



# The cheeky getaway

Fancy playing hookie? These great experiences are just a hop, skip and a 'copter ride away from the world's business cities

Words by  
Lisa Grainger

# You're in Tokyo...

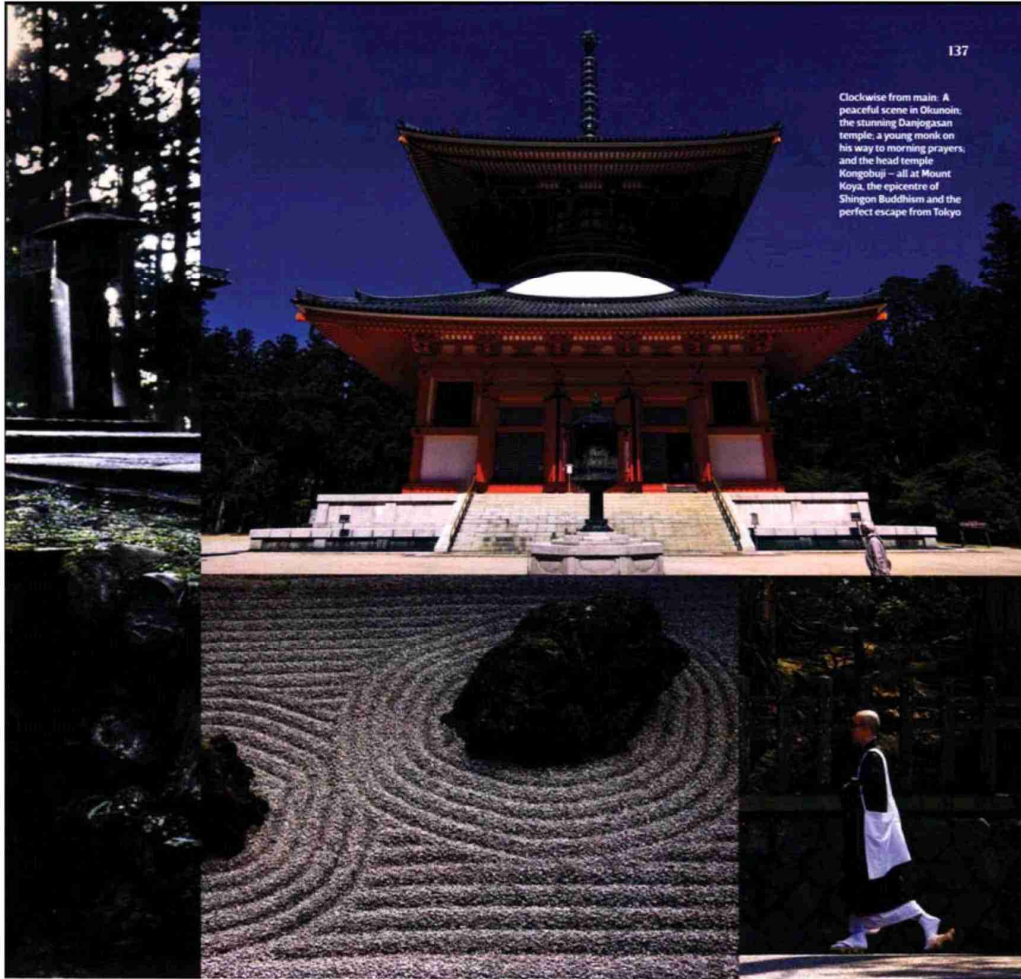
## ... immerse yourself in ancient Nippon

If Tokyo represents all that's cutting edge about Japan, you just need a day or two to discover the authentic, living roots of this country's culture, a short flight away from the gleaming towers of Shinjuku and the stores of Ginza. Fly to Osaka – Japan's third city – but then take a private car transfer to the holy mountain of Koya-san.

This is the heart of Buddhism, Shingon – the resting place of the sect's founder, Kukai,

and a Shangri-la-like land of temples and monasteries, high up in the forested peaks of Mount Koya. And you needn't just be a tourist admiring the sights, beautiful though they are. You can stay in a temple and experience the centuries-old Buddhist way of life, rising for morning prayers with the monks – and learning about their traditions and the story of how Shingon has survived.

If you have time for one more night away before heading back to Tokyo, Nara, the capital of Japan from 710 to 794, is often described as the birthplace of Japanese culture. It's home to many fine temples, shrines and the beautiful Strolling Gardens – and also the Suntory whisky distillery, if you're more into spirits than spirituality.  
[blacktomato.com](http://blacktomato.com)



137

Clockwise from main: A peaceful scene in Okunoin; the stunning Danjogasan temple; a young monk on his way to morning prayers; and the head temple Kongobuji – all at Mount Koya, the epicentre of Shingon Buddhism and the perfect escape from Tokyo

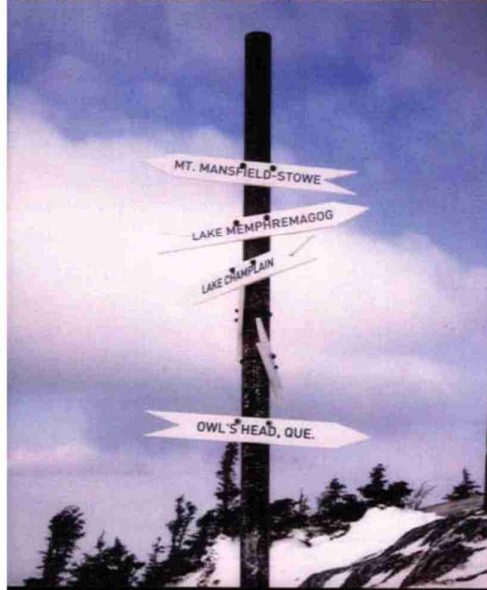
## You're in New York... ... go skiing in Stowe

After Manhattan, sometimes what's needed is a couple of days of back-to-nature downtime, surrounded by trees, mountains, lakes, friendly people – and snow. For while the ski destinations of the West are justifiably renowned, there's also great skiing within striking distance of New York.

Easily reached by a helicopter ride from the East River to Westchester, then an hour's flit on a little Cessna Citation, the handsome resort of

Stowe in Vermont is the East Coast's ski capital – covered in thick powder in which to hurtle, husky-ride or snowmobile on 600 miles of trails. Only 16 per cent of these are greens, making Stowe ideal for experienced skiers, and there's good cross country too. The season runs from late November to late April, but out of season, there's great hiking in the summer and trout to be caught in the autumn.

The place to stay is Topnotch Resort, with 68 rooms – or 23 houses, should privacy be paramount – set within 120 forested acres, alongside a tennis academy, horse stables, a spa and activities centre and, nearby, two golf courses. Stowe is the archetypal Vermont village, complete with white clapboard houses and cobbled streets – and, crucially, great après ski. [originaltravel.co.uk](http://originaltravel.co.uk)



The antithesis of New York City, Stowe in Vermont offers thick powder, incredible views and plenty of après ski

# You're in Bangalore...

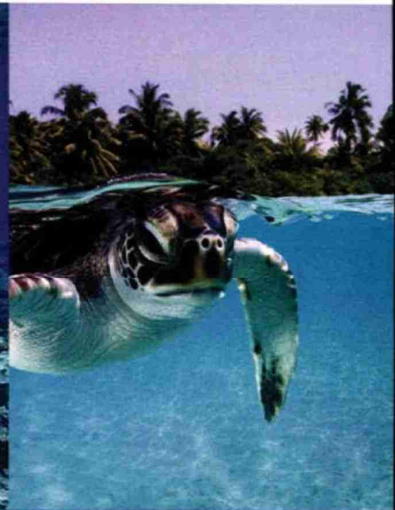
## ... swim with turtles in the Maldives

A little-known fact: Malé, the capital of the Maldives, is just an hour-and-a-half's flight from Bangalore, which means that a weekend dipping in and out of the Indian Ocean is totally viable on the back of a business trip to India's tech city. There are countless resorts across Maldives' sprawling archipelagos, but keep it simple. Head to Cocoa Island, just a 40-minute speedboat ride away when you step off your plane.

Cocoa Island is a classic. Other resorts might offer underwater nightclubs and underground wine cellars. Cocoa's greatest assets are its quiet simplicity – and one of the best house-reefs in the Maldives, just a few strokes across the water from your villa, which means even if you're travelling solo, there are turtles, reef sharks and angel fish for company.

Also on hand are Como's celebrated

Shambhala spa treatments, from Thai massages to Sundari facials, and great food, from super-healthy Shambhala recipes to Indian, Thai and seafood feasts, which can be set up on your private jetty or, if you feel like hiding away, a secluded spot on the beach. Best of all, there are warm, turquoise seas in which to wallow and watch puffs of cloud flit by. [greavesindia.com](http://greavesindia.com)



The classic Maldivian resort Cocoa Island is home to snorkelling, green sea turtles and unbridled luxury – ideal for downtime after a busy trip to Bangalore

## You're in Dubai...

### Drive a Formula 3000 on Abu Dhabi's F1 circuit

Although Abu Dhabi is right next door, the capital of the United Arab Emirates feels a world away from Dubai, with a deserted island, natural mangroves in which to kayak and, most importantly for petrol-heads, racing tracks.

What better way to reward yourself for working hard than by whizzing around the Yas Marina F1 track in a Formula 3000 or Aston Martin GT4?

The most pleasurable way to get there on a clear day is by floatplane, which will take you on a scenic flight past the skyscrapers of Dubai, soaring over the coastline of the Arabian Peninsula, before flitting past the domes of the Emirates Palace and the distinctive red roof of Ferrari World to land near the Formula One circuit.

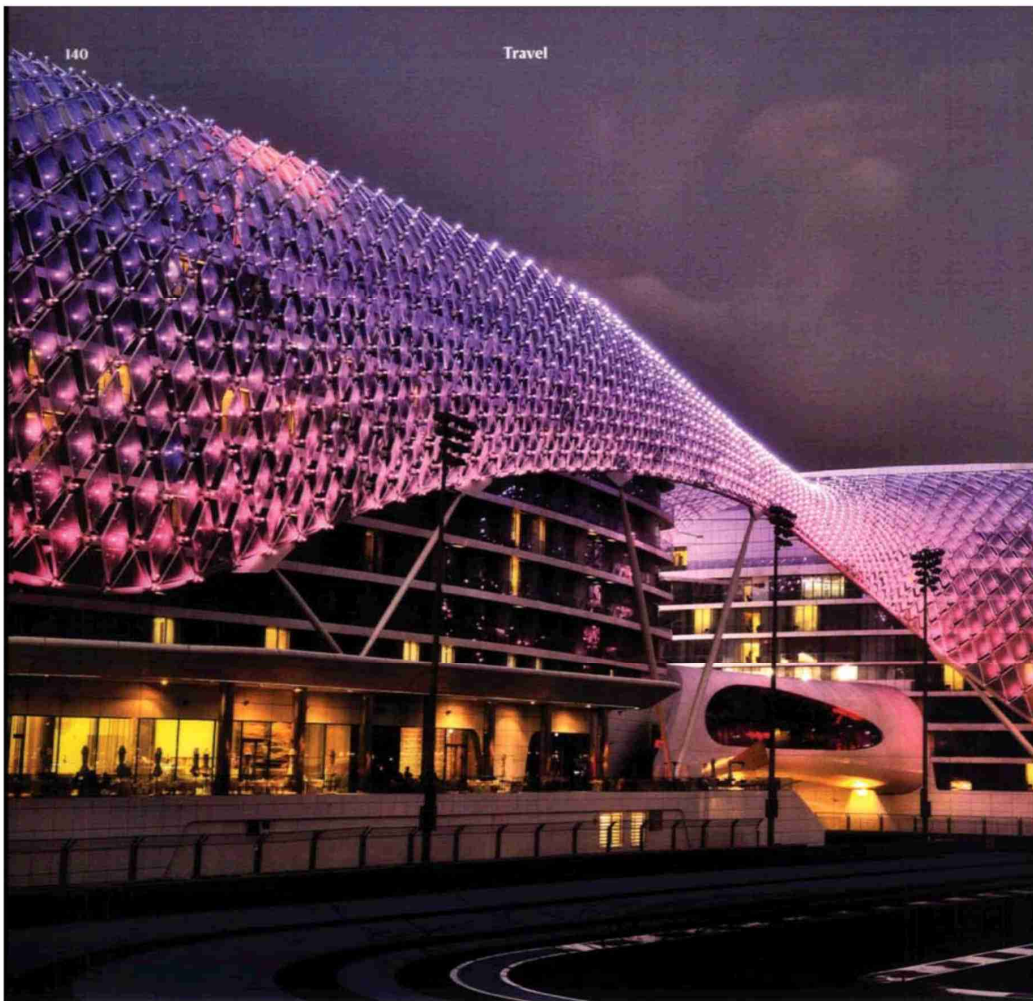
Should that not be adrenalin-fuelled enough, the Al Forsan sports resort is nearby, with a 1.2km

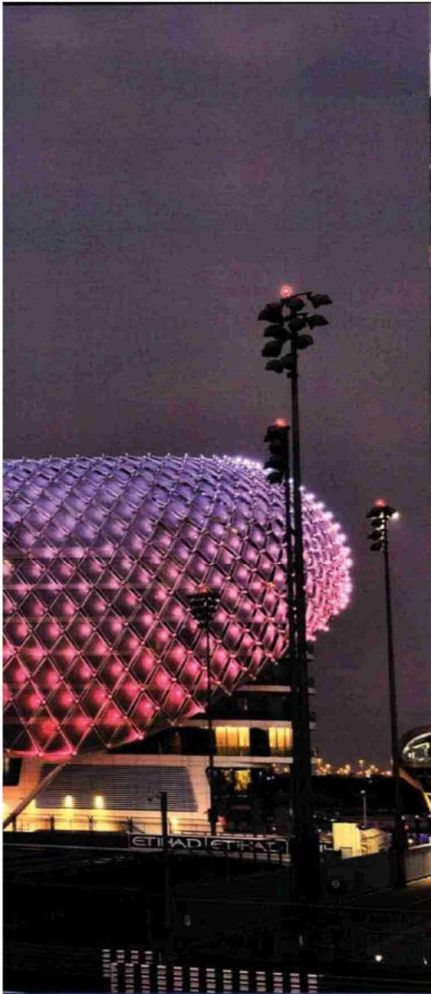
go-kart racing circuit, off-road dirt buggy tracks, as well as shooting ranges and traditional sports such as polo and falconry.

The best human pit-stop is Yas Viceroy, whose rooftop bar actually overlooks the F1 circuit; refuelling spots in the city include Hakkasan, the Michelin-starred Catalan and Quest, with its sky-high views. [abercrombiekent.co.uk](http://abercrombiekent.co.uk)

140

Travel





Clockwise from main: Make the futuristic Yas Viceroy your pit-stop for a trip to the UAE's Abu Dhabi – featuring Formula 3000, falconry and views of the Emirates Palace