

World

Luxury Travel

Magazine

Vol. 3 ■ Issue 2 ■ September, 2014

Luxury Hotel Must-Haves

The five facilities every
luxury hotel should provide

Time to Hit the Road

Five fascinating road trips

Cities for Singles

Solo Sojourn

**October Festivals
around the Globe**





It is said, "He who returns from a journey is not the same as he who left". I completely agree with this saying. Travel enriches life in more ways than one can anticipate. And what better way than through road journeys! These trips take you away from the hustle and bustle of trains and flights. They allow you to savour the journey giving you the luxury to stop and take in your surroundings when you please.

This issue of the e-magazine takes you through a few such amazing road trips that would excite and enrich you. Breath-taking sights, experiences and adventures await you in our Cover Story of this month.

Single? Have you ever felt like leaving everything behind to just take a break but not sure which place is best for singles? Our City Guide section addresses this concern. Take a look at some of the best places for singles to visit and mingle with like-minded people. Chances of serendipity happening here are high too.

Any hotel rated 4 Star plus can call itself a luxury hotel. But to be a real luxury hotel, it must provide some absolute necessities. These are facilities that every luxury traveller seeks. We have listed our five must have facilities in a luxury hotel. Find out all about this in our Luxe Stay section of the e-zine.

Happy reading!

Thank you!

Manashree Prakash
Editor-in-Chief

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**October Festivals
around the Globe**

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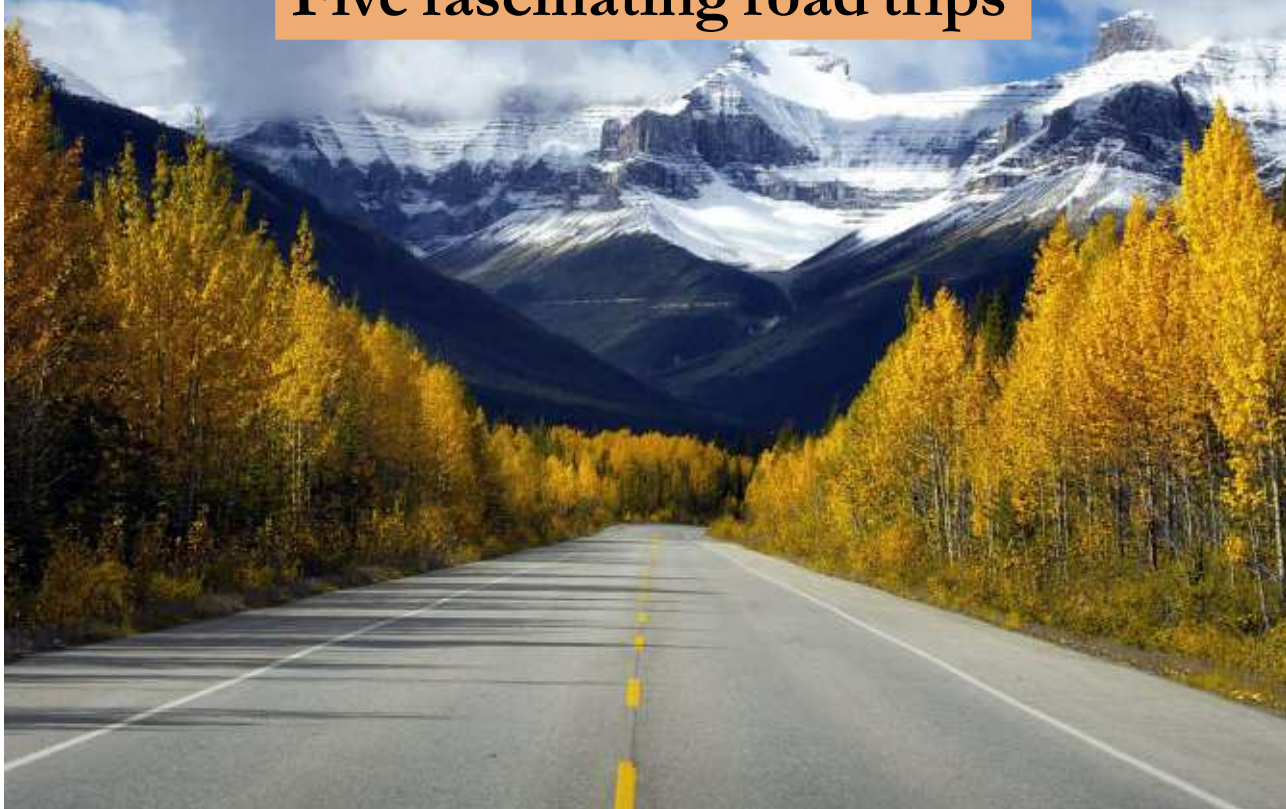
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The beaming sun, wind in the hair, miles flying by, there is something exhilarating about being on the road. It gives a sense of being footloose and carefree! It is also a fantastic way to explore and experience a country within a short period of time. Let

us take a look at some of the most amazing roads around our planet today. They are all unique in their own way. Here are some of the roads that driving aficionados and adventure seekers would definitely put on their 'must-drive' list.

Time to Hit the Road

Five fascinating road trips

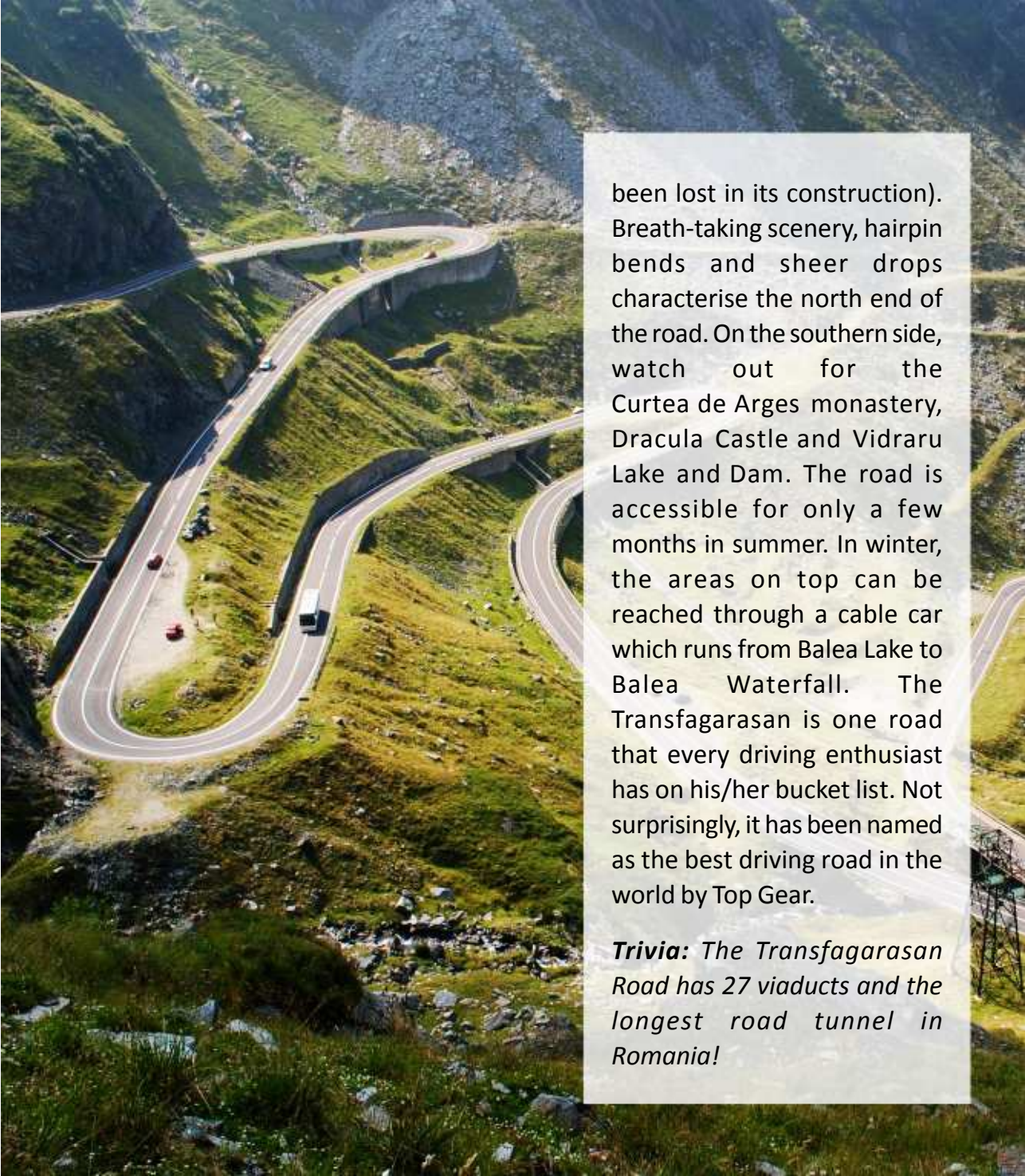


The Transfagarasan, Romania

This incredible 6,673-ft-high mountain pass road, connecting Sibiu and Pitesti, is the second highest paved road in Romania. The 90 km Transfagarasan Road (or the DN7C) along the Fagaras Mountains is a series of dramatic twists and turns. Originally built as a military route, it took 6 million kgs of

explosives to blast the northern face of the mountain while building and claimed 40 human lives. At the peak, the road touches the Balea Lake, which is thousands of years old. There is also an 890 km long tunnel stretching right through the mountain top (400 human lives are believed to have





been lost in its construction). Breath-taking scenery, hairpin bends and sheer drops characterise the north end of the road. On the southern side, watch out for the Curtea de Arges monastery, Dracula Castle and Vidraru Lake and Dam. The road is accessible for only a few months in summer. In winter, the areas on top can be reached through a cable car which runs from Balea Lake to Balea Waterfall. The Transfagarasan is one road that every driving enthusiast has on his/her bucket list. Not surprisingly, it has been named as the best driving road in the world by Top Gear.

Trivia: The Transfagarasan Road has 27 viaducts and the longest road tunnel in Romania!

Stelvio Pass Road, Italy

The highest paved mountain pass in the Eastern Alps, the Stelvio Pass is situated at a height of 2757 m. It was built in the 1800s to connect the Austrian province of Lombardia with the rest of the Austrian empire. The wall of switchbacks run to the top in 48 breath-taking turns on the north side. The challenge of the route lies in continuous hairpins, steep drops and the thinning of the road to dangerously narrow strips at parts. Just above the pass is the Dreisprachenspitze or “Three Languages

Peak,” (German, Italian and Romansh languages). The route is open from June to September. It is the hotspot destination for cycling and motorcycling enthusiasts. This challenging road drive has gorgeous scenery, which makes it one of the most sought after driving routes in the world.

Tip: *It is best to approach the route from the north-west side; you can also drive through the lovely Stelvio National Park from this side, before beginning the actual climb.*



North Yungas, 'Road of Death', Bolivia

The 43-mile long road has gained notoriety for its single-lane, narrow road, peppered with tight hairpin bends and terrifying steep drops. There are no railings in most of the places and fog and rain play havoc with visibility and road conditions making it muddy and slippery. The road connects La Paz with Coroico in the Yungas region in the Bolivian Andes. Around 200-300 lives are lost annually on this deadly stretch with the fatal plunges ending in the gorges of the Coroico River Valley below. Locals have aptly bestowed the name "El Camino de la Muerte" or "the Road of Death" to this road consequently. The North Yungas road has been named

the world's most dangerous road in the year 1995. The road now is less used for traffic and more by adventure seekers for the thrill of the challenges it poses.

Snippet: A new (by-pass) road has been opened from La Paz to Coroico in 2006 which is much safer than the North Yungas Road.

Guoliang Tunnel Road, China

The story behind the birth of the Guoliang Tunnel Road in the Taihang Mountains is an amazing one. The road owes its existence to the grit and determination of a handful of villagers of the remote village of Guoliang to connect their village to the outside world. Since the officials did not heed their requests for a road, they took it upon themselves to dig a tunnel. Though lives were lost in the work, they continued undeterred. On May 1, 1977, the tunnel was opened for traffic. The rough tunnel walls and road surface bear testimony to the hard work of the villagers, who brought the most

basic tools and knowledge to their arduous task. Today this tunnel is a major tourist attraction and needless to say the village has prospered. The tunnel road has several apertures cut into the wall and overlooking the rocky valley. The rough pillars are the only protection against fatal plunges into the deadly precipice below. The steep, narrow road with several blind spots is extremely dangerous, especially when it rains. The road is rightly described as “the road that does not tolerate any mistakes”.

Trivia: *The 1200 m long tunnel road was built by 13 villagers with primitive tools, who took five years to complete the work.*



Highway 1, Big Sur, California

The lovely, highway 1 in California is the only road running through the stunningly scenic Big Sur region of the Central Coast of California. Designated an “All American Road”, indicating its beauty and unique features, it offers some of the spectacular coastal scenery. The road runs through various coastal parks, a redwood forest and several historic bridges. The 143 km highway

runs from San Simeon to Carmel (the south and north ends of the Big Sur region). Driving along the highway, you can often spot California Condors, migrating whales and even the mating rituals of elephant seals if you drive right up to the beach. The views of the Pacific Ocean enchant, but don't forget to keep a watch on the road. Rugged cliffs, twists and turns and sharp inclines make it





dangerous to lose your focus. Drive over to the side for admiring the scenery. Some of the top attractions to watch out for on this route are the Pfeiffer Beach, Big Sur State Park, McWay Falls, Henry Miller Memorial Library and the Bixby Creek Bridge. During peak traffic hours, your drive could slow down to a crawl, so make an early start if you want to enjoy a fantastic drive.

Tip: Mud, rock slides and weather conditions play an important part in the accessibility of the highway. Do check the road conditions before you plan a trip.





The roads listed above are amazing. Splendid feats of human creation, they are beautiful and deadly in the challenges they harbour. They push the limits of skills and courage a bar higher. However, we have explored just the tip of the iceberg. There are many more equally fascinating roads, unique in their beauty, adventure quotient or as engineering marvels. Which ones are your favourites? Let us know. We are exploring some more too and watch this space for more.



Being single can be a great time for self-discovery, travelling, soul searching and of course indulging in plenty of activities you enjoy without being tied down by the responsibilities of life. When your priorities are different so are your choices, goals and motivations. Statistics claim that single people often choose to live in different places and court various experiences in an attempt to live life to the fullest. Here is a list of five best cities for singles where you can have an amazing time during your years of glory:

Cities for Singles

Solo Sojourn



New York: New Opportunities

Let's face it. New York is one of the best places you can live in irrespective of your relationship status. It is lively, cosmopolitan and ever so charming. The jobs are plenty, quality of life is

fabulous, the infrastructure is extraordinary and most importantly the spirit is contagious! It is as much a city of lovers as it is that of singles, workaholics or youngsters.





The popular sitcom “Sex and the City” christened it as the ultimate place for exploration, excitement, self-discovery and of course singlehood! Yes, it is expensive. Haven’t you heard that all good things come with a price tag? However the good news is the dating scene is ripe with innumerable options, whatever is your preference. Curiously, the number of single, educated women exceeds that of men. Since New York claims to be the ‘city that never sleeps’, meeting people becomes relatively easy and hanging out till the wee hours is the norm.



Barcelona: Celebrating Singlehood

The capital of Catalunya (Catalonia) and the second-largest city in Spain is the Mecca of art, architecture and heritage. Gaudi's muse bears an enthralling testimony to his works of art and architecture as well as his sheer brilliance. Every street and corner has its own character. Navigating on your own is easy and exploring your surroundings on foot is exciting. The colourful street art reflects the quirky and artistic



side of the city. Staying here has its own perks which include enjoying the best of gastronomy, music and culture. Home to nine UNESCO World Heritage sites and plenty of architectural masterpieces, it entails a fascinating journey into



the world of art and beauty. Yet the best part of Barcelona is, it can be as inspiring and thought provoking as it is breezy and light hearted. The beaches, mountains, restaurants, lounges and cafes promise great music, amazing food and essentially a good time while the literature, culture, concerts, museums and galleries open new doors to stimulating discoveries.



Sydney: Savouring the Sun and Sand

Sydney is often touted as the land of the young and that of never ending celebrations. The mood is usually laidback and fun. The cost of living is quite high. The Australians love to party hard and enjoy life as it unfolds. The residents are

approachable, friendly and usually adventurous. Their love for the outdoors is widely known as is their love for parties. Again the number of smart, beautiful women outnumbers men which create an imbalance when it comes to dating. The



good news is you do not necessarily need a partner to have a good time in Sydney.

There are a handful of free as well as expensive entertainment options to keep you on your toes. The nature parks, museums, galleries, theatres, markets, harbour, gardens, opera, beaches, mountains, wildlife and not to forget the buzzing restaurants, pubs and bars will keep you pleasantly occupied. Hot on the list of solo travellers, Sydney is world class, safe and clearly makes singlehood a joyride.



Buenos Aires: Time to Tango

The birthplace of tango and the capital of Argentina scores high when it comes to offering top notch entertainment and a palpable nightlife. Swanky restaurants, uptown clubs and trendy bars grace the social scene. Historical attractions, traditional neighbourhoods, riverbanks and cobblestone roads are some of the must experience aspects here. Romance is usually in the air. Mingling is a ball and everyone around is usually dancing, socialising, celebrating and rejoicing. Literary and cultural pursuits feature high on the list.





Movies, dance, art, music and theatre make for great pastime.

Energetic, colourful and creative, Buenos Aires is often called the “Paris of Latin America” owing to its sophistication and great fashion sense. Its rich cultural heritage unravels tales of a glorious past. An interesting study of contrasts, the city is a confluence of European sensibilities and Latin American passion. From embracing food and football to being footloose and fancy free, life offers a heady mix of choices here. Dance, drama and diversity rule the roost. As one of the most single friendly places in the world, be prepared to be whisked off your feet for a quick tango or even for a lifelong one!



Cape Town: Courting Adventure

South Africa's second largest and presumably the most stunning city attracts its fair share of singles looking to have a whale of a time. The pristine beaches, rolling vineyards, sandstone mountains, valleys, suburbs, beach town, bays and wilderness offer plenty of fun activities for both travellers and locals. In fact the best part of living alone in Cape Town is that you will never run out of ideas or activities to make your stay a memorable one.

If you love being outdoors you will almost always have your hands full. Take your pick from a host of options like helicopter rides, adventure sports, swimming with the penguins or sharks, diving, trekking, hiking, fishing, sailing, kayaking, camping, abseiling and golfing. You can also explore the wildlife and natural wonders, take a wine tour, drive to the countryside or hit the beach during the weekends. Retail therapy, art, theatre, gastronomy and spa trips are the other options you may want to indulge on.



Luxury Hotel Must-Haves

**The five facilities every
luxury hotel should provide**

Opulence and exclusivity are synonymous with luxury hotels, which compete with one another relentlessly to woo high profile guests. A host of must-have facilities and an impressive standard of service excellence are the key differentiators that go a long way to ensure customer satisfaction. Praiseworthy hospitality, attention to detail, seamless operations

and plush amenities are the other essentials that redefine the service industry which caters to the crème de la crème.

The term 'luxury' is often overused nowadays. Its true essence lies in its ability to offer custom made services by going that extra mile to craft rewarding experiences for guests. A great aesthetic sense and personal touch are supremely important when it comes to making the cut. The right lineage, renowned brand name, a

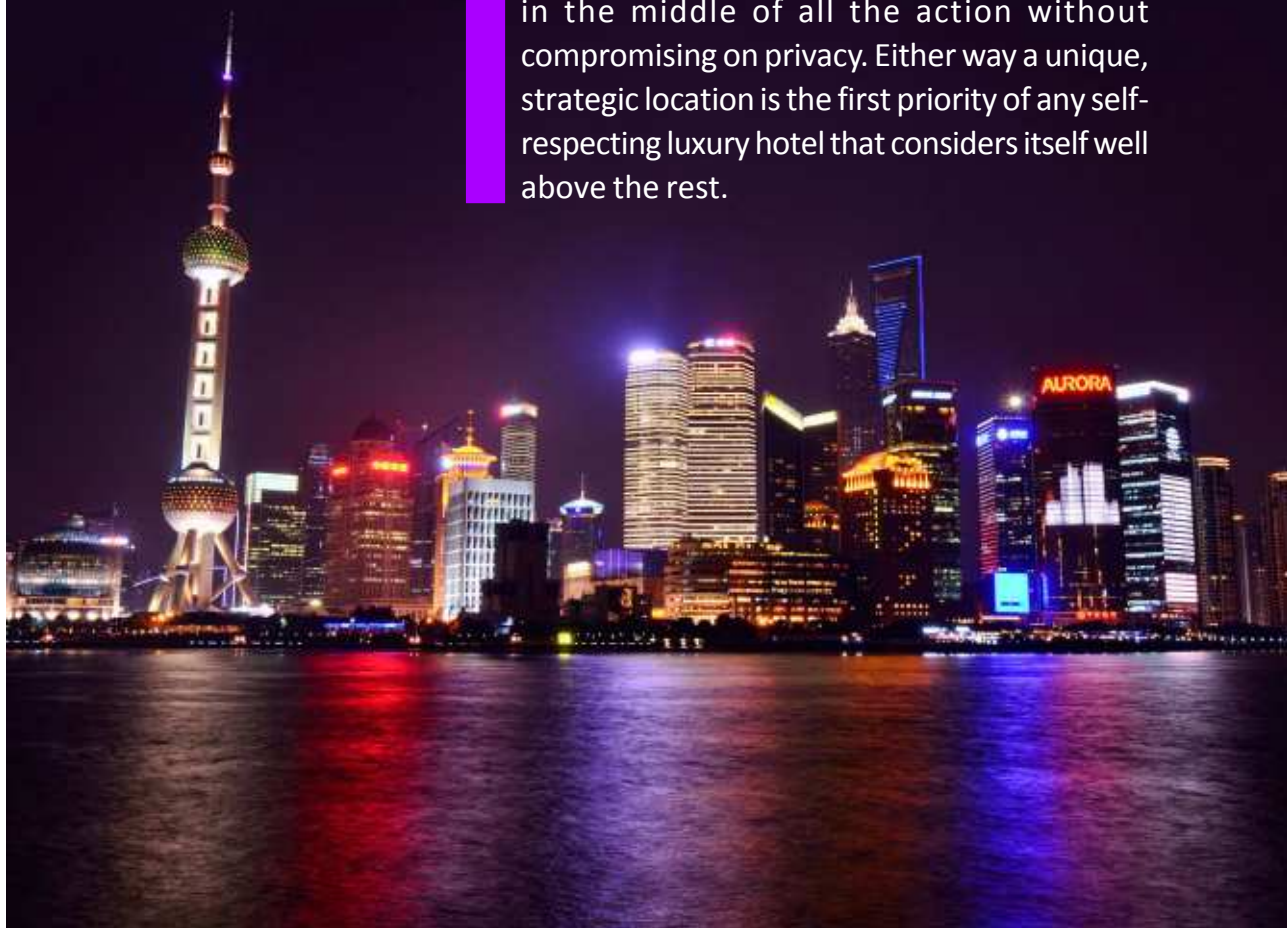




unique appeal and a sense of exclusivity help to push the envelope further. As more and more luxury hotels scramble to thrill guests with a potpourri of delights, we take a look at the top five must have facilities that can make or break a holiday.

Location – Accessibility and convenience are usually high on the checklist of most of the visitors. A hidden retreat with limited access or a vacation off the beaten track appeal to a number of guests provided the means of transport and travelling

time fit the bill. A combination of rare offerings coupled with ease of access seems to readily agree with top-notch delegates. That explains the popularity of heritage properties equipped with modern comforts or secluded island getaways that provide private helicopter or yachts services for selective tourists. While some travellers opt for a rejuvenating holiday in the middle of nowhere without giving up on their amenities, others prefer being right in the middle of all the action without compromising on privacy. Either way a unique, strategic location is the first priority of any self-respecting luxury hotel that considers itself well above the rest.



View – A panoramic view is often the deciding factor especially for leisure tourists. Hotels that offer a sweeping view of the skyline, significant regional attractions or heritage sites report a steady beeline of visitors throughout the year, as opposed to their counterparts. Luxury travellers love to feast on both scrumptious cuisines as well as spectacular, breath-taking surroundings while on a vacation. If the delights are available for a privileged few, the





demands escalate further. No wish should go unnoticed no whim unattended. Whether you want to wake up to see the sun dawning upon the Eiffel Tower next to your bedroom window, have a romantic, candlelight dinner under the stars or take a dip in your private lagoon in Bali – a luxury hotel must be prepared to fulfil your wish.

Concierge Service – The ability to offer personalised services and guarantee timely, reliable and effective solutions that surpass all expectations can be best



achieved through an extraordinary concierge service. Seamlessly shouldering a mountain of responsibilities from simple chores, an unusual whim to downright unthinkable demands – the concierge is often associated as the face of the brand. These charming, efficient professionals who work round the clock to ensure a memorable stay for the guests make all the difference. They cater to the VIPs and the crème of the society, serve as personal assistants and guides, work with strict deadlines, accommodate requests and carry out tasks with utmost discretion and competence. Some of the valued



services include customised itinerary planning, hotel reservations, limousine and coach transfers, Mercedes and yacht rentals, entertainment arrangements, shopping assistance, cultural expeditions, invitation to exclusive parties, access to elite events etc. to name a few.



Complimentary Breakfast – The traditional complimentary breakfast menu has gone for a toss only to be replaced by a far more creative version with oodles of variety. From house special platters, garden fresh delicacies, homemade treats to quintessential regional cuisines, international buffets, kid friendly menu and healthy varieties – upscale hotels go out of their way to tantalize every kind of taste bud. Organic dishes and farm-to-table platters have become increasingly popular among vegetarians. Signature dishes and specialty chefs have upped the game much to the delight of foodies who expect nothing but the best. This together with 24 hour dining and room service are the other essentials guests expect in a five star property today.





Spa & Salon – Nothing defines luxury more than a feet curling, pampering session right in the premises of the hotel. Whether you choose a head massage, body spa, foot spa, fish spa, body wrap, cleansing, toning, exfoliating or distressing therapies; Ayurvedic or eastern massages; stone therapies or Reiki – your options are practically endless. That is how it should be if you are in a luxury retreat. In many such retreats, an expert team of in house dieticians, gym instructors, life style gurus, yoga masters and healing therapists are usually at your beck and call. It goes without saying; luxury and wellness go hand in hand in present times. Apart from boasting of a well-known spa to rejuvenate weary travellers, a state-of-the-art salon is the next best valuable addition for any brand. A quick grooming





session, an emergency haircut or a full makeover under professional guidance – salons provide a bouquet of immaculate services for the clients. Many elite hotel chains offer membership to their spa and salon along with attractive packages once you join the club.

Before you set sail on your dream holiday, make sure you settle for the best bet while booking an expensive address. A destination

however beautiful and a vacation, however well planned can badly fall short if your preferred abode does not match up to your expectation. As the boundary between extravagance and necessity gets blurred and special privileges become a regular affair, the luxury tourism industry enthusiastically introduces its esteemed visitors to a whole new world of elegance, opulence and lavishness that were never heard of before.



October Festivals around the Globe

Thimphu Tsechu

Place: Thimphu, Bhutan

Dates: October 3 – 5, 2014

The Thimphu Tsechu (social gathering) is a spectacular and one of the biggest Buddhist festivals of Bhutan. Tsechu are essentially festivals held in honour of Guru Rinpoche,



the Buddhist saint who brought Buddhism to Bhutan. The festival is marked by colourful masks and historical folk dances. People come dressed in all their finery to watch the celebrations, sword dances and other rituals. Both monks and laymen participate in these dances. Colour, joy and enthusiasm make these festivals major attractions for tourists. Please note that you need to book in advance.

Trivia: *Thimphu Tsechu* is one of the two major tsechu of Bhutan; the other is the *Paro Tsechu*!





Hermanus Whale Festival

Place: Hermanus, South Africa

Dates: October 3 – 6, 2014

One of the top whale watching destinations of the world, Hermanus holds the only enviro-arts festival in South Africa. The festival celebrates the return of the Southern Right Whales to the Walker Bay in Hermanus. People can watch the whales as they play and rear their babies (There is even a whale crier who alerts people to whale presence!) Thousands of visitors flock to watch the magnificent whales and celebrate spring in this lovely seaside town. There are a host of lively events as well. Top international artists perform at the concerts and music shows at

the festival. There are eco-marine shows, craft stalls, great food, kids' entertainment areas and sports events too.

Trivia: *Ways to enjoy whale watching-whale watching boating trips, land walking tours, kayaking and Cessna plane flights over whales.*



Oktoberfest

Place: Munich, Germany

Dates: September 20 –
October 5, 2014

This is the grandest event for beer lovers around the world. Foaming beer mugs, entertainment and good food attract over a million visitors to this festival annually. The festival began in 1810 as the marriage celebration of Prince Ludwig. Today it is a full blown event with parades, concerts, Ferris wheels and of course gallons of beer. The venue is an area called Theresienwiese and the event is kick-





started with the Mayor traditionally tapping the first keg of the suds. Here you can guzzle beer to your heart's content while sampling traditional fare like Sauerbraten, Blaukraut and Bratwurst. The dirndl clad waitresses with armfuls of beer mugs are very much a part of the festival scenery.

Trivia: In the beginning, beer was not available at the Oktoberfest. You could only buy it outside the festival venue.

For more on Oktoberfest visit our blog here: <http://blog.worldluxurytourism.com/2012/09/20/all-roads-lead-to-munich-for-the-oktoberfest.html>



Lord of Miracles Festival

Place: Lima, Peru

Dates: October 18 – 19, 2014

This is a celebration in honour of the Lord of Miracles, which is a 350-year old mural depicting the crucifixion of Christ. Painted by an unknown slave, the mural gained fame after an earthquake destroyed the entire church but left the mural wall standing miraculously intact. The main event is the grand procession of thousands of purple-clad believers. They follow the two-tonne image of Christ through the streets from the Las Nazarenas church to the church of La Merced. The singing of hymns, the smell of incense and colourful flags create an unforgettable

impression. Not to be forgotten are the delicacies sold at stalls lining the streets at this time – *turrón* de Doña Pepa (nougat) and picarones.

Trivia: *The image painted by the slave is a black Christ. It withstood several attempts to erase it as well as three earthquakes!*



Abu Simbel Sun Festival

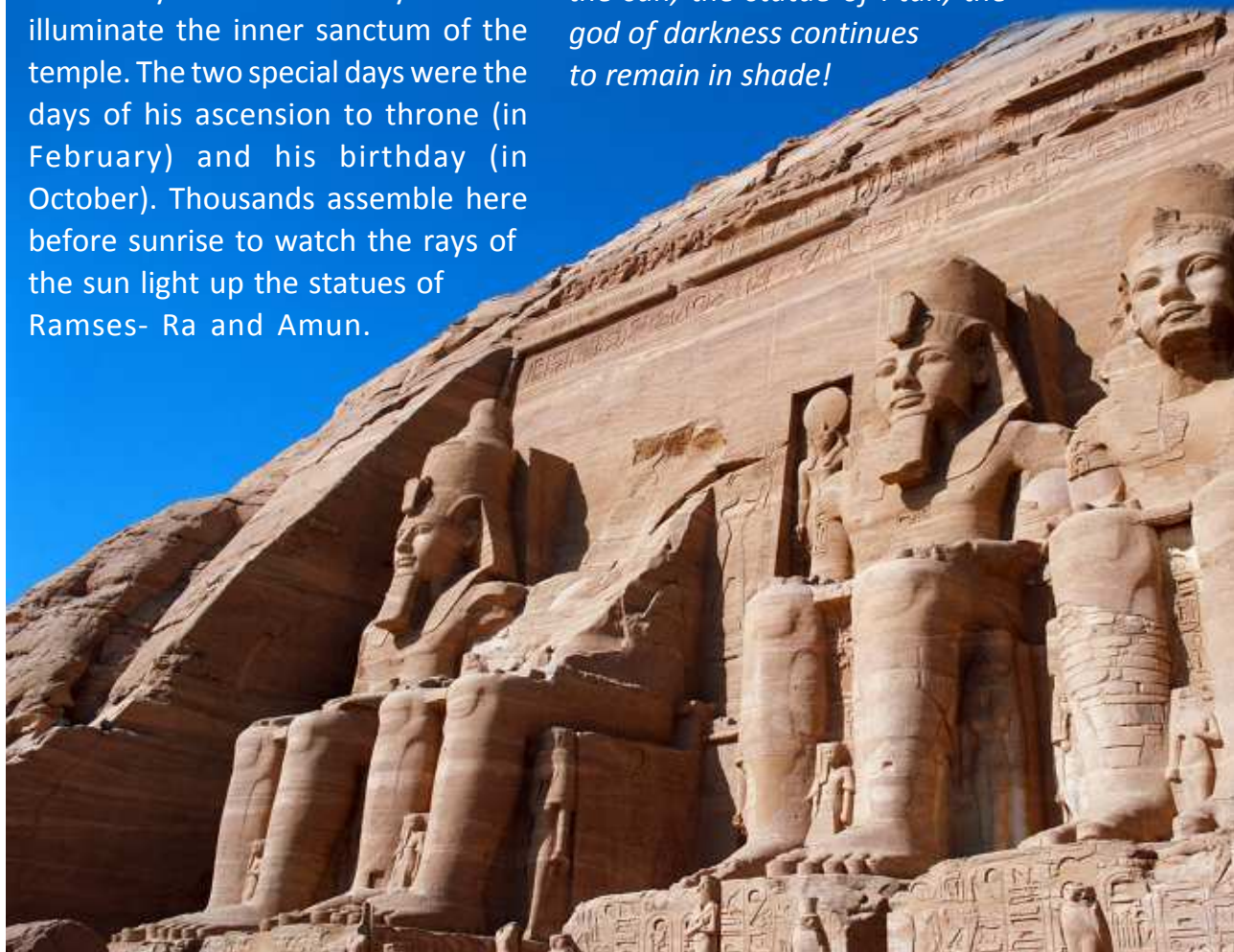
Place: Abu Simbel, Egypt

Dates: 22 October, 2014

An amazing spectacle of architectural and natural wonder can be seen at the temple in Abu Simbel. King Ramses II built this temple in such a way that twice a year the sun rays would illuminate the inner sanctum of the temple. The two special days were the days of his ascension to throne (in February) and his birthday (in October). Thousands assemble here before sunrise to watch the rays of the sun light up the statues of Ramses- Ra and Amun.

There are also performances by musicians and dancers and celebrations.

***Trivia:** While the statues are lit up by the sun, the statue of Ptah, the god of darkness continues to remain in shade!*





Diwali

Place: India

Dates: October 23, 2014

Diwali or Deepawali, the 'festival of lights', is one of the biggest and most popular festivals of India. Legend has it that the subjects of Lord Rama (King of Ayodhya) illuminated the entire city with lamps to welcome him after his 14-year exile. Today the tradition continues with people decorating their house with lamps and bursting crackers and fireworks. Houses are

cleaned and decorated in advance. People buy new clothes, sweets and meet friends and relatives. It is also the occasion for worshipping the Goddess of Wealth, Lakshmi. Diwali marks the beginning of the financial year for the trading community in India. The festival signifies the triumph of good over evil.

***Trivia:** Preparing traditional sweets at home, bathing before sunrise, gambling to ensure prosperity and drawing beautiful rangolis (decorative patterns) are all associated with Diwali!*



World Luxury Tourism