though those blue skies mean it's always cold at night. July is also when the centuries-old Naadam Festival takes place, when Mongolian wrestling, horse racing and archery are celebrated.

I've travelled all over, but still the best experience I've ever had has been back home in Mongolia's wide steppes, galloping on a horse with the nomads, whistling. It makes you feel alive. ■HTSI

**F**or me, Mongolia is open nature and the eternal blue sky. The sense of space is mindblowing. Mongolians live close to the earth still, and that gives them so much energy.

My father grew up in eastern Mongolia and he was a nomad – that is what he remained at heart, even though he later ended up being secretary of state. My father's family are still nomads in the east; my cousin has 300 horses. When he came to visit us in our apartment, he said, “It feels strange to me to be within four corners.” He lives in a ger [yurt] – a round structure with no corners. There are very few things in nature that have defined corners. It offers a very different perspective.

I left my home in the capital, Ulaanbaatar, to study fashion engineering in Budapest. But I would go back to Mongolia every summer to see my family. One year my sister, who runs horse trekking tours, asked if I would come and help translate at Lake Khövsgöl, in the north of Mongolia. I had to collect a guest who was arriving early at the airport. There I stood, holding up a board scrawled with the name of the man who would later become my husband. We ended up in London where we started our label Oyuna, for responsibly produced cashmere.

The camp we stayed at on that first trip, Toilogt, is one we still return to. Now it has a second edition, Double Lake, right on the pristine lake with pine forest all around. There's a mix of teepees, wooden cabins and traditional gers to stay in. They are involved in the Mongolia Sunrise To Sunset ultramarathon which has been going since 1999. I've walked it twice and the money goes towards preservation projects for the national park. There's also

Arburd Sands camp, a tiny place with only 20 gers, one of which has a library inside. All of these places are set up for tourists, but they are the closest you can get to how Mongolian nomads live.

Cashmere production is the backbone of the nomads' livelihoods. The human aspect is very important

## MONGOLIA

Cashmere label co-founder Oyuna Tserendorj on how best to enjoy the wide-open beauty of her childhood home

INTERVIEW BY LAUREN HADDEN  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY DAVAANYAM DELGERJARGAL



Above: a ger at the Genghis Khan Retreat. Right: Chojjin Lama Museum in Ulaanbaatar. Below: Tserendorj on Zorgol Khairkhan mountain



GALLOPING IN THE STEPPES WITH THE NOMADS MAKES YOU FEEL ALIVE

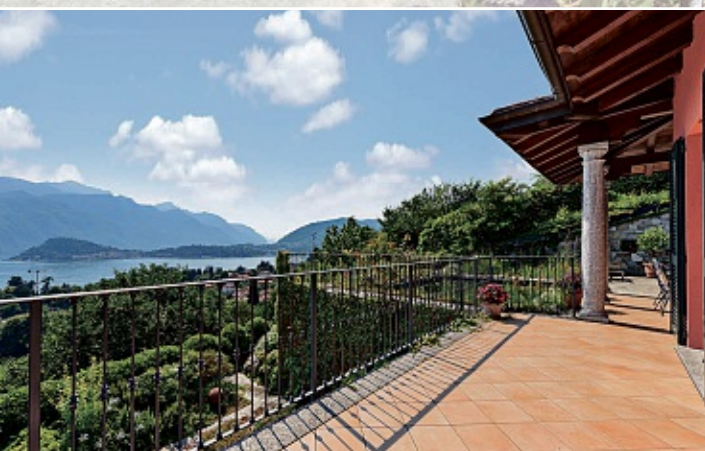
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