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OFF DUTY TRAVEL

# Travel Tips: Why the World's Best Taxis Are in the Water

Architect and TV Personality Jason Pomeroy Reveals His Passion for Venice



Jason Pomeroy: "Despite being incredibly busy, the experience of visiting 12 cities in six countries in a three-month period during the filming of my television series was simply unforgettable." PHOTO: JASON POMEROY

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Jason Pomeroy is founding principal of Singapore-based eco-architecture firm Pomeroy Studio. He is also a television personality for Channel NewsAsia, as well as a lecturer at the Università IUAV di Venezia in Italy. The Briton spoke to the Journal about snacking on roasted almonds, taking the scenic route on Venice's water taxis, and timeless Asian architecture.

## How often are you up in the air?

Once a week. As Asia continues to boom and its cities expand, developers and city planners from Yangon to Kuala Lumpur are realizing that they need to reduce the energy burden and increase the livability of their metropolises if this growth is to be sustained. For an eco-architect such as myself, this means more projects and traveling throughout the region.

## Favorite hotel?

The Majestic Hotel when I am on business in Kuala Lumpur. The M Gallery Papadopoli when I am teaching in Venice. I think cultural heritage is important, and I tend to gravitate towards hotels that speak of a bygone age, buildings with their period fixtures still intact. Technology, urbanization and globalization run the risk of destroying cultural heritage, so it is buildings like these that highlight how cultures and traditions play their roles in the modern cityscape. Also, the bars at both properties serve fantastic Negronis—perfect after a long day of running about.

## Favorite airline?

Singapore Airlines. On flights, when I am not busy designing buildings or editing papers, I am settling into a good film. I have to confess to being a bit of a film fanatic.

## Best airline seats?

First class, first row ... I assume.

## Frequent-flier program?

[Singapore Airlines'] KrisFlyer—though rather than miles, I would rather have carbon-offset credits.

## Favorite airport?

Changi airport [in Singapore] for its super-efficient immigration, great shopping and food selections, and, best of all, landing there means that I have arrived home.

## Preferred luggage?

My battered Rimowa. The case with its collage of airport stickers has been with me through thick and thin. It has braved blizzards, sandstorms and monsoons. And when I am filming my architecture and travel-focused television series [for Channel NewsAsia] —"City Time Traveller"—the bag often contains a bottomless pit of energy bars and roasted almonds to keep me going.

## Packing strategies?

I always pack a pair of brown loafers and a blue waterproof blazer that never creases. Also, bring along a scarf made from cashmere or silk in your hand luggage. It protects one from dust and from getting too cold or too warm.

## Which travel apps do you use?

None. I am surprisingly low tech.

## How do you stay fit while traveling?

By going to the gym and swimming. And when there are no such facilities, I opt for cardiovascular cross-training.

## What's your best travel advice?

Use a luggage tag. When I first bought my metal case, it was not so banged up and recognizable. Once, someone walked off with the said metal case, and this was followed by a frantic exchange with the ground crew at Changi. Thankfully, the person who took my case by mistake returned it, and all was resolved.

## Best travel experience?

Despite being incredibly busy, the experience of visiting 12 cities in six countries in a three-month period during the filming of my television series was simply unforgettable. While I cannot detail every experience I had, as an eco-architect I was constantly drawn to some of the ancient buildings along the way—Chiang Mai's traditional bamboo houses, Beijing's hutongs, and Singapore's shop houses. These buildings were built well before electricity and air-conditioning, yet their passive, vernacular designs have truly stood the test of time. There is much to learn from our ancestors as we struggle to meet the growing demand for housing in the future.

## Worst travel experience?

Spraining my ankle and being wheelchair-bound within the first 10 minutes of my honeymoon. I literally stepped out of our car, took a few steps and slipped on a wet timber floor. A couple of packs of ice later, I was bandaged and in a wheelchair, forgoing the elephant training that we planned. My wife still jokes that it was a glimpse of our old age.

## What's left on the bucket list?

Season two of my television series that takes me to Oceania and the Middle East.

## Favorite city?

Venice. My love affair with this city started as a university student at the villas of Palladio and Scamozzi in the Veneto. Fast forward many years, and I am now a professor at the Università IUAV di Venezia. I perceive the historic palazzos, narrow alleyways and canals with a very different perspective than as a student who was learning about Renaissance architecture.

## Favorite restaurant/bar?

The House on the Bridge, Eton [in the U.K.]. Sadly, it is now closed. My parents used to take me there regularly from the age of 14. I liked the lobster thermidor and the Crêpe Suzette, both of which were fantastic—classics that chefs today seem to scoff at. But thankfully, old school cuisine is making a resurgence.

## Which city has the best taxis?

Venice's water taxis. When I head to the university, I take the Number 2 water taxi to Zattere, which is several stops away from the yacht club where I occasionally stay on San Giorgio island. It is a delightful journey every morning with the opportunity to observe the Venetian skyline, punctuated by the St. Mark's Campanile and the domes of Santa Maria della Salute.

—Edited from an interview by Mark Lean

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