

Experiential^{talk}

For the discerning traveller



**POSTCARDS
FROM FRANCE**

Exploring the extraordinary Northern France

AWE-INSPIRING OTTAWA

The Canadian capital is also a
centre for exciting winter activities

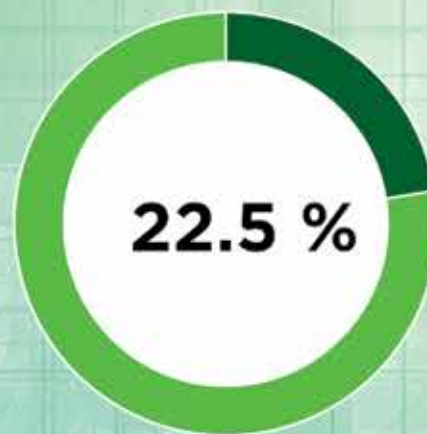


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ESCAPE THE MUNDANE

Wake up to the sound of the ocean just outside your window in Sri Lanka, gaze at the lone boat in the middle of the sea from a lighthouse while sipping your cocktail in Indonesia, spend a day with an African tribe, sing your favourite song with local artists on the streets of Barcelona or stay at a traditional Kumaon house amidst the mountains in Himachal Pradesh.

Experiences take you away from the mundane, lift the lid off your spirits and revitalise your mind, body and soul. Today's traveller realises that ticking off attractions on a pre-prepared itinerary is not the best way to travel. Experiencing local culture, cuisine and activities is the right way. And it's not just the millennials who want to travel this way, travellers irrespective of age or gender want to travel in their own way, at their own speed and preference. In order to cater to such a clientele, even travel agents and tour operators are becoming itinerary specialists.

These travellers are aware of what they want and are increasingly searching for options on social media platforms and travel search engines. Technology companies and social media websites are also keeping a track of a traveller's activities and suggest unique results. These companies have dedicated travel departments meant to get this data and share with travel companies for offering results and feed well-matched for every individual. In a way, these companies are also catering to provide the most suitable experiences to their users.

The world of travel is changing and with the technology boom, experiential travel is certainly the buzzword!

NISHA VERMA

NEWS IN BRIEF

RUN A MAZE IN SOUTH AFRICA

While the Redberry Farm is a commercial strawberry grower and a popular family entertainment venue, one of the more exciting activities it offers is exploring the largest hedge maze in the Southern Hemisphere. Nestled in the town of George, the Garden Route is one of the most remarkable attractions in South Africa. The maze consists of seven strawberry stations, a 25 meter underground tunnel and a look-out point to be found within 10,000 meter of pathways. The hedges are grown from over 30,000 Syzygium Paniculatum plants.



Explore the longest underground river

The Puerto Princesa Subterranean River National Park is a natural wonder that lies within the city boundaries of Palawan in the Philippines. With unique geological features, the subterranean river is said to be among the longest in the world measuring up to 8.2 km. Visitors can take an underground river tour here and explore the topography.



Winter attractions in Korea

Pyeongchang, an upcoming destination in South Korea, will host the 2018 Olympic Winter Games from February 9-25. If sports do not interest you, you can attend the Hwacheon Sancheoneo Ice Festival, featuring a variety of experiences, including mountain trout fishing on ice, a zip track stretching across the festival venue, and various snow and ice sculptures from January 14 to February 5, 2018.



Diving in Maldives

Ayada Maldives is a private island resort set in the relatively unexplored Gaafu Dhaalu Atoll in the south of the country – just a few kilometres above the equator. Ayada Maldives offers snorkelling and diving experience. Over 1,000 species of fish, coral and other marine life inhabit the waters throughout the Maldives; better yet, given the isolation of the Gaafu Dhaalu atoll, fast gaining an international reputation in being one of the most incredible places to dive and snorkel. The courses on offer are all developed by the Professional Association of Diving Instructors (PADI).

Art at Amsterdam Airport

With a mini branch at Schiphol airport, the Rijksmuseum was among the first in the world to open in an airport. The area just past security between Lounge 2 and 3, dubbed Holland Boulevard, has been converted into a museum showcasing some of Netherlands' greatest works of art. On display are 10 paintings from the Rijksmuseum collection. There is also a gift shop with souvenirs from famous Dutch museums, including the Rijksmuseum. The new exhibition makes Schiphol the only airport in the world with original 17th century artworks. Travellers flying into or out of Amsterdam will be able to transmute the base metal of slogging through airports into the purest Dutch Golden Age.



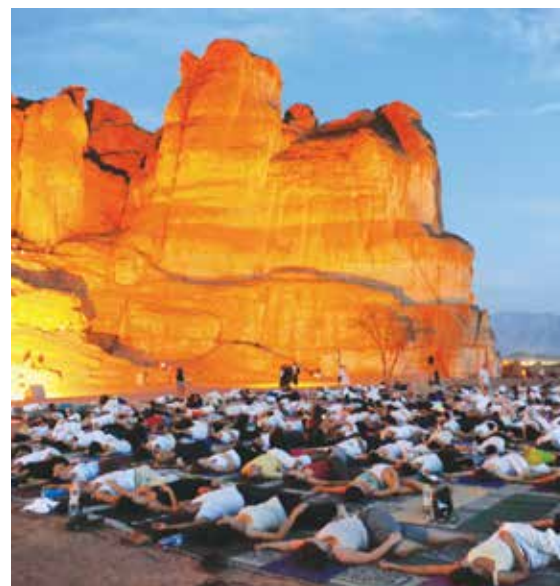
Dinner Cruise in Phuket

The Sanya Rak Dinner Cruise organised by Banyan Tree Phuket has been a remarkable success witnessing marriage proposals, valentine dates, anniversary celebration and even wedding dinners. Sanya Rak, meaning 'Promise of Love' in Thai, is a unique destination dining experience. It showcases Banyan Tree Phuket's connections to the local Phuketian culture and nature by allowing guests to not only experience exceptional Thai food but also take a romantic excursion in the traditional long-tail Thai boat. The boat sails through the Laguna Phuket's tranquil lagoons cruising past a tropical fairy-tale of palms, casuarinas, Thai-styled architecture and a soothing sunset.



Fine dining at Ayers Rock Resort

An exclusive new fine dining experience, Mayu Wiru, will commence nightly at Ayers Rock Resort from October 22 to March 24 every year. Mayu Wiru is a premium experience for a maximum of 16 guests that will combine the epitome of fine dining together with a premium Field of Light experience. The evening begins with champagne and canapés at a private lookout within the grounds of Sails in the Desert hotel, followed by a three-course table d'hôte indigenous-inspired menu with perfectly matched wines in the hotel's private dining room. After dinner, guests are transported to a dune top for a nightcap, panoramic views of the Field of Light Uluru and a star talk on the southern night sky. The evening ends with a private 30-minute escorted walk through an art exhibition.



Yoga Arava Festival in Israel

The grounds of the Arava Desert will serve as mats for the 7th Yoga Arava Festival, the biggest yoga meeting in Israel. Throughout the weekend of November 2-4, 2017, the villages of the Arava will host yoga workshops with the best teachers in Israel and special guest teachers from India in the exhilarating desert landscape. The practice areas will be placed throughout the Arava from Moshav Idan in the north to Kibbutz Elifaz in the south.

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OTTAWA 2017

Big, bold, immersive and transformative – Ottawa's 2017 signature events will be once-in-a-lifetime experiences that visitors wouldn't want to miss. Planned by the Ottawa 2017 Bureau, the year-long calendar of all-new events will continue till December 31, 2017 all the while showcasing its various tourism products that travellers can visit even later.



Canada records 37 per cent growth in Indian arrivals to Canada in April 2017.



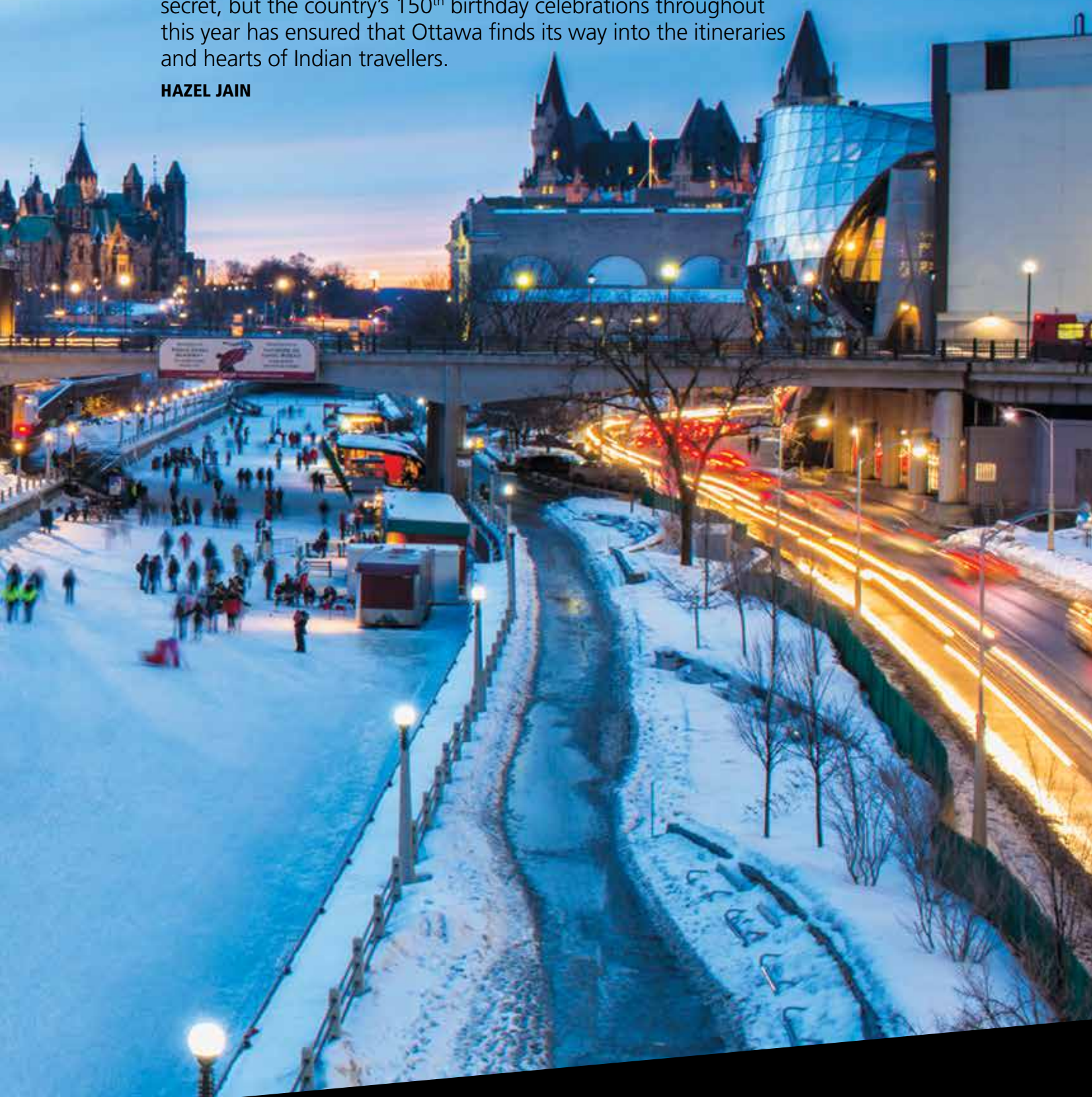
The Ottawa 2017 Bureau, in collaboration with CIBC, have launched Miwàte: Illumination of Chaudière Falls. This dynamic illumination of Chaudière Falls celebrates the Indigenous Peoples of Canada and their cultures. A rich soundscape accompanies the experience. In addition to the illumination, participants are invited to explore the Algonquin Awareness Exhibit, which shares information on the presence of Indigenous Peoples.

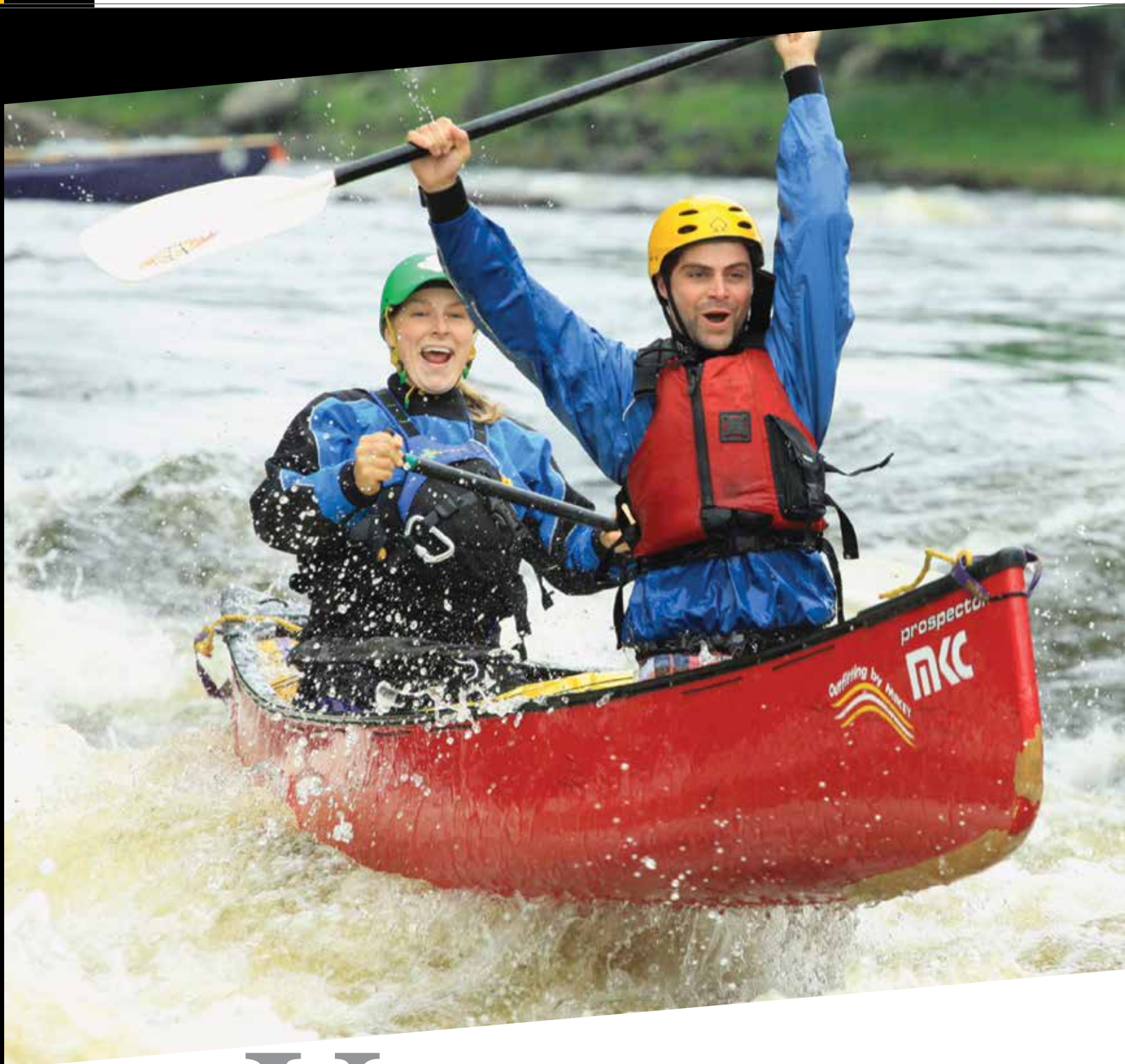


Ottawa Awe-inspiring

This quaint capital city of Canada has so far been its best-kept secret, but the country's 150th birthday celebrations throughout this year has ensured that Ottawa finds its way into the itineraries and hearts of Indian travellers.

HAZEL JAIN





Year 2017 is Canada's 150th anniversary and the celebration lasts all year long! By virtue of being its capital city, Ottawa is where the biggest party is happening...

and everyone's invited. An estimated half a million people attended the celebrations in July in Ottawa, where the government spent approximately half a billion Canadian dollars on the festivities.

Canada's most populous province, Ontario is home to nearly 40 per cent of all Canadians. It is also home to Ottawa, Canada's capital, known for Parliament Hill's Victorian architecture and the National Gallery, featuring Canadian and indigenous art. Ottawa is not only Canada's political capital but also its cultural capital which lies 450 km away from Toronto. The city has also evolved into a technological centre of Canada while still retaining its old-world charm. According to studies, it is the

most educated city in the country and is home to a number of post-secondary, research and cultural institutions, including the National Arts Centre, the National Gallery and numerous national museums.

Ottawa has the highest standard of living in the nation and low unemployment. It has been ranked second nationally and 24th worldwide in the quality of life index and is consistently rated the best place to live in Canada. With so many bests to its name, it undoubtedly makes for a fascinating destination to visit. Winter, of course, holds special significance for Canadians and they love to make the most of the snow they get. So, a large part of the Ottawa experience lies in winter sports activities. Like they say, Canada is cool, not cold!

WINTER IN OTTAWA

Travellers can beat their winter blues when in Ottawa. From rock climbing to outdoor skiing



Winter, of course, holds special significance for Canadians and they love to make the most of the snow they get. A large part of the Ottawa experience lies in winter sports

and skating, there are many ways to enjoy winter in Canada's capital region. Canadians enjoy Winterlude, an annual celebration of winter that spans three fun-filled weekends every February. There are exciting things to see and do during this snow-covered season. A special highlight for children of all ages is Snowflake Kingdom located in Jacques-Cartier Park in Gatineau with its collection of huge snow slides.

Not to be missed either is the International Ice Carving competition where carvers from around the world descend on Confederation Park in downtown Ottawa to transform blocks of ice into spectacular works of art. Visit during the day and again at night when the sculptures are lit up, for two very different perspectives. Ice skating on the naturally frozen largest skating rink in the world is a 'must-do' on many visitors' bucket lists. The Rideau Canal Skateway is open to skaters daily from roughly

late December to February, weather permitting, at no charge and there are change huts, skate rental shacks and snack stations all along its 7.8 km (4.8 miles) length.

Skating: If ice conditions don't allow for skating on the canal, visitors can head to Ottawa City Hall where the Senators Rink of Dreams—a refrigerated outdoor skating rink—is open from November to March from 0800 hours to 2300 hours complete with LED lighting, a heated change hut, picnic tables and benches. Lansdowne's Skating Court also offers a longer skating season that stretches from roughly mid-November to mid-March. Skate rentals are not available at these sites.

Cross-country skiing: Ottawa offers cross-country trails right in the heart of the city and there are over 150 km (93 miles) of cross-country ski trails in the Greenbelt area encircling Ottawa.



The Rideau Canal Skateway is open to skaters daily from roughly late Dec-Feb, weather permitting, at no charge and there are change huts, skate rental shacks



Visitors can use the trails for free and all are suitable for beginner and family outings. Just across the Ottawa River from downtown, Gatineau Park is a mecca for cross-country skiing enthusiasts, with over 200 km (124 miles) of groomed trails and heated shelters. Pick up a ski pass (daily or seasonal) at the Visitor Centre in Chelsea, Québec. The Gatineau Loppet will take place from February 16-18, 2018, and is Canada's largest cross-country ski event, bringing some of the finest distance racers from Canada and the world to the Ottawa-Gatineau area. For super endurance, consider the Canadian Ski Marathon from February 9-11, 2018. This three-day, 160 km (99 miles) event is open to skier participants of all ages.

Downhill skiing and snowboarding: For downhill enthusiasts, Ottawa is like an urban resort, with challenging hills within easy driving distance of downtown, including Camp Fortune and Mount Pakenham.

Snowshoeing: Gatineau Park has trails reserved especially for snowshoeing; so strap on your snowshoes and go! Pick up a Snowshoe pass (daily or seasonal) at the Visitor Centre in Chelsea, Québec.

Dog-sledding: Come enjoy a memorable dog sledding experience at Escapade Eskimo

in the scenic Outaouais region, only 75 minutes from Ottawa.

Hiking: Gatineau Park offers three groomed trails for winter hiking and is a lovely place for a walk in a snow-covered forest.

Winter camping: Gatineau Park also provides adventurers with campsites, cabins, yurts and four-season tents accessible via ski and snowshoe trails. Reservations are required, so be sure to book ahead!

Indoor rock climbing: Altitude Gym brings the world of indoor rock climbing to another level and to a one-of-a-kind location.

COLD WAR MUSEUM

Ottawa's most unique historical site, the Diefenbunker (or the Cold War Museum) is a four-storey, 100,000 square foot underground bunker, built between 1959 and 1961. During the Cold War, it was intended to house 535 Canadian government officials and military officers in the event of a nuclear war. For years, it protected the Canadians from 75 feet underground and they knew virtually nothing about it. Experience how close the Canadians came to a nuclear disaster, although a lot has changed since 1961.

WHITE-WATER RAFTING

Renowned as the Whitewater Capital of Canada, the Ottawa Valley is home to more than 900 lakes and four major river systems, including the mighty Ottawa, Madawaska, Bonnechere and Petawawa rivers. These are popular spots to raft, kayak, canoe, surf and fish.

NATIONAL GALLERY OF CANADA

Arachnophobes, rejoice! The National Gallery of Canada is home to more than 40,000 works of art (by over 6,000 artists), home to the most comprehensive collection of Canadian art and strong collections of indigenous, Asian, and international works.

BYWARD MARKET

The ByWard Market is where Ottawa was born. Established in 1826, the ByWard Market is one of Canada's oldest and largest public markets. Today, it is Ottawa's number one tourist attraction and residents and visitors alike visit the market for shopping, dining, arts, entertainment and professional services.

ABORIGINAL EXPERIENCES

Aboriginal Experiences offer visitors a unique look at First Nations' culture in a native village, including traditional native cuisine, powwow dance performances, guided tours, and craft workshops. Programmes offer a rare opportunity to experience the rich culture, teachings and history of Canada's First People from their perspective. It is open from May 1 to October 31 for groups of 25 or more.

LE CORDON BLEU

Cordon Bleu Ottawa is housed in a historical 1877 mansion, which exudes class and old-world charm. Le Cordon Bleu's demonstration experience is interesting as it gives you an insider's look at how the institute's world-renowned chefs are trained.

Mountain Escapades

Home to the tallest mountain in the UAE – Jebel Jais, Ras Al Khaimah offers a mountain experience like no other. Zip through the picturesque landscape or take the Via Ferrata, your next emirate spot to satisfy the adrenaline rush.

ANKITA SAXENA



In its first phase of operations, the zip line will be able to accommodate 250 people a day, that's 100,000 in a year. Nothing like this exists in the world yet



The spectacular Al Hajar Mountains in the eastern part of Ras Al Khaimah were formed over 70 million years ago and stand nearly 2,000 metres above sea level. The emirate boasts of an array of archaeological sites and breathtaking natural vistas, from golden sandy beaches, awe-inspiring terracotta dunes and a green belt of date palms to Jebel Jais, the highest mountain in the United Arab Emirates which stands at 1900 meters. Jebel Jais' dramatic and beautiful landscape offers an iconic backdrop which can only be categorised as a bucket list experience for travellers around the world. This peak is a key attraction in Ras Al Khaimah, ideal for active adventurers and visitors looking for unparalleled views of the Persian Gulf. The rugged terrain plays host to extreme climbing, hiking, driving and trekking enthusiasts.

The Via Ferrata or the 'iron path' is a protected mountain-climbing method spanning the rocky facades of Jebel Jais. Ras Al Khaimah's 470m-long Via Ferrata is unique to the region as it comprises three individual start and finish points, as well as three zip lines measuring 50m, 60m and 300m. Professional instructors guide travellers along the route. Via Ferrata offers a steel cable which runs along the route and is periodically fixed to the rock. Using a kit, climbers can secure themselves to the cable which could also be used as an aid to climbing.

WATCH OUT

New attractions also include The Jebel Jais Observation Deck, which is set to open in Q4 this year, having a multi-purpose deck that boasts of a series of viewing platforms to experience the awe-inspiring vistas, bird life, flora and fauna at 1,227 metres above sea level. It will also serve as a base camp for hikers and bikers looking to test themselves of the emirate's Al Hajar mountain range. Other product developments will also include the second season of the enhanced Via Ferrata and the launch of official cycling and hiking routes across the emirate, with a focus on Jebel Jais.

WHAT TO EXPECT

The standard and easiest course, the Ledge Walk, allows a group of up to eight climbers and takes around four hours to complete. It starts with a gentle climb through sedimentary rocks, goes into a vertical stretch which leads to the 50m zip line. A gradual slope then leads to the 60m zip line before another path leads to 300m zip line for the journey back to the middle section. From here, the return to the wadi is about 225m long. The middle, technical route—the Middle Path—takes around three-and-a-half hours and comprises three vertical sections and a horizontal traverse. It rises 60m from the wadi bed to join the Ledge Walk before the first zip line. After completing the Middle Path, climbers continue on the standard route including the three zip lines and a walk out. The higher, vertical route—Jolphar Scare—takes around one-and-a-half hour. This is the most direct route to the long zip line. It is a 120m ascent using ladders through five different vertical sections with adjoining horizontal sections.

ZIP THE WORLD'S LONGEST LINE

Soon, Ras Al Khaimah will be home to the world's longest and highest zip line, to be built at 1,800m, opening within the heart of Jebel Jais. The exact length of the zip line remains a closely-guarded secret until the multi-million dollar adventure tourism product's opening this December.

This zip line experience will consist of two lines, allowing friends and family to take part in the flight together. Ras Al Khaimah Tourism Development Authority (RAKTDA) has partnered with the world's leading zip line operator, Toro Verde, to develop the emirate's flagship active adventure tourism product. "In its first phase of operations, the zip line will be able to accommodate 250 people a day, that's 100,000 in a year. Nothing like this exists in the world – let alone this region – it is a true first for Ras Al Khaimah and adds another amazing attraction to the UAE's diverse tourism portfolio," says **Haitham Mattar**, Chief Executive Officer, Ras Al Khaimah Tourism Development Authority.



Of Culinary Extravagance

Hotels and restaurants are making sure that travellers relish worldwide flavours at impressive settings to create a unique dining experience.



THE ARABIAN TOUCH

Not too far away from the bustling cosmopolitan city of Dubai is the Bab Al Shams Desert Resort and Spa. Nestled amidst the desert, the luxury fort property offers an equally magical culinary experience in an exclusive award-winning Arabian restaurant, Al Hadheerah. Enjoy the aroma of Arabic cuisine emanating from the live cooking stations, wood-fired ovens and spit roasts. The open-air restaurant offers everything that a guest needs for an ultimate desert dining experience. Since the luxury on offer at Bab Al Shams knows no bounds, the restaurant makes sure that guests are treated to traditional preparations from the Middle

East. With 10 live cooking stations, it pampers guests with cakes, flowers and exclusive butler service. Dine under the stars here while enjoying traditional daily performances like Arabic band, belly dancers and lively guests' interactions. Weekends (Thursday and Friday) are extra-special at Al Hadheerah with spectacular fireworks to cease the day for the guests.

LOUNGING LIKE THE BRITS

When in London, one has to experience an afternoon tea session at The Crystal Moon Lounge in Corinthia London underneath the stunning Baccarat Chandelier. The tea here is served with delectable finger sandwiches on

artisanal breads, warm scones accompanied by clotted cream and jam, along with a selection of fancies. While the property is modern, it makes sure to remain faithful to the British tea culture and has an in-house sommelier who ensures that guests are treated to teas carefully selected from Camellia's Tea House. Those who want to take the luxury quotient higher can also relish a chilled glass of champagne alongside either a traditional or delightfully themed afternoon tea in the heart of London. Sit in the inner courtyard for tea al fresco or go for exclusive private dining rooms in the restaurants for intimate afternoon tea parties.



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THE FRENCH CONN



ECT

Experience the best of Northern France, a lesser known region of the country, which packs the perfect punch for those who want to move away from the ordinary sojourn.

NISHA VERMA

A way from the heights of the Eiffel Tower, and still not too far from it, is the Hauts-de-France region in Northern France. The panoply of attractions and activities in this part of the country have not been experienced by many. After recently discovering this hidden gem by walking the lanes of its most beautiful cities and towns, I saw a different side of the country, completely unheard of.

FLY TRULY FRANCE

The French hospitality experience starts the moment you board the Air France flight from Delhi or Mumbai. Lie flat on the comfortable Business Class seats in the Boeing 777-300ER, with luxury service and delectable meals on board.



LILLE ON A 2CV

It was a trip to an era gone by when I was welcomed in Lille on a Citroen 2CV convertible. This vintage car, launched in 1948 and produced till 1988, was my ride for the day to discover this charming city. Not only is this vehicle itself a trip into history, but it also came with an equally enthusiastic guide who gave anecdotes as we traversed from one street to another. Lille is very close to France's border with Belgium and falls under the French Flanders. While the passers-by greeted us with friendly smiles (also because of the carriage we were in), I was pleasantly surprised to see the number of shops of every possible brand under the sun. The city, I was told, is thronged by tourists to just be in the cosy surroundings of a small town while being able to shop and eat in the finest way possible. The city centre has the Column of the Goddess statue standing tall overlooking the various al fresco cafes and shops full of locals and tourists alike. The 2CV cannot be driven at a very high speed, which is a blessing in disguise, as it allows a better view of the surroundings. Because of this, another notable structure caught my eye—the Art Deco Town Hall Belfry, which towers over the entire city at a height of 104 metres. The city is small but full of cultural wonders. I'd recommend to stop and visit the amazing Cathedral in Lille, a Neo-Gothic church. One can admire the sculptures and design of this structure for hours. Stop by for lunch at Le Barbue D'Anvers and relish the sumptuous local dishes while admiring the curios and decor around. Those who want to experience an extraordinary French tea experience should head to Meert, which is a famous pastry shop in Lille and is known for its classic waffles, cakes and tea. Spend the night at the beautiful L'ArbreVoyageur, a beautiful boutique property in the heart of Lille and get a taste of the French hospitality here.





WALKING IN SAINT VALÉRY SUR SOMME

Saint Valéry-sur-Somme can be any traveller's delight for its small-town charm and colourful lanes. The seaside medieval town used to be a fishing village in the earlier times. The village is just next to the Baie de Somme near the mouth of river Somme, offering picturesque views. It is divided into an upper and lower part. With most of the administrative buildings, the upper town used to be walled earlier as it belonged to the elite class. This side of Saint Valéry offers a more historical view of the town and from here, one can also look at the lovely villas lining the sea-wall. While the streets are cobbled, the buildings are characterised by typical chequered design. On the other hand, the lower town is distinguished by narrow streets and alleys with small houses decorated with colourful flowers and marine memorabilia including anchors, artificial fish, boat wheels, fishing nets, etc. Many of these houses have now become B&B facilities for tourists. Visit the cathedral and enjoy a view of Somme river.



SAND YACHTING IN LE TOUQUET

Le Touquet or Le Touquet-Paris-Plage is a favourite holiday resort of the rich and famous in Paris and Northern France. Many French celebrities and politicians have their holiday homes in this seaside town, which boasts some of the best five-star hotels and casinos. Since I visited in September, there weren't many people on the streets, as the native population here is only around 5000, which reaches 250,000 in summers. While walking on the cobbled streets of the city centre, one might just run into a celebrity, shopping at the various branded outlets here. However, since it is a seaside town, people mostly head to the beach. If you are looking for something out of ordinary, try your hand at Sand Yachting. For me, trying my hand literally meant learning from scratch with a proficient instructor by my side. We got into our oversized wet suits and headed to our yachts which looked like kayaks with sails. Our instructor made us understand how to put the sails on and start working with them. After a few trials, we were ready to roll. It might take time to understand the concept of sails, but if you have time to spend, sand yachting is not hard to learn, and it's lovely to move around in these wheeled kayaks on the beach. I'd recommended walking around the city centre and a visit to the casino. Lunch at the Spoon restaurant facing the Golf Course in Le Touquet, and experience the colonial way of living at The Westminster Hotel.





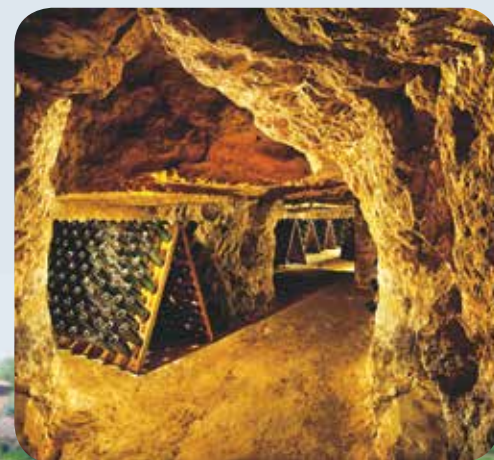
GONDOLA RIDE IN FLOATING GARDENS

The first thing I did on our visit to Amiens was getting into a Gondola for an hour-long journey through the floating gardens. Also known as Hortillages, these gardens are symbolic of the city of Amiens, because of which it is called the Venice of the North. In the past, these gardens were floating vegetable markets, from where the people of Amiens used to fulfil their grocery needs. Today, a number of tourists visit these gardens to enjoy the views around and admire live exhibitions on either side of the canals. What catches your attention from the water is the towering Cathedral of Our Lady of Amiens visible from every corner. In fact, it is the first skyscraper in France, claimed our charming guide. Walk to the cathedral after the Gondola ride and experience the city first-hand, which is also the hometown of the current President of France—Emmanuel Macron. I'd recommend Le Quai for local cuisine and great burgers.



VISIT CHAMPAGNE CELLAR IN CHÂTEAU-THIERRY

France is synonymous with champagne, and a visit to Northern France is incomplete without having visited the vineyards or a cellar of the much-coveted elixir. An hour's drive from Chantilly through lush green fields and vineyards, we were graciously welcomed into the Champagne Pannier cellar in Château-Thierry, which is also the head office of the brand. After entering the state-of-the-art facility showcasing bottles of every size and flavour, I entered the cold cellars to see how champagne is produced, fermented and stored to finally make it to our celebrations. As I walked through the meandering bricked lanes, the history of Champagne Pannier unfolded before me through our guide's informative narration and audio-visual films. The visit ended perfectly with champagne tasting.





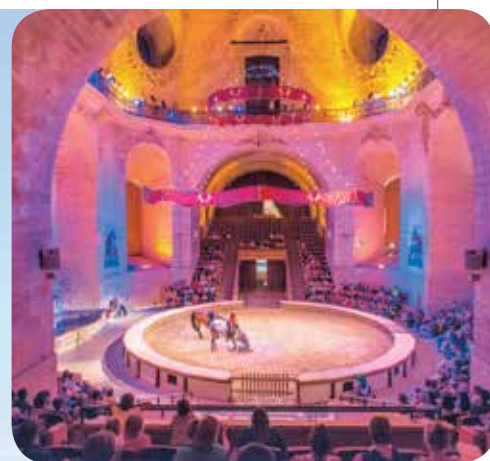
NAUSICAA

While all of us have visited a number of aquariums in many cities around the world, a visit to Nausicaa is a must for two reasons—first, it offers an experiential visit and not just seeing the marine life in glass windows with a placard mentioning its name. Second is the sustainability mission behind the project to educate people about managing the oceans so that its wealth is available to future generations. The facility stands by its motto of education which is visible right at the moment you enter, with interesting divisions of various types of sea animals. My guide told me that the basic idea of working behind Nausicaa is to explain how man's relationship with the sea had been affecting the underwater life. There were different sections on marine life from various continents. Audio-video and experiential shows ensured that visitors like us knew what lay beneath the oceans and how we behaved with that world. Admire the fish, jellyfish, sea horses, penguins, octopus and other marine creatures and spend the entire day at this impressive facility. Do watch how they train sea lions for public shows. Currently, Nausicaa is on an expansion path and with a new aquarium opening up soon, it will become the largest in Europe by 2018.



VISIT TO CHANTILLY CASTLE

The uber-luxurious and stunning Chateau de Chantilly was nothing less than a wonder when we drove towards this majestic structure. It comprises two separate buildings—the Petit Château built for Anne de Montmorency in 1560 and the Grand Château rebuilt in the 1870s. Surrounded by beautiful expansive gardens, this Chateau is a sight to behold. The castle is also home to a marvellous museum—Musée Condé named after its owner Grand Condé, cousin of Henri II. Housing the personal collection of Grand Condé, the museum is considered to be one of the most celebrated art galleries in France with art pieces and sculptures from famous artists including Raphael, Botticelli and even Piero di Cosimo. Just beside the Chateau are the grand stables, as Chantilly is home to a big equestrian industry. The gardens at the castle and the stables played host to an Indian wedding for the first time last year. Stay right next to the castle at the Auberge du Jeu de Paume, a Relais & Chateau 5-star property for an extraordinary luxury experience.



Surrender to SERENITY

ANUPRIYA BISHNOI

Anantara properties—Kalutara and Tangalle—in Sri Lanka are picture-perfect destinations to unwind and rejuvenate in blissful solitude.



ANANTARA KALUTARA RESORT

Uniquely tucked between the Indian Ocean and Kalu Ganga River, the Anantara Kalutara Resort is naturally exclusive. The resort is located at a 90-minute drive from Colombo's Bandaranaike International Airport, via a scenic route of lagoons, lush waterways and rural countryside. For guests wishing to experience Sri Lanka's beautiful train journeys, the Kalutara South Railway Station is a 10-minute drive away. Anantara's luxury chauffeur service offers seamless journeys to and from the resort.

The resort is a perfect getaway from Colombo's buzz. Once inside, guests don't have to look any further to indulge. From practising yoga and meditation in the stillness of the coast to swimming in the tropical pools or water sport thrills, the resort offers activities to invigorate and rejuvenate vacationers. Kids' and teens' clubs keep youngsters creatively engaged, while you indulge at Sri Lanka's largest and most luxurious spa.

For those seeking to experience the region, the resort is just 10-minutes away from the historic Kalutara which has a rich spice trading and colonial

heritage. Travellers can explore tea plantations and mansions, sacred temples and the world's only hollow Buddhist shrine. One can also cruise on the Kalu Ganga, which twists almost 100 miles from Sri Pada - the sacred mountain believed to be the footprint of the Buddha.

With 141 rooms, suites and pool villas, the resort is a perfect blend of authentic luxury and evocative Sri Lankan accents. Balconies and terraces draw the eye to lush nature, ocean waves or river beauty. Guests can choose from interconnecting, disabled-friendly and poolside havens and relish private pool intimacy or simply share holidays in villas with interconnecting gardens.

Spice Spoons - Anantara Cooking Class

Passing settlers and traders have richly influenced Sri Lankan cuisine, resulting in dishes infused with Dutch, Portuguese, English, Arab, Malay and Indian flavours. Guests can delve into the scenes of the island's culinary roots through a trip to local farms and markets. Return to the resort to refresh with a local arrack cocktail before the step-by-step cooking class – picking up secret chef tips for extra flair.





Activities

Sundown Ceremony: Each day at the sundown, the sound of a conch shell announces the start of traditional dancers performing with flower baskets on the pool deck to usher in evening time.

Saturday Fruit Market: Every Saturday at 1600 hours, local boats cross the river, bringing the freshest organic local fruits for guests to enjoy at the swimming pool.

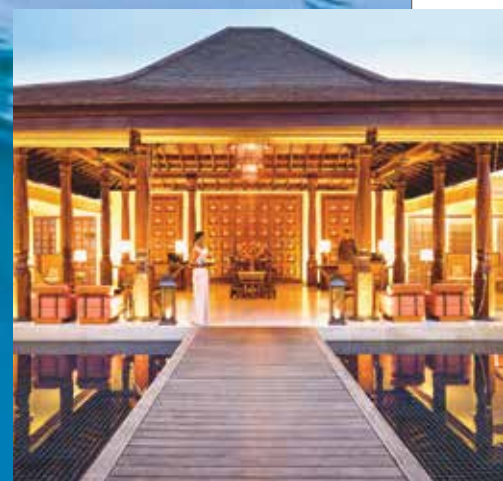
Fishing Guru: Learn local angling techniques with our Fishing Guru on a boat at the Kalu Ganga Lagoon. Then, hand over your prize catch for our chefs to prepare a delicious seafood meal.

Arts & Craft: During breakfast, local artisans demonstrate their traditional wood carving, batik printing and ratan weaving skills, and also offer their arts and crafts for sale as souvenirs. Visitors interested in wildlife conservation can meet baby turtles at the Kosgoda turtle hatchery. At a 90-minute drive away lies Mirissa Harbour, where boats set sail for Weligama. Lunuganga Estate was the country home of renowned Sri Lankan architect Geoffrey Bawa, and features terraced gardens with sculptures and oriental urns.

ANANTARA PEACE HAVEN TANGALLE RESORT

Anantara Peace Haven Tangalle Resort hides away on a rocky outcrop along a secluded stretch of Sri Lanka's southernmost coastline. Cinnamon Air operates a 45-minute transfer once daily between Colombo's Bandaranaike International Airport and Dickwella – just 10-minutes from the resort. For those who prefer the scenic land route, Bandaranaike International Airport is a three-and-a-half-hour-long drive away, appropriate for ones who enjoy long drives. You can stop by Galle to witness Portuguese architecture and narrow streets peppered with boutiques, antique shops, art galleries, restaurants and street stalls.

Set amidst a 21-acre coconut plantation and golden crescent shores with glorious views of the Indian Ocean, the resort offers a vibe different from Anantara Kalutara. It has 152 rooms and pool villas designed for couples, families and differently-abled guests. For adventure seekers, the resort is a gateway to the island's plethora of sacred heritage sites. One of the best features of the resort is its private villas. Early risers can take a trip to Udawalawe National Park for encounters with elephants or a jeep safari with a park tracker at Yala National Park – the second largest wildlife reserve in Sri Lanka.





SALERNO

where
Italy preserved its Roman

LIFE BY THE BEACH

Salerno, the second largest of the five cities in Campania region in Southern Italy, is nothing less than a hidden gem on the Italian gulf. With just over 140,000 inhabitants, the city offers breath-taking views of the shore, dotted with yachts of all sizes, boats and cruise ships ferrying passengers to every holidaymaker's favourites—Amalfi, Capri and Ischia islands, Vietri and Positano.

The city is situated 50 kms south of Naples and two hours by road from the busy Rome Fiumicino Airport. The ride from the airport to Salerno takes you along several kilometres of hills and beautiful farmlands. But wait, the journey is just a prelude to what the destination beholds. From the hills, you enter straight into cobblestone streets lined with the trendiest brands and open cafes offering the best of Italian cuisines and a perfect glimpse into Italy's Roman history entwined with modern culture. Salerno is blessed with an incomparable landscape, ancient history and a rich cultural heritage.

The Salerno Beach is not just a part of the

reached its fame between the 11th and 13th centuries. It is known for its Regimen Sanitatis Salernitanum (Salernitan Sanitary Regimen). It is considered the forerunner of modern universities of medicine in Europe.

Salerno has ancient origins, which is evident from the Arechi Castle. The 6th Century AD castle was built on Mount Bonadies and in the 16th century it became the residence of the Sanseverino princes. The castle was opened to public some years ago and houses a museum. It opens up for private functions, weddings and social gatherings. The view from the castle top is nothing short of stunning as you can view the entire crescent-shaped gulf while sipping your glass of perfect Italian wine.

Out of the myriad itineraries that one can choose from, the best is still on foot. Walking through the Villa Comunale built in 1874, one can simply relax and gaze through the variety of local, exotic and rare species of plants and trees. Close to this is the Verdi Theatre, which has witnessed many a famous artists perform here since

The view from the castle top is nothing short of

stunning as you can view the entire crescent-shaped gulf



Other than offering stunning views of the gorgeous gulf of Italy, wonderful landscapes, sunny beaches and azure waters, the city of Salerno provides great insights into Roman history and culture and the much-loved Italian cuisine.

SHIVANI KAUL

heritage

city, it is a lifestyle which engulfs people of all ages from all walks of life. A weekday does not deter locals and travellers alike to unwind on the glistening white sandy beach bracing the strong summer sun.

Starting 2006, visitors enjoy beautiful Artists' Lights, a series of illuminated decorations created by Italian artists that line the streets of Salerno and some parks and squares. Really worth visiting are those in the 'Villa Comunale' or the City Park.

Apart from this, the lesser known fact is that Salerno is also a centre of university education with an ancient tradition. The oldest school of medicine in Europe, the Salerno School of Medicine, was here and

its opening in 1872. Salerno's Bell Tower dates back to the 15th or 16th centuries and leans a bit to one side because part of it was built on solid Roman wall while the other part was built on crumbly soil. Just 100 meters from the Bell Tower is the Duomo di Salerno (Salerno Cathedral), dedicated to St. Matthew who was buried in Salerno. Inside the Cathedral, which boasts of baroque architecture, one can witness a mosaic representation of St. Matthew, probably from the 13th century.

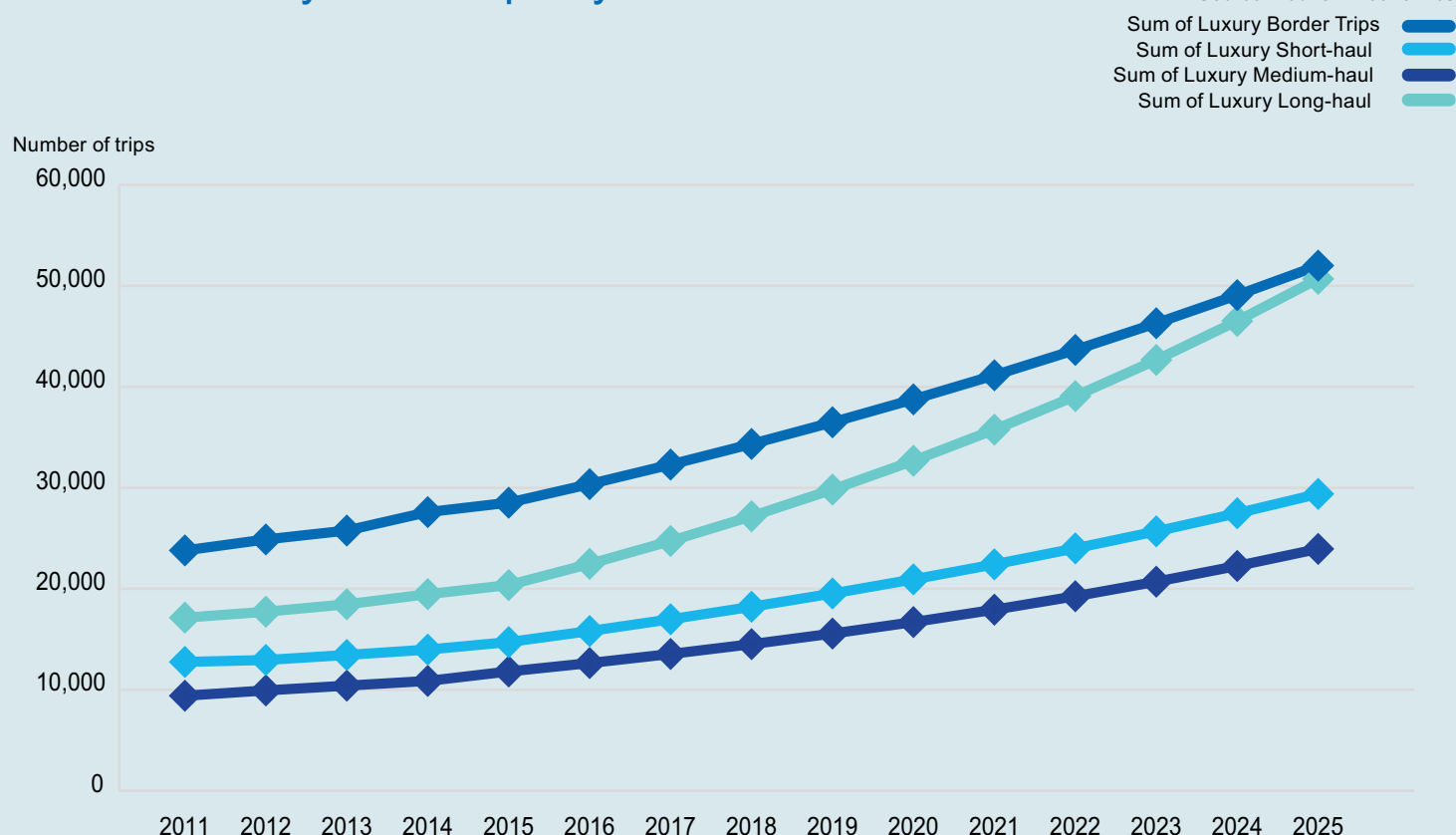
A visit to Salerno is incomplete without going to the new Zaha Hadid's Harbour Station and walk along the Lungomare in the sun. Not far from the Villa Comunale is the new Piazza della Liberta (Liberty Square) which is under construction. The square was designed by Spanish architect Ricardo Bofil and is part of the new Salerno waterfront. If weather permits, walk to the Molo Manfredi (Manfredi Wharf) and admire the new Stazione Marittima (Harbour Station) designed by renowned architect Zaha Hadid, an interesting piece of modern architecture. Boats from this harbour leave every day between April and October for Amalfi and Capri.

Luxury and budget benefit as travellers go for experiences

Luxury categories are benefiting from consumers trading up from mid-market brands to luxury. Whilst growth in budget remains popular, it doesn't bring vast returns. Moreover, budget players are faced with the challenge from travellers increasingly demanding premium services at lower prices. The trend affects every price point, which requires that luxury constantly updates to keep ahead of consumers' expectations.

Growth of luxury travel trips by distance

Source: Tourism Economics



Over the next 10 years, the growth rate in outbound luxury trips is

projected at **6.2%**, almost a third greater than overall travel (4.8%)

6.2%

projected 10-year
growth rate of
luxury travel

4.8%

projected 10-year
growth rate of
overall travel

The future of luxury travel

These statistics are a symptom of how polarised travel is becoming to reflect the wealth patterns of the world's citizens. At the other end of the spectrum, we are seeing the introduction of ultra-budget products, such as the launch of new cabin classes below economy from Delta, United and American Airlines. Luxury and budget markets will become increasingly extreme to cater to tomorrow's 'ultra'

market. Luxury long-haul travel will grow faster than any other form of travel, and will overtake border travel (travel between countries that share a border) shortly after 2025.

This is shown through Tourism Economics data that forecasts the distance of the next decade's luxury outbound trips based on current trends and growth rates.

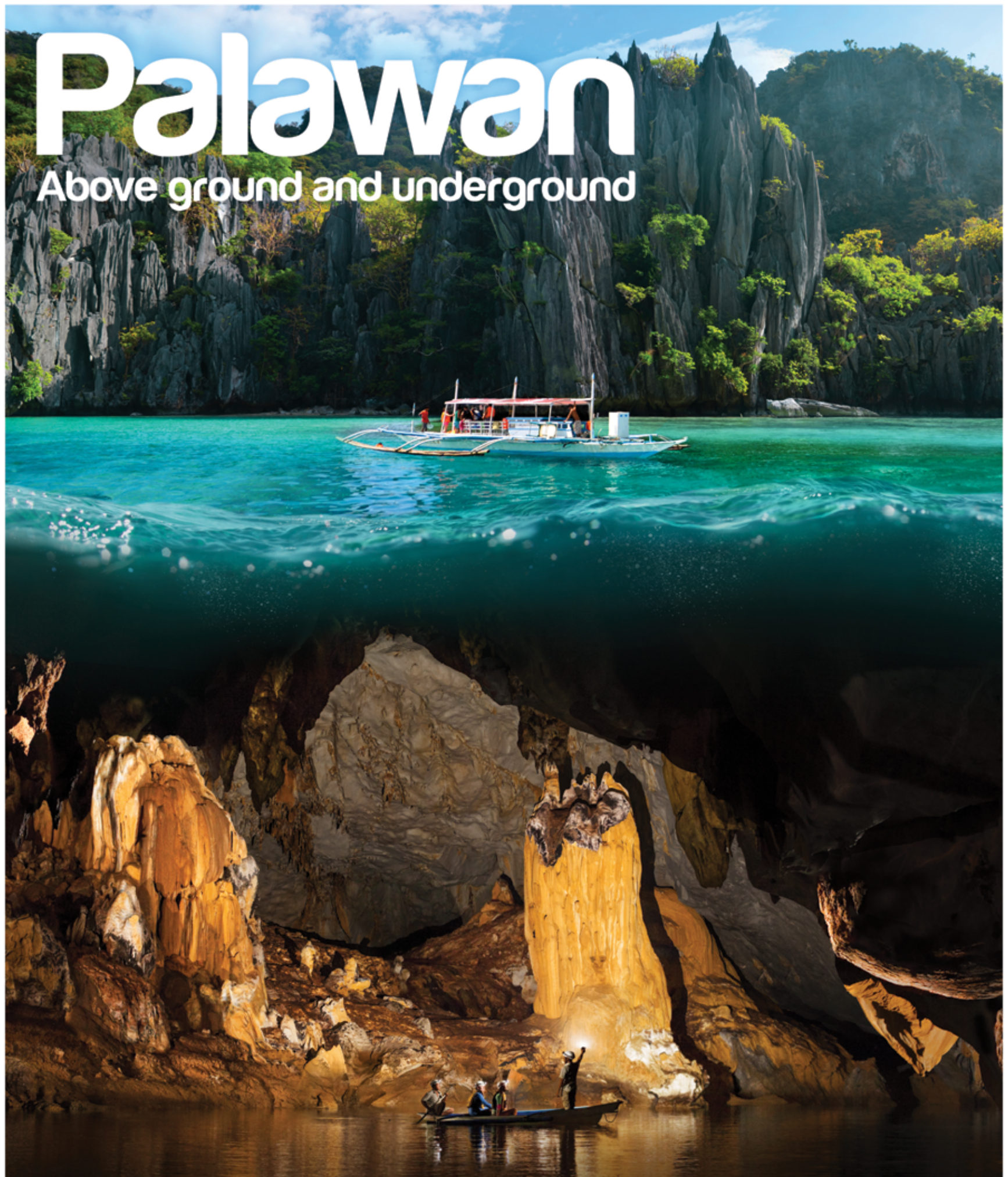
Source: Amadeus' Shaping the Future of Luxury Travel Future Traveller Tribes 2030

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