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EDITOR'S NOTE

We are in a new era of travel. Avid traveling has colored our lenses. No longer are we just in search of things to see, eat and do during our trips. Instead, we're looking for experiences. Not any usual experience, mind you, but those that gives us insight into a different culture, that affords us the chance to take a short stint in the shoes of another, or that have us willingly suspend our sense of place even if for a few glimmering moments.

In this prolegomenous guide, we delve into new notions of adventure and exploration. We discover how hospitality players have appropriated the co-living concept (page 12), offer you digital means of meeting strangers and getting a home-cooked meal during your travels (page 16) and asked a man who travels for craft beer how he does what he does (page 41). We flew to places like Spain (page 31) and Fiji (page 18) to experience local celebrations for ourselves, as well as to Oman (page 28) and Mergui, Myanmar (page 21) before the main tourist crowd inextricably find their way there.

So start flipping and planning—or just book your tickets spontaneously—and pack your bags. There's no time to lose.

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TAKE A WALK

What used to be an old highway in Seoul is now a massive elevated pedestrian walkway. Officially opened on May 20 this year, Seoulo 7017, or better known as the Seoul Skygarden, is part of the city's bigger plan to revitalize underdeveloped areas of the capital and create a more people-friendly city. Have a look at how South Korea is taking the lead in Asia to create more walkable cities while beautifying them at the same time.



© Ossip van Duivenbode



© Ossip van Duivenbode



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A SLICE OF NUREMBERG

When in Bavaria, travelers often flock to the state's capital of Munich, especially for its famed annual Oktoberfest celebrations. But just a short train ride away is the old town of Nuremberg, where medieval castle structures and ramparts blend seamlessly with everyday city life conveniences. Like most of Germany, pretzels, sausages and beer forms much of the daily diet. But here within the Franconian region, the local wine filled in iconic Bocksbeutel bottles are equally renowned—a must-try while you're here since it is rarely exported in substantial quantities. Here's a glimpse of the local life, eats and places not often tread.



© Florian Trykowski



© Thomas Granitzny



© Thomas Granitzny





Located in the centre of Siem Reap city within walking distance to the shopping and nightlife areas and minutes away from Angkor Wat, Park Hyatt Siem Reap offers the perfect place for a luxury yet cozy retreat to explore. The hotel's blend of refined interiors and graceful gardens combined with the warm Cambodian hospitality provides an authentic experience in a unique setting.

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NEW-AGE KAMPUNGS

*Blurring the lines between house and hotel more than sharing economy accommodation providers ever could are a new breed of co-living spaces that place emphasis on community rather than amenities. **Dannon Har** offers some places to consider the next time you are looking for a place to stay for a few days, months or even years.*



JO&JOE

More than the sum of its parts—a millennial hotel, hostel and apartment combined—is French hospitality giant Accor's first foray into the co-living segment. Jo&Joe defies easy definition by taking lessons from existing shared living apartments and adding to that their decades of experience running hotels. Imagine colorful bunking spaces for small groups of various sizes and, of course, a central communal area designed for guests, locals and staff to mingle. Its first property just opened in surfer's haven Hossegor, France.

PODSHARE

Not just a co-living hostel, but also a co-working space, is Los Angeles-based PodShare, one of the first to have explored the idea of social traveling back in 2012. It took the idea of accessibility (rather than ownership) proselytized by the sharing economy, and the interpersonal divide galvanized by social media, and created a physical social network and co-living chain of properties ahead of its time. Today, PodShare has four properties found around Los Angeles, where travelers, startup founders and other like-minded individuals all conglomerate.



ROAM

If you've always wanted to live and work somewhere else in the world, Roam, also a co-live-and-work concept like PodShare, is your best bet. It has properties in Miami, Bali, Tokyo and London at the moment, with a San Francisco one in the works. Rather than sleeping pods, Roam comes equipped with private bedrooms and bathrooms, while the kitchen, pool, laundry, work, and event areas are shared. They even offer support for travelers looking for remote work, in the form of a jobs board.



9FLOOR

While falling more in the category of co-housing rather than co-living (since they prefer longer-term residencies of over six months), the idea remains the same at Taipei-based 9floor—live, work and play with like-minded individuals in a home away from home. You can stay for shorter periods, but the fee will be higher. Since starting in 2014, 9floor now has over 12 co-living apartments available throughout the Taiwanese capital, each offering a different community mix.

ZOKU

The rave reviews for Zoku are well-earned. Rooms here, mostly loft units, are space-efficient, meaning they may not be the most spacious, but are designed well enough that you have everything you need—bed, table, kitchenette, fridge, microwave and dishwasher—and yet not feel cramped. It is more like a co-living apartment setup here, with a large communal living room being the connecting hive for travelers and those dropping in to work together or have meals. The food here, served at the Living Kitchen, is a big draw for many locals, both for its affordability and ability to satisfy discerning palates.



SHARE HOUSE NAGOYA

With its focus on encouraging interaction between travelers and locals, this Nagoya-based co-living setup is best suited for those looking to deeply immerse themselves in Japanese culture over a minimum stay of one month. Like 9floor, many of its residents are actually working locals looking to broaden their cultural exposure by having foreigners as co-living mates. It currently has 27 shared houses (some female-only) spread throughout the city, with more opening regularly due to great demand.

LYF

Lyf, pronounced 'life', is local serviced residence owner-operator Ascott's debut attempt at co-living spaces. Unlike conventional serviced apartments, Lyf properties will be run by millennials (who may be residents, too) who take on roles such as community manager, city guide and bar keep. Again, community plays a big role here, and every area, including the foosball table-equipped laundromat, is designed to encourage mingling. No Lyf properties exist yet, but you can check out the show lab they have set up at Singapore Management University to test its co-living concepts. The first Lyf will be born in Shenzhen, China in the first half of 2018, while Singapore will be getting one too, at Farrer Park, in 2021.

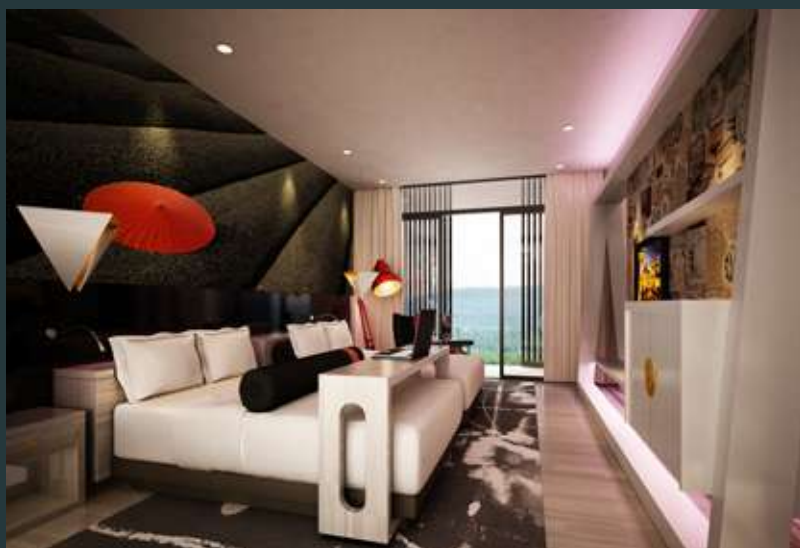


ANTI-SOCIAL SOCIAL HOTELS

Places to enjoy the creature comforts traditional hotels provide, while still getting your feet wet with some form of co-living.

TRU BY HILTON

Rethinking the way millennial hotels work is Tru by Hilton, which makes a splash by having cool communal spaces and a lobby area that is not dull and drab—it is a central gathering point for guests too, much like what co-living spaces do. Expect things like shared desking, a social media wall, board game tables and a 24/7 snacks and drinks shop there, all centrally located and done in an effort to encourage socializing. The first Tru just opened in Oklahoma City in June 2017. There are plans to open many more across the U.S.



DHAWA

Singapore's own Banyan Tree Hotels & Resorts introduced its first millennial-leaning brand, Dhawa, just last year. It isn't a midscale brand however, unlike most hotels in the category, and takes on a luxurious, designer aesthetic more in line with modern boutiques, but still with an approachable price point. What makes it different, besides the design, is its communal space found on every floor that lets strangers meet and chat over complimentary DIY refreshments like ice cream, coffee and snacks. The first Dhawa opened, surprisingly, in Cayo Las Brujas, Cuba last year. Plans for one in Bo'ao, and Guiyang, both in China, are in the works.

MOXY

Of course the largest hotel chain in the world has its own take on the millennial accommodation offering. Marriott's Moxy line of hotels is chic, caters to the young at heart, and is usually found in cities with a nightlife scene. Again, much of the action takes place at the lobby, where you can grab a bite and a cocktail while pitting yourself against people you just met in a round of Cards Against Humanity or chess, anytime of the day. Milan was where the first Moxy opened, and the brand has since sprouted all over Europe in cities like Berlin, London and Vienna.



CITIZENM

Boasting more personality than some people is the uber cool CitizenM, a Dutch hotel brand which first took root in Amsterdam before expanding globally to places like Glasgow, Rotterdam, New York and, closer to home, Taipei. Its first property, opened way back in 2008, already featured the common living room many of the big boys are now trying to emulate. Even today, CitizenM is still revolutionary in the way it redefines hospitality with self-check-in systems, no in-room mini-bars, no restaurants and a 24/7 canteen offering full meals, snacks, alcohol and a barista who doubles up as a local guide.



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APPY TRAVELING

Technology has freed us from the shackles of the travel middleman and enabled us to travel the way we want. And thanks to a whole new bunch of accessibility platforms, getting connected with destination experts for a taste of local living has never been easier.

Dannon Har checks out some worth the bandwidth.



© WithLocals



© WithLocals

BONAPPETOUR

Pioneers of the social dining scene here back in 2013, BonAppetour is now the go-to platform for those looking to have a taste, literally, of home-cooked meals prepared by locals in their own homes. They have since introduced new ways for travelers to explore each city's F&B scene as well, by offering hosts the ability to list food tours, drinking trails, workshops and more.

Best for: A solid selection of local dining experiences

WITHLOCALS

From a fashion tour in Paris to a food trail in Bangkok showcasing Gordon Ramsey's favorite street eats, tours designed by locals of every kind can be found on WithLocals. And like most sharing economy marketplaces, trips offered here are led by everyday people rather than professional guides. You can find many European and Asian destinations being covered here.

Best for: Insider tours led by locals

ME TO WE

Looking to have a vacation that is more meaningful? At Me to We, you can combine your wanderlust with a journey to places like India, Kenya and China where you can work on community projects (like building a school) that actually have a long, lasting impact on the lives of others as you explore a new sense of place.

Best for: Voluntourism

NOMAD HOUSE

For long, extended trips that last for a month at a time, Nomad House is where you should look. The two co-founders are believers that work and play aren't mutually exclusive activities. This philosophy presents itself vividly with their play/work itineraries that has brought travelers/coworkers together to the likes of Lisbon, Bali, Budapest and more for a memorable slow travel experience.

Best for: Planting temporary roots

NOSHTREKKER

For a more curated local dining experience filled with storytelling elements by trained hosts, try NoshTrekker. What sets them apart is their Signature line of events that can involve cooking demonstrations, live music and customisation of cuisine to your specific dietary needs. They also host more casual pop-up food events too. It is currently only available in Australia, South Africa, Singapore and Brunei, with coverage in Malaysia and Thailand coming soon.

Best for: Deep dive into a culture through food



© NoshTrekker



© EatWith

EATWITH

If you ever find yourself in a foreign land in need of comforting home-cooked meals prepared in the kitchen of a local family, head to EatWith. Here, the focus is on the sharing of cultures through traditional meals without any of the extra bells and whistles—just honest, good food shared at the communal dining table with residents.

Best for: Authentic homemade meals

GOVACAY

Photography, whether amateur or professional, often go hand in hand with traveling. And at Govacay, you can go on adventure tours specially designed by professional photographers meant to satisfy your inner shutterbug. On offer now includes trips to check out Sri Lanka’s diverse wildlife, finding the elusive Northern Lights in Iceland, and more.

Best for: Photography enthusiasts



© Triip

TRIIP

Vietnam-based Triip stands out from other more commercial peer-to-peer platforms by having a strong Southeast Asia presence (its global reach is vast too) and by having a strict vetting process for their guides. As a result, who you have leading you on tours are local experts who know their destinations inside-out and who are also excellent communicators.

Best for: Giving back to local communities while having fun

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COMING HOME TO FIJI

*Fiji is not just about Insta-worthy shots of blue water and pristine beaches. **Yining He** ventures into the heart of the Pacific nation to explore the untouched parts of the archipelago and discovers the true meaning of Bula.*



© Yining He



© Yining He



© Yining He

Going to Fiji is like returning home after a very long work day. In Singapore, we’re used to the daily anonymity of urban life jostling with blank faces during the morning commute. So it was initially disorienting when everyone I met in Fiji greeted me with warm, open smiles and echoes of “Bula!”

There was one night when I was waiting for dinner at my resort’s restaurant when one of the staff struck up a conversation with me. By the end of my meal, a small crowd of ladies had formed around me and I left that

evening with stories of village life and an invitation to go to a nightclub in town—both of which are things I appreciate.

I chose to go visit a village—the nightclub shall be left for my next visit—as it must be a great way to get to know local Fijians and participate in their still-intact traditions. I headed to Sigatoka, a town situated on Fiji’s largest island of Viti Levu found 1.5 hours’ drive away from Nadi International Airport. I got there by embarking on the Sigatoka River Safari, a guided tour that brings

travelers on a jet boat along the Sigatoka River to visit villages where you will dine in the homes of locals, share in their practices, and whether you’re in the mood or not, dance with the village folk (rest assured, they will get you in the dancing mood).

After a thrilling jet boat ride in which I got soaked (while being entertained by the captain’s stories about Fiji’s cannibalistic past), I arrived at Naveyago village, which also happens to be where one of the Fiji Rugby Sevens Olympic players, Semi Kunatani, grew up in.

Here, I partook in a common but significant social custom—the welcoming ceremony. With the men of the village seated in the village hall on one end, and we the guests on the other, we presented them with a sevusevu, or gift, of kava root to the village chief. The crop, found only in this part of the world, is used to produce a drink with sedating effects.

I accepted an offer of a bowl of kava drink by first saying “Bula” before clapping then drinking it in a single draught, and then saying “vinaka”, meaning ‘thanks’ in Fijian to the villager who offered me the drink. While containing no alcohol, the drink does induce a dreamy, euphoric state that feels rather pleasant. The more adventurous in my group had several more rounds of the drink.

We then headed into one of the homes. While the lodgings here are modest, they are in pristine condition

thanks to the Fijians being extremely house-proud. They are also super generous with what they have and spare no expense to prepare for us copious portions of food.

But what struck me most was the music and dancing that took place after we had our meal. Song and dance are woven into the fabric of Fijian culture, and they enjoy it with a warmth and freedom that is to be envied.

At first, I was trying to capture the pure glee and joy from the safety afforded by my camera lens when one of the Fijians pulled me into the action, refusing to let me be on the sidelines. This dancing is not a show put on for tourists; it’s part of their daily life and a genuine experience the villagers invite you to partake in.

Different people came up to me for a dance and I must have tried

everything, from slow footwork to forming an exhilarating conga line. Exhausted by the end, I took the opportunity to look around the room and noticed the village musicians having the time of their lives simply making music. Many of them are self-taught.

I then noticed a Chinese tourist there on her honeymoon running around with the village kids as they clasped her hands forming a circle. Peering at the other end of the room, I also noticed a woman from the village with an Australian toddler serene and rested in her arms. For a moment there, it truly felt like the comfort I get from being home.

But all celebrations must come to an end. When the song and dance ended, the Fijians carolled their traditional hymn Nisa Lei, a farewell song also sung to me by the staff from restaurants and resorts I



© Yining He

visited there. I couldn't help but feel a tinge of melancholy as they sang, being reminded that the whole world's just a mighty village and that we are all not that different after all.

HOW TO GET THERE

Fiji Airways flies direct from Singapore to Fiji twice a week on Wednesdays and Saturdays, offering Economy and Business Class seats. Fiji Airways is fully manned by a Fijian cabin crew.



© Fiji Airways

THERE'S MORE TO DO IN FIJI

From jungle trekking to cultural adventures or just relaxing by the beach, Fiji has a diversity of experiences to make any holiday there eye-opening. Here are some incredible activities to try.



© Cloud 9

LOUNGE ON THE BLUEST WATERS

Ever dreamed of devouring pizza and cocktails while floating on crystal-clear water? You can do so on **Cloud 9**, Fiji's floating platform featuring an Italian wood-fired pizzeria and fully stocked bar in the middle of the ocean, surrounded by nothing but turquoise blue waters. Located on the waters of Vanua Malolo amongst the Mamanuca Islands, the restaurant is only 45 minutes away from Port Denarau by speed boat.

CLIFF JUMP DOWN A WATERFALL

On Fiji's third largest island Taveuni lies a hidden rainforest paradise and the Tavoro Waterfalls—a series of three waterfalls found within the Bouma National Heritage Park. From jumping off the cliff along the waterfall to trekking across the garden island, this is the place to get back to nature on this little-known island paradise. After a long day of trekking, stay at the **Paradise Taveuni Resort** to soak up the heavenly sunset.

ISLAND-HOP WHILE AT SEA

With 333 islands and endless blue waters to explore, one option is to hop on a cruise. **Captain Cook Cruises** offers a short three-night itinerary around the Mamanuca Islands and Southern Yasawa Islands—where you can try your hand at a range of water activities by day, and be introduced to Fiji's colourful culture at night.



© Outrigger Fiji

MAKE A DIFFERENCE WITH YOUR TOURISM DOLLAR

Many resorts in Fiji employ people from surrounding villages and give back through community activities. To help make a difference in the lives of local Fijians, you can participate by volunteering your time or donating funds. **Outrigger Fiji Beach Resort** organizes weekly trips for tourists to contribute to the local community by building schools and libraries, while **Jean-Michel Cousteau Resort** conducts fun fundraising activities such as mud crab races for the Savusavu Community Foundation, which provides the community with health and education support.

THE SECRET MALDIVES

*The Mergui Archipelago, an 800-island paradise in Southern Myanmar, has been generating interest worldwide as the latest best kept secret. **Mika Itavaara** journeys there to find out why it has been described by some as the next Maldives.*



© NASA

Up until very recently, tourism to Southern Myanmar was heavily restricted and only the most intrepid travelers made their way to the region. As a result, many of the islands remain virtually untouched. Its white sandy beaches, crystal clear waters, and lush jungle-covered hills are, without exaggeration, pristine. It sounds clichéd and almost too good to be true, so my travel companions and I decided to embark on a journey to discover this paradise for ourselves.

These days, the archipelago is easily reached from the port town of Kawthaung, located in the southernmost part of Myanmar’s Tanintharyi region, just north of Thailand’s Surin Islands. To get to Kawthaung, you can choose to take a two hour domestic flight from Myanmar’s capital Yangon, or travel to the border town of Ranong in Southern Thailand and take a short ferry ride over to Kawthaung. We chose the former option, spending a few days exploring the capital before our trip.

Leaving the hustle and bustle of the city life behind, we set off on an early morning flight to Kawthaung. Options for accommodation on the islands of the archipelago are still quite limited, and since camping is restricted, we had decided to spend our first night in Kawthaung while taking day trips to various islands. Upon arrival, we were greeted by our local guide and taken to our hotel, the Victoria Cliff Resort, to freshen up and prepare for our first expedition to paradise.

So we set off by speedboat to what would be the first of many spectacular islands we would visit on our trip. Our first destination was Cocks Comb Island, an impressive limestone formation with an astonishing heart-shaped lagoon hidden within. To get into the lagoon, we put on snorkeling gear and had to swim through a small cave opening on one side of the island. Swimming through the remarkable limestone tunnel, surrounded by thousands of colorful fish, was an incredible way to make an entrance.



© Axel Drainville

After a blissful swim and some snorkeling in the gentle waters of the lagoon, we headed back out to our boat to continue on our journey. We’re headed to Horseshoe Island next. As our boat approached the island, a picture-perfect postcard scene began to take shape—a spotless white sandy beach, swaying palm trees and turquoise waters set in a secluded bay. We were stunned by the beauty of the place, and even more so by the fact that we had it all to ourselves. Once ashore, we spent the rest of the afternoon simply taking in the views, swimming in the crystal clear waters, lazing under the shade of the palm trees and strolling along the beach while forgetting the outside world—even if for just a moment.

The second day, we couldn’t wait to get out and explore more of the wonders of Mergui. We headed further out this time, deep into the archipelago for an overnight camping trip on Nyaung Oo Phee Island, located an hour and 45 minutes by speedboat from the mainland. The island is privately owned by Victoria Cliff Resort, and they have set up bungalow tents as well as a restaurant serving fresh seafood to cater to overnight guests. On arrival, the same breathtaking views we had come to expect awaited us. We spent the day unwinding on the beach as well as snorkeling in the water among coral reefs. We even managed to find energy to go sea kayaking after, to beach hop and explore

some of the other stunning shores on the island.

In the evening, we dined on freshly caught seafood while gathered around the warmth of a campfire; toes snuggled in the sand, tender sea breeze blowing through our hair and listening to the soothing sound of waves gently lapping on the shore. In that moment, it truly felt like time stood still. The next morning, we set off on a trek into the jungle-covered hills in the interior of the island. After an enjoyable uphill journey through the verdant greenery, we arrived at an awe inspiring vantage point from where we could enjoy brilliant views of the island and its surroundings. We made the most of our remaining time there by cooling off in the water nearby.

Sadly, our trip had to come to an end. In the late afternoon, we headed back to Kawthaung to catch an early morning flight back to Yangon the following day. Looking back, our time in Mergui had been simply unforgettable. The sheer beauty and unspoiled nature of the archipelago had left a deep impression on us. With over 800 Islands, there is so much to discover in Mergui and so many sights and activities we didn’t have a chance to experience on this trip. From diving with whale sharks to living aboard small sailing ships, there are plenty of reasons to come back and we cannot wait to do so.



© Discovery DMC



© Discovery DMC

MERGUI TRAVEL TIPS

ORGANIZING THE TRIP

Free-and-easy travel there is not allowed and a special permit is required to even enter the archipelago. You have to organize your trip through a Myanmar-based tour agency such as DISCOVERY DMC which offers a broad range of packages.

WHEN TO GO

The best time to visit the Mergui Islands is from October to May when the weather tends to be sunny and dry and the sea is most calm. During summer monsoon season, storms are frequent and traveling between the islands can get rough and most boats stay away anchored to sheltered bays.

ACCOMMODATION

In Kawthaung staying at Victoria Cliff Resort is recommended. Options on the archipelago itself include the tented camping site at Nyaung Oo Phee Island, Boulder Bay Eco Resort on Boulder Bay Island and the full-board Myanmar Andaman Resort on McLeod Island. Wa Ale Resort, a new luxury eco resort and potential game changer is being built on Lampi Island, a marine national park area within the archipelago. The resort is expected to be open in December 2017.

OTHER PLACES TO VISIT IN SOUTHERN MYANMAR



© Axel Drafville

MYEIK

A picturesque coastal town north of Kawthaung and an alternative gateway to Mergui, trips from Myeik to the archipelago can range from one day visits to nearby islands for snorkeling and visiting fishing villages or longer multi-day island hopping excursions further into the archipelago.

DAWEI

The charming capital of Myanmar’s Tanintharyi region is the gateway to several secluded bays along the coast south of the city that boasts spectacular unspoiled beaches. Intrepid travelers who make their way here will be rewarded with the perfect hideaway for a few days.

ONE NIGHT IN BALI

*We all enjoy a quick, long weekend trip as much as the next Singaporean, but **Adam Kerr** never thought a quick 2D1N trip could accomplish the same kind of satisfaction. He heads to Ubud, the cultural center of Bali, to experience it for himself.*



I really needed a quick respite and do nothing but laze around and relax. I needed to be away from the evil clutches of social media, my iPhone and my inbox. I needed to disconnect in order to reconnect with myself. And so I headed to Bali, a place that needs no familiarization, over a weekend.

The Bali we are all familiar with are the Kuta, Seminyak and Denpasar areas, the epicenters of all things beach and nightlife (read: crowds). I wanted to experience a different, quieter side of Bali. Hearing that the further north you go in Bali, the quieter, colder and more sophisticated it gets, that's where I headed.

I planted myself at The Chedi Club Tanah Gajah in Ubud, about an hour and a half away from the Ngurah Rai

International Airport by car. This five-hectare hotel resort is a magnificent piece of work and used to be the home of Hendra Hadiprana, one of Indonesia's most respected art collectors. It's hidden away among the rolling hills of the city's heritage-rich highlands and thriving rice fields, with only 20 villas on site despite its size, meaning you get lots of space and privacy.

After being whisked away to my villa in a buggy, I came to one conclusion: this place is extremely excessive for one person, so you might want to bring a pal along. Even alone, with amenities like a cozy queen-sized bed, a private pool facing the rice fields, an outdoor tub and all the club benefits at my disposal, I knew I was going to have a great time here.



Lunch was an intimate affair at The Restaurant, which overlooks an infinite vista of rice fields. Helmed by Singaporean-born chef Khairudin “Dean” Nor, The Restaurant serves up typical Indonesian cuisine like nasi campur and ayam sambal tomat, as well as other Asian dishes with a Western twist; all made using ingredients from their own garden. I wasn’t exactly prepared when I ordered the Rijsttafel (ordering when hungry is always a bad idea), a dish that was obviously meant for sharing. It started with a small bowl of soto ayam followed by a dulang (tray) of various main courses like the be plecing kangkung, ayam bakar taliwang and five other dishes, all served with steamed rice from the fields. My favourite has to be the flavor-packed bowl of shredded beef doused in Balinese spices, which tastes vaguely similar to rendang.



© Chedi Club

Instinctively, the first thing I did after the feast was to go for a massage in one of the two paddy fields-facing suites. I knew I was going to be in good hands (ha. ha.) because The Chedi Club Tanah Gajah was dubbed the World’s Best Relaxation Retreat at last year’s World Boutique Hotel Awards.

I opted for the 60-minute Ancient Balinese Massage, and the “Elate” oil—an in-house concoction of geranium, grapefruit, lemongrass and lime—to be used during the session. It’s apparently a good pairing since it’ll help the body “detox” while the traditional Balinese massage techniques of palming, stretching, effleurage and kneading pressure points relieve tension, improve blood flow, ease stress and calm the mind.



© Chedi Club



That same evening, I went to the rice paddy fields with my assigned personal butler, Ayu, and my host for the evening, Denny, after an indulgent, slightly over-the-top Afternoon Tea (complete with three tiers of savory and sweet snacks) in my villa. This trek is just one of the many Club Service Benefits here, which explains why both of them were fully prepped to answer my questions about the goings-on at the field, from its irrigation process to the ceremonies performed before planting, as well as the pre-harvesting process.

After a light dinner at The Restaurant and a quick runaround of the town center, I was back at the villa to

continue enjoying the rest of the facilities under the shimmering nightlight from the moon, which lit up the otherwise dark and serene compound (also because most of the establishments in the area close fairly early).

It's hard to imagine that I actually did all of that within a day and still managed to squeeze in a quick tour of Goa Gajah, a Hindu archaeological site that's been nominated as a UNESCO World Heritage site, the next morning before I departed for home—now rested, rejuvenated and ready to get back into the grind.

FLIGHT

Many airlines, including full-service carrier **KLM**, operates direct flights from Singapore Changi Airport to Ngurah Rai International Airport.

CURRENCY

\$1 = 9700IDR

Let us take you to Bali

Discover Bali's green rice fields, impressive temples, small fishing villages and idyllic beaches. We'll take you there in comfort, without any detours. KLM flies daily from Singapore to Denpasar. Visit **klm.sg** for more information.

Royal Dutch Airlines



THERE AND BACK AGAIN

*From the serenity provided by the mountain ranges to the flurry of activities that never fails to keep one busy, **Jane Bay** discovers for herself why Oman is a destination worth going more than once.*



© Alexis Wois

As a seasoned traveler, I often find myself yearning for experiences that go beyond the typical tourist traps and destinations suggested on countless travel sites. Tired of my usual haunt of Asian destinations and without having quite enough time to fly to Europe or the Unites States, I decided to embark on a journey to Oman—home to some of the most stunning and secluded beaches on the Arabian peninsula, peppered with luxury resorts—a veritable gem of the Middle East.

Once in Oman, my adventure started with a 2.5-hour drive to the Al Hajar Mountains. Traveling along a winding road up the mountain left me nauseous, but the magnificent scenery distracted me from my discomfort until I finally arrived at Alila Jabal Akhdar, a resort perched 2,000 meters above sea level. Unique

among other Alila properties, this one stood out with its breathtaking views. It is, after all, known as the ‘Grand Canyon’ of the Middle East. Despite its isolation—which is excellent for those of us allergic to crowds and busloads of tourists—there is hardly a dull moment to be had. You’ll be hard-pressed to decide whether you want to go for a yoga session, brave a cave adventure via Ferrata, or hike to a picturesque abandoned village where your only company consists of a few grazing goats and donkeys.

After a few days of mountain bliss that not only recharged my mental batteries but also rejuvenated my entire being, I found myself reluctant to tear away from this sacred little getaway to return to the real world. But return I did to Muscat, though not without



© Alexis Viols



© Alexis Viols

stopping at the UNESCO-listed town of Nizwan to see its immaculately restored fort. While there, I picked up a few souvenirs and tasted the exquisitely packed Omani Halwa, a local dessert made from a variety of spices, rosewater, nuts, sugar and ghee—the best in Oman, or so I have been told.

The bustle of Muscat was invigorating, and there was so much to see. The famed Royal Opera House of Muscat, a project initiated by the much revered Sultan Qaboos,

features state of the art acoustics and boasts a lineup of world class performances. I’d booked tickets to Giselle online even before arriving in Oman, which turned out to be the absolute best thing to do as it played to a full house. What I was unable to do afterwards was get a table at the exquisite Al Anghamoman restaurant (conveniently located at the same premise), so ensure that you plan in advance and get your reservations made in good time.



© Alexis Viols



© Alexis Vols



© Alexis Vols



© Alexis Vols

Another not to be missed masterpiece is the Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque. Once housing the world’s largest carpet and chandelier before the Emiratis and Qataris took over the top spot, this exquisite piece of architecture is where I spent an entire afternoon in quiet contemplation.

All too soon, it was time to leave my new favorite destination. I was already plotting my return visit while

at the airport. From a number of suggestions that were given to me by friendly locals, I knew that my next visit here would find me at Salalah (a little-known beach playground) during Kahreef, the monsoon period when the land becomes transformed into a lush green sight of exceptional beauty. I will be back, Oman.

TRANSPORT

Local transportation can get considerably expensive. Since neither Uber nor Grab has made its way to Oman, your best bets are the taxis around town. It’s not meter-operated, however, so you should research the destination and average fare, then agree on a negotiated price with the driver before the start of your journey. Should you find a driver you like, keep him for the rest of your trip.

STAY

The Chedi Muscat, Al-bustan Palace and Alila Jabal Akhdar are solid accommodation options.

FACT

The World Economic Forum ranks Oman as the 4th safest country in the world.

CURRENCY

One Omani Rial = \$3.60

VALENCIA ON FIRE

*The best time to see Valencia is during the Las Fallas, a two-and-a-half week festival in March that was recently added to UNESCO’s Intangible Cultural Heritage list. It’s an incredible community driven festival of music, traditional clothing, and grand satirical monuments depicting the goings-on in the city and the world. Oh, and there’s gunpowder. Lots of gunpowder. **Adam Kerr** flies up to Europe to experience this remarkable city-wide festival.*



© Spain Tourism Board

I woke up in my cozy, unmodern-like hotel room at about 7:30am to the sound of gunshots whirring through the streets below. Curious, I jumped out of bed and darted to the window, wondering if the place I was staying at had become collateral damage from crossfire between police and gunmen. But no, it was just the ridiculously loud sounds from the firecrackers the kids were playing with on the streets—all part of the festivities of Valencia’s Las Fallas (or Festival of Fire). Little did I know this was just a small taste of things to come.

The guys from Valencia Tourism had met us in our hotel lobby to bring us around the city center, where the Las Fallas action was at its peak. On the way there, I had a quick glimpse of the City of Arts and Sciences, a colossal group of structures that’s way beyond its years and houses an IMAX cinema, a Planetarium and a Laserium—all within the architectural masterpiece

L’Hemisferic—as well as the avant-garde opera house El Palau de les Arts Reina Sofia, the Principe Felipe Science Museum and Europe’s largest aquarium, the Oceanografic, standing tall and magnificent.

It’s definitely a hot tourist spot to hit if you’re visiting the city for the first time, but not a must if you’re looking to do as the locals do. While its one of the 12 Treasures of Spain and one of the most important modern tourist destinations of the city, you won’t find many locals here, obviously, unless there’s a great show going on during that season (book ahead if you don’t want to be disappointed).

After what seemed like an eternity weaving through congested roads and navigating detours because of last minute road closures, I finally arrived at the outskirts of the city center. The amount of noise that welcomed me was akin to the roar and cheers of fans outside the

Santiago Bernabeu Stadium after the Real Madrid vs. Bayern Munchen match I caught in Madrid three years ago—exhilarating and cacophonous. I had chills down my spine—the good kind—just thinking about what was ahead of me.

I was highly curious as to why and how the colorful and explosive Las Fallas de Valencia came to be. I was told that the first records of the festival date back to the 18th century to honor Saint Joseph, the patron saint of the carpentry guild, which explains the numerous man-made giant sculptures and *ninots* (smaller caricature pieces around the main fallas monuments) dotting the city and nearby neighborhoods. It’s also a celebration of the coming of spring—that’s why the whole city turns into a massive street party and outdoor art museum.

We were brought to check out the best three *fallas*. One was found at Campanar quarter, an inner-city suburb that’s about a 10-minute walk from the city center. Sitting in the middle of a busy residential intersection is an epic-looking, whimsical sculpture that would be perfect for the set of *Alice in Wonderland*. This particular *falla* had won top prize, and happens to be the biggest (22

meters high, 28 meters wide) this year.

Apart from the incessant boom, splat and bang of firecrackers echoing throughout the city, I also noticed a gathering of men and women—I learned that they were called *falleros* and *falleras*—in elegant costumes at a makeshift tent nearby. Just like the locals who seemed to swarm around these beautiful people, I broke from the group to approach one of them to find out why they were dressed to the nines, and why the women had Princess Leia-like hairdos. I went up to the one with the friendliest face and mustered a simple sentence despite fears that I might get a taste of Spanish side-eye: “This dress you have on is just amazing. Why is everyone here wearing them?”

She stopped what she was doing, looked at me and gave me a million-dollar smile, the kind that will melt hearts and sweep men off their feet, and said: “Hello there! Oh this is the official traditional clothing of the festivals. Each one is handmade using silk because Valencia is known for its silk trading activities since the 1700s.” She went on to explain that the *falleros* and *falleras* are men and women collaborators of each specific *faella* community, and who



© Spain Tourism Board



© Spain Tourism Board



are chosen to host year-round events like fund-raising to build the *fallas*.

Here's the part that both shocked and impressed me the most. The final hurrah and climax of the whole festival is La Crema, a tradition started in the 18th century where all the *fallas* will be burnt in a huge bonfire as midnight approaches. It seemed like such a waste to dispose of an entire year's worth of effort in a blaze, but this event actually gives greater meaning to the whole festival.

Once the firefighters were in place (just in case), the fireworks on the structure were set off, lighting parts of the structure and providing visual extravagance at the

same time. Slowly, we witnessed the magnificent wooden *falla* turn into an oversized burning torch. I had to take a couple of steps back.

But watching the monumental *falla* burn gave me an odd satisfaction. The wind carried the burning ambers and ashes into our direction and the sky was lit (literally, not in the millennial sense), like a swarm of fireflies congregating above. The blaze turned into a symbolic cleansing fire for Valencians representing a fresh start. In that moment, I truly understood the meaning behind the remarkable, vibrant and colorful Las Fallas de Valencia.

VALENCIAN PIT STOPS

Besides digging into paellas and sipping on horchatas, Valencia also has a burgeoning scene after hours. For low-key drinks with your posse, the Ruzafa neighborhood is where you want to be; it's Valencia's epicenter of all things cool and laid-back, and not as mainstream as the Carmen district.



CAFE BERLIN

This is one of the district's best-loved hole in the wall, complete with mismatched furniture that just works for them (there's even a swing inside!). You can't miss the place, especially when there's a super bright neon sign on the shop front, coupled with a hip crowd waiting to be part of the action on the inside. With exhibitions, occasional live music and knitting lessons that happen on Wednesdays, it's where the locals go to indulge in a seemingly boho lifestyle. They're known for their mojitos and G&Ts, which they add peppercorns to as a taste enhancer, but pass on their offerings of local craft beers, like the Mahou and Zeta beers priced at 2.50 Euros (\$4) and 4.50 Euros (\$7).

Carrer de Cadis, 22-24, 46004 Valencia, Spain

OLHOPS CRAFT BEER HOUSE

You can find exactly what you'd expect in a typical craft beer house; think Mikkeller at Deck

or Druggists on Tyrwhitt Road. They're relatively young—two and a half years old to be exact—and offer more than 10 draught beers mainly from different parts of Spain and Europe, which they change every other week. The list is chalked on a blackboard at the back, with information about where it's from, the type of beer and its strength. Its walls are decked out in grey, white, black and yellow, with modern, vector-style graphics on the walls with liberal use of metal and glass. The selection of beers here are priced between 2.50-6.50 Euros (\$4-\$10) for a pint.

Carrer de Sueca, 21, 46004 Valencia, Spain

UBIK CAFE

Don't be fooled by what you see from the outside. I almost mistook this place as a bookstore (though it really is) and was wondering if the bar I was looking for had closed down. I walked in and was greeted with chatter of the patrons, most of whom had books on the table accompanied by pints and bottles of beer. This hybrid bookstore-cafe-bar is where all the cool kids of Valencia hang out for a beer or 10 and on some nights, watch local jazz performers do their thing. They keep their website updated so check that out before heading down.

Carrer del Literat Azorin, 13, 46003 Valencia, Spain



FROM OUR READERS

We asked for your tales of wanderlust and you delivered.



NICHOLAS TANN TURKEY

Nicholas was on his way to Cappadocia on a bus when he got off a couple of stops too early. After trekking for three hours, he found a hut whose owner gave him not just directions, but freshly made mulled wine too. He proudly shared that in it was orange, pomegranate, apple, plum, cinnamon, ginger, apricot and cherries.

TONI FLORENTINO FIJI

📷 @_toniflo

Toni had just turned 30 and ended a 10 year-long relationship so she decided to celebrate the milestone by spending it with her best friend doing crazy things in Fiji.



DINESH SIVAPRAGSAM IRAN

📷 @dineshdashs

Dinesh, along with his travel buddy Marcel, met up with their Couchsurfing host Sinar and bonded over bouts of shisha, learning swear words in foreign tongues and partying like the Iranians do.



SHINN TEO HONG KONG

Shinn travels often for work, so much so her home has become somewhat of a hotel. But the joy of traveling has never escaped her, especially during her recent Hong Kong visit where she checked out HDB-like estates.

DANIEL TAY JAPAN

📷 @danieltjzs

Daniel planned for a solo backpacking trip to Kyoto but his parents came along for the ride at the last minute. Just as well, as his hectic job schedule meant family time was a rarity.



DANIEL ONG AUSTRALIA

📷 @danong

Daniel proposed to his wife at the picturesque Busselton Jetty, making the special place a personally memorable one for him. He says he got butterflies in his stomach as he submitted this picture to us.

LIM MING JUN MOROCCO

Ming Jun rode camels for the first time, took a jeep ride topside and spent a night in the middle of the Sahara desert under a beautiful star-lit night.



**SHABAZ HUSSAIN
LAOS**

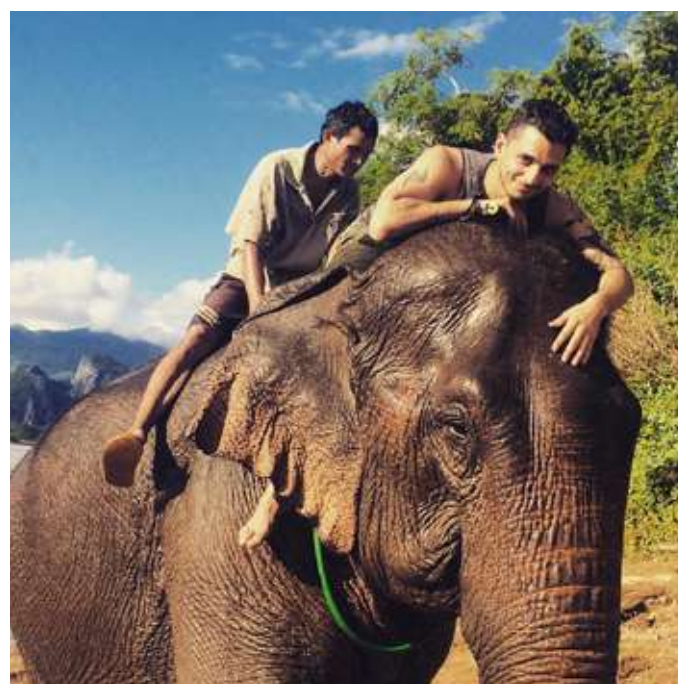
📷 @eye_of_shabaz

"I spent my American traditional holiday of Thanksgiving taking care of elephants at an Elephant Sanctuary in Laos. Learning more about these beautiful creatures created a newfound respect and love for animals. It's a life-changing experience."

**PEARLY NG
INDIA**

📷 @talkinghedgehog

Pearly couldn't ask for a better life/travel partner than Hau Yeow. Together, they've braved two nights riding third-class on sleeper trains, slept with dung beetles in the Thar desert and backpacked all over India for a month.

**ADNAN ZAINUDIN
TURKEY**

📷 @thenanan

Adnan went to Turkey for his honeymoon last year and had a memorable time meeting friendly locals, taking in the beautiful scenery and dining on delicious food.

**BEN WIGHTMAN
JAPAN**

Ben took his classmate's advice and visited Tokyo's crazy spectacular at the Robot Restaurant and wasn't disappointed by the colorful displays of robots, costumes and mechanized floats.

FIONA CHAN
THAILAND

Fiona went off the beaten track on her recent trip to Chiang Mai, where she hiked around the Pai Canyon and glimpsed a magnificent double rainbow.

**KARINA CURLEWIS**
BALI

📷 @kcurlewis

"In that moment facing out to the open sea, I felt the endless possibilities of life. Whether it was the Bali air, fairly high altitude or the soothing spa treatment I experienced beforehand, I truly felt the magic and wonder of Uluwatu."

**KELVIN DASS**
ICELAND

📷 @travelkelsg

Kelvin spent two months traveling around Iceland, Faroe Islands and Norway where he took in the tranquil landscapes, saw the Northern Lights and had the best trip of his life.

**IVY TOH**
SOUTH KOREA

📷 @ivyty

Ivy went to Boryeong and took part in their annual Mud Festival where she voluntarily put mud on herself for the first time. The adventurous lady then also did her very first paragliding in Danyang.

Interested to contribute your travel stories too?
Refer to our submission guideline [here](#).

BO AND DYLAN'S BANGKOK

Chefs Duangporn “Bo” Songvisava and Dylan Jones are two of Thai cuisine’s great modern exponents. The timeless flavors of traditional ingredients are taken to new heights at their eponymous restaurant, Bo.lan, tucked away in a green oasis in the middle of Bangkok.

Kurt Ganapathy caught up with the couple in the lead up to Chang Sensory Trails 2017 to talk about their favorite places in the city, hear their thoughts about the upcoming Bangkok Michelin Guide and find out if the supposed Bangkok street food “ban” is anything to worry about.



Dylan, how did you get your start in Thai cuisine?

Dylan: I decided after I finished my apprenticeship that I really wanted to travel, so I went through a bunch of London restaurants and applied for jobs. As it happened, Nahm was the first one that got back to me. I expected to do six months at Nahm—do Thai food for six months, learn it, travel around Europe like all the other Australian backpackers, come back, do another cuisine for six months and repeat that as many times as I could. But after working at Nahm, I just fell in love with the food completely and utterly. I often say that I didn’t really choose Thai food; it chose me. I was just blown away by the techniques, the flavors and the different ingredients.

And where do you go when you feel like dining out?

Dylan: If it’s Thai, we’ll probably go to Nahm.

Bo: Or Bangkok Bold, but go for the chef’s table.

Dylan: If it’s a more modern sort of Thai cuisine, then probably the new restaurant Gaa that was just opened

by the old Gaggan sous chef. It’s fantastic. For more casual Thai eats—Soul Food. For pizza you can’t go past Peppina really.

Bo: There’s a Vietnamese place that’s really good, Tonkin Annam.

Dylan: It’s actually in the Old City, right near our other restaurant (Err Urban Rustic Thai), so when we’re over there and don’t want to eat our Thai food, we go to their restaurant.

Bo: For Chinese, we always love Fei Ya at Renaissance Bangkok.

If you could recommend a couple of daytrip destinations off the beaten trail but close to Bangkok, what would they be?

Bo: Amphawa is close enough, it’s just an hour and a bit away. The floating market there, in the evening on Friday or Saturday; that’s good.

Dylan: The Maeklong Railway Market is fantastic, but it’s full of tourists now.



Bo: Or Khao Yai—they have wineries, an outlet mall; there’s a couple of petting zoos out there.

Dylan: The kids love feeding the lambs! There are a couple of golf courses too, if you want to do that. And there are great local Thai restaurants.

What are your thoughts on the Michelin Guide coming to Bangkok?

Dylan: For Thailand and Bangkok, it’s a good thing; it’s going to bring more attention to the area and the restaurants here. But my major concern is whether or not Michelin can do it in a way where they hold on to their integrity. So far in Asia, apart from maybe Japan, they haven’t really upheld what my idea of Michelin is. And while there are some fantastic one-Michelin-star restaurants in Singapore, there are also restaurants that I wouldn’t consider, myself, to be Michelin-star restaurants.

I know they say that Michelin stars are just about the food, but show me a one-star restaurant anywhere in Europe that has similar settings and decor to some of the places they’ve given stars to in Singapore or Hong Kong. I know they’re trying to do it to stay relevant, but maybe they can do it in a different way by having a separate section for street food or hawker centers and places like that. Coming to Bangkok, I sort of question how they can actually have an understanding of Thai cuisine to be able to rate it and give it a star or two or three.

We’ve all heard reports about the Thai government’s desire to “clean up” Bangkok’s streets and how this might affect street food stalls. What are your thoughts?

Dylan: I don’t think it’s necessarily a bad thing. I feel that street food has been declining in quality for the last five or six years anyway, if not longer, and if they can do something to curb that decline, make a better life for people selling street food and improve the quality of ingredients, then sure, it’s got to be a good thing.

Bo: It will lose its charm for sure. Running it this way doesn’t mean that food hygiene will become better anyway. An example of “cleaning up” is the Flower Market (Pak Khlong Talat). The Flower Market has lost its charm altogether. The traffic used to be so bad because people would park everywhere and the stalls would even come out on one length of the street, but it was bustling. Now it’s just really stale.

Dylan: If they clean it up too much, it’ll end up like Singapore! But like all things that happen in Bangkok, they’ve already done a major backflip on it. They’re not going to stop street food—they’re going to clean it up a little bit and in certain areas they’ll restrict it to improve access to the pavements—but places like Yaowarat, there’s no way they’re going to get rid of that! I mean, the public outcry; the tourism authority would ask them what the hell they were doing because it’s been their marketing campaign for the last six years.



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HAVE BEER, WILL TRAVEL

Expert beer drinker **Dannon Har** caught up with craft beer aficionado Brian Spencer who earlier this year launched the Singapore edition of *The Beer Travelist Guide* and found out what it means to travel in search for great brew.



How did the idea for Beer Travelist come about?

I’ve been fortunate to travel rather extensively, and it dawned on me that the way I’ve discovered the best bits of many cities has been by following the craft beer trail, which almost always leads to great bars and restaurants, friendly folks, cool neighborhoods, fun events, good music—basically good times.

Interesting people from all walks of life tend to gravitate towards proper beer bars and breweries, and I’ve learned that if you keep your eyes and ears open, and strike up conversations with random people, you can find so much more than just good beer at these places.

The other thing is that while there are a lot of insightful, well-written sites out there concerning craft beer, there are very, very few focused on the Asia Pacific region, and even fewer that prioritize high-quality, narrative-driven beer journalism framed through travel. I hope to develop Beer Travelist into the go-to resource in Asia for anybody who loves traveling and enjoys proper beers in fun places—and that’s just about everybody, right?

In a few words, how will you personally describe Beer Travelist?

Beer Travelist is independent, journalistic, honest, and pro-travel. We believe that good beer is for everybody, all the time, so we try to write with both dedicated beer enthusiasts and casual, craft-curious beer drinkers in mind.

As someone who travels for beer, or shall I say, with

beer in mind, how has that shaped the way you travel?

Well, I do travel for beer on occasion, such as the time I went to Kuala Lumpur for the Better Beer Festival, and I’m not alone. Just as many people travel for music and arts festivals, more and more beer enthusiasts are also traveling specifically to attend notable beer fests. I’ve met a few people around Asia who fly to Denmark for the Mikkeller Beer Celebration Copenhagen, for instance, and of course there are major events like The Great American Beer Festival in Denver, Colorado, that attract people from all over the world.

Whenever I’m in a city like, say, Tokyo or Seoul—places that I know have craft beer—I always incorporate stops on the so-called beer trail into my plans. That’s part of the idea behind our Beer Travelist Guide to Singapore. It has all kinds of tips for exploring Singapore’s beer trail. We’ll update it every year, and plan to roll out similar guides for major cities across Asia Pacific.

You’ve relocated to Singapore from Bangkok, and before that, New York. As a beer enthusiast, has the beer scene here been up to your expectation?

There was little to no craft beer in Bangkok when I lived there for a while in 2008-09 and again in 2011, but as anybody who’s been there lately knows that sure has changed fast. Aside from those extended stints in BKK, I was in Brooklyn from 2001 until we moved to Singapore in 2012.

I clearly remember filling a growler at my local beer shop,

Beer Street, just before moving here and the owner telling me about a new Japanese craft beer bar called JiBiru that he found online. I think he was trying to make me feel better about the beer prospects here because it looked grim from afar, especially then and compared to Brooklyn. It was basically JiBiru, Brewerkz, RedDot... that's about it, and two of those three didn't and don't do much for me.

Like in Bangkok, the lay of the craft beer land here is far different and much better than it was five years ago. JiBiru is now an institution, and Singapore has one of the better overall beer scenes in Asia.

What are some of the craziest places your lust for the brew have taken you?

When I first moved here my wife and I used to pay \$20-\$25 each way by taxi to go drink beer at an industrial food production zone in middle-of-nowhere Admiralty. I'm not sure if you remember Jungle Beer, which closed a few years ago, but they used to host a monthly free-flow for like \$40 at what was essentially a man cave at their brewery in FoodXchange. We couldn't find the brewery the first time and were wandering around this deserted, desolate industrial park at night for quite some time before locating it. It felt like a bad horror movie, and in anywhere but Singapore it could have turned into one.

You knew this question was coming. From your personal experience, name me your top three bars/pubs/breweries in the world for beer.

You knew more than three answers were coming, right? I've had so many silly, epic nights at so many amazing places over the years: Great Leap Brewing's original hutong taproom in Beijing, the Mikkeller Bar in Bangkok, Brooklyn Brewery (on Friday nights, before it became a thing), Proeflokaal Arendsneest in Amsterdam, and Modus Operandi Brewing Co., just north of Sydney, all come to mind.

As far as three personal favorites in which I've spent a lot of time on multiple occasions, though, I'll say the beer barrel-shaped funhouse that is Tawandang Microbrewery on Rama III in Bangkok; the Earl of Essex in Islington, which is my local boozer during my annual two- to three-month spells in London; and Brouwerij Lane in Greenpoint, Brooklyn, which stole my heart with its bathroom covered in vintage Star Wars wallpaper.

Which few cities in the world will you say are the most up-and-coming for craft beer?

Thinking just about Asia, for me five cities to watch are Saigon, Bangkok, Seoul, Manila, and Taipei. These places are all already on their way up but, I think, have much more in store.

What are some of the weirdest, but oddly delicious, brews you have had?

Easy—the Smoked Salmon ale from Jackie's Beernest in Shanghai, China. I know this sounds foul, but it smelled

and tasted exactly like smoked salmon; god help me it was kind of tasty, though, a testament to Jackie's brewing skills and creativity. There was also a cheese beer on tap that night, but I "didn't get a chance" to try it. I spoke with this Australian guy who did taste it, though, and he said it was "cheesy but not in a bad way, mate."

In April I took my dad to Grand Rapids, Michigan, for an overnight beer trip to celebrate his 60th birthday, and at The Mitten Brewing Company we tried a strange, very strong (10.5%) Finnish-style ale brewed with juniper berries and aged in aquavit barrels. Barrel-aging is all the rage in craft beer, with good reason, and yet that was the first time I'd ever seen an aquavit barrel used. The ale was... interesting, let's leave it at that.

Not sure if you do, but if you were to pack a beer in your luggage to bring along with you in your travels, which will it be?

When I'm travelling I leave it up to the Beer Gods to bestow their fruits upon me, whether that be proper craft or the local indistinct lager. That said, I try to bring at least a few bottles/cans back home, and those are usually imperial stouts or wild sour ales since they're particularly expensive in Singapore, age with grace, and tend to be goddamned delicious.

If I were visiting Singapore and looking for one beer to bring home—and there are still only a few local breweries bottling—it'd be Brewlander & Co's Love, which brewmaster John Wei brews with wild *Saccharomyces* yeast and is one of the best new IPAs I've tried anywhere this year.

