

TRAVEL AND HOSPITALITY

## Mandarin Oriental reflects escapist, encouraging ethos with podcast series

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*Mandarin Oriental is transporting travelers through commissioned short stories, told through podcasts. Image credit: Mandarin Oriental*

By KATIE TAMOLA

Hotel group Mandarin Oriental is getting escapist and fantastical in its latest storytelling effort, inviting consumers into a world of several journeys through a new podcast series.

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In the new podcast series "Fantastic Stories," the hotel group is reflecting the brand ethos of escapism and euphoria. With four short stories narrated by authors, viewers are taken on four disparate and emotional journeys with one recurring character: Mandarin Oriental.

"At Mandarin Oriental, our mission is to delight and inspire our Fans at every opportunity," said Shevaun Leach, vice president of marketing communications for **Mandarin Oriental Hotel Group**, Hong Kong. "We are passionate about making a difference every day, exploring new ways to surprise and delight our guests."

"Our recently unveiled podcast series, **Fantastic Stories**, features three renowned authors who have written and narrated short stories while in residence," she said. "We are now able to provide a curated audio experience for our fans, providing the opportunity for a journey around the world whether they can travel at this time or not."

### Fantastic Stories

In the first installment, "Vacuum in Munich by William Boyd," listeners meet Bethany, an editorial assistant at a periodical in London who is an adult go-between for her divorced parents, as the estranged relationship is built on "a hatred that seems to grow stronger."

One day, Bethany's father asks her if she'd like to meet him in Munich for the weekend, and she complies. Upon Bethany's arrival, she learns that her father is delayed, and she's left to her own devices, taking respite in a Mandarin Oriental hotel.

*The podcasts are available on Spotify and YouTube*

When her flaky father ultimately reports that he will not be joining her, a fellow guest decides to come to Bethany's aid, offering to pay for her stay so that the new friends can continue to enjoy each other's company.

The story is an introduction to the camaraderie and sense of home that guests can feel at any Mandarin Oriental location.

Another episode, "Bluebeard Daughter," conveys the theme of wanderlust. It positions Mandarin Oriental as a constant option for when consumers are looking to travel and have memorable experiences.

"In reality, this is the first time you have left home," Sarvat Hasin narrates in the second episode. "Ten years, you've never tried in London for yourself.

"When you dream, you dream of Rome, of giant bowls of pasta of espresso and wine, exploring the city."

Each episode is its own adventure, building empathy in reveling in the stories of others and encouraging listeners to craft travel stories of their own.

There are two additional episodes in the series, Mr. Boyd's "One Night in Nihonbashi" and "The Wish" by Alexandra Shulman. In these stories, the protagonists find themselves in unpredictable situations, with only one constant to rely on: a Mandarin Oriental and its comforting accommodations always in the periphery.

The emotive, descriptive narration is a journey in itself for listeners, projecting travelers into the different settings, lives and hearts of each protagonist.

New stories, new beginnings

Mandarin Oriental's new podcast series is its latest push to highlight its offerings across the globe where consumers can craft their own momentous experiences.

The hotel group has already opened new locations in what is shaping up to be a very busy year.

The hotel group's plans for 2021 include opening a new location in Istanbul as well as reopening locations in Madrid; Bodrum, Turkey; New York and Lago di Como, Italy. Following the appointment of Joanna Flint as chief commercial officer, Mandarin Oriental is also expanding its offerings at current properties, highlighting local partnerships and giving consumers more excursion options ([see story](#)).

Whether hospitality or fashion or food brand, all sectors seem to be delving into the podcasting realm, hoping to reach new audiences in a different way.

Last year, British department store Fortnum & Mason debuted a podcast series celebrating how food brings people together. Fortnum's podcast "Hungry Minds" discusses food trends, science and the future of food ([see story](#)).

Mandarin Oriental seems immensely excited about continuing its Fantastic Stories series, with new authors and global adventures.

"We have not limited the project with specific criteria in terms of partner selection or themes, but engage with authors whose work and creativity we not only admire and respect, but who are genuine Fans of our brand and have stayed at our hotels," Ms. Leach said. "We have more in the pipeline, featuring a diverse range of authors, which will go live later this year."