

# At *the* FRONT

In our July/August issue's opening pages we ride a recently reopened cable car in Sarajevo, meet the former political exile who is putting Lebanon back on the tourist map and – to coincide with World Cup fever – choose a dream team of multi-talented mayors who know how to boss a park. But first, our editor in chief Tyler Brülé wants you to consider starting afresh in one of the world's most exciting cities.



JULY/AUGUST

## Editor's letter

We live in stormy times but sometimes a crisis is a good opportunity to change tack and set a new course. How about Zürich, Hamburg or Fukuoka? The captain of our ship weighs up the possibilities.

By *Tyler Brülé*  
Illustration *Satoshi Hashimoto*

Imagine for a moment you live in a country that feels increasingly alien to you, your family, your friends and your overall worldview. Let's pretend that the country you've called home since birth has suddenly decided it's going to drift off out into the ocean without a compass, charts, a capable crew or seaworthy ship. As you've grown accustomed to your homeland muddling through and making the best of things, at first you resigned yourself to the fact that everything was going to work out alright and somehow, someone would have the good sense to keep the vessel tethered in a safe harbour. Unfortunately, things don't quite turn out that way and while the ship is still berthed it's also taking on water, crew members are deserting and there's a mild sense of panic due to a lack of leadership and a sensible plan. When friends say they're considering radical alternative plans and start venturing out to look for greener pastures you also get that dreadful sinking feeling. Do you side with most of your countrymen and elect to ride it out or do you consider your options and start thinking about a life in a new land?

When we launched our Quality of Life Survey back in 2007 the world seemed a saner, more sedate place. This magazine hit the shelves at the right time and the consumer markets were in good health. One year later came the collapse; much of the world went into financial free fall and suddenly nothing felt stable – particularly the business of publishing a global, English-language magazine.

Despite the challenging climate, however, MONOCLE managed to make its market as ad budgets were being slashed and many of our readers were being laid off from financial firms, consultancies and public-sector posts. Amidst all of this turmoil a curious thing happened – we continued to grow and we made a unique connection with our international audience. While it certainly wasn't great for thousands who suddenly found themselves without a daily gig to go to, it also gave the newly under-employed a moment to take stock and figure out what they wanted to do. On our editorial floor it also offered up a chance for us to help inspire our readership with stories of entrepreneurship, cities and towns that were full of opportunities and benchmarks for fresh business ideas from all corners of the globe.

As our home market lurches from one crisis to another and the US offers little in the way of long-term fiscal or moral leadership, we're in a similar place to where we were a decade ago when legions of talented people stood back and decided they were going to get off the ship and launch their own ventures. This time around people are willing to give up the financial stability of a job that might be secure in London or Chicago and look elsewhere for a city that fits with their political, cultural and business outlook. Since the UK opted to leave the EU there's been a steady stream of queries from British and American readers asking for recommendations about where they might set

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up a new base while they wait for things to stabilise or leadership to change.

For this 12th edition of our survey we've altered our metrics ever so slightly to assess liveability from the perspective of long-time residents as well as newcomers. We've also tried to look through a lens that considers how cities function for an individual or family ready to start afresh and how much is on offer in terms of connectivity and start-up opportunities. While the candidates are largely the same, this year sees no US cities in our top 25 and a few of our Japanese cities drop in the rankings – in part because Japan's biggest cities still have some work to do when it comes to cutting bureaucracy and making it easier for people to get in and out of the country. A city like Fukuoka, for example, is perfectly positioned as a hub close to Shanghai, Taipei and Hong Kong but it needs the support of Tokyo to speed up immigration queues and also cut down on paperwork for the entrepreneur who wants to swiftly set up a business and get his family and colleagues settled.

While our top five speak for themselves, if you were to call us today and ask where we'd look for a new apartment and office space we'd tell you we're feeling good about Paris and are optimistic that Emmanuel Macron's labour reforms will eventually take hold. Lisbon continues to solidify its position as an attractive, sunny base with a talented population. And if you don't mind the clouds and a bit (a lot) of rain then Hamburg is also a city that offers a superior quality of life and straddles both the Nordic and Mitteleuropean worlds. Of course, you will have noticed

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by now that we've voted for Zürich and so far are happy with the choice. Mind you, they could also do with making it easier to set up a business and also rethink how companies need to function and operate – particularly in the F&B and retail space. I can tell you more if you join us at our Quality of Life Conference at the end of the month. Until then, all the best for the summer ahead and we're back with another round of summer newspapers in August. Thank you for your support. — (M)



# The opener

We take a good swig of Vienna's wonderful water and find out why ditching the car has turned our writer into a joyrider. But first: Vancouver's mini libraries, Latin American litter pickers and Berlin's barbecues.

## Hot shorts: Home improvements

### Vancouver's mini-libraries

The unloved street-side newspaper boxes where you once got your daily read are among the most visible totems of a thinning newsprint sector in Canada. After laying dormant for years in Vancouver, an initiative between the city's Downtown Business Improvement Association and art students at the Simon Fraser University is repurposing 11 of them as holders for another kind of printed material: books. The chosen newsstands have been turned into miniature lending libraries – a welcome nod to print's persisting place in urban life. — TLE



### Latam litter pickers

When South American cities can't manage a proper recycling scheme, urban litter collectors are picking up their slack. In São Paulo, where about 3 per cent of rubbish is recycled, 41 voluntary co-operatives are doubling that figure. "Recycling doesn't exist in Brazil without their work," says Fernanda Lira Goes from the national Institute for Applied Economic Research. Efforts to formalise this trade are emerging – not a rubbish idea. — LE



### Carry on cooking

In a city where private gardens are rare, people depend on public space to sear their Würsts. However, only 10 of Berlin's 2,500 parks allow barbecuing and the debate is heating up. Politicians complain about the cost of clearing the waste left behind by serial grillers but, with enough bins and a little money for clean-ups, Berlin's barbecues need not go out. — KK



ILLUSTRATOR: Annrita Marino. IMAGE: Alamy

## Opinions: Quality-of-life hacks



**1. Drink it in**  
Vienna loves its water so much it's protected in the constitution – and we can see why.  
*by Kimberly Bradley*

When I moved to Vienna I noticed that my hair was shinier, my skin softer. No limescale dotted the bathroom. Locals carried metal water bottles, not plastic. Then it hit me: in Vienna there's something in the water.

Or not. Unlike tap water in most European cities, the Austrian capital's supply is soft. Springs in the northern Calcareous Alps flow directly into the city's system in a free-fall pumpleless delivery that, along the way, even generates hydroelectric power.

The city used its own groundwater until the early 1800s, when a lack of a proper sewage system caused a public-health crisis. The First Spring Water Main, 120km long, was inaugurated in 1873 and still provides about 40 per cent of the city's supply. A second was installed in 1910 and more have been added as Vienna has grown.

Tap water is an invisible quality-of-life marker. But there's evidence that the Viennese value it: drinking fountains are everywhere; a theme park surrounds a vintage water tower; and, in 1998, a hiking trail opened along the main water route. Vienna is also the first city to protect its drinking water in its state constitution. Michael Häupl, Vienna's former mayor, once said to me, "There's an old saying: 'When he comes back from holiday, the Viennese most appreciates Anker bread and mountain spring water.'" I see his point. — (M)



**2. Driving me crackers**  
Why forgoing a car in Houston, Texas is turning out to be the ride of this writer's life.  
*by Christopher Knapp*

I live in one of the most car-centric US cities yet a bicycle is my primary means of transport. What started out as an experiment when the car went in for repairs became a habit, a passion and then an obsession. And this in a place with a climate so inhospitable that, until 1972, the city was on the "unhealthy" list for UK diplomats being posted abroad.

First, a bit of context. I grew up here. Air conditioning arrived in the classrooms when I was in third grade. This was 1970,

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just a year or so after the Apollo 11 lunar mission and Neil Armstrong's famous (to us local folks, anyway) first word as he stepped onto the surface of the moon – "Houston". The Apollo launches and their supervision were led from Nasa's Houston base and this idea of seemingly infinite accomplishment – what I think of as a culture of possibility – permeated all aspects of Houston's civic identity.

Indeed, the city had recently opened the world's first air-conditioned indoor stadium, the Astrodome, dubbed the "Eighth Wonder of the World". This was the baked-in optimism of a place that many had heard little of at the time but that, years later, is the fourth-largest US city – and among its most diverse.

Back to the bike. It was the only way we got around as kids. My brother,

our friends, we all rode everywhere on our bicycles, climate and weather notwithstanding. It was a liberating sensation to get home after school and hop on your bicycle – a sense of freedom and mobility too often impaired or diluted as one "grows up" and switches to other forms of transport. It is a relief then to experience this sensation once again well into my fifties and to shed a few layers of object ownership and responsibility.

As so often happens when we are touched tangibly by something previously unknown (like living in an automobile-obsessed city with no automobile), perceptions change. I find that daily patterns are more intentional than before. There's a necessity to thinking through how I go about the day, a mindfulness of sorts that I do not recall from the days of simply jumping in the car and running an errand just because I could.

There is a relief too of ridding oneself of the mind-numbingness of sitting idle in traffic and a coincident awareness of the toll this must surely take on the energies of those who endure it. I find my energy enhanced, not diluted, by the physical and mental effort of making my way through each day on my bicycle – a resourcefulness I have come to believe is a human craving and also a powerful source of inner contentment. My perception is sharper: I notice more. And I appreciate where I live and how I live in ways that surprise me almost daily.

And there's where I live. I find that without a car I spend more time at home. I invite others over more frequently; I garden; I cook. It is as if I have discovered a dimension of my life that has always been there, albeit unactivated. There is an odd pleasure in this that I feel compelled to share with others.

A lifelong goal has been to meld my personal and professional lives so they are undifferentiated from one another. An area of particular passion has always been the way we approach our built environments and how we engage with them and one another. A window is opening in Houston and in cities across North America to redefine our urban landscapes and to change the too-often isolated patterns in which we experience the civic forum. I feel a sense of urgency to pry this window open wider. A guy on a bike won't change a lot. Still, it's a start, and I am sticking with it. — (M)