

## Athens

### FOUR SEASONS HOTEL ASTIR PALACE

Before it was given new life by Four Seasons following a three-year renovation, this sprawling property set in what's described as Athens' Riviera – all shades of green and blue – was a favourite with the international jet set; guests have included Frank Sinatra, Nelson Mandela and, more recently, Lady Gaga and Barack Obama. That Sixties-heyday feel permeates in its new avatar with the refurb carefully enhancing the charms of days gone by. This is most obvious in the 61 private bungalows – half of which boast private pools – which maintain many of their original design features including striped pelmet blinds. A seafront boardwalk connects them to the rest of the hotel, where 303 rooms, including 43 suites, are spread across two buildings. Despite the large scale (75 acres in total), the separation into three distinct parts allows each area to retain the feel of a smaller resort, with the added bonus of access to all the facilities – take your pick from tennis, basketball, football, water sports, cooking lessons, grape pairings and spa experiences. Dining has been carefully considered to ensure that this hotel remains a destination in its own right – an apparent success given the number of well-heeled Athenians sitting at tables in one of the many restaurants. The range spans from Greek at Taverna 37 to freshly caught seafood at Pelagos and Argentinian steak, served alongside ceviche and tacos, at open-air HELIOS. Grape bar Avra sports interiors designed by Martin Brudnizki of London's Sexy Fish and Annabel's fame. The celebrity might have changed but the fame remains the same. – *Katie Silcox*

**FLASH POINT** Spa treatments are based on the teaching of Hippocrates, such as a blissful 60-minute Frodida body ritual. [fourseasons.com](http://fourseasons.com)





Toby Skinner

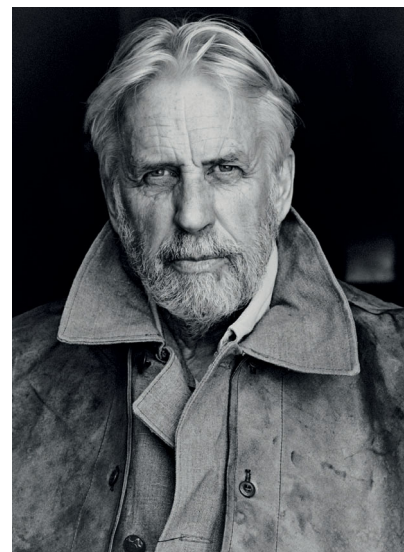
An award-winning editor and writer, Skinner has a passion for adventure and people-driven storytelling. He is also a Contributing Editor at *Condé Nast Traveller's* UK edition.

**Based in:** London

**Wrote:** Colour code, p 14

**I enjoyed driving through and writing about Morocco because...** The country always feels very textured and layered. I love the tumbling roof terraces, as if a bunch of cubes have been scattered across the land, and the sense of layers of paint added through history. A lot of places around the world are increasingly starting to look the same; Morocco is one of those places that remains resolutely itself. Exotic has become a tricky word, but it still feels thrillingly exotic to me.

**What are your hotel indulgences that you rarely get to at home?** Putting on a fluffy robe and padding toward a swimming pool or hot tub is happiness for me. I also like a good rainforest shower, though hotels need to stop using plastic mini-bottles. I also love an electric blackout curtain; pressing a button and watching a curtain give way to a teeming city below is a thrill.



Stanley Stewart

Award-winning travel writer and regular *Condé Nast Traveller* contributor Stewart has authored three travel books on the Nile, China and Mongolia. His travels have taken him to every continent and all five oceans, including the Arctic.

**Based in:** Rome & Dorset, England

**Wrote:** Space oddity, p 76

**Travelling to Antarctica for the feature was special because...** The beauty of Antarctica lies in its simplicity, those great white glaciers stretching to untroubled horizons. This is a place where human habitation, except with the most careful arrangements, is simply impossible. There is a thrill about travelling to somewhere that is beyond human possibility: the last true wilderness.

**What are your hotel indulgences that you rarely get to at home?** Spa treatments. There is nothing quite so wonderful as a soothing massage and a soak in a hot tub at the end of a hectic day. In the Dolomites recently I had the novel experience of a hay bath. It is not as prickly as it sounds.



Steve King

King is editor-at-large for British *Condé Nast Traveller*. He is constantly setting off on dream trips and is, afterwards, beset by agreeable flashbacks. The current global pandemic has limited the trips and made him value the flashbacks all the more.

**Based in:** Glasgow

**Wrote:** Room with a view, p 90

**What memory stands out from your time at Sanctuary Olonana, Kenya?** At breakfast each morning, on a terrace overlooking the river, I watched, entranced, as weaver birds busied themselves (as weaver birds will do) weaving their magnificent spherical nests. Those beautiful, brilliant, industrious birds achieved more in a couple of days than I have achieved in my working life to this point.

**What are your hotel indulgences that you rarely get to at home?** I had to think about this one for a minute. I concluded that I behave much better and less indulgently in hotels than I do at home. Perhaps there is something wrong with me.

Tom Parker

Parker has shot in nearly 90 countries around the world and loves nothing more than being dropped in new environments, whether the backstreets of Kolkata or the desert in northern Chad. When not at the airport, he can be found on a tennis court or talking late into the night with friends.

**Based in:** Lake District, UK

**Photographed:** Space oddity, p 76

**What stands out most about photographing Antarctica?** When I first landed in Antarctica the quiet

was overpowering – there's an eerie silence and stillness, punctuated only by the crunch of ice under your footsteps. Every moment felt like a privilege – there were spots very few humans had ever seen or set foot in. On such a well-trodden planet it's difficult to find places like this anymore.

**What are your hotel indulgences that you rarely get to at home?** It's not a physical indulgence but I love the anonymity of hotels: arriving in a city late at night as a total stranger, where nobody knows anything about you. I love long showers after a big day's shooting – I'm lucky to stay in some beautiful hotels and the bathrooms are much better equipped than mine!



Fatie Silcox

Photo editor and travel writer Silcox has spent a decade living around the world, from India and Sri Lanka to Dubai, Greece and the UK.

In addition to *Condé Nast Traveller*, she's worked with titles such as *Lonely Planet*, *GQ*, *Refinery 29*, *Culture Trip* and *Fodors*.

**Based in:** Athens

**Picture edited:** Secret beaches, p 30

**The most surprising thing while picture-researching the Middle East's secret beaches feature was...** The fact that in this day and

(Instagram-heavy) age, some places are still secret! I lived and worked in the UAE for three years and like to think I explored the region well, but even still, some of these beaches were new to me.

**What are your hotel indulgences that you rarely get to at home?** For me, it's about the beds – more specifically, the pillows. Any time I check into a luxury hotel, I know I'm going to have an amazing night's sleep because they are just so comfortable. Maybe it's time for me to invest in some hotel-worthy pillows for my own home.





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ISSN 2310-3760 80  
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