

Suites from  
\$400

← From left: Nanjing's Porcelain Tower; Beijing's Aman Summer Palace.

always has Peking duck at Dadong (where the **Obamas** have dined) and Beijing Yan, which features a live opera show. The Great Wall attracts A-listers, including **Tom Brady**, who visited with his son in June, as does the Forbidden City, of which ex-NBA star (and Green's boyfriend) **Jason Collins** says, "The grounds are beautiful." In November, American Airlines launched direct flights between L.A. and Beijing, a 13-hour trip on the 787 Dreamliner with 28 full lie-flat seats in business class (\$2,905 round-trip).

## Beijing on a Baller's Budget

New hotspots include a Chinese producer's favorite movie theater, Vin Diesel's 'remarkable' hotel room and presidential suites with VR headsets **By Jimmy Im**

**B**eijing, China's capital, is fast building a futuristic metropolis with landmark attractions (like the \$7.4 billion, 1,600-acre Universal Studios debuting in 2020) and a stand-out dining scene. A magnet for A-listers, Aman Summer Palace (suites from \$400) boasts a private entrance and exclusive access to the Summer Palace, an imperial garden in the Qing Dynasty.

"Having a peek at the park in the early morning is one of a kind," says *The Help* producer **Brunson Green**, who ran into **Rosamund Pike** there. While shooting *The Fate of the Furious*, **Vin Diesel** did a Facebook Live video from the Rosewood Beijing (from \$333), which offers a Jaguar XJL house car, stating: "I rarely, rarely, rarely, rarely shout out a hotel but ... this is pretty remarkable."

Peninsula Beijing recently unveiled renovated rooms (from \$335) accented with jade, marble and bronze and designed to mimic luxury yacht interiors. Producer **Ying Ye** of Easternlight Films (an arm of Arclight Films) watches hit Chinese movies at Taikoo Li, Sanlitun, one of Beijing's "It" spots: "Sitting in the theater with a Chinese audience is a great way to know the market." Ying

### Weekend Trips Outside Beijing

**QINGDAO** Known for its beaches, Qingdao, accessible via a four-plus-hour bullet train ride, has German roots and thriving beer fests. The \$8 billion Qingdao Movie Metropolis, on an artificial island by Dalian Wanda Group, features the world's largest movie-making facility.

**NANJING** A two-hour flight away (China Eastern flies direct), this bastion of traditional culture is replete with museums and sites like the Ming Dynasty tombs. Plan your visit around the opening of Nanjing Green Towers in early 2018, a vertical air-purifying forest by famed architect **Stefano Boeri**. Stay at The Grand Mansion (from \$311), which overlooks the Presidential Palace courtyard.

**HONG KONG** A starry stomping ground that's a three-plus-hour flight away (Cathay Pacific flies direct), the city recently has been visited by **Ariana Grande**, **Venus Williams** and **Rashida Jones**. The landmark Mandarin Oriental's presidential suite (\$16,000) features a drop-down projector screen, virtual reality headset and high-end popcorn machine; in January, the NYC-style speakeasy Please Don't Tell opens there. New restaurants include Ying Lee Club by Michelin-starred chef **Siu Hin-Chi**; Aussie chef **Nate Green's** Rhoda, serving haute cuisine; and Haku, a tucked-away Spanish/Japanese spot by local hero **Agustin Balbi**. Collins suggests Quinary for "finishing your night. It's always packed because of the inventive cocktails and atmosphere." **THR**

## L.A. Gets China-Ready

**D**onald Trump's travel bans may have rattled the U.S. tourism sector — arrivals are down 5.3 percent since 2016, according to the National Travel and Tourism Office — but China is bucking the trend. "Chinese travelers don't seem to care about" such criticism (the president accused China of "raping" the U.S. in trade), says **Lin Wang** of the trade group National Tour Association. "Many like Trump because he used to be a celebrity." Thus, it's no surprise that L.A. is a top overseas market. While 2.9 million Chinese visit the U.S. annually, according to U.S. Travel's **David Huether**, 1.3 million travel to California. L.A. is a gateway city with a large Asian population and attractions, from Universal Studios to the Hollywood sign, that appeal to the Chinese. In 2016, L.A. became the "first U.S. city to welcome a million visitors from China," says the Los Angeles Tourism and Convention Board's **Kathy Smits**.

It's not just the number of travelers, it's how much they spend. According to Huether, the average spend per person per visit to the U.S. in 2016 was \$2,546. The Chinese spend \$6,901 on average.

Locals have taken note. The L.A. Tourism & Convention Board has for the past three years run a China Ready program (recently rebranded as Nihao China) to encourage tourism; 150 businesses, from The Getty Center to Malibu Wine

Safaris and Wilshire Limo Services, have participated. Peninsula Beverly Hills, known for monogramming pillowcases in Chinese characters, offers a Bespoke Beverly Hills experience guided by a Mandarin-speaking personal shopper with unlimited access to luxury boutiques (\$1,045). The Four Seasons Beverly Hills — which has Chinese menus and a Chinese event coordinator in addition to Chinese-style slippers, robes and kettles in rooms — creates custom content on its channel on WeChat, China's dominant social media platform. Says Four Seasons director of sales and marketing **Greg Velasquez**: "The Chinese market 'has surpassed every other market except Canada and the U.K.'" In December, Luxe Hotels, located in West L.A., downtown and on Rodeo Drive, will begin accepting Alipay and WeChatPay, China's largest mobile payment services. Says Luxe's **Adam Sydenham**, "With year-on-year growth, it seemed to be the next sensible step."

As for shopping, Barneys New York, Breguet and Cartier are decorating storefronts for Chinese New Year, and Rodeo Drive stores from Hermes to Bulgari have on premises at least one Mandarin speaker. Chanel and Burberry will set aside merch likely to sell well to the Chinese. And for the Year of the Dog, on Feb. 16, Hong Kong Air is expanding flights, says chief marketing officer **George Liu**: "We chose L.A. as our first nonstop route in the U.S. because it is a hub for business and leisure travel for the Asian market." — SHANNON BOWEN AND ALEXANDRA CHENEY



The Four Seasons L.A. at Beverly Hills lobby decorated for Chinese New Year.

# HOLLYWOOD ORDER

## DISNEY-PIXAR POST-LASSETER

Animation's fraught future amid a top creator's 'sabbatical'

## ACTOR ROUNDTABLE

Tom Hanks on harassment: 'There are predators everywhere'

# Sorkin, Off Script

Hollywood's most celebrated and scrutinized writer ups the ante for his directing debut, *Molly's Game*, and unleashes on his fears, the critics and his idea for a *West Wing* reboot (hint: no Trump)

