



A bamboo-shaded path at Pha Tad Ke.

BOOK
Great Escapes

Bill Bensley's new hardcover will leave design freaks drooling. "My aesthetic varies hugely by project, as we try to build an environment that not only extends the culture of a place in a beautiful way, but also one where guests can learn something new," says the Bangkok-based designer, architect and landscape artist known for his daring design twists. **Escapism**, a coffee-table tome of his work released last month, draws the reader into his world with 550-plus pages of eye-popping photographs of 26 projects in 10 countries, including the Maldives, Thailand, Cambodia and more. "I try to explain the complex and enjoyable world of design that I live in, and why and how I do what I do," Bensley says. His team shot more than 50,000 images for the project. The result is a dreamy foray into the otherworldly spaces that have defined his career. amazon.com; US\$125.



FROM TOP: COURTESY OF PHA TAD KE; COURTESY OF BENSLEY

CONSERVATION

Flower Power

The opening of a botanical garden in already-lush Luang Prabang both parades and protects the local flora. BY VERONICA INVEEN

IF THE ALLURE of Luang Prabang's cascading waterfalls and ancient palaces weren't enough to beguile us, a new botanical garden offers yet another excuse for visiting the secluded city. After seven years of research and landscaping, **Pha Tad Ke**, the country's first botanical garden, will open to the public at the beginning of November. Showcasing the elaborate flora of Laos, the garden serves as an oasis of orchids, bamboo and palms, clustered around the base of Pha Tad Ke cliff, as it rises from the Mekong.

The garden is the brainchild of Rik Gadella, a former Paris-based art and publishing executive who visited Luang Prabang back in 2007 and loved it so much he never left. The idea of turning 14 hectares of scrubland into an elaborate garden, museum, café and shop stemmed from his love of Laos's natural beauty. "I want people to reconnect with nature," Gadella says, "and the way Lao people live with nature in their everyday lives."

Gadella has created a conservation garden to preserve plants used in medicine and spiritual ceremonies, and

as an archive of botanical wisdom traditionally passed down orally. "More young Lao are migrating to cities, and elders are passing away before they can transmit their knowledge," Gadella says. "By cataloging the information, we protect the plant diversity and help conserve the culture."

As focused as the Pha Tad Ke team may be on preserving history, they are equally dedicated to investing in Laos's future. Everything from the handicrafts at the onsite shop, to the ingredients used at the café, to the staff members making it all happen, is native to Laos. "We want to keep the money we make circulating in the Lao economy," Gadella says. "Our entrance fees will help fund our other projects, such as publications and educational programs." So as you walk the garden's quiet paths, stopping to look out over the sleepy river, or ducking into the Pha Tad Ke café for a Lao feast, remember this kind of tourism represents a balance. Take something away, give something back. pha-tad-ke.com; admission US\$24. ☉



CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE: Mickey Mouse is a recurring subject of Banksy's work; curator Steve Lazarides; *Girl with a Balloon*.

CULTURE

Australian Graffiti

Artwork by London's infamous street artist Banksy is being showcased at a new exhibition in Melbourne.

BY DIANA HUBBELL



IT'S ONE OF THE LARGEST exhibitions in the world of Banksy's works and a very well-rounded retrospective," says curator Steve Lazarides of the newly opened **The Art of Banksy**. As the subversive street artist's spokesperson from 1997 to 2008, Lazarides is one of the few people who knows who Banksy really is—though to him, the graffiti master's work transcends any questions of identity and remains relevant to a global audience, which is why he was so determined to procure these off-street pieces from roughly 40 different private collectors around the world. "I wanted to bring it to a place where people wouldn't normally get to see his work exhibited," Lazarides says of his choice of Melbourne for the unauthorized exhibition. "And I think Banksy's art belongs to the public."

To manage more than 80 of the artist's pieces, including pop icons such as *Laugh Now* and *Girl with a Balloon*, exhibitors

went beyond a conventional gallery. "They built the venue specially to hold the show. It gives off the right kind of vibe for this particular ethos," says Lazarides. With train lines and graffiti-sprayed brick, the resulting custom space at The Paddock, Federation Square, exudes the same gritty-cool as the pre-gentrified East London 'hoods where Banksy first rose to prominence. Lazarides says it's also the ideal place to shed light on the local dynamic creative scene: "Melbourne has a particularly vibrant street art culture." Murals by Kaffeine, Bailer, Be Free, Adnate, Sirum and other homegrown talent decorate the outside of the exhibition, and though Banksy's art may have that London underground vibe, the scene, with food trucks, craft beers, cocktails and live DJs, is a total celebration of summer in Melbourne. *through January 22; theartofbanksy.com.au; adult tickets A\$30.* ☺

TRENDING

Mile-High Grub

Once the butt of jokes, in-flight meals are moving up in the world as airlines elevate their standard menus with high-end chef collaborations.

FROM RUBBERY MYSTERY MEAT to sad pasta days past al dente, most airline meals are grim. Bitty galley kitchens would be enough to make feeding the masses daunting, even if dry air and low cabin pressures didn't blunt our sense of taste. A number of airlines in recent years have risen to the challenge though, creating dining options that are not merely palatable, but actually pleasurable. +The latest to up their game is **Hainan Airlines** (hainanairlines.com), which launched its Restaurant on Board collaboration with a Michelin-lauded team last August. For now, the fancier fare is only available on European routes, but there are plans to expand. +**Singapore Airlines** (singaporeair.com) helped pioneer the concept, hauling in a panel of culinary gurus like Yoshihiro Murata, Georges Blanc and Carlo Cracco—with a combined 12 Michelin stars—to lend their expertise on dishes on offer to even Economy and Premium class passengers. +**Qatar** (qatarairways.com) enlisted chef Nobu Matsuhisa to add some star-power to its First and Business menus. +**Cathay Pacific** (cathaypacific.com) asked for menu help from Mandarin Oriental last year to give passengers to Hong Kong, Tokyo, London, Paris, New York and Milan a full-on fine dining experience. You'll never be stuck hoarding bags of pretzels again. —D.H.



FROM TOP: COURTESY OF THE ART OF BANKSY EXHIBITION (3); COURTESY OF SINGAPORE AIRLINES

FESTIVAL

Wonderfruit

For its third act, Thailand's biggest festival makes 'carbon-neutral' sound as fun as four days in the park. BY JENINNE LEE-ST. JOHN

AFTER THE ANNUAL RICE HARVEST, farmers in Isaan gather their yield in the village center to build intricate edifices. Blessings and celebrations ensue, then the bundles are beaten, releasing the rice grains to be milled and shared with all. It's collective, sustainable and fun—which also happens to sum up **Wonderfruit**, the super-green music and arts festival returning to eastern Thailand for its third year next month with such headliners as Liane La Havas and Rudimental. Though hosting avant garde performances, the new Farm Stage will follow those age-old Isaan traditions; it'll be made of bamboo and organic rice that, post-event, will be distributed to local communities.

“Real positive changes are made when sustainability initiatives are at the core of everything,” says founder Pete Phornprapha, “so that they form the event rather than the other way around.” Other eco-evolutions in the works range from locally hand-made bamboo fencing around the grounds, to rice planting sessions at the on-site



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: Shopping, festival-style; the low-down on this year's event; swing kids bring the wholesome.



farm, to talks by 'eco heroes' like the filmmaker of the new *Plastics Ocean* documentary, debuting at the fest.

But the biggest news is that the entire festival will be carbon-neutral for the first time. Proceeds from ticket sales will go towards offsets to benefit Rimba Raya Biodiversity Reserve in Borneo, a 65,000-hectare peat swamp forest that is Indonesia's largest private orangutan sanctuary. Wonderfruit is also participating in an innovative, UN-approved bond



offering that will enable anyone to invest for profit in protecting Rimba Raya. We're seeing nothing but green. wonderfruitfestival.com; from Bt3,800 for adult one-day pass. +



LUGGAGE

Mission Accomplished

AN OH-SO-STYLISH COLLABORATION RESULTS IN CAPTIVATING CARRY-ONS WITH A SPLASH OF LOCAL COLOR.

When trend-setting Singaporean designer Ong Shunmugam teamed up with Rimowa, the result was both a striking ode to Asian textiles and an envy-inducing travel accessory. With vibrant prints pulled from the traditions of Indonesia, China, India, Mongolia, Japan and Malaysia, the **Rimowa X Ong Shunmugam: Women on A Mission** capsule collection is a throwback to travel's glam past and yet utterly of-the-moment. *Singaporean Rimowa stores, fashion sold separately at Ong Shunmugam boutiques; prices on request.*

FROM TOP: COURTESY OF WONDERFRUIT (3); COURTESY OF RIMOWA