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MAGAZINE
ASIA

JULY/AUGUST 2013

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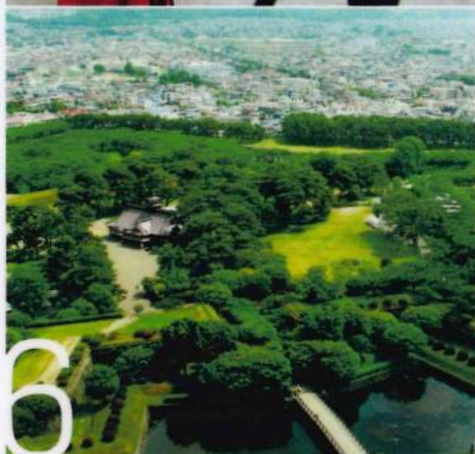
SGD 750
RM 15
NT 270
RP 75,000
THB 195



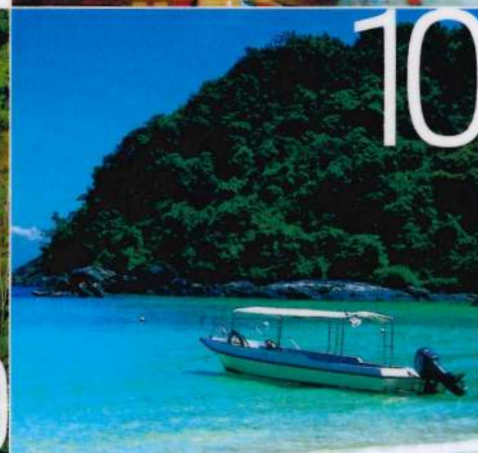
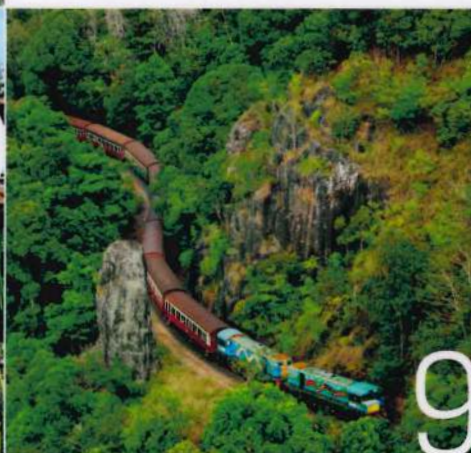
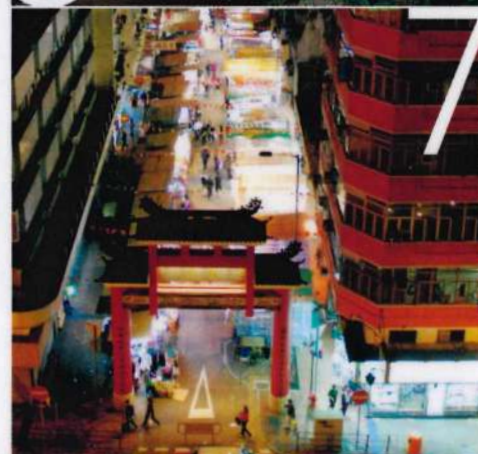
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10 EASY TRIPS



Queensland by rail,
Hokkaido's summer
warmth, a wilderness
experience in Darwin





Serene monasteries, smiling monks and the luxurious Taj Tashi hotel

Bhutan

WHY GO NOW?

The transition period between spring and summer marks an opportune time to visit the land of the thunder dragon – flowers bask in magnificent blooms, vegetation is lush, vivid green paddies are dotted with backs hunched in the air, rolling hills and white dzongs making for a picture-perfect shot. Bhutanese villages and dzongs are extremely picturesque but require stamina – shoes come off at all sacred sanctuaries, while others require long drives and trekking before reaching the dzong in

question. After visiting smiling monks and taking a turn at spinning gigantic prayer wheels found at most dzongs, consider visiting Buddha Point, offering an impressive 360 degree vista of the Thimphu valley, about a 15 minute drive up from town. Or see the awkward-looking Takin, also at Thimphu, where according to legend, Bhutan's national animal was created by the Divine Madman (a saint), who combined the carcass of a cow and a goat's skull to create the animal.

HOW DO I MAKE IT HAPPEN?

■ Direct flights are available from Singapore Changi Airport to Paro Airport via Drukair (drukair.com.sg), with a refuel stop at Kolkata, India. From Kuala Lumpur, fly to Bangkok Suvarnabhumi Airport before connecting to Paro with Drukair, the national carrier airline of Bhutan.

■ One of capital Thimphu's top hotels, the five-star Taj Tashi is an ideal starting point

in exploring Bhutan, centrally located from the main town and local popular hangout, Hong Kong Street. As one of the biggest hoteliers with 66 rooms, the Taj features hand-drawn murals and luxe marble-floored bathrooms in impeccably stylish rooms, where guests can awake to sunrise views of Thimphu's mountains (from US\$475; tajhotels.com).