

## TRAVEL

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## THE CONCIERGE

## GEO QUIZ

Bukhara and Khiwa, two Silk Road cities rich with Islamic architecture, are in what country?

- Uzbekistan  
 Kazakhstan  
 Afghanistan

Answer below. Source: National Geographic Bee

## TIP SHEET

## Spots buzz with sweet activities

BY J. KEITH VAN STRAATEN

Here's a honey of an idea: a hotel with an apiary where bees are kept. You'll learn why bees are important, and you may get to sample their honey or help as a beekeeper. Here are five spots in the West to get acquainted. (If you are allergic to bee stings, this is probably not for you.)

## Ojai Valley Inn &amp; Spa

Ojai Valley Inn & Spa offers a new immersive experience (includes beekeeping suits) for guests at its new Discover Ojai Center.

**Info, cost:** For those 12 and older, 10 a.m. and 1 p.m. daily (book at least 48 hours in advance), 90 minutes; \$150 per person. (800) 422-6524, [lat.ms/ojavalleybees](http://lat.ms/ojavalleybees)

## Carmel Valley Ranch

The property in Carmel lets Bee Experience guests do beekeeping tasks, including harvesting honey.

**Info, cost:** The Bee Experience costs \$75 for adults, \$50 for children 6-12. (831) 626-2507, [lat.ms/carmelvalleybees](http://lat.ms/carmelvalleybees)

## Calistoga Ranch

Calistoga Ranch in Northern California, which escaped fire damage, offers honey-infused treatments at its Auberge Spa (\$280 and up) and honey-inspired dishes at Lakehouse restaurant. Head groundskeeper Juan Luis will guide you through a secret garden to the hives.

**Cost, info:** Reserve the free tour at least 24 hours in advance. (855) 942-4220, [lat.ms/calistogabees](http://lat.ms/calistogabees)

## Miraval Arizona

Miraval Arizona in Tucson offers "All the Buzz — The Bee Experience," a two-hour mix of lecture, interactive beekeeping class and tasting; "Bees: What's the Story?" a free lecture and discussion of bee-related issues; and "Honey: A Sensual Journey," akin to a wine tasting.

**Cost, info:** "All the Buzz" is \$150; "Honey" is \$100 for a 60-minute tasting. (855) 234-1672, [lat.ms/miravalbees](http://lat.ms/miravalbees).

## Fairmont

## Waterfront, Canada

Fairmont Waterfront in Vancouver is one of more than 20 Fairmont properties with an on-site apiary. It has four beehives on the third floor and a full "bee hotel" on the roof. In summer, the bee butler offers daily tours.

**Cost, info:** Summertime tours are free. (866) 540-4509, [lat.ms/fairmontbees](http://lat.ms/fairmontbees)

## GEO QUIZ ANSWER:

Uzbekistan



Air New Zealand

AIR NEW ZEALAND'S Skycouch is three seats that can turn into a bed. You must pay for all three.

## MONEY MATTERS

## On flight, it's about space

You can be comfortable in coach, but pay attention to seat measurements on different planes.

BY TERRY GARDNER

How lovely it would be to fly first class, but a quick flight search can quickly convince most of us to buy an economy ticket and pray for an upgrade.

A first-class ticket from Los Angeles International Airport to Sydney, Australia, would cost about \$14,000 but a coach seat comes in at \$1,300, a recent search on Kayak showed.

If I have to fly coach, I wondered, which airlines offer the most comfort?

As frequent fliers and travel experts will tell you, it's all about the plane and the pitch, the distance from the back of the seat in front of you to the same spot on your seat.

## Varies by aircraft model

Several experts recommend the Boeing 787, known as the Dreamliner, and the Airbus A350.

Most commercial aircraft are pressurized to 8,000 feet — the equivalent of breathing air a mile and a half up — but these craft are pressurized to 6,000 feet.

"Lower pressure means easier breathing, especially for older travelers or those with respiratory issues, but really for everyone," George Hobica, founder of Airfarewatchdog, said in an email.

The air on these planes also contains more moisture.

"More humidity adds to comfort as

well, Hobica said. It's especially helpful for skin, which will feel less parched.

Brian Karimzad, an analyst at MileCards, a site for finding the best mileage reward cards, likes the A350 for its seat width.

Although the 787 was designed to have eight seats across in economy, many airlines have added a ninth seat "which makes it one of the tightest layouts in the sky," he said.

On Singapore Airlines, for instance, an A350 economy seat is 18 inches wide, but on Qantas' 787, an economy seat is 17.2 inches wide.

Japan Airlines has only eight seats across coach on its 787, so seat width ranges from 17.5 to 18.9 inches. Cheers to wiggle room.

## Pitch, legroom, face space

Airlines typically measure legroom based on seat pitch.

Airlines claim new slimmer seats with thinner cushions can create more legroom, and indeed, they may, but there may be less space between the back of the seat in front of you and your face.

"Fliers need to think about 'face pitch,' because the seatback of the passenger in front of you is now sometimes closer to your face," Karimzad said.

"You have more legroom but less face space, which can be claustrophobic."

## Comfiest carriers

Here are the airlines that frequent fliers think have the most comfortable economy class.

Karimzad recommends Delta for having "the most consistently good economy seats for international flights, because its 777s are nine seats

across, not 10."

Delta's economy seat on its 777-200ER is 18.5 inches wide and has a 31- to 32-inch seat pitch. (Delta Comfort Plus seats are the same width but have a 35-inch seat pitch.)

Karimzad also likes Delta's 767 for its 2-3-2 layout. Delta's 767 seats have a 31- to 32-inch seat pitch but are only 17.9 inches wide.

John DiScala, founder of the travel website JohnnyJet, likes JetBlue, citing more legroom.

With an average seat width of 17.8 inches and a basic seat pitch of 34 inches, JetBlue's economy class has, if not room to spare, at least room to move your legs.

Hobica's choice is Air New Zealand's Skycouch. It's not, strictly speaking, an economy seat because it's three seats together that turn into what Hobica called "a wide bed." You must pay for all three seats.

"Honestly, if there are two people traveling together and they snuggle well, these beds are almost more comfortable than business class on some airlines," Hobica said. "Two people can buy three seats and sleep soundly."

Shane Dallas, a.k.a. the Travel Camel, recommends Emirates' economy cabin.

The airline's economy class seats on its A380 are 18 inches wide and have a 32-inch seat pitch.

Sometimes, comfort is also psychic.

"I particularly love the [in-flight entertainment], the best in the skies," Dallas said, "and the service from a multinational cabin crew."

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## TOURS &amp; CRUISES

## FRANCE &amp; GERMANY

## A quick jolt of yule spirit

Dreaming of a holiday season river trip, but don't have the time (or money) to spend a week or more cruising?

CroisiEurope offers themed four-day Christmas market cruises that will get you into the holiday spirit. The Rhine River trip, which departs from Strasbourg, France, visits the Alsace region of France and Germany's Black Forest. At the lively market in Freiburg, Germany, vacationers can browse for locally made blown glass and wooden toys. At the Colmar market in Alsace, they visit cinnamon-scented Christmas markets and tour the Ecomuseum, which showcases Alsatian yule traditions.

**Dates:** Nov. 28-Dec. 1, Dec. 4-7, 7-10, 10-13

**Price:** From \$671, per person, double occupancy. Includes meals, excursions and port fees. Reduced fees for children. International airfare not included.

**Info:** CroisiEurope, (800) 768-7232, [www.croisieurope.com/cruises.com](http://www.croisieurope.com/cruises.com)

— ROSEMARY MCCLURE

## IRELAND

## Biking Donegal

Pedal through remote County Donegal on a new six-night bicycle tour offered by Wilderness Ireland. Highlights include the sea cliffs at Slieve League, among the highest in Ireland; beautiful Glenties National Park and its castle; Lough Swilly, famous for wildlife watching; and Malin Head, Ireland's most northern point and the backdrop for the upcoming "Star Wars" movie. The excursion begins and ends in Sligo; participants will cycle 20 to 40 miles a day.

**Dates:** May 12-18, May 26-June 1, June 16-22, Aug. 18-24, Sept. 1-7

**Price:** About \$2,125 per person. Includes six nights accommodations, most meals, ride support, luggage transfers and entrance fees. International airfare not included.

**Info:** Wilderness Ireland, [lat.ms/bikedonegal](http://lat.ms/bikedonegal)

— ANNE HARNAGEL

## BORNEO

## Island in focus

Explore the world's third-largest island with travel and wildlife photographer Michele Burgess. The 19-day itinerary includes a day in Kuala Lumpur before flying to the sultanate of Brunei with its traditional Malay water village, mosques and Royal Regalia Museum. Other highlights include the bustling city of Kota Kinabalu in Malaysia's Sabah state, boat trips along the Kinabatangan River to photograph wildlife and visits to the Labuk Bay Proboscis Monkey Sanctuary. Highlights in the Malaysian state of Sarawak include the Semenggoh Wildlife Centre for orangutans and honey bears.

**Dates:** April 2-20

**Price:** \$7,650 per person, double occupancy; single supplement \$1,500. Includes round-trip airfare from LAX, accommodations, most meals and sightseeing.

**Info:** In Focus with Michele Burgess, (714) 536-6104, [www.infocustravel.com](http://www.infocustravel.com)

— ANNE HARNAGEL

## DEAL OF THE WEEK

## Holiday savings for New Orleans cheer

The luxury Windsor Court Hotel in New Orleans, near the city's French Quarter, sweetens the holidays with up to 20% off room rates.

**The deal:** The hotel discounts rooms 10% on Fridays and Saturdays and 20% Sundays through Thursdays from Nov. 19 to Jan. 6, based on availability. Rooms can be as low as \$212 a night weekdays and \$342 on weekends. Forbes, which rated the hotel four stars in 2016, describes its style as "British aristocratic."

**Info:** (800) 262-2662, [lat.ms/windsor-noel](http://lat.ms/windsor-noel)

— MARY FORGIONE



SARA ESSEX BRADLEY Windsor Court

DISCOUNTS on rooms at the Windsor Court Hotel in New Orleans could mean a very merry Christmas near the French Quarter.