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DEC 2020 / JAN 2021

24 HOURS IN CAIRO

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EAT 'APPY IN JEDDAH

Sample authentic local cuisine without leaving your hotel room

BACK TO BUSINESS

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FIT FOR TRAVEL

Hotels embrace 'health is wealth' movement

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FIT FOR TRAVEL

Hotels are starting to offer travellers what they really want; flexible fitness and wellness options



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COVER IMAGE: DUBAI TOURISM

WELCOME

Our motivation to improve our health and wellbeing has never been so fierce. COVID-19 has made sure of this and today, more than ever before, we are aware of the fragility of life and the need to take good care of our body, mind and soul. We've known for some time that prevention is better than cure, but mid pandemic, it's become paramount. Pre-COVID there were trends dominating the global wellbeing movement. In the fitness world, video-on-demand training and movement-tracking apps were gaining traction, while consumer awareness of the nutritional requirements to support good health was rapidly improving. Meditation, breathing and time out from tech were also taking a front seat, again, aided by apps accessible anytime, anywhere.

During the pandemic, each of these trends has been accelerated and working from home, while challenging in its own way, has given us more time to explore wellbeing experiences. But what happens when we all get back out on the road, travelling the globe for work or leisure?

In this issue we explore how the hotel world is rapidly adapting its wellbeing offering to take into consideration what travellers now want from their stay, unearthing some trailblazing concepts already in place, with more on their way.

The hospitality industry is embracing the wellness movement and it goes far beyond the hotel gym and spa. From quiet corners to pause or meditate, sleep improvement and jet-lag

reduction programmes and design concepts that soothe the mind, to on-demand fitness solutions, health-driven menus and activities that merge training with cultural discovery, hotels are starting to base their entire proposition around guest wellbeing.

One expert we interviewed stresses how wellbeing concepts can also create community spirit. Hotels are already transforming lobbies, restaurants and other areas into social hubs, so why not their gyms?

What business travellers really want is to keep their body and mind in shape without having to research their options in advance of their trip. A wellness concierge service, providing guests with information on their fitness and wellbeing options, even before their departure, would win their loyalty for sure.

Personally, I look forward to the day where the after-thought hotel gym is a thing of the past and instead, the global movement of wellness-savvy travellers are given dynamic choices to suit their personal requirements, whether it's a post-weights protein shake, an app with the best running and cycling routes taking in key destination attractions, a jetlag recovery package or an in-room fitness video on demand. Hotels have a real opportunity to offer it all.

Gemma Greenwood, Editor

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Business Traveller

Middle East

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MOTIVATE MEDIA GROUP

Editor-in-Chief Obaid Humaid Al Tayer

Managing Partner and Group Editor Ian Fairservice

Editor Gemma Greenwood

Art Director Clarkwin Cruz

Editorial Co-ordinator Londresa Flores

Contributors Tom Otley, Hannah Brandler, Allyson

Portee, Melanie Swan, Seher Asaf, Chris Hall, Julian

Gregory, Ramsey Qubein, Jeff Mills

General Manager - Production S Sunil Kumar

Assistant Production Manager Binu Purandaran

Production Supervisor Venita Pinto

Chief Commercial Officer Anthony Milne

Group Sales Manager Dane Hills

PANACEA MEDIA LTD

Managing Director Julian Gregory

Associate Publisher Middle East Rania Apthorpe

Global Editor-in-Chief Tom Otley

THIS ISSUE'S PICKS



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Make the most of 24 hours in Egypt's world-famous historical playground (Page 16)



EAT 'APPY IN JEDDAH

Taste authentic dishes from the city's oldest restaurants without leaving your hotel (Page 18)



FIT FOR TRAVEL

New hotel concepts to help travellers keep their body and mind in shape (Page 22)



HEAD OFFICE: Media One Tower, Dubai Media City, PO Box 2331, Dubai, UAE.

Tel: +971 4 427 3000, Fax: +971 4 428 2270, E-mail: btme@motivate.ae

DUBAI MEDIA CITY: Office 508, 5th Floor, Building 8, Dubai, UAE.

Tel: +971 4 390 3550, Fax: +971 4 390 4845

ABU DHABI: PO Box 43072, UAE. Tel: +971 2 677 2005, Fax: +971 2 677 0124,

E-mail: motivate-adh@motivate.ae

LONDON: Acre House, 11/15 William Road, London NW1 3ER, UK.

E-mail: motivateuk@motivate.ae



Panacea Media Ltd

41-43 Maddox Street, London, W1S 2PD

Tel +44 (0)20 7821 2700 businesstraveller.com

Panacea Publishing Asia Ltd

#2408 24/F Dominion Centre, 43-59 Queen's Road East, Wanchai,

Hong Kong, Tel: +852 2594 9300, Fax: +852 25196846

SUBSCRIPTIONS: email subscriptions@motivate.ae; tel +971 4 427 3542



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Boeing forecasts return to growth for ME aviation

AIRCRAFT MANUFACTURER BOEING anticipates demand for 2,945 new airplanes in the Middle East valued at US\$685 billion over the next two decades as the industry recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic in the medium and long term.

The projection is part of Boeing's 2020 Commercial Market Outlook (CMO), an annual forecast of 20-year demand for commercial airplanes and services.

The 2020 CMO reflects the impact of the pandemic and Boeing's view of near- medium- and long-term market dynamics globally and regionally. Commercial aviation and services markets will continue to face significant challenges earlier in the 20-year forecast, while showing resilience and a return to growth trend over the longer term, it says. Over the next 20 years, passenger traffic growth in the Middle East is projected to increase by an average of 4.3 per cent per year, above the global average of four percent growth annually.

"In recent decades, several airlines in the Middle East have leveraged their geographical position to connect rapidly growing Asian economies and the more mature markets in Europe," said Darren Hulst, Boeing Vice President of Commercial Marketing. "At the historical crossroads connecting Europe, Africa and Asia, the Middle East and its airlines will remain a critical hub of sixth-freedom passenger flows and cargo throughout the 20-year outlook."

The Middle East commercial fleet is expected to reach 3,500 by 2039 – more than doubling the current 1,510 airplanes – to address replacement needs and growth, according to the CMO.

SAUDIA unveils G20 livery

SAUDI ARABIAN AIRLINES (SAUDIA) has customised the livery of three of its aircraft to mark the kingdom's

G20 presidency. An A320, B787-9 and B777-300ER were transformed to welcome participants to the virtual G20 Summit, which ran from November 21 to 22 in the capital, Riyadh. The bespoke livery reflected the theme of this year's G20 meeting – 'Realising Opportunities of the 21st Century for All'. SAUDIA is also celebrating its 75th anniversary this year as one of the first airlines established in the Middle East region. The carrier currently serves 95 destinations across four continents to all 28 domestic airports in the kingdom.



EMIRATES ROLLS OUT MORE A380 SERVICES TO UK AND RUSSIA

EMIRATES HAS SIGNIFICANTLY upped its A380 services to the UK and Russia.

The airline now operates its super jumbo four times a day to London Heathrow, six times a week to Manchester and has increased its twice-weekly service to Moscow to daily.

Flights to UK cities Birmingham and Glasgow have also increased from four-a-week to daily, while an additional four weekly flights will be operated by a B777-300ER to Manchester.

The expansion of Emirates' UK services follows the recent establishment of the UK-UAE air travel corridor with travellers entering the UK from the UAE no longer be required to quarantine. In the other direction, UK travellers heading to Dubai can opt to take their COVID-19 PCR tests 96 hours in advance of their flight, or on arrival in Dubai, making travel to the destination easier.

Emirates' enhanced services to Moscow will meet increased demand from leisure and business travellers visiting Dubai and other onward destinations across its network.

EMIRATES IN FLYSAFAIR PARTNERSHIP

IT'S NOW EASIER TO FLY to key destinations in South Africa, thanks to a new partnership between Emirates and FlySafair.

The UAE airline and South African low-cost carrier have signed an interline agreement, providing single-ticket travel and through-tagging of baggage for travellers transferring from Emirates' three gateways – Johannesburg, Cape Town and Durban – to FlySafair destinations in South Africa, including Port Elizabeth, East London and George.





STEP IN TO BESPOKE LUXURY OF WINNERS

Voted “Best Business Hotel in Cairo” for 2020 by the readers of Business Traveller Middle East, InterContinental Cairo Citystars offers luxury amid lush gardens in the buzzing hub of Citystars Heliopolis, next to Stars Centre Mall. Whether you are in Cairo for business or leisure, the hotel puts everything at your fingertips.

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UPFRONT

DUBAI AIRPORTS PREPARES FOR TEL AVIV FLIGHTS

DUBAI AIRPORTS, operator of Dubai International and Dubai World Central, is gearing up for the launch of commercial flights connecting Dubai to Tel Aviv. The entity has received representatives from El Al, Israir and Arkia following the recently announced launch of direct air services between Dubai and Tel Aviv. They include a twice daily B787 service by El Al; six weekly A320 flights by Israir and daily services by Arkia on the Embraer E-195 E-Jet, all launching this month. flydubai already operates a double daily between Dubai and Tel Aviv.



EL AL AND ETIHAD AIRWAYS SIGN MOU FOR DEEPER COOPERATION

THE CEOS OF EL AL Israel Airlines and Etihad Airways have signed a virtual Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to explore “deeper cooperation”.

Inked last month, the wide-ranging MOU looks to introduce joint codeshare services between Abu Dhabi and Tel Aviv and on the global flight networks beyond the two carriers’ hubs.

It also contains plans for greater commercial cooperation in the fields of cargo, engineering, loyalty, destination management and the optimal

use of pilot and cabin crew training facilities.

The teams of the Etihad Guest and EL AL Matmid loyalty programmes will therefore start to explore reciprocal earn-and-burn opportunities for their members and other benefits while the airlines’ destination management teams will collaborate to encourage reciprocal inbound tourism to Abu Dhabi and Tel Aviv.

Etihad Airways will launch daily services between Abu Dhabi and Tel Aviv from March 28, 2021

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HIA region’s first airport to install advanced baggage screening tech

HAMAD INTERNATIONAL (HIA) has become the first airport in the region to obtain new-to-market high-tech baggage screening kit.

To get technical, the airport has purchased Smiths Detection’s HI-SCAN 6040 CTiX, which offers advanced screening of carry-on baggage at security checkpoints using Computed Tomography (CT) X-ray.

HIA said it selected this equipment to deliver the highest levels of security and to improve baggage screening processes, therefore enhancing the passenger experience. The new cabin baggage screening equipment uses a CT gantry that rotates at a constant speed as baggage is carried through its conveyor belt. Hundreds of images are taken of each bag to create 3D imagery in real-time, allowing for more accurate assessments of the bag’s contents.

This investment in advanced screening technology allows passengers to keep electronic devices and liquids in their hand baggage, reducing passenger stress and wait times.

FAA CLEARS BOEING B737 MAX TO FLY AGAIN

THE US FEDERAL Aviation Administration (FAA) has rescinded its order that halted the commercial operation of Boeing’s B737 Max 8 and Max 9 aircraft, paving the way for the plane to return to the skies. All Max aircraft worldwide have been grounded since March 2019 as result of two fatal crashes that killed 346 people.

In a statement Boeing said that an Airworthiness Directive issued by the FAA had detailed the steps that must be taken before US carriers can resume services with B737 Max aircraft, including “installing software enhancements, completing wire separation modifications, conducting pilot training and accomplishing thorough de-preservation activities that will ensure the airplanes are ready for service”.

Similar directives are now expected to follow from European aviation officials.

Boeing said it had worked closely with airlines over the last 20 months, “providing them with detailed recommendations regarding long-term storage and ensuring their input was part of the effort to safely return the airplanes to service”.



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New METT Hotels & Resorts brand to debut in Turkey

METT HOTELS & RESORTS, a new lifestyle hotel brand created by UAE-based Sunset Hospitality Group, will open its first property in Bodrum, Turkey, next Spring.

The 105-key METT Hotel & Resort Bodrum in Haremham Cove will feature 72 guest rooms, plus 33 suites, lofts and private villas. Facilities will include four internationally acclaimed dining concepts, two outdoor swimming pools, a traditional Turkish hammam, MOI Spa and the RAISE Fitness & Wellness concept.

It is now accepting bookings for stays starting from March 21, 2021.

METT is described as a “refined, elegant and laid-back collection of lifestyle hotels and resorts inspired by the simple, balanced bliss of Mediterranean living, with social dining and lifestyle entertainment at the heart of the whole experience”.



Marriott launches business travel programme for SMBs

MARRIOTT INTERNATIONAL has launched a new travel programme designed exclusively for small-to-medium-size businesses (SMBs) booking stays at one of its 950-plus hotels across Europe, the Middle East and Africa (EMEA).

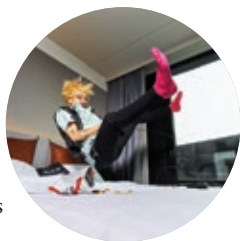
Marriott Bonvoy Business Ready is a one-stop booking platform with benefits including: an eight per cent discount on standard rates, including breakfast, valid seven days a week; a Marriott Bonvoy sign-on bonus of 2,500 points for first paid stay (new members only); no pre-payment required; dedicated landing page and process; and access to company tracking and reporting suite/dashboard, EMEA group and catering promotions via Marriott Bonvoy Events and Marriott Bonvoy specific benefits such as mobile check-in/key, late check-out and Wi-Fi and room upgrades.

See marriottbonvoy.com/businessready for more information.

Moxy makes its way to the Middle East

MARRIOTT WILL DEBUT its experiential Moxy hotel brand in the Middle East in 2025.

The hospitality giant has signed an agreement with Ingenious Holding Limited to operate Moxy Downtown Dubai, with 320 rooms featuring smart modular furniture, hi-tech touches and furiously fast Wi-Fi. Its industrial-chic design will include buzzing social spaces, such as a rooftop bar and restaurant with stunning views of Downtown Dubai, a bowling alley and a swimming pool.



December opening for DoubleTree by Hilton Dubai

DOUBLETREE BY Hilton Dubai M Square Hotel & Residences will open its doors this month (December).

The 458-room property, located in the city's historic Bur Dubai district, adjacent to Burjuman mall and metro station, will feature 327 rooms and suites and 131 serviced residences; three dining outlets, including a rooftop pool lounge; six meeting rooms and a grand ballroom; an executive lounge; outdoor swimming pools; a fully equipped fitness centre; and spa treatment rooms.

The 19-storey property will offer guests 360-degree views of Dubai's most popular attractions including the iconic Burj Khalifa, The Dubai Frame, The Museum of the Future, Dubai Eye and the Burj Al Arab.



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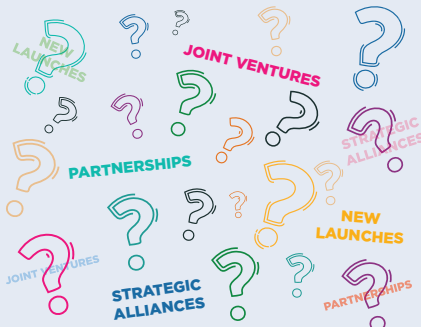


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LIVE ATM EVENT RETURNS TO DUBAI IN 2021

ARABIAN TRAVEL MARKET (ATM), the Middle East region's largest travel and tourism industry event, will make its live comeback in May next year.

The show, which will be staged under the theme 'a new dawn for travel and tourism', will take place at the Dubai World Trade Centre (DWTC) from May 16 to 19, 2021.

A virtual ATM will run a week later to ensure the event reaches the widest audience possible.

Now in its 27th year and working in collaboration with DWTC and Dubai's Department of Tourism and Commerce Marketing (DTCM), ATM 2021 will throw the spotlight on what the future holds for the industry, with emerging trends and the role of innovation to drive the sector forward, central to the discussion.

Supporting ATM's bounce back theme, a recent Colliers report – MENA Hotel Forecasts – estimated that 2021 will be a year of recovery, based on the assumption that hotel performance across the region is already improving.

Major destinations such as Dubai and Cairo are leading the way with estimated full-year 2021 occupancy levels of 68 per cent and 65 per cent respectively.

They will be closely followed by Abu Dhabi, Riyadh, Jeddah, Muscat and Amman, according to the Colliers report.

The announcement of a possible COVID-19 vaccine by Pfizer released in November also spells good news for the recovery of the travel and tourism sector, according to ATM's Exhibition Director, Danielle Curtis.

"If approved by the US Food & Drug Administration (FDA), Pfizer estimates it can roll out 50 million doses this year and up to 1.3 billion in 2021, enough to vaccinate almost 675 million people. So, we are confident that by May next year, we will be on the threshold of a new dawn for our industry," she said.

BUSINESS TRAVELLER BENEFITS

FLYDUBAI UPGRADES

flydubai is offering passengers the chance to bid for an upgrade to Business Class. Economy Class passengers travelling on eligible flights will be notified by flydubai via email when the bidding period has started. Once a bid is accepted the passenger is charged for the bid amount submitted for the upgrade and receive an updated booking confirmation. There is no charge if an upgrade is not possible.

ETIHAD MILES BOOST

Etihaad Guest, the loyalty programme of Etihad Airways, has launched two new unlimited member offers. Miles Transfer permits members to transfer miles between one another for a transaction fee of 10 per cent of the miles transfer amount. A minimum of 1,000 Etihad Guest Miles is required to make a transfer. Miles Booster enables members to boost their earned miles on recent cash flights in multiples of x1, x2 and x3 at a price of \$0.018 per mile.



FESTIVE FEASTS YOU WON'T WANT TO MISS

LA CANTINE DU FAUBOURG in

Dubai's Emirates Towers, considered one of 'the' places to business lunch, is serving a bevy of festive feasts to celebrate the holiday season.

If you're already a fan of the weekday lunch, you won't want to miss the Festive Business Lunch, served from noon to 2.45pm daily throughout December and promising a festive twist on menu favourites, with prices starting from AED110 per person. Alternatively, if you and your colleagues have a sweet tooth, why not take a meeting or coffee break to the next level by sharing a *Bûche de Noël* (a gourmet Yule Log)? You'll want to try both flavours, with the vanilla genoise and red fruit or chocolate, caramel and crunchy hazelnut option equally delicious. Yule Logs serve eight and must be ordered 24 hours in advance.




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I thought the whole world would be working from home

Darien Harris, Founding Partner at JansenHarris, talks WFH pros and cons and decides a hybrid approach is our best option



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The pandemic hit all of us like a tsunami. We could see it coming from a distance but underestimated how quickly our work and personal lives would be turned upside down. We all had to hit the ground running as we were forced to work from home.

Once the initial shock and novelty of lockdown wore off, we could take a step back and evaluate just how much life had changed. For better and for worse.

Business leaders became more sensitised to the heightened emotional needs of their employees. Colleagues shared a true lens into each other's lives. We got to know one another better, meet partners, children and occasionally, pets.

During this time, other unexpected benefits became apparent. No commuting, money saved and a better work-life balance.

A survey of workers in the US, UK, France, Germany, Japan and Australia, conducted at the beginning of the pandemic by collaboration tool company Slack, revealed the vast majority were happier working remotely. Only 11.6 per cent said they wanted to return to full-time office work. So that's it then; we're all working from home indefinitely?

Not so fast. Humans tend to overreact and underthink. When there is a major world event, the pendulum swings far and wide very quickly, but almost always ends up

resting somewhere in the middle, given enough time. Why do we go to restaurants when we can cook at home? Why join gyms, go to the movies, watch live sporting events? The answer lies in our evolution. We are social creatures. There's something unique that humans get from interacting with one another that doesn't come across via a screen.

There's something unique that humans get from interacting with one another

Screens keep distance between us. The more eye contact people have during a conversation, the more in sync they are with one another.

Video calls, in which you stare into a tiny camera, may make it appear that you're

looking someone in the eye, but it simply cannot replicate a face-to-face experience.

Studies show that prolonged social isolation is associated with a 26 per cent increased risk of premature death. It leads to a shrinking of the hippocampus, the part of the brain related to learning, memory, and spatial awareness. For people who live alone, the reality of remote work can be even bleaker. Human memories are short, so let's dig back into the not-so-distant past.

Best Buy, Yahoo and Aetna have all experimented with remote work in the past before doing an about turn. IBM came to a similar decision. In 2009, 40 per cent of its 386,000 employees in 173 countries worked remotely. By 2017, with revenue slumping, thousands were called back to the office. This all happened long after Peter Drucker, the management guru, declared in 1989 that "commuting to the office is obsolete".

What I propose is more of a hybrid approach, especially within the creative industry. We spend our time creating brands and building company culture. This happens with humans in the same room, bouncing ideas around, building upon one another's thoughts to solve a problem. Let your team have flexible time as long as performance doesn't suffer, but make sure to get people in a room during the week. For some companies that may be five times while for others, once may be enough.

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Whether you are on business or leisure, on a long-stay or a short escape, step in and enjoy a comprehensive lifestyle, defined by beautifully adorned serviced spaces and global recreational amenities. With separate living and dining areas, fully functional kitchenettes and breathtaking city views, the properties inspire balanced living.

Ascott Sari Jeddah, part of Ascott's prestigious portfolio is inspired by Parisian architecture, and eludes a sense of timeless sophistication. Located in the exclusive suburb of Sari, the boutique property offers studios, one-, and two-bedroom apartments. Parallely, perched in a vibrant community of fashion boutiques, restaurants, cafes and prime business centres, Ascott Tahlia Jeddah is Ascott's luxury property on the popular Tahlia street featuring studios, one-, two-, three- and penthouse apartments.

The perfect recluse for vibrant guests, Citadines Al Salamah is Ascott's stylish property in Salamah and is designed for comfort with studios, one-, two- and three-bedroom apartments. Sharing the same neighbourhood, Spectrums Residence Jeddah features exclusive two-bedroom serviced spaces for family and friends who enjoy spacious living.

For the safety of its guests, Ascott takes pride in being the first serviced residence in Jeddah to receive the accredited Bureau Veritas certification in line with its 'Ascott Cares' initiative. Residents looking for a local escape in the country can now avail a special offer of **up to 25% off on bookings with the Residents Special Promotion** at the-ascott.com/offers

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WORDS ALLYSON PORTEE

16

CAIRO

Step back in time and discover Egypt's ancient wonders in the City of a Thousand Minarets

Egypt, one of the world's ancient gems with a history dating back some 7,000 years, should be on everyone's bucket list. To get a flavour of this ancient land, which warrants a mega trip to really do it justice, the best starting point is Cairo. Of course, if you're visiting for business, it's tricky to pack in all that this colourful capital has to offer, from the iconic Pyramids of Giza to museums full of artifacts and ancient Egyptian art, but if you do only have 24 hours, hire a driver or an Uber to whisk you around the following hotspots.

1 Choose 'ful' for breakfast

Start your day with a traditional Egyptian breakfast at Zooba (zoobaeats.com), which is so good, it recently opened a branch in New York City. It might be a chain, but Zooba serves some of the best Egyptian street food in the capital. Try various types of 'ful' sandwiches. 'Ful' is fava beans soaked overnight and slow-cooked for 12 hours,

mashed with spices and mixed with olive oil, sunflower oil or flaxseed oil. We recommend a 'Taameya' sandwich, Zooba's very own fava bean and herb mix.

2 Get your pharaoh fix

With more than 120,000 items on display, you really need a full day, or even week, at the Egyptian Museum (egy monuments.gov.eg). It is the oldest archaeological museum in the Middle East showcasing the largest Pharaonic antiquities collection in the world. Set in Cairo's El Tahrir Square, the museum is also home to some of the world's most ancient pieces of art, as well as complete burials of Psusennes I, Thuya and the Narmer Palette, which commemorates the unification of Upper and Lower Egypt.

3 Enjoy lunch with a view

Before heading into the desert to see the pyramids, fuel up at nearby Andrea New Giza restaurant in the governate of



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Giza (andreamariouteya.com). It's situated on top of a hill with panoramic views overlooking the city and the menu is simple but fulfilling, offering cold mezze and the best grilled chicken or quail in the Cairo and Giza area.

4 See pyramids older than the greats

The ancient Egyptians lived in the east and believed that death was in the west, so the western part of Cairo is where they situated their burial grounds. Saqqara is an ancient burial ground that pre-dates the pyramids at Giza. It is where pharaohs, their families, administrators, generals and animals are buried. A pharaohs' entourage was buried in smaller burial sites surrounding the larger pyramids, which were meant for the kings. Ideally, you need a week to explore this area fully, but it is possible to gain insight into this ancient site in one to two hours.

5 Gaze in awe at Giza

One of the Seven Wonders Of The World, the Great

ABOVE: The iconic Pyramids of Giza

TOP RIGHT: You'll find Arabian lamps at Khan el-Khalili Souk



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Pyramids at Giza are a must see. After all, this is the reason why most people visit Egypt in the first place, right? Built more than 4,500 years ago these large pyramids tell a story. The first and largest pyramid was built for Pharaoh Khufu in 2550 B.C.; the second largest was built for his son Pharaoh Khafre in 2520 B.C.; and the third and smallest pyramid was built by and for Pharaoh Menkaure in 2490 BC. If you grab a great tour guide, it's possible to take external and internal pyramid tours. External tours can be done on foot, camelback or horseback too.

6 Carb up on Koshary

You can't leave Cairo without eating Egypt's national dish, Koshary, influenced by Italian, Indian and Middle Eastern cuisine. Make sure you're hungry because it's a carb overload of macaroni, rice, lentils with chickpeas, garlic vinegar and crispy fried onions. All of this is topped with a tomato sauce. The place to try it is 'Koshary Abou Tarek' (abutarek.com), which also has restaurant branches in Dubai and Saudi Arabia.

7 Shop like an Egyptian

If you're a lover of souks (open-air bazaar markets) then Khan el-Khalili Souk is the one for you. Here you'll find Egyptian craftsmanship at its best, so souvenir shopping is well and truly on the agenda. One of the most well-known souks in the Middle East, it's easy to find Arabian-style lamps and handcrafted metal items for which the Egyptians are well known. **BT**

EAT 'APPY IN JEDDAH

New food delivery app Lugmety is giving Jeddah visitors the chance to taste authentic local cuisine from the comfort of their hotel room

WORDS GEMMA GREENWOOD

The ancient city of Jeddah is a hidden gastronomic gem, but it's growing in popularity with residents, as well as visiting foodies, seeking authentic cuisine.

The Jeddah Historic District – known locally as Al Balad – is not only the oldest part of the city and a UNESCO World Heritage Site, but has a rich culinary heritage dating back to the 7th century.

Its maze of alleyways are bursting with amazing places to eat and drink, including some of the oldest restaurants in Jeddah.

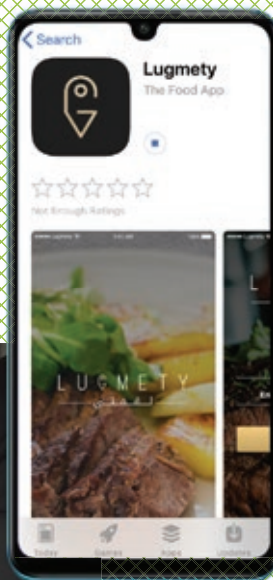
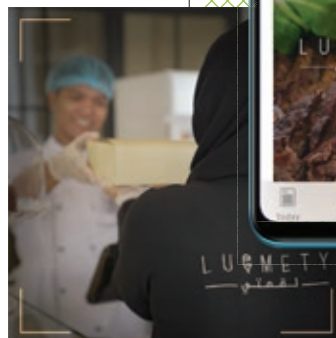
The kingdom's Ministry of Culture, which has a vision to preserve Saudi Arabia's identity and cultural heritage, is ploughing investment into the preservation of the district's unique character and historical importance. Its many initiatives include reviving and promoting Al Balad's most

ABOVE: Al Basali is one of the oldest fish restaurants in Jeddah

RIGHT: New food delivery app, Lugmety

BELOW: Get authentic local cuisine delivered to your hotel

FAR RIGHT: Baeshen Fish Restaurant



traditional and revered restaurants through a range of projects, from introducing new cutting-edge technology to carefully restoring building facades and re-designing restaurant signage.

The ministry recently launched new food delivery app, Lugmety, giving these historic family-run businesses the financial and technological ability to reach new audiences, and – in the era of COVID-19 – an opportunity to capitalise on growing demand for authentic local food delivered to your home, or your hotel room should you be visiting the Red Sea city.

Lugmety, which can be downloaded on the app store, gives visitors access to genuine culinary experiences that might otherwise remain unearthed. From traditional family bakeries and some of the oldest fish restaurants in Saudi, to eateries serving authentic hummus, masoub



and fowl, ordering via Lugmetry gives you a real taste of Jeddah without leaving your hotel.

It will also give you food for thought, so when the pandemic is over, you'll know exactly which restaurants to visit during your next trip. For a taste of what to expect, here are some bite-sized details on the Jeddah Historic District's top restaurants:

Al Basali Fish Restaurant

Al Basali is one of the oldest fish restaurants in Saudi Arabia with the friendliest service. It has been serving delicious fish and seafood dishes for more than 70 years and during that time, its fried fish and catch of the day have become firm menu favourites. Its 'bakhamry' appetiser also comes highly recommended. It's made of small pieces of fried bread, similar to local donuts, but not as sweet.

Signature dish: Fried fish

History: Founded in 1949 by Hamed Al Basali, who then passed it on to his son, Nabil. The family has created seven herb mixes that remain the restaurant's best-kept secret to this day.

Tel: +966 504 301 163

Baeshen Fish Restaurant

Baeshen Fish Restaurant, located in Al Nada Market, is more than 70 years old, earning it the title of one of the oldest fish restaurants in Jeddah. **Signature dish:** Fish (grilled or fried) and shrimps, both served with the famous Sayyadiyah rice.

History: The owner has kept the same routine for years – he goes to the fish market with his team before sunrise and buys enough fresh fish for the day. He closes the restaurant once all the fish has been sold. As a rule, the owner never sells fish that has not been caught that day, however fresh it may be.

Tel: +966 50 367 4710



CLOCKWISE FROM RIGHT:
Fattah's Foul; Abu
Saeed; Abu Ouf;
Al Sheikh Bakery

Basaad's Harissa Restaurant

You need to get up early to appreciate this authentic eatery. It opens its doors before sunrise and closes at 8am after typically serving some 300 customers.

Signature dish: Harissa (made of wheat, ghee, meat and meat broth) and Aseeda (made of dates, flour and ghee).

History: Founded in 1949, the restaurant has been passed from generation to generation.

Tel: +966 2 642 1759

Fattah's Foul

As its name suggests, Fattah's Foul serves just that – a delicious foul (fava bean) dish.

Signature dish: Foul (fava beans)

History: Founded in 1980, Fattah's Foul opens before sunrise and closes at midday. It then opens again before sunset and closes at midnight.

Tel: +966 2 604 0620

Al Sheikh Bakery (Forn Al Sheikh)

Al Sheikh Bakery is one of the oldest traditional bakeries in Jeddah. Around 120 years old, it specialises in traditional grain bread.

Signature dish: Wholewheat bread and bran bread.

History: The restaurant was first established in 1887 in Madinah, the city where its founder was born into a grain-trading family. In 1920 he moved to Jeddah and opened Al Sheikh Bakery.

Tel: +966 2 645 7243

Naji Harbi Kebab Restaurant

A traditional kebab restaurant.

Signature dish: Kebabs

History: Founded in 1951 by Naji Al Harbi when he was just 16 years old.

Tel: +966 2 643 8070





Uncle Jalal's Hummus

A restaurant dedicated to this chickpea and tahini classic.

Signature dish: Hummus

History: Established in 1947, the restaurant serves up to 300 plates of hummus each day.

Tel: +966 50 908 9565

Abu Saeed

Abu Saeed specialises in offal (organ meats) including liver, kidneys and hearts, which are normally eaten with bread.

Signature dish: Sauteed liver

History: This restaurant was founded in 1960 by Saeed Al Amoudi who passed away three years ago and handed it over to his daughter, Sanaa.

Tel: N/A



A gastronomic journey

Jeddah Historic District's culinary history is arguably one of the best ways to tell the story of Jeddah and how it became such an important port city. The district is a microcosm of Saudi's multicultural society - Al Balad was the arrival point for pilgrims and traders coming to Jeddah. Here they would disembark their boats and enter the city, with an appetite for Jeddah's well-known cuisine. The district's eclectic mix of restaurants from the Arab Peninsula reflects the melting pot of cultures and beliefs that have, for centuries, formed the lifeblood of the city.

Visit www.moc.gov.sa

Abu Ouf

A favourite for authentic Arabian fast food – ideal for a snack or meal on the go.

Signature dish: Mutabaq (thin pastry with sweet or savoury fillings).

History: Abu Ouf first opened in 1920. Each dish takes approximately three minutes to cook, making the restaurant incredibly busy and very convenient.

Tel: +966 2 647 0307



FIT

WORDS GEMMA GREENWOOD

The global 'health is wealth' movement accelerated by the pandemic is giving hotels the extra push they need to offer travellers what they really want – flexible fitness and wellbeing choices for their body, mind and spirit

FOR TRAVEL

There's no doubt about it; 2020 has been a game changer for the health, fitness and wellness sector. Pre-COVID-19, the global 'health is wealth' movement had gained strong traction, but nine months into the pandemic, body and mind wellbeing has become a priority for all.

Never before have so many people on this planet turned their focus to moving more, eating better and perhaps most poignantly, practising methods to improve their mental health to reduce anxiety and promote sleep during what has undoubtedly been 'the' most unsettling period in modern history.

Some 59 per cent of people are more conscious about their overall health as a result of COVID-19, and 73 per cent plan to eat and drink healthier, according to the latest research by FMCG Gurus.

The pandemic's impact on our every-day routine has also led to a fast evolution of fitness and wellness trends. With more of us working from home (WFH) than ever before and gyms forced to close for extended periods, we've been fast to adapt.

Video-on-demand fitness classes, available anytime anywhere, have become a saviour for many, breaking up the monotony of yet another day of WFH and enabling us to try new training methods at a time that suits us. Demand for already popular sleep and meditation apps and videos have rocketed too.

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In what Google CEO Sundar Pichai calls “a sign of the times”, daily views of guided meditation videos on YouTube (the streaming site owned by Google) have surged 40 per cent since mid-March, while San Francisco-based relaxation, meditation and sleep app, Calm, was downloaded 3.4 million times in April alone, according to figures from Sensor Tower.

With so much choice and flexibility now available to a new generation of wellness-savvy global citizens, most of whom will soon resume their travel plans, the hospitality sector needs to adapt to meet their post-COVID expectations. Travellers will demand new fitness and wellbeing experiences, from in-room or outdoor workouts to meditation apps and concierge advice on local running routes that maximise sightseeing opportunities.

Goodbye to tick-the-box gyms

Hotels are generally behind the curve when it comes to their wellbeing offering versus guest expectations, according to

Tea Ros, founder and managing director of Strategic Hotel Consulting, who advises hotel owners and operators how to create value for guests.

“Hotel health and fitness solutions are sometimes poorly conceived, resulting in low guest satisfaction,” she says. “Hotel gyms are often a tick-the-box exercise with limited and impractical design, traditionally led by fitness equipment manufacturers.”

We’ve all stepped into a hotel gym and observed random equipment, sometimes packed into a small, poorly ventilated room with no natural daylight and thought, ‘no thanks’.

Ros refers to these gyms as a “non-sensical after thought”.

“Traditionally hotels have been slow to adapt to fitness trends – the movement towards functional training and in-room and outdoor training are just some examples – and in a post-COVID world, where guests have a heightened interest in health, they face the risk of being left behind if they don’t adapt,” she says.

“Traditionally hotels have been slow to adapt to fitness trends”

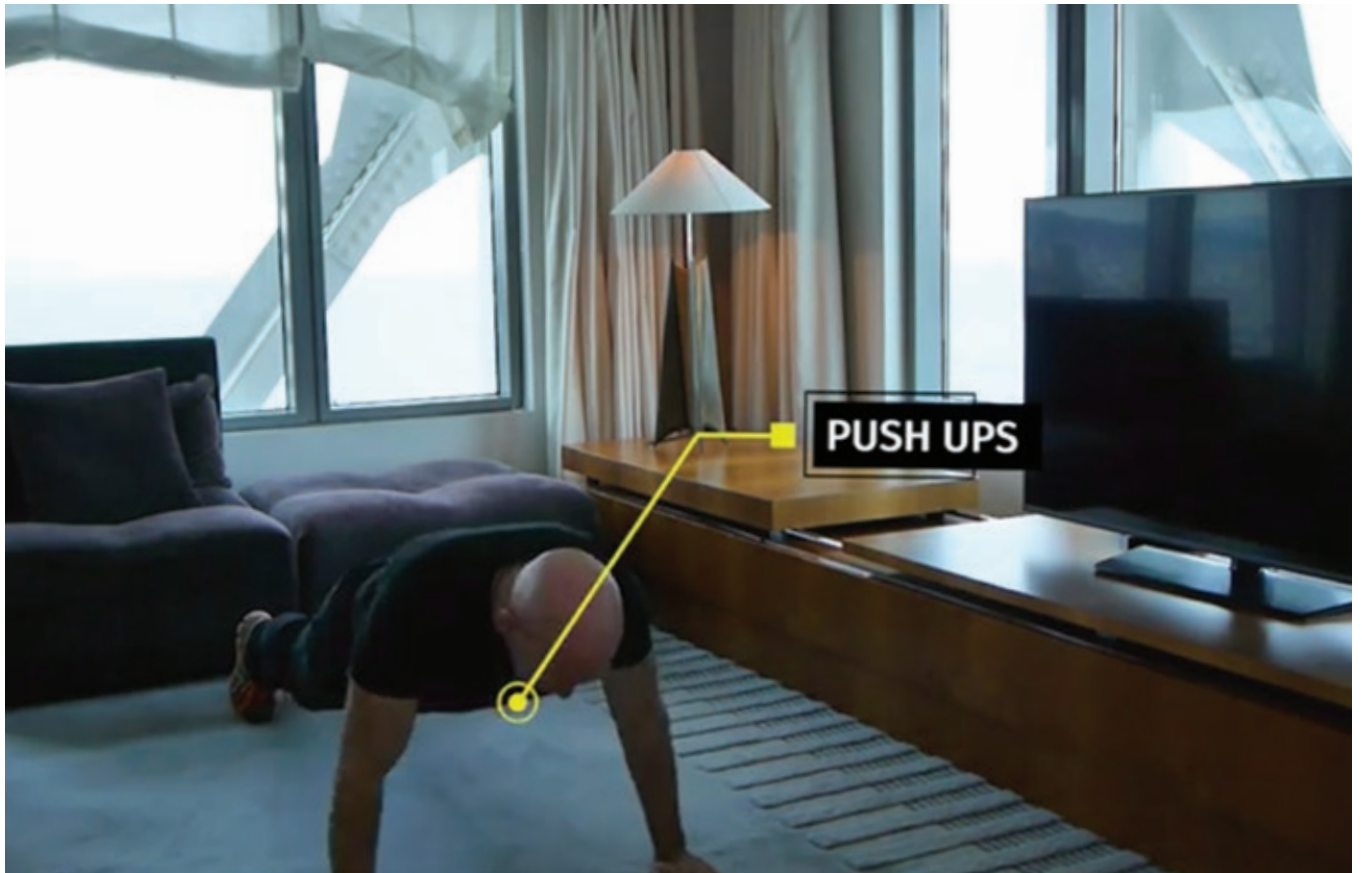
“The immediate paradox is that guests want to exercise during their stay, but many don’t want to go to the gym, so there’s a real opportunity for hotels to differentiate.”

Ros notes that 75 per cent of people are concerned about hotel gym safety as a result of the pandemic, citing the Gensler Hospitality Pulse Survey 2020, while in-room workouts are the favoured option for 27 per cent of business travellers, according to Carlson Wagonlit Travel (CWT).

An even more compelling argument, more than 83 per cent of business travellers now consider the gym and wellbeing activities on offer at a hotel before booking their stay (CWT).

ABOVE: Business travellers are now making fitness a priority (photo credit: Privilee)

PREVIOUS PAGES: Yoga on the Burj Al Arab beach (photo credit: Dubai Tourism)



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Peak performance

With consumer demand for fitness and wellness opportunities at an all-time high, Ros has an action plan to get the hotel industry up to speed. She's teamed up with her partner, Mark Arnall – a Formula

ABOVE: F1 performance coach and physio Mark Arnall

One performance coach and physiotherapist with 23 years of experience keeping F1 drivers in tip-top shape while travelling the world – to create a holistic health and fitness solution that meets the needs of today's guests.

For the last 18 years, Arnall has worked with Finnish F1 champion Kimi Räikkönen and previously with drivers Mika Häkkinen and David Coulthard and during this time, has spent more than 240 nights in hotels every year.

Of course, he's become adept at maintaining his own health and wellbeing and that of his drivers while on the road, developing successful in-hotel programmes and best practices that Ros says translate particularly well to on-the-go business travellers.

Their plan is to partner with “like-minded hotels” to create “first-class health and fitness solutions that motivate guests to lead a healthy lifestyle”.

“With Mark as their fitness ambassador, hotels can take a 360-degree approach to guest training, recovery, jet-lag reduction, nutrition and more,” explains Ros. “He can give their guests access to the tools F1 champions have been using for years, with great results.”

His holistic strategy spans in-room video training and travel/jet-lag recovery programmes, destination exercise planning, mental training tips for best performance, immune system support, advice on how to reduce travel aches and pains and crucially, nutrition and hydration – again, for performance and recovery. Health camps for corporate groups as an alternative executive retreat are also part of the offering.

Ros believes reliance on hotel gyms will soon wane as guests opt for more in-room and outdoor fitness options. Hotels that retain gym spaces will need to “step it up” and “do it properly”, she adds.



Luxury leaders

The tide is already turning in the luxury hotel sector, with aspirational brands including Kempinski, Four Seasons and Fairmont, to name a few, taking the lead in developing wellbeing strategies that tap into current trends.

Kempinski Hotels recently partnered with fitness company Peloton to offer in-room exercise bikes at its hotels in Germany. Guests can stream live cycling and fitness classes from the Peloton Studios in New York and London or watch them on demand.

Kempinski's Chief Quality Officer, Benedikt Jaschke, acknowledges that "today, more than ever, guests want to maintain and improve their fitness when travelling" and look for an "opportunity to continue their regular 'home' training in their hotel room".

Peloton bikes are already proving popular with guests at numerous hotels across the US, Canada and the UK, with all participating properties listed on the Peloton Hotel Finder (hotelfinder.onepeloton.com).

Four Seasons Hotels & Resorts has taken the celebrity trainer route, signing up Harley Pasternak to launch 'Fit With Four Seasons'. The full-body fitness 'guru' is enhancing hotel fitness facilities and creating exclusive fitness programming at Four Seasons properties worldwide. Guests can access challenges and routines in their room or at the Pasternak-designed hotel gym, with special programmes available to combat jetlag or 'desk' fatigue.

The new gym at Four Seasons Hotel Bahrain Bay represents Pasternak's first collaboration in the Middle East with his signature design including intuitive flow from station to station, the latest equipment from HOIST Fitness and a private area dedicated to personal training. It also showcases Pasternak's favourite machine, the MotionCage circuit trainer, ideal for small groups, with multiple stations offering everything from a squat rack and jump station to battle ropes and a punching bag.

Guests on the go can also access his workout videos on the Four Seasons app.



ABOVE: The Pasternak-designed gym at Four Seasons Hotel Bahrain Bay

TOP: Kempinski has partnered with Peloton

"Today, more than ever, guests want to maintain and improve their fitness when travelling"

Fairmont Fit takes matters a little further, offering "a host of paths to fulfil your quest for personal wellbeing – from heart-racing workout routines to heartfelt moments of peace".

This programme hinges around six pillars, including a gear-lending programme with kit delivered to your room; green spaces where you can tap into the healing power of nature; culinary journeys connecting you to the local landscape; immersive spa experiences; cultural exploration and destination discovery for wellbeing; and a new plastic-free sustainable water policy.

Let's get digital

Fairmont's parent company, Accor, has also partnered with wellness technology company Three Sages to launch restorative in-room video programmes at select properties in North and Central America. The tie-off offers Fairmont, Sofitel and Swissôtel guests complimentary yoga, stretching, breath work, mindfulness and sleep practices via the in-room entertainment systems.

For Swissôtel it's another service bolstering its already strong wellness offering, with many properties,



including Swissôtel Al Ghurair in Dubai now featuring re-designed rooms that enhance guest wellbeing through the use of circadian lighting, non-allergenic materials, improved air quality and more.

Pullman is another brand packing a punch in the wellness arena. Having recently rolled out a highly

successful neighbourhood gym concept (Pullman Power Fitness) at several properties, the brand then announced a partnership with New Zealand-based fitness-class giant Les Mills, initially offering guests the brand's globally popular video-on-demand workouts at 50 hotels around the world.

ABOVE: Accor offers on-demand digital wellness experiences with Three Sages

RIGHT: Fairmont Fit offers destination running experiences

The 'Pullman Power Fitness Fueled by Les Mills' experience includes a complimentary 30-day membership to Les Mills on Demand (LMOD) and Les Mills TV in China – the brand's online fitness library of more than 1,000 workouts. Guests will also have access to virtual group and individual classes from 2021, while live classes and events are on the cards too.

The programme, led by a team of worldwide fitness instructors and entrepreneurs known as the Pullman Fitness Squad, has already launched at Pullman Doha in the Middle East, as well as properties in China and New Zealand.

"With health and fitness now a top-tier priority for people of all ages, there is huge potential for forward-thinking brands like Pullman to meet growing consumer demand for high-quality wellness offerings as part of their travel experience," confirms Keith Burnet, CEO of Les Mills Global Markets.

"We're looking forward to combining the scalability of digital fitness with the thrill of live workouts to offer Pullman guests a world-beating fitness experience that will leave them happier and healthier by the end of their stay."





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All the feels

At the very top end of the hotel market the stakes have been raised even higher as post-pandemic, High Net Worth Individuals (HNWIs) demand even more sophisticated wellbeing solutions that improve health and peace of mind.

Raffles Hotels & Resorts has therefore gone all out and crafted its entire guest offering around the wellness movement, acknowledging the integral role it now plays in the traveller experience, moving from a “megatrend” to a key expectation.

Its recently launched ‘Emotional Wellbeing by Raffles’ initiative is a global blueprint for wellness, based around design, nutrition and “rituals for serenity”. This encompasses the exclusively Raffles ‘Second Nature’ hotel design philosophy of creating harmonious and natural environments through Feng Shui and

“The pandemic has led to a super acceleration of peoples’ demand for health and wellbeing”



Biophilia; nutrition to support sleep, travel recovery and the relationship between the mind and digestive system; as well as rituals that promote serenity, peace and revitalisation.

These are delivered by Raffles Butlers who are now trained to curate and guide the entire guest wellness journey.

“As the expectation for wellness luxury travel continues to grow, we must look beyond material luxuries to experiences that balance the mind, body and spirit,” explains Emlyn Brown, Global Vice President, Well-Being, Luxury & Premium Brands, Accor. “At Raffles we believe that true luxury is not about what you do, but how you feel. Once the pandemic is under control and our luxury guests return to their normal routines, there will be an even greater demand for wellness activities that embrace the key health modalities of nutrition, mindfulness and sleep.”



The democratisation of fitness

Brown acknowledges that until recently, comprehensive guest wellbeing offerings have focused almost exclusively on luxury travellers and although his remit is to create wellness strategies for Accor's premium and luxury brands, he stresses the post-COVID need for a "democratisation of fitness", making it accessible "to the largest number of guests possible".

"The pandemic has led to a super acceleration of peoples' demand for health and wellbeing and our message is clear – we want fitness to be central to the hotel experience across every single brand, making it available to all generations and demographics, enabling them to exercise the way they want to and nudging them towards healthier practices," he says.

Brown notes that even pre-COVID-19, 75 to 80 per cent of guests across all of Accor's 35-plus brands were making a conscious effort to look after their wellbeing, so this mindset has "become the norm".

With the pandemic accelerating this wellness movement, the hotel industry must catch up and respond with solutions that tackle fitness, nutrition and mindfulness, he says

"Guests want to move, so it has become an important part, if not 'the' most important part of the hotel wellbeing offering," he adds.

CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE: Emotional Wellbeing by Raffles; The wellbeing experience at Raffles Dubai; Swissôtel Al Ghurair has a strong fitness focus; Pullman Power Fitness Fuelled by Les Mills

Community fitness calls

When it comes to hotel gyms, Brown says that generally speaking, most are "not what they should be". The "big banks of treadmills" that were a differentiator for hotels 25 years ago, no longer cut it, he adds.

Accor is therefore looking to draw on key elements of its "game-changing" Pullman Power Fitness concept to create modern experiences for today's gym-savvy travellers across its portfolio of brands.



Launched in October, Pullman Power Fitness replaces the "one-size-fits-all" hotel gym environment. Pitched as the "world's first boutique fitness hotel brand", it also introduces a new social dimension to the guest stay.

"Hotels have been focused on bringing in people for community experiences in their lobbies, bars and restaurants, but the one space that is probably the most dynamic, with the most potential for animated community activity, is our gyms, and this is what started the approach for Pullman," explains Brown.

"We wanted to create our own fitness brand, drawing on all the modern elements of exercise so that new and sophisticated users could come in and do all the things they can do back home, if not more. From HIIT and recovery zones and equipment similar to what you might find in a CrossFit space, to video-on-demand exercise areas, it's very attractive, fun, dynamic and community based in a highly-stylised environment."

With the pandemic amplifying demand for health and wellbeing solutions, hotels are in a "great position" to offer them says Brown. The industry should not only "match and mirror" this trend, but "exceed expectations" through guest education and exceptional experiences, he stresses.

The hotel concierge will take on a new role in this respect, he adds, offering a much more wellness-focused check in.

In the near future we can expect our concierge's knowledge to go beyond practical advice on places to eat, taxi prices and shop opening times. They will be expected to provide information on the top Pilates class or boot camp in town, where the locals go for their post-workout protein shake and the best running route for sightseeing and cultural hotspots. Insider intelligence on wellness will be considered as essential as who and what to tip and how best to travel to the airport during rush hour. **BT**



DESTINATION FITNESS

From desert cycle tracks and city-wide fitness drives, to dedicated sports districts and high-altitude treks, the UAE offers travellers the chance to explore and stay in shape at the same time

The UAE has become a health and fitness destination in its own right, appealing to visitors who want to stay active while discovering the country's diverse natural and manmade beauty. For many, it's also a chance to become immersed in every day UAE life. Here are our top five picks of fitness experiences worth a try.

Al Qudra Cycling Track

A popular destination with adventure seekers and fitness enthusiasts alike, this 86km cycle track promises amazing views of the desert and the chance to catch a glimpse of local wildlife – including the Arabian oryx. Whether you're a professional or novice rider, it's an experience not to be missed, particularly at sunrise and sunset. There are rest stations and restrooms along the way if you need to take a break and the Trek UAE bike shop, located at the end of Al Qudra Road, is a great place to rent your bike. visitdubai.com

ABOVE: Hudayriyat Island is Abu Dhabi's new active lifestyle destination

RIGHT: Privilee gives members access to fitness activities galore

#DUBAI30X30

Dubai Fitness Challenge (#DUBAI30X30) is an annual celebration of fitness and wellness and you're invited to join. Launched in 2017, the challenge is simple: complete 30 minutes of activity each day for 30 days, with a month-long calendar of free workouts, fitness events and wellness-centric entertainment available on tap to inspire you and keep you moving. You can run in the desert dunes, challenge yourself to a boot camp, swim in open water, cycle through the city streets or take part in a free mega outdoor exercise class. Dubai has also teamed up with top fitness trainers to provide 30 high-tech workout stations at locations emirate wide, so there is no excuse not to exercise when you visit. You've just missed the 2020 DUBAI30X30, which ran from October 30 to November 28, but there's plenty of time to dust off your training shoes or roll out your yoga mat for the 2021 edition. dubaifitnesschallenge.com



The Privilee app

If you're a regular UAE visitor, consider splashing out on Privilee, an app-based lifestyle membership offering exclusive access to the country's top leisure and fitness venues. Members get unlimited access to the best beach resorts, pools, gyms, fitness classes, tennis and squash courts, kids' clubs, plus spa deals and discounts at hundreds of bars and restaurants, so it's worth the investment. Privilee memberships can be purchased annually, or for one- or four-month time periods, from as little as AED 529 (US\$141) per month.

privilee.ae

Hudayriyat Island

Abu Dhabi has launched a new district dedicated to sports, leisure and entertainment on Hudayriyat Island. This active lifestyle destination spoils you for choice with sports fields and courts, jogging tracks, cycle tracks, footpaths, a bike park and indoor fitness facilities, as well as Abu Dhabi's newest outdoor adventure hub, Circuit X, featuring a BMX Track, Splash Park, High Rope Park and a Skate Park. Hudayriyat is also home to the UAE's biggest permanent obstacle course site at OCR Park, merging obstacle course racing and endurance fitness with the latest in technology to create an innovative new fitness challenge. For leisure, there's glamping and stargazing experiences at Bab Al Nojoum, the Hudayriyat Heritage Trail located along the waterfront, plus a promenade lined with cafés and restaurants, a skate park and a children's splash park and play area. If you fancy a swim, access to Hudayriyat Beach is free and features a dedicated swim zone.

hudayriyatland.ae

Jebel Jais Hiking

Grab your hiking boots and head for the hills, or rather the Hajar mountain range formed more than 70 million years ago in the eastern part of Ras Al Khaimah. More specifically, Jebel Jais, the UAE's highest peak at 1,934 metres above sea level, is home to six unique hiking trails of various difficulty levels. Spanning some 16km in total, the trails take you through the diverse mountain ecosystem and if you're lucky, you might bump into a mountain goat or donkey. The hikes are split between the upper and lower segment of Jebel Jais. You can opt for a self-guided tour or hire a guide through a local tour operator.

visitjebeljais.com **BT**



Land of Opportunity

U.S. President-elect Joe Biden's pledge to immediately lift travel bans impacting some countries in the Middle East will create fresh opportunities for Arab families to live, work and study in the United States



The Covid-19 global pandemic has had a massive impact on the aviation, travel and tourism industries and human migration generally. As flights are cancelled, so have been consular appointments throughout the Middle East as families compete to obtain visas to travel abroad.

As doors shut for access to the West, many families question their ability to transverse and roam freely. Aside from government mandated lockdowns, isolation within the confines of apartments, the inability to roam free and take flight has caused families to seriously consider the value of access. Access in the sense of crossing borders with less hindrance, access to greater healthcare should the family see an emergency, or access to future prosperity for later generations - all of which has come under question since the start of the pandemic and the inability to catch that flight abroad.

There are nevertheless some consistencies with Middle East travellers, notwithstanding the Covid-19 pan-

dem. Whether it is in the face of economic market vulnerability, geopolitical tensions between nation states, or the effects compounded by the pandemic, at some point families do ponder about greater access to the West, namely the United States. The more developed Middle Eastern countries have a high concentration of expats that made bold moves by leaving their motherland in seeking job opportunities for the betterment of themselves and their families. Notwithstanding, there is a looming understanding within expat communities that they cannot stay permanently, whether it be due to local regulations or personal desire. Should they then move back to India or Syria? Would their children flourish in their previous Eastern homeland? If not, where to and how?

Understanding this vulnerability, a cottage industry of migration experts in the Middle East has been providing solutions for travellers seeking new lands for future, and perhaps, permanent prosperity. Although there are companies that provide a pay-to-play scenario in which Caribbean passports are delivered to those seeking greater border access for visa-free travel, we examine a team of U.S.-licenced lawyers at the American Legal Center in Dubai and their vision of providing permanent access for families to the United States.

BELOW: Shai Zamanian speaks to associate Sara Berryane at The American Legal Center in Downtown Dubai



Biden Presidency promises new immigration opportunities

U.S. President-elect Joe Biden has in recent weeks unveiled his transition team and has promised immediate changes that would affect Middle Eastern travellers and prospective immigrants to the United States. President-elect Biden has vowed to include Muslim Americans in every social and political aspect in his administration. This is crucial for many of the clients at the American Legal Center in Dubai as outgoing President Donald Trump's travel exclusions affected citizens of many Middle Eastern countries.



Biden has informed Middle Eastern and Muslim civil rights organisations that he intends to revoke the travel ban impacting travellers from the Middle East. He understands that the doors have been shut to Middle Eastern travellers, that aside from the pandemic or the disparity in obtaining travel visas, there needs to be a greater discussion of inclusively from those of Middle Eastern descent. The positivity from the Biden camp has caused an explosion of interest for families residing in the Middle East but now looking to gain U.S. residency.

This new page for America will pave a path of new residents from the Middle East. As parents continue to send their children to U.S.-based colleges and universities, they are now more inclined to allow them to stay and embark on their careers and perhaps the commencement of their own families in the United States.

The American Legal Center in Dubai is dedicated to helping clients gain the right to live, study and work in the U.S. The common thread behind most of the clients coming from their Dubai offices is the desire for parents to enable their children to embark on studies in the U.S. and seek employment there in the long term. Unfortunately, the process of achieving requires residency and the ownership of a Green Card. Thus, parents are undertaking the EB-5 U.S. investment residency programme to enable their children to forge their futures in the country.

Aside from the ability to stay and work, there is a lot of value to unlock for students with a Green Card. Including, but not limited to the ability to have the Federal and State government coverage of all university expenses such as tuition, housing, books, transportation - all costs necessary to sustain the student. Moreover, the student would avail prospects of paid internships at world class laboratories, gain relevant work experience, which would all bolster their ability to gain admission to top graduate schools.



Q&A: Shai Zamanian, Director of the American Legal Center in Dubai

Why invest in the U.S.?

The United States remains one of the world's most dominant countries in terms of economic growth and standard of living. Most people wishing to relocate to the United States are keen on creating a better future for themselves and their families. There are many reasons as to why people immigrate to the U.S., including but not limited to a life of ample opportunities, a chance to live in a developed country, and easier access to what many refer to as the 'American Dream'. Of the top five benefits of relocating to the U.S. include (1) access to the best healthcare system in the world, (2) access to the best academic institutions providing top quality education, (3) enjoyment of economic stability as the U.S. has the strongest economy in the world, (4) access to excellent career opportunities, and (5) the ability to travel to and enjoy different locations, with 50 different states in the country.

One of the main reasons applicants invest in the U.S. is for the benefit of their children in terms of unlocking the various education benefits that the programme provides. The U.S. provides the best quality of higher education in the world as evident by the fact that 16 out of the top 20 best universities are U.S. institutions. As a green card holder, investors and their qualifying dependents will be considered as U.S. persons and thereby can take advantage of the same educational benefits as that of a U.S. citizen. In line with its public policy, the U.S. government endeavours to ensure that every student has access to education irrespective of their socio-economic status. As such, the U.S. government provides student loans, grants, and scholarships to its students to ensure that they have the means to fulfil their studies.

How does the residency by investment programme work?

The United States EB-5 Immigrant Investor Programme (known as the EB-5 programme) provides an opportunity for investors and their qualifying dependents to obtain U.S. permanent resident status with a minimum investment of \$900,000 in the United States, which must create a minimum of 10 full-time jobs for U.S. workers.

As the programme has a number of specific eligibility and filing requirements, it is highly recommended that foreign nationals seeking to invest via the EB-5 programme consult an advisor and seek their services in taking their application forward.

An advisor will assist in providing a number of investment options for the foreign national. Once a qualifying project is chosen, the investor will proceed with transferring the investment amount and required fees to the project. The advisor will simultaneously be working on collating the required documents from the investor and putting together the application to be submitted to the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) in Washington, District of Columbia (DC). The application that will be submitted to Washington, DC is known as the I-526 petition. There are many intricacies involved in completing and submitting the I-526 petition and therefore



the assistance of an experienced advisor is greatly valuable throughout this process. Especially from The Middle East, the applications look quite different as many jurisdictions operate under no income taxes or tax free altogether. These nuances that pertain specifically to The Middle East can confuse officers reviewing the petition in Washington D.C., thus certain templates and legal documents would need to be provided.

Once the investor's I-526 approval comes through from Washington, DC, the investor will either apply for a visa from a U.S. consulate or embassy, such as the U.S. Embassy in Abu Dhabi, or apply for adjustment of status if they are already in the U.S. at the time of I-526 approval. The investor will thereafter receive their green card and will be considered a U.S. person.

What are the investment options?

Prospective investors participating in the EB-5 programme are required to invest a minimum of \$900,000 in a new commercial enterprise (i.e., a project) that meets the requirements of the programme. Choosing the right project is not a task to be taken lightly by investors. As previously mentioned, USCIS had designated certain organisations, known as regional centres, to provide investors with investment opportunities and facilitate the funding of such EB-5 projects. As of November 3, 2020, there are 674 approved regional centres. At the American Legal Center, we ensure to only work with the top six regional centres, which are those that have a track record of repaying their investors on time and have had thousands of green cards approved. Within the portfolios of the regional centres,

our advisors conduct great due diligence in ensuring that all documentation is properly in place. With the recent effects of the pandemic, we generally do not recommend our clients to invest in the hospitality sector. As there has been a robust demand for residential sales in the U.S., and with the central bank and the Feds keeping the interest rates quite low and the reduction of the price for mortgages, we are currently advising our clients to invest in residential projects, for example.

What makes the U.S. programme competitive - i.e., versus other citizenship by investment programmes on offer?

While there are many different investment immigration programmes available, the U.S. EB-5 programme remains one of the most competitive given the flexibility that it provides. As compared to other programmes, such as the Quebec Investment Immigration Programme offered in Canada, the EB-5 programme does not require a minimum net worth from investors. Additionally, the U.S. programme is more flexible as it does not require an offer of employment or family sponsorship, the investor does not need to have any specific educational or business background, the investor does not need to have a certain level of language skills, and an adult child may apply for the programme using funds gifted by their parents.

Why is now the right time?

With the shift in presidency taking place in January 2021, the time for investment and immigration to the U.S. is ripe. President-elect Joe Biden, unlike his predecessor, has always taken a pro-immigration stance and has announced that within his first 100 days in office, he will repeal the travel ban on Muslim-majority countries. Over the past few years, the travel ban has affected many investors in restricting them from their plans to invest in the U.S.

With Biden's promise of the travel ban being lifted in the first quarter of 2021, these foreign nationals will no longer be restricted and as such, this is the right time for them to start their EB-5 application process and start their migration journey to the U.S.

What impact has the new presidency had on this programme? i.e., how will upcoming policy changes make investment options favourable - and to which parties?

Lifting the travel ban is the most anticipated immigration policy change the world is waiting for from the U.S. It has been a tumultuous four years for U.S. immigration and Joe Biden's promise to lift the travel ban in his first 100 days in office is the steadiness we have been waiting for. It is the first change needed to indicate a move in a positive direction for the U.S.

In war torn countries such as Syria and Iraq, citizens are reliant on countries such as the U.S. for refuge. People flee their countries in hopes of obtaining protection and in pursuit of a higher standard of living than the one currently available to them in their countries. The travel ban prevents the ability for people to seek asylum or refuge. President-elect Biden has promised a number of positive changes to the immigration landscape of the U.S.

What is the EB-5 Programme?

The United States EB-5 Immigrant Investor Programme was created by U.S. Congress in 1990 with the intent to promote regional economic growth through the injection of foreign capital into the U.S. economy and creation of jobs for American citizens. Under the EB-5 programme, an investor and their qualifying dependents, which is composed of the investor's spouse and unmarried children under the age of 21, have the opportunity to obtain the U.S. green card and a path to obtaining the U.S. citizenship by way of making an investment of \$900,000 in a new commercial enterprise in the U.S.

Congress's original thought behind this programme was that entrepreneurs from abroad would start their own grand businesses in the U.S. and hire many new Americans. In reality, this belief fell short as the process became too involved for businessmen to make such a big investment that would be tied to their immigration status – there were simply too many strings involved, such as employing over 10 U.S. citizens and ensuring their employment over a series of years.

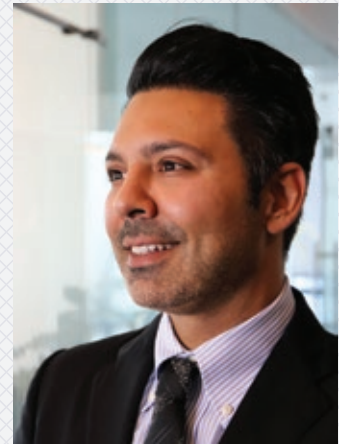
“It simply isn't enough to gain stellar grades. If students want to get into the top graduate schools, they need to tell a holistic story of success which includes paid internships and on-the-job experience. You cannot express your unwavering desire to attend Harvard Business School or Yale Law School. You must show the admissions committee through both studies and work experience. You need that paid internship at Google or the ability to clerk for a judge”

SHAI ZAMANIAN ON ADVISING PARENTS WHO SEEK TO SEND THEIR CHILDREN TO U.S. UNIVERSITIES FROM THE MIDDLE EAST.

Nevertheless, a solution was passed by congress whereby foreigners seeking U.S. residency for themselves and their children could then invest passively into a new business enterprise project, many of these businesses being commercial real estate in nature, and whereby the job creation requirement would then be met by the actual construction of the project. Congress amended the EB-5 programme and created the EB-5 Regional Centre Programme in 1992 which would allow investors to qualify by investing \$900,000 passively through regional centres that host these types of construction projects and that are specifically designated by the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). This form of passive investment for the sake of the family residency and Green Card has been the predominant method in which investors navigate through this government programme today. Director of The American Legal Center in Dubai Shai Zamanian and his team have actively been guiding families through this EB-5 process for nearly a decade.

BIO:**Shai Zamanian**

Director of the American Legal Centre in Dubai



Two passions drive Shai Zamanian: immigration and real estate. In 2012, Zamanian relocated to Dubai to follow these passions. He had a vision of using the EB-5 immigrant investor programme to bridge a gap between the U.S. and the Middle East. As a U.S.-licensed lawyer and U.S. immigrant, he understood the importance of obtaining credible assistance when embarking on the immigration journey for foreign nationals.

Shai completed his Law degree in the midst of the Great Financial Crisis (GFC) of 2008-09. At the time, financial institutions were being shut down for undercapitalisation, companies were not hiring, and banks were not contemplating any new lending to commercial projects. In the midst of global disarray, he was given a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to work at Rialto Capital, the financial arm of one of the largest housing developers in the United States, Lennar (NYSE:LEN). They simply did not make homes, they built entire communities. It was here that he gained the relevant experience in terms of the feasibility of commercial real estate projects and practices.

As a U.S. licensed lawyer and Director of the American Legal Center in Dubai, Shai finds great privilege to help families through the investment immigration option to the U.S., namely the EB-5 programme.

“It's not sufficient to just understand the immigration steps of the EB-5 programme,” he says. “The active guide, the best guide, would have to possess the legal and practical understanding of commercial real estate projects.”

As a first-generation immigrant himself, Shai saw a tremendous opportunity to help families navigate this government programme and to empower them to ask the right questions: both from an immigration and from a commercial real estate standpoint. To him, the EB-5 immigrant investor programme provided an investment opportunity with ample benefits for foreign nationals and their dependents. He says, “You're not buying property or considering where to take a vacation, the decision to relocate your children to the U.S. is a difficult one, but the rewards will be paid for many generations to come.”

At first glance, Dubai seemed like an ideal place to launch his services but he soon came to find out that it would take some time before UAE residents fully trusted his services. Notwithstanding his highest qualification as a U.S. attorney, UAE residents wanted to see whether he and his services would remain in the country or if his tales and promises of a new life in America were another fly-by-night promise.

After nearly a decade of successfully assisting families relocate to the U.S., Shai is now known as the pre-eminent voice of U.S. investment immigration services within the Middle East and emerging markets. In his years of operation, he has filed more applications than any other firm within the Middle East. Under the EB-5 programme an investor will gain U.S. residency and Green Card within months through their investment of \$900,000.

Shai has successfully dealt with the most difficult immigration issues such as President Trump's 'Muslim ban', the increase in required capital investment, and the current temporary immigration ban. These obstacles would have deterred most EB-5 specialists from continuing to offer this service, however he has stayed true to his commitment and continued to grow the size and breadth of his practice at the American Legal Center in Dubai.

BOLIVIA



Long Way Up

If you're a fan of adventure travel, motorbikes, electric vehicles, South America, travel documentaries and even better, all of the above, then *Long Way Up* is essential on-demand viewing. If you've already watched *Long Way Down* and *Long Way Round* starring best mates Ewan McGregor and Charley Boorman, you'll know exactly what I mean. Their new series, filmed in 2019, more than a decade since their last motorbike adventure, follows the pair through South America. They start at the very tip in Ushuaia and travel up through 13 countries including Argentina, Chile, Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador, Colombia, Central

America and Mexico until they reach Los Angeles. With sustainability front of mind they cover 13,000 miles on prototype electric Harley-Davidsons, encountering stunning landscapes, fascinating people and battling unforgiving terrain. In episode six (pictured), Ewan and Charley experience challenging conditions in the extraordinary Bolivian desert, captured not only by drone, but cameras built into their helmets. The scenes and moments captured are nothing short of breathtaking. To see for yourself, you'll find *Long Way Up* on Apple TV+ (apple.com and tv.apple.com). It's epic. **Gemma Greenwood**



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With the profound changes that the past year has brought, you would have been forgiven for thinking that we would never get back to normal. The evidence for a lasting shift in behaviour affecting most aspects of our lives is all around us, and, certainly when it comes to travel, all of the predictions are that it will be many years, if ever, before we return to our pre-pandemic habits.

What these headlines obscure, however, is the need for the world to keep trading, and for that trade to be a matter of meeting face-to-face. During July and August, we conducted a survey as part of a wider *Future of Business Travel* report produced in partnership with travel trend forecasting

agency Globetrender (globetrender.com) and American Express Global Business Travel. The survey polled 2,020 *Business Traveller* readers worldwide on their sentiments in relation to the pandemic.

We wanted to find out what you, the most frequent travellers for business, thought might happen in the coming months, and how your attitude to travel may have changed. Where once you might have been on the road for many weeks of the year to attend meetings, make new sales, manage teams or visit clients and suppliers, have you now realised the benefits of working from home and staying in touch by virtual means?

We found that more than three-quarters of you believe face-to-face meetings for sales and pitching are preferable to remote working. When it comes to following up on sales calls,

six out of ten of you think the majority of deals and decisions cannot be made virtually. (In case you think nothing has changed, 78 per cent of you said you would not shake hands in a meeting, so some other form of sealing the deal will have to be invented. Just please let it not be bumping elbows.)

Nearly 40 per cent of you said that you expected to start travelling again before the end of 2020, although this was before the latest round of quarantines and lockdowns, most notably here in the UK. Even before those announcements, quarantine remained a concern, with 91 per cent of you stating that you would be less likely to travel if required to quarantine at your destination.

Unsurprisingly, a vaccine would make most of us (80 per cent) more likely to travel, although nearly as many respondents →

THE EFFECT OF COVID-19 ON BUSINESS TRAVEL



89%

of business travellers around the world stopped travelling when there were travel restrictions in their region during the pandemic



11%

of business travellers flew when there were travel restrictions during the pandemic

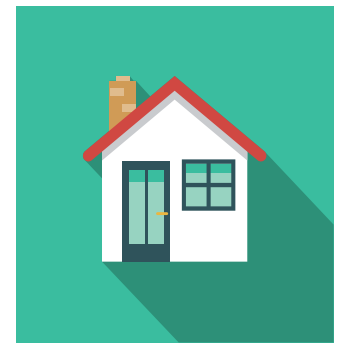
Of those that did travel for business during this time,

41%

were at the most senior levels (owner/partner)

17%

have travelled since lockdown restrictions eased (mainly short-haul or domestic)



91%

would be less likely to travel if they were required to quarantine at their destination

85%

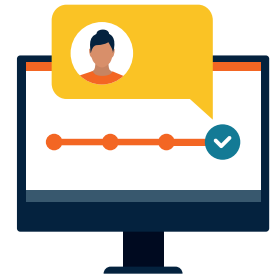
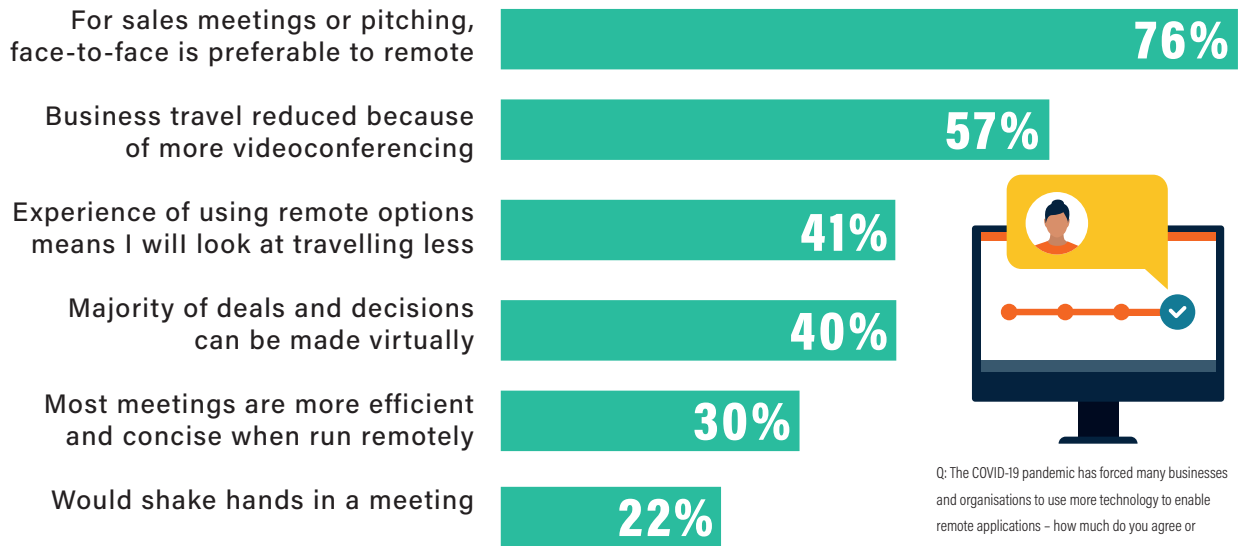
would be less likely to travel if they were required to quarantine when they returned home



55%

Percentage increase in business travel since restrictions eased

ATTITUDES TO NEW WAYS OF WORKING (% AGREE AT ALL)



Q: The COVID-19 pandemic has forced many businesses and organisations to use more technology to enable remote applications – how much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

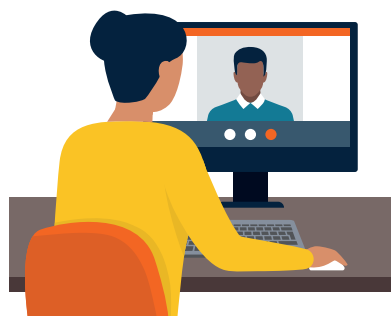
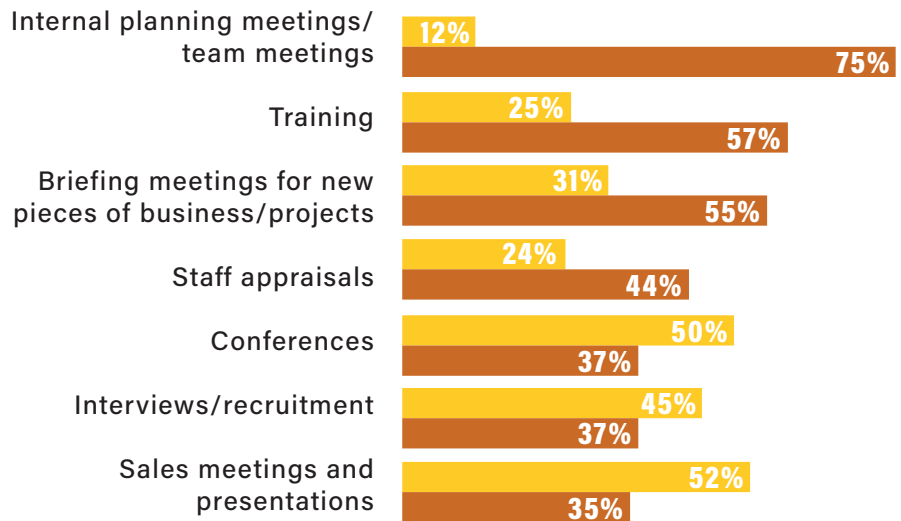
40

(75 per cent) said that being able to fly in business or first class would encourage them to get back on the road, something worth discussing with the travel department. The potentially greater ability to socially distance in business class rather than economy isn't something airlines are promoting, for obvious reasons – as we report in this issue ("Safe travels", page 36), they say the HEPA filters on board ensure "hospital-quality air". Still, if fewer people from your company are travelling, perhaps spending a little more on those wanting or needing to is only sensible.

When it comes to trusting travel providers with our safety, perhaps it is not surprising that familiar brands are those we will be most comfortable with – 87 per cent of you said you were likely to stick with airlines you knew when you started to travel again, and 80 per cent with familiar hotel brands.

What's clear from the research is that business travellers are keen to get back on the road. What's causing delay is the uncertainty created by government travel bans and the inconsistent measures – and messaging – in place around testing. There is cause for optimism, but it will take concerted action by the relevant authorities for this to translate into more people travelling for business. **BT**
 Download the report at [businesstraveller.com/future-of-business-travel](https://www.businesstraveller.com/future-of-business-travel)

FACE-TO-FACE vs REMOTE WORKING



Q: Which of these types of meetings do you think are likely to be frequently replaced with a virtual option in the future in your organisation, and which types do you think might still require travel to be undertaken to ensure face-to-face meeting?



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SAFE TRAVELS

What are airlines doing to reassure passengers about flying amidst the pandemic?

There are many reasons people aren't flying at the moment. Lockdowns and quarantines make it either difficult or close to impossible to get to many destinations, and airlines – and the travel industry as a whole – haven't had much luck so far in persuading governments to relax these restrictions. It's not all bad news: China, for example, saw domestic flights push past pre-COVID levels ahead of its National Day public holiday in October, according to aviation analytics company Cirium, but much of this was leisure travel.

Meanwhile, airlines have been using this period to introduce new protocols to reassure passengers that when travel does return, they can travel safely. From ramping up cleaning procedures to handing out hygiene kits, carriers are exploring ways to lure wary travellers back to the skies. Here we look at how new safety measures have fundamentally changed the experience of flying.

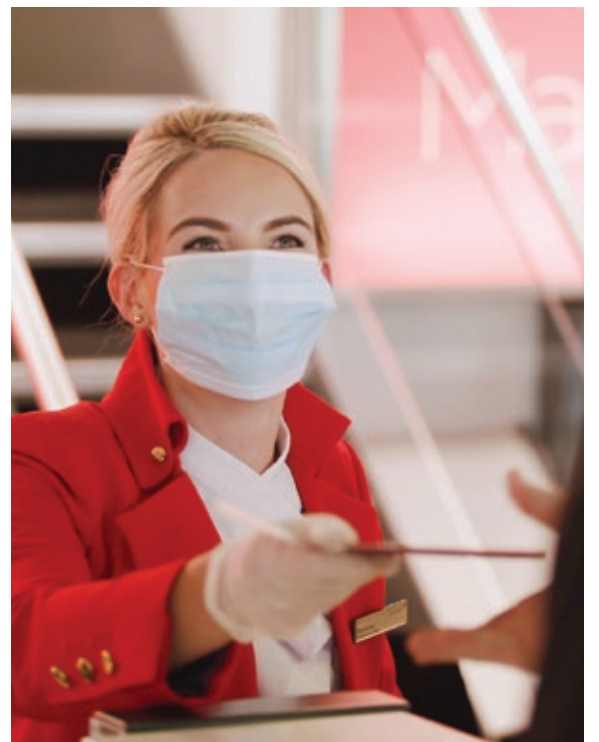
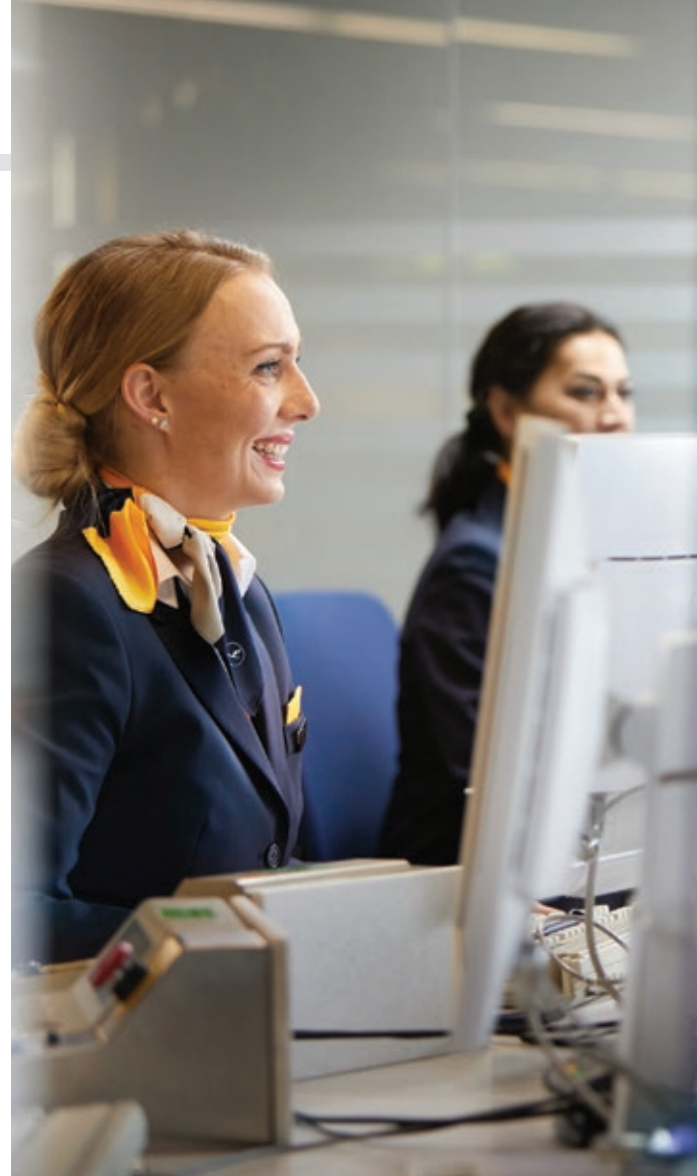
BOARDING

All airports are mandating that passengers should wear face coverings unless there is a medical reason for not doing so, and social distancing is in place throughout the terminals. Even so, travellers can often end up

in close contact during boarding, whether they are lined up at the gate, waiting on an airbridge or standing in the aisle while other people put their bags into overhead lockers.

Pre-pandemic, a number of airlines were exploring ways to make the boarding process as speedy as possible. Now, many have traded efficiency for safety and are boarding small groups of passengers using one of the slowest ways to get people on to an aircraft: back-to-front boarding. This can sometimes involve boarding passengers in economy class before those in premium cabins. While US carriers Delta Air Lines and United have adopted back-to-front boarding, the former's premium cabin customers can get on at their leisure at any time during general boarding, although it says boarding is limited to ten customers at a time. United is also allowing passengers in premium cabins to board at any time.

Virgin Atlantic is promising (along with Heathrow airport) that all of the seating at the gate will be sanitised, boarding will start from the back of the aircraft (with Upper Class passengers able to get on at any time), all customers will be asked to scan their own boarding pass and hold up their passport for inspection to minimise contact, and all Virgin staff will be wearing face masks.





WORDS SEHER ASAF AND TOM OTLEY

AIR QUALITY

One question passengers may have as they weigh up returning to the skies is: how clean is the air on board? As far as the airlines are concerned, the answer is “very” thanks to the high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filters fitted on modern aircraft, a technology also used in most hospitals around the world.

The air on a plane is a mix of recirculated and outside air. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, all commercial jet aircraft built after the late 1980s recirculate 10 to 50 per cent of the air in the cabin by mixing it with outside air. The recirculated air passes through a series of filters 20-30 times per hour.

In most newer aircraft, recycled air passes through HEPA filters, which capture 99.9 per cent of particles (including bacteria, fungi and larger viruses or virus clumps) measuring 0.1-0.3 micrometres in diameter. The virus that causes COVID-19 is about 0.125 micrometres (125 nanometers) in diameter, according to a study published in the Nature Public Health Emergency Collection, and so fits into the range captured by HEPA filters, although it is still unclear how effective the filters are in capturing the pathogen causing COVID-19.

Since the start of the pandemic, most major carriers have emphasised



CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE LEFT: Carriers such as Lufthansa, United, Austrian and Virgin Atlantic have rethought every step of the passenger journey

From ramping up cleaning to handing out hygiene kits, airlines are exploring ways to lure passengers back



FROM TOP: Easyjet's new cleaning regime; Delta's electrostatic sprayer; Qatar Airways' UV system

other routes, a SIA spokesperson said all aircraft were thoroughly cleaned before and after flights and that this “may include disinfection fogging procedures that are over and above regulatory requirements if necessary”. Carriers including American Airlines and United are also using fogging machines on select routes.

Electrostatic sprayers have been adopted by some airlines, particularly in the US. In May, Delta said it was sanitising every flight at each of its hubs using such sprayers, which offered a “safe and effective way to thoroughly clean an aircraft cabin from floor to ceiling”. The sprayers electrically charge and disperse liquid disinfectant in a fine mist that clings to surfaces such as seats, IFE screens, armrests, doors, washrooms and

galleys. United and American have also added electrostatic sprayers to their cleaning regimes.

Others are even turning to ultraviolet lighting to disinfect aircraft, a technology that has been used in hospitals and in self-driving airport cleaning robots. In July, Jetblue claimed to be the first US airline to deploy ultraviolet light to zap germs, using a machine roughly the size of an aircraft drinks cart that shines UV-C light from the ceiling to the floor. A video from the carrier shows an employee working their way down the aisle with the machine, which has arms that extend over the top of the seats and sweep across the cabin. According to Jetblue, the device is “capable of significantly reducing certain viruses and bacteria”. Honeywell Aerospace, the company behind the technology, says that the lighting can traverse the entire cabin in less than ten minutes, making it more time-efficient than fogging.

Qatar Airways has bought six Honeywell UV units, with plans to acquire more, so that they can be used on all aircraft turnarounds at its Doha hub. They will be used “as an additional step after manual disinfection, to ensure the very highest standards of cleanliness”, the carrier said.



the role of these filters in their fleets. American Airlines says that on its A320 and B737 families of aircraft, air is filtered through two HEPA filters located near the forward cargo compartment. Its B777s have eight of the filters, including two over each aisle near the middle of the aircraft cabin. Filters are changed regularly to ensure an uninterrupted flow of clean air into the cabin.

CLEANING

Most airlines have adopted rigorous new cleaning procedures, in many cases following guidance from government health departments. Videos published by a number of carriers show armrests, headrests, tray tables, washrooms and other surfaces that passengers come into contact with being cleaned with what they call “hospital-grade” disinfectant.

Some are going even further. In February, Singapore Airlines announced that it had begun using fogging machines to clean its aircraft operating inbound China flights, a procedure that involves spraying disinfectant on to cabin interiors. It takes about an hour and a half to fog an A380, and an hour for all other types of aircraft, the carrier said. On

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MIDDLE SEATS

As governments worldwide pushed for social distancing measures to curb the spread of the disease, a debate began to rage in the aviation industry about whether middle seats should be left empty. According to a survey by travel analytics and consulting firm Atmosphere Research, passengers are willing to pay 16 to 17 per cent more on average to fly on an airline that blocks the middle seat.

Delta has promised to keep middle seats empty until next year. Bill Lentsch, its chief customer experience officer, said in August: “We believe that taking care of our customers and employees and restoring confidence in the safety of air travel is more important right now than filling up every seat on a plane.”

Others, such as Qantas, have opposed such a move, saying it is ineffective and will raise the price of fares. “Social distancing on an aircraft isn’t practical the way it is on the ground, and, given the low transmission risk on board, we don’t

believe it’s necessary in order to be safe. The extra measures we’re putting in place will reduce the risk even further,” said Qantas group medical director Ian Hosegood in May, citing the use of HEPA filters and face masks.

Qantas’ stance has been echoed by industry body IATA (the International Air Transport Association), which in May said it supported the wearing of face masks during a flight rather than “mandating” social distancing measures on board that would bring “dramatic cost increases” to air travel.

Some airlines, such as Cathay Pacific, are promising to create social distancing on aircraft only if passenger numbers allow it. Virgin Atlantic states on its website: “Where possible, depending on how busy your flight is, we’ll try and leave empty seats between travellers who are on separate bookings.”

In May, the European Commission issued recommendations for airlines in Europe for cautiously restarting travel. It emphasised the use of masks but did not say leaving middle seats empty was a requirement.



ABOVE: Virgin’s “Mile High Tea”

A number of major European carriers, such as British Airways, Air France and Ryanair, are not blocking middle seats. However, German budget carrier Eurowings is letting passengers pay extra to keep it free. In August, the Lufthansa subsidiary said it had been trialling the service and had sold more than 5,000 middle seats in this way without actively

CLOCKWISE FROM FAR LEFT: Virgin keeps seats empty between bookings “where possible”; JAL meal tray; Emirates and Cathay hygiene kits; packaged food on Malaysia Airlines



COVID-19 COVER

A small but growing number of airlines have begun offering free cover for COVID-19-related expenses in a bid to boost confidence in travel. Emirates was the first, in July announcing that it would provide free global cover for Covid-19 health and quarantine expenses for passengers flying to any of its destinations. The airline said that travellers diagnosed with the disease during their travel within 31 days of taking their first flight would be covered for up to €150,000, including quarantine costs of up to €100 per day for 14 days. (The cover ends once the passenger has returned to the point of origin.)

Adam Li, Emirates’ vice-president for China, said the carrier had received positive feedback about the cover from travellers and the industry at large and that the airline had experienced an “uptake in demand for travel in July and August”. Etihad and Virgin Atlantic followed suit, promising to reimburse all passengers who contracted the disease on their trip for both medical and quarantine expenses.

Air Canada has introduced free COVID-19 emergency medical and quarantine insurance for all Canadian residents booking round-trip international flights until April 12, 2021, although the country’s government is currently advising against any non-essential travel outside of Canada.



GETTY IMAGES

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promoting the option. It formally launched the scheme in September on all Eurowings routes within Europe, saying that keeping the middle seat free would cost from €18 per flight.

IN-FLIGHT SERVICE

Many airlines have scaled down their meal service to minimise touch and interaction between passengers and crew. Some have removed menus and are serving pre-packaged food only. On short-haul flights, carriers such as Singapore Airlines and Virgin Australia are serving snacks only, in line with the International Civil Aviation Organisation’s recommendations to either limit or discontinue food and drink services on short-haul flights or offer packaged food in sealed or pre-packaged containers.

Hot meals are still offered on most major airlines on long-haul routes, but services have been adapted to limit contact. Qatar Airways brings out business class meals covered on a tray, similar to the way they are usually served to economy class flyers,

instead of offering its usual multiple-course service, with cutlery also wrapped. It has also introduced single-use menu cards in business class. Meals and cutlery in economy class are sealed, and menus are not being provided.

Carriers have also removed magazines and other literature from seatback pockets, instead encouraging the use of digital options.

HYGIENE KITS

The COVID-19 crisis could lead to a new norm in flying: giving passengers cleaning or hygiene supplies on board. A number of carriers are dishing out “hygiene kits”, a bit like amenity kits but with face masks, hand sanitiser and sometimes gloves instead of skincare products, toothbrushes and socks. Delta rolled out such a kit in

Many airlines have scaled down their meal service to minimise touch and interaction

June, and many have followed suit. Cathay Pacific provides a “Cathay Care Kit” comprising a face covering and antiseptic wipes, while Malaysia Airlines’ kit contains hand sanitiser, a non-surgical face mask and sanitary wipes, packed in a sealed zip-lock pouch designed “for passengers to comfortably keep in their pockets”.

Etihad Airways has introduced “wellness kits” that include a face mask, gloves and hand sanitiser, while first and business class passengers get reusable snood-style face masks that have been treated with “a broad-spectrum antimicrobial treatment, laboratory tested and proven to reduce the presence of germs in fabrics”.

Qatar Airways, in addition to providing care kits, is giving economy passengers face shields as an extra protective measure. Passengers travelling in economy must now wear both a mask and shield “at all times” (apart from when eating and drinking), including when boarding and disembarking. Business and first class passengers are exempt. **BT**



WORDS RAMSEY QUBEIN

In a pandemic world,
Bermuda is one place
that appears
to be open and ready
for both business
and pleasure

Island Jewel

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As parts of the world remain off-limits to many travellers, the island of Bermuda provides inspiration and rejuvenation with stunning natural beauty, an historic UNESCO World Heritage Site and world-class golf and tennis. Most importantly, it is open and welcoming visitors.

At time of press, Bermuda was one of only four other places in the world to be assessed with “moderate” COVID-19 risk level, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. It has also been awarded the World Travel & Tourism Council’s (WTTC’s) “Safe Travels” Stamp for its enhanced health and hygiene protocols.

Roughly 650 miles off the coast of North Carolina in the Atlantic Ocean, Bermuda does not share the same characteristics of many tourist-thronged Caribbean islands. Notably, it has cooler temperatures in the autumn and winter making it practical for outdoor sporting activities. With a more laid-back atmosphere, it packs plenty of sunny paradise views, pink sand beaches and European-getaway flair.

THE LOGISTICS OF VISITING NOW

Bermuda’s international airport reopened on July 1 with non-stop flights from many US East Coast cities, as well as London. During travel and while at the airport, face masks are required for passengers and staff.



Within the seven days prior to departure, visitors must obtain proof of a negative COVID-19 test result to travel to the island. In addition, they must complete a travel authorisation form within 48 hours of departure. The form requires a US\$75 fee, which covers the subsequent required testing once in Bermuda. Upon arrival, visitors must quarantine for 24 hours while they await the results of an additional COVID-19 test.

While on the island, non-residents must report their daily temperatures via an online portal and take follow-up COVID-19 tests on the fourth, eighth, and 14th days of their visit. These measures are an important way to mitigate risk, which is especially important when isolated on an island.

These protocols apply to visitors no matter the length of their stay. These serious protocols are part of what might make this especially appealing to people who are considering a temporary move to Bermuda to work remotely. The implementation of the Work from Bermuda certificate programme opens up the island to business travellers and students looking for a remote working option in paradise.

For a fee of \$263, travellers aged 18 and older can trade their current work environment for island life. Since early 2020, Digicel Bermuda has implemented a significant boost to bandwidth and Internet speeds to meet the growing demand.

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ADVENTURE AND EXPLORATION

While the option to work or study remotely will draw many takers, most of the island's visitors probably have a shorter vacation in mind. They will be happy to know that the majority of local attractions, shops and restaurants have reopened, albeit with new health and safety protocols in place.

Bermuda does not allow foreigners to rent cars, but they can get around via taxi, ferry, bike or bus. They can also rent small, eco-friendly electric vehicles or scooters. Don't forget, however, that in Bermuda they drive on the opposite side of the road from the rest of North America; the left, just like the UK.

These great transportation alternatives give visitors plenty of chances to get out and see, do, and experience. Whether relaxing under an umbrella on the beach with a good book or more active pursuits like watersports and hiking, Bermuda has it covered.

Early birds can watch the sunrise from Warwick Long Bay on the island's South Shore. What becomes quickly apparent for beachgoers here is the seemingly endless array of coves, bays and inlets. This means that even when you're outdoors, it's easy to have an entire beach to yourself.

Social distancing is less a concern out in nature; and Bermuda has a lot of natural resources making it easy to be away from people should you wish. There's nothing like having the entire stretch of sand to call your own.

Among the water-focused adventures around the island,



PREVIOUS PAGE: Horseshoe Bay, Bermuda 1195

ABOVE: The colourful village of Flatts, in the British Overseas Territory of Bermuda, is built around the Harrington Sound lagoon and the Flatts inlet

BELOW: Hamilton, in Bermuda has a blend of British and American culture. Its Royal Naval Dockyard combines modern attractions and boating with history.

guests will find jet skiing on the open ocean offers an invigorating new perspective of the island. And have you ever heard of helmet diving? Well, you can take a walk on the ocean floor with a local company that leads guided exploration of the colourful coral reefs and active marine life below the surface – all while comfortably protected in your own personal underwater helmet.

There's also stand-up paddle boarding, snorkelling and scuba diving around the more than 400 shipwrecks surrounding the island. Perhaps there is something to that Bermuda Triangle theory; the island is considered the "Shipwreck Capital of the Atlantic."

The adventurous can also visit the caves and grottoes of Blue Hole Park, which is a nature reserve known by locals as Tom Moore's Jungle. Also notable are the island's botanical gardens, which stretch for 36 acres and provide ample space for picnicking or reading in the shade. The Bermuda Arboretum features numerous trails and bridges for relaxed strolling.

In one of Bermuda's largest parks, Ferry Reach, bikers will find plenty of trails for entertainment. The views change with every twist and turn from cliff-top perches



FROM TOP: In Hamilton Bermuda, scooters are a popular way too sightsee as seen here by The Cathedral of the Most Holy Trinity; Unfinished Church. It's ruins are a protected historic monument and part of the St. George's World Heritage Site; The beach at Jobsons Cove Warwick Parish, Bermuda



to mangrove forests. Speaking of those cliffs, if you're especially brave, cliff divers will find Admiralty House Park to be an ideal spot to take the plunge thanks to the deeper waters below.

Golfers have always loved Bermuda for its lush, green fairways, many of which have ocean views. In fact, the island has more golf courses per capita than anywhere else in the world, making it the ideal venue for the Bermuda Championship, a PGA Tour event scheduled to be staged at Port Royal Golf Club at the end of October.

Tennis players, too, have plentiful courts from which to choose and moderate temperatures make it pleasant to play much of the day during the fall, winter and spring months.

For more tranquil pursuits, downtown Hamilton exudes the charm of a British village. Amid the colourful shops along the waterfront are pubs, bars and cafes that have reopened with social distancing measures in place. There's also ample shopping and entertainment at the Royal Naval Dockyard where small souvenir shops and cafes await.

When you are finished exercising your credit card, wander through the historic town of St. George and its surrounding forts, which is classified as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. These colonial fortifications are well-preserved examples of the British presence here that will appeal to history buffs.

ISLAND STAYS

Like other places around the world, many of the island's hotels closed temporarily due to the global pandemic.

However, many have reopened, including the luxurious Rosewood Bermuda and iconic downtown Hamilton Princess & Beach Club, which is part of Fairmont Hotels & Resorts. Elbow Beach Bermuda Resort & Spa plans to reopen on January 1, 2021.

Equally exciting is the number of new hotels planned to open on the island. The St. Regis Bermuda Resort is targeting April 2021 as an opening date for its new island property. In addition to guest rooms, it will feature 30 serviced residences. Also coming in mid-2021 is Bermudiana Beach Resort, a Tapestry Collection by Hilton property, with 90 fully-furnished residences – from studios to three-bedroom accommodations with full kitchens – that are part of the hotel.

While few would call Bermuda a budget destination, there are more affordable lodging options available from serviced apartments to small inns or bed and breakfasts.

The island is also known for its many cottages and private residences that work well for longer-stay guests and those that want maximum privacy. Popular lodging platforms like Airbnb and Thirdhome list numerous places to rent on the island.

All things considered, island life could be the perfect winter antidote to pandemic stressors at home. Bermuda's solid infrastructure and strict health protocols make it the ideal place to visit whether for a short vacation or extended time abroad. **BT**

THE YEAR IN REVIEW

We round up the finest watches released in 2020 – and look ahead to 2021, which may prove to be as unpredictable a year as the one that has just passed...

WORDS CHRIS HALL

Where to begin? No walk of life has been exempt from the impact of the coronavirus, and while it may seem, as you flick through the following pages, that the world of luxury watches remains as well-stocked with finely polished playthings as ever, it has not been a smooth ride.

In fact, as I discuss in my predictions for the future opposite (normally a somewhat irreverent affair), the worst may be yet to come as the pandemic continues into 2021.

The makers of expensive watches have proven resilient – in line with their clientele – but times remain tough for those tasked with selling them, especially in the UK. As *Business Traveller* readers will appreciate, airport retail is well down, as are the volumes

of visitors to London's premium shopping districts who keep watch boutiques and department stores busy.

The pandemic has hastened the watch world's engagement with e-commerce – a welcome development for anyone not located within close reach of Bond Street. It seems likely that the way we buy watches could be quite different in the future, with try-before-you-buy schemes and same-day delivery already on offer from some online stores.

Some may look at a celebration of expensive watches as inappropriate in such times, but I'd argue that continuing to take an interest in life's luxuries doesn't preclude us from caring about the bigger picture. Everyone needs their passions and, if watches are yours, hopefully they can provide a welcome distraction.

On the product front, it has been a mixed year; several of the biggest players quickly decided to keep their powder dry or postpone their major launches, so we have seen little from Patek Philippe, Audemars Piguet, Vacheron Constantin, Omega or Tudor. It has also been a very quiet year from Switzerland's many high-end niche brands; one hopes they will all live to fight another day.

The bulk of what we have seen has been as expected – watches are designed and brought to market over a period of three to five years, so the extent of any knee-jerk reactions will simply have been to put certain models on ice until things return to normal. Certainly, I was not short of candidates for our round-up of the year's best watches – the following pages are, as ever, a medley of mechanical ingenuity and aesthetic panache.



PREDICTIONS FOR 2021

ROUGH SEAS AHEAD

The disruptive effect of a global pandemic on watchmaking will manifest itself fully, as delays in supply chains that span Asia, Europe and the Americas have an impact on manufacturing. Mainstream watch companies rely on a relatively small network of suppliers for components – anything from sapphire crystals to dials or strap buckles – and exist in an ecosystem where lead times and production capacities leave little margin for error. If any of these companies should go under, it will make life tricky for dozens of brands, and the retailers that rely on them.

ENVIRONMENTALISM TO THE FORE

Watchmaking's association with sustainability used to begin and end with photogenic charitable initiatives aimed at saving marine life; laudable in their own right but irrelevant to the core issues of production and manufacturing. There are signs of a shift in mentality, with brands such as IWC leading the way on sustainable business practices, and projects from Breitling and Panerai to increase their use of reclaimed material (Panerai is working on a project to create the world's first 100 per cent recycled watch, but it is likely to launch only as a limited proof-of-concept). I think 2021 will be the year that Switzerland really wakes up to sustainability, but, as ever, the pace of change will not be fast enough.

ENTREPRENEURS WILL RISE

Crisis usually breeds creativity and I expect the coronavirus to be no different. Whether it concerns the way we buy and sell watches – new, pre-owned or vintage – the materials they are made from, or the way we congregate to share our affection for this anachronistic obsession, 2021 will probably see some bright sparks bringing new ideas to the world of watches. Not before time.

A BUMPER YEAR

Much as we are generally hoping that 2021 will make up for 2020 on a sporting, artistic, cultural, gastronomic and, dare I say it, political level, I would like to think that we will see an outstanding array of watches hit our boutiques, websites and Instagram feeds, as what went unreleased in 2020 can wait no longer. And although I am free from the obligation of predicting a new Rolex Submariner – we finally got one! – is it sacrilege to ask that in 2021 it releases something ever so slightly more interesting?

WATCHES OF 2020

BEST ALTERNATIVE TO A ROLEX SUBMARINER
JAEGER-LECOULTRE POLARIS
MARINER DATE
\$12,969

We may have been graced with a new Rolex Submariner in 2020, but I regret to tell you it will be all but impossible to get your hands on. It is also very much the margherita pizza of dive watches; fundamental to the entire category and appealingly pure of purpose, but there is undeniably more flavour to be had elsewhere. Which brings me to the Polaris Mariner Date. Jaeger-LeCoultre doesn't even begin to boast of a dive watch pedigree like Rolex, but it did make some much-loved models in the late '60s, and its watchmakers know their way around a workbench as well as anyone. The Mariner Date is recognisably its own beast, unlike many other dive watches that struggle to escape Rolex's shadow. It's defined by its twin crowns, the second of which operates an internal rotating bezel, an essential component for any true dive watch. At 42mm, it is a shade bigger than the new Submariner, and as befits a brand whose pitch is traditionally associated with elegant, high-end watchmaking, both the dial and case are finished in a more refined manner.

jaeger-lecoultre.com



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BEST VALUE →
FREDERIQUE
CONSTANT
HIGHLIFE
PERPETUAL
CALENDAR
MANUFACTURE
\$9,818

Eyebrows may be raised – a Frédérique Constant for seven and a half grand as my value pick? Indeed so; not only is it a bona fide Swiss Made in-house perpetual calendar movement, but whereas previous models have been a tad fusty, it now comes packaged in a genuinely attractive design.

frederiqueconstant.com



BEST TRIBUTE TO THE
GLORIOUS PAST →
A LANGE AND
SOHNE 1815
RATRAPANTE
HONEYGOLD
\$162,819

Utterly gorgeous watchmaking from a brand that is one of the best in the business, made in honour of F A Lange, who established the first watch company in the German hamlet of Glashutte in 1845. This "honeygold"-cased split-seconds chronograph, resplendent from front to back, will make 100 collectors very happy indeed. *alange-soehne.com*





BEST COMEBACK
AUDEMARS PIGUET CODE 11.59
FLYING TOURBILLON CHRONOGRAPH
\$POA

Audemars Piguet got a skewering in 2019 for the Code 11.59 – a design that many felt did not warrant the fanfare with which it was announced (to put it mildly) – but this year it has added a number of models that make good use of the intricate case construction and wide dial space. Chief among them is this tourbillon chronograph, a maximalist effort that combines colour, complications and texture very effectively. With the blue lacquered inner bezel framing the openworked mechanism, there is a great sense of depth and detail to the watch that matches its case, with its hollowed-out lugs and multifaceted sides. Time always improves one’s perspective, and with a year under our belts, the Code 11.59 has grown into a collection that feels much more at home at Audemars Piguet. The name, for me, still feels difficult to love (am I buying a watch, or an airport thriller in the best traditions of Tom Clancy or Lee Child?) but, to be honest, that’s unlikely to deter you from buying one if you have the motivation and the means – likely more than six figures. audemarspiguet.com



← **BEST WATCH**
NERD CHOICE
DOXA SUB 300T
\$2,378

A key player in pioneering the very first dive watches back in the early 1960s, Doxa today is a minnow beside the likes of Rolex, Seiko or Omega, but that adds to the appeal: the newly reissued Sub 300T is the credible dive watch that no one’s heard of. Get it with the “beads of rice” bracelet and orange dial for the proper look. doxawatches.com



← **BEST**
COLLABORATION
ORIS X MOMOTARO
DIVERS SIXTY-FIVE
\$2,221

Co-branded collaborations have produced some of the most interesting and enjoyable watches of recent years. This one won out for me not because I have an ardent passion for connoisseur-grade Japanese denim, which is Momotaro’s scene, but because I put it on and really did not want to take it off. Sometimes it’s that simple. oris.ch →



MOST UNDERSTATED
GLASHUTTE ORIGINAL ALFRED HELWIG
TOURBILLON 1920
\$139,466

Awards for understatement aren't always readily on offer in the watch business, especially since the modern trend is to flaunt every aspect of your watchmaking ability with openworked dials that completely reveal the movement beneath. But this limited-edition model is a masterpiece of restraint. It celebrates a somewhat arcane invention: 100 years ago, German watchmaker Alfred Helwig (also a distinguished professor and former technical director of the Glashutte watchmaking school) created the "flying" tourbillon – one that needs no metal bridge on top to anchor it in place. The tourbillon already being a delicate, extremely finely poised device (intended to mitigate against the negative effects of gravity on timekeeping by rotating the balance wheel over a given interval, usually one minute), allowing it to spin around with little support and still perform its function with accuracy is a feat of horological showmanship. These days, although tourbillon watches are decidedly more common, flying ones remain less so, and this is a particularly well made example. Hardly any watch brand can resist the temptation to show off such a device through a hole in the dial, but Glashutte Original has played it cool, and for that it stood out among the crowd. Of course, you can still see the tourbillon in all its glory through the caseback... glashutte-original.com

BEST FIRST
WATCH →
LONGINES
HERITAGE CLASSIC
TUXEDO
\$2,050

The name, and that two-tone dial, may have you reaching for the shoe polish, shawl-collar jacket and cummerbund, but the truth is that this is a watch to wear day in, day out, all year round. It's a perfect size – 38.5mm – and as uncomplicated as they come, without even a date window to distract from that evenly balanced dial. longines.com



BEST CHRONOGRAPH
DESIGN →
H MOSER AND CIE
STREAMLINER
FLYBACK
CHRONOGRAPH
\$4,580

At times, I am almost evangelical about H Moser's ability to buck the trend and yet follow it; to run with the pack and poke fun at its foibles. So I'll just say this – the Streamliner combines a sensational chronograph movement with a case and bracelet design that is as sophisticated in its concept as it is in its execution. h-moser.com



BEST OVERALL WATCH

PIAGET ALTIPLANO ULTIMATE CONCEPT SPOA

I last wrote about Piaget for these pages in 2018, when I sang the praises of its record-breaking Altiplano watch, the thinnest automatic in the world at the time (at 4.3mm thick). Today, that feels a little like congratulating Roger Federer on his first grand slam; justified at the time but somewhat eclipsed by subsequent events. For this year, Piaget presented a watch that, in its totality from top to bottom, caseback to crystal, measures just two millimetres thick. Yes, you read that right – a fully functioning, series-produced (a very limited series, but still), automatic-winding wristwatch that's even thinner than a pound coin. It's phenomenal. To look at it, you can't imagine putting it on for fear of bending the case or snapping the crystal (which is just 0.2mm thick), but thanks to Piaget's use of an entirely new cobalt-based alloy, such fears are unfounded. There are more complicated watches, and there are mechanical developments in watchmaking history that have had a greater significance, but as an achievement of engineering and design this is right up there with the best of them. piaget.com



← MOST ENTERTAINING
BAMFORD CASIO G-SHOCK 5610
\$194

George Bamford's creations never fail to raise a reaction – earlier this year he collaborated on a watch with a dial made from, I kid you not, coffee grounds – but nothing has tickled the fancy of watch collectors young and old like this G-Shock limited edition, executed in his trademark black and blue. The ultimate nostalgia trip for the horological in-crowd. bamfordlondon.com



← BEST SARTORIAL DECISION
CARTIER SANTOS
\$9,236

Svelte, suave and serene, Cartier's latest addition to the Santos range is the most knowingly stylish watch I came across this year – an artful reimagining of a 1980s icon that, despite the austere colour scheme, doesn't take itself too seriously. Don't believe me? No one else would put steel rivets in a rubber strap just for the sake of it. cartier.com

GRAND MILLENNIUM DUBAI HOTEL



DUBAI The 340-room five star hotel features award-winning restaurants and bars, spa and health club, state-of-the-art meeting rooms, a magnificent ballroom and exceptional banquet facilities.

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OMAN Adjacent to the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre, this 295-room hotel is an integral part of Madinat Al Irfan, a product of an exciting ambition to establish a new urban centre within Muscat. Situated 10 minutes from the new Muscat International Airport, Al Mouj and Muscat Hills Golf courses and overlooking a Wadi - a natural reserve and home to about 260 variety of Oman's exotic birdlife during the season.

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rooms.cpmuscatoc@ihg.com
crownplaza.com/muscatoc

MIRFA HOTEL



AL MARFA Away from the bustle of city life, overlooking the azure blue waters of the Arabian Gulf, the Mirfa Hotel offers 114 newly renovated rooms. The hotel provides excellent accommodation for the business and leisure traveller, state-of-the-art conference facilities, a fully equipped gym and ample parking.

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rsvn@mirfahotel.com

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DUBAI Located in the cultural heart of Dubai, Crowne Plaza Dubai - Deira lies at the convenient gateway between the old and new districts of the city. Featuring 300 guest rooms and suites, and an array of meeting rooms, 6 restaurants and bars, a dedicated and fully equipped fitness centre with outdoor swimming pool, the hotel is the perfect place for both leisure and business guests.

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WALDORF ASTORIA RAS AL KHAIMAH



RAS AL KHAIMAH Cradled by the Hajar Mountains, a championship golf course, sandy beaches and the azure waters of the Arabian Sea, Waldorf Astoria Ras Al Khaimah is 50 minutes from Dubai Airport and brings true Waldorf service to the most alluring beachfront location in the UAE.

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SHANGRI-LA HOTEL, DUBAI



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Business
Traveller Middle East

the report

**Tried,
Tested,
Tasted.**

TRIED AND TESTED

• **Armani/Kaf, Armani Hotel**
Dubai, Burj Khalifa

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• **The Oberoi Beach Resort,**
Al Zorah, Ajman

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TRIED AND TESTED

• **Citadines Islington London**

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• **Hart Shoreditch Hotel**
London, Curio Collection by
Hilton

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TRIED AND TESTED

• **Le Méridien Munich**

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• **Grand Hotel**
et de Milan

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SMART TRAVELLER

• **Our guide to... working from**
hotels

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Armani/Kaf, Armani Hotel Dubai, Burj Khalifa

BACKGROUND The UAE's first Kosher restaurant, Armani/Kaf, is part of a new wave of kosher dining experiences in the UAE. Opened in September, its kitchens are under the strict supervision of Rabbi Levi Duchman, the UAE's only resident rabbi, who has certified the venue with Glatt Kosher and Pas Yisroel certifications from Emirates Kosher Supervising Agency, the only UAE-based kosher certifier. While this directly appeals to the local Jewish community and Jewish tourists, the restaurant caters to all tastes and diners.

WHAT'S IT LIKE? Located in quiet corner of the hotel, this "pop-up dinner venue" with a low-key 40-person capacity, does feel like a bit of an afterthought. However, plants and wooden interiors create a cosy and intimate atmosphere.

THE FOOD The menu is massively diverse with plenty of options to suit all palates, thanks to the expertise of executive chef Fabien Fayolle. Reflecting both the UAE's

cultural diversity and the tastes of the global Jewish community, dishes range from Middle Eastern favourites such as shish taouk to steak, burgers and Italian and Indian specials. Kosher food is complex, not only in its preparation but its serving. Meat and milk cannot be consumed in the same meal, so desserts include sorbets as their accompaniments, rather than ice cream, and cheeseburgers are most certainly not an option. If you like a coffee with your meal, you'll be taking it black. For something a little more traditional, the challah, the classic braided bread, is to die for, and goes perfectly with a side of hummus. Another classic is the braised beef brisket, which pairs nicely with a glass of the kosher Pinotage from South Africa.

The menu is massively diverse with plenty of options to suit all palates



THE SERVICE Staff wear masks and visors, which makes communication somewhat tricky and at times, movement can be a little clumsy. But given the current circumstances it's important that we as diners be patient with staff who are adapting to new ways of serving.

THE WORKSPACE With views of the Downtown Dubai waterfront and natural daylight in abundance, Kaf/Armani offers a peaceful place to work or relax.

VERDICT Regardless of your food preferences, there is something for everyone at Kaf/Armani. The dining experience could be massively enhanced with some more cultural reference points to connect guests to its kosher essence, especially for those who are new to the concept, but it's definitely worth a visit.

Melanie Swan



HOURS

Sunday to Thursday, 18.30 to 23.30

LOCATION

Armani Hotel, Burj Khalifa, Downtown Dubai

CONTACT

Tel: +971 (0)4 888 3888;
armanihoteldubai

The Oberoi Beach Resort, Al Zorah, Ajman

BACKGROUND One of two Oberoi properties in the UAE, Oberoi, Al Zorah, has been open for just over three years. Surrounded by nothing but beach and natural mangroves, it is an urban retreat and well branded as “The UAE’s best-kept secret.”

WHAT’S IT LIKE? There is so much attention to detail, from the hand-crafted wooden furniture and fabrics to wood carvings. There is not an inch of ground uncultivated into breathtaking landscaping. With contrasting textures from wood to concrete, grass to stone, it is a patchwork of high-end architectural design, inside and out. While modern, it stays authentic to its Indian roots, with nods here and there paying homage to the brand’s essence. Trees are resort feature, from olive trees to magnificent towering palms, all interwoven with broad geometric waterways.

WHERE IS IT? 40 minutes by road from Dubai International Airport and Sharjah International airports, the resort is located on the outskirts of Ajman, the smallest of the UAE’s seven emirates.

Surrounded by nothing but beach and natural mangroves, it is an urban retreat

ROOMS I stayed in a premier room with private terrace and ocean view. The design was modern, with an open-plan layout, yet warm and flooded with light from the floor-to-ceiling windows leading to the terrace. A walk-in wardrobe, huge sofa, grand bathroom with walk-in shower and stand-alone bath, were some of the features, as well as tech extras like the iHome system, Apple TV on request, and high-speed Wi-Fi for multiple devices. There are nine room and suite categories, the largest of which is 339sqm three-bedroom pool villa.



FOOD AND DRINK The hotel has two main restaurants, a poolside dining venue and The Library. Vinesse, for all day dining, offers a huge array of options from authentic Indian cuisine to mouthwatering meats. With outdoor seating overlooking the ocean, it’s a winner for breakfast where the à la carte menu is extensive. Getting even closer to the water, Aquario, on the beach front, serves Mediterranean-inspired dishes with a seafood emphasis including delicacies ranging from oysters to caviar. The scallops are not to be missed, but the modern take on fish and chips was delicious too. The Library is a cosy space for coffee and snacks, while the pool bar serves a range of food and drinks in a relaxed setting.

BUSINESS Three business rooms can be converted into U-shaped or boardroom-style set-ups. They are equipped with automatic drop-down screens, Wi-Fi projectors, video conference facilities and more. Secretarial, courier, printing and translation services are available on request and a business centre has two private workstations with laptops, desktops and Macs, as well as printers and scanners.



BEST FOR

Incredible service and impeccably trained staff

DON'T MISS

Sundowners on the beach

PRICE

From AED 1,200 (US\$320) per night (weekday) for bed and breakfast (for two) in December

CONTACT

Al Zorah, Al Ittihad Road, Ajman; tel: +971 (0)6 504 4888; oberoihotels.com

LEISURE The hotel has excellent spa and fitness facilities and offers group yoga classes, table tennis and beach volleyball, all very much suited to corporate team-building events.

VERDICT One of my favourite UAE hotels to date – and that’s a big statement in a country which punches well above its weight in the hospitality stakes. I felt relaxed literally from the moment I arrived to the moment I left. *Melanie Swan*

Citadines Islington London

BACKGROUND The Ascott Limited's aparthotel brand, Citadines is a hybrid hotel and serviced apartment concept offering larger rooms than standard hotels, with fully equipped kitchens, but without restaurants and aimed at longer-stay guests. Open since September, this new Islington property is the fifth in the capital for the brand, and is due to be followed next year by Citadines Wembley London.

WHAT'S IT LIKE? The building has an Edwardian red-brick façade and was once a Royal Mail sorting office. Reception is bright and modern with art referencing its previous life, plus hand sanitisers, screens and social distancing signs.

WHERE IS IT? On Islington Square, a new development just off Upper Street that is based around the Grade II-listed former sorting office and yards. There are private apartments, shops, offices, a cinema, and a Third Space gym. The traffic-free Esther Anne Place runs through it, between Theberton and Almeida streets. Angel Tube station is about a ten-minute walk.

Deluxe one-bedroom apartments have a yoga mat and, more importantly, the space to use it

ROOMS The 81 studios and 27 one-bedroom apartments range from 25 sqm to 53 sqm and hold up to two or four guests, respectively. They are on floors one to four and look on to the pedestrianised square or interior Japanese garden (rooms overlooking the latter are quieter – there is no access to the garden so it is peaceful). Each unit has a kitchen, a separate bedroom or sleeping area, a good-sized bathroom and a living area. Even the studios have an entrance hall, adding to the spacious feel. In Deluxe one-bed apartments, the living room sofa converts into two single beds. Wifi is free.

Pale wood floors and neutral walls are



lifted by textured blue upholstery, brushed chrome light fittings and bold rugs. Sleeping areas have blue and white screen-printed wallpaper by Paris-based graphic artist and printmaker Jérémie Solomon that references London's skyline and rooftops.

The kitchen area takes up one end of the living rooms in Deluxe one-beds, and is cleverly tucked behind a dividing wall feature in the studios. It has a hob, microwave, coffee maker, kettle, fridge, dishwasher and table for four. Most of the one-bedroom and Deluxe apartments have a washing machine; otherwise, you can use the one in the property's laundry room. Rooms also have an ironing board, while Deluxe one-beds come with a yoga mat and, more importantly, the space to use it.

FOOD AND DRINK The breakfast buffet in the residents' lounge is currently closed, although at the time of writing there were plans to offer a grab-and-go breakfast for £5 towards the end of the year. There is a free coffee and tea machine plus vending fridges selling beer, wine and soft drinks. Given the many food and drink options

nearby – including a street-food market just outside (Fri-Sun), and several supermarkets a short walk away – this would only be for emergency purchases.

MEETINGS No dedicated facilities.

LEISURE A decent-sized first-floor gym.

VERDICT If you need a base that is away from the tourist trail but still central, Islington is a great choice. It's one of London's most vibrant areas, with excellent bars and restaurants and a good mix of high-street and independent shops, while the leafy streets and nearby Regent's Canal offer opportunities for running. A good-value option if you're bringing your family on a business trip, especially the Deluxe one-bedroom apartments with sofa beds for children in the living room. *Tom Otley*

BEST FOR

A taste of Islington living, with the option to self-cater for some of your stay

DON'T MISS

A picnic lunch from the street-food market, where you can pick up artisan breads, tarts, pies, cheeses, beers, gins and other delights

PRICE

Web rates for a mid-week stay in January start from £119 (US\$158) for a studio

CONTACT

3 Shelley Place; tel +44 (0)20 3986 0900; citadines.com



Hart Shoreditch Hotel London, Curio Collection by Hilton

BACKGROUND Hart Shoreditch is the fourth London property for Hilton's upscale Curio Collection brand, with a fifth, the Gantry, due to be opened soon. It opened in February and a month later had to close because of Covid-19, reopening in August.

WHAT'S IT LIKE? The five-floor hotel champions the local area, paying homage to the East End's industrial heritage. Its name is inspired by some of the property's



The interiors are inspired by the area, with nods to craftsmanship and creativity past and present

anonymous former occupants, a family of cabinetmakers in the 1800s. The interiors by Fabled Studio are inspired by the neighbourhood, with nods to craftsmanship and creativity past and present. Mahogany chandelier-like lights in the lobby replicate cabinetmaker's boxes and copper accents gleam throughout. A one-way system is in place so guests enter via Leonard Street and leave via Great Eastern Street. It is required that you wear a mask when staff-facing, and there are plenty of hand sanitising stations. Check-in was quick and easy, with friendly staff.

WHERE IS IT? In the heart of Shoreditch, about five minutes' walk from Old Street Tube station and ten minutes from Liverpool Street station.

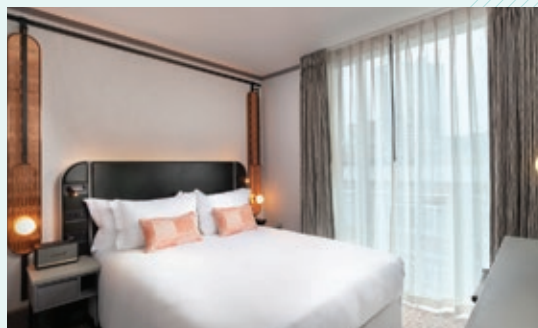
ROOMS The 126 rooms come in nine categories, ranging from the 17 sqm

Queen Guest to the 27 sqm King Superior Corner and three suite types. All are prepared in line with the Hilton Clean Stay programme, with a label clasp the door shut to show that no one has entered since housekeeping, and guests have to opt in for daily servicing of the room. The décor is warm, with a muted palette of white and grey brightened by burnt orange furnishings. Bedside lamps hang from leather straps, while there are



a selection of books about the local area. Large windows provide natural light, and noise was never an issue despite the property being on a busy road. The bed was comfortable.

All rooms come with small desks, plenty of USB and plug sockets, mini fridges, tea and coffee facilities, safes and Marshall wireless speakers. King Superior rooms and above also have Nespresso machines. The geometric-tiled bathrooms feature walk-in marble showers or majestic rolltop tubs with showerheads – the bath in my King Superior Corner room overlooked the Shoreditch skyline, with a blind to preserve my privacy, and speakers to listen to music.



FOOD AND DRINK The hotel's dining concepts extend beyond London's East End, drawing inspiration instead from the eastern Mediterranean. Located in the lobby, Turkish-inspired bar Tavla is a homely space, though backgammon, from which the bar draws its Turkish name, seems to have fallen victim to the virus. A QR code brings up a limited menu – so no barrel-aged cocktails. On the same floor lies the restaurant Barboun ("red mullet" in Turkish), from executive chef Hus Vedat, the brains behind Soho's Hovarda. With Turkish Cypriot head chef Fezile Ozalgan at the helm, Barboun specialises in Levantine cuisine, with flavours drawn from coastal towns. Highlights included beetroot fritters with whipped feta and mint, and the Burma baklava – three gorgeous cigarette filo rolls soaked in cinnamon syrup. It also offers a grab-and-go breakfast service. The hotel is looking to open underground entertainment venue Byrd in the future.

MEETINGS There are two rooms on the lower ground floor that can be joined together to hold 26 people boardroom-style.

LEISURE A small gym on the lower ground floor is open to two visitors at a time owing to social distancing rules.

VERDICT The hotel has successfully navigated reopening amidst the pandemic, taking cleanliness seriously while also providing guests with a friendly, accommodating and thoughtful stay, championing local artisans along the way. The stylish restaurant and bar will attract locals and hotel guests.

Hannah Brandler

BEST FOR

Sharing Levantine plates at Barboun

DON'T MISS

A bath overlooking London's glistening skyline

PRICE

Internet rates for a flexible midweek stay in January started from £94.50 (US\$123) for a Queen Guest room

CONTACT

61-67 Great Eastern Street; +44 (0)20 3995 3655; hartshoreditch.com

Le Méridien Munich

BACKGROUND This member of Marriott's "upper upscale" brand opened in 2002. It underwent refurbishment in 2016.

WHAT'S IT LIKE? Modern in style, the nine-floor hotel is set around a courtyard that provides some peace and tranquillity in the centre of the city. Unless you look up and see the flags and signs, it would be easy to pass by without realising you are outside the property, owing to the bright blue welcome art covering the windows and hiding the lobby.

WHERE IS IT? Right next to the Hauptbahnhof (central train station) – you can catch the S1 or S8 train from Munich airport. The hotel is opposite the station entrance on the south side.

ROOMS There are 381 in total, split across three room categories – Superior (23-28 sqm), Deluxe (29-34 sqm) and Executive (35-45 sqm) – and three suite types. Lower-category rooms are designed in a similar style to the Executive suite

Being in the middle of the city, you would expect some noise but the soundproofing is excellent

I stayed in on the seventh floor, which was 60 sqm with a separate living room. It was decorated in shades of grey with rich blue accents, while large windows created a real sense of space and light. On all but the top two floors, the windows are floor-to-ceiling.



Rooms are air-conditioned but also have windows that open if you prefer fresh air. Being in the middle of the city, you would expect some noise but the soundproofing is excellent – still, if you are worried about being disturbed, choose a room overlooking the courtyard. I slept well in the super-king bed. Rooms come with free wifi, desks, safes, ironing boards and tea and coffee facilities (Illy machines in suites). The minibar is normally complimentary in suites but was empty because of Covid. My bathroom was large, with twin sinks, a great oversized shower, generously sized Malin and Goetz toiletries and individually wrapped antibacterial wipes.

FOOD AND DRINK Longitude 11 bar is to the left of reception. In the present situation it is hard to get the measure of a place, as it was quiet with only a couple of other tables occupied. It normally serves snacks but food choices had been limited to soups, beef goulash (warm and tasty), chicken fricassée and cheesecake. The signature restaurant, Irmi (closed Sun-Mon at the time of writing owing to the pandemic), offers regional dishes such as cheese Spaetzle, roast pork, schnitzel and veal meatballs, along with locally brewed beer. A breakfast buffet is also served here – it is currently reduced in choice but I found it to have everything I needed (including cereal, bread, pastries, fruit, yoghurt, cheese, meats, an egg station and some hot items). Disposable gloves were provided for helping yourself. In warmer



months the courtyard becomes the all-day Au Soleil Summer Lounge.

MEETINGS There are eight rooms, the largest a ballroom holding 220 guests for a reception or 180 theatre-style, with access to the courtyard.

LEISURE In the basement there is a 17-metre pool and a spa (currently closed in the middle of the day for cleaning), plus a sauna and spa bath (both closed). There is also a good-sized 24-hour gym. Hotel guests get free entry to MUCA (the Museum of Urban and Contemporary Art), which is about a 15-minute walk away.

VERDICT A modern, comfortable hotel with spacious rooms in a great location for business or leisure. *Julian Gregory*

BEST FOR

The pool – one of the largest in Munich

DON'T MISS

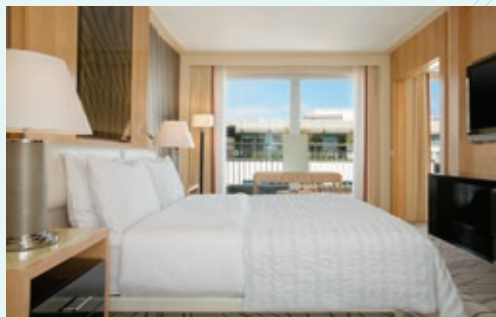
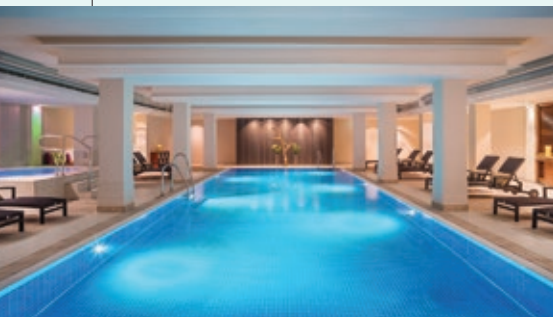
The courtyard beer garden in the summer

PRICE

Internet rates for a flexible midweek stay in January started from €127 (US\$151) for a Superior room

CONTACT

Bayerstrasse 41; tel +49 89 24220;
lemeridienmunch.com



Grand Hotel et de Milan

BACKGROUND Open since 1863, this Leading Hotels of the World member has been owned by the Bertazzoni family for three generations and has welcomed guests ranging from Hemingway and the Duke and Duchess of Windsor to composer Giuseppe Verdi and opera singer Maria Callas.

WHAT'S IT LIKE? Designed in the style of a grand palazzo, the property, like many of Milan's extravagant and luxurious houses, has an unassuming façade. Once inside, it is elegant grandeur all the way, in spite of all of the Covid precautions in place. The public areas and guestrooms sport priceless antiques that have been there so long that they have become part of the hotel's history. Ask to see the Verdi suite, complete with the desk that he used.

WHERE IS IT? On Via Manzoni in the centre of the city, about a five-minute walk from the financial district and a short stroll from La Scala opera house, the Duomo and the fashion area. It's an excellent location whether you are in Milan for business or leisure, or a bit of both.

ROOMS The 72 rooms and 23 suites (entry-level Classic rooms are 23 sqm) feature period details such as parquet floors and Italian marble in the bathrooms.



A recent refurbishment by Milan's Dimore Studio has seen a number of rooms upgraded to provide a contemporary feel with individual colour schemes and accessories, although they still retain a sense of history. All have air conditioning, minibars, flatscreen TVs, desks, plenty of plug sockets (although not all have USB charging points), safes and free wifi.

My 50 sqm Superior suite – the Duke and Duchess of Windsor suite – had a lavish sitting room with slightly overstuffed sofas and a dining table, with sliding doors to a bedroom fitted with plenty of wardrobes. Both rooms had splendid windows overlooking the street. The bathroom had twin sinks, a large shower, good-quality robes and products by Etro.

FOOD AND DRINK With some Covid restrictions still in place in Milan at the time of writing, the Caruso restaurant and bar is the hotel's main venue for dining and drinking at the moment. With an attractive winter garden overlooking Via Croce Rossa, it is a great place to have breakfast and

watch the city's elegant office employees and fashionistas walking to work. There's a limited menu at present but for lunch or dinner make sure you try the saffron risotto, a superb Milanese classic. This is also a good place for an after-work or pre-dinner drink, although in normal times there's also Gerry's Bar and

the American Bar, both excellent for drinks with your business contacts.

The hotel's top restaurant, although it was closed during my visit, is the Don Carlos, which pays homage to Verdi. The food is top-class Italian and the superb wine cellar offers about 200 labels.

MEETINGS Plenty of options, including the Verdi, Giordano and Puccini rooms, which accommodate 50, 60 and 120 delegates theatre-style, respectively.

LEISURE There is a fitness room on the second floor. The hotel doesn't have a spa, although guests will be able to use the new facilities at its nearby sister hotel, Straf, which at the time of my visit in September was in the final stages of renovation.

VERDICT Living history, grandeur and Italian style and service in a location for business travellers that is hard to beat. You will probably be able to walk to most meetings, otherwise taxis are easy to find. *Jeff Mills*

SILVIA RIVOLTELLA



Designed in the style of a grand palazzo, its façade is unassuming but once inside, it is elegant grandeur all the way

BEST FOR

Its location, right in the heart of the business and fashion district and five minutes' walk from La Scala

DON'T MISS

Breakfast on the terrace while watching the morning parade of stylish pedestrians heading to their offices

PRICE

Internet rates for a flexible midweek stay in January started from €426 (US\$505) for a Classic room

CONTACT

Via Manzoni 29; tel +39 02 723 141; grandhoteletdemilan.it

Our guide to...

Working from hotels

As 2020 turns into 2021, working from home continues to dominate our professional lives, but cabin fever is starting to set in for some. Research by Accor has found that 41 per cent of people in the UK feel their work-life balance has worsened, while 22 per cent feel less productive owing to distractions.

So how about a change of scenery? Hotels have lots of empty rooms and are marketing them as clean and safe workspaces that can be rented by the day, week or month. Embracing the "work from anywhere" trend, they are hoping that vacant rooms will be filled, while workers will get the peace they need alongside access to hotel facilities. Here are some "work from hotel" schemes operating in the UK and further afield.

HOTEL GROUPS

Accor

Programme: Hotel Office
What's included? Private rooms with in-room amenities and access to on-site bars, restaurants and wellbeing rooms, subject to availability in participating hotels
Location: 220 hotels currently in operation in the UK, 70 across Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg, and South America; more to come in Europe and Russia
Timings: Daily (9am-6pm) or a five-day package
Extras: Breakfast, a snack or lunch on the go
Price: From £35 (\$46) per day; members of ALL – Accor Live Limitless get a 5 per cent discount
all.accor.com

The Ascott Limited

Programme: Work in Residence
What's included? Studios and apartments with high-speed wifi, coffee and tea, printing facilities in reception, and parking, subject to availability at participating properties
Location: 90-plus properties across more than 20 countries
Timings: Daily (8am-7pm), weekly or monthly packages

Extras: Widescreen monitors, webcams for videoconferencing, Bluetooth speakers, food delivery, grocery shopping, printing, concierge services, in-room chef
Price: From £69 (\$92)
the-ascott.com

Day Break Hotels

What's included? This website allows guests to book rooms, suites and apartments at partners including Radisson Hotels and Resorts, Hilton and NH Hotels
Location: International
Timings: Hourly or daily
Price: Varies per hotel
daybreakhotels.com

Hilton

Programme: Workspaces by Hilton
What's included? Rooms with a desk, tea and coffee and enhanced wifi. Access to gyms, pools, dining areas and business centres where available. Individual hotels are also offering extras including free parking and bike hire.
Location: Expected at most Hilton hotels across the UK, plus locations in the US and Canada
Timings: Daily (hotel hours vary)
Extras: Breakfast, a snack or lunch

Price: Varies per hotel. From £75 (\$100) at Conrad London St James
workspacesbyhilton.com

Mandarin Oriental

Programme: Working from M O
What's included? Private rooms with high-speed wifi, printing, a dining credit and gym access
Location: Most city hotels globally
Timings: Daily (8am-6pm)
Price: Varies. From £342 (\$454) at the London property
mandarinoriental.com

25 Hours Hotel

Programme: Home Office
What's included? Pet-friendly private rooms with high-speed wifi, Nespresso machines, tea, Schindelhauer bikes and Bluetooth speakers
Location: Select hotels in Berlin, Dusseldorf, Frankfurt, Hamburg, Cologne, Munich, Vienna, Zurich
Timings: Daily or five days
Price: €50 (\$59) daily; €200 (\$237) for five days
25hours-hotels.com

LONDON HOTELS

The Dorchester

Programme: Working Away
What's included? A private suite for up to six guests with an on-call IT concierge, tea and coffee and a £100 (\$133) spa and dining credit
Timings: Daily (7am-7pm)
Price: From £1,275 (\$1,692)
Validity: Until November 30, 2020*
dorchestercollection.com

K West Hotel and Spa

Programme: Work from Home Alternative
What's included? Executive

rooms with desks, wifi, tea, coffee, and parking. A week pass includes five full days and a four-night stay with daily breakfast and a room-service dinner on two nights
Timings: Daily (8am-6pm) or weekly
Price: £79 (\$105) daily; from £550 (\$730) weekly
Validity: Until December 30, 2020*
k-west.co.uk

Shangri-La Hotel at the Shard

Programme: Meeting in the Sky
What's included? A room holding six guests for meetings, with flipcharts, high-speed wifi, printing and Nespresso machines
Timings: Daily (7.30am-5pm)
Extras: Breakfast, lunch, afternoon tea
Price: £390 (\$517)
Validity: Until December 31, 2020*
shangri-la.com

The Stafford

What's included? A Mews suite with a desk and a two-course lunch in-room or in the restaurant
Timings: Daily (8am-6pm)
Extras: Timings can be extended
Price: From £395 (\$524)
Validity: Until December 31, 2020*
thestaffordlondon.com 





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