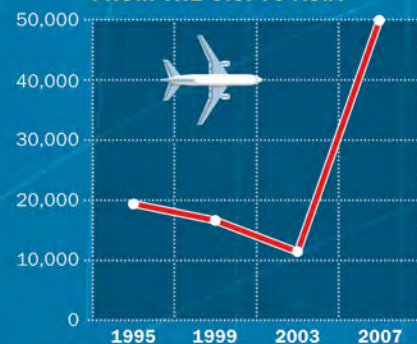


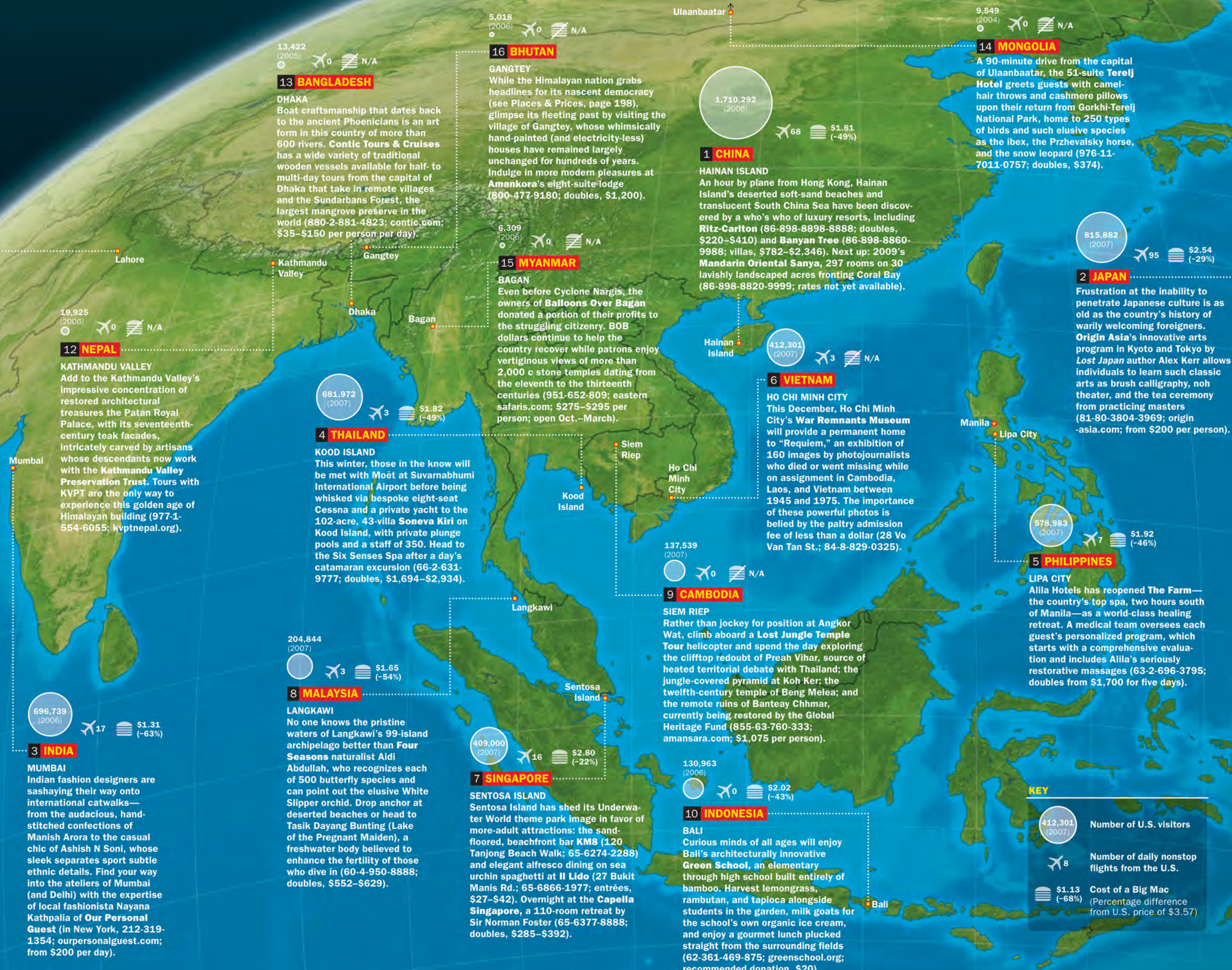
# Occidental Tourists

More Americans are traveling to Asia than ever before. Here's where we're going, from No. 1 China—where a Big Mac (and just about everything else) costs half what you'd pay at home—to No. 16, a blissfully McDonald's-free Bhutan. Plus: **Cynthia Rosenfeld** gives a host of reasons to go *now* to a region where even the humbled dollar can hold its head high

NONSTOP FLIGHTS FROM THE U.S. TO ASIA



GRAPHICS BY HAISAM HUSSEIN



**11 PAKISTAN**  
LAHORE  
Goose-stepping soldiers have met at the India-Pakistan border, near the Pakistani town of Lahore, every evening since the Radcliffe Line was drawn by the British in 1947 following the Partition of India. The concierge at the **Pearl Continental Hotel** can arrange car transfer to the sunset ceremony, which requires perfect coordination as Pakistani patriots in olive drab and India's khaki-clad guards lower their flags in silent unison (92-42-636-0210; doubles, \$483-\$567).

**12 NEPAL**  
KATHMANDU VALLEY  
Add to the Kathmandu Valley's impressive concentration of restored architectural treasures the Patan Royal Palace, with its seventeenth-century teak facades, intricately carved by artisans whose descendants now work with the Kathmandu Valley Preservation Trust. Tours with KVPT are the only way to experience this golden age of Himalayan building (977-1-554-6055; kvptnepal.org).

**3 INDIA**  
MUMBAI  
Indian fashion designers are sashaying their way onto international catwalks—from the audacious, hand-stitched confections of Manish Arora to the casual chic of Ashish N Soni, whose sleek separates sport subtle ethnic details. Find your way into the ateliers of Mumbai (and Delhi) with the expertise of local fashionista Nayana Kathpalia of **Our Personal Guest** (in New York, 212-319-1354; ourpersonalguest.com; from \$200 per day).

**4 THAILAND**  
KODD ISLAND  
This winter, those in the know will be met with Moët at Suvarnabhumi International Airport before being whisked via bespoke eight-seat Cessna and a private yacht to the 102-acre, 43-villa **Soneva Kiri** on Kood Island, with private plunge pools and a staff of 350. Head to the Six Senses Spa after a day's catamaran excursion (66-2-631-9777; doubles, \$1,694-\$2,934).

**13 BANGLADESH**  
DHAKA  
Boat craftsmanship that dates back to the ancient Phoenicians is an art form in this country of more than 600 rivers. **Cotic Tours & Cruises** has a wide variety of traditional wooden vessels available for half- to multi-day tours from the capital of Dhaka that take in remote villages and the Sundarbans Forest, the largest mangrove preserve in the world (880-2-881-4823; cotic.com; \$35-\$150 per person per day).

**15 MYANMAR**  
BAGAN  
Even before Cyclone Nargis, the owners of **Balloons Over Bagan** donated a portion of their profits to the struggling citizenry. BOB dollars continue to help the country recover while patrons enjoy vertiginous views of more than 2,000 stone temples dating from the eleventh to the thirteenth centuries (951-652-809; easternsafaris.com; \$275-\$295 per person; open Oct.-March).

**8 MALAYSIA**  
LANGKAWI  
No one knows the pristine waters of Langkawi's 99-island archipelago better than **Four Seasons** naturalist Aidi Abdullah, who recognizes each of 500 butterfly species and can point out the elusive White Slipper orchid. Drop anchor at deserted beaches or head to Tasik Dayang Bunting (Lake of the Pregnant Maiden), a freshwater body believed to enhance the fertility of those who dive in (60-4-950-8888; doubles, \$552-\$629).

**7 SINGAPORE**  
SENTOSA ISLAND  
Sentosa Island has shed its Underwater World theme park image in favor of more-adult attractions: the sand-floored, beachfront bar **KM8** (120 Tanjong Beach Walk; 65-6274-2288) and elegant alfresco dining on sea urchin spaghetti at **Il Lido** (27 Bukit Manis Rd.; 65-6866-1977; entrées, \$27-\$42). Overnight at the **Capella Singapore**, a 110-room retreat by Sir Norman Foster (65-6377-8888; doubles, \$285-\$392).

**16 BHUTAN**  
GANGTEY  
While the Himalayan nation grabs headlines for its nascent democracy (see *Places & Prices*, page 198), glimpse its fleeting past by visiting the village of Gangtey, whose whimsically hand-painted (and electricity-less) houses have remained largely unchanged for hundreds of years. Indulge in more modern pleasures at **Amankora's** eight-suite lodge (800-477-9180; doubles, \$1,200).

**9 CAMBODIA**  
SIEM RIEP  
Rather than jockey for position at Angkor Wat, climb aboard a **Lost Jungle Temple Tour** helicopter and spend the day exploring the cliff-top redoubt of Preah Vihear, source of heated territorial debate with Thailand; the jungle-covered pyramid at Koh Ker; the twelfth-century temple of Beng Melea; and the remote ruins of Banteay Chhmar, currently being restored by the Global Heritage Fund (855-63-760-333; amansara.com; \$1,075 per person).

**10 INDONESIA**  
BALI  
Curious minds of all ages will enjoy Bali's architecturally innovative **Green School**, an elementary through high school built entirely of bamboo. Harvest lemongrass, rambutan, and tapioca alongside students in the garden, milk goats for the school's own organic ice cream, and enjoy a gourmet lunch plucked straight from the surrounding fields (62-361-469-875; greenschool.org; recommended donation, \$20).

**14 MONGOLIA**  
A 90-minute drive from the capital of Ulaanbaatar, the 51-suite **Terej Hotel** greets guests with camel-hair throws and cashmere pillows upon their return from Gorkhi-Terej National Park, home to 250 types of birds and such elusive species as the ibex, the Przewalsky horse, and the snow leopard (976-11-7011-0757; doubles, \$374).

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**6 VIETNAM**  
HO CHI MINH CITY  
This December, Ho Chi Minh City's **War Remnants Museum** will provide a permanent home to "Requiem," an exhibition of 160 images by photojournalists who died or went missing while on assignment in Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam between 1945 and 1975. The importance of these powerful photos is belied by the paltry admission fee of less than a dollar (28 Vo Van Tan St.; 84-8-829-0325).

**5 PHILIPPINES**  
LIPA CITY  
Alila Hotels has reopened **The Farm**—the country's top spa, two hours south of Manila—as a world-class healing retreat. A medical team oversees each guest's personalized program, which starts with a comprehensive evaluation and includes Alila's seriously restorative massages (63-2-696-3795; doubles from \$1,700 for five days).

**2 JAPAN**  
Origin Asia's innovative arts program in Kyoto and Tokyo by **Lost Japan** author Alex Kerr allows individuals to learn such classic arts as brush calligraphy, noh theater, and the tea ceremony from practicing masters (81-80-3804-3969; origin-asia.com; from \$200 per person).

**KEY**

- Number of U.S. visitors
- Number of daily nonstop flights from the U.S.
- Cost of a Big Mac (Percentage difference from U.S. price of \$3.57)

