

THE VINSON VIEW

Quality maniac Nick Vinson on the who, what, when, where and why



WHAT NICKY WANTS FROM A HOTEL STORE IN THE SUMMER

Swimwear

You can't go wrong with Orlebar Brown, Eres and Lisa Marie Fernandez.

Sweaters and T-shirts

Polo shirts with hotel logos are fine - for the staff. Instead stock some unisex crew-neck cashmere in basic colours.

Sandals

Tuscany's Hotel Il Pellicano has just launched its own range with Birkenstock. Follow its lead and offer something different.

Eyewear

Wayfarers and Aviators would be a good start.

Local craft

Source the work of the best, most respected local craftsmen. Guests will be pleased to buy original gifts that they won't find at the airport.

Vintage and antiques

Hook up with a good local dealer so clients can trust the edit and provenance.

Books

Yes, we do want to learn about the area and country, and no, we don't want spa books.

01 Unique selling points

Hotel gift shops could do more to float Picky Nicky's boat

Hotel gift shops are more often than not a big disappointment. You are in a great hotel, somewhere fabulous; it's the summer; perhaps you packed well, perhaps you did not, but you need a pair of sunglasses, hat, swimsuit or a pair of sandals. Or you just fancy having a nose around to discover a local brand, or perhaps an object made nearby, or a vintage piece to take home. Something you could never find otherwise. Of course, the best thing is to head out of the hotel and do the groundwork yourself, but you are on holiday and the hotel is exquisitely designed, so the hotel's gift shop should have just what you need.

Instead, you are faced with a random assortment of items, bought because the receptionist's cousin and the assistant director of rooms' neighbour made them or, worse, the hotel owner's husband/wife/mistress/partner thought they were pretty. The offering is shockingly overlooked. It's counter-intuitive, since hotel owners really want to keep you on their property and charge things to your room.

Things are moving in the right direction at Aman resorts. In 2017, Karen Schneider joined the company after working for the likes of Saks and Neiman Marcus in the US. Her job is to refine the offering and develop exclusive product for the group's 34 properties, such as Frescobol Carioca shorts

in custom prints and items sourced locally to each resort - like the home accessories by Catherine Denoual Maison that I bought recently at Amanoi in Vietnam. In October, a stand-alone store will open at Amanpuri on Phuket, in a new pavilion designed by a leading Japanese architect (to be revealed to our readers exclusively later in the year).

I am impressed by Four Seasons' The Surf Club in Miami, which now houses a branch of New York gallery Les Ateliers Courbet. With brands including Lobmeyr, Nymphenburg and Puiforcat, and pieces by designers including Tadao Ando and Aldo Bakker, its edit reflects Miami's design credentials and lives happily with the Richard Meier architecture and Joseph Dirand interiors. And for your beach essentials, there is the À la Mer boutique next door, run by the Istanbul brand Haremlique, which also make the great fringed towels stocked by Aman.

Most adventurous and fun of all is a tie-up between MatchesFashion.com and Pellicano Hotels that has turned a 1930s boat into a pop-up shop filled with fashion and accessories. Over recent weeks, the yacht made its way from Hotel Il Pellicano in Porto Ercole to La Posta Vecchia near Rome, stopping at the group's newest property, Mezzatorre in Ischia.

Hoteliers, it's time to shake things up. ★



02

Island dream

The latest edition to Pellicano Hotels, Mezzatorre is housed in a 16th-century watchtower on Ischia, a 40-minute speedboat ride from Naples. *mezzatorre*.



03

Grape escape

I'm looking forward to bringing home wine, olive oil and local crafts from my stay at São Lourenço do Barrocal, a hotel on a 19th-century estate in Alentejo. *barrocal.pt*