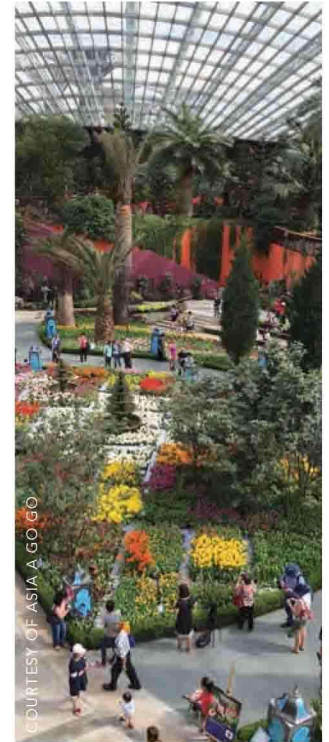




*“For once you have tasted flight
you will walk the earth
with your eyes turned skywards,
for there you have been
and there you will long to return.”*

—Leonardo da Vinci

GRAND TALES OF VISITS TO FARAWAY LANDS IN ASIA and the Middle East – the stunning landscapes, vivid cultures and abundant creativity celebrated by cities like Singapore and Dubai, United Arab Emirates – evoke fantastic images in our minds of surreal groves of “supertrees” and shimmering skyscrapers that seemingly pierce the sky. The region’s blend of uber-modern and historic architecture, the rich and diverse art and design communities of both Singapore and Dubai, as well as their retail offerings, set both cities apart from the Western norm.



I, along with *VMSD*/ST Media Group Intl. SVP/ Group Publisher Murray Kasmenn, joined a host of retail designers, architects, digital designers and manufacturers/suppliers for 10 days of retail immersion in Singapore and Dubai as part of *asia a go go* 2016, presented by *VMSD*. This special report is but a small taste of the incredible experiences the group shared on its journey. The excursion is well worth the visit for creatives in the retail space looking for inspiration or education outside their comfort zone.

◀ **Louis Vuitton Island Maison** **The Shoppes at Marina Bay Sands, Singapore**

The concept of Louis Vuitton Island Maison is perfectly logical once you suspend disbelief. Not content to be one of many in a shopping mall format, Louis Vuitton set its elegant Crystal Pavilion structure atop its very own island in Marina Bay, Singapore. The nautically inspired store is reportedly the retailer's largest outside its Avenue des Champs-Élysées, Paris, flagship. Floor-to-ceiling glass window panes offer customers an incomparable, unobstructed view of the Singapore skyline.

From the Marina Bay Sands building, guests enter the island through an underground tunnel that connects the two structures, while also serving as an entrance and a vessel for the brand's history, displaying a collection of antique LV trunks, each with a distinct history.

◀ **Jewel Changi Airport** **Changi, Singapore**

In the U.S., the majority of airport retail is located beyond security screenings, out of reach to the shopping public. In the case of Jewel, or Terminal 5 at Singapore's Changi Airport, the local, non-traveling shopper is as much a consideration as those passing through on their way to a connecting flight. Since shopping or dining at the airport is already a local custom, the goal is to elevate the experience to make airport retail and hospitality a destination.

Singapore is known as "The Garden City" for its lush green spaces, both indoors and out. Due to the area's heat and high humidity, designers included green spaces throughout the Jewel terminal to offer visitors a chance to comfortably experience the beautiful outdoors in a climate-controlled setting. A nearly 130-foot indoor waterfall – said to be the world's largest – is located at the terminal's center.

House of Tang, Tangs department store Orchard Road shopping district, Singapore ▶

In a quiet spot, four stories above the constant hustle and bustle of Orchard Road, renowned Singapore-based department store Tangs' House of Tang concept is tucked away among the treetops. The space houses a fascinating, curated mix of technology, apparel, lifestyle and pet products. Many local and cause-based concerns enjoy floor space here, including paintable white elephants that are sold with proceeds benefitting a disabled elephant named Moshu.

As the story goes, Moshu was injured by a land mine near the Thai border. In a culture in which elephants are revered, efforts sprang up to raise money so she could be fitted with a prosthetic limb. Those efforts continue today by organizations like Elephant Parade, which donates 20 percent of its net profits from the sale of the painted (or paintable) statues to elephant welfare projects. The statues are merchandised alongside photos of Moshu with her caretakers, as well as an example of the prosthetic leg that gave her life.

The Armani Spa Armani Hotel Dubai, Dubai, U.A.E. ▶

When Giorgio Armani set out to open the first hotel bearing the Armani brand name in Dubai's Burj Khalifa – the tallest structure in the world – the fashion mogul was involved in every detail. From the silk covering the armchairs to the shape and color of the soap, inspired by a smooth pebble he found on the beach, his influence is apparent throughout the luxury property.

The Armani Spa is equally impressive and on-brand, featuring revitalizing and relaxing treatments in a cool, fluid space. Consecutive rooms offering sequential treatments of heat, humidity and cold are set around a circular atrium. Rich, organic finishes include dark woods, leather and natural stone throughout the spa.

Dhamani 1969 The Dubai Mall, Dubai, U.A.E. ▶

Dhamani 1969 (Dubai, U.A.E.) is known for its handcrafted, one-of-a-kind creations with a selection of beautiful diamonds and gemstones. Dhamani Diamonds CEO Amit Dhamani hosted the Asia go go group for an exclusive tour of the retailer's Dubai Mall location.

The 3500-square-foot luxury boutique is an elegant and welcoming space with rich materials like wood and marble, silk wallcoverings and fixtures in rose gold and bronze. The Dhamani signature floral pattern is referenced throughout in the form of metal screens, used to separate spaces without obstructing the boutique's sight lines. The purchase of jewelry in the Middle East is often a family affair, meaning retailers must be mindful of accommodating shoppers' accompanying relatives. ▴



COURTESY OF TANGS, SINGAPORE



COURTESY OF ASIA A GO GO



COURTESY OF CALLISONRTKL

JENNIFER ACEVEDO, CHICAGO