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Hordes of the rings In summer, thousands flock to Haeundae Beach from all over South Korea

TIME TRAVELER

Five Reasons to Visit Pusan. Imagine Seoul, but with a great big beach

THE SOUTH KOREAN CAPITAL Seoul is known for its high-tech buzz, restless pace and radiant neon lights, but visitors wanting to tune down a notch or two should contemplate a trip to the country's second city Pusan (or, as it is also written, Busan). A welter of shopping opportunities (including the

world's largest department store) mean that there's Seoul-style glitz, but it's softened by laid-back beaches and gorgeous scenery, with hiking trails aplenty and unforgettable views over the Korea Strait. Springboarding off its packed festival calendar—which includes the famed Pusan International Film

Festival, held every October, as well as large rock-music and performing-arts festivals—the city is also turning itself into something of a cultural hub. Here are five great reasons to check it out. —BY GEOFFREY CAIN

1 Beomeosa Temple

In English, the name of this Korean Zen (or to use the proper term, Seon Buddhist) sanctuary means "The Temple of the Heavenly Fish." It's a reference to an enchanted fish that, according to legend, descended from heaven and still lives in a mysterious well

at the summit of Geumjeongsan, on the slopes of which the temple was constructed in 678. Rebuilt in the early 17th century, Beomeosa sits today on one of the most peaceful hiking trails in South Korea. A long, gentle stroll might even put you in the mood for meditation classes (taught in English) by the monks of the Jogye Order, the sect that the temple is affiliated with. Call (82-51) 508 3122 for bookings.

2 Haeundae Beach

Old-timers will tell you that Pusan's iconic beach was much prettier before developers,

hotly anticipating a tourism boom in the wake of the 1988 Seoul Olympics, started throwing up the hotels and apartment blocks. Nonetheless, this broad powdery strip has become the city's pleasure ground, lined with thumping bars and popular eateries. Haeundae is best enjoyed during the film festival, when large screens are set up on the sand. Crowd levels can be daunting during summer months, so head out early to grab your patch of sand.

3 Jagalchi Fish Market

Love seafood? Then you'll flip over this cluttered bazaar in southern Pusan,



Second city
But offering a first-rate array of culture and diversions



www.jagalchimarket.org. It's the nation's largest seafood mart and the prices charged for freshly landed catches will have you happily salivating. Try *gulche* (or hairtail, a long skinny silver fish) for about \$3 each, or abalone at just \$10 for three—way below what this delicacy will fetch in the Chinese restaurants of the world. Many vendors clean and cook your purchase on the spot, or prepare it raw if you want to consume it as sashimi.

4 Busan Aquarium

Located right beneath Haeundae Beach, this mammoth aquarium exhibits 35,000 marine animals from around 250 species—including penguins, otters and piranha—and will keep you happily roving around for hours. Don't miss the 80-m underwater tunnel. Adults pay \$14 for admission at the ticket booth, but families get a discount if they order online ahead of time. See www.busanaquarium.com for more information.

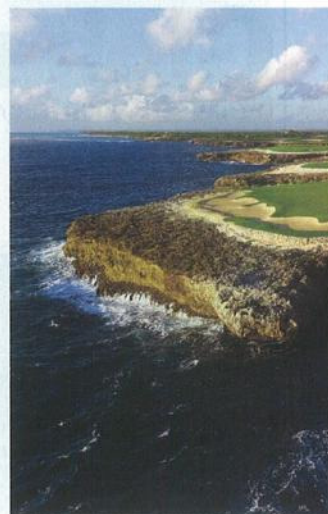
5 Shinsegae Department Store

Shopaholics can unite over Pusan's grand tribute

to consumerism, www.shinsegae.com, listed by Guinness World Records as the largest department store in the world at just over 290,000 sq m. (It convincingly trounces the previous record holder, the Macy's store in Herald Square, New York City, by a whopping 95,000 sq m.) After browsing just about every product the human mind can conceive, stop by the colossal spa on the second floor or the golf driving range at the top.

CHECK IN

Dominican Retreat. Find heavenly bliss at this recently revamped Caribbean getaway



THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC HAS a reputation for being a wallet-friendly island getaway. But like many Caribbean outposts, plenty of cookie-cutter all-inclusives have set up on its beaches in the past decade, particularly along Punta Cana's sandy white eastern coast. Yet long before there were Iberostars and RIUs, there was the Puntacana Resort & Club, which marked its big four-oh last year with resortwide room refurbishments and unique new voluntourism outings.

Translation: you get to hang with hawks.

Encompassing an epic 67 sq km, the resort has a distraction for just about anyone: there's a ranch with horses prepped for beach rides, an eco-reserve composed of a dozen aquamarine freshwater swimming holes and more than 80 types of birds, a Six Senses Spa overlooking the ocean and P.B. Dye- and Tom Fazio-fashioned golf courses (some tees sit just meters from the spray of the surf) with a new

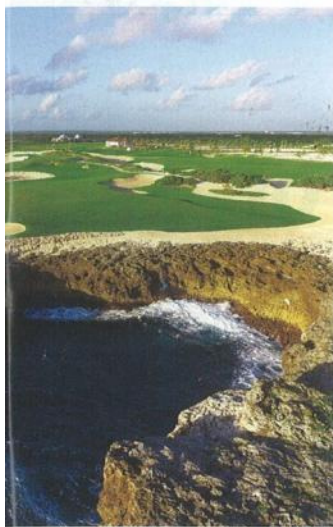
STYLE WATCH

Meet Barcelona's Girl Gu

IF YOU'RE IN BARCELONA AND looking to uncover its famously eclectic design scene, here's one way to save time: ditch the guidebooks and tedious online research and simply book yourself a tour with Antiques & Boutiques.

Founders and fashion designers Lisa Richardson and Niki Robinson devise each itinerary according to a client's taste and budget, so no two tours are the same, although they are themed under three broad categories: fashion, contemporary furniture and antiques and vintage home accessories. There are also general city walkabouts and treks around the city's fabulous food markets and





Decisions, decisions World-class golf course, pristine beach or both?

one debuting next year. On Dye's La Cana course, the pièce de résistance comes in the form of the Hecklebirnie hole, which Dye has affectionately christened a "golfer's purgatory" on account of its 21 traps.

To prep for its momentous birthday, the resort revamped the rooms at its main hotel, its 21 ocean-view and beachfront casitas and the upscale suites at the Tortuga Bay villas, where power couple Bill and Hillary Clinton like to unwind. Equally progressive are the resort's eco-programs: guests conduct bird counts alongside ornithologists and replant endangered staghorn coral. The more intrepid visitor can even feed a Ridgway's hawk, which the on-site ecological foundation is working to repopulate the Dominican Republic with.

After a day of do-gooding, dinner options include the new beachside Playa Blanca, Tortuga Bay's Bamboo restaurant (the sweet-corn gazpacho is delicious), and the thatched-roof La Yola, with views of the marina and a trio of musicians who travel table to table strumming local love songs.

Hotel rates start at \$96, two-bedroom beach casitas from \$280 and Tortuga Bay suites from \$495. For more information, go to www.puntacana.com. —BY LIZ OZAIST

ides

best tapas joints, if you can handle only so much design.

Weaving through the charming, mazelike streets of El Raval or the Barri Gòtic, the tours reveal what casual visitors to the city can only hope to stumble upon: tucked-away boutiques showcasing the hottest up-and-coming local talent, vintage stores that feature high on the pillage lists of Hollywood's costume departments and busy backstreet workshops where edgy young designers craft beautifully made shoes.

Vintage stuff Boutiques specializing in bygone eras feature strongly in the tours

Richardson and Robinson's scrupulously assembled database is constantly evolving, and the two regard scouring the city for new openings, collections and label launches as part of the process. Richardson's sideline as a reporter for influential fashion forecasters WGSN keeps her eye particularly well honed.

No time for a tour? Then call on the two fashionistas' "covetable address book" for a whole host of concierge-style services, including hotel and restaurant bookings. Excursions start from about \$150 for three to four hours. See www.antiquesandboutiques.com for more. —KATE JOHNSON

NEXT TIME YOU'RE IN ... GOA

Fields of History

WITH GOA'S CONNOTATIONS OF FULL-moon parties, beaches and backpackers in tie-dyed pants, it's not surprising that most visitors to the Indian state are blithely unaware of its gritty agricultural past. In that respect, the Goa Chitra Museum, tel: (91-832) 657 0877, comes as a genuine revelation.

The brainchild of artist turned curator Victor Hugo Gomes, the museum is situated on a working organic farm (also Gomes' home) in the southern Goan town of Benaulim and showcases over 4,000 traditional tools, items of furniture and other objects sourced from across the state. The exhibits include hundreds of tillage implements, in testimony to a time when agriculture was Goa's mainstay. (Now, tourism and mining are the key industries and Goa depends on neighboring states for such staples as cereals and vegetables.) A sugarcane grinder standing almost five meters high is one of the main focal points of the museum. Gomes took over two years to restore it.

Supplementing the farming-related displays are exhibitions of vintage paraphernalia and antique furniture, many examples of which were rescued from garbage heaps left beside demolished homes and churches. Dismayed at the speed with which local heritage was vanishing, Gomes visited over 300 traditional buildings in the process of demolition, salvaging doorways, window fittings, pillars, railings and even church altars. Folklore, costume, jewelry and marine displays are scheduled to open at the end of the year.

Gomes personally leads hour-long tours of the facility at 11 a.m. and 4 p.m. daily, communicating a passion for his native history that elevates Goa Chitra above your run-of-the-mill local museum. The tours take in an on-site gallery of work by local artists, a performance space and a walk around Gomes' 7,400-sq-m farm, where he grows chili, okra and other crops. At the end, visitors are served a refreshing drink made from *kokum*, a tangy local fruit related to mangosteen.

Goa Chitra attracts a steady flow of visitors. Novelist Kiran Desai dropped in recently, as did poet and lyricist Sampooran Singh Kalra (better known as Gulzar), who was so impressed that he donated his fee for a reading to the museum. But don't take his word for it. Pencil in a break from Goa's beaches and scrunch your toes in the sands of time instead. —BY CHRYSSELLE D'SILVA DIAS



Digging up the past Displays of tillage implements evoke Goa's agricultural history

AQUARIUM: BRUNO BARBERE; MANGUMI: TEMPLE; HEIMO AGAR: PUNTA CANA; PUNTA CANA RESORT & CLUB (2); GOA: GOA CHITRA (3); BARCELONA: ANTIQUES & BOUTIQUES