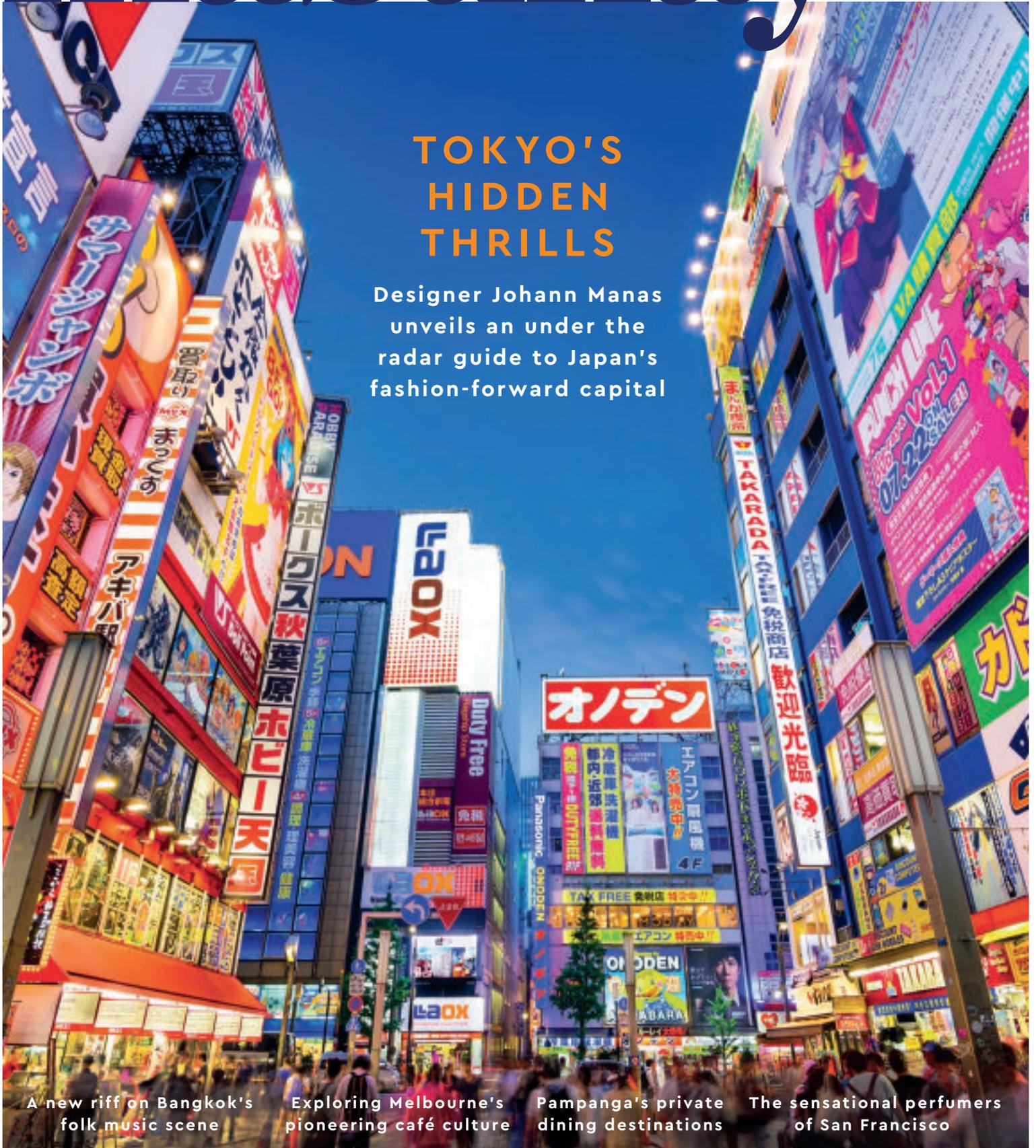


mabuhay

March 2017

TOKYO'S HIDDEN THRILLS

Designer Johann Manas
unveils an under the
radar guide to Japan's
fashion-forward capital



A new riff on Bangkok's
folk music scene

Exploring Melbourne's
pioneering café culture

Pampanga's private
dining destinations

The sensational perfumers
of San Francisco



Camiguin

Looping with the eagles

The tiny island of Camiguin is mostly known for its volcanoes. Now, a veteran aviator is attracting daredevils to see its landscape from a new perspective

"There are three things I'm going to give you for this flight," says Captain Sean Clarke, his voice echoing inside Camiguin Aviation's cavernous aircraft hangar. "A parachute, a life vest and a sick bag." But he assures me that I won't be needing the parachute or the life vest. "And what about the sick bag?" I ask. He laughs. "We'll see," he says.

The Canadian pilot fell in love with Camiguin's wild, seismic contours a decade ago while visiting with his wife and their young family. This tiny paradise, located 10km off the coast of Mindanao in the Bohol Sea with a circumference of just 60km, is home to a little over 70,000 residents and has no fewer than seven volcanoes, some still active today.

Now, Clarke runs the only advanced flight-maneuver camp in the Philippines. Camiguin Aviation teaches pilots how to spread their wings with loop-the-loops, Cuban eights and hammerheads, giving daring tourists an

extreme flight experience they'll never forget.

Before flight, Clarke performs a safety check on his canary-yellow plane: a two-seater American Champion 8KCAB Super Decathlon. It's light, maneuverable and perfect for sky-high gymnastics. I buckle up as the propeller roars and we roll toward the runway.

"This is Captain Clarke requesting permission to take off."

"Permission granted. Clear for takeoff."

Within seconds, we're airborne, and Camiguin is transformed. The curves of the island's coastline take shape as we gain height, the sea changes from deep blue to brilliant turquoise and the trees become a mosaic of green in every shade. It is spectacular.

We circle upward, heading inland over Camiguin's magnificent seven volcanic peaks: Hibok Hibok, Mambajao, Guinsiliban, Timpoong, Vulcan, Uhay and Tres Marias.

The open mouth of Hibok Hibok's crater sends a chill down my spine. Its last eruption in 1951 killed 3,000 islanders, and the lava path is still visible in the vegetation. With our volcanic view, Clarke is fired up and ready for some aerobatics. "This kind of flying is all about letting go," he says. "It's about giving up control in order to gain control."

And with that, we accelerate upward into weightlessness, hanging momentarily inverted in mid-air before free-falling back into our flight path. I laugh and scream hysterically, as I cycle through feelings of terror and nausea, before eventually landing on euphoria.

Next up is a Cuban eight – a breathtaking sideways corkscrew maneuver which obliterates all sense of orientation as sea and sky tumble over each other through the window. It's like watching Camiguin from inside a turning kaleidoscope. From here we fly into a hammerhead – a rapid upwards acceleration followed by a deliberate stall before turning and free-falling in the opposite direction.

Clarke watches from the rear-view mirror, assessing my aerobatic threshold, and determines that I've had enough for now. He's right. But while my stomach is asking for an emergency landing, the rest of me would happily ride this invisible theme park in the sky until my head is buried in a sick bag.

"You wouldn't be the first to do that," Clarke says, laughing as we spiral down toward the Camiguin runway.

"This is Captain Clarke requesting permission to land."
camiguinaviation.com – Sharon Crowther

