

# do disturb

— Encounters with modern day nomads

# Wanderlust

**Wanderlust. It's the best word in the English language (aside from kumquat, nipple and frothy), though it's not actually an English word. We must thank the Germans and their love of hiking for loaning it to us. Celebrated travel writer, Paul Theroux, puts it better: 'I've seldom heard a train go by and not wished I was on it.'**

We travel for countless reasons: to soak up the sights, do business, shop, explore or simply to lounge beneath skies that are less grey than our own. But above all, the modern traveller visits people not places. And it's through these locals that the journey really takes shape.

citizenM is an ever-growing collection of hotels started by enthusiasts with wanderlust, peoplelust and bedlust. A hotel named after mobile citizens (that's where the M in our name comes from); those who travel with a mobile in their pockets and mobility in their hearts, minds and feet.

citizenM's belief is simple: give all eternally curious travellers out there the best homes-from-home in the world.

This means hotels that are luxurious, in the modern sense of the word; hotels which are affordable, so you have enough money left to see that strange play recommended by a bartender at 2 AM last night; hotels with rooms enhanced by great tech, showers and beds to make all other beds crumple with envy; with lobbies that aren't actually lobbies, they're collections of stylish, artful spaces designed to inspire work, rest, gossip, people-watching, cocktail-drinking, vintage sofa-slouching and

noodle-slurping. All slotted into the best neighbourhoods of the world's best cities.

The story behind our hotels is also the story behind this book. citizenM is named after our guests; individuals who are as inspiring, culturally diverse and story-rich as the locals in the cities they visit. We were happy to get to know them more through the beautiful lens of Desiré. We hope you are too.

Before you meet these new friends, let us sign off with some tips – from guests, friends, taxi drivers, citizenM cleaners, ambassadors and baristas – on how to enjoy every new city you find yourself in. Try a few and let us know how you get on...

Always sit at the bar. Eavesdrop without shame. Take home a local's joke and leave one behind in return. Go off-menu. Make eye contact. Visit the place with the least TripAdvisor recommendations. Find that bookstore with more dust than books. Talk to a corner shop owner, she has some brilliantly off-kilter tips. Eat with your hands and from the street. Shop vintage, independent and without

crowds. Take the back door. Go the back streets. Look up. Walk, you have time. Enjoy a bed that enhances your dreams (hint: they're in our hotels). Avoid the selfie, get a passer-by to take the shot instead.

Explore a city at 5.30 AM, the streets are glowing and characters plenty. Flea markets are the soul of every city, go if you can. Dare to eat food that squirms (though don't blame us if things get weird). Visit questionable-looking nightclubs, because soon you'll be dancing with a 90-year-old sushi chef, an urban beekeeper and a woman who claims to be descended from Cleopatra. Travel with map closed and eyes wide open (though don't blame us if things get weird). Always carry a notepad, your smartphone switched to silent and a photo of your Mum.

Lastly, come say hi, whether you're staying as a guest or not. We welcome all travellers, even if you've just travelled from two streets away.

Safe journey,  
**citizenM**

**“The story behind our  
hotels is also the story  
behind this book.”**

— citizenM



**“The modern traveller visits people not places. And it’s through these locals that the journey really takes shape.”**

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INTRODUCTION BY  
**Desiré van den Berg**  
— Photographer

# The world is such an intriguing place

Have you ever found yourself surrounded by strangers, wondering what their lives look like? I have. Many times. The philanthropist in me always ends up speaking to travellers on trains or helping lost tourists find their way. My curiosity is rewarded with an intimate glimpse into their lives – even if we only speak for seconds. A facial expression, a small gesture, a few little words, can reveal so much about a stranger. Nothing is enriching my life as a photographer more than this.

When I was told about the concept of this photography series, diving into the lives of complete strangers, I was immediately fascinated. I was asked to visit hotels in four of the most inspiring cities around the world, and engage with travellers who would allow me to join them for a day in their lives. The challenge of this project was to capture very intimate moments via my lens and have them tell me their stories.

I spent hours on the couches in the citizenM lobbies waiting for the perfect moment deciding on whom to approach. I had no system for this; it was purely based on my instinct and gut feeling.

I spent hours and hours with my new friends from across the globe, listening to their stories. Travelling from Amsterdam to New York, London and Paris was not just a physical journey. It made me realise the people I met and the places I visited touched me on a very personal and emotional level.

This book celebrates the beauty of global diversity, and in particular the people who never stand still, and travel physically as well as emotionally.

Do Disturb is a testimony to people's willingness to share a look in their hotel rooms of life and open up their suitcases of stories.

Thanks to all the people who are featured in this book for sharing your time and trust. You have inspired me immensely and I hope everyone reading this book will do so too.

**“It is the story that makes a connection with the person reading it.”**

— Desiré van den Berg **Photographer**

“Sorry can I ask you something?” - I must have asked this over a hundred times. And while doing so, not sounding like one of those people on a busy shopping street trying to sell you something. Luckily enough, my question was usually answered with a smile. “Can I be part of your life for a day and follow you with my camera?” I never thought the days to come would turn out to such a magical experience.



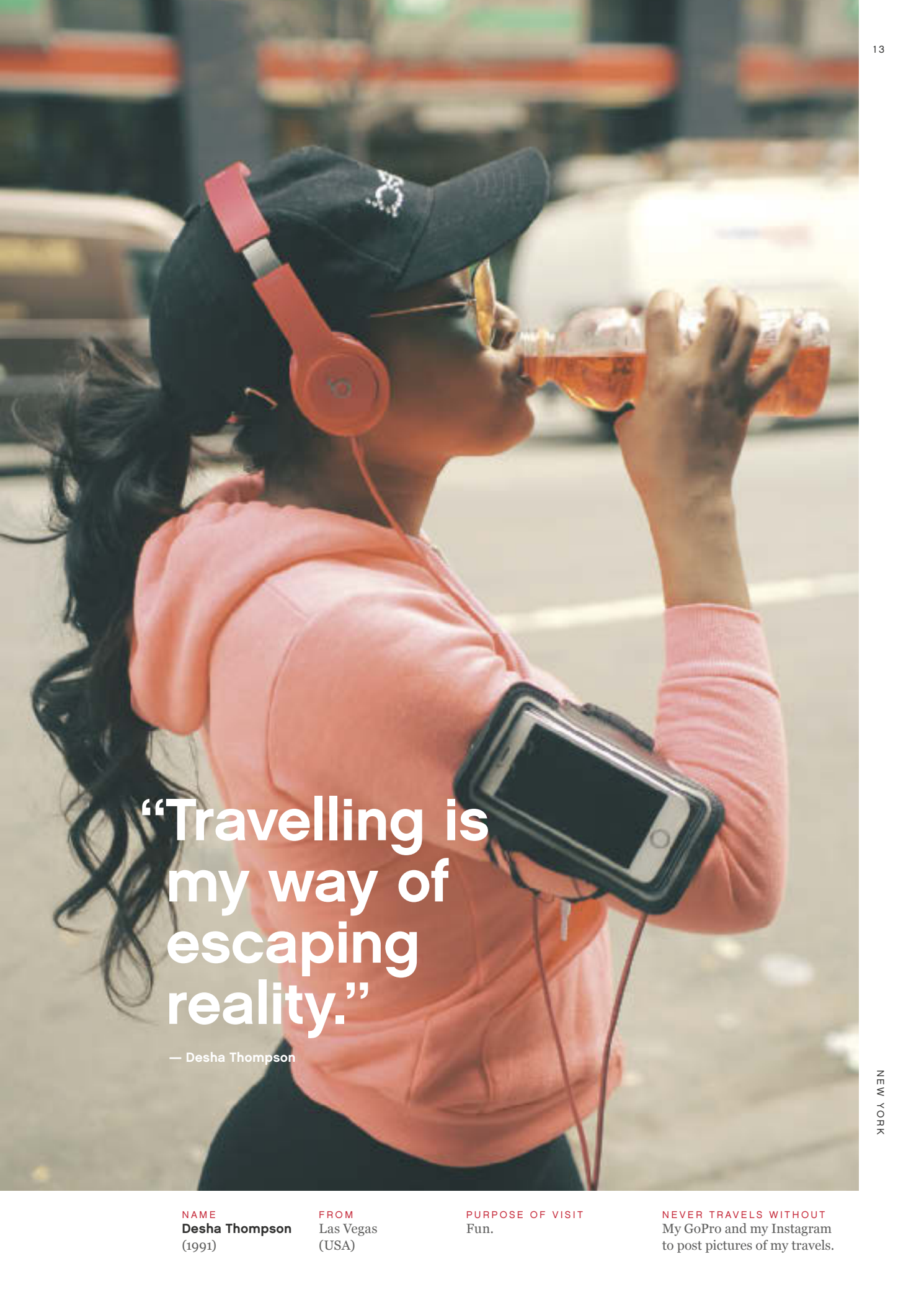


**“Travel with map closed  
and eyes wide open.”**

— citizenM



"Travelling is my way of escaping reality. I'm a dancer in Las Vegas, so I'm free to travel often. I travelled four times in the past four months! I went to Indonesia, Japan... I guess I could just live my life on the move."



“Travelling is  
my way of  
escaping  
reality.”

— Desha Thompson

NAME  
**Desha Thompson**  
(1991)

FROM  
Las Vegas  
(USA)

PURPOSE OF VISIT  
Fun.

NEVER TRAVELS WITHOUT  
My GoPro and my Instagram  
to post pictures of my travels.





"I'm very careless with my ties. I lost one a couple of days ago in Berlin after I had a few drinks at night. I used it to tie someone to a landpost... My other tie got lost in Singapore when I was having a beer after work and got talked into being a stripper while they played Grease Lightning. The concierge managed to gather most of my clothes and brought them to me the next morning when I was having a coffee with my boss. I had some explaining to do..."

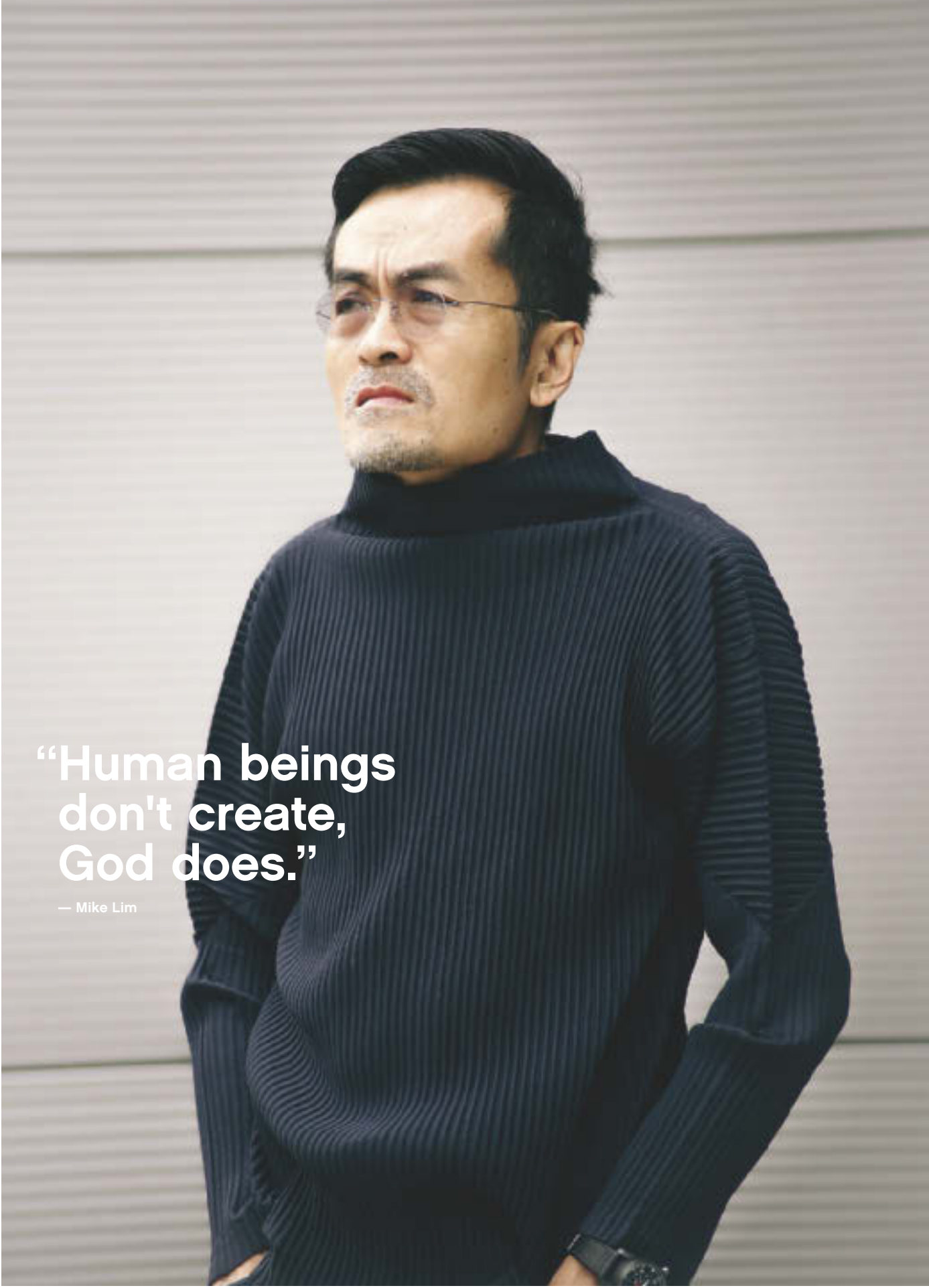


NAME  
**Jake Head**  
(1988)

FROM  
Brighton  
(UK)

PURPOSE OF VISIT  
Business at the RAI  
exhibition centre.

NEVER TRAVELS WITHOUT  
My music, which is mostly rock  
and dubstep.

A portrait of Mike Lim, a man with dark hair and glasses, wearing a dark blue ribbed turtleneck sweater. He is looking off to the side with a thoughtful expression. The background is a light-colored, horizontally-ribbed wall.

**“Human beings  
don't create,  
God does.”**

— Mike Lim

"Human beings don't create, God does. I'm not a Christian but I just believe that everything has already been created for us and it's up to us to continue from there. People don't create, they invent."





**NAME**  
**Mike Lim**  
(1967)

**FROM**  
Singapore  
(Singapore)

**PURPOSE OF VISIT**  
Check out what is new in design.  
I'm an interior designer,  
and did the Dubai mall -  
the biggest mall in the world.

**NEVER TRAVELS WITHOUT**  
My own pillow cover. It's just  
comforting when I go to bed, to  
lay my head down on something  
familiar.



"I am a very passionate person and will always stay young at heart. Growing up brings so many responsibilities, but I will always stay a kid on the inside. I think that's essential to happiness, to still enjoy the little things in life."





NAME  
**Flora Xu**  
(1981)

FROM  
Shanghai  
(China)

PURPOSE OF VISIT  
Starting a road trip through  
Normandy and Bordeaux.

NEVER TRAVELS WITHOUT  
A silver Christian cross necklace.