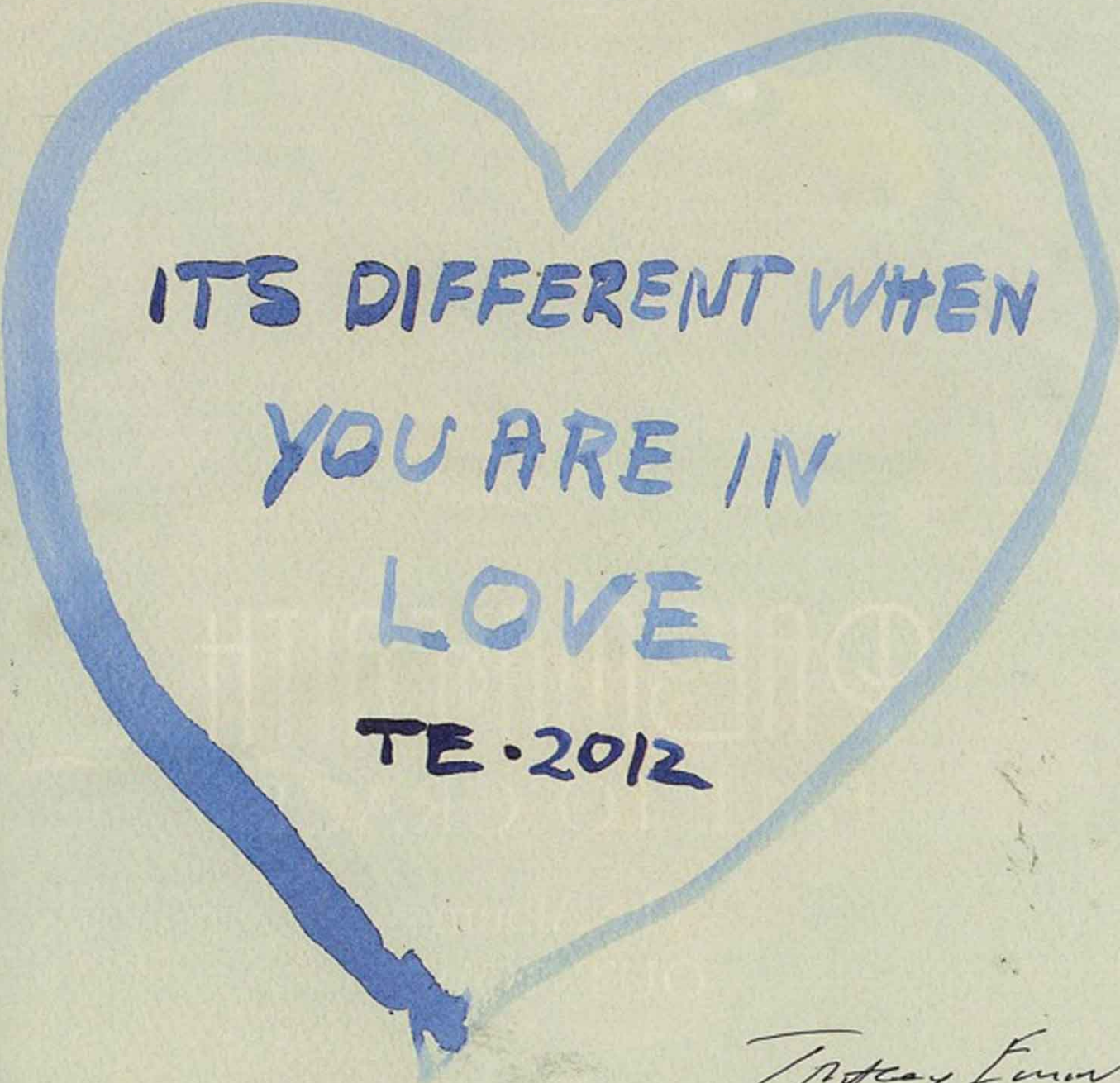


EXCLUSIVE COVER BY TRACEY EMIN

STYLIST



ITS DIFFERENT WHEN
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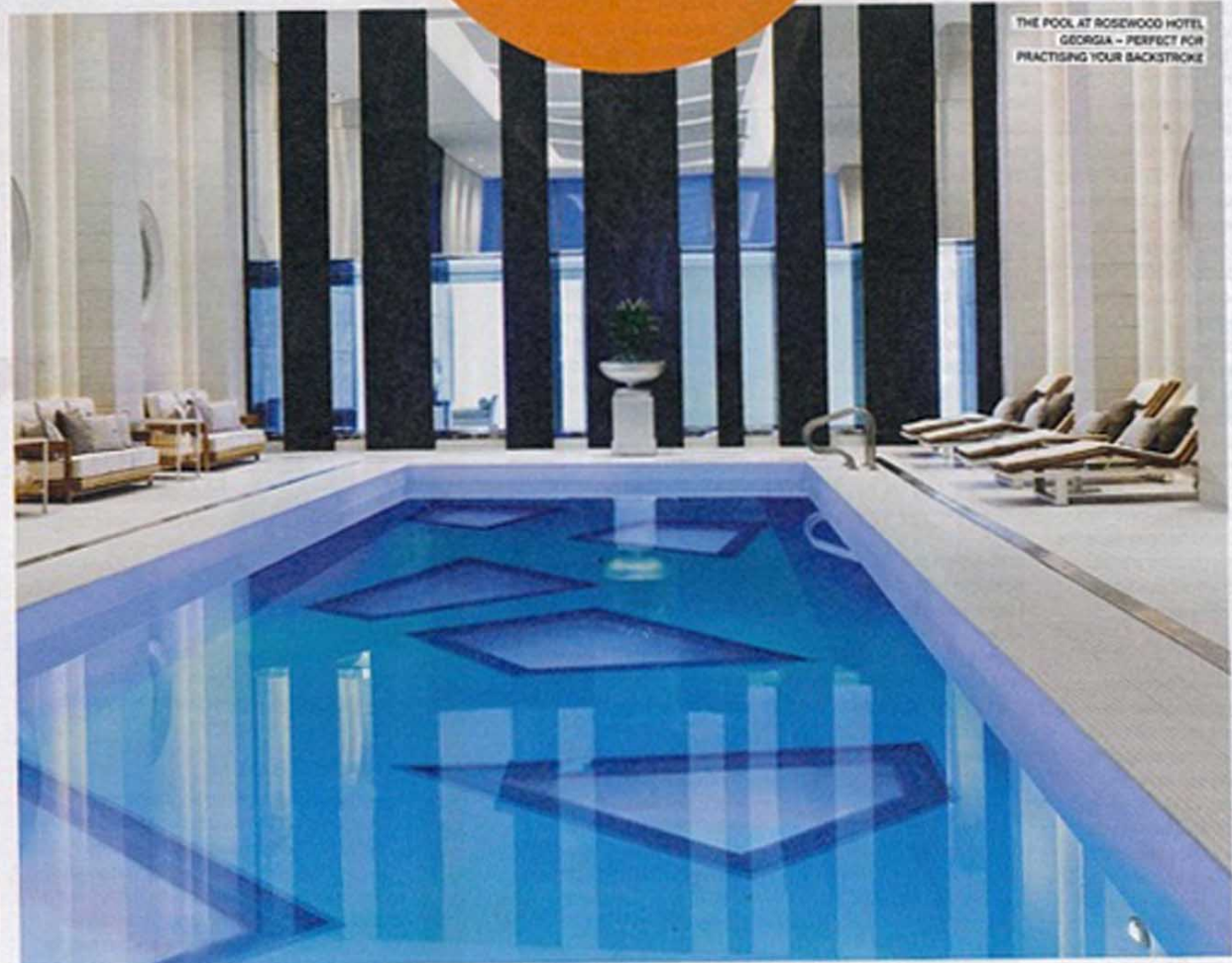
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Tracey Emin

TRAVEL

ESCAPE ROUTES

YOUR NEW BIKINI DESERVES A HOLIDAY



THE POOL AT ROSEWOOD HOTEL, GEORGIA - PERFECT FOR PRACTISING YOUR BACKSTROKE

MODERN LUXURY & LAID-BACK CHARM IN VANCOUVER



Stylist's deputy editor Susan Riley visits the Canadian city to experience its laid-back charm, world-class eateries and breathtaking scenery

"I've been to Vancouver twice now and whichever way you get to it, you'll want your camera at the ready; there's

just no ugly way in. The first time, I was on a 16-night, east-to-west tour of Canada and travelled on an overnight train from Jasper. Snow-capped mountains and giant firs flashed past the windows and when I awoke at dawn, there Vancouver sat, skyscrapers gleaming next to the ocean. This time round, I arrived from a week's unbeatable snowboarding in

Whistler on the 'Sea to Sky Highway' - cruising past the forests, lakes and waterfalls that hug the coastline from Squamish to Horseshoe Bay and beyond. Like I said, there's no ugly way in.

Wedge neatly between the Rockies and the Pacific Ocean, Vancouver is one of those cities where you want to throttle its occupants: it's an enviable spot offering that

sought-after mix of outdoorsy pursuits and city living. Granted, they don't have LA weather - temperatures are mild all year round and in March it was Manchester-style drizzly - but with mountains on its doorstep to ski, hike and zipline (Whistler is under two hours away; Grouse Mountain 15 minutes), waters to kayak in and an abundance of

world-class restaurants, to expect a year-round suntan too seems a little greedy.

Planning your expat life aside (it will cross your mind), Vancouver's other allure is its laid-back attitude and ease to explore. Even arriving in the late afternoon, I had time to unpack and stroll out to historic neighbourhood Gastown for a nose around its Inuit art



galleries and cosy, brick-walled bars before dinner back at my hotel: the Rosewood Hotel Georgia. Grandly taking up the corner of the block on W Georgia St opposite the Vancouver Art Gallery, the hotel hails from 1927 but reopened last summer after a plush face-lift. The effect when you walk in is one of grandeur (Elvis Presley and Katharine Hepburn once stayed here after all; with the latter coining the term 'room service' during a 1950 visit) meets modern luxury. You can even drink old or new, sipping cocktails from another era in the speakeasy Lobby Bar 1927, or embracing an altogether Miami vibe at rooftop bar Reflections. Worth a mention too is its Sense Spa, which gave me the only facial I've ever had where I could happily face the world directly afterwards, thanks to a final dusting of mineral make-up.

DAY TRIPPING

The Rosewood's central location means you can reach most places on foot: the west end for shopping, the warehouse bars and restaurants of Yaletown and the waterfront, where you catch the Aquabus across to Granville Island with its artisan boutiques, galleries and street performers (granvilleisland.com). Before heading over, we had lunch at C Restaurant (crestaurant.com) – their tasty seafood platter is charmingly served like an afternoon tea. I made the mistake of not leaving enough room, as an hour later I was roaming Granville's incredible indoor public market, packed with fruit, jams, freshly baked goods, spices, seafood... Amateur chefs would go nuts in there, and all you want to do is buy, sample and taste your way round.

Hire bikes for an afternoon in Stanley Park – Vancouver's 1,000-acre green space that looms on the edge of downtown – to cycle its scenic Skim sea wall and explore its totem poles, aquarium and other sights. Also worth visiting is the Capilano Suspension Bridge – teetering over a ravine since 1889 – 10 minutes out of town, it has a hassle-free complimentary shuttle bus that picks you up from downtown (capilano.com). For a full day out, catch the ferry to Vancouver Island. From May to October, it's one of the best places in the world to go whale watching but even out of season, the

"YOU WANT TO THROTTLE VANCOUVER'S RESIDENTS – IT'S AN ENVIABLE MIX OF OUTDOOR AND CITY LIVING"

scenery on the 90-minute boat trip is breathtaking. I ticked off its colonial capital Victoria – more British than us, with its afternoon teas and horse-drawn carriages – and The Butchart Gardens in one round trip before ferrying back before dusk.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

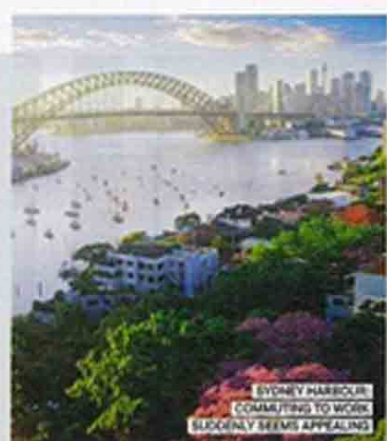
Eating is a huge pleasure in Vancouver, particularly if you're a seafood fan: cheap, amazing sashimi abounds and

tasty oysters are ten-a-penny. I had an unforgettable meal at the Blue Water Cafe (bluewatercafe.net) – an open brick warehouse conversion in Yaletown serving ultra-imaginative seafood dishes – the red sea urchin trifle was unlike anything I've ever tasted. My final (sob) west coast meal was at the hotel's Hawksworth Restaurant (hawksworthrestaurant.com). We plumped for apple beet salad, foie gras parfait, pan-roasted pacific sablefish and roasted lamb loin, which might sound like standard gourmet fare but the flavour combinations served up by chef David Hawksworth –

formerly of Le Manoir and The Square – made it one of the top 10 meals I've ever eaten.

Vancouver also has a thriving street food scene offering up tasty cheaper eats (vancouverstreeteats.ca), and Vancouverites also make a mean cocktail – I wasn't served a single mediocre one – although even the most stylish bars seem to have 24-hour ice hockey on their TV screens. Well, I guess nowhere's completely perfect... 

To plan a trip to Vancouver, visit uk.britishcolumbia.travel; rooms at the Rosewood Hotel Georgia start from £246; rosewoodhotelgeorgia.com. This month Virgin launches its new route from Heathrow to Vancouver*, from £452; virginatlantic.com



FIVE STUNNING WATERFRONT CITY BREAKS

Vancouver's not the only coastal city worth exploring – here's our pick of the world's best...

SYDNEY

Boasting the iconic Harbour Bridge and the Opera House, Sydney's host of bars and cafes overlooking the harbour make this the ultimate waterfront city.

STOCKHOLM

With hundreds of terracotta-tinged buildings on 14 islands connected by 57 bridges, the Swedish capital is an enchanting maze of winding waterways. The narrow alleys lined with design-led stores, outdoor cafes and Strandvägen – a 1km waterfront road – are perfect for a weekend of pavement-pounding.

CHICAGO

America's third largest metropolis rises at the foot of Lake Michigan, which means everything from its eateries, 18-mile jogging trails, an all-American fair, beaches and cultural hub Millennium Park, has an incredible water view.

REYKJAVIK

Iceland's capital is perched right on the harbour, where you can take a boat out whale watching or just sit and eat fish and chips while watching the world go by.

HELSINKI

As 2012's World Design Capital, it's the place to visit this year. The small harbour city has a distinct air of community and nature at its heart, from its seawall views, ancient maritime fortress and a recent shift towards embracing its agricultural heritage.