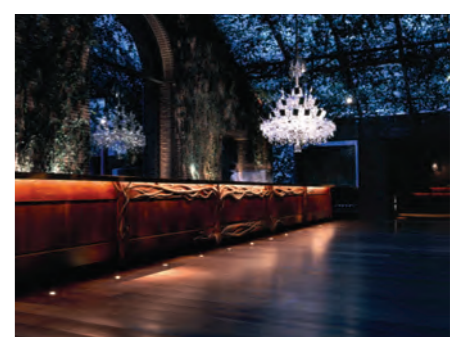




Clockwise from left: Beach in Goa, Parrot Cay, Turks and Caicos; The Oberoi, Mauritius; The Hotel at Mandalay Bay, Las Vegas; The Hudson Hotel, New York



HIP Hip Hooray!



Kasha Van Sant and Claire Rutter discover that travelling has always been in Herbert Ypma's blood, so it's not surprising that he is behind the phenomenal guides, HIP Hotels, which saw him launched into the travel stratosphere

Despite his birth in Holland, Herbert Ypma, 51, spent a great deal of his childhood in Spain whilst his father studied. Living a nomadic lifestyle, his father would work on his PhD and his mother "would cook on a bunch of stones" whilst their caravan was parked on a beach. His father became a geologist and professor at Columbia University, which meant

each summer was spent in a different location. "I would tag along to the very exotic places or sometimes not so exotic, always in the middle of nowhere and so I became an expert on the middle of nowhere. Sometimes we were staying in a caravan, sometimes in a tent, or sometimes we would borrow somebody's villa. Going to remote exotic places was normal."

This gave Ypma invaluable experiences and

is a sure contributor to his success. He puts this down to a pattern discovered by Malcolm Gladwell in *Outliers*, he says: "One of the things he discovered in his book is that there is a 10,000 hour formula. It doesn't matter whether it is hockey, or playing the violin, the rule that they seem to stumble on in this book is the 10,000 hour rule. I travelled for more than 10,000 hours by the time I was 15, maybe younger. I never considered it as part of my education."

At 25, he launched award-winning *Interior Architecture*. The magazine was structured by architects and each issue focused on a different destination. "We would do an issue on India, or an issue on Barcelona or an issue on design in the South Pacific, unusual things. So when I started writing books it was the same."

Currently based in Knightsbridge, Ypma had strong influences from family members

throughout his life. In his youth, an uncle educated him about culture and design. He often stayed with him in Amsterdam, in "an amazing house" that was often featured in magazines. "They almost used it as a laboratory for things they were experimenting with for style. There was nothing in the house that didn't have some kind of prominence, or thought, or design history. Their mantra became mine."

His first book *India Modern* sold 800,000 copies, it was followed by his World Design series which is about to be re-issued. Talking about HIP Hotels (or Highly Individual Places), his successful travel series, designed to highlight individual places that are noteworthy for their 'style and refinement'. "The idea of HIP Hotels was to come up with a new hybrid, where we would mix the production standards of a coffee table book with the practicality of a guide book which >>



Clockwise from left: Victoria and Alfred Waterfront, Cape Town; 60 Thompson, New York; The Caves, Jamaica; 60 Thompson New York; The Wynn, Las Vegas



“I WOULD TAG ALONG TO THE VERY EXOTIC PLACES OR SOMETIMES NOT SO EXOTIC, ALWAYS IN THE MIDDLE OF NOWHERE AND SO I BECAME AN EXPERT ON THE MIDDLE OF NOWHERE”

specifically focuses on the type of hotels you wish that you knew about.”

Embarking on a new partnership with Virgin, the world wide tour operator, Ypma reveals how it came about. The new unique service gives each customer a personal 'travel guru' who will locate the perfect destination and 'hippest' hotel down to the most intricate detail. Each of the hotels will have the most extraordinary designs and architecture. “It is a really nice relationship because it is taking a large collection of unusual places to stay with a company that can make it easier for you to go to these places.” The service will improve people's quality of travel and holidays, unlike normal travel agents, V HIP Hotel Travel Gurus will ensure children are thought of, as well as guest lists or wine lists, making it easier for those who love to travel, but have limited time to organise it. “You don't want to land in Nairobi and find out no-one is waiting for you at the airport or find out that the person who is waiting for you, doesn't know how to get to the place you're going,” he says. “If that happened to a family with six

kids they would never go back to Africa, let alone Kenya.”

As a person who defies rules and regulations, Ypma considers himself a rebel against tradition. He recalls a recent meeting where everyone wore similar clothing apart from him. “What is interesting to me is even in the world of so-called creativity, there is tremendous pressure to conform. I'm very happy to be stepping outside the box. Conforming to expectation doesn't sit well with me.”

When asked to choose his favourite hotel, Ypma explains that it's all about context. “Two weeks ago my favourite hotel was in Cortina where I went skiing for a week and it was a magical place. But there are so many places I could put on the list depending on what mood I am in. If I'm thinking about skiing that is one list. When I think about a beach and Asia then that is another.”

Over the years, Ypma has photographed and reviewed hundreds of hotels in over 50 countries. His next visit is to Cape Town, for ten days, Ypma will take his camera “and slowly get to grips with Cape Town and what people do. I like to tell the story.”

Photography is a key part of his interests, the expert says, “A good travel photo is one which makes people want to be there. It has to have the power to promote.” ■

www.hiphotels.org
www.vhiphotels.co.uk

