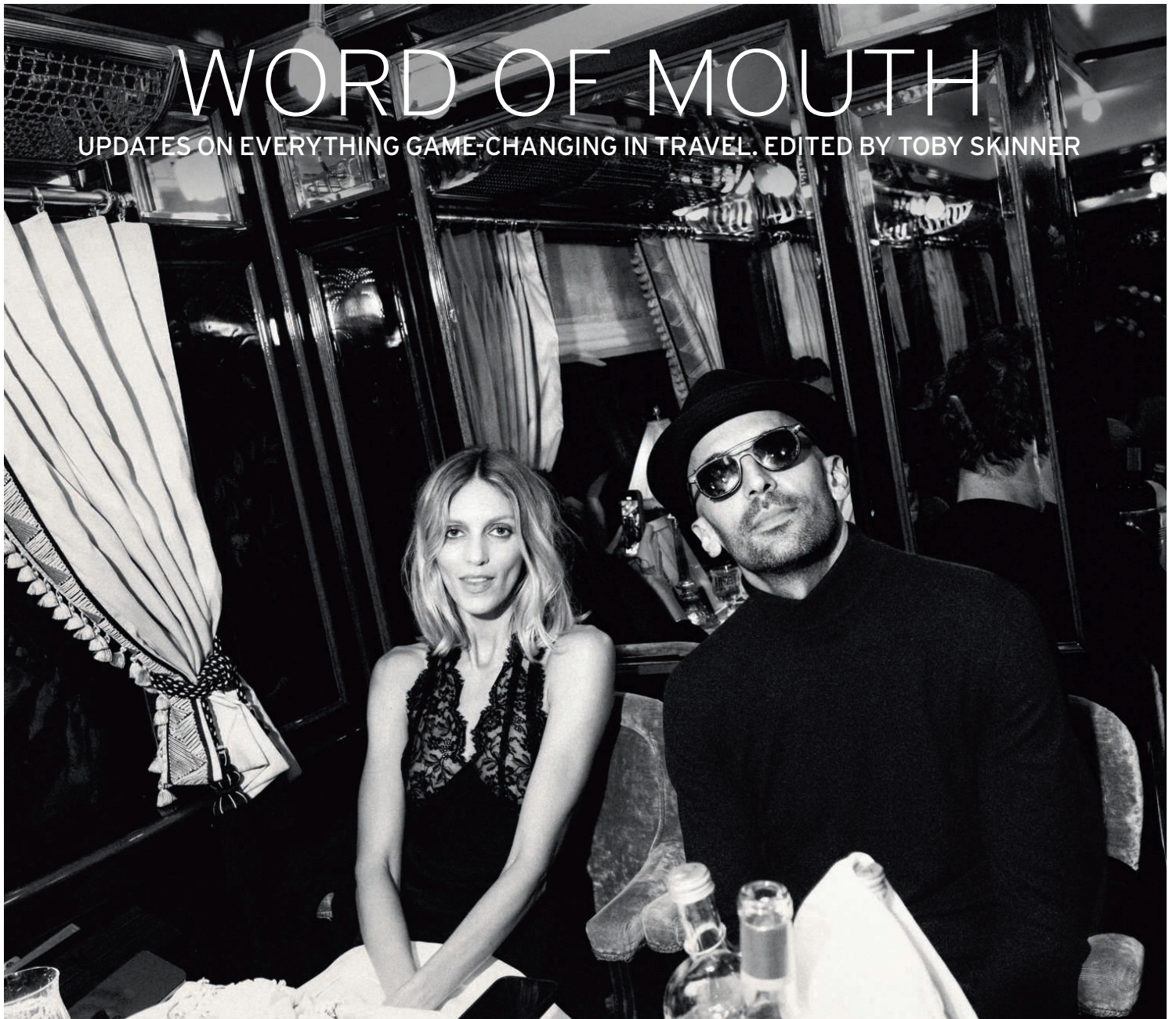


WORD OF MOUTH

UPDATES ON EVERYTHING GAME-CHANGING IN TRAVEL. EDITED BY TOBY SKINNER



CARRIAGES AT MIDNIGHT

With train travel still on the up, in 2025 all eyes will be on Belmond's new *La Dolce Vita Orient Express*, with a design by Milan's Dimorestudio that nods to Italian greats such as Gio Ponti.

But change has also been afoot on the *Venice Simplon-Orient-Express*, with its exquisite new L'Observatoire carriage suite designed by French street artist JR, who has also curated the vinyl selection, Gallimard books collection and little gifts for guests.

Launched with a hedonistic party attended by actors Daisy Edgar-Jones and Sami Outalballi, and model Anja Rubik, it suggests that the new era of trains is more zeitgeisty than starchy classic.

PHOTOGRAPH: BOBY

HAPPY NEW YEAR

THE 25 TRENDS WE'RE EXCITED ABOUT FOR 2025

Model Anja Rubik and street artist JR on the *Venice Simplon-Orient-Express*

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NEXT-GEN DUBAI DESIGN

For a glimpse of the next Gulf aesthetic, the creekside Al Seef neighbourhood is a good place to start. It's home to the Afaneen Collective, a group of whip-smart fashion and homeware shops and cafés run by young locals reimagining modern Emirati culture. There's streetwear store One8, selling trucker hats emblazoned with Arabic phrases; Tebra, which offers retro motif socks and finjan coffee cups; and Tamashee, known for its teal, mustard and ochre sandals – a fresh take on classic Arabian Gulf footwear.

SET-JETTING HOTSPOTS

JERSEY

For the reboot of *Bergerac*, which coincides with the opening of the Jersey Opera House.

THAI ISLANDS

The setting for both *Jurassic World: Rebirth* and series three of

The White Lotus, filmed mostly at the Four Seasons Resort Koh Samui.

CHICAGO

A fourth season of *The Bear* requires a Chicago eating odyssey, starting at Mr Beef, the no-frills Italian that inspired Carmy's joint.

UNFORBIDDEN CITY

Beijing's Imperial centre – fanning out symmetrically from the Forbidden City – has always been evocative, from the narrow hutong laneways around Houhai Lake to the summit pavilion of Jingshan Park. But this central district has been curiously shy of heritage-driven hotels, which is why the new Mandarin Oriental Qianmen, Beijing is so exciting: 42 gorgeous courtyard spaces built in a 2,000-year-old architectural style, with a restaurant by Cantonese Michelin magnet Chef Fei and a plum location within touching distance of the iconic Drum and Bell Towers east of the lake.



Clockwise from bottom left: the Forbidden City in Beijing; products from Afaneen Collective shops Tebra, Torba Pottery and Tamashee; room at Coco Hotel; 1 Hotel Copenhagen

GREEN COPENHAGEN 3.0

More than two decades since the back-to-basics New Nordic Food manifesto and the subsequent rise of all things Danish, it's easy to forget that Copenhagen remains a pioneer in everything from renewable energy to safe harbour swimming and "five-minute city" planning. The green credo informs the hotel scene, which includes boutiques such as Coco, owned by the Copenhagen Food Collective and fed by the group's solar farm (which also powers its 16 restaurants). This year eco-forward 1 Hotels is set to open in the Latin Quarter. The group's first mainland European property will feature an abundance of plants, recycled materials and low-energy, low-waste solutions.



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BRIGHT IDEA

The capricious northern lights shouldn't be the sole reason to travel. But recent sightings in the south of England suggest something is afoot: specifically, a new solar maximum. This 11-year peak in auroral activity could mean skies of shimmering neon in 2025. The viewing destinations du jour are Iceland, Greenland and the Faroe Islands, the latter with a new Icelandair connection from London, a waterside hotel set to open in the eastern village of Klaksvík and a recently launched outdoor spa at the turf-roofed Hotel Føroyar overlooking Tórshavn.



Clockwise from this picture: Hotel Føroyar; dancer at Kahnawake Powwow, Quebec; Tipi Teachings participant, Saskatchewan; Ojibwe dancer; The Newman; The Zetter Bloomsbury

Below: Baguette Hand in Hand bag, POA, Fendi (fendi.com).
Below, right: Lady Dior printed velvet and resin bag, POA, Dior (dior.com)



CRAFTY CROSSOVERS

Fashion will be mining global arts and crafts more than ever this year – especially those from East Asia. There's Fendi's hand-woven bag made with 80-something Korean artisan Kim Eun-young, a specialist in maedeup, the tradition of tying string to create ornamental knots; or Dior's collaboration with Liang Yuanwei, a Chinese artist who has brought her textured biophilic style to a range of bags.

From above right: Kim Eun-young; Liang Yuanwei



POPULAR POWWOWS

This year Indigenous tourism is expected to hit new heights. In Canada, Entrée Destinations has put its might behind the launch of 20 epic new adventures across all 13 Canadian Provinces. Together they are called Stories of Canada, as they focus on people and their cultural tales. For peak immersion these involve Indigenous groups including the Haida elders of the nature-rich Haida Gwaii archipelago, and Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in artists in the Yukon territory's Dawson City. Entrée founder Marc Telio's big passion is the joy of cross-cultural interaction. He's encouraging visitors to join powwows: traditional song, dance and craft celebrations, which are booming again across Canada.



STREET HUSTLE

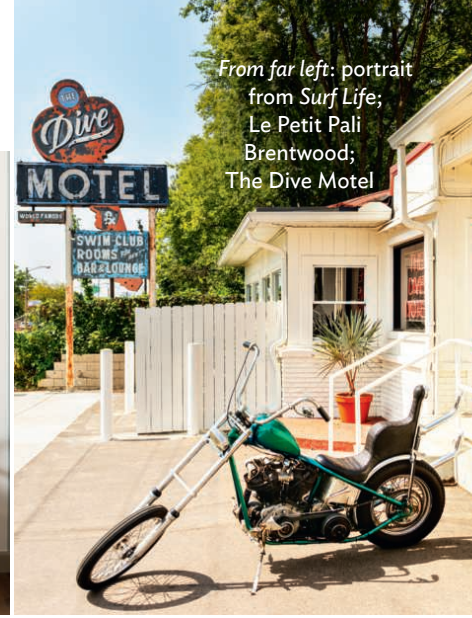
In London, big city energy will be shifting north of Oxford Street this year (can we make "Noost" happen?). The art deco Newman hotel, inspired by one-time resident heiress Nancy Cunard, will open in Fitzrovia, a short stroll west of where the 68-key Zetter Bloomsbury will become the third Georgian townhouse from a brand that's brought sophistication to Marylebone and Clerkenwell. And all of it overlooked by the BT Tower, itself in the process of becoming a place to stay under the owners of New York's Jetsons-retro TWA Hotel at JFK Airport.

PHOTOGRAPHS: HANNES BECKER; ENTRÉE CANADA; FENDI; WENINGAO LEI; MARTIN MORRELL/THE ZETTER; THE NEWMAN

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NEW WAVE GIRLS

Australia's surf line-ups are increasingly the domain of women, whose stories and lifestyles are shifting narratives. Recent books on the subject include *Surf Like a Woman*, Pauline Menczer's memoir about defying aggressive misogyny and intimidation on her journey from "dirt-poor, chronically ill, freckle-faced teen from Bondi" to surf world champion; and Gill Hutchison's coffee-table tome *Surf Life*, which lovingly celebrates the often enviable lifestyles of 28 diverse female surfers of all ages, from Tasmania to Noosa.



From far left: portrait from *Surf Life*; Le Petit Pali Brentwood; The Dive Motel

CENTURION MOTELS

A century ago the Milestone Mo-Tel in San Luis Obispo, California, created a new genre of frill-free roadside hotels. But while pop culture has tended to be down on the motel – from *Psycho* to *Schitt's Creek* – so many have smartened up, such as crisply wood-clad Tourists in Massachusetts and Nashville's disco ball-filled Dive Motel. New openings include Le Petit Pali Brentwood, a charmingly revamped 25-room roadside inn in a quietly upscale LA 'hood between Santa Monica and the Crestwood Hills – the third in the growing Californian Le Petit Pali portfolio, with two revamped lodges in Carmel and more to come in Laguna Beach and the Napa Valley.

THE BUZZWORDS

PHENOMENA LISTS

As in: see the starling migration at Denmark's Wadden Sea National Park.

FUCK-IT LISTS

Spontaneity and weirdness are in – such as surprise kidnappings by travel company Based on a True Story.

TRAVEL JOMO

AKA the new Fomo, as per the joy of going off-grid and phone-free with Shacks, one of a new generation of cabin brands.



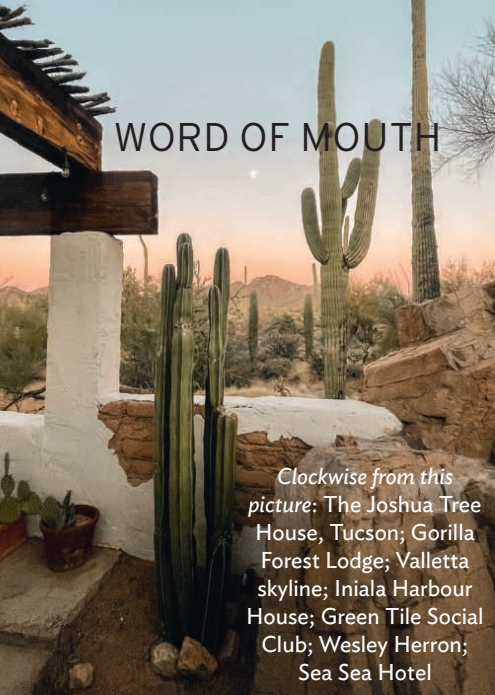
HOTEL HONCHOS

It's been a trend for a while, but in 2025 hotel managers will depart ever further from the besuited Swiss stereotype. At Singita Ebony Lodge – the pioneering safari outfit's newly revamped, 1993-born mothership – operations are overseen by the cool Primrose Siziba, an alumnus of One&Only Cape Town who smartly straddles local and global sensibilities. Then there's Puspa Anggareni at Bali's sublime Buahan. A mould-breaking local hire for the global Banyan Tree group, she leads an all-Indonesian team in delivering the property's brand of eco-forward, wall-averse nature immersion.

From far left: Primrose Siziba; Singita Ebony Lodge; Buahan; Puspa Anggareni

PHOTOGRAPHS: BUAHAN; WILLEM-DIRK DU TOIT; BEN FITCHETT; PALISOCIETY; SINGITA

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Clockwise from this picture: The Joshua Tree House, Tucson; Gorilla Forest Lodge; Valletta skyline; Iniala Harbour House; Green Tile Social Club; Wesley Herron; Sea Sea Hotel

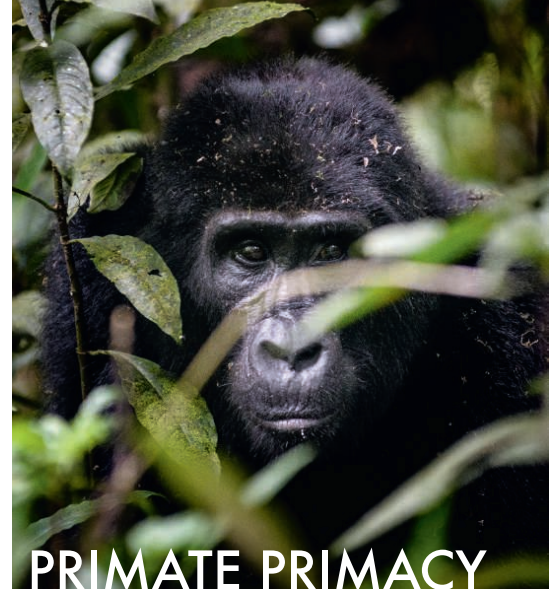
PRESS PLAY

Twenty-five years after house DJ Stéphane Pompougnac's first mix for Paris's Hôtel Costes, bespoke hotel playlists are drawing increasingly high-calibre musicians. Chase McBride, for instance, the folk-popper who curates some of the New Moon playlists at the ochre-and-cacti-cool Joshua Tree House rentals in California's Joshua Tree and Tucson, Arizona. Or Wesley Herron and Matt Correia, creators of the psychedelic Reverberation Radio. They're now compiling the playlists at Sea Sea Hotel, the '70s-style boutique in Crescent Head, New South Wales, owned by George Gorrow, cofounder of Ksubi jeans, and his model wife Cisco Tschurtschenthaler, also behind cult Canggu bolthole The Slow.



NIGHT ON THE TILES

With its romantic tiles depicting dragons, winds, seasons and more, mahjong has been a beloved game across East Asia since it was conceived in 19th-century China. Now it's become a quiet hotel trend – not just at Asian venues such as Capella Singapore, with its beginner-friendly Mahjong Mania sessions, but Stateside too. In New York, The Standard, East Village hosts games nights in collaboration with mahjong group Green Tile Social Club. Ace Hotel does similar with Chop Suey Club, which also sells sharply branded socks and knick-knacks online.



PRIMATE PRIMACY

Whether or not the gorillas care, 2025 could be a banner year for ecologically diverse Uganda, which tends to get less safari attention than neighbours Kenya, Tanzania and Rwanda. Adding to the 2024 opening of Volcanoes Safaris' deep-nature Kibale Lodge, this year will see an intriguing band of arrivals, including a revamp of Abercrombie & Kent's Gorilla Forest Lodge in the Bwindi Impenetrable Forest, close to the Rwandan border and not far from the upcoming 12-room Silverback Lodge, with regional-inspired styling by design firm Hesse Kleinloog. In the Kyambura Game Reserve to the north, Wildplaces Africa has just opened the smart River Station, with dhow boats – a first for the region – set to sail the hippo- and elephant-rich Kazinga Channel.

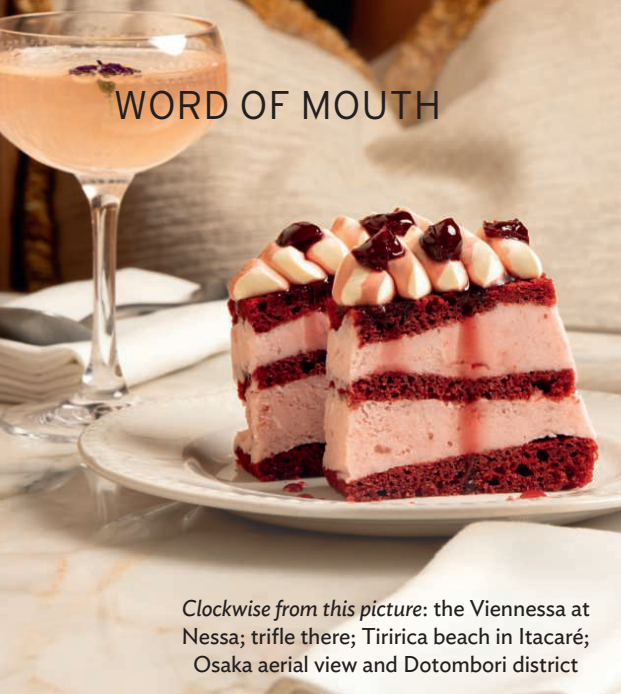


VALLETTA'S CLOSE-UP

The honey-coloured Maltese capital has been on the up, driven by a slew of ambitious new boutique hotels such as Iniala Harbour House, with its Simon Rogan restaurant overlooking the Grand Harbour; and big-ticket launches including the Micas art museum, which opened this October in the restored 17th-century Ospizio complex with an exhibition of large-scale sculptures by Portuguese artist Joana Vasconcelos. Coming soon is Romègas Hotel, a 23-room boutique in a protected 500-year-old palazzo – another sign that Valletta is so much more than red phone boxes, English pubs and cruise passengers.

PHOTOGRAPHS: ASK; MICHAEL BREITUNG/GALLERYSTOCK; SARA & RICH COMBS; INIALA HARBOUR HOUSE; CHRIS KUMARAJAJA; DANIELLA MURPHY; TOMMASO RIVA

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Clockwise from this picture: the Viennessa at Nessa; trifle there; Tiririca beach in Itacaré; Osaka aerial view and Dotombori district

JUST DESSERTS

It's not just the *Rivals* reboot that's had us embracing the mores of the 1980s. Nostalgic puddings will be so (ironically) 2025 – such as the Viennessa, an oversized take on the Viennetta for special guests at Soho's Nessa. But few desserts have had a Jilly Cooper-esque revival quite like the ever-versatile rice pudding, albeit in formats your nan wouldn't have dreamed of. There's the risogalo and poached fig version at Borough Market's neo-Greek Oma; the meadowsweet take at Fitzrovia's two-Michelin-starred Kitchen Table; or one in a pastry with alphonso mango and rum agricole at cult Edinburgh bakery Lannan.



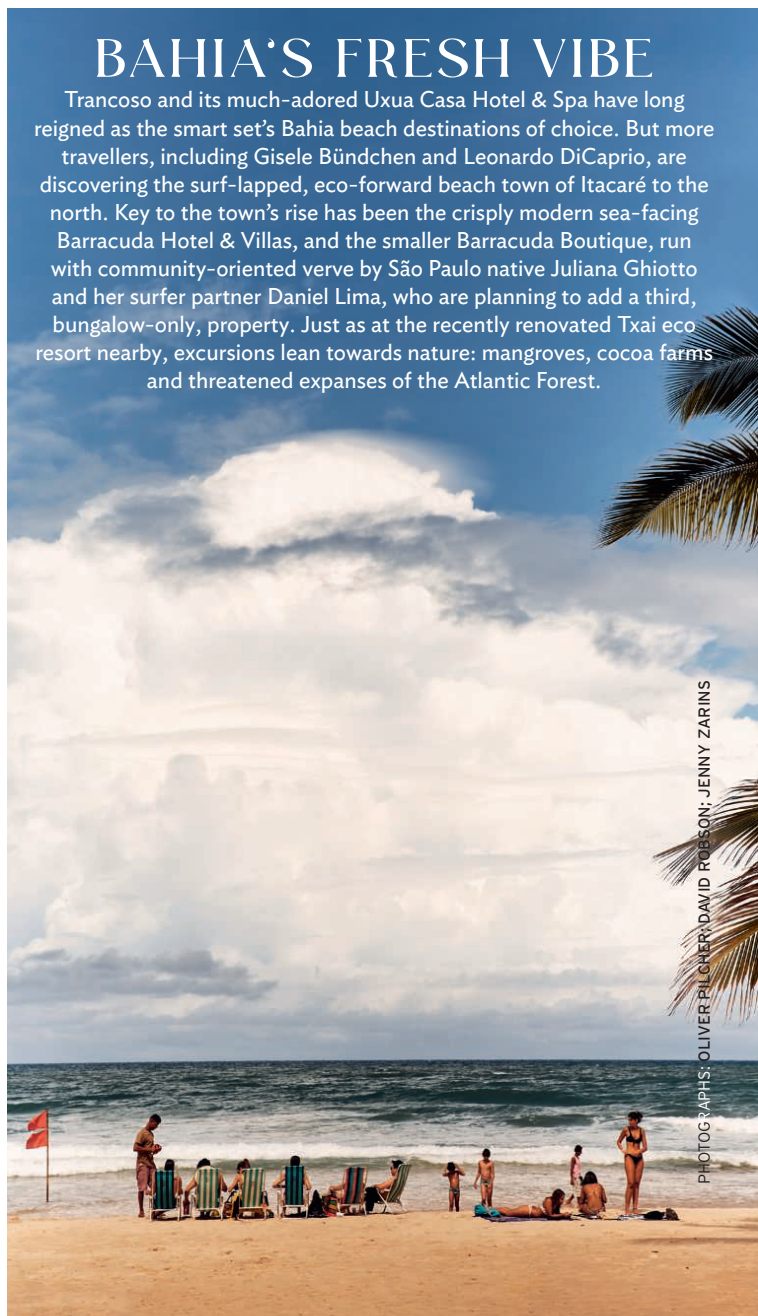
OSAKA FEVER

Even if World Expos are only occasionally interesting (Seattle's Space Needle and the Eiffel Tower were built for previous iterations), the 2025 version in Osaka will, at the very least, turn attention towards this intriguing city. It's more bustling, neon-lit, blue-collar and baseball-obsessed than serene neighbour Kyoto, and with a more diverse food scene, including low-key staples such as okonomiyaki savoury pancakes and takoyaki octopus balls. In 2025 the Patina Osaka – a first urban property from the Capella sub-brand – will occupy a glassy 20-storey tower, with a cocktails-and-vinyl listening room and a water theme that culminates in a vast Zen-style pool and wellness area.



BAHIA'S FRESH VIBE

Trancoso and its much-adored Uxua Casa Hotel & Spa have long reigned as the smart set's Bahia beach destinations of choice. But more travellers, including Gisele Bündchen and Leonardo DiCaprio, are discovering the surf-lapped, eco-forward beach town of Itacaré to the north. Key to the town's rise has been the crisply modern sea-facing Barracuda Hotel & Villas, and the smaller Barracuda Boutique, run with community-oriented verve by São Paulo native Juliana Ghiotto and her surfer partner Daniel Lima, who are planning to add a third, bungalow-only, property. Just as at the recently renovated Txai eco resort nearby, excursions lean towards nature: mangroves, cocoa farms and threatened expanses of the Atlantic Forest.



PHOTOGRAPHS: OLIVER PITCHER; DAVID ROBSON; JENNY ZARINS

THE GENTLE AU REVOIRS

SPLITTING THE G

We can go back to drinking Guinness – and enjoying pubs such as The Devonshire – without the blarney and hype.

SEITAN

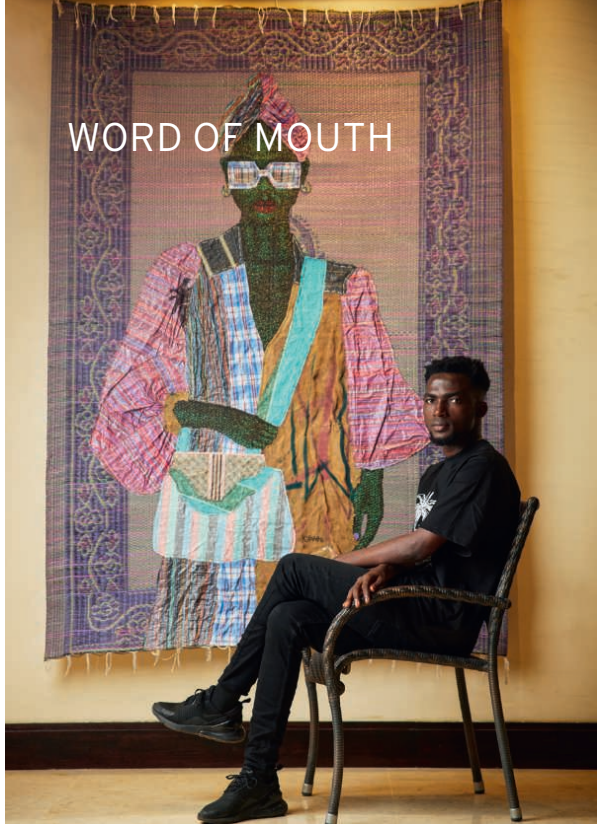
The vegan fast craze has enjoyed a quiet demise. This year will still be about

plant-based dining, but with vegetables that actually look like vegetables.

BRAT ELEGANT

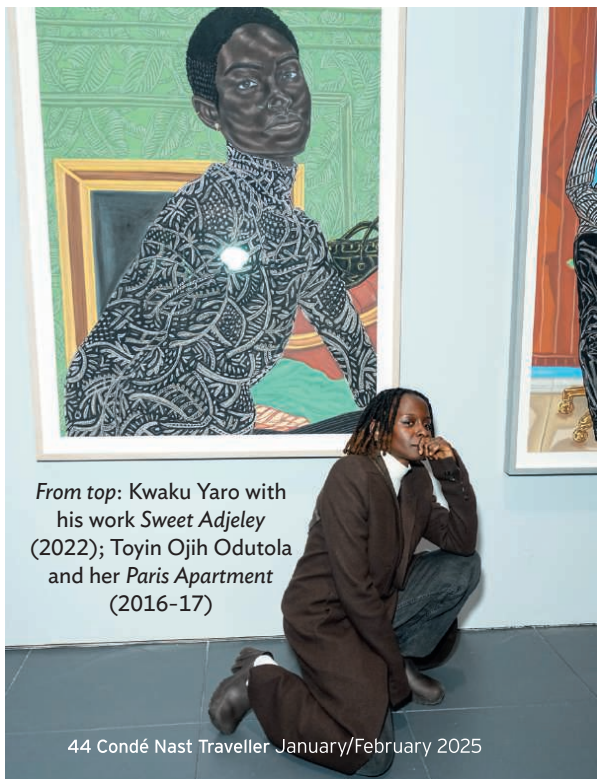
“Whimsical” and “demure” were watchwords of many spring/summer 25 fashion collections – with brat green a notable absence.

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IT'S COMING HOME

In recent years we have seen West Africans wresting back control of their own art narrative, from the launch of the continent's biggest photo library at the Dikan Center in Accra to the buzz created by Ghana's Artemartis collective, of which mixed media artist Kwaku Yaro is a member. Nigeria seizes the limelight this year with the Museum of West African Art in Benin City, which will open in stages throughout 2025. The 15,000-square-foot Rainforest Gallery by Senegalese designer Worofila will celebrate artists such as Toyin Ojih Odutola, whose multimedia portraits have been shown at the Whitney, MoMA and the 2024 Venice Biennale. Other spaces will house historical collections and archaeological and material-science labs.



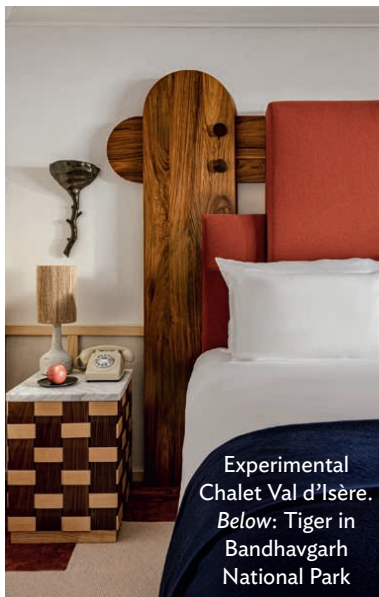
From top: Kwaku Yaro with his work *Sweet Adjeley* (2022); Toyin Ojih Odutola and her *Paris Apartment* (2016-17)

PHONE-FREE DINING

Time to put the phone down and pick up the art of dinner conversation again. London restaurant The Dover “gently” discourages the use of mobiles at the table – joining famously phone-unfriendly stalwarts such as St John and The French House – and Manchester’s new red-velvet Italian-American joint Louis has a strict no-photo, no-social-media policy. Taking it further is Stockholm’s Punk Royale, which requires diners to lock their phone in a metal box before tucking into an experimental utensil-free tasting menu; and Amsterdam’s Offline Club, based at Café Brecht, is proving so popular that it’s curating digital detox trips in 2025.



Cheesecake at Louis. Below: Val d’Isère



Experimental Chalet Val d’Isère. Below: Tiger in Bandhavgarh National Park

VALLEY HIGHS

No one’s ever doubted that Val d’Isère is a great place to ski, with access to the epic Espace Killy. But it wasn’t exactly smart until a sprouting of fresh arrivals, such as the wood-panelled Airelles Val d’Isère and the more mod-Alpine Le Refuge de Solaise. The new 113-room-and-suite Experimental Chalet Val d’Isère, with a whimsical design by brand favourite Dorothee Meilichzon, has surely sealed the deal for Val as a place to rival the likes of Zermatt.



TIGER TALES

The Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve, overlooking the Vindhya hills and Bandhavgarh National Park, has one of the densest populations of Bengal tigers in the world, as well as leopards and a rich spread of wildlife, including 110 species of butterfly. This year Oberoi will add to the reserve’s top-end options with The Oberoi Vindhya Wildlife Resort – the group’s second safari offering after Vanyavilas at Ranthambhore – featuring 21 tents in high style with private gardens and plunge pools. Sightings of the awesome yet imperilled creatures are as good as guaranteed.



PHOTOGRAPHS: TONY HEALD/NATUREPL.COM; MR. TRIPPER; LE REFUGE DE SOLAISE; TIMMY/LOUIS RESTAURANTS; WWD/GETTY IMAGES. ARTWORKS: KWAKU YARO/ARTEMARTIS; TOYIN OJIH ODUTOLA