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COVER: RENDERING OF POOL TERRACE AT
AMAN RESIDENCES, BEVERLY HILLS

COVER RENDER COURTESY OF AMAN

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Letter from the Publisher

Dear Reader,

Welcome AMAN, not only to our beloved city of Beverly Hills, but also to this second edition of the Beverly Hills Courier's TRAVEL magazine. We are honored to officially introduce Beverly Hills, our surrounding cities, and our global readership to your extraordinary locations of ultimate luxury within the world of AMAN.

The stories will take the reader on an exceptional journey through the Courier's curated selection of AMAN's finest properties around the globe, each with its own unique appeal. From the American desert landscape of Amangiri, to the lush jungles of Indonesia, through the sunbaked terrain of Marrakech, and back home to our much-anticipated, world-class property in Beverly Hills, you will easily be transported to these soul-soothing and astonishing escapes.

As AMAN first took shape in Asia, we return there by sea in "Asia's Allure," an expert's overview of luxury voyages to Japan, Hong Kong, Thailand and beyond. In "Oaxaca, Mexico, Land of Color, Culture and History," the Courier's Neely Swanson explores the riches of one of Mexico's most vibrant colonial towns. And in "Italy! Italie! Italia!" she takes readers on a multi-day sojourn on the Amalfi Coast. Rounding out the issue is a Q&A with the CEO of one of the world's top global travel concierges, sharing travel tips and insights.

We hope this issue inspires your next journey, and wish you many safe and rewarding travels to come.



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A Piece of History

BY SAMANTHA BROOKS

RENDERINGS COURTESY OF KERRY HILL ARCHITECTS (KHA)

RENDERING OF POOL TERRACE AT AMAN RESIDENCES, BEVERLY HILLS

Known for legendary resorts and residences around the globe, Aman chooses Beverly Hills to make its West Coast debut. Here's an exclusive look at what's to come.

From its inception, Aman has always pursued the creation of dynamic resorts and residences in incomparable settings. Never compromising on location or architectural integrity, the brand portfolio now includes 35 hotels, resorts and residences across 20 countries, reaching storied destinations such as Bhutan and Marrakech and global metropolises including New York and Tokyo.

As the first Aman to be located on the West Coast, Aman Beverly Hills will combine the cherished brand's ability to craft captivating retreats in an unparalleled setting. The project, designed by Kerry Hill Architects (KHA) from Singapore, will be the crown jewel of One Beverly Hills, a multibillion-dollar, 17.5-acre oasis set at the most iconic intersection in Los Angeles, where Santa Monica and Wilshire Boulevards meet. Aman will join the preexisting Waldorf Astoria Beverly Hills and the Beverly Hilton to create a unified development that will include 10 acres of public and private botanical gardens featuring more than 200 species of California native and water-wise plants and trees. Aman Beverly Hills will raise the bar of luxury in the area, offering a 78-key Aman hotel, two residential towers and a members-only Aman Club, all set on a private parcel with botanical gardens and secluded pathways reserved exclusively for the owners of Aman residences.

WHAT IS AMAN?

Aman, the Sanskrit word for “peace,” has spent the last three decades cementing itself as a global leader in luxury hospitality. The first Aman Resort was created in Phuket in 1988 to replicate the feeling of being in a private home, with just a handful of rooms. Although the brand has since evolved, its main ethos of making guests always feel at home has long been the common thread running through the brand's history.

“Our studio was founded in Singapore 45 years ago, and we've spent the last 35 of them working with Aman,” says Tanuj Goenka, Director of KHA. “Our brands started their journeys together, and we've been proud to complete 13 Amans around the world. Over that time, Aman has always valued an environment that sets the properties apart, but the brand is not static—it has had a tremendous ability to move with the times, but without ever losing its soul.”

The now Switzerland-based hospitality brand has always been synonymous with thoughtful design, peerless service and refined taste—qualities it will be bringing to Los Angeles, where it will introduce the city to a new level of luxury. At the recent World's 50 Best Hotels awards, Aman was recognized



RENDERING OF AMAN RESIDENCES, BEVERLY HILLS

as the first-ever winner of the “Most Admired Hotel Group Award,” where it was called out as a “pioneering purveyor of ultra-luxe, wellness-forward stays.” Indeed, Aman Tokyo, which was also designed by KHA, landed as the #7 hotel in the world, while Aman New York landed spot #37, wowing guests with its spacious suites, stunning three-story spa and peaceful atmosphere, all while being located in one of the busiest cities in the world. The New York property was the third U.S. project for the brand, following the landmark 2007 opening of Amangani in Jackson Hole, where the 40-key resort overlooks the Grand Tetons, and the spectacular 2009 debut of Amangiri in Utah, set among red-rock canyons and 900 acres of the Colorado Plateau. Also in North America, the brand features properties in the Dominican Republic (Amanera) and Turks and Caicos (Amanyara), where guests are just a stone’s throw from the U.S. but feel transported to a world away by the captivating environments Aman so thoughtfully designs.

A SETTING LIKE NO OTHER

Beverly Hills may consist of just 5.71 square miles, but the tiny enclave has reached world-renowned status as one of the most elite and sought-after luxury destinations in the world. In the early 1800s, the city began as an agricultural community. By 1912, it was welcoming its first hotel, The Beverly Hills Hotel; by the 1920s, historic mansions as Pickfair (the home of Douglas Fairbanks and Mary Pickford) were being constructed; by the 1960s, Fred Hayman and Aldo Gucci were turning Rodeo Drive into a glamorous luxury retail destination with the openings of Giorgio Beverly Hills and Gucci; by the 1990s, the city’s zip code was immortalized by the series “Beverly Hills 90210”; and in 2027, the city will become even more elevated with the launch of Aman Beverly Hills.

“I’ve been to California many times and was already familiar with Beverly Hills before we came onto this project,” says Goenka. “[Another world-renowned architectural firm] Foster and Partners had already put plans in with the city and gained approval for a project that included a botanical garden that would drape around the master plan. The idea of living in a garden in the middle of a busy city, which is predominantly a car city, meant that the Aman resident would have the opportunity to live in a truly special space.” Goenka adds that as he and his colleagues visited private homes around the city, they always noted the generosity of the landscape and the vistas. “We observed how private homes in L.A. take in the natural landscapes, the views, the surrounding nature, the sky ... it was important that we brought that all into this vertical project,” says the architect.

Now, the residences will occupy the two towers at Aman Beverly Hills, allowing for ample space to be dedicated to outdoor gardens that will make each unit feel like a private retreat that embraces the outdoors instead of hiding from them behind walls of glass and steel. But Aman Beverly Hills is not only a lush oasis for residents—its accompanying hotel will offer a new level of vertical luxury the city has never seen before. As the first new luxury hotel in the region in nearly a decade, it will raise the bar by offering guests a new way to experience Beverly Hills, complete with unparalleled design, top-tier service and exclusive amenities.

INCOMPARABLE DESIGN

Deep overhangs, lush, verdant gardens on every level, an abundance of natural wood—there is nothing typical about Aman’s plan to bring vertical living to the heart of Beverly Hills. “This is not your ubiquitous glass-and-steel high-rise,” says Goenka. “We considered how the building would be viewed and lived in from every angle and at different times of the day.” To that end, the glazing of each floor is set back from the edges of the building, with space for plantings, private pools, and undersides of timber that allow both residents and passersby to feel as if they’re immersed in lush landscaping.

“We’ve created five Amans in Bhutan, which is one of the only carbon-negative countries in the world, and we created the Aman in Kyoto, which rests within a forest, near several UNESCO World Heritage Sites,” says Goenka. “We took the same propensity towards nature with this project, immersing the residents in a beautiful garden setting not on just the ground plane, but on every level.” Natural materials like limestone and natural woods will be used throughout, with the line between interiors and exteriors intentionally being blurred. “We only take on projects where we can be responsible for both the architecture and the interiors. We never want someone in one of our environments to distinguish where the architecture starts and stops. Instead, the indoors and outdoors should flow seamlessly,” he continues.

A Piece of History continues on page 22

Asia's Allure

Luxury Cruisers Seek Exotic Voyages to Japan, Hong Kong, Thailand and Beyond

BY SUSAN J. YOUNG

Whether luxury travelers desire to savor Singapore's eclectic tastes, delve into Japan's geisha heritage, stroll through captivating UNESCO World Heritage sites, soak in Thailand's eco-beauty or shop till they drop in Hong Kong, one fact is clear for 2025 and beyond—Asia travel, including luxury cruising, is booming.

No longer are consumers taking just one big annual vacation. Instead, they're heading out on two, three or even more robust trips a year. Virtuoso, a network of top luxury travel advisors, recently revealed that its 2025 travel sales to Tokyo are up 116% year-over-year. From the luxury cruise side, "Japan is Asia's hottest destination," says Shawn Tubman, senior vice president of sales and trade marketing, Regent Seven Seas Cruises, with Southeast Asia another big draw.

Helping to fuel demand for Thailand is Season 3 of "The White Lotus," now airing weekly on HBO and Max. The storylines focus on interactions between global travelers and hotel staffers at a luxurious Thailand resort. But while the tales are pure fiction, the settings are authentic. Many scenes were filmed on location at sumptuous resorts in Phuket, Bangkok and Koh Samui, Thailand, as well as at Thai beaches and eco-preserves.

As a result, "Koh Samui is getting tremendous exposure of its natural beauty," says Tubman. "That will generate demand for not only Thailand, but also the rest of Asia." From his perspective, "Luxury cruising will benefit, particularly as people realize how accessible the exotic Asia destinations are via cruising." Simply put, I totally concur, based on my personal experiences from multiple Asia ocean voyages, most recently a two-week voyage from Tokyo, Japan, to Singapore on Silversea's ultra-luxury Silver Nova.



PHOTO COURTESY OF SILVERSEA

SILVER NOVA IN HONG KONG

Over the years, I've traveled within Asia on escorted land tours, city stays and extensive independent trips. I love it all, but luxury ocean cruising is a hassle-free way to travel in comfort and style, plus touch many cultures in multiple Asian countries. For example, while sailing on Seabourn a few years ago, I enjoyed a great night's sleep and room service breakfast delivered by my suite's butler while sailing in Southeast Asia.

Less than 90 minutes later, I was off the ship and exploring Sihanoukville, the second-largest city in Cambodia. At a local market, I watched locals haggle loudly with vendors to get the best price on fresh fruits and veggies piled high on produce stalls. Seated on the floor, a fish seller sloshed his hands inside a tub of water, causing the live fish to splash and leap. His convincing performance resulted in a female onlooker nodding and quickly buying a fresh catch. It was a rewarding cultural snapshot of the local lifestyle.

Another two hours later—after a stroll through an ancient temple—I was ensconced back aboard Seabourn Ovation. After a luscious dinner and a great night's rest, another exotic locale beckoned me in the morning.

Asia's Allure continues on page 33

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PHOTO BY LARRY SWANSON

POSITANO

Italy! Italie! Italia!

BY NEELY SWANSON

Italy! The name conjures romance, old-world glory, elaborate icing-topped monuments, and film and television references, which for me are impossible to escape. I'd love to think of myself as young Audrey Hepburn, princess in disguise, riding on the back of Gregory Peck's Vespa through the streets in "Roman Holiday" (at a time when it wasn't quite as treacherous); or Anita Ekberg lolling sexily in the Trevi Fountain at night in "La Dolce Vita" (when you could do that almost privately) or "Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow" where we get to play Sophia Loren and Marcello Mastroianni. And of course, there's my cult favorite "Beat the Devil," set in Ravello, where I get to be Gina Lollobrigida to my husband Larry's Humphrey Bogart, but more on that later.

By reputation, the perpetually lemon-scented Amalfi Coast is almost peerless in its stunning beauty and sophistication. Just take a dip in the languid waters of the Netflix series "Ripley." It fully captures the slow-motion riot of the treacherous roads, the decaying decadence of the crumbling buildings and the linen-clad beautiful people who still call it home. Built into the rocky hills, the houses tumble down the cliffs, seeming to float or be attached by invisible wires holding them up like alert puppets. The white of the buildings reflects almost blindingly off the blueness of the water. When a close friend rented a villa on the Amalfi Coast and invited us to come, the answer was a very quick YES!

Our villa, actually two country houses, was on a hill in Piano di Sorrento, off the beaten track but overlooking Sorrento, the coast and Capri. We settled in comfortably, meandering around the grounds filled with trees laden with apricots, oranges and, of course, the ever-present lemons. Our tiny neighborhood was populated by two cafes and a mini market whose hours of

operation were at the owner's caprice. There was even a tiny clothing-souvenir shop specializing in homemade linen shirts, dresses and pants. The sewing machines were in constant use producing brightly colored shirts and (alas) pants with lemon motifs.

Sorrento was our first eagerly awaited foray. Devoid of some of the harrowing hairpin turns that would await us on our trips to Positano and Amalfi, it was an introduction to driving in Italy where lane markings are mere suggestions, and the game of "Chicken" seems to be embedded in the DNA of anyone with a driver's license; truly a case of "he who hesitates" loses. If roundabouts didn't have stop signs, tourists would wait until the inevitable two-hour lunch break before they could progress.

Sorrento, the tip of a peninsula in the Gulf of Naples, is not technically part of the Amalfi Coast but shares some of its physical beauty. From the Sorrento harbor, boats and ferries leave for the islands and the cities of the Amalfi Coast. Mount Vesuvius with its dual peaks is an easily identifiable landmark, and Pompeii is halfway between Naples and Sorrento. It's ironic, or at least disingenuous, of a tourist to complain about tourists but Sorrento, even in May, is nigh unto unmanageable. Rife with accommodations from the five-star variety to suspect B&Bs, the shops along the main pedestrian street sell tacky souvenirs and brag of so-called handcrafted wood inlay works of art but are just factory showrooms churning out ashtrays and plaques. Contributing to the claustrophobia were the hundreds of Bermuda short-clad men, women and children lined up behind flag-waving guides dashing through the stores and monuments before being herded back to one of the megaliners (4,500 passengers and more) docked in Naples.

Italy! Italie! Italia! continues on page 28



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Rooted Philosophies

A guided look at Aman's five stunning resorts and duo of exclusive experiences in Indonesia

BY SAMANTHA BROOKS

While the Aman brand didn't originate in Indonesia, it certainly established its foundation there, with much of its hospitality heritage stemming from the Southeast Asian country's architectural vernacular, as well as the rich Eastern philosophies of wellness. The Aman brand debuted with the opening of Amanpuri in Phuket, Thailand, in 1988, followed by the opening of Amandari in Indonesia's Balinese cultural capital of Ubud in 1989. In the years since, Aman opened Amankila and Amanusa in 1992, Amanwana in 1993, Amanjiwo in 1997, and launched a sailing yacht, Amandira, through the area in 2015.

"Indonesia is the heritage and background of the Aman brand," says Jann Hess, the General Manager of Amankila and Regional Director of Aman Indonesia. "The strongest DNA of the brand comes from the people here, and the ethos of how the brand always aims to blend in with local culture stems from here too."

While these Aman properties are all well-established, the region's increasing popularity over the years has made it prime for new development, as well as for people to rediscover the foundation and heart of the Aman brand, with the U.S. bringing more visitors to Aman's properties than any other region. "Indonesia has more than 17,000 islands and more than 700 spoken languages, as well as breathtaking landscapes and culture," says Hess. "It's also 3,600 miles wide from east to west, so it takes some time to fully explore." Here, the experienced hotelier, who has spent the last decade with Aman Resorts, guides us through what makes each property particularly unique—as well as what's ahead for these legacy properties.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF AMAN

BALINESE FEAST AT AMANDARI

AMANDARI—AN ENCHANTED FOREST HAVEN

"In the beginning days of the Aman brand, the idea was that the resorts would feel like homes where you are welcoming friends," says Hess. Nestled in Bali's uplands, about 15 miles from the sea, Amandari is surrounded by Bali's most verdant landscapes, filled with Hindu temples and shrines, rainforests, and numerous craftspeople and artisans. Here, spacious suites offer a variety of residential-inspired configurations, complete with private pools that reflect the tonal greens of their surroundings, as well as open-air rooms for seamless integration with the outdoors to let in views of the Ayung River Gorge and River Valley, rice paddies or landscaped gardens. Materials like teak, marble, as well as thatched roofs and coconut define the building palette.

"At Amandari, you can see how from the beginning, the Aman brand always developed in a way that blended in with what was already around it. It sets the standard for all the resorts to follow," says Hess. Today, guests at the property can visit the neighboring village filled with galleries and artists; be led by an Aman guide through local markets; explore the nearby iconic temples; go on a cycle journey through rice fields; trek alongside a picturesque lake; experience Balinese spiritual counseling; or simply bask in the environment and absorb the stunning nature.

AMANKILA—A NEW HOME FOR AMAN LOVERS

Historically, Bali was divided into nine kingdoms, each ruled by a different royal family. Set in the ancient kingdom of Karangasem, on the eastern side of Bali, Amankila is set among some of the island’s most culturally significant sites and compelling landscapes. “It’s hard to find a place more unique than this,” says Hess. “Bali is quite large [about 2,230 square miles], but there’s so much you can do here without going too far.” Hess points to Balinese cultural experiences like visiting one of the water palaces, Tirta Gangga, hiking along the stunning gray-sand coastline, as well as snorkeling and diving.

First built in 1992 by architect Ed Tuttle, who is responsible for other Aman resorts like Amangani and Amanzoe, the property has long inspired guests with its cliffside home featuring sweeping views of the Lombok Strait, as well as its intimate accommodations with canopied beds, soaking tubs and private terraces. Now, Amankila is creating just nine exclusive residences, designed by Singapore-based Studio NvS. The expansive properties range from 29,000 to 61,000 square feet, boasting outdoor terraces, private pools and an elevated hillside position to take in sweeping ocean views.

“Each villa is being designed to host multigenerational families and/or groups of friends,” describes Hess. “They’re created on a large scale, each comprised of elegant pavilions and seamlessly blending with the rest of the resort.”

Residences will range from three to five bedrooms, with homeowners having the option to add additional pavilions for spaces like an office, media room or meditation lounge. Owners will have full and preferred access to all hotel amenities and services, in addition to the Aman Private Office, which provides global services across the entire Aman portfolio.



THE FOUR-BEDROOM VILLA GARDEN BALE AT AMAN VILLAS AT NUSA DUA

AMAN VILLAS AT NUSA DUA—AN ALL—VILLA RESORT FOR A TRULY EXCLUSIVE STAY

Golden beaches, oceanside temples and frangipani-scented hillsides set the background at Aman Villas Nusa Dua, where each private, two-story villa comes with a team of two butlers and a private chef. The all-villa resort feels more like its own private residential enclave, where its seven homes, ranging from 45,552 square feet to 58,727 square feet, occupy a total of 153 private acres. Since opening in 1992, the property has been catering to guests seeking customized experiences in a unique setting. Its position on Bali’s southernmost peninsula provides proximity to the Bali National Golf Club as well as some of the island nation’s most stunning white-sand beaches. Complementing the stunning setting, the architecture of the villas comes from Kerry Hill Architects, who have designed Aman resorts across the world, including the forthcoming property in Beverly Hills. “Kerry Hill’s work, especially in these early Aman properties, really set the tone for the brand, and you can see how decades later, not only is it still relevant, but it’s also still inspiring,” says Hess.



RENDERING OF PRIVATE POOL AND TERRACE AT AMAN RESIDENCES, AMANKILA

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Oaxaca, Mexico

Land of Color,
Culture and
History

BY NEELY SWANSON

A visit to Oaxaca, Mexico, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, anytime from October to May is ideal. The temperature is always pleasant and the rains are yet to come. But if I had a preference, it would be in early November. For the adventurous, the Day of the Dead (Nov. 1-2), combining pagan and Catholic rituals, is exciting, vibrant and full of activity. For me, the perfect time is always the day after the day after the Day of the Dead. The chaos, noise and mayhem have calmed, leaving the colors, statues and joy behind. Already one of the most brilliantly glowing cities in Mexico, a country full of color and beauty, Oaxaca is bathed in the bright primary colors of its buildings and the intense ornamentation of its many churches. A very approachable city, ideally you should reserve at least four days for your visit. Besides the city itself, not-to-miss sights are Monte Albán and, time permitting, Mitla, both important archaeological sites and UNESCO World Heritage Sites, full of Zapotec and Mixtec history.

Historically, the rugged topography of the Oaxaca region was both a curse and a blessing. The curse was in the difficulty of growing crops, but its blessing was its isolation and mineral and gemstone-rich land. The two primary Indigenous cultures, Mixtec and Zapotec, were in constant conflict, with the Mixtecs predominating until the arrival of the Aztecs in the 15th century. Their dominance was short-lived, however. Misjudging conquistador Hernán Cortés for a god, the Aztecs almost immediately lost their stronghold and influence to the Spaniards. It was an ideal location for the conquerors to set up headquarters as they stripped the region of its gold, silver and jade. It is rare to find so much history, Indigenous culture, art and craft in one location.

Hotels of every level of luxury and sophistication are found throughout the city center. We chose the historic Quinta Real, a stone's throw from the famous Templo de Santo Domingo and one of the many blocks with long open-air markets selling everything from jewelry to gelato. Like so much of Oaxaca, the Quinta Real is tied to the conquest by the Spanish and its post-colonial history. Originally built as the Convent of Santa Catalina de Siena by Benedictine monks, it was inhabited by Dominican nuns. Steep stone steps lead to the rooms on the upper levels, all built around courtyards, as are most buildings and houses in the area. Many of the 16th-century paintings originally belonging to the Dominican order still hang on the walls. But as tied into the religious history of the city, it is even more connected to its political profile. The Revolution of 1859



PHOTO BY LARRY SWANSON

OAXACA CITY CENTER

by local hero Benito Juárez changed everything, at least for a time. Juárez, the first elected Zapotec president, nationalized the church and seized its many properties, including the convent, turning it first into government offices and then a jail. Later it was a school, a warehouse and eventually a luxury hotel. The old chapel was even used as a movie theater. Yes there are more modern accommodations with greater degrees of luxury, but there is nothing to compare with the history and flower gardens that make up the Quinta Real. That, and the grasshopper omelet they serve at breakfast.

Walking to the Templo de Santo Domingo, we were immediately immersed in the design and meaning of Baroque architecture. Almost Gothic on the outside, it has two tiled bell towers and a central fascia of tablets depicting lives of the saints with a few conquistadors and contemporaneous citizens thrown in for good measure. But it is the lavish interior that brings the definition of Baroque clearly into focus. Excessive decoration leaving no tile unturned, the Templo has a lavish gold-leafed nave with an arched ceiling of saint portraits encased in ornate gold frames, accented by arched lapis blue ceiling tiles. Each column is bejeweled with statues of saints, some known, mostly not. There is even an elaborate "Tree of Life" with various "sainted" Spanish knights occupying the branches. This is the architectural style for which more is never enough, and an empty inch is a design flaw. Dazzling when entered, it only expands in extravagance.

Combining the sacred with the irreverent, symbols and statues of the "dead" surround the grounds of the church where vendors hawk their miniature skeletons and totemic animals. Oaxaca is a city of contrasts, historical and artistic. It is home to many churches and a cathedral, many adjacent





PHOTO BY LARRY SWANSON

PLAZA IN FRONT OF TEMPLO DE SANTO DOMINGO

to one another. But it is also the birthplace of Benito Juárez, who, schooled originally in a seminary to enter the priesthood, became the first democratically elected Indigenous (Zapotec) president of Mexico who established, at least for a time, a clear boundary between church and state, something the conservative party and the church were determined to recoup. Oaxaca is also home to Juárez's acolyte and later bitter rival, Porfirio Díaz, who replaced the democracy of Juárez with his own autocratic rule, a rule that spurred the Mexican Revolution of Emiliano Zapata and Pancho Villa. In so many ways, Oaxaca is the center of everything.

Parallel to the political history is the art history of the region. Rufino Tamayo, a contemporary of the muralists Rivera, Orozco and Siqueiros, was a modernist painter, born in Oaxaca of Zapotec origin. A Mexico City resident in adulthood, he returned to Oaxaca to build an art museum that featured his personal collection of pre-Columbian art. Choosing different colors for each room, highlighting a different era of the archaeological history of Mexico, the shades bring out nuance in the pieces that might otherwise blend into a beige or gray background. In its own approachable way, the relatively few, colorful rooms contain artifacts of the highest quality, rivaling the much larger and more famous National Museum of Anthropology in Mexico City. The Rufino Tamayo Museum of Pre-Hispanic Art is must-see.

The artistic thread continued when Tamayo mentored his protégé Francisco Toledo, a Zapotec artist whose influence in Oaxaca may be even greater. Already an internationally recognized artist at the age of 19, he studied and worked in Paris and New York but returned to his home state where his commitment was immediately felt.

Our first stop was Toledo's Art Library and school (Instituto de Artes Gráficas de Oaxaca - IAGO). Built around a bougainvillea-shaded patio, rooms of art-related books, most from Toledo's personal collection, form the body of a cultural center that includes the Manuel Álvarez Bravo Photography Center and the Eduardo Mata Music Library, all part of the art school he founded. Artwork is hung everywhere, but it was

the Day of the Dead altar set up at the exit celebrating Toledo, who died in 2019, that resonated the most. Orange and red streamers hung near his portrait, with candles and celebratory bread loaves, decorated with skulls lining the shelves below his picture. We were in the perfect mood to walk some more along the avenues populated with giant skeletons in party dresses under multicolored flags that created an umbrella over the temporary "Dead" sculptures. Many of the buildings, all painted in various hues, sported skulls or ceramic animal heads. Walking toward the Zócalo, the large courtyard in the city center, we passed the Catedral Metropolitana, Oaxaca's only consecrated cathedral, flanked by giant, Rodinesque sculptures of downtrodden men and women carrying the load of the world. Created by Oaxacan artist Alberto Aragon Reyes, "Procession: Time of Giants" is striking in its use of metal. The poverty it portrays is, to a certain extent, an honor to the cathedral behind it, a more modest structure than many of the other churches.

A return to the hotel meant a return to the bar and one of the excellent mezcal-laced cocktails. Tequila, in all its permutations, may be the national liquor of Mexico, but mezcal has a distinct smoky taste and is a specialty of the Oaxaca region. A cocktail is always a great beginning to one of Oaxaca's renowned restaurants. Now a foodie paradise, Oaxaca boasts many starred restaurants, all with a distinct Mexican flavor, highlighted by molé. Fear not. Molé, a sauce made from dried chiles and any combination of various ingredients, but always chocolate, is definitely not the black, gelatinous glop so often passed off as a Oaxacan specialty. Mole comes in many flavors and colors and can range from delicate to strong, depending on the amount of spice and chocolate. Not being a fan, it took a lot to convince me to try, but after my first taste of red mole (coloradito), followed by green and then pink, I was a fan. The delicacy of the sauce enhances the flavor of the meat and does not overpower.

Monte Albán is a must-see, regardless of the time allotted for a visit to the region. A UNESCO World Heritage Site, this pre-Columbian archaeological site is not quite an hour outside the city center. Monte Albán was the preeminent Zapotec city for almost a thousand years, founded around 500 B.C. and totally abandoned in 800 A.D. Situated on top of a plateau in the mountains above the valley floor, its elevated location provided an ideal view of invading armies. Terraces of varying levels were designated for the important religious and political leaders, with the workers, tradesmen and farmers living on the lower levels. Although rediscovered in the late 19th century, it remained almost untouched, covered with vegetation, until large-scale excavation began in 1931. A main plaza occupies the center where religious rituals were held. Temples surrounded the plaza where many stone monuments are found (Las Danzantes) depicting the brutal fate of captured soldiers. Large, monumental stairways, like those found in Teotihuacan outside Mexico City, lead to platforms, possibly sacrificial. The remains of white "plaster" can still be seen on some of the

Oaxaca, Mexico continues on page 30



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Marrakshi Life

BY SAMANTHA BROOKS

A bit bohemian in its soul, a bit varied in its cultural history, and entirely seductive in every way, Marrakech is the kind of city that gets under your skin and makes you want to return again and again. Whether visiting for the first time or the 30th time, the city's rugged topography, with the sometimes-snow-capped Atlas Mountains in the distance; vibrant visual delights, from the red-clay walls that make up most of the city's architecture to the copper-cut-out lanterns that come on at night and cast decorative shadows; and endless energy, from the bustling medina and souk to the calming energy of the earth in the remote areas—it's impossible not to be in awe of this North African oasis.

Located just 20 minutes from the international airport and 12 minutes from



PHOTOS COURTESY OF AMAN

TOP: AMANJENA RESORT AND BASSIN VIEW
BOTTOM: AMANJENA PAVILION INTERIOR

the center of town, Amanjena, which translates to “peaceful paradise,” feels a world away from everything. Arrive through its gates and instantly enter a serene Moroccan fantasy world, where the open-air reception is furnished with antiques and decorated with a display of colorful spices from the region. Guests are immediately captivated by the

awe-inspiring water feature outside. The black-bottom tranquility pool sets the tone for the entire resort—amplifying the architecture and lighting of the property at night when it reflects off the water—and juxtaposes the desert landscape, creating what seems like an impossible oasis.

“The first time I was at Amanjena was

about 15 years ago with my wife,” says Cape Town, South Africa–based architect Stefan Antoni, principal and founder of SAOTA Architecture and Design, which is responsible for everything from mansions in Bel-Air to hotels across Africa and Europe. “I was an early ‘Amanjunkie’ and had been to a lot of the early Aman hotels in Asia. Amanjena was built in 2000, but it feels centuries old and very much of its destination, which is a testament to its architect, Ed Tuttle [who also designed the first Aman, Amanpuri, in Phuket].”

Indeed, so much of Amanjena’s appeal rests in its ability to pull the guest into the destination and immediately feel a connection to the local architecture, the landscape, and the soul of Marrakech. And, for its next phase, just a handful of special villas at Amanjena will allow its esteemed guests the privilege of owning a piece of the luxury oasis. Sprawling across 13 acres, Amanjena currently features 40 rooms, ranging from 1,883 to 12,163 square feet, a spa with four treatment rooms and two Turkish hammams, two clay tennis courts, and access to the adjacent Amelkis golf course and two additional nearby golf courses. There are also two signature restaurants, one serving traditional Moroccan cuisine in an intimate area centered around a marble fountain, and one serving informal Japanese fare for three meals daily.

“Right now, Amanjena is this hidden gem of a property, and we had the fortune of there not being much directly around it,” says Antoni. “The unused land next to it was the perfect opportunity to create something truly special.”

The homes that Aman is creating will consist of elegantly and harmoniously designed three- to six-bedroom villas, staying true to the brand’s ethos. “So many of the hotels in Marrakech are elaborate and over the top, but Aman is more Zen. The DNA of the brand is very unique, so to that end, we’re carrying on with a subdued feel,” says Antoni. “From what I’ve experienced at the other Amans around the world, there’s always a quietness and sense of balance and symmetry. The architecture is very considered, so that you can feel calm and really let go.”



TOP: MOROCCAN DINING AT AMANJENA

BOTTOM: ROOM-AL-HAMRA SUITE AT AMANJENA

Amanjena continues on page 31

Desert Time

Amangiri at a Glance

The Resort

Amangiri debuted in 2009 with just 34 suites. Its luxury tented resort, Camp Sarika, opened in 2020 with 10 spacious accommodations to further immerse guests into the stunning setting of the 900-acre resort. The property also includes a 25,000-square-foot wellness center, restaurant and access to the nearby Grand Canyon, Bryce Canyon, Zion National Park and Lake Powell.

The Residences

Each of the private homes at Amangiri will be situated on five to 19 acres. Homeowners will have access to all the hotel amenities at the adjacent Amangiri resort, as well as the Aman Private Office, which coordinates access to global services across the entire Aman portfolio of properties.

The Location

Amangiri is located in Canyon Point, Utah, about 550 miles northeast of Los Angeles. The closest airport is Page Municipal Airport (PGA), just 25 minutes from the property.

The Architect

Based in Los Angeles since 2012, Masastudio was founded in Phoenix, Arizona, in 1997 by Marwan Al-Sayed and Mies Anderson. In addition to being one of the original architects of Amangiri, the firm has created homes for private clients and institutions across the world. Recent projects include everything from a modern estate in Dallas on four acres with a creek running through it, to custom residences in Bel-Air and Brentwood, as well as international work that includes private homes in Dubai and a tea museum in Southern China.

BY SAMANTHA BROOKS

When Amangiri opened in 2009, on 900 acres of pristine desert landscape, it not only helped introduce an American audience to the previously Asia-centric Aman brand, but it also helped introduce a worldwide audience to a unique landscape in the American Southwest. Arriving at the property feels like entering one of the world's most exclusive luxury resorts, and the beginning of a restorative stay, thanks to its unique surroundings.

Miles of sandstone terrain, undulating mountains, crisp clear skies and an abundance of silence are just some of the most distinguishing aspects of the property. Its striking architecture and legendary Aman services and amenities have made it a bucket-list destination, even from its early days.

Over the years, the resort has



PHOTOS COURTESY OF AMAN

TOP: AMANGIRI ORCHARD SUITE BEDROOM AND BACK PATIO

MIDDLE: CAMP SARIKA VIEWS AT AMANGIRI

BOTTOM: AMANGIRI RESORT AND POOL

continued to evolve to accommodate the needs of a more globally inspired traveler. With the 2020 opening of Camp Sarika, the 10-key luxury tented experience at Amangiri, private, safari-like accommodations reach up to 2,820 square feet and feature glass walls, fire pits and private plunge pools. The resort's expansion speaks to a more nature-loving traveler, eager to be further immersed in the landscape, while still within reach of the finest services and amenities from one of the world's leading hospitality brands.

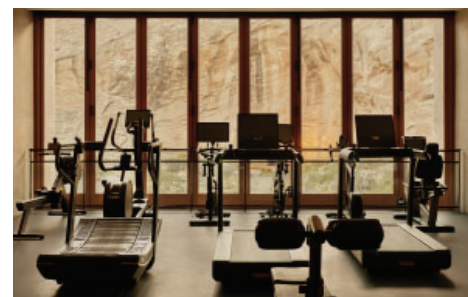
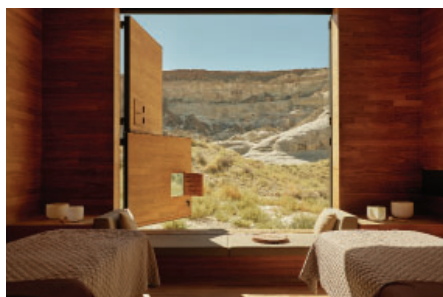
Now, the Aman Residences at Amangiri offer a unique opportunity to live at one of the most acclaimed resorts in the world, in an organically designed home that blends seamlessly with its surroundings, courtesy of the resort's original architect, Marwan Al-Sayed of Masastudio.

The Resort: From Idyll to Iconic

With 34 rooms, a 25,000-square-foot spa, signature restaurant and iconic views—from endless landscapes of the plains to the monolithic rock formation appearing to erupt from the swimming pool—Amangiri has been wowing guests for more than 15 years. “There are few hotels in the world as unique as Amangiri,” says the resort’s General Manager Kerry Hing. “Many guests are often lost for words when discovering the property for the first time. They may mention that it feels like going to another planet. The scale of the desert scenery—where you can see miles away—combined with the colors and textures of the million-year-old rock formations invites reflection and wonder.”

Hing also says that the rugged wilderness and mineral design of Amangiri are usually appreciated in layers. The pace of the desert encourages guests to slow down and take the time to notice more details, whether it is a specific feature or opening in the concrete design, or the subtle variations of the light on the sand dunes and towering mesas throughout the day.

Because the inherent landscape of the surroundings encourages visitors to pause and absorb the calming energy of the region, it was a natural fit for Aman to create a residential component to the property so that guests could linger in the setting for extended amounts of time. Although an initial concept for residences



TOP LEFT: RENDERING OF PRIVATE POOL AND TERRACE AT AMAN RESIDENCES, AMANGIRI
 TOP RIGHT: PRIVATE DINING LOUNGE AT AMANGIRI
 BOTTOM LEFT: COUPLES MASSAGE EXPERIENCE AT AMANGIRI
 BOTTOM RIGHT: GYM OVERLOOKING DESERT ROCK AT AMANGIRI

at Amangiri was drafted at the time of the property’s opening, Aman chose to focus on cementing the resort and the brand before turning its attention to residences. Now, after Amangiri has become one of the most recognizable destinations in the world, the timing has been right to focus on the residential plan, which was conceived by the resort’s original architect, Marwan Al-Sayed.

The Architecture: A Seamless Union Between Nature and Man

Los Angeles-based architect Marwan Al-Sayed of Masastudio first set foot on the land that now holds Amangiri in 1999. “Creating Amangiri was a completely unique project,” he says. “I was based in Phoenix at the time, and the developers were interviewing different firms in the area. When they realized that their top picks, Rick Joy [of Studio Rick Joy], Wendell Burnette [of Wendell Burnette Architects], and I all knew each other, they asked us to collaborate on the project.”

Al-Sayed admits a collaboration of such established firms is rare, but the site was so spectacular and the project so intriguing that all three firms eagerly signed on. They formed their own joint

firm for the project, ITEN Studio, and had a completely open collaboration. “There was no competition between us—we all put our egos aside and decided that the best idea on the table wins,” says Al-Sayed.

The design team traveled to numerous Aman properties, mostly in Asia, to immerse themselves in the brand’s ethos and DNA. Upon returning to the site and developing a plan, they were predominantly inspired by the light and surrounding environment. “So many of the surrounding places to stay in the region are built right next to the highway, like an old roadside American motel,” says Al-Sayed. “But here, we built entirely into the landscape—not just on top of it. Our mission became to create something that would resonate but not detract from what’s already there. Because there was nothing else like this in the area, it put the region on the map in a way that had never been done before.”

For the property’s next chapter, Al-Sayed, who has frequently traveled back to Amangiri since its opening, observing how the property has matured and evolved, has created a new residential plan for a collection of villas,



RENDERING OF POOL WITH DESERT VIEW AT AMAN RESIDENCES, AMANGIRI

which will have unique characteristics prescribed by their individual settings.

“The way I look at it, is that there is the main area with the hotel, with a valley above it, which will have some villas, and then two other valleys will each have a handful more,” says Al-Sayed. “It’s as if Amangiri is the trunk of the tree and these villas are the branches and leaves that extend from it.”

Featuring many of the same materials found at the main resort, the new villas will each have a living room, dining room, loggia pavilion that opens to outdoor spaces and a swimming pool with its own unique rock feature. “The rooms are like a series of blocks that get adapted to the landscape,” says Al-Sayed. “Although each residence is made from the same materials, they will all feel different because of the way they engage the rock and the land. If you’re visiting someone else’s residence, it will be familiar but different.”

The Environment: Nature Makes for the Best Neighbor

Amangiri is surrounded by 900 acres of sand dunes and sandstone cliffs, making it a unique playground for hiking, rock climbing, exploring the nearby national parks or just luxuriating in the tranquility the property exudes. From the air, most of the land around the resort appears flat, but Al-Sayed explains that there’s actually quite a bit of undulation in the landscape that allows for not only

a variety of outdoor pursuits but also for the architecture of new residences to be tucked into the folds of the landscape. The natural terrain provides organic privacy, as well as an intertwined experience with the outdoors, intrinsically linking the homes with the landscape.

“The location in the high desert is a completely unique setting to experience nature year-round,” says Hing. “Amangiri experiences all of the four seasons, each with their own charm. Spring and fall enjoy balmy temperatures during the day with cooler mornings and evenings—they are the ideal seasons for outdoor adventures. The dry heat in the summer is the perfect companion for a day lounging at the pool or exploring the picturesque Lake Powell. Winter is usually colder with clear blue skies and therefore the best time of the year to retreat to the spa or go and discover the surrounding national parks.”

Indeed, the natural landscape of the resort is one of the biggest draws, with Amangiri offering an incomparable way to experience it. “I went to boarding school in Colorado and spent every spring break in Utah,” says Al-Sayed. “I have memories of hiking and biking there in spring, and the main swimming pool at Amangiri reminds me of how I’d see natural pools in the area fill up from the seasonal rains. The region is like the American version of the Greek Islands to me—a wonderland of rock and water. People coming from Europe have never experienced those expanses and scale and sense of space. It’s a magical playground in itself.”

Among some of the unique experiences to be had in the property’s “magical playground” is Via Ferrata, a series of cables and ladder rungs fixed to rock faces, allowing climbers to ascend on the property’s steep mountain routes. “This is popular with our guests as they offer both a physical and mental challenge with the reward of breathtaking views on top of the mesas,” says Hing.

After exploring the nearby terrain, guests often understand the more subtle connections between the resort’s architecture and surroundings. “When we were developing the original materials of the resort, we decided to make it out of concrete, which was made from the existing sandstone around the property,”

says Al-Sayed. “By using materials from the site, which have minerals in it, over time the walls have come to reflect what happens in the nearby rocks. They’ve aged in a natural way, just like the landscape around it.”

Wellness: Beyond the Gym

Much like the Japanese art of Shinrin-yoku, or forest bathing, spending time in the natural landscape around Amangiri is inherently relaxing. “We used to always say that just being at the property feels spa-like,” says Al-Sayed. “The rocks there are 165 million years old. My daughter [who has visited with me many times over the years] said that the energy they give off is palpable. With the residences, we tried to create a spa-like ambiance, so that you feel like you’re in harmony with what’s there.” All of the residences Al-Sayed has created are meant to settle into their site, without being overdesigned or overimagined.

Nearby, at the property’s 25,000-square-foot wellness center and throughout its grounds, Amangiri offers a variety of movement sessions to encourage a reconnection of body, mind and spirit, using the power of the natural elements to rejuvenate and rebalance. “Some of the most unique experiences here are yoga at sunrise on the top of Tower Butte [after a short helicopter flight, guests enjoy their own private, open-air yoga studio 1,000 feet above Lake Powell], as well as our Longevity Fitness, a combination of balance, stability and mobility-oriented routines, and Ai Chi, a total water-based body relaxation and strengthening process based on Tai Chi and Qi Gong,” says Hing.

Al-Sayed points out that living in a resort should be adaptable to everyday life, with the serene setting enhancing the lifestyle and daily routines. “When we created the residences, we utilized the palette in nature as much as possible. We often say that light is the final finish,” he says. “We typically build custom homes, which we fit to our clients like a tailored suit. Here, we used the site as the client, tailoring each structure into the site for a holistic living experience that not only looks good, but also feels good.” +

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KHA is collaborating with Los Angeles–based RIOS for the landscape architecture, whose work can be seen at some of the city’s most prestigious private residences, as well as at larger corporate projects for clients like NBC Universal, Paramount Pictures and Larry Ellison. “We didn’t want the landscape to be secondary; we wanted it to be substantial,” says Goenka. “Trees and plants are set within and all around the buildings—not just in an isolated planter box—so it breaks the illusion that you’re even in a building and instead feels like you’re living within nature. There are also multiple swimming pools and water features, so you truly feel like you’re in an oasis.” Adding to the residential feel of the project, a series of walking paths throughout the property will allow both hotel guests and residents to feel like they’re in their own refined neighborhood, immersed in fresh air.

Units at Aman Beverly Hills start with two-bedroom homes of 3,100 square feet and extend to five-bedroom units that command 10,500 square feet. Penthouses will offer 25,000 square feet of private space, as well as bird’s-eye views across the city, taking in the ocean, the glittering city below and the verdant Los Angeles Country Club located just west of the site. Every residence of three bedrooms and up has a private pool, and even the smaller two-bedroom units have outdoor onsens.

“Almost 30 years ago, Aman was one of the first hotel brands to allocate as much space to their bathrooms as their bedrooms,” says Goenka. “We’ve been a pioneer in celebrating the bathing experience as a ritual, and the bathing and dressing areas we’ve created in the homes here are equal to if not larger than the sleeping areas.” In the primary bedrooms, wet areas in the bathrooms extend to the outdoor terrace and pool. The sleeping, bathing and dressing areas have the option of being opened as one free-flowing space or partitioned off at times, so as not to disturb a sleeping partner.

Each primary suite will contain a double vanity, a WC, a shower with steam option and a freestanding tub oriented to the views. “Typically, bathrooms are designed with lower ceilings than in the bedrooms, but we worked hard to make sure it was the same,” says Goenka. “Once everything is open and slid away, it will feel like one continuous open plan.”

KHA’s design draws inspiration from American mid-century culture, yet as an international hotel with bespoke solutions, the project incorporates the finest products from around the globe to create a contemporary, exclusive and state-of-the-art destination.

LIFE AT AMAN BEVERLY HILLS

Much like one of the nearby exclusive estates, the approach to Aman Beverly Hills is considered the moment a resident crosses the property. Entry for the residents comes from either Santa Monica or Wilshire Boulevard along a private, secured drive. From there, residents can park in the thoughtfully designed subterranean garage or leave their car with the valet. As residents walk into the lobby, they’re met with a concierge team and staff to help assist with bags and groceries.



RENDERING OF ONE BEVERLY HILLS

The ground floor includes common areas for residents to greet visitors or hold meetings. From there, three elevator banks host private lifts that take residents directly into their homes.

While the units at Aman Beverly Hills are truly a special opportunity, the Aman Club is another unique offering. As the social hub of the project, the space will include an entertainment zone, a screening room and jazz club, multiple food and beverage outlets, as well as wellness and fitness facilities. The members-only club is open to all residents of the Aman Beverly Hills, as well as other Aman aficionados who have applied for membership, creating a collective of like-minded individuals.

Indeed, a sense of community is important to Aman Beverly Hills, with the project feeling like its own master-planned neighborhood. “What we’ve seen in our other residential projects like Amanpuri in Thailand, is that the homeowners at Aman properties are quite compatible and enjoy getting to know each other,” says Goenka. “Especially around certain times of the year or around holidays, they’ll all be there and celebrate together.” With the Aman Club and generous outdoor spaces acting as central gathering spaces, residents are meant to meet, interact and build bonds over the prestigious community that they’re all now a part of.

“When you look at our other projects, there’s always a clear reference to the property reflecting its location. For instance, in Tokyo, in terms of materials and aesthetics, there’s a clear reference to it being in Japan, but it’s not inherently or too literally Japanese,” says Goenka. “Instead, we prefer subtle references to where the project is. We’re influenced and inspired by the local vernacular, but we aren’t copying it. We’re always looking to distill design to its most essential elements, allowing it to sit lightly within the setting.”

Upon its completion in 2027, Aman Beverly Hills won’t just wow guests and residents with its striking architecture; it will envelop its guests and homeowners with a sense of calm, peace, and an appreciation for the setting and environment never offered in Southern California. +



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TOP RENDERING COURTESY OF AMAN, RIGHT PHOTOS COURTESY OF AMAN

RENDERING OF AMAN RESIDENCES, AMANJIWO PRIVATE POOL AND OUTDOOR DINING

AMANJIWO—WHERE HISTORY MEETS A CONTEMPORARY SENSE OF SERENITY

Overlooking the world's largest Buddhist sanctuary, in the bucolic bliss of central Java, Amanjiwo draws guests with its tranquil setting and natural attractions. "The resort overlooks the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Borobudur, which is a 9th-century Mahayana Buddhist temple," says Hess. "There's a feeling of serenity when you're here, so much so that 'Amanjiwo' actually translates to 'Peaceful Soul.'" Here, the resort's 33 rooms form a semi-circle around the central spaces, with views looking out to the cascading rice paddies, Kedu Plain, and four volcanoes. The inland setting, just 35 miles from the coast, is deeply immersed in the island's rich culture, with guests frequently coming to experience Aman-led private visits to Borobudur, trekking into the nearby mountains, or simply resting in the tranquil landscape and lounging by the pool.

The architecture of the property deeply reflects its storied surroundings, with legendary architect Ed Tuttle designing accommodations with local stone, gracious pavilions and walled gardens. "Ed Tuttle was also the architect of the first Aman, Amanpuri in Phuket, and helped establish the brand's design vocabulary, looking to merge modern comforts with historic and Indigenous attributes," says Hess.

Although the options for accommodations range as large as the Dalem Jiwo Suite with two bedrooms, each in their own pavilion, a Javanese-stone swimming pool, two outdoor lounging bales and nearly 13,000 square feet of private space, those seeking to make their refuge even more personal have the option of purchasing one of the forthcoming private residences at Amanjiwo. "We're currently in the process of creating four villas, each in the language of the current property and Ed Tuttle's direction," says Hess. "We'll never create more than four, though, because it's important that the property stays small and doesn't impose on the protected UNESCO site."

Construction of the villas is already underway, with options for three or four bedrooms, and designs by Sydney-based Manasara architects, who have created various residences and projects throughout Indonesia. The residences will be placed above the hotel for elevated views, and each will feature pavilions for bedrooms, living and dining, as well as expansive terraces and gardens, complete with an 18-meter private pool. Lots range from approximately 30,200 square feet to 37,700 square feet, but should owners ever feel the need to leave their environs, they have full access to all of the amenities at the Aman resort.

AMANWANA—TENTED LUXURY ON THE REMOTE MOYO ISLAND

There are tented camps, and then there are the tented camps that Aman creates. Those familiar with Amangiri's Camp Sarika experience will recognize the full-nature immersion that Aman creates with its camp-style retreats. At Amanwana, instead of being surrounded by a boundless desert oasis, guests have the unique experience of waking up on Moyo Island. Measuring 135 square miles and accessible only by boat or helicopter, the island is part of the Moyo-Satonda National Park and offers calm turquoise waters, lush savannahs and rich forests. Here, just 17 tents rest in a tranquil bay on the western coast of the island. Each of the permanent tents measures 625 square feet and features plush beds, picture windows, wooden decks, full bathrooms with showers, and views of either the ocean or the jungle. "It's unique that Aman can offer these five resorts in one country for guests to experience," says Hess. "Each one is designed in complete harmony with its setting to offer something different to each guest. Of course, they can be experienced individually, but when a guest books stays across multiple properties, we can really create a personalized itinerary so that each retreat offers meaningful culture, memorable experiences, and the Aman-level of luxury."

While the untouched setting of Amanwana is perfect for swimming with whale sharks in the Saleh Bay, scuba diving and snorkeling in the nearby untouched reefs, trekking through the jungle to explore hidden waterfalls, or experiencing a massage at the open-air spa set among tamarind trees, the emphasis here is always on the feeling of being a million miles away in a place still almost completely undiscovered by mainstream travelers.



TENT ACCOMMODATION AT AMANWANA

AMANDIRA AND AMAN BY TRAIN—JOURNEYS OFF THE BEATEN PATH

Launched in 2015, the luxury sailing yacht Amandira is the most recent addition to the Aman Resorts portfolio in Indonesia. "This custom-built, two-masted sailing yacht is modeled after a traditional Indonesian Phinisi sailing and diving vessel," says Hess. "It's a fantastic complement to our properties on land because it gives our guests such a unique way to see Indonesia and its many islands from a different standpoint."

Itineraries for Amandira include journeys to the Spice Islands, where powder-white-sand beaches merge with volcanic mountains and uninhabited shorelines, as well as the Komodo Cruise Expedition, where guests track and photograph the elusive Komodo dragon in its UNESCO-protected home of the Komodo National Park. Both journeys are offered only a few times a year due to weather, but each includes an incomparable stay aboard the 52-meter Amandira, where just five cabins ensure an intimate experience, and a crew of 14 ensures top-tier service.

"For another unique Aman experience, we have the Aman train journey," says Hess. "It's something we came up with during the pandemic that's become a really special and popular experience." Just twice a month, Aman guests arriving to Amanjiwo via Jakarta can board the luxury carriage, which seats 10 guests, for a 6.5-hour scenic ride. "We have a resident anthropologist on board who talks about Indonesian culture and sites you see along the way, which is a wonderful way to ease into and learn about the country," says Hess. "It's also a great reminder that some of the best ways to explore and absorb Indonesia are by sitting back and slowing down." +



NIGHT VIEW OF THE SAILING YACHT FROM THE BEACH AT AMANDIRA

Lauren Wilt, U.S. CEO of Quintessentially, Shares Travel Insights and Trends



BY CAROLE DIXON

Global concierge service Quintessentially is a luxury lifestyle management group founded in London 25 years ago. It now operates from 35 offices worldwide with over 50 languages spoken, and a diverse ecosystem of advisors and partners. Are you trying to secure VIP tickets to the U.S. Open this year? Perhaps you are feeling more adventurous and want to track mountain gorillas in East Africa or simply score a table at La Dolce Vita in Beverly Hills on a Saturday night. Look no further than this client-driven platform whose dedicated lifestyle managers provide members with personalized support.

Quintessentially's U.S. CEO Lauren Wilt oversees the brand's strategy, corporate development and day-to-day operations with a team of 50 across six cities.

Wilt joined the company as Head of Membership in 2013, after a previous role at the Cipriani Group. Here are her insights on the growing concierge industry and traveling in 2025.

Explain the services that Quintessentially provides.

Travel, tickets and dining are our most common request categories; however, what makes Quintessentially truly unique and stand out are all the other things we do for our members. We take a 360-degree approach to lifestyle management, which means we support our members in all facets of their lives. From day-to-day support like finding dog walkers, to arranging appointments and sending gifts to loved ones, we also have specialists in numerous areas such as property and estate management, education and private clubs.

What are the most in-demand travel or hospitality requests from your clients?

Time and time again, we see members who want to travel to familiar destinations such as Aspen or St. Barts and explore new places for their larger trips. They rely on us the most to tell them about the top properties, must-try restaurants and "must-visit" destinations to put it on their radar during the planning process. There has been an uptick in wellness-focused retreats; North American destinations like Mexico and Arizona and global destinations like Switzerland, Thailand and beyond. There has also been a surge in exploring the unexplored, which means destinations like Bhutan, which is not only a trending destination but also has great traction among our members

globally and provides the opportunity to stay at luxury accommodations like the Aman or Six Senses. On a smaller scale, we are being tasked with requests like quick ski trips. The Presidential Suite at Hotel Jerome was a member favorite over Presidents Day weekend, for example.

Is there a particularly challenging request that your team was able to resolve?

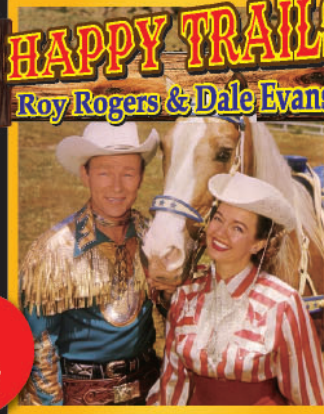
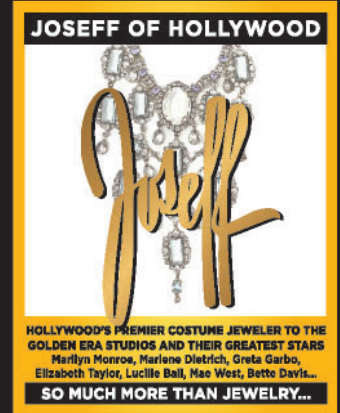
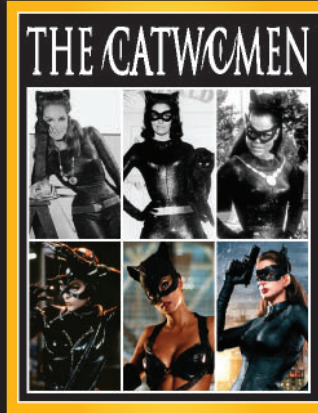
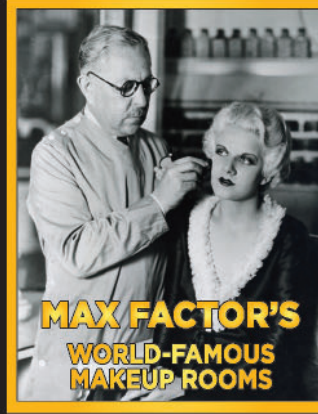
Earlier this year as the catastrophe of the fires has wreaked havoc on Los Angeles, it has been a particularly challenging time, not only as the CEO who has a large team in California but as a long-term LA resident and member of the community. Understanding the impact these fires have had on our members has been devastating, but it's been encouraging to know we're a team not only of experts, but also of friends, sisters, daughters, mothers and fathers who care about our members like their own community. As everyone has been impacted in different ways, we've been able to help families relocate for short-term stays in comfortable hotels while they wait to return to their homes, find suitable rental properties within certain criteria for those who have lost their homes completely and work with trusted organizations to provide a resource to members looking to make contributions for those in need.

Travel Insights and Trends continues on page 32

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That it was Sunday may have been a contributing factor, something we would be able to judge when we returned.

Sorrento, on Tuesday after the hordes had departed, was much more pleasant because our host treated us to a boat ride, “yachting” luxuriously from Sorrento to Amalfi with the young, charming and gorgeous Capitano Antonio, viewing all the coastal towns along the way. He skirted the working fishing villages and less-traveled harbors like Nerano, one of his favorites, and brought us into the three-island Gallos archipelago for a close view of this famous property. Craggy, lacking vegetation, it was Léonide Massine, the famed Russian choreographer and dancer of Diaghilev’s Ballets Russes, who fell in love with the island and its medieval tower, converting it into a villa and dance studio. No wonder Rudolf Nureyev felt an attachment, buying it in the early ’80s, further renovating it and living there until his death. It has since been refashioned into a luxury villa where visitors may swim in the waters but, unless they can ante up the €250,000 per week rental (including servants, cook and boat), they are forbidden to set foot on the island.

Pacing the trip perfectly, we gazed up at the road, one we would repeatedly take in the next few days, winding through the imposing mountainous rock facings on one side and the little protected cliffside leading to the water far below on the other. Built into the rock are the towns and villages that dot the coast. Colorful pebble beaches abound, accessed by stairways carved into the rocks descending unimaginable heights. The barely-clad bathers were young and hardy, unless they had arrived by one of the anchored boats.

Positano is world-famous for its beauty and rightfully so. Gazing at it from the sea, it appears like a many-layered wedding cake, elaborately iced and inviting. Many of the boats anchored off the shore were on a grander scale than ours, equipped with motorized rafts or dinghies to transport their passengers to shore where they can dine, drink and frolic. The beach is crowded and the pastel buildings overlooking the sea (they all overlook the sea) have vast terraces and balconies. The exclusive properties are either near the bottom of this cliffside town or at the very top. I must confess that in all our trips past Positano, we did not venture into the town. Theoretically, it would have been possible to traverse the tiny streets, but it appeared that the vast majority of people visiting the actual town parked haphazardly, with the emphasis on hazard, along the upper road and walked down, a rather daunting prospect at any age. Still, the pastel combinations of Positano need to be seen to be believed. It is the very definition of a jet-set hamlet where it’s easy to imagine the linen-clad visitors, cocktail in hand, trotting from party to party and then back to the yacht.

Continuing through the bay, Antonio led us into the Fiordo di Furore, a pristine beach in an inlet accessed from the tiny town by 3,000 steps. Furore is home to an 11th-century church containing frescoes by Giotto and his students. How, one must ask, did they get there in the first place, let alone why? It’s one of many puzzles to be contemplated all over the Amalfi coastline. It is the arched brick bridge, 28 meters high, traversing the fjord, from which there is a high diving contest



PHOTOS BY LARRY SWANSON

FIORDO DI FURORE

every year, that provides its unique feel.

We were able to dock in Amalfi, larger, more bustling than any of the other towns, allowing us the time only for a purchase at the pasticceria and a few lemon-scented souvenirs. Our lunch was at the Torre Saracena, a 16th-century tower that was part of the city’s defense system. The views to the northwest are of Amalfi, and to the southeast, Atrani of “Ripley” fame. We’ll get a closer view of Atrani, Amalfi’s poor relation, when we drive to Ravello. The food was wonderful but the views were better. But then, all of the views have been panoramic and stunning. Our trip back to Sorrento was at a faster pace and we enjoyed a crisp breeze as we retraced our earlier steps, making sure to renew our sunscreen.

We would return to Amalfi the next day, taking the treacherous SS163 with its serpentine curves, hairpin turns, series of long tunnels and blind mirrored corners dreading the sound of a bus honking its arrival. The lanes, marginal under the best of circumstances, are often further constricted by parked cars along one edge or the other. Even worse are the sightseeing viewpoints where cars spill out onto the roadway waiting for a place to stop, competing with the ever-present vans selling fresh juice, lemon granita and T-shirts. The trip never got easier and the anxiety never lessened; but in each case, we lived to tell about it. Arriving again in Amalfi, our small group split up, the more intellectual choosing to climb up to the Duomo and its Byzantine facade of inlaid striped marble and stone. The 63 wide stone steps lead to a vast porch, semi-enclosed by a series of arched window-like openings giving it a Moorish flavor. Others of us, the more superficial members of the group, myself included, went in search of artisanal souvenirs. The shops closest to the harbor are crowded with the same lemon-themed souvenirs found in every other town



THE HIGHWAY FROM RAVELLO OVERLOOKING THE NAPLES VALLEY AND MOUNT VESUVIUS

in Southern Italy. Walking slightly off the beaten track are the more interesting stores of inlaid wood furniture, handmade paper and ceramics of more unique design. After lunching on garlic-flavored focaccia, myriad antipasto and fish, we returned to the car and wound our way slowly back across the hills and treacherous roads.

For our next excursion, we chose the small town of Nerano with its seafood restaurants on the water. Lo Scoglio was a trip to the rarefied air of the jet set. Although we arrived by car, most of the guests in this terraced restaurant were ferried from their private yachts by Lo Scoglio's motorboat, arriving at the restaurant's landing platform. Stanley Tucci, in his series "Searching for Italy," declared their Spaghetti alla Nerano with zucchini and provolone to be his favorite pasta. The food was sumptuous, the service attentive and the local wine delicious. Lingering on the multicolored pebble beach for a few moments, we made a last stop at the mini market to buy vodka and crackers, indispensable for our evening cocktails. Lemon twists were in abundant supply from the villa's trees.

We left early the next morning for our trip to Ravello, east of Amalfi and north of Salerno. It's famous for its hilly location and view of the blue coastline to the west; and east, the grassy highlands of its rival city Scala with its vineyards and olive groves. Ravello is known for its two exquisite botanical gardens, the Villa Cimbrone and the Villa Rufolo. Villa Cimbrone is a long walk uphill, far from the city center; not the option we took. Instead, we headed straight for the Villa Ruffalo, a palace built originally in the 13th century but rescued and renovated in the 19th century by Francis Neville Reid who bought the villa in 1851 and installed the elegant gardens that can be seen today. Its pavilions are terraced such that each looks down onto the next, all with a view of the bay far below. In spring it is a riot of neon-colored flowers and green sculpted hedges. Excavations in recent years have uncovered artifacts and foundations from its 13th-century origins. Towers and courtyard columns attest to the Moorish influence of the times. One can easily see why this garden has enchanted so many over the years, including Richard Wagner and Maurits Cornelis Escher, who may have been inspired by the Torre Maggiore's staircase.

Although Ravello is also on the list of tourist must-sees, our early start avoided most of the crowds. Much to our dismay, the restaurant we wanted was closed, but the shop owner next door suggested we try Osteria Ravello, a family-run restaurant at the far end of town. With its outdoor terrace and excellent food, we were well cared for, especially when the owner's mother adopted one of our group showering her and us with extra attention and treats. Returning to the center and the shopkeeper who had made the original recommendation and reservation, we found lots of souvenirs to take home and even some to keep. It was now mid-afternoon; the tour groups had begun to arrive, and it was time to leave.

Our final outing to Positano was for a birthday celebration. The storied Hotel Il San Pietro is at the summit of Positano just before Praiano. It has sweeping views of the entire bay, but most importantly it has valet parking. Tiered on the hillside, there are tennis courts, a pool and deck, a spa and garden and a small private beach far below, all accessed by an elevator built into the rock. Of course, one always has the option of walking, but a glance at the stairway was one more reason to hope the elevator was operational. Cocktails were first in order at the beautiful bougainvillea-filled terrace bar where Bellinis with fresh peach almost matched the stunning views. The San Pietro's Michelin-starred main restaurant, Zass, is open only at night so we held our celebration in the beach-adjacent Carlino, an al fresco lunch spot where they have a farm-to-table concept drawn from their garden. The pasta was as fresh as the fish, and the atmosphere was festive. Sated, we were back on the road to the villa to pack up and snack on leftovers from previous evenings.

The Amalfi Coast, land of sun and endless lemon trees—it is not surprising that each local restaurant offers its own artisanal Limoncello, and we sampled any and all put in front of us. The sharpness of the colors, the salt in the air, the hairpin turns that seem to cantilever over thin air will be memories we always keep. And to all who follow, take a boat along the coast to get the full flavor of life on those shores. So don those linens and, for a brief moment, you too can be a jet-setter. +

buildings. There is, of course, a ballcourt, one of two thought to have occupied the edge of the plaza. It was a game played with life-and-death consequences. Some artifacts can be found in the adjacent museum, next to the gift store selling hats (you'll need one); but most of the artifacts discovered during the original excavations can be seen in the wonderful Museum of Oaxacan Cultures next to the Church of Santo Domingo, another must-see (but more on that later).

While not a must-do when on a limited schedule, Mitla, the other archaeological site outside Oaxaca City, offers a look into the architecture and design of the Zapotec culture, still thriving when the Spanish invaded. Inhabited around the turn of the first millennium, Mitla was a thriving city of Mixtec and Zapotec population in an area that supported more than 500,000. Much of the site was devoted to the dead, believed to be a burial site for the rich and ennobled. The construction was very sophisticated, using blocks that fit together seamlessly like those built by the Incas in Peru. Adorned with carvings along the building cornices, creating a crown molding whose decoration was often enhanced by fresco-like painting and fretwork on the walls, these funerary properties were built around courtyards, not unlike the modern architecture of Oaxaca. Smaller and more manageable than Monte Albán, a trip to Mitla can easily be combined with a trip to Santa Maria del Tule to visit the massive 1500-year-old Tule Tree. Its size and scope make it one of the wonders of the world. At 130 feet tall and 145 feet in circumference, it defies logic.

Many tourist agencies encourage trips to the outskirts to visit San Bartolo Coyotepec, famous for its black pottery, made here for hundreds of years. The town of San Martín Tilcajete is famous for alebrijes, those animal figurines made from copal wood, hand painted with natural dyes and decorated in dots, stripes and geometric shapes, often sprouting spines of thin wood. Heresy, perhaps, but unless you are determined to see how these crafts are made, your time is better spent in Oaxaca City Center where literally hundreds of shops feature

these arts. Be judicious, look carefully at the art, compare the products of the innumerable shops and then fill your luggage with your treasures.

The Centro de Artes de San Agustin (CaSa), not far from the city, is an art complex started and funded by Francisco Toledo on the grounds of a huge, converted textile factory. Part art gallery, there was a fantastic comprehensive exhibit of Toledo's art on view at the time, part workshop and part art school, it is worth the short trip to experience the campus that also includes a paper factory, again, started by Toledo.

Another must-see in the city center is the Museum of Oaxacan Cultures, located in the former convent attached to the Templo de Santo Domingo. An incredible museum, built around a courtyard surrounded by columns and arched walkways, it is almost encyclopedic in its holdings. Many of the artifacts discovered at both Mitla and Monte Albán found their way into these collections. Intricate jewelry in gold and jade is found next to ritualistic carvings and ceramics of the skulls of men and animals. The library of Francisco Burgoa, also part of the complex, contains over 30,000 works, including incunabula, bibles in Latin, Greek, Syriac and Hebrew, as well as 16th-century books printed in Mexico. A bronze death mask of Juárez is prominently displayed. It is here, on the grounds outside, that Francisco Toledo presented another gift to his hometown, creating the Ethnobotanical Garden on land behind the Templo de Santo Domingo. It highlights the many plant species used by the Indigenous population for cultural rituals, food and medicine. It is also because of Toledo-led protests that the garden was created when the government was trying to use the space for a parking lot.

This just scratches the surface of a marvelous city. So much can be discovered on your own including the Mercado Benito Juárez and its endless booths of food, spices, clothes and decorations. There's so much more to explore from the many other museums, world-class restaurants and village markets. But that's for my next trip, and there will be one. +



PHOTO BY LARRY SWANSON

MONTE ALBÁN

The residences at Amanjena include three villa layouts, ranging from 16,400 to 24,300 square meters in size, all with private gardens, swimming pools and open walls to immerse the owner in the surroundings.

“When you’re in the city center [of Marrakech], you see these tall walls, which are made of local mud with the texture of straw and grass in them. They have these smallish openings, where you’ll get a glimpse of some incredible oases inside,” says Antoni. “For us to extract that essence, what Marrakech architecture is all about, was really important, but without being a pastiche or copy of the traditional—it’s our interpretation of that.”

The residences will feature similar architectural walls that are found throughout Marrakech, as well as a dusty

design palette with accents of lime-washed oak, stone and patinated bronze, which complement honed travertine tiles and Tadelakt plaster walls. The resulting homes honor the region with traditional materials but contemporary layouts, with indoor spaces that flow seamlessly onto private terraces and roof gardens by way of pools and courtyards.

“We spent a lot of time studying other Aman hotels, specifically their layouts and connections and the sequencing of spaces,” says Antoni. “As you enter the villas, you will experience the unraveling of the mystery in the design from the arrival, the layering of the internal spaces and then the garden and water elements ... each is laid out like a palace, so that they can condense and expand as needed, never feeling too big or too small for the site.”

Although Marrakech dates back to 1070 and is steeped in history and authentic charm, it’s also constantly evolving, whether with new museums, restaurants or an increasing number of international visitors who come each year to discover its charms. “Marrakech is so central and close to Europe, but it’s also just one step away from America and one step from Asia,” says Antoni. “It’s a very well-positioned city and very multicultural. Not to mention, it will have the World Cup in 2030, and there’s even an area where you can ski. The region offers so much, but there’s no place better to experience it than at Amanjena.” ✦



RENDERING OF PRIVATE POOL AND TERRACE AT AMAN RESIDENCES, AMANJENA

What trends are you seeing in luxury travel in 2025?

Luxury travelers are prioritizing self-care and holistic well-being. This includes stays at wellness retreats like SHA Wellness offering personalized programs like yoga, meditation, nutrition and spa therapies, and Chenot Palace Weggis, which offers advanced programs that focus on rejuvenation to delay the onset of biological aging. These destinations—be it in the mountains, by the ocean or at cutting-edge urban spas—are seeing a surge in demand.

Belated and extended honeymoons: Weddings now are so much different than they used to be because more and more frequently the couple has a global network of friends. This, coupled with the growing popularity of destination weddings, means that often couples are now taking a pause between their wedding and honeymoon. It's nice to fully reset and prepare for a once-in-a-lifetime honeymoon, which may take place in exotic locations like Mozambique, the Outback, Rwanda and beyond.

Soft travel: Traveling somewhere to reset and relax versus packing it in. The era of jam-packed itineraries is fading and is now being replaced by a desire for slow, intentional travel. Luxury travelers are seeking destinations where they can truly reset—long stays in serene locations, which for some may be tucked away in Jackson Hole and for others St. Barts, providing both a time to connect with nature and experiences designed to refresh both body and mind.

Cultural Immersion: Travelers are looking for meaningful engagement with local cultures. They want to explore destinations through hands-on activities like cooking classes, art workshops or guided tours with historians, creating deeper connections and more authentic memories. A property that comes to mind is Hacienda AltaGracia, tucked away in Pérez Zeledón, Costa Rica, which gives it edge and creates an environment where cultural immersion is at the root of who this property is and everything they do.

Adventure Tourism: Luxury adventure travel is booming as avid travelers want an outside-the-box experience; there really seems to be a surge in making once-in-a-lifetime trips at the forefront of their planning. From expeditions in Antarctica to glacier hiking in Iceland to private safaris in Africa, the focus is on tailor-made experiences that balance thrill with comfort—think luxury campsites, expert guides and personalized itineraries.

You have recently visited Nicaragua, El Salvador, Sri Lanka, Morocco and Costa Rica for surf trips and completed a 500-kilometer cycle challenge across the South of France. Any personal traveling tips for a seamless experience on the road or in the air?

Travel prepared: Before arrival, I've done my research and worked with our expert team of travel advisors to map out where I want to eat, what I want to see and experiences throughout the trip. While this helps set me up for a successful vacation, there are a few habits I always follow upon arrival.

“I try to ensure I understand and can say basic words and sentences in the local language, especially greetings and words of gratitude.”

Walk: I love to take a walk right away. This helps with much-needed fresh air after travel and to get my bearings in a new place. If it's a city break, I love to see what's around the immediate area, and if I pass a local grocery store, I always pick up some local snacks, which can be a great indicator of the culture. If it's a country or nature holiday, a walk helps me to see what's on property and explore what's available during my stay.

Talk: Whether it is to people in the airport, the taxi driver to my hotel or the person checking me in, I always try to be as friendly as possible and ask questions. Locals are a great way to learn about your destination's history and culture. They will also know of citywide events to look out for and are a great source for insider tips when navigating a new destination, such as an off-the-beaten-track local restaurant or shop.

Unpack: It takes a few minutes, but I find in the long run it's a time-saver during a vacation. Unpacking also helps me feel settled and at home in an unfamiliar place.

Gratitude: I try to ensure I understand and can say basic words and sentences in the local language, especially greetings and words of gratitude.

Which Beverly Hills properties or restaurants are the most sought-after for bookings?

Polo Lounge (The Beverly Hills Hotel), Dante (The Maybourne Beverly Hills), Matsuhisa, Sushi Note Omakase, La Dolce Vita, Nozawa Bar, Funke, Matū and Marea.

What do you never leave home without and why?

Besides my phone, there are a few things I tend to never leave home without. First, I love my Smythson cardholder, which is personalized with my initials. I've never been a fan of large wallets, and my Smythson fits in any pocket, with everything I need whether staying local or traveling domestically. Wherever I go, I also always have a Kosas Lip Fuel within arm's reach. It's my lip balm, lipstick and lip gloss all rolled into one super sleek tube that fits anywhere. Finally, when traveling, I never leave home without my Kindle. I'm an avid reader and this fits easily into any purse or carry-on luggage. I'm also a huge advocate for packing cubes, which help me stay organized and efficient on any trip. My favorite packing cubes are my monogrammed Mark & Graham set. +

JAPAN AND SOUTHEAST ASIA SOARING

When planning an Asian luxury cruise, booking early allows travelers to savor the pre-cruise anticipation, research “must see/must do” shore activities including any private arrangements, and have the best choice of snagging their preferred stateroom or suite on a luxury ship.

Many cruise lines have already opened Asia sales through spring 2027. For example, on Feb. 16, 2027, Regent Seven Seas Cruises will offer a 14-night “Cities of Mystery and Magic” itinerary from Bali (Benoa), Indonesia, to Bangkok (Laem Chabang), Thailand. The 746-passenger Seven Seas Explorer will sail into Surabaya, Semarang and Jakarta, Indonesia; Kuala Lumpur (Port Klang), Malaysia; and Singapore (with an overnight stay).

One plus is that this itinerary also visits Borneo and Brunei. Arriving at Kota Kinabalu (Borneo), Malaysia, travelers might head out on Regent Seven Seas’ five-hour “Lok Kawi Wildlife & Handicraft Market” excursion. It’s a great way to view exotic, native animals at a wildlife park, learn about medicinal, endemic and exotic plants, including carnivorous pitcher plants, and stroll through a local handicraft market.

Never been to Muara, Brunei? I recommend Regent Seven Seas’ four-hour “Splendor of the Sultan” excursion. Guests will peruse the Royal Polo Grounds, opulent Empire Hotel and the Sultan of Brunei’s magnificent 1,788-room palace. They will also gaze at the monarchy’s Royal Regalia exhibits.

This voyage will also offer a call at Phu My (Ho Chi Minh City) before concluding at Bangkok (Laem Chabang). “Bangkok is a fantastic city with access to Siem Reap, Cambodia,” Tubman explains. So, by booking a pre- or post-cruise land package, cruisers can also see and do more in Thailand’s capital city and the countryside, as well as head to Cambodia to explore Angkor, a UNESCO World Heritage Site.



PHOTO COURTESY OF REGENT SEVEN SEAS

FLOATING MARKET IN BANGKOK, THAILAND



PHOTO COURTESY OF SILVERSEA

THE CONNOISSEUR'S CORNER ON SILVERSEA'S SILVER MOON

MORE NEW OPTIONS

Between September 2026 and May 2027, Silversea’s 596-passenger, ultra-luxury Silver Muse and Silver Moon will operate 17 Asia voyages. Targeted at Southeast Asia, Silver Muse will sail to both marquee ports and less-visited gems, such as Vietnam’s stunningly gorgeous Ha Long Bay. It’s home to limestone karsts, islets, fishing villages and ancient caves.

On certain voyages, luxury travelers will also go ashore at Chan May, a gateway for excursions to Hue’s Imperial City, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and Coron on the Philippines’ Palawan Island with beaches and scuba diving sites. Silver Muse’s itineraries are also combinable for travelers to create a 28-day Southeast Asia vacation.

Silver Moon will, in turn, operate in-depth Japan itineraries. Two voyages during the 2027 spring Cherry Blossom season will include an overnight in Osaka, Japan. In just one of many touring options, guests might book Silversea’s exclusive S.A.L.T. (Sea and Land Taste) shore excursion to celebrate the science of umami with an acclaimed Japanese chef. Some Silver Moon voyages will offer later-than-typical departures from Busan, South Korea and Kanazawa, Japan, so that guests can spend more time ashore.

On March 1, 2026, ultra-luxury Seabourn’s 600-passenger Seabourn Encore will set sail from Singapore to Yokohama, Japan. One perk for those planning a big Asia trip is “voyage length flexibility.” For example, they might book the 15-day “Southeast Asia: Singapore, Vietnam, Hong Kong and Japan” itinerary. It visits Ho Chi Minh City (overnight) and Danang, Vietnam; Hong Kong (overnight); Keelung (Taipei); and Tokushima, Japan.

Two other options for that same departure date—both entitled “Southeast Asia and Japan’s Crafts & Spring Blossoms” sailings—will alternatively create a 29-day or 43-day vacation.

All three options begin with the two-week sailing, but guests booked on the longer trips stay aboard for more cruising and many other ports of call, among them Beppu, Japan, famed for its “hells” or bubbling hot springs.

For those who love leisurely “days at sea,” one Asia and Australia option is Cunard Line’s 23-night voyage from Singapore to Sydney on Feb. 22, 2026. Before setting sail, though, travelers might venture atop Singapore’s Marina Bay Sands for incredible views from its observation deck. Alternatively, perhaps stroll through the Singapore Botanic Gardens; its National Orchid Garden sports 1,000 species of orchids plus 2,000 hybrids.

As for the cruise itself, Cunard’s 2,996-passenger Queen Anne will spend three days at sea, then two full days in Hong Kong, another two days at sea, one day in Manila, the Philippines, before two more days at sea and a day in Bitung, Indonesia. Well, you get the picture. More sea days follow, interspersed with visits to Darwin, Airlie Beach and Brisbane, Australia, before an overnight in Sydney.

New this year fleet-wide, Cunard has introduced holistic “Harper’s Bazaar” Wellness at Sea programs. Spanning three days each, three optional curated wellness programs—“Relax,” “Recover” or “Energize”—include a selection of spa treatments, some premium ELEMIS products and unique, nutritionally balanced dining options.

In early 2027, Crystal’s “World Cruise” will depart from San Diego, Calif. As the 740-passenger, ultra-luxury Crystal Serenity sails across the Pacific, several April 2027 segments will explore Southeast and East Asia. Guests can learn about Indonesian culture at Semarang’s temples, explore attractions in Singapore and Bangkok, visit the Great Wall of China and chow down on dim sum in Hong Kong.

Crystal Serenity will then continue to South Korea and Japan. There, guests will visit multiple destinations including Busan, South Korea. One destination highlight is the Gyeongju National Museum, displaying ancient Silla Kingdom artifacts.

Returning to China in 2026-2027 is upper premium Azamara. For example, on Oct. 16, 2026, Azamara Pursuit will operate a 15-night “China Intensive: Beijing, Shanghai & Hong Kong” voyage. One plus is that this 702-passenger ship is right-sized for sailing directly into the heart of Shanghai. Another itinerary hook is the unusual embarkation point of Incheon, South Korea, not far from Seoul, the nation’s capital. So, guests who desire to explore more of South Korea can do so pre-cruise.

In Incheon itself, military history buffs should head to the Memorial Hall for the Incheon Landing Operation. Built to commemorate the 1950 Korean War landing led by U.S. General Douglas MacArthur, it displays copious military equipment (both inside and outside) from North and South Korea plus other artifacts, photos and flags of 16 war participants.

Upscale foodies might board Oceania Cruises’ 670-passenger Regatta on April 3, 2026, for a “Cherry Blossom Splendor” voyage round trip from Tokyo. Highlights will include top-notch cuisine and culinary activities on board, plus cultural experiences ashore at nine Japanese ports and Busan, South Korea.



PHOTO COURTESY OF CRYSTAL



PHOTOS COURTESY OF SEABOURN

TOP: CRYSTAL SERENITY PALM COURT
MIDDLE: SEABOURN ENCORE POOL DECK
BOTTOM: CHERRY BLOSSOMS IN JAPAN

MORE IN ASIA

Expanding in Asia, Viking now offers enticing new China itineraries that include a voyage on the 930-passenger Viking Yi Dun, combined with overland stays in China, including Tibet. Separately, Japanese cruise line Mitsui Ocean Cruises, part of Mitsui O.S.K. Lines, has opened sales for its cruise vacations in North America. As a first step, Architects of Travel will support sales of the new-to-fleet, 458-guest Mitsui Ocean Fuji (the former Seabourn Odyssey) by promoting it to North American travel advisors. Another former Seabourn ship will arrive in 2026. This is one development to watch.

Many premium lines such as Celebrity Cruises, Holland America Line, Princess Cruises and Disney Cruise Line also sail in Asia, as do such small-ship operators as Scenic, Aqua Expeditions, Aurora Expeditions, Ponant, Windstar Cruises and others. For instance, Ponant's 184-passenger Le Jacques Cartier operates a 14-day "Islands, Cities and Volcanoes of Indonesia" voyage, departing Jan. 7, 2026. While sailing between Bali and Singapore, guests can sip a cocktail at the ship's underwater Blue Eye lounge and gaze out whale-eye-shaped windows to look for marine life.

Aurora Expeditions' 130-passenger Greg Mortimer will operate a new 16-day "In the Wake of Wallace: Indonesia & Borneo" itinerary from Denpasar (Bali), Indonesia, to Singapore on Oct. 24, 2026. And between September 2026 and May 2027, Windstar Cruises' new 224-passenger Star

Seeker will offer 12 departures of a 10-night "Grand Japan" itinerary between Tokyo and Kobe in Japan, plus other Asia itineraries.

Another option for Asia travelers is a river cruise on the Mekong, Yangtze or Ganges rivers. Experienced river operators include AmaWaterways, Scenic, Viking, Uniworld Boutique River Cruises, Avalon Waterways, Pandaw and others. This fall, Pandaw's new 10-cabin Kochi Pandaw will debut on a new "Kerala Backwaters" itinerary round trip from Kochi, India. And in October 2025, Viking's new 80-passenger Viking Tonle will begin sailing the Mekong River.

If you're wondering if there is still time to book an Asian cruise for this year, the answer is "yes." Tubman stresses that "It's possible to still book some space this year and next winter."

Whenever or wherever one travels in Asia, be sure to relax and cherish the moments. After a long day of Hong Kong touring late last year, I ordered room service in my luxurious suite on Silver Nova and then nestled into a chair on my private veranda to admire the up-close skyline views. But I had forgotten that each evening the city puts on "A Symphony of Lights," the world's largest permanent light-and-sound show. Suddenly, dramatic music enveloped the waterfront, and colored light beams danced and twirled across the skyscraper facades. It was pure magic. Best of all, those moments of visual splendor unfolded on my private perch on an ultra-luxury ship. +

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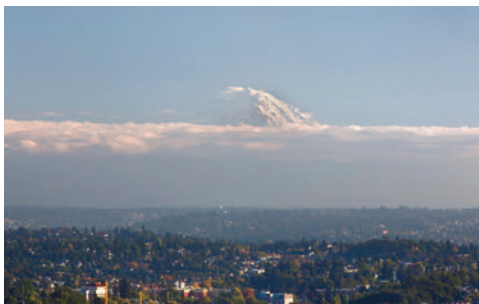
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