ALASKA AHoy: THE SCALES OF POWER IN THE 49TH STATE (OR HOW A FISH CAN BECOME AN AMBASSADOR)

A BRIEFING ON GLOBAL AFFAIRS, BUSINESS, CULTURE & DESIGN

From soft power to firm beds: top nations, hotels and design

Monocle gets out its clipboard and sharpens its pencil to rank the key players in everything from diplomacy to aviation – a MONOCLE SPECIAL

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A 35-page travel guide to the nation’s best cities, beaches, vineyards and winning retreats

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Enjoy diamonds, Dries and Damasukas in beautiful Belgium as we name our top spots for having your Christmas stockings stuffed with fine threads, fancy treats and a tight-fit mitz

AFFAIRS Is that a rocket in your pocket? Why it’s Mars or bust for the ESA

BUSINESS Made in France: a walk through the country’s top shoe-making ateliers

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DESIGN Karl Lagerfeld on Berlin, lesbians, provenance and why it’s good to spend

EDIT S Photographer Gregory Crewdson’s ‘last meal’

BIG BUMPER HOLIDAY THUMPER
Best-in-class airlines and top hotels in our annual travel awards, plus a sit-down with Finland’s PM, Tokyo’s governor and a Spanish contender in our interview series

TRAVEL TOP 50

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5-page fashion portfolio

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(Do you Reinezoo?)

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS
5 political profiles

TOOLS For LIFE
A practical pit guide
Travel Top 50
2014/15

We've scoured the globe via road, rail, sea and sky to bring you the best in travel. Buckle up and join us for our annual rundown.

1 Bracing beds
From alpine escapes in Italy and Switzerland to the Four Seasons Ritz's rooftop running track in Lisbon, we've highlighted the best places to rest your head.

2 Cross-continental chic
We've selected a French-made tote bag, an onboard look to keep you snug from take-off to touchdown and the very best duty-free buys.

3 People power
Meet the friendly flight attendants manning the first-class cabins of Cathay Pacific, plus Swedish rail-operator SJ's politest host.

4 Fit for purpose
We let off some steam with some post-flight jogging routes and introduce a Tokyo shop in which to kit up for keeping in shape.

5 Pretty fly
From Jetfly's private fleet to Air New Zealand's sharp livery, we round up the best in aviation from economy to first class.
01

Best historic hideout
Bad Dreikirchen, South Tyrol

Perched on a hillside above the quaint little village of Barbiano in South Tyrol, northern Italy, the Bad Dreikirchen hotel is an isolated haven with stunning views down the Valle Iserco and some of the cleanest air you're likely to find in Europe.

The main building is 600 years old and takes its name from the three ancient churches clustered on the historic Roman site. A 30-minute drive from regional capital Bolzano (itself easily accessed from both Innsbruck and Verona airports), the hotel has 26 rooms clad in local pine that are very reasonably priced, making this the perfect weekend escape. — MAL

baddrei kirchen.it

02

Best new rail ride
Frecciarossa 1000

Trenitalia's flame-red Frecciarossa 1000 will join Italy's high-speed network in June 2015 as the country's old fleet receives a timely shot in the arm. With a top speed of 360km/h the new trains have shaved 20 minutes off the transit time between Milan and Rome and boast comfy seats, a dedicated dining car and a meeting room, all finished with an interior by Turin-based Bertone.

"This train is at the apex of technological standards," says Pietro Diamantini, Frecciarossa 1000's project manager. "A train of this kind is the best business card we could have."

We would like to see a bit of carpet rather than too breccio. — GB

trestitalia.com
Top crockery
Finnair

A far cry from the drab tableware of its competitors, Finnair’s crockery from Helsinki-based manufacturer Marimekko adds a homely touch to its in-flight meals. The collaboration sees Marimekko’s iconic prints – including the Unikko poppy and Kivet stones – on everything from espresso cups to plates and saucers, many of which are available for purchase. It’s also made from lightweight porcelain aimed to fit in with Finnair’s commitment to lower carbon emissions by jettisoning unnecessary weight on board. One fifth lighter than the airline’s previous tableware, this collection is easy on the environment as well as the eye. — AK
finnair.com; marimekko.com

Hotel we wish was in all our top cities
Ett Hem, Stockholm

In 2012, Jeanette Mix roped in local architect Anders Landström and British interior designer Ise Crawford to transform a 1910 building into 12-room hotel Ett Hem (meaning “a home” in Swedish).

“The house has a soul,” Mix says, amid the mid-century furniture that dots the interior. “We welcome guests as family friends.”

Patrons can play the piano or rummage through the larders for a snack and a bottle of wine to enjoy in the courtyard. Nestled in the district of Östermalm, Ett Hem’s just-so service and elegant aesthetics set an example to hoteliers around the world. — JN
etthem.se

Best cabin crew
Cathay Pacific

For Kuniko Kameda (pictured), who joined Cathay Pacific’s cabin crew in December 2000, providing in-flight service begins the moment a passenger walks onto the aircraft. “It’s about creating a third space for people while onboard,” says Kameda, originally from Sendai, Japan. “It’s not home, it’s not the office but it is a place for them to enjoy.”

Often working between Hong Kong and Haneda, Kameda also enjoys the long-haul route to JFK. “Cathay has great character as an airline but I also want passengers to experience the caring, gracious and polite standard of service that my country is known for.” — MES
cathaypacific.com

Sights for sore eyes Monocle’s Travel Top 50 slideshow will premier online this November at monocle.com