

CITY A.M.

No. 80 — THE MAGAZINE — DEC 19

TRAVEL

Bangkok is the most visited city in the world – what will it look like in 30 years?

LIVING

Safe house: how the super rich are kitting their pads out with panic rooms

FOOD & BOOZE

Director and author Emma Forrest on why her last meal on earth would be a buffet of puddings



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EDITOR'S LETTER



This will be our last magazine before the 2020s. It's also the 80th edition I've edited over more than seven years. A lot has changed over that time: back in 2012 we would never have run features on how to accommodate vegans at your Christmas lunch, how frequent flyers can offset their carbon footprint, and whether co-living apartments might help to solve the housing crisis (spoiler: they won't).

But these aren't just fringe 'woke' ideas anymore – they are part of the cultural mainstream. Moreover, businesses have taken these ideas and run: who would have guessed that the best-tasting thing to come out of Greggs would be meat-free? Or that the CEO of an airline would be imploring customers to travel "responsibly". Amid the rancour of the general election and the protests over Trump's visit to the UK, it's worth remembering that, behind the scenes, away from the headlines, some things are actually looking up.

So find out how to keep those vegans and teetotal millennials happy this Christmas in our feature on P20. And make sure they have a smile on their face when they open their presents by consulting our bumper gift guide, which starts on P31. Merry Christmas everyone – see you in the roaring twenties. – **STEVE DINNEEN**

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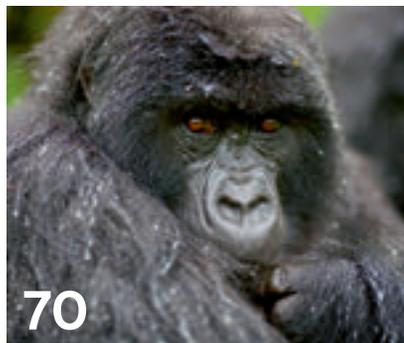
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CONTRIBUTORS



HELEN CRANE is editor of our Living section. On P86 she tries out 'co-living', the new housing model that markets tiny flats with added 'wellness' benefits to millennials, and on P90 she finds out what the super-rich want from their bespoke panic rooms.



MARK HIX is *City A.M. Magazine's* regular food columnist. His restaurants include HIX Oyster & Chop House, Tramshed, and Hixter Bankside. He talks about living on his boat on the Thames on P28.



NOO SARO-WIWA is a travel journalist and author of the award-winning book *Looking For Transwonderland: Travels in Nigeria*. In this issue, she visits the Ugandan community evicted from their ancestral home by conservation efforts – P70



EMMA FOREST is a filmmaker and author whose work includes the novels *Namedropper* (1998), *Thin Skin* (2002), *Cherries in the Snow* (2005), and *Royals* (2019). In this issue she takes us on a culinary tour of the world as she fantasises about her last meal – P18



JOSH BARRIE is a food writer and restaurant expert who spends his days hopping from restaurant to restaurant in search of the elusive perfect meal. In this issue he asks top chefs how to plan a stress-free Christmas dinner – P20



SIMON THOMSON is *City A.M. The Magazine's* booze expert, specialising in dark spirits. He also writes film and theatre reviews for *City A.M.* – all of this when not pursuing a career in legal policy. He picks out his drinks of the year on P24.

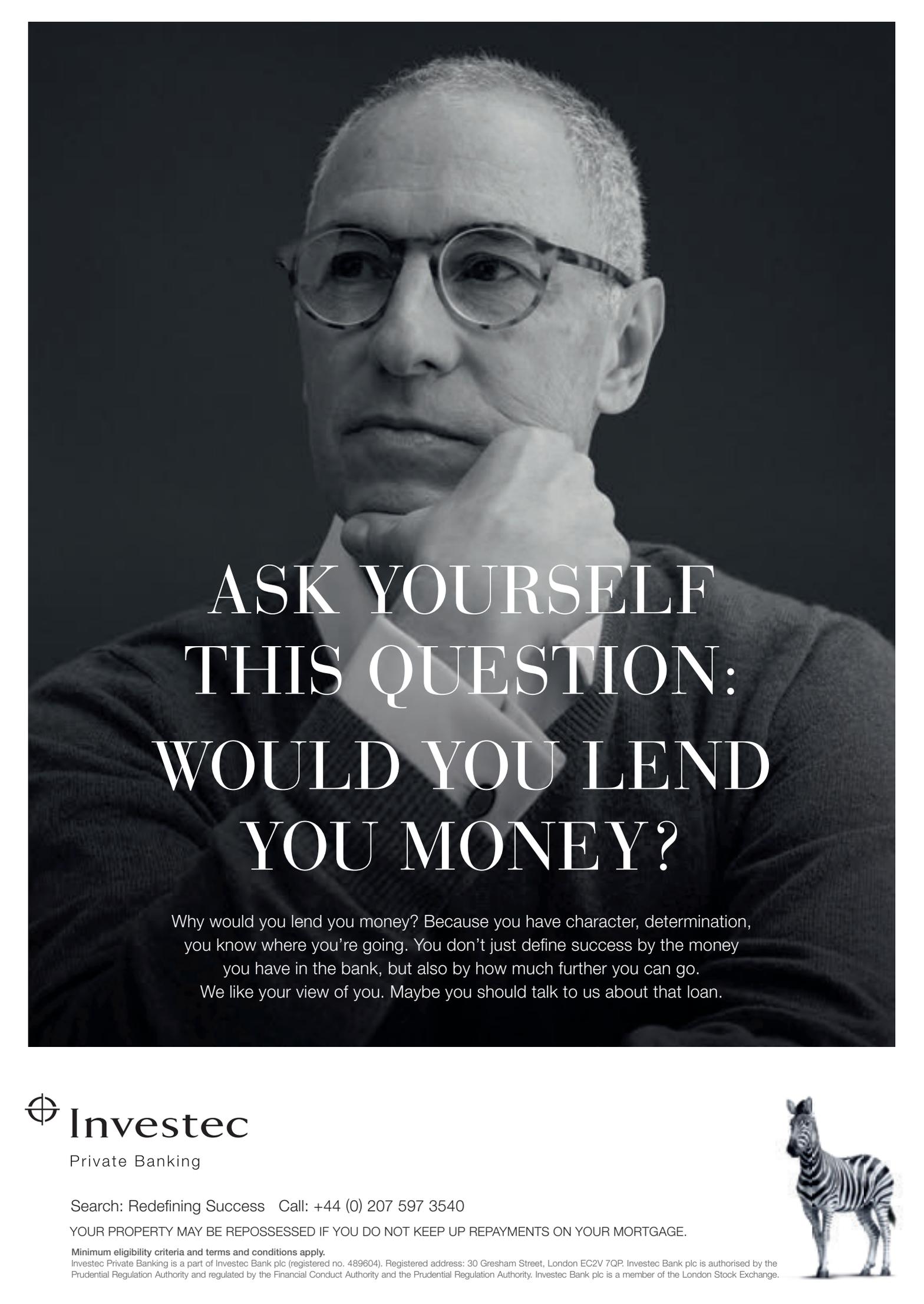
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FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Stories from the world of arts, technology, design and luxury goods



Left: One of Charlie Mackesy's illustrations from *The Boy, The Mole, The Fox and the Horse*, a set of illustrations that could be a top-seller this Christmas



Particularly in demand are 'digital detox cards', which give practical advice intended to cultivate a healthier relationship to technology

The moral of the John Lewis Christmas retail report – that modern life is rubbish – is borne out in another major trend. It seems instructive that in a year defined by Greta Thunberg and Extinction Rebellion, Christmas shopping has become a lot more eco-friendly. This increased environmental consciousness is particularly pronounced in the Health & Beauty sector, where companies like natural soap maker Lucy Bee are thriving. Its vegan, organic, fairtrade, and palm oil free Jasmine and Cedarwood soap looks set to be one of the breakout stars of the festive period; and there's an impressive diversity of similar products on sale, from non-toxic nail varnishes to natural deodorants. Expect to find bamboo spatulas and vegan belts around the tree on Christmas morning.

The divinations of the Waterstones bestsellers section are harder to understand. The issue is that many different sorts of books do well at Christmas, and it isn't always easy to tell why. While there are some reliable stocking fillers – cookbooks and celebrity biographies, chiefly – there are usually a few surprise contenders for the bestseller crown. "There are so many books being published nowadays, and in such a range of genres, that it's difficult to talk about trends," says Brett Croft, manager of Daunt Books' Marylebone store. "Christmas sales can be very spontaneous, and with a few notable exceptions, they will differ massively from bookshop to bookshop."

One of the notable exceptions this year looks set to be Jamie Oliver's new vegetarian cookbook, which raises an interesting question about the commercial viability of having your entire restaurant empire collapse. Unsurprisingly, the autobiographies of sporting heroes Eddie Jones and Ben Stokes are also projected to sell in enormous numbers – but according to Croft, they might all be outdone by *The Boy, The Mole, The Fox and the Horse*, a set of charming illustrations by the cartoonist Charlie Mackesy. More surprising, in an age of declining interest in the royal family, (and on the back of what you might politely call Prince Andrew's 'controversies') is the predicted success of *Lady in Waiting*, a confessional memoir by a former aide to Princess Margaret. Perhaps the festive period hides fewer secrets than I thought.

WHAT DO THE GIFTS WE BUY SAY ABOUT BRITAIN TODAY?

We care about wellness and the environment, and we're suckers for cute illustrations, says

DOUGIE GERRARD

Christmas presents are a window into the soul. If grandma gifts you a lovingly-wrapped novel by your favourite author, it's probably evidence of a flourishing relationship, whereas a plastic bag with twenty quid in it suggests she stopped paying attention when you hit puberty. But what can they tell us about society? "People are really stressed out by technology. They're looking for alternatives," says Mandy Pursey,

communications manager at John Lewis.

According to Pursey, one way this manifests is an uptick in interest for traditional wooden games, like *Shut The Door* and *Chinese Chequers*. Increasingly, technological burnout is also being funnelled into the wellbeing industry, with products aimed at 'enhancing wellness' growing in popularity. Particularly in demand are packs of 'digital detox cards', which give amiable, practical advice intended to cultivate a healthier relationship to technology. A typical card might instruct its reader to take a 24 hour break from social media, a long bath, or a restorative morning walk. Yoga cards, which give similar instructions for poses and meditations, are also newly popular, as are diffusers and scented candles. Pursey attributes the popularity of all three to a desire to find a more relaxed rhythm to life, away from the relentless tempo set by work and social media.

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HAPPEN

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35

25

42

BUSINESS LUNCH

The best places to eat in and around the City of London, from hip new openings to long-established staples

OFFICINA 00, OLD STREET

WHAT IS IT? A ridiculously good Italian restaurant in one of those non-descript modern developments that are such a common part of London's repeating landscape that they become essentially invisible. Officina 00 is the kind of place you could walk past every day and never seriously consider entering. Well, we're here to tell you otherwise. Officina 00 bills itself as a "restaurant and pasta workshop", which would be a little pretentious if it weren't so accurate. In this case, the industrial-chic decor actually relates to the core premise of the restaurant, which is a place where things are not only cooked, but are *crafted*. All the pasta is hand-made on site and you can watch as your corzetti emerges from the rustic press, ready to impress the hell out of your mouth. It's a labour of love from Elia Sebregondi and Enzo Mirto, neither of whom we'd heard of until now.

WHO WILL IT IMPRESS? If you know someone who doesn't swoon at the thought of a perfect sheet of pasta, we hope you steer well clear of them. Everybody will appreciate the quality food and laid-back vibe at Officina 00, but it will be manna from heaven for proper pasta nerds.

WHAT ABOUT THE FOOD? I feel like we have already alluded to the fact that the food is pretty decent. In fact, it's the best pasta we've eaten all year, from the beautiful, languid piles of pappardelle (with meatballs and burrata) to the taut strings of ink tagliolini (with anchovies, chili and cod). It's a relatively small menu and we recommend you order as much as you can conceivably eat; it's about as sharing-friendly as awkward strings of pasta can be, and it's not the kind of place where table manners are at the forefront of anyone's mind.



A selection of fresh pasta, which is made on-site daily

DESSERT? Yes, two. Profiteroles with lemon are absolutely divine (you can also get them with chocolate), and there's a very decent tiramisu.

PHONE: 020 8037 7161
WHERE: 156 Old St, EC1V 9BW
WEB: officina00.co.uk

BROTHER MARCUS, SPITALFIELDS

WHAT IS IT? The third branch of Brother Marcus, a Middle Eastern (with a hint of Mediterranean) venture that's been impressing locals in Balham and Angel for some time. It's cut from a similar cloth to Ottolenghi, albeit with enough twists to make it distinctive in its own right. This one is located in the heart of Spitalfields market, in the big unit vacated by Canteen. It's something of a brunch specialist, although it's open till late and you shouldn't overlook the excellent all-day menu.

WHO WILL IT IMPRESS? Spitalfields is increasingly becoming a foodie hotspot and Brother Marcus fits in comfortably. It's relaxed and buzzy, perfect for informal meetings.



The "Brother Mary" cocktail, which has a secret recipe involving Egyptian spinach

WHAT ABOUT THE FOOD? We recommend a flatbread per person and a selection of other dishes to share. We went for the chargrilled leek and feta flatbread, a decadently sized canoe that heaved under the weight of its toppings. Next we had an extravagantly-dressed burnt aubergine dish, piled high with tahini, a 62 degree egg, Moroccan-style salad and a squirt of fermented mango. It's a riot of colour and a commendably bold combination of flavours and textures. Altogether simpler is the excellent grilled octopus, served with torched orange and chorizo mayo. All very nice indeed.

DESSERT? Yep, there's a nice selection of cakes, but you should really wash things down with one of the signature cocktails, which include a spin on the Bloody Mary – the Brother Mary, which involves ouzo and dried molokia (Egyptian Spinach) – Ginger Pimms and (if you don't have to slope off back to work) a pitcher of white sangria, all sure to leave you with a smile on your face. Finally, the coffee, courtesy of Caravan, is worth a mention – you'll find one of the best flat whites in London here.

EMAIL: spitalfields@brothermarcus.co.uk
WHERE: 22 Crispin Place, E1 6DW
WEB: brothermarcus.co.uk

14 HILLS, FENCHURCH ST

WHAT IS IT? The latest opening from D&D London, the restaurant group behind ventures including Angler, Launceston Place and Sartoria. 14 Hills adds yet another sky high restaurant to the City's ever-growing portfolio, this one being located on the 14th floor of 120 Fenchurch St – about 30 seconds from City A.M. Towers – and boasting impressive views across the Thames. The dining room is pleasantly buzzy, with enough greenery to put a millennial's bedroom to shame.

WHO WILL IT IMPRESS? Given its location at the heart of the City, it's no surprise that this is a Mecca for business lunches. Clients from out of town will appreciate the views, while the menu, put together by head chef Thomas Piat, is a substantial list of modern European dishes designed to appeal to as broad an audience as possible.

WHAT ABOUT THE FOOD? Our meal got off to a great start with the scene-stealing crab, an ornate shell filled with a generous portion of white meat, little jelly cubes of "crab essence" and topped with cauliflower puree. Next came 63 degree "rare breed" egg with mushroom ragout, which is essentially posh egg and mushrooms on toast. Our main was an absurdly large portion of veal sweetbreads served on a bed of very creamy mash and decadently drizzled with amontillado jus.

DESSERT? Oh yeah. The apple and blackberry pie with clotted cream was



The excellent crab dish, served in an ornate shell and topped with pureed cauliflower

the highlight of the meal, the perfect blend of sweet and tart, and large enough that we packed half of it up and brought it back to the office.

ANYTHING ELSE? Don't leave without checking out the roof garden on the 15th floor, which is our favourite in London, far quieter than the one over the road at the Walkie Talkie.

PHONE: 020 3981 5222
WHERE: 120 Fenchurch St, EC3M 5BA
WEB: 14hills.co.uk

MTHR, CANARY WHARF

WHAT IS IT? The restaurant on the 20th floor of The Collective, the newest apartment block in Canary Wharf. Expect a well-stocked bar, top-notch views across East London and the river, and a lively – but not overloaded – atmosphere. Bizarrely, it is also located next to the building's pool, so depending on where you sit you might catch a view of someone swimming lengths while you eat.

WHO WILL IT IMPRESS? The Collective is aimed at millennials, so Mthr tends to attract a slightly younger, less corporate



Mthr's extravagant seabass ceviche, part of a surprisingly diverse international menu

crowd. Located just below South Quay, it's great for a casual team lunch or Friday night drinks, especially if you want to escape the mania of the bars around Canada Square. Since opening in the autumn it has only run breakfast and dinner services, but it is open for group Christmas lunch bookings from Wednesday to Friday during December, and will start a regular lunch service in the new year.

WHAT ABOUT THE FOOD? It serves an international menu of comfort food dishes, and they really do veer quite wildly between different cuisines. Mains range from coq au vin to ceviche to macaroni alla norma. It's all nice enough, but the chefs have spread themselves a bit too thinly by trying to cover off so many different parts of the world and the result is that nothing particularly stands out. The cocktails are a different story. Made by mobile bar company The Rum Runner, some of them might be cringingly named (we're looking at you, 'Lovely Melons') but the ones we tried were all delicious.

DESSERT? Six options, from a zesty lemon tart with orange crème fraiche, to a silky coconut panna cotta with passion fruit and rum-roasted pineapple.

SET MENU? Not here.

PHONE: 020 3985 3700
WHERE: Crossharbour Plaza, E14 9YF
WEB: mthrlondon.com



THE LAST SUPPER

Writer, director and author **EMMA FORREST** tells us what she'd eat for her last meal on earth, which is mostly just cake

As a teenager in London, I was the only one among my friends who didn't drink. People are suspicious of people who don't drink so I tried to cover for it by eating dessert instead. People would be getting the drinks in and I'd be sitting with a sticky toffee pudding. I probably already had a sweet tooth, but it became a big part of my life, the way I got through social occasions. So most of the food I'm going to be talking about is sugary.

My mother has psychological thing where she doesn't enjoy cooking, so she never taught us to cook. I think she was trying to save us. I still can't cook to this day. It's part of why I moved to New York when I was 21: I wanted to live in a city where you could order delivery for breakfast. I can make toast and I can boil spaghetti but that's it. It's totally normal for people in New York, the way it's totally normal for people who grew up in London to never learn to drive.

I really love cafe life so when I moved back to London I wanted to live somewhere close to places I love to sit in and eat. It meant I got to reconnect with the city like a tourist. I love the cafe at the V&A, where I order scones with clotted cream and jam and sit with that amazing wallpaper and stained glass. It's such a thoughtful, calming place.

In New York it's a different story. I love this place called Ray's Original Pizza. There was a big war about which Ray's was the original, and anyone with a reasonable mind will tell you it was the one on 6th Avenue and 11th St, which isn't there anymore. Not only is it just so good, it also represented how safe I felt

in the city. I was 21 and I'd walk around alone late at night and stop for a slice at Ray's before I got home.

I'm very tied to Nigella's chocolate marmalade pantry cake, which is one of the few things I can make, so I'd start my last supper with that. It's really important I make it myself. Nigella started my career – I interviewed her for my school newspaper when I was 13 and she told the Evening Standard she'd been interviewed by this kid and they should meet with me. I've made this cake for every boyfriend I've ever had so I have an almost erotic attachment to it. Every man I've loved has been amazed that I could make something so tender and delicious and aromatic. And it makes everything smell like chocolate and orange, which would be a good way to go.

Next I'd have some really good Marmite on toast, made with the best sourdough from this fantastic French-Japanese bakery in Ravenscourt Park called Patisserie Sainte-Anne. I'd have it with that French butter with big grains of salt in it, and a really strong cup of builder's tea.

Oh by the way, I want to have all of this in LA. There's a place called the Madonna Inn in San Luis Obispo, California, which is one of my favourite hotels in the world. It was opened by a Vegas showgirl who found God and the rooms are all extraordinary – there's a Fred Flintstone room made out of rocks and a 60s-themed room where everything is bright pink. The bakery there does an amazing pink champagne cake. I want to eat it lying in bed. I'd probably die of sugar-shock after eating all that.

● Emma's new book *Royals* is out now published by Bloomsbury priced £12.99

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IT'S CHRISTMAS, BUT NOT AS YOU KNOW IT

From vegans and veggies to the new wave of millennial teetotallers, this could be a tricky year for festive chefs. **JOSH BARRIE** asks the experts how they will be doing Christmas lunch this year.

The cards may read “peace to all men” but Christmas is a time for bitter fights, tantrums and physical conflict, especially when it comes to lunch (or should that be “dinner”?). Most of all, it's a day when people come together to vehemently disagree about food. Siblings will fly thousands of miles, cross land and sea, to brawl over whether there should be Yorkshire puddings with the turkey. And where do all the new vegans fit in? It's a tinsel-strewn minefield. But don't worry: I've spoken to some of the country's top chefs to compile this fool-proof guide to making Christmas day both peaceful and tasty.

CATERING FOR VEGANS

Greggs sparked mayhem at the beginning of the year when it launched its vegan sausage roll. The budget bakery may even be to blame for all your new plant-based family members who require something more enticing than a dry nut roast.

Adam Rawson, executive chef at The Standard, has a solution. “Cook a whole miso and brown sugar baked celeriac, covered in roasted chestnut tahini with cranberry sauce and sage,” he says.

Pastaio's Stevie Parle, meanwhile, urges the use of a “smallish onion squash”, stuffed with a “very nutty, herby pilaf rice... It's delicious and looks the part.”

Chef restaurateur Robin Gill, who's soon-to-open The Yard at Great Scotland Yard Hotel, has something more traditional in mind: “I'd suggest a chestnut pot roast with roasted root vegetables, finished with a maple syrup glaze.”

For the veggies, says Forest Side head chef Paul Leonard, “I always find a vegetarian wellington goes down a treat. I make a mushroom duxelle, confit some carrots and beets, then thinly slice parsnips. You can put anything in. Build it like a traditional wellington, with pancakes and a good puff pastry. It's a showstopper when it comes out of the oven.”

LOW-CARBON DINNER

Only last month November Waitrose announced it would be selling 100 per cent British lamb by 2021. Not that there's anything wrong with New Zealand's meat – we've been enjoying it for years – but these days provenance is king, and food miles are



the enemy. Coombe Farm, based in Somerset, and London's Turner & George both sell retired dairy beef, while ethical veg boxes such as those available through Abel & Cole will help to limit your carbon footprint.

At Stepney City Farm – or your closest equivalent – you'll find the freshest eggs, homegrown veg, herbs, flowers, and some of the juiciest sausages going. You could even consider buying wine from one of London's own producers. Chateau Tooting, anyone? The rose is surprisingly crisp.

BOOZE-FREE CHRISTMAS

Young people today drink less than the generations before them. There are plenty of reasons why, and all of them are boring. The

point is, you've got to stock up if you don't want to offend your nieces and nephews. It's Christmas, give the Gen Zeros a break.

Seedlip is probably the best-known alcohol-free beverage. Described as the “world's first distilled, sugar and additive-free non-alcoholic spirit,” it launched about four years ago and has since been used by some of London's top bartenders to create drinks like the ‘NoGroni’.

Or there's Everleaf, created by Paul Matthew of The Hide bar in Bermondsey. He said it took years of experimentation to find the right combination of flavours. “I wanted to make something non-alcoholic, firstly to give people more choice when they don't necessarily want to drink, but also to reflect



Left: Cornerstone chef Tm Brown shares his top tips on how to make Christmas dinner go off without a hitch this year; **Above:** Whether you're planning a minimalist lunch or an all-out festive feast, we have you covered

that concept of sustainability – sustainable consumption as well as sustainably sourced.”

ZERO WASTE

No matter how carefully you plan, there’s bound to be food left over – who among us is not tempted to throw in a few extra few spuds, or prepare extra pigs-in-blankets, just in case. The cure might be a goose cassoulet.

“A perk of opting for goose is that you get great offcuts the next day. On Boxing Day I like to make a big sharing cassoulet with classic confit goose leg,” says Dan Fletcher.

“Using leftover sausage stuffing as a base, just add white beans, extra roast veg and some stock from the goose bones and pop it in the oven to slow cook. If you want to really

impress, sprinkle over some crispy sprout leaves and chestnuts before serving.”

Tom Booton, head chef at The Dorchester Grill, has another nice idea: “A great way to use up a ham hock is to shred the ham from the bone and then fry in a little oil until crispy. Serve crumbled over blanched hispi cabbage for the best Boxing Day dish.”

MAKE A CURRY INSTEAD

Every year people moan about dry turkey breast meat, and those people would perhaps be better off with something else entirely. So why not skip the whole palaver and make a madras? Rohit Ghai, from Indian restaurant Kutir, says he likes to kick things off with his signature quail naan and masala scrambled

eggs. For the main event, James Cochran from Islington’s 12:51 has a foolproof turkey curry that’s sure to satisfy. “Sometimes you need something more than a roast, and this is a serious option. Use turkey trim as a base, with curry powder and coconut milk to bring everything together.” Cochran has a simple recipe to follow: onions, minced garlic, a little grated ginger, two tbsp of scotch bonnet jam, 50g of raisins, 10g of coriander, 20g of curry powder, and 500g of coconut milk. Then add a handful of coriander and any leftover vegetables you have lying around.

DON'T BOTHER COOKING

Sure, you could toil for hours on turkey and chestnuts and jackfruit koftas. But maybe it’s time to admit that cooking isn’t in your repertoire. Do you really want to spend half a day preparing roast potatoes and skimming skin off vats of gravy? Go out for lunch instead. “I’m cooking [at the restaurant] on Christmas day this year and we’ll be doing roast goose with all the trimmings,” says Adam Rawson. “We’re even making mince pies from the leg meat.” Nathan Eades, head chef at The Wild Rabbit, is going for a simpler vibe, with “cold cuts, pork pies, and terrines.”

Pasta guru Stevie Parle, meanwhile, has the day off and says he might go “somewhere classic” like The Ritz or The Goring. Imagine sitting down to dinner at the Ritz, everybody on their best behaviour, no dishes to worry about afterwards. Still want to tackle that turkey?

THE ART OF SNACKING

Before unleashing the turkey – or curry, or giant vegan sausage roll – what are you going to nibble on? Snacks – ‘canapes’ to our readers in the Home Counties – are a serious business. Personally I’m considering filling Yorkshire puddings with mac ‘n’ cheese, but a few chefs have some ideas, too.

George Barson, chef director at Cora Pearl and Kitty Fisher’s, will be making devils on horseback. “It’s the one thing I never go without and I always keep them pretty traditional,” he says. “Always streaky bacon – unsmoked is almost as pointless as unsalted butter in my mind – because the smoky, salty flavour contrasts perfectly with the sweetness of the pitted dried prune.”

Dan Fletcher, from 28 Market Place, adds: “I like to make the most of seasonal wild mushrooms and mix them up with some high quality sausage meat to make a giant sausage roll. I cut it up into slices and serve with some sliced prunes on top for a hit of sweetness. You can also leave out the sausage for a veggie version. And I love a little french snack called pissaladière. It’s a French-style pizza. You just top a thin bread dough base with anchovies, caramelised onions and olives and pop it in the oven until the dough is cooked. Then slice it up into squares and serve. The sweet and salty flavours go really well with champagne so it’s a perfect pre-lunch snack.”

GET THE DETAILS RIGHT

Your uncle’s getting upset about the carrots and your mum’s telling your grandma off for the way she’s done the sprouts. Despite its age, Christmas dinner is as divisive as ever. Even the top chefs can’t agree. Nigella Lawson and Jason Atherton both insist on bread sauce with lunch. Ben Tish from Norma thinks slow roast pork belly is ►



► a more delicious alternative: “This is what I’ll be serving for my family this year, with roasted spiced quince and seasonal cabbage steamed and finished with orange, chilli and marjoram, and potatoes roast with thyme and garlic.”

Monica Galetti, meanwhile, says she likes to glaze a ham with tinned pineapple blitzed to a puree. “I add it to a simple caramel [heat caster sugar in a saucepan until golden]. It makes a nice thick glaze ready to brush over your ham, which doesn’t run off the sides.”

THE CHRISTMAS SANDWICH

You’re doing Christmas wrong if you’re not rounding off the occasion with a hefty sandwich brimming with meat and gravy and all manner of delights. Just ask Richard Corrigan. The Bentley’s legend puts slices of cold leftover ham, homemade kimchi and grated red cabbage on buttered rye bread. “Add some chopped pineapple if you’re feeling exotic,” he advises.

Cornerstone’s Tom Brown says: “I use leftover beef – my mum always does beef and turkey – dipped in cold gravy, with enough horseradish sauce to sting your nose, pickled gherkins from the cheese board, sliced red onion on crusty tiger loaf. And don’t be shy on the butter, it’s Christmas after all.”

Sam Herlihy of The Sons + Daughters also knows his way around a sandwich. He says: “They are by nature made of leftovers. But to push them towards something truly lush I think you need to look to the less obvious remains. Gravy belongs in a sandwich for starters. I’d also raid the cheese plate. A handful of crisps, a quail egg or some chopped pistachios is class as hell.”



From top: A Christmas cocktail, courtesy of no-alcohol brand Everleaf; Rohit Ghai, from Indian restaurant Kutir, likes to make a festive quail naan; Richard Corrigan reckons he has a winning Christmas sandwich; James Cochran from Islington’s 12:51 has a foolproof turkey curry

DINNER HACKS

Paul Ainsworth says turkey should be cooked breast from leg: “Keep in mind the turkey legs and breast are two totally different muscles, so to be at their absolute best they require two different cooking techniques. Ask your butcher to remove the crown, wishbone and the thigh bones from each leg, this will make carving easier after a few festive drinks.

“What I love to do with the deboned legs is stuff them with your favourite kind of sausage meat and add cranberries, apricots and classic Christmas spices. Season it with salt and pepper, brush with a little oil, wrap it in baking parchment and foil, and it’s ready for the oven. This really packs in the flavour and is much quicker than cooking the whole bird on the bone.”

And here’s a tip from Booton: “Boil the carrots in carrot juice instead of water for extra flavour,” says. Scott Paton of Boringdon Hall’s top tip is: “Try dressing your sprouts in the cooking juices from your pigs in blankets – you’ll change people’s lives forever”.

Finally, remember the five Ps: perfect planning prevents pathetic performance. “Cook your roast potatoes the day before,” says Lympstone Manor’s Michael Caines, “then re-heat them while the turkey is resting. Always blanch potatoes for three or four minutes before roasting to ensure they’re crispy on the outside and soft and creamy in the middle.”

Paul Ainsworth advises freezing your gravy so you can make sure you’ve got it right weeks ahead, while Jason Atherton says bread sauce can also be made in advance. He says sourdough works best, and he blends his with cloves, cinnamon, and mace. ■



WE'VE COME THIS FAR...



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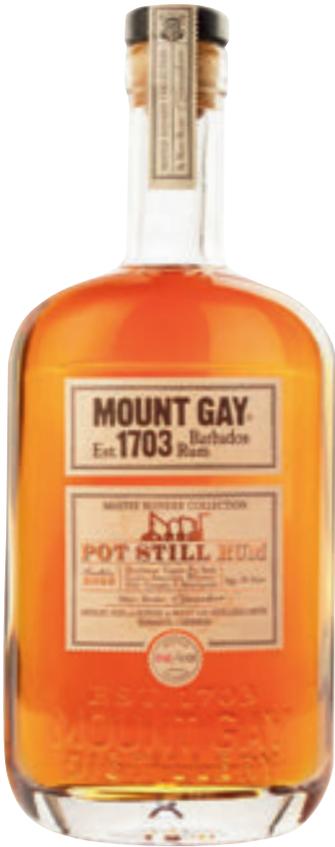
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A VERY BOOZY XMAS

'Tis the month before Christmas,
Let the merriment begin,
And charge up a glass,
With rum, whisky, or gin,
But which should you purchase?
Hark! Let us assist,
With suggestions contained
in our festive drinks list

Words: **SIMON THOMSON**





WHISKIES

THE WHISKY EXCHANGE CHRISTMAS MALT, £56.95

Bottled exclusively for The Whisky Exchange the very fine Christmas Malt 2019 is a cask strength Speyside whisky, which has been aged for 10 years in ex-bourbon barrels (for caramel cream and spice) and ex-sherry barrels (for rich fruit). The resulting liquid is pale gold and bursting with bold flavours of lemon and sultanas. Attractively packaged, it would make a great gift. A festive treat with an exceptionally long finish. **The serve:** Pour a generous dram for visiting friends on Christmas Eve. Open it out with a tiny splash of water. God bless us everyone.

LEGENT, £47.95

Back in 2014, the legendary Japanese whisky-makers Suntory acquired the similarly legendary bourbon-makers Jim Beam, and there was speculation about what products might emerge from collaborations within the new company. With Legent, we now have an answer. Suntory master blender Shinji Fukuyo takes Jim Beam master distiller Fred Noe's bourbon, and finishes it in Californian red wine and sherry casks. The result is a bold but finely considered caramel and dried fruit flavoured whiskey, showcasing the best of both brands. **The serve:** Leave a glass out for Santa with a mince pie (and a carrot for Rudolph).

OCTOMORE 10.3, £172

This single malt whisky is made with barley from just one field on a farm on the Scottish island of Islay. This tiny island is renowned for its peated whiskies, the smokiness of which is measured in phenol parts per million (PPM). Lightly peated whiskies register below 15 PPM, and heavily peated above 30 PPM. Part of Bruichladdich's super heavily peated Octomore range, the 10 series is intended to explore the realm of "softer smoke", so the 10.3 weighs in at a mere 114 PPM. The taste, however, is surprisingly delicate. **The serve:** Sipped neat in front of a roaring fire.

GINS

HENDRICK'S ORBIUM, £37.25

Orbium is a diverting experiment from Hendrick's Gin's master distiller Lesley Gracie. She has reimagined Hendrick's cult cucumber and rose accented gin to discover what it "might taste like in a parallel universe", layering in additional flavours associated with popular gin accompaniments quinine (from tonic water) and wormwood (from vermouth). Blue lotus blossom extract ties it all together with a bitter and deeply floral finish. **The serve:** Fill a highball glass with ice and a double measure of Orbium. Top up with soda water and garnish with cucumber slices for a pleasingly puzzling gin and 'tonic'.

WARNER'S CHRISTMAS CAKE GIN, £40

Warner's distillery is at Falls Farm, a working cattle farm in rural Northamptonshire. Its classic London Dry Gin won Double Gold at the San Francisco World Spirits Competition in June 2019, but it also makes a range of less conventional drinks. Its Christmas Cake Gin, for instance, is distilled with winter spices and dark chocolate, barrel-aged, then blended with cherry juice. **The serve:** Fill a highball glass with ice, add two parts Warner's Christmas Cake Gin and three parts ginger ale, garnish with candied peel. All the fun of a boozy Christmas cake - none of the marzipan.





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SINCE 1849



VILLA ASCENTI, £36.25

New from global spirits giant Diageo, Villa Ascenti is super-premium gin with an Italian accent. Made at the recently opened Distilleria Santa Vittoria, using a refurbished Frilli copper pot still from the 1970s, Villa Ascenti is triple-distilled from Moscato grapes, with Tuscan juniper added for the final distillation. Italian botanicals including mint and thyme from the hills of Piemonte create a light, fresh, vibrant spirit. **The serve:** Put a double measure in a champagne flute with a bruised sprig of mint, top it off with Prosecco, and drink it on Boxing Day with your favourite aunt.

RUMS

ANGOSTURA 1787, £60.95

From celebrated bitters-producer the House of Angostura, this Trinidadian rum spent 15 years maturing in charred oak barrels, developing dark amber colour and intense flavours of fudge and fruit. Black treacle dominates, but there is a strong taste of passionfruit which begins on the nose and lingers on the tongue. Angostura 1787 was named to commemorate the year that Trinidad's first sugar mill opened, and the drink is appropriately bitter-sweet. **The serve:** Muddle 1787 with sugar and three dashes of Angostura Bitters, dress with a twist of orange peel, and serve on the rocks for an all Angostura old fashioned.

BLACK TOT RUM, £39.95

Black Tot Day, 31 July 1970, was so called because it was the last day that the Royal

Navy issued sailors a daily ration of rum, known as the "daily tot". Launched in 2019 by Elixir Distillers, Black Tot Rum is a modern celebration of the more than three century-long tradition of British naval rum, playing with its core components to make a modern and versatile blend. Comprising pot and column still rums from Guyana, Barbados and Jamaica, Black Tot's gratifyingly complex flavours run from liquorice to overripe bananas. **The serve:** In your hot chocolate on Christmas morning.

MOUNT GAY POT STILL RUM, £115

This is the second release in Mount Gay's Master Blender Collection, and the first from newly appointed master blender Trudiann Branker. Since at least 1703 Mount Gay has made rum using copper pot stills. A column still was introduced in the early 20th century, but this release is intended to demonstrate the range and complexity of flavours that can be produced using the distillery's double retort pot stills, and the results are suitably impressive. The liquid was barrelled in American whiskey casks in 2009 and bottled at cask strength. **The serve:** In a tumbler with one massive ice cube.

WILDCARDS

DON JULIO 1942 TEQUILA, £125

Don Julio 1942 is a double distilled tequila from the highlands of Jalisco. Aged in ex-bourbon barrels for two and a half years, it is technically categorised as an añejo. The name "1942" commemorates the year in which the brand's founder, the then 17-year-

old Julio González-Frausto Estrada, distilled his first tequila. This liquid tribute has the rich caramel taste of roasted agave and hints of chocolate, with a warm oaky finish. **The serve:** On the rocks, as a post-Christmas dinner digestif.

HAKU VODKA, £31.95

Haku is a vodka made by Suntory, with the same precision and subtlety it brings to the production of whisky. The name "haku" comes from "hakumai", meaning "white rice" – the grain from which the drink is made. Bamboo charcoal filtration results in an exceptionally smooth vodka and the taste is redolent of sake. **The serve:** A Bloody Mary-inspired shot of Haku with good slug of kimchi juice, some wasabi, and a sprinkling of shichimi togarashi (Japanese seven spice) is the hair of the dog that will be your best friend if you've been too merry this holiday season.

RÉMY MARTIN XO COGNAC, £143

An outstanding Cognac, Rémy Martin XO is comprised of over 400 eaux-de-vie, mostly from the Grande Champagne region, famed for its chalky soils which produce some of the best grapes for making brandy. "XO" stands for "extra old", which means that the youngest spirits in the bottle are six years old, but some may be much older. With a scent of jasmine, and a fruity, nutty, umami taste, this is opulence in a bottle. **The serve:** Rémy Martin XO and Parmigiano-Reggiano is the upgrade you didn't know your Christmas Port and Stilton required. ■



MY LIFE IN
RESTAURANTS
MARK HIX

BARGE LIFE

Our resident chef on the trials and tribulations of life aboard his new home on the River Thames

Twelve weeks have passed since I gave up dry land for a house boat on the Thames. One of the first things you notice is how friendly your neighbours are – it's not like living on your typical London street where you never actually meet anyone. After a couple of weeks on the boat I knew the whole pier. Everybody is *so friendly* – anything you need, be it diesel, a cleaner or a bag of sugar, there's someone on-hand to sort you out.

Case in point: I had my little dinghy delivered from Dorset, which I planned to use for excursions up the river to explore fishing spots, pubs and restaurants. But on the day of delivery, I got a call from the truck driver saying he couldn't get his lorry down the road to the slipway.

The pair of us stood around scratching our heads for 15 minutes, with the driver saying he couldn't take it back to Dorset and me loath to just chuck it away. So I called one of my new water friends to ask his advice and 10 minutes later he turned up on his pushbike. His solution was for the three of us to drag it to the pier, which we did. It was a bit like the Two Ronnies trying to get a piano up the stairs but luckily the boat's made from fairly lightweight aluminium and it's been dragged up and down the beach a few times already, so after a few twists and turns over a narrow bridge we managed to get it into the water.

That evening I'd arranged a joint party with my neighbour across the pontoon. I'd been shooting and mushroom

picking, both of which were bang on season, so the guests had partridge and wild mushrooms, all cooked on my little four-ring Baby Belling cooker.

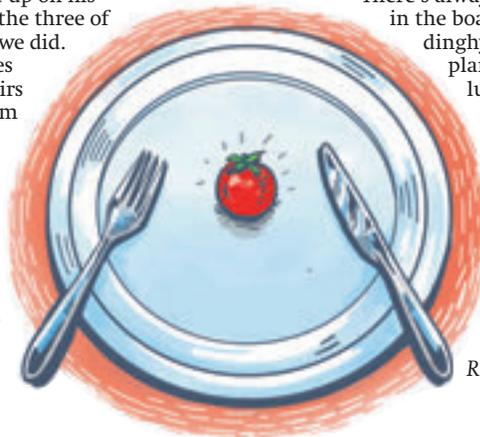
People always assume that cooking in such a confined space would be a problem, but professional chefs are used to working in cramped conditions. Necessity is the mother of invention, so when you only have a few feet to play with, you find yourself cleaning as you go along and being extra efficient. Anyway, I've seen London restaurants with smaller kitchens than my house boat, so I can't complain, and I'd rather a tiny kitchen than have to navigate around a dozen other chefs.

After the party I jumped ship with my old friend Nick Strangeway, with whom I opened Mark's bar in Soho, and made our way up the river and back down past the Thames barrier till gone 3am. After 11pm we didn't see a single other boat, which confirmed my suspicion that Londoners don't use the river enough. It's crazy really – it's the best way to see all the new and historic buildings along the Thames.

There's always a party of some sort going on in the boat community, and my little dinghy is often borrowed – the next plan is a little trip upstream for lunch at the River Cafe. A few weeks ago a part of the pier broke so it was even used as an emergency craft to ferry residents to safety.

I love this strange new life of mine. I've even got used to the water taxi giving me a daily 6.15 wake-up call.

● Mark's new book, *Hooked: Adventures in Angling & Eating*, is available for £20 from any Hix Restaurant



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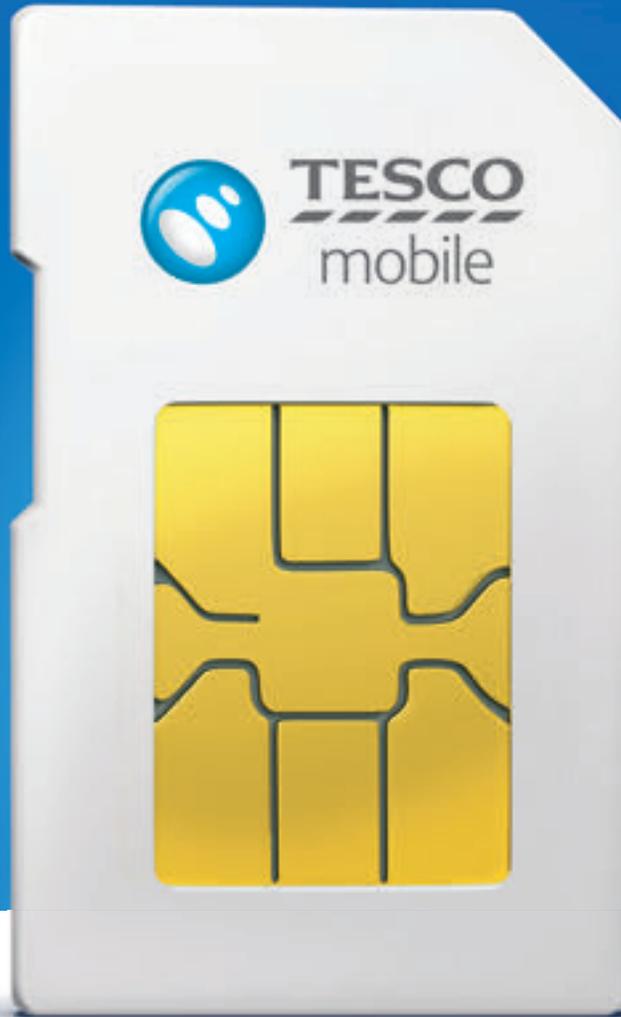
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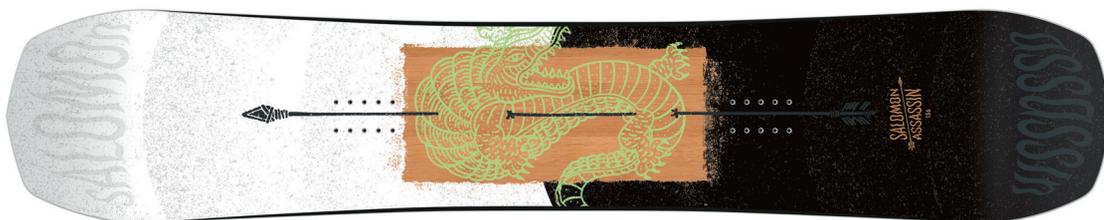
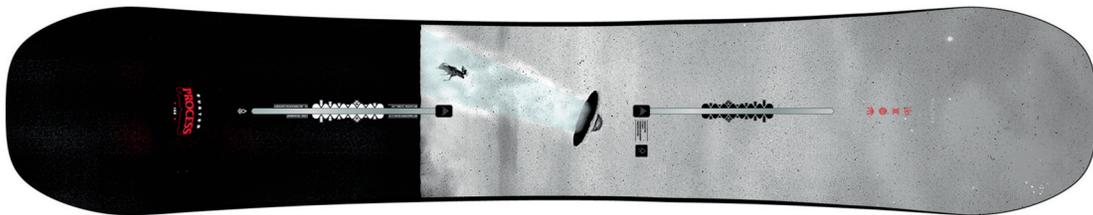
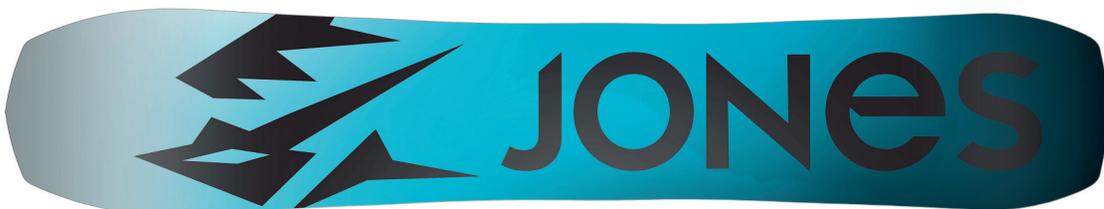
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LEICA SOFORT
 £275, STORE.LEICA-CAMERA.COM

Capture those priceless Christmas moments with this stunning, cherry red edition of the brilliant Leica SOFORT instant camera. The world rediscovered the lost art of instant photography a few years ago and this

is the most stylish way of joining the craze, giving you the ability to experiment with features including double and long exposures. It also comes with must-have features such as a self-timer and automatically adjusted exposure times, giving you more control over what and when you shoot. An instant classic.



SNOWBOARDS FROM ELLIS BRIGHAM
ELLIS-BRIGHAM.COM

If you're planning on catching some winter snow with your loved ones this year, why not surprise them with a brand new board? The Jones Men's Flagship (top, £569) is a killer combination of craftsmanship and style, with a

brand new shape and construction to celebrate the iconic board's 10th anniversary. The Burton Men's Process Flying V (middle, £390) is a slightly more affordable option that makes no compromises on build quality, while the Salomon Men's Assassin (bottom, £470) is another excellent option.

FORD HYBRID

ALL-NEW KUGA PLUG-IN HYBRID



Charging the future of business.

Drive your business further with the All-New Ford Kuga Plug-in Hybrid. A full charge of the electric powertrain gives you a range of 35 miles with zero emissions. Re-charge via mains power or let the 2.5 litre Duratec Petrol Engine take over. The sleek and stylish exterior is mirrored in the versatile interior which is filled with the latest technology, including pre-collision assist and intelligent speed assist.

Search All-New Ford Kuga PHEV to discover more.

CO₂

26g (NEDC)

BIK

£176 to £201 per month for 40%

COMBINED MPG

201.8 MPG *using the electric range



Go Further

Model shown is an All-New Kuga Plug-in Hybrid ST-Line X, Transmission 2.5 Duratec Petrol with CVT Automatic Transmission. Fuel Economy mpg (1/100km), Combined 201.8. CO₂ emissions 26g/km.

Figures shown are for comparability purposes only; they only compare fuel consumption and CO₂ figures with other cars tested to the same technical procedures. These figures may not reflect real life driving results, which will depend upon a number of factors including the accessories fitted (post-registration), variations in weather, driving styles and vehicle load. *There is a new test used for fuel consumption and CO₂ figures. The CO₂ figures shown, however, are based on the outgoing test cycle and will be used to calculate vehicle tax on first registration. BIK/P11D prices are based on published pricing as of 22.10.2019. Pricing is subject to change.



From left to right, starting on top row:

Huawei Watch GT 2

A GPS-enabled, classic looking smartwatch with a battery that won't leave you hanging. £179, consumer.huawei.com

Microsoft Surface Laptop 3

The new Windows 10 laptop from Microsoft is the device of choice for power users. From £899, microsoft.com

Microsoft Arc Mouse

Microsoft achieved the impossible when it designed this legitimately cool folding, portable mouse. £79, microsoft.com

Apple AirPods Pro

The best all-round ear buds we've tried. The AirPods Pro are a massive upgrade on the vanilla version, with a snug fit and excellent adaptive noise cancellation. £249, apple.com

Apple iPhone 11 Pro Max

Apple's flagship phones are designed to be the best on the market and this doesn't disappoint. It comes with the usual raft of improvements in speed and efficiency, and finally realises that dream of a whole day's use from a single charge. But the real point of difference is the incredible camera, the best we've ever experienced on a mobile device. From £1,149, apple.com



Bang & Olufsen H9i headphones

A beautiful pair of over-ear, noise-cancelling headphones that don't compromise on the sound quality we expect from B&O. We especially like them in festive spruce green. £450, bang-olufsen.com

Devialet Phantom Reactor

This compact speaker has unbelievable, room-filling sound and looks superb. From £990, devialet.com

Montblanc Summit 2 smartwatch

Swiss craftsmanship meets Silicon Valley tech in this luxury smartwatch powered by Google's Wear OS. £845, montblanc.com

Bang & Olufsen P6 Bluetooth Speaker

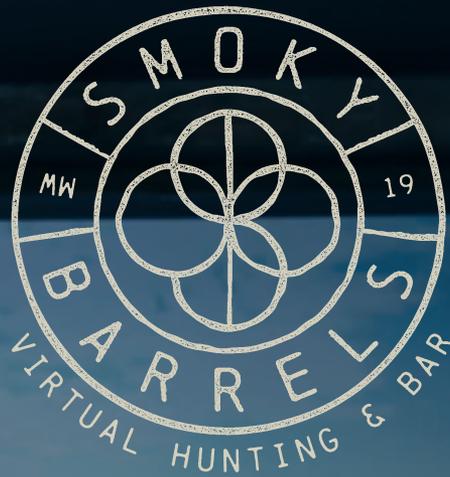
Another fine audio device from the great Danes, this time a portable Bluetooth speaker with a 16 hour lifespan. £350, bang-olufsen.com

Google Pixel 4 XL

With its striking orange design and an unbeatable low-light camera, the Pixel 4 XL is the finest Android phone on the market. £759, store.google.com

Sennheiser PXC 550-II headphones

Quite simply the best value for money noise cancelling cans in town, with exceptional quality and a great, hard-wearing design. £299, en-uk.sennheiser.com



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From left to right, starting on top shelf:

Absolut Elyx Copper Coupe Set
£33.99, absolutelyxboutique.com

Absolut Elyx Copper Cocktail Shaker
Part of a three-item cocktail gift set,
£65.99, absolutelyxboutique.com

Moore House pre-mixed cocktails
This innovative drinks brand takes the hassle
out of shaking cocktails, employing

mixologists to do the hard work so all you
have to do is pour and serve. Order your
negroni, espresso martini or manhattan from
£8.50 at moorehousecocktails.co.uk

Johnnie Walker Timorous Beasties
An elegant blended whisky in a stunning
painted bottle and presentation box.
£225, harrods.com

Glenfarclas 15 Year Old
£49.95, houseofmalt.co.uk

Maestro Dobel Humito
£43.95, masterofmalt.com

Barentsz Gin
£36.64, masterofmalt.com

J&B Rare
£19.15, masterofmalt.com

John Lewis Riya Bar Cart
Store all that booze on a lovely art deco bar.
£299, johnlewis.com

F.I.S.S.



Pommery
£39.99, majestic.co.uk

Pol Roger Reserve
£46, waitrosecellar.com

Nyetimber Classic Cuvée
£27, waitrosecellar.com

Chapel Down Sparkling Bacchus 2018
£19.99, grapebritannia.co.uk



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4

1. SWAROVSKI CHOKER

£209, SWAROVSKI.COM

The festive season is most definitely a time to leave restraint at the door and embrace all-out opulence. And nothing says decadence quite like a fully set crystal choker. Rhodium plated and featuring a mix of green and clear stones, it's so fabulous you could wear it with your pyjamas and no one would presume you were anything other than properly attired.

2. THOMAS SABO STAR AND MOON EARRINGS

£198, THOMASSABO.COM

Mismatched earrings have been seen on every catwalk and red carpet this year. However, if a total contrast makes you

anxious, these Thomas Sabo earrings are ideal. The moon and star complement rather than conflict, while the rose gold vermeil will warm up pale winter skin.

3. CARTIER CLASH DE CARTIER RING

£1,820, CARTIER.CO.UK

With its luxe punk sensibilities this gorgeous ring from Cartier would make the ultimate present for someone who doesn't like their jewellery too feminine. The pastel prettiness of the rose gold is offset by the strong geometric lines of the design. That said, it might be risky putting a small red box under the tree if you're not planning to ask a certain question... Still, we can't imagine anyone being *too* disappointed with one of these.

4. HIRSH BLUE DIAMOND SNOWFLAKE PENDANT

£POA, HIRSHLONDON.COM

It may not be a white Christmas, but this snowflake is made from a different kind of ice. Like the frozen fractals it imitates, each pendant has a unique design, one that Hirsh changes every year, and this blue version is the brand's most ambitious yet.

5. HARRY WINSTON GATES BRACELET

£POA, HARRYWINSTON.COM

When Harry Winston was designing his New York Salon on Fifth Avenue, he wanted to incorporate a rosette – a symbol in many cultures of optimism, opportunity and good fortune – into the gilded iron gate at its entrance. That rosette motif adorns this



beautiful bracelet making it the perfect gift to give as one year ends and the promise of the next begins.

6. FABERGE ROCOCO PAVÉ DIAMOND EARRINGS

£2,760, FABERGE.COM

Chandeliers and shoulder sweepers may have dominated the fashion pages this year, but there's something to be said for a bit of subtle sparkle. These exquisitely set studs from Faberge have just enough of a diamond count to catch the eye. After all, precious stones are made to be noticed.

7. CHANEL COMETE PERLES EARRING

£7,800, CHANEL.COM

If you're too squeamish to embrace the

"curated pierced-ear trend" – lots of little piercings, basically – just invest in this one statement piece from Chanel. An incredible jumble of cultured pearls and diamonds, it snakes dramatically up the ear like the shooting star that inspired it. A must-have New Year's Eve accessory.

8. FOPE EKA ANNIVERSARIO BRACELET

FROM £3,000, FOPE.COM

There really is nothing like a Fope Eka bracelet. It is the epitome of everyday luxury (Fope doesn't deal in anything other than precious metals) and is made using the brand's unique Flex'It system. This signature mesh is made stretchable thanks to tiny gold springs hidden between each

link. Add to that the fact that every Flex'It bracelet is flexed 30,000 times before it leaves the Vicenza workshop and you've got a piece that's for a lifetime. Not just Christmas.

9. TIFFANY & CO PAPER FLOWERS DIAMOND OPEN FLOWER EARRINGS

£3,725, TIFFANY.CO.UK

If putting a Cartier box under the tree is risky, then Tiffany is even more dangerous. However, if you both know where you're at marriage-wise then these earrings from the recent Reed Krakoff-designed collection are exquisite. To make the shapes, the creative team cut up literal paper flowers, whose delicacy they then captured in precious metal.

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KEEPING WATCH

Who wouldn't want to find one of this horological dozen in their stocking this Christmas, by **LAURA MCCREDDIE-DOAK**

1. ROLEX DAY-DATE 36, £26,600

There are myriad steel options available but it's as if this Rolex were made for Christmas. It's got a pine-green dial, enough gold to make a Wise Man happy and diamonds, because they make everything feel more festive.

2. TUDOR BLACK BAY S&G 32, £2,960

If you thought Black Bays were all chunky tool watches, then this will make you think again. It still has all the technical functions of its big brothers – 150m water resistance, automatic movement and screw-down crown – just wrapped up in a more petite, champagne-dialled 32mm frame. Because the best things always come in small sizes.

3. PATEK PHILIPPE REF. 5212A CALATRAVA WEEKLY CALENDAR, £25,610

This is the Patek for anyone who thinks the Swiss marque is a little too traditional. Everything about it suggests a more loosened-tie approach from the free-form typography that looks hand-written to the steel case – the brand hasn't made a steel Calatrava since 2017. It's your ultimate everyday wearer.

4. GLASHUTTE ORIGINAL SIXTIES, £5,400

Glashutte's colourful "Annual" edition of its Sixties style gets an eye-catching makeover with this bold orange dial. The "Annual" in the name refers to the fact that this beauty will only be available in 2019. If you want one, you've got just a few short weeks to buy.

5. CHRISTOPHER WARD C65 ANTHROPOCENE, £995

Taking its name from a new Scottish opera with an ecological message (one that takes place in the frozen Arctic), this diving watch also has a charitable angle, with five per cent of proceeds going to an environmental charity. It looks good and *does* good too.

6. LONGINES HERITAGE CLASSIC, £1,760

Longines ended 2019 on a high with this gorgeous slice of 1930s inspired cool. It's a checklist of everything you might want in a watch right now from the vintage stylings to 38.5mm dials. No one will be sad to see this under the Christmas tree.

7. JAEGER-LECOULTRE REVERSO TRIBUTE SMALL SECONDS, £7,100

There's a reason the Reverso has been in Jaeger's collection since 1931: it remains one of the most iconic and desirable designs around. For 2019, it has been decked out in this lovely burgundy livery. And very Christmassy it is too.

8. RADO TRUE THINLINE LES COULEURS LE CORBUSIER SUNSHINE YELLOW, £1,780

It's bright, colourful and a shade from a palette that spawned an entire philosophy of colour from one of the modern era's most celebrated architects and designers, Le Corbusier. It's basically a 39mm conversation starter.

9. BELL & ROSS BR05, £3,990

If those other notable steel sports styles are a little out of budget, this new Bell & Ross hits the sweet spot. It's impossible not to love everything about it from the slinky bracelet to the blue dial. Which is obviously the only acceptable colour dial for a sporty steel number.

10. MAURICE LACROIX AIKON MERCURY, £6,600

This looks like a normal watch when you're just looking at the time, but move your wrist and the hands abandon their chronometric duty and go into a free-form spin. Get it upright and the hands start behaving normally again. Apparently, this is all the work of a double-snail cam. Or magic elves. Definitely elves.

11. BREMONT BROADSWORD, £2,595

Given its military connections, Bremont being announced as the official luxury watch partner of the Ministry of Defence this year, seemed like an obvious match. And those on civvy street get to own the results too, like this Broadsword designed, obviously, for the Army.

12. OMEGA CONSTELLATION, £8,260

Dainty, delicate and with an aventurine dial that looks like a star-lit sky, this is the ideal watch to buy if you're looking to make a horologically themed Christmas Day proposal. Actually, it's the perfect gift for the woman you love even if you're not planning to pop the question.

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TOM CAVE
CELLAR PLAN
MANAGER, BERRY
BROS. & RUDD

Provided the temptation to overindulge on Christmas Eve has been avoided, a late morning glass of Pol Roger's excellent non-vintage Champagne (once known and loved as "White Foil") is called for – ideally from magnum and stock

bought two to three years prior, to lend that little extra age.

Smoked salmon preempts lunch (it does have to be lunch, and not dinner, on the day, for me) and here I'll be looking at Riesling, specifically something rich and enveloping like Domaine André Ostertag's wonderful Alsace wines or perhaps a more austere, Germanic style such as those from Heymann-Löwenstein, depending on the mood.

Then it's on to the dining room, and to accompany the turkey (any other bird just won't do) and all the trimmings, one needs a red solid enough to cope with sprouts, bread sauce, stuffing and the inevitable party-popper detritus sure to be found floating on top by the close of lunch. If we're a large party and all ages, then a sound, solid red like Rhône producer Stéphane Ogier's superb L' me Soeur Seyssuel – a "lowly" Vin de Pays that punches well above its weight – will cope with anything thrown at it. In a similar vein, and this is a new discovery for me, the freshness and sheer delight in Domaines Lupier's El Terroir – a terrific Garnacha from old vines in the high tops of Navarra – would be a very suitable alternative.

If we're fewer, and thus a wine is called for that warrants a little more thought, perhaps I would waver from the usual Rhône-style wine and plump for something utterly traditional and satisfying. A bottle such as 2014 Château Latour-Martillac will keep even those most ardent traditionalists happy, and avoiding confrontation is, after all, much of what Christmas Day is all about.

There's really little point in wracking one's brain for a wine to accompany Christmas pudding but if one is needed then Lustau's striking East India Solera Sherry will prove popular with all, not least the spinster aunts. In fact, Sherry deserves another mention here: a neat, 50cl bottle of any of Lustau's excellent exemplars secreted away for the occasional furtive nip is an essential part of combating Christmas Day.

Which leads us nicely onto Port and, ideally, a fine vintage from the Douro – 1983, '85 '94 will all appeal and have the necessary maturity to make for a supremely enjoyable accompaniment to your cheeseboard. Decanted on Christmas morning, any Port not consumed by day's end will taste even better at the Boxing Day meet.

Cold cuts at supper cry out for a refreshing, invigorating cru Beaujolais; Alain Michaud's Brouilly is a personal favourite. The day closes with a tot of luscious Armagnac, perhaps, if there's the appetite, to accompany the first slice of the Christmas cake, and thoughts of how best to consume any leftovers.

● *City A.M. Club members will receive a complimentary case of wine when they invest £250 or more a month with Berry Bros. & Rudd; Find the perfect wines for your Christmas feast at bbr.com*



Clockwise from left: The Wolf of Wall Street; The Lion King; Wicked; The Nutcracker. Just some of the shows Club members can nab tickets for



EXPLORE THE STAGE OVER THE FESTIVE BREAK

Your Club membership is your ticket to the West End. Access to London's best musicals and plays gets you closer to the stage than ever.

BREAK A LEG, COURTESY OF ATG

Founded in 1992, the Ambassador Theatre Group is the world's number one live theatre company, with almost 50 venues across Britain, the United States and Germany. To make sure you've always got the best seats in the house, ATG is now offering City A.M. Club members unbridled access to some of the West End's biggest and best shows. Club members enjoy exclusive deals unavailable

anywhere else, as well as a range of VIP perks such as seat upgrades and pre-sales for the most in-demand musicals and plays. You need never race to grab the last tickets to a sold-out performance again. Discover the amazing new shows that audiences are raving about, such as the immersive Wolf of Wall Street experience and the stand-up comedy of best-selling author Adam Kay, or enjoy the classics of the stage like Wicked

and The Lion King. And what better way to end a day of Christmas markets, mulled wine and ice skating than a pair of tickets to see The Nutcracker? City A.M. Club members also enjoy preferential rates on venue and room hire at nine iconic West End venues, ranging from the intimate Duke of York's and Harold Pinter Theatre to the impressive Apollo Victoria and Lyceum Theatres.

● For more information visit club.cityam.com



PLANNING ON POPPING THE QUESTION? JOIN THE CLUB

NIKOLAY PIRIANKOV
CEO & CO-FOUNDER OF TAYLOR & HART

Picking a diamond engagement ring can be difficult. How many potential marriages never had a chance to blossom because one partner found the ring-buying process a little too daunting? So here's some insider knowledge you might consider if you're planning on asking a certain question over the coming months.

WHAT ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT THINGS TO CONSIDER?

First, allow yourself a couple of months before you want to propose to avoid rushing the process. This is one of the most important jewellery purchases in your life, so take the time to do your research on what your partner will like.

Before choosing your diamond, you must consider the four Cs of diamond quality: cut, clarity, colour and carat weight. While all four are important, we suggest that clarity, cut and colour suit your preferences first, before considering carat weight, based on your remaining budget. Of course, for lovers of the bold and bright, gemstone engagement rings featuring sapphires, rubies, emeralds or tourmalines are on-trend, offering a vibrant splash of colour, and a unique take on an otherwise traditional gift. We recommend 18ct white, yellow or rose gold and platinum for rings designed to be worn every day. Both 18ct gold and platinum are durable, with a glorious shine.

WHAT ABOUT CUSTOM RINGS?

This is a surprisingly easy and affordable process, in fact with the right jeweller, it can be more affordable than buying an off-the-shelf piece. Don't be afraid to consider customisation and really push boundaries. Using a custom service empowers you to take creative control of your engagement ring design. The spectrum of bespoke ranges from a small inscription or gemstone set on the inside of your band, to an entirely customised engraved pattern along the ring.

HOW TO KNOW WHAT THEY LIKE?

Nobody knows your partner better than you. The best inspiration of all is to look at the style of jewellery and clothing your partner already wears. Take into account what will suit their skin tone and daily lifestyle. For example, if your partner works with their hands, the metal and setting should reflect this to avoid damage to the ring. Also, avoid going with a theme, it's wiser to choose something tasteful and classic that will stand the test of time.

● City A.M. Club members will receive five per cent off their first order up to a maximum saving of £200. Go to club.cityam.com for more information; Browse the collection at taylorandhart.com



Top: Design your own ring with the help of the experts at Taylor & Hart; **Main:** The options for your perfect ring are endless



DIAMANTE PALOMA

The lesser-known Paloma is a true favourite down in Mexico – the birthplace of Maestro Dobel, and of course, Tequila. Meaning ‘Dove’, this cocktail is naturally uplifting and for years has been a staple at gatherings and celebrations. The long, refreshing nature of this drink will mean you and your closest friends can keep Christmas Eve lasting just that much longer – this updated recipe was intended to be shared.

Ingredients

- 50ml Maestro Dobel Humito
- 3 dashes Angostura Bitters
- 1 tspn agave nectar

Method

Add all ingredients into glass & stir for 10 seconds to combine. Cut a medium length of peel from a fresh Orange, spray the oils over the drink and place in cocktail. Serve immediately.

Glassware

Highball glass with cubed ice

CELEBRATE IN STYLE WITH THESE TEQUILA COCKTAILS

Cocktail king **OLI PERGL**, tequila educator at Maestro Dobel, suggests three alternative festive cocktails. City A.M. Club members can enjoy them for free at locations around town – log on to club.cityam.com for more information

HUMITO OLD FASHIONED

Since the 19th century the Old Fashioned has been dominated by bourbon and other whiskies – a short, stirred cocktail made with your choice of spirit, bitters and orange. This year we wanted to try something new, and twisted the classic recipe with some smoky tequila – Maestro Dobel Humito. The ideal drink to serve to the family to keep everyone happy after Christmas dinner.

Ingredients

- 50ml Maestro Dobel Humito
- 3 dashes Angostura Bitters
- 1 tspn agave nectar

Method

Add all ingredients into glass & stir for 10 seconds to combine. Cut a medium length of peel from a fresh Orange, spray the oils over the drink and place in cocktail. Serve immediately.

Glassware

Rocks glass with cubed ice



BLACK DIAMOND MARGARITA

The perfect tippie to get the Christmas party started, the ever-popular margarita. Since US Prohibition in the 1920s and early 30s, people have been searching for the perfect tequila to mix into this classic recipe and this time we’re passing the baton on to Maestro Dobel Diamante. What better way to sign-off for the year than with the ultimate feel-good cocktail?

Ingredients

- 50ml Maestro Dobel Diamante Tequila
- 25ml freshly-squeezed lime juice
- 15ml Agave Nectar

Method

Rim glass with lime juice and black lava salt. Add all ingredients into a cocktail shaker with ice – shake and fine-strain into glass. Garnish with a lime wedge on the rim.

Glassware

Rocks glass or tumbler





TUDOR

**#BORN
TODARE**

DAVID BECKHAM
**BLACK BAY
CHRONO S&G**



WATCHES



STAR SPANGLLED

RAYMOND WEIL FREELANCER JIMI HENDRIX

For Jimi Hendrix diehards all along the watch(tower), here is plenty of reason to get excited. Following in the steps of David Bowie and The Beatles, the guitar legend of the 60s now has a Raymond Weil Freelancer tribute of his own, with papers signed personally by sister, Janie Hendrix.

The 500-piece chronograph (£2,795) is a subtle nod to Hendrix's notorious Woodstock performance 50 years ago, where he tortured the Star-Spangled Banner on his white Stratocaster in protest of Vietnam.

During his performance, Hendrix wore a now-iconic Aztec-print guitar strap slung across a bead-tassled white jacket, both of which provide inspiration for the watch's dial pattern, colouration and presentation box. Its indexes and concentric grooves pick up on his Fender's pickups and strings, while the caseback comes emblazoned with the star's 'Authentic Hendrix' legacy logo. Look closer still, and the logarithmic tachymetre scale around the circumference features Hendrix's mantra, "Music is my religion". For watch and rock fans alike, this strikes plenty of chords.

WHAT'S TICKING?

From the latest celebration of James Bond to the newest store on New Bond Street, we keep you in the horological loop



FINE TIME TO DIVE

Shooting has finally wrapped on Bond 25, AKA No Time to Die, which means the the hype building up to April's opening weekend starts here. But not *here*; the Omega Seamaster Diver 300M James Bond Limited Edition Set instead celebrates the 50th anniversary of On Her Majesty's Secret Service, with a brace of yellow-gold and steel watches in a Globe-Trotter case. (Yes, George Lazenby wore a Rolex in the film, but Q has issued an Omega since Pierce Brosnan took the reins in 1995, so shush). As well as the opening-credits gun rifling of the dial, closer examination of the 257-piece special reveals Commander Bond's family coat of arms at 12 o'clock and a '7' date window in the logo's typeface.

JUST IN THE NIB OF TIME

It was only a matter of time (so to speak). For almost 100 years, Caran d'Ache has been crafting every child's dream stocking gift to the exacting standards of 'Swiss Made', next-door to the finest watchmakers in the world. And while it might not be a tin of fresh colouring pencils arranged in a vivid rainbow, to horolophiles the new 'Timegraph' bears the same excitement as turning over a fine watch and discovering a clear caseback. Thanks to a collab' with Le Temps Manufacture up in the Jura Mountains, it is the first fountain pen to incorporate a visible mechanical movement, complete with time display.

NEW HOUSE RULES

Bricks-and-mortar luxury retail remains in restless flux, and bright vitrines and brocade trim just won't cut it anymore. If a client wishes to visit, they expect an immersive expansion of the website's basic transactional offering, with Insta-worthy photo-opps besides. For its standalone UK debut, one of Switzerland's finest has spurned the shop format altogether, cutting the ribbon on a "home away from home" five-star suite of a space: the Audemars Piguet House, overlooking New Bond Street. Boasting a pro' kitchen, bar and a lounge with self-playing Steinway



Clockwise from top left: The new Omega Seamaster Diver 300M James Bond Limited Edition Set to celebrate the 50th anniversary of On Her Majesty's Secret Service; Greubel Forsey's Hand Made 1, a mind-boggling feat of engineering; The new Audemars Piguet House; Caran d'Ache's clock pen, a collaboration with Le Temps Manufacture

Spirio, "there's no obligation to buy a watch," says CEO François-Henry Bennahmias, "you can take a seat, relax and chill out."

THE HAND-MADE TALE

Believe it or not, £700,000 seems like a bargain when you finally get your head around the sheer scale of human endeavour that's gone into Greubel Forsey's Hand Made 1. The 'collector's collector's' watchmaker has gone above and beyond its usual micro-mechanical acrobatics, crafting a mind-bending 95 per cent of this timepiece – including the hairspring – with just hand-operated lathes, jig borers, ovens and files. Eschewing automated machinery entirely, it singlehandedly resurrects every pre-industrial-age craft – dangerously close to extinction today – over the course of 6,000 hours (or three years) of work. Gruebel Forsey has yet to comment on whether they also worked by candlelight.

COMPLIMENTARY GIFT WITH PURCHASE

Receive a free watch roll with any watch purchase over £1,000,
or a free watchwinder if you spend over £2,000*
when you shop online or in our stores



*Subject to availability. Exclusions apply.
See terms and conditions instore or online for details.



WATCHES OF
SWITZERLAND
SINCE 1924

Mappin & Webb
LONDON

GOLDSMITHS
SINCE 1778



ADVENTURE TIME

Forget crampons or oxygen tanks – what every hardbitten explorer has in common is a mechanical wristwatch.

Words: **ALEX DOAK**

There's an old motoring adage that goes, "win on Sunday, sell on Monday." In other words, as crippling expensive and vainglorious as motorsport can be, prove yourself successful on a race weekend (not to mention thrillingly glamorous) and you have no better billboard for the sporty road-goers populating your forecourt.

It's why Enzo Ferrari begrudgingly started making sports cars in the '50s (ploughing all the cash back into racing). It's also why Ferruccio Lamborghini confused everyone by not going into motorsport at all, beyond supplying engines to other teams.

But, for the purpose of these pages, "win Sunday, sell Monday" is a handy analogy for what we know as the 'sports watch'. Most professional sportspeople don't ever wear a watch, except when it's time to strap on the sponsor and lift a trophy, but the 'sports' we're talking are more 'endeavours' – endeavours that demand a close eye on the time, no-nonsense ruggedness and a failsafe analogue backup.

Mountaineering, diving, space travel... every quartermaster of every field of exploration has always had 'Watch. Wrist. Waterproof.' scrawled onto their procurement list. And, like the Maseratis, Aston Martins and Mercedes of this world, Switzerland's

manufacturers waste little opportunity planting their own chequered flag after the event.

"Summit a peak, sell next week," if you like.

Only, it turns out even better for watch fans than proud new owners of an AMG coupé. Because what you're buying into is the actual Formula 1 car. Whatever the parameters of the world's most extreme adventurers, a watch that's 'custom-built' or 'tuned' doesn't come into it – Switzerland has already engineered it and marketed to Joe Bloggs, built beyond anyone's needs, even an alpinist or astronaut.

Take 2019's biggest horological anniversary, the Omega Speedmaster, which bounded about the lunar surface 50 years ago strapped to Buzz Aldrin. It was one of the few non-bespoke items on-board Apollo 11, and it remains standard-issue NASA kit – a manual-winding mechanical stopwatch, barely tweaked since. It was conspicuously *not* strapped to Neil Armstrong because his 'Speedie' was being used by Michael Collins as the ship's clock. The very same 'clock' was used by Jack Swigert to time the stricken Apollo 13 module's re-entry to the Earth's atmosphere in 1970.

All that capability and baked-in derring-do can be yours for less than £5,000 from your local Goldsmiths.

Which isn't to say Switzerland (or England, France or Germany for that matter) has been toiling away all these centuries without real-world impetus. Truth is,



Right: Vacheron Constantin's Cory Richards, one of around two per cent of people to climb Everest without additional oxygen; **Above left:** The crew of the Trieste, the first team to explore the bottom of the Mariana Trench in 1960; **Above right:** Nims Purja, who climbed all fourteen of the Earth's 8,000-metre-plus peaks in just over six months, wearing his trusty Bremont S300

modern watchmaking owes everything to human exploration. The advent of transatlantic travel, high-speed public transport and telecommunications all drove the world's watchmakers to be more precise, more portable, and more reliable.

Washington's International Meridian Conference decided to chop the Earth into 24 segments back in 1884, each running an hour ahead of its westerly neighbour; America alone was divided into four time-zones. With trans-continental railroads on the rise, a standard time system became increasingly necessary – a measure that took a tragedy of mis-timing to cement. The Kipton Disaster of 1891, 25 miles from Cleveland, saw one train engineer's watch stop for four minutes, leading him to think he had seven minutes in hand rather than three, before he had to let the fast mail train pass. Both trains' engineers and the postal cars' nine clerks were killed in the collision. The General Superintendent of Lake Shore Lines quickly appointed Ohio jeweller Webster C Ball as Chief Inspector for the lines, whose fortnightly checks on the watches worn by all railroad workers gave rise to the expression 'on the ball'.

Over a century before the advent of long-distance rail travel, watchmakers faced an even greater challenge: creating timekeepers accurate and robust enough to be taken aboard long ocean voyages and

used to determine longitudinal position, relative to a time reference back at port. So many lives had been lost at sea through mis-navigation that the British government even set up a Board of Longitude and a £20,000 prize – eventually won by John Harrison with his 'H4' watch, still ticking away at the Greenwich Observatory. The ensuing stream of London-based 'chronometer-makers' ensured Britannia ruled the waves well into the 19th century.

Today, miniaturised and spiked with ever-more-robust alloys, a finely crafted wristwatch is a trusty instrument for every sort of explorer. It can be used to monitor sub-aqua oxygen usage with a glance at the bezel; time anything else with a simple push of a chronograph's button; it can even double as a rudimentary compass when the GPS drops out. And while you might think a luxuriously priced mechanical timepiece over a cheaper, more-precise quartz watch is flashy frippery for the sake of it, remember that battery-powered electronics simply grind to halt in sub-zero conditions.

This fact has led a veritable base camp of explorers to adopt Henley-on-Thames' Bremont as their horological Tenzing Norgay. (Though, for the record, Tenzing Norgay wore Rolex when he summited Everest in 1953, defining the parameters for the its new 'Explorer' in the process.) Ben Saunders chose one of ►



Above: The Rolex Deep Sea Special (1960) and Rolex Deepsea Challenge (2012);
 Right: Cory Richards' Vacheron Constantin Overseas Dual Time



► Bremont's reinforced-steel, precision 'chronometers' for his solo Antarctic expedition back in 2014. Half-man-half-bear Ross Edgley wore a Bremont S2000 diving watch throughout his 2,000-mile swim around Great Britain last year.

And topping them all, you now have newly crowned mountaineering superhero Nirmal 'Nims' Purja – fresh from his multi-record-smashing 'Bremont Project Possible', summiting all fourteen of the Earth's 8,000-metre-plus peaks in just over six months. The previous record was seven years. And strapped to his wrist throughout, an S300 with suitably snow-white dial.

The modern incarnation of Webster Ball's US railroad enterprise is now Swiss, but no less enterprising. It fosters its own 'Explorer's Club' and yet another plucky Brit is the latest to join its pantheon: Ash Dykes.

The first to walk across Mongolia solo and unsupported in 2014, Dykes has now completed 'Mission Yangtze', making him the first to walk the entire 4,000 miles of the Yangtze River. His journey started with the freezing temperatures of the Jianguenduru Glacier on the Tibetan Plateau and brought him to the more tropical environment of its delta near Shanghai. Encounters with native inhabitants kept him buoyed when it mattered, but in his own words, his most consistent, trusty companion was on his arm the whole time – ticking with its own heartbeat.

"Most days are long," he recounts. "If you're lucky, you come across the locals who are so friendly and make all the difference

to the expedition being enjoyable or not. But often I'm alone... I'm tired, cold and all I want are my tent and my sleeping bag. But the focus of the task keeps me disciplined and thankfully my Ball Engineer II Magneto S keeps my mind on the game, day and night. I have a routine, a time to smash out distance, a time to rest and recover, and my Magneto centres that; it keeps me in check."

With Earth now thoroughly mapped out it's easy to be cynical about today's notion of adventure. Especially given that infamous photo taken in May, showing the human traffic jam queuing for Everest's summit (taken by Bremont's own Nims after ticking off number four of his 14). But with climate change now upgraded to a climate crisis, the modern explorer is more crucial than ever. Less explorer and more environmental ambassador, speaking with wonder, and concern, from the front line.

Vacheron Constantin is Switzerland's longest-running watchmaker – one of the very finest and probably the last you'd consider mentioning alongside carabiners and Kendall mint cakes (unless that list also includes 'thermal tux'). But its latest recruit is Cory Richards, the Colorado teen slacker turned National Geographic photographic wunderkind, and a highly accomplished alpinist in his own right. He's a member of the two percent who have summited Everest without oxygen. Equipped with his own custom Overseas Dual Time in tough, lightweight titanium, Richards is a true unique, with infectious personality and rare humility.

In his own words, his Dual Time's secondary 'home time' display is, "a constant reminder to not risk too much, but also to celebrate all those in my life that have brought me to this moment.

"It's important for me to know what time it is back home," he continues, "but perhaps even more important is to know that the world in which I'm currently working is one of two. To tell meaningful stories, it's important that I keep going off the grid to discover important issues and impacts."

Environmentally, this year's other revelation came from the other end of the altitude spectrum – the bottom of the Mariana Trench, 10,928 metres below the surface of the ocean. Ex-naval commander-turned-financial tycoon Victor Vescovo used sonar imagery to determine the deepest point of the Pacific, only to discover, through the porthole of his purpose-built submersible, discarded bits of plastic.

Rolex and its own Mariana aquanaut, the film director James Cameron are allegedly contesting the veracity of Vescovo's depth, claiming their own 'DeepSea Challenge' of 2012 still has rightful claim to the records books. At the very least, Rolex will always have 'first there' bragging rights thanks to its sponsorship of Swiss oceanographer Jacques Piccard's 1960 descent aboard Trieste.

Either way, the prototype watches strapped to the outside of Piccard, Cameron and Vescovo's respective crafts – all still ticking upon re-surface despite the bone-crushing pressures – means we can perhaps coin a new adage: "Plumb on Sunday, sell on Monday". ■



Above: Ash Dykes as he became the first person to walk the entire 4,000 miles of the Yangtze River, wearing a Ball Engineer II Magneto S; This image: Nims Purja unveils the Bremont flag after summiting another peak





WOMEN'S HOUR

LAURA MCCREDDIE-DOAK

GET YOUR XMAS PARTY LOOK RIGHT

Forget cheap one-nighter dresses – invest in a special timepiece to stand out amongst the crowd

It's around this time of year that the streets of London are traditionally strewn with cheap sequins, the glittery relics of £20 dresses bought for office Christmas parties. However, a cursory flick through fashion magazines suggests this year might be different. Conversations around sustainability have made buying a one-nighter seem gauche and sequins are incredibly bad for the environment. And what's more, suits, jumpsuits and going-out tracksuit bottoms in voluminous silk à la Gucci are far more relevant than the 'Poundland bauble' look.

Suiting on the red carpet is nothing new – Jane Fonda accepted her Oscar for Kluge in an all-black YSL number way back in 1972 – but 2019 is the year more masculine styles filtered down to the mainstream.

This also changes what you can wear on your wrist. Super sparkly and ultra dainty won't cut it when you're channelling Kristen Stewart. You need something more dynamic, a watch that challenges the approved codes of what should be worn when the invitation says "cocktail".

The first port of call for those looking for an understated, gender-fluid yet elegant vibe is Patek Philippe, and while it's easy to default to the Calatrava, the Ellipse is the smart choice.

First unveiled in 1968, the case – neither circle, oval or rectangle – was allegedly based on the principles of the Golden Ratio, a divine proportion that equates to 1/1.6181 which is seen in everything from mathematics to nature. That theory, however, has since been debunked: apparently it was based on the shape of a US highway junction as seen from an airplane. Whatever its origins, it's everything you want from an after-dark companion – discrete but unusual enough to be a conversation starter.

If you want something a little more flamboyant, Rolex's Day-Date 36 is sure to get people talking, with its sumptuous green dial and sparkly indices.

For something in between those sartorial poles, a retro-chic Tudor Style should fit the bill. The steel-and-gold case and bracelet keep things streamlined, while the deliciously decadent burgundy dial adds a pop of festive colour.

Of course, if you can't throw off convention entirely then there's always a Fope Flex'it. Its signature super-flexible spring-linked strap and white dial lend a sporty flavour but the white gold case and diamonds on the bracelet are pure traditional cocktail. So there you have it: you can look chic this festive season without leaving a trail of sequins in your wake.

● Laura is one of the country's leading experts in women's watches and jewellery





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FERRARI TAKES NO PRISONERS

The ferrari Portofino may conjure images of antipasti on the Riviera, but it's equally adept at negotiating the winding roads of Portmeirion, home of 60s icon *The Prisoner*, finds **ADAM HAY-NICHOLLS**



The Ferrari feels utterly at home in the rolling Welsh hills

Cars should have proper names. Monikers that describe either the exterior style or power within. The Triumph Spitfire was a good name. So was the Volkswagen Beetle. I'm not sure the AMC Gremlin was terribly enticing, but better than naming it the C12/440-HSE. Ferrari has mixed form when it comes to christening things. Mostly, its cars are given a series of alphanumeric characters. And the less said about the Ferrari LaFerrari the better. But sometimes it hits the jackpot; soubriquets that conjure freedom propped up on stilettos.

'Testarossa' is Ferrari's magnum opus. 'Superfast' sounds rakishly cocksure. 'Portofino' instantly brings to mind an afternoon of antipasti and negroni sbagliatos on the Riviera; the air scented with honeysuckle, varnished speedboats bobbing in the brightly-hued harbour to a floating composition by Puccini.

Unlike Ford's efforts in the 1970s with the Capri and Cortina, the convertible Ferrari Portofino could genuinely be twinned with the town from which it takes its title. Top down on a summer's day, can one imagine a more suitable destination? Well, the trouble is we have a mileage restriction. Ligurian marinas are 900 miles away, plus I only have

24 hours to kill. Where can one get to within a couple of hundred miles of the M25 that boasts the Instagrammable appeal of an Italian fishing village?

Portmeirion is the answer. Squint your eyes, and ignore the grey skies. Behold, a Mediterranean vision emerging from the dark Welsh hills; a merry jumble of domes and turrets in ice-cream shades. Situated on the estuary of the River Dwyryd in the county of Gwynedd, North Wales, Portmeirion was the lifetime's work of eccentric landowner and self-taught architect Sir Clough Williams-Ellis CBE.

"How should I have not fallen for Portofino?" he asked of his design ►

► inspiration. “Indeed, its image remained with me as an almost perfect example of the man-made adornment and use of an exquisite site.”

Sir Clough was a bit odd, but he was a genius. He used theatrical stage set techniques to create optical illusions, and incorporated columns and sculptures from demolished buildings and bankrupt stately piles to make a fairytale bricolage of impish nostalgia. Such work became known as ‘Cloughing up’. It was, he called it, his “home for fallen houses”.

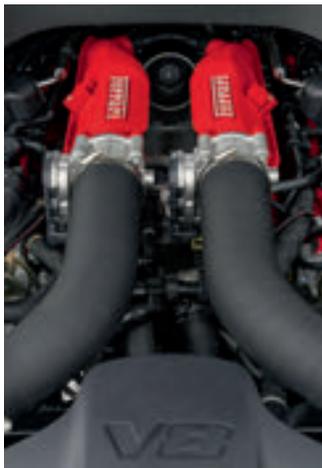
Its quirky architecture attracted Frank Lloyd Wright on holiday here in 1956. It stood in for Renaissance Italy in the 1976 series of Doctor Who. Many of Portmeirion’s colourful cottages, grottos, tiny castles and towers look Italianate, others Gothic, Palladian or Eastern European, and there are even Chinese influences. Between 1925 and his death in 1978, Williams-Ellis kept adding, making it more and more otherworldly. His face can be found on the many gargoyles that decorate the place.

Most famously, Portmeirion has been a place of pilgrimage for fans of the surreal spy-fi show *The Prisoner*, which was filmed here in 1967. Its star, Patrick McGoochan, had shot an episode of TV’s *Danger Man* a few years earlier and thought it would be the perfect location for ‘The Village’. His character, known only as ‘Number Six’, was a retired secret agent, incarcerated and interrogated by unknown forces in a mysterious yet enchanting coastal hamlet, which he speculated was on the wrong side of the Iron Curtain. Escapees were chased by meteorological balloons. What served as his character’s house in the countercultural series is now a Prisoner-themed gift shop, while an annual fan convention takes place in Portmeirion’s piazza. You can stay at White Horses, the humble 18th century fisherman’s cottage which the actor took for the year-long production.

Number Six drove a featherweight Lotus 7. The Ferrari Portofino is a rather more sophisticated roadster that proves every bit as rewarding on Snowdonia’s stunning roads. It’s lighter, pointier and prettier than its predecessor, the California. Inside, it smells like a wallet full of £500 notes. The A470 and the Llanberis Pass take one towards Portmeirion through emerald-walled forest tunnels, with plenty of opportunity to savour the 3.9 litre twin-turbo V8 that’s mounted in front of my feet and the seven-speed dual clutch transmission that races through the cogs at the flick of a finger. Sixty-two mph arrives in 3.5 seconds and it gallops on to 198mph.

The 591bhp engine is a work of art. And it’s a gateway drug. At £165,000, this is designed to be a ‘starter’ Ferrari; 70 per cent of people who buy this car are new to the marque. It looks sexy and it goes fast. But it’s also versatile and forgiving. There are only three settings on the Manettino dial; Comfort, Sport, and the one where all driver aids are turned off. If this is your first Ferrari, and your main motivations for buying it are the badge and the lissom retractable hard top, do not switch it to this. Not before writing a will. If, on the other





The Ferrari Portofino snakes around the candy-coloured Portmeirion estate, which was the setting for hit spy-fi TV show *The Prisoner*; star Patrick McGoochan is pictured above, beside the Portofino's V8 engine



hand, you enjoy getting its hind quarters out of shape, may I suggest you work a bit harder and buy the more expensive and more nuanced mid-engined F8 Tributo.

The Portofino is medium-cooked rump, while the F8 is pink fillet mignon. But the Portofino is still a brilliant car, with the added convenience of a big boot and decent fuel economy. If you're upgrading from an F-Type, 911 S or an AMG'd Merc, you won't be disappointed. But you may soon find yourself dreaming of something from Maranello's more hardcore range...

Nevertheless, the Portofino's razor-sharp throttle response is ideal for the Snowdonian blacktop. It combines mighty speed with impeccable manners. Driving a Ferrari should feel like a celebration of life, and owning a convertible Ferrari in the UK is all the more optimistic. When the weather is good, the joy is intense. "An architect has strange pleasures," Sir Clough wrote in 1924. "He will lie awake listening to the storm in the night and think how the rain is beating on his roofs, he will see the sun return and will think that it was for just such sunshine that his shadow-throwing mouldings were made."

One of Portmeirion's original buildings, which was adapted by Williams-Ellis rather than built from scratch, is a Victorian manor which he converted into the Hotel Portmeirion. There are 14 bedrooms above baroque and art deco drawing and dining rooms, destroyed by fire in 1981 but lovingly rebuilt. Forty-five other buildings and suites in the village are available to rent nightly as self-catering cottages. They promise, like the Ferrari, pure escapism.

The horseshoe of the estuary is fringed by mountain peaks, the highest being Snowdon, and upon these shores many bohemian parties took place from the 20s onwards. Princess Margaret brought her children to swim here. Some immortal artistic types also found inspiration. Noel Coward wrote *Blithe Spirit* in the Fountain suite in 1941, escaping the distracting din of the Blitz. George Bernard Shaw and HG Wells were early visitors. Bertrand Russell and Sir Kenneth Clark wrote here too. The Beatles' manager Brian Epstein was a regular guest, staying at Gate House and outfitting it with enormous built-in wardrobes to house his Savile Row suits. John Lennon and his half-sister came pre-Fab Four, while Paul McCartney came later and George Harrison celebrated his 50th birthday in the Watch House. Portmeirion has a trippy, psychedelic quality I imagine appealed to them. And while one thinks first of Lennon's gypsy caravan-painted Rolls-Royce Phantom V when one remembers the Beatles' motors, George was a committed Tifoso and John's very first car – get this – was an Azzurro Blue Ferrari 330GT.

Still, a Ferrari in Portmeirion is a surreal sight, and all the more suited for it. The Portofino is stirring attractive, and surely would have appealed to Portmeirion's creator, who described beauty as "that strange necessity". Sir Clough's motto must strike a note with Ferrari's Centro Stile design department: "Cherish the Past, Adorn the Present, Construct the Future". And take no prisoners: let that glorious V8 roar. ■

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TRAVEL

THREE VALLEYS

Sky-high skiing in France's largest Alpine resort – P66

UGANDA

How gorilla tourism upturned the lives of local tribes – P70

BANGKOK

Why the most visited city on the planet still has more to give – P74



MOXY CHELSEA, NEW YORK

The trend for micro-room, macro-amenity hotels may have originally been borne out of rising real estate costs, but that doesn't mean these midscale digs can't be stunning designs in their own right. In fact, the architectural constraints involved are producing some of the most striking new hotels around.

Rising 35 storeys above New York's flower district, the 349-room Moxy Chelsea (Moxy is the millennial-courting wing of the Marriott group) has been designed in partnership with Yabu Pushelberg and the Rockwell Group. Guests enter through the Putnam & Putnam Flower Shop in a haze of freshly cut flower fragrances, before checking in at one of a pair of

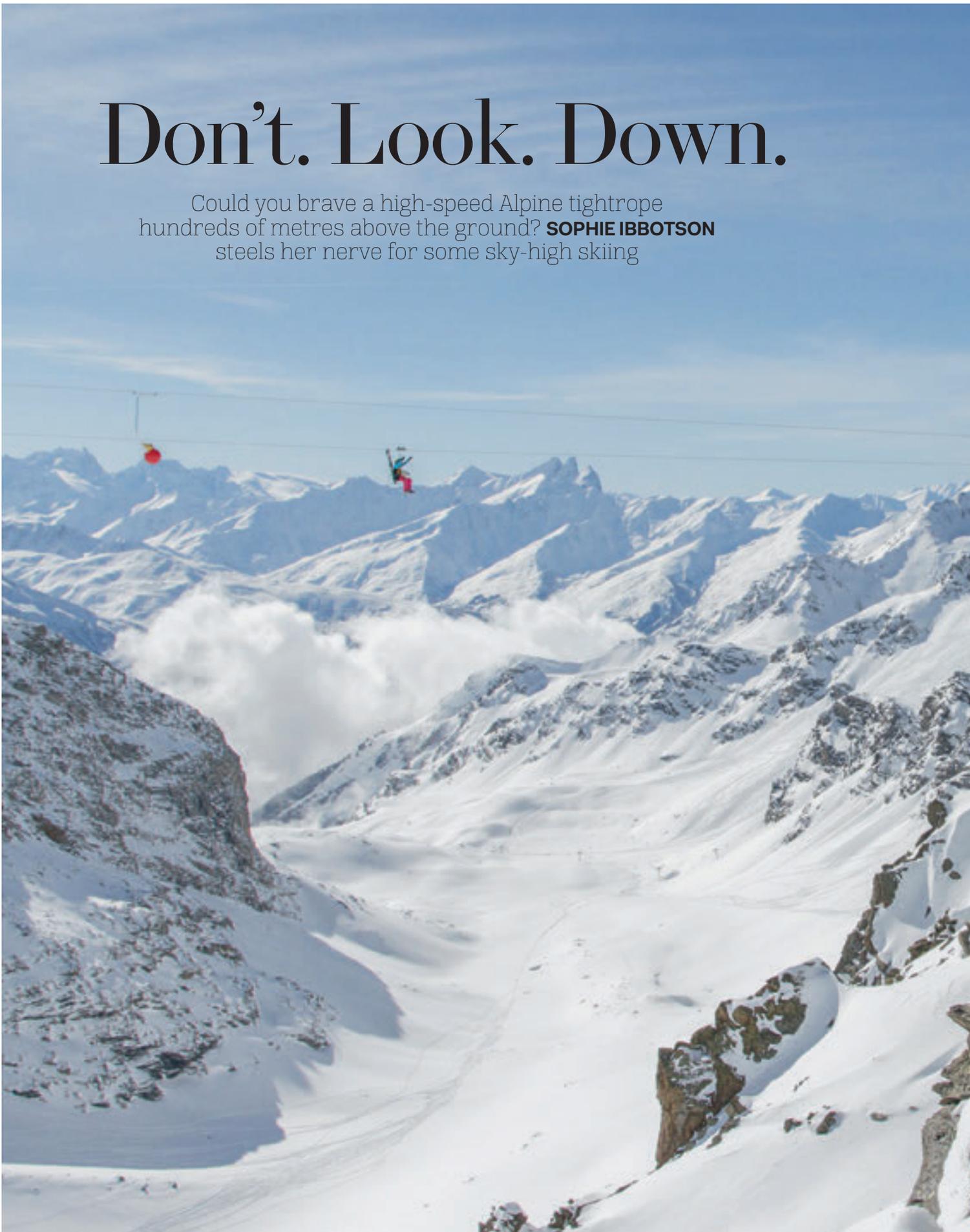
hanging desks beneath an ever-changing ceiling of inspirational, Instagrammable slogans. Your complimentary prosecco is waiting for you in the rooftop bar overlooking the Empire State Building, served by impossibly attractive staff straight from an Abercrombie & Fitch billboard. The rooms are cozy but not cramped. Instead of a desk there's a folding table, and instead of a wardrobe there are hooks on every wall. The rotary phone reads you bedtime stories. But really, the place to be is downstairs in the three-storey, greenhouse-style co-working conservatory (*pictured*).

Moxy Chelsea is a tiny hotel with big style.

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Don't. Look. Down.

Could you brave a high-speed Alpine tightrope hundreds of metres above the ground? **SOPHIE IBBOTSON** steels her nerve for some sky-high skiing





I've mastered the chair lift, and nine times out of 10 will make it to the top of a drag lift without ending up on my behind in the snow. The suggestion I received over drinks in a bar that I might want to try "skiing on a rope" at 100 km an hour, however, left me bemused and curious in equal measure. This Alpine tightrope trick hardly sounded like something for the amateur skier, let alone one who had rather enjoyed the apres ski the night before.

The Tyrolienne, as it is called, turned out to be slightly more robust than "a rope", but no less terrifying than I feared. Had my French been better, I'd have realised that it's not just a name, but the word for zip line. The steel cable stretches more than 1,300 m from Orelle to Val Thorens, reaching a top speed of 105 km per hour. At its high point, I dangled 250 m above the ground, a fashionably oversized pair of SunGod Vanguards protecting my face from the worst of the piercing wind. For the few, snatched moments that I dared look out through the goggles' pink-purple lens and admire the rose-tinted valley, the views were spectacular. The part of me that wasn't screaming felt like a bird of prey soaring on the thermals, the skiers far below little more than Lego men. I was completely out of control, but the fear was tinged with exhilaration.

France's Three Valleys is the biggest ski area in the world, with some 600 km of slopes, 321 pisted runs, and 169 high performance lifts. The season lasts from December until April, drawing tens of thousands of skiers and boarders. But the valleys' resorts — and Courchevel in particular — are expanding their offering year on year, broadening their appeal. Here you won't be missing out if you have an old injury that holds you back from downhill skiing, or a young family in tow who need to be entertained.

Having recovered from The Tyrolienne with a stiff drink in a slopeside bar, I swapped my skis for snow boots and set out for Art at the Summit, an impressive outdoor art exhibition spread across multiple sites. For the past 10 years, Courchevel has teamed up with Galeries Bartoux to bring sculpture to the resort. Dali's Alice in Wonderland and Horse Saddled with Time are greeting visitors to Courchevel 1850, but the really dazzling pieces are accessible only by cable car.

Richard Orlinski, the French pop artist, has created a series of oversized, luridly coloured creatures which seem to have burst out from the pages of a comic book. King Kong appears in various guises, one beating his blood red chest, another brandishing a pair of skis above his head. I found Orlinski's proud red stag and midnight blue wolf to be rather more attractive and in keeping with ►



Above: The new luge track in Moriond is “Courchevel’s answer to Mario Kart”; New Year celebrations; and French pop artist Richard Orlinski’s King Kong sculpture.

► their surroundings, but King Kong certainly had a devoted queue of excitable skiers and art lovers desperate to snap a selfie with him.

To get off the mountain you can retreat the way you came, but on the way up a race track had caught my eye. Moriond Racing is Courchevel’s answer to Mario Kart.

This 3km track loops through the forest, twisting and turning through eight tunnels. The vehicle — if that’s the right word for it — is a simple plastic sled, but I promise you it moves at quite a lick on the steeper descents. With the right adjustment of your balance and application of the metal brakes, you could probably speed around in style; I lurched around the first ice lined bend, rolled, and fell out on the snow, legs flailing and laughing hysterically. It is not quite as easy as it looks.

In our group of three, I was the last to leave the starting line, and a party of strangers was hot on my heels. I had some catching up to do. Forcing myself to overcome the urge to pull continually on the brake — which in any case had probably caused my first roll — and to pick up speed on the straighter stretches, I began making gains. On the snail shell-like spiral approaching one of the tunnels I almost overtook the sled in front, only to be thwarted by the narrowing of the track through the tunnel and a very large pile of snow to one side. Thankfully, it was soft enough, and I made it to the finish with nothing more than a few small bruises and battered pride. My grin and the silliness of it

all more than compensated for both.

What I will say is that sledding (and falling off of said sled) leaves you decidedly stiffer than skiing. I was immeasurably grateful, therefore, to discover the thermal waters of the Aquamotion pool and spa centre were just one escalator ride from my apartment at Residence Le C in Courchevel 1650. I discarded my boots and heavier layers with the building’s ski butler — what a joy! — and padded off down the mountainside.

Nothing beats the combination of steaming hot water, a snowy landscape, and fresh mountain air, especially when the



light is fading, the sky turns pink, and the moon starts to rise over the peaks. Aquamotion’s architects have capitalised on this perfect merger of elements in Courchevel: though an extensive part of the complex is under cover, two swim out pools make the most of the great outdoors. I floated, staring up at the sky and the few flakes of snow falling from it, as jets of water pummelled my tired muscles from below. The temperature was like bath water, and the only noises which serenaded me were the bubbling of the jacuzzi and the faint sound of the wind in the trees.

Zen like and scarcely with it, I drifted back up the escalator to Residence Le C. One of my few coherent thoughts whilst in the water was a yearning for glass of wine. The Savoie department in which this part of the Alps falls is known for producing G n pi — a particularly fearsome local liqueur akin to absinthe and drunk neat — but there also some fine vineyards at lower altitudes.

Eight local wines have made the menu at Bistrot Le C, the Residence’s fine dining restaurant. I was tempted by the prospect of the 2016 Princess Leia — if only for its name — but in the end was advised by the waiter to try something a little less sweet. This was definitely the right call; the 2015 Chignin-Bergeron Les Salins slid down a treat, the ideal end to a ski free day in the Alps. ■

◉ An apartment at **Residence Le C** in Courchevel 1650 starts from €368 per night and sleeps six people. For more details and reservations, see alpine-residences.fr.

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UGANDA'S CONSERVATION REFUGEES

Efforts to preserve Africa's dense forests can have unexpected casualties. **NOO SARO-WIWA** visits the ancient hunter-gatherers evicted from their ancestral home in Uganda.



Left: Bwindi is home to just 800 gorillas. To protect their numbers the area was designated a national park in 1991. **Above:** A tree is planted to mark completion of the Batwa village in 2018, a permanent home for the displaced community.

Standing in Bwindi Impenetrable Forest, I'm dodging a light hail of fruits being thrown down by gorillas in the trees above. The animals climb down and gallop through the undergrowth. While they roly-poly down the steep slopes, we chase them in a less dexterous fashion, slipping onto our backsides and hoping we don't roll in their faeces. Eventually they pause. Shafts of golden sunlight pierce the canopy and shine on a female. She is lying supine, her newborn baby resting on her chest. She takes issue with one of us and screams, flinging an arm in our direction.

Our bodies flinch but we can't take our eyes off our primate cousins. The proximity is mindblowing. There are only 800 gorillas in Uganda's Bwindi Impenetrable Forest – that's one for every nine million humans on the planet. We are so privileged to be here, yet at the back of our minds is the niggling truth that our fun has come at the expense of the humans who once lived in this magnificent wilderness.

For thousands of years, the hunter-gathering Batwa (so-called 'pygmies') lived blameless, carbon-neutral lives in this ancient primary forest. They co-existed in peace with the apes – eating or harming them was

culturally taboo – but nonetheless, when Bwindi was designated a national park in 1991 the government evicted the hunter-gatherers in order to protect the gorilla population. Any Batwa who re-entered the forest was threatened with a bullet. All that remains of Africa's oldest human culture are the occasional grassy clearings in the lush hills and valleys.

These 'conservation refugees' are the collateral damage in the tussle between agriculture, industry and population growth. Bwindi's pristine flora and fauna were under threat from population increase, poverty, poaching and logging.

Since land ownership and money were not in the Batwa culture, they were given no compensation following their eviction. Adjusting to life outside of the forest wasn't easy. With nowhere to go, the Batwa squatted on farmland. Some became addicted to alcohol and drugs, drifting into nearby towns like Kisoro, which offered all the comfort and familiarity of outer space. Many work as low-paid farm labourers, others as freelance porters for visitors to Bwindi.

Illiterate and strangers to the concept of agriculture and ownership, the Batwa made innocent mistakes, such as eating crops planted by local farmers. When given new homes with corrugated metal roofing, ►



► some of them were so horrified by the sound of raindrops hitting the metal they chose to sell their roofs rather than suffer the racket. Their simplicity drew contempt among non-Batwa, some of whom viewed these forest-dwellers as “primitive” and ripe for exploitation.

Once upon a time, the fate of the 60,000-strong Batwa was met with indifference. These days, there is a more enlightened recognition that their wellbeing is intrinsically tied to the forest and the tourism industry that funds the gorillas’ survival. Nobody appreciates this more keenly than Praveen Moman, owner and founder of Volcanoes Safaris, the company that runs the gorilla tours. When he launched Volcanoes Safaris, Moman knew he could not separate social responsibility from ecological conservation. And so in 2018 Volcano Safaris completed construction of a village for 18 Batwa families, providing permanent homes for them after 25 years of squatting. The company purchased 10 acres in Musasa, about 4km from Mgahinga Gorilla National Park.

The village has a community centre and land set aside for recreation and agriculture. Residents will be able to grow their own produce, freeing themselves from the prohibitive land rent they pay farmers.

This new hamlet comprises 18 huts, constructed by the Batwa from volcanic

stone base with mud and water. The villagers are very poor and there’s no electricity just yet, but if wealth were measured in natural beauty these Batwa are living in the lap of luxury: in the near-distance a volcano rises into the blues skies, and rolling green hills are sprinkled with boulders and cooled by a breeze suffused with the aroma of eucalyptus plants.

On my arrival, the Batwa villagers sing an ancient welcome song from the forest. They are shy, much like other pre-agricultural peoples living out of their element, and lack the assertiveness that comes with having full agency over one’s life.

The kids are snot-faced and hilarious. One five-year-old boy dances in front of my phone camera, pushing away anyone who tries to

join him in the frame. Another boy urges me to take a photo of him with a stone balanced artfully on his head. They attend local schools and speak local languages alongside their native Rufumbira dialect. Assimilation and intermarriage seem an inevitability. Every hip-hop hand gesture camera pose, every name scrawled in English on the huts’ exteriors marks a little dent in the Batwa culture.

The biggest symbol of their move towards modernity is the village community centre, a six-metre-high domed multi-purpose space. Designed by German-Swedish architects, it can be used for meetings, dance performances and adult education. The structure is made of tree branches and a papyrus roof cover, with grass mats for the ceiling. There are translucent sheets for windows, and two garage-like doors that can swing open to increase the size of the space.

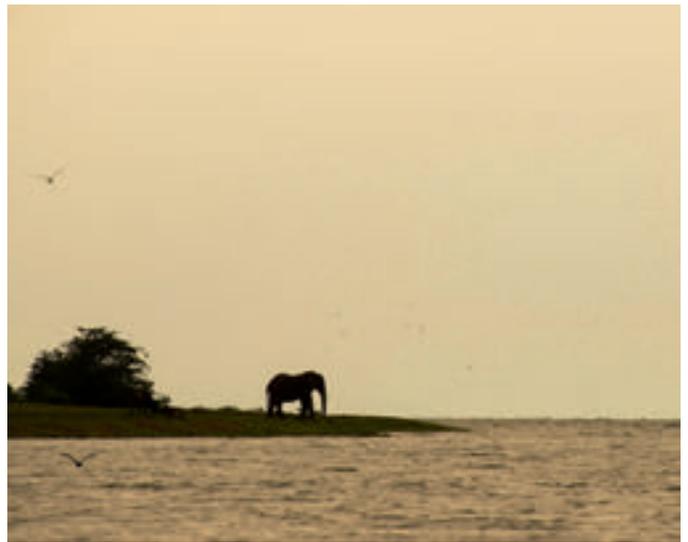
To one side is a medical room where a doctor sees patients once a month for health checks and vaccinations. Life expectancy among the Batwa was just 28 years in their forest days. Four in 10 of their children used to die before their fifth birthday, but not anymore. I cuddle the village’s newest arrival, a ball-fisted three-day old girl. Her parents haven’t decided on a name for her yet, but when they do her birth will be documented, which represents a big cultural change. “They have problem

“

Since land ownership and money were not in the Batwa culture, they were given no compensation following their eviction from the forest



From far left: A room at Kyambura Gorge Lodge; the Batwa community gathers at the hamlet built for them by Volcano Safaris; hippos bathing at Kyambura Game Reserve; an elephant silhouetted by the lakeside at Kyambura



with figures,” says an interpreter, referring to the older generation. They have no idea what year they were born. When I ask a woman called Jane how old she is, she giggles as the interpreter tells me, “Jane has been thirty-one since 2013!”

The adults have designed a Heritage Experience for the Batwa youngsters to teach them about their cultural past: they receive instructions on medicinal plants and on building snares to trap forest animals, such as bush pigs, buffaloes and kobs – they used to barter the meat for farmers’ crops.

For a sample of traditional Batwa forest life, I visit a small forest situated next to Volcanoes Safari’s Gahinga Lodge. It is a mini version of a larger Batwa Trail, which is run by a different entity. Our Batwa guide is the splendidly named Safari Monday. He and a female companion are wearing traditional pelts of goatskin around their shoulders. Via an interpreter, Safari tells us that medicine is all around us. He scoops up a mass of soil containing the protruding roots of a giant fern. The Batwa grind it into a tea to treat skin allergies. He then holds up another plant – a giant lobelia shrub, which is pounded into water to create an emetic drink. For soap, they chop thorny apples into water and stir it into a paste.

“Do you prefer modern medicine?” I ask. “Traditional medicine is better,” Safari replies. For starters it costs nothing. And

while diseases are cured, new ones are introduced through the modern diet, he says.

Further into the forest, Safari invites us to use a bow and arrow to hit a board covered in goatskin (I almost hit the target at both attempts!) and nearby is a tree house, for the children’s entertainment. Over by a traditional thatched-roof hut, some Batwa men demonstrate how they build fires. Twiddling those wooden sticks is a laborious chore, not for the infirm or injured, reminding us of the demanding precariousness of hunter-gatherer survival.

I ask whether the Batwa still worship their traditional deity. Many have converted to Protestantism and Anglicanism, Safari says, but he still worships Bihako, the god of the forest. He also worships Arsenal football

club, I’m told with a smile. Although Safari keeps one foot planted in the past, he surprises me by saying he has never returned to the forest since the eviction nor does he think about it. He looks forwards, towards a future in which the Batwa play a greater role in sustaining the knowledge of Bwindi forest and its conservation. For now they have lost their self-sufficiency through no fault of their own, but they have a lot to teach us through this experience – it is not simply a cultural show-and-tell. Who knows?

Humanity may come full circle one day and require the Batwa’s knowledge, appreciating their traditional customs as something ironically futuristic – a low-carbon lifestyle the rest of the world might have to revert to one day.

● **Africa Odyssey** an eight night package starts from £6,990 and is based on two people sharing a room. Includes international flights, internal flights, ground transport, two nights on full board at each of the four lodges (Virunga Lodge, Kyambura Lodge, Gahinga Lodge and Bwindi Lodge), one gorilla permit in Uganda and one Kasinga Channel boat trip. For bookings call 020 87801216, email info@africaodyssey.com or visit africaodyssey.com

● This trip was supported by the **Uganda Tourism Board**. Go to visituganda.com for more information. ■

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Every hip-hop hand gesture camera pose, every name scrawled in English on the huts’ exteriors marks a little dent in the Batwa culture

BANGKOK 2049

Overtourism is placing the Thai capital's street food vendors and bustling markets under threat. What do the next 30 years hold for this neon metropolis? Words: **DAMIEN GABET**

It looked like volleyball from afar. Up close, I realised the players were only using their feet. And the ball was hollow; a spherical rattan of bamboo. Sepak Takraw (or “Muzzle”) was being played with brio by a group of local boys on Phutharet Square, a Thai time capsule in Old City Bangkok.

They invited me on court. I scored and bowed out on a high. Around the play area, locals were sat at toy-store plastic tables swapping plates of saucy, spicy Chinese bites. There were hand-hewn egg noodles, dumplings, spring rolls, honey-glazed red pork, pork brain soup and pale pork balls.

A harlequin festoon hung above each table providing just enough light for me to mooch in the gloaming, looking for a seat. Before long, a group of ten or so animated lads – smart in their True Internet uniforms – offered me one, along with beer and a bowl of hokka soup noodles. It came from a mama-&-papa kitchen over the road called Phraeng Phuthon.

I snarfed and slurped between answers to, “Which football team do you support?” “First time in Bangkok?” “D’you like pork?” I’d have been overwhelmed were it not for their balmy charm – and the quality of the street food. What a far cry from the lens-friendly dude food back home.

Ahead of visiting Bangkok I’d spoken with someone

who knows more about the place than me. Her concern was that it’s being modernised at a pace, and in a way, that’s tantamount to its gelding. Thailand’s street food vendors, in particular, have been hit by the ‘forces of gentrification’. Pork balls, facing the chop.

New Internationalist reported earlier this year that some 17,000 street hawkers have lost their licences across the city since 2014. The feeling among protestors is that this is part of a wider attempt by the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (BMA) to sanitise. The spark and spirit of Bangkok’s markets and pavements – part of the city’s ecosystem and one of its principal draws – is under threat. Thailand also features regularly in overtourism lists. I can vouch: Wat Pho – a megaplex of temples near the Royal Palace – was a backpacker, selfie-stick soup.

So where can one still go to appreciate the best of the city without being elbowed to death by the hordes?

My interest was piqued from the main road (Thanon Tanao) by the noticeable change in architecture: a pared-back Sino-Portuguese style gives the clutch of streets in the Sam Phraeng neighbourhood a village feel. In Thai culture every day of the week has an assigned hue. Reigning monarch King Rama X was born on a Monday, and Monday – contrary to what New Order might tell you – is a yellow day. The buildings here are painted in a fetching lemony ►







Main: The Buddhist temple of Wat Arun on the west bank of the Chao Phraya River. **Left:** The pool at The Peninsula hotel; and a street food vendor preparing meals. **Right:** The view from The Peninsula's luxury suite; and the hotel's restaurant.

► pastel to honour him.

On one corner of my new favourite square Natthaphon has been putting odd toppings (beans, sweet potato, palm fruit) on fresh coconut ice-cream since the 1950s. Behind us, a local has gone from one fix to the other, converting his grandfather's classic car garage into a coffee shop. Unfinished works spill onto the street: a mint-condition Austin Mini in tasteful grey; a clapped out 1930s gangster-style Ford. Indoors is an oily tribute to automotive salvage hunting: driver's-club plaques and chrome fenders ornament the walls like trophy antlers. The coffee, served Thai style with condensed milk, is sweet and cold and strong.

Perhaps the most conspicuous example of Bangkok's push for clean and new is the nearly finished retail and entertainment complex "Icon of Eternal Prosperity". Iconsiam to its friends. After the wooden charm of Old City, this angry-angled megastructure felt quite alien. A \$1.67bn spaceship, hovering on the banks of the Chao Phraya, tractor-beaming captivated consumers.

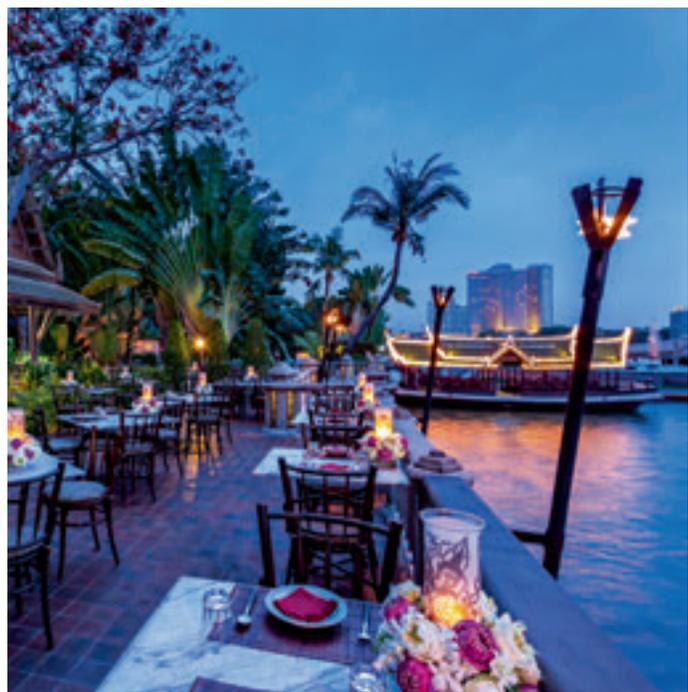
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The most conspicuous example of Bangkok's push for clean and new is the nearly finished retail and entertainment complex 'Icon of Eternal Prosperity'

On board, the experiment is to see whether we can be convinced and compelled by its ersatz set pieces and heritage trompe-l'oeils. Indeed, while its frame and scale are odes to Brave New Bangkok, much of the decoration aims to convince you of the opposite. The foyer is laid out as a sweet-smelling, gently twinkling, river market at night. Old ladies in full vintage regalia sit in boats preparing coconut pancakes for nobody. Gold pillars and village-life frescoes are the spit of those found in the city's big temples. Appropriation, parody and a lack of sympathy. To culture and character what Cillit Bang is to soot and grease.

Many around me were mesmerised. And, well, fine: it is, if one is happy to ignore the hoax, a festival for the senses. The hope, though, is that this new-found 'eternal prosperity' doesn't rid Bangkok of its real, old, proper bits altogether. Bits such as I saw on a day-long, 20km bicycle tour with Bangkok's finest lycra-clad guide, Little Finger.

We started in Yan Nawa to see its eponymous boat-shaped temple, where



needy buddhists come to buy amulets for luck. From there, she pedalled us north, along the river, via maze markets, ancient Chinese shrines and crumbling sandstone mansions. To fill the gaps, garrulous Little Finger expounded on Bangkok's history: "Thailand was never fully colonised, mainly because of the king's friendship with Tsar Nicholas II..."

Busy poking my head round the corner of every corner, I suddenly found myself in the way of a passing monk, his blanched saffron kasaya signalling gravitas. He stopped and spoke in that compassionate way that monks tend to. Beginning, apropos of nothing, on a potted history of Buddha himself (prince from India; good guy for 10 incarnations in a row; became perfect; hit nirvana) he then turned to a lament on the present state of Buddhism: "Temptation in the world today is changing things. There is a lack of monks teaching us well."

Over the river again, in the Thonburi district, we visited Wat Kalaya, a temple dedicated to travellers. We left our bikes at the entrance next to a clutch of chain-

smoking men and women playing "Indian chess". Frowns and a fast pace suggested it was serious. While this 'second class' temple can't compete with the gilt girth of Wat Pho, its quietude means there are fewer snapbacks interrupting your view of the monks who serry for prayer at 8am and 4.30pm daily. Our afternoon viewing was one I shall never forget.

My hotel, the venerable Peninsula, seems keen to uphold tradition too. I was encouraged to help in the giving of alms to a visiting holy man. He passes by the hotel's 'spirit house' everyday to receive edible charity. But not all of Bangkok's traditions educe zen-like calm: hours later I was on a nearby lawn having my first ever muay thai lesson. It was kid gloves from my kindly coach; a big kid in gloves from me. Exhausting, but affirming. For those bent on more of a Van-Damme-style, spit-and-sawdust session, head for Mankong Phranai Muay Thai Gym near Lumpini Park. 200 Baht (around £5) is enough for a one-on-one lesson with an ex-pro who will make you sweat and swear.

It is with these few examples of

Bangkok's heritage that I grasped the dichotomy of its character: cerebral and visceral, calm and chaotic. The contrasts are irresistible.

While backstreet adventures will dominate this sort of trip, time should be allotted to Bangkok's high-end. Beyond the riverside splendour of The Peninsula, Michelin-star Gaa is a worthy example of the city's positive move to modern. An eclectic Thai-Indian fusion comes from a kitchen with a Noma-trained chef at the helm. I peaked early on its 14-course tasting menu: the second dish, a revelatory 'savoury betel leaf', served with a Marlboro pinot noir, was without doubt the best wine-to-food pairing I've ever tried. Sorry Heston. The only thing missing was a little square outside to play Muzzle.

● **Inspiring Travel Company**
(01244 435077; inspiringtravelcompany.co.uk) offers a three-night stay at The Peninsula, Bangkok (peninsula.com/bangkok) from £1,075 per person. Based on two adults sharing a Deluxe Room including daily breakfast, flights and transfers. ■



FREQUENT FLYER

SCARLET WINTERBERG

AM I KILLING THE PLANET?

There are few things a person can do that release more CO₂ into the atmosphere than set foot on a plane. Is there a way to offset the damage?

Until recently, I didn't give my carbon footprint much thought. I recycle wine bottles and buy LED light bulbs, but these things are a drop in the ocean compared to the impact of being a frequent flyer. For the first time in my life, I feel rather ashamed by the amount I travel. It turns out that my business class seat on a flight from London to New York is equivalent to the entire annual carbon footprint of someone living in Paraguay, at almost a tonne of CO₂. Basically, I am f*****g up the planet.

Some are calling for 2020 to be a "no-fly" year, but frankly that's not feasible for me. I have, however, turned down several unnecessary trips (thank heavens for video conferencing), and I'll continue to be more discerning about the way I travel. Where possible, I try to take the Eurostar and onward trains across Europe. Private jets are impossible to justify.

But I'd like to do *more*. There's carbon offsetting, for a start. Some airlines are adopting this approach – planting trees to counteract the levels of CO₂ being pumped into the atmosphere – with Easyjet offsetting emissions on all its flights as of November this year, BA and Air France offsetting on domestic routes from January, and Qantas offsetting on international routes from 2020 (it plans to be "net-zero carbon" by 2050).

The worry is that although global aviation only produces two per cent of human induced carbon dioxide emissions (according to the International Air Transport Association), annual passenger numbers are expected to double to 8.2bn by 2037. By 2025, China will

overtake the US as the world's biggest aviation market, followed by India in third place.

So what else can be done? Efforts are underway to develop biofuels, which are made from things like algae and salicornia plants, thus lowering the overall carbon footprint of flying as crops like this feed on carbon dioxide, but much of the world will continue to use fossil fuels. What's more, burning biofuels still releases CO₂ so it's still only solving part of the problem.

You can try to fly on newer planes, such as the B787 Dreamliner, the A350 XWB or the A320NEO, which burn 20-25 per cent less fuel than older aircraft of a similar size. Booking economy class is another way of lowering your carbon footprint: the more seats you can squeeze on a plane, the less CO₂ per passenger. The atmosphere still receives the same amount of pollution though, so it's really about easing your conscience.

More hopeful is the promise of zero-emission, battery-powered planes. Next year, Rolls Royce will test the world's fastest (300mph) all-electric plane, ACCEL. But it can only accommodate one person.

Easyjet is, however, confident that the technology will improve to the point where it can introduce 180-seat electric planes into its fleet by 2030.

Perhaps the best advice comes from KLM: the Dutch airline's CEO recently issued a statement asking people to "fly responsibly". I might have to ask

my editor to rename this column "Infrequent Flyer"...

● *Scarlet Winterberg is a seasoned business traveller.*

There is nothing she likes more than sipping champagne while staring through an aeroplane window



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A pilot touches down by the Victoria River on safari in Australia



WHY YOUR NEXT SAFARI SHOULD BE IN AUSTRALIA

With spectacular lodges, mind-blowing wildlife and vast swathes of unexplored land, **LIZZIE POOK** argues that off-the-beaten-track Oz is one of the finest safari destinations around

The helicopter buzzes like a cicada, the slow swoop of the propellers creating a meditative hum in the air. Below, the Victoria River looks like a colossal serpent, coiled lazily around scorched saffron dirt which spills across the landscape as far as the eye can see.

The sky is that cloudless sort of robin's egg blue. The sun needles the windshield like pincers.

Pilot Charlie makes the signal and we descend, hovering momentarily above the wide, inky waters. I lean my forehead against the window and spot the unmistakable silhouettes of saltwater crocodiles hanging motionless at the surface: their bodies as long as school buses, splayed hands as large as soup plates. There are more crocs than any other place in the world here in Australia's Northern Territory, a place that's also home to 400 species of birds and bizarre mammals from spiny echidnas to rare sugar gliders.

I've come to one of the most remote parts of the planet to explore the slick safari offering that's quickly gaining momentum here and in neighbouring Western Australia. Forget the bustling, vehicle-filled plains of the Serengeti, in Outback Oz luxurious eco-lodges sit alone in vast wilderness, offering guests intimate access to spectacular marshy wetlands and parched mountain ranges, where sun-baked dingoes roam and venomous snakes shelter in shady rock crags.

With the precision of a coronary surgeon, Charlie lands on a small sandstone escarpment, which teeters high above the sprawling shrub-filled land. As we emerge from the chopper, the landscape seems to glow like polished treasure. Sticky-legged flies clamber across my exposed arms. "These rocks are 380-million-years old," he says, as we stand cloaked in the oven-like heat. "There are hundreds of ancient aboriginal rock art sites hidden all around us. Plenty that no one ever has or ever will see again." He spreads his arms wide

and my skin prickles. I imagine the people who have walked this land for millennia; those who know this jumble of billabongs, caves and mountain ranges like the veins on the underside of their own wrists.

I've been staying at Bullo River Station down the (singular, arterial) road. Set on half a million acres, the working cattle station has ten guest rooms – filled with Edison bulbs, driftwood furniture and quirky knick-knacks peering out from antique cases – offering a stylish escape from the dusty outback heat. Guests here can hop on a horse and help the jackaroos move cattle, or take to buggies to ride-along with the heli-muster (watching slack-jawed as the chopper dances just above their head, weaving in and out of trees to round up rogue bulls). My guide Grace has also shown me secret swimming spots where dragonflies dart like fighter pilots. She's taken me by boat through the burnt orange cliffs and emerald mangroves of Bullo Gorge, searching for crocs and kookaburras as rainbow bee-eaters stuff their beaks with insects.

But Bullo is just one example of how these remote lodges give access to some of the most spectacular wildlife around. A short hop away by bush plane you'll find Bamurru Plains, set on sultry floodplains where crocodiles lurk and sunset skies are filled with thousands of migrating whistling ducks. "If you hear the sound of a woman screaming in the middle of the night, don't worry, it's just the owls," manager Karen tells me as she walks me to my room. I say 'my room', but what I really mean is 'my mesh-fronted corrugated iron bungalow', designed to offer prime views of Bamurru's resident wildlife. Brilliantly, I don't even have to leave my bed to go on safari here. Wallabies slump in the shade of my steps, muscular brumbies pass by with their foals, cockatoos screech and scooch across the roof in search of grubs and the crunch of grazing buffalo jaws sails in through the breeze. But still, I'm keen to get out and about so I head off on an airboat safari with guides Anna and Amy. We glide ►



Clockwise from above: Lizzie flying high above the Bullo river; the modest accommodation at Bamurru; herding cattle in the outback; and jetting across the water-logged plains in an airboat.



► through lotus flower-filled channels as magpie geese fly in neat formation alongside us. We drift into haunting paperbark forests where the cackle of the blue-winged kookaburra fills the air and wallowing buffalo peer at us through sinewy tree roots. At one point Amy cuts the engine and we see the surrounding reeds part slowly around us, a sign that a colossal croc is making its way through the water.

WINNING IS WINNING

But if you yearn for the bustle of a big city, there is a way that you can combine these remote safari adventures with a more metropolitan escape. Perth, Western Australia's capital, might be one of the most isolated cities in the world, but you'd never know it. The city bulges with brilliant restaurants, boutique hotels and lively street art. It's also home to COMO the Treasury, an impeccable design hotel that's been lovingly developed out of the city's old State buildings. The hallways here pay homage to the old treasury – with original vault doors and hefty steel window shutters – and rooms come with vertiginously high ceilings, freestanding bathtubs and quirky design touches like porthole windows. Downstairs people flock to neon-lit Thai hotspot Long Chim for Chiang Mai larf and dumpling laksa, and busy office-workers swing by to get their morning coffee from Telegram. High up on the fourth floor, with

panoramic views of the city's waterfront, you'll find the award-winning Wildflower restaurant, which serves up exquisite dishes based on the indigenous six seasons. But the real draw for me is the hotel's new Experience the Kimberley package, which combines two nights at the city hotel with three nights at El Questro Homestead, a bucket-list property set within the vast Technicolor landscape of The Kimberley in Australia's rugged northwestern corner.

Touching down in The Kimberley is like stepping foot on another planet. The stark white trunks of eucalyptus trees look like wandering ghosts in a haze of thick heat. Toasted spinifex grasses fringe pindan dirt roads as red as heritage tomatoes. Black cockatoos coast from branch to branch of towering thousand-year-old boabs, and the mighty Cockburn ranges rise like giants in the distance. El Questro Homestead is like a shimmering oasis in the cossetting heat. Set within the El Questro Wilderness Park – which sprawls across almost one million acres – it's enclaved by frangipani trees and gleamingly manicured lawns.

Airy garden rooms here come with louvered shutters, corrugated iron walls that tick in the heat and private decking – complete with an al fresco freestanding bathtub – overlooking the Chamberlain river. I could content myself with afternoons spent sitting out and watching dive-bombing kingfishers and freshwater crocs.

But, as always, there are adventures to be had in these parts.

A boat trip through Chamberlain gorge will get you within a camera lens of short-eared wallabies that peek out from straggly tropical red box trees. On dry land, a bumpy 4WD trip takes you up to Buddy's Lookout, for far-reaching views of The Kimberley's burnished lands and the brahminy kites searching for mousy snacks in the tussocks below. You'll end your evenings with hearty meals of gazpacho with avocado and feta, and prime rib eye steak with tangy orange reduction – all paired with delicious Australian wines. Then pour a glass, lean back and gaze at the stars shining bright as freshly-struck matches. Just don't forget to dodge the toads on the way back to your room. After all, you're always on safari in Australia.

● **COMO's** Experience the Kimberley package starts at £3177 per person; comohotels.com.

● Safari Bungalows at **Bamurru Plains** from £621 per person, all-inclusive (with activities); bamurruplains.com.

● Rooms at **Bullo River Station** start at £654, all-inclusive (with helicopter ride); bullover.com.au.

● **Qantas** flies direct from London Heathrow to Perth from £887 return (economy), with Darwin transfers available; qantas.com. See australia.com for more info. ■



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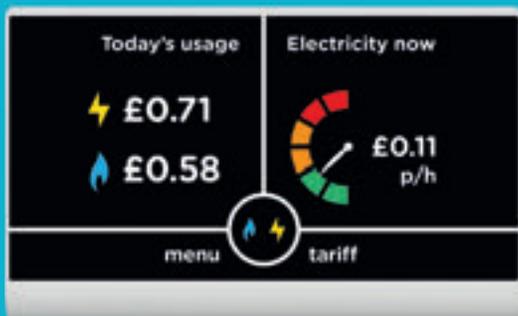


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LIVING

CO-LIVING

We spend a night in the tiny flats targeted at millennials – P86

PANIC STATIONS

A look inside the boutique panic rooms of the super-rich – P90

OFFICE SPACE

How Amazon's Shoreditch base caters for its ever-expanding business – P94



THE AUDO

ÅRHUSGADE 130, 2150 KØBENHAVN

Danish design brand Menu partnered with renowned architecture studio Norm Architects to create its new headquarters in Nordhavn, the rapidly regenerating 19th century industrial port turned trendy waterfront city district of Copenhagen.

The hybrid concept is a little bit of everything: part ten-room boutique hotel,

part materials library, part co-working and event space and part furniture showroom.

The protected, red-bricked warehouse building has been transformed into a minimalist masterpiece in brass and earthy tones, with each room becoming its own showcase for designers and artists to present their work against a more natural backdrop than any retail store or gallery.

New partner Bang & Olufsen outfitted

the lobby with the audio brand's distinctly crafted speakers, such as the dish-like Beoplay A9 and the conical, aluminium Beosound 1. One of the hotel's residences showcases the Beovision Harmony, which harks back to mid-century TV cabinet design with its butterfly folding case. In quiet symphony with The Audo's interiors, you could hardly imagine it anywhere else.

● Visit theaudo.com



The reception area and sun lounge at The Collective in Canary Wharf



IS CO-LIVING THE FUTURE, OR JUST STUDENT HALLS WITH A FACE LIFT?

Inside the co-living apartments where millennials trade living space for craft workshops and free yoga. Words: **HELEN CRANE**



My alarm goes off at 6.30am, which means it's time for yoga. As I wipe the sleep from my eyes, I glance around the unfamiliar apartment I've just spent the night in, which doesn't take long because it's barely bigger than a walk-in wardrobe. I get dressed and stumble out the door, traipsing down the stairs behind a row of others dressed in identical kit. We're directed to the 'Wellness Pavilion,' where we start the day with an hour of downward-facing dogs and warrior poses.

Welcome to co-living – the new trend trying to persuade millennials that living in a small, expensive rented room isn't not, in fact, a total bummer, but a lifestyle choice. It's not a commune, exactly, but a building where you rent a poky studio

apartment and have access to shared social spaces and a roster of 'fun' activities to take part in. You also don't have to bother yourself with such arduous tasks as cleaning up or paying the bills.

A handful of these buildings have sprung up in the capital over the past couple of years, claiming to offer an alternative to dingy house shares and dodgy landlords. As a single 30-something living in London, I'm the target market – so I spent the night in two of them to see what it's really like to exist in the co-living bubble.

First up is The Italian Building in Bermondsey, a brand-new 28-studio development run by a company called Mason & Fifth. It's so new the first residents haven't yet moved in, but I'm promised a taster of the experience they can expect, so I turn up with my overnight bag on a rainy Tuesday, armed with a schedule for the evening's activities.

Mason & Fifth is focused on 'wellness' – take a drink – and promises "a transformational home that connects you to a more joyful way of living". The building is nice, its interiors all polished concrete and snaking monstera. But the studios are what you would charitably call bijou at just 170 sq ft, less than half the minimum space standard of 398 sq ft outlined by the Greater London Authority. This is allowed under planning rules because the building was converted from an office.

It's nicely decked out with hanging plants, 'quirky' wall art, Ottolenghi cookbooks and an inexplicable bowl of lemons, but basically just consists of a bed, kitchenette, shower room, wardrobe and a table and chairs. It feels more like a hotel room than an apartment.

Some say it's just a formalisation of the house shares that city-dwellers in their 20s and 30s begrudgingly find themselves in. ►



Clockwise from left: The exterior of Mason & Fifth's The Italian Building in Bermondsey; the entrance lobby; the communal living, dining and kitchen space

► An even rosier view is that it harks back to the kind of close-knit communities that people lived in in the past. “The idea of living collectively is almost ingrained in our DNA and we’ve done it for hundreds of years,” says Richard Lustigman, director of co-living at property consultancy JLL. That might be true, but it hasn’t always been so expensive. It costs £1,650 per month to live here – far more than the average room in a shared house, and slightly more than the average £1,633 rent for a one-bed property in Bermondsey, according to Zoopla.

The reason Mason & Fifth thinks people will pay it is because of the less tangible things the building offers, based around five ‘pillars of well-living’ it has come up with: healthy spaces, daily nourishment, modern fitness, mental clarity and something called ‘conscious hedonism’.

Along with your tiny room you get a big communal living room, kitchen and dining area downstairs, bills included and access to free activities including running clubs, meditation, yoga, gardening workshops, bike rides, a ‘rant and reflect talking circle’ and a ‘mental resilience workshop’. You can also have a chef cook you dinner and packed lunches and have someone do your laundry for an extra fee. The owners predict people will stay for three months to a year.

Ben Prevezer, the 30-year-old creative director of the project says the rooms

“balance our generation’s growing need for both community and privacy” and enable “meaningful exchanges and generous individual space within the metropolis.”

My evening sampling the co-living lifestyle starts with a paper marbling workshop, then a dinner in the communal area consisting of shared plates of burrata, quinoa, root veg and plaice. We are served ‘social spirits’ from Third Way; strange non-alcoholic herbal elixirs which claim to have ‘active feel-good compounds’. We have our auras read. When we go to bed, herbal sleeping tablets have been left on our pillows. I take one and it seems to work, which is good because I’m booked in for a yoga class at 7.30am in the “wellness pavilion”, which we all turn up to in our Mason & Fifth branded hoodies. It feels like a new age version of a school residential.

Continuing the school theme, there are also lots of rules. When the building opens in January, residents will be given a book full of them. “Sleepovers are sexy, squatting is not,” it proclaims, pointing out that if a partner stays over for more than ten nights in four weeks you may be asked to “upgrade” to a couples room fee. They can also be asked to leave after three warnings if they don’t respect the “calm, relaxed and welcoming environment” of the building.

There are only 28 apartments, and Mason

& Fifth will hand pick the residents to try and create a harmonious atmosphere. So far, 800 people have registered interest in The Italian Building, so they’ve got their work cut out.

Over dinner, one of the staff confesses that they’ve been a bit worried about how potential relationships – and inevitable breakups – might ruin the carefully curated dynamic. And that’s the problem with co-living, really: there’s no accounting for the fact that people might want to have an ill-advised hook up with someone in their building, or own more than a couple of suitcases worth of possessions, or just watch TV alone in their apartment on a hungover Sunday, rather than in a communal room with 27 other people.

Here, you have no choice but to be the best version of yourself.

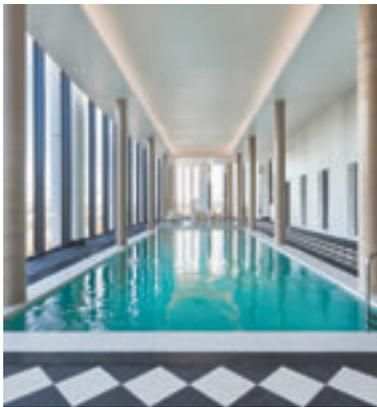


When I walk into The Collective at Canary Wharf, a new 21-storey co-living block which opened three months ago, the first thing I notice is a huge chalkboard with the programme of events for the week. You can add managing our own social lives to the list of things that millennials clearly can’t be trusted with, along with mortgages and cutting up an avocado.

There’s circuit training, a running club, yoga, three film club sessions, a ‘pimp my



Clockwise from top: A little sleeping space at The Collective; the co-working space; the pool on the 20th floor



G&T” masterclass, a cooking class and a session on how to make a kokedama (a type of Japanese hanging planter). Deep down, I know that the session I would be most likely to attend if I lived here would be the Friday happy hour in the top-floor bar and restaurant, Mthr.

The community manager, Jackson Torchia, shows me around the place. The walls in the communal areas are aptly painted millennial pink, and there are neon art installations everywhere.

There’s a co-working space, a giant living room filled with sofas, a meditation room, a gym, a screening room and a huge kitchen for cooking classes. “We get a lot of young professionals here who are just out of home,” says Torchia, who says recent recipes have included vegetable curries and pumpkin bread. In the next room, an electronic putt returner for practicing golf is being installed. “Not to curse it, but I think our members will use it once and never again,” he adds.

Long-term residents will pay £1,300 per month for a year-long stay in the smallest room here, or up to £2,080 for the space with the highest specification.

All in, the communal spaces take up three whole floors of the building. In the basement is a student-style bar with graffiti on the walls, a DJ booth, ping pong table. There are fake cobwebs left over from the

Halloween party a few days earlier, and just to infantilise things even further, a giant hopscotch grid on the floor. “It’s just to get people talking,” says Torchia.

Finally, on the top floor is the incongruous combination of the bar and restaurant, Mthr, which is open to the public, and a pool – the highest in East London – complete with inflatable flamingo. “One of our members put it in and I didn’t have the heart to take it away,” says Torchia. Conveniently, it’s also the kind of thing that people love to post on Instagram. The only way this could be more perfect is if it was a unicorn.

The people trying to sell the co-living lifestyle say it addresses two of millennials’ biggest reported problems: bad housing and feeling lonely. There’s definitely a community here – and it’s strikingly similar to the one you might find in a student halls of residence. Strangers say hi to me when I get in the lift, friends bump into each other in the hallways and there are clusters of people hanging out in most of the rooms I pop my head into.

The similarity to being at university isn’t lost on the people that live there, either. “It appealed to me to be able to live a more social lifestyle, more akin to my uni days – that’s something that I missed since I graduated,” says 28-year-old software programmer Jonas Hou, who has just

moved here after living in The Collective’s sister building in West London for a year and a half. “I came to London five years ago from Germany, and because I didn’t grow up here it’s not like I have a clique of old friends.”

He says it’s better than the flatshares he used to live in, but anyone who’s navigated the minefield of aggressive WhatsApp groups and broken boilers that is the standard London flatshare will know that’s not particularly hard.

My apartment here is a bit bigger than at Mason & Fifth, but I still wonder where I’d put all my stuff, as the storage amounts to a small-ish wardrobe, kitchen cupboards and a few shelves. Whoever designed this room has clearly taken to heart the oft-spouted marketing edict that millennials value experiences over possessions.

Co-living isn’t for me. Admittedly, that’s partly because I’m too miserable – I don’t like waking up early to do yoga, and I can barely be bothered to socialise with my existing friends on a Tuesday night, let alone make new ones. But you can’t hide the fact that these buildings are expensive and don’t offer enough private space.

Unless co-living can overcome one or both of these problems, it’s not going to be an option for the average twenty-something renter – no matter how many yoga classes and hanging plants you throw at them. ■

The interior of the prototype panic room in Harrods

DON'T PANIC

For the super-rich, a panic room isn't just a hiding place – it's a status symbol. **HELEN CRANE** meets the man who designs them.

Most of us will never have the need for a panic room. The sum of our valuables and the size of our homes means dropping in a huge, heavy steel structure at a cost of (at least) hundreds of thousands of pounds doesn't even cross our minds.

Those who do find themselves in need of this highly exclusive service, tend to head to the panic room department in Harrods, run by Florentine safe manufacturer Agresti.

Here, they can step into the store's example panic room – a glossy, marble-lined affair that most closely resembles the bathroom of a five-star hotel, except it's filled with cutting-edge gadgets – to get a taste for what's possible, before designing a bespoke vault all their own.

The man that runs it is Massimo Vignola, director of Italian Design Living at Agresti and an expert on how best to store your insanely valuable, well, valuables.

The first thing you need to know about panic rooms, he says, is they can be as small and basic or as large and ostentatious and you desire (on the inside, obviously – on the outside they have to blend in seamlessly with their surroundings). The cost of installing one starts at around £500,000, and Vignola tells me there really is no upper limit. He's had a hand in designing panic rooms ranging from barely the size of a cupboard in Belgravia, to a 30sqm behemoth in Nigeria. They are then made in Italy by "artisans who have been doing this for generations."

"The aesthetic depends on the client," he says. "It can be simple and basic, or it can be made to look like a spaceship landed in their property. For a very powerful Russian client we created a classic, almost baroque design with a lot of gold."

So how does a panic room work? First of all, you enter it using fingerprint access. This includes a 'coercion code' which means







Above: One of the panic rooms Agresti has designed for a client. The structures must be inconspicuous from the outside so the homeowner can avoid detection.

► that, if an intruder is forcing the owner to open their panic room, they can use a certain finger and the emergency services will immediately be alerted.

The rooms are completely cut off from the rest of the home – the supply of air is from outside, and they are fitted with a separate phone line so that the police can be called even if the line is cut.

Panic rooms are given a numeric grade based on the thickness of the door and walls, which are made from steel and can go up to around 20 inches. The scale starts at one, and anything above a grade seven would only be found in a bank. In terms of location, most people want it next to their bedroom – but sometimes it has to be in the basement because it's so heavy it could bring down the floor. Clients' security requirements are mostly dictated by insurers, who will base their coverage of their valuables on the specifications of the room where they are stored.

Back in the Harrods room, Vignola shows me what he calls the 'control centre,' hidden behind a mirror. In an actual home this would be linked up to security cameras, and can be modified so that the homeowner can pepper spray intruders remotely from a pump close to the camera, or activate a 'fogging' system which makes it difficult for intruders to see inside the house.

"It's not harmful – it just creates a bit of a panic," he explains.

I'm surprised by how plush the panic room is. It has marbled walls and floor, and the walls are lined with built-in shelves. There's a compartment for cash, pull-out drawers that can be used for pieces of art

and a watch storage shelf with automatic winders. There is a cigar box, and a jewellery cabinet with compartments for cufflinks, rings and bracelets. It also has a comfy-looking white leather chair in front of the mirror, giving it the air of a ladies' dressing table – and lots of people do actually use it for this purpose.

"Some clients use it like a little apartment within their apartment," Vignola says. The model in the store is even fitted with a Bose sound system. "It is a place you can go if you want to concentrate, to meditate quietly... or just spy on your family using the cameras," he adds.

He says he's been asked to create bespoke rooms to store all manner of things – some more innocuous than others.

"Even though it's about safety, a panic

“

It is for people who have hobbies and passions and want to keep those things in a safe place: watches, paintings, rifles, your secret stash of substances – whatever you're passionate about. Russians often want one for their knives and kalashnikovs.

room is actually quite an emotional purchase. It is for people who have hobbies and passions and want to keep those things in a safe place: watches, paintings, rifles, your secret stash of substances – whatever you are passionate about. Russian families quite often want one for their knives and kalashnikovs."

One Omani client, he adds, requested a bespoke storage unit to store all of her Hermes Birkin bags, which she then colour-coded so it looked like a painter's palette.

There are still challenges he'd like to take on, though. "There is one guy who always talks with me about creating a panic room for his whisky collection, but he hasn't bought one yet," he says.

Some of his clients are referred by Harrods Estates, the department store's luxury estate agency arm, which says an increasing number of high net worth clients want a panic room. "There's a real demand for these at the moment – London can be pretty scary at times," says Monica Rowe, its marketing manager. "It is for a very particular market, and it has taken a while for them to catch on – but I think the next wave of prime central London developments will have them built in."

Back in the showroom, I notice that alongside the chemical toilet and first aid kit, there is also a mini bar, presumably so you can kick back with a chilled glass of something while your home is ransacked.

It just goes to show that, with the right budget, anything is possible – whether you want a storage vault for your priceless jewels, or just an extremely secure man cave. ■



Above: Another panic room designed by Agresti, featuring display cases for jewellery; **Below:** The control panel and watch storage compartment in the Harrods panic room





OFFICE SPACE **AMAZON**

A look behind the scenes of Amazon's huge, 15-storey headquarters at Principal Place
Words: **STEVE HOGARTY** Pictures: **GREG SIGSTON**



There's always money in the banana stand. Or at least there would be, were the bananas not being handed out for free. Each morning outside Amazon's HQ in Shoreditch a fruitmonger dispenses complimentary bananas to Amazon staff, peckish commuters and anybody who cares to take one.

The tradition was started by Jeff Bezos himself on the company's sprawling Seattle campus, a vast complex of more than 45 buildings across the city, covering between 8.1m and 13.6m sqft, depending on who you ask. That's the equivalent of ten Shards.

The tech giant's London operation is relatively modest by comparison, though still one of the largest footprints of any tech company in the capital. Situated over all 15 storeys of the recently completed Principal Place on the edge of Shoreditch, Amazon's headquarters occupies 600,000 sqft of floor space, and joins an existing office in Farringdon in employing a total of around 5,000 staff. Amazon had planned to take two thirds of the building, before deciding to take the whole lot in 2017. An indicator, if one were needed, of the firm's ambitions for accelerating growth in the UK.

The vast, atrium-style lobby is bustling when we arrive, with employees streaming in through the revolving doors of the glass-fronted entrance, and onwards through a wall of airport-style security gates. The ceiling is a starry expanse of hundreds of warm Edison bulbs, the waiting area is furnished in mismatched mid-century chairs and coffee tables, and on the floor are a series of round tiles commemorating different parts of the business. An Amazon Echo speaker the size of a phone booth stands in one corner of the reception area. You can get inside it and chat with Alexa, or just take a call in its soundproofed confines.

Past the security gates is one of several event spaces, designed to be easily adapted to meet the wildly varying needs of a business that's spread across industries as diverse as fashion, music, web services and grocery shopping. Pinning down exactly what Amazon *does* here is tricky, because it does a little bit of everything, and the result is an office layout that is consciously more generic and function-led than most smaller, more focused companies.

"We're a global business," says Ben Farmer, head of HR for Amazon UK. "We're incredibly diverse. We really think that being able to collaborate in real-time is important for both our business and for how people learn and develop here. So we didn't want to have too much formality and structure around our spaces. We've got meeting rooms, as you'd expect, but there's lots of other spaces that people can use either as individuals or as teams."

Riding the elevator up to the 15th floor reveals one such space, a bright and airy lounge with wide views out over east ►



Above: The view from the terrace; a supersized (and fully functional) Amazon Echo; and the repurposed Mini Cooper salvaged from LoveFilm's old offices.

► London. "This is set up fairly informally today," says Farmer, "but, for example, we had Dido performing here on International Women's Day, and we had a completely different setup then. It's actually quite cool coming up here because on any given day you've got no real idea how it's going to be set up or what's going to be going on."

A curved brown wall disguises a mini auditorium in the corner of the lounge, where a new hire orientation is in full swing. As we descend through the building, it's possible to peer down the full height of the structure through an impressive interior atrium that rises from the café on the first floor to a huge skylight above. Ensuring plenty of natural light was a specific consideration when designing the office in London, where daylight can be a rare commodity, says Farmer. The vantage point is one of the few times you get a true sense of the building's population, too.

There are all the usual trappings of a large, 21st century technology company. Every desk can be adjusted to a standing position at the push of a button, there are gender neutral toilets and multi-faith prayer rooms, nursing rooms for breastfeeding mothers and meditation spaces for relaxing.

On the 10th floor is a fully equipped fitness studio with a busy schedule of classes. Next to that, the recruitment team has its own set of dedicated meeting rooms for interviewing candidates. There is no post room as such, instead dotted about the place are bright yellow Amazon lockers for

taking in parcel deliveries to employees.

There are two rooftop terrace gardens, which aren't terribly pleasant places to be in December, but find regular use in warmer weather for company gatherings. Could they also one day function as landing pads for Amazon drone deliveries?

"That's not happening here," say Farmer, "but we do have a research and development facility in Cambridge, where the first ever drone flight to a customer took place. We're proud to say that's come out of the UK.

"Beyond that we've got a fair number of our technology teams here. The Prime Video team is here, and there's a big technology team based in this building."

We wander through the Amazon Fashion department, past racks of clothes from the company's latest fashion line and towards the Prime Video floor. There are shelves packed with different cables, televisions, mobile phones and games consoles – every feasible combination of devices is routinely tested to ensure Amazon's video app is working smoothly across all platforms.

Last year Amazon bought the rights to broadcast Premier League matches starting in December, and the company will no doubt be pulling out all the stops to ensure their streaming software works flawlessly on even the most obscure hardware.

Rounding another corner, we find a few more nods to Prime Video's eminence in the building. Walls are adorned with movie posters for Amazon Originals such as *The Man In The High Castle* and *The Marvelous*

Mrs Maisel. A life-sized stuffed buffalo, a prop from *American Gods*, dominates one room. Most eye catching however is a bright red Mini Cooper converted into a set of plush leather chairs. It's a nod to the *Italian Job*, and the origins of Prime Video itself.

"This is a nod back to one of our subsidiaries," says Farmer. "LoveFilm was a business that we acquired a while ago, and, along with others parts of our business, became what Prime Video is today. These seats actually belonged to the original LoveFilm offices."

Back on the second floor, the piazza style lunch area is beginning to fill up as hungry employees descend from the dozen floors above. Stalls sell pizza by the slice, a laid back coffee shop with low-slung lights and comfortable seating overlooks the reception area. Like almost everywhere else, the space is designed to be versatile, and regularly used for networking events: here and there are dart boards, table tennis and pool tables.

Amazon's HQ has the population of a small town, and a cursory tour of its floors can only yield a snapshot of the breadth of its UK operation. But if anything is clear, it's that the office space is intended to be as adaptable as Amazon itself.

"What works for us here is not being too prescriptive about the spaces we've got," says Farmer, "but providing a real variety that people can use as they see fit. We employ lots of very smart and inventive people, and they use space in ways that work for them." ■

Clockwise from main: Employees get their caffeine fix at a Benugo café; A rescued prop from American Gods, the Amazon Original television series; And a set of salvaged doors from around Shoreditch, decorated by local artists.





THE BACK PAGE

STEVE HOGARTY

DREAMING OF A WOKE CHRISTMAS

As our growing mistrust of plastic meets our long-held contempt for deforestation, how do we know which Christmas tree won't kill the planet?

Like all the best Christmas traditions – mulled wine, advent calendars, the version of Santa Claus that creeps into your house and murders you – the first artificial Christmas tree was invented in Germany in the 19th century. Argos wouldn't be invented for another hundred years, so these fake trees, made from goose feathers painted green, were significantly more difficult to come by than the real ones. Their invention was an attempt to curb rampant deforestation in Germany, as more of us succumbed to the seasonal hysteria of ritualistically chopping down a big bush and dragging it into our house so we could stare at it.

The feather tree was, for everybody except the goose, the world's first sustainable Christmas tree. But this year marks an awkward tipping point in festive eco-mindedness, as society's newfound disdain for all things plastic has crashed headfirst into our historic contempt for cutting down trees. An unstoppable green force has collided with an immovable woke object. It's the Lorax versus that one baby seagull who exploded because he ate a bunch of Coca-Cola lids.

The mounting argument between real trees and plastic ones marks what must be one of the last possible sub-divisions of an increasingly factionalised society, as once allied Christmas fans draw lines in the sand. (Sand, by the way, is a limited resource necessary for the production of concrete, which accounts for eight per cent of CO2 emissions globally, so you really shouldn't be using it to draw lines.)

So which is best? On the side of real trees, you have the argument that their production is perfectly sustainable and nothing at all like how we feed a football field of the Amazonian rainforest through a woodchipper every millisecond to make our festive red coffee cups. Apart from the one that Norway gifts Trafalgar Square each year, which is plucked from an authentic forest and has all the squirrels and bears

shaken out of it, our Christmas trees are typically grown precisely to end up in our living rooms, and increasingly grown in the UK. It is their grim destiny, and a fate that, were they capable of comprehending it, they would surely accept without complaint. Also, real trees smell nice, so there's that.

The primary argument for the ecological soundness of plastic trees, on the other hand, is their reusability. Manage to keep hold of a plastic tree for five years on the trot and you'll start to break even versus the five real Christmas trees you'll have sneaked out at 2am to chuck in your neighbour's skip. But even the best artificial trees can't survive repeated trips to the attic, and when the time comes to dispose of your plastic tree you'll be creating a festive artefact for future historians to puzzle over in the year 2820. Either that or it will be broken down into a trillion microparticles that will re-enter the foodchain and, through a series of naturally occurring ironic processes, eventually end up back in your turkey sandwiches.

The answer – in case you're actually interested – is that real trees, when bought locally and properly recycled, are much better for the planet. But the woke Christmas decorator can aim to have even less of an environmental impact over the holiday season.

Why not switch off all the lights in your house, plunge your living room into complete darkness and simply *claim* to your guests that there's a Christmas tree in the corner? Or drag all of your furniture to the nearest pine forest and entertain your visiting relatives there? Why not climb into a hyperbaric chamber over the festive period and enter a kind of thermodynamically static hibernation state, in which your very existence neither exerts nor consumes resources, so that you can enjoy Christmas blissfully untroubled by your own raging and implacable conscience?

● Steve Hogarty is a travel and technology writer for City A.M. and is frequently paralysed by indecision during the ecologically fraught process of purchasing a Christmas tree.

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