

WELCOME



Community is everything. Whether you're a writer, an athlete, or a corporate worker, having the right people around you can make or break an experience, or indeed, one's path in life.

It's a sentiment that I felt keenly during a trip to Tokyo last month, where I visited the "Manuscript Writing Café", a unique spot in Japan's capital created specifically for creatives to be able to work in a focused environment that provides an intangible sense of support through solidarity. The owner, Takuya Kawai, sees himself as a coach of sorts, and works from there too: "The manager creates an atmosphere by writing here himself," he said. And he was right: I left four hours later with 3,000 words written, and a true

sense of accomplishment. Leading by example is a time-tested way to build teams that reach inspiring new heights, and there's no better place to see how this is done in the region's travel, tourism, hotels, and aviation industries than the annual *Business Traveller Middle East* awards – which takes place this month. On the 6th of May, 300+ industry C-suite executives, thought leaders, and key decision-makers will gather at The Ritz-Carlton, Dubai International Financial Centre for a gala dinner during which some will receive awards recognising their outstanding impact. Their contributions are an exemplary way to achieve growth, not only for the individuals and teams involved, but for the region as a whole. We can't wait to celebrate you.

One shining example of the type of progress that an inspired community can achieve is Diriyah. The giga-project has transformed the first Saudi state into a jewel worthy of the kings that once lived there, and has begun its new reign as one of the region's most covered cultural destinations. Diriyah was historically celebrated as a place for gathering, and that strength of community still shines through today. Learn more in our cover story (p16).

In order to create a successful community, one must account for the needs of as many of its members as possible, regardless of their physical or intellectual limitations, disabilities, or age. It is inspiring to see so many hotels (p32) and tourism destinations (p22) around the world rising to this challenge through increasingly accessible tourism.

Still, while we all need a fair dose of connection, a bit of introspection never goes amiss – and in an information-overloaded world with an attention economy that constantly demands our hustle, it's little surprise that when it comes to recreation, escapist travel is a trend that's on the rise (p44). Whether you have travel planned this month or not, we hope you enjoy escaping into this issue for now, at least! Until next month.

Yi-Hwa Hanna

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Editor

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