

MARCH 2019

REASONS TO TRAVEL NOW

T+L's monthly selection of trip-worthy places, experiences and events.

A temple skyline from the *Namthip* rice barge.



1. Go on a sailing sojourn with these handpicked floating hotels.

They say it's about the journey, not the destination. Well aware of this theory, Asia-based curated travel network Secret Retreats added several new independent luxury vessels to its Secret Cruises catalogue this year. Here are a few we can't wait to jump aboard.

Namthip Luxury Rice Barge, Thailand

Cruise from Bangkok to the former Thai royal capital, Ayutthaya, in this remodeled traditional cargo barge with just two decadently appointed cabins and a wooden deck with intimate dining area. secret-retreats.com/namthip; day cruise for up to four people from Bt120,000; overnight cruise for up to four people from Bt150,000, including dinner.

Ginger Junk, Vietnam

This modernized Indo-Chinese wooden junk boat takes to the dramatic waters of Halong Bay as well as quieter Lan Ha Bay. The ship features 12 spacious, modern suites with Vietnamese designs, a terrace restaurant, a relaxing spa and an on-deck Jacuzzi-pool. secret-retreats.com/ginger; one-night low-season cruise from US\$231.

Sequoia Yacht, Indonesia

Charter this elegant, eco-friendly (there's no single-use plastic or palm oil products on board) private yacht around the seas of Eastern Indonesia—Komodo, Sulawesi, the Banda Islands, Raja Ampat and more. Its three suites will fit up to six people. secret-retreats.com/sequoia; one- to two-person sailings from US\$5,500 per night. — ELOISE BASUKI

COURTESY OF SECRET RETREATS

no. **2**

Dragon-boat racing gets a pachyderm twist in this fundraiser for Thailand's rescued elephants.



Watch the fast and furious races from the riverbank.

You may have noticed that Anantara has a thing for pachyderms. This month they're launching new parties in their honor, to raise money for the Golden Triangle Elephant Foundation, a non-profit that rescues the animals and provides housing, health care and insurance for the mahouts and their families.

On March 13, Anantara Golden Triangle Elephant Camp & Resort in Chiang Rai will host a fête, market and elephant walks. Then, in Bangkok on the weekend of March 29–31, dragon-boat racing teams will descend on the Chao Phraya River for a regatta in special boats adorned with wooden elephant heads. Ashore, join a dry-dock rowing competition, or enjoy an Old Siam-themed Ladies Day, concerts, champagne tents and more. bangkokriverfestival.com; tickets Bt200 per person, per day; VIP tickets Bt3,000 per person, per day, including free-flow drinks and snacks. — E.B.



At Anantara Golden Triangle Elephant Camp.

no. **3**

Hangzhou's heritage temple quarters is a hostel you'll actually want to stay in.

Next to Hangzhou's UNESCO-listed West Lake, Inlake Hostel is not your average backpacker bunker. In the historic grounds of a former temple, the hostel's rooms are refurbished dormitories, where emperors once stayed on pilgrimages. The actual temple didn't survive the pillage of the Cultural Revolution, but its dormitory was left among the ruins and still maintains stone images of Buddha and original altars. Now, these dorms (which offer both private king and twin rooms, plus two six-bunk rooms) provide a stay steeped in this history; three original scripture verses penned by the Qin Emperor are preserved at its entrance. The project of a former art director named Xue Li, the 15 minimalist rooms have wooden accents and custom furniture that spell more boutique hotel than hostel. The spacious rooms are awash with Japanese and Scandinavian sensibilities and hit the spot for design buffs looking for a different experience in this charming cultural city. inlake-hostel.hangzhouhotel.org; doubles from RMB1,280. — JULIANA LOH

FROM TOP: COURTESY OF ANANTARA (2); COURTESY OF INLAKE HOSTEL

no. **4**

Add a once-in-a-lifetime experience to luxury stays across Asia.

With their Hong Kong and Bangkok properties opening this month (see page 35 for more on the latter), Rosewood Hotels have their sights set firmly on Asia; Guangzhou and Rangoon are also in the pipeline this year. Channeling their "Sense of Place" mandate, the boutique hotel group's 12 Days of Rosewood experience packages offer chances to explore with local communities and global personalities.

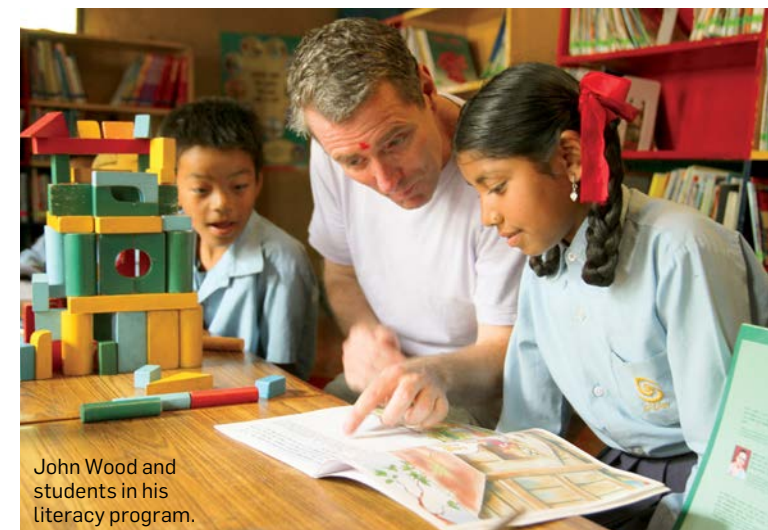
Hong Kong

Here's a two-stop package that puts style mavens on the catwalk. In Hong Kong, take a behind-the-scenes visit to the atelier of local designer Anaïs Jourden Mak and receive a bespoke creation by Anaïs; at Paris Fashion Week, sit pretty in front-row seats at the Anaïs Jourden show, with backstage access. Accommodations include two-night stays at both Rosewood Hong Kong and Hôtel de Crillon, A Rosewood Hotel, in Paris, plus designated culinary experiences in both cities.

rosewoodhotels.com/hong-kong; from HK\$738,682 including two nights in Hong Kong and two nights in Paris; valid from April 1, through February 28, 2020; e-mail hongkong.reservations@rosewoodhotels.com.

Phnom Penh

This three-part journey starts by going back to school: join John Wood, founder of literacy charity Room to Read, and speak to students in his foundation's program. Next, board the Khmer Magic Music Bus with



John Wood and students in his literacy program.

Phlouen Prim, from Cambodian Living Arts, as it spreads traditional music around the countryside, plus learn to play local instruments and perform a Cambodian folk dance. Lastly, take part in a Khmer cooking class with chef Nak in her traditional wooden house on the Mekong. rosewoodhotels.com/phnom-penh; from US\$6,980, including a four-night stay, through December 31; e-mail phnompenh.reservations@rosewoodhotels.com.

Luang Prabang

Embark on a soulful journey in the former royal Laos capital. Start with a personal treatment by venerated traditional healer Mr. Xong, who uses ancient Hmong herbal remedies. Take part in a private meditation session in a sacred shrine with one of the most revered monks in Laos. And go foraging with Rosewood Luang Prabang culinary director Sebastien Rubis, plus farmers and members of local hill-

tribes, before a culinary masterclass and royal Laotian banquet. rosewoodhotels.com/luang-prabang; from US\$5,480, including a three-night stay; valid through December 1; book three months in advance; e-mail luangprabang@rosewoodhotels.com.

Sanya

Surfing will debut at the Tokyo Olympics next year, and going for gold at the inaugural competition is rising Chinese star Xinrui Wang. Training regularly in Sanya, home to China's best surf breaks, Xinrui is offering exclusive one-on-one lessons for guests of Rosewood Sanya. The surf pro will bestow a mix of useful theory and practical instruction personalized to each guest's experience level, so even beginners can learn to approach a wave. rosewoodhotels.com/sanya; from RMB45,888, including a three-night stay, through December 31; e-mail sanya.reservations@rosewoodhotels.com. — E.B.



Chef Nak at Rosewood Phnom Penh.

COURTESY OF ROSEWOOD (2)