

# TravelTrendz

International

March / April 2022

*a travel lifestyle publication*

**Azerbaijan**  
Amazing Experiences

**Japan**  
Museums To Inspire

**Colombia**  
Wetlands And Wildlife

**Namibia**  
Undiscovered Gem



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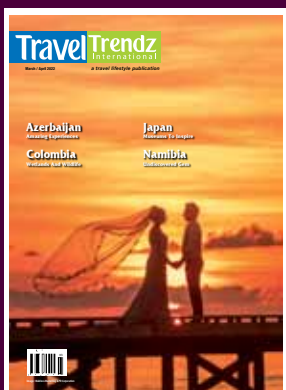
**summer hillsides**  
*winter slopes*



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**Editor in Chief**  
S. M. Hassan

**Editor**  
Ken Chapman

**Executive Editor**  
Naushad Hussain

Aysha Azmat  
Executive Editor (The Americas)  
aysha4azmat@gmail.com

**Associate Editor**  
Christine Smith  
Rubina Sohail

**Marketing & Sales**  
Naushad Hussain

**Creative**  
Faheem

**Web Co-ordination**  
Umer Naushad

**Co-ordination**  
Nizam Nur

**For advertising inquiries:**  
Al jasar Advertising L.L.C.  
United Arab Emirates  
P.O. Box: 25414, Sharjah  
Tel: +971 6 5533902  
Cell: +971 55 4827197  
E-mail: info@trendzinternationalmedia.com  
www.trendzinternationalmedia.com

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The pandemic is not over however, vaccinations are helping. Even though the entire industry is in trouble and travelling has not reached the pre-Covid levels. Travel restriction diminishing in many destinations and borders are opening. The vaccines are being used as the major tool but still huge global population is not vaccinated. The industry is still facing a mighty challenges with a new war in Europe plus high fuel cost. Unhindered travel and tourism is the key to revival of World Economy.

In this issue as always, we offer new and exciting options to our readers as destinations are gradually opening. The top destinations and Hotels are being introduced as never before. Do not miss the article on Vienna, Austria. Learn more about the amazing Kailash Festival in Pakistan. We have featured the amazing Colombia in this issue. Do not miss the articles about Japan and Maldives. Article on winter in Azerbaijan is a must read. An interesting article on Uganda is not to be missed which features the Big seven in Uganda and gives a good insight about the wildlife in the country. The feature on Namibia, the undiscovered gem of Africa is a must read.

We have covered the top notch hotels and Resorts in this issue such as The Ras Al Khaimah Intercontinental Resort and Spa in UAE. We have a special section on the amazing properties in Maldives such as Kandima Maldives and COLOURS OF OBLU brand.

As always, read about the news and views relating to the hospitality industry plus learn about what is happening in the Airlines and Aviation Industry.

So, have a good time reading...

**Ken Chapman**  
Editor

## Contents

- 05 Azerbaijan**  
Amazing Experiences
- 10 Maldives**  
Honeymoon
- 12 Kandima Maldives**  
An Idyllic Retreat
- 14 Uganda**  
Unbeatable Wildlife
- 16 Vienna**  
Capital Of Pleasure
- 18 Pakistan**  
Kailash Festival
- 20 Ras Al Khaimah**  
Intercontinental Resort & Spa
- 22 Colombia**  
Wetlands And Wildlife
- 24 Japan**  
Museums To Inspire
- 30 Namibia**  
Undiscovered Gem

**NEXT ISSUE**  
MAY/JUNE  
2022



Image: Namibia Tourism Board

# AZERBAIJAN

## GATEWAY FOR NEW, UNEXPLORED, AMAZING WINTER EXPERIENCES



Combining the charms of both Europe and Asia, Azerbaijan is a country of surprising contrasts, hospitable people and epic landscapes. From historic and traditional experiences to modern-day escapades, this fast-growing destination offers countless experiences all leading to untold tales and adventures. And no matter which experience you opt for, expect spectacular architecture, rare natural wonders and exquisite food and wine.

Home to 9 out of 11 distinct climatic zones, the landscape offers diverse scenery with everything from city to beaches, forests, and lush and snowy mountains. In fact, the mountains of Azerbaijan are transformed into a white paradise every winter, offering a magical experience for both those seeking adventure and those looking for a dose of rest and relaxation. Set amidst the Caucasian mountains, the change of scenery with the most satisfying pistes for ski enthusiasts is just three hours away from the city centre.

In winter, Azerbaijan's mountains are irresistible for skiing enthusiasts. Breathtakingly beautiful, they are home to state-of-the-art ski resorts with well-prepared slopes and first-class amenities. The dramatic landscapes make ski trips here unforgettable, while non-skiers can opt for numerous other activities such as riding a snowmobile, ziplining or snow tubing.

Perched atop the pristine mountains of the Gusar region, Shahdag Mountain Resort has a range of high-class hotels, open-air steam



pools, spas, restaurants, and an endless array of thrilling sports and leisure activities. The snow at Shahdag transforms it into one of the most stunning ski resorts in the Caucasus. Whether you are a beginner or an experienced skier, brave the slopes and enjoy over 17 kilometres of pistes. The nearby charming village of Laza is famous for its storied waterfalls which freeze into icefalls during the winter and become a popular site for ice climbing. Soon-to-be-opened rollercoaster in Shahdag will definitely become a go-to place for the enthusiasts of extreme activities.

Further along the Caucasus Mountain chain, the scenery at Tufandag Mountain Resort in Gabala is equally enchanting. The complex, which can accommodate up to 3,000 people at a time, is well equipped with restaurants, cafes, bars and recreation areas,

as well as a ski school for children and adults. The 15 kilometres of perfectly groomed slopes are great for snowboarding and skiing. Like Shahdag, it also has several affordably luxurious hotels. The Chalet Steak and Wine House, which can only be reached by cable car, is the highest restaurant in Azerbaijan, to enjoy a perfectly cooked steak alongside a glass of local wine.

The village of Agbulag in the Shahbuz region, an hour's drive from Nakhchivan city, is home to the first all-round tourism infrastructure complex in Nakhchivan. This area has long been popular for agricultural tourism and relaxation in nature, attracting tourists with its pure air and clear weather. But the ski centre ensures there are now great travel opportunities throughout the year. At the centre you can not only go skiing, snowboarding or sledging, but



also enjoy the Lesser Caucasus Mountains scenery and try delicious local dishes. It has everything necessary to cater to tourists, including a hotel with 38 rooms.

With mountains accounting for over 60 per cent of Azerbaijan's total area, visitors can enjoy memorable moments hiking through the stunning landscape. One such village is Khinalig which is beautiful and peacefully isolated, so much so that its residents speak a little-known, unwritten language. The scenic route to Khinalig from the city of Guba opens to impressive views at every turn. But the photo opportunities do not stop there! Recently included in the UNESCO World Heritage Tentative list, the village is made up of 360

cobblestone houses built on top of one another 200-300 years ago: one house's roof is another family's courtyard! The settlement's 2,000 residents are warm, welcoming and eager to share with you their local dishes and homebrewed tea. To see all the village's best bits, reserve up to five hours of your day. Griz village is another popular destination in Guba region, located 2200 meters above the sea level. It is famous for its fascinating waterfall located up in the hills of Ag Dagh mountains. The waterfall freezes in winter and creates a breathtaking scenery, making it a perfect spot for nature admirers. In the region of Gakh, Ilistu village is also picturesque from every viewpoint and has paths to spectacular waterfalls and historical monuments.



# COLOURS OF OBLU and By Atmosphere resorts

Offer the best festive  
experience for the  
entire family this  
Easter







**O**BLU SELECT Sangeli will offer fun-filled treasure hunts and a plethora of activities to choose from for both children and adults, as it turns into a child-heaven, along with other COLOURS OF OBLU and By Atmosphere properties, for the occasion

### **OBLU SELECT Sangeli**

Looking for a fabulous family adventure this Easter with that perfectly themed treasure hunt for your little ones? You need to look no further as OBLU SELECT Sangeli is transforming into a secret garden for the grand occasion with some unique offerings for both children and adults.

To give your holiday that magical touch, from 11 to 17 April, OBLU SELECT Sangeli is hosting various entertainment activities for the family. Some of the activities scheduled for adults include

- beach volleyball, karaoke night, Easter night market, Easter after-party, cooking lessons, magical storytelling and music night, water polo game, Indian Ocean gala dinner, and Sangeli's got talent among others. To cater to its younger guests, Sangeli Island features a bright and inviting kids club surrounded by lush green vegetation. The facility includes a children's pool, a playground with a trampoline, and a variety of indoor games. Adding to the Easter charm, the resort will be hosting various fun-filled activities for young children, including Mocktail Monday, Easter card making, beach games for kids, easter puppet making, Easter egg hunting and painting, arts and crafts, cookie decoration for kids, and an Easter kids party.

### **COLOURS OF OBLU – OBLU NATURE Helengeli**

#### *OBLU Nature Helengeli*

OBLU NATURE Helengeli is another hotspot for the family to have some fabulous time together with a host of thrilling activities. From plunge pools in the water villas to the wonderful marine life around the island, this resort offers a varied set of activities for the family to enjoy together. Discover the wild and pristine vistas of the Indian Ocean as you set sail on a wondrous journey. From trying your hand at sunset fishing to watching spinning dolphins, OBLU NATURE Helengeli offers a range of boat excursions in the Maldives. You can also 'go your own way', as you charter your own boat and enjoy a private relaxing cruise around Helengeli island. Watching a magnificent group of Dolphins twist, frolic, and dance in their signature joyful style as they swim along with your boat over the Indian Ocean waters is a must-try experience with your loved ones.

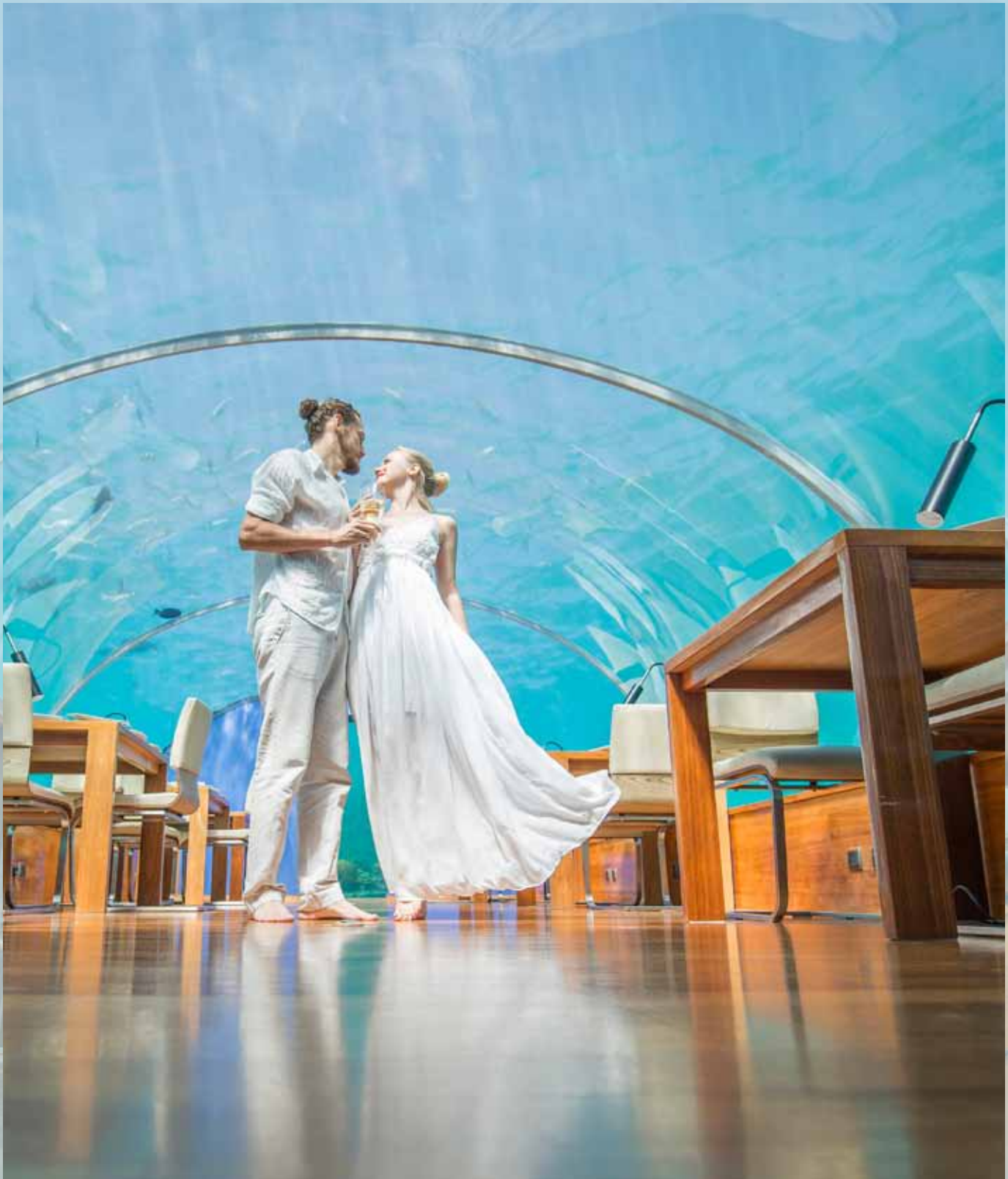
### **By Atmosphere – Atmosphere Kanifushi**

#### *Atmosphere Kanifushi*

A host of adventurous activities and learning experiences are in-store for your young ones to enjoy at the Atmosphere Kanifushi' world-class kids club. Accessible to children of four years and above, the club features spacious indoor rooms with monitored play areas and a sandy outdoor playground shaded by towering palm and banyan trees to ensure a safe and fun-filled experience for your tiny tots, amidst nature. The engaging and friendly staff at the club organise various activities such as guided art and craft workshops, birthday parties, among other events to keep your tiny tots entertained.

# Maldives Honeymoon

The Maldives is considered one of the most romantic destinations in the world





A quintessential honeymoon destination. Arguably one of the most beautiful tropical countries in the world, honeymooning in the Maldives checks every box a beach-loving couple looking for the ultimate in luxury accommodations and relaxation could want. Stunning beaches. High-end accommodations that offer every amenity. Complete privacy to enjoy your time as newlyweds.

The most unique aspect of the Maldives is certainly the one island, one hotel concept. Each resort is located on its very own private island, creating an exclusive and peaceful environment. The Maldives is also known for its lush natural surroundings and

wildlife, with resorts being built in harmony with nature.

Essentially, no matter where you're staying, you'll be on a private island, a huge boon for couples seeking a super private, intimate experience away from crowds and the beaten path. And if you choose to stay in one of the beautiful overwater bungalows that many of the resorts offer—and that the country is so well-known for—that privacy factor is magnified even further. The overwater bungalows are much more private in the Maldives than in any other destination. You will feel like you have the island to yourself. Most of these villas also have their own pools or direct access to the beach.





# Kandima Maldives

## An idyllic retreat

In this time of cool winds and cloudy skies, there are places where the air is still warm on the skin. Kandima Maldives invites travelers to a game-changing destination where summertime lasts the whole year, and opportunities for adventure, wellness enhancement and gastronomic discovery await.

With a seamless integration of indoor and outdoor living, Kandima Maldives' is designed to provide the comfort of home without the pressures that come with it. Shaded alfresco dining areas and courtyards open to fragrant, balmy breezes, bathed in sunshine, and with views of the vivid turquoise waters of Dhaalu Atoll immerse its guests in nature.

In tune with its environment, the resort creates space and freedom for guests to savour time with loved ones, share extraordinary experiences in astonishing natural settings, and make treasured memories together.

### Relax, Recharge and Realign

For travelers seeking an adrenaline-filled trip itinerary, Kandima Maldives offers fitness facilities such as BURN Fitness Centre with its own private swimming pool, fitness pavilion, tennis, badminton and beach volleyball courts and a football field. An incredible range of aquatic adventures and excursions give you a perfect opportunity to enjoy your sports passion or discover a kool new one.



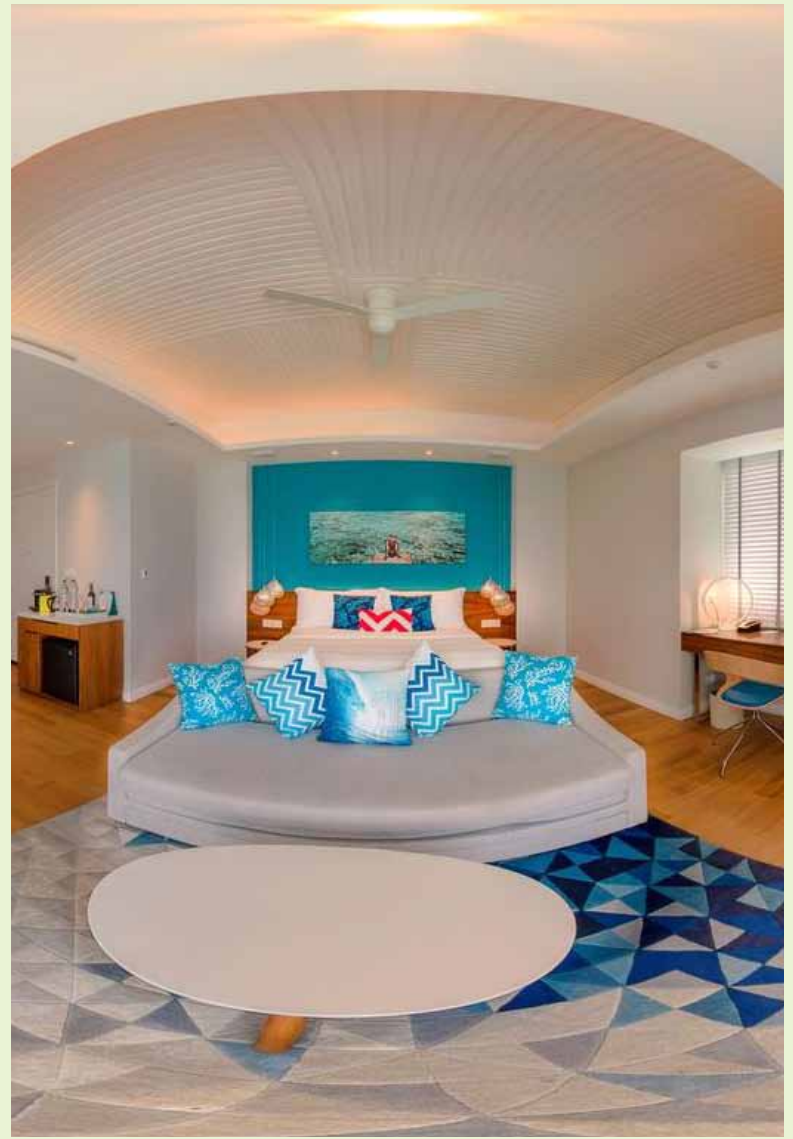
Ahead, the spotlight is on five unique K'Classes that make Kandima Maldives' urban activity jungle one of the coolest destinations to get energized – whether guests want to build resilience, enhance their wellbeing.

With a full-range of sports activities for all ages or hands-on activities for the kids, there's never a dull moment at Kandima Maldives. Every single day feels different when with activities like skydiving, kayaking, paddle-boarding, Jet skis, wake-boarding and kite surfing. The whole family can enjoy endless fun at the Aquaholics Dive and Watersports Centre with a huge choice of water sports, diving or snorkelling near the house reef for the ultimate adrenaline rush.

### **A Culinary Journey**

In the mood to indulge after a day of activity and adventure? Guest can choose from a total of ten unique restaurants offering mouth-watering flavours from across the world. For those who prefer laid-back vibes & spectacular views, the Beach Club is the perfect hangout spot for both families and couples alike. Swim up for fruity cocktails and delicious shots or relax in one of the stylish cabanas perched above the turquoise pool.

The island destination offers even the largest of groups an expansive living space that combines unpunctured privacy with a sense of openness and flow – ideal for families or small groups seeking to realign mind, body and soul, while being immersed by the beauty of nature. The mantra is simple – all the facilities of a resort, with the comfort and reassurance of a private home.





# Uganda's Unbeatable Wildlife

## The Big 7

by: Hazel Saldanha

Artly termed the "The Pearl of Africa" Uganda is blessed with incredible natural beauty, brimming with thickly forested lands, vast expanses of savannahs and misty mountains that will satiate even the most discerning wildlife enthusiast, all whilst ensuring that every experience is framed from the ground up to minimize our human impact to ensure that generations to come fully enjoy the richness of its flora and fauna.

The "Big 5" a term coined in an age-old era indicated the 5 most challenging animals to track which were the African Lion, Leopard, Elephant, Rhinoceros and Cape buffalo. With the advent of modern transportation and experienced guides visitors are nearly guaranteed to spot the Big -5 in many of the country's 10 National Parks – the Queen Elizabeth Park amongst the most diverse of them all. The park's allure is drawn from its mix of habitats and eco-niches; the sight of majestic rare tree-climbing lions in the middle of a hunt is sharply contrasted with large buffalo and elephant herds that dominate the horizon. A number of options await visitors from walking safaris to a channel cruise along the game rich Kizanga river channel or a multi-night stay at one of the many riverside lodges that allow for sunset encounters with the majestic procession of wildlife that skirts its banks. Although Queen Elizabeth park is a fantastic primer for the new wildlife enthusiasts; far more awaits those who wish to experience the awe inspiring mountain gorilla and the wild chimpanzee – completing the "Big 7"

Uganda is home to almost half the world's surviving mountain gorillas; the Bwindi Impenetrable national parks – a UNESCO

world heritage site is where nearly 350 of the world's remaining 1100 gorillas live, amongst precipitous mountainous rainforests. Tracking gorillas is a truly challenging yet rewarding experience as these creatures live in dense undergrowth. Seasoned guides lead visitors up verges, across flowing rivers past thorny trees and vines in order to catch a glimpse of these creatures. In addition to these primates the park also hosts forest elephants, giant hogs and over 350 species of bird, including several seen nowhere else in the world which makes it a bird-watcher's dream come true.

North of Bwindi, Kibale National Park is believed to have the highest primate densities in Africa and the foremost destination to view wild chimpanzees – including the ultra-rare L'Hoest monkeys and the endangered red Colobus species. The park is a sensory feast with an amazing varied landscape, where grassland and swamps are interspersed with elevated plateaus. Incredibly it is said there are several groups of wild chimpanzees that are habituated to human contact for an intimate experience like no other. No visit is complete without a trip to yet another UNESCO heritage site the Rwenzori National Park a short trip east of Kibale. It is a haven for a number of rare plants, animals and birds some of which are still being discovered. The Rwenzori Mountains are a marvel in themselves with equatorial snow covered peaks along with lowlands blanketed in colourful mosses united with spectacular flora creating an idyllic dreamy ambience.

Learn more about Uganda's fantastic wildlife experience at [www.ugandawildlife.org](http://www.ugandawildlife.org)





# Feeling Vienna

Vienna is a capital of pleasure – just as diverse as the city itself are the possibilities for enjoying it to the fullest and with all the senses. After the privations of recent months, there is a great desire to indulge oneself again, to exploit everything to the fullest, and to break away from the monotony of everyday life.



## HOW DOES VIENNA TASTE?

On the one hand, there are the culinary delights of Vienna that carry our palate through the city. From beisl to toque-winning restaurant, from hipster café to traditional coffee house and from street food to slow food. Viennese cuisine is the only type of cooking in the world to be named after a city. Many specialties have conquered the world, such as the Wiener schnitzel with the crispy, golden-yellow breadcrumbs in a cozy beisl or the aromatic apple strudel in the coffee house, whose interior seems to have originated in imperial times. Vienna's coffee house culture has been on UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage

List since 2011, but reaches far back to imperial times. The imperial and royal court confectioner Demel still serves Sisi's favorite sweet treat: candied violet petals.

## GREEN VIENNA

Slowing down comes easily: half of the city is made up of green spaces. These are evident approx. every 250 meters in the form of a park or at least a piece of green. The rose garden in the Volksgarten is located in the city center and is a feast for the eyes and nose from spring to late autumn thanks to the 400 different varieties of flowering rose. Find a spot here, close your eyes, and let the city work its magic on you.



The Green Prater, which according to the magazine "Focus" is one of the ten best city parks in the world, covers an area of six million square meters. Although it is located only three linear kilometers from St. Stephen's Cathedral, nature is thriving in this area. Its vast lawns, woods, and water areas offer an ideal environment for relaxing strolls, brisk hikes, extended jogging tours, bicycle and skating trips, and much more.

#### HITS FOR KIDS

What do children expect from a sightseeing trip? Pretty much the same as the grownups do: Variety and entertainment. Many Viennese museums and organizers have therefore created programs that are fun for the entire family – The motto is "hands on."

The Austrian capital has plenty of space for action. Unlike many other major cities, Vienna boasts huge green areas where children can play to their hearts' content. But that is by no means all. Maybe a little princess would like to dance a minuet in a hooped skirt and old-fashioned bodice? Become a child artist? Stroke some snakes? No problem. Dive into the colorful adventure world of the Prater, Vienna's oldest and most popular amusement park, where 250 different stands and attractions wait for you. Or visit the oldest continuously operating zoo in the world –

Schönbrunn Zoo. Vienna is the perfect destination for every age!

#### WINTER IN VIENNA

Vienna is beautiful any time of the year, however during winter season Austria's capital is filled with festive lights and a romantic atmosphere unlike any other city. Ice skating in front of city hall, glamorous ball nights and festive Winter markets are only a few of the special experiences Vienna has to offer in the winter season. Take a romantic ride in a traditional horse-drawn carriage, cozy up under the warm blankets and marvel at the illuminated buildings and streets. With a little bit of luck, fresh snow will turn the city into a winter wonderland.



#### SPECIAL TIP: VIENNA CITY CARD

##### USE THE VIENNA CITY CARD TO MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR VISIT!

Available for 24h, 48h and 72h it allows you to enjoy numerous benefits such as free use of all public transport by Wiener Linien and discounts for museums, restaurants and shops. Especially as a family you can use the Vienna City Card to its fullest potential, as it allows one child up to the age of 15 to travel free with each card holder.





# Pakistan

## KAILASH FESTIVALS

A unique Kailash Valley, the remaining minority of approximately 3500 people living in three isolated but beautiful valleys known as Bumburet, Rambur, and Berir. The people of Kailash have a rich culture and are very strong footed about their identity. These people stand out from the remaining tribes, cultures, and communities due to their distinct traditions, religious practices, and festivals.

The people of Kailash celebrate many festivals during the year but notable festivals are three, the spring feast Chilam Joshi, in May, Uchal or Utchal, in August and Choimus, in winter. Chilam Joshi is one the most important festival, this four-day festival is celebrated across all three valleys of Bumburet, Rambur, and Berir. Chilam Joshi begins with "Milk day" which, Kailash people store from household to offer their libation on the day of the festival. They ask for the blessing of God and pray for a prosperous year of agriculture, health, and safety of their herds. The main purpose of this festival is that Kailash men and women can find a spouse for themselves to get married. The women wear traditional attire with lively colors whereas, men wear traditional Shalwar Kameez with a waistcoat made of wool.

### Uchal or Utchal

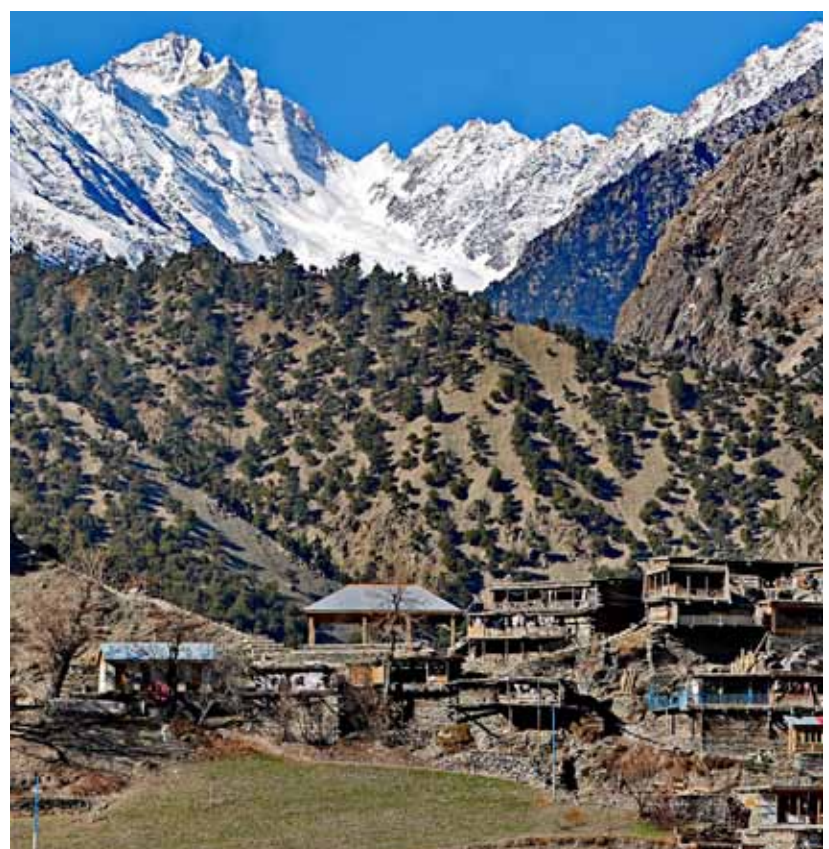
Uchal, also known as Utchal is a summer Kailash festival. During





The festival celebrated in annual harvesting with singing, dancing and paying homage to the nature for blessing them with good food and fruits. It is marked in the barley and wheat harvest season every year in August. Kailash people prepare cornbread, buttermilk, and cheese to celebrate the festival. They wear their traditional black robes, ornate cowries shelled headdresses and adorned with coloured necklaces and dance in a circle. During the festival, prayers and processions are held at a high plateau outside the village in Balangkuru, where the long night of dancing begins. The Uchal festival continues for several days and moving on to different locations within the valley.

Choimus is the winter festival, from 8-21 December, the most important celebration of the winter solstice and the return of the sun. Everyone wears new clothes, dance, feasts, and offer sacrifices. The first week of Choimus is for the Kailash people only. It is celebrated by feasting until the elders, who sit on a hilltop, watching the sun reaching the orbit, declare the beginning of the New Year. In the second week of Choimus, people show gratitude to their god with dance, music, and the sacrifice of goats. This part of a festival is public. It is dedicated to the god Balimain who is believed to visit from the mythical homeland of the Kailash, Tsyam, for the duration of the feast. Food sacrifices are offered at the clans' Jeshtak shrines, dedicated to the ancestors.



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# InterContinental Ras Al Khaimah Resort & Spa

ISLAND LIVING AMONGST THE MOUNTAINS, DESERT AND SEA



**W**ith over 20 years of experience, much of which was spent with IHG Hotels & Resorts based in Egypt, Bahrain, KSA and UAE, Mohammed Mahmoud is a seasoned professional within the realm of luxury hospitality with an exceptional track record for results.

After graduating with honors from the Faculty of Tourism & Hotels in Helwan University in Egypt, Mohammed started his professional career in Conrad Sharm El Sheikh (2000) as a receptionist. He steadily climbed the corporate ladder and began 20-year long journey with InterContinental as Front Office Supervisor in Pyramids Park InterContinental Cairo (2001). From humble beginnings to eventually earning the title of Executive Assistant Manager and Director of Rooms & Quality Improvement across the Northern Gulf at InterContinental Regency Bahrain (2010-2016), Mohammed has been recognized for his unmatched contribution in leading properties to success. He added greatly to the hotel's achievement of a "TripAdvisor Excellence" rating for 5 consecutive years and attained 10 out of 10 IHG Key Performance Metrics (Club Ten), setting the highest standards.

A multi-tasker by nature, Mohammed took on the role of Resort Manager at InterContinental Fujairah Resort & IHG KSA Projects Lead "Interim General Manager", where he strived for a luxury guest experience, embedding operations excellence, and developing the commercial positioning of the resort. Mohammed then joined the pre-opening team in Saudi Arabia (2019) responsible for leading the conversion of the first InterContinental resort in Saudi Arabia, InterContinental Durrat Al Riyadh Resort & Spa.

In April 2021, Mohammed took charge of his third preopening in a row and joined InterContinental Ras Al Khaimah Resort & SPA as General Manager, the first-ever flagship resort for the hotel brand in the emirate which is set to open in the first quarter of 2022. In his first six months, he quickly built a high-performing team

whilst also promoting diversity and inclusion and embedding the IHG winning culture of which he is so familiar.

**Here is a short interview** where Mohammed Mahmoud, the General Manager of InterContinental Ras Al Khaimah Resort & SPA shares his ideas and his plans;

Mr. Mohammed describing about his association with IHG Hotels and Resorts said that He has been with IHG Hotels & Resorts for over twenty years, starting as Front Office Supervisor in Pyramids Park InterContinental Cairo, before progressing to where He is today. Having been embedded in operations for the whole of the career. He said: I really have seen everything, which has helped me become the General Manager that I am now and I like to lead by example and hope to inspire, develop and drive my- team, with a forward-thinking approach and a clear vision on how to develop a luxury product.

Highlighting about the property he informed us that it is located on Hayat Island in Mina Al Arab, the resort offers Island style living with green landscapes, flowing water features, and white sand. Whilst still having Arabic touches, Arabic hospitality and of course the scenery with the backdrop of the Al Hajar mountains behind us, those who have visited the property already have commented how it transports them to somewhere completely different. He continued that one unique product is our private villas, some of which have their own private pool. Just steps away from the beach, they are perfect for families who prefer seclusion. Every room in the hotel is facing the sea, regardless of the room category.

Mr. Mohammed further updated us about Club InterContinental and said: On the other hand, it is something we believe will redefine the Club experience in the region. With a separate check-in area, private pool, and bespoke food and beverage



offerings throughout the day, it's a concept that goes above and beyond what guests would normally expect to find. And finally, we believe that the resort can be a dining destination in itself. Whether it's Levant & Nar, our stunning Levantine cuisine which offers 360-degree views of the sea, or our sharing concept restaurant NoHo, which is inspired by the trendy New York district North of Houston Street. Each of our outlets has a distinct story that we can't wait to share.

Elaborating about UAE hospitality scenario after Expo 2020 especially for Ras Al Khaimah He said: EXPO 2022 has given the UAE another opportunity to showcase itself to the world, and there is no doubt that it will leave a legacy long after it closes its doors in March. For Ras Al Khaimah in particular, it is perfectly placed to capitalize on the increasing demand for escapism travel, with stunning landscapes and unique history and culture that has seen it continue to post record tourist figures. He further added that we are also incredibly proud to be in a destination that has sustainability at the core of its agenda and are looking forward to supporting them become a regional leader by 2025.



The General Manager told us: Ras Al Khaimah is everybody's favorite staycation destination and so the local UAE market is incredibly important to us. As such, we've shaped our offer to reflect that, from authentic Arabic touches that are prominent throughout the design of the resort, to our private villas that are perfect for families. It's also important to us that we help to grow the destination on an international scale, and we'll be working closely with Ras Al Khaimah Tourism Development Authority to position ourselves in their key international target markets, including KSA, Germany, UK, Russia, and India, which given our event space, is perfect for destination weddings.



Answering how will the hotel industry cope with the new COVID-19 variant this year and what impact will this have on new hotels to come he said: Whilst the industry has responded remarkably well to the events of the past eighteen months, I think that now more than ever it is important that we stay vigilant, especially as new variants develop. As an IHG resort, the IHG Clean Promise, with additional COVID-19 protocols and advanced practices allows our guests to be reassured that we're taking every possible step to protect them.



# Experience Colombia

## Savannas, wetlands and wildlife

A safari tour and a cowboy ride in one trip? One may not easily find these two different experiences in one travel destination, but it is possible in Colombia's eastern region



Orinoquía, known as the Wild East of Colombia, is characterized by vast tropical savannas, offering tourists an experience of hacienda life, complete with llaneros lessons in horse riding, cattle herding and milking.

Expo 2020 Dubai visitors will have the opportunity to explore, experience, and enjoy a glimpse of Orinoquía's myriads of flora and fauna species, crystal clear water, and breathtaking mountain ranges through a special virtual experience at the Colombia Pavilion to the delight of everyone's senses. Orinoquia, is one of Colombia's six regions located in the eastern part of the country and widely known for its vast tropical savannas with lush forests and wetlands.

The country's Orinoco River watershed that winds through the region's thick jungle is the perfect spot for water tourism activities. It is also home to the mighty stream Raudal de Maypures (Maipures Rapids), dubbed as the 'Eight Wonder of the World' by German explorer Alexander von Humboldt in the 19th century.

Colombia's rich biodiversity provides visitors with a wide range of natural options of places to visit and things to experience. Orinoquia is the perfect spot for wildlife enthusiasts and those interested in exploring and discovering the various fauna of the country. Tourists can enjoy sightseeing while occasionally interacting with the Sabanero deer, the chigüiro, the Orinoco caiman, the four-nosed viper (*Bothrops asper*), the red cocora or tigers, monkeys, and if one is fearless, anacondas. Like the other regions, Orinoquia also hosts more than 300 bird species, thanks

to its lush forests.

The variety of ecosystems in the region provides a home to diverse amphibians and mammals. Birdwatchers can enjoy guans, curassows, screamers, eagles, and ducks. The savannas host white-tailed deer, armadillos, tapir, and peccaries, while pumas and jaguars widely inhabit the woodlands.

The region is also home to the only protected area under Colombia's Natural Parks system in the eastern plains. The El Tuparro Natural Park, a biosphere reserve located at the Vichada Department, is home to 74 species of mammals, 320 birds (many of them marine), 17 reptiles, 26 fish, and five primate species. Some of the most common endemic species that can be spotted in the park are top predators in the food chain, such as the jaguar, the jaguarundi [*Puma yagouaroundi*] and the forest fox [*Cerdocyon thous*].

Other major tourist destinations in the area include the Amacayacu National Natural Park, Eastern plains, Sierra de la Macarena, and Mavecure. It is the ideal destination for those who wish to hike the mountains of Serranía del or experience the cool water cascading from the waterfalls in Jirijirimo.

Colombia has emerged as a strong player in the global tourism landscape, bringing forward its diversity and wide range of untouched and protected natural areas. Recently, the country has been advancing its sustainable tourism initiatives while adding adventure and health tourism to its offerings.



# MUSEUM

From trains to digital worlds, a museum-hotel and more, Japan has museums to inspire the whole family



Museums can be one of the great joys of travel. We're not talking about dusty displays in darkened rooms. We're talking about those museums that can inspire and delight, that can educate children even when they don't realise they're being educated. That can offer exciting hands-on experiences, letting you try things you've never tried before. Japan is home to a wide variety of museums, ranging from the quirky to the must-dos on most visitors lists. Read on to discover a few of our favourites that are slightly off the beaten track, and perhaps all the more exciting for it.

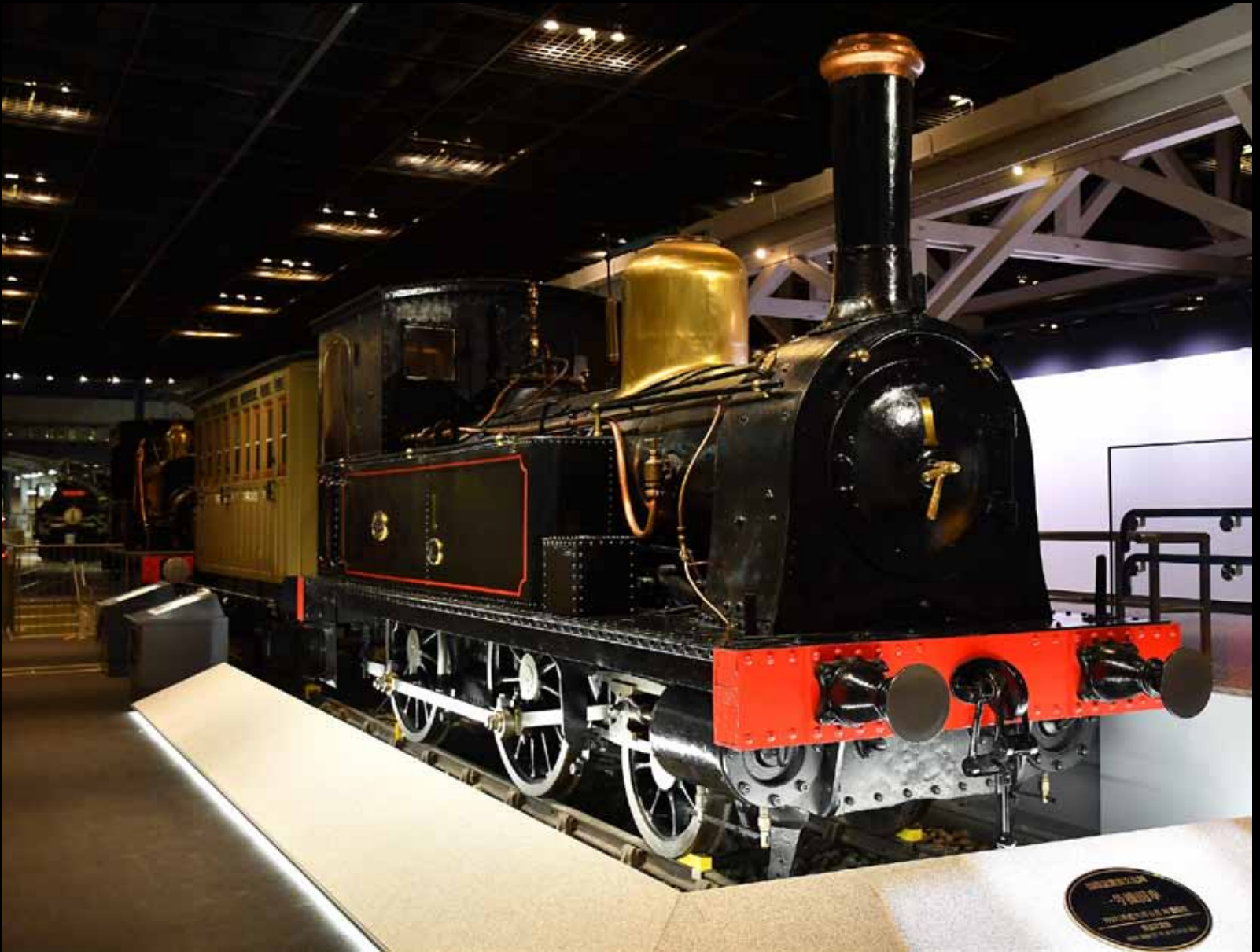
## Do the Locomotion at the Railway Museum

Japan may be famous for its Shinkansen Bullet trains, but the history of rail travel in the country goes much further back. Stepping into the vast spaces of the Railway Museum in Omiya in Saitama City is enough to strike joy into the heart of any locomotion enthusiast, but this isn't just for trainspotters. The scale, historical trains, simulators, model railways and interactive displays are as exciting for children as they are for adults of all ages, bringing to life the golden age of train travel, and what's still to come in the future.

Different zones take visitors on journeys through different periods of locomotive heritage. The Rolling Stock Station showcases 36 different trains, including Locomotive No. 1, the first train to run







when railways first started operating in Japan in 1872, as well as historical shinkansen bullet trains.

Try your hand at driving a miniature train on a 300-metre course, following signals and speed limits, and keeping your passengers safe. Experience the thrill of driving the Series E5 Shinkansen with a life-like simulator that plays live-action video simulating the real speed - all 320 kilometres per hour of it.

### **Dive into an immersive of Encyclopaedias, brought to life at the new Zukan Museum Ginza**

Instead of flipping through the pages of an encyclopaedia, Ginza's new Zukan Museum brings the world of encyclopaedias to life through revolutionary digital experiences that immerse visitors into natural worlds filled with creatures. Created by Shogakukan, one of Japan's largest publishers of educational materials, the new museum lets visitors embark on adventures to discover forests, oceans and savannahs, meeting the creatures that inhabit these different natural worlds. See life from an ant's perspective, observe monkeys high up in the trees, swim with dolphins, meet birds, bugs and butterflies, all through digital projections. It's an interactive experience - get too close and some of the creatures will run away - so it pays to observe them thoughtfully and carefully. Your journey through these digital worlds can be captured on a special "recording stone" device. Approach a creature and the stone provides hints to help you record what you've seen, sharing the creature's name and other information that can be saved until the end of the experience, for a finale tailored to all of the things you've discovered on your own individual adventure.



# MUSEUM



## Discover the Great Wall of Manga at the Kyoto International Manga Museum

Japanese pop culture has spread around the world, and manga is perhaps one of the most highly appreciated forms, loved by children and adults alike. Kyoto International Manga Museum started out as the first comprehensive cultural centre for Manga home to a collection of 300,000 manga-related items, from post-war books to caricature woodblock prints, 18th century satirical magazines, and comics from around the world. The museum's 250,000 piece strong archive is even available for those wanting to do research into the manga tradition.

But even though it's housed in the Showa-era former Tatsuike Elementary School, representing the role that education has played in the area, it's not just for academics. The museum is bound to strike joy into the hearts of manga aficionados, not least for its browsing wall made up of 50,000 books.

## A Night at The Museum-Hotel

Hotel Gajoen Tokyo is a piece of history tucked away in a quiet neighbourhood in Tokyo's Meguro district, as much museum as

it is place to spend the night. But unlike most museums, guests at the hotel can live and breathe their art-filled surroundings. Dating back to 1928, the hotel is a showcase of early 20th century Japanese art and design. Guestrooms are Japanese in style and spirit, but venture down the hotel's corridors and into the public spaces and its museum-like qualities become clear. Originally designed as a high-end restaurant and wedding hall aiming to provide beauty to residents of the city living in the aftermath of a devastating earthquake, the hotel is full of treasured artworks and cultural assets. Head to the Hyakudan Kaidan, or 100-step staircase, part of the original building and home to exquisitely decorated rooms featuring a dazzling display of wood carvings, painted screens, mother-of-pearl inlay and more, designated a Tokyo Metropolitan Area Tangible Cultural Property in 2009.

The best way for guests to appreciate the museum-like hotel is to join one of The Art Tours, held multiple times a week and led by an expert guide who will reveal treasures from the collection. And even if you're not a guest, dining in one of the hotel's many restaurants is an equally impressive experience, and the art on the plate complements the artful surroundings perfectly.



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# A321neo aircraft



[SalamAir.com](http://SalamAir.com)

**M**uscat: To facilitate and align with its growth strategy, SalamAir, the Sultanate's fastest-growing value-for-money airline, has taken delivery of its second A321neo aircraft. Expanding SalamAir reach to almost eight hours flight, the new aircraft will connect Muscat and Salalah further to East Europe, Far East, and African destinations. The new fleet mix will enable SalamAir to diversify its portfolio and support the Sultanate of Oman's tourism industry vision, especially during the Khareef season.

To offer a unique travel experience, A321neo will include the Luban class wherein the front row seats of the aircraft will be dedicated to the special seating class. The seating capacity of the new aircraft will be 212 seats equipped with USB ports, HEPA air filtration system and leather seats.

The next-generation A321neo aircraft has a new engine option (NEO) known for being fuel-efficient and environment friendly with one of the lowest carbon footprints in the industry. To

elevate the passenger experience, it offers additional seating capacity while allowing augmented use of cabin space and low noise levels. A redesigned cabin door configuration and supplementary exit limits lifts the comfort quotient of the aircraft. While the aircraft's extra range capability of eight hours meets the ambitious plans of the airline's expansion.

With the induction of the second A321neo, SalamAir has become the first airline in the country to have two aircraft from the brand in its fleet. In September 2021, SalamAir took delivery of the first A321neo.

Captain Mohamed Ahmed, CEO of SalamAir, said: "We are excited to welcome the second A321neo aircraft, the newest addition in our growing fleet. The new aircraft guarantees operational boost, cost-benefit as well a drop in carbon footprint while enabling extra payload capacity and better fuel efficiency. By adding this aircraft to our fleet it will support the growth plans of our airline's network and will make our youngest fleet in Asia even younger.



We are also delighted that SalamAir is well-positioned to be part of and help accelerate Oman's air travel growth and Oman Vision 2040, as contributing to the growth of the country is one of the main goals of our company."

SalamAir meets the nation's growing demand for affordable travel options and aims to generate further opportunities for employment and business creation in various Oman sectors. In a short span, SalamAir has achieved growth in its operations and has expanded its reach across the region serving customers across a cross-section of society.

With an intention to enhance the overall user experience for travellers during the last few months, SalamAir has been engaged in improving its online check-in, website, booking engine and travel agent portals. The airline has also been involved in additional training of ground operations and handling, in addition to cross-functional training aspects to boost productivity and readiness. Showcasing safety as its first

priority, SalamAir has put in place a stringent set of measures to ensure a high-quality sanitation process. Its new fleet is being used right now, which has leather seats that are non-porous and easy to disinfect. In addition, every surface in the aircraft is disinfected using approved cleaning agents, be it the doors, windows, seats, foldable tables, baggage cabins, or seat hand rests.

#### **About SalamAir**

SalamAir commenced its commercial operations in 2017, intending to set new standards in the aviation industry in Oman. SalamAir meets the country's increasing demand for affordable travel options and aims to generate further opportunities for employment and business creation in various Oman sectors. In a short span of four years, SalamAir has achieved growth in its operations and has expanded its reach across the region. SalamAir was awarded the Youngest Fleet in Asia by Youngest Fleet in Asia 2022 – ch-aviation. It operates 6 A320neo and 2 A321neo.

# Picturesque Namibia

## Africa's Undiscovered Gem



**N**amibia is a country of infinite opportunities and diversity, from its topography and people to its culture and wildlife. It remains one of the most beautiful countries worldwide, offering travellers a kaleidoscope of activities and adventures to enjoy during their stay in the land of contrasts.

The central region which provides a variety of tourism activities and places of interest to visit before to exploring further. With Auas Mountains to the south, Khomas Hochland in the west and the Eros Mountains in the East, Windhoek is a meeting place of old and new, modern, and old styles featuring an assortment of architectural styles, people, modern facilities, and world-class infrastructure.

The city is a melting pot of cultures, people, cuisine, and religions, offering travellers insight into the Namibian way of life as executives dressed in the latest business attire walk alongside Herero women dressed in their beautiful traditional wear. The restaurants appeal to a magnitude of tastes while accommodation options include camping and B&B's to international chain hotels.

Namibia's coastal region (Erongo) offers travellers a range of entertainment and tourist attractions. It offers travellers a range of entertainment and tourist attractions and local folk offer advice and tips on making the most of this beautiful region popular with boardsailing and water sports enthusiasts.

The giant dunes provide the perfect backdrop for adventure activities such as sandboarding, quad biking, parasailing as well as whale and dolphin cruises. Major Attractions include Erongo Mountain Winery, Brandberg Mountains, Spitzkoppe, Cape Cross Seal Colony, National Marine Aquarium, The Walvis Bay Waterfront Development and lagoon as well as the Dune 7.

The Eastern region, (Omaheke and Otjozondjupa) offers visitors a variety of attractions and its natural beauty, stark landscapes and indigenous people make it worthwhile to visit. Major attractions include Kalahari Desert, The San Bushmen, Nyae Nyae Pans and Waterberg Plateau Park.

The Northern Region (Omusati, Oshana, Oshikoto and Ohangwena) offers wildly contrasting landscapes, ranging from



the arid sandy plains and rocky hills of the country's Kaokoland region to the water-rich area in the east with some of Namibia's best game viewings. It has Ruacana Waterfalls, Uukwaludhi Traditional Village Homestead, Lake Otjikoto, Hoba Meteorite and Etosha National Park.

The North-Eastern Region (Kavango East & West and Zambezi) is water-rich, with woodlands, wetlands, riverine forests, swamps, and rivers and provides a paradise for visitors searching for a holiday rich in fauna and flora with an abundance of game and birdlife.

Its rich landscapes and panoramic views are a stark contrast to the wide-open dunes and landscapes found to the west of Namibia. Major attractions include Kavango and Zambezi Rivers, Mashu Craft Centre, Popa Falls, Mbungura Woodcraft Co-operative and Rich Wildlife and Forestry.

The Southern Region (Hardap and Karas) is dominated by historical buildings, fossils, ghost towns and quiver tree forests. Major attractions include Ai-Ais hot water springs, Fish River

Canyon, Namib Naukluft (Sossusvlei), Sperrgebiet National Park (Diamond Area), Warmbad Hot springs, Garas Quiver Tree Forest, War Memorial at Gochas and Kolmanskop (Ghost Town).

Getting to Namibia is easy and the most popular way of travelling through Namibia is by self-drive. There are scheduled tours in luxury coaches or minibuses, by train, safaris, off-the-beaten-track camping trips in 4x4 vehicles, specialised tailor-made tours, wilderness safaris, safaris on horseback, canoeing, tailored tours and white-river rafting. It is time for Namibia.

Shereen Shabnam



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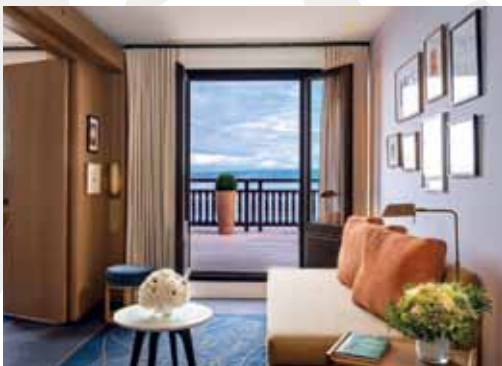
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