word of mouth

The people, places, and ideas we're talking about right now

PHOTOGRAPH: PAOLA+MURRAY/GALLERYSTOCK

Introducing the New Standard

A set of guidelines for talking about where travel is in the present moment—and where it's headed

Last spring we all knew right away that travel would be changing, not for a few months or a year or two, but permanently. Now that we've been living with COVID-19 for a while, the shape of that transformation is coming into focus. Travelers' desires and expectations have shifted, and hotels, airlines, cruise companies, and destinations have all shifted how they operate in response. And while there will surely be more shifting once there is a vaccine and a

The Crane resort in Barbados, whose new Welcome Stamp seeks to attract digital nomads

THE NEW STANDARD

Lisbon's Intendente neighborhood; Portugal launched its Clean & Safe seal in April

nationwide recovery, we have seen five key principles come into focus, demanded by travelers and fulfilled by the best travel providers. As a group, we are calling them the New Standard:

1. Health & Safety. Travel providers must be following all current best practices for protecting consumers from sickness or any other threat while in their care.
2. Communication & Transparency. They must speak directly and forthrightly with consumers about what they're doing to respond to this or any other crisis.
3. Flexibility. They should be generous with their booking and rebooking policies, and provide for guests affected by external circumstances swiftly and kindly.
4. Innovation. They should be seeking out smart new ideas for improving the guest experience and coming up with creative solutions to issues that remain important to travelers, like sustainability.
5. Civics. They should do anything they can to support their community, not only in times of need but also times of plenty.

All of these principles will remain important in a post-COVID-19 future, as they address not only the current pandemic but tourism's ability to respond to global events in general. Let's not sugarcoat it: The present situation is dire, and the future is scary. Still, it has been inspiring to see how the industry has put these values into practice over the past several months, even as it has lost hundreds of billions in revenue and been forced to shed millions of jobs. Many of the changes it has already enacted will benefit travelers in the long run. The policies around cleaning and safety put into effect by Singapore, Portugal, Dubai, and scores of other destinations, as well as hotel brands large and small, matter in an uncertain world where threats like—or unlike—COVID-19 will emerge in the future. The solidarity and spirit of cooperation shown by cruise companies will produce solutions not only to this problem but to others, like environmental impact. The outside-the-box thinking of a country like Barbados—which, having effectively managed the COVID crisis, has invited digital nomads to park on its beaches and work for a few months—can help expand the very definition of travel.

The five pillars of the New Standard inform the stories we've chosen to tell on the pages that follow, about the individuals and companies and places that have risen to the moment. We'll delve further into the New Standard online and in our future issues, this year and next, as we continue the conversation about where travel is headed. We hope, above all else, that this can be a road map for taking trips again, and feeling comfortable once you're out there. ***–Jesse Ashlock, U.S. Editor***

Trust Factor

More than ever, booking with a travel specialist is the way to get where you want to go

In this new world, where a border can close just as suddenly as it was reopened, a travel fixer's nimble skill set is especially essential. In the early months of the pandemic, Alice Daunt of Daunt Travel leveraged a longstanding relationship with an Indian Ocean resort to hold—not book—rooms for clients of hers, a family that was wary of putting money down too far in advance of their Christmas vacation; now they can reassess in October. "Because of our relationships with suppliers, we've been able to push for more flexibility for future bookings," says Ashley Gerrand, a safari expert with Go2Africa. For those whose trips have been bumped a year, the agency has succeeded in getting suppliers to honor 2020 rates and to allow clients to make changes at little to zero cost. "Travelers may not get that when they're booking directly," Gerrand adds. Specialists are also vetting services, from guides to drivers to accommodations, more carefully than ever; engaging in near-constant communication with partners to ensure protocols are being met; and conducting road tests under our current novel conditions themselves, or deputizing employees to do so. "We're in close contact with hoteliers daily and making sure that we know how they're handling things," says Andrea Grisdale, of Italian Connection Bellagio. It's the type of personal service you expect, reborn for the times. ***–Betsy Blumenthal***

PHOTOGRAPH: NICO SCHINCO

THE NEW STANDARD

Health & Safety Hero

The Trailblazer

With its SG Clean initiative, Singapore created a template for COVID-19 responsiveness that other destinations have emulated, leading the way into a post-pandemic future

Buildings in Singapore's Little India

Pastel-colored façades on Koon Seng Road

If it weren't for all the masked faces on the streets, you could forget that there's a global pandemic here in Singapore. Life post-lockdown isn't so different from life pre-lockdown, aside from mandatory digital check-ins everywhere you go, temperature scans, and the growing number of robots dutifully scrubbing the (already!) sparkling floors of the malls.

But of course this is Singapore, a country that is famously prepared, with plans for everything from disease outbreaks to its citizens' fitness, so you know there is more going on than meets the eye. In fact, while actual travel has come to a virtual standstill over the past few months, in this wealthy Southeast Asian city-state a kind of time travel has been quietly taking place behind the scenes—one that will transport globetrotters into the future. Singapore has spent a fortune (officials will not say exactly how much) over the past months to pioneer a slate of COVID-19 responsiveness measures that are perhaps the most rigorous in the world. The goal, says Keith Tan, CEO of the Singapore Tourism Board, is to address COVID-19's "disruptive and lasting impact on travel behavior. These responses are intended to help Singapore rebound as quickly as possible."

That's vital for any destination, but especially one so reliant on tourism and its status as a global logistics and transport hub that connects 120 countries on six continents. The crown jewel of its plan is SG Clean, a program that encourages companies to meet specific hygiene and safety standards by certifying compliant venues. It applies to all kinds of businesses, from the mammoth Ngee Ann City designer shopping mall to the beloved hawker markets all over town. It includes a seven-point system of common sense mandates like keeping your spaces tidy and making sure guests aren't sick before they settle in (hence the temperature checks), in addition to creating the new role of SG Clean Ambassador at all businesses. Once a business is up to snuff, it can display a white-and-green SG Clean sticker, similar to a Zagat rating seal.

Crucially, the impact does not feel invasive. For those of us who live here, the only palpable differences from what we're used to are the digital check-ins to restaurants, shops, malls, offices, and even parks, which are used to facilitate contact tracing, and the temperature scans. And the latter are growing less obtrusive, with temperature guns being replaced by artificial intelligence scanners that only require you to step in front of them for a moment.

The measures are a turbocharged version of Singapore's response during SARS, when the city rolled out a variety of nationwide actions including a mass education campaign on hygiene. Implemented in February, SG Clean was quickly imitated by a wide range of destinations: Portugal launched its Clean & Safe initiative in April, while Abu Dhabi kicked off its Go Safe certification scheme in June. Singapore businesses were quick to recognize the importance of the certifi-

PHOTOGRAPHS: CALVIN CHAN WAI MENG/ GETTY IMAGES, TANVEER BADAL, LAURYN ISHAK

Dishes at one of the city's hawker markets

Public art piece Supertree Grove

Singapore, Reinvented

What's changed around town

Marina Bay Sands
The iconic urban resort was one of the first to implement contactless check-in. There's also a unique A.I. system that monitors the number of people within its glass walls to help with social distancing. *marinabaysands.com*

Changi Airport
In a world first, the Southeast Asian gateway airport has installed motion detectors for hands-free check-in and contactless bag drop. Look out for robot cleaners as you shop for new headphones on your layover. *changiairport.com*

Tiong Bahru Market
You'll see SG Clean Ambassadors reminding diners to keep their distance in line while you tuck into chwee kueh (soft rice cakes with salty preserved radish) at this historic hawker market, one of the first in town to get certified with SG Clean. *tiongbahru.market*

cation; more than 16,000 have signed up so far. "If we don't take COVID-19 seriously and something happens, business will become unsustainable and the livelihood of our employees will be at risk," says Frank Shen, the co-owner of modern Southeast Asian restaurant Laut, in the Central Business District. "Getting certified is extra work on our part, but it helps us protect our employees' rice bowl and creates a safe space for customers."

After all, most of the measures that have emerged over the past several months aren't just COVID-19 solutions, they're a step into the world we'll live in after the pandemic. A walk through Changi Airport today is already a preview of the future of travel, with contactless check-in systems, traffic patrol, and hospitality robots in the Jewel retail-and-entertainment space. Meanwhile, a growing number of hotels—including the sophisticated Grand Park City Hall and the Amara group's Singapore accommodations—have transformed the guest experience to make it not only contactless but also more efficient. Now the check-in process requires just a few taps on your mobile phone instead of a wait behind a crowded desk, an improvement that saves time and shrinks the hotel's carbon footprint, according to Gtriip, the Singapore-based firm behind the system. Guests can also use their phone to perform tasks that usually involve touching, like turning on the lights or ordering room service. One of the less-discussed aspects of COVID-19's impact on travel has been the way it has sped innovation that was coming anyway—so perhaps we'll all be hanging out with robots before long. ***–Audrey Phoon***

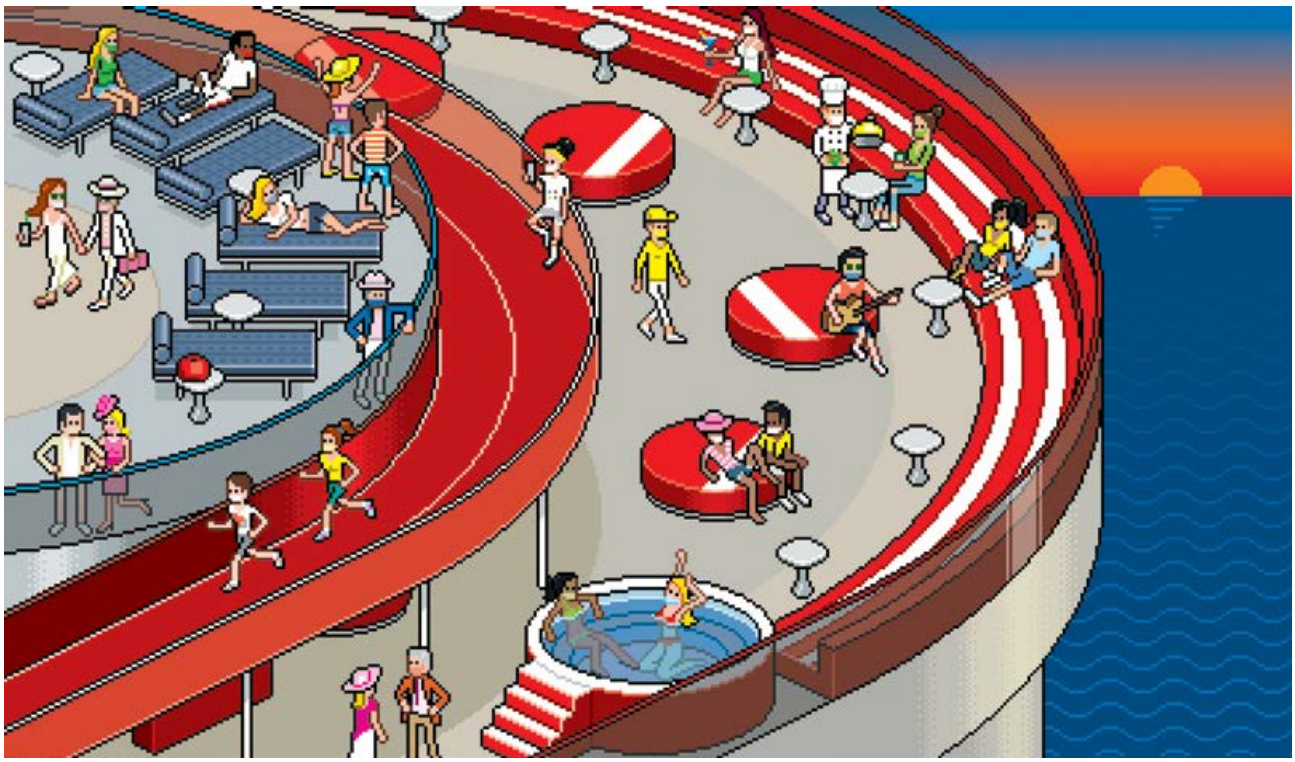
SGCLEAN.GOV.SG

THE NEW STANDARD

CASE STUDY

Launching Virgin Voyages

The pandemic delayed the first sailing of Virgin's hotly anticipated cruise ship *Scarlet Lady* until this month. But when it does begin exploring the Caribbean, it will feature several innovations that will matter to cruisers in the COVID era, in addition to the ballyhooed tattoo parlor, record store, and drag brunches. "When the pandemic hit, all of us in the hospitality industry had to pause to consider how to change the consumer experience to make guests feel safe and secure," says Nirmal Saverimuttu, the chief experience officer for Virgin Voyages. "And we found that investments we made in developing a new customer experience had a lot to offer for a healthier, safer environment." Here, how the liner is making us want to sail again. ***–Corina Quinn***



Clearing the Air

All along, Virgin had planned an HVAC system that would pump fresh rather than recycled air throughout the cabins and public spaces to evoke "an ocean breeze," Saverimuttu explains. But in the wake of the pandemic, the company upgraded to an air-purification system that uses bipolar ionization technology, which has proven remarkably effective in killing viruses. The system, developed with AtmosAir Solutions, will produce fresh air from bow to stern.

Skip the Queue

"We're trying to create a boutique hotel on the ocean, with an intimate space and intimate experiences—and lines don't fit into that," Saverimuttu says. Virgin Voyages' Sailor App tracks wait times around the ship. Book a table on the app, and it'll tell you when to head to the restaurant. The company conceived the approach as a means of eliminating a common cruise ship annoyance, but it has the added benefit of promoting social distancing.

Only You Touch Your Food

From the get-go, Virgin Voyages emphasized that there'd be no buffets on board. Instead, all meals are made to order—even in the food hall, where stalls hawk everything from sushi to salads—helping reduce waste and handling. To up safety compliance, the company added contactless delivery throughout the ship. Meals arrive in a satchel and can be left outside rooms or at a lounge chair on the deck.

VIRGINVOYAGES.COM

ILLUSTRATION: QUICKHONEY

THE NEW STANDARD

Straight Up

Delta has developed a strong strategy in fighting COVID-19—but it has also led the way in showing how to communicate effectively with its customers

This has been a year of firsts for everyone, including the airline industry. For the first time ever it held its middle seats open, required passengers to wear masks on board, and gave fliers two years to rebook canceled flights. And the first carrier to enact most of these measures was Delta—but maybe more importantly, it was also the first to tell customers what it was doing. The company's relative success during this time owes a lot to its open communication, right down to its sneak peeks of the new cleaning technology it was developing.

Rival carriers followed Delta's lead, but not all have been as transparent or consistent about implementing changes. Some implied that middle seats would be blocked, then filled planes to capacity anyway, to the alarm of nervous passengers. (Delta, for the record, has promised to continue blocking seats and limiting flier numbers at least into the fall.)

As in so many other corners of the travel industry, enhanced cleaning procedures were a top order of business. Delta was one of the first companies in the world to use an electrostatic sprayer with hospital-grade disinfectant to sanitize all surfaces. Soon it had implemented these protocols on every plane before every takeoff. In addition to spraying, the company has a team of cleaners who wipe every crevice of the cabin.

"We want to be the industry leader in clean standards," says Ginny Elliott, Delta's vice president of airport operations at LaGuardia Airport. Another way the company has sought to do this is by launching an entirely new division focused on hygiene standards, its Global Cleanliness Division, overseen by a new executive role called the vice president of global cleanliness. It is responsible for overseeing everything from check-in to Sky Club lounges to baggage claim. (American Airlines has since followed suit with its Travel Health Advisory Panel.) When the pandemic is under control, these rigorous procedures will remain, a promise that only Delta, so far, has made.

Fliers seem to have taken notice. According to Elliott, overall customer satisfaction scores have seen a 30-point increase compared to 2019. Obviously, this has to do with how Delta has responded, but it also has to do with how the airline has talked about its response—which goes to show how much travelers need to hear from companies right now to feel confident about booking a trip. ***–Jessica Puckett***

PHOTOGRAPH: MATTHEW MICAH WRIGHT/GETTY IMAGES

THE NEW STANDARD

The Inn at Abeja in Walla Walla

All in This Together

By making simple promises, and asking visitors to do the same, small-scale destinations take a refreshingly direct approach to reopening

Walla Walla, the city and county in southeast Washington, is known for its namesake sweet onions, its apples, and its thriving vineyards, but above all it is famous for its friendliness. "We're a town so nice they named us twice," jokes Visit Walla Walla board member Tabitha Crenshaw. So in May, when the area began thinking about reopening to visitors, it sought a way to signal how seriously it was taking health and safety while also staying true to its ethos.

These twin goals manifested in Walla Walla's Peace of Mind Pledge, a straightforward oath voluntarily adopted by many of the local hotels, restaurants, wineries and breweries, and tour operators, and communicated at the grassroots level: Businesses announce their participation by placing a poster or placard in a window or elsewhere. By doing so, they promise to meet (and exceed, whenever possible) governmental guidelines and to adopt industry-specific best practices. Beyond those commitments, they vow to prioritize visitors' health and safety even if doing so results in additional costs to themselves. "We think this unified approach makes a lot of sense at a time when people are basing travel decisions on the safety of a destination as a whole, not a single hotel or lone winery," explains Crenshaw. Like-minded small cities and low-density areas throughout the U.S., like Sedona, Palm Springs, and Asheville, and up north, like Canada's Niagara Falls, have adopted similar pledges that succinctly convey regional solidarity and uniform standards.

Other visitor hot spots with the zeitgeist appeal of nature and top-tier amenities, such as Jackson Hole and Sonoma, have implemented a slightly different kind of covenant that places the onus of safety on both travelers and businesses. "We learned during the wildfire crises that we have to take care of each other first; before we can wholeheartedly welcome visitors, locals need to feel safe," says Birgitt Vaughan, director of global media relations for Sonoma County Tourism. The county's SAFE Travels Promise asks visitors to be aware of their actions and take personal responsibility for preventing the spread of the coronavirus while abiding by any health regulations required by the county, even if they're different from those in their home regions. For both promisees and promisors, destination pledges are a human note in a newly clinical world; a welcome reminder of the larger, age-old social contract that we've agreed to implicitly, to work together for the greater good. ***–Rebecca Misner***

PHOTOGRAPHS: ALANNA HALE, TOM PARKER

Home, Sweet Home

With many international travelers banned from entering certain countries, the consequences for the $9.25 trillion global tourism industry have already been profound. In response, many destinations are turning to their local markets like never before. Clever campaigns and incentives help keep vital income flowing to the 10 percent of the global workforce in jobs supported by travel, so that the businesses, retreats, and people we love to visit will still be there to greet us when we can finally get back out there. ***–Erin Florio***

New Zealand

Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern has been praised for her handling of the crisis, including measures that will keep international travelers out until spring. Now, with Do Something New, New Zealand, the government is urging Kiwis to visit the sites so popular with the nation's nearly 4 million annual foreign tourists, like the rugged Milford Sound in the South Island. There's even talk of adopting a four-day workweek so citizens can take more long-weekend getaways.

Tanzania

COVID-19 put Tanzania on the U.S. Department of State's Do Not Travel list, and that's bad news for conservation, which is mostly funded by safari camps. So brands like Asilia Africa are offering incentives for locals to book stays, like additional discounts on top of the up to 75 percent off that residents of the country already get on the fixed rates paid by international travelers, and services like pickup and drop-off in the major cities.

Vietnam

The Southeast Asian nation was one of the first to impose a lockdown, keeping infection rates among the lowest in the world. Quarantine eased in May, but borders stayed shut through summer. To help offset losses to the $32 billion tourism industry, the government launched Vietnamese People Travel in Vietnam, with airfares and rates at luxury resorts like the iconic Sofitel Legend Metropole Hanoi slashed by up to 50 percent in some cases.

Masai giraffes in Tanzania

THE NEW STANDARD

CASE STUDY

Reopening Arapahoe Basin, Colorado

Most ski resorts closed early last winter and never reopened because of the pandemic. But Arapahoe Basin, a small indie in Colorado known for its long season, expert terrain, and raucous après tailgating, was able to put new safety protocols in place and briefly resume operations in May, upholding its reputation for being open later than any other outfit in North America. When the resort, locally known as A-Basin, hopefully starts its new season on October 13, it will be with a good sense of what works for skiers and staff. In addition to heightening sanitation measures and mandating face coverings, A-Basin, like others, has promised to transfer season passes to 2021–22 in the event of another closure. Here, more of what you can expect this fall. ***–Jen Murphy***

Advance Planning Is a Must

This last spring, the resort, which on a typical May weekend averages 3,000 skiers, brought its daily capacity down to 600 and implemented a new reservation-only policy. After demand crashed the online system, it switched to a lottery model that prioritized pass holders while allotting a set number of slots to drop-ins. A similar program may be in place for the upcoming season. Smaller ski-school sizes also will make planning ahead essential.

Spaced Out and Slowed Down

To help people visualize proper spacing while waiting in lift lines, A-Basin will post signs every six feet. Every other line will likely be kept closed to ensure that skiers and snowboarders don't stand too close. And no one will be allowed to ride up with anyone who is not in their immediate party. On certain intermediate and expert runs, speeds may be lowered so that lift operators don't have to physically slow the chairs by grabbing them.

Streamlined Service and PB&J

A-Basin's famed post-ski tailgating ritual was banned last May and probably won't return anytime soon. Spring skiers also had to do without gear rental, lockers, and lessons. Some of these could return alongside contactless payments and e-signing for lift tickets, ski-school waivers, and rentals. Resort food may be available, but visitors may want to go old-school and brown-bag their lunches.

ARAPAHOEBASIN.COM

ILLUSTRATION: QUICKHONEY

Clean Slate

In an era of uncertainty, hotels have adopted sweeping measures to help guests rest easy

Electrostatic spray guns, particulate-level air-filtration systems, U.V. wands: What might have seemed downright *Jetsons*-esque just a few months ago is now de rigueur at many hotels around the globe, whose business model—predicated on person-to-person interaction—was threatened immediately by the pandemic. But brands didn't just have to figure out how to combat the virus; they also had to determine how to share what they were doing with their guests, who suddenly ranked rigorous cleaning protocols ahead of cutting-edge spa treatments and pilgrimage-worthy dining on their list of priorities.

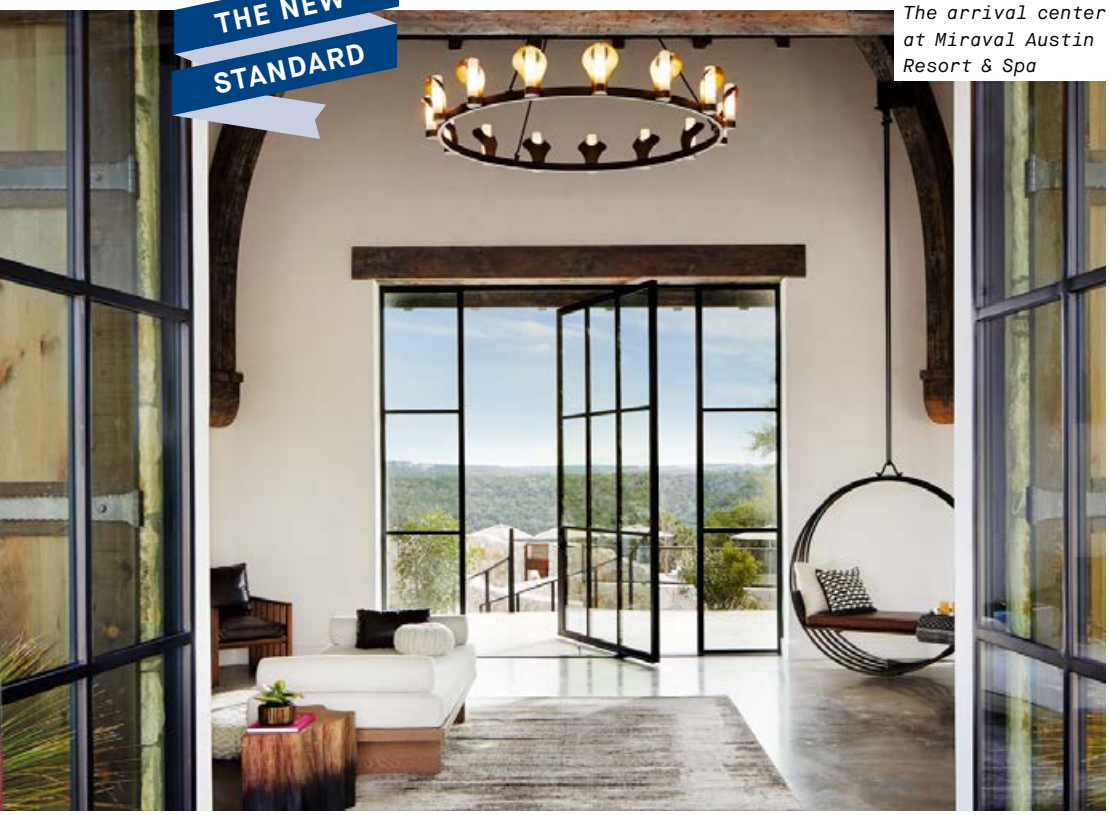
"Suddenly, safety became sexy. Clean was cool," says Scott McCoy, Marriott's vice president of operations and guest experience for the Americas, on formulating the company's response. "We had to work our way through that." The industry titan, which manages more than 7,300 properties globally, was among the first to react, unveiling its Commitment to Clean campaign in late April. Nearly as detailed as a U.N. resolution, the program announced the formation of a Global Cleanliness Council to redraw Marriott's best practices, citing help from experts in food microbiology, public health, and epidemiology. The statement also introduced leaf-blower-like devices to dispense hospital-grade disinfectant; plexiglass barriers ("sheer curtains" in McCoy's parlance) at front desks; and the newly created role of cleanliness champion at each of its hotels to oversee protocols.

Other top players followed suit. Hilton, after stepping up the frequency of its cleaning procedures in mid-March, formalized its game plan just a few days after Marriott, announcing it would link up with Reckitt Benckiser, the British manufacturer of Lysol, to further revamp its methods and rejigger staff training guidelines with help from the Mayo Clinic. The company instated a room-door seal—proof that no one has entered guests' quarters after housekeeping—and mandated extra sanitation of high-touch features like thermostats and light switches. Four Seasons rolled out a COVID-19 advisory board in mid-May, pulling in specialists from Johns Hopkins Medicine International to review old practices and establish new ones, like black-light inspections of accommodations post-cleaning. Montage Hotels & Resorts introduced U.V. technology to sanitize in-room items, down to the ballpoint pens, and began offering guests and staff complimentary memberships to digital health care provider One Medical.

Indeed, virtually all hotel brands have taken steps to combat the crisis. Many will remain in place, because in addition to helping keep guests safe they fulfill that most basic promise of hotels: to be a place of refuge. As Montage International president and chief operating officer Jason Herthel puts it, "When a guest tells you they have total peace of mind and were able to fully relax, you know all the effort was worth it." ***–Betsy Blumenthal***

PHOTOGRAPH: FELICITY MCCABE

THE NEW STANDARD



The arrival center at Miraval Austin Resort & Spa

Yes, You Can Still Relax

With spas adjusting to the new rules, **Stirling Kelso** checks in to Miraval Austin to remember what time-out feels like

I wouldn't say that I arrived at Miraval Austin Resort & Spa a broken woman. I was more like a twig pulled back so far I was either going to snap or catapult back in the direction of whatever was restraining me—probably my two-year-old. The pandemic has turned my life, like most people's, upside down: Work has changed, childcare has dried up, and my mood has fluctuated with every push notification.

So when the Hyatt-owned Miraval Austin reopened, I booked a stay before giving much thought to COVID-19 logistics. Then I began to wonder: Would the resort—a device-free property specializing in spa experiences, yoga, meditation, and therapeutic classes on everything from gut health to stress management—be the same transformative experience it was pre-pandemic? Would it be safe? And could the wellness consultants still connect with guests on a meaningful level, now that we would all be veiled in PPE?

During Miraval's extended shutdown, its team has been grappling with these questions at all three of its properties—two that recently resumed operations and one, Miraval Berkshires, that opened in July. "Miraval is a wellness destination first and foremost, so the threshold for us to reopen was very high," says Simon Marxer, corporate director of spa and well-being. Partnering with the Global Biorisk Advisory Council, a biological-crisis consulting firm, Miraval spent countless hours overhauling cleaning and safety procedures, calculating ideal capacity, and educating staff members—from the astrologers to the beekeepers—on public health practices.

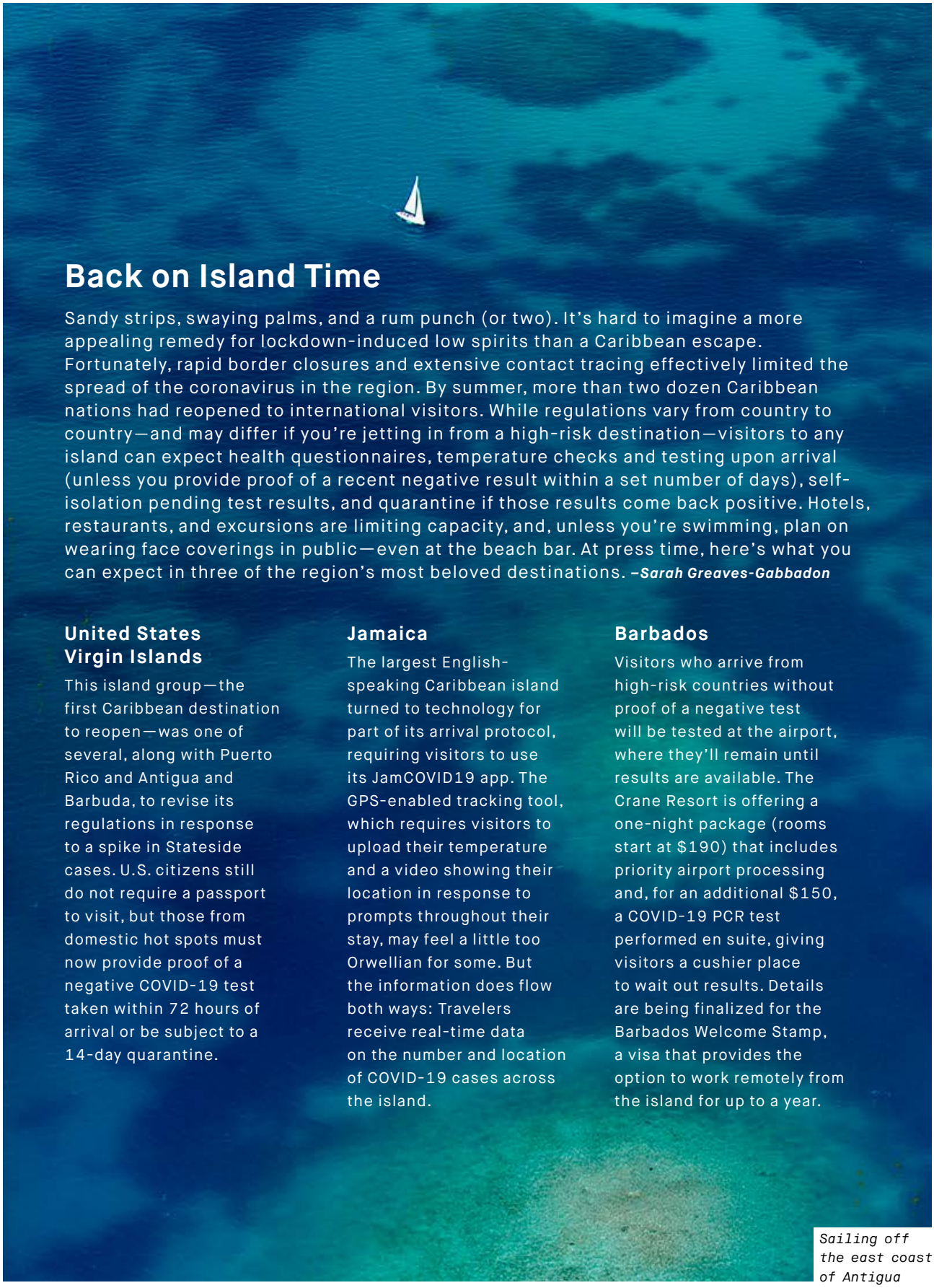
COVID-19, though, has also encouraged Miraval to redevelop its programming to meet guests on a deeper level. This has meant incorporating moments of mindfulness into all activities, even ropes courses, and shrinking class sizes to not only socially distance but also leave time for guest participation. (Hopefully they won't rethink this model after I blurted out, "My house has turned into a prison!" in a class on mindful decluttering, where my only classmates were newlyweds quietly debating whether to part with a pair of skis.) Austin has added new workshops such as Reclaiming Your Breath and Mindfulness in the Moonlight; at Miraval Berkshires, guests learn resilience by working with injured birds of prey undergoing rehabilitation.

It hasn't been easy opening and reopening amid a pandemic, Marxer acknowledges. But ultimately Miraval's loyal guests motivated the team to keep moving forward. "Many expressed that they have a lot to gain from our programming, not in spite of but because there's a lot of uncertainty in the world," he says.

I agree, and have even managed to incorporate a few lessons from my visit into my everyday life: Be kind to yourself. Drink plenty of water. And turn off your damn phone.

MIRAVALAUSTIN.COM

PHOTOGRAPH: JAMES BAIGRIE/MIRAVAL AUSTIN



Back on Island Time

Sandy strips, swaying palms, and a rum punch (or two). It's hard to imagine a more appealing remedy for lockdown-induced low spirits than a Caribbean escape. Fortunately, rapid border closures and extensive contact tracing effectively limited the spread of the coronavirus in the region. By summer, more than two dozen Caribbean nations had reopened to international visitors. While regulations vary from country to country—and may differ if you're jetting in from a high-risk destination—visitors to any island can expect health questionnaires, temperature checks and testing upon arrival (unless you provide proof of a recent negative result within a set number of days), self-isolation pending test results, and quarantine if those results come back positive. Hotels, restaurants, and excursions are limiting capacity, and, unless you're swimming, plan on wearing face coverings in public—even at the beach bar. At press time, here's what you can expect in three of the region's most beloved destinations. ***–Sarah Greaves-Gabbadon***

United States Virgin Islands

This island group—the first Caribbean destination to reopen—was one of several, along with Puerto Rico and Antigua and Barbuda, to revise its regulations in response to a spike in Stateside cases. U.S. citizens still do not require a passport to visit, but those from domestic hot spots must now provide proof of a negative COVID-19 test taken within 72 hours of arrival or be subject to a 14-day quarantine.

Jamaica

The largest English-speaking Caribbean island turned to technology for part of its arrival protocol, requiring visitors to use its JamCOVID19 app. The GPS-enabled tracking tool, which requires visitors to upload their temperature and a video showing their location in response to prompts throughout their stay, may feel a little too Orwellian for some. But the information does flow both ways: Travelers receive real-time data on the number and location of COVID-19 cases across the island.

Barbados

Visitors who arrive from high-risk countries without proof of a negative test will be tested at the airport, where they'll remain until results are available. The Crane Resort is offering a one-night package (rooms start at $190) that includes priority airport processing and, for an additional $150, a COVID-19 PCR test performed en suite, giving visitors a cushier place to wait out results. Details are being finalized for the Barbados Welcome Stamp, a visa that provides the option to work remotely from the island for up to a year.

Sailing off the east coast of Antigua

PHOTOGRAPH: TOMMY CLARKE

THE NEW STANDARD

CASE STUDY

Unveiling Six Senses New York

"Translating our values into an urban environment is a particular challenge," says Six Senses CEO Neil Jacobs, of the luxury wellness and sustainability brand's New York debut, the first foray into North America by the company known for spa-focused properties in places like Oman and Thailand. That challenge grew with COVID-19, forcing the team behind the Bjarke Ingels–designed retreat on Manhattan's High Line to rethink its approach to programming and social spaces—and bump its opening to 2021. Here, a few key shifts. ***–Erin Florio***

The Wellness We Need

The spa incorporates every current well-being trend, from Ayurveda to Chinese medicine, but in a first for Six Senses, the focus will be on immunity boosting and medical wellness. "We know that COVID-19 is making people take a more proactive approach to their wellness," says Rebecca Soloff, Six Senses' director of sales and marketing. On the menu? Diet and lifestyle tips for preemptively fighting illnesses and a biohacking program to help guests optimize their workout goals, like equipment specially built to cut exercise times.

Socializing, Reimagined

The pandemic wasn't going to stop Six Senses from launching its new social club, Six Senses Place. "One of our brand missions is to connect, which is a big word emerging from this crisis," says Jacobs. Overlooking the Hudson and spread across the hotel's fifth floor, the 45,000 square-foot area combines rooms for health seminars, co-working areas, and stylish spots for martinis. "It is being designed for distancing without compromising a sense of community that is protected and private," says Soloff.

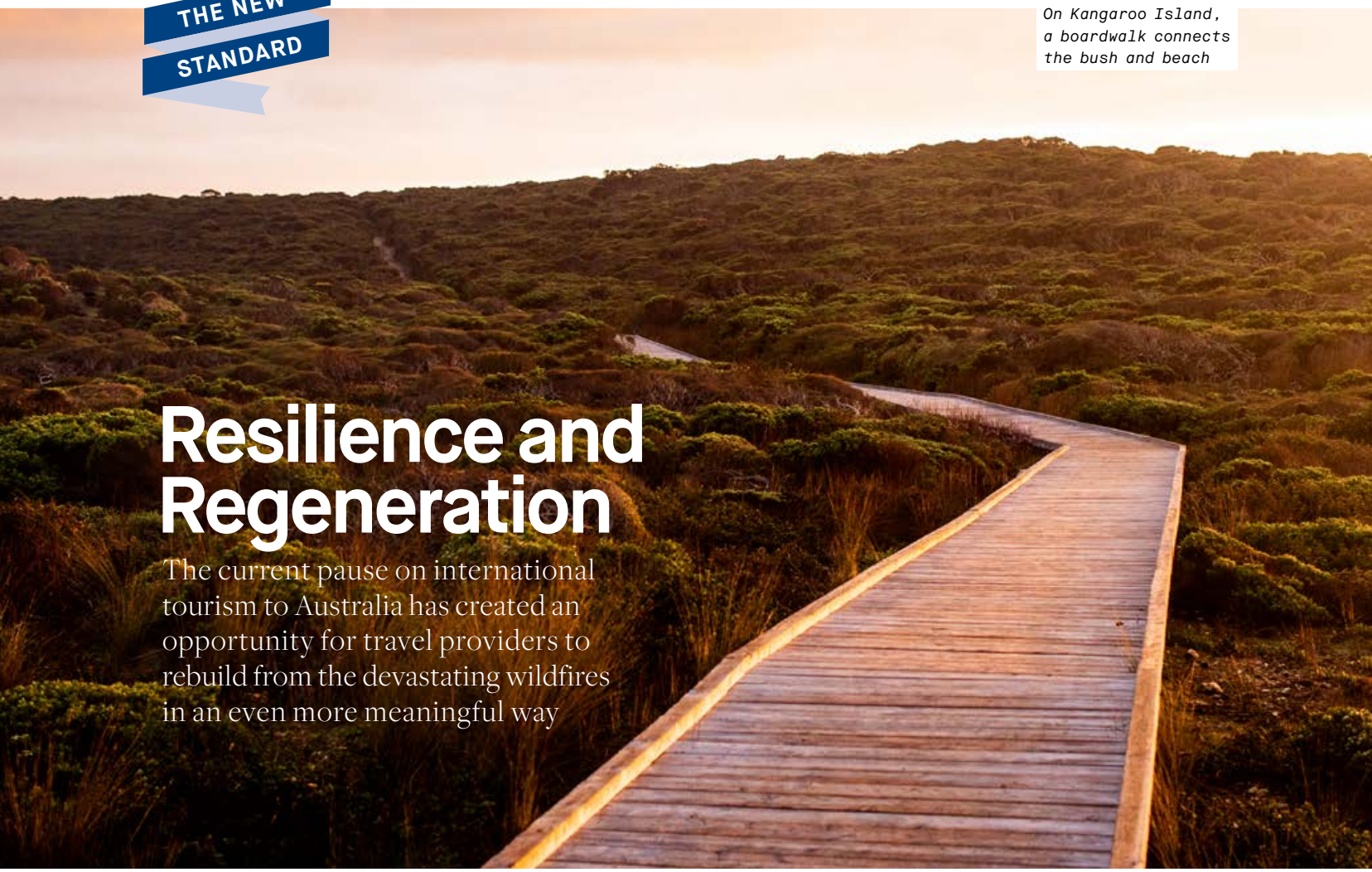
Changing How We Connect

After closing its properties, the company launched At Home With Six Senses, allowing would-be guests to livestream yoga classes from the company's Zighy Bay retreat in Oman and for their homebound kids to learn about coral life in the Maldives. Programming at Six Senses Place will include talks on business leadership and social-entrepreneur seminars that stream inside the 132 rooms, should guests decide that, in the end, they just want time to themselves.

SIXSENSES.COM

ILLUSTRATION: QUICKHONEY

THE NEW STANDARD



On Kangaroo Island, a boardwalk connects the bush and beach

Resilience and Regeneration

The current pause on international tourism to Australia has created an opportunity for travel providers to rebuild from the devastating wildfires in an even more meaningful way

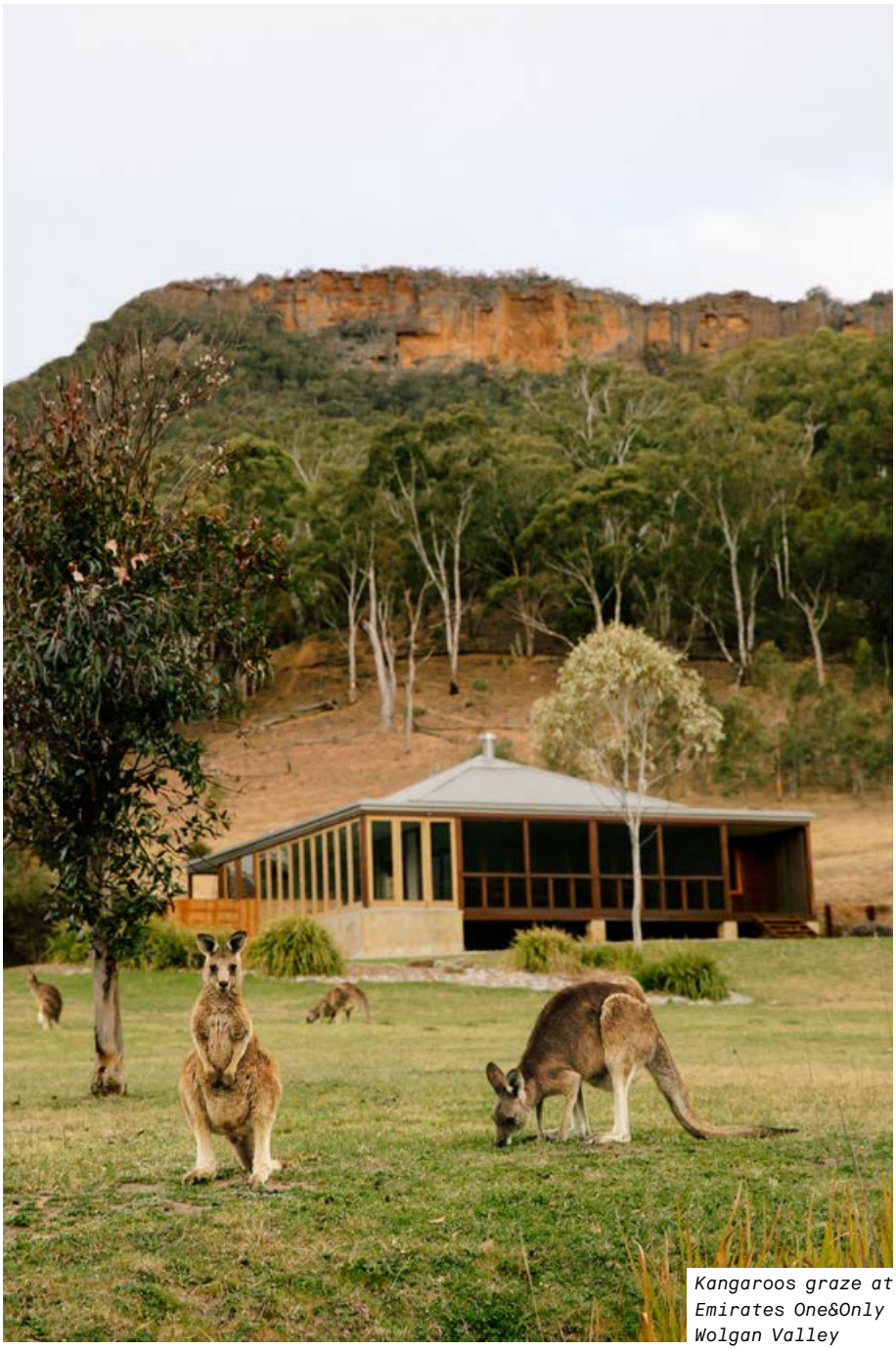
From the news coverage of Australia's apocalyptic bushfires early this year, you couldn't be blamed for thinking the entire place had burned to the ground. I arrived in New South Wales, the country's most blaze-ravaged state, in mid-March, expecting devastation. But barely a month after the last flames had been put out, there were already signs of renewal. Amanda Fry, founder of Wild Food Adventures, a travel outfitter that designs culinary-focused nature experiences, showed me around Kangaroo Valley, a wildlife haven 90 minutes south of Sydney, where rock wallabies, wombats, and echidna had started to return. In nearby Morton National Park, vibrant green shoots sprouted from trees charred to the color of obsidian, and emerald cycads, palmlike plants dating to Jurassic times, bloomed from singed trunks.

In March, Fry developed a tour called Travel in Purpose after dozens of travelers asked how they could assist in the relief effort. The program involves hikes and picnics in affected areas to educate people about the resilience of the bush. Though the immense scale of the recent fires was the result of drought, deforestation, climate change, and high winds, fire always has been and always will be part of the bush, Fry told me: "The Aboriginal culture has used fire for land management for centuries. It's essential to the propagation of many species, like eucalyptus. That's why we're already seeing native plants regenerating." The new offering has proven as popular as her more luxe experiences, like a Champagne-and-canapés canoe trip.

Four hours north of the park at Emirates One&Only Wolgan Valley, a 7,000-acre eco-retreat, I joined guests engaged in restoration work. The buildings were unscathed, and recent rains had turned the burnt landscape lush and green. As I knelt to plant a sapling, conservation manager Simone Brooks pointed out a tufted honeyeater, noting how the property has become an unexpected refuge for previously uncommon bird species. "It's a fascinating time to experience the bush and get to see Mother Nature at work," she told me.

I left Australia feeling hopeful. Tourism was rebounding; the land was coming back to life. But then the pandemic hit and the country closed its borders indefinitely. The dramatic reduction of visitors will help the wildlife to recover without interruption, though experts point out that responsible tourism is critical in reversing biodiversity loss. "With greater visitation

PHOTOGRAPHS: KARA ROSENLUND, RHIANNON TAYLOR



Kangaroos graze at Emirates One&Only Wolgan Valley

Native eucalyptus on Kangaroo Island

comes the ability to provide more research on our wildlife species," explained John Daw, executive officer of the outdoor-focused Australian Wildlife Journeys, which in July launched a Bushfire Recovery Wildlife Journey across multiple affected states.

In the state of South Australia, nearly half of Kangaroo Island was affected by the fires; a main attraction, Southern Ocean Lodge, a 21-room luxury retreat that accounted for 3 percent of the island's 200,000 annual visitors, was a total loss. Owner James Baillie, founder of high-end hotel company Baillie Lodges, estimates it will take three years to rebuild. "Our community partners were the fabric of the hotel," he said, "and the fires made us realize we have a responsibility to promote travel to the destination." Southern Ocean Lodge has been using its social media platforms to send such messages as "So much of Kangaroo Island looks exactly as you'd expect: pristine, pure, and perfect. To rebuild, we need tourism, and for that we need you."

Craig Wickham, managing director of the tour operator Exceptional Kangaroo Island, estimates he lost $400,000 worth of business in January alone once the fires became global headline news. The coronavirus travel restrictions that followed made him rethink his approach to tourism. "The need to find alternative experiences during the bushfires was the genesis of many new tours, but after 30 years, COVID forced us to look at our legacy of products," he said. "We realized we need to do a better job appealing to Australian travelers who would usually be headed offshore for wildlife adventures in the Galápagos, Patagonia, or East Africa." To that end, the company has developed immersive five- and seven-day programs that offer behind-the-scenes research insights, walks, guest speakers, and private property access. "If we want to get visitors from abroad to care, we should be able to get visitors from Australia to care," he said. "That is the definition of sustainable travel." ***–Jen Murphy***

THE NEW STANDARD

Smooth Sailing

Lost in the coverage of outbreaks on a few ships was the cruise industry's extraordinary effort in getting thousands of travelers home safely

As the coronavirus exploded on the world stage, cruise lines faced the most visible challenge of any sector of the travel industry. Their first problem was assisting stranded cruisers. When President Trump announced his European travel ban on March 11, an estimated 1.1 million passengers were still at sea, according to Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA). Crews, no strangers to the art of crisis response, launched a coordinated effort to bring them back, in spite of port closures and other obstacles. "Their dedication shined during this time," says Crystal Cruises president and CEO Tom Wolber. His company was one of many that had no reported COVID-19 cases—a reality that may surprise some, given the media's sensationalistic depictions of the pandemic's impact on cruise ships.

A Viking Ocean Cruises ship near Øksfjord, Norway

Those aboard Viking Cruises' In Search of the Northern Lights expedition, which was called back two days into a 13-day sail around the North Sea, describe seamless service by the crew, who provided cocktails and news to jittery guests as the ship reversed course and arranged transfers. "Announcements were made regularly, and the entire team was supportive of us, and each other," says passenger (and *Condé Nast Traveler* contributor) Carrie Mitchell.

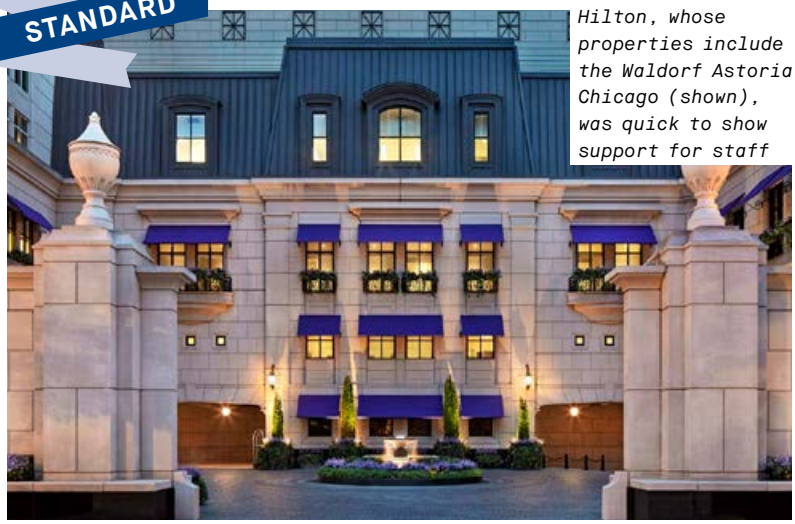
Silversea's expedition branch navigated travel restrictions that changed daily to retrieve guests from remote corners of Southeast Asia. In the end, says Roberto Martinoli, president and CEO, "We even chartered 24 private planes to fly guests home."

Simultaneously, cruise lines had to help travelers whose plans had been scuttled by the pandemic, with sailings paused and reports of furloughed cruise staff. By May, companies were offering full cash refunds or large compensation alternatives, including 125 percent credits for sailings through 2022.

As the industry readies for its eventual return to the seas, what's most reassuring is the spirit of solidarity and cooperation cruise companies have demonstrated. In July, two of the world's largest, Royal Caribbean Group (owner of Royal Caribbean, Celebrity, and Silversea) and Norwegian Cruise Line Holdings (owner of Norwegian, Regent Seven Seas, and Oceania), announced the Healthy Sail Panel, a consortium of prominent physicians and public health experts, to develop sharper safety standards. As Frank J. Del Rio, president and CEO of Norwegian, says, "We compete for the vacationing consumer's business every day, but we never compete on health and safety standards." One more reason to feel good about setting sail again. ***–Janice Wald Henderson***

PHOTOGRAPH: VIKING CRUISES

THE NEW STANDARD



Hilton, whose properties include the Waldorf Astoria Chicago (shown), was quick to show support for staff

Hotels With Heart

International chains and boutique outfits alike are doubling down on their commitment to their communities—to the benefit of all

***Local* has been a favorite word of hotels for years,** used in reference to everything from partnerships with small-batch gin distilleries to artist-in-residence programs. But what does it mean to be local in the midst of a crisis? Despite the enormous financial hit the pandemic has inflicted on the hospitality industry, many of the world's leading hotel brands have sought to use their resources to help communities, particularly those where their properties are located, deeming it both a sensible long-term business strategy and the right thing to do.

Hilton teamed up with American Express to offer nearly 1 million rooms across the U.S. to frontline medical staff, while Marriott harnessed its Bonvoy loyalty program to let members donate points toward providing rooms to relief organizations like the American Red Cross and UNICEF. Large- and medium-size companies from Hyatt to Rosewood similarly launched efforts to help first responders. Hilton also established a job-placement service for the employees it was forced to furlough, setting them up with temporary gigs at companies like Amazon and Walgreens, and issued a grant through its philanthropic arm, the Hilton Effect Foundation, to provide personal protective equipment to communities in need. "The challenging reality is our funds are limited," says Kate Mikesell, vice president of global corporate responsibility at Hilton, "so we are rethinking how we can be more innovative with the resources we do have—whether that's an open kitchen at a hotel or team-member volunteer hours—in order to have the greatest impact in our communities."

Independent hotels have likewise been responsive to the needs of their neighborhoods. Brooklyn's Wythe Hotel took in 40 medical workers from nearby hospitals and fed staff at two intensive care units, managing to avoid any on-site cases of the virus in the process. When the Wythe reopened its popular restaurant, Le Crocodile, the public demonstrated its appreciation—

The Wythe Hotel in Brooklyn put up workers from local hospitals

and perhaps its confidence—by submitting more than 300 reservation requests over a few days. On the opposite coast, the Surfrider Hotel in Malibu used its kitchen and common spaces to prep meals for frontline workers and launched an initiative allowing the public to purchase hotel-stay vouchers and donate them to workers.

For the Surfrider, these kinds of actions were nothing new. After the Woolsey Fire the winter before last, the hotel pledged all of its lodgings to area residents. Since opening three years ago, it has hired locals almost exclusively, and before COVID-19 it had started working with nearby colleges to offer hospitality students training and leadership development courses. These choices aren't necessarily convenient, but the team behind the Surfrider believes that strong ethics garner trust, particularly during a crisis. "Guests will be naturally attracted to places with soul and a little lightness," says the hotel's co-owner Emma Crowther Goodwin. "It's not something you can create overnight, though. Those things have to be earned—and shown through action." ***–Shivani Ashoka***

PHOTOGRAPHS: HILTON, WYTHE HOTEL

THE NEW STANDARD
Innovation Hero

The Future Is Green

Colombia has long emphasized sustainability. Now the country sees responsible tourism as the smartest way out of our current crisis

This last summer, Andres Ossa and his wife, Paola Dradá, reopened their eco-reserve Bosque Colibri in careful accordance with the government's new biosafety protocol, developed to control the spread of COVID-19. Now, at their 35-acre spread outside of Cali, the legendary salsa-dancing capital about 300 miles southwest of Bogotá, the couple take visitors' temperatures, disinfect their hands and shoes, and ask them to wear face masks and follow social distancing guidelines. Along with the protocol, Colombia's Ministry of Trade, Industry, and Tourism created a biosafety seal (the first of its kind in Latin America) that aims to promote responsible tourism and ease travelers' safety concerns; businesses that certify they're following the measures are permitted to display it.

"We have to be even more conscious about how we're living," says Ossa about the current global situation. "The only way to respond is to adapt." Ossa is no stranger to change. Nearly a decade before the biosafety measures came along, he and Dradá began implementing sustainable practices like land and wildlife conservation and organic farming. On five of their acres, they cultivate coffee, raise free-range chickens, and grow produce. The rest of the lush land is crisscrossed with hiking trails and birdwatching posts where binocular-toting visitors can spot the rare yellow-eared parrot or one of the other 540 species of birds found in this part of the country. Ossa and Dradá represent a new breed of hospitality entrepreneur in Colombia. The past decade has seen a rash of similarly nature-centric ecotourism projects, like the surf lodge El Cantil, on the Pacific coast, and Cannúa, an upscale eco-friendly hotel that opened last year outside of Medellín, not to mention a significant expansion of Serranía de Chiribiquete, Colombia's largest national park.

The couple's past efforts and willingness to embrace the biosafety practices are a snapshot of a larger nationwide commitment to sustainable tourism. In June the Colombian government became one of the founding members of the Future of Tourism Coalition, a community of businesses, governments, and organizations that have agreed to employ eco-friendly practices, protect cultural and natural heritages, and contribute to the social and economic well-being of local communities. When speaking about the future of travel, Costas Christ, a global sustainability expert and adviser to the Colombian government, says, "The travel industry needs to come to a place where the very definition of *tourism* and *travel* includes these principles of sustainable tourism; a tourism based on a commitment to people and planet." Colombia and the other destinations that understand this philosophy will be the leaders in a new and reset travel industry. ***–Jordan T. Jones***

PHOTOGRAPH: CANNUA LODGE

A mountainside bungalow at the ecolodge Cannúa, in Colombia's Antioquia region