

Condé Nast Traveler

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TRUTH IN TRAVEL

OCTOBER 2008

ASIA NOW

GREAT VALUES, GREAT TRIPS

INDIA'S
GOLD COAST

TAIWAN'S
TREASURE TROVE

SHANGHAI'S
SEXY HEART

ENDLESS SUMMER

4 QUICK GETAWAYS
TO HAWAII,
MEXICO, AND MORE

PARADISE ON SALE

UNBELIEVABLE
BARGAINS IN TOP
HOTELS & RESORTS

(Free flights, nights,
meals, treatments)

BUSINESS TRAVEL POLL BEST HOTELS, AIRLINES

Hong Kong Heroes

(A city's best-kept secrets often lie behind closed doors.
These five trendsetters have the keys)

Cocktail hour: On
Sevva's roof terrace.



1.

Benson Soo THE CONCIERGE

Want to know how to get your paws on a limited edition Bulgari watch, when the new giant panda will debut at Hong Kong's Ocean Park, or the best place to have your face read? Ask Benson Soo, chief concierge at the Landmark Mandarin Oriental Hotel. Soo's Hong Kong contacts and connections, known in Mandarin Chinese as *guanxi*, are second to none. "I can get guests access to places, services, and events—like our secret concerts by such stars as Wyckliff Jean—that they'd never experience otherwise," he says (852-2132-0188; mandarinoriental.com/landmark; doubles, \$575–\$755).

2.

Bonnie Gokson THE RESTAURATEUR

Former fashion exec Gokson was the creative force behind Hong Kong's swank Joyce Cafés, which flourished in the nineties. "People kept asking me to bring them back," she says. Not content with mere reinvention, she found a space for a new venture. **Sevva**, a 360-degree-view rooftop lounge with two elegant dining rooms, immediately became the city's must-go eatery, with an eclectic menu featuring jumbo Indian *dosas* filled with Italian cheese, and Chinese clay pots with crackling rice. Next: restaurant gigs with W and Ritz-Carlton (25/F Princes Bldg.; 852-2537-1388; entrées, \$24–\$108).

3.

Joe Wong THE MASSEUR

Before the Grand Hyatt's Plateau spa opened in 2004, if you wanted a treatment in Hong Kong your only option was a seedy massage parlor. The 80,000-square-foot spa now has stiff competition from ritzier outfits, but those needing serious kneading always look to Wong, a.k.a. Asia's Best Hands. He's unassuming for a legend: "I just help guests relax," he says. His signature treatments, which dissolve the most tenacious knots, are deep-tissue and Chinese massage. And his secret? "Focusing on the simplicity and integrity of each and every stroke" (852-2588-1234; hongkong.grand@hyatt.com; massages, \$51–\$180).

4.

Arnold Wong THE BAR OWNER

"It was love at first sight," says Wong of the four 1888 shophouses he restored and reopened as **The Pawn**, a feat in a city better known for replacing old quarters with glass towers. H.K.'s hip young things can't get enough of the gastropub's imported beers and Asian-inspired cocktails (like the chili-guava margarita), as well as gastropub grub like steak and kidney pie. Wong cut his teeth at the Press Room, a lively brasserie on social-shopping artery Hollywood Road, and cheese shop Classified, in Sheung Wan—look out for a new mozzarella bar this fall (62 Johnston Rd.; 852-2866-3444; entrées, \$16–\$75).

5.

Joanne Ooi THE FASHIONISTA/ GALLERIST

As creative director of fashion house Shanghai Tang, Ooi nurtures indigenous talent like Lanvin alum Joseph Li and stakes out new outposts—a store will soon be unveiled in Hong Kong's former Marine Police Headquarters. This year, she leveraged her network to open **Ooi Botos Gallery**, behind an origami-rippled facade on Gresson Street in Wan Chai, where she displays the work of homegrown avant-garde photographers and video and installation artists. "Having my own gallery allows me to be unconventional and totally uncompromising in my vision," Ooi says (852-2527-9733; ooibotos.com).

Dress Comme des Garçons at H&M prices—guest designer **REI KAWAKUBO**'s collection debuts in Tokyo this fall (hm.com).