

travel



HAWAII'S BACKYARD
Kahilu Theatre on the Big Island aims to reach a wider audience
» G3

LAS VEGAS ADVISOR » G5



HANGZHOU

Stories and photos by Julie L. Kessler
Special to the Star-Advertiser

Museums and a wetlands park await visitors to a city explored centuries ago by Marco Polo

An old Chinese proverb says, "Shang you tian tang, xia you su hang," which translates to "Heaven above, Suzhou and Hangzhou below."

Described by Marco Polo in the 13th century as the most beautiful and magnificent city in the world, Hangzhou, 110 miles southwest of Shanghai, and the capital of China's Zhejiang province, was also named by Travel + Leisure as one of the best places to travel in 2016. (We'll save the city of Suzhou for another time.)

It is a wealthy city of 9 million people. Alibaba.com has its headquarters there. Explorers, poets and artists have long been captivated by Hangzhou and the ethereal quality of its central West Lake and cultural heritage.

The bed

In preparation for the G-20 Summit in September, several new shining stars have made their debut, one of which is the 417-room, Midtown Shangri-La Hangzhou, the group's second hotel in the city. With comfortable and spacious rooms, impeccable service and first-class dining, it also has a signature Chi Spa and a fantastic brewery headed by talented Australian brewmaster Josh Staines. Staines brews five regular ales named after local subway stops, and three specialty brews, including a summer ale infused with passion fruit. 6 Changshou Road, Kerry Central. Telephone: 866-565-5050. Website: shangri-la.com.

The Midtown is also just a stone's throw from Hangzhou's picturesque West Lake. It has wide causeways for walking and bike riding, numerous temples and pavilions to explore and

wooden boats to hire by the hour. There is also a nearly continuous fascinating parade of local life with impromptu outdoor ballroom dancing, tai chi (traditional and on roller skates), all means of exercise classes and plenty of lovers taking advantage of the romantic environs.

The meals

Hangzhou kitchen is known as one of the eight major types of Chinese cuisine. Fairly light by Chinese standards, the most popular dishes are West Lake grass carp, shallot-stuffed crepes, Dongpo pork with Shaoxing wine, and Victory Cake. My friends and I tried all of these in one of the picturesque dining rooms at the Hangzhou Cuisine Museum. But be forewarned, while the menu with its colorful pictures accurately displays the delicious food, the descriptions — no doubt courtesy of Google Translate — will provide diners with comic relief. (Chicken stew Dictyophora or Bacteria burning sea cucumber, anyone?) The museum has a well-curated display of Chinese history as it relates to Hangzhou cuisine and culinary traditions, with replicas of more than 400 local dishes. The museum's small gift shop sells realistic-looking replicas. Open 10 a.m.-6 p.m., closed Mondays. 9 Fenghuangshan Road. Telephone: 571-8792-1117. Website: zghbc.com (site only in Chinese).

A marvelous dinner



at the award-winning Jin Sha Restaurant at the Four Seasons Hotel — the only hotel directly on West Lake — was a dining extravaganza. Peony shrimps with plums in rice wine, pan-fried abalone with minced fish, and stewed duck with vermicelli and truffle sauce, coupled with excellent Chinese wines from Kanaan Winery, risked turning me into a Hangzhou poet. 5 Lingyin Road. Telephone: 571-8829-8888. Website: Fourseasons.com.

The finds

Despite its size, one of the most remarkable aspects of Hangzhou is its natural beauty. Besides West Lake, nowhere is this more evident than Xixi National

Please see HANGZHOU, G4



One of the many traditional structures along Bai Causeway at the ethereal West Lake, Hangzhou, top. Above, working cormorants in the Fu Causeway at Hangzhou's Xixi National Wetlands Park. At right, Beijing skyline by night, with the China World Summit Wing Tower in the center. Below, Hangzhou's colorful snacks are almost too pretty to eat.



PHOTO COURTESY SHANGRI-LA

Changing views, venues keep Beijing exciting

To say that China is a nation undergoing rapid change would be a vast understatement. While some of Beijing's greatest highlights and architectural achievements have been around for centuries — Tiananmen Square, the Forbidden City, the Summer Palace — there are some wonderful new additions to Beijing that add some magic to the city.

The bed

The China World Summit Wing Beijing, with its 278 rooms, towers over this large capital city. The lobby is on the 64th floor, making for magnificent, see-forever views when the weather cooperates. The property hosts an incredible spa on the 77th floor, where a great massage made me forget the long flight over the pond. The beautifully appointed treatment rooms are the largest, most indulgent I have seen anywhere in the world. There's an indoor infinity pool and marvelous breakfasts and made-to-order breakfasts and mouthwatering a la carte dinners served at Grill 79, conveniently on the 79th floor. The Atmosphere Lounge with its panoramic views from the property's 80th floor has

plush seating and a chic East-meets-West decor. Guest rooms are enormous at nearly 600 square feet. A wonderful plus is that just below the building is the subway, where you can take a direct line to Tiananmen Square, the Forbidden City and the shopping mecca of Wangfujing. Room rates start at \$355. No. 1 Jianguomenwai Ave., Beijing. Telephone: 866-565-5050. Website: shangri-la.com.

The meal

For Incredible Peking Duck. In a modern atmosphere, just a 10-minute walk from the China World Summit Wing, head to Horizon Chinese Restaurant, Lobby Level, Beijing Kerry Centre, 1 Guanghua Road, Chaoyang District. Telephone: 8610/8565-2188. Website: thekerrylife.com.

The find

The 798 Art District was originally set up in 2001 in the newly vacated 798 military factory. The 50-year-old industrial compound boasts unique, Bauhaus-influenced architecture built by East Germans. Original plans called for large indoor

Please see BEIJING, G4

HANGZHOU

Continued from G1

Wetlands Park, the first in the country, just 3 miles away. With more than 170 bird species, the park contains 2,800 acres and 60 miles of waterways grouped into three causeways: Fu, Lu and the longest, Shou, meaning "prosperity," "status" and "longevity."

With our local guide Emma and our conical-hatted fisherman, we took one of the wooden longboats for a glorious ride along the Fu Causeway from south to north. Passing the Plum and Bamboo Villa, and the Xiaolongtan Ecological reserve, we came upon several small boats with working cormorants — large, raven-colored, heavy-boned aquatic birds known for their diving and fishing skills. These gangly worker birds, with strings tied snugly around their necks to forestall swallowing, repeatedly dived, caught fish and brought their catch to the waiting fisherman, Emma told us the cormorants were rewarded at day's end with fish of their own.

As we continued north-bound, our ever-smiling fisherman tossed over some nets and, within minutes, brought up an enormous silver carp. A half-hour later we alighted at the Misty Fishing Village Landing Dock where the fish was cooked with red peppers to perfection for our tasty lunch. Tian Mu Shan Road. Telephone: 0571-8810-6688. Website: Xixiwetland.com.cn.

In Hangzhou's east side and perched on a hill is Wushan Square and the reconstructed Chenghuang (City God) Pavilion. On a clear day one can have a great view of West Lake. Nearby Hefang Street, a well-preserved pedestrian walkway of crafts, candles and must-have tchotchkes that one doesn't actually need but wants anyway, makes for a pleasant stroll. A block away is the Museum of Traditional Chinese Medi-



COURTESY JULIE L. KESSLER

Tai chi morning exercises on roller skates near West Lake, Hangzhou, China.



STAR-ADVERTISER

cine, which contains a dispensing pharmacy where the venerable Mr. Ding, a 67-year-old herbalist, has, for the past 50 years, been compounding traditional medicines. 95 Dajing Alley, Shangcheng. Telephone: 571-8702-7507. Website: hqyt.com.

Around the corner is the grand home and gardens of Hu Xueyan, the first owner of the pharmacy. Even though a member of the merchant class, Hu was given an officer's rank in the Qing Imperial Court and granted the rare permission by Empress Dowager Cixi to ride a horse in Beijing's Forbidden City.

As tea is the national drink of China, and Hangzhou is home of the acclaimed Longjing (Dragon Well) green tea, no journey to Hangzhou would be complete without stopping at the National Tea Museum, the only one in China spe-

cializing in tea and tea culture. Both admission to the museum and tea tasting are free.

We sampled four different teas under our docent's steady and steaming pour — Oolong, Pu'er, Jasmine and Longjing — and communally decided the Jasmine was our favorite. In the museum are various sections: Tea History Hall, reflecting the origins of tea and its medicinal properties, including relics such as a Han Dynasty porcelain stove, and Tea Customs Hall, where you can travel around the world without moving and learn how tea drinkers worldwide enjoy their brew. 268 Wengjia Hill. Telephone: 571-8796-4221. Website: teamuseum.cn.

The lessons learned

Spending a few days in Hangzhou will remind you that Marco Polo's genius was not that he was the first European to travel to China, but that he was the first to dictate a comprehensive and meticulous archive of his sojourn there. Despite time and modernization, many of Polo's descriptions of 13th-century Hangzhou ring true today, and reflect that Polo may indeed have been more of a poet than any of us realized.

Julie L. Kessler is a travel writer, attorney and legal columnist based in Los Angeles and author of the award-winning book "Fifty-Fifty: The Clarity of Hindsight."

BEIJING

Continued from G1

spaces to provide maximum natural light with great attention to arch-supported ceilings and engineered to withstand earthquakes registering a magnitude of 8 on the Richter scale. Little did the East German architects then know what a great home 798 would make in the future for the burgeoning avant-garde art community.

Today, along with art galleries showcasing Chinese artists, there are studios, bars, lofts, design firms, cafes, restaurants, art bookshops, designer stores and photo galleries. There are also several foreign art dealers. 4 Jiu Xian Qiao Lu, Dazhanzi, Chaoyang (north-east of Metro Park Lido Complex).

A bit farther outside the city is Caochangdi, which has developed into a truly avant-garde art haven and is also home to China's leading artist and activist, Ai Wei-

wei. 105 Caochangdi Village, Chaoyang District, 5th Ring Road and Airport Expressway.

The lesson learned

While travelers can always learn from the greatness of eras past, often the new serves to put the past into perspective. Architect Norman Foster once said, "You design for the present, with an awareness of the past, for a future which is essentially unknown." Perhaps nowhere is this truer than in Beijing.

Nadine Shimabukuro
739-9010
"We Specialize in Okinawa & Japan"

2017 Tours
1/18-1/27 **Okinawa Sakura Tour** (including Ishigaki & Taketomi Islands)
3/30-4/08 **Spring Japan Tour**
4/23-5/03 **Tohoku Sakura Tour** (Morioka, Akita, Aomori, Hakodate, & Tokyo)

NAKA'S TRAVEL SERVICE
MAGICAL MANILA TOUR
29 NOV - 6 DEC 2016
Apply before 16 September

CHIANG MAI FLOWER FESTIVAL TOUR
1-10 FEBRUARY 2017
Apply before 16 September

VIETNAM TOUR
15-26 MARCH 2017
Apply Before 18 November

MAGICAL MEXICO TOUR
22-31 MARCH 2017
Apply before 18 November

522-0810
1647 Liliha St. TAR 4250
nakastravel.com

EM EM HAWAII TOURS
Roy & Ellen Matsumoto
Previewing 2017 Tours
Southeast Kentucky Hill Billy Days, Apr
Tulip Festival/Great Lakes, May
Kyushu/Shikoku Princess Cruise, May
Limited Staterooms Available
National Parks, June
Quebec, Sep-Oct
Churchill's Polar Bears, Oct
Vietnam, Cambodia & The Mekong, Nov
AMA Waterways Land & Rivercruise
Limited special promotion!
Call to reserve a stateroom
Hanoi, Long Bay, Siem Reap, Ho Chi Minh City, 7-nite cruise
Travel via United Airlines

AUTUMN IN HOKKAIDO
October 12 (12 days)
AUTUMN TOHOKU & NORTHERN NIHON KAI
October 13 (11 days)
AUTUMN CENTRAL NIHON KAI
November 6 (9 days)
PERU, BOLIVIA & CHILE
May 2017 (14 days)

Travel Ways
1250 S. KING ST.
597-1425
www.twhawaii.com

AUTUMN LOWEST AIRFARE
JAPAN **Tokyo \$544- Fukuoka \$504- Nagoya \$604- Osaka \$609- Chitose \$616-**
S.E. ASIA **Seoul \$550- Manila \$573- Taipei \$614- HKG \$634- Saigon \$597-**
Tokyo Business Class \$2231.00-(Via Beijing)
Tax and surcharges included as of 8/1/16
NEW! Discover Taiwan Tour in Feb/2017 details coming soon!

HOTEL, BREAKFAST, AIRPORT TRANSFER & 1 DAY CITY TOUR PACKAGE
HIGHLIGHTS OF SEOUL 5 DAYS \$553 • SPECTACULAR HONG KONG 4 DAYS \$490
EXOTIC BANGKOK 4 DAYS \$490
Based on USD 300

JR RAIL PASS 1-WEEK ORDINARY \$279 GREEN \$373
M-F 9am-5:30pm • SAT 9am-1:30pm • SUN CLOSED
808-979-0111 www.jtbusa.com >Branch Special Deals >Honolulu

Vacations Hawaii
COMPLETE PACKAGES TO LAS VEGAS
START FROM ONLY **\$699** RESERVE TODAY!
Includes round trip airfare, hotel, meals and transfers
or book online at www.boydvacationshawaii.com
1585 Kapiolani Blvd., 9th Floor
Honolulu 591-4777
Neighbor Island 1 (800) 548-8951
Mon-Fri 8am-5pm • Sat 8:30am-1:30pm • boydvacationshawaii.com
Special Las Vegas Packages valid on departures from 8/22/16 to 8/22/17. Limited space and non-refundable. Some prices may vary. Read terms in applicable travel agent or 2017 Book early for best price. Not valid with any other discount, coupon or promotion. Prices are per person based on double occupancy. Single supplement applies.
*On Las Vegas Cluster Packages the following is applicable: \$100 for 21 (first) stay at Boyd Gaming's Colosseum, Flamingo, or Flamingo Las Vegas Station.
*Includes Sat. taxes and fees, including 20% FCC fee, and 24 on FCC fee. Also includes 20% supplement if it is a weekly fee.
*Cluster flights operated by United Air International.
*A baggage fee of \$25 per person applies to each of the first two pieces of checked luggage. \$100 fee applies to overweight (overweight or checked baggage) in excess of the first two pieces.

Las Vegas Getaways
on Hawaiian Air
From **\$929** PP dble
7 NIGHT PACKAGES AT THE CAL!
Oct 5 - Oct 12* Jan 11 - Jan 18 Feb 2 - Feb 8**
Nov 13 - Nov 20 2017! Jan 18 - Jan 25 Feb 9 - Feb 16
Nov 23 - Nov 30 Jan 24 - Jan 31 Feb 15 - Feb 22
Dec 4 - Dec 11 Feb 1 - Feb 8
Round Trip Air On Hawaiian • 7 nights at The CAL
Breakfast And Dinner Daily • Round Trip Airport Transfers • Baggage Handling
*at the MGM Grand Station Hotel **6 Night Package

WE ARE YOUR GROUP SPECIALISTS!
Let us arrange your family or class reunion, special celebration or incentive group.
YOUR GROUP - YOUR WAY! CALL TODAY!
A baggage fee of \$25 per person applies to first piece of checked luggage and a baggage fee of \$35 per person applies to second piece of checked luggage. One piece of carry-on baggage permitted at no fee.
Honolulu 591-4700 • Neighbor Island 1(800) 253-4422

WELCOME to Fabulous LAS VEGAS
WELCOME to Fabulous LAS VEGAS
WELCOME to Fabulous LAS VEGAS
WELCOME to Fabulous LAS VEGAS

HANDMADE TOURS
Tel: 541-0316
1000 N. Kalia Ave., Honolulu, HI 96813
www.handmadetours.info

\$100 EARLY BOOKING DISCOUNT
by 3 months before departure date

FULL CIRCLE HOKKAIDO & GOURMET
OCT 10-23, 2016 (14 days)
JAPAN AUTUMN TRAIN RIDES #2
OCT 24-NOV 4, 2016 (12 days)
KYUSHU YUKURI OONSEN
NOV 2-13, 2016 (12 days)
AUTUMN MONJI & OONSEN
NOV 3-14, 2016 (12 days)
AUTUMN SCENIC KYOTO & OTHER AREAS
NOV 26-DEC 7, 2016 (12 days)
SNOW FESTIVAL & KAWAZU SAKURA
FEB 7-18, 2017 (12 DAYS)
HOKKAIDO WINTER TRAIN RIDE
FEB 23 - MAR 4, 2017 (10 DAYS)
MAIN OKINAWA & 6 ISLANDS
FEB 23 - MAR 4, 2017 (10 DAYS)
EARLY SPRING FLOWERS & OONSEN
MAR 5 - 16, 2017 (12 DAYS)
2017 TOURS WILL BE OUT ON WEBSITE SOON

E.S. International Tours
TAR4744 www.esitour.com
Specialized in tailor-made tour packages for different interests.

8-Day Colors of Tokyo
Tokyo • Nikko • Kamakura • Hase

15-Day New Zealand Tour
Queenstown • Milford Sound • Franz Josef • Christchurch • Wellington • Napier • Rotorua • Auckland

Japan 101 Tour
Osaka, Kyoto, Nara, Mt. Fuji, Hakone, Tokyo

Alex Doid Group Journeys
Irrawaddy River (Myanmar)

7-Day Sydney Tour
9-Day Sydney & Melbourne
9-Day New Zealand North Island
9-Day New Zealand South Island
12-Day New Zealand Explorer
14-Day Magnificent New Zealand
11-Day Hokkaido Summer Tour
9-Day Japan 101
8-Day Taiwan Round Island Tour
11-Day Exotic Thailand
11-Day Vietnam Tour
14-Day Vietnam and Angkor Wat Tour

250 Ward Ave. Suite 208, Honolulu HI 96814 PH: 596-0490