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COVER PHOTO BY MELISSA PEPIN

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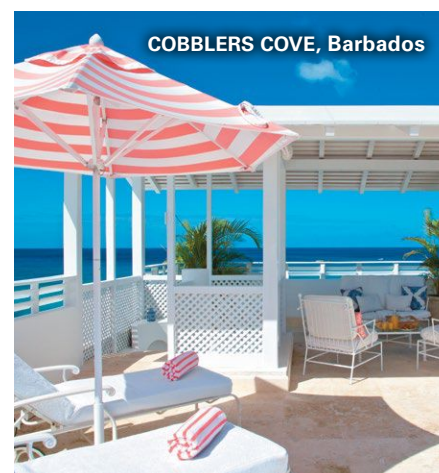
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It's Not About You



Keep your e-mails to clients brief. They'll likely be reading them on their cell phones and don't want to see large blocks of copy.

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There are many attributes that make a good salesperson. Passion, tenacity, self-motivation, confidence and an entrepreneurial spirit are some of the traits that deliver results.

What is considered the most common element among the very top salespeople who consistently crush their sales goals? It's having a deep understanding of the customer's business.

Think of it in this context: A consumer is considering taking his large family on a very complex African safari and they've got two referrals for luxury travel advisors from their friends at the country club.

Travel Advisor A takes them to lunch, opens his laptop and does a PowerPoint presentation on his agency and his experience in booking high-end trips. He's got all of his certifications listed, the number of years he's been doing this and toward the end he's got several screens that show off lions and elephants with some sample, out-of-the-box itineraries.

Travel Advisor B is a curious soul. She researches this prospective customer by going back to the client who referred him to politely ask some top-line questions about them (she doesn't want to stalk) and with that she's also able to take a look at their Instagram and Facebook pages. Before the consult meeting, she e-mails the prospect, asking him about his likes and dislikes, what made him crazy about his last trip and what sparked joy.

For her meeting, Travel Advisor B has created a delightful presentation that focuses completely on the family that is traveling. She's researched experiences that will appeal to each age group and added in some wow moments that the entire clan will enjoy together.

She has plenty to share about her own background and capabilities, which she's put into the appendix

of the presentation. She is leaving all this to the end and will use these slides for an FAQ, only because this meeting is not about her, it's about the customer.

Needless to say, she wins the business for the safari and Travel Advisor A becomes a vague memory.

In comparison, it's easy to see what Travel Advisor A did; he made the meeting all about himself. But he also wasted the client's time by doing that and, in today's world, that's an egregious error.

It's nearly 2020 and you're setting new goals for the next decade. Here's a list of some other things you can do to deliver positive results:

Don't waste time with clients who will not spend on a luxury trip. These are the people who are constantly balking about price, even though you've repeatedly shown them the value of the experiences spending a bit more will deliver.

Keep your e-mails to clients brief and to the point. They're likely going to read your message on their cellphone, and they don't want to pour through massive paragraphs that you've copied and pasted from a supplier's website describing their room, tour or flight.

Go out of your comfort zone. This means personally traveling to destinations you're unsure about but that may interest your clients. When you come home, push your clients out of their comfort zones as well by challenging them to try a new experience they haven't considered before.

Lastly, remain curious — about the world, of course, but mostly about your clients. Digging in deeper to learn about what makes them tick will make them incredibly loyal to you and you'll likely earn a strong friendship from it as a result. And you might just crush those annual sales goals you've set for yourself in 2020.

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A man and a woman are shown in profile, smiling and looking out from a stone balcony. The woman is wearing a black and white geometric patterned cardigan over a white top, and the man is wearing a grey blazer over a light blue shirt. They are standing close together, with the man's arm around the woman. The background features ornate stone arches and columns, suggesting a historic or luxurious setting. A diagonal line divides the image, with the top right portion being a solid brown color where the text is located.

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DESTINATIONS

EXPLORING INDIA



Bespoke itineraries and a familial approach combine to show travelers a more intimate side of India.

BY LINDSAY LAMBERT DAY

Home to a staggering 1.36 billion people, India is constantly in motion, a place where sound never stops. Exploring the vast and populous country can feel overwhelming, but, with its bespoke itineraries, VIP access to iconic historical sites, and its familial approach to travel, **Micato** makes traveling through India an intimate and highly personalized experience. We found that out on our own custom journey to some of North India's most iconic and sacred sites.

UDAIPUR, India's "City of Lakes," is a major tourist attraction, known for its history, culture, lakes and palaces. Shown here is the City Palace, which is set on the banks of the iconic Lake Pichola.

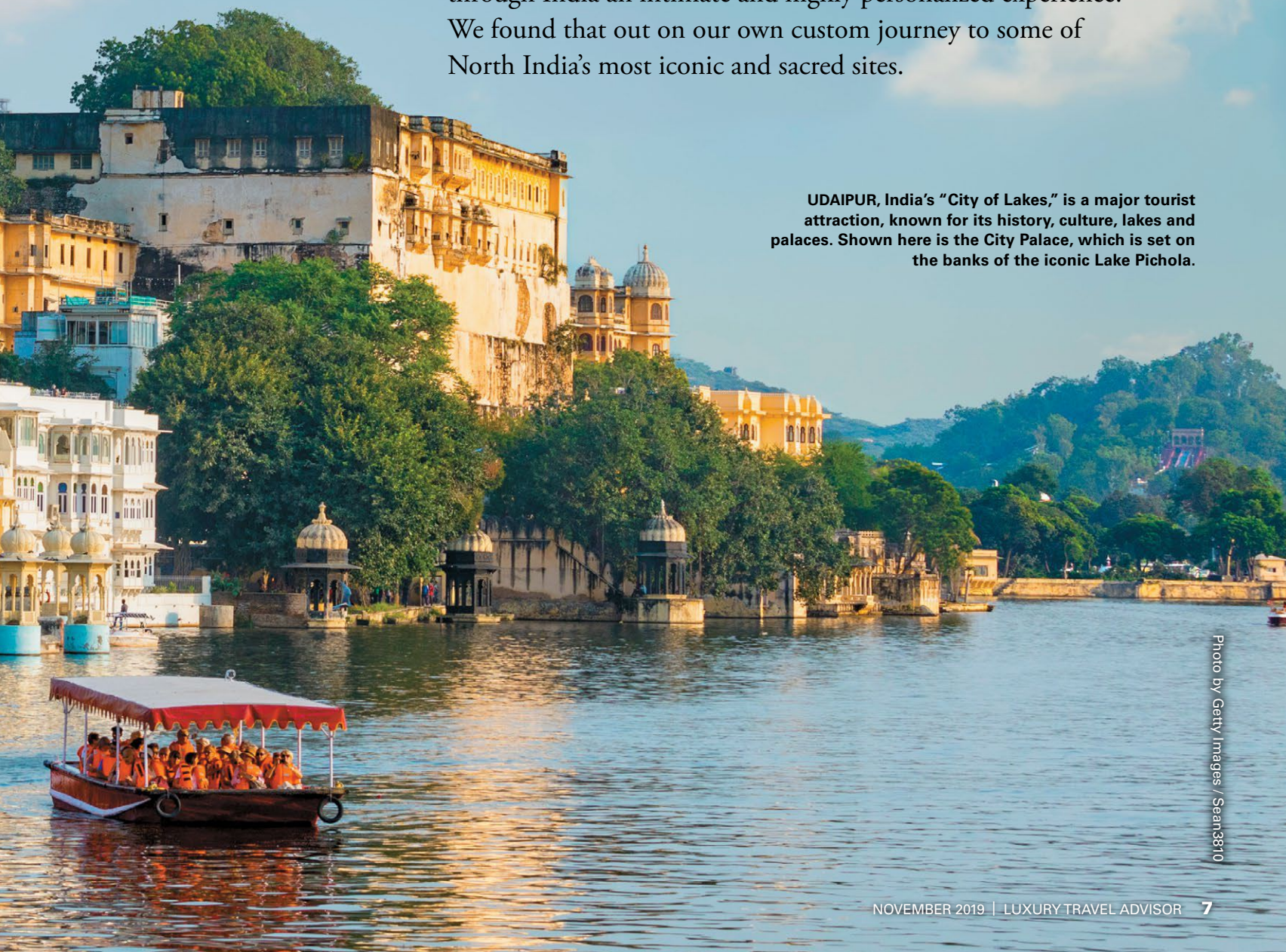


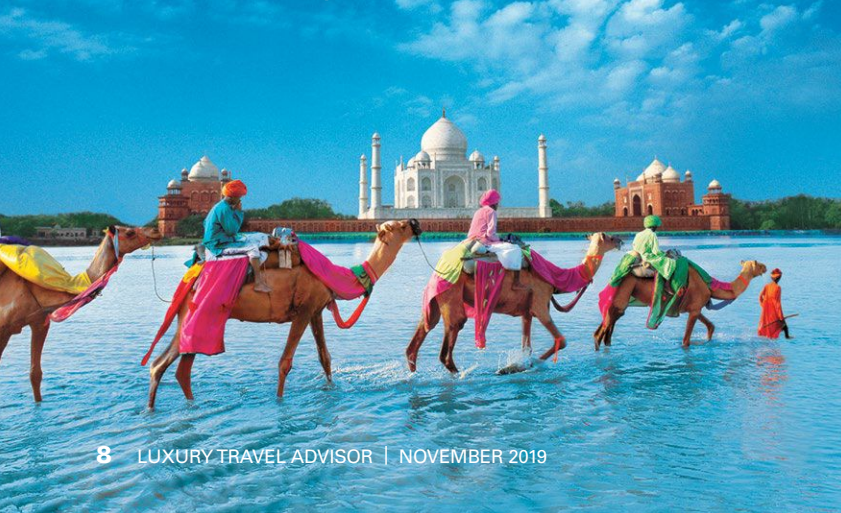
Photo by Getty Images / Sean3810

THE OBEROI NEW DELHI's Kohinoor Suite (here) has 3,500 square feet of space and its bathroom comes with a full length enamel bathtub.

HUMAYUN'S TOMB (below), a UNESCO World Heritage Site, is the tomb of Mughal emperor Humayun, built in 1560s in New Delhi.



THE TAJ MAHAL on the banks of River Yamuna in Agra is a significant Indian landmark, which was built by the order of Mughal emperor Shah Jahan in memory of his wife, Mumtaz Mahal.



Pre-departure

Our India journey began several weeks prior to our March departure from the U.S. After narrowing our focus to North India, we consulted with Marion Miller, director, Micato Safaris Bespoke Collection India, to create an itinerary that hit all the region's can't-miss highlights. In the weeks that followed, we received several care packages from Micato, containing everything from helpful trip-planning materials to a Bollywood DVD.

DAYS 1-3

Delhi

After clearing immigration in Delhi, we were greeted by a Micato staffer and shown to a waiting car for the late-night drive to **The Oberoi, New Delhi**. Memorable Moment: Our travel fatigue faded when we found a small welcome gift and note from Micato perched on our pillow.

Over lunch the next day at the hotel's 360° restaurant, we met Hem Singh, our guide and Micato's senior travel director. Singh, who has escorted high-profile Micato guests such as Hillary Clinton in India, not only took care of logistics throughout our trip (including tipping), but he also beautifully shared his encyclopedic knowledge of Indian history and culture at every turn. After lunch, we set out to explore the city, with stops including Jama Masjid (India's largest mosque) and a walk and rickshaw ride through the jam-packed, narrow *galis*, or lanes, of Old Delhi, where vendors sell everything from street food to smartphones to brilliantly colored bangles. Nice Touch: Back at the Oberoi that evening, to help us get better acquainted with India's cuisine, we were treated to a private cooking lesson in the kitchen at the elegant Omya restaurant before eating dinner.

The rest of our time in Delhi brought visits to stunning sites, such as Humayun's Tomb, India

Gate and Gandhi Smriti, the former private home turned museum where Mahatma Gandhi lived out the final 144 days of his life and was assassinated in 1948. A highlight of our time in Delhi was a visit to one of the city's *gurdwaras*, or Sikh temples. Meaningful Moment: Volunteers welcomed us into the temple's massive kitchen, where we joined others in flipping *chapati*, or Indian flat breads, on a giant grill. We were also invited into the gurdwara's large *langar* hall to serve free, homemade food to hundreds of congregants — a touching display of community.

Days 4-5

Agra

From Delhi, we rode with Singh and our driver, Darmender, to Agra, where we checked in to a spacious suite at **The Oberoi Amarvilas, Agra**. Magic Moment: After showing us to the suite, a hotel staffer slowly pulled back its drapes to reveal a stunning first look at the Taj Mahal. A sunset visit to the legendary landmark followed. Note that, while a sunrise visit was scheduled for the next day, we asked to skip it and catch up on our sleep, feeling certain that the sunset experience couldn't possibly be topped.

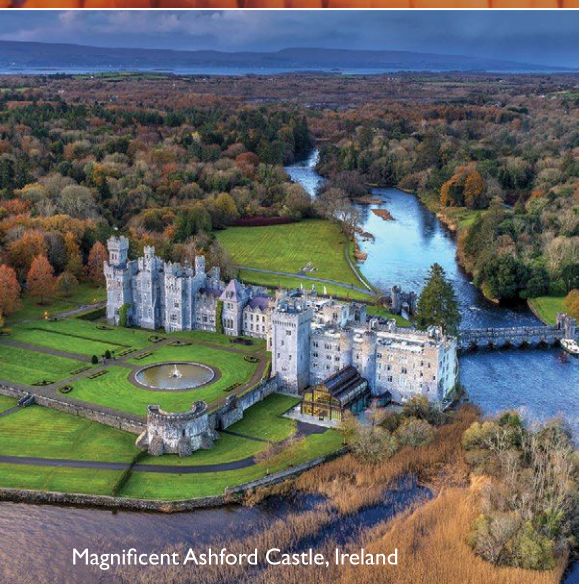
Although the Taj Mahal is Agra's most famous landmark, there's plenty more to enjoy there. We enjoyed exploring Agra Fort's resplendent architecture, and visiting with artisans in town who carry on centuries' worth of tradition through their skillful work with marble, jewelry and more.

VIP Access: While visiting the storied Kohinoor Jewellers, Ruchira Mathur, the brand's chief jewelry designer, invited us inside its heavily secured workshop. There, highly skilled technicians use 3D-printed molds designed digitally on-site to bring Mathur's exquisite designs — featuring diamonds, sapphires and other precious gems — to life. Mathur's father and Kohinoor's current

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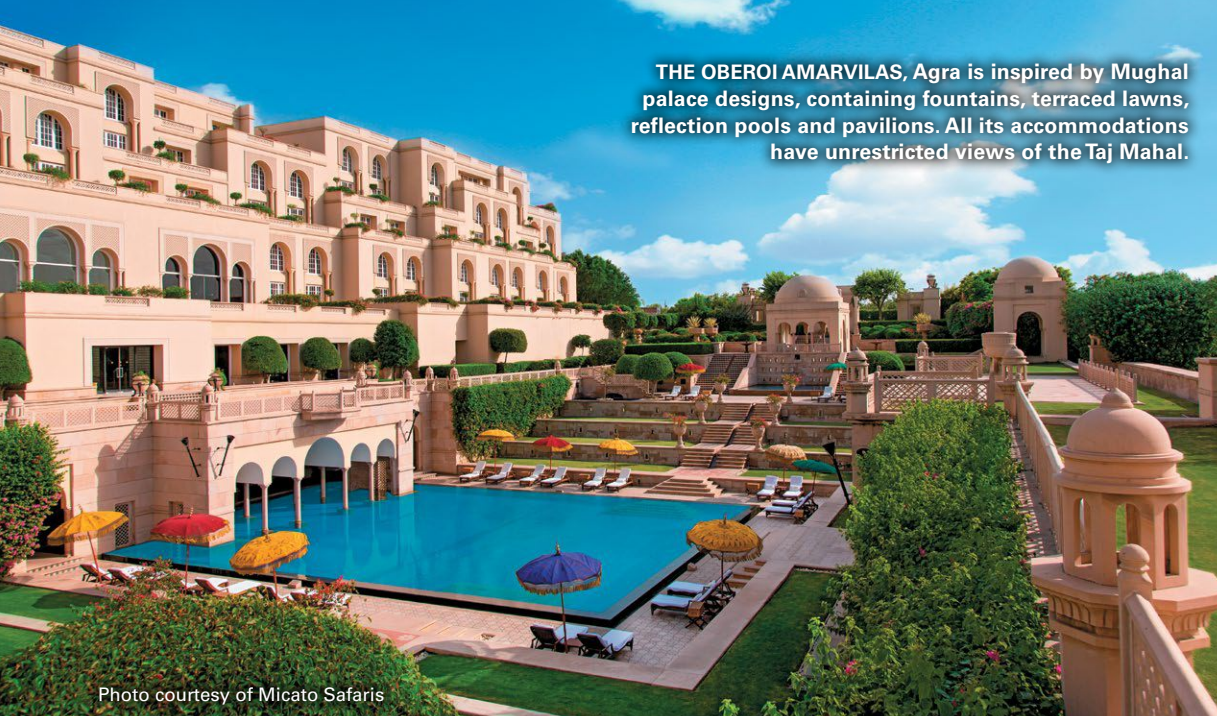
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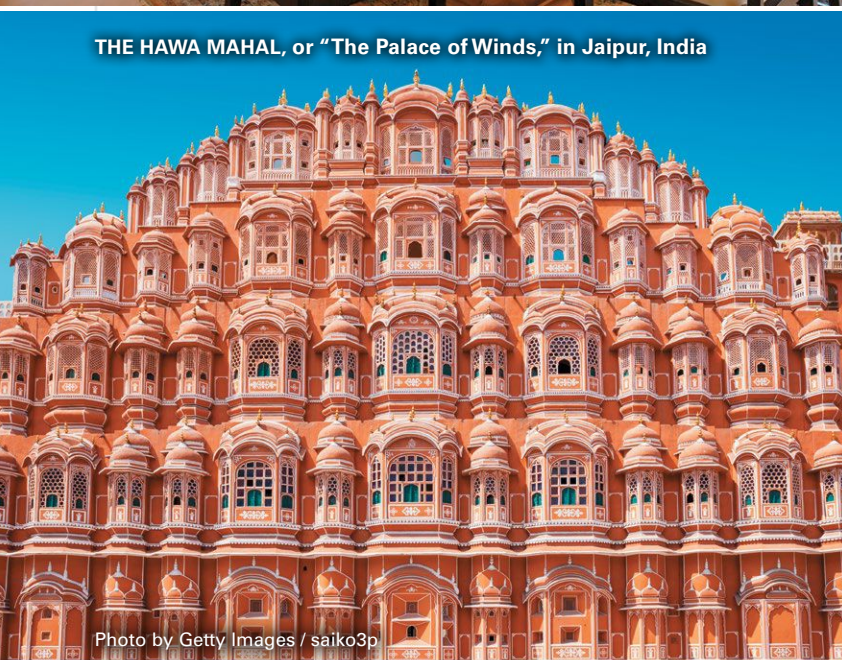
THE OBEROI AMARVILAS, Agra is inspired by Mughal palace designs, containing fountains, terraced lawns, reflection pools and pavilions. All its accommodations have unrestricted views of the Taj Mahal.

Photo courtesy of Micato Safaris



THE OBEROI, RAJVILAS in Jaipur is spread over 32 acres of landscaped gardens. Shown here is the dining room of the hotel's Kohinoor Villa.

Photo courtesy of Micato Safaris



THE HAWA MAHAL, or "The Palace of Winds," in Jaipur, India

Photo by Getty Images / saiko3p

Rajvilas, Jaipur, we set out to explore the city's historic sites, including the Amber Fort, Hawa Mahal, and City Palace. Nice Touch: At the City Palace, Singh whisked us through a restricted door for a peek inside one of the royal family's private drawing rooms. We then emerged onto a restricted rooftop terrace, where palace staff poured us refreshing glasses of cold Champagne as we savored city views.

Shopping is a must in Jaipur, which is known for its jewelry and textiles, among other products. So, save room in your suitcase for new leather slippers, glass bangles and other purchases you're bound to pick up in the city's bazaar. One of the best places in town to shop for block-print pajamas, wraps and more is Heritage Textiles. Personal Touch: During our own visit to Heritage Textiles, Singh surprised us by suggesting we pick something to take home — a special gift from our gracious hosts.

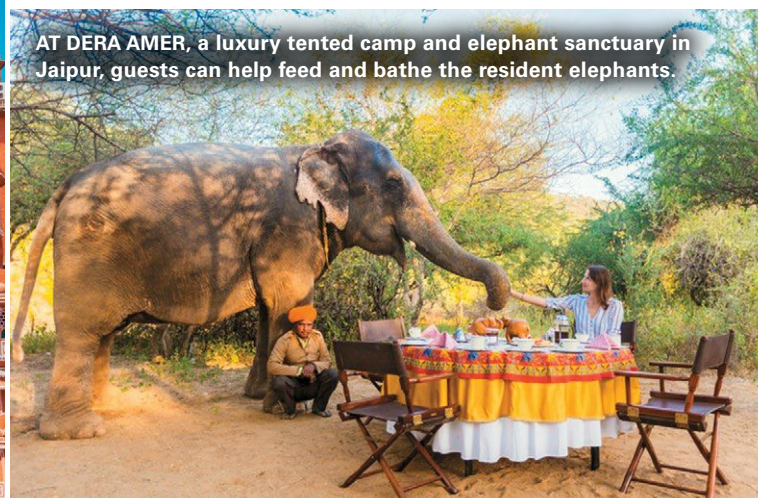
A can't-miss experience in Jaipur came later that evening with a visit to **Dera Amer**, a luxury tented camp and elephant sanctuary just outside town. There, owner and founder Udaijit Singh accompanied us on a walk around the property alongside one of its three resident rescue elephants, 49-year-old Laxmi. (Rides are strictly off-limits, but guests can help feed and bathe the gentle giants.) After feeding Laxmi more

owner Ghanshyam Gopal Mathur also gave us a private tour of his family's priceless collection of embroidered tapestries by artist Padmashri Shams.

We worked up an appetite in Agra, and we enjoyed two of our favorite meals here: A traditional Indian-style *thali* at The Oberoi Amarvilas' Esphahan, and a casual feast at Peshawri, located inside the **ITC Mughal, a Luxury Collection Hotel, Agra**.

Days 6-8 Jaipur

A nearly five-hour drive from Agra took us on to Jaipur (nicknamed "the Pink City"), the busiest stop on our schedule. After freshening up in our luxury tent at **The Oberoi**



AT DERA AMER, a luxury tented camp and elephant sanctuary in Jaipur, guests can help feed and bathe the resident elephants.

Photo courtesy of Dera Amer



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than a dozen bananas, we sipped cocktails by a campfire and sat down for our own Indian feast under the stars before heading back to our hotel.

While Jaipur's frenetic atmosphere is thrilling, getting out of town brings a welcome change of pace. We began our final day in Jaipur with a pre-dawn drive to the countryside for a sunrise hot-air balloon ride, floating silently over farms and tiny villages. The adventure continued after landing near Samode, where we took a jeep safari through the village's dusty streets, stopping along the way to greet friendly, local farmers. Local Connection: We paid an afternoon visit to Samode's main school, which Micato supports with guests' donations. The school's young students showed us around their classrooms and asked us to take their picture. (We did, and Singh had framed copies delivered to the school after we departed.) Waving goodbye, we headed to Samode Palace, a lavish former fort and private manor turned luxury hotel, for a relaxing lunch.

Welcome R&R: Simply put, traveling around India can be exhausting. An Oberoi Signature Massage at the Rajvilas' tranquil spa was just what we needed to get our second wind halfway through our trip.

Days 9-10 Udaipur

Bidding farewell to Jaipur, we drove to our next destination, Udaipur, nicknamed the Venice



Photo by Lindsay Lambert Day

IN DADAR, Mumbai's biggest flower market sells a variety of colorful, fresh flowers.

Days 11-12 Mumbai

A short flight from Udaipur took us to Mumbai, the final stop on our India itinerary. After checking in to **The Oberoi, Mumbai**, we joined a local guide for an introductory tour of the city, with stops including the famous Gateway of India and the 19th-century Victoria Terminus, whose design was inspired by London's St. Pancras Station. That evening, we reminisced over a meal of modern Indian cuisine, prepared by Michelin-star chef Vineet Bhatia, at Ziya, the see-and-be-seen restaurant inside The Oberoi, Mumbai.

Eager to make every minute of our last day in India count, we kicked it off with a pre-dawn walking tour that highlights the city's important morning rituals, from the delivery of newspapers to the opening of its major flower and produce markets. Our tour concluded at Church Gate Station, where we watched in awe as Mumbai's famous *dabbawallahs* — members of the Mumbai Tiffin Box Supplier's Association — prepared to deliver thousands of lunch boxes to workers in nearby office towers using a nearly failsafe, 127-year-old system comprising bicycles, carts, and symbol-based labels. Like India itself, the *dabbawallahs'* system is a marvelous marriage of old and new — something that has to be seen to be believed. ■

of the East for its breathtaking system of lakes. Upon arriving at **The Oberoi Udaivilas, Udaipur**, the hotel's staff welcomed us with dancers, music and a shower of fragrant flower petals. Within minutes, we were resting next to our suite's semi-private pool, enjoying beautiful views of Lake Pichola just beyond it. Nice Touch: As the sun began to set on our first evening in Udaipur, we climbed on board our own private boat for a cruise around Lake Pichola, complete with a full tea service.

After a packed few days in Jaipur, we welcomed Udaipur's slower pace — in particular, wandering between the count-

less rooms of its City Palace, and visiting its 10th-century temples. While each meal of our India journey was memorable, an al fresco lunch overlooking the pool at **Raas Devigarh** — an 18th-century palace-turned-chic boutique hotel in the Aravalli Hills — ranked among our favorites. Wow-worthy Moment: When it comes to the ultimate India VIP experience, nothing topped being surprised with a visit to the Oberoi family's private, hilltop home overlooking Udaipur. We arrived by private car at the estate, where chefs and staff from The Oberoi Udaivilas treated us to a beautiful meal, served with Champagne on the estate's breezy, emerald lawn.

Photos below courtesy of Micato Safaris

THE OBEROI UDAIVILAS's Premier Rooms with Semi Private Pool have sweeping lake views.



THE OBEROI MUMBAI's Executive Suite (here) has 800 square feet of space and affords panoramic views of the city.





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Three Hours or Less from Paris

BY RICHARD NAHEM

Paris is always a favorite for luxury travelers. Recently, Virtuoso named the “City of Light” as its Top City in its 2020 Luxe Report. However, for travelers who are looking for a new French escape, *Luxury Travel Advisor* has rounded up three cities that make for a great extension to your vacation or even just as a day trip.



Lille

Lille, a French and Flemish city on the border of Belgium, is about one hour from Paris Gare du Nord station.

Strolling through the old quarter of the city, we were struck by the various styles of architecture, quite a contrast from uniformity of the Haussmann-style buildings from the late 19th-century dominating Paris. We later learned the Spaniards, the French and the Flemish ruled Lille, hence the fiery colors of brick with mustard trim, ornate Baroque style and the austerity of the Dutch influence.

Le Musée de l'Hospice Comtesse is a formidable edifice and one of the most relevant sites in the Old Quarter. Countess Jeanne de Flandre started the hospice in 1237 as a place for the poor to be spiritually and medically treated; the present-day buildings date from 15th, 17th and 18th centuries. Remarkably, the hospice operated up until 1939, and in 1962 it was converted into a museum where travelers can visit the monastery, the chapel with a ceiling decorated with coats of arms from significant donors, the medicinal gardens and the former hospital ward. The tapestries, wood sculptures and white porcelain tiles, each individually painted with figures in blue, sustain the strong Flemish period details.

THE GRAND PLACE is the main square in Lille, France, which is the site of important monuments like the Vieille Bourse, the old stock exchange, the Column of the Goddess and the Grand Garde which houses the Theatre du Nord.

Photo by Getty Images / pp76





LA PISCINE (above) derives its name from an Art Deco indoor swimming pool it once housed. Today, the museum has a revamped version of the pool.

LE MUSÉE DE L'HOSPICE COMTESSE (here) was founded in 1237 as a place for the poor to be spiritually and medically treated.



Meert, the oldest pastry shop in Lille (which dates to 1761), is a sheer delight for the senses. The present-day Meert encompasses a pastry shop, tea salon, restaurant, ice cream parlor and retail shop offering chocolates and confections. Although we enjoyed our lunch in the lavishly decorated Louis XVI-style tearoom, we were much more excited by our scrumptious desserts, lemon meringue tart and a heavenly chocolate concoction of chocolate mousse with hazelnut and almond praline. In case that wasn't enough, we went overboard and bought a box of their famous *gaufres* (dry waffles) filled with vanilla cream.

After our decadent lunch and pastry feast, we headed to the Charles de Gaulle Birthplace and Museum. The former general and president of France was born in 1890 in the bourgeois home of his grandparents; bought by the friends of de Gaulle in 1967 to preserve his memory, the museum features artifacts and objects from de Gaulle's formative years, plus a multimedia program that reflects on his historic accomplishments.

The Palais des Beaux-Arts de Lille has a vast collection of paintings, sculptures and drawings spanning from the second to 20th century, including works from the Impressionism, Symbolism, medieval and Renaissance periods. Flemish, Spanish, French, Roman and Belgian artists are represented: Rubens, Monet, Courbet, Manet, Donatello, Delacroix, El Greco and Picasso are a sampling of the artists in the museum.

We had an outstanding dinner at La Royale, a cozy bistro within walking distance from our hotel. A starter of house-made country pâté with crusty peasant bread was more than ample for two people, followed by a succulent, slow-roasted beef served with organic yellow, orange and



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CHÂTEAU DE CHANTILLY has a significant collection of masterpieces and an extensive library with 50,000 books and 15,000 manuscripts.

red carrots and buttery mashed potatoes. The genial owner, who spoke English, told us he recently sold the restaurant and was relocating to San Francisco to open a French wine bar.

The next morning, we headed outside Lille to the suburbs for two terrific and worthwhile attractions.

Just a 25-minute metro ride from the center of the city is La Piscine - André Diligent Museum of Art (most commonly referred to as La Piscine). The museum once contained a lavish Art Deco indoor swimming pool constructed between 1927 and 1932 (hence the name). Closed in 1985, it was remodeled into a museum, also incorporating an old textile factory next door. The museum has an excellent and well-rounded collection of mostly 19th- and 20th-century works, including an impressive selection of porcelain and pottery. One massive hall has a revamped version of the swimming pool hedged by plaster and marble statues and, on the upper floors, authentic-looking Art Deco railings and balconies.

After leaving La Piscine, we

took a tram ride to Croix to visit Villa Cavrois. During the 10-minute walk from the tram to the villa, we viewed some stately mansions and manor houses with well-manicured gardens.

Villa Cavrois is the masterpiece of French architect Robert Mallet Stevens. Built for textile magnate Paul Cavrois and his wife and seven children, Mallet was given free rein to his design — the only parameters were that the house should be comfortable, practical and not over budget. Construction began in 1929 and completed in 1932; the family lived in the house until 1985. It was to be demolished after it was sold to a developer, but the project was abandoned in 2001. The state bought the villa and took 13 painstaking years restoring it. We marveled at the scale and size of the rooms and the handsome furnishings, impeccable architectural details and natural light flowing through the rooms. A long, narrow reflecting pool complemented the symmetrical, manicured gardens, while the swimming pool is an extension of the house, rather than being separated.

In Lille, we stayed at the cozy and historic **Mercure Lille Centre Grand-Place Hotel**, which was an easy five-minute walk from the station, ideally located in close proximity to many of the main attractions. We stayed in a Junior Suite — one of the larger rooms in the hotel. One of our pet peeves of late is the lack of plugs in hotel rooms for the various electronics one is required to travel with these days, and we were happy the suite had a plug on each side of the bed, plus a reading lamp and a sconce. A Nespresso machine was a nifty amenity, a welcome caffeine treat first thing in the morning. The clever setting for the breakfast buffet was a real-life kitchen with a four-burner stove with Le Creuset pots filled with simmering breakfast dishes, a dishwasher and a refrigerator filled with dairy products. The space made us feel so much at home, we were tempted to wear our pajamas and slippers.

The staff patiently marked our maps and gave specific directions to the sites we wanted to visit. Contact Jérémy Paillart, front office manager, at h0802-sb@accor.com.

Chantilly

The most obvious reason to go to Chantilly is to visit the historical Château, but we found many other activities and sites to enhance our stay, including recently restored rooms at the aforementioned château.

Trains leave Paris Gare du Nord station to Chantilly / Gouvieux station almost every hour, and it takes less than 30 minutes to be whisked to the verdant French countryside.

A two-year restoration of the royal apartments at the **Château de Chantilly** is a great reason to revisit the city. Henri d'Orléans, Duke of Aumale, engaged the services of architect Victor Dubois and decorator Eugene Lami in 1845 to design private apartments for him and his new wife, Maria Carolina Augusta, on the ground floor of the Petite Château, an extension of the Château de Chantilly. The suite of eight rooms was completed in 1847, and it includes the prince and princesses' bedroom, salon and bathrooms, plus the Petite Singerie, the only room that is completely intact as it was originally built. A series of wood panels painted in 1735 by Christophe Huet exhibit the aristocratic activities of female monkeys (lunch during the hunt, picking cherries, playing card games, dressing), borrowing the clothes and expressions of the Condé princesses, in all the seasons.

The Château features the second-most significant art collection in France after the Louvre, with masterpieces by artists Corot, Delacroix, Fragonard, Ingres, Poussin, Raphael, Watteau and van Dyck. An extensive library boasts 50,000 books and 15,000 manuscripts. Le Nôtre, who created the royal gardens of Versailles and Fontainebleau, designed a gorgeous formal French garden, and the park area of the chateau has acres of forest, streams and meadows — an ideal

three Xclusive reasons to visit Mexico.



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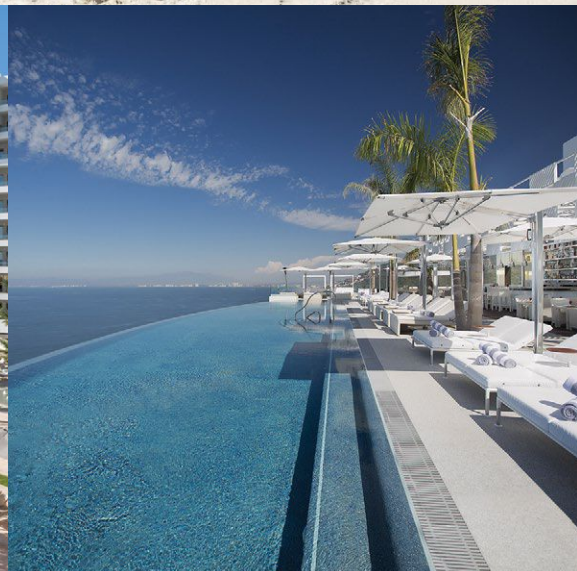
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place to have a picnic.

A few hundred feet from the Château, horse aficionados will embrace the Hippodrome de Chantilly, one of the most prestigious racetracks in Europe. The first official race took place in 1834, and the current racetrack was constructed in 1879. The flat, thoroughbred track runs a little under a mile and a half, and five classic races include the Prix de Diane and Prix du Jockey Club, which draw international guests. Next door to the racetrack is The

with the animal farm that has peacocks, ponies, swans, goats and geese, in addition to rabbit and hen races. A theater on the property has a festival in summer (Tip: Operas are also performed from time to time). A tea salon and café serving full meals and pastries, open from May to September, has a lovely setting inside the formal garden with a green latticework pavilion and starched white linens.

Golf is not a major pastime in France, but the turf and climate

the rooms facing the front of the hotel, where the main road runs. Our Junior Suite was decorated in typical, luxurious French style with blue Toile de Jouy fabric on the headboard and drapes in the bedroom and lace-trimmed pillows on the bed. Our petite salon was tastefully appointed with a tapestry-style carpet, a handsome blue silk-covered sofa with mahogany wood trim and classic 18th-century portraits on the wall.

The highlight of our stay was the dinner we had at the

most beautiful and clever we've ever seen — was an exact replica of an endive but made of chocolate on the outside and filled with a sensational mix of chocolate and espresso ganache inside.

Do not miss the crème de la crème we experienced at the hotel's Spa Valmont: The Thousand & One Chantilly treatment. The decadent treatment starts with a revitalizing exfoliation, followed by a soothing massage; the surprise at the end is the slathering of chilled Chantilly cream all over your body. Afterwards, our skin felt smooth and silky for days.

An advantage about Chantilly is its close proximity to Charles De Gaulle Airport, only 20 minutes away. Travel advisors may contact Nicole Wilms-Kauffmann (nicole.wilms@aubergedujeudepaume.fr), hotel manager, directly for bookings and other information.

Granville

Our last pick is Granville, a small city in Normandy on the Mont Saint-Michel Bay (tip: it's just an hour away from the popular eponymous commune).

The main reason we went to Granville was for the Princess Grace exhibit at the Musée Christian Dior. The museum is actually the home Christian Dior grew up in during the early 1900s, which had a significant impact on his later life. In his memoir, *Christian Dior et Moi*, he says, "I have most tender and amazed memories ... of my childhood home. I would even say that my life and my style owe almost everything to its site and architecture."

Villa Les Rhumbs was the original name of the house purchased by Dior's parents in 1906, but in 1932 his father had to sell the house for financial reasons during the Great Depression. The city purchased the villa in 1938 and opened the garden to the public. In 1997, the villa was

L'AUBERGE DU JEU DE PAUME is a Relais & Châteaux hotel with 92 rooms and suites, as well as two restaurants, salons and a spa.



Photo courtesy of Auberge du Jeu de Paume

Living Museum of the Horse, located in the Cour de Remises, the vast stables of Chantilly. Fifteen rooms have been designated to exhibit 200 objects and works of art, including manuscripts, drawings, paintings, prints and sculptures, which tell the rich history and evolution of the horse culture of France.

Le Potager des Princes is the former royal vegetable garden of Prince de Condé, and, today, it is a wonderful public garden with a bevy of sites and activities. A formal garden still stands along with an active vegetable garden; and children will be enchanted

of Chantilly is ideal for the sport. There are five premier golf courses in Chantilly, all with 18 holes and some that sponsor competitions.

Since there were so many activities in Chantilly, it was necessary to stay overnight. **Auberge du Jeu de Paume**, a five-star Relais & Châteaux hotel, is the best-situated hotel in Chantilly, as it is the closest property to the Château, and it is also within walking distance of the restaurants and boutiques in town.

We highly recommend booking the suites and rooms overlooking the Château gardens and a tranquil fountain, rather than

Michelin-star restaurant Le Table du Connétable. We appreciated the spaciousness and comfort of the elegant dining room, as many restaurants in France tend to be crammed with too many tables. French-born chef Julien Lucas prepares an exquisite menu of truly local specialties, sourcing most ingredients within 50 miles, such as endive and mushrooms from Orry-la-Ville; hares, deer and chestnuts from the forestland surrounding Chantilly; wild seafood from the waters of Picardie; and shellfish and saffron from the Baie de Somme. A most special dessert — probably one of the



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THE MUSÉE CHRISTIAN DIOR (here) in Granville is the home Christian Dior grew up in during the early 1900s.

LA COURTINE (below) in Granville is famous for crepes.



bought by LVMH, the company that owns the Dior brand. The museum celebrates the life and designs of the master couturier.

We had the chance to check out “Grace de Monaco, Princesse en Dior,” an exhibit tracking the fairy tale story of how a movie star gave up a thriving Hollywood career when she married a real “Prince Charming,” Prince Rainier III of Monaco. Announcing their engagement at her parents’ home in Philadelphia, Princess Grace wore a dress adorned with flowers designed

by Christian Dior. Soon after, she was exclusively dressed in Christian Dior with Marc Bohan, the creative director of the house, personally designing all of her garments until her death in 1982.

Over 90 designs display the princesses’ wide-ranging wardrobe, including suits, gowns, day dresses, casual clothes and accessories. The clothes are interspersed with artifacts of her well-chronicled public life in the press, which includes magazine covers, portraits and photos. The highlight of the exhibit is coverage of the annual

gala ball for charity Princess Grace would throw, where she had noted designers and artists create the lavish sets while Dior designed a gown to match the theme.

After the informative and entertaining exhibit, we treated ourselves to a stroll in the lovely surrounding gardens bursting with late spring blooms. An outdoor café with white wood trellises covered in wisteria was too pretty to pass up, so we sipped on Earl Grey tea served in a porcelain teapot, admiring the handsome manor house and gardens.

The house and gardens are perched on a high bluff overlooking the dramatic, rocky beach, and we took the long staircase down. It was a blustery day and the Caribbean-blue water crashed on the high boulders. The sea air made us plenty hungry, so we had lunch at Le Restaurant du Port, which specializes in locally caught seafood. We enjoyed their hearty signature dish of seafood choucroute, a bed of steamed sauerkraut and bacon bits topped with salmon, haddock, sea bass,

cod fish and shellfish.

After lunch, we walked through an ancient stone archway, which led to the old quarter of Granville. Charming cottage-style houses with exposed stone facades and window boxes brimming with seasonal flowers lined the uneven, cobblestone streets. In the center was the oldest church in the village, Église Notre-Dame du Cap Lihou, which was built in 1440 by the English but not consecrated until 1641. The brilliant stained-glass windows with geometric and abstract forms appeared to be from the 20th century, and two chapels had small, wooden sailboats hanging in them, commemorating the strong presence of fishermen in the village.

Passing the inviting white lattice exterior and the heavenly scent of fresh crepes being made, we couldn’t resist La Courtine. We practically inhaled a dreamy warm crepe smothered in whipped Normandy cream and gooey chocolate syrup.

At the end of the afternoon, we discovered the Rue de Juif, a street chock full of art, ceramic and painting galleries. Most of the high-quality work is from local artists depicting the village scenery.

Although we didn’t have time on our day trip, it would be worthwhile to stay longer to take a boat ride on an early 19th-century schooner, *Lys Noir*. The half-day sail takes passengers to Iles de Chausey, a series of inlets, and small islands. Rugged and mostly untouched, the islands have white sand beaches, a chapel from 1840, an ancient fort and are a haven for fishermen.

For an overnight stay, our pick is the **Mercure Granville Le Grand Large Hotel**. It is a laid-back, four-star property with contemporary rooms (some with Channel views), a gym and bar. Granville takes between three and three and half hours to get to from Gare Montparnasse Paris. ■

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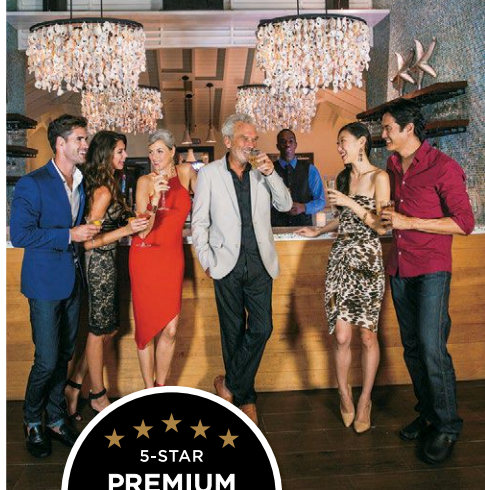
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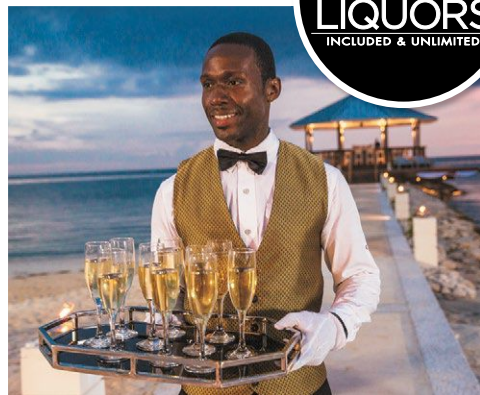
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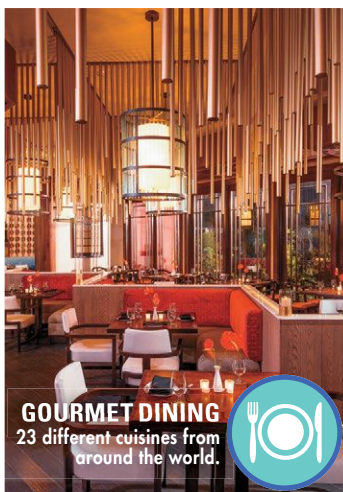
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All-Inclusives

BY MATT TURNER AND ADAM LEPOSA

Looking for all-inclusive vacation in the Caribbean or Mexico? *Luxury Travel Advisor* has just the picks for you.

On October 14, **Cobblers Cove** on the northwest coast of Barbados reopened with a new look. As part of the five-year refurbish-

ment, the Relais & Châteaux resort, which offers both a bed-and-breakfast and all-inclusive rate, updated all of its suites, guest areas, swimming pool and pavilion. The great entrance hall, drawing room and two signature suites also received updates.

Good to know: The all-inclusive rate covers breakfast, lunch, afternoon tea, dinner, soft drinks, local beer, house wines and house spirits, as well as a myriad of water sports, tennis, boat trips and fishing. Premium alcoholic beverages and snacks are not included.



Claiming a one-quarter mile of white-sand beach in a quiet cove, the family-owned boutique hotel — which opened in 1968 — is surrounded by three acres of lush tropical gardens. The 40 suites are spread among nine two-story cottages set in the gardens surrounding the original plantation-era Great House. Here, the two honeymoon suites have hand-woven grass carpets, four-poster beds, historical island prints, botanical drawings, basketwork lamps and views directly over the Caribbean.

The honeymoon suites — Camelot and Colleton at the Great House — are the

THE CAMELOT SUITE (here) at Cobblers Cove is located on two floors of the original Great House and comes with a private rooftop.

COBBLERS COVE can arrange private lunch and dinner at Lazybones Pavilion (above right), which offers sea views.



top options on-property. Colleton is the larger of the two (1,780 square feet) and is located on the first floor. In addition to the four-poster bed, the suite has his-and-hers dressing rooms, a double shower, a kitchenette, a private covered terrace with its own plunge pool and an open terrace with sun loungers. Camelot at the Great House comes in at 1,380 square feet but is spread across two floors; it has a first-floor terrace, private rooftop with sun loungers, a separate bathtub and shower, and kitchenette. Good to know: Each of these rooms also has the best views of the Caribbean.

The Ocean Front and Ocean View Suites are the most requested. The Two-Bedroom Suite is best for families. Note: Only six of the 40 rooms have bathtubs, so enquire with reservations managers Sheena Goodridge (sheena.goodridge@cobblerscove.com) or Renee Smith (renee.smith@cobblerscove.com) should that be a preference.

Known for locally sourced food and fish caught daily by Barker, the hotel fisherman, Camelot Restaurant is run by Bajan chef, Jason Joseph. Guests of the Camelot restaurant should order the catch of the day (available blackened or grilled with potato, zucchini and red pepper coulis) and follow that with the Grand Marnier Soufflé with vanilla bean ice cream. In addition to a seasonal menu for breakfast, lunch and dinner, chef Joseph also offers Tuesday Cocktail Party and “Easy Sunday” BBQ menus, as well as an Island Night menu, available on Fridays. All three events include live music (think: soca, calypso, steel pan and swing). Tip: Be sure to request a table at the Gazebo.

Good to know: Guests can also arrange for a private dinner — whether it’s a romantic evening for a couple, a family picnic or a celebration with friends. Dining locations include the Lazybones Pavilion, offering the top sea views; North Patio, near the pool and bar, or any number of private beaches. Chef Joseph will also work with you to completely customize the menu. To arrange a private dining experience, travel advisors should contact Anne-Marie Green (anne-marie.green@cobblerscove.com; 011-12-464-222-291), assistant to the general manager.

For guests looking to learn more about the island, Cobblers Cove can arrange a variety of interesting tours, including garden, heritage and hiking tours. The private, chauffeured Garden Tour will visit numerous notable



gardens on the island, including Hunte’s, Andromeda Botanic Gardens, Orchid World, Welchman Hall Gully and Flower Forest. The tailor-made heritage tours, led by a guide from the Barbados National Trust, visit both public and private plantation houses not usually open to the public and / or Bridgetown’s UNESCO World Heritage garrison.

After a day on the water or exploring the island, be sure to book a spa treatment with Carla Cumberbatch, the resort’s therapist. The spa has only one treatment room, so book as far in advance as possible (couple’s treatments are available).

The hotel is 45 minutes from Grantley Adams International Airport. Tip: Book FastTrack through immigration via the hotel when making your reservation. Christmas, New Year’s and February are the busiest times at the resort; it’s best to book a year in advance for these times.

Cobblers Cove closes yearly between August and October for upkeep. The general manager is Will Oakley (will.oakley@cobblerscove.com; 011-12-464-222-291).

In Turks & Caicos, **The Meridian Club on Pine Cay** first served as a private members club before opening as a hotel in 1973. Here, three meals daily, afternoon snacks and tea, water sports, taxi and boat transfers are all included in the rate but no drinks of any sort are included.

Guests can stay in any of 13 beachfront

residences and the original Clubhouse. The Premium Beachfront Rooms were renovated in 2018; each of these open-plan rooms has a king bed and built-in closet space. In the bathrooms, guests will find double vanities and a large, walk-in shower that leads to a private outdoor stone waterfall shower. The Premium Beachfront Rooms look out onto Pine Cay's secluded two-mile beach, and are set among the same sand dunes as the Standard Beachfront Rooms; these rooms have a more traditional Caribbean aesthetic and a separated living and bedroom space. Note: The Standard Beachfront Rooms do not have air conditioning.

Good to know: Both the Premium and Standard Beachfront Room categories have screened-in porches.

The top accommodations on property are the two new Luxury Beachfront Cottages, Sand Dollar and Sea Biscuit. The cottages have slightly more space than the Beachfront Rooms (912 square feet compared to 814 square feet) and offer more seclusion. They have the same amenities as the Beachfront Rooms but additionally have private outdoor dining spaces and terraces with a hammock.

There are also six private homes available in varying sizes, meaning they can accommodate couples, families or groups of friends; they also vary from modern to "casual island chic" in décor. Good to know: The Private Homes come with their own golf cart for easy access to the Clubhouse.

Note: The Meridian Club accepts children ages 12 and older from November through May; from June and July, ages six years and older can stay at the resort. Children under the age of 12 are allowed to stay in some rental homes but there are limitations in terms of them eating dinner at the Clubhouse.

Travel advisors should contact Avianna Adolph Penn (reservations@meridianclub.com; 011-888-286-7993), reservations manager, or Melissa Jennings (guestservices@meridianclub.com; 011-888-286-7993), guest services manager, for bookings. Note: The Meridian Club on Pine Cay can be fully bought out.

Similar to Cobblers Cove, The Meridian Club is most busy for Christmas, New Year's and February. It also closes yearly, from August through October.

There is one restaurant on property, helmed by executive chef Carlos Andrés Meléndez, who creates tropical-inspired fine



dining dishes. Jump Up Night (hosted every Saturday) is a must. You should also definitely head to the upstairs bar in The Clubhouse to take in views of the sunset, while enjoying drinks and hors d'oeuvres.

The construction of a new spa and fitness room is nearing completion. Among the new amenities? A couple's treatment room. Currently, however, the Sand Dollar Spa has two treatment rooms. Yani (spa@meridianclub.com), the spa director and Balinese spa specialist, selects products that are natural and organic. The Balinese Massage is the signature offering, but the Deep Tissue Massage is among the most requested.

How to get there: Guests should fly into Providenciales International Airport and take a 15-minute taxi to the marina, where a Pine Cay boat will pick them up. A guest service representative will get the guests acclimated during the 20-minute boat ride. Pine Cay does have its own small airstrip that can accommodate some private jets.

If you're looking to get off-property, among the more popular options are bird watching, bike rides across the island or walking any of the nature trails that lead to secret beaches. On the water, Hobie Cats, kayaks, paddle boards and snorkeling gear are included and available. Guests can also sign up for scuba diving, deep sea fishing, kitesurfing, whale watching and more.

Should guests prefer a Mexican retreat, here are a couple resorts to keep on your radar.

The **Paradisus Playa del Carmen** offers a pair of options for travelers seeking either a romantic getaway or a family-friendly vacation. The resort complex is divided into two halves — the adults-only Paradisus La Perla and the family-friendly Paradisus

La Esmeralda — and both offer exclusive, upscale service in the form of the Family Concierge at La Esmeralda and the Royal Service at La Perla resorts-within-a-resort.

All-inclusive rates at the resorts comprise roundtrip transfers, à la carte meals and drinks — at La Palapa for the Royal Service and at the Olio Restaurant for the Family Concierge — as well as private check-in, pool and beach areas and, of course, butler service, complete with a complimentary cell phone to message the butler while on property.

Both Royal Service at La Perla and Family Concierge at La Esmeralda offer access to the best suites Paradisus has to offer in Playa del Carmen. At La Perla, ask for Presidential Suites Nos. 1392 or 1396, each of which have Thierry Mugler amenities, a view of the ocean and access to the exclusive Royal Service Pool and the water ritual at YHI Spa.

For families, Presidential Suites Nos. 3325 and 3328 at La Esmeralda are the ones to pick. These have much the same amenities as the Presidential Suites on the adults-only side of the resort, but with access to the exclusive Family Service Pool instead of the Royal Service Pool.

Outside of the Presidential Suites, the resorts' two-bedroom master suites, some of which have swim-up access, are a good bet for families and large groups. All told, 67 of the connecting rooms are available at La Esmeralda. For girls' or guys' getaways or other friend groups, the adults-only La Perla also has 54 connecting two-bedroom master suites. For other options with great views of the ocean, book the one-bedroom suites on the third floor on both the La Perla and La Esmeralda side.

Royal Service at La Perla also grants access



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to a number of exclusive amenities, including dedicated, personalized assistance from a private butler, who can be contacted via instant message. Billed as a boutique hotel within the larger all-inclusive resort, it has its own dedicated lounge for private check-in and checkout, plus a terrace with private whirlpool in every suite.

Family Concierge at La Esmeralda likewise offers butler service — a lifesaver for managing the little ones! — as well as exclusive access to the Olio restaurant, a traditional, poolside Italian trattoria. The area also has its own private swimming pool and beach area with

Juarez or David Escamilla, the top estheticians at the facility. A full menu of treatments, including aromatherapy, sports and relaxation massages and hydrotherapy, is also on offer. For those interested in keeping up their wellness routine, even on vacation, the fitness center offers trainers, group studio classes and one-on-one coaching. Contact Carla Paladino (Carla.paladino@melia.com; 011-52-984-877-5720), spa manager, for special requests.

Once refreshed, it's time to hit the town, and fortunately the famous shopping area of La Quinta Avenida is only 10 minutes

A taste of the Riviera Maya scene is also available at the resort; the Passion Restaurant by Michelin-starred chef Martin Berasategui draws a local crowd. Note: "Elegant attire" is required here, and only adults are allowed, but the menu of Basque-French fusion cuisine is not to be missed. Foodies will also want to check out the Fuego restaurant, which serves up Latin fusion dishes and a raw bar in a sexy atmosphere — be sure to try the octopus ceviche! There's even a terrace to dine on while enjoying the breeze.

Terrace dining is also available at Vento, the resort's Indian restaurant that's open for dinner and available to both families and adults, as well as Bana, the property's contemporary Asian fine dining restaurant. The latter also has an adults-only area with Teppanyaki tables and a sushi bar.

Elsewhere around the resorts, there are a number of other ways to while away the time or blow off some steam. La Perla has great adults-only sports activities ranging from light stretching and meditation to, for the more competitively inclined, volleyball. Travelers can also opt to learn a new skill with tango classes or a number of workshops focused on tequila sampling or wine tasting.

For kids at La Esmeralda, daycare service for ages between 12 months and four years old is available from 9 a.m. to 10 p.m., while older kids (ages five to 12) can check out the Kids' Zone, where they can take part in beach games, treasure hunts and enrichment experiences such as cookie workshops or an exploration of the nearby natural environment. There is also a special program for teenagers that runs the gamut from beach volleyball to snorkeling, kayaking and more. For those who simply must spend their vacation indoors, there is also a games room with a PlayStation, Nintendo Wii and Xbox 360. Twenty-four-hour babysitting service is also available for an extra charge.

Both resorts are 40 minutes away from Cancun International Airport, and roundtrip airport transportation is included for guests of both properties. Travelers can also opt to land at Playa del Carmen Domestic Airport, which is 10 minutes away and has facilities to handle private helicopters and jets.

Leisure travel manager Gerardo Palma (Gerardo.palma@melia.com; 011-529-848-773-963) serves as the primary advisor contact for both properties. Managing director Conrad Bergwerf can also be reached at conrad.bergwerf@melia.com, or 011-529-848-773-900. ■



PARADISUS PLAYA DEL CARMEN's adults-only section
Paradisus La Perla has 395 rooms, many with swim-up access.

concierge service, plus there are daily, specially organized enrichment activities for the whole family. In the suites, a number of fun touches for kids abound (think: kid-sized bathrobes and slippers, turndown service with milk and cookies and a "bathtime fun" setup for the whirlpool). Best of all, the area just opened a new water park, so there will be plenty to keep the children busy during the day.

Adults at both resorts, however, can opt to relax with a trip to the YHI Spa, which is home to a full-service beauty salon (bridal treatments available), 14 massage cabins and wet and dry saunas. The most popular treatment here is the 50-minute Mayan massage; be sure to ask for Andres García, Maribel

away by taxi. The hotel is also 45 minutes by car from famous archeological sites such as Tulum, Chichén Itzá and Cobá. It's also close to the Xcaret ecological park.

For golf buffs, the Grand Coyote Golf course is five minutes away from the property, where outings can be arranged for an additional charge. Advisors should contact Aldo Espino (aldo.espino@melia.com; 011-529-848-775-133), La Perla guest services manager, and Rocío Juárez (Rocio.juarez@melia.com; 011-529-848-775-205), La Esmeralda guest services manager, to arrange an outing. Espino and Juárez also serve as the head concierges for their respective resorts and can arrange for a number of other VIP activities, as well.

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Couple's Spas

From the white-sand beaches of St. Lucia to the iconic shores of Oahu, these two resort spas set the stage for rest, relaxation and romance.

BY LINDSAY LAMBERT DAY

The BodyHoliday Saint Lucia

Daily pampering is part of the experience for guests of **The BodyHoliday**, situated along Caribblue Beach in Castries, St. Lucia. One 50-minute spa treatment per full day is included, with 12 facials, massages and

wraps to choose from.

Insiders tell us that the most requested inclusive treatments are the relaxing full-body massages, which use Swedish massage techniques and aromatherapy oils, and the coconut and spice wrap. Many guests find the latter invigorating after long

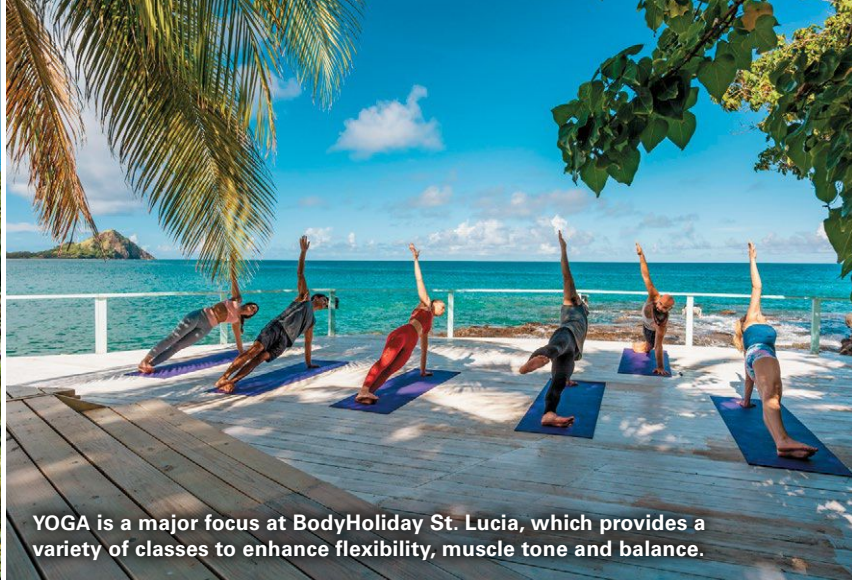
hours in the air and say it readies the skin for exposure to the Caribbean sun. Supplemental treatments are also available and the Abhyanga Ayurvedic massage, which is administered in the Wellness Centre's Pavitra Ayurvedic temple, is the most requested treatment from that

menu. Tip: BodyHoliday's Wellness Centre staff tell us that, while all of its aestheticians and therapists are expertly trained and highly knowledgeable, Georgia is renowned for her reflexology skills.

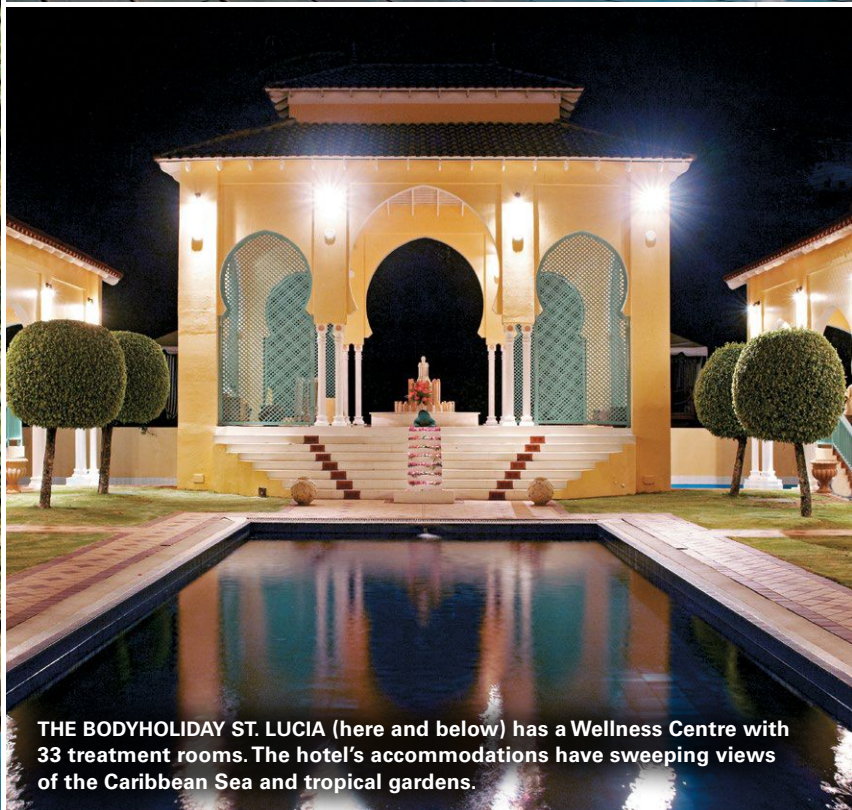
BodyHoliday's Wellness Centre has 33 treatment rooms.



THE BODYHOLIDAY ST. LUCIA, situated along Caribblue Beach in Castries, has 40-plus activities, which range from sailing to guided stretching.



YOGA is a major focus at BodyHoliday St. Lucia, which provides a variety of classes to enhance flexibility, muscle tone and balance.



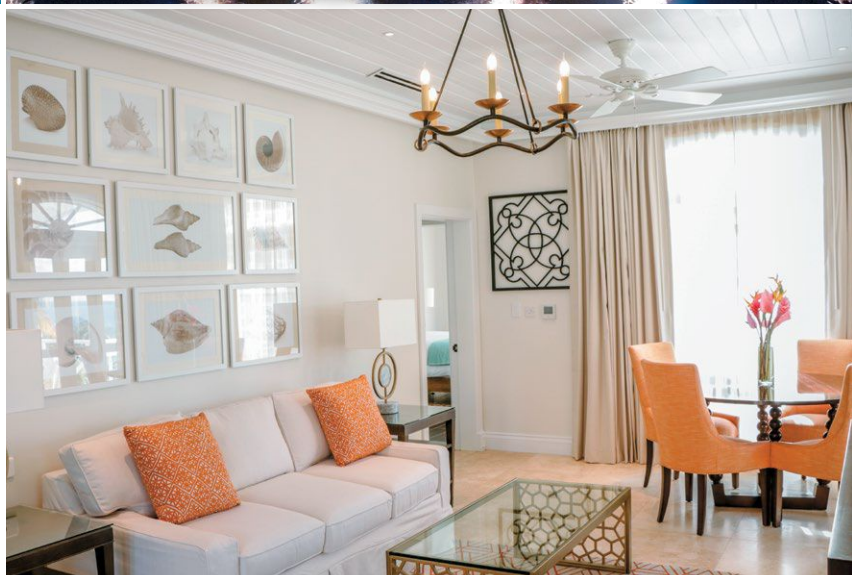
THE BODYHOLIDAY ST. LUCIA (here and below) has a Wellness Centre with 33 treatment rooms. The hotel's accommodations have sweeping views of the Caribbean Sea and tropical gardens.

Note that, while the rooms are all configured for individual treatments only, couples can spend time together in the detoxing Far Infrared Therapy facility; the meditation temple; the Thalasso therapy pool; the fitness studio and gym; the BodyScience Clinic; or with the resort's 40-plus activities, which range from sailing to guided stretching.

From the moment a room booking is made, guests can schedule spa treatments via the resort's pre-arrival Web room service, which they can use to cus-

tomize their entire visit. It's best to book rooms and spa services as far in advance as is possible; however, Wellness Centre staffers are flexible, and guests can even make changes to their spa visit day-of. Let wellness leader Safyie Jean Pierre (safyie@thebodyholiday.com; 011-17-584-577-800) know about any special requests.

Nothing drums up an appetite like time spent in the surf and sun, and the resort's fusion restaurant, TAO, is a romantic place to refuel thanks to its setting on an open-air balcony over-





THE SPA at The Ritz-Carlton Residences Waikiki Beach has four treatment rooms (one of which is shown here), including one for couples, and a relaxation lounge (shown above).



looking Caribblue Beach and the Caribbean Sea. Bespoke dining options include in-villa catering, and private dinners on the beach, at the resort's secret garden or on the Hibiscus Deck, which affords stunning sunset views.

When it comes to accommodations, BodyHoliday's top offering is its Penthouse, which occupies its own floor. Amenities include a private entrance, butler service, a Kinesis gym and a private

Turkish hammam that's decorated in marble and travertine mosaics and features a heated massage bed. If the Penthouse is booked, opt for one of two new Oasis Villas, which are located just steps from the spa. The villas opened this fall and offer private concierge service and direct beach access. Contact director of sales and marketing Rebecca Platt (rebecca@sunsweptresorts.com; 011-17-584-577-875) for bookings.

The Ritz-Carlton, Waikiki

A perennial favorite romantic destination, Hawaii seduces visitors with its cotton candy-colored sunsets, balmy breezes and slowed-down vibe. In Honolulu, **The Ritz-Carlton Residences, Waikiki Beach** ups the romance ante with its 3,400-square-foot spa, which is home to just four treatment rooms.

The 80-minute Pili-loha couple's treatment uses a rhythmic lomilomi technique and flower essences to release emotional tension and align both partners' hearts. Bonus: It includes a wild lehua honey scrub, warm stones and other soothing components. The spa also offers several signature treatments, the most requested of which is the renewing, 105-minute Huki Huki thanks to its mud wrap, lomilomi massage and scalp treatment combo. Hint: If you're booking a massage or facial, request to have it done by Emiko Bilal. Don't go home without taking a dip in the resort's 1,100-square-foot, adults-only infinity pool, located in 'Ewa Tower; it has lounge seating, private cabanas and two Jacuzzis. Fun Fact: It is the highest adult pool in Waikiki.

Because of the spa's intimate size, insiders suggest booking treatments at least a week in advance by contacting spa director Jennifer Koon (koon@ritzcarlton.com; 011-808-922-8111); she can also assist with special requests and other questions.

The hotel caters to couples beyond its spa, too. Its Grand Ocean View Suite is the perfect pick thanks to its lanai with panoramic views of Waikiki Beach — not to mention a soaking tub that comfortably fits two. For even more space, book the three-bedroom Premier Ocean View Suite (the highest suite category) or a Grand View Suite. The latter is the only four-bedroom suite in Waikiki and it also has a den. If proximity to the spa is important, note that it's located between the hotel's two towers on the lobby level, so request rooms accordingly when reaching out to director of sales and marketing Sandy Narvaez (sandy.narvaez@ritzcarlton.com; 011-808-922-8111) to book.

With three top-notch restaurants located on site, resort guests don't have to go far to enjoy a romantic meal. La Vie, which overlooks the ocean from 'Ewa Tower, serves modern French cuisine with a focus on local ingredients and wine pairings. At the 10-seat Sushi Sho, chef Keiji Nakazawa pairs various types of seasoned rice with more than 40 kinds of fish. Good to know: Insiders tell us that many guests book their stay based on when they're able to score a reservation at the restaurant, as Sushi Sho books up several months in advance. Quiora specializes in classic Italian in an open-air atmosphere and has live entertainment nightly. Is private dining more your M.O.? Customized, in-suite dining can be arranged, complete with personalized décor, flowers and live music. ■

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Body & Soul

New wellness and spa programs are trending as a priority for luxury cruisers.

BY SUSAN J. YOUNG



Life today moves at breakneck speed as family and business responsibilities combine to create a fast-paced schedule with lots of stress and little “me time.” Not surprisingly, Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA) cites “Total Restoration” as one of the cruise industry’s top travel trends this year.

How many guests typically use the cruise line’s spa? **Crystal Cruises** tells *Luxury Travel Advisor* that nine to 12 percent of all oceangoing guests book a spa service while onboard,

depending on the season and region. Many guests also head for the gym or participate in wellness activities.

For many luxury travelers, wellness is a lifestyle. The good news is that several luxury cruise lines have just introduced totally new spa concepts, restorative spa treatments, plant-based dining options, wellness programs onboard and ashore, and fitness center updates.

New Spa Concepts
Ultra-luxury **Regent Seven**

Seas Cruises has unveiled “Serene Spa & Wellness,” a new holistic concept for ship and shore. Originally targeted exclusively at the new 750-passenger *Seven Seas Splendor*, debuting in early 2020, the concept now is going fleet-wide. Replacing the line’s existing Canyon Ranch SpaClub concept, Serene Spa & Wellness will debut during these voyages: *Seven Seas Explorer*, December 7; *Seven Seas Mariner*, January 6; *Seven Seas Voyager*, January 7; *Seven Seas Navigator*, January 23; and *Seven Seas*

Splendor, February 6.

One facet we find appealing is the coupling of new spa treatments with elements or ingredients that reflect the global destinations to which the line sails. For example, a new “Calming Rose Facial,” features hand-picked organic English roses from the United Kingdom. The signature “Regent Massage,” a full-body therapy, uses rosemary, sea fennel and sea Buckthorn from the Mediterranean Coast, while warm eucalyptus-infused paraffin mitts and boots



AQUAMAR SPA + VITALITY CENTER on Oceania Cruises will offer a range of wellness programs and services, from refreshing body treatments to nourishing menu choices and enlightening adventures ashore.

Photo courtesy of Oceania Cruises

enhance that experience.

We can't wait to try the "Around the World Massage," which fuses multiple destination-focused treatment techniques. During this new treatment, guests will soak in scents of Indian cardamom, Egyptian coriander and eucalyptus, while a Swedish massage and bamboo stalks gliding over muscles will help release any tension. A soothing Moroccan argan oil will condition the scalp.

The full range of spa treatments will include ELEMIS

facial therapies, and many more body treatments, massages, manicures and pedicures. Check out the menu of treatments on Regent's website (www.rssc.com/experience/onboard-activities/spa-fitness).

In addition, the new Serene Spa & Wellness concept will offer luxury Kerastase salon services and have a hefty wellness component, too. Guests can expect fitness classes and personal training, plus a series of wellness tours and nutritionally mindful cuisine in the ship's onboard restaurants. In short, the services will extend far beyond just the physical spa venue.

Guests can participate in exercise classes, Pilates, yoga and meditation. Fitness equipment will include spinning bikes, dumbbells, treadmills, Technogym strength machines, work-out mats and step benches. One-on-one training can be arranged with a fitness instructor. *Seven Seas Splendor* and *Seven Seas Explorer* will also offer a hydrothermal suite, with a multi-sensory aromatherapy steam room, chill room, infrared sauna and experiential showers.

Examples of the shoreside wellness tours? They might include a tai chi class on a beach at Palma de Mallorca or a yoga session overlooking the seaside town of Taormina in Sicily.

In early October, **Oceania Cruises** also announced that it has created a new spa brand concept, Aquamar Spa + Vitality Center. Look for it on all ships by late January. Replacing Canyon Ranch with a much more encompassing concept, the new offering was dreamed up, finetuned and launched by an internal team at Oceania who believed in going "beyond the traditional physical spa experience." It will incorporate new rejuvenating treatments and healing therapies, gourmet Aquamar Vitality Cuisine and plant-based

dishes, and Wellness Discovery Tours by Aquamar.

How about a "Restorative Himalayan Salt Stone Massage," in which warm salt stones are bathed in aromatics to diffuse negative energy, reduce stress and alleviate muscle tension? Or, going ashore in Bangkok, Thailand, guests might take a Wellness Discovery Tour by Aquamar. Guests will float along the Chao Phraya River on a historical wooden rice barge, while a traditional reflexologist applies gentle pressure during a foot therapy session; it's designed to enhance relaxation and reduce pain.

In terms of Aquamar Vitality Cuisine, in the Grand Dining Room, breakfast might offer a green apple muesli with pistachios, pecans and yellow raisins, with avocado toast on rustic farmer's bread. Or, for dinner, one sample menu includes som tam green papaya kelp noodle salad and roasted butternut squash with arugula, mango, black radish and hearts of palm.

For loyal Oceania guests wondering whether the onboard Aquamar Spa will still offer a spa terrace with pool, the answer is "Yes." Guests in Concierge Level Staterooms and higher categories will still have complimentary access to that pool. Daily passes will be available for purchase too. Aquamar fitness centers will offer complimentary fitness classes, with one-on-one training and specialized group classes at an additional charge.

Do Oceania Club benefits apply to Aquamar Spa + Vitality Center? Yes, they'll be reinstated for each ship as the new spa concept debuts. That's during the following voyages: December 5 on *Riviera*, December 7 for *Nautica* and *Sirena*, January 6 for *Regatta*, January 8 on *Insignia* and January 22 on *Marina*.

A third new spa brand, the Mareel Wellness & Beauty spa concept, a holistic approach developed in partnership with Canyon Ranch, will debut on **Cunard Line's** 2,691-passenger *Queen Mary 2 (QM2)* in November 2020. It's already on *Queen Elizabeth* and *Queen Victoria*.

Taken from the ancient Norse language, the word "mareel" means phosphorescence of the ocean and focuses on the sea's unique qualities — illuminating light and healing energy for the spirit. So, luxury travelers entering the redesigned spa facilities will find new décor with hues of blue, green and pale coral, designed to create a sanctuary of calm.

A more extensive spa treatment menu includes mineral-rich seawater and marine-based experiences. We'd opt for the signature treatment, "Ocean Discovery," with organic, marine-based products from VOYA (mostly harvested in western Ireland); it's a great way to replenish and nourish the skin and body. Cruisers have a diverse range of new ocean-focused massage, body and alternative treatments — from an "Organic

REGENT SEVEN SEAS CRUISES's new spa concept, Serene Spa & Wellness, will debut on *Seven Seas Explorer* on December 7.



Photo courtesy of Regent Seven Seas Cruises

Seaweed Leaf Wrap” to the “Taste the Ocean Full Body Experience” to a “Luminescence Massage.”

New offerings include a couple’s suite for seaweed bathing rituals; sound therapy facilities in every treatment room, and a meditation room with acoustic resonance loungers. The multi-functional fitness center and studio space is also redesigned.

Mareel wellness experiences also are being added to *QM2*’s daily program. Guests can attend a wellness seminar, participate in outdoor yoga or dance classes, or simply check out the stretch and daily meditation videos on their suite’s TV.

Spa Pampering on an Expedition

Luxury Travel Advisor just returned from Antwerp, Belgium, late last month, where **Hapag-Lloyd Cruises** christened its new luxurious *Hanseatic inspiration*, an international-market ship with both English and German spoken onboard. It serves 230 guests and even fewer (199) in polar waters. While adventurous itineraries are on tap for this new expedition ship, so is the pampering “Inspired by Nature” wellness deck with full spa facilities that focus on sustainability.

The ship’s 2,350-square-foot Ocean Spa offers stressed-out

travelers an opportunity for massage and cosmetic treatments in light-filled rooms with sea views. Spa specialists use only sustainable products by Vinoble, Hyapur, John Masters Organics and Nailberry. The “Inspired by Nature” concept is also reflected in the spa’s vegan formulas and use of local produce with no chemicals or synthetic additives. The Finnish sauna features floor-to-ceiling windows and an outdoor area. Guests will also find a Finnish sauna, steam sauna, hydrotherapy shower and ice fountain. The spa also has a hairdressing salon and fitness areas with sea views.

Scenic’s first Discovery Yacht, the new 228-passenger *Scenic Eclipse* (fewer maximum passengers in polar regions) also

began cruising the globe earlier this fall. It’s a sleek, contemporary beauty with spacious modern public spaces, multiple dining venues and lounges, and even two six-seat helicopters and one six-seat submarine for exploring in the sky and underwater.

Luxury Travel Advisor walked through the spa during a ship visit, and this 5,920-square-foot space is quite large for a ship this size. It has a well-equipped gym and separate yoga and Pilates studio. All accommodations on *Scenic Eclipse* are spacious, too, from 344-square-foot Veranda Suites to the 2,659-square-foot, two-bedroom Penthouse Suite. We’d suggest spa enthusiasts consider *Scenic Eclipse*’s Spa Suites, which range from 538 square feet to 560 square feet.

One Spa Suite perk is a large Philippe Starck-designed spa bath overlooking a private veranda. These spa suites also have a steam shower with oversized head and light therapy, dual vanity basins and separate lounge area with reading chair. Added perk? Spa suites offer a complimentary one-hour spa treatment per suite and complimentary laundry service.

Also on the expedition side, the new *Crystal Endeavor*, a 200-passenger polar-class vessel,

will launch next summer with plenty of creature comforts and high visibility amenities, including two helicopters and a seven-person submarine. Look for the ship’s Crystal Life Spa & Salon to feature a relaxation area, three treatment rooms, a salon for hair styling, manicures and pedicures, and both a men’s and women’s sauna and steam room.

We’d splurge for a stay in the 1,290-square-foot Expedition Suite (ES category), largest and most lavish of all accommodations onboard. Located on Deck 7, this enclave combines an Expedition Penthouse and a Deluxe Suite, so it has two bedrooms, sumptuous living and dining areas, as well as a private veranda.

To entice potential guests and Crystal Society members onboard all Crystal ships, this fall, Crystal debuted a new consumer-focused *Crystal Living* magazine. Spotlighting destinations and onboard experiences, it will have dedicated editorial sections including Wellness, highlighting Crystal’s activities to nourish mind, body and soul.

Luxury small-ship **Ponant** recently announced that it was acquiring **Paul Gauguin Cruises**, expanding its small-ship luxury footprint across the globe; it plans to both expand the Paul



SCENIC ECLIPSE’s 5,920-square-foot spa has a separate yoga and Pilates studio.

Photo courtesy of Scenic Cruises



THE OCEAN SPA on Hapag-Lloyd’s Hanseatic inspiration has 2,350 square feet of space and offers massage and cosmetic treatments in light-filled rooms with sea views.

Photo by Susan J. Young

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Gauguin fleet and operate that as a separate brand. As for Ponant itself, two more 184-passenger Explorer-series ships will set sail in 2020 — *Le Bellot* in April and *Le Jacques Cartier* in July.

Both feature the multi-sensory, underwater Blue Eye Lounge, which can do wonders for those seeking a fun spot to relax and soak in nature's sounds. Have a cocktail here bathed in blue lighting, soak up whale sounds and view the underwater world outside via portholes shaped as cetaceans' eyes.

Looking ahead to 2021, Ponant's new hybrid propulsion vessel, *Le Commandant-Charcot*, will be the first luxury ship to reach the true North Pole; it will be powered by LNG and electric generators. Equipped with just 135 staterooms, including 31 suites with balconies and outside views, this expedition vessel will offer an intimate, refined aura.

Wellness-wise, it will have a fitness room with elliptic, running machines and bicycles, as well as a hair salon, massage rooms, a sauna, snow room and nail shop. We'd opt to relax in the indoor pool nestled within a "winter garden."

Wellness Lifestyle

Wellness is a lifestyle for many guests. This year, **Seabourn Cruise Line** added new Mindful Living shore excursions with a wellness bent. In addition, the line's new "Wellness in the South Pacific" cruise on *Seabourn Encore* sets sail on February 8 from Auckland, New Zealand to Sydney, Australia.

The big draw is Dr. Andrew Weil, M.D., a world-renowned leader and pioneer in the field of integrative medicine, as well as other wellness notables. The sailing will also feature the Ventures by Seabourn program of optional,

for-charge expedition excursions.

Ports of call include Tauranga (Rotorua), Picton, Wellington, Akaroa (Christchurch), Port Chalmers (Dunedin), Oban (Halfmoon Bay), a cruise around Fiordland National Park, and Milford Sound. Then it's across the sea to Australia with calls at Melbourne, Phillip Island in Victoria, Eden in New South Wales, and finally Sydney.

Wellness-wise, **Windstar Cruises'** three Star-class vessels will emerge in 2020 with many new suites and spaces, as well as greatly enlarged fitness centers and a new world-class spa. It's

all part of the line's \$250 million Star Plus Initiative program.

In what's sure to be a dramatic scene, the line is adding a new mid-section in drydock to lengthen *Star Legend*, *Star Breeze* and *Star Pride*. *Star Breeze* will emerge first in February with the other two ships being completed in July and November.

Overall Star-class ship capacity will increase to 312 guests and the vessels will gain 50 new suites, new suite categories and two-larger Owner's Suites. The latter combines existing suites to create a three-bedroom, two-balcony suite, appealing for multigenerational families or couples traveling together.



Photo by Juan Pablo Merchan

Ancient Treatments

For those seeking something a bit different — perhaps a traditional treatment rooted in Chinese medicine — some lines, among them **Silversea Cruises** and **Azamara**, also bring licensed acupuncturists onboard to offer treatments using the ancient Chinese system of healing. Acupuncture is said to strengthen the immune system, fight disease and control pain, as well as dissolve accumulated stress and restore the body's natural balance.

Acupuncture is also thought to help with smoking cessation and weight loss. One popular Azamara acupuncture specialty service is an hour-long nutritional consultation; guests come away with a personalized diet plan based on current nutritional research and a Chinese medicine diagnosis. Silversea, as well, offers an acupuncture seminar on certain sailings of *Silver Muse* and *Silver Spirit*.

On Global Rivers

River cruise lines are also offering wellness / fitness themed options. From January through March and September through October in 2020, **Uniworld River Cruises** will offer many departures of its new

A MASSAGE ROOM (above) on a Silversea Expedition-type ship. Silversea is among the few lines that also bring licensed acupuncturists onboard.

CRYSTAL ENDEAVOR's Crystal Life Spa & Salon will have a relaxation area (here), three treatment rooms, a salon and both a men's and women's sauna and steam rooms.



Photo courtesy of Crystal Cruises

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AMAMAGNA's Zen Wellness Studio has plenty of machines, including the four spin bikes for outdoor spinning classes.

12-day “Me to We: Calcutta and the Sacred Ganges” itinerary, both on land and river, from New Delhi to Kolkata, India; the land portion includes many yoga sessions, while the river portion is an eight-day, wellness-themed cruise on *Ganges*

Voyager II with a new “Nutrition and Wellness Food” menu at breakfast, lunch and dinner.

This year, **AmaWaterways** expanded its wellness program fleetwide in Europe (except Portugal) and Southeast Asia.

Now, professionally trained Wellness Hosts sail and offer guests group fitness classes — such as stretching, core strengthening and resistance band training — and lectures and discussions related to holistic

wellness. For guests sailing on *AmaDara* on the Mekong River, depending on the wellness host's expertise, the line also could include a traditional tea ceremony (so guests can learn about organic tea), meditation, yoga and tai chi.

This summer, the new 196-passenger *AmaMagna*, twice as wide as other Danube River vessels, launched with an aft Zen Wellness Studio, a fitness center with state-of-the-art machines (both inside and outdoors on the terrace), and a creative wellness bar relaxation area. We like that the wellness area had both inside and outside chairs and tables, scenic river views and a “detox water of the day.” One day we sampled the “Gemstone Water” with quartz and amethyst minerals.

Wellness is certainly trending as a top desire of luxury cruisers this year. Thankfully, many upscale lines have creative new spa or wellness offerings; in some cases, these go far beyond the traditional physical spa experience of the past. ■

MORE LUXURY CRUISE TRENDS

Greater Family & Skip-Gen Cruising:

Multigenerational family travel is a hot trend. **Tauck** has expanded its line-up of family-dedicated Bridges river cruises. And luxury lines, including **Ponant**, are now seeing more “Skip-Gen” or “skipping-a-generation” cruising. In the Caribbean or Alaska, grandparents take their grandchildren on a cruise, but leave their adult children behind (for their own couple's romantic trip, perhaps.)

Delving More into Land: Cruise lines and luxury sellers alike continue to stress that “the destination” rules as the prime reason for cruising. That's why cruise lines are infusing itineraries with more overnights in port, late nights in port and even overland journeys in the midst of a long cruise. **Azamara** recently dropped the “Club Cruises” from its name and added new curated pre- and

post-cruise land adventures to showcase its even more extensive land focus.

The Rise of Luxury Expedition: New luxury expedition ships just launched or on the horizon, from **Scenic**, **Hapag-Lloyd Cruises**, **Ponant**, **Crystal**, **Silversea** and others, are greatly broadening choices for luxury guests seeking off-the-beaten-path adventure, whether it's to the Arctic, Antarctic or more tropical spots across the globe. See our main story for more about several new vessels.

Ancestry & Genealogy: Genealogy is reportedly the second-most popular hobby in the U.S., only trailing gardening, as cited in a recent CruiseCompete.com study about the latest cruising trends. Studying family trees and finding out “where we came from” has become a reason for cruising to such countries or regions as Ireland, the U.K., France, Scandinavia, Italy, West Africa, Southeast Asia and beyond.

Booking Farther Out & Closer In:

Most cruise lines are pushing consumers to book further in advance (and giving them the best deals to do that), but this year, luxury lines including **Crystal** are seeing both, people booking further out and closer in. That may also show that luxury travelers are booking further out for the big vacation, but closer in for a second trip.

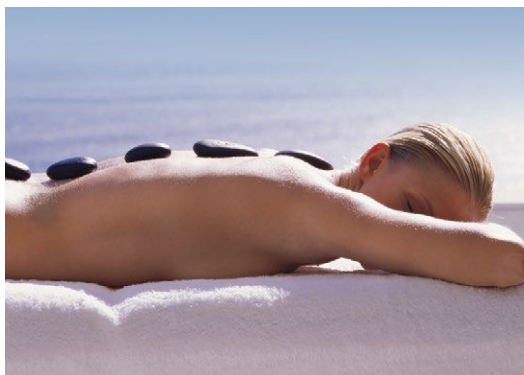
Experiential Culinary: Guests don't just want to watch celebrity chefs or sample high-brow cuisine. They want to delve into the local destinations via culinary. One good example is next year's summer debut of **Silversea Cruises'** S.A.L.T. program, which takes culinary immersion to a new level. For example, cruisers might meet with an organic pasta maker in Italy or hike along Balinese fields to a local resident's home for a family meal.

Photo courtesy of AmaWaterways

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TIFFANY HINES, here shown at Hotel Indigo Athens Downtown, says, "Luxury means different things to different people, so it's always a goal of ours when we sit down with people that we really find out what it means to them. It doesn't always mean spending a 'gazillion' dollars on a vacation, it could mean having very curated, private attention."

Southern Comfort

Tiffany Hines is ever-evolving Global Escapes to serve the luxury traveler.

BY MATT TURNER

Tiffany Hines of Global Escapes has seen her agency's business grow by double digits in each of the last six years. The agency, a member of the Signature Travel Network, now pulls in \$7 million in annual revenue.

Hines, who is the president, CEO and co-owner of Global Escapes, based in Athens, Georgia, has always put people first and sees that as part of her success. Five years ago, she cleaned up the agency's website to get rid of a lot of the brand "noise," and instead focused on her team, which includes four leisure advisors, two corporate advisors and two independent contractors.

"We really focused on Global Escapes, and who we are as a company and how we can help you accomplish your travel bucket list," she tells *Luxury Travel Advisor*. "We are the people who really love to get into the weeds, learning about destinations and the best way to see them," she says.

She also dropped "travel agency" from the company's name. Her website's homepage now reads, "Global Escapes is different. We are a full-service travel consulting company." It was a necessary update for someone who has been with the company since it was primarily booking airline tickets. But more on that later.

"We've put more of an emphasis on being a little bit more purposeful about our marketing and how we try and inspire people ... It's definitely brought about a more educated clientele," she says.

All this has helped Global Escapes find a niche in the luxury market, which currently comprises 65 percent of the agency's leisure sales. Hines also credits this shift to luxury to a focus on relationships — both with the company's clients and its supplier partners.

"One of the things that we explained to a lot of our newer clients is that everybody has different travel preferences," Hines says. "Everything we do is tailored to the client that we're meeting with and planning something for. Even if it is something as simple as spring break to the Caribbean, it's always tailored to the people that are traveling — what their preferences and priorities are for that particular trip."

To create these custom trips for clients, Hines says her advisors must maintain strong relationships with their preferred suppliers. "It's critically important that we have good relationships with the companies that [we] work with, because when you start getting into more luxury travel, it's so important for people to get that personalized attention," she says.

Hines adds that the agency has a part-time marketing director who stays in touch with all of the suppliers they work with most often and the ones that they want to build a better relationship with.

Home-Grown Roots

"Southern hospitality is at our core," Hines tells *Luxury Travel Advisor*.

It's been that way since her mother, Ella Grondahl, started the agency in 1988. "It was meeting people and being able to feel like you're helping people," that Grondahl enjoyed most, according to Hines. These remain some of the most important characteristics that she looks for in new employees. "We want to make sure that they really enjoy people and helping and that they're creative."

Since just about the beginning, Global Escapes has been housed in a Victorian home in the heart of Athens, where they prefer to meet face-to-face with as many of their clients as they can.

Walk-in business used to be the norm, but Hines says that they

mostly work by appointment now. "What's really nice about having appointments with clients is that they can come into our building and sit down with an advisor and really have our undivided attention," she says. "They don't have to worry about the advisor trying to juggle the phone or juggle other people walking through the door."

"It's helpful when you can sit down with people face-to-face and kind of force them to turn off all the distractions and really think about something that is very important to them," Hines adds, noting that "it's those little nuances that you pick up on with people when you can have those face-to-face meetings" that are also key.

Hines says that if a client can't make it into the office, she or her advisors might just jump

GLOBAL ESCAPES

Location: Athens, Georgia

President and chief executive officer:

Tiffany Hines

Chief financial officer: Chris Hines

Founder: Ella Grondahl

Number of advisors: Eight total (four leisure advisors, two corporate advisors and two independent contractors)

Annual volume of business: \$7 million

Advisory board positions: ASTA National Board of Advisors, Athens Area Chamber of Commerce Board

Agency website:

www.globalescapes.com

COVER STORY

in the car and drive a few hours to meet with them. Just the same, Hines will always try to send someone from Global Escapes to Atlanta (about one-and-a-half hours driving) when suppliers are in town, if she can't attend.

Global Escapes' clients are largely based throughout the Southeast; others are spread out across the U.S. They're mostly made up of Baby Boomers and Gen Xers, Hines adds.

Before taking a new client on, an advisor will have a 20- to 30-minute conversation with the potential client to learn more about their aspirations and explaining how Global Escapes can help them. "I think we've gotten really good at realizing the type of clientele that might not be a good fit for us," Hines says. "As much as we give our prospects and leads an opportunity to ask us questions and interview us, we are doing the same thing with them."

Italy remains the favorite among the agency's clients, while Iceland, Greece, and the South Pacific, Australia and New Zealand are growing in popularity.

One of the larger bookings that Global Escapes is working on right now is a trip to Italy for a family that likes to settle in one



FAMILY VACATION: Tiffany Hines' extended family at the Grand Velas in Puerto Vallarta. From left, Tiffany's daughter, Emerson; husband, Chris; Tiffany; her mother and founder of Global Escapes, Ella Grondahl; Ella's husband and Tiffany's stepdad, Mike Bridwell and her older daughter, Christiana.

place for a full week. They'll do Florence for six nights and then Milan for another six before Lake Como for a day. The itinerary includes wine regions in Tuscany to learn about Etruscan history before heading onto Milan, arriving just in time for Men's Fashion

Week. The oldest daughter intends to pursue a career in design, and so they'll spend time with exclusive designers and visit their ateliers during their stay. Finally, they'll finish the trip with a day on Lake Como before heading back to the U.S.

"It's always tricky when you're planning for a family because you've got to make sure that the parents have enough downtime and the kids stay busy enough to keep their interest," Hines tells us. "For a lot of the trips we plan, it's like taking a 1,000-piece puzzle and dumping it out on a table and spreading it out, and then putting it back together so it all fits nicely together."

Another big trip Global Escapes is working on is a three-week "Best of Africa" trip aboard a TCS World Travel private jet for a couple. This trip begins and ends in Athens and travels to many areas of Africa, including Rwanda, Kenya's Masai Mara, Cape Town, Namibia, Botswana and Madagascar. "Everything is included," Hines says.

Since the husband is "getting to an age where it's a little bit more difficult for him to travel," the couple will be traveling with a doctor (and a cook!). "It is totally private, handheld the whole way," she adds.

"Luxury means such different things to different people, so it's always a goal of ours when we sit down with people that we really find out what it means to them," Hines



IN PARIS: Tiffany and Chris Hines spent a few days in the City of Light before sailing aboard the *Viking Heimdal*, from Lyon to Avignon.

tells us. “It doesn’t always mean spending a ‘gazillion’ dollars on a vacation, it could mean having very curated, private attention.”

To that point, Hines says that “luxury” to her was spending her 50th birthday in August with three of her college friends at One&Only Palmilla Resort in Los Cabos. “The property itself was very hands-on, very service-oriented,” she says. “Having two teenage girls, to get away and get a little break for a few days, it was really, really nice.

“This is what I mean by luxury means something different to different people and at different points in their life. That was very luxurious for me,” she adds.

Global Escapes is trying to get its clients to plan their travels further in advance — and it’s showing positive results. “We’re trying to encourage them to sit down and plan the next year, the next three years, next five years,” Hines tells us. She adds that, fortunately, “more and more people [are] realizing they need to plan ahead to conquer their bucket lists.

“You really need to have a plan, and you need to think through the best time of year to travel to various destinations, and different milestones that you might be celebrating with your spouse, or family or kids,” she notes.

Hines tied this concept in with overtourism. By taking the time to work with an advisor to plan out where a client wants to go, the advisor can educate the client on best times of year to visit — both helping alleviate overcrowding but also offering the clients an even better experience because the destination isn’t overrun with visitors.

Regarding Global Escapes’ advisors, Hines prefers if they have a specialty — whether that’s a destination or a type of travel. “Especially with luxury travel, it is critically important for the advisors to have focus on certain types of travel or certain destinations that they are going to commit to going to every couple of years to visit, and get a refresh and stay on top of,” Hines tells us. (Back when she sold travel, Hines focused on destination weddings and honeymoons, we’re told.)

Getting to travel is one of the top perks of being a travel advisor, Hines says, “but for those of us who really love to learn and really want to help our clients the best, there’s nothing like being able to put your feet on the ground in a destination and taste it, and touch it and be able to explain that to a client

with firsthand knowledge.”

In order to help get her advisors into the field to learn more about destinations or brands, Hines says Global Escapes has invested a lot of money in the last 10 years, affording them a travel budget, which is separate from their salary or compensation. This comes back to promoting and marketing the people who make up Global Escapes: In order to make the advisors as successful as possible, Hines had to empower them.

A New Role

Looking back, Global Escapes was founded by Hines’ mother, Ella Grondahl, in 1988 — the summer before Hines’ sophomore year at

Grondahl was one of four partners who owned the agency, but she ultimately bought them all out within several years and purchased the historic home that Global Escapes operates from.

Despite most of the business coming through airline ticketing, it was a big change for the family as they never really traveled much. (Most of Hines’ travels growing up consisted of visiting the beaches of Florida and lakes within a couple hours of her home.) “I can remember sitting on the floor [of the office] when the boxes of brochures started arriving — we didn’t even have furniture yet. Just opening these brochures and looking through them, my eyeballs were enormous,



HINES’ TEAM: From left to right, Kourtney Prater, Betsy Harter, Abbey Beckham, Christine Smith, Beth Barnett, Tiffany Hines, Chris Hines, Natalie Horton, Mollie Siddens, Jenny Owensby, Joy Meadows and Hannah Angel. Since taking over Global Escapes, Hines has spent less time working with clients (although she will still work on group itineraries) and has focused on hiring new advisors and training them.

college. Back then, Global Escapes was more of a booking agency — “there wasn’t as much consulting and advising,” says Hines, who joined at the beginning, working part-time through college, where she was studying to become a schoolteacher. (“I always enjoyed kids and teaching,” Hines tells us. “Now, I get to use some of that love with training new people to join our industry.”) Originally,

like, ‘Wow,’” Hines recalls.

After sticking with the agency throughout college, Hines made the decision to join full-time upon graduation (the travel industry “gets in your blood and you just can’t give it up,” she says). The mother-daughter duo made a good team: Grondahl took care of “the daily bookkeeping and accounting, along with sales and booking flights,” while Hines was “a little

COVER STORY

bit stronger with management, working with the employees and travel planning.”

Their roles largely remained the same for more than a decade, until 2008, when Hines took over leading the company. Her mother maintains a small role with Global Escapes — still bookkeeping — but she doesn’t work with clients anymore. Since taking over, Hines has spent less time working with clients (although she will still work on group itineraries) and has focused on hiring new advisors and training them. “My focus

Hines adds that she’s constantly reading books and listening to podcasts. Her current favorite podcast is “Building a StoryBrand with Donald Miller.”

“He talks about how most companies try to be the hero but [instead] it’s that your customer’s the hero and you need to position yourself as the guide to help your customer be the hero in the story,” Hines says.

She says the podcast has helped her clarify her agency’s message, better informing potential clients who Global Escapes is and how

started taking off: One big change was Global Escapes joining Signature Travel Network. (The company was previously with another consortium and even another before that.)

“Our business has doubled in size since joining Signature and I credit much of that success to their marketing and technology,” Hines tells us.

In addition, “They (Signature) constantly remind us that they are an extension of our office and, so, if we need help or we have a struggle here or there, we’ve got this network that we can lean on and collaborate with,” she says.

Hines says she likes how Signature’s print marketing highlights Global Escapes and not the Signature logo and brand (“We always order extra print pieces, so when we host events or attend functions in our community, we always have plenty of collateral to share,” she says). The fact that e-mail marketing program can be customized to the agency’s client’s interests and preferences helps ensure Global Escapes is always sending relevant content and remains compliant with e-mail regulations.

On the tech side, Hines commends Client Reach, which allows her to customize messages, so Global Escapes can stay in touch with its clients more easily.

The value of Signature can also be seen in the number of preferred partners that Global Escapes uses. Hines says 90-plus percent of the company’s supplier partners belong to the travel agency network.

Another benefit of being a member of Signature? Executive vice president Ignacio Maza. “He’s so energetic and so passionate about the world and traveling,” Hines tells us. “He gets everybody energized when we have our sales meeting.”

Hines also credits TAMS (that is, travel agency management systems) benchmarking for her agency’s success. The program comprises 15 to 20 agencies of varying sizes — as far as sales volume and number of employees — from all over the U.S. and Canada, and the owners discuss best practices and take a deep dive into each other’s finances, in order to learn from each other but to also hold each other accountable.

“It’s been amazing,” Hines says. “It’s been really, really good to really be able to

CHRIS AND TIFFANY HINES
in Amsterdam before
boarding the *AmaKristina*
and sailing through the
Netherlands and Germany as
part of the Signature Member
appreciation trip.



is learning how to be the best business owner and leader I can be,” she tells us.

Her tips? Be a constant learner. “I don’t think you ever get to a point where you feel like you’re there (being the best leader you can be),” Hines tells us. “There are constant challenges and changes ... I’m just constantly trying to stay involved with local business organizations and other business owners because the challenges that I face with running our company, I realized are really very similar challenges that companies face across all industries.”

they can help the clients in their life.

One book that Hines recommends is Simon Sinek’s *Start with Why*. Each new employee at Global Escapes is asked to read the book and then asked what’s their “why” — as in, why they’re involved with the travel industry?

“I do think it’s very important for people to be passionate and enjoy what they do,” Hines says. “If we take good care of our employees, our employees will take good care of our customers, and it just creates a cycle that just continues to roll forward.”

Back to five years ago, when business really

know where you fit in the scheme of things compared to other agencies.” The good news: Global Escapes is doing pretty well. In fact, Hines won a “TAMSY” award last year for her agency’s practices.

Expansion on the Horizon

Less than two years ago, Hines’ husband, Chris, joined Global Escapes as the CFO. His primary responsibility is assisting Hines with her goal of expanding the agency in the next five to 10 years. First on the list is a second office location in Atlanta; however, Hines tells us that other locations — including throughout Georgia, South Carolina or Tennessee — are all on the table.

Hines sees expansion as a twofold solution: Recently, Global Escapes has had more business than it could handle at times but expansion is also a way to bring more people into the industry. “A lot of companies talk about younger people, and, yes, we need younger people in the industry because we need that fresh perspective and energy, but I see a lot of people entering our industry from other careers,” she says.

While Global Escapes has two ICs, Hines says the best way for someone to learn the industry is in an office atmosphere, making an additional location a necessity. Between all the airlines, tour operators and cruise lines, not to mention marketing, consulting and sales, there’s a lot to learn when starting off from scratch. “I believe there is an opportunity to bring new talent into our industry and develop them through hands-on training, mentoring and collaboration with seasoned advisors,” she tells us. “I love that technology allows our team members to be flexible and work remotely but humans crave connection and belonging.”

Overall, Hines is very excited for the future of travel and the agency, although she admits she is “cautiously optimistic for 2020 pending the election and predicted ‘economic downturn’ cycle.”

Regardless, she’ll keep the agency’s core tenet at heart.

“One of the things that’s really touched me over the last couple years is as divided as some issues can be in our country and in our world, to me, at the core of it all, there is nothing like traveling to a destination to



BIRTHDAY SURPRISE: As Christiana turned 13 in 2015, the family celebrated a long weekend in New York City.

create empathy and understanding of other cultures and other people. We’ve talked about this a lot in our company, in the last six to 12 months: If we really want to change the world, you have to travel the world — you’ve got to be able to understand and empathize with other people, where they come from, what makes them tick and why they’re the way they are,” she says.

The good news, according to Hines, is that upward of 10,000 Baby Boomers will be retiring each day for the next 11 years, finally affording them all the time to travel. “It’s

exciting to think about being able to help those people finally try to realize some of those dreams they’ve had,” she says.

Hines is also excited by the prospect of younger generations who grow up traveling — like her children, ages 13 and 16 — and who see it as a part of their normal lives. “That’s the future of our industry,” she adds.

“When you really think about how life-changing it can be for people to go and experience some of the things we plan, it’s really cool that we all get to be part of this industry,” Hines says. ■

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Luxury Sampler:

Millennial Advisors Provide Firsthand Europe Hotel Insights

When it comes to hotel accommodations, about half (49 percent) of Millennial travelers say it's worth paying more for the very best quality, according to MMGY Global's 2019-2020 Portrait of American Travelers. An even greater number (64 percent) "enjoy being treated like a VIP." We're sure that's even more of a factor for the nearly one in six Gen Y gadabouts who identify themselves as luxury travelers. This is also the generation that values authenticity and experiential travel.

With all that in mind we asked Millennial travel advisors to tell us about any unique hotels they've visited that they feel fit in very well with their locale. Perhaps not surprisingly, most of their Europe accommodation choices fall into the luxury category. Here is a sampling.

"I have visited the **Santa Caterina** [in Amalfi, Italy], and the **Conservatorium** [in Amsterdam]," Lilly Elizabeth Sutton, Ovation Travel Group, tells us. While they have "very different

aesthetics" from one another, "each has a very strong sense of place respective to their destinations," she says.

A member of The Leading Hotels of the World, the Santa Caterina Amalfi "is true understated elegance capturing everything we all love about Italy," while The Set Hotels' Conservatorium "is a former music conservatorium and you really feel that as well as the Dutch style of simplicity when staying there," Sutton says.

"The Aria Hotels in both Prague and Budapest are a combination of luxury and music in great locations," Brittany Bridgewater, TravelSmiths, Inc., says. "The hotels' sole focus for décor inspiration is music. In the **Aria Hotel Budapest**, the main lobby greets you with floors painted like piano keys and each room is decorated in vibrant colors." The hotels' guestroom names honor great composers and their works, "with each being more beautiful than the last. [And each hotel's] rooftop bar overlooks the whole city. Their hotels will make you fall in love with the

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ON OUR COVER: View of Lake Como through a villa window in Varenna, Italy
Cover photo provided by Getty Images / zxvisualt

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Each room at the Aria Hotel Budapest is decorated in vibrant colors.



Six Senses Douro Valley's Wine Library is open 24 hours a day.

destinations." Aria Hotel Budapest is part of the Library Hotel Collection and **Aria Hotel Prague** is a Virtuoso member.

The Mystique Hotel in Santorini "is quintessential Greek Isles luxury," Nickolas Cunningham, Exceptional Journeys by CTS, tells us. "The cream-colored walls are a pleasant variance from the stark, whitewashed original cave dwelling hotels and resorts that make up Santorini. The property is built directly into the cliffs of Oia, and features the same original rock walls that have been there for centuries."

The Mystique, a member of The Luxury Collection, "exudes romance and beauty, just as the island of Santorini itself," he says, adding that "the friendly service is reflective of traditional Grecian hospitality." And the food? "The cuisine is simply exquisite from the tiganites [Greek pancakes] served at breakfast to the lamb with grilled halloumi cheese served for dinner at the candlelit restaurant," Cunningham tells us.

Six Senses Douro Valley is a personal favorite of First in Service Travel's Jamie Garcia Guillen, who touts its "vineyard tastings, delicious in-season game on the menu [and] wine library open 24 hours. The attention to detail in each room you walk into makes you feel special and helps you take in the moment." It also takes the "pet friendly" experience to whole new level.

"They have their very own mascot, [a dog] named Aqua. Upon arrival late at night, we got lost through the dark winding roads and sure enough Aqua was on her way to lead us through the entrance," says Guillen.

Kate Lawless, River Oaks Travel, visited **The K Club** in County Kildare outside of Dublin earlier this year and was "blown away by the experience. The property has over 500 acres of manicured gardens and sculpted fairways and is

honestly a heritage property hotel at its finest," she says.

"The staff are amazing, the food is delicious, the rooms are super luxurious and there are so many activities on-site that there is no chance that you'll get bored."

Barrett Hollo, SmartFlyer, "absolutely fell in love" with Switzerland on a trip in April and offers this recommendation: "The highlight of the trip for me was **Bürgenstock Resort** [in Lake Lucerne], which had just opened after a 14-year renovation." For experiential travelers, the resort offers daily guided excursions (walks, bike tours and hikes) in the breathtaking region of the Bürgenberg. Also, a hotel museum and recurring art fairs provide opportunities to combine various historical, art and cultural tours and exhibitions with a stay at one of the resort's four hotels.

A couple of high-end boutique properties drew praise from New Horizons Travel's Shane Klaver and MAD Travel's Paige Lewis. Klaver visited the **Kimpton Charlotte Square Hotel** in Edinburgh, Scotland, and found it to be "the most unique hotel I've visited. From the décor to the style of the rooms it just has a really fun and quirky vibe." The hotel consists of seven interconnected Georgian townhouses and is set in New Town, a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Lewis was "extremely impressed with **Kex** in downtown Reykjavik [Iceland]. The interior has an industrial feel while the décor is extremely contemporary — a perfect blend of the building's history and the new eclectic style you'll see downtown today. Many of the antiques were sourced from Icelandic school gyms, hair salons and libraries."

And talk about authentic cuisine: "Their Gastropub uses mostly local ingredients and is influenced heavily by Icelandic heritage which draws tourists and locals alike," Lewis says. ■



K Club is "a heritage property hotel at its finest." Pictured here is the Viceroy Suite.

The Map Room (right) is a unique feature of the Kimpton Charlotte Square Hotel in Edinburgh, Scotland.





Visit Britain Like a Royal

Photo courtesy of Highclere Castle

PERHAPS MORE THAN EVER Americans seem to have an insatiable fascination with British nobility and royal heritage. The pomp. The circumstance. The luxurious lifestyle.

The most recent and visible example of this is their devotion to *Downton Abbey*, the Emmy and Golden Globe award-winning series that ran for six seasons on PBS and spawned a movie that has pulled in more than \$164 million at the box office to date — about \$89 million in the U.S. alone.

Fans of *Downton Abbey* can hightail it to Highclere Castle where the series and movie were filmed. Just an hour train ride west of London in Newbury, this majestic Victorian castle has been home to the Carnarvon family since 1679. Visitors can relive every scene, tour the Red Room (Lady Mary's bedroom), visit Lord Grantham's study and more. A seasonal calendar of unique tours and special events are open to the public on set dates only. Tip: Plan and book your clients' visit far in advance.

Beyond Highclere, must-visit film locations include the picturesque village of Lacock, where Carson's cottage resides, and Bampton (aka Downton village) where one can find the home of Isobel Merton (in reality, Churchgate House). An interactive movie map to explore all the iconic *Downton Abbey* film locations can be found on VisitBritain.com.

Britain has many other stately homes that are open to the public to explore and discover "how the other half live." Pick up a National Trust Touring Pass and choose from more than 300 historic properties.

Royal Must-Sees

While other popular TV series such as *The Crown* and *Victoria* cater to viewers' attraction to British royalty, nothing compares to the real thing, fueled in recent years by a pair of royal weddings. The best place for "royalphiles" to start is Buckingham Palace, the Queen's official London residence, which opens its magnificent State Rooms to the public every summer. Windsor Castle, the oldest and largest occupied castle in the world, is the official home of Queen Elizabeth and was the location for HRH Prince Harry and Meghan Markle's wedding. Westminster Abbey, home to more than 1,000 years of royal tradition, was the setting for Prince William and Catherine Middleton's nuptials. You can also take the grand tour of their home, Kensington Palace and breach Henry VIII's domain at Hampton Court Palace.

Less well known, but no less fascinating, is the 157-year-old Sandringham Estate in Norfolk — the Queen's country retreat and the place she chooses to spend Christmas with her family. The house, gardens and museum at Sandringham are open to the public from April to November. The Palace of Holyroodhouse is the Queen's official residence in Edinburgh and the home of Scottish royal history. Other must-do royal experiences include seeing the Crown Jewels at the Tower of London and watching the Horse Guards Parade, in which the changing of the Queen's Life Guard and the Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment takes place every day at 11 a.m. (10 a.m. on Sundays).



Angels with Bagpipes restaurant, Edinburgh, Scotland

Photo courtesy of VisitBritain / Simon Winnall

Shop Like a Royal

For those who wish to shop like a royal may start out at Cleave & Co. Just around the corner from Buckingham Palace, this prestigious jeweler made Meghan Markle's diamond engagement ring. Nearby is Lock & Co Hatters on St James's Street (the oldest hat shop in the world) who has designed hats for Sir Winston Churchill, Oscar Wilde and Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis. On Savile Row is the flagship store Gieves & Hawkes, which has provided the Royal Family with the finest garments since 1809 as well as crafting uniforms for the Royal Navy and the British Army.

These are just some of the British brands so revered for their quality that they're officially recognized as Royal Warrant Holders. This means their services have been personally approved by Her Majesty The Queen, the Duke of Edinburgh or the Prince of Wales.

Staying in Grand Style

There is no shortage of fine, luxury hotels in Great Britain, but royal-obsessed travelers should know that London's Goring Hotel, around the corner from Buckingham Place, is one of the Queen's favorite venues for entertaining. Its Royal Suite takes up the entire top floor.

Clivendon House & Spa in Berkshire, where Meghan Markle stayed before the wedding, has several elegant rooms and suites as well as the three-bedroom Spring Cottage on the banks of the Thames. The Great Hall has an enormous fireplace, suits of armor and masses of paintings and antiques.



Photo courtesy of Belmond



State Dining Room - Royal Collection Trust

Photo courtesy of The Royal Collection 2019, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II

Luxury Rail and Barge Travel

Train travel is one of the most relaxing and enjoyable ways to explore Britain, and the BritRail Pass is a cost effective and flexible train pass that covers England, Scotland and Wales.

Visitors seeking a true luxury rail experience can book the Belmond British Pullman, which embodies everything that was fabulous about the 1920s and '30s. Each carriage has been lovingly restored and refurbished so that today's passengers can experience the glamor of vintage rail travel. Belmond British Pullman operates mainly around London and southern England, with all trips starting and ending at London Victoria train station. For a Grand Highland Fling, there's the Belmond Royal Scotsman.

For a unique and exclusive luxury barging experience, one can sail in high style along the inland waterways of England and Scotland with European Waterways. Both cruises include carefully curated shore experiences that immerse guests in local culture.

For additional information and trade resources, please visit trade.visitbritain.com.

P.S. At time of print, we received news that England had just been crowned one of the top destinations to visit, taking second spot in the *Lonely Planet's* Best in Travel 2020. Just one more reason to promote Great Britain to your clients!.

A Culinary Revolution

2020's Michelin Star Awards included 28 new British additions. Here's a sampling of those receiving their first star:

Condita, Edinburgh, exclusive meals two nights a week

Artichoke, Buckinghamshire, serving innovative and refined Modern European cuisine

The Angel at Hetton, Yorkshire, UK's original gastropub

Mana, Manchester, from former Noma chef Simon Martin

Mãos, a 16-guest supper club in Shoreditch, London

Opheem, Birmingham, an innovative Indian restaurant

Alchemilla, Nottingham, a stylish plant-based eatery

The Cottage in the Wood, Braithwaite, cozy rural eatery

Edwardian Hotels London

WITH AN ENVIABLE COLLECTION of luxury distinctive properties, restaurant, bar and spa brands, **Edwardian Hotels London's** individual style encapsulates its unique position in the most desirable locations in London and Manchester.

HOTELS

Edwardian Hotels London properties are steeped in history, centrally located and integral to their communities.

The May Fair and The Edwardian Manchester have now joined the premium lifestyle brand Radisson Collection.

The May Fair, located in the heart of Mayfair, opened in 1927 and became one of London's high society hotels in the Roaring Twenties. Today, the hotel has transformed into a contemporary boutique getaway. The Official Hotel of London Fashion Week, the hotel has some of the largest bedrooms in London, a collection of suites, Edwardian Hotels London's Mediterranean-inspired flagship restaurant May Fair Kitchen, a vibrant bar, secluded terrace, stunning event spaces and tranquil spa.

The Edwardian Manchester resides in the historic Grade II listed Free Trade Hall. The Free Trade Hall played an integral role in the UK's history. Iconic names performed or spoke here, from Charles Dickens to the Sex Pistols to Winston Churchill. The hotel embraces this legacy through a multi-million-dollar refurbishment that reflects the energy, confidence and progressive spirit of the city.

The Radisson Blu Edwardian, London hotels are inspired by the neighborhoods they inhabit. From stylish boutiques to luxury on the grandest scale, each hotel boasts stunning interiors and exceptional comfort, with genuine service.

Whether looking for art, culture, shopping, fine dining or relaxation, these four- and five-star hotels can be found in Leicester Square, Covent Garden, Bloomsbury, Oxford Street, New Providence Wharf and Kensington. With fast, compli-



The May Fair

mentary Wi-Fi on unlimited devices throughout all properties, Edwardian Hotels London is committed to delivering unforgettable experiences.

The Londoner, the latest project by Edwardian Hotels London, will open its doors in June 2020 as the world's first Super Boutique hotel in London's Leicester Square. The property will occupy 16 stories with 350 guestrooms and suites; two private screening rooms; a mix of six concept eateries, bars, a tavern and a variety of meeting spaces and a results-driven gym and spa. The Londoner is a member of the Preferred Hotels & Resorts Legend Collection and extends its preferred Hotel Rewards benefits to eligible guests.

RESTAURANTS

Developing food and beverage concepts is a key part of the Edwardian Hotels London's vision. Recognized for its unique take on the relaxed art of shared dining, The Kitchens brand includes a collection of restaurants that each showcase two distinctive cuisines in a beautiful, modern and unassuming setting. The flagship Kitchen restaurant, May Fair Kitchen, showcases the best of Spanish and Italian small plates while also featuring contemporary Peruvian, Mexican, Japanese and Mediterranean dishes from Monmouth Kitchen, Leicester Square Kitchen, Peter Street Kitchen and Bloomsbury Street Kitchen. The group's portfolio also includes the Steak & Lobster restaurant and the Scoff & Banter gastro-pub.

SPAS

With four spas to choose from in East London, Heathrow, Mayfair and Manchester, guests can enjoy a blissful hideaway in city settings.

For additional information or to make a booking, please visit edwardian.com or call 800-333-3333. For VIP reservation enquires, call 800-483-7871.



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The Latest in Luxury on Europe's Hotel Front



Villa Saint-Ange has 35 rooms decorated in the style of the Third Empire.



The distinctive lobby décor of Paris's new Sinner hotel sets the tone for the guest experience ahead.

Here are some of the best and brightest new hotel options that should appeal to your Europe-bound luxury travel clients, especially repeat visitors seeking a change of venue.

The Biltmore Mayfair debuted in September as Europe's first LXR Hotels & Resorts property — Hilton's collection of luxury hotels. The 307-room hotel is across from the gardens of London's Grosvenor Square and showcases culinary concepts by Michelin-star restaurateur Jason Atherton.

Instead of a traditional minibar, guests who book one of the hotel's eight signature suites will have access to a quilted, leather-encased cabinet holding full-size bottles of champagne. Even kids will be pampered with their own bathrobes, colored toothbrushes and access to a complimentary non-alcoholic minibar throughout their stay. Bath amenities are provided by Penhaligon's. Bonus luxury touch: For special

occasions, the hotel can create embroidered pillowcases and monogrammed bathrobes.

The latest from Evok Hotels is showing off its swanky interiors in Paris. Opened in July in Le Marais, the city's historic aristocratic district, **Sinner** has quirky décor from designer Tristan Auer (also behind the Hotel de Crillon and Hotel Les Bains in Paris). The concept is daring and a little rock 'n' roll, with allusions to religious heritage (a candlelit crypt in reception serves as a concept store, stained-glass windows line lantern-lit corridors).

There are 43 guestrooms, with the Suite Justine offering a most decadent experience (the name is a reference to the Marquis de Sade's famous book). The walls are all in black, and a "confessional" opens onto the bathroom, equipped with a blood-red tub and a private hammam.

In Aix-en-Provence, about 16 miles north of the southern France port town of Marseille, the **Villa Saint-Ange** opened in September. This boutique five-star hotel, just a five-minute walk from the lively Cours Mirabeau thoroughfare, covers two acres, with a leafy Provençal garden populated with statues and fountains. The villa's 35 rooms and suites are richly decorated in the style of the Third Empire. The restaurant serves Mediterranean cuisine prepared by chef Nadège Serret with ingredients sourced from the onsite vegetable garden and local producers.

Wine lovers in particular may be candidates for a stay at the new luxury property in the vineyards just outside Aix. After more than three years of renovation work, the **Château de la Gaude** has debuted as a small luxury hotel and gastronomic destination occupying a typical Provençal bastide (country house), that dates from the 17th century. Some of the 17 rooms and suites are designed in a contemporary style in a white-on-white palette. Some have fireplaces. The chateau's impressive art collection is showcased in the guestrooms and also throughout the grounds (for example, Philippe Pasqua's enormous stainless steel shark is suspended in the middle of the park).

Presiding over the gastronomic restaurant is chef Matthieu Dupuis-Baumal, who was previously at the Domaine de Manville in Les Baux-de-Provence, where he won a Michelin star and was awarded the title of "Grand de Demain" by the Gault&Millau guide in 2018. A spa and swimming pool will open in 2020, along with a casual brasserie. Good to know: Wine workshops and tastings take place in the cellars; the wines are all certified organic.

PortoBay Flores is Porto, Portugal's newest luxury accommodation. Built from a 500-year-old small palace, the façade

Continued on page 62

Grand Hotel Principe di Piemonte

DISTINGUISHING VIAREGGIO'S seafront promenade, the Grand Hotel Principe di Piemonte, a member of Small Luxury Hotels of the World, is the ideal location to visit Cinque Terre. The five-story hotel boasts 106 rooms, including 19 suites, decorated in different styles, most with a sea view and a range of interconnecting family accommodations guaranteed at time of booking.

Guests can dine at the Regina Restaurant, serving traditional Italian flavors in a beautiful veranda facing the seafront, and the two-Michelin star Il Piccolo Principe Restaurant, open March to October, with panoramic rooftop seating by the pool, for exquisite fine-dining cuisine. The rooftop terrace is also the perfect place to relax after a refreshing swim. The spa is open all year round.



Claudio Catani is general manager of both hotels.

Brunelleschi Hotel, Florence

THE BRUNELLESCHI HOTEL is set in a prime location in Florence's historical center, just a few steps from the Duomo, the Uffizi Gallery and the main museums, as well as the shopping district. It is housed in the iconic Byzantine Pagliazza Tower, the oldest building in town, and includes a private museum where Roman ruins of a caldarium are showcased.

The hotel boasts 96 elegant rooms and unique suites, some with breathtaking views, and offers a special "Suite&More" program for suite guests. A range of interconnecting family accommodations are guaranteed at time of booking. Guests enjoy dining in Osteria della Pagliazza for traditional cuisine, and in Santa Elisabetta, listed in the 2019 Michelin Guide, for a fine-dining experience.



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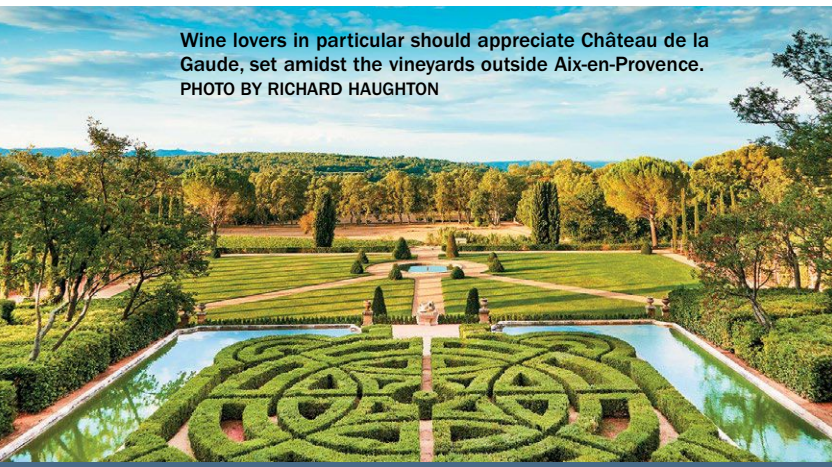
Continued from page 60

keeps the large wooden doors, the large windows surmounted by triangular pediments, wrought iron balconies and stonework emblazoned with a 16th-century coat of arms; Samuel Torres de Carvalho, the hotel's architect, sought to protect the origins of the building while also contemporizing it. The old stables, for example, have been transformed into the hotel entrance. Accommodations include 55 rooms in the new building and 11 in the old mansion.

Langham Hospitality Group has announced that it will manage **The Langham Nymphenburg Residence**, set within the 490-acre imperial estate of Nymphenburg Palace, just 15 minutes from Munich's city center. It is scheduled to open this winter. Offering views of the palace and the landscaped gardens, the 9,000-square-foot Residence will have four bedrooms, three living rooms, two wine cellars, seven bathrooms, a home cinema, an elevator and a dining room that seats 12. A private terrace with a water feature and centuries-old sculptures will set the scene for special occasions for up to 100 seated guests.

The three-story Residence will be appointed with bespoke furniture pieces and accessories handcrafted by specialist brands and ateliers. The Langham Residence will have ornately decorated bathrooms and a children's room with a circus motif.

Wine lovers in particular should appreciate **Château de la Gaude**, set amidst the vineyards outside Aix-en-Provence. PHOTO BY RICHARD HAUGHTON



Alex Lake Zurich opened this summer in Thalwil, six miles south of Zurich, Switzerland. This stone-and-glass boutique hotel offers a complimentary car service to/from Thalwil station, where there are direct trains to Zurich's main station, the airport, Zug, and ski resorts in the Alps.

Each of the 44 rooms and penthouses comes with a custom kitchenette and a terrace or balcony overlooking the lake. The Boat House Restaurant serves Swiss-sourced produce and local wines at the water's edge.

Facing the Piazza di Spagna, one of the most famous squares in Rome, the first-ever **Rocco Forte House** occupies an 18th-century palazzo, offering just five suites and a rooftop terrace with panoramic views overlooking the Spanish Steps. Rome-based designer Tommaso Ziffer decorated the suites



Many of the suites at Palace Elisabeth in Hvar, Croatia, afford panoramic views of the Adriatic Sea.

with an eclectic melange of antiques and 1970s décor. The suites range in size from 1,356 square feet (two bedrooms) to 3,132 square feet (the four-bedroom Borghese Private Suite). Two of the suites have their own terrace.

Ferruccio Ferragamo's **Il Borro**, a Relais & Châteaux property in Tuscany's Upper Valdarno valley, has opened the **Aie del Borro**, a collection of 18 new suites spread across four centuries-old farmhouses. For couples, the Luxury Suites are the best choice; these are among the larger options and have furnished terraces. The Family Suites can accommodate six in three bedrooms. On-site eateries include Osteria del Borro, Il Borro's fine dining restaurant, and the new Vincafé for a light lunch or an aperitif at sunset.

Originally opened in the fjord-side city of Trondheim in 1870 to accommodate wealthy, salmon-fishing Britons, the **Britannia Hotel** reopened in April 2019 after a four-year, \$160 million renovation. Just 60 miles south of the Arctic Circle, it has 257 rooms and suites, all elegantly and individually decorated. For more space, book one of the two Signature Suites, on the third and fifth floors. Each of these has the option to connect to a Superior 1897 Room for an additional bedroom and bathroom. Slightly smaller Executive Suites also offer the connecting option.

Top accommodation is Britannia's new one-bedroom Tower Suite. It has separate dining and living rooms, a fireplace, a raised seating area with a baby grand piano and private elevator access. It can also connect to 14 additional guestrooms.

On the Croatian island of Hvar, the **Palace Elisabeth** welcomed its first guests on September 1. This heritage hotel is perched above the city hall, overlooking Dalmatia's main square and marina. The edifice dates to the 13th century, when it was the Duke's palace, and is considered a historic landmark with Venetian and Austrian architectural elements.

The hotel has 45 luxury rooms and suites that afford panoramic views of the Adriatic Sea or the surrounding city. All guest bedrooms incorporate traditional Venetian details and designs inspired by the hotel's history. Additionally, each guestroom includes Guerlain bath amenities, plush bathrobes and a complimentary minibar.

The largest accommodation is the 656-square-foot Elisabeth Suite on the second floor of the hotel. With a central view of the harbor, this suite includes a balcony with an open seating area.

Hotel facilities include a private luxury spa, indoor pool and the signature restaurant, San Marco. The latter serves locally sourced seafood and traditional Mediterranean cuisine while providing sweeping sea views. Concierge services at Palace Elisabeth include yacht rentals and daily excursions. ■

Quintessential British Charm in London

DISCOVER RICH FURNISHINGS, original art and outstanding cuisine at this elegant historic hotel in the heart of London. **The Milestone Hotel & Residences**, opposite Kensington Palace and Gardens and close to the Royal Albert Hall, is a member of Leading Hotels of the World and part of the exceptional Red Carnation Hotel Collection.

Deluxe rooms and luxury suites, each with original artwork and antiques, evoke the feeling of an English country manor. The Milestone's reimagined Signature Suites are truly magnificent, from the Meghan, a tribute to the Duchess of Sussex, to the Ruhlmann, an homage to French Art Deco artist Emile-Jacques Ruhlmann in black and chrome.

Perhaps the most celebrated redesign is that of the Hermès Suite, with a vintage collection of Hermès scarves adorning its walls. Seamlessly combining modern design with

the building's original 18th-century architecture, the serenity of the design is punctuated by the grandeur of the space.

Thirteen-foot-high coffered ceilings lead to its private balcony overlooking Kensington Palace and the surrounding Gardens.

Discover extra-special in-suite experiences, from molecular cocktail lessons and private performances by the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, to 24-hour butler service and the use of a chauffeur-driven Bentley to take in the sights. Six beautiful Residences offer private sanctuaries for extended stays with family in London.

Enjoy delicious British dining created with the finest seasonal produce in Cheneston's Restaurant, and expertly mixed cocktails, including the famous Milestone Old Fashioned, in Stable's Bar. The Milestone's Sabrage experience — the art of opening a bottle of Champagne with a sabre — makes for a truly theatrical celebration.



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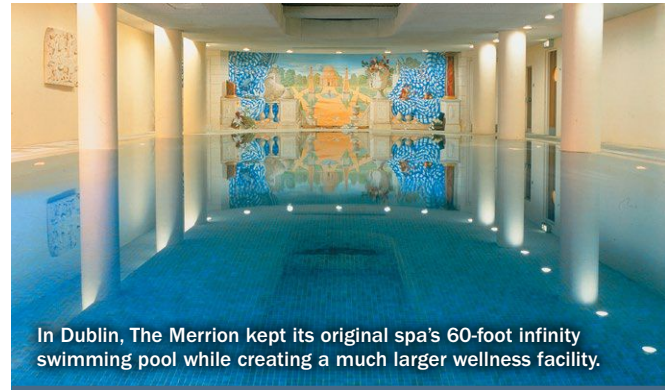
Spa — the very word brings to mind a luxuriating experience. Not surprisingly, the presence of an onsite spa has become an increasingly important factor in vacationers' hotel selection, according to the MMGY Global's 2019-2020 Portrait of American Travelers. In addition to the wellness aspect, luxury hotel spas in Europe give guests an elegant way to unwind after a day of stimulating cultural sightseeing. Here are some of the latest developments on Europe's spa front.

The **Corinthia London** has launched ESPA Life at Corinthia with Dr. Barbara Sturm, one of the world's most sought-after skin doctors. Providing an aesthetic alternative to invasive surgery, Dr. Sturm is often booked by her VIP clients a year or more in advance for her anti-aging treatments. Corinthia is now making her cutting-edge proprietary techniques more accessible, offering a new series of facials and products.

The spa itself occupies four floors, including an entire floor full of LifeFitness machines and Powerplate 6. (For an inside look at the ESPA Life at Corinthia experience, check out our London correspondent Emily Goldfischer's firsthand account at www.luxurytraveladvisor.com, search "Sturm.")

In Dublin's city center, **The Merrion** recently unveiled a brand new spa and health club on the hotel's ground floor. The Merrion Spa and Health Club takes the place of the original spa, which was much smaller in size. Designer Alice Roden sought to create a calming retreat with a neutral color palette, soft lighting and Irish fabrics. Along with the original 60-foot infinity pool, there are now six treatment rooms as well as a sauna, steam room, gym and salon by hairdresser Ciaran Nevin. The Merrion has partnered with Biologique Recherche, along with ESPA, to design signature spa treatments.

Toscana Resort Castelfalfi, a 2,700-acre eco-sustainable luxury retreat in Tuscany and member of Preferred Hotels & Resorts, has launched a variety of new wellness programming



In Dublin, The Merrion kept its original spa's 60-foot infinity swimming pool while creating a much larger wellness facility.

taking place in and outside of La Spa. In partnership with Bocelli Wines, La Spa now offers a range of organic, grape-based bespoke facial and body treatments. Created locally in Tuscany, the vinotherapy products are made from the byproducts of wine produced at the Bocelli family vineyards and blended with Tuscan plants and essential oils.

Other new options include the Bluefit program, Brainkinetik body and brain training sessions, and a natural healing wellness program centered on walks through the woodlands of Castelfalfi and designed to alleviate stress, reconnect with nature, improve mental health and learn more about the beneficial properties of plant life.

In September, **Borgo Egnazia**, south of Bari on Italy's Adriatic coast, began partnering with Blue Zones to offer a series of science-based wellness retreats focused on longevity — the first such programs world certified by the Blue Zones Institute. The Borgo Egnazia Blue Zones Retreats will focus on evidence-based solutions from the world's longest-lived people delivered in a practical format that makes healthy living easy and sustainable. Activities include health-conscious meals and cooking classes, movement sessions in the Puglian countryside and innovative workshops. The retreats will be available at Borgo Egnazia from November 18-23, and four times in 2020: March 16-21, May 4-9, September 7-12 and November 9-14.

Looking ahead, Six Senses, a luxury hotel brand that has always had holistic wellness, rejuvenation and beauty treatments at its core, has two new Europe properties in the pipeline. Slated to open in May 2022, the **Six Senses Loire Valley** will be set in the village of Saint-Laurent-Nouan, less than 10 miles from the famous Château de Chambord and an hour south of Paris by high-speed train.

Also in 2022, **Six Senses Össurá Valley** is on track to debut near Lóni on Iceland's southeastern coast. This past summer, **Six Senses Douro Valley** added seven suites and three guest-rooms, bringing total accommodations to 70 units. ■

Borgo Egnazia in Bari, Italy, is now partnering with Blue Zones to provide science-based wellness retreats focused on longevity.





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THE MAIN BARN at Shou Sugi Ban House has a conference room for private meetings, workshops and events. It also has a demonstration kitchen.



New in Wellness

Wellness retreats are all the rage. This month, Four Seasons debuted a brand-first: A wellness-focused, adults-only, all-inclusive resort.

Upon booking a retreat at **Four Seasons Hotel Lanai at Koele, A Sensei Retreat**, each guest is matched with their own Sensei Guide, who will help customize their itinerary in advance — whether that's targeting a specific health goal or simply unwinding from the stresses of everyday life.

Formerly the Lodge at Koele, the hotel has 96 rooms and suites (tip: top digs is the 1,920-square-foot Kaiholena Suite), a spa with 10 private *hales* (cabanas) and Sensei by Nobu restaurant, which uses ingredients from Sensei's on-island sustainable farm.

Guests can partake in one-on-one training sessions, group classes and lectures. There are two movement studios, a yoga pavilion, onsen baths, an outdoor lap pool, 18-hole short golf course, ziplines and rope challenge courses.

Reach out to senior travel industry sales managers Kristy Daley (East Coast and Mid-Atlantic; kristy.daley@fourseasons.com) and Ashlea Varca (U.S. Central and South East; ashlea.varca@fourseasons.com).

com); and Joseph Bell (joseph.bell@fourseasons.com), travel industry sales manager, U.S. West Coast.

Earlier this year, two hours from New York City, **Shou Sugi Ban House** opened in the Hamptons. The retreat offers personalized schedules led by resident and visiting experts. Itineraries will combine fitness, nutrition, yoga, meditation, holistic living, hydrotherapy and body care. A popular offering is the Vibroacoustic Therapy, a science-based treatment that uses various subtle frequencies to reduce stress and return the body to a balanced state.

All 13 rooms have a fireplace, private garden and massage area; half of the rooms have traditional Japanese *ofuro* (Hinoki wood tubs), while the others have modern soaking tubs. Facilities include a swimming pool, movement pavilion and fitness center. The Healing Arts Barn has a tea bar, while the Main Barn has a demonstration kitchen. The spa has five treatment rooms, Watsu and plunge pools, an infrared sauna and a chromotherapy shower.

Guest can choose from four-, five- and seven-day experiences, which are all-inclusive. Tip: Half- and full-day spa rituals are also available. Phoebe Briggs (pbriggs@ssbhouse.com), head of reservations, can handle bookings. — Matt Turner

Romain Meiran (rmeiran@lareserve-paris.com) is now GM of **La Réserve Paris Hotel and Spa**. Before joining La Réserve, he was GM of Cheval Blanc Paris and, prior, Cheval Blanc Courchevel. He also served as GM with Royal Mansour. His Paris experience includes Hôtel Le Meurice, Hôtel de Crillon, Hôtel Plaza Athénée and Ritz Paris.

Curtain Bluff named Andrea Balladori (Andreab@curtainbluff.com) as GM. Balladori most recently served as the executive assistant manager at Gayana Marine Resort in Malaysia. He previously held positions at Grosvenor House Park Lane and Dukes Hotel in London and Hotel Il Pellicano in Tuscany.

Cuixmala, an eco-friendly resort in Puerto Vallarta, has named Sean Flakelar (sflakelar@cuixmala.com) as its new GM. Flakelar spent 27 years with Aman, where he managed such properties as Amanjiwo, Amanoi and Amangalla, and was Aman's country manager for Indonesia and then for Sri Lanka.

Stephanie Sansiveri (stephanie.sansiveri@corinthia.com) has been named head of sales, East Coast of the U.S. for **Corinthia Hotel London**. She is based in New York City and responsible for sourcing, developing and account managing for the East Coast.



IL PALAZZO EXPERIMENTAL (here) has 28 rooms and four suites and a spacious back garden letting onto a canal.
THE ST. REGIS VENICE's Arts Bar (below) serves art-inspired modern and classic cocktails.

Photo by Karel Balas

New in Venice

Venice has a couple new hotels you need to know about. In mid-October, **The St. Regis Venice** made its debut on the Grand Canal, just steps from Piazza San Marco. What's nice: It touts the largest waterfrontage in all of Venice, and one-third of the 169 rooms have views of the canal.

The top digs at the hotel — which opened following a two-year renovation of the former Grand Hotel Britannia, dating back to 1895 — are the two-bedroom Presidential Suite and a three-bedroom Penthouse Suite with a wrap-around furnished terrace. Good to know: The five Roof Garden Suites also have furnished terraces. These rooms have views of the Santa Maria della Salute Basilica and the Punta della Dogana Museum.

Be sure to grab a Spritz from the hotel's roaming Spritz Trolley and enjoy it in the garden, the spot to see and be seen. Or, enjoy



Photo by Niall Clutton

a Santa Maria — the hotel's twist on the brand's signature cocktail, the Bloody Mary — at the Arts Bar inside.

Contact Paola Toniolo (stregisvenice@stregis.com), reservations manager.

On the Giudecca Canal, **Il Palazzo Experimental** (of Paris-based Experimental Group fame) opened in September. The hotel has 28 rooms and four suites and a spacious back garden letting onto a quiet canal.

Book the Zatterre Junior Suite with Canal View. In addition to the best view at the hotel, it has a king bed and spacious bathroom (with soaking tub). All rooms have a minibar with cocktails by Experimental Cocktail Club.

Il Palazzo Experimental's restaurant uses only seasonal, local ingredients, and has an in-house wine bar highlighting regional producers. Tip: Order the Bombetta (deep fried bread from Puglia) with Apulian tomatoes and Burrata and the Arrostitini (grilled lamb skewers from Abruzzo) with cumin and sichuan pepper sauce.

Contact Christian Zingarelli (christian@palazzoexperimental.com), hotel manager.

Note: Venice voted to enforce a tax for day-trippers, which goes into effect July 1, 2020. Visitors will pay €3 during the low season, €8 during high season and €10 during "critical" periods, such as summer weekends.

—Matt Turner



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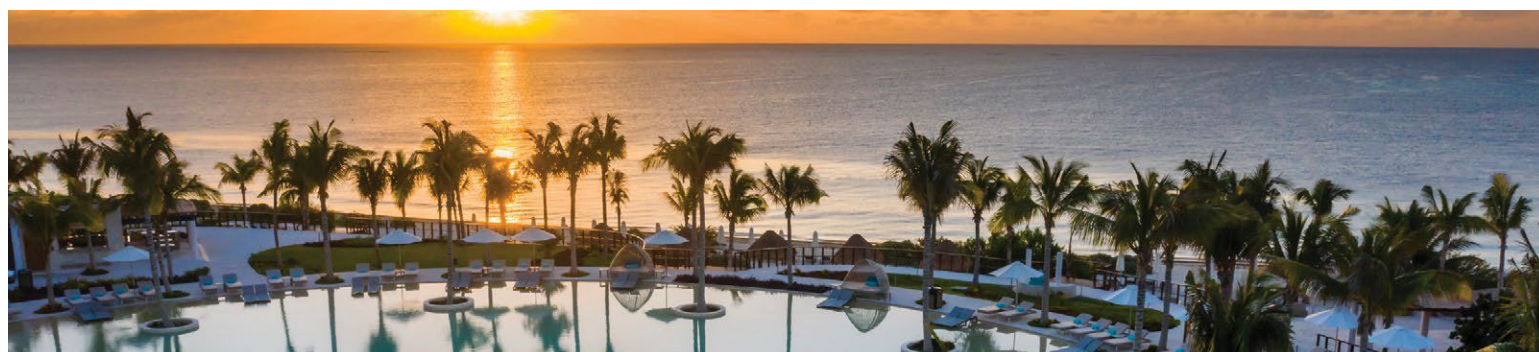
Island Destinations hosted its annual gala at The St. Regis New York in October, where it recognized several top properties and debuted its new Travelers Collection Brochure for 2020.



1. Maurice Bonham-Carter, president and chief executive officer, Island Destinations; Jennifer Castro, hospitality sales executive, Tortuga Bay Punta Cana Resort & Club; Laurie Palumbo, chief operating officer, Island Destinations; Jaime Piedras, managing director, The Grand Reserve at Paradisus Palma Real; Karime Buraye, regional director of sales, USA and Latin America, Aman Resorts; Lucien Echavarria, director at Ministry of Tourism, Dominican Republic Tourism Board; Richard Rodriguez, vice president of sales and marketing, Casa de Campo Resort & Villas and Giuseppe Di Palma, partner, Lush Experiences Representing Eden Roc Cap Cana **2.** Narelle McDougall, general manager, Silversands Grenada **3.** Laurie Palumbo, chief operating officer, Island Destinations; Maurice Bonham-Carter, president and chief executive officer, Island Destinations and Sarah Moya, general manager, Anantara Angkor Resort & Spa **4.** Kavita Kapur, Island Destinations; Julie Shifrin, Lake Shore Travel and Michelle McKenzie, Island Destinations **5.** Tulio Baruch, director of sales, Grand Velas; Laurie Palumbo, chief operating officer, Island Destinations; Maurice Bonham-Carter, president and chief executive officer, Island Destinations and Denys Montes de Oca, corporate director of sales and marketing, Grand Velas **6.** Karen Bodner, Power Travel; Valerie Ritacco, Power Travel; Viviane Gringer, Power Travel; Kavita Kapur, Island Destinations; Jane Berk, Power Travel; Michelle McKenzie, Island Destinations; Susan Zurburn-Hothersall, Power Travel; Matilde Broder, Power Travel; Tracy Lehrer, Power Travel and Lisa Eden, Power Travel **7.** Gina Forte, founder and creator, Atelier Group and LOOKTRVL.com; Laurie Palumbo, chief operating officer, Island Destinations; Maurice Bonham-Carter, president and chief executive officer, Island Destinations **8.** Stacy Cox, chief executive officer, Turks and Caicos Hotel & Tourism Association; Jordin Gremauriene, Signature Travel Network; Scott Khile, vice president of sales and marketing, Grace Bay Resorts; Joyce Striar, Protravel International; Ignacio Maza, executive vice president, Signature Travel Network; Stephanie Navatto, director of sales, Grace Bay Resorts; Adelphine Pitter, general manager, West Bay Club; Heather Thornhill-Braxton, Valerie Wilson Travel; Nikheel Advani, chief operating officer, Grace Bay Resorts; Karen Thornhill, Valerie Wilson Travel; Eve Szembek, vice president, hotels and resort program, Signature Travel Network and Mark Durliat, chief executive officer and owner Grace Bay Resorts.



9. Scott Khile, vice president of sales and marketing, Grace Bay Resorts; Michelle McKenzie, destination specialist, Island Destinations; Karen Goldberg, managing director, hotels and resorts, Virtuoso; Raquel Suarez, director of product management, Island Destinations and Tets Kato, director of sales, Banyan Tree Mayakoba **10.** Paul Largay, Largay Travel **11.** Michele Marino, Altour **12.** Laurie Palumbo, chief operating officer, Island Destinations; Cristina Romero-Peri, director of sales and marketing, Montage Los Cabos and Maurice Bonham-Carter, president and chief executive officer, Island Destinations **13.** Lljajaira Gomez, Island Destinations; Marcia Kirsh, Travel Experts; Beth Steele, Island Destinations; Bonnie Scheck, Travel Experts; Margaret Williams, Travel Experts and Elina Lanavojja, Island Destinations **14.** Laurie Palumbo, Island Destinations; Mark Southgate, Tzell Long Island and Beth Steele, Island Destinations **15.** Ana Fonseca, director of sales and marketing, Amanara; Jaime Jaramillo, managing director, NIZUC Resort & Spa; Darrick Eman, global director of sales and marketing NIZUC Resort & Spa and Antonio Cosío Pando, chief executive officer and owner, Grupo Brisas.



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JUST BACK

New Zealand

Ignacio Maza, EVP of the Signature Travel Network, ventured to New Zealand earlier this year for an immersive dive into the destination's many options for travelers. Here is his report.

One of the highlights of any journey in New Zealand is experiencing outstanding lodges and unique luxury resorts in every region of the country. I recently visited both South and North Islands, and wanted to tell you about five special places to stay, beyond well-known resorts like Blanket Bay, Huka Lodge and other exceptional prop-

erties you may be familiar with. At every lodge mentioned below, the luxury accommodations, attentive service, fine cuisine and warm hospitality are just the beginning.

Azur Lodge (Queenstown, South Island)

This luxury contemporary lodge is located just 10 minutes driving from downtown Queenstown, in a residential neighborhood high above the lake. The property consists of nine private villas, each about 750 square feet with an open plan, fireplaces and large terraces overlooking the lake and mountains. The lodge is situated on the slope of a hill, with a main residence with reception area and lounge at the top. The design is modern, comfortable and pared down. Highlights: Complete privacy in the villas, space, views from the bedroom and bathtub, superb service, seclusion, proximity to Queenstown, and breakfast and afternoon tea served in the main house. Note: Azur does not have a restaurant on property, but the hotel provides guests with a wide range of Queenstown restaurant menus to order from. Azur staff will deliver the meal to your villa and serve it properly on china, a nice option.

BAY OF MANY COVES (above), a member of Luxury Lodges of New Zealand, is located on Queen Charlotte Sound.

AZUR LODGE villas (here) offer space, privacy, and spectacular views of Lake Wakatipu.



Bay of Many Coves (Marlborough Sounds, South Island)

Bay of Many Coves overlooks a tranquil bay in the heart of the Marlborough Sounds, a maze of peninsulas, bays and islands on the uppermost part of the South Island. The resort occupies only a small portion of the estate, which covers over 150 acres. While on property, walk along the property's many paths, swim in the pool or the sound, or enjoy a treatment in the lodge's spa. I felt a million miles from civilization, yet I was only a short boat ride from the mainland. Service and dining are outstanding, with a staff to guest ratio of 1-to-1. The 11 spacious apartments offer one to three bedrooms with terraces, as well as the large Kereru Suite. All apartments are built on the hillside and offer privacy, as well as beautiful views of the sound. My two favorite activities while staying at the lodge were hiking on the Queen Charlotte Track (a short water taxi away) and kayaking at sunrise from the property's pier. The nearest airport is Woodbourne.

Hapuku Lodge + Tree Houses (Kaikoura, South Island)

A member of Luxury Lodges of New Zealand,

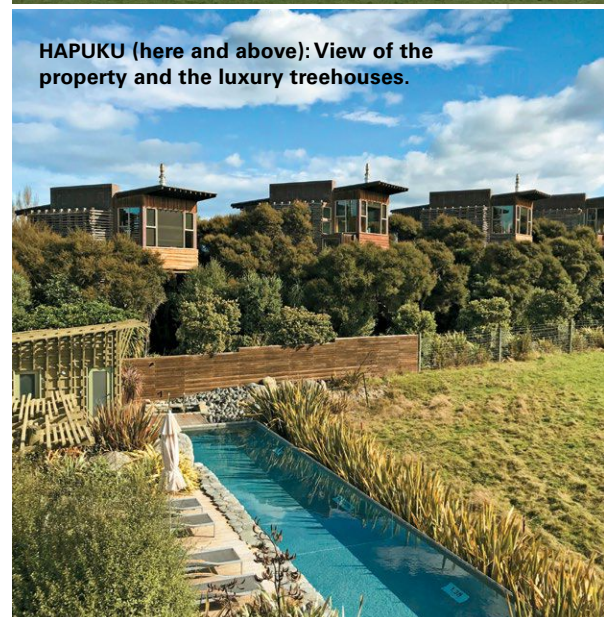
Hapuku Lodge + Tree Houses is *the* place to stay in this part of the world. The property opened in 2013 and is a 10-minute drive from central Kaikoura. Originally, Hapuku started out as a deer farm. Today, the lodge offers four spacious rooms in the main building and five free-standing tree houses — my favorite category, built 30 feet from the ground. Two of the treehouses offer two bedrooms (one above, the other below). Hapuku also offers its two-story Olive House for families or friends traveling together, accommodating up to six guests. The lodge has an outdoor pool and a new spa. Guests have bicycles to use during their stay. The property is known for the quality of its dining, most of it sourced locally. Don't miss swimming with a pod of dusky dolphins in the open ocean — simply exhilarating. The nearest airport is Christchurch International.

Treetops Lodge & Estate (Rotorua, North Island)

This celebrated lodge, which opened 17 years ago, is set within an enormous 2,500-acre estate of old native forest. The property has streams running through it, on-site trout fishing, lakes, miles of hiking trails and many



HAPUKU (here and above): View of the property and the luxury treehouses.



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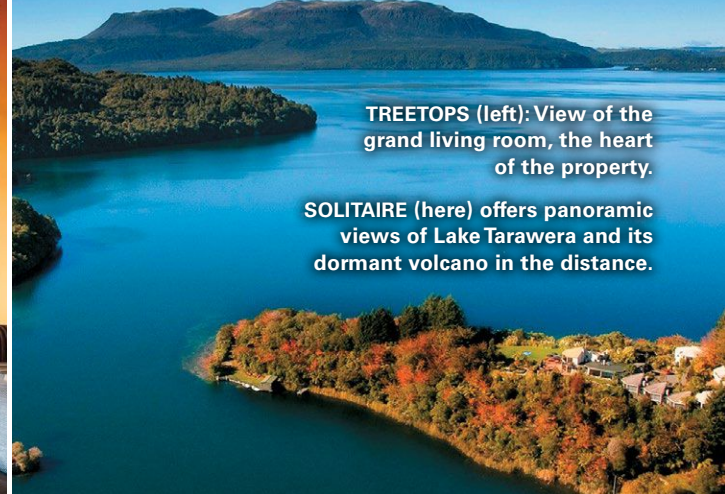
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JUST BACK



TREETOPS (left): View of the grand living room, the heart of the property.

SOLITAIRE (here) offers panoramic views of Lake Tarawera and its dormant volcano in the distance.

activities. The main lodge has large living and dining areas, as well as a spa and helipad — convenient for adventures. Dining is a highlight, with menus offering produce sourced from the estate. I enjoyed the hike to Bridal Veil Falls (tip: you can also arrange to have a picnic at the base of the waterfall) and the 4WD safari that tours the entire estate. There are four spacious suites in the main building and eight freestanding villas, nestled in the estate's lush vegetation. Suites are well-appointed and offer over 500 square feet of space; villas are over 1,000 square feet — all with terraces. Take time to explore the property

on foot to get a sense of the diversity of this magnificent estate.

Solitaire Lodge (Rotorua, North Island)

One of the first luxury lodges of New Zealand, Solitaire is located at the tip of a peninsula on Lake Tarawera. This cozy lodge has a tranquil and understated feel to it, and I felt immediately at home upon arrival. The setting is very peaceful, as you are surrounded by water on three sides. The property has its own helipad and a pier on the lake — perfect for swimming and kayaking. Solitaire is known for its service and the quality of the resort's fine dining, serv-

ing contemporary New Zealand menus. The resort offers nine suites, all with terraces and views of the lake. Tip: While in Rotorua, take a helicopter to White Island, New Zealand's most active volcano, an unforgettable experience.

Planning your New Zealand journey: I traveled with Southern Crossings, the expert destination specialist who creates custom-tailored itineraries and unforgettable experiences. Write to nzdesign@southern-crossings.com

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— Ignacio Maza

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