

Check in Aman Tokyo



Aman's first city location is housed high in the top six floors of Otemachi Tower in Tokyo's financial district. Designed by Kerry Hill Architects, (responsible for the last six Aman properties) the hotel mixes traditional Japanese styling with contemporary touches to create a clean and fresh finish. The grand lobby on the 33rd floor extends the full height of the building with the rooms on the top four floors around the edge, creating a giant paper lantern effect.

The rooms

The hotel's 84 rooms come in five types, from the Deluxe – the largest entry-level in the city at 233sq ft – to the 515sq ft Aman suites, all four of which sit in the northwest corner, taking in the imperial palace and Tokyo Skytree from its floor-to-ceiling windows. The mixture of light camphor wood, washu paper and grey stone keep the rooms feeling serene and unfussy. Even the flat screen TVs are hidden in a rising platform in the central cabinet.

The facilities

The Aman is a discreet hotel and once you're inside it offers a full range of facilities for its guests,

from conference rooms to spa and relaxation. Off the main lobby sits the dining area, which provides beautifully prepared Mediterranean and Asian dishes in generous portions, with views over the city. The bar offers equally impressive views with cocktails to match. Guests looking to work or expand their knowledge can enjoy the library with its vertiginous book shelves, while for exercise and relaxation the hotel features a 30m pool, a large modern gym and spa.

The bottom line

The Aman manages the rare skill of being extremely high class without appearing showy. There is an air of calm and confidence in the way it runs and in its layout. Though set up for the business visitor, its position, just minutes from the Imperial Palace and Tokyo Station, make it as handy for those in town to see the sights – if you can convince yourself to leave the hotel that is. *Mat Gallagher*

Aman Tokyo The Otemachi Tower, 1-5-6 Otemachi, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 100-0004, +81 3 5224 3333; amantokyo.com. Rooms from \$6,000 (inc taxes) per night.



Staycation of the Fortnight Hyatt Regency Hong Kong, Sha Tin

Located in the Sha Tin district of the New Territories, this five-star complex is just a short taxi ride from the Ten Thousand Buddhas Monastery, the Science Park and the Sha Tin racecourse. Each of the 559 rooms and suites are modern, stylish and exceptionally comfortable, with panoramic views of Tolo Harbour or looking out on to the picturesque Kau To Mountain. The hotel also boasts a range of facilities including a 25m outdoor heated pool, a tennis court, a 24 hour fitness centre and a children's camp. The 'Romance Package' includes buffet breakfast for two, a bottle of red wine and chocolates, a bouquet of red roses, \$600 dining credit and late check out. From \$2,430. *Hyatt Regency Hong Kong, Sha Tin, 18 Chak Cheung Street, Sha Tin, NT, 3723 1234; hongkong.shatin.hyatt.com. April Foster*

Wanderlust with Cynthia Rosenfeld



Festival season

As Chinese New Year approaches, thoughts of the lion dances I adore spark my curiosity about festivals further afield. While my travel calendar may not permit attending all of these in the Year of the Sheep, I have my heart set on making it to at least one or two, starting with Rio Carnival, held in February. This profusion of sound, lights and skin actually started out simply to lighten the mood of Christian communities around the world before the more sombre observation of Lent. I am curious to see Rio's jam-packed parade of outrageously frocked hot bodies and the over the top floats, each from a different Brazilian school of samba.

No less sedate, July's Fiesta de San Fermin (sanfermin.com) has held my fascination since I read Ernest Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises* as a teenager. The annual encierro, or running of the bulls, honours Saint Fermin, a patron saint of Spain's Navarre region, where celebrations involving bulls date back to the 14th century. The main event involves hundreds of humans running in front of six raging bulls plus six steers down a narrow, half-mile stretch of old town Pamplona. I however plan to be among the more cautious, but no less curious bystanders.

Later in the summer, I will hop continents to attend Burning Man (burningman.org) from August 30 to September 7, though I have been forewarned that 'nobody at Burning Man is a spectator'. Regulars advise me to stock up on all essentials (like toilet paper) before driving deep into Black Rock Desert, 120 miles north of Reno, Nevada, for this must see to believe, hot as hell gathering of grand scale art installations, live music and trance dancing on an ancient lake bed. At this annual but temporary community of nearly 50,000, one can ride a bike, naked if you wish, into the cacti speckled void for a moment's meditation, then come back for a grilled cheese sandwich at Bianca's Smut Shack (bianca.org), a festival mainstay.

The mass congregation of good vibrations culminates on the Saturday night when everyone gathers to burn the man – a massive wooden effigy.

I pray I can make it to Oaxaca in Mexico for November 1, otherwise known as Día de los Muertos. This 300 year-old, pre-Colombian celebration is not about ghosts and goblins but rather it's a mix of Aztec



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beliefs and Christian teachings that honours the dearly departed with handmade arches of brightly coloured marigolds that represent hopeful gateways to the afterlife. I am told that Mexican food and hot chocolate are essential elements of these feast days – an added bonus.

I would like to wind down the year in Chichicastenango, a small town deep in the mountains of western Guatemala where December's weeklong Fiesta de Santo Tomas mixes Mayan and Christian traditions. After days of parades, indigenous dances and fireworks comes a peculiar traditional dance I am curious to witness. Palo Volador involves men hanging themselves by ropes from 30m wooden poles so that it appears they are dancing as they leap, swing and spin through the air. It's unique, breathtaking performances like these that encourage me to keep travelling in new directions, albeit while my own feet stay firmly on the ground.

Follow Cynthia on Instagram and Twitter: @CynthiaRoams

Burn baby burn
Black Rock's wooden effigy

