

**Samples of
Published Work:**



Travel

SUPER KAWAII!

PICNICS IN THE PARK, SENSATIONAL SHOPS, CUTTING-EDGE ARCHITECTURE – THERE IS SOMETHING IRRESISTIBLE ABOUT TOKYO ON A SUNDAY, WRITES SUSIE BURGE



Those cute Harajuku girls; (below) the Mikimoto building in Ginza, designed by Toyo Ito

IT'S a universal truth that a girl who goes to Tokyo must visit Harajuku and buy a pair of red shoes – or vintage trainers or a faux punk tee – from one of the myriad kooky boutiques up and down the crowded maze of narrow laneways that hive off from the railway station.

The combination of Harajuku plus Sunday plus shopping is a Tokyo institution, as are white-hooded fairytale wedding processions at nearby Meiji Shrine, teens dressed as manga heroes, and tragic middle-aged guys in black leather making 50s moves at the entrance to Yoyogi Park.

"We hold hands so as to stay together while a crazy cast of characters swirl around us"

I meet up with friends and their child at the park gates, a pair of shiny red patents in a box under one arm. As instructed by three-year-old Sana, we all hold hands so as to stay together while a cast of crazy characters swirl around us.

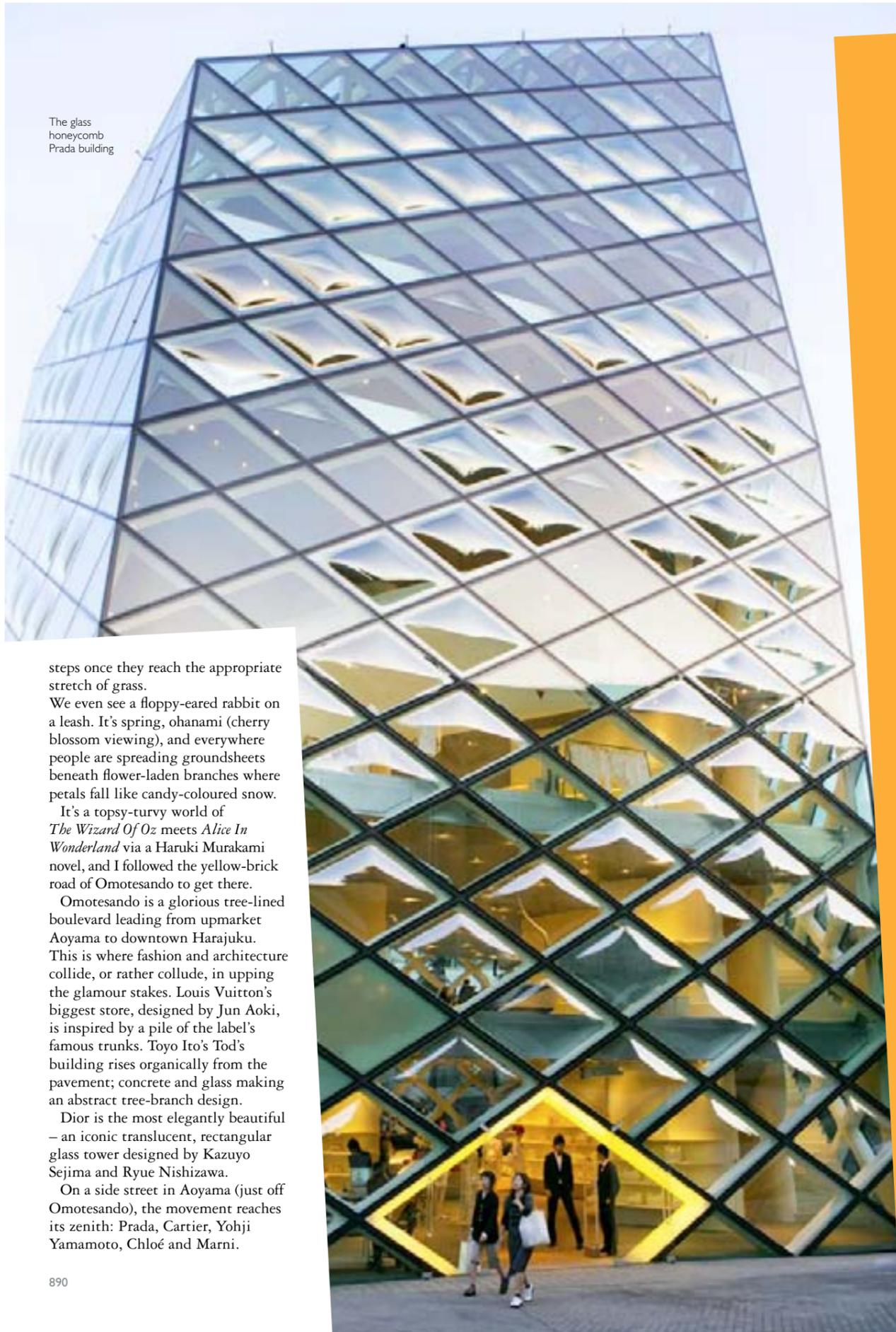
There are shoppers, tourists, picnickers; popstar look-alikes with guitars and portable sound systems and statement hair; big girls dressed as little girls, complete with dolls and ribbons and bows; dogs so pouffed they look like toys; and groups of seemingly average Japanese who start dancing madly in synchronised ▶



Pedestrians flood Chuo Avenue in the Ginza District



The glass
honeycomb
Prada building



steps once they reach the appropriate stretch of grass.

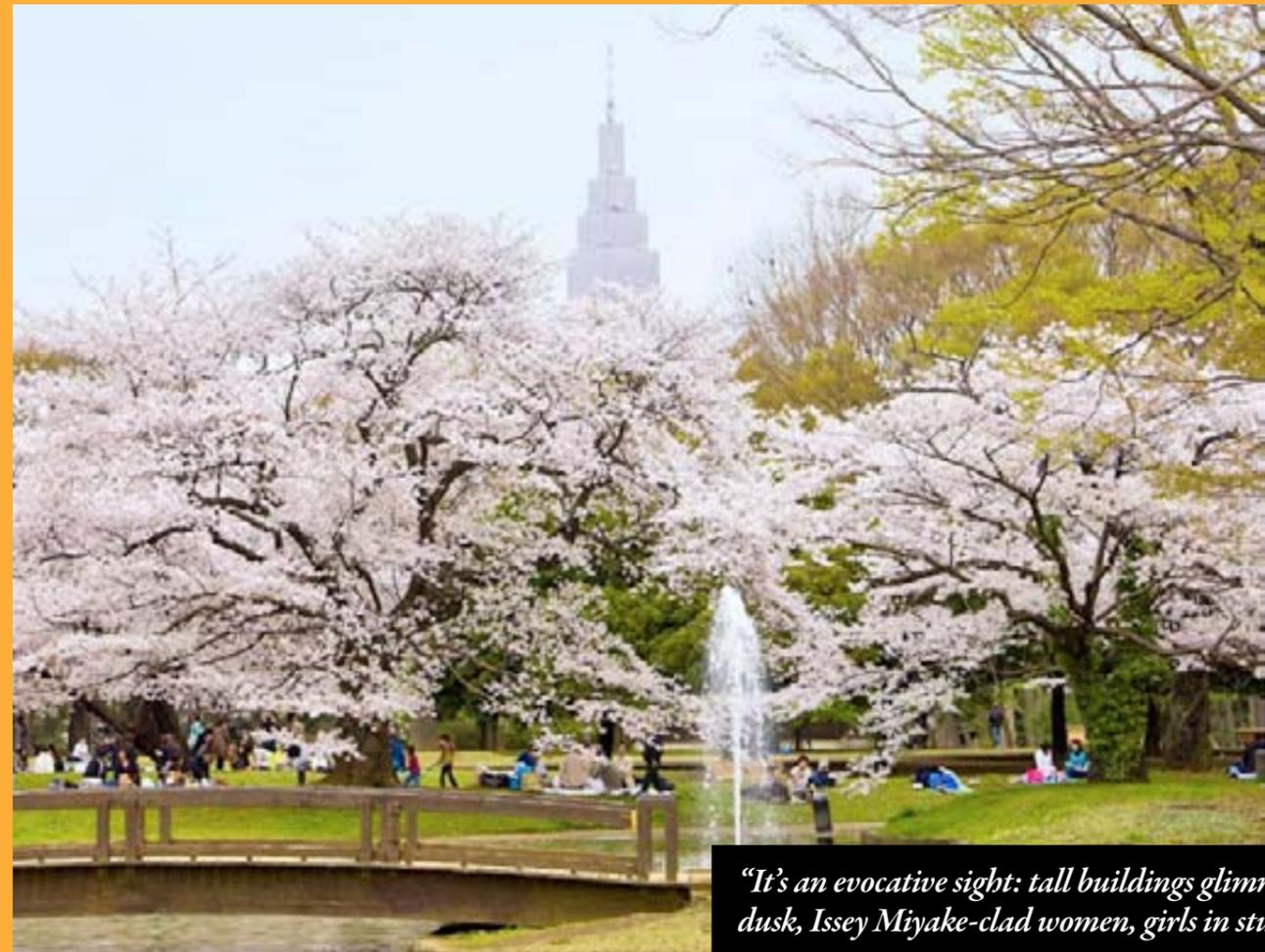
We even see a floppy-eared rabbit on a leash. It's spring, ohanami (cherry blossom viewing), and everywhere people are spreading groundsheets beneath flower-laden branches where petals fall like candy-coloured snow.

It's a topsy-turvy world of *The Wizard Of Oz* meets *Alice In Wonderland* via a Haruki Murakami novel, and I followed the yellow-brick road of Omotesando to get there.

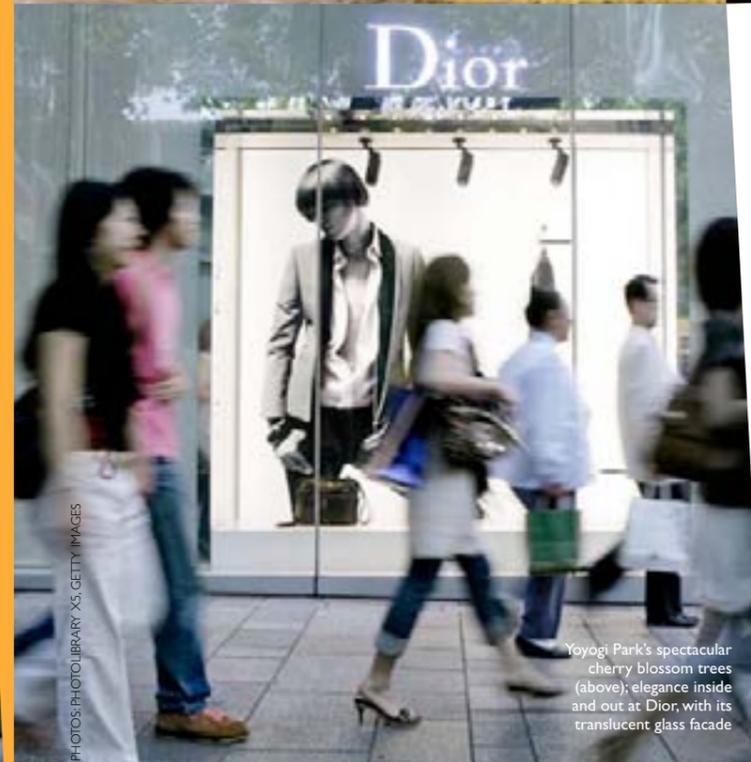
Omotesando is a glorious tree-lined boulevard leading from upmarket Aoyama to downtown Harajuku. This is where fashion and architecture collide, or rather collude, in upping the glamour stakes. Louis Vuitton's biggest store, designed by Jun Aoki, is inspired by a pile of the label's famous trunks. Toyo Ito's Tod's building rises organically from the pavement; concrete and glass making an abstract tree-branch design.

Dior is the most elegantly beautiful – an iconic translucent, rectangular glass tower designed by Kazuyo Sejima and Ryue Nishizawa.

On a side street in Aoyama (just off Omotesando), the movement reaches its zenith: Prada, Cartier, Yohji Yamamoto, Chloé and Marni.



"It's an evocative sight: tall buildings glimmering in the dusk, Issey Miyake-clad women, girls in stupendous heels"



PHOTOS: PHOTO LIBRARY X3, GETTY IMAGES

Yoyogi Park's spectacular cherry blossom trees (above); elegance inside and out at Dior, with its translucent glass facade

Herzog and de Meuron's glass honeycomb for Prada resembles a spaceship – reflective exterior, white interior – with clothes hanging from furry racks and 60s-style lamps like giant eyes on stalks. It's a place to dream, to garner inspiration, to marvel at modernity, even if (like me) you decide to save your yen for the quirky Harajuku boutiques.

At the end of the day, two of us head to Ginza. Ginza Chuo-ku is pedestrian-only on Sundays and hundreds of ultra-chic shoppers walk between famous department stores. It's an evocative sight: the tall buildings glimmering in the dusk, the Issey Miyake-clad women, the young girls in stupendous heels, and glimpses of perfectly made-up faces heading to cosmetics counters. We haven't come to shop, though. We've come to eat.

In department store Mitsukoshi we discover one of the finest food halls in Tokyo. There are counters of raw fish, piles of root vegetables, vats of

steaming noodles, pyramids of bento boxes filled with duck and pork and lozenges of sushi, pretty green bean cakes and flamboyant displays of crustaceans, and every kind of fresh salad imaginable. Unable to wait until we get back to our hotel, we perch on the side of a street garden and hoe in.

We've made a few errors since arriving in Japan. Our first time in a Japanese taxi: a) I try to tip the driver (he was offended – they don't accept tips) and; b) I shut the door as I get out (the doors shut automatically).

There are many rules of courtesy that enable a complex and crowded society to function with delicate efficiency (it's handy to know the word for sorry: sumimasen). Today we commit transgression #337: apart from picnics in the park, Japanese don't eat in public places.

In a city filled with strange sights, on a day when people dress as comic book characters and foibles are exaggerated and indulged, we've managed to become eccentric. We look so unusual, someone takes a photo. ■

NATURE'S BOTOX

Sea, spa, sex appeal... Bora Bora is pure blue-water bliss, says Susie Burge

Hello, lover...
the Intercontinental
Bora Bora Resort

IT'S SAID to be the most idyllic spot in Tahiti – an impossibly beautiful, expansive lagoon of ever-changing blues, ringed by islands and coral cays. Bora Bora, the place that inspired *South Pacific*, was once home to Marlon Brando and is now a favourite playground of the rich, celebrities and honeymooners.

I'm on a boat, skimming the surface of water the colour of violets and anemones, towards the pure aqua shallows of the Intercontinental Bora Bora Resort & Thalasso Spa. It's hard to believe I'm not dreaming.

Here, just like a retouched photo in an idealised travel brochure, the

resort sends forked tongues way into the lagoon. Pretty, thatched over-the-water villas are connected by long timber jetties to the chic restaurants, bars, pool and spa on the island. The gardens are filled with frangipani and fragrant Polynesian tiare flowers. And everywhere you look is an oasis of blue.

Water therapy takes on a new dimension in Bora Bora. In the villas, windows frame it, a deck hangs over it and a ladder leads right down to it. A glass-topped coffee table allows you to see fish swimming beneath your feet and can be slid open to feed them, transforming the living room into an aquarium.

From my bed I stare straight out over the lagoon – it's the last thing I see at night (plus the silken canopy of stars) and I awake at first light to catch the soft lavender flush of dawn. Before breakfast, I dive off the deck of my villa into liquid turquoise.

In the palatial Deep Ocean Spa (over 4000 square metres of plunge pools, jacuzzis and glam relaxation zones) glass floor panels allow a view of the passing tropical parade while any remaining stresses are massaged away.

Cold deep-sea water, pumped from the bottom of the ocean, pristine and loaded with trace elements, is a feature of the Algotherm spa products, and

it also serves as a unique eco-friendly airconditioning system throughout the resort. I'm completely surrounded by salt water, 24/7.

Consequently, just one day in, after an outstanding meal in Le Reef restaurant (think talented French chef utilising Polynesian influences, seared mahi mahi and perfect creme brulee) and I'm blissed out.

Day two and I'm on a boat again, with three honeymooning couples and two Tahitian guides, heading further into the lagoon.

Our world becomes a changeable spectrum of blues, from ultramarine and jacaranda to sapphire, sky, azure.

We moor at the edge of a coral reef and snorkel over giant purple-lipped clams and iridescent fish. Moses and Sam, our guides, take us further into the shallows, then stop the boat again. Suddenly clouds of stingrays appear. We stand with them in the waist-deep water as the guides hand-feed them fish. It's quite emotional, just beautiful – these elegant, grey creatures flying through the translucent water like great birds, brushing up against us with their wings.

On my last night I take the free shuttle to the Intercontinental Le Moana on the main island. A transfer delivers me to Bloody Mary's, a classic bar and restaurant with sand on the floor, a fabulous seafood display and signature vanilla rum cocktails. Everyone who comes to Bora Bora stops in here, from Paris Hilton to Buzz Aldrin. Island hospitality? Hell yes.

Day three and the traditional blowing of the conch shell signals my boat back to the airport. I feel 10 years younger, bright-eyed, silky-skinned and happy. Around me, relaxed, glowing honeymooners have lost their post-wedding exhaustion. No wonder Bora Bora has been called nature's Botox. Whether it's me time or he time, Bora Bora is the one.

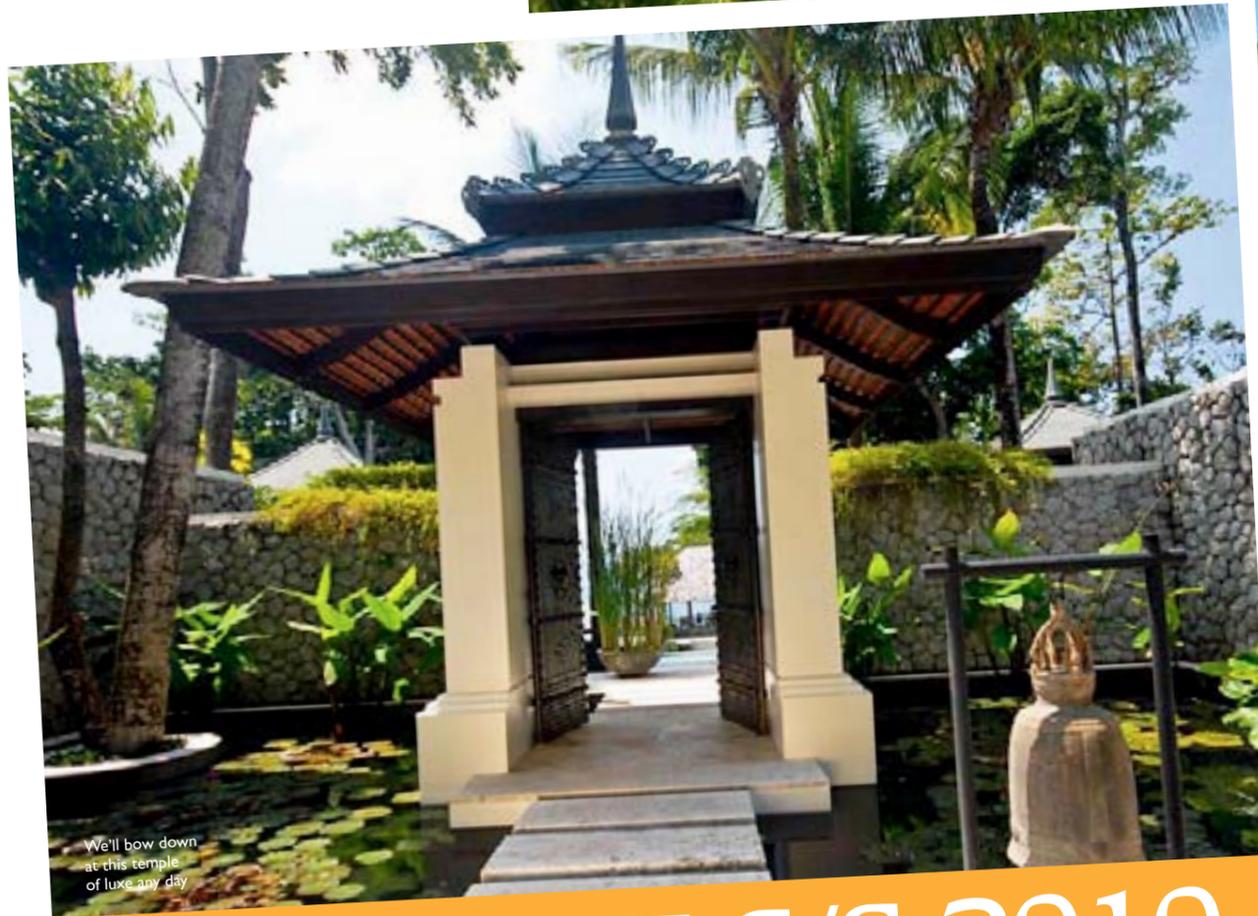
See the ocean from your bed (sigh!)

A pina colada if you please

Champagne o'clock at Bubbles Bar

TRAVEL NOTES Get to Bora Bora via Papeete, for the ultimate escape. Visit www.boraboraspa.intercontinental.com or www.tahiti-tourisme.com

Villas with a view



We'll bow down at this temple of luxe any day



with an emphasis on natural materials – weathered teak, water gardens, pottery jars from Chiang Mai... The central indoor and outdoor bar and restaurant leads down to a long pool, floating jetty off the beach, and swimming pontoon and spa pavilions. On the upper level there's a second lobby, tennis courts and luxurious spa. The exceptional gardens retain a rainforest feel with big trees, primed hedges, screens of lush foliage and masses of flowers.

Most "rooms" are actually ultra-generous villas with spectacular uninterrupted views over the Andaman Sea, each with its own spacious outdoor deck and 10m infinity pool. And due to the clever positioning on the hillside, none of the 39 rooms overlook the other.

"I wanted people to be able to leave

'TRISARA'S GUEST LIST IS A WHO'S WHO OF ARISTOCRACY'

their bed, open the doors and jump naked into their pool!" says part-owner and general manager Anthony Lark, who greets each guest on arrival.

Day 2

Everything here is generous. The beds are uber-king – custom-made and about 15cm wider than standard. Stacks of fluffy white towels adorn the bathroom, which has a big bath, marble shower and two basins. I love the outdoor shower, with the scented Trisara bodywash bottles refilled each day.

Housekeeping arrives at the civilised hour of late morning. Fresh chocolate truffles from the bakery are placed in the fridge, exotic fruits fill the covered bowl in the sitting area, and a different floral decoration is left on the bed – intricately woven petals of varying colours and scents, shaped like fertility offerings. ▶

RESORT S/S 2010

It's the under-the-radar retreat of royalty, celebrity and the super-rich. For the rest of us, Thailand's Trisara is a save-up-for-it splurge, writes Susie Burge

Day 1

I'm lying on a sunlounger by Trisara's 45m aquamarine swimming pool when a Romanian countess swings by, long blonde hair, diamond Rolex on one wrist, hot-pink arm candy dangling from the other. She gives me a wave and I smile back, trying not to stare – that's the third Birkin I've seen her with, each a different colour.

Kate Moss, Roger Federer, Balenciaga's Nicolas Ghesquiere, Hollywood celeb photographer Matthew Rolston, Martha Stewart, Leonardo DiCaprio, King Carl XVI

Gustaf of Sweden... Trisara's guest list whispers like a who's who, crossing the boundaries of sport, entertainment, business and aristocracy. There's a 30 per cent return-visitor rate. After just one day at this dreamy resort on the luxe west coast of Phuket, it's easy to see why.

Trisara's secret weapon is privacy. The property extends from one end of a secluded bay to the other, leaving no access for beach hawkers or paparazzi.

The expansive common areas are understated and serenely beautiful,



Woven petals add a little touch of luxe

Day 3

The Trisara Spa at the top of the hill has views out over the blue, blue sea. I lie on a massage table, taking in the extraordinary experience of a six-hand massage. The therapists work seamlessly and in rhythm, pummelling, stroking, getting deep into the knots and applying pressure with herbal compresses. It's sublime.

Yesterday, a delicious in-villa Thai barbecue (local lobster fresh from the sea – yum!) was preceded by a massage in the oceanfront spa pavilion, listening to the sound of waves tinkling over coral, washed by the sea breeze.

Day 4

Yoga with wellness director John Dunbar opens up a wealth of options – private classes in the beachside pavilion or your villa, personalised exercise programs, one-on-one meditation and therapeutic treatments for body and soul. John's a yachting as well as a yogi, so water activities are the go.

Yesterday a few of us drove to the east coast and jumped aboard a sports cruiser to explore the striking islands of Phang Nga Bay, where hundreds of exotic limestone formations rise dramatically from the water, some with lagoons at their heart, accessible by kayak.

Today we're going for a joyride with the GM in Trisara's prized speedboat. *Ashoka 1* is straight out of a James Bond movie – white-leather seats, foldaway gadgets, sleek styling, sexy dash...and SPEED.

We zoom up the west coast, past crowded beaches, resorts and multi-million-dollar houses. Then we loop back, moor at the coral island just off Trisara and snorkel among shoals of iridescent tropical fish.

Day 5

A night out. A driver drops us off at the Siam Supper Club downtown. Original candid black-and-white photographs – Monroe, Jackie O and Sinatra – cover the walls. It's buzzy and busy, a genuine old-style NY joint...in Thailand.

Back at the mothership, the sensual murmur of surf rises up from the beach below. I dive into

the indigo pool and float for a while in the silky water, staring up at the velvet sky studded with stars.

Leaving Trisara

Re-entry into the real world should come with a warning: transition from heaven to earth can be rough.

In celebration of its 5th anniversary, Trisara is offering delicious extras for stays over three nights. Rooms from \$657 per night. www.trisara.com



Limestone exotica at Phang Nga Bay



Trisara is heavenly both indoors (above) and out



PHUKET LUXE FOR LESS

There's a range of luxury lodgings on the island. Here, three chic (and cheaper) options:

ALEENTA RESORT & SPA

PHUKET-PHANG NGA is just outside the main town of Phuket and about 15 minutes' drive from the stunning limestone formations of Phang Nga Bay on the east coast. Rooms from \$215 per night. www.aleenta.com/phuket

BANYANTREE PHUKET

is on the shore of Bang Tao Bay, part of the larger Laguna Phuket, which comprises several luxury hotels, six tree-lined lagoons and 3km of beach. Rooms from \$260 per night. www.banyantree.com

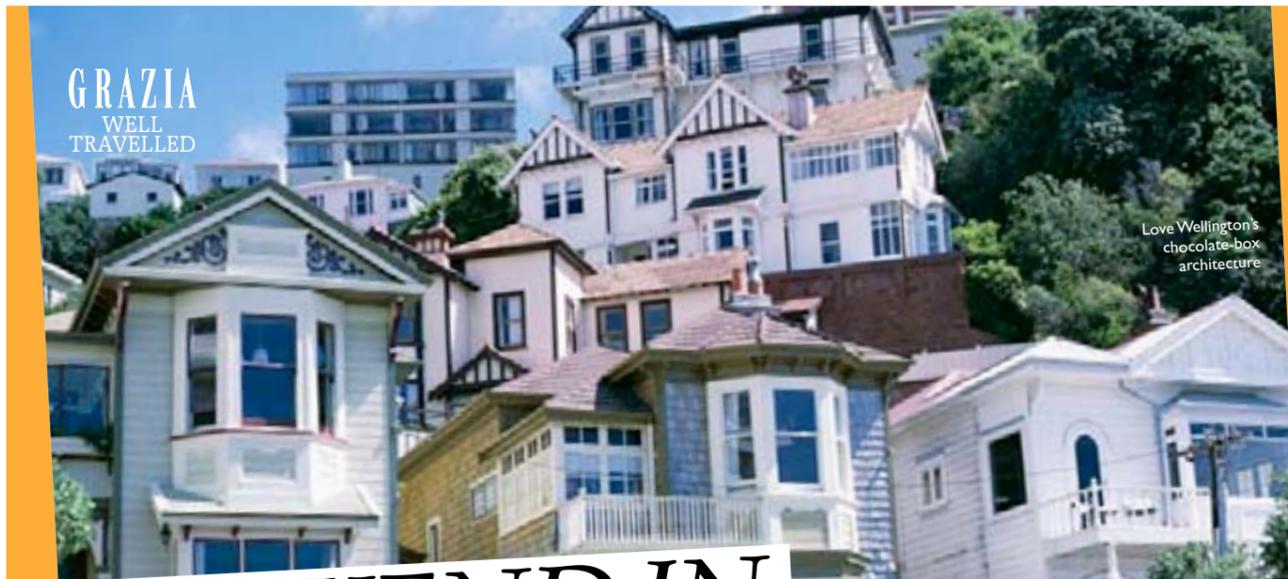
THE RACHA

is situated south of Phuket on Racha Yai Island, about 35 minutes by speedboat from Chalong Bay. It's a lovely resort with an emphasis on eco principles and sustainability. Rooms from \$280 per night. www.theracha.com

GETTING THERE

Fly into Phuket International Airport direct from Australia (flying V Australia out of Brisbane and Melbourne, Pacific Blue out of Perth) or via Singapore (Singapore Airlines out of Sydney).

PHOTOS: SUE BURGE X4



Love Wellington's chocolate-box architecture

WEEKEND IN WELLINGTON

NEW ZEALAND'S capital is on a roll – think original little upstairs bars, edgy retro boutiques and restaurants to write home about.

The hills are dotted with weatherboard houses overlooking the harbour, and the arty city is so compact you can bar hop (oops, walk) practically everywhere.

No wonder it's ranked one of *Lonely Planet's* "top 10 cities for 2011". And did we mention the exchange rate? Love.

SLEEP STYLISHLY

Check into gorgeous Museum Hotel for a spacious room with an atmospheric view of the harbour plus boho-luxe styling. The lobby is fabulous too: buzzy and busy, with an opulent feel and NZ paintings and sculptures just about everywhere. Have a meal at Hippopotamus restaurant upstairs, or choose high tea, served each afternoon. www.museumhotel.co.nz

FOOD, GLORIOUS FOOD

Two fantastic restaurants sit right next door to each other on Majoribanks Street. Book well ahead for an occasion at The Ambeli, or take your chances for a spot at the bar at the cool Ortega Fish Shack. Order Bluff oysters and watch the barman shake the perfect martini. Or head to award-winning Logan Brown, situated in an old Deco bank – it's BYO (and super-busy) on Sunday. www.theambeli.co.nz; www.ortega.co.nz; www.loganbrown.co.nz

COCKTAIL HOPPING

There are more bars per capita in Wellington than in New York City. Matterhorn on Cuba Street started it all and is still going strong as a late-night venue. Check out the 70s-chic Motel Bar, Hawthorn Lounge (styled like a 1920s gentleman's club), or channel Manhattan's SoHo at The Apartment. Or just make The Library your home away from home – love the eclectic rooms and

shelves filled with books. Sip a Gambatte (sake and plum wine, with a plum in the glass) and chill. www.matterhorn.co.nz; www.motelbar.co.nz; www.hawthornlounge.co.nz; www.theapartment.co.nz; www.thelibrary.co.nz

SHOPPING A GO-GO

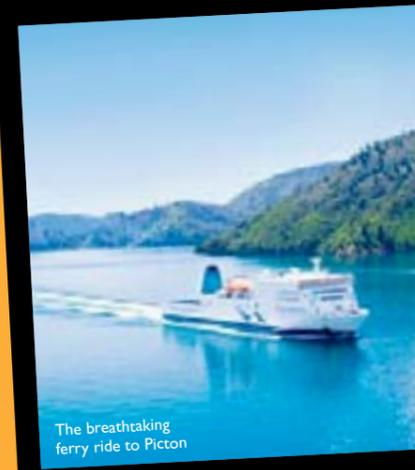
Head straight to The Service Depot for an edit of NZ designers in industrial surrounds. Think Miss Crabb slips and dresses and Nick Von K jewellery. The Service Depot is in a laneway tucked behind sister shop Artikel, next door to Karen Walker on Wakefield Street. Round the corner is Cuba Street – check out the retro vintage stores (try Hunters & Collectors), quirky boutiques like Madam Fancy Pants and vibrant pit-stop cafes. For designer vintage visit Soup, close to the Museum Hotel. www.theservicedepot.co.nz; www.nvk.co.nz

EXTRA-CULTURAL

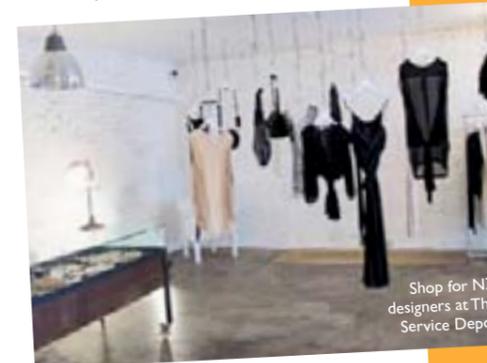
A foodie market (German bakery treat + aromatic coffee + punnet of fresh raspberries = breakfast sorted), national museum Te Papa and cutting-edge art at City Gallery makes the harbour foreshore the best place to be on a Sunday morning. Then jump on the cable car to the top of the hill (plus pretty Botanic Garden) and take in the long view. www.wellingtonnz.com; www.wordonthestreet.co.nz

DAYTRIP TO THE SOUTHSIDE

The Interislander ferry from Wellington to the South Island is widely acclaimed as one of the most beautiful ferry rides in the world. A \$40 upgrade to the Kaitaki Plus premium lounge is so worth it: the spectacular passing parade of secluded inlets and bays is complimented by comfy sofas, a bar (yes, another one!), food and wireless internet. The ferry lands you in the pretty village of Picton, gateway to Marlborough wine country. www.interislander.co.nz



The breathtaking ferry ride to Picton



Shop for NZ designers at The Service Depot



Bunk down at the Museum Hotel

PHOTOS: SUE BURGE - PHOTOS: PHOTOLIBRARY.COM

ONE METROPOLIS, TWO VERY DIFFERENT PERSONALITIES. LUXE IT UPTOWN OR LIVE IT DOWNTOWN? SUSIE BURGE TAKES A LONGITUDINAL APPROACH TO NEW YORK

NEW YORK, New York – so good they named it twice. On this visit to the city, I wanted to explore both NYs, so I stay Uptown, which I know and love, but I'm moving Downtown too, to properly check out the bookshops, boutiques and galleries of the West Village and SoHo...

I begin Uptown and it seems I've been blessed. A fairy godmother has waved her magic wand. I'm in The Pierre, a grand old NY hotel, icon of the Upper East Side, reopened last year after a lavish \$100 million makeover. And instead of the perfectly luxe room I've been dreaming about, I've been upgraded. Walking through the palatial sitting room of the Getty Suite, I open French doors on to a terrace the size of a tennis court and drink in views over Central Park.

My suite is named after J. Paul Getty, who rescued the hotel after the Great Depression and transformed it to become part hotel, part apartments. The Pierre has a fabulous history. It has played host to rock stars and royalty, movie stars and moguls. If these walls could talk, the gossip would be salacious!

Coco Chanel has stayed here, so too Howard Hughes, Katharine Hepburn and Spencer Tracy, Andy Warhol, Queen Elizabeth II and the Rolling Stones. Socialite Barbara Hutton lived and had her wedding reception here. The tango scene in *Scent Of A Woman* was filmed in the beautiful Cotillion Room.

Down in the sleek cocktail bar,

Two E, well-groomed women dressed in Lanvin and Chloé chat over shopping bags. I select a table, sink into a velvet chair and order an outrageous mid-afternoon martini. I feel just like Audrey Hepburn in *Breakfast At Tiffany's* (just down the road). Next door is Barneys – handy for their legendary shoe sales.

An hour or so later, armed with a new pair of Louboutins (half price), I return to my suite, bathe in the princess-worthy marble bathroom, slip on an LBD and some Estée Lauder and decide to explore. I get to know Katie, the lift operator. I wander through the lobby, hung with gorgeous black-and-white photos of famous past guests, to take a sneak peek at Le Caprice restaurant. It's decked out with David Bailey shots of Jean Shrimpton and done up smartly like a Chanel mirrored compact in monochrome. The rest of the hotel is a mix of history and modernity; a fabulous upgrade by interiors guru Alexandra Champalimaud has kept the lavish old-world grandeur but lifted the rooms into the realm of swish contemporary luxe.

A nod to the doorman, a swing of the revolving door and I'm standing on Fifth Avenue at twilight. Across the road, fairy lights twinkle in trees in the park and horses and carriages come and go in the plaza. I head south, joining the crowds, past brightly lit, magical shop windows – Bergdorf, Vuitton, Bendel – to 55th Street. I have a date (lucky me) at Salon De Ning, the sexy rooftop bar at The Peninsula, with a bird's-eye view uptown. □



GOING UP (clockwise from left): Central Park in spring; iconic Tiffany & Co.; the well-heeled head to Barneys for luxe labels – and killer sales; suites at the Pierre, inside and out



UPTOWN...

MANHATTAN TRANSFER

BEST ABOVE MIDTOWN

RELAX: The ESPA at The Peninsula hotel – think pool with a view and world-class treatments.
EAT: Le Caprice at The Pierre for dinner, Sant Ambroeus on Madison for perfect panini and chocolates.
DO: The Whitney Museum of American Art, The Frick Collection, Guggenheim, The Met, Central Park.

...DOWNTOWN

It's time to head to the first of my Downtown hotels, where I discover the most user-friendly hotel lobby in NYC. Think graffiti-chic wall art, big old sofas and leather club chairs, dim lighting and a long central table where singletons sit with their MacBooks over a glass of wine, while discreetly checking out the talent heading into The Breslin Bar & Dining Room.

I've moved to the wallet-friendly Ace Hotel, corner of 29th and Broadway, smack-bang in the Garment District.

From my window, I can see the street below, shuttered windows, rooftops, fire escapes, people in workday clothes. It's a curiously appealing urban view. Snuggling under checked blankets, I feel like Winona Ryder in *Heathers*, or as if I've sneaked into my college

boyfriend's room. It's a trip down memory lane. There's even a turntable and records. Plus a retro Smeg fridge.

West, across town, via the amazing Chelsea gallery district, I arrive by yellow cab at The Standard. I'm curious about the chic styling, the rumours of exhibitionism and celebrity. All the hype is true: Kate Hudson is lunching at The Standard Grill; in my room, floor-to-ceiling windows stare out over the High Line (a city park with a twist) and walkers below stare back up at me.

I head out and walk the High Line, making my way along the route of disused railway tracks. There, big wooden loungers angled to catch the sun, beds of wildflowers and tall waving grasses, plantings of maple and birch trees, an art installation

BEST BELOW MIDTOWN

RELAX: Aveda Institute NY on Spring Street, SoHo. Get a fab haircut or conditioning treatment plus facial by wonderful Aveda students. Book ahead or miss out.

EAT: The Spotted Pig in the West Village for dinner; Pastis in the Meatpacking District for brunch or the finest steak frites; Momofuku in the East Village for innovative food.

DO: The Chelsea galleries. See listings in *Time Out* or the Art Map.

based on light bouncing off the Hudson River, unique vistas down urban corridors or over industrial angles to denim-coloured water.

At certain places, stairs lead down to street level. The High Line is a green corridor running from the heart of the fashionable Meatpacking District (think great shopping like Ernest Sewn) to the edge of Chelsea, without touching the ground. It's a place to wander among gardens, replenish, breathe in space and light; Downtown's answer to Central Park. □

PHOTOS: GETTY IMAGES; XIA; JAMIN; BAAN; SNAPPER; PEDIA; RYDER; E. ROBISON

GETTING DOWN
(clockwise from left):
The High Line puts a disused railroad to work as an elevated garden; Ace Hotel's rooms have a charmingly collegiate feel; hit SoHo's colourful West Broadway for bites...and bikes



Your best guide to the hottest bars in New York? Claire Smith, head of Spirit Creation and Mixology for Belvedere vodka. Here, her pick of where to sip...

UPTOWN

Monkey Bar New York

Classic NYC bistro with a self-confident swagger that suggests this place is more than meets the eye. Great food, upbeat ambience and swiftly executed classic drinks that lubricate the *Vanity Fair* aficionados. www.monkeybarnewyork.com

Mandarin Oriental

The ultimate in romantic destinations, MObar is a beacon of class, style and effortless sophistication. Glass walls frame the incredible views of Central Park and bring sharp relief from the majestic backdrop of the New York skyline. Simple, classic and elegant cocktails are well executed and graciously served. www.mandarinoriental.com/newyork/dining/mobar

Bookmarks

Stunning art deco ambience and classic drinks lend an air of Agatha Christie to this bar. The real clue to the success of this venue lies in the beautiful garden rooftop bar, one of Midtown's best-kept secrets. www.hospitalityholdings.com

DOWNTOWN

Goldbar

The size-zero of the club world. A petite, perfectly formed space with beautiful people, beautiful bartenders and only Belvedere by the bottle. Gold skulls grace the walls, while dark alcoves and sexy smoked mirrors encourage saucy mischievousness. Expect to be seduced. www.goldbarnewyork.com

Dutch Kills

The best spot for a cocktail lover's secret rendezvous, this speakeasy-style bar is a hidden gem. Seriously skilled bartenders dish up achingly flawless drinks from menus that change daily. www.dutchkillsbar.com

PDT

No New York recommendation would be complete without a mention of Please Don't Tell (PDT). Once inside the kooky entrance, a cubby cove of cocktail masterpieces await the cocktail cognoscenti. We're so there. www.pdtnyc.com



UNDER THE SPELL OF BEIJING

OVERWHELMED BY THE SCALE AND SYMBOLISM, SUSIE BURGE SPENDS 72 (BREATHLESS) HOURS IN CHINA

The Gate of Divine Progress

The Pavilion of the Rain of Flowers, the Palace of Earthly Tranquillity, the Hall of Military Eminence – on my first day in Beijing, a walk through the 15th Century Forbidden City is like inhabiting a poem. Or an ancient gilded scroll (for the colours are saturated, intense) where every single thing has symbolic meaning – shapes, colours, aspect, carved animals and birds.

I enter through the Gate of Divine Progress, pass through the Gate of Loyal Obedience and am waylaid by an art student in the Imperial Garden. Wu Shin leads me to an exhibition room somewhere in the environs of the Palace of Gathered Elegance and sells me watercolours of horses (power) and goldfish (wealth). Outside the Palace of Heavenly Purity I read the translation of the Chinese inscription: "Heaven and Earth are bright under the sun and the moon and the whole world is open and peaceful." Somewhere along the way, staring into these ancient and grandly furnished chambers, imagining the court in situ, the emperor, the concubines, the costumes and the ritual, I remember to turn on the audio guide. Roger Moore's suave voice adds a surreal touch of Hollywood to old China ("Look up at the ceiling – isn't it fabulous!").

At the other end of the city I pass through the red and gold gates and touch them for luck. I am waylaid again, this time by policemen

suspicious of the white silk flower I have pinned to my dress. Perhaps it hides a concealed weapon? (White, after all, is the colour of death.)

Attempting to find a way across to Tiananmen Square I meet an engineer wishing to practice his English. As we talk, behind us the fountains spout like magic. "You like spring?" he asks. In the square itself, people are being allowed back in. Tiananmen has been closed due to talks between the Chinese and the Sudanese in the Great Hall of the People. One by one the red flags fluttering atop Parliament come down. A young policeman comes over for a chat and insists on taking my photograph using my camera. When I ask to take his, he politely tells me it is not allowed.

I'm late getting back to the Shangri-La hotel where I am staying. I've been waylaid again, this time by the sight of the new National Theatre, a shining contemporary ellipse known as "The Egg" set in a manmade lake. The sun catches the gleaming titanium arc of the structure turning it pale gold.

I stand at the crossroads of three histories: to the south west is the Forbidden City; to the west, the Communist architecture of Tiananmen Square; in front of me, cutting-edge 21st-century minimal beauty – where Beijingers dressed for a night out come and stand to be photographed at the edge of the lake. ▶

Drink in the saturated colours of the 15th Century Forbidden City, once home to the Imperial Court



Songbirds in Jingshan Park

The Water Cube

Tonight I'm with the fashion team. It's been a comedy of errors getting close to the Olympic buildings (permits are sorted, but how can we shoot with that bloody great fence in the way?) but now two policemen are dragging a section of the barrier to one side. For 20 minutes or so, we'll have the perfect backdrop, an uninterrupted view of the National Aquatics Centre, the Water Cube.

Conceptually unique and radically beautiful, the Cube is made of large interconnecting pillow-like cells. Designed by Australian firm PTW, the pillows are made of a polymer, filled with air. The architects were thinking of soap bubbles. Standing here looking up, it's as if water has been solidified like jelly, sectioned like a leaf and put under a microscope in order to see the cellular structure. It's like the interior of water, its essence. As the sun goes down, the building turns from dove grey to blush pink and, when the sky is dark, lit from within it's the colour of a David Hockney swimming pool: trippy Los Angeles blue.

The team springs into action. Model, photographers, stylist, hair and makeup. When the shoot is over we all pile back onto the bus, giggling, like some travelling pop band. As we drive away, a movie of tropical fish is projected onto the face of the Aquatics Centre and the building is transformed into a floating aquarium.

Sushi and slippers

Today I have a partner in crime. American photojournalist Natalie Behring has lived in Beijing for 10 years and she loves to shop. We bond over spicy tuna hand rolls at Hatsune, some of the best sushi in the city. Natalie speaks fluent Mandarin and as we eat and buy things and wander the streets, she engages in plenty of banter with the locals – Beijingers have a great sense of humour – and offers a running commentary on contemporary life. (Apparently you get used to the pollution. It's my only gripe while I'm here.)

We've just come from one of the "hundred year old shops", Neiliansheng, a gorgeous store, established in 1853, all carved and burnished and painted wood and glass cabinets, where they continue to cut and sew traditional Chinese slippers by hand. Natalie's are blue embroidered cotton. Mine are stripy pink and gold silk with butterflies. Before that, we spent a couple of hours exploring Nan Luo Gu Xiang in the Dongcheng District, one of the curious hutongs (laneways) that still survives the wrecking ball of progress. The hutongs are continually being demolished to make way for the new malls and towers and shiny glass and steel precincts. Sometimes they are not demolished entirely but torn down and rebuilt in the same style. "There's nothing old left

in Beijing," says Natalie. Here, small fashion boutiques are crammed among kooky crooked living spaces and cafes with courtyard gardens and Wi-Fi.

In The Pottery Workshop, triangular good-fortune robes with flared arms made of hundreds of thousands of tiny ceramic butterflies hang on the wall – art pieces by Zheng Yi, surrounded by shelves of lovely utilitarian mugs and cups and bowls. Fish Nation has the best fish and chips in town and Better Travel Than Dead is one of the best offbeat bars. We've found stacks of little brown paper notebooks decorated with paintings of roosters and rabbits and rats. We've got commie-chic sporty and matching "Beijing Super Noodle Shop" T-shirts from Plastered 8.

"Creative Dictator" Dominic has lived in the hutong for about five years. He and Natalie chat about recent changes... He's just signed a licensing deal in the UK and has been invited to exhibit in Harvey Nichols in September.

Earlier in the day, at the end of a corridor in the Sky and Sea warehouse near the Buddhist Temple, we visited the showroom of Chang and Biorck. On display are traditional Chinese silks, woven to fresh, contemporary Scandinavian design in small batches. The combination is hot – so desirable Terence Conran in London is going to stock them later this year. I gather handfuls of jewellery rolls, cosmetic pouches and little lipstick purses.

WORDS: SUSIE BURGE. PHOTOS: NATALIE BEHRING, PHOTOLIBRARY.COM, STEPHAN GRASNEANSKI FOR VUITTON

It's only lunchtime, we've scooped Harvey Nics and The Conran Shop and we have many, many bags. Luckily we have a driver, a great idea in Beijing. Santilan lies ahead. Shopping can be stashed in the car.

Walking backwards singing

The sky is ethereal this early. Opaque. Wreathed in a fine layer of cloud. The taxi lets me out at the entrance to Jingshan Park. Inside the park, people are walking backwards. Somewhere among the trees, a woman is singing Chinese opera. From high on the hill that looks out over the Forbidden City comes the sound of intermittent guttural shouting. Old men do tai chi. Ballroom dancers waltz over paving stones to music from portable stereos. Large groups follow their leader in stretching and jiggling exercises. Old men carry pet birds along a path, hang the cages in tree branches and let them sing to one another.

I taxi back to the Shangri-La and check out. The hotel lobby is dotted with businessmen heading to breakfast meetings and sleepy fans of the Korean boy band who are staying here. Of all the top hotels in Beijing, the Shangri-La is undoubtedly the most poetic. Quotes from *The Lost Horizon* and its mythical Himalayan land of eternal youth are scattered throughout the rooms and communal spaces. The gardens are famous and used for

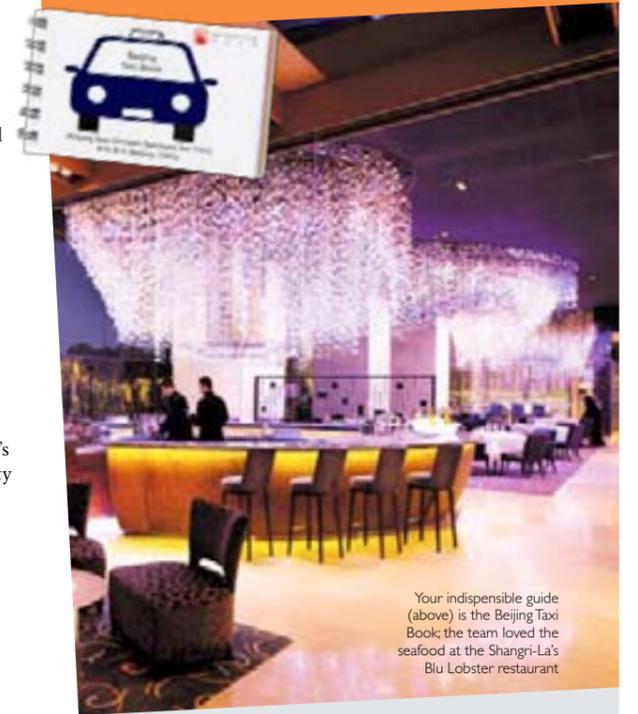
weddings. The colours of the Garden Wing are elegant, pale golds, creams and yellows. The new Valley Wing is a study in contemporary opulence with cascading chandeliers, expanses of polished marble and a spectacular pool that looks out over a rooftop garden and the roofs of the city. The staff in the Blu Lobster restaurant (outstanding seafood and bordeaux – yum) deserve a medal for putting up with us. I'm sorry to leave. I push through the glass revolving doors and into a waiting taxi.

Luggage clatters over grooved marble floors. High above, soaring delicate steel-ribbed glass ceilings in silver and orange remind me simultaneously of an intricate computer chip and the shimmering wings of a bird. The new Terminal 3, designed by Sir Norman Foster, is mesmerising. The building is an extraordinary mix of subtlety, sheer size and the symbolism of future progress. When viewed from the air it's shaped like a dragon. With the capacity to handle more than 50 million passengers a year, it's the biggest airport on the planet. ■

The Grazia team flew courtesy of Air China to Beijing. (Sydney – 02 9232 7277, Melbourne – 03 8602 5555, www.airchina.com.au) and stayed at the Shangri-La hotel (29 Zizhuyuan Road, Beijing 100089, China – 0011 86 10 6841 2211, www.shangri-la.com/en)

Walk the walk

For a unique travel experience, try the Louis Vuitton Soundwalk (above left). In the hour-long audio guide, gorgeous actress Gong Li takes you on a nostalgic journey through the winding laneways of Beijing (www.louisvuittonsoundwalk.com).



Your indispensable guide (above) is the Beijing Taxi Book; the team loved the seafood at the Shangri-La's Blu Lobster restaurant



City views? Crown Metropol knows how to do 'infinity' pool

WEEKEND IN MELBOURNE

MINI break anyone? City staycation? We say embrace all things urban and find an oh-so stylish escape in the heart of Melbourne. It's gearing up for A/W 11 with an amazing program of blockbuster shows and exhibitions. And, of course, there's the food culture, the shopping and fabulous new venues to explore...

STAY AND SPA

We bypass the crowds in Crown Metropol's uber-smart lobby and head straight to level 28 for concierge service and superb views. We've opted for a "28" upgrade – priority check-in, complimentary sunset drinks in the sky bar, all-day refreshments plus a truly wonderful breakfast (four types of fruit salad and manuka honey-scented labna with fresh strawberries and almonds). So worth it. Next rave: the pool. The 27th floor is all water and lounging. The air is heated to give a tropical feel, sunlight floods in and you can gaze out over the city from the infinity edge. Magic. Oh, and the rooms are tres chic too. www.crownmetropol.com.au

EAT, DRINK AND BE MERRY

Our new fave Sunday lunch spot is the Newmarket Hotel in St Kilda. Share the best roast chicken or order from the Latin Street Food menu of tasting plates like tacos with duck (the soft tacos are homemade with pure cornmeal imported from Mexico – delicious). Head to Collingwood and Fitzroy for a cool bar scene. Try hip newcomer Naked For Satan on Brunswick Street. The atmospheric space channels classic Barcelona

bars and serves up Spanish-style pintxo with your vodka. www.newmarketstkilda.com.au; www.nakedforsatan.com.au

SHOP IT UP

Hello, department-store makeover with a snazzy designer edge: Myer's Bourke Street flagship has reopened with a bang. Light-filled with mirrored columns, white honeycomb installations, polished fittings... plus a dreamy Galerie de Parfum. At the other end of the spectrum we love Scout House in St Kilda for unique homewares – some new, some vintage – sourced from around the globe by owner and textile designer Orlando Mesiti. Think Noguchi lights, bell jars and quilts. www.myer.com.au; www.scouthouse.com.au

DON'T MISS...

The Melbourne International Comedy Festival is on until April 24, Andrew Lloyd Webber's new musical *Love Never Dies* (a sequel to *Phantom*) is premiering at the Regent Theatre in May, and *Vienna: Art & Design* (including works by Klimt) opens at the NGV in June. More? The 3000-year-old Tutankhamun relics are an absolute must-see. www.visitvictoria.com; www.kingtutmelbourne.com.au



Newmarket Hotel for tacos y tequila

DESIGN FOR LIFE

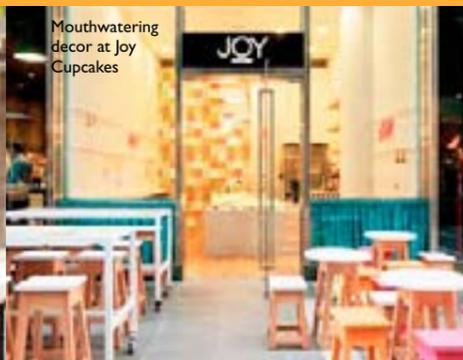
The Australian Interior Design Awards (announced in Melbourne this week) offer extra inspiration to check out new cool spaces to stay, play and shop. The awards are divided into categories: hospitality, retail, commercial... Crown Metropol is short-listed for its fab Bates Smart interiors, as is the edgy LIFEwithBIRD boutique designed by Wonder. If you're a makeup junkie don't miss the Kryolan Cosmetics state-of-the-art store in Little Collins Street. Those in the know speak very highly of the brand. We love Joy Cupcakes (try the Red Velvet). The colour-pop fitout is almost as delicious as the sweet treats themselves... www.australianinteriordesignawards.com; www.lifewithbird.com; www.joycupcakes.com.au; www.kryolancosmetics.com.au



LIFEwithBIRD



Hunt for treasures at Scout House



Mouthwatering decor at Joy Cupcakes



GRAZIA WELL TRAVELLED

Hey, MONA: love the pavilion rooms for an artcation

WEEKEND IN HOBART

OH, HOBART, you've changed. The dinky, foodie, crafty, historically interesting hotspot is now quite something else. It's an artistic world player (while retaining its gourmet crown) and this week the capital of Tasmania has the MONA Festival of Music and Art in full swing. Gotta love a little city with a big beating cultural heart.

MARVELLOUS MARKETS

Salamanca Market is justifiably famous, a feast for fossickers and foodies every Saturday. Channelling iconic French flea markets, it's possibly one of the best produce and vintage wares markets in the world. As an added extra, Salamanca Place is a shopping mecca, with boutiques like Luxe well worth a visit. www.salamanca.com.au

FOR DESIGNER DIGS

How swanky can you get? Separate uber-contemporary structures named after iconic Australian artists and architects with luxe fittings, jaw-dropping views over the Derwent River; a fabulous glass-shrouded pool, five-star food at The Source restaurant, Moorilla Winery cellar door and Moo Brew tastings, cutting-edge contemporary art in the Museum of Old and New Art... Yes, a stay in the MONA Pavilions is as unique as it gets. www.moorilla.com.au/pavilions

CHOW DOWN IN STYLE

Looking great and with divine food, Garagistes is run by Tetsuya-trained chef and food photographer Luke Burgess. The fab interiors have a raw industrial edge and the menu

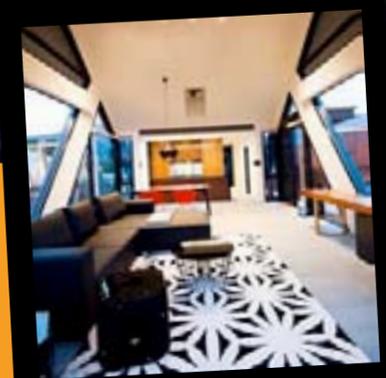
is inspired by the slow-food movement, with Japanese influences and inspiration from Copenhagen's renowned Noma restaurant. This is one cool place. Our Tassie-based food editor Matthew Evans loves it, too. www.garagistes.com.au

TEA WITH AN EX-ROCKER

Is tea the new cocktail? Mmm...not completely sure but there's certainly a groundswell towards refined tastes and ceremony. Chado The Way Of Tea is a genuine Asian tea house owned by Dr Varuni Kukasekera and her husband, legendary Violent Femmes muso Brian Ritchie. You'll sometimes find him there in his zen capacity – playing the Shakuhachi (Japanese flute). [134 Elizabeth St \(03 6231 6411\)](http://134.Elizabeth.St.03.6231.6411)

TRADITION WITH A TWIST

Did someone say cocktails? The IXL Long Bar at The Henry Jones Art Hotel ain't new, but it's still the best place in town for a pre-dinner drink. Catch up on the gossip, meet visiting movers and shakers, or simply take in the atmosphere and the view over Sullivan's Cove while sipping on a leatherwood martini. www.thehenryjones.com/experience/ixllongbar



DISNEYLAND FOR DESIGN LOVERS

The brainchild of an eccentric multi-millionaire who chooses to indulge his own tastes, Hobart's MONA (Museum of Old and New Art) is a subterranean art palace based around the themes of sex and death. It's the largest privately owned art museum in Australia and combines precious historical relics and up-to-the-minute contemporary art practice. Super-rare ancient coins, the biggest Sidney Nolan painting in existence, an entire Anselm Kiefer Pavilion... Owner David Walsh calls MONA "a subversive adult Disneyland" – we just call it mind-blowing. And entry is free. MONA opens over three days of art, theatre and music from January 21-23. Thereafter, it's open 11am-5pm daily. Access is by MONA fast catamaran from Brook St Pier, Hobart waterfront, or by shuttle bus from the city. www.mona.net.au



Garagistes equals culinary cool



So French-chic: Salamanca Market