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MOMENTS TO INSPIRE



A SHORT HISTORY OF BUSINESS TRAVEL



114BC–1450AD The Silk Road unfurls

Rather than one specific route, the Silk Road was a spiderweb of overland trails connecting China with Southern Europe, from as early as the Second Century BC. As the name suggests, it began as a means for shipping silk west, but became considerably more: namely a means of opening long-distance business relations between civilisations.



1271 Marco Polo becomes first world business traveller

One of the first famous business trips was when the 17-year-old European traveled across Asia to take holy oil from Jerusalem to Beijing.



1492 Christopher Columbus cracks the American market

The Italian sailor's discovery of a viable sailing passage between Europe and the Americas was the first step in what would become one of the most important trade routes in the history of mankind.



1760–1840 Industrial Revolution sees business travel move full-steam ahead

The process of industrialisation, beginning in Britain around 1760, changed the face of international trade once again. Factories grew and urban areas ballooned, but the biggest immediate impact was the rise of the railways. Suddenly, long-distance travel was cheaper, easier and faster than at any previous point in history.



1807 World's first steamboat agency opens

In a precursor to modern business travel, entrepreneurs Robert Fulton and Robert Livingston started the world's first commercial steamboat agency. The North River Steamboat ferried passengers up and down the Hudson River, from New York City to the state capital, Albany.



1978 Business Class flies in

Several airlines claim to have invented "Business Class" travel. In late 1978, KLM began separating "FFP" (Full Fare Passengers) into a different cabin, while British Airways simultaneously applied a similar strategy with "Club Class". It was Qantas, however, that coined the phrase "Business Class".



1957 World's first motel opens

Marketed as a "Motor Hotel", the Twin Bridges in Arlington, Virginia, catered to salesmen driving through the DC area.



1919 First airlines take off

KLM and Avianca were founded within weeks of each other (in the Netherlands and Colombia, respectively), becoming the world's first commercial airlines—and instantly rendering most physical travel barriers obsolete.



1841 Thomas Cook establishes the world's first travel agency

In 1841, tourism pioneer Thomas Cook struck a deal with the Midland Railway to carry a large group of people from Leicester to Loughborough and back on a day trip. The Englishman received a commission from the railway, effectively becoming the world's first recorded travel agent. His eponymous company would last 178 years, finally folding in 2019.



1983 First business-dedicated hotel opens

Swimming pools are great, but we're here to work. That was the vibe as Marriott International debuted its dedicated lodging for business travellers with the first Courtyard hotel.



1996 First online travel site debuts

A little-known division of Microsoft called Expedia launched its website, offering online bookings for flights, hotels and car rentals.



2004 Crowdsourced reviews change the narrative

Above a pizza parlour in Massachusetts, TripAdvisor launched a new platform hosting peer-to-peer reviews. The simple yet incredibly effective "wisdom of the crowds" system went on to revolutionise how travel decisions are made globally.



2016 Marriott International acquires Starwood

One of the biggest deals in the history of hospitality created the world's largest hotel company.

2017 Mobile booking takes over

An incredible 79% of travellers completed flight and hotel reservations on their smartphones, making the mobile web the travel industry's single most important space.



2019 Bleisure blooms

Otherwise known as a "bizcation", bleisure is a portmanteau of "business" and "leisure", and is identified as one of the fastest growing trends in travel. Driven by millennials, it involves bolting holidays onto corporate travel in order to enjoy personal downtime while saving on expenses like flights and transfers.

From the Silk Road to Bleisure—how work travel grew into big business

In the earliest times, all travel was, in fact, business travel. Groups and individuals left their homes to seek and trade resources, to explore potentially lucrative new territory. These networks spread exponentially—across counties, countries and, later, continents—because the farther you got, the more likely you were to find others who did not have access to your goods and that meant charging a premium. From the hawkers, hucksters and hustlers of the ancient Silk Road to the tech entrepreneurs of the 21st century, business travel has always resulted in the birth of ideas, innovations and collaborations that have helped shape the world as we know it. But as business travel has evolved from camels and mules to jets and Ubers, and from hand-drawn maps to GPS, something else has changed, too. Instead of simply finding a place to sleep, modern business travellers are increasingly looking to stay in spaces that inspire; accommodations that are not only comfortable, but that can also give them an advantage through enriching experiences and igniting imaginations. And if the history of business travel has told us anything, it's that those who stay ahead are those most likely to succeed.

MIND TRAVEL GUIDE

Clearing your head and savouring your surroundings while on business travel may seem counterintuitive, but the creative inspiration you'll find will revitalise both you and your work.

Business travel is, well, big business. So much so that the industry is expected to be worth a whopping US\$1.6 trillion by 2020. And, while corporate travel once meant back-to-back meetings and intense networking schedules, things are shifting, with many now on the hunt for a more meaningful travel experience. "Even if you are an experienced high-flyer, the need to be 'on' can wear you down," says Dana Zelicha, organisational psychologist, corporate mindfulness expert, and CEO and founder of the Organizational Well Being Agency. "Studies show that travelling mindfully is associated

with higher productivity, creativity, communication, happiness and enhanced relationships."

Of course, the best place to start is at home. This means establishing a solid foundation of self-awareness in your everyday life so that these techniques become second nature wherever you are. "Once this is a habit, it is not difficult to practise it outside of your daily routine," explains Dina Glouberman, psychotherapist, author of *The Joy of Burnout* and founder of Skyros Holistic Holidays. "Stopping at a traffic light, sitting on a train, eating breakfast or walking to a meeting... there are countless moments in a day that are all opportunities to practise being more self-aware."

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From there, identifying your intentions is key. Whether it's taking time out from social media, choosing to walk to meetings or making a point of immersing yourself in the local culture, the trick is to keep it simple, write it down and check in with this list while on the road. "Planning your days and setting clear intentions before the trip can cultivate focus and clarity for what you want or need to be doing," says Ms Zelicha, who also says implementing alternative meeting structures like "walk and talk" or "stand-up" meetings can elevate focus and creativity.

According to Dr Glouberman, disconnecting to reconnect is essential to staying creative and effective. And, while pulling the digital plug might sound counterintuitive when travelling for business, it's hardly a surprise to hear that our habitual smartphone-checking is mostly irrelevant to work and is often compulsive. In fact, a recent study found that, shockingly, Americans look at their phones an average of 52 times a day. This amounts to a mind-boggling 14 billion times a day among a population of around 270 million. "Just like it's possible to turn off your phone during an important meeting, it's possible to designate quiet times during a work day when you're not available to messages and emails," says Dr Glouberman. "This technique gives breathing space, a clear head and an ability to be more effective." Ms Zelicha agrees: "Turn off notifications on your phone. Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram and WhatsApp alerts might help us feel connected to friends and followers, but they are also a major distraction during business travel."



Being a conscious traveller is a way of connecting with yourself and of learning who you are away from the everyday.

While there is little concrete research into the benefits of disconnecting, anecdotal evidence has been done that soaking up real time instead of screen time makes us feel less anxious, happier and more productive, allowing us to connect and pay attention to our surroundings and the people around us. When in a foreign location especially, making yourself aware of new sights, smells, sounds and tastes and immersing yourself in the local culture will spark creativity and possibly new opportunities. "If business travellers are aware of new experiences, they may find that new possibilities will also emerge, meaning that the trip will go far beyond the original remit for both themselves and the business," says Dr Glouberman.



Living and travelling in the moment is also about nurturing the heart, which, Ms Zelicha says, "should be approached with the same sense of curiosity and intention by making room for emotions such as empathy and gratitude". We say "thanks" a dozen or more times a day, almost as a reflex reaction to daily transactions—from accepting your morning coffee to half-acknowledging the person who has held a door open for you. However, science suggests that expressing true gratitude can boost your health and spread happiness. "Upon your return, before going to sleep, make a list of three things that made you grateful and one wish for your next trip," says Ms Zelicha. "You might think you can simply do this exercise in your head, but trust us, you should write this down in a gratitude journal. You'll be grateful you did!"

Being a conscious traveller is a way of connecting with yourself and of learning who you are away from the everyday. Along the way, you might discover new people, charming places, interesting foods and fascinating cultures; perhaps more important, you'll discover something about your temperament, courage, resources and curiosity. All of which will go a long way towards a happier, more productive and more inspired you.

A ROOM WITH A SELF-VIEW

Hotels with a mindful approach to guest room spaces may not only improve your next trip, they might improve you.

The clichés that cross borders and survive generations tend to be the most truthful. It has been more than 150 years since Mark Twain first observed that travel broadens the mind, but a quick Google search shows it's still rooted as a truism among today's millennials and the ascendant Generation Z.

But what if Twain were only partly right? What if travel could not only broaden the mind, but both heighten and deepen it, too? What if the spaces in which we stay could actually elevate and upgrade us?

These are questions that the hospitality industry is starting to ask itself. If design and decor decisions are made astutely, could they enhance and improve the performance of business travellers?

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What if the spaces in which we stay could actually elevate and upgrade us?

The answer is yes, says Helen Sanderson, a UK-based therapist and designer who is an expert on mindful interiors. “Layout is vital,” says Ms Sanderson, founder of the Ministry of Calm (ministryofcalm.com). “A balanced and well-organised space will create a sense of inner calm and order, from which guests are better able to relax and focus.”

That relaxation and focus, she contends, can trigger everything from significantly elevated mood to significantly elevated performance in a business meeting room the following day.

“A sense of openness and flow can be both relaxing and empowering,” says Ms Sanderson. “It will support your unconscious mind, making it easier to get into an inner state of creative flow.” It's about everything from correctly harnessing the five human senses to respecting the “local design narrative”, she says. “The best rooms subtly engage all of our senses. There are the visual impressions of colour, light, art and design, but it pays to think about the others, too, particularly touch, through a variety of textures.”

Using unique objects created by local artists and artisans is also important, says Ms Sanderson. “Connecting to the local culture will help the visiting business person relax into the environment and be better able to establish rapport with partners.”

Research shows that this positive stimulation of the mind can not only reduce the amount of the stress hormone cortisol that your body produces, but also spark significant creativity.



It's not quite as simple as what you place in a guest room, however. It's also where you place it.

“The layout of a hotel room will directly have an impact on you while you're staying there,” says Denise O'Dwyer, an interior design expert and author of bestseller *Feng Shui—The Element of Success* (fengshuiement.co.uk). “We're energised by Feng Shui when the Qi—or energy—is supportive, allowing us to rest and revive during our stay. Being energised by our environment supports brain power and gives us the mental edge for any business meetings.”

In other words, style and substance combined make for a potent mix when it comes to guest spaces, bringing benefits to the business traveller.

Creating these inspiring spaces is a primary objective at Marriott Hotels. “For us, it's about creating spaces that clear your mind, where you can feel restored and rejuvenated, so that you're open to sparks of inspiration during your stay,” says Craig Milne, Vice President of Design & Construction Management, UKI and Eastern Europe for Marriott International. “We all have to look after ourselves, and we all want to wake up in an environment where we instantly feel good. We want to think ‘this is giving me positive energy; this is making me feel like I can face the day’. This is something that great hotel design should feed into—a room that makes you feel happy, that makes you open to creativity and intuition. That's our goal,” says Mr Milne.



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“It's crucial to design space in three dimensions,” he continues. “By doing so you're going to create a space that will lend itself to encouraging creativity and to exciting all of the human senses. Designing in two dimensions—just looking at a floor plan—never gives you that. We design spaces that feel open: rooms that feel as spacious and flexible as possible, for both work and relaxation.”

To ensure guests feel inspired, Marriott Hotels also offers everything from in-room TED talks, specifically curated with the business traveller in mind, to workouts, dining options and a “Mind Menu” comprising snacks and beverages with active ingredients that offer everything from a “Mind Boost” to a relaxing “Slumber Shot”. Even lighting is optimised for a productive yet relaxed environment.

Details matter and, as Mr Milne notes, designing inspirational spaces means thinking through how guests use the room and updating elements accordingly. “We know that many of our guests don't work sitting at a desk any longer. People want to work on a big chaise or a relaxing armchair,” he says—a preference that is reflected in guest room design.

Mr Milne says his team creates design narratives for each of their hotels through historic, physical and social local insights, which provide a more memorable and enduring design. “It's not obvious; it's not in your face, but, taken together, these are powerful tools for creating memorable guest experiences, because the content has a connection with the location, and there's a sense of discovery in that.”

Mark Twain was right, of course; travel does broaden the mind. But in today's business sphere, that's just the start.

BODY

TRAVEL GUIDE

For many, the main perk of business travel comes at dinner time. Discover how to enjoy local cuisine in a way that indulges the senses, creates new friendships and fuels your focus.

Work hard, play hard. Certainly, that was the game that most business travellers aspired to in the past. But rather than cramming in meetings from breakfast to dinner, with an alcohol-fuelled power lunch in between, today's corporate set are on a mission to make the most of their travels while maintaining their quality of life on the road. In fact, with 78% of millennials reported to purposefully carve out personal time during work trips, it's clear that business travel these days is about having your cake and eating it, too.

As long as that cake is local, of course. "Food feeds your body and your mind," says Camille Rumani, co-founder and COO of Eatwith, a community that brings travellers authentic culinary experiences with locals, from sushi-cooking classes in Tokyo to an Italian feast with a Roman family or a foodie pop-up event in a secret London hotspot. "My top tip is to eat and travel local: be curious and immerse your body and mind in a destination by going off the beaten path and trying something new."

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New tastes expand your palate and also make you think about what you normally eat and don't eat, and why.

Sara Clemence agrees: "Try a new food every day." The former travel editor for the *Wall Street Journal* and author of *Away & Aware: A Field Guide to Mindful Travel* says that new tastes expand your palate and also make you think about what you normally eat and don't eat, and why. "This goes double if you're an unadventurous eater," she says. "You don't have to start with fish eyes (unless you are in southern China, where they are prized). Bonus points for working your way up to something crazy."

More than just a buzzy trend, culinary tourism is on the up, with local food becoming a tourist attraction in itself. From sampling pho on the streets of Hanoi to taking a cooking class in Naples or hunting for truffles in Croatia, seeking out authentic food at its source is the best way to get to know somewhere new and, as Ms Rumani says, "to meet new people and make new friends from all walks of life".

This can be particularly rewarding for business travellers on their own. "Business travel can be tiring, lonely and impersonal at times," says Ms Rumani. "Communities like Eatwith offer travellers the opportunity to make real-life connections over great, authentic food. We always say that the table is the original social network."

Of course, while communal eating gives solo travellers a social boost, Ms Clemence says that learning to eat alone can also be a highly rewarding, peaceful, meditative, liberating and even life-changing experience. "It can be one of the most intimidating dining experiences," she says. "[But] as

you eat, reflect on the fact you are not actually alone: your meal connects you to a whole bunch of people from farmers, harvesters, buyers, truckers and fishermen to butchers, bakers, servers, chefs, bussers and more. Oh, and order whatever you like, even if it's three desserts. There's nobody across the table to judge you!"

Elsewhere, Ms Rumani's must-do activity in every destination is to visit a local market. A kaleidoscope of colours, tastes, smells and sounds, she believes a market is the best place to feel the vibe of a city and to discover new products. "My pro tip is to go early in the morning to mix with the locals," she says. "Don't be shy about asking questions about the vegetables, fruits, cheeses or spices you are discovering."

Similarly, Ms Clemence encourages travellers to embark on a food quest. "Pick a dish you want to explore," she says. "This narrows your food focus and gets you thinking deeply about one thing. Wherever you eat, make sure to ask questions: How did you make it? What's your secret ingredient? What else should I try?"

And, while the evidence is still circumstantial, these unofficial business-travel perks are pretty much a no-brainer for those on the hunt for that elusive work-life balance. In fact, it has been reported that those who take personal time out during work trips to veer off the beaten path are significantly more satisfied with their quality of life, with the majority saying that it helps them to stay more focused while on business trips.



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Before jumping on your flight, pick up a trove of spices, ingredients, cookbooks and recipes to try in your own kitchen. Ms Rumani also continues to enjoy Eatwith experiences back at home in Paris. "In our own city, it becomes easy to close ourselves off from the people and cultures around us. To avoid this, I do dinners, food tours and cooking classes—because there's always something new to discover in our own back yards. I find these local experiences to be very refreshing, and it gives me a taste of travel in my own city."

Ms Clemence, meanwhile, stresses the importance of staying in touch with the people you meet. "Don't let all the email addresses of the many great people you met while travelling languish," she says. "In a few weeks the memories will have faded, and you'll wonder if there's any point in reaching out. So, do it now, while the connection is still fresh." Keep those inspiring conversations going now that you're back home; they are food for the soul.



FIT FOR PURPOSE

The right spaces can upgrade your diet and exercise routine when you travel.

Travel should replenish, restore and enrich you, but too often we return home weary, sluggish and struggling to button our business suits. A recent US study, published in the journal *Physiology and Behavior*, found the average person gains nearly a pound for every week away. To turn this around, travellers should make trips to distant locations work for their wellness routines—not against them.

“The change in routine is what throws most people off-track, but there’s no reason why you can’t stick to a nutrition or fitness plan while you’re travelling,” says Sarah Lindsay, an Olympic speed skater turned personal trainer who runs her own exclusive London gym, Roar Fitness. “The majority of my clients travel a lot, so I’m frequently looking for solutions to this,” she says, noting that she encourages clients to look for motivating factors wherever they stay.

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“The most important thing is enjoyment, the sense that you feel lucky to be able to exercise in a new environment,” she continues. “Walking, jogging and cycling are all fantastic ways to explore new destinations, so get up and get out in the surrounding neighbourhood early. Not only will this blitz any lingering jet lag, but it’ll also help you get your local bearings—and make you feel like you’ve achieved something before you’ve started the day. Plus, breakfast always tastes better when you’ve worked up a decent appetite.”

That first meal of the day is also the most important when it comes to avoiding weight gain on the road, says Ms Lindsay. “Breakfast while travelling can make a huge difference,” she says. “Your body is less efficient at metabolising carbs first thing in the morning, especially when it’s been thrown out of sync, so you need to prioritise proteins and healthy fats.”

With the right setting, travellers may be more inclined to work out when away. “Our guests tend to be more aware of the need to mentally rejuvenate, inspire clearer thinking, feel more energised for the meeting or the travel ahead, so building a workout into the day becomes a habit when on the road,” says Alison Ainsworth, Marriott Hotels’ Senior Director of Spa, Golf and Leisure, Europe.



To encourage guests, Marriott Hotels makes gym spaces feel open, light and uncluttered. “Natural materials and materials that create a sense of place are part of our design philosophy,” says Ms Ainsworth.

“We’ve looked at how we zone the gyms so that spaces are easy to identify according to your workout need. We always try to locate the gyms with external views and natural light.” Working out overlooking a fantastic landscape is mood enhancing; watching a sunset in the evening can inspire you to do an extra circuit, she says.

Another of London’s leading fitness experts, former British and European boxing champion Cathy Brown, says that when you arrive to a new destination, moving as soon as possible in that environment should be your priority, from running along the Seine in Paris to outdoor tango lessons in Buenos Aires.

“I make a point of walking or running everywhere I possibly can when I’m travelling,” says Ms Brown, now a personal trainer and cognitive behavioural therapist at Third Space Soho. “You get to see so much more that way, and just moving in a beautiful environment is great for your mindset: you’re away from your regular scenery, so you automatically become more mindful of your surroundings and relax into your workout.”



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The great Sir Arthur Conan Doyle famously quipped, ‘A change is as good as a rest.’

To help guests make the most of any given location, Marriott Hotels look at the unique nature of each property to programme outdoor activities. “These include running or walking groups, trim trails through the woods, yoga on the beach at sunrise, spinning classes on outside patios or HIIT sessions on the grass,” says Ms Ainsworth. “It’s about seeing the potential for combining exercise alongside experiencing the local area in a unique way.”

On the diet side of the equation, Marriott Hotels recently introduced the “Mind Menu”—a selection of snacks and shots available in its elite “M Clubs”. These cunning concoctions focus on active ingredients to enhance your daily performance, from “Mind Fuel Snacks” to fire up the start of your day to “Slumber Shots” to encourage deep, restorative sleep at the end of it.

“Sleep is absolutely fundamental to our mental and physical health when travelling and it has an important role to play in regulating our weight too,” says Ms Brown. “It can be exciting

being in a new destination, but you still need to prioritise those eight hours in bed, particularly if you want to maintain the physical and mental benefits from astute, mindful eating and exercise during your day.”

When it comes to travel, the great Sir Arthur Conan Doyle famously quipped, “A change is as good as a rest”. He was only partly right. We all want to return home feeling rested and recharged. If we look for the right inspiration while away, we can come back sharper, slimmer and stronger—and we can integrate what we learned while away (tango anyone?) to stay motivated and productive back home.

SPIRIT TRAVEL GUIDE

From yoga stretches to long jogs or simply a good night's sleep, taking time out from hectic travel itineraries for self-care will restore your energy and reinforce a positive outlook.

Although we live in a world that is constantly connected, business travel is on the rise. An estimated 445 million of us hit the road for work each year—a fact that is perhaps not so surprising given that a recent study found face-to-face requests to be 34 times more successful than those sent by email.

And while travelling for leisure can in itself present many challenges, including changes to sleep patterns, limited food choices and the need to navigate unfamiliar surroundings,

adding business to the mix creates even more complexity, as we need to be at our best to get the job done. It is in these moments that taking time out to nourish your spirit is important. "It teaches us to think before taking important actions or making big decisions and it helps us to be non-judgemental when we interact with others," explains Jud Brewer, MD, PhD.

Director of research and innovation at Brown University Mindfulness Center, Dr Jud—as he is known—is also the founder of MindSciences, a company that provides app-based mindfulness training for people to use on the go.

Doing bite-sized activities can help effectively build a mindfulness habit, both while travelling and in people's regular routines.

"We often don't have time to take out of our busy schedules for a full yoga session, and travelling can make this harder," explains Dr Jud. "Doing bite-sized activities can help effectively build a mindfulness habit, both while travelling and in people's regular routines." Of course, the key word is "habit". The point of learning mindfulness, says Dr Jud, is to be able to apply it wherever we are.

Anne Dimon, president and CEO of the Wellness Tourism Association and founder and editor of TravelToWellness.com, says business travellers are usually preoccupied with the business reason they are travelling, so taking the time for self-care has to be "incorporated in bits and bytes".

In short, this translates into intentionally pre-planning your trip to pre-empt potential stress factors—like booking direct flights in a comfortable premium-class cabin—and making the most of your surroundings and what you have at hand when you can, from stretching on the plane to in-room workouts. "Take advantage of any yoga or fitness classes your hotel might be offering," says Ms Dimon. With a range of benefits, including anxiety reduction, sleep promotion, stress management and increased energy, to name a few, practising yoga is a no-brainer for any road warrior.

For both Dr Jud and Ms Dimon, staying active by exploring your destination is key. "Walking and running are not just

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the best ways to experience a new destination, they are also both easily accessible and portable forms of exercise," says Ms Dimon. Dr Jud agrees: "When I travel for business, the first thing I do is to ask the hotel for a map and, specifically, where there are runner-friendly routes I can take to get to know the local sights. If possible, I try to end my run at a local restaurant for breakfast or lunch so that I can connect with the people that work and live in the city. This is much more energising than staying in my hotel room trying to catch up on emails."



Business travel usually means packed itineraries, but while it can be tempting to go, go, go, less is often more. Frenzied schedules and constant "busyness" are often not only less effective but can also strain our mental wellbeing and our immune systems. "It is important to allow yourself to relax, to think your own thoughts, to create time for self-reflection, and time to simply BE," explains Ms Dimon. In other words, take the time each day to check in with yourself, perhaps talk to yourself, clear the mental clutter, meditate or even, as Ms Dimon suggests, "book a stress-reducing massage or other relaxing spa treatment".

She also stresses the importance of getting a good night's sleep: "Make sure your accommodation offers a quiet environment, conducive to sleep," she says. "Mention at the time of booking your hotel that sleep is important to you and you want a room in a quiet location."

The more we look after ourselves, the easier and deeper it is, becoming a way of life. "At home, we often become too comfortable with our surroundings and settle into habits and routine," says Dr Jud. "Remembering how energising it feels to explore a new place may encourage you to take more walks in your own town and can help bring that curious attitude back home and into the workplace."

SOUL PROPRIETOR

A spirited approach to business travel can enhance your performance and your wellbeing.

Spiritual wellbeing might not be a key criterion when planning travel for work, but perhaps it should be. Put simply, high spirits equal high performance, and investing in your wellbeing while on the road can pay off in your success when travelling—and when you’re back home.

Delayed flights, back-to-back meetings, being on call around the clock to respond to emails and other work requests—it can all take a toll, and, while you might be inclined to hunker down in your guest room, you would miss what can be a prime opportunity to recharge, renew and refocus.

Shifting your perspective can be as easy as stepping into an inspiring space. This was the intent behind the design of Marriott Hotels’ Greatrooms. “Hotel lobbies can be such specific and sterile spaces,” says Craig Milne, Vice President of Design & Construction Management, UKI and Eastern Europe for Marriott International. “But our Greatrooms have a specific design strategy,” he says, explaining that the concept of a separate reception, lobby, bar, restaurant and lounge has been reimagined into one multifunctional, open-plan space. They are built to be lively, so guests feel energised and can connect with one another more easily.

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“These rooms are arranged with flexible seating,” says Mr Milne. “Rather than providing a traditional dining table, we might use tea-height tables so that it feels less formal, like someone’s home, and guests can have a drink or dine or work more comfortably.” Whether people are working or socialising, the spaces can be adapted to their needs. Creating these spaces is important, says Mr Milne, because, “When you’re in an environment where you get to experience new and unique things, it sparks creativity; you get fresh ideas.” Every hotel within the Marriott portfolio of brands is unique, he notes. And the design is reflective of the location. Music, lighting and colour all come into play.

Research shows that something as fundamental as colour does affect our mood. “When we walk into a room, the first thing our minds take in is its colour,” says Karen Haller, author of *The Little Book of Colour: How to Use the Psychology of Colour to Transform your Life*. “That’s crucial because this message passes immediately from our eyes into the part of our brains where emotions reside. Whether we have a positive or adverse



reaction to any room initially depends on its colours: their combination, proportion and placement. We immediately feel a connection to the space or we feel uncomfortable.

“Soft pale blues are mentally relaxing, while soft pinks are physically calming,” Ms Haller explains. “Soft tans and warm, ivory whites are emotionally relaxing, while soft greens calm us holistically by triggering our instinctive human affinity with nature.”

Of course, mood enhancement can also always be found in another space: the spa. Well-designed spa facilities can take relaxation and its business benefits to an entirely new level. And that is a notion Marriott Hotels take seriously. “A first-class treatment is one that fulfils the unique needs of each guest from start to finish,” says Marriott Hotels’ Alison Ainsworth, Senior Director of Spa, Golf and Leisure, Europe. “A great treatment encompasses the exceptional technical skills of our therapists combined with the genuine care and personal attention that runs through every stage of the spa journey.”

And the payoff is real: “Studies show that when we are perfectly rested and relaxed, our memory is sharper and our concentration levels rise,” says Ms Ainsworth. “A fresh mind can grasp concepts more quickly and creativity increases. It all contributes to a more positive, happy and resourceful state of mind.”

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The benefits of a spa visit are meant to travel, she says. “The knowledge and expertise of our therapists is one of the most important aspects of our service and helping our guests maintain their skincare or body care at home is an important part of what we do.

“It’s the education and advice provided by each therapist that is key. Providing insight into how best to apply certain products, areas of the face to concentrate on, creating an effective skincare routine—all of that is key to completing a personalised experience and showing genuine care,” says Ms Ainsworth.

The beauty of the research, the attention to detail and the expert tactics that go into creating inspiring spaces at Marriott Hotels is that you can transfer these benefits into your own day-to-day lives. Choosing the right paint colour for the rooms of your own home, for example—and the ways you subsequently light them—can enhance your personal wellness



on a day-to-day basis. While travelling was there a particular piece of art that spoke to you? A scent that helped you focus? A beverage that helped you relax? The things that fed your soul when you were away can be replicated when you return so that your emotional wellbeing and subconscious working efficiency continue until you need another boost—which you can reap on your next business trip.

