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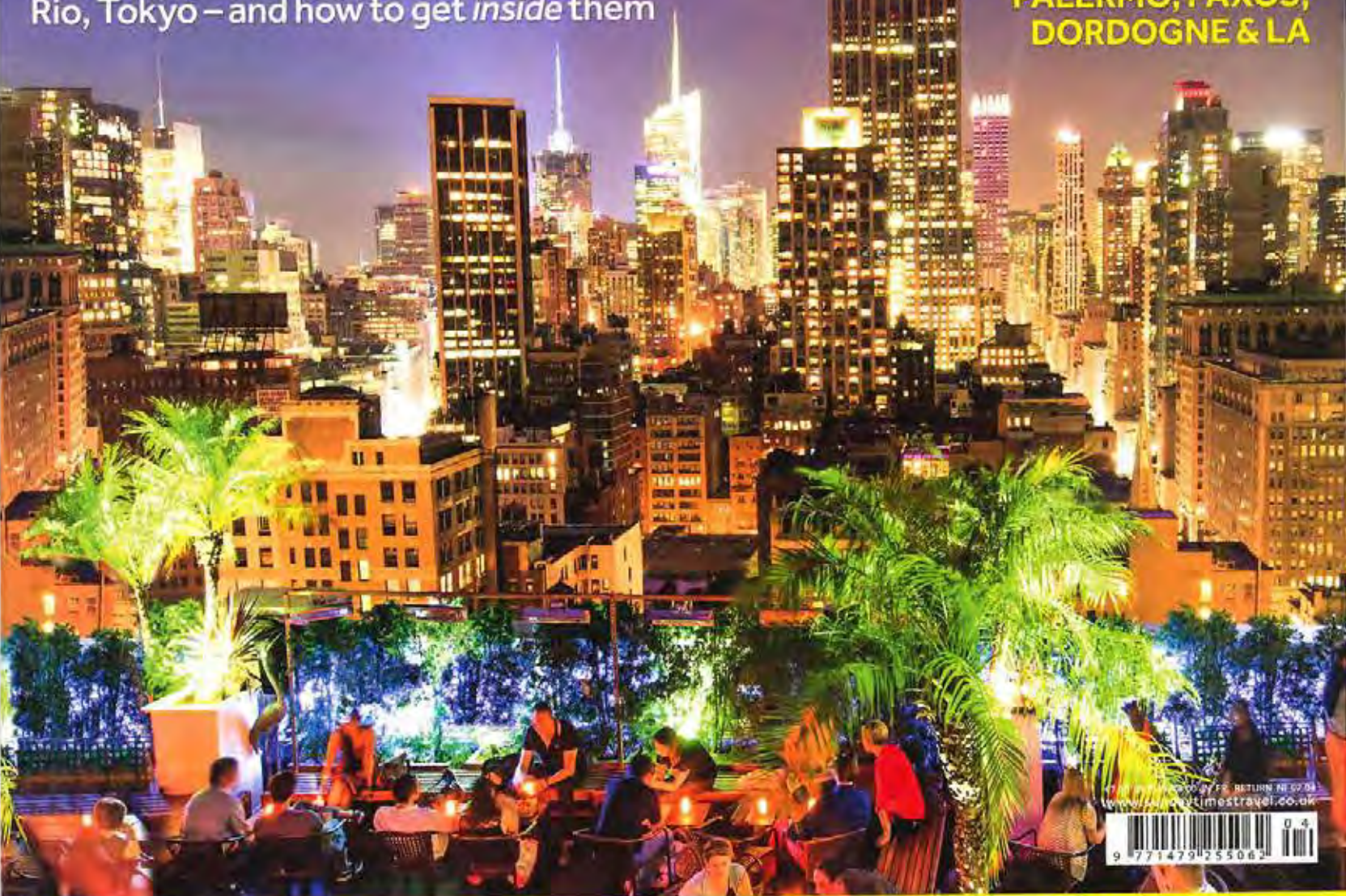
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SHINE OF THE TIMES

Lazy wake-ups in bijou hotels, leisurely lunches by briny waters, late-night rosé on rooftops... In Istanbul for spring, **Nick Redman** lives (and loves) its most glittering moments

Istanbul has long been the new New York: electric thrum, yellow cabs, even a 212 telephone prefix. Now, though, it's the *new* new New York. Despite recent woes, the world keeps pouring in, with lots to spend and pots to invest. Designer drinking, hip hotelism and energy levels that surge when the weather starts getting warmer – Istanbul is having a moment. In fact, we've identified 10 dream moments...

...SIPPING your second Turkish rosé at **The House Café Ortaköy** (Salhane Sokak 1; www.thehousecafe.com), on the back terrace beside the Bosphorus, the brilliant blue consumes your view. The furniture is 'Scandi-canteeny', the strength of the sun simply stunning. And the scene? Seriously sunglasses. Ladies-who-lunch stick salads into little 'o' mouths, tinted hair catching in gusts, and a languid Latino take on Kylie's *I Should Be So Lucky* seems to inform the waiters' shimmy. This is bliss.

...GLIMPING extraordinary sunset clouds – swept-up, pink and candy-flossy – above the Bosphorus, from the tiny transfer boat rocking you east for dinner. Destination: **Tapasuma** (Kuleli Cad 43; 00 90 216 401 1333, tapasuma.com), on the Asian shore at Cengelköy. It's been in business for just over year at Sumahan on the Water, a design hotel in an old *rakı* distillery. As the name suggests, it's doing Barcelona-trendy things with Turkish *meze* (classic shared starters). They're immaculately presented on tiny square plates (or in pots). Octopus, with dill and razored slivers of yellow and red peppers. Fig with goat's cheese... All *dee*-licious.

...HEARING a club track mingle flawlessly with the distant muezzin's prayer wail around sunset, at the alfresco roof bar of **Georges** (Serdar-ı Ekrem Cad 24; 00 90 212 244 2423, georges.com; doubles from £181, B&B). The hotel, a cosy French-feel apartment conversion (bare brick, wine crates in reception) in cobbled Galata, is your base for this boho, boutique-filled >



Bright and breezy: Istanbul's minaret-dotted, Bosphorus-cooled skyline

neighbourhood. The bar's the star: clock a head-turning blonde quiff or two on the girls sipping Turkish Chardonnay, and that splendid far-off view of twinkly ships on black night waters.

...LOPING down the steep, sun-needed streets of Beyoglu to the contemporary art gallery **Istanbul Modern** (Liman Isletmeleri Sahası Antrepo 4; istanbulmodern.org; £4.50). It's quite a sight: warehousey, pale and interesting, beside the waters in Karaköy. Airy interiors roll out pushy – pretentious even – Turkish and international exhibitions (eg, *Fantastic Machinery*; *50 Years of Urban Walls*), but everyone prefers the restaurant: a corker with a sun-warmed terrace and views of the Old City's curvy mosques.

...INHALING the smell-good, masculine soap in the marbled shower at **Adahan** (General Yazgan Sok 14; 00 90 212 243 8581, adahanistanbul.com; doubles from £169, B&B), a recent hotel arrival that's handy for the nightlife of Asmalı Mescit. Rooms are light and sanded, plain and woody, the thrifty furniture shrunk by tall ceilings. You can smell the age of the place. Up top: a wraparound terrace restaurant, viewing gritty roofs and Art Nouveau facades. Do a dusk aperitif before stepping out.

...TAXIING north to waterfront Emirgan for modish museum-gazing at **Sakıp Sabancı Müzesi** (Sabancı Cad 42; muze.sabanciuniv.edu; £4.50). It's in a blinding-white Italianate villa, reworked, with gardens all around. See displays of vibrant Ottoman calligraphy, dating back centuries – rare Koranic manuscripts, too. The view, through firs to the Asian shore, is splendid from **Müzedechanga** (00 90 212 323 0901, changa-istanbul.com), the glassy restaurant in the grounds. You drink coffee while insects whirr.

...LAUGHING when you find out the story behind 'Zelda Zonk', the watering hole atop newish **Gradiva Hotel** (00 90 212 249 7700, gradivahotels.com). Marilyn Monroe is said to have used the name as her alias – even when booking a plane ticket. ZZ has a starry feel itself, a low-lit sliver of a space, breeze-cooled and blessed with epic Sultanahmet views, the mosques and minarets lit orange by night. First-timers are stunned into silence.

...UNCOVERING Karaköy, Istanbul's 'neighbourhood on the up', in the streets behind the ferry terminal at the mouth of the Golden Horn. Once industrial and plied by working girls, now it is nicely edgy. Galleries gleam from knackered facades. The ornate **Fransız Pasajı** (Passage des Français) hosts delis and designer stationers. Lamplight on cobbles and geraniums suggests Montmartre – cue late-night *vin rouge* at Brutalist-chic bistro **Unter** (Karaali Kaptan Sok 4; 00 90 212 244 5151).

...LIKING the taste of *rakı* – Turkey's aniseed firewater. Drunk by maudlin men in backstreet *meyhanes* (taverns doing *meze*), it's heavy stuff. Now, it's being softened by savvy cocktail-makers. Try it with black cherry, by candlelight, outside in-vogue restaurant **Münferit** (Yeni Carsı Cad 19; 00 90 212 252 5067) – could be the new Campari! Or head 20 storeys up to **Raika** (00 90 212 243 3773, raika.com.tr) and order a *Cilingir: rakı*, lime, parsley, gin and triple sec, all muddled up – and irresistible.

...WATCHING the red lights of cigarettes at a pavement table outside **Aliye** (Cihangir Cad 35/B; 00 90 212 244 2373, aliyemeyhane.com). It's a warm night in Cihangir, a louche-luxe neighbourhood far from touristy Sultanahmet. Here's a modern, groomed, upbeat reworking of the old *meyhane*. Fish is chalked, Paris-brasserie-style, on a blackboard, speakers ooze '30s music from a twangy guitar, and Turkish guys compare manicures at the next table. How 'now' is that? ■

For flights to Istanbul, see the Factfile, page 78.

