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TUESDAY. 18/08/20

The Monocle Minute

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OPINION / CHRISTOPHER CERMAK

Guilt trips

Are we really all doomed to stay "domestic" this year? As someone with a love of international travel whose family is spread across countries and continents, I have to resist the idea that this new normal of holidaying at home is here to stay. And yet staying within your borders is clearly favoured. Book a trip abroad today – I'd like to visit my cousin and her new baby in Italy, for example – and you risk getting stuck in quarantine upon return; just ask anyone from the UK who made a trip to France in the past week.

This isn't just about the hospitality industry and the future of travel, it's also about the attitude that is slowly creeping in as a result of this focus on our home nations. National employers – at least those without a global mindset and operation – are coming to view international travel as something you do at your own risk: if you get stuck, it serves you right for going overseas rather than holidaying in the UK (and don't expect us to look after you if you have to quarantine upon return).

I realise that I'm in a minority by having close family and friends abroad but we're a pretty large minority these days. And governments are in danger of creating a divide that goes beyond the hard reality of closed borders. If you have family and friends on the other side of the city or even your own country, you're free to see them. But if you have family abroad, that's seen as a no-no. Is one really more likely to spread the virus than the other? And are health considerations *really* always the reason for these decisions? This pandemic will be with us for a while; we could use some better answers to these questions.

NEWSLETTER / JOIN US

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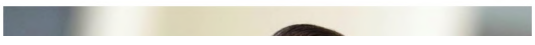

POLITICS / BRAZIL

Covering his tracks

Brazilian president Jair Bolsonaro's standing as something of an international pariah might have been reinforced by his handling of the pandemic but a large number of Brazilians don't share that view: a recent poll has found that 47 per cent of them don't blame Bolsonaro (*pictured*) for the more than 100,000 deaths caused by coronavirus in the country. The same poll puts his approval ratings at their highest level of his presidency. Why? In part because the government has provided monthly emergency payments during the pandemic to those in need, helping him make inroads in the northeast, a poorer region that previously rejected him. He has of late tried to soften his tone, attempting more alliances in Congress and staying away from some of his harsher verbal diatribes. Still, the Brazilian electorate can be volatile: local elections later this year will provide a better gauge of which parties and political figures could play an important role in the 2022 presidential elections.

TRACKSMITH × MONOCLE

Embrace the run commute

Commuting on foot is a time-efficient, healthy and inexpensive way to get to where you need to be. It's also never been so essential. This season Tracksmith is introducing their first-ever Run Commute Collection, featuring essentials for active transport made from Merino wool with support from the Woolmark Company, tested in New York and London.

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TRANSPORT / SWITZERLAND

Ticket to ride

With many Swiss using the summer to rediscover the beauty of their native land, a cycling boom has pushed the Swiss Federal Railway (SBB) to its limits. The country's trains have been at capacity during the past few months, transporting up to 15,000 bicycles on a peak day. A total of 80,000 bicycle day tickets were purchased in July, up from 48,000 for the same month last year.

Though the SBB had anticipated a seasonal boom, the extent of the increase has been a surprise; it's responding by opening luggage cars to bikes and requiring reservations on certain lines. Pro Velo Switzerland, the Swiss bicycle advocacy group, is also calling for an increase in bike stands and bike rentals at train stations. But it'll be up to SBB to identify its biggest weak points and find longer-term solutions to deal with the new normal.

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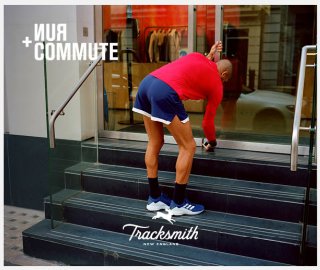

SOCIETY / SAUDI ARABIA

Work in progress

Since coming to power in 2017, Saudi Arabia's crown prince, Mohammed bin Salman, has taken steps to improve the rights of women, such as allowing them to travel without the permission of a male guardian. Yet women still can't freely compete in sports or wear clothes that "show off their beauty" – and many women's rights activists remain in jail. This weekend, in the latest attempted reform, 10 women were appointed to senior administrative and technical roles at the two holy mosques in Mecca (*pictured*) and Medina, which are among the holiest sites in Islam. "Letting women into positions of authority is unprecedented in Wahhabism," says Courtney Freer, research fellow at the London School of Economics' Middle East centre, noting that roles for women are limited across most religions. But will the appointments be accepted? "Much of the Saudi population is still pretty conservative and resistant to these reforms," says Freer. Saudi Arabia and Bin Salman still have a long way to go towards true equality.

The Chiefs
Monocle's high-altitude, look-ahead summit.

Wednesday 16 – Friday 18 Sept 2020
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HOUSING / MELBOURNE

Home remedy

Australian boutique-property developer Milieu and real-estate heavyweight Mirvac announced plans last week for a build-to-rent development in Melbourne's Brunswick neighbourhood. Although such schemes are more common in the US and Europe, the newly slated Albert Fields is a rarity in Australia and will be one of the first for the country's second-biggest city. The development is intended to provide long-term security for tenants through leases of up to 15 years. But these schemes also have the potential to improve the built environment – developers typically hold the property long-term, which means that they have a stronger commitment to the area's needs than if they were looking to make a fast sale. Milieu and Mirvac are conducting a broad community consultation in Brunswick before putting their architects to work. Here's hoping that the emergence of these projects in Australia will prompt all developers – working on build-to-rent schemes or otherwise – to take a more considered approach.

M24 / THE STACK

'Verse', 'Food & Friends' and 'Where Is The Cool'

We head to Taiwan to talk about new bi-monthly title 'Verse'. Plus: Polish food publication 'Food & Friends' and a magazine that asks 'Where Is The Cool'.

LISTEN TO THE EPISODE (30 MINS)

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MONOCLE FILMS / TURKEY

Building a place for culture

We visit a Kengo Kuma-designed art museum in Eskisehir that's set to become Turkey's new cultural hotspot.

WATCH **THE FILM** (6 MINS)

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