

WTSIH

A male model with dark hair and light eyes is the central focus, wearing a blue and white checkered suit jacket over a blue t-shirt. He stands on a modern staircase with glass railings and metal handrails. The background is a bright, blue-tinted interior space with large windows and architectural lines. The overall aesthetic is clean, modern, and sophisticated.

DEPARTURES

TRAVEL TRENDS OF 2017, SECRETS OF THE
BRITISH ISLES, LONDON'S DESIGN MUSEUM
+ JASON WU, MICHAEL KORS & PAUL BANGAY

WHAT IN THE WORLD

EXPERIENCES ARE THE KEY TRAVEL TREND IN 2017, AS WISH DISCOVERED AT THE INTERNATIONAL LUXURY TRAVEL MARKET IN CANNES.

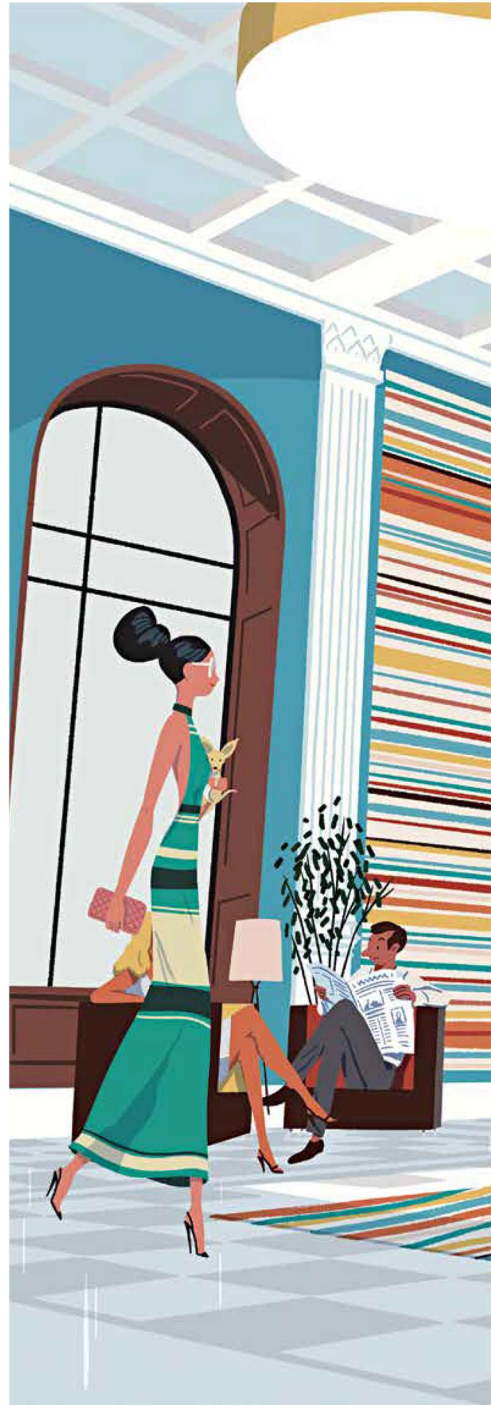
STORY **LISA ALLEN** ■ ILLUSTRATIONS **STEVE SCOTT**

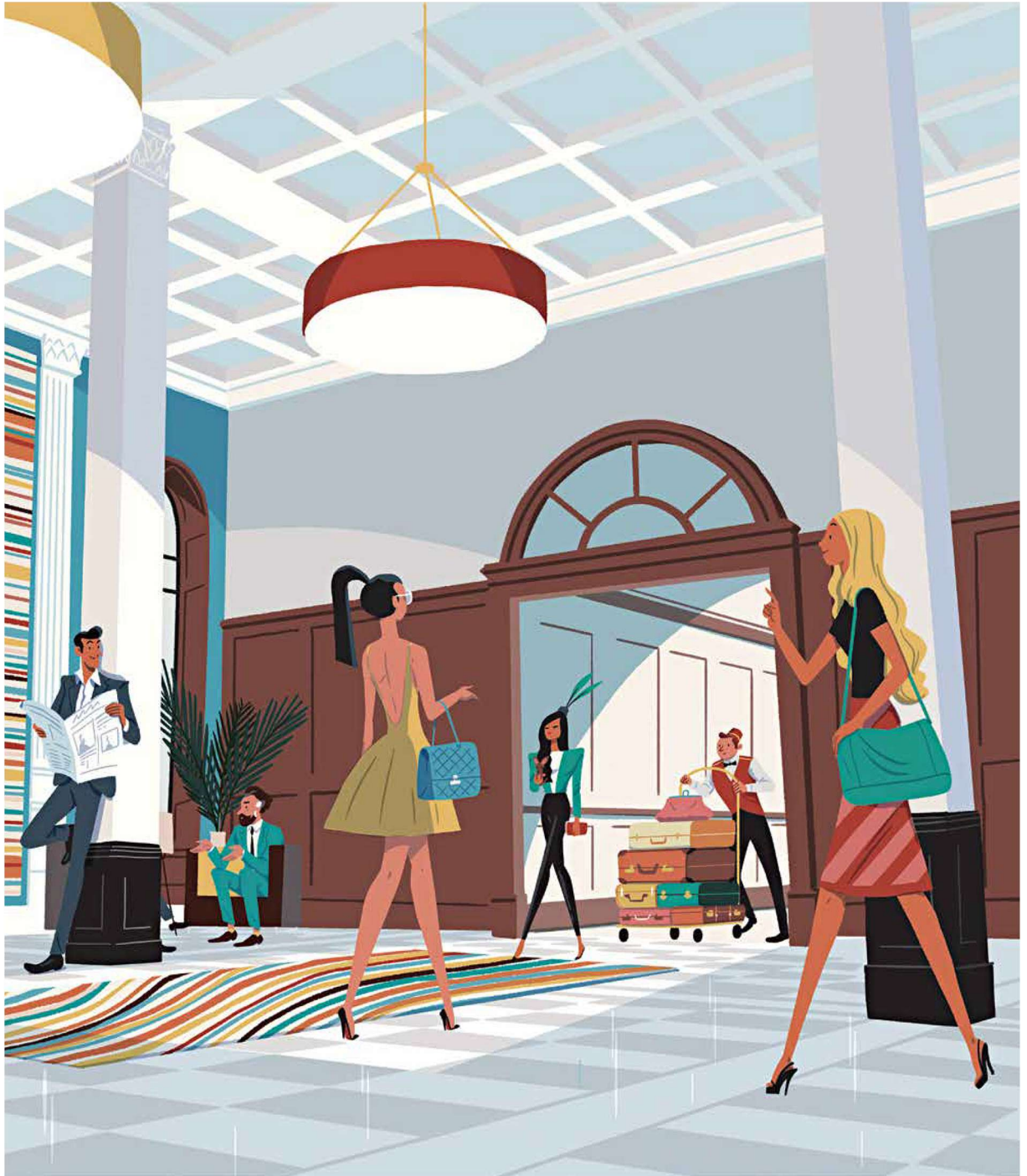
Kabul, Havana and Reykjavik are in the sight lines of the world's top hoteliers, as wealthy travellers increasingly demand out-of-the-way destinations to deliver unique experiences in luxury travel. Hip adventurers would rather hear about running an ice marathon in Alaska than where they can buy a pair of the newest Christian Louboutin heels, says luxury marketer Ana Andjelic of New York-based Havas LuxHub.

Legendary British hotelier Rocco Forte has tapped into this increased demand for luxury experiences and authenticity, hiring fashion designers and famous actors to provide his clientele with tips and tricks to give them the best experience of London. In Japan, upmarket operator Luxurique Inc takes ultra-high-net-worth foreign guests to sumo stables for morning practice sessions with wrestlers, an elite experience beyond the reach of most Japanese. The luxury operator also opens its "black book" of contacts for introduction-only restaurants where it usually takes foreigners at least a year to secure a lunch or dinner booking.

Martin Raymond, co-founder of the UK's The Future Laboratory, says the very concept of luxury is under attack. "Obsessed with talking about heritage, many luxury brands have forgotten how to talk about legacy, and consumers are now demanding a more inspiring vision."

Here's what some more of the experts had to say.







NAOMI MANO

President and chief executive, Luxurique Inc, Tokyo
“There’s a rise in demand for authentic experiences. We offer guests access to sumo tournaments including sumo morning practice, where we invite them to wrestle the wrestlers. In Japan you don’t have access to sumo unless you know the right person. Ninety per cent of Japanese citizens are not able to go into a sumo ring, they are normally off limits.” Luxurique can also organise for Westerners to experience Noh, an art form for Japan’s uber-elite, in the first such performance

sessions ever opened to the foreign market. “A lot of top Japanese restaurants take one year to get into – we can get you into these restaurants,” adds Mano.

SIR ROCCO FORTE

Chairman, Rocco Forte Hotels, London
“We try and open up areas in cities that are not obvious to tourists, to do things that are unusual and take them deeper into the life of a city,” says Sir Rocco. Forte Hotels has hired designer Paul Smith and *Downton Abbey* actor Hugh Bonneville to furnish luxury guests

with tips and tricks to experience the British capital. In Florence, Laudomia Pucci, Emilio’s daughter and image director of the Italian fashion house, shares her insights into Florence with delights such as her favourite boutiques, brunch spots and places to dance.

TINA EDMUNDSON

Global officer for luxury and lifestyle brands, Marriot International, Washington DC
“All of the indicators are there – rising wealth fuels luxury travel. By 2025 Generations X, Y, Z will

control luxury travel. They want true experiences and they are generally really pushing for it." Some of Edmundson's luxury hotels will offer check-in at the bar and industrial chic décor in the public areas juxtaposed with cosy hotel rooms. There's also more demand for hotels in far-flung and exotic places. Marriott is soon to open hotels and resorts in Afghanistan, Cuba and Iceland under its eight luxury brands including St Regis and Ritz Carlton.

CHRIS SANDERSON

Co-founder, The Future Laboratory, London
The boom in luxury is not about to end but there's a shift and the warning bells are ringing, according to Sanderson. "Unless we are careful we are going to see an overuse of the word luxury. The big luxury trend is the luxury experience. We are spending more on a holiday rather than a bag or shoes. Bain & Co is anticipating a 2 per cent slowdown [in luxury retail] to 2020. It's good news for hospitality and travel and bad news for handbags." Sanderson says that by 2025, Generations X, Y and Digital will control 85 per cent of luxury spending, and more than 50 per cent of luxury customers will be Asian. "The challenge for established brands is how to appeal to these younger consumers without alienating the traditional core."

MARK TREMLETT

Co-founder, Naturalmat Hotel, London
The need for good experiences extends to the bedroom, Tremlett says. "People are looking much more at good sleep. So hotels should spend money on a mattress, but most hotels only change beds every five years." Naturalmat manufactures eco-mattresses costing 10 times the average hotel bed. Made from organic wool, natural latex, coconut fibre and cotton, the British-based company supplies The Connaught, Claridge's, Capital Hotel and Belmond Le Manoir aux Quat'Saisons with bed bases, mattresses, toppers and wool mattress protectors.

GIULIA PAZIENZA

Owner of six-star Mediterranean resort Sikella Pantelleria, Pantelleria Island and Milan
"Luxury for us is really different, it's not what people think of as luxury," PaziENZA says. "Our idea of luxury is service-related: people come to relax, and abandon everything that isn't necessary."

ROELAND VOS

President and chief executive, Belmond, London
"Our customers are asking for time to disconnect from their crazy lives. A train is the best way to disconnect.

I want to create opportunities for them to take time and reconnect by reading a book, sitting on a beach, visiting a museum."

KENNETH LAW

Vice president of global sales, Banyan Tree Hotels & Resorts, Singapore
"People are getting deeper into a sense of knowledge," Law says. "They want bragging rights. People want to travel further and deeper. They want to travel further into deep Africa and it's not on packages, it's free and independent travel."

NEIL JACOBS

Chief executive, Six Senses, Bangkok
"It's still about individualism and the growth of boutique hotels and the move away from the traditional hotels," says Jacobs. "I do think there is an increasing awareness of wellness and buying into a healthy lifestyle. For hotels to stay relevant the demand is only going to increase for healthfulness. Honestly, if a hotel is charging \$US500-\$US1000 (\$600-1350) a night it's got to be more than traditional."

Lisa Allen travelled to Cannes courtesy of the International Luxury Travel Market.



"People are looking for much more than they used to, they want experiences they can brag about. Guests are also looking for more added value; people want more things included – they are seeking out value when it comes to family travel, and when building hotels there is a far greater emphasis on connecting rooms and the services of an 'expert' concierge."

MICHAEL HOBSON,

Chief marketing officer, Mandarin Oriental Hotel Group, Hong Kong