

A magazine created
for 25hours Hotels

**Saddle up
with Flinc**
Urban cycling never felt so good

**Get
your Karaoke fix**

Issue 27

Companion



JAKARTA CITY WALK

Join local Troy Fridatama
for a tour of his favourite
Oddbird neighbourhood
hangouts and haunts



Unravelling BATIK

How this symbolic
ancient textile art
has survived and
thrives today



HERITAGE ON A PLATE

Four culinary creatives share their ancestral Asian
knowhow in their favourite European cities



Into the wild

Reclaim yourself on a wellness retreat in Mongolia,
still one of the most remote places on earth



Fresh moves

Pump it up with
Southeast Asia's
latest fitness
trends



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FOLLOW US INTO THE DARK.

Cinema Akil is an independent cinema platform that brings quality films from across the world to the audiences in the UAE. Showcasing directors and filmmakers across the decades, Cinema Akil aims to create awareness and interest in film and the cinematic arts.

25HOURS HOTEL ONE CENTRAL | CINEMA AKIL.COM | @CINEMA AKIL

25HOURS HOTELS

Editor's note

There are many wise Eastern philosophies offering a means to a better life. None perhaps more pertinent than the Japanese aesthetic of 'wabi-sabi'—the acceptance of transience and imperfection. In honour of the recent opening of 25hours Hotels Jakarta The Oddbird, the group's first step into Asia, we have woven the warm and wise heart of the East throughout this issue of Companion.

I hope you enjoy reading about everything from Indonesia's gender busting, all-female heavy metal band, Voice of Baceprot, and the talented culinary creatives currently bringing their rich Asian heritage to European plates. Our Trailblazer series spotlights our current favourite innovators including Chris Kerrigan, founder of artisan perfume brand, Oaken Lab, and Donna Priadi, creator of sustainable fashion brand, KIND Denim.

So when you're in The Oddbird's new Vida Spa having your oxygen therapy or swimming some laps of the outdoor infinity pool, or getting down to some serious brainstorming in a co-working cage on the 8th floor living room (see below)—or hanging out at any of the other 25hours Hotels across Europe and Dubai—I know that our mantra of 'Come as you are' fits perfectly with the Eastern philosophy of accepting life's imperfections. And if some days do feel a little blue, head to one of our favourite karaoke bars (see p12) for a cathartic sing-along.

Jane Anderson, Editor
✉ Instagram.com/janeandersontravel



Here at Companion, we love your feedback. Email me at jane@enoughmedia.co.uk with your comments, and anything you'd like to see in forthcoming issues.



I'm thrilled to announce that Companion won 'Customer Content of the Year 2024' at the Travel Media Awards. Huge thanks to my talented team that make it all happen, and to you for picking up Companion and taking a look! #longliveprint



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SWITZERLAND



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SOEDER X 25HOURS HOTEL

Hello from Soeder! We're the creators of the natural care products in your 25hours Hotel room. Based in Zurich, Switzerland, we're all about crafting the highest-quality products using only the best natural ingredients like plant oils, honey, wheat proteins, and sea salt. We ditch artificial fragrances, letting nature's pure scents shine through.

We're committed to sustainability. Our refill concept at 25hours Hotels reduces plastic waste, giving your brown glass bottles a longer life. Plus, our production processes are energy positive, meaning we reuse the energy from soap making to power our operations. We're on a mission to become fully energy positive soon.

Join us in making mindful choices for our planet. Visit the 25hours things shop to take Soeder home with you, and don't forget to refill your bottles on your next stay at any 25hours Hotel. [VISIT @SOEDER.NATURALCARE](#)

Photo: Stephan Lemke

CONTRIBUTORS

We take a look at some of the talented people who brought this issue of Companion to life, and ask what is their most memorable experience of Asia

» TROY FRIDATAMA

Troy takes us on a tour of his hometown, Jakarta, p26

Troy has spent over half of his life living in the bustling city of Jakarta, a countryside boy who moved to the big city to pursue his studies. He is passionate about his career in marketing and communications with more than two decades of experience across hospitality, banking, FMCG, media and property.

Asia highlight

"I'm a great believer in solo travel and love travelling across Indonesia, learning the culture and admiring the traditional fabrics including batik, songket and tenun. Retail therapy is a favourite pastime. Jakarta Great Sale is a highlight, held around June 22 to coincide with the city's anniversary."

» MARTINA PAUKOVA

Check out Martina's illustrations, p12

Martina is a Slovak illustrator currently based in Berlin, where she relocated after 10 years in London. She has been creating commercially for over 15 years now and has worked for clients such as Google, Apple, The Economist, Shopify and The New Yorker. She also had the massive honour to sit as an Illustration Jury President at the D&AD Awards 2023. "My work tends to be very colourful and character based (I love drawing people!) and spans topics like home, working life, technology and relationships. Illustrating is fun!"

» JANE DUNFORD

Follow Jane into the mindful wilds of Mongolia, p54

Jane Dunford is deputy head of travel at The Guardian newspaper in London. With a love of wild places, she has ridden horses with the gaucho in Argentina, slept in an igloo in the Arctic and visited tribes deep in the Brazilian Amazon.

Asia highlight

"Spending three weeks in the Limi Valley in north-west Nepal, hiking and camping near the border with Tibet, climbing 5,000m high passes along the way. We travelled with guides, a cook and five mules."

Photo: Olivia Valentine; Paul Musso; Peter Dibdin; Marie-Lusette Cropp

I offered a farmer in Kyrgyzstan a cup of tea while sitting outside my tent

» MARKUS STITZ

Read all about his Silk Road adventures, p47

Globetrotting adventurer Markus Stitz founded bikepackingscotland.com in 2017 after his one-year and 34,000km around the world trip on a singlespeed mountain bike. He is a German-born route designer, filmmaker, photographer and writer, based in Edinburgh, Scotland. He is an ultra-endurance racer, with successful finishes of the Highland Trail 550, Silk Road Mountain Race, Atlas Mountain Race and Mother North, and runs the Dirt Dash events in the UK. Markus co-edited Big Rides: Great Britain and Northern Island and is the author of Great British Gravel Rides, Bikepacking Scotland and the upcoming Gravel Rides Cairngorms and Perthshire.

» CHRIS BONE

Our literary expert rounds up his favourite new Asia inspired books, p31

Chris is a writer and communications specialist with a deep passion for books. Based in Paris, France, he has the privilege of representing Hay Festival, one of the world's biggest and best cultural charities.

Asia highlight

"Teaching for a year at a Hong Kong college was a privilege, and travelling back to Paris by train across Mongolia and Russia was unforgettable."

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CONTRIBUTORS

BITS & PIECES



HONG KONG OUTDOOR & ACTIVITY

Panda Go!

As giant pandas are globally recognized as a vulnerable species, opportunities for close interaction with them are exceedingly rare. Unless that is, you head to PANDA GO! FEST HONG KONG, the city's largest ever panda exhibition, showcasing 2,500 panda sculptures.

All royalties generated from commercial activities will be fully donated to Ocean Park Hong Kong to support giant panda conservation efforts. The park is now home to six real life giant pandas. pandago-fest.com, oceanpark.com.hk



HAMBURG ART & ENTERTAINMENT

Chinese antiquities

'Inspiring China' at Hamburg's MK&G gallery is the second part of the institution's new East Asia collection, now showing until January 2027. Totalling over 3,000 items including imperial porcelain, carved lacquer, calligraphy and woodblock prints, it's one you can return to again and again. Hands-on workshops and multimedia presentations allow visitors to engage with Chinese artistic traditions such as calligraphy demonstrations and ceramic-making. The exhibition also highlights how modern Chinese artists reinterpret and innovate traditional techniques in today's globalised world. Watch out for fun themed events around Chinese Festivals too.

mkg-hamburg.de



WEIL AM RHEIN, BUSAN
FASHION & STYLE

DESIGNING OUR WORLD

Nike: Form Follows Motion

Check out the world's first museum exhibition about Nike at the Vitra Design Museum in Germany. Nike: Form Follows

Motion explores the world's most revered sports brand's five-decade ascent from a grassroots start-up to a global phenomenon. From the company's beginnings in the 1960s and the design of its famous swoosh logo, to iconic products such as AirMax and Flyknit, plus current research devoted to future materials and sustainability, it's a must-see.

On now until May 4, 2025.

design-museum.de

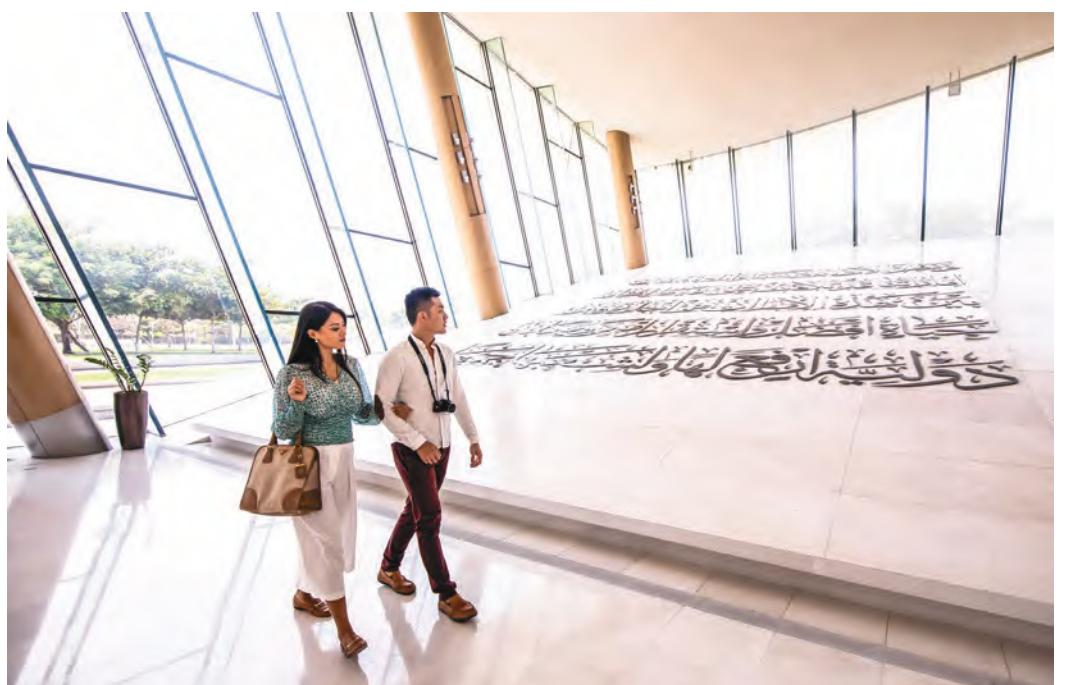


Plastic: Remaking Our World

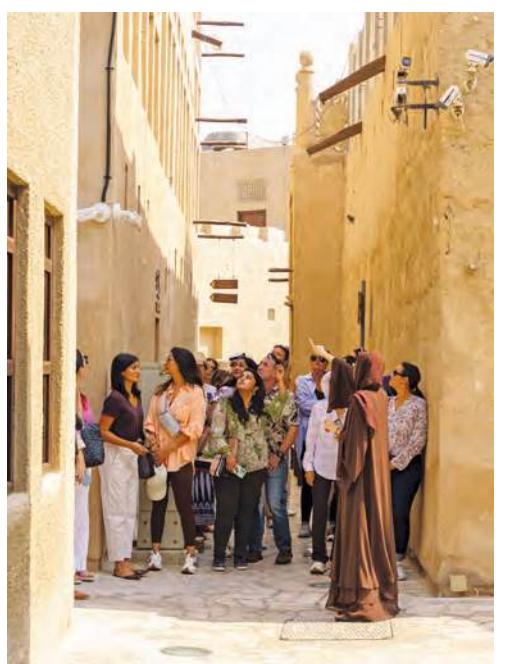
Hyundai Motorstudio Busan (Korea's second largest city) has teamed up with Germany's Vitra Design Museum to present the 'Plastic: Remaking Our World' exhibition which puts the past, present and future of plastic in the spotlight. On until August 20, 2025 this will open your eyes to how plastic has evolved over the last 150 years. And how its durability that was once seen as a blessing is now a curse for our planet, whilst exploring much-needed sustainable solutions. →

motorstudio.hyundai.com





Local knowledge
Clockwise from far left: Etihad Museum; Quranic Park and Sheikh Mohammed Centre for Cultural Understanding



DUBAI CULTURE & HERITAGE

A deeper love

For a greater insight into the traditions and customs of the United Arab Emirates take a visit to the following places of interest across Dubai

The Sheikh Mohammed Centre for Cultural Understanding (SMCCU) was created to bridge the cultural knowledge gap. Located within Dubai's Al Fahidi historical neighbourhood, visitors can enjoy activities from tasting traditional cuisine to discussions with Emiratis about local life. During the Holy Month, you can also experience what Ramadan is like for locals including iftar (breaking the daily fast at sunset with dates), and a mosque tour to learn about how and why Muslims pray. cultures.ae

The Etihad Museum is dedicated to the history of United Arab Emirates and features interactive exhibits and multimedia displays. etihadmuseum.dubaiculture.gov.ae

Quranic Park is designed to give visitors a greater understanding of Islamic values and the miracles of the Holy Quran. Here you can explore The Miracle Caves, The Greenhouse, The Lake and The Orchards, featuring 51 types of plants mentioned in the Holy Qur'an. visitdubai.com



VIETNAM CULTURE & HERITAGE

Face to face

April 30, 2025 marks 50 years since the end of the Vietnam War and the reunification of Saigon (Ho Chi Minh City). Vietnam-based photographer Réhahn is renowned for his colourful portraits, including all 54 of Vietnam's ethnic tribes and daily life. His new book, '100 Iconic Portraits' includes his best-known images from Vietnam, Cuba, Malaysia and India, including the most expensive photo ever sold in Asia, Hidden Smile, a portrait of Madame Xong (shown left). The final copy of the portrait sold in 2019 for \$USD150,000.

Check out his work at the new Réhahn Gallery in Ho Chi Minh City and his Precious Heritage Museum and Art Gallery in Hoi An. rehahnphotographer.com

Local knowledge
Clockwise from far left: Etihad Museum; Quranic Park and Sheikh Mohammed Centre for Cultural Understanding



**ZURICH
ART & ENTERTAINMENT**

ICE COLD ART

There's a new immersive experience at the Chipperfield building of the Kunsthaus Zurich. Swiss private bank Julius Baer has donated 'Glacier Dreams' by new media artist Refik Anadol (shown below). This permanent work, which the bank commissioned, takes the form of an immersive digital room, and illustrates how AI and digital transformations are one of the greatest challenges of our time, along with the climate crisis. To make this piece, Anadol combined existing as well as his own glacier data from an expedition to Iceland and, using AI, created a chilling experience of melting ice way beyond traditional glacier research studies.

kunsthaus.ch



**BERLIN, COPENHAGEN, FLORENCE, PARIS
PEOPLE & BUSINESS**

5 EUROPEAN MAKERS DRAWING ON THEIR RICH ASIAN HERITAGE



Rosh Mahtani was inspired by the Italian poet, Dante Alighieri, dreaming up jewellery designs which offer modern heirlooms. Find her designs in Florence's La Rinascente store.

Buy: The Key To The Library Necklace, €340 alighieri.com



Jamini is a Franco-Indian lifestyle brand found on the edge of picturesque Le Marais in Paris, where founder, Usha Bora, pays homage to the artisans of her native Assam.

Buy: Dalia B 'Bonheur' Tote Bag, €27 aminidesign.com



Herbar is a cult skincare brand founded by Rui Liu and Catarina Oliveira in Berlin. They connected over their interest in traditional Chinese medicine. Find Herbar at Berlin concept store, Voo.

Buy: The Face Oil, €45 herbarofficial.com



Longfei Wan is a Chinese-born, Danish artist and ceramist who specialises in simplistic, high-quality tableware, combining traditional Chinese rituals with a Scandinavian aesthetic.

Buy: Bowls from €65 toseibo.com

INDONESIA HOSPITALITY & RETREAT

SAILING WITH SOUL

Seeing Indonesia through Indonesian eyes and supporting small, local conservation projects is central to the experience SeaTrek Sailing Adventures. When guests voyage aboard its 12-berth traditional, UNESCO-heritage Indonesian Ironwood masted sailing ship, Ombak Putih or the smaller 6-berth Katharina. Activities include coral reef restoration projects, planting seagrass and visiting a zebra shark relocation project. →

seatrekbali.com



COPENHAGEN, VIENNA, FRANKFURT
FOOD & DRINK

ZEST ON A PLATE

Copenhagen Food Collective (Cofoco)

has opened their 19th restaurant, Asian-inspired Superbon in the Meatpacking District. Bringing modern Asian cuisine to the Danish capital, diners feast on steaming bao buns, crispy soft-shell crab and fresh pomelo salad.

cofoco.dk

For a Europe-meets-Asia blend of cuisine, book a table at Cucina Itameshi in Vienna, where Italian and Japanese flavours and culinary methods collide. Created by the talented Mochi family, this is their fifth fusion eatery in the city.

cucina-itameshi.at

Asian cuisine is alive and well in Frankfurt. Entering Zenzakan Pan Asian Supperclub between two bronze lions, the air is filled with the delicate smell of tonka beans. Dine on tempura chicken, teriyaki sirloin and miso black cod.

mook-group.de/zenzakan

JAPAN
PEOPLE & BUSINESS

PUSHING THE BOUNDARIES

The Osaka Expo 2025 from 13 April to 13 October on Yumeshma Island will spotlight global innovation and sustainability under the theme 'Designing Future Society for Our Lives'. The event will show off Osaka's brand-new architectural wonder, the Grand Ring, one of the biggest wooden structures in the world and a symbol of sustainability. Featuring over 150 countries and 25 international organisations, the Expo will offer cutting-edge exhibits, cultural exchanges and interactive experiences.

To coincide with Expo, Osaka City Museum of Fine Arts will reopen on 1 March after a major renovation. The museum joins another five institutions to hold a joint OSAKA-HAKU (Life, Museum, Osaka) including the Museum of Oriental Ceramics.

osaka-art-museum.jp
osakahaku.ocm.osaka

Once struggling against a declining population, Naoshima Island now thrives as a destination for art and design enthusiasts, fondly known as Japan's Art Island. Ando Tadao's Benesse House explores 'the coexistence of nature, architecture, and art'.

benesse-artsite.jp

JAKARTA
OUTDOOR & ACTIVITY

Reclaim the Streets

Once a week Jakarta is without the din of horns and car engines. Each Sunday between 6am and 11am, parts of the city are closed off to traffic for 'car free Sunday'. The idea was initially introduced to reduce pollution, but it has since evolved into a bit of a street party where locals walk, run, cycle and rollerblade.

Get your best running shoes on and check out ON Store in Jakarta's ASHTA Mall right below the new 25hours Hotel.

WHAT IS YOUR IKIGAI

Ikigai (pronounced ee-key-guy) is the Japanese secret to a long and happy life. It's what gives you a sense of purpose and a reason to live. In other words, it's what gets you out of bed in the morning.

WHAT WE LOVE
SATISFACTION BUT FEELING OF NO POSITIVE IMPACT ON THE WORLD

OUR MISSION
DELIGHT AND FULLNESS BUT WITHOUT PAY

WHAT THE WORLD NEEDS
WHAT WE ARE GOOD AT

OUR PROFESSION
COMFORTABLE BUT FEELING OF EMPTINESS

OUR VOCATION
WHAT WE CAN BE PAID FOR

IKIGAI

NEWS & VIEWS

10

11

HEALTH & WELLBEING

Sing along if you don't know the words

Matt Charlton (song of choice, 'Let's Dance' by Bowie) checks out the karaoke bars guaranteed to hit the right note on a 25hours city all nighter

It is a little-known fact that karaoke is Japanese for 'drunken businessman', and it is little known because it isn't true... though pretty believable, right? Ever since it was thrust upon the West in the 1980s, the word which genuinely translates to 'Empty Orchestra'—or empty bar if my mum gets behind the mic—has been the mainstay of lairy nights out, the curtain-down on Christmas parties, and, more recently, an ironic destination for hipsters.

In honour of Companion's Asia-inspired issue, we have stuck our fingers in our ears, downed a bravery drink, and sought out the best locations in 25h cities where you can sing your noggin off. 1-2-3-4...

Berlin Monster Ronson's

Warschauer Str. 34, 10243 Berlin, Germany

Here, the infamous Berlin Schnauze disappears as residents and visitors alike can cut loose in their own private box. The eight karaoke boxes with names like Jimi, Kurt, Freddie, Amy or Michael (where's Iggy?!?) can accommodate groups of up to six people. The boxes are primed for the spontaneous guests going against their better judgement, and cannot be reserved... much like the patrons.

↗ David Bowie - Heroes

↘ Gin Martini (Bowie's favourite drink)
karaokemonster.de

Hamburg Drunken Lama

Hans-Albers-Platz 3, 20359 Hamburg, Germany

Small but perfectly proportioned, this popular bar hosts regular karaoke nights. A fine bar with club character in the middle of the notorious Hans-Albers-Platz, this place also has a digital gaming table, plenty of dancing, and 20 different types of 'Bomb-shots', in case you either need some Dutch courage or are looking for an excuse not to walk up the steps to the stage.

↗ The Beatles - Twist and Shout

↘ Whiskey and Fritz Cola
drunkenlama.de

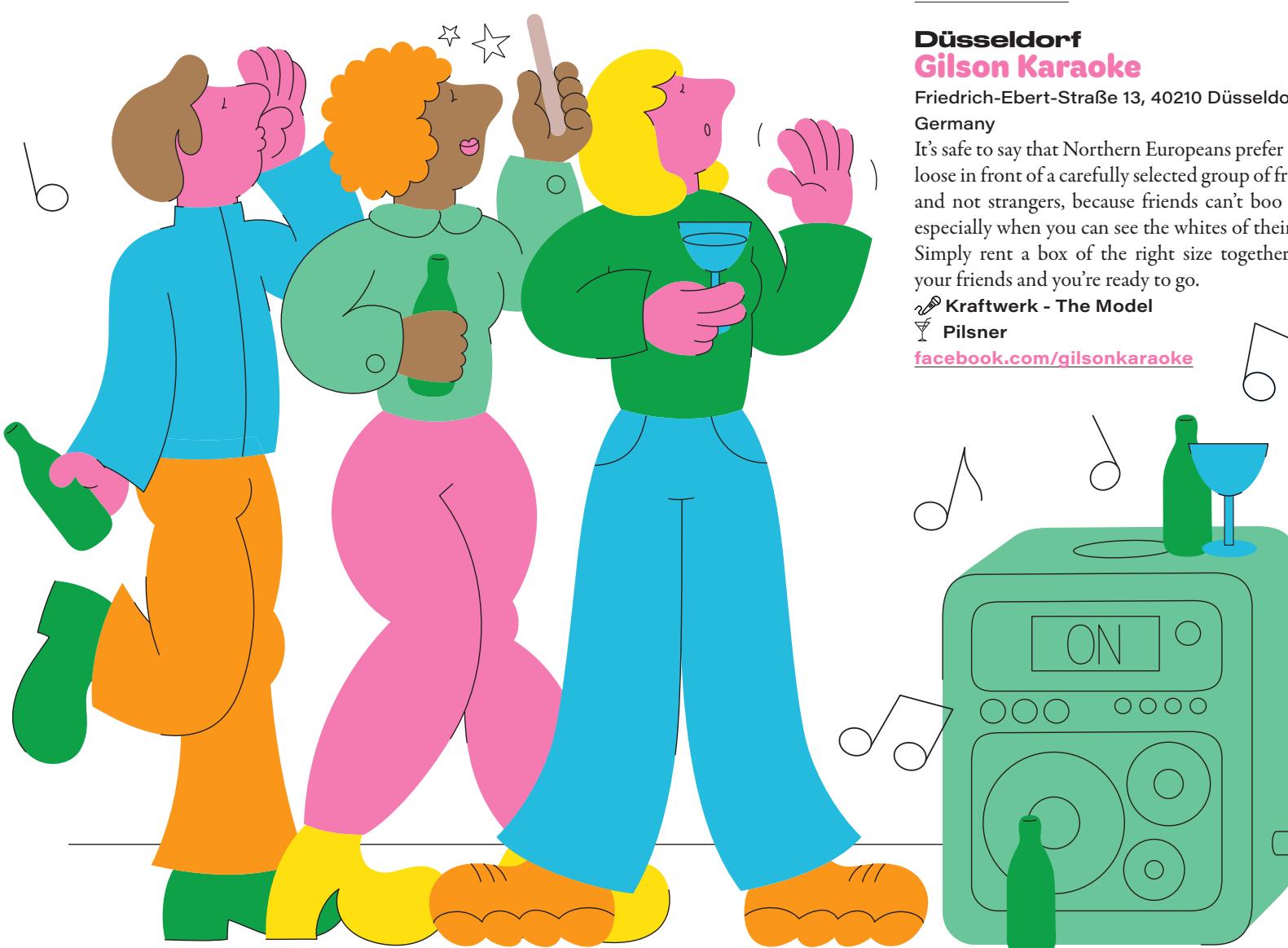
Düsseldorf Gilson Karaoke

Friedrich-Ebert-Straße 13, 40210 Düsseldorf, Germany

It's safe to say that Northern Europeans prefer to cut loose in front of a carefully selected group of friends, and not strangers, because friends can't boo you... especially when you can see the whites of their eyes. Simply rent a box of the right size together with your friends and you're ready to go.

↗ Kraftwerk - The Model

↘ Pilsner
facebook.com/gilsonkaraoke



Florence The Red Garter

Via dei Benci, 33, R, 50122 Florence, Italy

This is a... um... notorious rite of passage for any Florentine, and doesn't necessarily reflect the sophisticated, renaissance-infused beauty of the city... but would it be as fun if it did? One of the first American bars in Italy, serving American food with the addition of beer, and karaoke with the addition of a live guitar accompaniment? Without a doubt this is the second renaissance.

↗ Florence and the Machine - You've Got the Love

↘ Negroni (invented in Florence)
redgarter1962.com

Paris BAM Karaoke

50 Rue d'Aboukir, 75002 Paris, France

The city of light's reputation of quiet sophistication should all be forgotten on entering BAM. Okay, maybe there's a little bit of design flair. Interiors are created by Pablo Peyer Studio, and there are hidden bars and also secret gardens. Don't let these trinkets distract you from your tuneless warbling, however.

↗ Charles Trenet - La Mer

↘ Absinthe
fr.bam-karaokebox.com



Dubai Mr Miyagi's

Studio One Hotel, Dubai Studio City, Dubai, United Arab Emirates

You can both wax on and wax off here at this popular twist on a karaoke bar, and with a potentially authentic nod to karaoke's Asian origins, not only with the name, but also the Thai street food. Located in Dubai Media City, there is also beer pong, and a lot of puns. This for instance, from their website: 'Tuk tuk into our pho-nominal dishes or have your world wok'd with our thai-tastic cocktail buckets. There soy good, you'll be wonton more!'

↗ N-Sync - Bye Bye Bye

↘ Melon Margarita
mrmiyagis.xyz

Munich The Cave

Nikolaistraße 9a, 80802 München, Germany

You'd think that sports fans and karaoke enthusiasts don't mix (we should test this theory with a 'World In Motion' sing along), but Old Gregory Pub argues the contrary. Located on Langstrasse, which is already quite loud, this place adds to the noise, and you could be part of that beautiful din at one of their allegedly 'legendary' karaoke events.

↗ Editors - Munich

↘ Witbier
karaoke.the-cave-munich.de
oldgregorypub.ch

Vienna Sing Your Song

Eschenbachgasse 5, 1010 Wien, Austria

Austrians are nothing if not literal, and this place does what it says on the tin. 'Come as a guest, leave as a friend', they say, thought I would have added 'unless you choose to sing Celine Dion', and since this is apparently the oldest karaoke bar in good ol' Vienna, they must be doing something right.

↗ Ultravox - Vienna (the staff will love this as no one will have thought of it before)

↘ Old Fashioned
singyoursong.at

Zurich Old Gregory Pub

Schöneggstrasse 6, 8004 Zürich, Switzerland

You'd think that sports fans and karaoke enthusiasts don't mix (we should test this theory with a 'World In Motion' sing along), but Old Gregory Pub argues the contrary. Located on Langstrasse, which is already quite loud, this place adds to the noise, and you could be part of that beautiful din at one of their allegedly 'legendary' karaoke events.

↗ Spandau Ballet - Gold

↘ Mai Tai
instagram.com/zenthamrin

Cologne Museum Bar

Zülpicher Pl. 9, 50674 Köln, Germany

The karaoke nights here have proven so popular that they now run four nights a week, usually starting at around 11:30pm after a live concert... you'll be good and loose and ready for Meatloaf by then. From an extensive repertoire of around 32,000 songs from all styles and musical eras, everyone can choose the right song to perform (or massacre) on stage.

↗ Nirvana - Smells Like Teen Spirit

↘ Paloma (very fragrant)
museum-kneipe.de

Jakarta Zen Karaoke

Gedung Menara Thamrin Gedung Parkir Lt. 8, Jakarta, Indonesia

This really is as classy as karaoke gets... How classy is that, you ask, we'll leave that to you. Open all week til 3am, this pricier proposition even offers singers and dancers to accompany you in your 'musical' exploits, so you can feel that you've made the studio stage of American Idol even if you sound like a lawnmower sucking up a dog toy.

↗ The Only Living Boy in New Cross - Carter USM

↘ Mai Tai
instagram.com/zenthamrin

YOU GOT TO POUND IT UP



Flex your muscles with Southeast Asia's latest fitness trends.

Yanar Alkayat reports

Fitness, it seems, is no longer a niche interest reserved for enthusiasts, and that's a great thing. The benefits of physical wellness, with its undeniable positive effect on mental health, have become widely recognised. While the COVID-19 pandemic had an overnight impact on fitness goers everywhere, closing gyms and turning countless living rooms (mine included!) into mini gyms, it also compelled millions to become more health-conscious almost out of necessity, fuelling the rise of fresh fitness spaces and trends.

Southeast Asia is no exception and has been flexing its creative muscles. Once dominated by large gym chains, the region's fitness landscape has evolved into a vibrant mix of specialised studios, niche workouts, data-driven experiences and mass participation events. From hybrid Pilates classes to gamified fitness, there's no shortage of innovative ways to stay active. Here we share some of the biggest trends firing up the area and beyond—ones that might just inspire you to don your trainers and get your body moving.

FUSION FITNESS

If you find traditional gyms monotonous, you're probably not alone. Luckily, the rise of neighbourhood gyms, boutique gyms and innovative workouts have invigorated the fitness game. Now a staple across Singapore, Hong Kong and Thailand, sleek, community-focused spaces offer a personalised alternative to corporate-style, big gym chains. Take STRONG Pilates for example. Originating in Australia and now expanding across Singapore, it combines high-intensity workouts with low-impact, Pilates-inspired movements. The fusion doesn't stop there. The Pilates Reformer has also had a makeover, reinvented as hybrid machines like the Rowformer (mixed with a rowing machine)

POUND FITNESS



or Bikeformer (mixed with an air bike), creating fast-paced sessions that blend resistance with cardio, which seems like a lot of fun.

Talking of which, fun with a capital F has been injected into fitness with the explosion of classes like POUND fitness. This Californian-born phenomenon involves using two lightweight exercise drumsticks to create a rhythm-driven, full-body workout full of squats, choreographed moves and coordinated drum-like tapping to high-energy music. Not only does it enhance strength, coordination and

core stability, it leaves people energised and smiling. "It's the unique combination of movement, music and group energy that resonates with a wide range of fitness enthusiasts," says Tari Wirtjes, SEA market development manager for POUND on its popularity in Indonesia and globally.

The combination of physical movement, mental engagement and communal spirit is a winning formula. "The rhythmic drumming motions are cathartic, enabling participants to release tension while engaging in a fun and physically invigorating workout. Indonesia's cultural emphasis on togetherness and mutual support aligns seamlessly with the group-oriented nature of POUND. Classes thrive on collective energy, camaraderie and the shared joy of movement, reflecting the spirit of 'gotong royong'—mutual cooperation," she adds.

TECH-POWERED TRAINING

In our increasingly digitised lives, it's no surprise fitness too has had a digital revolution. On-demand fitness apps, like 8fit, Streaks, Glo and Malaysian fitness celebrity Jordan Yeoh's Train With Jordan, make it easier than ever to work out anytime, anywhere. Meanwhile, live-streamed workouts and virtual personal training have evolved into more sophisticated offerings. AI-powered apps such as EliteFit.AI, track your movements, analyse progress and provide real-time feedback. For a more holistic approach, Healthifyme, with 40 million users, helps users maximise their health journeys with movement and nutrition tracking.

Gamified fitness is also on the rise. Apps like GO-Qii, a fitness-tracking wearable with over five million downloads, and Sweatcoin with an impressive



170 million users, reward users with points for achieving their goals. These points can be redeemed for discounts on products and services or donated to charity (with Sweatcoin), giving you and others something back for your efforts. Even traditional gyms are getting in on the action, with big brands like Celebrity Fitness offering interactive cycling challenges and real-time leaderboards to push participants to give it their all.

THE NEW SOCIAL SCENE

Fitness events have become the ultimate social gatherings. From marathons and running festivals to obstacle races and functional fitness competitions like Hyrox, working out has evolved from a solitary pursuit to an energy-charged celebration of community and camaraderie.

Running has become a global lifestyle, with more people than ever lacing up their trainers to tackle challenges ranging from 5K and 10Ks to half marathons, full marathons or more. Southeast Asia has some of the most striking races, combining the thrill of physical achievement with the excitement of discovering new destinations. The dawn of purposeful sports travel is upon us.

The Jakarta Running Festival, held across two days in Indonesia's capital, transforms the bustling city streets into a runner's haven. There are distances catering to beginners and families to seasoned runners and elites, combined with music, food stalls and a festival vibe. This year's festival takes place from 23 to 26 October.

Further afield, the Maybank Marathon in Bali offers scenic views of Balinese villages, while Borobudur Marathon in Java, has runners pass the iconic Borobudur Temple—a UNESCO World Heritage Site. These events combine the 42km challenge with stunning natural landscapes and a taste of the country's rich cultural heritage. Whether you're chasing a personal best, supporting a good cause or soaking up the lively atmosphere, you can turn racing into a memorable travel adventure.

STATE

Matt Charlton discovers
how art duo Veli & Amos use
public spaces to make
a statement

It can't be denied that we're currently living in a very fraught world, riddled with division and social issues... go on, try to deny it—you can't, can you. But it could be argued that the arts flourish in such times: the protest music of the late 60s, Keith Haring's work during the AIDS crisis, the punk movement... 'Think Twice' by Phil Collins... I've gone too far, haven't I? Anyway, despite the ancient Chinese curse 'May you live in interesting times' never feeling so pertinent, a charged society breeds memorable art. Step forward Veli Silver and Amos Angeles.

The Slovenian-Swiss artist duo based between Ljubljana and Zurich, otherwise known as Veli & Amos, use language, codes and graffiti to draw attention to social issues, but, for 25hours Zurich Langstrasse, the message is a bit more uplifting, though no less affecting. “We wanted to do something big and inspirational for the people in the city and its visitors. Something that makes people stop for a while, smile and take a picture”, they tell me. ‘Dear Zurich, we would like to strongly encourage you to consider having a great day’, they wrote with adhesive tape across the entire facade of the seven-story building, plus a smiley, a heart, ‘Love’ and the artists’ signature: ‘Veli & Amos’.

Maybe this is a message that every city—hell—every community, needs. Why is public art so important to them? “Public space has become increasingly significant, especially in the age of social media. It’s a physical experience in our daily surroundings, a place we all encounter—unlike social media or galleries—where we can curate our experiences or remain within personal bubbles.” They finish this thought with some pertinent words, “In public space, you have to close your eyes not to see it.”

But maybe a lot of people—hopefully figuratively—are walking around with their eyes closed. What does it take to get a reaction from a passive audience... is it more important to them to make a statement or provoke debate? “To provoke by breaking some ground is always good, it can be a statement, size, cuteness or even provoking by not being provocative”, they proffer. “When provocation sparks debate, it’s always good, but it’s very challenging at the same time. Being open to new perspectives is crucial, not just to challenge others but also to reflect on and expand our own limited views.”

"We enjoy shifting dynamics, prioritizing the message over the medium"

Veli Silver and Am Angeles making the world a kinder place through art



And how open are minds to new perspectives in an ostensibly conservative city such as Zurich? Is there a passion, support and community for the more provocative and modern in such an environment? “While there are talented individuals working in the art field, the scene has felt less cohesive since the impact of the pandemic, and free space remains scarce”—Veli and Amos always speak as one voice, by the way. “This inspired us to create the Ice Cream Project. An exhibition space on wheels (shown above). It’s an independent platform for showcasing art we like. The project is funded in part by renting out hand-painted billboards on the truck.” Both the billboard and the truck serve as canvas spaces available for rent, allowing individuals to have a voice in public space and be part of the art.

It feels as if this type of outreach is important to them, to take their messages beyond a narrow audience and make the sometimes distant concept of 'art' more accessible and less intimidating. "Our aim has always been to communicate our work, not just to art enthusiasts, but to a broader audience. Public spaces require engagement with an existing context, while galleries demand the creation of one. We enjoy shifting dynamics, prioritizing the message over the medium. In the end, it's about what we want to express."

It seems to me that their more visible, provocative work in the public sphere is a route they intend to pursue. “We have been actively involved in numerous public space projects. In the city, we manage several billboards available for rent, offering options for hand-painted designs or LED neon signs. Recently, we moved into a larger studio, providing more space to continue these projects.”

Next time you're in Zurich, be certain to walk past 25hours Hotel and look at their message on the side of the building. If you crack a smile, if your day suddenly improves, you know what? You've just opened your eyes to art. Why bother moving into a bigger space when Zurich—and its people—seems to be their canvas.

ART

Veli & Amos reach out to 25hours
Zurich Langstrasse guests



Droga Amsterdam Cunami

The Comet Vybz Kartel

Holy Ghost Omah Lay

Kwaku the Traveller Black Sherif

Logba Logba Simi

First Sermon Black Sherif

Turn Red MdotR

ТИ СИ ТОП DJ Damyan x Mile Kitich

The logo for 'Veli & Amos Play List' is displayed. The text 'Veli & Amos' is at the top in a large, blue, serif font. Below it, 'PLAY' is in a large, red, bold, sans-serif font, and 'LIST' is in a large, red, bold, sans-serif font below 'PLAY'. To the right of the text is a QR code.



Driving into the future

MAKING A SAFE AND SUSTAINABLE STATEMENT: THE VOLVO EX90



"The start of something new for Volvo Cars"



Keeping everyone safe

The standard safety in the Volvo EX90 is higher than any Volvo car before it. It's designed to understand you and its surroundings, and becomes smarter and safer as it learns from new data.

Outside, state-of-the-art sensors like cameras and radars are connected to high-performance core computers. Sensors don't get tired or distracted. They are designed to react when you're just a fraction too late. The EX90's lidar (light, detection and ranging), delivered by Luminar, can sense the road in front of you, whether it's day or night, also at highway speeds. It can see small objects hundreds of metres ahead.

Inside, an invisible shield of safety looks out for you. Special sensors and cameras, powered by Volvo Cars' own in-house developed algorithms, gauge eye gaze concentration. Your car understands when you're distracted, drowsy or otherwise inattentive. It'll alert you, first softly nudging, then more insistent. And if the unthinkable happens, and you fall asleep or are taken ill while driving, the Volvo EX90 is designed to safely stop and call for help.

Technology with a purpose

The Volvo EX90 is a highly advanced computer on wheels. And just like your smartphone or your laptop, this car is designed to get better over time, thanks to regular over-the-air software updates.

A 14.5-inch centre screen is your gateway to one of the best infotainment systems on offer, with Google built in. Google apps and services including hands-free help from Google Assistant, Google Maps navigation and more of your favourite apps on Google Play all come built in. It's also compatible with wireless Apple CarPlay. You can also stream your favourite music through the Bowers & Wilkins audio system featuring Dolby Atmos, plus headrest-integrated speakers for immersive sound.

The Volvo EX90 will also come with phone key technology as standard. Your smartphone serves as your car key and automatically unlocks the car and starts a personal welcoming sequence as you approach.

Supporting a more sustainable lifestyle

All of this technology comes together in one of the most elegant car interiors on the market, full of natural and responsibly-sourced materials. With its in-house developed fully electric technology base, the Volvo EX90 is your perfect companion for a more sustainable lifestyle. Delivering up to 600km of tailpipe emission-free driving range on a single charge, according to the WLTP test cycle, it charges from 10 to 80 per cent in around 30 minutes. Are you ready for a technologically advanced, smooth driving experience?

The new, fully electric Volvo EX90 is the start of a new era for Volvo Cars. This true seven-seater further raises standards in safety and a more sustainable lifestyle as this iconic Scandinavian car brand sets a decisive course for a fully electric future.

The Volvo EX90 defines the principle of form following function, and is all set to be an instant classic. This versatile family car has modern proportions, combined with cutting-edge technology in computing,

connectivity and electrification to optimise safety, efficiency and aesthetics.

"The Volvo EX90 is a statement for where we are, and where we are going," said Jim Rowan, chief executive of Volvo Cars. "It's fully electric with a range of up to 600km on a single charge, designed to further raise our safety standards, the first Volvo car to be truly defined by its software and part of a wider ecosystem, connecting to your home and your other devices."



Take a test drive

Volvo Cars have teamed up with 25hours Hotels to offer guests the opportunity to drive the new all electric Volvo EX90 free of charge for one day. Now available at 25hours Hotel The Circle in Cologne, 25hours Hotel Das Tour in Düsseldorf and 25hours Hotel Bikini Berlin.

Watch out for more Volvo Cars new electric vehicles coming to more 25hours Hotels soon.

JEAN GEANIE

Jane Anderson speaks to Donna Priadi, founder of sustainable and inclusive Indonesian fashion brand, KIND Denim



TRAILBLAZER ★ TRAILBLAZER ★ GREEN FASHION

In the heart of Indonesia's bustling fashion scene, a small and passionate brand was born amidst one of the most challenging periods in recent history. KIND Denim, founded in 2021 by Donna Priadi, a working mother of two, during the COVID-19 pandemic, embodies resilience, passion, and a vision for a more sustainable future. What started as a dream during uncertain times has now blossomed into a beacon of sustainable fashion and Indonesian pride.

Deeply rooted in the love for denim and local fashion, Donna saw the pandemic as an opportunity to pursue her long-time passion: creating a sustainable denim brand that champions Indonesian craftsmanship while advocating for environmental responsibility. As a passionate supporter of local designers, she was constantly inspired by the richness of Indonesian creativity and textiles. Her dream was clear—to see Indonesia not just as a producer but as a leader in the global fashion industry.

WHY DENIM?

"Denim is more than a fabric—it's a lifestyle," says Donna. "Denim is universal. It transcends age, gender, and occasion. It can be worn by anyone, anywhere, at any time." The KIND ethos believes that no matter how old people are, denim always carries a youthful, timeless vibe. KIND Denim founder's personal connection to denim and its versatility inspired her to create a brand that would make this beloved fabric accessible and sustainable for all.

From the very beginning, Donna prioritized eco-conscious practices. The brand exclusively uses 100% organic cotton, grown without harmful chemicals and sustainable Lycra for the stretch mix. Their indigo colouring is mostly plant-based and the denim is also eco-washed.

KIND Denim incorporates recycled materials, including repurposed cotton waste and leftover threads, into its collections. In January 2023, KIND launched its 'Upcycled Denim' collection, collaborating with Indonesian designers Rinda Salmun and Purana. This collection transformed damaged or unsellable denim into fashion-forward pieces.

INDONESIAN CRAFTSMANSHIP

At its core, KIND Denim is proudly Indonesian, supporting local artisans and their communities. The brand draws inspiration from Indonesia's rich cultural heritage, ensuring that each garment tells a story of its roots. Donna believes that by supporting local craftsmanship, KIND Denim can help preserve traditional skills while offering contemporary designs that appeal to global audiences.

"This commitment to local craftsmanship is also a way of giving back," says Donna. "By providing a platform for Indonesian artisans to showcase their

work, KIND Denim contributes to the local economy and helps build a more sustainable and equitable fashion industry."

KIND Denim's collections are as versatile as they are sustainable. From the bestselling KAIA Palazzo to the edgy SABRINA Mini Skirt and the classic NAOMI Crop Jacket, every piece is designed to cater to a variety of styles and occasions.

This versatility underscores Donna's belief that fashion should be inclusive and timeless. Her designs reflect a universal appeal, ensuring that pieces can be worn by anyone, regardless of age or gender, while always retaining a youthful, vibrant energy.

SHARED VALUES

One of KIND Denim's most notable collaborations is with 25hours Hotel Jakarta The Oddbird, where it provides eco-friendly uniforms for the hotel's staff. This partnership embodies a shared vision of sustainability and style.

"KIND Denim isn't just about creating sustainable clothing; it's about elevating Indonesian fashion on the

'Fashion should be inclusive and timeless'

global stage while inspiring other small businesses," said Donna. The brand blends sustainable innovation with Indonesia's rich cultural heritage, proving that local craftsmanship can shine in international markets. It aspires to be a beacon for small enterprises, demonstrating that with passion and purpose, even the smallest businesses can make a global impact. It's more than a business—it's a dream to see Indonesian creativity celebrated worldwide, empowering a community of local brands to rise together and redefine fashion.

Donna's vision is to see KIND Denim on the global stage, representing not just a brand but a movement toward a more ethical and sustainable future for fashion. Every piece of KIND Denim carries a story—a story of resilience, passion, and a commitment to making a difference.

WHERE TO BUY KIND: DENIM

KIND Denim sells via the website, Instagram and E-commerce (Shopee). Pop-Up Stores occur four to five times a year, and they regularly participate in Pop-Up shops. "Our dream is to one day open a flagship store here in Jakarta," adds Donna. →





SADDLE UP BUTTERCUP

Companion discovers the inspiration behind FLINC, the compact city and cargo bike company

It all started, as a lot of things do, with Steven Spielberg. Markus Freitag, founder of FLINC Cycles, was just 12 years old when he first saw intergalactic blub-fest 'E.T.' at the cinema. As well as the actual movie, he was also impressed by Elliott's BMX, with the front basket and E.T. inside... a truly iconic cinema moment.

Later, it became clear to Freitag that "...the ideal everyday bike would have 20-inch wheels, be robust, and equipped with a large luggage compartment in the right place, ensuring lots of manoeuvrability," Lara Heller, the Communications Manager for FLINC tells me. And so, a mere four decades later, Freitag created an alien-inspired bicycle, perfect for nipping around. FLINC is a compact two-wheeler which is as convenient as an urban minibike, as comfortable as a cargo bike, and as sturdy as Elliott's BMX... though sadly it can't fly. Yet.

Why does the world need a FLINC bike? I've already noticed quite a few bikes around European cities. "The world still needs many sustainable mobility solutions: large and small bicycles, so many that there is at least one for every world/city dweller," Lara tells me. "A closer look reveals that the world especially needs bikes like FLINC, a nimble, compact city and cargo bike. FLINC adapts to all situations and, over its decades of use, to all stages of life and urban cycling needs." There are also a lot more technical bike words like 'hub dynamo' and '11-speed hub gear' which I don't understand, but

sound impressive. The main thing I glean is that it's made to last a lifetime, in stark contrast to the obsolescence built into many modern products.

Zurich seems to be such a green city, too. From the mountains to the rivers and lakes, there appears to be a healthy mix between the urban and the great outdoors... there's even alpine-fresh drinking water from fountains everywhere. So, is this a city-friendly cycle for a cycle-friendly city? "It's nice to see that there is a strong cycling community which is also politically active, but the roads are narrow and there are still few cycle paths," answers Lara, somewhat surprisingly. "But the city is working on solutions. By 2031, for example, the city wants to have 130 kilometres of cycle paths."

But what a picturesque part of the world to cycle in, from town to country in moments, the clear alpine air blowing in your face, the bother of the big city melting away. Does Lara have any favourite routes? "There are many beautiful routes, especially around Zurich. It's small, so you can be on the outskirts of the city in just 10 minutes by bike. Whether you head north or south, along Lake Zurich or the Limmat, there are city escapes; in all directions, as well as a few hills for mountain bikers and downhill fans."

It's also a city of bankers... it must be a great place to start a business? "It's not easy," replies Lara. "Living in the city is expensive, and not everyone



Photography: Philip Frowein; Lukito



can work on new projects for too long without an income. On the other hand, it's also much easier in Zurich because the city is a manageable size, so you can still make a name with a new product and limited resources. We want to get lots of people excited about cycling, especially those waiting for the tram; who don't look good on those unsightly electric scooters; or, even worse, are stuck in traffic jams in their cars."

Who would have thought a homesick alien just looking to borrow someone's phone would have led here. Now all they need to figure out is how to make them fly, and we'll see Swiss bankers peddling through the clear, alpine air before we know it.

Check out zurichrides.com for some great cycle routes around this Swiss city.



HEAVEN SCENT

Companion speaks to Chris Kerrigan, perfumer and co-founder of artisan perfume brand Oaken Lab

"It all began when I started tinkering around with making personal care products for my own use at home," recalls Chris Kerrigan who co-founded Oaken Lab with his wife, Cynthia Wirjono. "We wanted higher quality, natural products, but we couldn't find them locally. I became obsessed with making the perfect formulas, and that led to an obsession with creating fragrances for the products. At the time, 2017, we were active in our fashion retail company, The Goods Dept. By 2018, Cynthia and I decided to turn my new passion for fragrances into a brand."

Early on, Oaken Lab was focused on high-quality body care products with experiential scents, as well as a natural luxury formulas using ingredients like olive oil and shea butter. Soon after, Chris and Cynthia added their perfume and home scentsing lines, and shifted their focus to a full fragrance lifestyle brand. In 2023 they opened their Oaken flagship store in the neighbourhood of Pererenan, Bali. Just last year they opened an Oaken Lab store in Plaza Indonesia, Jakarta. "We strive to be completely original in our style and tell stories with our scents," said Chris. "When I'm creating perfumes it's often very personal. I take inspiration from our experiences of travels, art, music, or just particular

moments that have left an impact. Since we are lucky to be in a country with such rich resources, I always try to incorporate some natural Indonesian elements like patchouli or vetiver into my scents. Often I have a specific memory or scene in my mind and build the fragrance around that. Other times I smell new materials that trigger inspiration."

Oaken Lab's best sellers include Sanctum Eau De Parfum, Far Afeld Body Wash and Conservatory Reed Diffusers. They are also launching an exclusive scent for 25 Hours Hotel Jakarta The Odd Bird. Chris says, "When I create fragrances for others, I think about the space that the scents will be presented in, the brand identity, design, colour, texture, and even the way light fills the space. My goal is to create a scent that completes the entire sensory experience."



One of Oaken Lab's key messages is to follow 'the road less travelled'. "This partly refers to the literal art of traveling and the experiences that come of it," says Chris. "On a deeper level, it's also about choosing to follow an uncommon path in life, not conforming to what is considered 'standard' and discovering the unexpected. I suppose this is how we approach creating our scents. They are not what people think of as typical perfume." A true trailblazer. →

TIGER LILY BURNING BRIGHT ...

Matt Charlton talks to Stephan Erletz, head chef of the Asia-inspired Tiger Lily restaurant

Fresh-faced German chef Stephan Erletz, age just 30, has now hauled his pots, pans, and food-smoking gun (probably) over to Denmark, to be head chef the shiny new Tiger Lily restaurant in the equally as shiny 25hours Hotel Paper Island Copenhagen. His background and rise are impressive. You could almost call him a 'wunderkind', or whatever the German word for that is. He comes from Christoph Rüffer's team at the two Michelin-starred Haerlin in the Fairmont Hotel Hamburg, then taking up his first position as head chef in a five-star hotel in Kitzbühel.

Is there any way of describing how hard a team has to work to achieve two Michelin stars, because I can only really imagine the kitchen in 'The Bear'? "To achieve 2 Michelin stars, consistent high-quality performance is essential, along with a refined sense of taste to create sophisticated dishes with the perfect balance", says Stephan. "Teamwork is crucial. For most chefs, it is not just a job, but a combination of hobby, passion, and work."

So, for those of us not in the restaurant game, what is the difference between a head chef and executive chef? Is it an office and a special pen? "Executive chefs are more commonly found in large hotels with multiple kitchens, resorts or larger culinary establishments", Stephan tells me. "In [these places], there may be multiple kitchen chefs under the executive chef's supervision. Executive chefs are often more focused on administrative tasks than cooking day-to-day". He continues, "For 25hours, head chefs take on both administrative tasks and daily cooking."

The inspiration for Tiger Lily begins with the cuisine and the vibrant colours of Asia. The venue itself thrives on wood and paper art, and guests are taken on a culinary journey through the Far East whilst sitting smack dab in the middle of Northern Europe. But what were Stephan's big headline plans when he took on the restaurant? "The primary goal of a chef is



Master chef
Stephen Erletz in action; right:
fresh flavours; below: Tiger
Lily Restaurant on Paper
Island, Copenhagen



'The goal is to delight guests with the food'

Photography: Richard Lohs

to delight their guests with the food and provide them with an enjoyable evening. For me personally, it is important to deliver delicious dishes that are as fresh and of the highest quality as possible". So far, so general... but can he pick a favourite child? "In this cold, dark time of year, our Chinese Ramen is a perfect fit. It features handmade wide noodles paired with braised lamb shank, cooked in a 15-year-old master stock."

"Our restaurant has a fantastic Asian ambience that, together with the food, might give guests a bit of an Asian-inspired feeling. The neighbourhood is very important for the restaurant, [but] we aim to be presented away from being a hotel restaurant. Tiger Lily is like a separate brand".

The brevity and succinct nature of Stephan's answers suggest that he is a busy man (or maybe just that he's German), so I'd better let him get on. Before he goes though, the most important question: how does he like his eggs? "I really enjoy poached eggs, especially as part of a classic Eggs Benedict". Know, the eggs, know the man.

STEPPING OUT

This season's trainers are all about putting your best foot forward, says stylist Michelle Duguid

K-WAY x Diemme
Grappa Hiker, €445
diemme.com

Veja x NIKK Store
Volley Leather Trainers, €160
veja-store.com

Lacoste x Maison Chateau Rouge
Leather trainers, €160
masionchateaurouge.com

Onitsuka Tiger
GSM Trainer, €140
onitsukatiger.com

Nike
Shox trainers, €183
nike.com

Hoka x Reformation
Monogram trainers, €177
monogramthereformation.com

Alohas
Soft tan leather trainers, €236
alohas.com

Bape x Stadium Goods
Leather trainers, €330
uk.bape.com

Asics
Metaspeed Edge Paris trainer, from €260
asics.com

Salomon
Dex defy running trainers, €142
salomon.com

Troy's stroll around Jakarta

Jakarta local Troy Fridatama leads you to his favourite Oddbird neighbourhood hotspots

Jakarta, the capital of Indonesia, has now become one of the most busy and most populated cities in the whole of Asia. Its blend of modernity and tradition captures the essence of a city in constant flux and evolution, reflecting the complexities of contemporary Indonesia.

Local resident, Troy Fridatama, guides you to his must-visit haunts around the newly opened 25hours Hotel The Oddbird which perches above the Ashta Mall in the Sudirman Central Business District, renowned as one of the trendiest business and lifestyle areas to explore.



1
Pasar Mayestik
Tebah Street, Kebayoran,
South Jakarta

Established in the 1950s, the Pasar Mayestik (meaning 'to weave' in Javanese) market became a popular destination not only for locals but also for tourists, known for its authentic Indonesian products, especially textiles. I'm always drawn to the colourful array of fabrics at Pronto Moda Mayestik, my favourite textile shop in Jakarta.

[@pasar_mayestik](#), [@prontomodafabrics](#)



2
Saint Theresia Church
Gereja Theresia Street, Menteng,
Central Jakarta

As a Muslim majority country, Indonesians pay respect to other religions too. Theresia Church is a prominent Catholic place of worship. In 1933, Dutch architect J. Th. van Oyen designed this church without any pillar at the centre, giving a clear view of the altar. This church was inaugurated in 1934 by Priest A. Th. van Hoof SJ and is dedicated to Saint Thérèse of Lisieux, serving as a central place of worship for the local Catholic community. I enjoy its blend of Gothic and Romanesque architectural styles, with striking stained-glass windows and serene atmosphere. Besides regular Mass services, the church hosts community events, educational programmes, social outreach initiatives and cultural events reflecting the rich local heritage.

[gerejatheresia.org](#)

Photographs: Olivia Valentina Illustration: Emma Kirkham



"Sarinah Tamrin Plaza features Indonesia's first escalator"

3
Sarinah Thamrin Plaza
MH Thamrin Street, Central Jakarta

Sarinah Thamrin shopping centre is home to one of the city's most iconic department stores which opened in 1966 with the very first escalator in Indonesia! The mall is named in honour of the nanny who played a pivotal role in shaping Indonesia's first president, Sukarno. Here you can buy clothing, accessories, electronics, and local handicrafts. There are also places to eat and cultural events showcasing Indonesian culture and arts. →

[sarinah.co.id](#)



5

ASHTA District 8 mall District 8, SCBD, South Jakarta

ASHTA District 8 mall has direct access to the 25hours Hotel Jakarta The Oddbird which towers above it. Blending shopping, dining, and entertainment under one roof, there's a well-curated choice of brands and a diverse culinary scene, offering everything from gourmet cuisine to comforting local dishes. I love the Kopi Bangsawan (latte with palm sugar) at Batisserie and having dinner and drinks at Ryota is always fun. ASHTA is not just a shopping center; it is a community hub that hosts various events, art exhibitions, and cultural activities, fostering a sense of connection among visitors. ashta.co.id, batisserie, ryota.jkt

4

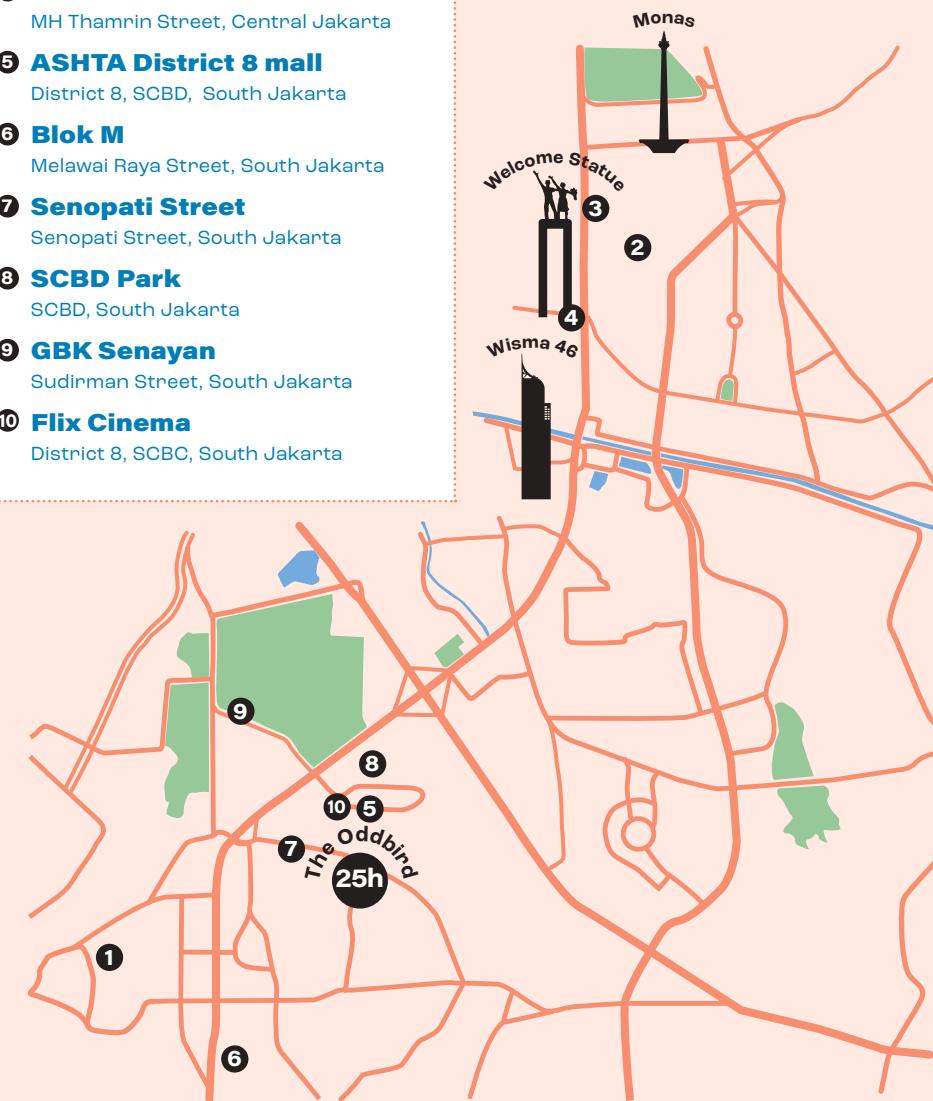
Bundaran HI MH Thamrin Street, Central Jakarta

Bundaran HI (Hotel Indonesia Roundabout) or also called Welcome Statue, is an iconic landmark and traffic circle located in the heart of Jakarta. It's known for its fountain and serves as a major intersection connecting several key roads in the city. Reaching the Bundaran HI is pretty easy. You can take Transjakarta Busway or MRT and drop off right at the Bundaran HI station. The fountain is beautifully illuminated in the evening, making it a picturesque spot for photography. Bundaran HI is also a community activity center especially on Sundays where the road is closed for Car Free Day program in the morning when locals and visitors are encouraged to enjoy outdoor activities. Celebrating New Year Eve at Bundaran HI is once in a lifetime experience where you can enjoy live entertainment, fireworks, fountain show, with thousands of locals.

jakartatravelguide.com



- ① **Pasar Mayestik**
Tebah Street, Kebayoran
- ② **Saint Theresia Church**
Gereja Theresia Street, Menteng
- ③ **Sarinah Thamrin Plaza**
MH Thamrin Street, Central Jakarta
- ④ **Bundaran HI**
MH Thamrin Street, Central Jakarta
- ⑤ **ASHTA District 8 mall**
District 8, SCBD, South Jakarta
- ⑥ **Blok M**
Melawai Raya Street, South Jakarta
- ⑦ **Senopati Street**
Senopati Street, South Jakarta
- ⑧ **SCBD Park**
SCBD, South Jakarta
- ⑨ **GBK Senayan**
Sudirman Street, South Jakarta
- ⑩ **Flix Cinema**
District 8, SCBC, South Jakarta



7

Senopati Street Senopati Street, South Jakarta

Senopati Street is a vibrant and upscale area known for its blend of residential, commercial, and culinary offerings. It also has some of the funkiest entertainment and nightlife and is just steps away from 25hours Hotel Jakarta The Oddbird. Overall, Senopati Street represents a dynamic slice of Jakarta's urban landscape. For the best bar hopping experience, I suggest you head for The Cocktail Club, Pantja, The Modern Haus, A/A Bar and Izzy Social Club.

thecocktailclubjakarta, pantja.id,
modernhausjkt, aa_bar,
izzysocialclub

8

SCBD Park SCBD, South Jakarta

SCBD Park, nestled in the heart of Jakarta's bustling Central Business District, is a verdant oasis that blends nature with urban life. This meticulously landscaped park within walking distance of 25hours Hotel The Oddbird has lush greenery and serene walking paths, providing a refreshing escape from the surrounding concrete jungle. There's a good choice of local and international restaurants in the park which is the perfect spot for a post meal stroll or a spot of alfresco work. →

scbdpark



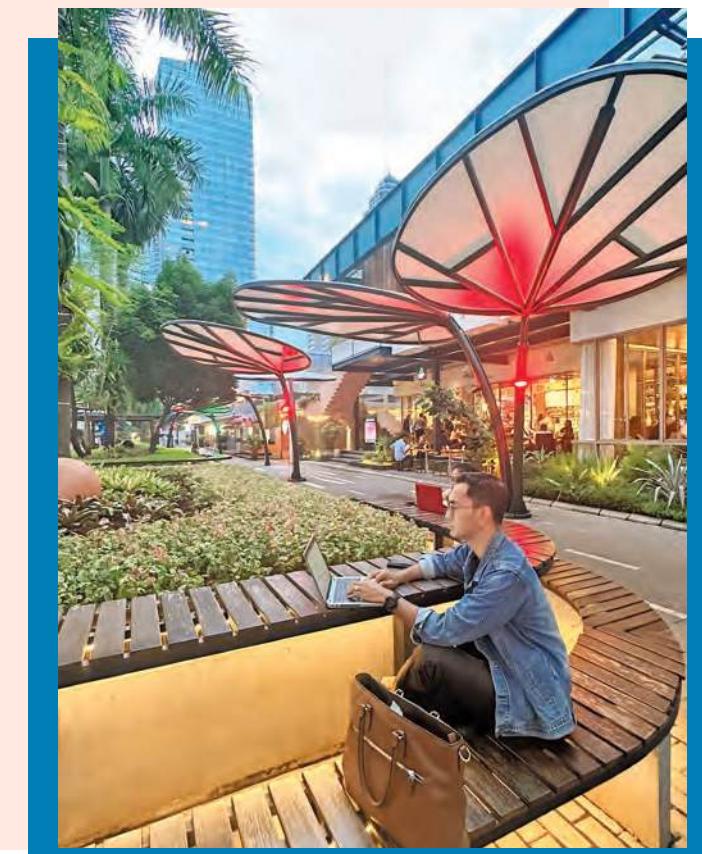
6

Blok M Melawai Raya Street, South Jakarta

Blok M is a vibrant and bustling district renowned for its dynamic blend of culture, commerce, cuisine and nightlife. Also known as Little Tokyo, it features many authentic Japanese restaurants. In the evening,

Blok M transforms into a lively hotspot of cafes and bars. Local coffee houses and dessert places are now mushrooming here attracting Gen Z visitors.

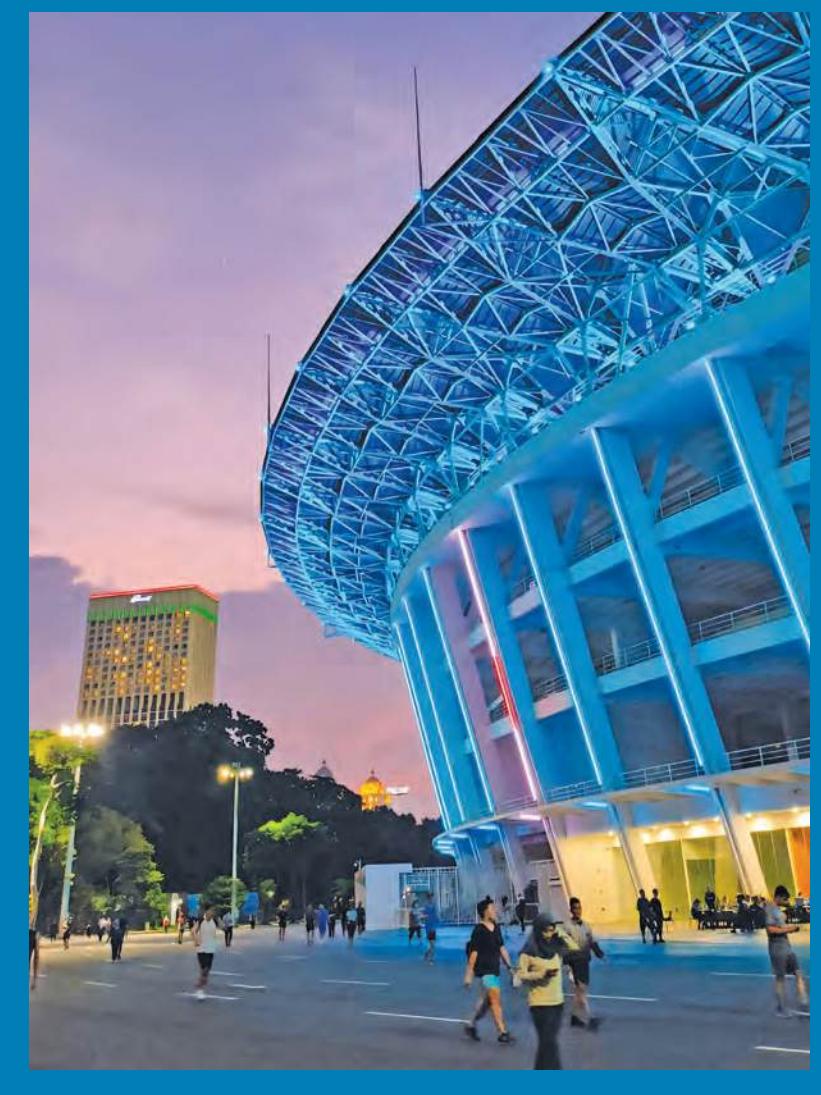
jakartatravelguide.com



9

GBK Senayan
 Sudirman Street, South Jakarta

Gelora Bung Karno (GBK) Senayan is a prominent sports complex located in Senayan, right in the heart of Jakarta. It was built to host the 1962 Asian Games and has since become a key venue for sporting events, concerts, and cultural activities seating up to 78,000 spectators. GBK is also a significant landmark in Jakarta and plays an important role in the country's sports culture. Just 10 minutes away from 25hours Hotel The Oddbird, it's the perfect spot for outdoor sport activities such as running. It also includes the Aquatic Stadium, Istora Senayan, Stadion Madya and Indonesia Arena Stadium. I love the fact that sports communities gather here and host free activities for anyone to join.

gbk.id


10

Flix Cinema
 District 8, SCBC, South Jakarta

Head up to the second floor of ASHTA Mall where you'll find the Flix Cinema. I love its gold and platinum studios with plush seating and state-of-the-art technology that pampers your eyes and ears. Catch the most anticipated local movies and Hollywood blockbusters, while enjoying snacks from the craving counter. One of my favourite movies was *Bila Esok Ibu Tiada*, for its cinematography in this elevated movie-going experience.

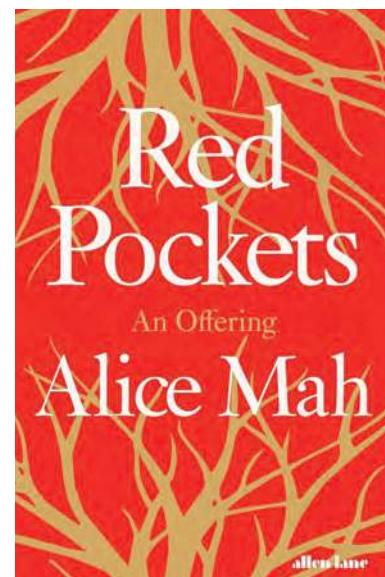
flixcinema.mimin.io

Troy Fridatama

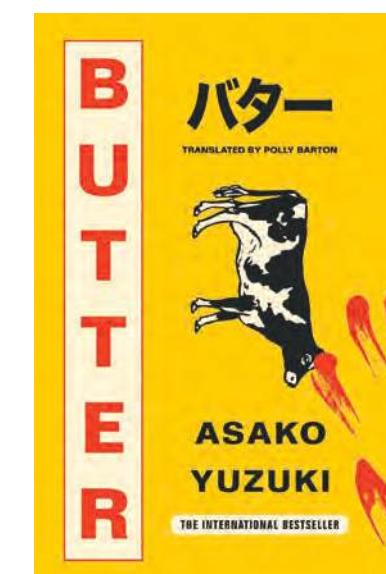
Troy has spent more than half of his life in the bustling city of Jakarta and has witnessed much change since his high school days, not least the opening of 25hours Hotel The Oddbird, reflecting the city as a 'Paradise of Paradoxes'. He hopes this feature will give you a glimpse of his home, a dynamic metropolitan city that retains its traditions whilst welcoming the new. The melting pot of Indonesia.

Literature looks EAST

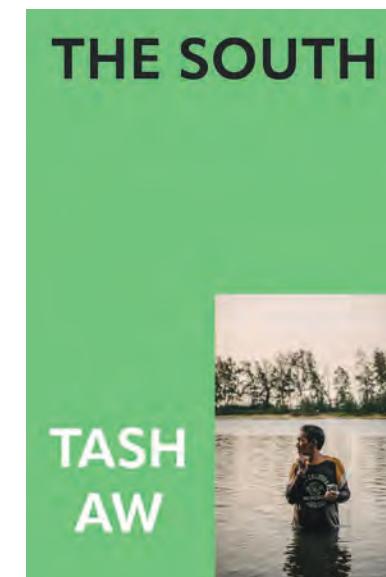
Christopher Bone of Hay Festival* recommends four new books and one cult bestseller, all inspired by Asian histories and cultures



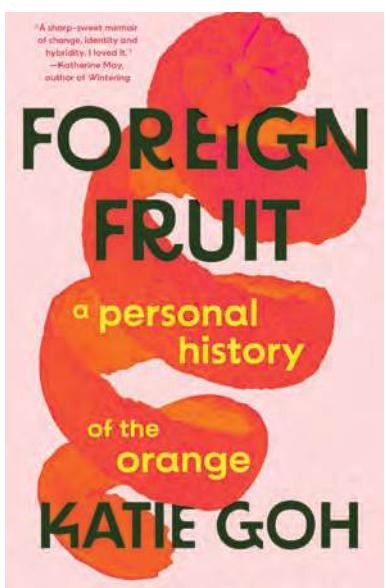
↗ **RED POCKETS**
BY ALICE MAH
 Following a record year of wildfires, Alice Mah returns to her family's rice village in South China, and discovers that her ancestors are almost forgotten. A mix of memoir, cultural history and environmental exploration, *Red Pockets* confronts the ghosts of our ancestors: what do we owe to past and future generations? What do we owe to the places that we inhabit?

[OUT IN HARDBACK ON 24 APRIL](#)


↘ **BUTTER**
BY ASAKO YUZUKI, TRANSLATED BY POLLY BARTON
 A cult bestseller around the world, *Butter* is inspired by a true story. We meet gourmet cook Manako Kaji in Tokyo Detention Centre convicted of serial murder. Against the subversive backdrop of Japan's food scene, the story that unfolds offers a page-turning snapshot of the country while exploring universal themes of misogyny and romance.

[OUT NOW IN PAPERBACK](#)


↗ **THE SOUTH**
BY TASH AW
 Set against the backdrop of a fast-changing Malaysia, *The South* is a story of what happens when private and public lives collide. After his grandfather dies, a boy named Jay travels south with his family to the property he left them, a once flourishing farm that has fallen into disrepair. This is the first in a quartet of novels following the journey of the family navigating a period of global change.

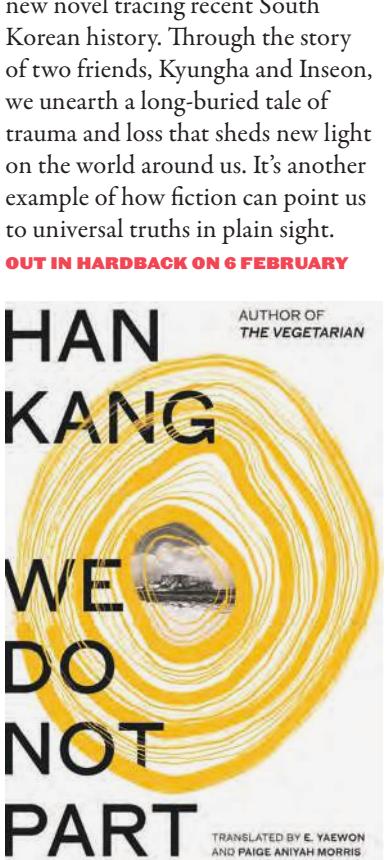
[OUT IN HARDBACK ON 6 FEBRUARY](#)


↘ FOREIGN FRUIT

BY KATIE GOH

Think you know the orange? Think again. *Foreign Fruit* merges social history, self and object in telling the history of this fruit. Taking us from east-to-west and west-to-east, it is the tale of our modern world: of violence, colonialism, resilience, survival, adaptation, and of unexpected beauty and sweetness against the odds.

OUT IN HARDBACK ON 8 MAY



↘ WE DO NOT PART
BY HAN KANG, TRANSLATED BY E. YAEWON AND PAIGE ANIYAH MORRIS

From last year's Nobel Prize for Literature winner comes a visionary new novel tracing recent South Korean history. Through the story of two friends, Kyungha and Inseon, we unearth a long-buried tale of trauma and loss that sheds new light on the world around us. It's another example of how fiction can point us to universal truths in plain sight.

OUT IN HARDBACK ON 6 FEBRUARY

* HAY FESTIVAL GLOBAL EVENTS COMING UP THIS SPRING AND SUMMER INCLUDE HAY FESTIVAL SEVILLE, SPAIN (12-15 FEBRUARY); HAY FESTIVAL HAY-ON-WYE, UK (22 MAY-1 JUNE); HAY FESTIVAL QUERÉTARO, MEXICO (4-7 SEPTEMBER) AND HAY FESTIVAL SEGOVIA, SPAIN (11-14 SEPTEMBER).
 FOR MORE INFORMATION, GO TO HAYFESTIVAL.COM

Heritage

Meet the coolest culinary creatives, sharing their ancestral Asian recipes in their favourite European cities.

Megan Murray reports



LONDON
Rahel Stephanie
Founder of Spoons supper club

When Rahel moved from Jakarta to London via Singapore at the age of 19, she was disappointed to find little representation of real Indonesian cuisine across the capital's food scene. "I started my supper club in 2020 driven by my desire to share the flavours and stories of my heritage with those around me and to put authentic Indonesian flavours firmly and accurately on the western map." It's clear Rahel has oh-so succeeded. She's appeared on Masterchef, hosted Channel 4's Sunday Brunch, written a Jakarta guide for the Financial Times and developed a dish for Wagamamas, all while producing supper clubs globally. But, for Rahel, it's not just about creating delicious dishes. "My mission extends far beyond a tasty menu. To me, cooking Indonesian dishes serves as a way of reclaiming, decolonising and celebrating the foods of my heritage. I hope to cast a light on the diverse culinary range of Indonesia and I'm a strong believer in the importance of real representation of the food that comes from marginalised communities."

A large part of this is conveying the complexity and breadth of the techniques, ingredients and flavours that begin to build an over-arching picture of Indonesian food, something Rahel says she's barely dipped a toe into. "A lot of people don't realise that we're built up of 17,000 islands and how rich our culinary roots are, but it's something I'm really enjoying sharing not only in London, but through pop-ups in Paris, Berlin, Bali, Melbourne and beyond." Amongst her travels, Jakarta has remained a constant. Her restaurant recommendations include Kopi Es Tak Kie, Pagi Sore and Bubur Ayam H. Jowo. No doubt, feeling close to her home city while on the other side of the world is hard, but Rahel says that the heartwarming response from her supper clubs makes it easier. "For many guests my dishes are their first experience with Indonesian food, which is always an honour. Beyond the food, Spoons helps me celebrate and share my culture and heritage in a meaningful way."

Rahel's go-to Indonesian foodie spot in London: "Toba in St. James's Market offers authentic Indonesian dishes in a refined dining setting, skillfully avoiding the overcomplication often seen in attempts to 'elevate' the cuisine."
tobalondon.co.uk
 1a St James's Mkt, London SW1Y 4AH
 Follow Spoons at [@eatwithspoons](https://www.instagram.com/eatwithspoons)

There's no cooler calling than being part of the food scene right now. Culinary creators are sharing their recipes with hundreds of thousands of followers across the world, while supper clubs are officially back in fashion, creating a closer connection between chefs and diners which fosters the perfect environment for learning about the culture and history behind a cuisine. While this industry is blowing up, we're celebrating the opening of the first Asian 25hours Hotel, now open in Jakarta, and looking to the way foodies from not only Indonesia, but Japan and the Philippines enjoy, honour and share their heritage on a plate while living in Europe. Be it a Jakarta-native whose London supper club has grown to a world-wide event, or Paris-based Tokyoite on a mission to help other East Asian chefs rock the gastronomic boat, each of these food enthusiasts have their own delicious story to share.

BERLIN
Kim Boshoven
Recipe developer & food stylist

Born to a Filipina mother and Dutch father, Kim has always felt the push and pull between her East Asian and Northern European beginnings. After growing up in Dubai (her parents emigrated there in the 1980s), the Netherlands began calling and so, at 18 she attended university there, before spending time in Switzerland and eventually settling in Berlin in 2018.

Growing up, Kim's family home was alive with parties and celebrations with big connections to the expat Filipino community, in which food played a huge part. But, while she's always felt inspired by cooking, it wasn't until she was made redundant from her fashion job that she imagined a career in gastronomy. "I saw being laid-off as a sign to finally pursue food so I walked into Ayan, one of my favourite Filipino restaurants in Berlin (and a must-try if you're visiting!) and asked for a kitchen job. I started the very next day," Kim smiles.

Though Kim's connection to cooking Filipino dishes comes from her mother, her style isn't exactly traditional. Experimenting on Instagram with quirky flavour combinations and a minimalist aesthetic, she has quickly racked up 20,000 followers who love her unique take with posts featuring cocktails derived from rice water gathered from fields in the Philippines or Filipino coffee and pandan-flavoured tiramisu, presented in an on-trend, contemporary aesthetic.

"When it comes to plating, I draw on the visual and aesthetic sensibilities I developed during my fashion days, like turning rhubarb strands into frilly ribbons for a cocktail garnish or choosing dishware and glasses with unique textures and characteristics," says Kim, her playful and creative nature coming to the fore.

Quoting her current catchphrase as 'little recipes with big table energy', Kim says that she prefers to use a minimal ingredient list and make an impact with unusual



Kim's go-to Filipino foodie spot in Berlin
"The Filipino food scene in Berlin needs a lot of work! Of course, please try Ayan where I am part of the team, but I also love to shout out a Berlin-based Filipino coffee brand called Kape De Filipina who source coffee beans directly from small-holder farmers in The Philippines and do workshops at their HQ."
@ayan_filipino_streetfood
Potsdamer Str. 69, 10785 Berlin
Follow Kim at **@menubyoven**

"Little recipes with big table energy"



flavour combinations like pairing French peppercorn sauce with grilled pineapple steaks or using Greek rosewater to enhance a Filipino soy dipping sauce.

As well as foodie inspiration, you can also find plenty of drinks ideas on Kim's social media accounts, a craft she's enjoyed developing "as a great creative exercise to explore new techniques and stretch their versatility". Olive oil vermouth aperitif anyone?

A new way of eating
Above: Artful placement and braided snake beans turn rhubarb sinigang into edible art; top: Celery becomes the drink, dish and decor, imitating a candle for a playful look



Photographs: Cécile Rosenstrach

PARIS
Sayaka Kaneko
Co-founder of **Balbosté**

Next year marks Sayaka's 20th anniversary in Paris. Previously an occupational therapist in Tokyo, she set off on a three-month backpacking trip around Europe with her husband in search of a more balanced lifestyle. Seduced by Paris (really, who isn't?), they stayed put and Sayaka began to develop her skills as a cook. "I had a growing passion for DIY Japanese cooking using locally available ingredients and as I looked into launching my own catering business, I met Charlotte Sitbon who had already conceived the idea for production culinary house Balbosté," she explains.

Unlike anything else in this space, Balbosté is a collective of creatives who produce high-level dining experiences for brands rooted in storytelling, not simply feeding. Think a mini, edible checkers board for Louis Vuitton, cocktails of banana water, pollen and pearls for a Jimmy Choo event, and the creative direction behind Selfridge's Howl's Moving Castle cafe in collaboration with Loewe. One of the things that makes Balbosté unique is its refusal to conform. But,

for Sayaka, bringing a Japanese perspective to concepts has always been important. "I enjoy innovating our dishes. I created quartz, jewel-like candy inspired by Japanese confections kohakutou and shared insights about Japanese culture." The changing gastronomic landscape in Paris has also pushed her to share Japanese cooking with locals, not just clients. "When I arrived, it was hard to find authentic ingredients but now Asian supermarkets are scattered across the city. In restaurants, it's not unusual to see ingredients like miso on the menu and you'll often find sake in cocktail bars, too."

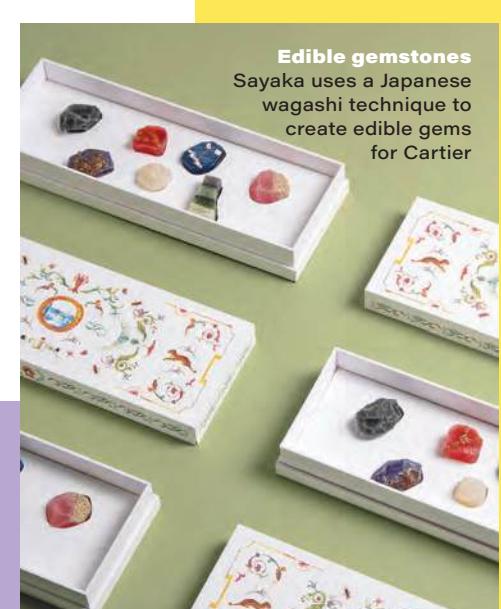
Sayaka is also now consulting for some upcoming projects and right now, is excited to help launch a stylish Asian cafe serving healthy meals. "The cafe owner, Jason, is a third-generation Chinese-Frenchman in his twenties who was born and raised in Paris. My daughter, born to Japanese parents, is also a Parisian native, and I sometimes feel like I'm seeing a glimpse of her future. Children like them grow up influenced by their parents' cultures while navigating their own identities and creating new lifestyles, and food undoubtedly plays a significant role in this. Seeing the East Asian food scene in Paris grow and develop, and having the chance to more personally share Japanese culture in my own way is what I'm looking forward to now."

Sayaka's go-to Japanese foodie spot in Paris
"Sagan, in the 6th, is a 'kappo wine bar' offering à la carte Japanese dishes thoughtfully paired with curated wines. It exudes the comforting atmosphere of a traditional Japanese koryouri-ya.
saganparis.fr
8 Rue Casimir Delavigne, 75006, Paris
Follow Sayaka at **@biphase_kitchen**
Follow Balbosté at **@balboste_paris**



"I had a growing passion for DIY Japanese cooking"

Edible gemstones
Sayaka uses a Japanese wagashi technique to create edible gems for Cartier



Attention to detail
Balbosté designs a chic table setting for Veuve Clicquot, at Plaza Athénée

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FOOD & DRINK

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FOOD & DRINK

“The kitchen became our sanctuary, where magic happened and stories were shared”

LONDON Ranie Saidi

Content creator and founder of The Malay Cook supper club

Growing up, Ranie was his grandmother's shadow. She was born in the East coastal province of Kota Baharu, Kelantan, and after marrying his grandfather who was serving in the Malaysian faction of the British Army, found herself in a nomadic lifestyle that made it challenging to hold down stable employment. Eventually, it was cooking that called her; having learnt dishes from the army wives hailing from across the country, she built up a wealth of regional recipes that one day would make her the much-loved village cook of Ranie's home. “Living under the same roof as my grandmother, I eagerly watched as she whipped up signature dishes. The kitchen became our sanctuary, where magic happened and stories were shared. Together, we embarked on expeditions to bustling markets, handpicking the freshest ingredients to bring her dishes to life. I witnessed her charm and unwavering commitment to her craft.”

In 2013, Ranie moved to the UK and pursued a career in hospitality here, at first working with corporate clients before developing his own supper club, The Malay Cook, as a way of ‘continuing the legacy’ of his grandmother after she passed away. Ranie says that Malay cooking is unique in its harmonious balance of flavours,

Malay magic
Ranie uses fresh pandan leaves to create his vibrant Kaswi Pandan Santan



where no single taste should overpower the others, spanning creamy coconut-based dishes to aromatic, spice-driven stews and curries. “It's hard to find many of the true staples of Malay households in commercial Malaysian restaurants in the UK,” he adds. “My mission is to introduce the UK to a new spectrum of Malaysian cuisine, sharing dishes that are both exciting and accessible using ingredients available in local supermarkets.” Having hosted sell-out supper clubs in both London and New York with Soho House, as well as producing pop-ups at Alexandra Palace, and teaming up with the Curry Club London and Dusty Knuckles on events, Ranie is on his way to “making Malay cuisine a staple in the European and American foodie scene.”

Ranie's go-to Malaysian foodie spot in London

“Mambow in East London is where chef Abby Lee beautifully recreates dishes from her Chinese Malaysian heritage with Nyonya dishes paired with an exquisite drinks list to complement.”

mambow.co.uk

78 Lower Clapton Road, London, E5
Follow Ranie at [@raniesaidi](https://www.instagram.com/raniesaidi)



Heritage dining
Soho House sets the table for Ranie's supper club, in honour of his grandmother

Photographs: Kadir Gold

Get into Indonesian cuisine with Rahel's fried tempe snack

Fancy trying your hand at an Indonesian dish? Rahel Stephanie, founder of London-based Indonesian supper club, Spoons, recommends keeping things (relatively) simple with a fried tempe snack, Tempe Mendoan. “It's a classic from Central Java,” Rahel explains. “The word 'Mendoan' translates from the West Javanese language of Banyumasan as 'half-cooked'. True to its name, the tempe in this spice battered dish is deep fried quickly in very hot oil to give the still-tender flesh a crunchy shell. It's perfect dipped in kecap manis sambal and shared with friends,” she smiles. Find the ingredients, recipe and serving ideas below, and get a little taste of this Indonesian island at home.



Ingredients

500g tempe (cut into rectangular or square slices)
3 stalks spring onion, sliced thinly
Frying oil of choice (vegetable or sunflower)

Dry batter mixture

5 tbsp plain flour
5 tbsp rice flour
1 tsp baking powder
1 tsp salt

Spice paste

5 small Asian shallots/2-3 echallion shallots
4 cloves garlic
1tsp coriander powder
1cm turmeric or 1/2 tsp turmeric powder
1cm kencur (omit otherwise)
1tsp salt
splash of water

Approx 200 ml water

Sambel kecap

3-5 birds eye chillis lightly mashed with an ulekan
10 tbsp kecap manis
pinch of salt

Cooking instructions

Heat enough oil for deep frying to a pan over medium heat until it reaches 170 degrees celsius.

Mix dry batter mixture ingredients in a large bowl thoroughly, and add the spice paste. Then slowly add approximately 200ml water while mixing with a wooden spoon, until batter consistency is just right. Be careful to ensure it's not too thick, or too watery.

Check the oil is hot enough by dipping a wooden spoon or chopstick on the surface and making sure it bubbles or if you have a thermometer, it should be 170 degrees celsius.

Now, dip the tempe slices in batter and add to the pan. Flipping halfway through, fry until the tempe is light golden brown and crispy.

Enjoy dipped in sambal kecap!

ADVERTORIAL FEATURE



ADVERTORIAL FEATURE

SPRING INTO LIFE IN ZURICH

ZURICH COMES ALIVE AGAIN WITH THE FIRST RAYS OF WARM SPRING SUNSHINE. COME AND CELEBRATE THE TURNING OF THE SEASON IN THIS FEEL-GOOD SWISS CITY

Zurich in the spring is all about rebirth. There's a palpable joy in the air and a spring in the step of locals as they go about their day. This is the season of renewal as daylight hours increase and temperatures rise. There's a welcome return to the city's garden terraces and weekly outdoor markets as the cherry blossoms bloom, and boat cruises and picnics in the park begin again.

GOODBYE WINTER, HELLO SPRING

Locals are proud of the centuries-old tradition of Sechseläuten which heralds the beginning of spring. This local festival features music ensembles, horses, flowers, flags and costumed guild members. At the centre of all the attention is the Böögg – a 3.4m tall snowman effigy – which is set alight at the top of a pyre when the clock of the St. Peter church strikes 6pm on the first Monday after the vernal equinox, proclaiming the official beginning of spring. The excitement mounts as the faster the figure of Böögg burns, the finer the summer will be – according to local folklore. 'Sechseläuten', or 'Sächsilüüte' in local dialect, literally means 'the six o'clock ringing of the bells'. This year Sechseläuten takes place on April 28 starting with a colourful parade at 3pm. The Sunday before, (April 27) is the children's parade from 2.30pm where youngsters dressed in historical costumes accompany the Böögg on his way to the pyre. For visitors, it's well worth timing your holiday to see this spectacle and celebrate with locals.

ZURICH IN BLOOM

The magnolias and Japanese cherry blossoms of Zurich are a sight to behold come mid-March. Head to Bertastrasse, the Rieterpark, and the garden of the Villa Patumbah amongst others. A fun way to explore the cherry blossom hotspots is by bike with a Publibike Zuri Velo or by purchasing a Zurich Card Bike, which as well as bike rental and unlimited public transport, offers free admission to many museums as well as discounts in a range of local stores and restaurants.

Another great way to experience the arrival of spring is by boat cruise. Take a round trip with Lake Zurich Navigation Company (free with the Zurich Card). Speciality culinary cruises feature cheese fondue or brunch onboard. A longer lake cruise takes you all the way to the lakeside idyll of Rapperswil, known as the picturesque Town of Roses, due to the breathtaking roses that flower in the gardens of the Capuchin monastery and the Schanz – a rose garden built for the blind. Its 12th century castle has undergone a recent refurbishment, and is well worth a look along with the quaint alleys of the medieval old town.



FOR MORE INFORMATION
ON SPRING HAPPINESS IN
ZURICH, SCAN THE QR CODE
ZUERICH.COM

FRESH AIR AND FINE FOOD

Healthy lifestyles come naturally in Zurich, especially during springtime when weekly markets get back into full swing. Foodies rub shoulders with top chefs from local restaurants browsing the stalls for fresh fish from Lake Zurich, local organic vegetables and meat, and freshly baked bread. And what better place to devour your shopping than with a picnic in the spring sunshine in one of Zurich's beautiful parks and gardens? With around 70 to choose from, these include stately museum parks and fragrant botanical gardens.

If chocolate is what you associate with Switzerland, Zurich has much to offer including chocolate making workshops. Löw Delights, founded by sisters Laura and Fabia, invites you to learn the art of modern chocolate making including the much-loved Löwenkusse (Lion Kisses). Or for traditional pralines and pastries, head to Confiserie Honold which dates back over a century.

STAY IN STYLE

The prestigious, five-star Mandarin Oriental Hotel Group has come to Zurich. Taking over the former Savoy Baur en Ville, the newly opened Mandarin Oriental Savoy, Zurich blends old and new at its coveted location on Paradeplatz. Along with 44 Tristan Auer-designed rooms and 36 of the city's largest suites, there's a choice of four restaurants including the award-winning Orsini serving Italian cuisine and the 1838 Rooftop Bar, named in honour of the year this imposing hotel was founded. Book your spring break for the best start to the year.



Dominic Bliss meets the all-female hijab-wearing heavy metal band, Voice of Baceprot, who have caused outrage among conservatives in Indonesia



"Sometimes we feel like aliens because wherever we go, people are always watching us"

When Voice of Baceprot first started out, the trio knew the conservative Muslims in their home village disapproved of girls playing heavy metal music. But they had no idea just how much. Until, one day, while walking in the street, lead singer Marsya was suddenly struck on the head by a rock. Attached to the missile was a note with the message: 'Stop making the devil's music!'

"To this day we don't know who the perpetrator was and why that person did it," Marsya says, still disturbed by the incident.

As an all-female metal band in Muslim Indonesia, Voice of Baceprot, or VOB, as they abbreviate it, have always courted a certain amount of controversy. Yes, they have thousands of fans—as their summer 2024 appearance at Glastonbury Festival and their massive social media following proves—but they must also deal with the haters. "It all stems from ignorance and misunderstanding about the music we play," Marsya explains to Companion magazine. "Metal may be popular in Indonesia, but not here, in our village. So we feel our music must also play a role in clearing up all these misunderstandings and breaking the chain of intolerance."

Twenty-four-year-old Firda 'Marsya' Kurnia sings vocals for the band and plays lead guitar, while Widi Rahmawati, also 24, plays bass and Euis Siti Aisah, 23, plays drums. Pronounced 'bah-che-prot', the band's name means 'noisy' in their native language Sundanese. They perform in a mixture of Sundanese, English and Indonesian. In 2018 they released their first single, School Revolution, and in 2023 their debut album, Retas (which roughly translates as 'breaking something open'), came out, much to the delight of fans.

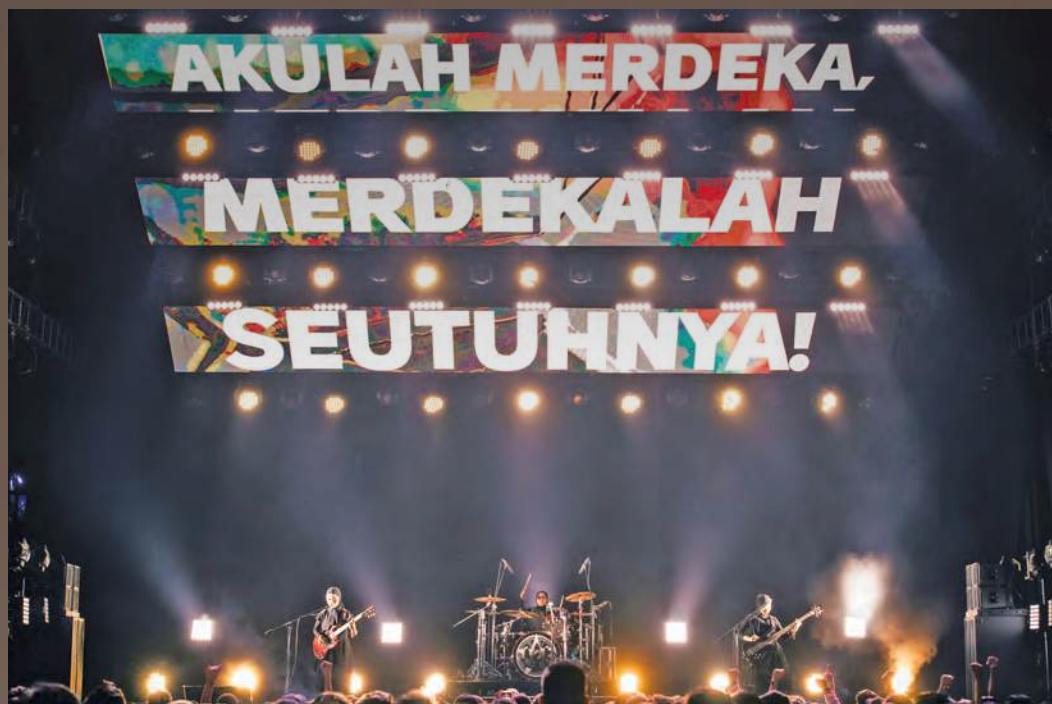
Their tight, well-crafted and melodic (by heavy metal standards) songs protest against patriarchy, sexism, war and environmental damage. On their 2021 single God, Allow Me (Please) to Play Music, for example, they sing, "I'm not the criminal, I'm not the enemy. I just wanna sing a song to show my soul. God, allow me please to play music." Their follow-up single has the message, "Our body is not public property. We have no place for the dirty mind. We have no place for the sexist mind." Two songs from 2023—What's The Holy (Nobel) Today and The Enemy of Earth is You—are blunt outbursts against the evils of war and ecological irresponsibility.

"We care about what happens around us, and we hope our listeners do, too," says Marsya. "This world never lacks smart people but we don't have enough people who live with empathy for each other. We are all here to grow each other's dreams."

The band first formed a decade ago when the three girls were studying drama in high school in Singajaya, a village 150 miles or so southeast of the Indonesian capital Jakarta. With no acting skills, they were encouraged to take up musical instruments instead, providing the accompaniment to the school plays. It turns out their teacher was a heavy metal fan and, after discovering tracks on his laptop, the three girls quickly fell in love with the genre.

Many of their teachers were less supportive and criticised their 'rebellious behaviour', a reputation not helped by their love of loud music. "We were just told to get good grades, memorise, write, flip the books, that's it," Marsya remembers. "This was our daily routine for 12 years. We were bored. Then, there was music. It was something new. We

Photographs: Yael Putuel, Abi Ismail



let our anger flow through our music because we don't want to get into trouble by getting angry with others," Siti adds. "More religious people would say, 'You are going to hell because music is haram (forbidden by Islamic law).'"

After touring Europe and the United States, the hijab-wearing trio came to the attention of some very famous musicians in their chosen genre, including Flea from Red Hot Chili Peppers and Tom Morello from Rage Against the Machine. When Guns N' Roses performed in Jakarta in 2018, guitarist Slash invited VOB backstage to talk music and hang out.

Nowadays, all three have moved to their regional capital, Garut, where they live close to each other, regularly practising in a studio they built together. Their career has no doubt been boosted by a strong appetite for heavy metal in their native Indonesia. Jakarta is after all home to Asia's biggest metal festival, Hammersonic, which has seen the likes of Slipknot, Megadeth and Cradle of Filth headlining. Another festival called Rock in Solo takes place annually in Surakarta, with no shortage of European and North American death metal acts keen to attend.

Even Indonesia's former president Joko Widodo is a huge fan of the genre. In 2013, before taking office, he sang at a Jakarta concert where British band Arkana were performing. More than once, he's been spotted making the devil's horns heavy metal hand gesture, or wearing a t-shirt with British metal band Napalm Death emblazoned on the front. He was once given a collectible box set of vinyl records by US metal giants Metallica.

VOB appreciate their former leader's taste in music. "At least it helps popularise metal music and makes it more common among ordinary people, especially those who find it difficult to get permission [to attend] metal gigs," Marsya says.

Strong women
Rocking out under the words 'I am free, completely free'; (far left) The joy of Glastonbury Festival, 2024

Heavy metal fans in Indonesia, however, are culturally very different to those in Europe and North America. Not for them the old rock clichés of devil worship, hard partying and macho posturing. In this part of the world they're likely to be teetotal, celibate and more respectful of the authorities.

Nonetheless, as females wearing hijabs, VOB will always stand out. "Sometimes we feel like aliens because wherever we go, people are always watching us," Marsya says. "It's uncomfortable for us."

Hopefully, though, no one will feel the need to throw rocks.

VOB's Top 10 Tracks

God, Allow Me (Please) To Play Music	Integral
Voice Of Baceprot	Burgerkill
Anatomi Dosa	DeadSquad
Gojira	
Born For One Thing	War?
Lamb Of God	System Of A Down
Laid To Rest	Take The Power Back
Lamb Of God	Rage Against The Machine
Bleed	
Messugah	
Master of Puppets	
Metallica	
Dilarang Di Bandung	
Seringai	





Photographs: Sean Fennessy; Alamy

Jenny Southan, founder of travel trend forecasting agency Globetrender, explores seven ways Asia is setting the agenda for globetrotting this year

2025

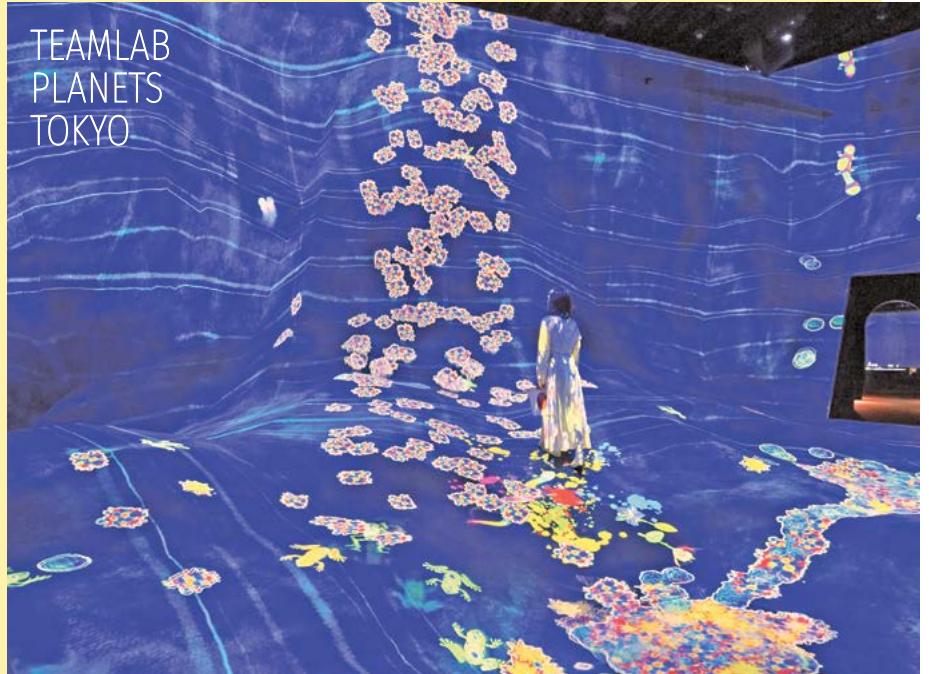
The Year of the Snake, is a big year for travel and tourism in Asia, with countries such as China offering visa-free travel to citizens from dozens of countries around the world and simplifying entry restrictions to attract international tourists. Thailand is expected to be top of many people's lists, due to season three of popular TV drama *The White Lotus* being filmed there. South Korea may also receive a boost after the airing of season two of *Squid Game*. Beyond set-jetting, what trends will be shaping the future of travel in Asia?

OTHERWORLDLY MUSEUMS

The big news for Japan is the hosting of Expo 2025 in Osaka, a futuristic showcase of planetary wellbeing that is expected to attract 28 million visitors from around the world. Highly Instagrammable and interactive, it signals how cultures of today are increasingly seeking out otherworldly museums that stimulate the senses as well as the mind by blending technology with experiential installations. A good example is the popularity of trippy Japanese artist Yayoi Kusama whose exhibitions of mirrors and lights attract crowds of thousands on a daily basis. Her latest show (on until April 21, 2025) is at the National Gallery of Victoria in Australia. Meanwhile, the TeamLab Planets Tokyo features four immersive artwork spaces that allow you to 'become one with the flowers'.

WEIRD WELLNESS

Whether it's cannabis massages at Beach Samui in Thailand, or silent retreats in India, destinations across Asia are pioneering weird wellness rituals that bring together ancient knowledge with zeitgeisty innovations. A hotbed for betterment is the Indonesian island of Bali. Here, acolytes are increasingly gathering for sunset ecstatic dance sessions, kambo frog medicine (imbibing the poisonous secretions of tree frogs), and Melukat ceremonies (water purification in natural pools such as Goa Giri Putri Temple). Bali's spas offer everything from flower baths to chakra cleansing including Fivelements Retreat Bali and Soori Bali.



DIGITAL NOMAD VISAS

The ability for many professionals to 'work from anywhere' has spurred a handful of Asian countries to incentivise remote workers to relocate there for the short or medium term by selling digital nomad visas. Leading the way is Thailand, which debuted its digital nomad visa last summer. The visa costs 10,000 baht (about €280) and allows stays of 180 days. After that, you can exit the country and extend for another 180 days, up until five years. Indonesia also offers a one-year temporary residence permit for remote workers, while Japan started selling a six-month digital nomad visa in spring 2024, however, you need prove you have an annual income of at least ¥10 million (about €62,000). Indonesia also launched its Remote Worker Visa programme last year, making it easier than ever for digital nomads to work from the beach in Bali. →

"BALI BRINGS TOGETHER ANCIENT RITUALS WITH ZEITGEISTY INNOVATIONS"



KUNG FU PANDA 5

TIKTOK TASTEHUNTING

From bubble tea to fruit sandos, TikTok Tastehunting is taking culinary touring to the next level. It all started with 'mukbang', a South Korean obsession with watching other people eat large quantities of food on social media. No longer purely voyeuristic, consumers are not only avidly watching food influencers as they eat their way around cities, but following in their footsteps and seeking out viral dishes for themselves. Often, people are willing to queue for hours to be able to sample—and stream—theirselfs eating too. Spicy ramen noodles are proving particularly hot—especially Cho Yonsoon's knife-cut noodles served at Gwangjang Market in Seoul, which featured in Netflix series Street Food: Asia.

MEGA ATTRACTIONS

Big-ticket blockbuster attractions across Asia are proving a powerful lure for both domestic and international travellers. In China, the Legoland Shanghai Resort will be opening this summer, complete with 75 interactive rides. Arriving in early 2025, Minion Land will come to Universal Studios Singapore, while later in the spring, Rainforest Wild Asia at Mandai Wildlife Reserve will become Singapore's fifth zoological park. Also opening in 2025 will be SkyCity in Malaysia's Selangor, which will feature an exhilarating 600-metre glass slide. Meanwhile, Nuanu Creative City is taking shape in Bali over 44 hectares, combining beach clubs, sound healing spaces and alpaca farms with Aurora Media Park, a 5,000 sqm immersive AI-powered art venue.

KUNG FU FIGHTING

As people around the world become increasingly interested in exploring traditional practices rooted in ancient history and philosophy, kung fu offers a pathway to understanding Chinese culture, meditation and discipline. The release of the upcoming movie Kung Fu Panda 5 will likely boost mainstream awareness—with martial arts fanatics willing to travel for first-hand experience of training sessions with Shaolin monks. Whether it is watching highly choreographed displays of mastery at Shaolin Temples or signing up for warrior schooling, the appeal lies in elevating physical and mental strength. The YunTai Shan International Culture and Martial Arts School in Xian offers intensive all-inclusive programmes. Taking place in Chengdu from August 7 to 17, The World Games 2025 will include competitive Wushu (aka kung fu) among its roster of 35 sports beyond those typically showcased at the Olympics.

ASIA UPLIFT

Etihad is one of many airlines expanding their wider Asia network for increased uplift to the region—in this case with the launch of flights between Abu Dhabi and Singapore from February 1, 2025, and increased frequency of flights to Thailand. In May 2025, Alaska Airlines will schedule daily nonstop flights between Seattle and Tokyo Narita. Japan's ANA will start three new direct flights from Tokyo to Milan, Stockholm and Istanbul. Catering to increased demand for travel in and out of Indonesia, flag carrier Garuda Indonesia plans to buy 15 to 20 new aircraft in 2025, with the addition of four new routes by the end of January. A reciprocal partnership with Singapore Airlines (SIA) also means it has expanded its daily flights to Singapore from four to six from December 1, 2024.

CYCLING THE SILK ROADS

The Silk Roads traverse more than 40 countries and are a cornerstone in the evolution of Eurasia. Adventure cyclist and journalist, Markus Stitz, takes you for an exhilarating and enlightening ride



In the saddle

Left: Markus Stitz; above: a rider in the Silk Road Mountain Race on open roads in Kyrgyzstan

SILK ROAD ROUTES



Humans have always moved from place to place and traded with their neighbours, exchanging goods, skills and ideas. In Scotland, which I've called home since 2009, cattle were driven from the rough Highlands to the markets in the lowlands by Drovers. The Via Regia, the oldest and longest road linking eastern and western Europe, once crossed through Erfurt, where my family lives. And throughout history, Eurasia was criss-crossed with communication routes and trade paths, which gradually linked up to a network which we today call the Silk Roads.

My personal experience with those routes begins in August 2019 in the Kyrgyz capital Bishkek. The biggest town in the otherwise largely nomadic country is the start and the finish of the 'Silk Road Mountain Race', which, since its inception in 2018, has become one of the most anticipated events in the global ultracycling

calendar. Run by Nelson Trees, the race attracts around 200 riders from all over the world to Kyrgyzstan. The event takes its name from the Silk Roads, which continue to stir imaginations with its evocative mystery. For the majority of their long history, these ancient roads had no particular name. It was German geologist Baron Ferdinand von Richthofen who named the trade and communication network 'Die Seidenstrasse' (the Silk Road) in the mid-19th century.

Kyrgyzstan is one of over 40 countries situated along the historic land and maritime Silk Roads. Those trading routes enriched the countries they passed through not only with merchandise and precious commodities like silk. The constant movement and mixing of populations also brought about the transmission of knowledge, ideas, cultures and beliefs, which had a profound impact on the history and civilisations of the Eurasian peoples. Travellers were attracted not

only by trade, but also by the intellectual and cultural exchange that was taking place in cities along the Silk Roads. Science, arts and literature, as well as crafts and technologies were shared and disseminated along the lengths of these routes, connecting cultures, religions and languages.

As the clock in ultra cycling never stops, it can be a rather daunting affair racing 1,700km self-supported across the vastness and beauty of the Tian Shan mountains. The Silk Road Mountain Race can be ridden solo or in a pair. It is not just the sheer length and about 26,000m of climbing that makes it one of the hardest races in the world. The climate is often unforgiving in Kyrgyzstan, even at the peak of summer. The daytime temperature in the capital reaches almost 40 degrees, yet I freeze at minus 10 in my tent two days later on a mountain pass.

The race doesn't just follow the ancient Silk Roads, it also includes a section of the modern Silk Road, or One Belt One Road initiative, presented in 2013 by China's President Xi Jinping. Costing an estimated three trillion dollars over the lifetime of the project, it is aiming to link China with 65% of the world's population by road and maritime connections. The land-based Silk Road will connect Mongolia and Russia to the North; South-East Asia, India, Pakistan and Bangladesh to the South; and Central Asia, West Asia and Europe to the West. The maritime route includes harbours and coastal infrastructure going from the Chinese east coast to Europe, India, Africa, the Pacific, and the Indian Oceans. The clear intention of the road is to lift the Chinese economy going forward by connecting it to major economies in Europe and Asia, but also to exercise its influence in countries like Kyrgyzstan.

Riding the Silk Road Mountain Race requires me to stop at three checkpoints to get a stamp in my brevet card. The first two checkpoints are



Photographs: Markus Stitz Illustration: Emma Kirkham



MARKUS'S PLAYLIST

Salamat Sadikova
Esindebi
The Triffids
Wide Open Road
Faithless
Take the Long Way Home (Live at Alexandra Palace)
Aphex Twin
#3
Still Corners
The Trip
Silly
Verlorene Kinder
Calexico
House of Valparaiso
Fly My Pretties
Lie in the Land
Keimzeit
Kintop (from Nachtvorstellung)
Mel Parsons
Alberta Sun



about 25 to 30km per day and carried around 300 to 350kg each. I average more than 100km per day and carry way less than a tenth of equipment on my gravel bike, but each kilometre is still hard earned.

After the second checkpoint I am first plagued by food poisoning, and later on I arrive disoriented in Naryn with clear signs of heat exhaustion. While wearing an insulated jacket in almost 40 degrees and not sweating, I almost collapse on the dusty roads in the only bigger city on the race route outside of Bishkek, known amongst riders as 'Scratch City'. I rest for half a day and carry on the next day after some sleep in a hostel. The highest pass of the

route, Tong pass, at 4,012m, is still to come. While balancing my bike over ice sheets I can hear huge rock falls beneath me, and feel relieved when I reach the shores of Issyk-Köl, the 'warm lake'. Considered for inclusion in the world heritage list, the eighth-deepest and the eleventh-largest lake in the world by volume, and the third-largest saline lake, hardly freezes during the cold winters. The lake is a Ramsar site of globally significant biodiversity, and many historians believe that it was the origin for the Black Death that plagued Europe and Asia during the 14th century.

My final days cycling are challenging. Although the finish of the Silk Road Mountain Race is at Cholpon-Ata, about 80km away as the bird flies on the northern shores of Issyk-Köl, it takes me almost 600km to get there. The thing about ultracycling is that you never take the quickest way. In my case that involves crossing another three mountain passes close to 4,000m before I finally arrive. After 14 days in the saddle I reach Cholpon-Ata, exhausted and 10kg lighter, but with the desire to explore more of this ancient route by bike.

Unravelling Batik

Fashion insider Michelle Duguid delves into the ancient Indonesian art of batik, still alive and well in the world of contemporary fashion

Batik is both a type of fabric and an ancient dyeing technique celebrated for its intricate patterns and vibrant colours. It has a long and complex history, often compared to other culturally significant textiles like ikats and suzanis. The term 'batik' comes from the Javanese word 'titik', meaning 'to dot', which refers to the distinctive resist-dyeing method used to create the complex patterns on fabric.

The creation of batik fabrics begins with an array of stamps, carved from foam and wood, featuring motifs that are dipped into melted wax to create intricate patterns. Some of these motifs trace back to the legendary Ashanti Kingdom. The stamps are applied by hand to cotton fabrics, and artists use various techniques—such as brushes, dripping, and crinkling wax—to enhance the designs. After each wax application, the fabric is immersed in dye, with multiple layers of colour building up. Once the wax is removed by washing, the result is a vibrant and unique handmade fabric, each piece telling its own story through its layered patterns.

Batik has a long history in East Asia, with evidence of its practice in China dating back to the Sui Dynasty (AD 581-618). Silk batiks, in the form of decorative screens, have also been found in Nara, Japan, from the Nara period (AD 710-794). These pieces are believed to have been created by Chinese artists and feature motifs such as trees, animals, flute players, hunting scenes, and stylised mountains.

While no direct evidence of very old cotton batiks has been found, there are depictions in ancient art that suggest early use of batik-like patterns. Frescoes in the Ajanta Caves in Ma-

Above: using a tjanting tool; and right: batik artist, Lisa King



rashtra, India, show head wraps and garments that may have been batiks. Similarly, temples such as those at Borobudur and Prambanan in Java feature figures wearing garments with patterns reminiscent of batik designs, hinting at the technique's early influence.

Batik reached its peak in Indonesia, particularly on the island of Java, where it flourished as a textile art. The technique was first mentioned in a cargo bill in the mid-17th century, as Chinese, Arab, Indian, and European traders exchanged textiles. In the 19th century, Dutch manufacturers attempted to mechanise batik production using copper rollers and resin resist to produce cheaper, mass-produced prints. However, these cheaper prints could not match the artistry of traditional Indonesian batik, and were largely unsuccessful in local markets. Instead, they gained popularity in West Africa, where they evolved into a unique tradition known as 'wax-print', which continues today.

In the 1890s, batik sparked a creative movement in Europe, particularly in Amsterdam, where a group of young artists introduced the technique to interior design, furnishings, and later fashion. This innovation led to widespread adoption by European and American artists, reaching its peak popularity between 1918 and 1925 in Holland, Germany, France, Poland and the UK. After a decline in the mid-20th century, batik experienced a revival in the 1960s, with artists such as Noel Dyrenforth in London founding The Batik Guild in 1986. This small group of students grew into an international community of batik enthusiasts. In Asia, too, the craft saw a resurgence, as artists embraced both traditional techniques and contemporary innovations. →

Today, batik continues to thrive as both a traditional and modern art form practiced worldwide although it can be argued that it reached its greatest heights of creativity in the islands of Southeast Asia, especially Indonesia. As with other textiles from this region, batik cloth is also rich in symbolism, with certain designs and colours connected with specific ritual or social functions, whether worn or presented as a gift. Maroon batik, for example, is reserved for court use in Java. Certain other traditional motifs found in Javanese batiks also indicate the rank of the textile's owner.

Today, batik is both a traditional and modern art form, practiced globally. Artists like Lisa King and Annie Phillips continue to innovate within the craft. Lisa King, a batik print artist, merges her cultural heritage of Indonesia and London through her unique batik practice. Growing up surrounded by her mother's collection of antiques and crafts from around the world, Lisa developed an early appreciation for beautiful, colourful objects. She went on to study art at the renowned Central St Martins in London. While her interest in batik had always been present, it wasn't until 2020, during lockdown, that she fully immersed herself in the technique, using the time to explore and develop her practice.

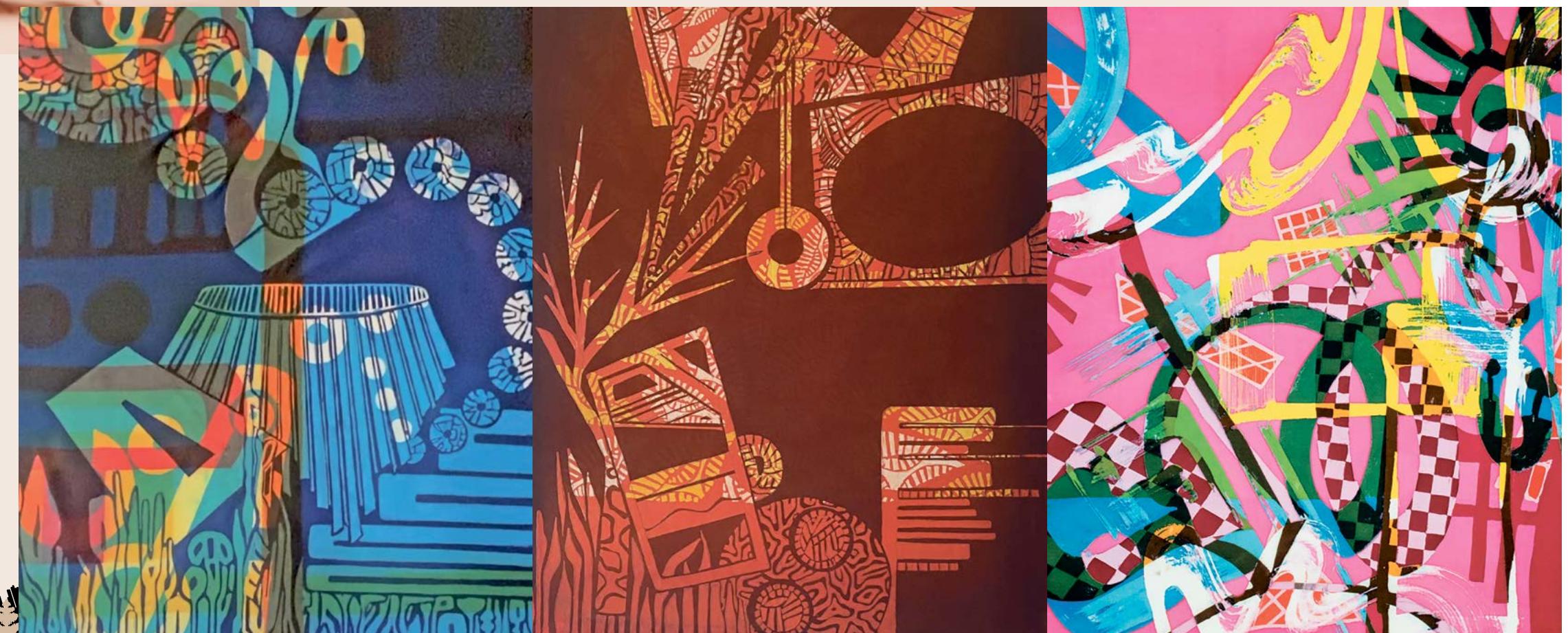
It was around this time that Lisa was given a storage container belonging to her late mother, which contained 100 boxes of Southeast Asian textiles, including a 500-piece batik collection of sarongs, kains (a piece of material used for skirts, perhaps to wrap a package or line a baby's bed), and selendangs (a long narrow cloth usually worn over the shoulder). This collection, was an archive of textiles her grandmother and great-grandmother would have worn, and pieces her mother collected annually from Indonesian artisans. King recalls the moment with mixed emotions. "What do I do with it? Am I allowed to cut these things up?" she asked in an article in Vogue. This unexpected gift marked a turning point, inspiring her to delve deeper into batik as a medium for her artistic expression.

Some of the batik pieces from Lisa King's collection have been donated to museums, incorporated into a menswear collection with the British brand New & Lingwood, and kept by Lisa for future exhibitions to highlight the intricate craftsmanship of batik. Currently, King is collaborating with one of the oldest batik factories in Yogyakarta, near Bali, to bring the art to a new audience. The factory is run by an 80-year-old woman who inherited it from her parents and King is focused on learning the traditional



Photographs: Sittithipha Thititham; Adobe Stock; Getty

"Batik cloth is rich in symbolism, with certain designs and colours connected with social functions"

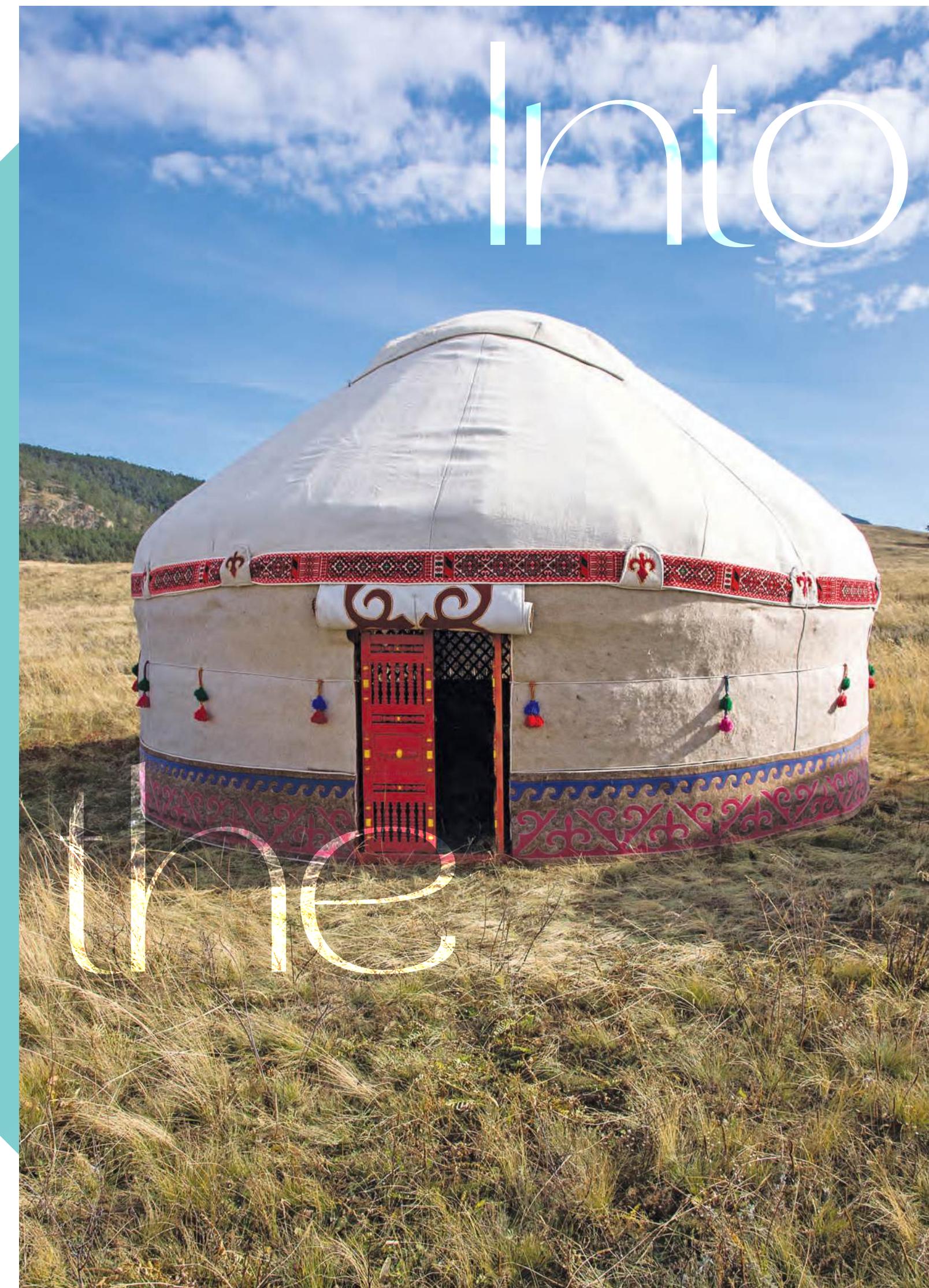


Indonesian methods of batik to integrate them into her own practice, honouring her late mother's love for the craft.

Annie Phillips is a modern batik artist who has spent much of her professional life honing her craft. She has trained and collaborated with artists in both Ghana and Indonesia, exchanging techniques and ideas. Phillips has also worked with architects and designers, and her original batiks have been printed and glazed on various surfaces for decorative purposes. Her distinctive batik process blends traditional techniques with modern technology, while preserving the joyful use of colour and pattern that defines this ancient art form.

"Batik is a medium that can create many types of looks depending on the artist's heritage and culture. For example, Indonesian batiks look very different to African batiks that look very different to mine. Because I am from the UK the inspiration for my batiks comes from 20th century abstract painters such as Kandinsky and Picasso. When I find a tjanting in my hand full of hot wax, something happens to my physiological being. I relax, I calm and then I begin to play! Batik has always been a process that has allowed me to approach creating with freedom and experimentation, with my destination unknown."





into



Infinite horizons
Left: Round white yurts are known as ger; above: milk collection; bottom right: striking a pose in the Gobi desert

Wild

Jane Dunford takes a wellbeing adventure in Mongolia, one of the most remote places on earth

There are some places on Earth with names that evoke mystery and adventure: Africa's Timbuktu, Colombia's Ciudad Perdida, Chile's Atacama Desert... High on this list for many is Mongolia, Asia's last frontier, a country of vast open steppes, mountains and desert, home to horse-riding nomads and golden eagles, often called the 'land of the eternal blue sky'.

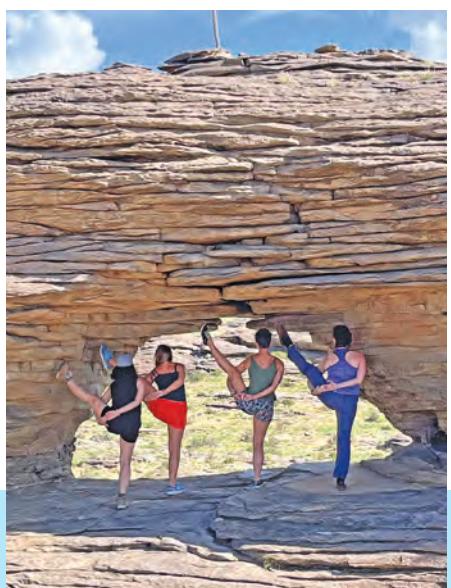
As I sit watching the sun set over the lunar landscape of the Gobi desert, the wonder of this mysterious country feels very much alive. That endless azure sky is turning gold, setting the strange rock formations aglow, and soon the Milky Way appears in full glory, undimmed by light pollution. An ancient Buddhist mantra carved onto the rock nods to the sacredness of this spot. Caves where wolves sleep in winter tell of its wild nature.

I'm here with Reclaim Yourself Retreats, a company that specialises in wellbeing holidays in some of the most beautiful places on earth. I'd chosen Mongolia, their most remote adventure, for a proper break from the world. Landlocked between China and Russia, with a population of less than 3.5 million people in a land more than four

times the size of Germany, it's one of the least densely populated places on the planet.

Most journeys begin, as ours does, in Ulaanbaatar, the traffic-clogged capital where over half of all Mongolians live. Tower blocks and huge squares bear testament to the 70 years of Communist rule, which only ended in 1990. The real adventure starts the next day when we board the TransMongolian Express on its journey towards Beijing and venture deeper into the infinite flat horizon. There's a sleeper option but the seven-hour day-time journey allows us to watch the unfenced landscapes unfurl and chat with new companions. Our group of 20 from Germany, the UK and the US easily bonds over shared travel tales.

We arrive at our off-grid camp in Ikh Nart nature reserve, on the desert's northern edge, under a full moon. The round white yurts (known as ger), central to nomadic life, are dismantled each season to leave no trace. With woodburners, proper beds and painted wooden furniture they're spacious and cosy—and separate ger are set up as bathrooms and dining and yoga spaces. The bright cloudless morning and wide-open views bring a sense of liberation as Nergui, our camp manager, takes us to →



explore. This seemingly hostile, scrubby landscape is home to ibex, curly-horned argali sheep and varied birdlife, and nomadic families still wander with camel and livestock. We climb huge rocks and spy a baby vulture in its nest, pass remains of Bronze Age burial mounds and see petroglyphs dating back thousands of years.

It's easy to disconnect from life's complexities here, engulfed by silence, far from technology. Twice-daily yoga classes, led by London-based Zephyr Wildman, shape our days; a more dynamic morning practice complements a grounding evening session, both woven with philosophy and meditation. Our meals are delicious and vegetarian, and a massage therapist is on-hand for treatments.

After three days it's time to move on. Our next camp in the Khan Khentii Strictly Protected Area is a day's jeep ride north. Slowly the desert, the scrub, the wind-carved rocks and the dunes morph into rolling verdant steppes under an ever-changing skyscape of clouds, sunshine and heavy rain. We cross swollen rivers and off-road across plains, where herds of horses, sheep and goat roam, to our camp on the banks of the Tuul River, surrounded by wildflower meadows. Our luggage is delivered to our gers by yak.

Each morning, swirling mists add magic to the scene and between classes we hike into the wilds, relax in the sauna ger or dip in the river. We try an activity central to Mongolian nomadic life too—horse-riding. The Mongol empire was founded on the prowess of their horseback warriors under Ghengis Khan and horseracing is one of the



Reclaim Yourself's Mongolia 2025: Yoga Wilderness Adventure, 24 July-3 August, costs from €2,371 for a triple yurt to €4,747 for single occupancy. Includes 10 nights' accommodation, meals at camp, yoga and meditation, hikes, TransMongolian Railway and bus and jeep transfers. reclaimyourself.co.uk

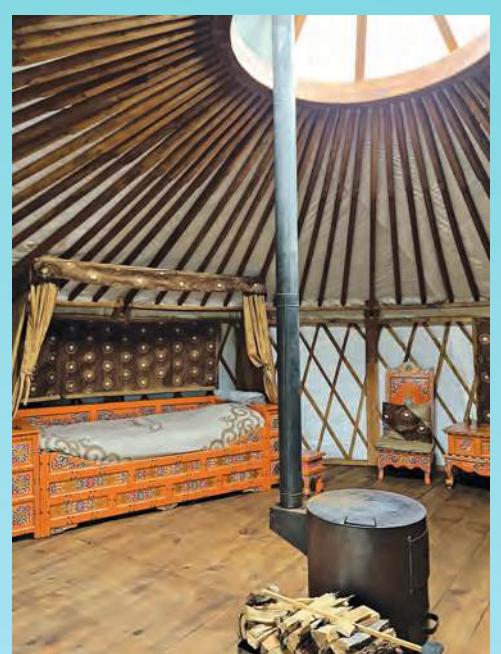
Photographs: Jane Dunford; Lonely Planet



three sports revered in the annual Naadam festival (alongside archery and wrestling). Local herder Jagaa, dressed in traditional deel tunic, takes us out on semi-wild horses across land flecked with multi-hued wildflowers, alongside the river, up into the hills.

One afternoon Jagaa invites us to his home, where his daughter serves us cheese and salty tea. Almost 30 per cent of Mongolians still live nomadically, in tune with nature, moving with the seasons, selling meat and dairy produce, wool and cashmere. But life is getting much harder, Jagaa tells me. Climate change is bringing devastatingly harsh winters, killing livestock and threatening traditional life, and urban migration is high.

"It's hard, but it's a blessing to live like this in nature," Jagaa tells me. "This land, my animals, my family... it's all that matters." As we prepare to leave the next day and I take in the energy of this wild place one last time, I know he's right. This country and its people have cast a spell on me and I'm in no rush to return to the rush of the outside world.



Mongolian life

Above: pretty painted furniture inside the yurt (ger); top: Jane's reverse warrior between the ger; left: the TransMongolian Express

Photographs: Jane Dunford; Lonely Planet

TREES OF LIFE

Matt Collins, co-author of Lonely Planet's *The Tree Atlas*, tells Companion why we should all be in awe of these giants of nature

Why is *The Tree Atlas* important?

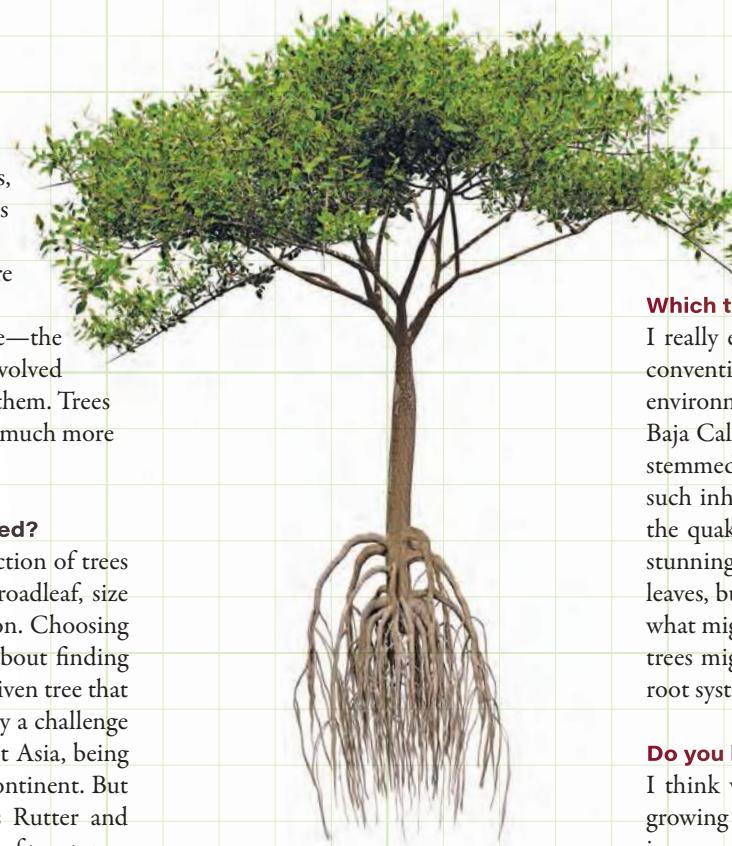
There are of course many books about trees, but put simply, so few of them present trees in a way that suggests you might actually go out and see them. There is so much more that can be understood and experienced in visiting plants on their home turf, as it were—the incredible landscapes in which they have evolved and the many other species that surround them. Trees belong to unique environments and are so much more than the sum of their parts.

How were the trees in the book selected?

We really just aimed for as diverse a collection of trees as possible—in terms of evergreen and broadleaf, size and height, but crucially global distribution. Choosing just 50 was the hardest part! It became about finding interesting details and stories about each given tree that would help bring it to life. It was definitely a challenge narrowing down a list of trees to represent Asia, being such a dramatically varied and dynamic continent. But this in turn gave my co-author Thomas Rutter and I the opportunity to include a good variety of tree types, from historically valued productive species like the black mulberry and coconut palm, and evergreens such as the banyan fig, to trees whose spectacular flowers are globally celebrated—species of cherry, magnolia and rhododendron. My favourite of the bunch would undoubtedly be the *Ginkgo biloba*, however; the ancient Jurassic descendent whose golden autumn foliage is unrivalled the world over.

What can be learned from this book?

I think this book's most valuable asset is in describing the landscapes in which these trees grow—getting across a sense of the world's incredible and diverse environments, as opposed to simply the trees themselves. A central message of the book is that trees are incredibly diverse; that they come in so many forms and perform a surprising range of functions, from supporting biodiversity and providing habitats to the many ways in which humans have long depended upon them—for



food, fuel, materials, shelter. Trees in their staggering variety are woven so deeply into the literature, customs and cuisines of worldwide cultures.

Which tree fascinates you the most?

I really enjoyed learning more about some of the less conventional tree species, particularly those from desert environments, such as the columnar 'Boojum' tree of Baja California and Mexico, and the iconic, succulent-stemmed Joshua tree. Their techniques for surviving such inhospitable conditions are fascinating. However the quaking aspen might be my favourite. There's the stunning contrast of the bright trunk and lucid autumn leaves, but also the strangeness of its morphology; that what might appear above ground to be a copse of aspen trees might in fact be many trunks of the same clonal root system—an enormous single organism.

Do you believe that tree travel is a growing?

I think wildlife and nature, the Great Outdoors, is a growing motivation for travel, absolutely, especially in an age when things feel increasingly over-sanitised. Monumental trees such as California's giant sequoias have long been a significant tourism draw, but I think as afforestation comes more and more into focus globally, in the wake of the climate and biodiversity crises, forested landscapes of all kinds will no doubt prove inviting, exciting attractions.

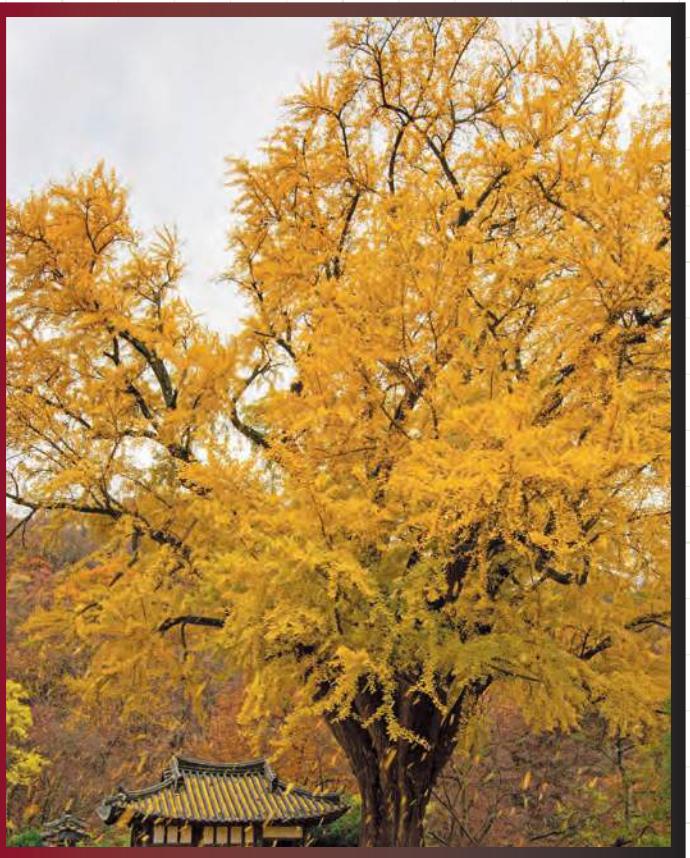


TREES SUPPORT BIODIVERSITY AND PROVIDE HABITATS

How should people behave around trees?

My take has always been that the more people experience the wonders of the natural world, the more they're inclined to want to champion it. It's really important to be mindful of the living, growing nature of trees—we often think of them as robust, sturdy organisms but they are vulnerable to damage, and that includes heavy footfall over their roots, soil compaction and limb break. Best practice is to respect not only the trees themselves but their associated flora—the plants growing at their feet, or along their branches. Footpaths are often implemented for good reason! →

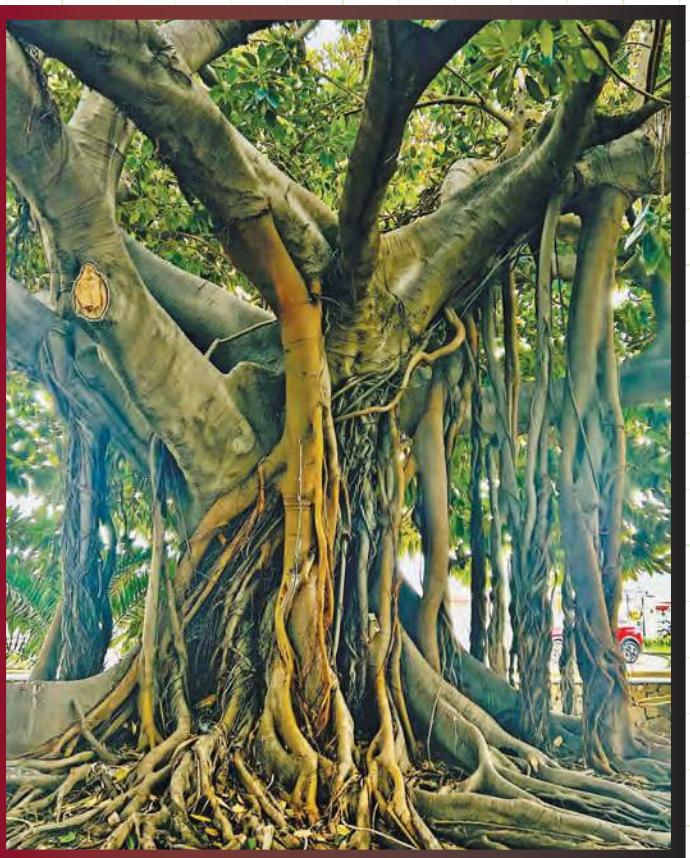
ARBORIAL GIANTS



GINKGO *Ginkgo biloba*

"The ginkgo is a survivor, outliving the dinosaurs to become one of the world's most adored ornamentals"

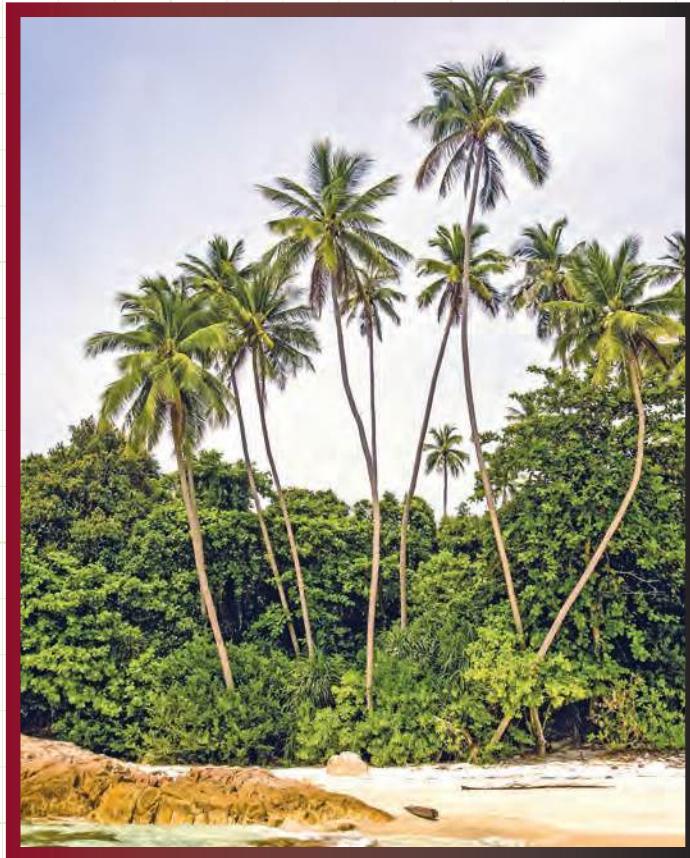
Range: China Status: Endangered
Lifespan: 2,000 yrs Average height: 20m-33m



INDIAN BANYAN *Ficus benghalensis*

"This extraordinary and expansive tree has long been considered sacred across its native range"

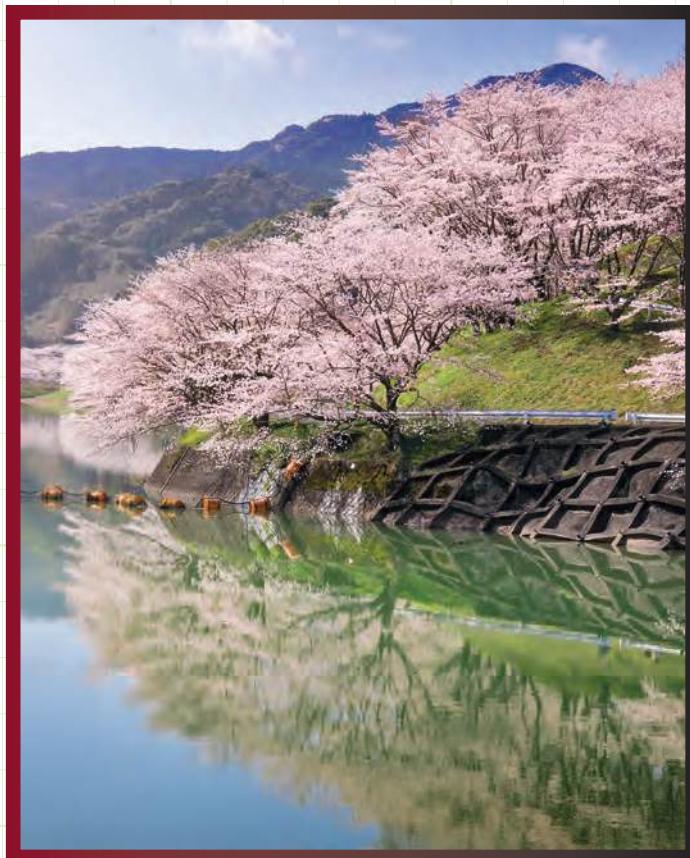
Range: China, Malaysia, Myanmar, India, Sri Lanka and Thailand
Status: Unclassified Lifespan: 500 yrs Average height: 20-30m



COCONUT PALM *Cocos nucifera*

"Few other trees can rival the coconut for the versatility and utility of its many parts"

Range: Indo-Pacific region Status: Least concern
Lifespan: 100 yrs Average height: 18m-30m



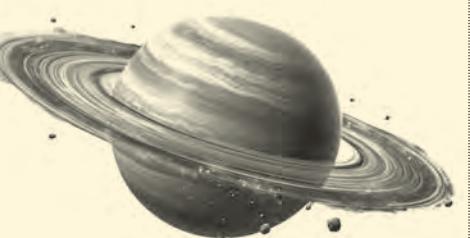
EAST ASIA CHERRY *Prunus serrulata*

"Famed for its transient blossom, the cherry is perhaps the world's favourite flowering tree"

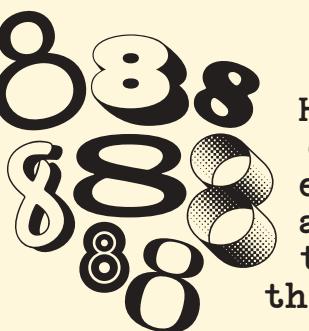
Range: Japan, China, Vietnam and North and South Korea
Status: Least concern Lifespan: 25 yrs Average height: 6-15m



RIDDLE ME THIS



1 You'll find me in Mercury, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn and Uranus. But never Neptune, or Venus. What am I?



2 How do eight eights add up to one thousand?



3 What has keys but can't open locks?

MANGA WORDSEARCH



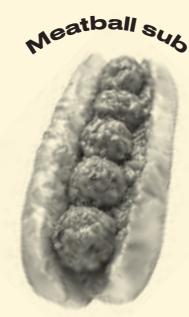
★ DEATH NOTE ★ ASTRO BOY ★ NARUTO
★ ATTACK ON TITAN ★ CHAINSAW MAN
★ PARASYTE ★ ONE PIECE ★ VAGABOND
★ TOKYO GHOU ★ DRAGON BALL
★ BERSERK ★ JUJUTSU KAISEN



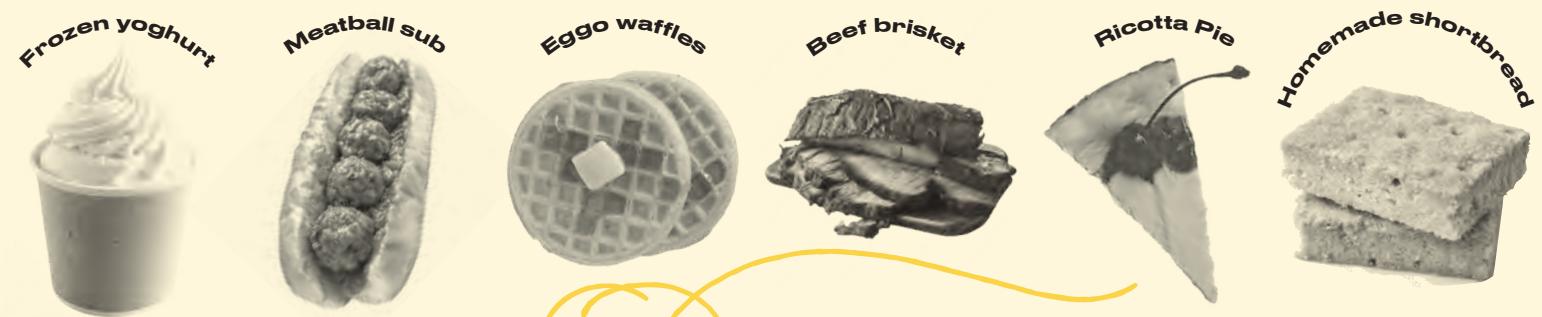
TV DINNERS MATCH THE FOOD TO THE HIT TELEVISION SHOW



TED LASSO



YOUNG SHELDON



SOPRANOS



STRANGER THINGS



THE GOOD PLACE



REGULAR SHOW

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Puzzles compiled by Emma Kirkham; Images: Adobe Stock; Manga Illustration: Bea Laing

MASTHEAD

25hours-companion.com



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A photograph of a classroom in a developing country. Several children are sitting at simple wooden desks, looking at papers. The room is decorated with simple drawings on the wall. Overlaid on the image is the ABURY Foundation logo and text. The logo consists of the word 'ABURY' in a large, white, sans-serif font, with 'Foundation' in a smaller font below it. The main text 'Reality starts with a dream!' is written in a large, white, sans-serif font. Below it, a smaller text block reads: 'Our dream is to provide access to education for 50,000 girls and women in Africa by 2030!'. At the bottom, there is a call to action: 'Be a part of it— www.abury.org' and a QR code with a blue 'P' logo.

BROTHERS & SISTERS

Companion invites you to take a frow (front row) seat in the fashionable world of 25hours Hotels sister brand SO/

When fashion is your passion, it's good to know there's a hotel group out there totally in tune with the world of voguing, posing, and generally feeling fabulous. SO/ is a coveted collection of places to stay which are rooted in the worlds of fashion and design. If there was a hotel group that could strut their stuff down the catwalk, SO/ would be in the supermodel league.

Making its debut on the global hotel scene in 2011, SO/ continues to command attention with its avant-garde design, creative community and innovative approach to the world of luxury with lifestyle properties in Auckland, (New Zealand), Bangkok (Thailand), Berlin (Germany), Hua Hin (Thailand), Paris (France), Sotogrande, (Spain), St Petersburg (Russia), the Maldives, Uptown Dubai, and Vienna (Austria).

Firmly placing itself en vogue, every SO/ hotel partners with renowned local and international designers, celebrating their creative art and craftsmanship. And with bespoke spaces, sartorial signatures and experiences, each SO/ hotel reflects its destination's innate culture and sense of style, celebrating the joy of dressing up. And where better to do this than in a glamorous hotel?

The flamboyant Monsieur Christian Lacroix (the man and the design house) infuses the style of SO/ Bangkok with colourful embellishments. Singapore SO/ has German fashion legend Karl Lagerfeld as emblem creator, whilst SO/Berlin called on the creative vision of lauded Dutch duo Viktor & Rolf. And in the latest SO/ in The Maldives, Japanese-French designer Mr Kenzo Takada has lent his eye to the tropical island couture. SO/ Auckland has sweeping views of Waitemata Harbour and



"SO/ IS ALL ABOUT FASHION STATEMENTS, MACRO SHAPE AND FORM, MICRO DETAILING AND THEMATIC SPACES"

guests are at the front row of Downtown with its stylish boutiques. Once the Reserve Bank of New Zealand with the nation's largest gold reserve, the hotel's fashion collaborator, Benny Castles, WORLD director of design and Project Runway NZ judge, has ensured touches of gold infuse this chi-chi property. Over in the French capital, Guillaume Henry, creative director at Maison Patou designed the uniforms and logo for SO/ Paris, inspired by the River Seine and clean lines of tailoring.

All SO/ properties offer special services from personal shopping to grooming, and each hotel has a luxury concept store where the partnering fashion designer collaborates on a collection from dressing gowns to bathroom accessories. And just as fashion updates each spring/summer and autumn/winter, SO/ Hotels offer seasonal refreshes including gifting, amenities and food & beverage to ensure even the most loyal customers are surprised and delighted. All hotels work with local fashion and creative lifestyle industries by hosting events from fashion week dinners to collection launches, media talks and exhibitions with the wider fashion industry and emerging talent. SO/ Hotels invites you to its FROW for a hotel stay where it's all about self-expression through style.



To discover more about SO/ check out so-hotels.com