

## hot spots Hotel Mulia, Jakarta

**Where is it?** With 996 guests rooms, Hotel Mulia, in Jakarta, is one of the biggest in Southeast Asia. A short hop from the main business district, it's an oasis of opulence in the greenbelt opposite Bung Karno soccer stadium and an 18-hole golf course. The hotel has a huge pool, a heated Jacuzzi, the obligatory spa, a gym, tennis courts and a business centre.

**What's the big deal?** The Mulia is the flagship in the real estate empire of an Indonesian Chinese family, meaning it's a local luxury hotel competing against foreign-owned ventures, including the Shangri-La, the Grand Hyatt, the Ritz-Carlton, the Four Seasons, the InterContinental and the JW Marriott. If avoiding the hotel chains isn't a strong enough draw in itself, the Mulia's Indonesian ownership has proved a selling point with businessmen from multinational companies, particularly those from the US, following the 2003 bombing of the Marriott in Jakarta.

**What's on the menu?** The revamped Cafe, the hotel's main restaurant on the ground floor, reopened in December and features five zones based on the

elements: earth, water, fire, wood and gold. The entrance near the water zone has a dizzying bank of diamond-white lights and flat-screen televisions. The sushi bar wraps around a floor-to-ceiling funnel of traditional white wood carvings installed behind a slab of volcanic rock.

The Cafe is open 24 hours and lays on lavish buffets for breakfast, lunch and dinner, with Japanese, Thai, western and Indonesian stations. There are two private dining rooms for special occasions, such as the wine dinners the hotel hosts.

Italian restaurant Il Mare specialises in seafood, of course. It crafts tasty fare such as salty Alaskan crab balls in zucchini soup and scallops with foie gras. Its Sunday brunch, with traditional delicacies and free-flowing sparkling wine, is a favourite of expats.

**Any other quirks?** The hotel prides itself on its lavish flower arrangements in the lobby and the rooms. It also has its own in-house chocolate store and chocolatiers. The huge ballroom can accommodate up to 4,000 guests and the nightclub, CJ's, is popular.



**So it's pretty plush?** Guests in the 115 suites get teddy bears and monogrammed bathrobes to take home. They also receive a customised chocolate selection each day. At the end of the day, bed down on 1,000-thread-count sheets and make a choice from the pillow menu: do you want latex foam, sand or down in your pillow?

**What's the bottom line?** Brunch at Il Mare is a good deal at 318,000 rupiah (HK\$263). Rack rates range from US\$255 for a single room to US\$321 for an executive room, with round-trip airport transfers and breakfast. Special offers are available, with prices as low as US\$113 for an extended stay.

Add a 10 per cent service charge and an 11 per cent government tax to all rates in Indonesia.

Hotel Mulia is at Jl Asia Afrika Senayan, Jakarta, Indonesia, tel: 62 21 574 7777; www.hotelmulia.com. Alex Frew McMillan

## spree Paris department stores

When you're short on time for retail therapy in the city of love, head to the world's chicest department stores for a one-stop shopping session.

If you can visit only one department store in Paris, make it **Le Bon Marche** (24 rue de Sevres; www.lebonmarche.fr). This grande dame, with its Gustave Eiffel-designed steel and glass structure, has been serving up fineries to locals in the swanky 7th arrondissement since the mid-1800s. Expect fur-draped madames escorted to the door by their trusty chauffeurs as well as Lanvin, Stella McCartney, Miu Miu, Prada and friends. Foodies head to Le Grande Epicerie and inhale. Fashionistas consult the store's personal stylists. Buy nothing, buy everything, but take your time: this is a people-watching destination like no other.

**Galleries Lafayette** (above; 40 Boulevard Haussmann; www.gallerieslafayette.com) is as much a tourist attraction for its stunning art nouveau design and mammoth domed atrium as it is a consumer paradise. At 3J, its annual three-day (*trois jours*) sale, vast quantities of goods are up for grabs.

Only here could you find Ronald McDonald and the world-renowned Mavrommatis brothers (with their Laurier eatery) in the same store. Not enough? Daily cooking classes are held in Lafayette Maison for those in search of gourmand secrets.



Good things come in threes. The **Au Printemps** flagship department store (64 Boulevard Haussmann; www.printemps.com) is so extensive it needs three buildings – the Printemps de la Mode, de l'Homme and de la Beauté Maison. Any girl worth her weight in Christian Louboutins will go directly to the luxury first floor of the building dedicated to fashion, hand over her credit card and let the stylists do the walking. Then, there's the decadent Tea Salon, the Paul Smith-designed World Bar for mid-shop martinis, "Be", the Alain Ducasse bakery for brioche, and the Brasserie Printemps, where shoppers can dine under the stained-glass Haussmann dome, built in 1923.

Fancy yourself as a designer? Indulge your inner Philippe Starck at **Bazar de l'Hotel de Ville** (14 Rue du Temple; www.

bhv.fr), a giant department store dedicated to all things DIY, from hand-woven curtain tassels to glass-cut door knobs and an entire floor wholly dedicated to art supplies. There are dress fabrics, blocks for millinery and even shoemakers' tools. You can find the usual fashion, beauty, music and toys but at affordable prices. This historical department store, the city's second oldest, is considered the least expensive in the French capital.

Roll up your sleeves and dig in at **Tati** (4 Boulevard Rochechouart; www.tati.fr), Paris' iconic bargain-basement department store. You'll be vying for space with the city's eclectic shoppers in search of the ultimate bargain. Founded in 1948 by Jules Ouaki, with a mission to sell clothes at the lowest prices, it's pure chaos.

Rachael Oakes-Ash

## trial run Contura suit carrier

It has long been the conundrum of the business traveller: how does one carry a suit while on the road without it becoming creased. Bulky suit bags would seem the sensible option but they quickly lose shape and can lack durability.

The Contura suit carrier appears to offer a solution. It features a foam cut-out, around which clothing is folded so that it does not crease. And it works.

Created by Hong Kong engineer Wade Tang and produced by Omnibus, the Contura carrier is essentially a two-part system that holds your suit in position. Jacket and trousers are folded around the specially shaped mould, which is made from a recyclable thermoplastic rubber manufactured in Taiwan by Nike. This package is then zipped up in a soft case of polyester twill made by luggage brand Tumi.

The complete parcel will fit easily into a carry-on suitcase, a backpack or a duffel bag. Omnibus will be introducing a direct sales and delivery service in mid-July and buyers will be able to receive a tutorial upon purchase. The Contura Suit carrier is expected to retail for HK\$468. For more information, visit www.omnibus.com. Nicholas Walton

