

Word of mouth

Kazakhstan



All mighty Almaty

With Air Astana's recent re-launch of daily Dubai-Almaty flights, CEO **Peter Foster** explains why we need to be on the next flight to Kazakhstan

WHAT'S SO GREAT ABOUT ALMATY?

Almaty has the most fabulous climate, and people coming in the spring and summer can enjoy hiking while winter visitors often come for the hunting and winter sports. Almaty is very liberal, a place where you work hard and play hard. It's full of little sidewalk cafés, pubs, clubs and bars. We have a superb opera house, a fantastic philharmonic and a tremendous theatre scene. The people themselves are a lively bunch. It's a place that laughs and smiles a lot and is full of intellectuals and artists with an interesting, bohemian feel to it.

WHERE'S THE BEST PLACE TO STAY?

The Ritz-Carlton launched recently at the very southern end of town, which is ringed by our end of the Tian Shan Mountains. Almaty has got an astonishing mountain, in effect framing it from the southern end, and the hotel has the most extraordinary views on to snow-capped peaks right outside the bedroom windows. It's out of a *James Bond* scene, really.

WHAT'S THE MOST BEAUTIFUL PART OF KAZAKHSTAN?

The most beautiful place that I've been to is a town with an impossible name – Ust-Kamenogorsk. It's the gateway to the Altai Mountains, fabled as the location of Shangri-La. The mountains are extraordinary and incredibly remote yet accessible. If there's anywhere on Earth that truly is a *Lost Horizon*-type place, this is it.

> ON TREND

How we'll eat in 2015

Culinary crazes that are going global

WHAT: Fermented food

WHERE: Sydney

In 2015 it's all about fermented foods like *kimchi*, miso, sauerkraut and *kombucha* (fermented tea, originally from China). "There is a lot happening in the world of fermentation – we'll see prebiotics like *kombucha*, and lots of different vinegars," says London-based food futurologist Dr Morgaine Gaye. "You might go out at night and have a drink infused with hedgerow [wild leaves and plants] and vinegar, muddled with mint, lime and sparkling water." Chefs are already incorporating them into menus, like Mark Best at the Marque in Sydney, who serves a Wagyu beef with beetroot and radicchio *kimchi*.

WHAT: Botanical beverages

WHERE: Los Angeles

Making waves on the west coast of America are non-alcoholic herbal mixes, such as Altar, a herbal martini. "It drinks like grape and is beautifully bottled, and has all the notes through it – all the botanicals and the hedgerow," says Dr Gaye. Globally sourced ingredients include organic African red rooibos tea leaves, organic hibiscus and Asian *shiso* (an aromatic herb in the mint family).

WHAT: Community dining

WHERE: London

Tapas and sharing platters will dominate in 2015. "The idea is that when you eat together, the quality of what you eat and the enjoyment you get from a meal is heightened," says Dr

Matcha has more health benefits than green tea because the whole leaf is ingested rather than brewed



Gaye. Community dining and "cook for your street" events are already filtering into the UK, where allotment growers share their produce with neighbours. Restaurants like Barnyard are following suit. Head chef Joseph Woodland explains, "It's about making it an event, not because of a massive tasting menu but focusing on the communal atmosphere."

WHAT: Matcha

WHERE: New York

Get ready to hear a lot more about the Japanese "superdrink" *matcha* in the year ahead. Already available in ready-to-drink cans, this antioxidant-infused, bright green powder is traditionally used in Japanese tea ceremonies. "This is the next green tea," notes Dr Gaye. Brothers Max and Graham Fortgang opened the first MatchaBar in Brooklyn this year, with a menu featuring hot and iced teas, *matcha* lattes and matchaccinos. Meanwhile, another Brooklyn café, Watty & Meg, has introduced matchamole (a *matcha* version of guacamole) and chocolate cupcakes with *matcha* frosting.



Eerily beautiful
La Petite
Ceinture
in bloom

Secret Paris

A Parisian orbital railway that last saw trains running in 1939, La Petite Ceinture is mostly off-limits – short sections are open to walkers, while some derelict stations are re-opening as chic bars – and the sole preserve of plant life, graffiti artists and urban explorers. French photographer Pierre Folk's new **By The Silent Line** photography series documents the Little Belt's ghostly existence across all four seasons. "I investigate society's relations to the environment, and how we often change direction leaving obsolete frameworks behind," he explains. "La Petite Ceinture's story epitomises our tendency to consume the world." pierrefolk.com