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Perlée Collection Bracelets, white gold and diamonds.





"Camélia" necklace in White Gold, ruby and diamonds "Camélia" ring in White Gold and diamonds

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UNDERCOVER

HANDS ON



On Iroshini: Iroshini Jewellery earrings in white gold with pink sapphires totalling 18.51ct and diamonds totalling 3.98ct; Iroshini Jewellery ring in yellow gold with a yellow sapphire and diamonds

Dress, Bottega Veneta

Sulwhasoo

자음생크림

On Kevin: Suit and turtleneck top, both Bottega Veneta

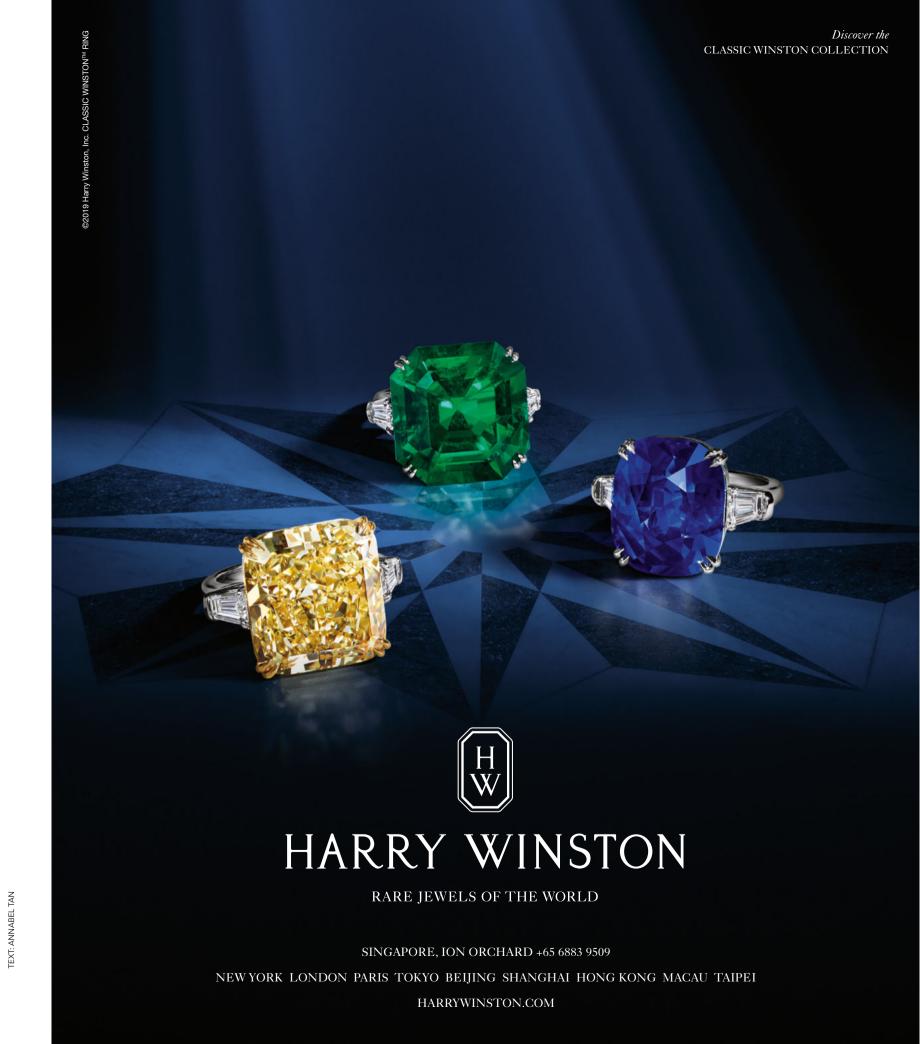
Dior

Dior Diorific Happy 2020 Lipstick

While Iroshini gets her hair and make-up done, Kevin is on the other side of the studio quietly observing as our videographer fiddles with his equipment. He's having a little trouble setting up his camera gimbal and Kevin has noticed. After watching him struggle for a few minutes, Kevin offers to help. The doctor confidently twists and turns some knobs around, and it's good to go. He figures it out so quickly I guess that he must have one at home too. "No, I don't but I just love gadgets and knowing how machines work," says Kevin. "I saw what he was trying to do and I just immediately knew how to achieve it." Iroshini concurs with Kevin's passion for gadgets. "He is very obsessive with his machines. He is obsessive – you can quote me on that!"

FASHION DIRECTION JOHNNY KHOO
ART DIRECTION AUDREY CHAN
PHOTOGRAPHY CHER HIM
FASHION STYLING JACQUIE ANG
HAIR SEAN ANG, USING IGK
MAKE-UP KEITH BRYANT LEE,
USING DIOR
PHOTOGRAPHY ASSISTANCE
YANG SHI HUI
FASHION ASSISTANCE

SHANNAHLETTE JENN LIM



Sulwhasoo Concentrated Ginseng Renewing Cream EX

Dunhill Century Blue for men



THE ARTISAN OF EMOTIONS - SINCE 1860

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CHOPARD BOUTIQUES:



DIGITAL

LUXURY ART HOTELS IN ASIA

These hotels across Asia feature authentic artworks and immersive installations.

prestigeonline.com/sg/travel



NOTRE DAME AND SACRED VALLEY OF THE INCAS AMONG 25 HERITAGE SITES IN NEED OF CONSERVATION The World Monuments Fund's 2020 World Monuments

The World Monuments Fund's 2020 World Monuments Watch list highlights key issues such as the elevation of indigenous voices; historic and underrepresented sites, urbanisation and development, and disaster recovery.

prestigeonline.com/sg/travel



VACHERON CONSTANTIN TEAMS UP WITH THE LOUVRE

Swiss watchmaker Vacheron Constantin and the Louvre are collaborating on horological projects inspired by masterpieces from the Paris museum's collections.

prestigeonline.com/sg/style/watches



ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE BARTENDERS ARE THE FUTURE OF FESTIVE PARTIES

Several technology companies have developed smart devices powered by artificial intelligence (Al) to double as bartenders for your soirée.

prestigeonline.com/sg/wine-dine



CHAUMET

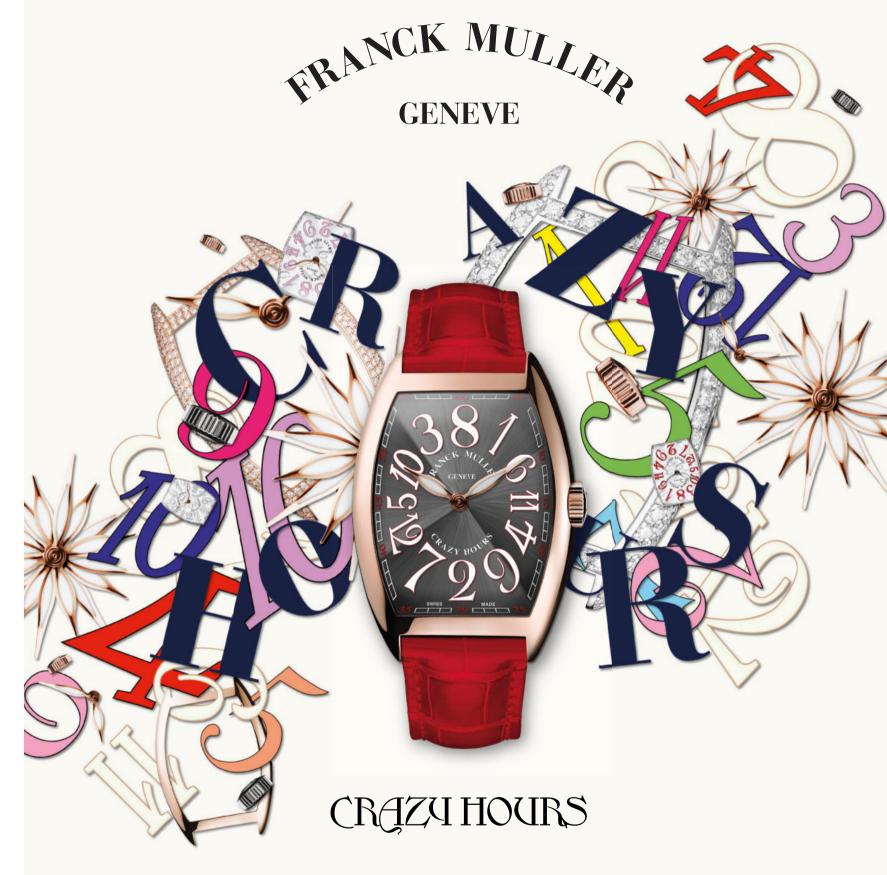
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DRINK YOUR WAY THROUGH JAPAN

If you're looking for unusual travel itineraries, why not check out these Japanese whisky distilleries?

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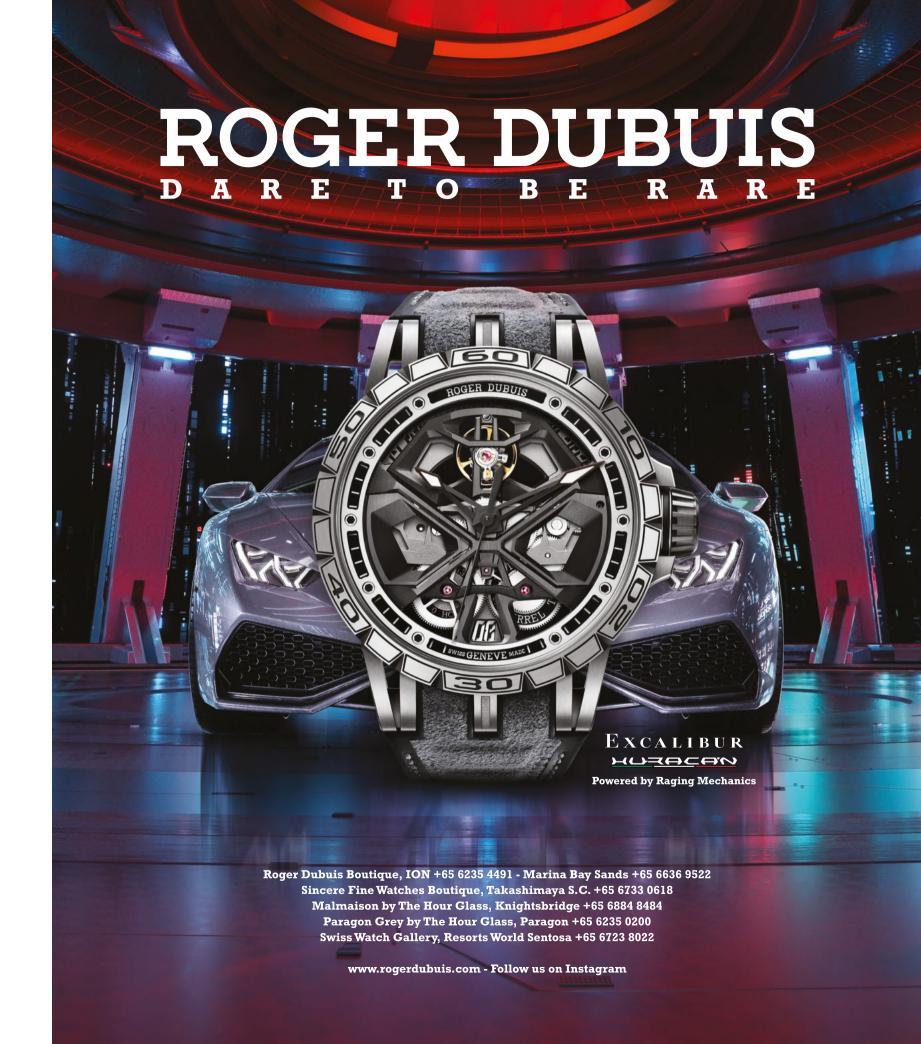
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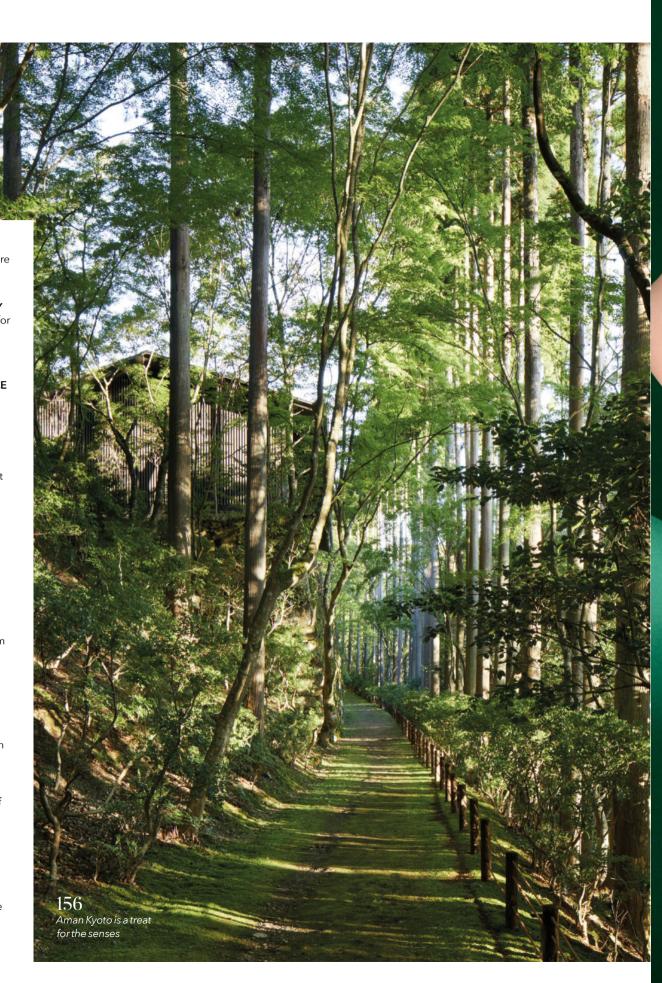
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PRESTIGE

Yanni Tan MANAGING EDITOR

Johnny Khoo GROUP FASHION DIRECTOR

Allyson Klass DEPUTY EDITOR

Boon Tan DIGITAL EDITOR

Audrey Chan SENIOR ART DIRECTOR

Lionnel Lim SENIOR SOCIETY EDITOR Nafeesa Saini ASSOCIATE ONLINE EDITOR

Aaron Lee ART DIRECTOR

Jacquie Ang

Simon Sim SENIOR PHOTOGRAPHER

Lela Jalil CONTRIBUTING SUB-EDITOR

Annabel Tan

Nicholas Chan Shannahlette Jenn Lim Chua Jun Xian

CONTRIBUTORS

Christvian Goh, Clarence Lee, Denise Li, Grace Ma, Grace Tay, Joel Low, Mavis Teo, Melissa Yeo

PRESTIGE ASIA

Tama Lung EDITOR-IN-CHIEF HONG KONG

Chris Hanrahan MANAGING EDITOR, INDONESIA

Julie Yim MALAYSIA

Steve Chen EDITOR-IN-CHIEF, TAIWAN

Reena Hallberg DEPUTY EDITOR, THAILAND

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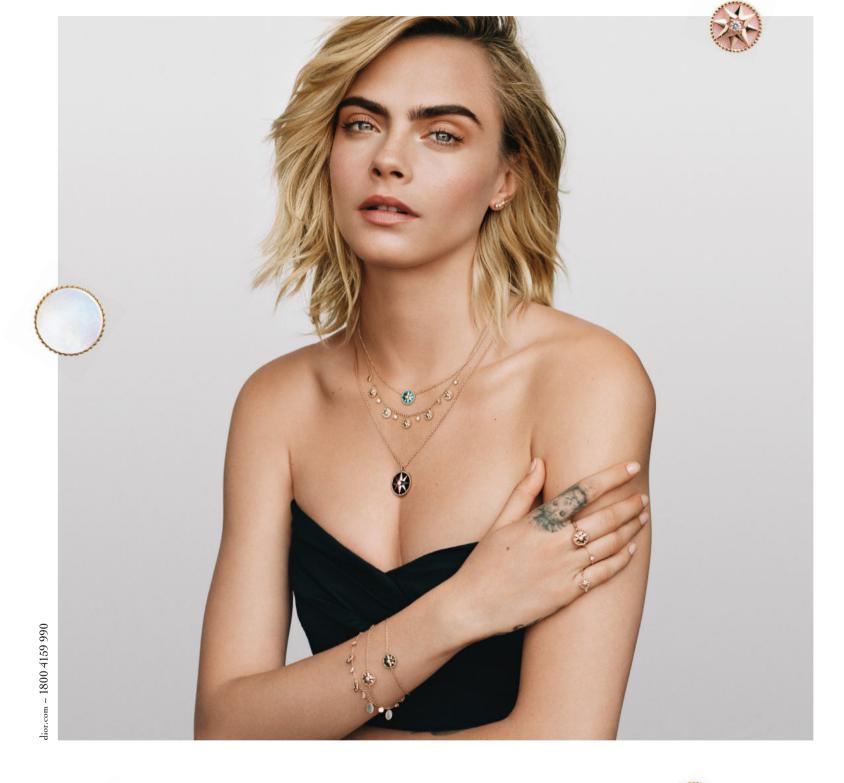
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Piaget Limelight Gala

watch in pink gold, featuring a natural malachite dial, 42

diamonds, the Piaget Manufacture 690P quartz movement and a palacedecoration bracelet

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ADVERTISING DIRECTOR

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PRESTIGE ASIA

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Steven Chan PUBLISHER & MANAGING DIRECTOR, MALAYSIA Steve Chen PUBLISHER, TAIWAN Waraporn Siriboonma
PUBLISHER & MANAGING
DIRECTOR, THAILAND

INTERNATIONAL ADVERTISING SALES REPRESENTATIVES

BURDA COMMUNITY NETWORK

Michael Neuwirth Senior Client Service Manager International Media Tel: +49 (89) 9250 3629 Email: michael.neuwirth@burda.com Kseniia Komarova Client Service Manager International Media Tel: +49 (89) 9250 3035 Email: kseniia.komarova@burda.com

FRANCE / BENELUX Marion Badolle-Feick Head of Sales Region France & Benelux Tel: +33 (1) 72 71 25 24 Email: marion.badolle-feick@burda.com

SWITZERLAND / AUSTRIA Christina Bresler Head of Sales Region Austria & Switzerland Tel: +49 (89) 9250 2232 Email: christina.bresler@burda.com SWITZERLAND
Regina Essig
Senior Client Service Manager Sales Region Switzerland
Tel: +41 (44) 810 21 46
Email: regina.essig@burda.com

UK / IRELAND Jeannine Soeldner Head of Sales Regions UK&Ireland Tel: +44 (20) 7607 7979 Email: jeannine.soeldner@burda.com ITALY / SCANDINAVIA / SPAIN / NETHERLANDS (FASHION) / GREECE / OTHERS Lena Kölle Client Service Manager Tel: +49 (89) 9250 3197 Email: lena.koelle@burda.com

BurdaInternational

Sven Friedrichs CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, ASIA

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391B Orchard Road, 13-01 Ngee Ann City, Tower B, Singapore 238874 HONG KONG | ISRAEL | THAILAND | SINGAPORE

MAY THE PARTY NEVER END

Finally, the festive season I adore most is now in full swing. Don't you just love parties? My preferred variety are dinner parties, especially intimate ones, where the hospitality is heartfelt, the pace unhurried and conversations can actually be heard. There's an art to being a good host, and *Prestige* has already been invited to several fabulous ones, such as Betty Chen's 93rd birthday lunch and the Poddars' Diwali bash. We also held a lively cocktail-networking session for our 40 Under 40 personalities, which to our pleasant surprise, extended way beyond the official ending time!

Some of the best hosts I've personally had the good fortune to be invited to dinner by, are our cover personalities, Kevin and Iroshini Chua. Their charisma, pacing, guest-list curation and menu - flawless. Beyond sharing with us their approach to throwing enjoyable parties, the power couple, who recently opened their new aesthetics clinic in Orchard Road, also tell us the secret to their successful partnership – both at work and home. If you think about it, being a great host is essentially making a guest feel good. The Chuas have extended this ability from their personal life into their business, to help their clients feel and look beautiful.

Speaking of beauty, isn't this the time of the year when everyone celebrates it? The necessity of gifting means we try to hunt down the most gorgeous presents. We dress to impress for countless parties. We adorn our homes to welcome others. We squeeze in a couple more beauty treatments to look va-va-voom. And of course, we find every excuse to buy a new outfit and to reward ourselves with well-deserved gifts.

To that end, we have compiled pages and pages of amazing shopping ideas – from the whimsical medals of Fauré Le Page, to foolproof Christmas beauty coffrets, to Snow Queen-worthy diamond chandelier earrings, to that one versatile watch, featuring your favourite maison's enblematic motif, you'd absolutely need in the year ahead. Feeling harried already? Just peruse our review pages on the aesthetics treatments that will turn back the clock and freshen you up for the festivities.

Back to the topic of hosting, we have a feature on James Suckling's top 10 wine selections of 2019, just in time for your orders. So here's an early toast from the Prestige team to you and your family: May the holidays be ever wonderful, and may the merriment never end. Santé, and see you in 2020!

Yanni Tan | MANAGING EDITOR yanni.tan@burda.com.sg



Cartier Guirlande De Cartier, nano model, in red calfskin with an adjustable

EUROPE & THE AMERICAS

Until Feb 9, 2020



SOTO. THE FOURTH DIMENSION

The Guggenheim Museum Bilbao presents a retrospective exhibition of over 60 works by Venezuelan artist Jesús Rafael Soto, including several of his large-scale sculptures called Penetrables. There are also paintings and mural works that highlight Soto's influential role in the development of kinetic art in the '50s and '60s.

SINGAPORE Until Mar 1, 2020 Dec 17–Jan 5, 2020

Get your paws on tickets to Andrew Lloyd

Webber's hit musical, showing at the Sands

Theatre at Marina Bay Sands. One of the longest-

running shows on the West End and Broadway,

CATS promises feline fun for the whole family.

COLLISIONS: INFORMATION, HARMONY

Korean artist Chun Kwang Young presents his

artworks in a solo exhibition at the Sundaram

Tagore Gallery. He is best known for his wall-

triangular forms wrapped in antique mulberry

hung sculptures made from thousands of

Until Mar 15, 2020

ARCHITECTURE IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

(1969-1989)

SUDDENLY TURNING VISIBLE: ART AND

Discover the connections between art and

Singapore, Bangkok and Manila during their urbanisation in the 1970s. The exhibition at the

National Gallery Singapore will include more than 50 artworks from the period, as well as

architecture in Southeast Asian cities like

archives and newer works.

paper tinted with teas or pigment.

Until Feb 1, 2020

AND CONFLICT

THEATER OF OPERATIONS: THE GULF WARS 1991-2011

New York City's MoMA PS1 introduces more than 250 works from over 75 artists in an exhibition to explore the legacies and effects of the American-led military engagement in Irag. The works reveal how the Gulf War was defined by concerns like xenophobia, violence and oil dependency - many of which are still prevalent today.

Until Mar 8, 2020

TROY: MYTH AND REALITY

The British Museum holds the first major Troy exhibition in the UK, featuring for the first time since the 1870s, the finds from German archaeologist Heinrich Schliemann's excavations at the site. There are also nearly 300 objects that unfold different aspects of the famous story, from the Trojan horse to Hollywood films and contemporary art.

ASIA-PACIFIC

Until Jan 4, 2020

STORIES TOLD TOMORROW

Japanese artist Tomoko Kashiki presents her first solo exhibition in China at Ota Fine Arts Shanghai, where she will showcase eight new paintings and sketched drawings. Kashiki's paintings often capture a mix of imagination and reality, expressing the weird and wonderful nature of everyday life.



Dec 12–16

WONDERFRUIT

Put on a flower crown for the annual arts, music and lifestyle festival as it returns to The Fields at Siam Country Club in Pattaya. Aside from the entertainment, Wonderfruit focuses on sustainable, creative experiences, and the entire event functions like a pop-up city with eco-friendly elements.

Dec 28–Jan 5, 2020

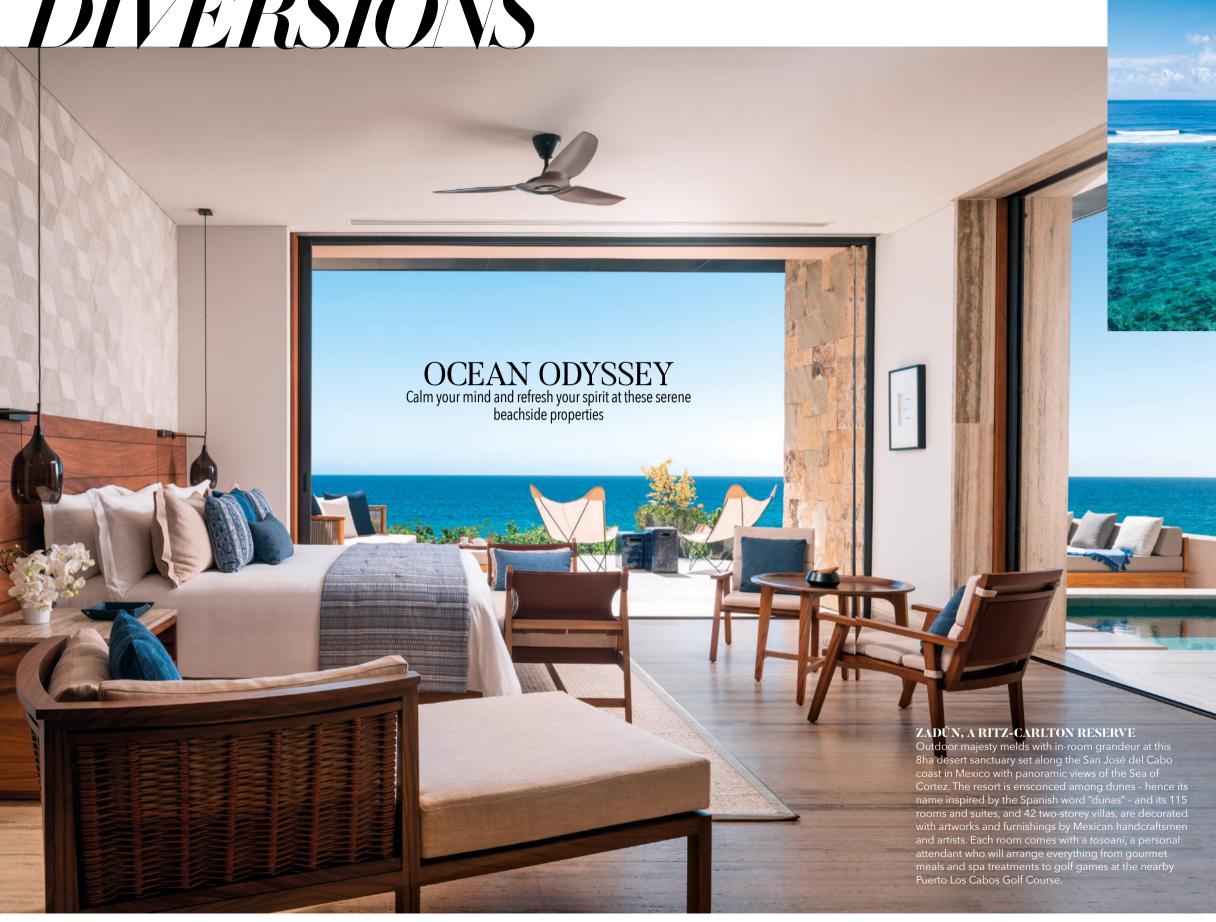
FALLS FESTIVAL

Ring in the new year with artists like Halsey, Vampire Weekend and Disclosure at the annual music festival held in various coastal towns across Australia - Lorne, Marion Bay, Byron Bar and Fremantle. Besides a national line-up touring each location, there are also exclusive special guest acts at the respective towns.

FEXT: ANNABEL TAN | PHOTOS: KHOO SUI HOE (SUDDENLY TURNING VISIBLE: ART AND JESÚS RAFAEL SOTO, ADAGP, PARIS/VEGAP, BILBAO, 2019 (SOTO. THE FOURTH DIMENS)

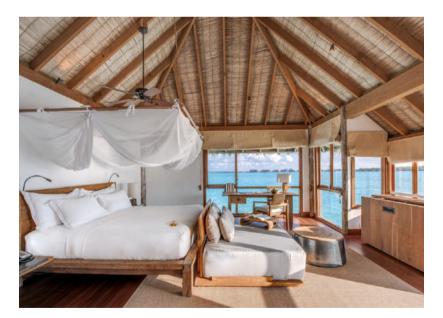
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DIVERSIONS



ANANTARA IKO MAURITIUS RESORT & VILLAS

This 164-room secluded gem along Le Chaland Beach, on Mauritius' southeastern coast, shines in its stunning location fringed by sugarcane plantations and the crystal-clear waters of the Indian Ocean. Bask in the outdoors with activities such as nature hikes, quad biking and ziplining, before returning to your spacious room adorned in natural, locally sourced materials such as volcanic stone, basalt and driftwood. The signature Anantara Spa also offers therapeutic treatments from detox programmes to traditional hammam rituals.



GILI LANKANFUSHI MALDIVES

Sustainability and marine conservation are the highlights of this newly renovated resort, including furnishings made of upcycled materials such as wire mesh and teakwood. New room additions include two Family Villas with Pool and a 1,700sqm Private Reserve, the world's largest overwater villa with four spacious bedrooms and amenities such as an open-air cinema and a two-storey waterslide. Revel in underwater beauty in the Dive and Discover programme that includes coral planting with a marine biologist and guided nighttime snorkelling, then refuel with healthy dishes including herbs and vegetables from the organic garden at the signature restaurant Kashiveli.

DIVERSIONS

GOOD FOOD

Wind down the year with unforgettable meals and meaningful gourmet gifts



ROYAL PLAZA ON SCOTTS

Have a berry Christmas with garden-themed log cakes, such as Raspberry Royaltine with Valrhona chocolate creme and hazelnut royaltine, and Hojicha Chocolate with morello cherry jelly and apple compote. Spice things up with Sambal Hijau Turkey with fried rice and spiced chicken stuffing, or Japanese Miso Roast Chicken with curry potatoes, garlic fried rice and carrot stew.





CAPELLA SINGAPORE

From the juiciest roast turkey that we've ever tasted to fine Cantonese delights at Cassia, a festive meal at Capella Singapore always creates memorable moments. Chill out over afternoon tea at Chef's Table or get a Christmas hamper, with homemade goodies such as the panettone, stollen and gingerbread man that are perfect for gatherings.



Scented Turkey with sweetsavoury Mantou Kaya Nibbles and piquant house-made chilli sauce. Our pick of delectable nibbles: Turkey Mantou Sliders. which features tender braised turkey with yam and pickled white onion between deep-fried mantou buns; and Pan-fried

Turkey and Chive Gyozas

served with tangy black vinegar



"Our bees only collect pollen from wild flowering trees, as well as blossoming Karri, Redgum and Jarrah hardwood trees... producing honey unmatched in its distinctive flavour. delicious taste and powerful healing qualities"

- HARRY GROVER. Founder & Director of The Rare Honey Company





SHERATON TOWERS SINGAPORE

Be spoilt for choice with a decadent international buffet spread at The Dining Room and curated five-course menus at Li Bai Cantonese Restaurant. Buffet items include the signature Dry Laksa, Lobster Mac and Cheese with Truffle, Sichuan Mala Baby Lobster and Wok-fried White Pepper Crab. Bring some goodness home with new takeaway options, such as the Honey Rock Hoisin Turkey, Bourbon Orange-Glazed Bone-In Gammon Ham and Raspberry Cheese Igloo Cake.



resort's gourmet gift sets, now available exclusively at Da Paolo Gastronomia's Paragon outlet and its website. The resort is especially well known for its extra virgin olive oil and jams, and also partners other artisans to produce honey and fine teas. Order from gastronomia-foodtoorder.

dapaolo.com.sg



Cru single malt has been matured for 23 years and is the only one of its kind finished in rare French cuvée oak casks. It lingers on the palate with an intense nose of apple blossom and candied apple, while layers of vanilla oak, sweet brioche, sandalwood and pear sorbet lead to a long and opulent finish. Available at all DFS stores at Singapore Changi Airport in an exclusive

GLENFIDDICH

The dark gold

Glenfiddich Grand

75cl 43% variant.

28 **PRESTIGE** DECEMBER 2019 #prestigediversions | DECEMBER 2019 PRESTIGE 29



"The sculpted green marble bath and the theatrical shower shaped like a brass cage form the centrepieces of this perfectly symmetrical decor, which is imbued with soft-toned lighting. The arches are ornamented with handcarved and painted scales. This decor's classic codes are married with tones and materials that resonate with modernity relevant to today's design needs"

- EMIL HUMBERT and CHRISTOPHE POYET, principal designers of Humbert & Povet, on their bathroom design inspired by the neo-classical architecture of Palladian villas



compact speaker Heritage Food Be transported to 1930s Shanghai in the

newly renovated Grand Shanghai restaurant, complete with live jazz entertainment. Master Chef Jacky Tang serves signatures with a twist, such as the Light and Shadow Crispy Duck, where each sliver of meat has whiffs of wasabi and is placed on an intricate Osmanthus syrup sculpture. Other worthy hits include the crispy and juicy Grand Shanghai Tea Smoked Duck, and the delicious Souffle Egg White, Red Bean Paste, Banana dessert.



Celebrity Cruises' newest ship, Celebrity Apex, is expected to make its debut in spring 2020 with speciality restaurants, expansive suites and curated experiences that take luxury cruising to new heights. Among the highlights is Eden, a 12,000sqft space that offers panoramic sea vistas and is awash in sunlight from three-storey-high windows. The ship also offers a variety of entertainment options on the world's first cantilevered, floating platform The Magic Carpet.





NOCTURNAL NIBBLES

Guests staying in service apartments with club privileges at the Oakwood Premier AMTD Singapore can now enjoy daily free-flow drinks and delectable canapés in their rooms. Just add the Mobile Club Lounge service to your reservation and the bartender will come by 7-10pm with his trolley and bites such as Crispy Chicken Wings with Maple Truffle and Chicken Satay with Pineapple Salsa. This new concept will soon be introduced to other Oakwood Premier properties across the Asia Pacific.



Mediterranean Opus

Celebrity chef Alain Ducasse opens his first modern Mediterranean grill in Southeast Asia: BBR by Alain Ducasse in Raffles Singapore's former Bar & Billiard Room. Watch the action in the open kitchen as you polish off savoury dishes such as the Pulpo a la Gallega showcasing tender grilled octopus, and the Cataplana de Marisco Carabineros, a shrimp and shellfish stew.



70th floor as you tuck into SKAI's new Asian-inspired afternoon tea, available from Sunday to Friday 3-5pm. There's a playful twist on teatime favourites, like the Lobster Roll served in a charcoal bun, and the Foie Gras Polo Bun that comes topped with a raspberry gel. Pastries including the 72% Chocolate Sable Tart and Matcha Tea Mascarpone are sweet but not cloying. Add a glass of Tattinger Brut Réserve champagne and your indulgence is complete

is now available in matte black - in addition to its white predecessor - and **HAPPY MEAL** makes for a sleek and Start your day with a hearty breakfast subtle powerhouse in the whimsical dining room of The in the living room. English House, by Marco Pierre White. Its patented audio Our faves: the Traditional English technologies in Breakfast with crumpets, organic sound amplification eggs, sausages and bacon; and the and purity also Omelette Arnold Bennett with smoked ensure an impeccable haddock that was gone in a jiffy. acoustic experience.

Tune Up

Reactor ultra-

Devialet's Phantom

DIVERSIONS

SPY WATCH, RELOADED

To celebrate the 50th anniversary of On Her Majesty's Secret Service (1969) and well ahead of time for the April 2020 release of the next 007 film, Omega has released a new collector's Seamaster Diver 300M "James Bond". Limited to 7,007 pieces worldwide, the 42mm stainless steel watch features a black-PVD-on-black-ceramic dial with a spiral-brushed gun barrel design and a 9mm bullet head at the centre. On the seventh day of each month, the number 7 on the date window appears in the same font as the 007 logo. There is also a hidden "50" on the 10 o'clock index, which appears by night within the Super-LumiNova. The 12 o'clock index is inspired by the Bond family coat of arms, while the side of the case bears a yellow gold plate engraved with the limited-edition number.



- Local jeweller and founder of Caratell MICHAEL KOH, who designed the exquisite dial of the Tefnut Arabian Nights Milanaise, which reached the pre-selection phase in the ladies category of the prestigious Grand Prix d'Horlogerie de Genève 2019 awards



Having already charmed the watchmaking world when it introduced the Seventies Chronograph Panorama Date in 2014, Glashütte Original now ups the ante with two 100-piece editions of the watch, with a green or grey dial. The special colours pay tribute to the landscape of Glashütte: green for the thick forests and lush meadows, and grey for the tin and silver ore mined by the town. A sophisticated dégradé effect and sunray decoration further accentuate the dial on a 40mm stainless steel case, which bears the Calibre 37-02 chronograph movement.





is powered by the SW500 mechanical movement, with a water resistance of up to 100m.

Man-made Perfection

With the Greubel Forsey Hand Made 1, the independent manufacture has shown the world that it is not impossible to craft by hand a finely finished creation that matches the very high standards of its standard-production watches. In fact, 95 percent of the 43.5mm white gold tourbillon watch showing the hours, minutes and seconds is made using hand-operated tools – and that includes its hairspring. The entire piece takes a jaw-dropping 6,000 hours (or three years of man-hours) of work by a team of the best artisans in the world. Only two to three pieces will be produced annually.

Simple yet ever so chic, the Chaumet Boléro small model watch with a silver, white-grained dial stands out in yellow gold. At 30mm, this quartz watch is a versatile boardroomto-bar accoutrement, especially with its flexible bracelet that wears like second skin.

RAY OF SUNSHINE

Bring a dose of warmth into your winter wardrobe with these classic, feminine timekeepers.



This pink gold Piaget Extremely Lady Watch features an exquisite Palace-decoration bracelet the maison is renowned for, along with an eye-catching carnelian dial encircled by 24 brilliant-cut diamonds and the Piaget Manufacture 56P quartz movement. This 22mm by 27mm piece is on point not just for the evening, but all the way into the Chinese New Year season.





GOLDEN DELIGHTS

Like mini Christmas baubles, smooth and shiny beads of gold look extra festive alongside round diamonds on the Van Cleef & Arpels Perlée diamond collection of bracelets and rings. Available in yellow, white and rose gold, the elegant pieces are great for mixing, matching and stacking.



In celebration of its 95th anniversary this year, Damiani has created a limited-edition collection of the well-loved Belle Époque necklace with multi-hued sapphires. The Belle Époque Rainbow is available in three versions, each made in pink gold with a separable cross. The smallest pendant comes with a single rolo chain, while the middle-sized one has a double rolo chain, princess-cut stones set along the sides of the pendant and is limited to just 95 pieces. Lastly, the largest Belle Époque Rainbow measuring 60mm by 46mm comes with a cluster of rolo chains.

HERE COMES THE SUN

Spread some warmth this holiday season with sparkling symbols of sunshine from Piaget's Sunlight collection. Both Sunlight pendants in rose gold set with brilliant-cut diamonds pair perfectly with the Sunlight earrings – also bearing layered rose gold triangles with dazzling diamonds that look like graphic sunbeam motifs. Top it off with the exquisite Sunlight ring in rose gold with 250 brilliant-cut diamonds and triangular sunrays on the sides of the ring frame.



Just as love comes in many different forms, Chaumet's new Liens d'Amour rings are available in a spectrum of shades. There are eight coloured gemstones, each sitting atop a white gold band with brilliant-cut diamonds. From the intense red rhodolite garnet to the serene aquamarine, cheerful yellow chrysoberyl and more, every gem evokes a unique emotion.





DIVERSIONS

character to wear Blahnik's shoes. The design has since become one of Blahnik's most recognisable styles. This season, the Maysale's

pilgrim buckle, usually seen on

the 5cm mule, now graces a range

of models including this Maysli

slingback. In addition, the

range is refreshed in a new denim

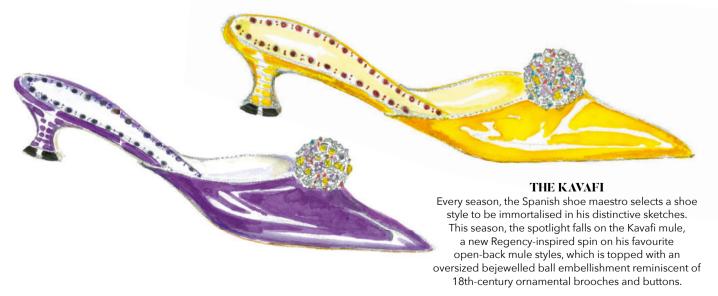
canvas in blue, red or white.

THREE THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT...



THE BB PUMP

Named after French screen siren Brigitte Bardot, this pointy-toe pump boasting universal appeal – fans include A-listers the likes of celebrities Victoria Beckham and Rihanna, and even royalty such as Duchess of Sussex Meghan Markle and HRH Queen Letizia of Spain – now comes in new colours and materials, such as this snakeskin print on calf leather.





The Baguette gets all blinged out this festive season with the new Metallic Vibes capsule collection. Fendi has selected some of its emblematic Baguette line of bags and accessories to get all dressed up in glittering gold and shimmering silver.



You first met Max The Teddy at Max Mara's Spring/Summer 2019 runway show. Now, he's back to unveil the Italian fashion house's gifting goodies. The exclusive #MaxMaraBearingGifts selection of limitededition items include belt bags, mittens and the brand's iconic teddy coats in punchy colours. There is even a colourful array of bag charms featuring #MaxTheTeddy wearing his tiny teddy coat.

"While haute couture is closely linked with the idea of perfection and the mastery of every last detail, I wanted to transport 70 years of Dior creations to an unexpected place. The streets of New York embody the most contrasting background to reveal unforeseen emotions" - PETER LINDBERGH (1944-2019)

Dior/Lindbergh



New York

This two-volume book set is Dior's final project with revered German photographer Peter Lindbergh, who passed away in September. A ravishing pictorial on his interpretation of the fashion house's oeuvre, Dior/Lindbergh features Alek Wek in a Bar ensemble from the Spring/Summer 1947 haute couture collection, on one of the two covers. The pictures from the Big Apple shoot are featured in one volume, while the other volume is dedicated to Lindbergh's imagery for Dior, which spans more than 100 visuals of men's and women's haute couture and ready-to-wear published over the last 30 years.

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According to the Tom Ford Research team, caffeine can also increase skin's natural energy and boost hydration levels. The brand zoomed in on the rare ingredients of white porcelain cacao and gyokuro, a type of Japanese green tea grown in the shade, for their caffeine levels and also the ability to protect skin from free radical damage. This led to the development of the Serum Concentrate, which immediately improves the appearance of tired-looking skin; and the Crème Concentrate, an ultra-rich cream to combat dehydration

Gold Standard

Dior's L'Or de Vie Le skincare line is derived from the sap of vines at Château d'Yquem, a renowned vineyard in Bordeaux that boasts exceptional soils and stringent cultivation methods. The sap has amazing antioxidative properties that strengthen skin against environmental aggressors and maximises its reparative capacity. The star product is Le Sérum, which is made with 100 percent Yquem extract.



PERK UP

If your skin usually looks worse for wear by the time the afternoon rolls around, have a bottle of Whal Myung Skin Elixir at arm's length. Doing triple duty as a toner, serum and oil, it's infused with a secret formula comprising a blend of five herbal extracts used in traditional Korean medicine, with antioxidative and anti-inflammatory properties to heal blemishes and impart



Gotta Catch'em All

Shu Uemura puts the fun back in make-up, collaborating with Pokémon for a collection playfully dubbed Pikashu. Just in time for the gifting season, there are plenty of great stuffing fillers: the Catch'em All Pikashu Mini Lip Coffret, a set of five matte lippies in shades like pink and coral; Pikashu Eye Palette Thunder Shade, which has 12 shades like yellow and berry colours; and the Catch'em All Pikashu Cleansing Oil Kit with four travel-size oils.

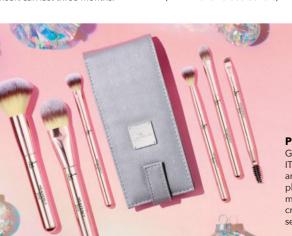
SMOOTH OPERATOR

Get perfectly groomed with this sleek limitededition Hommage premium razor set. All of the shaver's metal parts are made from stainless steel, while the handle and stand are made from resin-impregnated wood laminate, which offers excellent water resistance. On that note, Remède Spa at The St Regis Singapore has also launched the Men's Definitive Facial comprising a purifying cleansing ritual, anti-ageing and decongesting eye massage, and a massage for the scalp and neck - that uses Hommage's skincare products.

Pretty, Please!

Festive gifting is a breeze with our beauty recommendations for everyone,





H.H.H.

A.A.

Gift flawless skin to one and all with IT Cosmetics' selection of make-up and skincare that is developed with plastic surgeons. Besides cleansers, moisturisers, eve creams and CC+ creams, there is a six-piece full-size brush set that comes in a travel case.



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GO EAST

RADAR



PENHALIGON'S @penhaligons london

Get scent-sational with Penhaligon's matching his-or-hers gift offerings for Christmas. Choose from the Halfeti or Elisabethan scents for a set of the 100ml fragrance duo presented in a customisable tin, which also comes with the 300ml body and hand wash. Meanwhile, the coffret of five 5ml miniature bottles of Penhaligon's beloved scents makes an excellent sampling set. In addition, there's a range of travel-size fragrances, body and hand lotions, and body and hand washes in either Luna or Endymion scents - all wrapped in a delightful cracker packaging.





FESTIVE WONDE

It is impossible to be short on shopping and gifting ideas at Raffles City Singapore, which presents five ways to get ready for the party season



SANDRO @sandroparis

with Sandro's 1980s-inspired collection, which comes elevated with Texan touches. Star pieces include a houndstooth shorts suit, and an exquisite bag quilted in suede. Even the little black dress gets a chic twist here, featuring subversive lace cut-outs and eyelets that will delight those who love a little something extra.









Razzle dazzle with fine jewellery and timepieces from Gucci. One of the fashion house's storied symbols is the Lion Head. Here, it graces stud earrings and pendant necklaces in 18k yellow gold, accentuated with gemstones, such as amethyst or chrome diopside. Over at the watch department, the G-Timeless Automatic line is updated with new 40mm water-resistant timepieces featuring a guilloche pattern on the dial, as well as the knurled decorative technique on the bezel

and the small second hand. The feline's head, along with the emblematic bee, appears as index markers.



CHANEL BEAUTY @chanel.beauty

Spread some magical enchantment with the Chanel No. 5 perfume set in a fantasy world conjured up by Jean-Paul Goude. The famed French graphic designer and close Chanel collaborator places the iconic 100ml bottle centre stage in an extravagant gift box that includes a travel-size bottle and Rouge Allure lipstick of your choice. Another limited-edition offer is Chanel No. 5's new 7ml lipstick-style bottle. What's amazing about this miniature is the way you apply the fragrance - just twist open the capless bottle and spray the fragrance with one hand. Each bottle also comes dressed in a holiday-themed sleeve. Bonus: Wear it as often as you wish because it comes with two refills.



For more Raffles City festive deals, events and information, visit www.capitaland.com/sg/malls/rafflescity or check out its social media updates at @RafflesCitySG.

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Prestige DECEMBER 2019 #prestigediversions | DECEMBER 2019 Prestige 45

MY SPIRIT DRINK



"The story of the 26-year-old A Day of Dark Barley began when a batch of dark roasted malted barley. more commonly used in the production of stout. unexpectedly arrived at the distillery. After experimenting, the craftsmen produced this incredibly smooth whisky with oak flavours, smokiness. as well as classic honey, vanilla and citrus flavours"

JAMES CORDINER

Born and raised in Speyside, which is home to more than half of Scotland's whisky distilleries, it seems inevitable that James Cordiner would wind up in the industry. The 27-yearold, however, really only started appreciating the spirit in his first year of university. While pursuing a degree in veterinary bioscience at the University of Glasgow, he took on a summer job as a tour guide at a whisky distillery. "On my first day of work, the global ambassador taught us about the different expressions and how the flavours are created," recalls Cordiner. "That's the first time I really remember appreciating whisky in the way that I do now."

Since then, he has worked as a head bartender and VIP hospitality supervisor at various venues, and was the UK brand ambassador for Chivas Regal and the Chivas Brothers Single Malts portfolio. He is also currently in the midst of obtaining a master's degree in brewing and distilling.

Meanwhile, as the brand ambassador for The Balvenie in Southeast Asia, he plans to get creative and hold a variety of events to educate and show people new ways of appreciating The Balvenie. Recently, for the launch of its new collection of single malt whiskies, The Balvenie Stories, he hosted a storytelling night together with Ross Blainey, The Balvenie brand ambassador for Australia.

To enliven the guests' whisky and food pairing experience, the ambassadors took turns to share the tales of craftsmanship behind the whiskies, while live music accompanied their narratives. "Whisky drinkers appreciate flavour first and foremost, but when they learn about the stories behind that recipe, it also opens up their imagination and helps them appreciate the whisky even more."

Cool Off

"One major change from Scotland to Singapore is the temperature difference. So I've expanded my whisky drinking experiences and now drink it with ice, or with soda and ice - something Scottish people never do. It's nice and refreshing, and you're still getting the flavours of the whisky coming through."

HE BALVENI



Spice Of Life

"Whisky can be a bit too fiery or some people but if you pair it with spicy food, it saturates your taste buds so you don't get as much spice from the whisky and instead pick up more of the sweeter notes."

"One of my favourite flavour profiles is the spicy Christmas pudding flavours from whiskies aged in sherry casks. If I could make a new whisky at The Balvenie, it would be a first-fill Oloroso

Dream Drink

sherry cask kept at cask strength, so you can drink it with as much or as little water as you want."

SOME SHOE BRAND FOUNDERS were trained as designers; some started their careers as apprentices; and then there are the rare few, like Sergio Rossi, who call shoemaking their birthright. "I was born among leather... Watching my father at work I stole his trade," said the celebrated Italian

designer, who founded his eponymously named brand in 1951. "I have always thought of myself as a myself in front of a sleeping beauty. The factory in calzuler ("shoemaker" in Corsican), a cobbler, then I San Mauro Pascoli represented a global leader in became a 'creative manager'.' Born in 1935 in San Mauro Pascoli in the

Romagna region of Italy, Rossi learnt the craft from his shoemaker father and started his very own workshop in his hometown at just 16. The hardworking lad quickly became known for his well-made and boldly designed sandals, and by the 1960s, his brand had become synonymous with quality Italian craftsmanship and classic Pascoli, it also built a new sustainability-oriented feminine aesthetics.

Prioritising shape, harmony and elegance in his work, the designer steadily built his reputation as an artist and engineer of shoes. Even fashion leaders are a tribute to the founder and represents the new the likes of Versace, Dolce & Gabbana, and Alaïa came calling for collaborations.

Such is Sergio Rossi's reputation that even when Investindustrial acquired the brand and relaunched it with a bang in 2016, the company chose to remain committed to its deep heritage. Said Riccardo Sciutto (former general manager of Hogan), who was appointed the chief executive officer: "When I arrived at Sergio Rossi, I found the Made-in-Italy industry, and was in need of expressing its true potential."

In order to relaunch Sergio Rossi with fresh relevancy and a modern edge, Sciutto and a team of creative talents had embarked on a journey rediscover the roots and essence of this historic luxury brand. While the company had retained the master artisans from San Mauro production plant.

The debut collection anchoring the brand's revival is the snazzy sr1 collection. The letters "sr" team's respect for the brand heritage, while "1" stands for the new beginning.

The new Sergio Rossi Resort 2020 collection draws on the brand's rich heritage, but features a refreshing twist with statement-making colours and unique textures

> Each pair of shoes undergoes a minimum of 120 steps that totals about 14 hours of work. Seen here are (from top) the sr Icona slingback in blue denim with crystals, sr1 pump in black mesh with crystals, sr1 flat sabot in leather with printed logo pattern, and Sergio Extreme sneaker in blush and coral

Three years on, the sr1 is still very much loved today and constitutes a key part of Sergio Rossi's new Resort 2020 collection. Highlights include statement materials, such as a hyper-colourful patent leather that adds a fun twist to classic styles for deskto-dinner versatility, as well as an exclusive mesh fabric that endows an unexpected peekaboo effect.

Taking centre stage here is also the re-edition of the archival Sergio Rossi logo, ingeniously reworked into a cool graphic motif that adorns the sporty Sergio Extreme sneaker and the sophisticated sr1 slipper.

Sergio Rossi is located at Level 2, Branded **Boutiques, Takashimaya Department Store**



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Looking resplendent in a flowing turquoise and mauve muumuu, Betty Chen was the picture of glowing health as she walked into her birthday party at Tanglin Club's Churchill Room. Hosted by nine of her friends – Lotus Soh, Genevieve Peggy Jeffs, Jacelyn Lai, Violet Yeo, Christine Lim, Esther Ho, Frances Low, Lai Yong Lawrence and Angela Loh, the event was an elegant lunch to celebrate Betty's 93rd, with the exact number of guests and family members in attendance. It was six months in the planning, from the specially curated menu to the turquoise-themed decoration and heartfelt entertainment. Grandson Michael showed off his piano skills while good friends Lotus Soh and Noor Quek serenaded the room with several songs – all dedicated to the formidable Betty, who had served 26 terms with the Chinese Women's Association and is now its Patron. During her presidency, she raised millions for charities, most notably funding and managing Henderson Senior Citizens' Home for 32 years. Guests got up to dance, took plenty of wefies and toasted to Betty's health as she blew out candles from a three-tier cake. Each guest went home with a gorgeous three-way pocket mirror as a gift from the birthday girl.





WILD RICE BALL

History In The Making

Wild Rice never throws tame parties and its annual ball seems to get larger and more spectacular with each passing year. The theme this year was Making History, and guests were encouraged to turn up dressed like their favourite historical figures. Chinese dynastic figures jostled for space with immediately recognisable Western personalities in Shangri-La Hotel's Grand Ballroom, with many opting to show up as popular singers and actors. The concert brought guests through 700 years of Singapore's history, with the talents of some of our island's brightest theatre stars on display. Performers included Ivan Heng, Pam Oei, Hossan Leong and Siti Khalijah Zainal. Another surprise came in the form of a line-up of leading chefs, including Heidi Flanagan and Herve Potus from Shangri-La Hotel, along with Janice Wong and Kenjiro "Hatch" Hashida, who crafted an exquisite menu inspired by our local cuisine. To end the evening, special guest DJ Keith Colaco got the guests up on their feet during the Disco Singapura segment. Other guests chose to make their way to the foyer to enjoy a spread that included Teochew porridge. All in all, \$796,500 was raised to support programmes that involve the training and nurturing of the future generations of Singaporean theatre talent.











guests six short dance routines that can be associated loosely with the movements of changing a light bulb, sweeping the floor, tossing prata, catching a mosquito,

CHOO KEN-YI WITH ISABELLE

washing dishes and riding a motorcycle!

LARS AND SERENE SORENSEN WITH NIKOLAI, HAYDEN LUKAS AND KRISTIAN SORENSEN



LA'EL GANESH'S 100-DAY PARTY Purple Rain Lisa Ganesh and Ganesh Ramalingam celebrated their second daughter La'el Ganesh's 100 days with a purple-themed brunch party at The St Regis Singapore Caroline's Mansion, which was also where the couple held their wedding in 2017. Purple was the colour du jour to reflect Ganesh's love of the A Song of Ice and Fire series: He wanted a colour that represented royalty. Guests were encouraged to show up in all shades of the colour, while the venue was transformed into a riot of purple with balloons, bows and desserts reflecting the theme. The party saw about 130 guests in attendance, including Edwin Tong, Senior Minister of State for Law and Health, who is a family friend. The afternoon's festivities included face painting, balloon sculpting, caricature drawing and a magic show, which thrilled both the young and the young at heart. A lavish spread that included Western and local delights like chicken and lamb satay, gado-gado, ngoh hiang, roti prata, laksa, Cajun chicken and cod fritters tantalised guests' taste buds, and adults were served Moet & Chandon Rose Imperial champagne. Beautiful crystal jars were also presented as door gifts.

SHOBAR RAJWEKAR, RAMALINGAM RAMASAMY WITH LA'EL, LUCY KOH, FRANCIS LIM, GRACE GANESH AND GANESH





BYINVITATION









Green Is The New Black

Recognising the urgent need to address climate change and related environmental issues, HSH Prince Albert II of Monaco started his eponymously named foundation in 2006 to tackle the problem globally. The foundation prioritises issues such as the conservation of biodiversity and water management, which also includes combating desertification. To generate increased awareness of its mission, the Fondation Prince Albert II de Monaco launched its Singapore branch (one of 10 representative countries worldwide) in 2008 to galvanise the support of our citizens, politicians, scientists and other stakeholders. To induct new members, a reception at the Consulate of the Principality of Monaco was hosted by Jacky Deromedi, President of the foundation's Asian branch, and Jean-Marc Deromedi, the Honorary Consul of Monaco in Singapore and the foundation's Director. The theme was a touch of green, a nod to the foundation's Trees For Water programme that aims to plant teak and bamboo along the rivers of Madhya Pradesh in central India. The long-term benefits of the project include encouraging the production of humus which, in turn, will reduce surface run-off and soil erosion; the absorption of carbon dioxide and generation of oxygen; and creating 4,125 days of work for the locals.







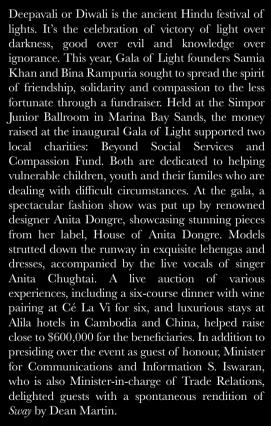


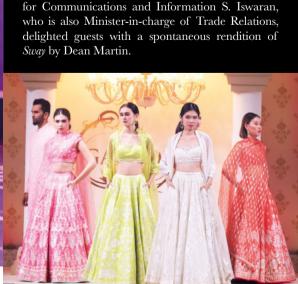






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MAUNIK THACKER AND AKSHAY MAHAJAN





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CRASHGATE: WHEN BALL SEASON BRINGS OUT IMPEACHABLE BEHAVIOUR



he was rattling the doors trying to get out like the house was on fire. "I. Need. A. Smoke! Why can't I get out this way!?" Virginia squalled. Her face was perfectly placid thanks to Botox but her eyes were ablaze with righteous fury. "The yellow box is right over there!" she said, pointing savagely at the designated smoking area she was being kept from by the invisible forces of tempered glass.

She hissed as she violently shook each side door of the ground-floor ballroom. They were locked, of course, to keep out unbidden "guests". As she stalked off towards the main doors at the opposite end of the ballroom, I couldn't help but marvel that this was, in all my years, the first time I had witnessed anyone so desperate to gatecrash out of a gala.

Someone at the next table must have also wanted to bolt for the nearest exit when Kimberly brought a plus one to the ball. I do admire her superpower ability to prance from one horse to the next; she always had a weakness for the cute ones and the ones in uniform. And while I did like Brandon, out of loyalty to Kim we did our best to ignore the bitter looks of her minus one as we partied on.

I felt peeved initially that my squad was not originally on the invite list. I mean, Daisy and Belinda are the sincerest girlfriends anyone can have – they always put up photos of our most intimate gatherings and lavish endless praises on my impeccable style. But no matter – I just bought a table and here we all are. Nothing is a problem if money can solve it.

But manners matter. No amount of money can buy you manners.

My husband and I were hardly surprised when a bigwig pulled a no-show with nary a word to the organisers, leaving his VIP table conspicuously bereft of warm bodies. He was, after all, notoriously mercurial. While touching up in the powder room before the second course, I could not help but overhear Elsa's loud scoffing at the uninitiated event planner who had seated the free-spirited philanthropist and his ghost party so prominently by the aisle, next to the VVIP table, when everyone knew that there was a high chance of said bigwig and his accompanying party not turning up. Again. Well, I joked, at least his tax-exempt generosity had already been locked in, and his latest gesture would go on to feed 10 members of the hourly-rated wait staff behind the scenes.

Imagine our surprise when we returned to the ballroom and saw half that table filled with D-list hangers-on, tucking smugly into superior soup. How did they sneak past the receptionists? More than a rat, I smelled smoke... Aha, a glass door was ajar. Virginia must have convinced a hotel employee to unlock it so she could inhale her hourly anti-derangement meds.

When the main door closes, another one opens; a vacuum must be filled. It was clearly the universe maintaining equilibrium.

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A ROOM OF ONE'S OWN

Under SONIA CHENG's leadership, the Rosewood Hotel Group is well on its way to becoming an empire. She tells Denise Li how she's creating a luxury hotel brand for the younger jet set and how the group sets itself apart from its competitors

onia Cheng was quite clear about the vision she had for Rosewood Hotel Group, when the former New World Hospitality Group – a division of Hong Kong-based conglomerate Chow Tai Fook Enterprises – bought the US luxury group in 2011. "I saw myself as a target client," says Rosewood's 38-year-old CEO. "The younger generation of luxury travellers is looking for something different, which is why we've also set out to create hotels that no one else was creating.

"We saw a great opportunity in Rosewood, because of its unique philosophy, which is 'a sense of place'. It's about creating different experiences in different locations, and building a collection, rather than offering a cookiecutter experience."

Cheng and I are chatting in Rosewood Bangkok's all-day dining destination Lakorn, which I thought was an excellent example of what Rosewood is about. Though it's dubbed a "European brasserie", there is also a good selection of upscale yet authentic renditions of Thai street food favourites on the menu, including tod mun pla (Thai fish cakes), sai ua (Thai herb sausage) and hoy jor (blue crab wrapped in dried tofu skin).

Indeed, this thread – a sincere effort to represent that particular locale's food in its dining experiences – runs through all the Rosewood hotels in Asia: "When we curate our F&B experiences, it's important for us to also make

the hotel a destination for the local community, which is an angle that hasn't been pursued by our competitors," says Cheng.

She cites the example of Rosewood Beijing, where a hotpot restaurant has taken the place of the French or Italian fine-dining option that's de rigueur in most other five-star hotels. "The younger travellers appreciate the fact that we've put so much thought and effort into curating the experiences we offer. It's about letting them experience the city within the hotel and, of course, it's also good for us as it allows us to capture an audience within the hotel."

CONQUERING THE LEARNING CURVE

Although she "grew up in hotels", Cheng, who has a degree in applied mathematics from Harvard University, says she still encountered a steep learning curve when she first came aboard New World Hospitality in 2008. "I joined the family business with no working experience in hotels, so initially, it was a pretty intensive crash course about the industry. At the time, our company was also quite small. We only owned a handful of hotels, most of which were in China and Southeast Asia."

It's only been 11 years since she cut her teeth in hospitality, but under her leadership, Rosewood's portfolio has grown to 27 properties, with 19 more in the pipeline internationally. By the end of 2019, it will have nine hotels in five countries across Asia, including in Cheng's home city





"Travellers are looking beyond the superficial and more appreciative of, say, thoughtful service. They really appreciate it when staff remember what their favourite drink is"

of Hong Kong, where the Rosewood overlooks the Victoria Harbour on the Kowloon Waterfront. "The project was 10 years in the making," she says. "It was a huge and complicated, not to mention a significant flagship for us, so it was important that we took the time to get it right in terms of construction, design and curated experiences."

The brand is clearly on a growth trajectory, establishing itself as the hotel chain to watch. Over the next couple of years, the group plans to focus its expansion efforts in Europe, opening in cities like Venice, Vienna, Munich and Edinburgh. South America will soon have its first Rosewood too: It's slated to open in São Paulo some

When choosing which city to establish a Rosewood, how much revenue the hotel will earn per room is but one of the many factors she takes into consideration. "We obviously want to be in all the top-tier cities," she says, "but we also want to be in destinations that initially may not be an obvious choice but have something great to offer travellers." She cites the example of building a Rosewood in the Unesco heritage site of Luang Prabang, in Laos. The Rosewood Luang Prabang is smaller and more exclusive than its urban hotels – there are only 23 rooms, including six luxury tented villas that come with their own private dining areas and wrap-around decks - adding a unique touch to the group's portfolio.

For Cheng, there's no time like the present to shake things up in the luxury hotel industry. "A decade ago, it was about extravagance, the glitz and glam aspects of it. But the market is more sophisticated now," she shares. "Travellers are looking beyond the superficial and more appreciative of, say, thoughtful service. They really appreciate it when staff remember what their favourite drink is."

A WOMAN'S TOUCH

an understatement – it's even more impressive when I find

out how a "typical" day pans out for her. "I'm not sure if there's such a thing," she says, with a chortle. "I'm usually up really early in the morning to send my four kids off to school. After that I'll head to work where I'll attend meetings, which will usually take up the better part of the day. Of course, there's also a lot of travel involved to visit

To keep all the balls up in the air, Cheng says she's since learnt how to delegate. Her teams are now responsible for delivering the experiences, where she was previously making even the smallest of design decisions like which cup to use. She admits, however, that it's hard for her to completely switch off from work: "I'm constantly thinking about how to be inspired, how the company can continue to evolve. But when you're passionate about work, it's no longer just a normal job, so you might not need work-life balance in that traditional sense."

To explain, she talks about how she sometimes combines travelling with family with visiting the Rosewood properties for work, but is adamant that it's no sacrifice at all. "Forgoing a bit of time with the children is inevitable but I also think it's important to be a role model for them, which means letting them see how hard I work. I hope this is inspiring to them too."

I'm curious about the unique challenges she has faced being a young female hotelier in an industry where the top positions are usually still held by older, mature men. "I honestly think there are more advantages to disadvantages to being a woman in this industry," she laughs. "Women have more stamina, an eye for detail and a genuine desire to create a great work culture.'

Cheng is nothing if not clear-headed about her vision for Rosewood. "I want it to be one of the most formidable luxury brands out there," she says, with steely-eyed determination, "and not only in the hotel space. For Rosewood to be at the top of people's minds and for it to be an irreplaceable brand... That's my dream for

To say that she has accomplished much for her 38 years is



PARTNERS IN WORK AND IN LIFE, POWER COUPLE KEVIN AND IROSHINI CHUA TELL ANNABEL TAN HOW THEIR LONG-STANDING TEAMWORK MAKES THE DREAM WORK

FASHION DIRECTION **JOHNNY KHOO** | ART DIRECTION **AUDREY CHAN** | PHOTOGRAPHY **CHER HIM** | FASHION STYLING **JACQUIE ANG** | HAIR **SEAN ANG** USING IGK | MAKE-UP **KEITH BRYANT LEE** USING DIOR | PHOTOGRAPHY ASSISTANCE **YANG SHI HUI** | FASHION ASSISTANCE **SHANNAHLETTE JENN LIM**





fter running their practice in Bukit Merah for over a decade, Drs Kevin and Iroshini Chua are ready for a new and exciting challenge. They recently moved their clinic into a swanky new 1,450sqft space, right in the heart of Orchard Road. Featuring soft pastel hues with modern gold accents, the Dr Kevin Chua Medical & Aesthetics Clinic at International Building is chic and

"We've been offering aesthetics services for 12 years now, and have always wanted a calming space that complements our business and offers our patients privacy," explains Kevin. Finding the right location took a few years but the couple, as well as their clients, are happy with their decision. "We are making ourselves more accessible and also establishing a certain level of prestige that comes with being located on Orchard Road," he adds. "We've really upped our game."

contemporary, with a cosy warmth that immediately puts visitors at ease.

The clinic offers a range of treatments and services like Ultherapy, which is a non-invasive skin tightening treatment, as well as the PicoWay laser treatment, which works to improve scars and wrinkles, tighten pores, as well as remove pigmentation and tattoos. One of the newer offerings is Rejuran, a skin rejuvenating treatment that harnesses the powerful antiageing benefits of wild salmon DNA fragments, which Kevin explains are structurally close to human DNA. "It's great in terms of giving patients a nice glow, closing up pores and providing an overall rejuvenation."

Many patients also see the doctors for Cool Sculpting, a fat-freezing treatment for problem areas, as well as the HydraFacial treatment, which cleanses, extracts impurities, and hydrates the skin for clear and radiant skin. The comprehensive list of treatments is complemented by highly efficacious skincare products, such as the Calecim Multi-Action Cream boasting anti-ageing benefits, as well as the Dr Kevin Chua skincare line, which has found a loyal following among the clinic's clients.

Now that they have acquired their dream space, the couple have been channelling all their time and energy into the new clinic. "I feel the same way as we did starting out 12 years ago, because you really need to invest the time and be present," says Iroshini.

DYNAMIC DUO

Thankfully, years of being partners at work have meant that they are incredibly in sync. The key to their efficient partnership is no secret. "From the beginning, we've been a tag team," adds Iroshini. Before they were a couple, they were great friends in medical school who often helped each other out. When one was on call in the hospital overnight, the other would also go in to assist in clerking patients, despite not being on duty.

"It's a simple thing – if we help each other to clear the work, then there's time to sleep. Otherwise, both of us suffer," she explains. "We realised very early on that teamwork is the best thing because we both get some sleep as opposed to no sleep. So now in our practice, as well as in our daily lives, we really work as a team."

At the clinic, they each hold different roles. Kevin does most of the treatments and procedures, while Iroshini manages the staff and day-to-day operations. "Both of us bring our own A game to the practice," says Kevin. "I'm the hands-on guy with the steady hands who's good with the machines, while Iro is really good at planning and scrutinising, along with all the soft skills that are needed for people management."

To that, Iroshini chimes in, "That's the thing about a partnership because we really feed on each other's strengths. He is all about the precision and accuracy, and I'm about the attention to detail." It also helps that they both love what they do, albeit in different ways. Specialising in aesthetics treatments allows Kevin, a self-proclaimed gadget junkie, to tinker with machines every day. "I'm always trying to squeeze as much as I can out of the machines I use as possible," he says.

"Recently there was a change in protocol for our Ultherapy machine, and it got me excited because I understood the reason for it and I agreed with it. I got excited about changing protocols!" he says with a laugh.

For Iroshini, beauty has always been her interest and her sense of fulfilment comes from helping people achieve their best selves. "I love the reaction that people have when they look better and feel they have improved themselves. That happiness to me is priceless, because it shows in the self-confidence that comes with taking care of and investing in yourself. When patients are happy, it makes me happy."

BETTER TOGETHER

This ethos of making others feel good about themselves even extends into their personal lives — as excellent dinner party hosts. "The hospitality we provide in our clinic is an extension of how we like to spoil and treat our family and friends at home. With love, care and keeping their well-being at heart," explains Iroshini.

"We understand our guests' personalities well, and we curate the menu and dinner experience according to their preferences. Beyond enjoying the food, wine or any other pleasantries, our parties give us the chance to deepen our friendships – that's the most important thing to us."

In their other shared hobbies, the couple's complementary skill sets

also come into play. As avid travel photographers who often contribute travel stories to *Prestige*, the couple say that their best photos are often a combined effort of Iroshini's artistic eye and Kevin's technical execution.

Similarly when it comes to parenting, the parents of two take turns playing good cop and bad cop. "But we are consistent," says Iroshini. "We have different personalities but we are on the same page when it comes to many

aspects in our life, from our priorities to how we raise our kids and how we run our practice. We are pretty congruent in all of that. And if there is any disagreement, we would fall back on our faith, I think," she says, before turning to her husband for confirmation.

"Well, if there's any disagreement, I always defer to Iro," says Kevin, to which the couple erupt in laughter. "I realised very early on that Iro can see much further than most people. After 17 years of marriage and 25 years of being together, there have been plenty of instances where I could have avoided a lot of headache if I had just listened to her at the very beginning. She sees everything; she's almost like an oracle."

Iroshini is quick to express a mutual admiration for her husband. "Kevin inspires me to work hard because he works hard. He inspires me to give the best of myself to my patients, to my friends. He inspires me to seek God first."

Having run the practice together for so many years, it is difficult for the couple to separate work from their personal lives. But at the same time, working as a tag team has allowed them the flexibility to spend adequate time with their children, who are now aged 16 and 13. It was important to the Chuas, especially when the children were younger, for at least one parent to have a constant presence at home.

In fact, Kevin credits their children's well-adjusted personalities to the way Iroshini has nurtured them during those crucial adolescent years. "I appreciate how she has brought up our kids and her efforts in guiding them. Given the hours that I work, it's not always possible for me to do it."

The doctors have always had an arrangement where Iroshini works the first half of the day, after which she goes home to spend time with the kids when they get back from school. "Kevin would cover me, so to speak, which allows me that time spent with the kids. And that is really the most precious time we have to make an impact in their lives," says Iroshini. "It wouldn't have been possible if I didn't work with Kev."

"I love the reaction that people have when they look better and feel they have improved themselves. That happiness to me is priceless, because it shows in the self-confidence that comes with taking care of yourself and investing in yourself. When patients are happy, it makes me happy"

- Iroshini Chua

In addition to their complementary skill sets, shared values and similar priorities, the couple say the final crucial factor to a smooth and successful working and personal relationship is good communication. "Understanding each other's love language is important for communication," says Kevin. "Iro's is quality time."

"And Kevin's is words of encouragement," chimes in Iroshini. "Whatever your partner's love language is, it is good to communicate in that so he or she feels like they are being cared for. We don't isolate each other, we talk about anything we have on our minds and we just face everything together."







DISTINGUISHED
WITH CRISP WHITES,
SAFARI-BOUND
OUTFITS IN EARTHY
TONES SET OFF A
BEAUTIFUL BOYISH INSOUCIANCE IN THE TROPICAL GRASSLANDS

FASHION DIRECTION **JOHNNY KHOO** | PHOTOGRAPHY **JOEL LOW** | FASHION STYLING **JACQUIE ANG** | HAIR **CHRISTVIAN GOH/ARX**, USING KEVIN MURPHY | MAKE-UP CLARENCE LEE, USING ESTÉE LAUDER | PHOTOGRAPHY ASSISTANCE ALFIE PAN | FASHİON ASSISTANCE CHUA JUN XIAN | MODEL JULIA Z/LOOQUE

SANNA SUNRISE













FROM ARMS TO ARMS ARMS ARMS TO
#1 A ROOM WITH A VIEW

Imagine Fauré Le Page as a mansion with its nine boutiques as individual rooms all over the world. "We have a different concept and a specific ambience for each store. We have a hunting lodge in Taipei, a dining room in Seoul and now, a garden pavilion in Singapore's Ngee Ann City. Who knows where we will have the bedroom, the kitchen, the library...?" teases De Buffévent.

#2 THE GARDEN CITY

De Buffévent pays homage to Singapore's beloved moniker, The Garden City, through the store design. "It's a dialogue between Paris and Singapore, between two cultures, mixed with a bit of history. Showcased here is a collection of ceramic parrots from the 18th to 19th century," points out De Buffévent, who personally bought the ornaments from auction houses, specially for the Singapore boutique.

"The parrots come from France, Germany and Portugal. They are all different but the proportions are similar. It's like a big family. It gives a lot of life to the store."

The ceiling was painted by a pair of local artists. Greeting visitors are vibrant orchids, which are closely tied to Singapore's identity and so loved by De Buffévent that he dedicated a medal to it. "I think the combination of Paris-meets-Singapore makes Fauré Le Page so inviting. It's how I want to welcome all our guests. I want them to feel at home."

#3 DO THE HONOURS

Just as how warriors in the past were awarded medals for their achievements on the battlefield, Fauré Le Page empowers vou to reward yourself. Form your initials or meaningful words with your chosen medals displaying individual alphabet letters, or pick your favourite Order of Seduction from nine symbols, such as the Order of the Coup de Tête dedicated to tenacious lovers.

De Buffévent had spent a lot of time designing each medal. All of them make him smile. He has also co-written a little blue book profiling the medals. "I love it when someone steps into the store and I ask, 'Tell me your love story and I will tell you which medal vou deserve.""

The bandolier, which is a military shoulder belt with loops to keep ammunition within reach, is now used as a design feature for pinning the medals.

#4 COUNT YOURSELF LUCKY

Among all the numerals, only "7" has an arrow on the medal. It is De Buffévent's lucky number, as well as Fauré Le Page's. Its significance is rooted in the heritage maison's founding year of 1717, which is a magical number in a sense -1+7+1+7 sums up to 16, while 1+6 adds up to 7.

De Buffévent slips the numbers "7" and "17" often onto the bags, but it's very discreet. For instance, he points out the 17 adjustment holes on the strap of the Daily Battle tote. On every seventh stripe on the Écailles ("scales" in French) motif, and every seventh scale, you will encounter scales with either the words "Fauré Le Page" or "Paris 1717".

#5 TAKE COVER

A Fauré Le Page symbol, according to De Buffévent, the Écailles is also a historic symbol of strength as well as seduction. Dating back to ancient times, the first armours made for Roman soldiers and samurai warriors were inspired by animals, and composed of pieces of leather or metal linked to create a second skin. Also, many of ancient mythology's fantastic beasts and bewitching creatures are covered in scales. "Think of dragons and mermaids. It is like an armour for them. When you're well-protected, your self-confidence rises and life gets much easier."

#6 GET IN LINE

Fauré Le Page adopts the demanding technique of Lyon frame printing, a kind of screen-printing that requires meticulous precision and steady hands. Describes De Buffévent: "It is a labour-intensive process. If the main colour is yellow, we include three tones. First, the black is applied with one stencil, followed by light brown, medium brown, dark brown, and then the yellow. The colours and the formulation belong to Fauré Le Page.



Seduction in Singapore's boutique; the Pouchette Parade and the Boum Box, both Singapore-exclusives

AUGUSTIN DE BUFFÉVENT ON THE "FLP" HARDWARE

"It is difficult to match the different tones of the same colour. If the screen is not perfectly aligned, even just a quarter of a millimetre off on one side can translate to disaster on the other side. In addition, it has to be executed with the same speed and the hues must have the same density. I'm going to tell you a secret: We love it when it rains. It's much easier to print in high humidity."

Using this intricate method enables Fauré Le Page to apply the Écailles motif, reserved for the finest of fabrics, on sturdy canvas. A brilliant shade of yellow named Ocre de Mars, a tribute to the god of war, accentuates the precious pattern.

#7 TOP OF THE POPS

Last but not least, there is a Room of Seduction in every Fauré Le Page store, where precious, limited-edition items whose production don't usually go beyond 10 pieces, are on display. "I like to have a small selection. It can vary all the time. There is no season. Sometimes, I meet creatives I want to collaborate with, and produce such pieces."

Another example of De Buffévent's art of surprise are the Singapore exclusives that take centre stage in the Ngee Ann City boutique. The Pouchette Parade clutch stars "FLP", an old monogram he's turned into a hardware. "I think this piece has a lot of personality. You know the love story of Mr Fauré and Miss Le Page?" he reminds. "The letters are intertwined ike the couple."

The Boum Box clutch combines two exotic skins. "You see the heart grenade? It is first a weapon. Love is a battle. You should take nothing for granted in love. You have to fight on a daily basis. It also means that love can be dangerous at times, when your emotions grow intense in the heat of your passion."





rom Angelina Jolie's glorious silver-fringed gown on her latest red carpet to Meghan Markle's black beaded bodice dress in the official photo of her engagement to Prince Harry, Ralph & Russo gowns are now world famous. Feted and worn by Middle Eastern royalty, Aishwarya Rai, Beyoncé, the Hadid sisters and Angelababy, the style is about uncompromising femininity, with volumes exaggerated and pinched to fabulous effect. Then there are the statement colours, the sensual fits, the movement of light chiffon layers, slinky silks and ostrich feathers that dance deliciously around the body.

The rise of Ralph & Russo, now ubiquitous at events like Cannes or the Oscars, has been fast and furious. In 2014, the London-based brand became the first British fashion house in more than a century to be accredited by the Chambre Syndicale de la Haute Couture in Paris.

"Before establishing Ralph & Russo, Michael [Russo] and I had always shared the vision of building a global luxury lifestyle brand. We never wanted to be known and loved for one individual product category forever," says the brand's fine-featured creative director Tamara Ralph. "There was always that wish to diversify and expand into a larger house with a more holistic offering."

In terms of couture, theirs is a relatively young luxury brand that's had an enormous impact on the contemporary market – and this year they followed up with a big launch of prêt-à-porter for spring/summer 2020, as well as shoes, accessories and bags.

Founded by the Australian duo in 2006, headquartered in London and making a splash at Parisian fashion weeks while catering to elites from the Middle East, the Americas, Europe and Asia, Ralph & Russo seems to be a modern-day fashion fairy tale. The co-founders met when they quite literally bumped into each other on a busy London street, an encounter that turned into a partnership both romantic and commercial. They've steered the latter into an enviable business that makes waves in the international luxury space, has been profitable from the outset and made it on to the Forbes 40 under 40 list in 2013. Being partners in life and business for some is no easy feat, so how does their dynamic work?

"It has its challenges," Ralph says with a smile, "but Michael and I are also incredibly lucky in that we balance each other both personally and professionally, with Michael as CEO spearheading the business side of the company and me as the creative."

Above: Michael Russo and Tamara Ralph Opposite page: Looks from the Ralph & Russo Spring/Summer 2020 Prêt-à-porter Collection There are, of course, times where there's overlap, but taking ownership of different sides of the company has been key to harmony, they explain. Designer Ralph was born into a family with four generations of couturiers, so it was arguably her destiny to succeed in the competitive field. She sketched her first outfit when just eight years old and stitched her first full gown at the age of 12. Russo was working as an investment banker in London when they met.

"Launching as a couture brand was an incredibly natural first step for us into the luxury landscape," Ralph says, "not only as the perfect technical and creative basis from which to build other product categories, like ready-to-wear, but also because I'd been living and breathing couture my entire life."

This year marks a milestone for Ralph & Russo – the shift from haute-couture house to luxury brand. Sculptural metallic hardware and straps on heels and handbags certainly make a luxurious, feminine statement for the items in their new categories. And being newish perhaps also makes the house more agile and quick to respond to luxury's rapidly changing market.

"In such a tech-forward and fast-paced age, I wouldn't say that I'm surprised by the shifts that we've experienced as a brand," says Russo. "The luxury market has been subject to rapid change in the past decade that we've been trading, and we've naturally had to adapt to remain relevant to our consumer."

In recent years, for example, Ralph says that many younger clients like to order couture separates with more of a streetwear feel, because they wanted that level of quality in their everyday, more casual clothing. It's a relatively new desire and attitude that they've been able to adapt to.

Ralph's aesthetics have also become more sophisticated and confident over the years, an evolution she's achieved with an admirable lightness. For autumn/winter 2019 couture, it was pearls, pristine white, feathers and gorgeous drapes. The big unveiling of their first prêt-à-porter line for spring/summer 2020 at Paris Fashion Week introduced a newer, bolder, contemporary look.

"Both collections were very different in terms of conception and inspiration," explains Ralph. "For couture, I was inspired by the vibrancy and joie de vivre of the Art Deco era. Showing in the gardens of the British Embassy, the collection was designed to encapsulate a scene from a 1930s garden party in all its glamour and ethereal beauty.

"Our spring/summer prêt-à-porter, on the other hand, was designed with similar joie de vivre in mind, but this time in a more contemporary and youthful way, highlighting elements of the Miami Beach boardwalk and the femininity of a '70s boudoir."

As much as the Ralph & Russo story seems to be all about a meteoric rise and expansion, the pair tell us about the challenges along the way. Finding and curating the right talent, "to really support in driving the brand forward" was one main pain point – but after years of global scouting "our team now comprises more than 45 nationalities, and all are experts in their field", says Russo.

The search also led to the pair launching an apprenticeship programme in which their younger creative talents are nurtured by senior members who pass down established techniques and skills to a new generation. It also ensures a continuity and community at their house, which relies on superior craftsmanship, word-of-mouth kudos in elite circles and close relationships with customers.

In serving this wealthy clientele that hails from all corners of the world, Ralph has been in the forefront of observing differences and similarities in how women from all cultures treat fashion and couture.





"Launching as a couture brand was an incredibly natural first step for us" - Tamara Ralph

"To be honest, the one element that defines all women, despite their cultural background and wherever they live, is that they love to look and feel beautiful. Women want to dress well and for their clothing to be an extension of their identity," she says.

The brand is expanding globally, with new stores opening in New York and Miami next year in addition to the brand's existing presence in London, Paris, Monte Carlo, Doha and Dubai. The plan is to have stores in all major fashion capitals in the not too distant future.

"Our end goal is for Ralph & Russo to be taken forward

from a brand that encompasses couture, ready-to-wear, accessories and leather goods, to one that's also loved for interiors, fragrance, beauty and eyewear – an overall luxury lifestyle," Russo explains.

That certainly means the pair have some busy years ahead, though this will be an endeavour of life and love as well as business. Being partners like this has its benefits too, says Russo with a laugh, "because not only do you have an innate respect for each other, but you also have a greater depth of understanding and can truly think as one".

FEATURING EMBLEMATIC MOTIFS DEAR TO THEIR
RESPECTIVE MAISONS, THESE LADIES' TIMEKEEPERS FUSE FINE
WATCHMAKING WITH STYLE AND VERSATILITY

TEXT YANNI TAN | ART DIRECTION AARON LEE

8

The legendary Mr Harry Winston's favourite diamond cut, the emerald, is translated elegantly onto this Harry Winston Emerald Automatic 33mm in white gold with a blue-gradient sunray satin-finished dial framed by diamonds. It features the HW2003 mechanical movement as well as an alligator strap.

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This Gucci G-Timeless flaunts a 38mm yellow gold case encircling a malachite stone dial decorated with bee motifs, which is a recurring symbol of the maison.

A snazzy printed leather strap, which is interchangeable, adds to its style quotient. Beating at its heart is a Swiss-made automatic movement.

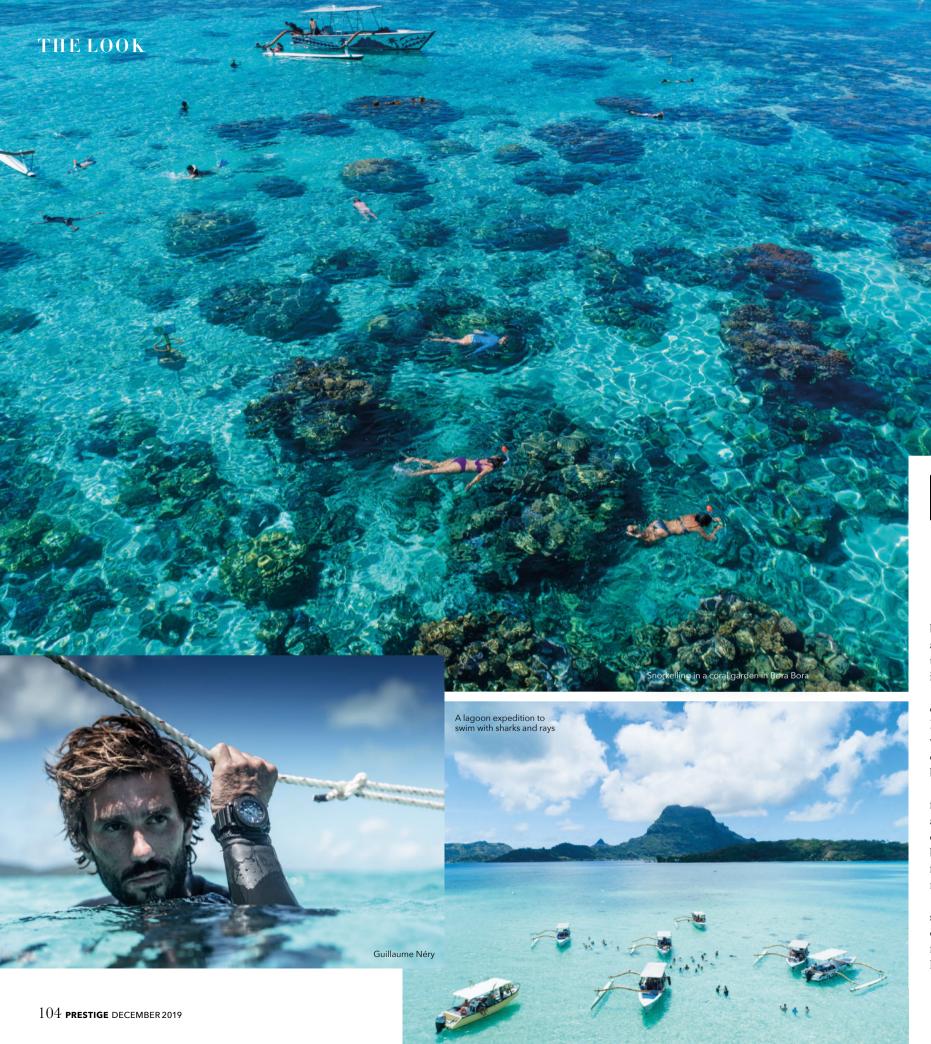


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TAKE MY BREATH AWAY

Panerai takes the concept of luxury experiences to new heights — or rather, depths — with a once-in-a-lifetime trip to Bora Bora for owners of a very special limited-edition watch to experience the ocean alongside freedwing champion Guillaume Néry. Grace Tay dives in



he sun pierces through the deep cerulean waters of this popular shark safari spot somewhere in the South Pacific Ocean, beyond the reef. All around are dozens of grim-faced, and large schools of variants of trigger butterfly

beady-eyed reef sharks and large schools of variants of trigger, butterfly and angel fish, casually going about their day. They're well used to curious two-legged land creatures dropping in on a daily basis, faces distorted into snorkel gear and ogling their world.

But today's group isn't just any bunch of pale-skinned tourists checking off a bucket-list must-do ("swim with sharks") in exotic Bora Bora. These 30 or so bodies hovering near the surface, clad in shortic wetsuits emblazoned with "Panerai", are a multinational group of watch collectors, Panerai staff, journalists and influencers that have been brought together by the brand historically linked with the sea.

And the intrepid leader of this group is somewhere near the ocean floor, tens of metres below. World freediving champion and Panerai ambassador Guillaume Néry swims alongside lemon sharks which lurk closer to the seabed; wafts nonchalantly on his back, blowing up air bubble rings; and speeds through the depths with dolphin kicks, his long fins flexing behind him like a guppy's tail. And underwater he stays for minutes at a time, without any scuba gear, on a single breath.

The sharks and other sea creatures might recognise this merman, since he and his young family have made the neighbouring island of Mo'orea home last August, but it's the first time in French Polynesia for all the rest of us — and our first encounter with Néry in his element.

THE X FACTOR

"Bora Bora is mythically beautiful – just bringing us here alone was more than half the job done," says Peter Ch'ng, a Hong Kong-based watch collector. He is one of 15 owners of the Submersible Chrono Guillaume Néry Limited Edition watch, which was his ticket to Bora Bora.

Just a fortnight ago, he and two other watch owners here in Bora Bora were also part of a small contingent of civilians undergoing a two-day boot camp in Italy with the elite Comsubin commando frogmen of the Italian Navy. That was Panerai's first experience trip for the owners of the 33-piece limited-edition Submersible Marina Militare Carbotech. He is also hoping to join explorer and conservationist Mike Horn, a long-time Panerai ambassador, on a gruelling training expedition among Arctic ice floes come March 2020, as he's wait-listed to purchase one of the 19 Submersible Mike Horn Edition pieces.

The concept of these "Xperience Edition" watches stems from Panerai's Laboratorio di Idee (Laboratory of Ideas), with adventure and the marine world and its conservation tying back to the brand's long heritage in military-grade timepieces.

Panerai CEO Jean-Marc Pontroué tells me that only the very top customers in the brand's top markets were offered the three experience watches last year. "We sold everything in two days – our collectors knew that it's extremely limited, and the experience concept is very valid with our positioning. Panerai stands for innovation and the experiences are part of this journey in the world of innovation."

Having not bought the \$57,200 watch to earn myself a spot, I feel extra privileged to be here to "live the experience" – a phrase Néry uses

THE LOOK



often during our trip. And, more than just a celebrity sportsman leading us on two days of waterborne adventures, Néry brings an almost spiritual element to the experience.

IN PURSUIT OF ADVENTURE

Our first day starts with 7am yoga on the beach. Tall and lanky, with tousled curls, Néry, while not a yoga instructor, is a riveting teacher. He uses stretching and sun salutations to open up the chest every morning, and shares that the breathing techniques help him stay calm before a big dive. After leading us through an hour of stretches and breath control exercises, he succeeds in helping us learn to hold our breath for two whole minutes.

Nonetheless, he reminds us: "The idea of this experience is not just to go in the water and try to hold your breath, but to interact with wildlife: whales, sharks, rays. Those animals are in their home and they can feel everything - they can feel your emotions, the way you are in the water. So the more relaxed you are, the stronger the connection can be."

We're certainly hoping to connect with

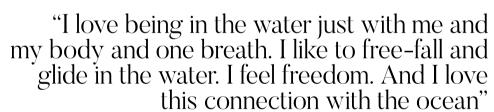
uninterested female keeps on going.

whales today. A few of us are on a 21ft semi-rigid catamaran with Néry and Pontroué – a smaller fast craft that leads a three-boat expedition to spot us some humpbacks, which migrate up from Antarctica to breed from mid-August to end October. We are on the trail of a mother and calf for a seeming eternity, hoping that they would stop to rest or play so we can swim right up to the friendly, curious creatures. But apparently there's a male humpback in pursuit that wants to mate, and the

Néry eventually calls off our quest. "That's nature," he says. "You can never guarantee what you'll see." Our next stop outside the reef swimming with sharks - where we watch Néry dive into action - is ample consolation.

Afterwards, we gather for lunch on a tiny islet, where a Polynesian spread and picnic tables have been set up in the shallow waters, and we're eating off boat-shaped plates fashioned from banana leaves. I meet Rodrigo Becerra Mizuno, who is one of a few owners of the Guillaume





of the deep black and green/blue on the dial, and there are only 15 of this chronograph, so it's really unique."

The jovial Singapore-based Mexican is taking cover under a beach umbrella and has a thick layer of sunblock slathered on his face. "I'm not the most outdoorsy person," he admits, "but I thought that getting this watch was a good way to do something – coming to Polynesia, swimming with the whales – that I would probably never do on my own."

While he jokes during the rest of the trip about all the scary things that could bite, eat or kill us when surrounded by raw nature, Mizuno believes in the ruggedness of his Guillaume Néry watch, which he wears throughout. "It's a tough watch and meant to be in the water, man..." he tells Ch'ng, who despite his taste for adventure (remember, he bought two, and is aiming for three, experience watches) is decidedly more cautious about his Panerai pieces. "I like to keep my special watches in pristine condition for as long as possible," he says.



The second morning's agenda entails a visit to a coral garden and swimming with sharks and stingrays. We make an unexpected stop along the way. There's a manta ray in the water, our boatman alerts us excitedly. Nérv is in the water in a flash and descends to the bottom, swimming alongside the majestic, gentle creature which measures about 3m wide. The rest of us trail them from the surface. The manta ray flits away, then circles round to indulge us with an encore before drifting off into the murky depths.

Nérv later tells us: "To see a manta ray in a lagoon is very, very special. I don't know if you have ever seen an animal so big, moving with that grace - like it's flying in the water. Even though I've travelled the world and seen many animals, it was still very special, and I am very happy that you had the opportunity today to meet that special animal."

We get to put our newly acquired breath control techniques into practice with our master freediver, gripping his ankles as he manoeuvres an underwater scooter towards the ocean bed. I manage a descent of probably no more than 3-4m and 10 seconds, and already struggle with holding my breath under the increasing water pressure – it certainly gives me a greater appreciation for the endurance needed in Néry's sport.

Later, we're standing waist-deep in water in a lagoon teeming with hundreds of blacktip reef sharks, and experience dozens of stingrays swooshing in to eat raw fish from our boatman's hand and suck up any parts that fall to the seabed. These puppies of the sea happily slither around our legs and bodies hoping to be fed, letting us pet and stroke

their smooth bodies. Tour boat operators regularly remove the barbs from the stingrays' tails (it supposedly doesn't hurt them), so we needn't

Our day ends with a boat ride to Motu Tapu island to catch the glorious, painterly sunset, followed by a BBO dinner and energetic Polynesian dance performances. It's our final night in Bora Bora, and the friendships formed during the two-day experience (plus three to four days of flights and stopovers) are evident from the laughter and conversations that stretch into the night.

For fans of what I consider a testosterone-heavy watch brand, I found this group of owners surprisingly chill, with no overt shows of oneupmanship and bravado. Néry was not here to prove he was a big fish either, or compel us to achieve a measure of his freediving ability, but had been a quiet, thoughtful star of the show who lit up when sharing about his favourite dive spots and the importance of not just ocean but overall environmental conservation. He and Panerai aimed to let us "live an experience", and they achieved it with resounding success. Pontroué promises another eight experiences in 2020 – four specific to local customers in China, India, Italy and the UK; and four international.

The experience also reinforced Néry's personal alignment with the brand: "I'm someone with passion for my sport, and the customers have a passion for the brand. You see it in their eyes, from the way they talk about watches and the industry. Panerai really has something that creates passion. It's a very special brand and people are really fans of the brand. I understand this better now."

— Guillaume Néry Néry watch to actually have it on his wrist today. "I love the combination

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UNLOCKING THE CODE

The Code Coco captures the imagination with innovative design, writes Rubin Khoo





The 2019 Code Coco collection features a piece in the new beige gold, several models in steel or steel with ceramic, a limited-edition white gold jewellery piece and a unique piece featuring baguette-cut rubies and diamonds

Playing on the concept that time needs to be protected, the Code Coco innovatively draws from the "codes" of the house – a clasp replicated from that of the 2.55 and a bracelet that bears tiny squares reminiscent of the quilted design of the bag. The 2019 Code Coco collection is amplified with several new models: one in the exclusive Chanel alloy of beige gold, versions in full steel or steel with ceramic, and

Coco, a watch that initially masquerades as jewellery, which

upon inspection reveals itself to be a watch.

two high jewellery pieces.

The 18k beige gold watch is striking with 52 brilliant-cut diamonds on the bezel, while its two dials bear 152 brilliant-cut diamonds with a princess-cut diamond. For those opting for something more subtle, there are models in full steel or steel with highly resistant black ceramic case and bracelet.

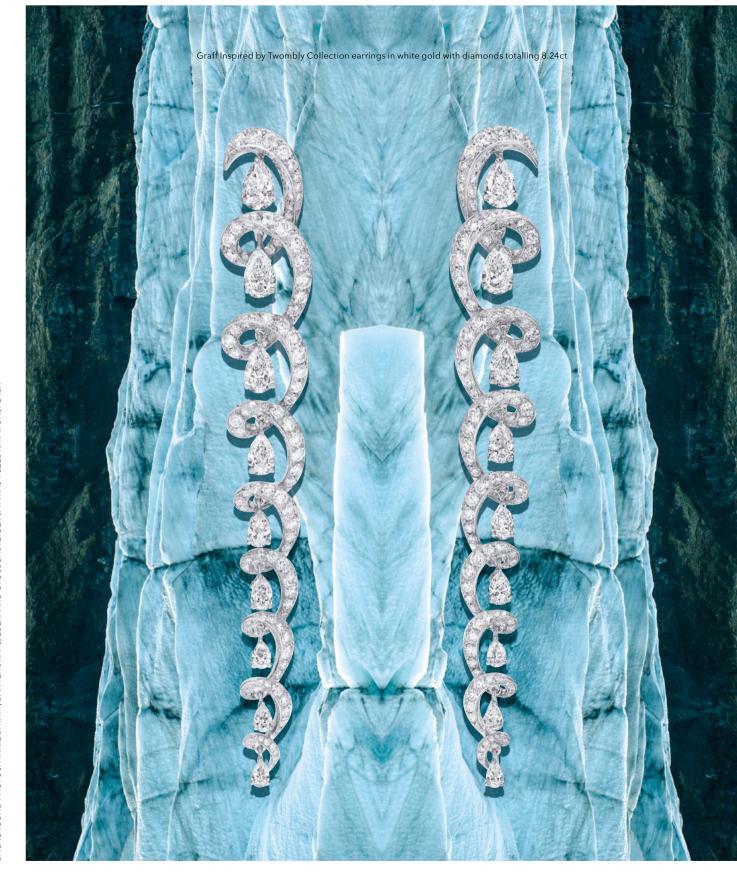
Channelling instant glamour is the limited-edition high jewellery Code Coco, which is numbered and comes in 20 pieces only. This bedazzling 18k white gold watch showcases 10 brilliant-cut diamonds on the case and 124 brilliant-cut diamonds on the bezel. On the two dials are 136 brilliant-cut diamonds and one princess-cut diamond.

The showstopper, however, is the unique piece. Adorning the 18k white gold piece are nearly 63 carats of baguette-cut rubies in a mystery setting, along with baguette- and brilliant-cut diamonds. The turning lock system itself is set with 15 baguette-cut diamonds, while the two dials are set with 60 brilliant-cut diamonds and one princess-cut.

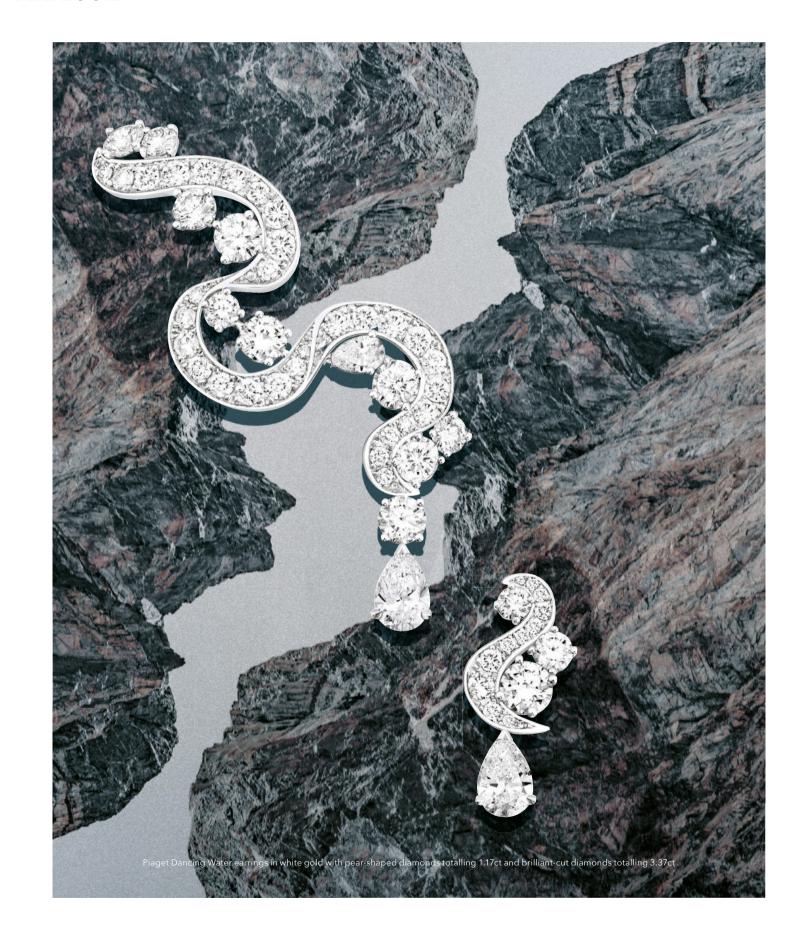
The Code Coco comes equipped with a high-precision quartz movement and is water resistant to 30m.

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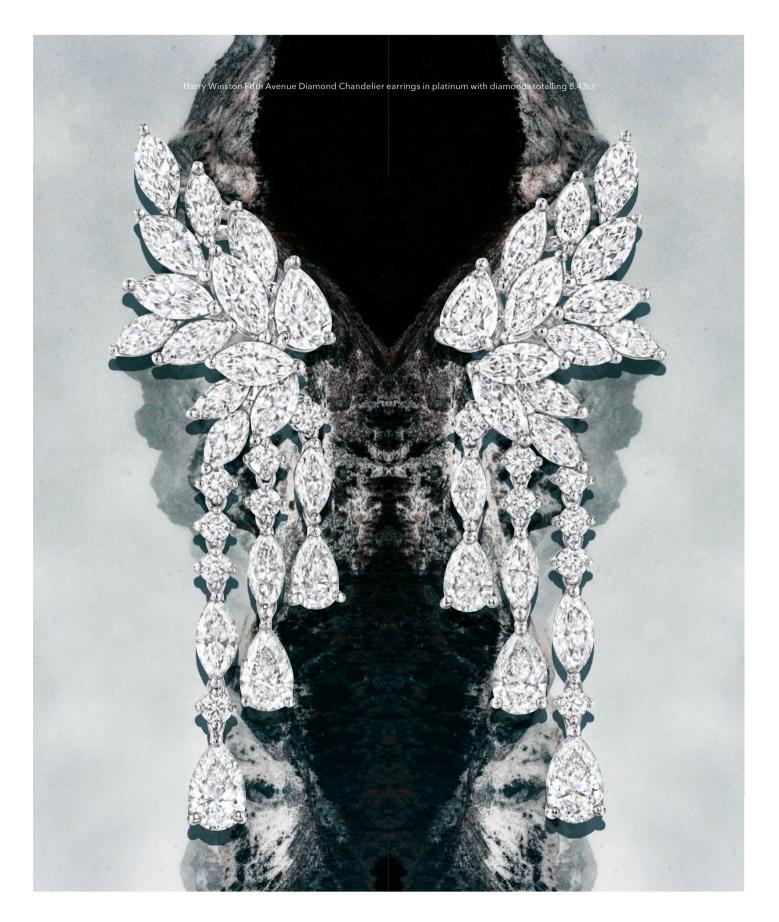
THE LOOK



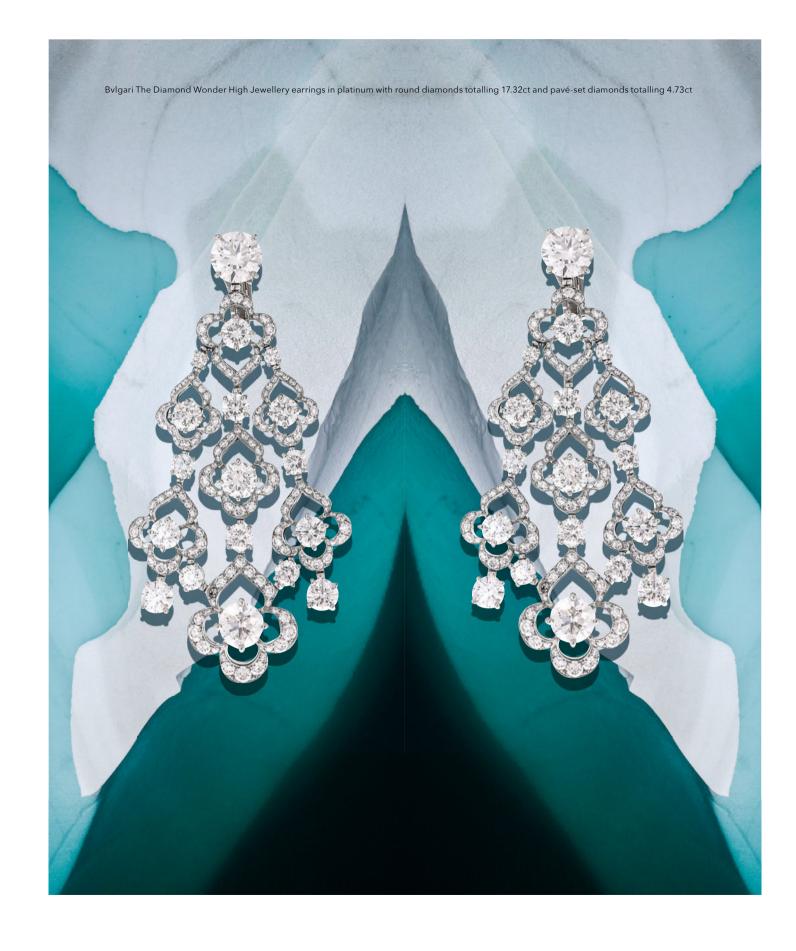


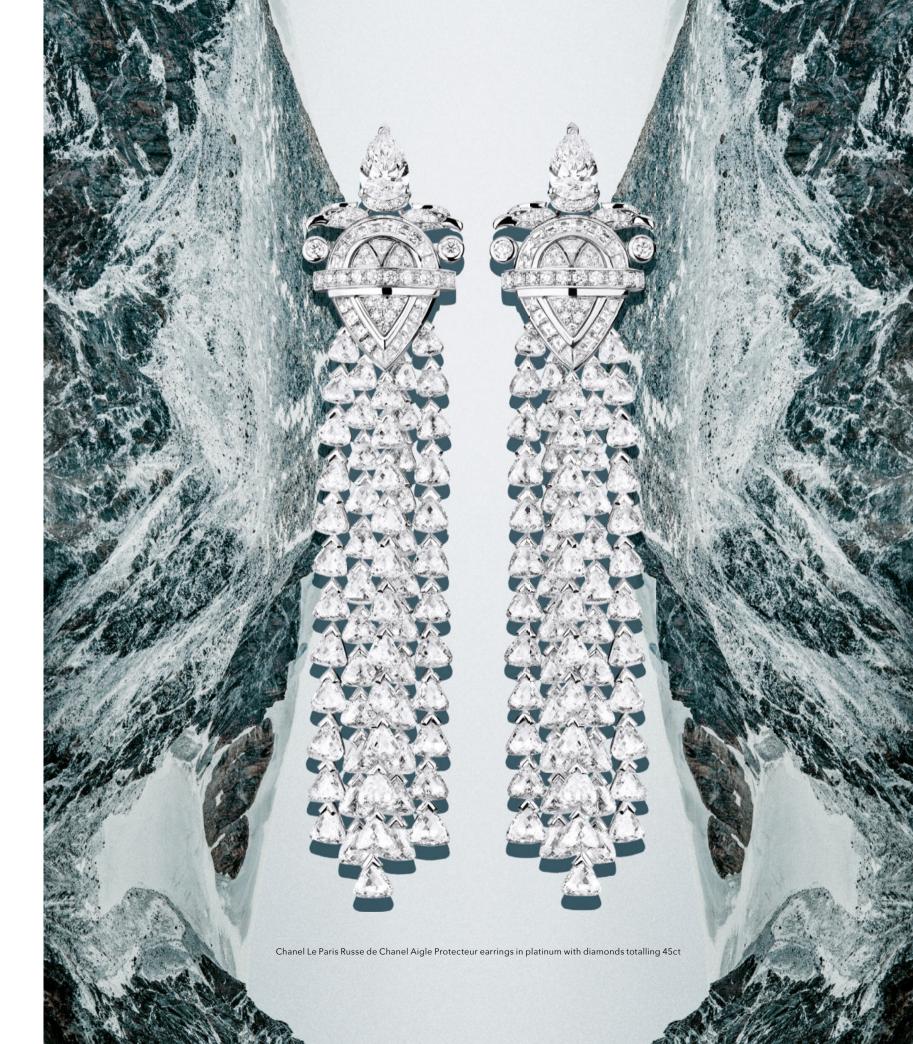
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THE LOOK









ODE TO 1

Bringing to m its plaza is t Diamond Drageometry of I sapphires according breathtaking sapphire beact

centrepiece. T extended to th The section

between 59th and 96th Streets, is known as the "Millionaire's Row" for the stately mansions built in the late 19th century. Channelling their grandeur and elegance is the Ruby and Diamond necklace and earrings, which are inspired by the homes' tapered triangular tops and grand windows overlooking the greenery.

Nestled within Central Park itself is The Metropolitan Museum of Art, which is a structural masterpiece unto itself. Recalling the institution's grand entryway is the scintillating Crossover Diamond suite, which features a choker and a ring. Here, a selection of the finest round brilliant, marquise and carefully calibrated baguette diamonds come together to form a symmetrical medley of geometric shapes and angular forms that bring to mind the museum's facade.

the Pearl and Diamond Draperie suite. The strands of glimmering pearls accented with diamond motifs and tassels beautifully echo the streaming vehicles and pedestrians.

Downtown in Greenwich Village stands the 23m-high Washington Square Arch, which is an iconic structure of popular gathering place Washington Square Park, marking the southernmost end of Fifth Avenue. To honour this historic landmark, which celebrates the centennial of George Washington's inauguration as president of the United States in 1789, Harry Winston styles its Sapphire and Diamond suite as the monument's counterpart. Comprising a choker, a pair of earrings, a bracelet and a ring, this suite features symmetrical curves with intricate diamond detailing that are as alluring as the arch and its iconography.

Clockwise from left: A bird's-eye view of Central Park and Midtown Manhattan; the necklace and bracelet from the Pearl and Diamond Draperie suite, which celebrates the city's dynamism and Art Deco features; and Harry Winston's Fifth Avenue salon today



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eld every other year since it was founded in 2005, the Only Watch auction brings together key members of the global horological community behind a single noble aim: to raise money – and lots of it – to combat Duchenne muscular dystrophy, a devastating neuromuscular disease that mostly affects boys. The sale owes its genesis to the vision and energy of its founder and organiser, Luc Pettavino, whose own son Paul had been diagnosed with muscular dystrophy. Tragically, Paul died some three years ago at the age of 21, but his father's commitment – Pettavino now serves as the President of the Monégasque Association Against Myopathies remains as firm and as focused as it ever was.

A marketing wizard, Pettavino was already well known as the organiser of the Monaco Yacht Show when he began raising funds for research against the disease. And when he hit on the notion of a charity auction, that unsurprisingly soon led to the world of luxury watches. Collectors were happy to spend millions on unique pieces and, it serendipitously turned out, watchmakers were equally willing to create them – for free!

Held in Geneva on Nov 9, Only Watch 2019 was the eighth

auction in a series that, by 2017, had already raised €35 million - a remarkable 99 percent of which had directly gone to research against the disease. Under the patronage of Prince Albert II of Monaco and with the support once again of auction house Christie's, the 2019 auction featured 50 one-of-a-kind watches created by 50 of some of the most famous names in the business, from Audemars Piguet to Zenith, and with a panoply of brands both great and small in between.

With estimates ranging from the relatively modest – a unique Tudor Black Bay Ceramic One, for example, was valued at US\$4,500-\$5,500 - to the US\$2.5 million that the Patek Philippe Grandmaster Chime was expected to realise, there was something for everyone – or at least that was the theory. The reality was very different, however, with the recordbreaking sum in excess of US\$31 million raised by the Patek, making it the most expensive watch ever sold at auction. Even the Tudor made a staggering US\$352,756.

In the following pages, we highlight a small selection of timepieces that exemplifies how the watch industry stepped up to the plate for this year's sale. They will certainly whet your appetite for the ninth Only Watch event, which will roll around again in 2021.

PATEK PHILIPPE GRANDMASTER **CHIME**

The undisputed star of Only Watch 2019, Patek's recordbreaking Grandmaster Chime Ref 6300A is an absolute blockbuster of a watch - and not just for its 47.7mm diameter. The first grande sonnerie in the company's collection not made in a precious metal, it's powered by a manually wound Calibre 300 movement that comes in a reversible stainlesssteel case. As well as its two dials, salmon on the front and ebony behind, it features hours, minutes, 24-hour hand, perpetual calendar (day, month, year, leap-year and moonphase), day/night indicator, grande and petite sonnerie, minute repeater, date repeater and alarm.

ESTIMATE: US\$2.5 million-



JACOB & CO EPIC X CHRONO MESSI ONLY WATCH SPECIAL EDITION

Jacob & Co's ultra-contemporary tribute to superstar footballer Lionel Messi has been reimagined for this singular Only Watch edition with 36 baguette-cut blue sapphires replacing diamonds on the white-gold bezel. In a 47mm titanium case, it features a semi-skeleton, self-winding Jacob & Co calibre, white ceramic pushers, and crowns in titanium and red rubber. The transparent blue-mineralcrystal dial displays Messi's number 10 in red at two o'clock - and the sale price also includes a meet-and greet with the great Argentinian striker.

ESTIMATE: US\$70,000-\$100,000 ACTUAL: US\$75,591

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PIAGET ALTIPLANO ULTIMATE AUTOMATIC

Ultra-thin, at a scarcely believable 4.3mm, Piaget's Altiplano Ultimate Automatic features a wafer-like, self-winding 910 calibre that's integrated into the 41mm rose-gold case, which serves as the mainplate. For aesthetic purposes, however, the movement has been reversed so that its bridges are visible on the dial side – which, of course, has been achieved by offsetting the blue dial at 11 o'clock. Further contributing to the watch's thinness is the fact that the hands are fitted below the bridges. Sophisticated, elegant and yet technically intriguing, it also has a special engraving on the rose-gold caseback.

ESTIMATE: US\$30,000-\$50,000 ACTUAL: US\$48,378

BREGUET TYPE 20 ONLY WATCH 2019 An update of the Type 20 pilots flyback chronograph that the company manufactured for the French Ministry of Defence in the 1950s, this one-off piece for the Only Watch auction recalls the Breguet family's achievements in both horology and aviation. Powered by a numbered and signed hand-wound Valjoux 235 calibre that's directly derived from the movement used in the original Type 20, this unique watch comes in a 38.5 mm round steel case with an engraved back cover and features a bronze dial with 30-minute counter at 3 o'clock, small seconds at 9 and a central chronograph hand. It has a 45-hour power reserve and is water resistant to 3 bar. ESTIMATE: US\$35,000-\$50,000 ACTUAL: US\$211,654



HUBLOT CLASSIC FUSION TOURBILLON SAPPHIRE ORLINSKI FOR ONLY WATCH

The white-gold bezel of Hublot's special-edition Classic Fusion for the Only Watch auction is set with 54 baguette-cut topazes. Otherwise, its entirely transparent case of polished sapphire crystal presents an uninterrupted view of the watch's openworked architecture, which includes the hand-wound, skeleton Calibre HUB 6021 with tourbillon at 6 o'clock and power-reserve indicator at 9. The watch comes in a transparent box, which is supported by artist Richard Orlinski's Wild Kong sculpture.

ESTIMATE: US\$160,000-\$180,000 ACTUAL: US\$241,890

F.P. JOURNE ASTRONOMIC BLUE

Constructed from more than 750 components (which don't include the tantalum case), F.P. Journe's Astronomic Blue features 18 complications and functions, which can all be adjusted from a single crown. Its hand-wound, double-barrel 1619 calibre in rose gold can be seen through the caseback crystal, as can the date, annual-calendar and equation-of-time displays. On the front, the blue-chrome dial shows the following indications: hours, minutes and seconds of average time; second time zone; hours, minutes and seconds of sidereal time; sunrise and sunset; day and night; moon phases and power reserve. The tourbillon at 3.30 has a rémontoire d'égalité that completes a complete rotation in 60 seconds. This incredibly complex and beautiful watch also features a minute repeater.

ESTIMATE: US\$300,000-\$600,000 ACTUAL: US\$1.8 million





44mm-diameter, satin-finished titanium case. The dial is in degraded blue agate (a natural stone) with white hour numerals and red seconds, and the chronograph movement's rattrapante function – one of the few of its type currently available – is activated by a pusher at 2 o'clock; all other indications are set and activated by the crown. As a further bonus, the exquisite workings of the movement can be admired through the caseback crystal.

> ESTIMATE: US\$42,000-\$48,000 ACTUAL: US\$100,787

BELL & ROSS BR 05 SKELETON GOLD BLUE

Best known for its aviation-themed tool watches that echo the instruments on classic aircraft, Bell & Ross has strayed somewhat from this formula for its Only Watch one-off, though the rigorous square shape of its satin-polished rose-gold case is certainly familiar. This BR 05 features a beautiful skeleton dial in blue with Super Luminovacoated rose-gold indexes, while the automatic BR-CAL.322 movement with its skeletonised rotor, also in blue, is visible through the caseback. Especially noteworthy is the neat integration of the case with the blue rubber bracelet, which further emphasises how well suited those two colours are.

ESTIMATE: US\$20,000-\$25,000



HERMÈS ARCEAU L'HEURE DE LA LUNE ONLY WATCH

Hermès has rendered its Arceau L'heure de la lune even more transcendentally beautiful with this singular version in a white-gold case for Only Watch. This visually stunning watch is powered by the H1837 self-winding calibre that employs a special module to drive two mobile counters (displaying time and date) around the meteorite dial. As they rotate they reveal a pair of mother-of-pearl moons that show the moonphases in both the southern (confusingly placed in the north) and northern hemispheres.

ESTIMATE: US\$35,000-\$55,000 ACTUAL: US\$211,654



JAEGER-LECOULTRE MASTER ULTRA THIN PERPETUAL **ENAMEL CHESTNUT**

For Only Watch 2019, Jaeger-LeCoultre asked its Métiers Rares atelier to deck out the Master Ultra Thin Perpetual – which was first revealed at SIHH 2019 – in an exquisitely autumnal shade of chestnut. Otherwise, the dressy, white-gold 39mm perpetual calendar remains unchanged, which means the dial is in guilloche enamel with an engraved moonphase counter, and also that power comes from the equally gorgeous 868A/2 automatic calibre, which can be viewed in all its glory (which includes a sculpted gold rotor) through the caseback crystal.

ESTIMATE: US\$55,000-\$70,000 ACTUAL: US\$60,472



CHANEL THE J12 INSÉPARABLES FOR ONLY WATCH 2019

As Chanel's dive-inspired ladies' timepiece approaches its 20th anniversary, the maison has decided to celebrate that milestone - as well as support a worthy charity – by creating not one watch but two, a first in the auction's history. Sold as a pair, with one in a 38mm matte-black ceramic case and the other in matte-white, this stylish duo is powered by the new, COSC-certified Calibre 12, the first of these Kenissi-made movements to be finished in black; fittingly, it can be seen through the caseback on both watches. Each makes a style statement with a tone-on-tone dial that emphasises the number 12, but with 20-bar water resistance and 70-hour power reserve, these most certainly aren't just pretty faces.

ESTIMATE: US\$22,500-\$27,000 ACTUAL: US\$131,024



RESET FOR THE REVELRY

Out of the many aesthetics treatments that could give you a quick refresh, we recommend three that are low pain but all gain

BEST FACE ON

WHAT: Thermage FLX; 4th Generation (\$5,000; 120 minutes per session)
WHERE: Calvin Chan Aesthetic & Laser Clinic at #05-11 Wheelock Place

"I've never had anything done to my face, except for a facial I did back in 2012 when I was in Seoul, which I didn't particularly enjoy. Having heard so much about the anti-ageing benefits of Thermage, I accepted the offer by Dr Calvin Chan to try the latest generation of the skin-tightening

treatment, called Thermage FLX, despite some initial apprehension.

Thermage FLX, which is FDA-approved, harnesses the power of non-invasive radiofrequency (RF) energy. The heat applied to skin causes collagen to contract and stimulates new collagen growth. Also, it is a machine that can only be used by a trained doctor.

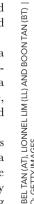
During my consultation with Dr Chan, he highlighted that while there is practically no downtime, some patients may experience minor redness and swelling, which generally subsides within 24 hours. Thirty minutes after numbing cream is applied, a handheld device that uses Total Tip 4 radiofrequency technology was applied to my face to heat the deeper, collagen-rich layers of the skin.

Prior to my visit, I did my research and found that some patients may find the procedure to be rather painful. Because of that, I readied myself for a truly distressing session. While there were moments when I twitched involuntary, especially when heat was delivered along my jawline and hairline, it was mostly bearable. Uncomfortable, at the very most.

After Dr Chan completed the treatment on one side of my face, a nurse took a picture to show me the difference between my left and not-

yet-treated right profile. I already noticed a subtle tightening of the skin along my jawline, although Dr Chan said the results would continue to improve after the third month.

I've always been conscious of my eye bags but two months after the treatment, the area around my eyes looked less tired. Friends have even asked if I have lost weight because my jawline became more pronounced. It's reassuring to know the effects of a single Thermage FLX treatment can last between one and two years, depending on the individual." – **BT**





SOUNDING OFF

WHAT: ONLipo (\$588–\$1,800; 90 minutes per session) **WHERE:** ONLY Aesthetics at #09-00 RB Capital Building

"Weight gain or stubborn pockets of fat in certain areas of the body can be difficult to get rid of, despite a stringent diet or rigorous exercise. As the FDA-approved ONLipo treatment at ONLY Aesthetics promises to destroy fat cells painlessly and offer instant results without downtime, it would be worthwhile to investigate just how effective it's purported to be.

Using a Multi-Sequential Ultrasound (MSU) technology, high-intensity ultrasound waves penetrate the skin to break down and eliminate fat up to a depth of 13mm. The destroyed fat cells are then eliminated naturally from the body. This non-invasive treatment works well on targeted problem areas, such as the arms, thighs, belly, chin, armpits, abdomen and even under the buttocks.

Having opted to try ONLipo on my upper arms, the treatment began with the application of a cool gel on my right arm first. My aesthetician then pressed the applicator firmly onto my skin and massaged it along the contours of my arm. Because the applicator is quite small, it is able to reach more specific areas and have a more focused effect than some other slimming treatments. It also felt like a massage and was completely painless. The process was then repeated on my left arm.

There was a slight redness on the areas that had been treated, but this quickly disappeared within 20 minutes. I also noticed that my arms did immediately look and feel slightly more toned and contoured. While the results are instantaneous, they can also be enhanced with each subsequent session. The total number of sessions required will be tailored to one's goals, with the recommended interval between sessions to be a fortnight." – AT

EYE LIKE IT

WHAT: Fotona 4D Eyelift (\$500 and upwards; 45–60 minutes per session) **WHERE:** Veritas Clinic at #B2-35 Capitol Piazza

"The idea of a bladeless eye bag removal treatment was intriguing, and so I signed up for the Fotona 4D Eyelift, which is one of the most advanced, non-surgical techniques in the market to improve the appearance of tired and ageing eyes.

To holistically target various eye concerns, this FDA-approved treatment features four unique lasers to reach different layers of the skin surrounding the eyes. They are Fotona Smooth, the only laser that can be used on the conjunctiva of the eyes for eye bag removal; Fotona VERSA3 for the removal of unwanted veins; Fotona FRAC3, a non-ablative laser that results in collagen remodelling and skin tightening; and Fotona SupEr for skin surface ablation, wrinkle removal and dramatic skin-tightening for very loose skin.

I had minimal eye bags so Dr Chua Cheng Yu recommended that I skip the Fotona Smooth laser. With the numbing cream, there was no pain during the 15-minute session, only a slight tingling sensation. What I wasn't expecting was a slight smell of burnt skin. A cooling pad was applied over my eye to soothe the skin and aid with recovery.

Immediately after the session, I noticed that my eyes were a bit puffy and bore laser marks. In the subsequent five days, there was also some bruising, which is best covered with concealer that can be applied over a special repair cream prescribed by the doctor. Scabbing followed, but skin returned to normalcy within a week.

The result of my treatment fluctuated slightly on a day-to-day basis, but I noticed fewer fine lines and firmer lids. While I only went for one session, which will give me gradual improvements over the course of a few months, those seeking more instant results could opt for sessions at closer intervals. Dr Chua says that the results are long-lasting until intensive skin ageing caused by factors such as UV exposure and stress occurs." – **LL**



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THE FUTURE OF K-BEAUTY

As the appetite for K-Beauty continues to grow in Southeast Asia, Amorepacific rises to the challenge with ambitious expansion plans and more inventive products. By Lionnel Lim



Its Southeast Asian business was first launched in Vietnam in 1998, and the company has since built bases in Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia, Vietnam and the Philippines – with a presence in 33 cities and counting. Some of the labels that are retailed in this region include Etude House, Hera, Innisfree, Laneige, Mamonde and Sulwhasoo. Newer hair brands such as Amos and Ryo have already been launched in Singapore, while a new brand Mise-en-scène will debut next year.

REACHING INTO THE HEART OF ASEAN

The future looks to get more exciting for Amorepacific as it shifts its focus from megacities to promising second-tier cities like Medan, Pattaya, Penang and Surabaya. At the same time, the beauty behemoth will continue to expand to more countries, strengthen its brand portfolios, and deepen its collaboration with multi-brand stores and e-commerce channels, such as Lazada, Shopee and Watsons online, to draw more millennial customers.

Emphasising the need to respond quickly to rapidly changing distribution environments and customer needs, Head of Amorepacific Asia-Pacific Regional HQ Robin Na, says: "It is important to introduce innovative products and secure customer-friendly channels earlier than other companies."

Moving ahead, the company is committed to reaching out to diverse customer bases within the region, and winning them over with its DNA of Asian holistic beauty and well-being. Muslim customers, for example, is one such important group. Kate Kwon, Director of Amorepacific Brand Science Lab, says: "We are continuously researching on halal certification, as well as Muslim people's preferred colours and hand-feel on the skin. In particular, we are developing formulas that meet the certification criteria of Indonesia and Malaysia. So far, 11 products including our popular Mamonde Ceramide Cream have been halal-certified by the Department of Islamic Development Malaysia, and we will continue to expand the range."

The millennials are another market Amorepacific is set to take on. "They are smart but lack loyalty. Beyond simply finding superior products, they will actively learn about them, and test their ingredients and efficacy. It is important for us to stay constantly updated on our knowledge, and strengthen our customer education and communication accordingly," Kwon adds.

The strategy for gaining access to and engaging with this young group of shoppers is a multi-pronged one, explains Na. "We aim to respond to our customers through as many channels as possible, because today's customers get information about products and brands through far more varied channels than before not only through digital platforms but also from brick-and-mortar shops." ■

Amorepacific's success and reputation today stems from Suh Sung-whan's belief that securing an edge in R&D is the key to establishing its dominance as a global beauty force. Since launching its first research centre in 1954, the company has since introduced numerous innovative technologies and award-winning products.

GINSENOMICS

Amorepacific's trademark ginseng research, which began in the '60s, culminated in the early 2000s with the development of the proprietary Bio-Conversion Technology that enables high concentrations of a rare saponin in the ginseng root to be extracted. This antibacterial. antimicrobial and immunityboosting ingredient is used extensively in the Sulwhasoo range of products.



WATER SPLASH TECHNOLOGY

The company's intensive research into skin hydration dates back to 1994 and is ongoing. Featured in the Laneige Water Bank line are the "Green Mineral Water" formula, which boasts highly concentrated hydro-ionised mineral water, and the "Water Zipper" technology, which locks in moisture for a cool 24 hours.



BLOSSOMING ENERGY Harnessing the

Sulwhasoo

power of flowers since 1991, the company studied hundreds of flower varieties. implemented ecofriendly cultivation practices and established efficient extraction protocols to translate nature's goodness into a host of benefits for the Mamonde brand

PRISTINE JEJU INGREDIENTS

The island of Jeju has always featured prominently in Korean skincare literature for the efficacy and purity of its indigenous ingredients. The company began cultivating green tea there in 1979 and has continued to source locally for high-quality beauty ingredients. One such example is the skin-brightening and moisturising cherry blossom leaf extract showcased in Innisfree's Jeju Cherry Blossom range.

t all began in the 1930s when Yun Dokjeong sold precious, hand-extracted camellia oils as a hair treatment in the northern Korean village of Kaesong. Her second son, Suh Sung-whan, took over the family business in 1945, named it Amorepacific and steadily expanded it abroad in spite of the tumultuous Korean War years. Entrepreneurship must run in the family, for Suh's second son Kyung-bae, who was handed the reins in 1997, grew the company into one of the largest cosmetics conglomerates in the world today. Worth a cool 6.07 trillion won (S\$7 billion) by the end of 2018, Amorepacific now boasts a stable of 30 health, beauty and personal care brands.

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li McAdam's childhood

is filled with memories of

playing with the children at

A FAMILY LEGACY

Leliebloem House, a youth care centre and home for vulnerable children, and making decorations for her mother's fundraisers.

McAdam is the daughter of Liz and Phil Biden, who own The Royal Portfolio group of properties in South Africa, including the Royal Malewane safari lodge (previously their holiday home), La Residence vineyard hotel and the artdriven The Silo Hotel. She also heads The Royal Portfolio Foundation, established by the Biden family for community and conservation initiatives, which include crèches, schools and care centres like Leliebloem House, as well as wildlifefocused programmes, such as the Cape Leopard Trust and the Greater Kruger Animal Protection Unit.

McAdam and her family are among a group of dedicated hotel owners around the world, who not only come up with and contribute financially to the community impact programmes of their properties, but are also personally involved in them.

"My granny was the 'godmother' to one of the dormitories at Leliebloem House," McAdam says, "She used to visit each child on his or her birthday, taking a present and some sweets for a little celebration party. When she passed away, I took over her role for many years."

Her aunt started Friends of Child Protection in 2006, making "comfort packs" of soft toys, toiletries (including underwear), snacks and colouring books to ease the trauma abused kids suffer as they endured long hours of questioning at the police station. Since then, volunteers have packed over 62,000 bags for distribution at hospitals, family courts, and abuse prevention and treatment centres in the Western Cape.

Today, McAdam still spends time at the youth centres and enjoys bringing the local primary school children on game drives together with the rangers to teach them the importance of protecting Africa's wildlife and having positive tourism.

BREAKING THE POVERTY CYCLE

Children, especially the ones in Nepal, are also close to the heart of Gordon Oldham, a former law firm partner and



Left: Gordon Oldham runs 250km races to raise funds for the Child Welfare Scheme charity he co-founded Right: Heli-biking at New Zealand's Mahu Whenua in 20

the founder and CEO of The Pavilions Hotels & Resorts. Oldham is heavily involved in the Child Welfare Scheme (CWS), a Hong Kong-based charity that he had set up together with his good friend Douglas Maclagan to raise funds for disadvantaged children in Pokhara, Nepal, where The Pavilions Himalayas eco-resort is located.

Oldham says: "Our current projects are focused on three areas – education, protection and vocational training – and are aimed at lifting Nepal's next generation out of poverty through early education to respectable and sustainable employment as a young adult." This includes the FAB School that provides hospitality training to young people and employing them in The Pavilions hotels and the Asha Clinic, which provides primary care to impoverished mothers and children.

While Maclagan is the one driving the programmes on the ground in Nepal, Oldham, who is CWS's chairman, visits several times a year and has personally run fundraising marathons since 2010 across the Gobi, Sahara and Atacama deserts and the Australian outback.

GUARDIAN OF THE LAND

For some, the beauty of a destination ignites the passion to preserve it. South African record producer and songwriter Robert "Mutt" Lange (famous for his recordings with artistes such as Def Leppard and Bryan Adams, and even more so as the ex-husband of Canadian singer-artiste Shania Twain) was so taken by the land between Wanaka and Queenstown on New Zealand's South Island that he bought it. He then established the Mahu Whenua covenants in 2015 in partnership with the Queen Elizabeth II National Trust, forming the largest private land covenant agreement ever initiated in the country.

The covenants cover 53,000ha of landscape over four high country sheep stations – Motatapu, Mount Soho, Glencoe and Coronet Peak – and protect the habitats of endemic plants and animals, which had previously been hit hard by mining, farming and an influx of non-native species. Although Mahu Whenua (which means "healing the land" in Maori language) is a private eco-sanctuary and lodge, the public has as much access as the guests to walking trails that are continuously being developed together with the different local conservation organisations. Lange says: "Through truly sustainable farming, with economical and ecological elements working in harmony, we are healing a land that many felt had been lost forever."

Although not based in New Zealand, he keeps in close contact with his property manager, who liaises with the different stakeholders, such as the Department of Conservation, Otago University, and the principal local iwi (Maori tribe) Ngai Tahu, on his behalf. When he visits, he walks the land and personally looks at the options for each conservation project before making decisions.



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BACK TO THE ROOTS

For Bjorn Ronning Vike, a master builder who has restored many old town houses, and his wife Tone, a former journalist passionate about sustainable tourism, their boutique hotel 29/2 Aurland is the realisation of a dream to preserve the wild magnificence of the Unesco World Heritage-listed Western Norwegian fjords, attract tourists to rural Norway, and restore Bjorn's family farm.

The couple uprooted their brood, including two young children, from the city lights of Oslo in 2012, and moved to Aurland, a small village of just under 2,000 inhabitants. The Goat Barn and Riverside Lodge buildings of 29/2 Aurland were built using recycled material, such as windows from houses that Bjorn has renovated over the years, and old textiles upcycled into curtains and pillows. The couple do almost everything on their own, including leading visits to local farms and handicraft shops, and working with local experts for activities such as fjord

Meals include produce from their kitchen garden with additions, such as ice cream made from organic milk and award-winning Undredal goat cheese from the few remaining farmers in the area. Tone says: "Eighty percent of what we serve is local and/or organic. Norway's only organic agricultural school is in Aurland. We buy a fair amount of our vegetables from them and we also employ their students to work in our garden."

Bjorn hosts an annual wild fish conference attended by researchers, fly-fishermen and politicians, heads an organisation that advocates sustainable tourism and has spoken out against the farmed salmon industry for its danger to wild fish. The couple have also asked the local school to make small creeks in order for fish to spawn and they only use the catch-and-release method in their fishing activities.

"With our tours and way of thinking, we not only create spin-offs in the local community, but also pride in our destination and culture. And that's how you develop small rural societies," adds Tone. "We try to limit our carbon footprint by biking, hiking, kayaking and rowing. We believe in soft adventures."





f there's one automobile that's perfectly attuned to the modern era (and yes, I get that you could argue no car is), I'd say it was the hatchback. A classless family runabout designed to be utilitarian, compact, affordable, economical and yet also technically sophisticated, it first appeared in the 1970s and, in the guise of tens of millions of Golfs, Focuses, Civics, A3s, Clios and whatever, has occupied a vast chunk of the automotive landscape ever since.

In retrospect its arrival seems to have been prescient, as it surfaced during a decade that was marked by two oil crises, which choked global petrol supplies, ramped pump prices skywards, caused long lines to form outside gas stations and led many motorists, perhaps for the first time in their lives, to give serious consideration to the issue of fuel efficiency. Since then the hatchback has evolved, as indeed it had to, but in spite of changes in tastes, fashions and lifestyles its appeal has endured. In fact, excepting a handful of names at the luxury end of the market, almost every major brand still builds them – and the best of the current crop are better than ever.

The hatchback's success isn't due solely to practicality, though the ability comfortably to accommodate four full-size passengers plus reasonable quantities of shopping or luggage in an abbreviated and urban-friendly two-box shape certainly helps. It's also garnered a firm following among enthusiasts enamoured of its nimbleness and lightness, qualities generally regarded as prerequisites for any properly capable high-performance car. So that when Volkswagen launched the heavily breathed-upon Golf GTI in 1975, its speed, agility and sheer driveability turned it into a motoring legend almost overnight, not to mention spawning countless hot-hatch imitators.

Of course by contemporary standards the 108bhp of the original GTI wouldn't even be considered tepid, though as that little VW weighed less than a tonne it could still show a clean pair of heels to cars that were far more powerful and costly. Modern-day hatchbacks, which tip the scales by a good 500kg more, require considerably more grunt, with around 200bhp being the barest minimum to achieve warmth, let alone generate discernible heat.

Which brings us inevitably to the extreme end of the Scoville scale, the point where the current Audi RS3, with a mind-blowing 395bhp from its five-cylinder 2.5, and the recently launched Mercedes-AMG A 45, with an even less believable 415bhp from just 2 litres, go head to head as the twin Carolina Reapers of the compact autoverse. Ridiculously fast and inevitably thirsty when driven in anger, both are as far removed from the original brief as if they'd sprouted wings, fins or elephant's tusks, though in their own mad way they do go to show that the humble family hatchback is as capable today as it ever was of providing the basis for some very fast wheels.

Owning a pocket rocket is one thing, but whether you actually need the power of a late-'60s F1 car under its bonnet or, equally to the point, are prepared to fork out the sizeable chunk of wedge to pay for it is quite another. Hence the appeal of what we'll call the hot hatch "lite", a car that's sufficiently fiery to give you an enjoyable kick but whose sustained



On the inside it's even sweeter, especially if you go for the Premium Plus package, which among other goodies gets you the full touchscreen display, 64-colour ambient lighting, electric front seats, a panoramic power roof and a rattlingly good sound system. Although for some reason my car doesn't have satnay, it does have the smartphone package - and as Apple CarPlay seems to have pulled itself together at last, my iPhone's map app works as a reasonable substitute, notwithstanding the fact that I forget to bring a USB-C adaptor first time out. My only major issue regarding the plush and otherwise well-thought-out cabin is with the sports seats, which certainly look the part with their integrated headrests and side bolsters, but take me an age to get right – and even then I'm still not sure I've nailed it. Perhaps it's me.

On the road, the A 35 is great fun, less of a handful than the fullfat, third-gen A 45 that I drove several years ago, but in real terms barely slower point-to-point. As a driving tool it's quick, precise, stable and effective: If you choose a line it'll pretty much keep to it, with oodles of cornering power both from the 4matic system and the grippy tyres – and I dare say my standard-spec car is more involving than if it were loaded with the exhaustive list of driving aids that Mercedes now offers (does any small car have more?). Great brakes too.

The four-pot revs easily, which is always good in a car with performance pretentions, but to keep things sharp I've got the drivetrain switched to Sport, as the more leisurely Comfort setting can reveal a flat spot lower down in the band; that said, you'll rarely want more power than this. And though the ride can be choppy on rougher surfaces, on the motorway it's exceptionally smooth – if I could only find a driving position that suits me, I'd happily cross continents in this.

So if you're looking for fun on four wheels in a package that's compact, practical, comfortable and fast, a car that's exceptionally well engineered for one so small and has an interior that punches way above its class, the A 35 makes a strong case for itself. Easy to live with yet always engaging, it's hot but rarely explosive. Just like a medium-spiced jalapeño, it's a car that enlivens the daily drive no end, but won't ever ruin the appetite for more.

use is less likely to cause unpleasant side effects (not least being the longterm loss of one's licence). A car, to be even more precise, just like the Mercedes-AMG A 35 4matic that I've been playing with recently.

The entry-level model to the Mercedes-AMG high-performance range, the A 35 would seem like a more liveable day-to-day proposition than the steroidal 45, though with more than 300bhp and 400Nm from the 2-litre twin-scroll-turbocharged four that lies upfront, it can still sprint to 100km/h in less than five seconds and reach a maximum of 250. It's also fully fettled with Merc's predictive 4matic all-wheeldrive system (in normal conditions it feeds all torque to the front wheel, like any normal hatchback, though it can vector up to 50 percent to the rear when required), as well as a pukka seven-speed dual-clutch gearbox. Indeed, were it not for the existence of its fire-breathing big brother, the A 35 might be considered properly peppery.

It gets the full Dynamic Select menu of drive modes too from Comfort – in which the car disports itself much as would any normal hatchback on its way to the shopping mall – to Sport +, which tightens the throttle response and, if you press the right button, gets the exhaust popping and banging. If you option the active dampers the chassis can also be fully adaptable; my test car, however, is almost entirely frill-free, though the 4matic system does offer a Slippery setting that, on a gloriously sunny autumn weekend, remains firmly disengaged.

Less fussy than its predecessor, the styling of Mercedes's fourth-gen A is much the better for it, though in its A 35 iteration you can spoil things by going for the Aerodynamics Pack, which adds an extended hatch-top spoiler, a larger front splitter, 19-inch wheels and other unnecessary embellishments, all in boy-racer black. Far better to keep it understated and stick to stock spec, like the one I'm driving, where the only visible clues to its capabilities are a front grille that's slightly different from that of the regular A-class, five-spoke 18-inch alloys, discrete badging on the flank, twin exhausts and a small roof spoiler. Order it in chilli red or capsicum yellow and it might even turn heads.



BMW M135I

Although styled like a pintsize MPV, which may make it hard to fall in love with on first sight, Beemer's warmhatch contender is fun, lively and engaging enough to pose serious competition for the baby AMG.



AUDIS3

Available as a three-door hatchback, saloon and cabriolet, Audi's warmed-over S3 would appear to have most bases covered. It's well-made, rapid and easy to live with, though perhaps a little too overfettled for pure enjoyment.

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BOSOM BUDDIES

Chefs MARK BEST and SHANE OSBORN, from the Netflix hit series *The Final Table*, share with Grace Ma the secret to their chemistry and why they love cooking on cruises

hey were the veterans, and the favourites pipped to win American reality cooking competition *The Final Table*. In the Netflix series, Shane Osborn, chef-owner of one-Michelinstarred Arcane and newly opened casual eatery Cornerstone in Hong Kong, and Mark Best, whose now defunct Sydney restaurant Marque was given a three-hat rating by Australia's Good Food Guide for 10 consecutive years, were the unflappable, jocular duo that made it through nine gruelling rounds against 11 other teams. Preparing national dishes from countries such as the US, Mexico, Japan, India and France, Osborn and Best eventually made it to the final four, where they had to compete separately to earn a seat at "the final table" alongside nine other culinary legends, including Anne-Sophie Pic (France), Grant Achatz (the US) and Clare Smyth (the UK).

American chef Timothy Hollingsworth eventually took home the top prize, but the "bromance" between Osborn and Best hogged headlines for months afterwards. From Sep 29 to Oct 4, the duo partnered Dream Cruises, of which Best has two restaurant concepts – Prime Steakhouse

and Seafood Grill — to conduct cooking demonstrations and enrichment talks, as well as cook a six-course dinner on a round-trip voyage from Singapore to Nha Trang and Ho Chi Minh City. *Prestige* had a taste of the delicious menu in a post-cruise media lunch and we were won over by dishes such as meltin-the-mouth, tender slow-braised Australian wagyu short ribs served with charred onions and a tamarillo salsa; and Parmesan gnocchi in a light pumpkin dashi. The jovial gentlemen share their favourite moments of cooking together for the first time on the high seas.



What was the best thing about cooking together on this cruise?

Shane Osborn (SO): Besides enjoying each other's company, I like sharing my cooking ideas and philosophy with other chefs. On this cruise, you can see the excitement, and a little bit of apprehension and pressure to deliver. But after the first dinner, the nerves were soothed, and the kitchen crew was more relaxed.

Mark Best (MB): I love this sharing of knowledge where one and one becomes three — and the collaborative experience inspires the kitchen team and the guests as well. The cross-pollination of ideas is what keeps everyone energised and inspired as we travel to different places and check out different ingredients. We are also learning from the crew, who cooked us incredible dishes from their countries, such as adobo and chicken biryani. They are as proud of their food as we are of ours. There's a real cultural exchange that I truly love about being with this company. We're in many different destinations, different countries and people, but a love of food is the one thing we have in common.

What were the challenges of cooking on a cruise ship?

MB: We don't believe in limitations. Once we know the parameters, it's

all about possibilities. We're both used to serving 50 people a 10-course degustation menu – about 500 plates a night – out of a tiny kitchen, and a three-and-a-half-hour service run by a team of six.

That sort of constraint in the kitchen meant that the dishes there are two elements on the plate, and two sauces at most, but the preparation was quite complex to get that simplicity. We don't like surprises, so as long as we know what we have to work with, whether it is a meal over a campfire or held outdoors, we make the best out of it and do something special.

SO: One of the genius parts of operations such as Dream Cruises is the procurement team. It is enormous. It spans the region and gets the best produce, so it's a matter of knowing what you want and giving them time to get it.

How do you get the most of each ingredient, knowing that you're miles away from suppliers once you're out at sea?

MB: The carrot [used in the fish dish] was an ordinary one.

What I like to do is to create some magic out of ordinary things. After blanching the carrot, we split it and peel off the outside layer, leaving its heart. The outer layer is put through a juicer and made into a sauce. The same goes for the Frozen Mandarin Curd with Mandarin Sherbet dessert. I used the mandarin juice to make the mandarin curd and the powder comes from the skins that have been dried, then mixed with icing sugar and tartaric acid. An ordinary mandarin is turned into something special and with no waste.

Can you tell us what else guests can look forward to on culinary-themed cruises?

MB: We've brought guests to markets in Bangkok, Phuket and Bintan where we'll shop for the ingredients and then I teach them how to cook local dishes. We're going to do that in Darwin, Sydney, Wellington and Gisborne in the future. It can be something as simple as showing them how to make a tom yum soup, for instance. Having the chance to source the ingredients in local markets produces something delicious and different, and it's a nice way of exploring the local culture.

Shane, it's your first time on board a cruise ship. How do you like it?

SO: My staff follow me on Instagram and asked how my holiday was. I told them I'd been working and I'm quite exhausted! But I loved being on board and am keen to do more cooking experiences like this. I was at the front of the ship's hull this morning, swimming and sitting in the jacuzzi as the ship came into Singapore. It was incredible watching the skyline appearing. Being on a cruise is so much less stressful than travelling on a plane!

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Nick Stock and I are going to time. It was the year that we discovered more than 50 perfect wines among the 25,000 we rated. In fact, we can't remember a vear quite like it: Every major wine region released great wines onto the market, the majority being from the 2015 and 2016 vintages. These duo vintages will long be remembered much like 1989 and 1990 for Bordeaux. However, 2017 and 2018 should not be forgotten - both produced some exceptional wines, particularly whites.

Every year we list the best wines we tasted. While the emphasis is on quality, special preference is given to more affordable wines. For example, the Top 10 listed here are all priced at less than US\$80 a bottle

The wines on our list show the diversity of greatness in the wine world today, with entries from Italy, Spain, Germany, France, New Zealand, Chile and Argentina. But of particular note this year were wines from Brunello di Montalcino in Italy's Tuscany region. We tasted close to 200 wines from the 2015 vintage and dozens scored 95 points or more. We gave 11 perfect 100-point ratings. The Siro Pacenti Brunello di Montalcino Vecchie Vigne 2015 is our Wine of the Year. It's a perfect example of what makes 2015 Brunello so compelling to buy and drink. There's a real energy and excitement to tasting it. The 2015 Brunello di Montalcinos are available beginning of January.

1. SIRO PACENTI BRUNELLO DI MONTALCINO **VECCHIE VIGNE 2015**

Score: 100

This is a perfect example of what makes 2015 Brunello so compelling. The Siro Pacenti really has a "wow" factor. We tasted it at least five times over the summer and we liked it more and more. Like all the best 2015 Brunellos, the Pacenti Brunello 2015 shows super intensity of cool and dark fruits as well as stones and

flowers, and opens to a full and plush body of expansive yet utterly refined tannins that coat your palate in a caressing way. It shows glorious transparency and communication. It's one of the best young Brunellos I've tasted in my fourdecade career and I've been tasting Brunellos professionally since 1983.

Owner Giancarlo Pacenti savs his 2015 Brunello is "the wine of his career". And we have to agree. It's very intense on the nose with blue fruit, cool stones, brambleberries and blackberries. Wet earth too. Full-bodied and extremely dense and powerful with a super centre palate of fruit and ripe yet compact tannins. Lightly chewy and expressive. Superb transparency and integration. Goes on for minutes. Try from 2021, but already amazing.

2. RENIERI BRUNELLO DI MONTALCINO 2015

Score: 100

Marco Bacci of Chianti Classico's wellrespected Castello di Bossi bought this gorgeous Brunello vinevard in the late 1990s. However, it's only now that the wines are coming into their own. This is probably because the vines are at a good age to yield superlative grapes. Renieri has been producing excellent wines - both Brunello di Montalcinos and Super Tuscans - since the 2006 vintage. The former show fabulous depth and fruit yet remain polished.

This 2015 Brunello has earthy aromas: bark, sand, truffles, graphite, rust, terracotta and sandalwood rise from the deep with Burgundian poise; fruitier orange zest and preserved lemons glimmer in their wake, while riper incense and tar lurk in this dense forest of aromas. There's such richness to the centre palate, but the fruit there is vivacious and elegant, swaddled in robust but generous tannins. The finish is hauntingly long, the aftereffects of the acidity unworldly. This is certainly in a quiet, reserved stage of evolution and will need time to fully mature in bottle. Drink from 2025.

3. MUGA RIOJA PRADO ENEA **GRAN RESERVA 2011**

Score: 99

Muga is one of the classic wine estates in La Rioja, Spain. It produces a diverse range of styles, but the owners strive to create classic wines for the region, characterised by finesse and elegance as well as structure and depth. They're made for drinking, but age incredibly well. I'm invariably impressed by the reds, especially the Reservas. The wines spend years ageing in barrels, an important feature in distinctive Rioja-style wines. The Gran Reservas in particular are aged three years in oak and another three years in bottle.

This is the most structured Prado Enea ever. A reduced centre palate that is so compact with dark fruit, dark mushrooms and cedary spice. Full body. Wonderfully polished tannins and a long, long finish. Electric acidity. Muscular and well toned. This is a new classic that reminds me of great Spanish wines from the 1940s and 1950s. Better after 2021, but already so impressive.

4. MARCHESI ANTINORI **UMBRIA CERVARO** DELLA SALA 2017

Score: 99

What would the wine world be like without the Antinori family? The patriarch of the clan, Piero Antinori, forever changed the way the world views Tuscan wines with the invention in the 1970s of Tignanello, followed by Solaia. Many of Antinori's wines maintain a loval following among collectors around the world. The sleek, structured wines of Guado al Tasso represent Antinori's continued connection to Tuscany's Bolgheri. Indeed, the Antinoris make wine in many of the key appellations in Italy and the world, but Tuscany remains home.

This is big and powerful, without being ripe and heavy. So much apple, stone and hints of toffee. Aromatic. Full-bodied, lavered and framed with phenolic tension and a great finish. Muscular and agile at the same time. One of the best I've tasted. Drink or hold.

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5. SCHÄFER-FRÖHLICH RIESLING NAHE FELSENECK **GG** 2018

Score: 99

With the hugely talented Tom Fröhlich - who made several savvy vineyard acquisitions after taking over in 1995 – at the head of this estate, Schäfer-Fröhlich has become a standard-bearer for great Riesling from Germany's Nahe.

Very pure slate here – this is something unique. The elevated, steep and stony site has such strength of character, delivered with such purity. Gunsmoke, gunflint and very fine fragrance with a streak of fresh lemons. It has a super-fine and elegant feel, floating ballet-like over the palate. Such elegance and power. The finesse and length are really ethereal. Yellowgrapefruit juice and pith here. Wildly succulent at the long, salty finish. What a thrilling wine. Drink or hold.

6. RIPPON PINOT NOIR CENTRAL OTAGO MATURE VINE 2010

Score: 100

This biodynamically farmed wine estate in New Zealand's Central Otago region not only produces great Pinot Noirs, but it could also be one of the most beautiful wine estates in the world. With a vineyard that sits against a lake, backed by mountains and clear skies, five generations of the same family have turned it into one of the best producers in the region.

This has such freshness, at between nine and 10 years of age. It delivers a very rich, blue-fruit core with spiced earth and light, leathery nuances. The palate has composed and compact tannins and a slinky and rich, powerful array of blueberries and a long, juicy, succulent and vibrant finish. Shows just how well Rippon Pinots age. This is just getting started! From biodynamically grown grapes. Maturation release. Drink or hold.

7. CHÂTEAU LARCIS-DUCASSE **SAINT-EMILION 2016**

Score: 99

When Larcis-Ducasse brought consultants Nicolas Thienpont and Stéphane Derenoncourt into the estate to turn around what looked like a flailing business, they couldn't have hoped for better results. The two improved drainage, harvesting techniques and moved to organic methods on the estate, and the wines are now rich, textured and very age-worthy.

The aromas here are so spellbinding, with shiitake mushrooms, wet earth and moss, as well as tree bark and, finally, dark fruit. The palate is incredible as it builds and grows with full body, but is always tight and reserved. It shows so much depth and complexity. Please try not to touch this until 2025.

8. EREDI FULIGNI BRUNELLO **DI MONTALCINO 2015**

Score: 100

Situated on the northern slope of Montalcino, this small winery makes wines with incredible finesse and intensity. For the last three decades, law professor and family member Roberto Guerrini has been overseeing the wine estate. His wines are as complex and refined as the symphonic music he enjoys. Guerrini is a man of impeccable taste, and he personifies the unique and subtle character of his wines. Hence, the wines here show perfect balance and exquisite complexity.

The purity of fruit on the nose is perfection, with cherries, crushed raspberries, mineral, pumice and citrus fruit. Dust too. Full body. Powerful, chewy tannins. So long and muscular, yet polished and formed. The most structured Brunello I've ever had from here. A wine for decades. Try from 2022.

9. ERRÁZURIZ PINOT NOIR ACONCAGUA COSTA LAS PIZARRAS 2018

Score: 99

Errázuriz is among the most venerable producers in Chile's Aconcagua Valley. The winery was founded by Don Maximiano Errázuriz in 1870, which gives it almost 150 years of rich history. Today, Eduardo Chadwick – a fifth-generation family member - manages the estate. Benefiting from the hot summers and cool winters of Aconcagua, Errázuriz's vineyards are home to Bordeaux varieties such as Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot, as well as Carmenere, Malbec and Syrah. Aside from high-quality reds of elegance and complexity, Errázuriz also makes Chardonnays with great minerality.

This wine has great aromas of dried strawberries and fresh flowers, such as lavender. Full-bodied vet very tight and focused. Impressive tannic structure, but refined and polished. Lightly chewy. Finishes tight and refined. Best Pinot of Chile. Drink from 2022, but hard to hold back.

10. CHEVAL DES ANDES **MENDOZA 2016**

Score: 99

RENIERI

BRUNELLO

do Eneas

Mugao

A joint venture between Châteaux Cheval Blanc in Bordeaux and Terrazas de Los Andes in Argentina (which is owned by Louis Vuitton Moët Hennessy), Cheval Des Andes focuses its efforts on producing the best Malbecs of the region. It's the best of two worlds: a For the full list of Top 100 Wines of 2019, head to combination of the intense Argentinian fruit James Suckling.com.

and the elegance that comes with French style.

Super refined and beautiful with flowers, spices, dried fruit and hints of stones. Medium to full body with very fine tannins and a gorgeous finish. Shows great finesse and depth. Savoury character, as always, but in check. Drink from 2022.





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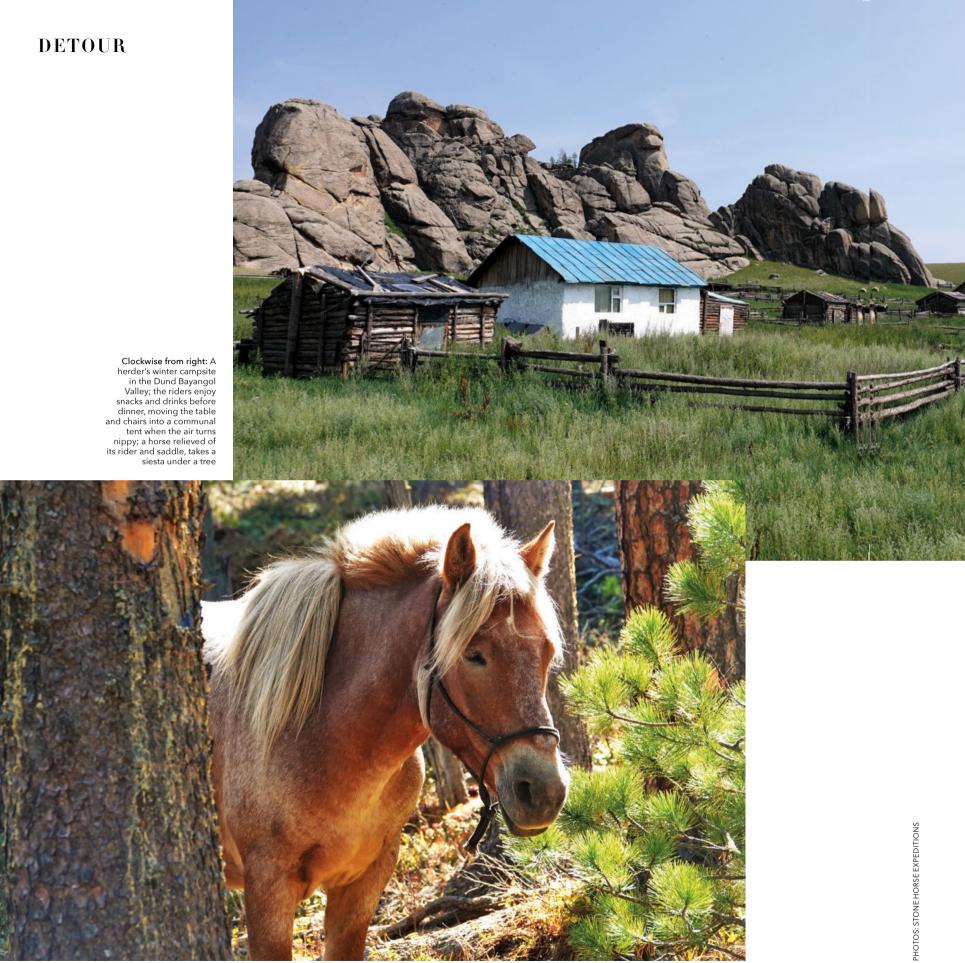
Valley in Gorkhi-Terelj National Park, 90 minutes away from Ulaanbaatar by car.

Our departure must have been quite a sight. Over 20 horses are spread out on grasslands fringed by mountains of larch and pine forests. Some are saddled with camping equipment, some are running bare and loose while others have riders on them. The riders are a motley crew of different nationalities, riding abilities and professions. Among the guests, there are two university professors, be priceless.

vastness and connecting with wildlife. Since it was on horses that Genghis Khan and his army had set off to conquer much of Asia pushing as far as Austria, seeing the country from the back of a horse seems like the way to go. Because we are on the move, we will sleep in tents every night (save for one night at a ger camp). Although we cannot be further removed from the usual references of luxury travel, such as Frette bed linen or even a bathtub, the experience proves to

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From top left: Rock formations fringe the Baruun Bayngiin Gol Valley; the Black Lichen Lake in the Khan Khentii Strictly Protected Area is connected to the Gorkhi-Terelj National Park and is covered in Stone Horse Expeditions' longer trips





ADVENTURE OF A LIFETIME

Throughout the 250km we cover over eight days of riding (the first and last days are for packing and unpacking), we are exposed to diverse landscapes and wildlife. On our first afternoon, we trot through a sandy plain that seems bereft of life. Then we pass over a ridge and suddenly, like a piece of theatre, another world opens up. This one is lush and green with bleating sheep and grazing cows.

Another morning we canter up and trot down an undulating valley full of wildflowers of all colours imaginable. The alpine air is pungent with edelweiss and sweet grass crushed by the hooves of the horses. We ford rivers, climb hills and thread through forests, filling our pockets with pine cones to throw at one another – just like children. Spotting a marmot gets us excited every time. Silence falls on the group when we see a grizzly's paw print in the woods, suddenly mindful of the dangers that lurk behind these magical scenes. We forget quickly when we see a herd of horses in a glade, manes and tails flapping in the wind. I feel giddy with happiness after every long gallop.

By the fourth day, even the beginner riders are confident enough to sit through a canter (Stone Horse's western-style saddles allow them to sit more securely), while the

experienced riders are galloping at every opportunity. Choosing the right operator is important. Sabine Schmidt and her husband Keith Swenson are the team behind Stone Horse Expeditions, who have more than 30 years of experience running wilderness expeditions and conservation programmes around the world. Their 18 years in Mongolia means an in-depth knowledge of the terrain. Guiding us on this trip are Sabine, who makes the saddles, and three Mongolian staff. So far, there's nothing our curious minds can ask about the land that the very well-read German-born Sabine, who has a PhD in earth sciences, doesn't know.

BEYOND THE ORDINARY

While Mongolia's population is sparse, her history is rich. In the Dzuun Valley, Sabine tells us stories of Mongolia's history, pointing out burial mounds erected during the Bronze Age. She also leads us to the ruins of Princess Temple built in 1740 in memory of a Manchurian princess married to a Mongolian king.

Although lunch is simple – usually a picnic of cold cuts, bread and dried fruits, breakfast and dinner are quite grand. With German precision, Sabine serves every cooked meal on time, turning out flavourful lentil curry one day and moreish Mexican fajitas the next. As if she can read our minds, Mongolian stir-fried noodles appear on the table when we start craving Asian food. There is minimum wastage. Leftover diced cucumber and tomato go into our omelettes the next morning. After restocking at the ger camp, Sabine makes a hearty beef goulash that night which we polish off with rice and sautéed root vegetables.

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Conversations flow with bottles of an easy red that she has carefully packed according to a dietary restriction and wine preference list that guests submit beforehand. When the wine runs out before the end of the trip (because there are people who turn out to be much heavier drinkers that they admitted on the list), there is a Klean Kanteen of Scotch.

After she's done with her chores, Sabine joins in our conversations. She keeps us city folks enthralled with her adventures in Antarctica where she met her husband, and regales us with past antics of the horses, hounds and horsemen whom we get to know better on the trip. We learn that Byambaa is an excellent singer, and off-season, Hundag goes home to the west to help his herder parents comb and collect wool from their cashmere goats. The fibres are bundled with other herders' production and sent overseas to the processing plants of brands possibly the likes of Loro Piana and Hermès.

Post-dinner, we sometimes linger outside our tents under Mongolia's canopy of stars. But on most nights, we go straight to bed. On the first night, we hear wolves howling and sleep fitfully. Sabine assures us the next morning that they are actually hiding far away in forested mountains, steering clear of humans in numbers. Some nights, we fall asleep lulled by a brook's babbling and the sonorous snoring of horses, and occasionally, their chomping on grass right outside our tents. Relaxed horses means there is no imminent danger.

BORN FREE, RUN WILD

After a few days of travelling on our steeds, we imagine ourselves to be born for a life with nature. "I think I can live this way," I declare, "I don't need a lot to be happy. Just give me a horse and the space to run free." Heads bob in agreement, in tandem with the riders' trotting horses.

Returning every summer seems more practical for a city girl from the tropics than moving to Mongolia. Especially if the temperature in Mongolia nosedives from the 20s to single digits at night, even in August. On some days, the sun is out in full force making it a must to plaster on SPF50 sunscreen and a relief to wash under a makeshift shower strung from trees by the wranglers (with tarpaulin walls to protect our modesty) or bathe in a stream. After sunset, we pile on the layers. The next morning, we wake up to find a film of frost on our tents.



Returning is something we talk about a lot. "I rode elsewhere one summer and I found myself thinking of Mongolia throughout the trip," says the banker from Hong Kong who has ridden with Stone Horse Expeditions four times in five years. And most of Stone Horse's clients are repeat ones, booking for the next season in advance.

As we thread through our last pine forest in the trip, Byambaa who has repeatedly shied from our requests for a folk song, starts to sing softly, his spirits lifted by the prospect of seeing his young family. Encouraged by the palpable silence of approval from around, his voice soars. We don't understand a word, yet it resonates with us. We imagine his song sailing across a sea of grass. Our hearts swell to become as expansive as the vistas we have galloped across, and we want to relive this feeling.

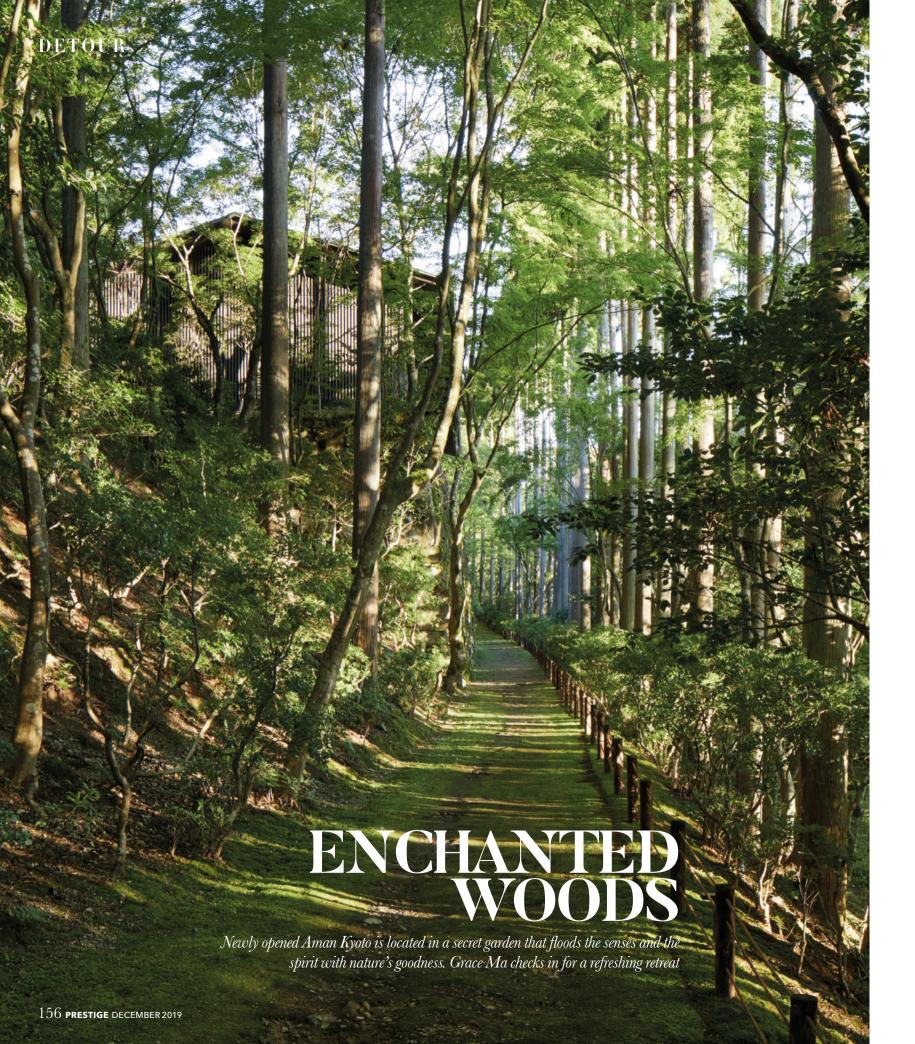


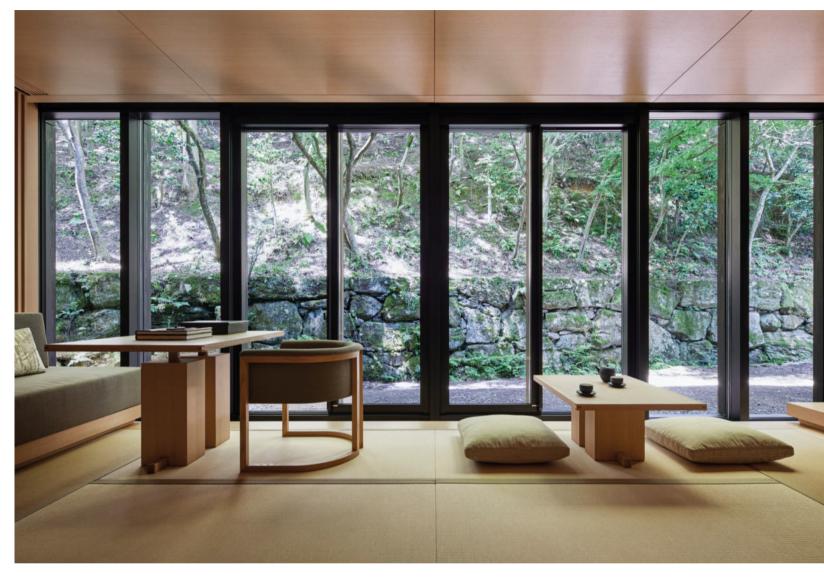
Clockwise from top left: Panoramas of Mongolia's landscapes are everywhere, giving keen shutterbugs plenty of photo opportunities; Stone Horse Expeditions' trips are usually accompanied by one of their dogs to round up stray horses and humans who have wandered off; Princess Ger Camp where the riders spend a night in traditional Mongolian gers

WHY YOU SHOULD GO TO MONGOLIA N 2020

If the land of the blue skies is on your bucket list, think about making the trip soon as tourist numbers are expected to rise in the near future. "The New Ulaanbaatar International Airport is projected to open in May 2020," says Surenbaatar Nergui, Director of Business Development at Juulchin World Tours (juulchinworld.mn), Mongolia's largest travel agency.

With this opening, there will be more direct flights into the capital. More highways are also expected to be ready in 2020, improving accessibility to rural areas. In the meantime, tour operators like Juulchin World Tours, which owns luxury ger camps in Gorkhi-Terelj National Park and Orkhon Valley, are expanding on experiences offered to tourists. Besides horse-riding expeditions in Terelj, Stone Horse Expeditions (stonehorsemongolia com) also runs Gobi Desert tours and conservation trips to Khan Khentii Strictly Protected Area.





This page: One of Aman Kyoto's minimalist guest rooms Opposite page: Garden path running under the two-bedroom Washigamine Suite

anabu Horiguchi has lived in Kyoto's Gentaku neighbourhood all his life. Yet it was only when the 31-year-old was hired as Chef de Partie at Aman Kyoto that he realised a secret garden had existed all

this while, just 10 minutes from his doorstep. Such is the magic surrounding luxury resort chain Aman's third resort in Japan, that even for the locals, it's a mystery waiting to be unravelled.

The resort is only a 30-minute drive from Kyoto Station, but as you near the 32ha grounds located in north Kyoto, the urban landscape fades into a glade of maple and Japanese cedar trees. Granted, it was hard to visualise that beauty in an 8pm arrival, but Aman's magical hospitality was still felt right away as a team of six welcomed me the moment my chauffeur-driven car pulled into the driveway.

Below: Counter seating at the Japanese restaurant Taka-An Right: A tokonoma alcove is found in every guest room Opposite page: The all-day dining yenue Living Pavilion



Dinner had been arranged at the Japanese restaurant Taka-An, but Head Chef Koji Mita saw my tired face and suggested a simple but comforting bowl of nyumen and conger eel in kombu and bonito flake dashi instead, telling me to take the nine-course kaiseki menu another day. I slurped down the delicious noodles, happy as a lark.

OASIS OF SERENITY

The next morning, the mechanised blinds of my suite rolled up to reveal a serene, sun-dappled garden through the floor-to-ceiling windows. It felt surreal, especially in the wake of Typhoon Hagibis that had hit Japan only four days earlier. My minimalist room resembled an art gallery: an ikebana in a tall earthen vessel and a hanging scroll with the printed image of a fog rising from Kyoto's Takagamine Mountain occupy a tokonoma, an alcove for the display of artistic items.

I spent my free time sitting on the tatami-covered floor gazing outside, never once feeling the urge to switch on the television that was cleverly hidden – as were other amenities such as the wardrobe and minibar – behind wooden panels. Add a steaming bath redolent with the scent of herbs and yuzu in a *hinoki ofuro* bathtub (factor 30 minutes for the tub to fill up, yes, it's that big) – long enough to fit my entire 1.65m frame lying down, and there was a real temptation never to leave the room.

But with nature beckoning in the form of jewelled gardens, ancient mossy boulders and stone-cut pathways, it's hard to resist its allure. Treatments at the Aman Spa range from Japanese Gold Leaf facials to grounding massages and scrubs for harried urbanites, and include dips in the indoor and outdoor onsens (the latter is especially bracing in chilly autumn air).



I had the autumnal version of the Aman Kyoto Signature Journey, which included a foot bath ritual inspired by the traditional ryokan welcome that dates back to the 16th century. It features organic rice bran, natural sea salt, Japanese sake (the same one offered to the gods in the nearby famous Kinkakuji Temple) and 24k gold flakes. My therapist Koko then had me close my eyes while she sounded an *orin*, a Japanese singing bowl. Calm and relaxed, I slumbered through the full body massage that used an essential oil blend of sweet osmanthus, Japanese orange and cider.

RESTFUL INDULGENCE

Nature's bounty ended up on our plates too. Chestnuts shaken out of their trees by the typhoon became steamed snacks drizzled with molasses on my table. At the all-day dining Living Pavilion, where a central fireplace and side walls lined with handmade tiles bring on warm



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feels, Executive Chef Kentaro Torii brings a finesse and elegance to dishes, such as the Aman Kyoto Fish and Chips (a tender trout fillet in kataifi pastry served with pickled Kyoto turnip), and a hearty spaghetti bolognese made with Ohmi wagyu, one of Japan's top three wagyus.

Taka-An's kaiseki menu, which I finally took on the last night seated at the 7m-long African cherry wood counter, was filled with local ingredients at their seasonal best: matsutake mushrooms, *yuba* (bean curd skin), *ebi-imo* (a kind of taro) and grilled barracuda with ginkgo nuts.

Aman Kyoto was a 20-year project in the making, conceived even before the other two Japanese ones, Aman Tokyo and Amanemu, were on the drawing boards. Kerry Hill Architects, which designed all three, respectfully abided by heritage rules surrounding the grounds and left the original gardens and pathways untouched.

Black-latticed standalone pavilions housing the 24 suites, a pair of two-bedroom villas, and the Arrival, Living, Dining and Spa Pavilions

were built on platforms that were designed as foundations for a textile museum – an unrealised dream by the former owner, who was one of Japan's most respectable obi collectors.

The neighbourhood is full of history and culture, and makes for lovely wanderings. Cycle on an electric bike to the Imamiya-Jinja Shrine and Ryogen-In Temple, famous for its five Zen gardens, or take a 15-minute stroll to Kinkakuji Temple. Also nearby are Matsuno Shoyu, a 200-year-old soy sauce maker that supplies miso to the hotel; and along the same street, a local market hidden between the lanes, where I bumped into Chef Mita shopping for vegetables.

On the day of departure, as I traipsed down the uneven stone paths for the last time, grateful for restful solitude, I remembered Koko's words to me during my spa treatment: in Aman Kyoto, it's all about *shinrin-yoku*, or "forest bathing", so just breathe in all of nature's essence for healing. If that were true, I had inhaled an entire ecosystem of rejuvenation.

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BACKSTORY

THE FINEST HOUR

At the recent 19th edition of the Grand Prix d'Horlogerie in Geneva, Audemars Piguet snared the prestigious Aiguille d'Or Grand Prix for its Royal Oak Selfwinding Perpetual Calendar Ultra-Thin. Judged as the most impressive watch across all categories at this "Oscars of watchmaking", the 41mm timepiece is the manufacture's latest technological milestone launched earlier this year. It is the world's thinnest automatic perpetual calendar wristwatch, showcasing the self-winding manufacture Calibre 5133 at a mere 2.89mm thick and a titanium case just 6.3mm in height. To achieve such thinness, the perpetual calendar functions that are normally arranged on three levels have been merged into one layer, thanks to two patented innovations.









Dazzling Rendez-Vous Moon. Manufacture movement 925B/1.

