

THE VINSON VIEW

Quality maniac and master shopper Nick Vinson on the who, what, when, where and why



WHERE QUALITY TRUMPS LUXURY

Dining

Fergus Henderson's rigorously simple, fuss-free British cuisine at St John and St John Bread & Wine in London. stjohngroup.uk.com

Fashion

Thanks to the new-season Hermès womenswear by Nadège Vanhee-Cybulski, understatement never felt so fine. hermes.com

Flowers

In place of fussy arrangements, FlowerBx delivers high-quality, single-varietal bunches of cut flowers, direct from the flower markets of Holland to your front door. flowerbx.com

Design

The epitome of enduring design, Adolf Loos' drinking sets for Lobmeyr are simplicity at its best and elevate a glass of water into a treat. store.wallpaper.com

01 Simple pleasures

Less is more, even in the world of luxury hospitality

If I fly first class I want effortless check-in, the fastest track within and out of the airport, and space, comfort and attentive service in the cabin. I am more likely to go for water and nuts than caviar and champagne, although I will have my nuts on a dish, not in a packet - I am definitely with Heather 'Nut Rage' Cho on that one [Cho, Korean Air's former vice-president, ordered the aircraft to taxi back to the gate before take-off, after she was dissatisfied with the way a flight attendant served her nuts]. I rarely eat on board, but if I did I would prefer simply prepared, expertly sourced produce; I would also prefer a fast exit off the plane over a designer amenity kit.

When I stay in a great hotel, I don't need champagne in my room, amuse bouches that require a conversation-interrupting explanation, an overbearing piano player in ear shot or fussy food, or anything else that is just fancy for the sake of it. This type of 'luxury' often comes with equally out-of-date dress codes. Huka Lodge and The Farm at Cape Kidnappers, some of the finest accommodation New Zealand has to offer, both insist that men wear a jacket to dinner, especially odd on a sheep farm. Pomposity seems worse in Italy: The Splendido in Portofino offers food that is hardly a match for its splendid location, and the staff could be less punctilious and

more discreet. Likewise, Villa San Michele in Fiesole, with its enviable views overlooking Florence, has omnipresent piano playing in the evenings, guests that seem uncomfortably overdressed, and rather average food served up with much fanfare by over-precious staff. This summer, we were welcomed with a crude 'mi dica' (tell me), a greeting I might accept from the butcher, providing it was preceded by *bongiorno* or *buonasera*. I would cease being snooty, drop dictatorial dress codes, tone down the fuss and focus on offering less, but better.

The Il San Pietro in Positano gets the balance right, which must have something to do with the fact that Virginia, the *padrona* and niece of founder Carlino Cinque, can be found daily at the beach in her swimsuit, often accompanied by her boxer Zarina and her grandchildren. This is a top-notch place, yet the staff are formal but friendly. On the terrace at aperitif time you get a charming mandolin-and-guitar duo playing traditional Neapolitan tunes at just the perfect volume. The restaurant serves a simple slice of pizza in place of an amuse bouche and will happily suggest a local wine if that's what you want. I don't think that sandals, even the crocodile ones my husband Álvaro and I teamed with a shirt and trousers, followed their dinner dress code to the letter, but our less but better dressing was totally appropriate.



02

Blazer, by Berluti

This has to be the world's most perfect blazer. Designed by Berluti's artistic director Alessandro Sartori, the suede number features a soft leather lining, patch pockets and horn buttons. £3,850, berluti.com



03

'Lyngby' vase

First produced in 1936, Lyngby Porcelæn's simple fluted vase was recently reissued and is now available from WallpaperSTORE*. From €45, store.wallpaper.com