



# Gallivanter's Guide<sup>®</sup>

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IDYLIC PLACES FOR DEDICATED TRAVELLERS

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## The traveller's alternative medicine kit.

**W**henever I read an article about medicine for travellers in one of the American or European travel magazines, I am always horrified at the amount and strength of drugs recommended to combat the 'perils' of foreign travel.

Travel sickness patches are top of the list, despite the horrendous side effects of dry mouth and dizziness experienced by many. Then we have the broad spectrum antibiotics for that 'inevitable' tummy bug - a good way to destroy the stomach's natural flora together with one's vitamin B content.

Malaria pills, despite the fact that many have proved to be ineffective, are still regularly prescribed, and one is rarely warned of the nasty rashes, headaches or discharges which often ensue.

Equally, some doctors are still recommending cholera injections, although these were proved ineffective years ago.

Is foreign travel really so dangerous to our health, or could the medicines we take to prevent these ills be more damaging than the illness?

If one does not intend to back-pack, bathe in limpid African pools, eat from local food stalls or sleep in bug-infested guest houses, then is it really necessary to fill one's body with drugs to safeguard one's well-being? Personally, I think not.

David and I travel all over the world and never submit ourselves to inoculations, unless required to do so by a country's health regulations. The only precautions we take are to stay in the best hotels, use bottled water (even to clean our teeth with), avoid ice, unless made from purified

water, only eat meat that is well cooked, and refrain from watching the sun set in a mosquito-infested area unless we are firmly ensconced indoors.

On the rare occasion when one of us does become ill, we have found that concentrated Grapefruit Seed Extract (Citricidal), which is now employed in the more enlightened US hospitals, can cure all sorts of things, from a sore throat to a severely upset stomach, by rebalancing the body's natural defenses through a probiotic effect.

Equally, Homeopathic Malaria pills appear to work just as well as the pharmaceutical variety, but without the side effects, as do Homeopathic pills for travel sickness and creams for insect bites, burns and cuts.

Our standard prevention comes in the form of hefty doses of vitamins, especially vitamin B complex (which incidentally makes one taste unpleasant to mosquitoes), and mega doses of vitamin C; and if sleep eludes us after a jet-lagged flight, we find that herbal sleeping pills with natural Valerian work wonders.

To most doctors, ours would seem an unconventional if not dangerous attitude; but after over 20 years of travel, we find that the alternative approach has kept us healthy and side-effects free, from the Delhi bellies of India and the bugs of Zimbabwe to the over-indulgences of gourmet French

**Editor/Publisher**

# AMANPULO

PAMALICAN ISLAND · THE PHILIPPINES



## THE WORLD'S MOST PERFECT BEACH RESORT

**R**efreshed and de-jetlagged after 2 nights at the stylish Makati Shangri-La in Manila, we were driven to the domestic airport, where we discovered the small but exquisitely designed Amanpulo lounge, buried in a sea of Vuitton luggage and First Class labels.

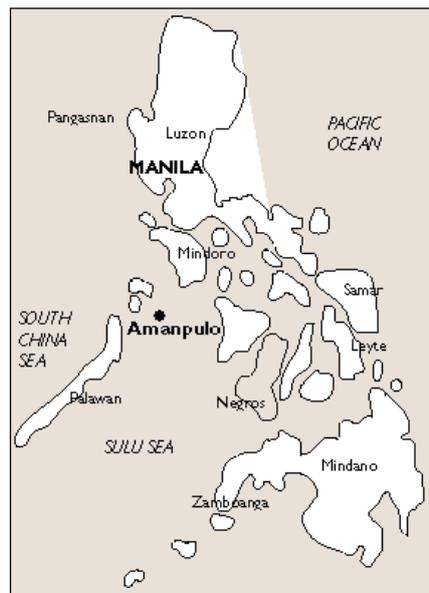
Check-in was pleasantly relaxed, involving little more than a tick against our names and the cursory weighing of ourselves and our luggage. Strictly speaking, one is only allowed 20kg each, and to facilitate this one may leave any surplus baggage in a personal locker at the lounge. Cold drinks, art books and the latest magazines helped pass the time, as the small group of elegant international travellers swapped stories about the various Amanresorts they had visited.

Finally, David and I, together with 12 other guests, squeezed aboard the private twin-engine plane, and with little or no formalities, we soared south across the Philippine archipelago; the 90 minute flight being both smooth and visually exhilarating, until suddenly we saw Pamalican Island; a tiny green emerald held in an aquamarine circle; the dark Sulu Sea lapping against the protective coral reef.

Collectively, we drew in our breath, as

the bright turquoise lagoon filled the horizon, and in the blink of an eye we were touching down smoothly on the island's private landing strip, cut like a swathe through the lush jungle.

Within seconds we were off the plane, and being greeted by Marieke and Pierre Baumgartner, Amanpulo's delightful Swiss-



trained Managers who preside like genial hosts over this idyllic island paradise. We were then introduced to our Guest Assistant, who presented us with our own personal 4-seater cart, and drove us along

jungle lanes to our Beach Casita, #24; pointing out various landmarks on the way, such as the main Lobby Lounge, Beach Club, Tennis courts, pool and Picnic Grove.

There is nothing on this island save for Amanpulo, which means 'peaceful island'; an exclusive 40-casita escape; each villa shrouded by jungle and scattered from the western coastline to the eastern lagoon; some, like ours with a white sand path to the beach; others raised high on stilts in the trees, or clustered upon the central hillside, and all identically built in the style of a Filipino 'bahay kubo' house.

Parking our cart at the edge of the casita's jungle path, we were led through a tunnel of bush trees to our front door, which opened onto a glorious cream pebble washed room of vast proportions, with polished Tanquile hardwood and fine split rattan; art-gallery lit to create a sensuously comfortable habitat, and thoughtfully equipped with everything one could wish for, including a welcoming bottle of Taittinger cooling on ice, complete with champagne cork.

Twin, cream calico day beds flanked an intricate table topped with a sunburst mosaic of dark and light polished coconut shell, a theme echoed from waste-bins to

tissue holders; and a broad plate piled with fruits was, predictably refreshed each day.

Exquisite Filipino artifacts, spot-lit or bathed in the dimmer-controlled glow of recessed mother-of-pearl panels graced the polished fossilised stone surfaces; a large desk holding stationery in hand-made parchment folders; a bright green yuka borne aloft in an ebony and split rattan planter; a ceiling spot radiating a sunburst shadow onto the polished floor. A pristine white kingsize, plumped with huge soft pillows and flanked by locally woven cream rugs beckoned; and along one wall, an elegant sideboard held mini-bar, snacks, glassware and CD, and shockingly, a television, which is apparently de rigeur for Filipino guests, who watch more TV than anyone in the world!

Through a sliding door, we came to the dressing room and bathroom, almost as large as the main room and beautifully lit with museum-like objects; a spot-lit white orchid on a marquetry table; sunken oversized marble tub enveloped with bamboo trays of Floris toiletries and towels; so much hanging and drawer space as to warrant several trunks of Vuitton; spacious twin marbled vanities, lit by mother-of-pearl panels; and a huge marble step-in shower and separate, exquisitely mirrored loo with spot-lit Japanese flower arrangement. You will find, however, that, due to water conservation, the water

## Gallivanter's Best Beach Resort for 1994

pressure is quite low; so do not expect a power shower!

Typically of Amanresorts, all the custom furnishings and objects were locally made on nearby islands, and the quality and attention to detail were unsurpassed.

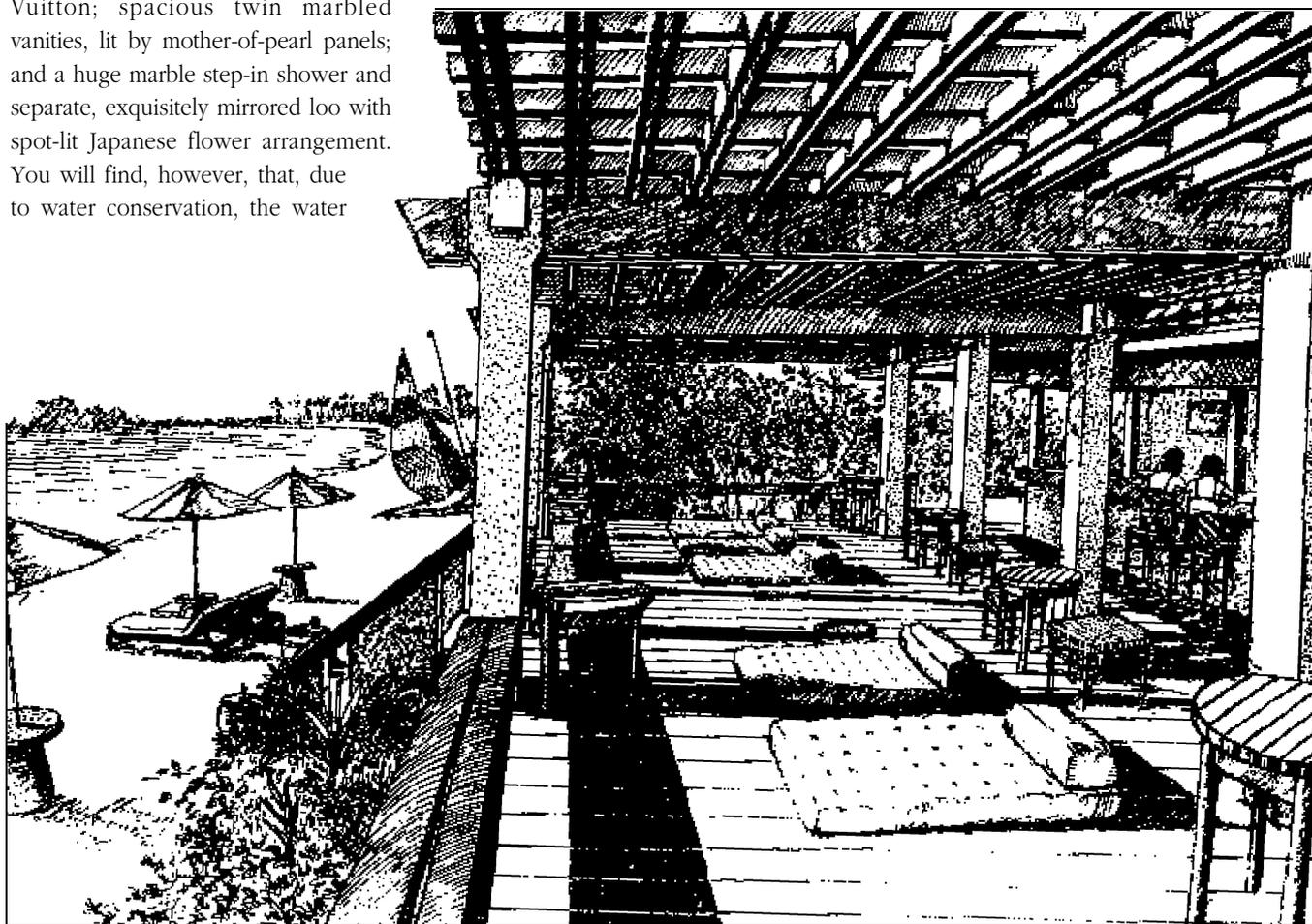
Surrounding the casita, a raised deck looked out onto the garden and beach beyond, replete with twin day beds and a white crocheted hammock, strung between the trees above the white icing-sugar sand that encircles the island in a broad, unremitting band, dappled with a myriad shells and bright vermilion pieces of coral which we women collected like jewels.

The sea was like a calm turquoise swimming pool; the most perfect natural waters I have ever encountered; the beaches empty for miles, save for the odd guest gazing from a blue-towelled lounge or strolling in a dream along the shoreline.

After watching the orange sun sink behind nearby Manamoc island, we drove our little cart through the darkened jungle to the elegant Lobby Lounge, and choosing a book from the large library, we strolled around the Gallery of jewels and artifacts, bought after-sun in the craft-filled shop, then glided through the spacious Lobby Lounge and Bar to the softly-lit Dining Room, finding the perfect table outside on the star-lit terrace. The huge sea-hued pool stretched before us; the thin encircling trees spot-lit like sentinels; the white-clad staff almost prescient in their attention.

Marieke and Pierre were everywhere; talking to the guests, sorting out problems, or just relating stories about the tremendous task undertaken when Amanresorts settled this island paradise; how the food is flown in from neighbouring islands; how the de-salination plant was installed, 900 workmen labouring for months on end; and how soon the island will also offer Amanpulo Villas, privately owned and rented out like those at Amanpuri in Phuket.

Gradually, the guests began to unwind;



*Amanpulo Beach Club, where ice cold drinks and light lunches are served alongside one of the world's most unspoilt beaches on tiny 11/2-mile Pamalican Island.*



*The main room of our Amanpulo Beach Casita, #24, with views of the jungle and beach from a spacious exterior deck, replete with day beds and hammock.*

a regular lunch party occurring around the Bar at the spectacularly minimal Beach Club, as fresh oysters, Quiche Lorraine or tender Chicken Sate were consumed with ice-cold San Miguel Dry, served in chilled glasses, or freshly blended juices such as mango, watermelon, or the local kalamansi juice.

Some preferred privacy, enjoying orchestrated lunches on their terrace, beautifully served on fresh linen; or a gourmet picnic hamper on some remote spot overlooking the azure sea.

24-hour room service was remarkably swift and efficient, as was the excellent laundry service; one's shirts returning the next morning in a bamboo case, carefully packed in tissue.

Barely a year old, this extraordinary self-sufficient resort managed to be closer to perfection than most five star veterans; the ambiance beyond comparison, with the sound of the eccentric Ibis bird punctuating the stillness of a zillion-starred sky, and the crystal waters and fine white sand merging seamlessly with the single storey amber-lit architecture.

Indeed, my only niggle was chef Vaughn Reader's preponderance of Filipino cuisine, which, lacking the spices and

herbs of other Asian cuisines tended towards tedium, apart from the excellent Leche Flan, which was 'to die for'.

The breakfasts, however, were positively bravura, and remained my favourite meal of the day, with superb coffee, real leaf tea and the best porridge oats I have ever tasted. I also enjoyed the regular Filipino feasts held beneath mother-of-pearl tree-strung lamps in the Picnic Grove on the beach, when huge bonfires were lit on the sand and traditional roast piglet was served with succulent seafood, salads and fresh fruits.

This is a resort that pays great attention to detail, including thoughtful touches such as complimentary rattan beach bags and picnic mats, endless bottled water, soft robes with matching slippers and a first class satellite 'phone system, from which I got through to my daughter in London on New Year's eve at the very first attempt.

Personally, I preferred the Beach Casitas, although, if you do not mind steps, many of the Treetop and Hillside Casitas offer spectacular views, especially numbers 39 and 40. Indeed, Amanpulo offers something special for every taste, from the peaceful, shaded pavilions that

flank the pool to the raft of watersports, boat trips and fishing opportunities for the more energetic. One may even enjoy a massage in the privacy of one's casita.

Amazingly, around 50% of the staff have been trained from scratch, and hail from local islands; yet the service is of a quality rarely found in the top international hotels - a combination of the best Swiss training from Marieke and Pierre and a natural Filipino desire to please.

In our 1994 Gallivanter's Awards for Excellence, you voted Amanpulo the Best Beach Resort in the World. We agree.

#### AT A GLANCE

##### AMANPULO, PAMALICAN ISLAND.

**Address:** PO Box 4442, Makati Central Post Office, Malugay, Makati 1284, Metro Manila, Philippines. **Tel:** (63) (2) 532 4040. **Fax:** (63) (2) 532 4044.

**Or through:** The Rafael Group (UK toll-free) 0800 282684. (USA toll-free) 800 447 7462. Or via Prima Hotels.

**Rooms:** 40 identical casita suites.

**Approx Rates:** *Treetop:* \$350. *Beach & Hillside:* \$425. *Hillside Casita 39 or 40:* \$500, plus 10% service and 13.7% tax.

# PEACEFUL PASADENA

## *The Ritz-Carlton Huntington*



*Today's imposing rear view of the Ritz-Carlton Huntington was originally the main entrance to the hotel.*

**I**f you are doing business in downtown Los Angeles, or you just want to escape the craziness of this less than angelic city, then head for where the old money resides in leafy Pasadena, just a limo away from LAX, 2 miles from the Rose Bowl, and a mere 15 minutes from downtown.

The queen of Pasadena is the gloriously refurbished Ritz-Carlton Huntington, a 383-room Grande Dame of palatial proportions where, in the words of the Ritz-Carlton credo, 'ladies and gentlemen serve ladies and gentlemen'.

Happily ensconced in a small but airy Executive Corner room, #667, with spectacular panoramic vistas of the San Gabriel mountains from a great swathe of chintz-clad windows, we gazed down upon the gold and green trees which enfold some of the State's most expensive real estate, and delighted in the view of exotic Japanese Gardens and cottage suites set in the lush gardens below.

The hotel opened for its first season in 1907 as the Hotel Wentworth, built on the knoll just adjacent to the San Marino Ranch of Henry E. Huntington, and named for its founder, Marshall Clark Wentworth. Sadly, due to unprecedented rains that season, numerous cancellations and the withdrawal of a key East coast investor, the hotel closed before it had barely opened, and it was not until 1914 that the Huntington Hotel, now owned by its wealthy neighbour, came to be; becoming one of California's most famous and elegant resorts.

In 1932, the hotel's unique covered redwood footbridge was transformed into

a 'picture bridge' when Frank M. Moore added 41 murals of Californian scenes; and today, this same gabled walkway, which now frames the Olympic-sized pool and the Japanese gardens, can be traversed by modern-day guests on their way to the well-equipped Health Club.

In 1985, to a tearful farewell, the old Huntington closed, and the ghosts, like the lady in red and Rufus the sheepdog, which many claim to see to this day, waited to see if it would be demolition or restoration for the Huntington Hotel. Happily, the conservationists won, and in 1987, the Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company, the most obvious choice, set to work, and it was not until 1991 that the Grande Dame of Pasadena was finally back in business.

Nowadays, one could hardly imagine the hotel ever being more beautiful, or the staff more caring.

The small airy marble lobby, with its fragrant flowers blossoms into a series of incredibly broad corridors and huge but intimate public rooms, the sun streaming

in from interior courtyards to flood the antique-filled salons, where 18th and 19th century art merges flawlessly with dark elegant furnishings and sumptuous fabrics.

In the Bar, one can still imagine Arabella, Huntington's wife, holding court with the local matrons; and from the lovely terraced Café, where light Southwestern fare perfectly complements the warm Californian climate, one looks across the pool to the picture bridge and imagines white-clad couples racing to a game of tennis.

One may still occupy one of the 6 remaining ultra-private guest cottages, which are very large and colonial in style. I particularly liked Wisteria Cottage, which is perfect for a family visit; or if one is entertaining, then of the 22 suites in the main building, the duplex Tournament of Roses Suite, with its sweeping baronial staircase and vista-laden balconies, makes for a very impressive address indeed.

Generally, the rooms and suites are of

*Continued overleaf*



*Our airy Executive Corner Room at the nostalgic Ritz-Carlton Huntington in Pasadena.*

relatively modest proportions, but all are prettily designed and furnished, with lovely signature Ritz-Carlton marbled bathrooms, deep tubs, step-in showers, a raft of fragrant toiletries and thick white robes. The spacious 37-room Ritz-Carlton Club on the 7th and 8th floors is especially recommended, and offers five different complimentary food presentations daily.

For formal lunches or dinners, The Grill is ever popular with guests and locals alike, although, like many Californian fine dining establishments, we found the cuisine to be somewhat over garnished. However, the menu and extensive wine list were certainly varied, including imaginative dishes such as Sautéed Fresh Duck Liver with Marmalade of Sweet Onions flavoured with Ginger; Fricassée of Crawfish with Vegetable Confetti; Penne Pasta with Blackened Salmon; Roasted Duck Breast, Leg Confit Turnip, Wild Mushroom with Honey Cider Sauce; and typical Grill staples such as Filet Mignon, New York Sirloin and Roasted Rack of Lamb with Herb Crust.

Tea in the Lounge is a traditionally elegant Ritz-Carlton experience, and also on the premises are some rather fine boutiques and the locally popular Amadeus Spa, which is equipped to virtually remake one. Ask for Mary for a relaxing massage, and Alice for hair.

All in all, we found the Huntington to be a peaceful, elegant retreat; occasionally marred by convention groups which tend to take over the terrace café, yet large enough to accommodate them and you, dear reader, and refreshingly absent of the nouveau riche patina which taints so much of LA.

#### AT A GLANCE

##### THE RITZ-CARLTON HUNTINGTON HOTEL, PASADENA.

**Address:** 1401 South Oak Knoll Ave., Pasadena, CA 91106. **Tel:** (818) 568-3900. **Fax:** (818) 568-3700. **Or through:** Ritz-Carlton (UK toll-free) 0800-234-000. (USA toll-free) 800-241-3333. **Rooms:** 383. **Approx Rates:** *Courtyard or Garden View Deluxe:* \$230. *Executive Corner:* \$245. *Club Level:* \$265. *Club Level Suite:* \$400. *Cottage Suites:* \$350-\$500, plus 11.32% tax.

# The Gollivanter's Weekend

## Grand Hôtel du Cap-Ferrat, Côte d'Azur.

**A**t the turn of the century, it was the British custom to visit the Côte d'Azur during the mild winter months, and in that elegant Belle Epoque era, the Grand Hôtel du Cap-Ferrat was born.

Today, it is equally restorative in the winter, with clear blue skies and a misty sun that requires little but a jacket or sweater to keep out the chill; and as we drive along the coast from Nice and turn into the cypress-lined residential road that leads to the Cap's rugged peninsula, the wintry frosts of London are soon forgotten.

With just 59 elegantly restored rooms and suites, simply finished in quiet pastels and pine, the Grand Hôtel is like a millionaire's summer palace. Its pristine

public rooms are strikingly stylish, with a mélange of antique and modern pieces that resemble the bravura interiors of a fashionable decorator; a brightly woven rug and candy-striped chair contrasting with an antique painted screen, whilst bowls of fresh and dried flowers bring the outdoors in and vast airy windows encircle it all with blue skies and ancient pines.

The restaurant is one of the loveliest we have ever seen, with pastel murals complementing the hotel's signature mosaic dolphins which dot the original marble floors.

Across the fragrant pines that create a natural roof over the elegant outdoor dining terrace, wide sea views and bright



Rear view of the elegant Grand Hôtel du Cap-Ferrat, as seen from the Club Dauphin beach venue.



*The exquisite lobby lounge welcomes one to the turn of the century Grand Hôtel du Cap-Ferrat, where style and service are the order of the day.*

Mediterranean flowers beckon from 14 acres of manicured gardens; and donning our jackets we stroll along fragrant pathways and across the little sea road to the hotel's private funicular that descends gently to the sophisticated Club Dauphin on the sea's edge.

Here, a trompe l'oeil pool of generous proportions merges with the sea beyond, and even in winter, the white loungers

and parasols await a shaft of sunlight to lure a passing guest, although the pool's dining terrace is sensibly, though sadly closed.

Gazing across from the pool, we spot a bubbling jacuzzi and a raft of white crusader-like cabanas that dot the rugged coastline, a white shale path meandering across the rocks to the Cap's distant lighthouse.

A sparkling motor cruiser glides past to moor by one of the neighbouring villas, and we breathe in the pine-perfumed air and dream of dinner.

The restaurant, Le Cap, proves to be one of the finest dining venues we have ever experienced, and the pleasant, knowledgeable staff guide us through meal after gourmet meal during our two night stay, each morsel a triumph of culinary brilliance; from a delectable Amuse Bouche of crisped Lobster and Sole Gâteaux to a sumptuous Petite Marmite de Crustacés en Croûte Feuilletée, creamy Escalope de Foie Gras aux Poires et Epices, Blanquette de Sole au Champagne Beurre de Caviar aux aux Dés de Légumes and the most extraordinary bitter chocolate crêpes I have ever tasted.

Indeed, to write in retrospect of such cuisine is positively painful, for nothing since has equalled it in all the world, and I still dream of the wine list with its elegant Château Rasque 1993 cuvée

Alexandra Côtes de Provence in its Lalique-like bottle, or my most favourite Château de Selle Domaines Ott, both of which are rarely seen or appreciated outside the privileged enclave of Provence.

Our sea-facing Junior Suite, #208, is simple rather than lavish, with a tiny bathroom with combined tub and shower, and separate loo and bidet. Everything however works, and our room is comfortably furnished in pickled pine and pale-hued fabrics, with rafts of wardrobe space for all one's designer finery, a personal safe, TV-containing armoire and excellent room service when required.

Of course, the most prized accommodation is a balconied suite facing the sea, which in the summer months is as close to heaven as one could wish for!

When King Leopold II of Belgium declared the Cap to be comparable to a paradise on earth, few disagreed. Thankfully, this still holds true, and the Grand Hôtel epitomises its perfection.

#### AT A GLANCE

**Address:** Bld. du Général de Gaulle, 06230 Saint-Jean-Cap-Ferrat, France.  
**Tel:** (33) 93.76.50.50. **Fax:** (33) 93.76.04.52. **Affiliation:** Relais & Châteaux. **Rooms:** 59. **Approx Rates:** Rooms: £113-£559. Suites: £321-£976, according to season.



# GALLIVANTER'S Gossip



**F**OR THOSE OF YOU WHO RELISH ADVENTURE COUPLED WITH LUXURY, **Orient-Express** are planning to operate a luxury cruise up the Iriwadi in Burma within the next 18 months. Following on from their success with the Venice Simplon Orient Express and the Eastern & Oriental Express, discerning train spotters and cruiseaholics will soon be expressly catered for.

**O**NE OF EUROPE'S HOTTEST DESTINATIONS IS PRAGUE. However, due to the constant shortage of rooms, one is forced, invariably, to reserve one's bed up to 1 year in advance. If you are not overly enamoured with the choice, which ranges from the boutique-style Palace Hotel to the Inter-Continental, Hotel Forum, Atrium Hotel or the Diplomat, then take heart, for the first Relais & Châteaux property in the Czech Republic was announced last month. The traditional Bohemian-style 42-room **Hotel Hoffmeister**, which nestles in the shadow of Prague's ancient castle, is owned by the descendants of Adolf Hoffmeister, whose charming drawings of friends, Dali, Chagall and Picasso decorate the Bar. Fresh farm produce graces the table, and the Old City is just a stroll away. Tel: (42) (2) 561.81.55 - 60. Fax: (42) (2) 530.95.9.

**D**UE TO OPEN IN JULY IS KIT KEMP'S new 50-room **Covent Garden Hotel** in London's trendy Monmouth Street, which, according to the owners will be a very 'sexy' five-star. Kit, and husband Tim are known for the traditionally English Pelham, Durley House and Dorset Square boutique hotels, which are all sumptuously and originally decorated London properties. However, the Covent Garden, we hear, will be a more glamorous affair, designed, one presumes to match its operatic surroundings.

**I**F YOU ORDER A GLASS OF WINE IN A BRITISH HOTEL OR RESTAURANT, and the glass itself is not of the usual quality, then blame the EEC. From January 1, **a new British law**, designed to enforce European Metric Measures, means that all wines must be served in a Government-stamped glass, with a line indicating a 125ml or 175ml measure. This prevents hotels and restaurants from serving wines by the glass at table in fine, unstamped glasses. The change was not widely publicised, and means that one is now allowed either an absurdly small measure, or a vastly alcoholic one. If, in your favourite hotel or restaurant, you find that your usual crystal glasses have been replaced by inferior pub-standard glass, then complain loudly and write to your MP. Government bureaucrats should not be allowed to impinge upon Europe's aesthetic pleasures!

**W**HEN YOU ARE NEXT IN THE SOUTH OF FRANCE, do visit one of my favourite hotel restaurants, the gorgeous **Le Saint-Paul** in Saint-Paul-de-Vence. New chef, Frédéric Buzet has created a stunning menu, including Pressé d'Agneau, Aubergine confite à la Tapenade, Assiete du Pêcheur au Jus de Bouillabaisse and the most delicious desserts and cheeses. Perfect ambiance and superb service. Reservations: *Tel: 93-32-65-25. Fax: 93-32-52-94.*

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