

## **Olaf Peter Jensen**

### **Writing portfolio**

#### **Outlook for 2017: Travel in Times of Global Uncertainty**

Published on [www.hotelrez.net](http://www.hotelrez.net) on 19 January 2017

If one thing is clear, it's that 2016 marked the beginning of a new era of uncertainty. With political upheavals like Brexit, Donald Trump and the Turkish coup d'état, terror attacks in France and Belgium and natural disasters in Italy – many of which affected traditionally popular destinations – you might be forgiven for thinking that the travel industry is on the verge of a crisis.

This couldn't be further from the truth. Opinion polling has already suggested that political events like Brexit have little impact on tourism, with [a survey of US travellers](#) by travel industry intelligence company Skift revealing that over half view Brexit as unlikely to affect their likelihood of visiting Britain. Some have even suggested that the plummeting value of the pound may encourage more tourism to the UK. Trump's victory, too, seems unlikely to dampen the glittering appeal of the USA as a travel destination.

My outlook for 2017 is therefore one of cautious optimism. Tourism has proven itself resilient in the face of global uncertainty, and it is my belief that it will continue to do so over the coming year. Indeed, this resilience is already evident: early bookings [were strong in the last quarter of 2016](#), although it is possible it may simply be a reflection of a pre-existing trend in that direction. Nonetheless it seems clear that tourism has yet to be hit by this global uncertainty.

#### The future is digital

Much of this can be attributed to the growing population of digital natives. Unlike previous generations, many of these tourists tend to demand a richer experience from their travel. Traditional holiday packages no longer satisfy this new breed of traveller, particularly when opportunities for authentic experiences can be readily found online.

Furthermore, in this era of ‘fake news’, the mainstream media is no longer considered the authoritative source it once was. With local expertise now available at the touch of a button, digital natives can look beyond negative news stories about Donald Trump or Brexit and focus instead on a unique culinary experience in Louisiana or a secluded natural wonder in Wales.

### Unperturbed by disasters

For this same reason, travellers are becoming more receptive to destinations typically considered unsafe. While this doesn’t mean they are heading off in their droves to Syria, it does open up countries like Nepal, Myanmar or Rwanda that have suffered from natural disasters and political instability in recent decades.

Even recent disasters and terrorist attacks appear to have had little negative impact on the global market as a whole. Following terror incidents in North Africa over the last two years, tourists simply migrated their attention to [resorts elsewhere in the western Mediterranean](#); after natural disasters, bookings typically pick up after only two or three weeks, a much faster rate than in previous years.

### A change in climate

The desire for more authentic experiences has also meant that, in 2016, more people looked to city breaks than traditional beach holidays. The most obvious beneficiary of this is the sharing economy, with peer-to-peer services like Airbnb – which gives travellers the opportunity to stay in the homes of real locals – making it increasingly possible for tourists to have the meaningful, authentic interactions they seek. However, I also believe that independent boutique-style hotels, often synonymous with their neighbourhood, stand to benefit.

The rise of the sharing economy and the educational power of the internet is beginning to have a major effect on the travel and hotel industry, meaning tourists are able to cut through the fog of

uncertainty to reach the genuine experiences they demand from their holidays. What this suggests is that the major events of 2016 are unlikely to perturb tourists. The ramifications of Brexit and Trump's presidency are as yet unclear, but short of a catastrophe, we can remain hopeful that tourism will be relatively unscathed by any negative consequences – real or perceived – they might produce.

## **A Snapshot of the Netherlands in 5 Cities**

Published on [blog.hotelrez.co.uk](http://blog.hotelrez.co.uk) on 21 March 2018

[The Netherlands](#) is a dense country; there's so much to see and do in such a small place. It's the country of total football, of stunning Baroque art, and cyclists and canals. This guide highlights some of the most fascinating aspects of Dutch culture and history, in just five destinations.

### **Amsterdam: visit the home of total football**

The Netherlands has given the world a lot: tulips, capitalism, abundant cannabis, and total football. This brand-new way of playing football was developed in the late 1960s by Rinus Michels, whose Ajax side took the world by storm. At its heart was the late Johan Cruyff, an [Amsterdam](#) native who is rightly considered one of the finest men ever to take to the football pitch.

Rotterdam and Eindhoven host fine football clubs, but it's Amsterdam in which you can see where it all began. AFC Ajax are the kings of Dutch football. They play in the Johan Cruyff Arena, south of the city centre. Although the Dutch top division, the Eredivise, is no longer considered to be among the very finest football leagues, Ajax still play attractive, innovative, international, and exciting football. Tickets to Ajax matches can be tough to get hold of, they are usually well worth the price of admission.

Even if you don't manage to attend a game, you can take a stadium tour and visit the Ajax museum, where you'll find plenty of artefacts from their long and storied history, including their four European Cups – three of these were won by teams built around Johan Cruyff.

**Where to stay:** [Cityden Up](#), an apartment hotel balancing stylish accommodation with big, modern social spaces.

### **The Hague: discover the Dutch Masters**

[The Hague](#) is a place of history and tradition – you'd expect nothing less of the seat of government and the royal family. It owes its wealth and charm to the Dutch Golden Age, a period in which Dutch

ships plied the seas in search of trade and commerce, the Dutch East India Company swelled to become the richest private company of all time, and capitalism was born out of Dutch banks and stock exchanges.

But there is another kind of wealth here. The city's most popular attraction is the Mauritshuis, a somewhat unassuming building overlooking the Hofvijver pond, next door to the Prime Minister's offices. Like opening a little jewellery box, the contents of this historic building belie its appearance.

Inside is surely one of the world's finest art galleries. Here, you'll find some of the masterpieces of the Dutch Golden Age of painting, with iconic images like Jan Vermeer's *Girl with a Pearl Earring* and Rembrandt's *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr Nicolaes Tulp*. You can easily spend a day lost among its treasures, marvelling at these lively, charismatic paintings that open a window to a lost age when the Netherlands led the world.

**Where to stay:** [The Hague Teleport Hotel](#), located in a quiet corner of The Hague, with plenty of royal touches.

## **Groningen: explore medieval streets and canals by bicycle**

Glance at a map, and you might think that [Groningen](#) is rather isolated, sitting on its own in the northeast corner of the country. In fact, this city is vibrant, youthful, and progressive. It's a university town, criss-crossed by canals and pock-marked by historic churches and public buildings. Groningen has been called the 'World Cycling City', because more than 57% of all journeys in the city are made by bicycle. With any luck, you'll leave wondering why the rest of the world doesn't do the same.

If you really want to experience the Netherlands as the Dutch do, rent a bike and get cycling. Winding through old streets and past tranquil canals is the very best way to see the city and take in its sights – and there are more than you'd expect – including plenty of unique street art like the *urinoir*, a street urinal covered by striking artworks.

On your travels you might find the Groninger Museum, a colourful modern building housing international art, the 16th-century

Martinikerk and its huge tower, and the Grote Markt, the lively market at the heart of the city. Take a stroll round the food market, or simply sit and relax at one of its many cafes and terraces.

**Where to stay:** [The Student Hotel Groningen](#), a quirky, social hotel in an up-and-coming area of the city.

### **Rotterdam: find the very best modern art and architecture**

Levelled during the Second World War, modern, futuristic architecture turned [Rotterdam](#) from a bombsite into an open-air gallery. Though an industrial city, Rotterdam doesn't feel run-down or dilapidated; its multi-ethnic character, maritime tradition, and wealth of curious art and design make the Netherlands' second-largest city unique and absorbing.

Modern architecture is everywhere. There are some 19th-century gems here, such as the late-nineteenth-century, 11-storey Witte Huis, built to compete with American skyscrapers – it's sometimes called Europe's first. More recent additions, like the iconic, swooping Erasmus Bridge, the Cube Houses, the Central Library, and the Market Hall – a gigantic, horseshoe-shaped arch that looms over a large, open marketplace – give the city its striking, innovative flavour.

You can also find some intriguing local art, from the Het Nieuwe Instituut, which showcases modern art and architecture, to Showroom Mama, a creative hub for Rotterdam's vibrant youth culture, or Toko 51, another youthful concept store and venue. Unsurprisingly, Rotterdam can complement this was a host of fantastic places for eating, drinking, and nightlife.

**Where to stay:** [The Student Hotel Rotterdam](#), a lively hotel in a trendy part of Rotterdam, with unique social spaces.

### **Maastricht: witness Dutch history in microcosm**

[Maastricht](#) is a microcosm of Western Europe. Here, you can find everything from Roman ruins and Spanish forts, to French food with Belgian and German twists and turns. All this combines to

create the least Dutch of Dutch cities – what better place was there to sign the treaty that created the European Union back in 1992? As if to highlight this, Liege in Belgium and Aachen in Germany are both just a short car or train journey away.

In Maastricht, you'll also find a pretty comprehensive cross-section of Dutch history in Maastricht, from the Roman ruins in the cellar of the Derlon Hotel, to the 17<sup>th</sup>-century Fort Sint Pieter and the tunnels used by the Dutch Resistance during the Second World War.

Take a relaxed stroll around historic neighbourhoods like the Jekerkwartier, where you'll find medieval buildings, churches, remnants of the city walls and water wheels; or you could retire for a coffee or lunch on a pavement café on the Vrijthof, the square at the heart of the city upon which the 1,000-year-old basilica sits, before popping into one of the city's excellent museums.

Meanwhile, modern Maastricht is represented by its thriving student culture, an excellent culinary scene, and plenty of places to enjoy a decent Dutch beer.

**Where to stay:** [The Student Hotel Maastricht](#), adding a lively atmosphere and stylish rooms to the city centre.

## **Guest writer: Should Russia be hosting?**

Published on [www.gameofthepeople.com](http://www.gameofthepeople.com) on 14 May 2018

WHEN Russia was awarded the hosting rights to the 2018 FIFA World Cup, it wasn't totally unfair to dismiss the reaction – particularly that of the English – as sour grapes. After all, there was a certain expectation among the England camp that it was their moment: a feeling of entitlement that it was their chance to win the tournament in the home of football once again. **Olaf Peter Jensen** addresses the elephant in the room.

Fortunately for Russia – but unfortunately for England's chances of seeing the decision somehow overruled – the whole event was overshadowed by the ludicrous choice to send the 2022 edition of the World Cup to Qatar. As a result, few people at the time questioned whether Russia was a suitable host for the competition.

And indeed, from a footballing perspective, Russia isn't such an outlandish choice. They have a fairly successful football tradition, having won, as the Soviet Union, the very first European Championship in 1960; at the time they were captained by Lev Yashin, a Russian-born goalkeeper widely considered the greatest of all time. They've been innovators, too. It was a Russian, Victor Maslov, who invented the 4-4-2 formation as manager of Dynamo Kyiv in the 1960s. His team was among the first to utilise the pressing game, and implemented new developments in nutrition and fitness to create a team well ahead of its time.

But Russia's national significance can perhaps be overstated: the country's cultural dominance within the Soviet Union means it's easy to forget that the nation's best players, best managers, and best clubs were often *not Russian*. Of the three Soviet players to be awarded the Ballon d'Or, two – Oleh Blokhin and Ihor Belanov – were Ukrainian; the very best Soviet manager, Valeriy Lobanovskiy, was born in Kiev; and the most formidable club in the Soviet Union were Dynamo Kyiv, who won 13 Top League titles and two UEFA Cup Winners' Cups.

And today, you'd struggle to name a single Russian player. It is telling that, since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the Russian national team has never qualified for the knockout stage of the three World Cups it has played in, and only done so once in the Euros. Its clubs have fared better: CSKA Moscow and Zenit St. Petersburg won the UEFA Cup in 2005 and 2008 respectively, and make regular appearances in the Champions League, but it's fair to say that they no longer hold the cachet they once did. But these days it's not the clubs that strike fear into the hearts of the top European clubs, but the fans – and this is where the trouble begins.

Racism and violence among Russian football fans has been under heavy scrutiny, particularly in the wake of an unprecedented level of organised hooliganism during Euro 2016. In Marseille and Lille, Russian thugs, wearing masks and carrying improvised weapons, clashed with England fans with an almost military level of planning and organisation; dozens of supporters were injured, and two were left in a coma, having been beaten by thugs wielding iron bars and throwing chairs.

The violence made for harrowing viewing. Documentaries have since followed gangs of thugs into the Russian woods, where hyper-masculine, Fight Club-esque punch-ups are held to train new generations of hooligans. The groups, heavily linked with Russian nationalist and neo-Nazi ideology, fight not just for the love of violence – a fixture at Russian Premier League matches – but also for national pride. They see the mockery and derision of loutish, lippy, provocative English fans as another symptom of the emasculation of their country at the hands of the decadent West. The solution is obvious: all out war.

Worst of all, it seems to be tolerated, if not actively encouraged by the Russian political establishment. During Euro 2016, Igor Lebedev, a nationalist MP and a member of the Russian Football Union, tweeted 'I see nothing terrible with the fans fighting. On the contrary, well done our boys. Keep it up!' He added on his website that 'The lads defended the honour of their country and did not let English fans desecrate our motherland.'

Although hooliganism can be contained by the Russian authorities, the pervasive and often violent racism is more difficult to overcome – it's a particular concern with five African nations and dozens of black players from around the world competing in the tournament. Black players are regularly subject to abuse at Russian league and international matches. For instance, Brazilian legend Roberto Carlos had bananas thrown at him during his spell as an Anzhi Makhachkala player, and the Ivorian Yaya Touré received a hail of monkey chants from CSKA Moscow supporters when they played Manchester City in 2013. His protestations to the referee were fruitless against the crowd.

Racist abuse and violence is already common in Russia, targeting black and Muslim individuals. Furthermore, oppressive anti-LGBT laws and intense, rampant homophobia make attending the tournament a risk for LGBT supporters. With millions of fans from all over the world set to attend the World Cup, how seriously can we take Russian assurances of safety and security for its guests?

No FIFA official could have cast his vote in 2005 without knowledge of the racism, the homophobia, the violence and the hooliganism that pervade Russian football culture and wider society. It would take a particularly nasty, morally bankrupt individual to happily back Russia's bid for the tournament, knowingly putting fans in danger.

Bribery and corruption seem to present something of an explanation; ever since the vote was concluded, football officials have been liberal with their allegations. But, when it comes to Vladimir Putin's totalitarian mafia state, it's difficult to discount. After all, evidence has since emerged of a massive, state-sponsored doping operation, that has implicated over a thousand Russian athletes, seen 51 Olympic medals stripped from them, and had the country banned from both the 2016 Paralympic Games and the 2018 Winter Olympics.

In the years following the decision, Russia has invaded two countries, propped a brutal dictatorship in Syria, interfered in

elections and funded populist groups across the Western world, poisoned two people on the streets of Salisbury, created a dictatorship and burgeoning cult of personality, quashed dissent and murdered opposition leaders and journalists. They hold international law in contempt, they celebrate corruption as a national pastime, and they laud the violence and racism of their football fans. And beyond all that, they're not very good at football either. If FIFA still believe they made the right choice, how can they be taken seriously as custodians of the global game?

## **Karpatalya 5-1 Tibet**

Published on [www.conifa.org](http://www.conifa.org) on 3 June 2018

Despite a spirited performance from Tibet, buoyed by their passionate crowd, Karpatalya emerged deserved 5-1 winners on a humid afternoon in Bracknell.

Karpatalya dominated the first half, led by the potent attacking trio of Ronald Takacs, Zsolt Gaidus, and Gyorgy Tone, as well as Zoltan Baksa, their marauding right wing-back. Their intensity was rewarded with a goal within just two minutes, when Gaidus slotted past Tenzin Samdup. Tibet made it all too easy.

The Karpatalyans relaxed for a short period after the first goal, affording Tibet a handful of chances, including two well-saved headers by Dema Lhundup. But a resolute defence and assured goalkeeping made sure that Tibet's attacks were limited and short-lived, and Lhundup was too often isolated up front.

Karpatalya remained threatening, and eventually doubled their lead through a Gyorgy Sandor penalty, after Takacs was fouled in the box.

They added a third after 42 minutes, with Gaidus lancing the ball through a hapless Tibetan defence to provide the assist for Takacs.

The second half started quietly. Karpatalya looked relaxed and happy to soak up Tibetan attacks.

But Tibet made a breakthrough on the 69th minute: Tenzing Phardoe, acting as playmaker, scuffled with the Karpatalyan defence before finding the beleaguered Lhundup, whose potshot from outside the box found the back of the net to make it 3-1.

Tibet had a few more of these potshots, but Karpatalya scored two goals in quick succession, courtesy of Alex Svedjuk and Ronald Takacs, ending Tibetan chances of a comeback.

With Tibet losing width – Tenzing Yougyal cut a frustrated figure on the left – they were unable to forge any more chances, and a clumsy defence nearly cost them another goal.

Nonetheless, Tibet's delightful supporters were in full voice through the game. During half time, a display of traditional Tibetan music and dance made sure the Tibetans would leave an indelible mark on this year's competition.

## Kyoto and the importance of myth

Published on [www.letterhole.com](http://www.letterhole.com) on 12 November 2017

ON 30 MAY 1945, Kyoto was given a reprieve. Three months before the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan's ancient capital was taken off the list of potential targets thanks to the intervention of Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson, who had fallen in love with the city on his honeymoon, decades earlier. The reverence that saved Kyoto speaks to its immense importance, not just to Japanese culture, but also to the popular perception of Japan in the West.

To us *gaijin*, whose primary understanding of Japan comes from imported technology, Pokémon, dubbed animé, Kurosawa films, and – if you're unlucky – internet hentai, Kyoto is still the city of temples, gabled houses, wooden arches, and *kimono*-clad *geisha*. In truth, the buildings are reconstructions, and the *kimono* are rented and worn by Chinese tourists going through the motions of their photography rituals.

But tourism has always relied on stereotypes and a mythologised version of history and culture. Even Kyoto's very real temples rely on this to a certain extent. Two of the most famous (and most exhaustively photographed for Facebook profile pictures) are *Fushimi Inari-taisha*, with its winding paths of iconic red archways, and *Kinkaku-ji*, the famous and beautiful golden pavilion. Yet the current iteration of *Kinkaku-ji*, for all the history that weighs heavily upon it, was only built in 1955, the original having fallen victim to an act of arson at the hands of a novice monk five years earlier. The reason so many tourists flock to marvel at the temple in spite of this, is because the fire did not remove *Kinkaku-ji*'s inherent sense of 'historicity'.

It's this same phenomenon that makes strolling through the Gion district, down 'preserved' streets like Shirakawa-minami, Shinbashi, and Hanamikoji streets, the favoured haunts of *geisha* – or *geiko* as they are properly known in Kyoto – and their touristic imitators. These places are attractive to us because they appear as Japan

is *meant to be*. It's a historical facsimile of the country we see across Western media: traditional, beautiful, and preserved. A cynic will decry all this as inauthentic, and in an age in which tourists are increasingly seeking out authentic experiences (see Airbnb), it might even seem fake and exploitative.

I count myself fortunate that my image of Japan is coloured as much by drinking in a Kamata *izakaya* with my brother's weird friends as it is by the likes of Kurosawa and *samurai* legends. Modern Japan is far more complex than the tourist sites of Kyoto. You can get under its skin by visiting a Muji shop or trying to load up as Pasmu travel card as much as you can in any temple or castle. But these heritage sites lacquer Japan with a sense of identity familiar to us in the West; and if that lacquer is a gateway to getting to know this wonderful country, then that myth, that constructed sense of 'historicity' is worth preserving, just as Henry L. Stinson decided more than seventy years ago.

## **Event Industry Trends in 2018**

Published on [www.eventogy.com](http://www.eventogy.com) on 24 January 2018

The events industry evolves and changes every year. New trends and technologies make planning a great event easier and more secure. Here are some event industry trends and ideas that we think will take centre stage in 2018, from new social media opportunities in event marketing to sustainable environmentally-friendly practices for event venues.

### **Event Marketing**

The way you market your event might change in 2018, with plenty of new ideas and strategies emerging, but also new challenges. Here are just some of them:

- **Shareable content**

Digital marketing and social media campaigns have to form a seamless part of your event. Most importantly, they have to be something your guests can really engage with, either by sharing content or adding to it. Make your event marketing really stand out in 2018 by harnessing the power of social media, particularly Instagram and Snapchat. If it's appropriate, make sure your event has plenty of 'photo-worthy' moments that your guests will want to capture and share.

- **New marketing strategies**

People are talking about Drip Marketing this year. Drip Marketing involves gradually introducing new content, relationships, and information to ease your guests into the event. It's all about getting people invested in your event, rather than immediately shoving a call to action at them. This can be combined with other strategies, such as a focussed social media campaign, or integrating more technology to your marketing, perhaps by using a platform that helps you distribute tailored emails to your attendees based on their personal preferences.

### **Event Tech**

We're always excited about new tech trends, inside or outside the events industry. Here are a few things to look out for this year:

- **Drones**

Drones have become popular over the last year or two as both a toy and tool. In 2018, they will begin to have a useful role in events. Drones are especially useful in large event venues, where they can be launched above the heads of your attendees to film the event or provide extra security. Although, be careful of using drones in your events: aside from privacy concerns, an untrained pilot might even pose a danger to your guests!

- **Artificial intelligence**

AI has been making inroads into the events industry for a while now, and even though the kinks are still being worked out, there are a few unique ways to implement it into your events in 2018. For instance, chatbots that automate customer service are getting better every day, so your future events can incorporate these to provide your guests with unique, tailored insights and answers. Artificial intelligence can also help provide better personalised recommendations, perhaps by using data given by attendees to link them to the most appropriate seminars, sessions, and contacts. This will have consequences for attendee engagement, which is often boosted by personal touches.

- **Livestreaming**

Livestreaming is already fairly popular at events, but there's still plenty of scope for introducing it to your conferences and meetings. It's a useful tool for allowing people to tune into major events remotely, and also makes sharing your content much easier. Many social media channels have introduced a live streaming functionality, such as Facebook Live, which means guests can broadcast events themselves, adding more opportunities for sharing.

## **Event Security**

Something else we've already written about is event security, both physical and online. In 2018, there could be some new methods in play to keep you safe.

- **New technology and Stricter Security Procedures**

With the recent events in 2017, there will be a stricter security procedure in place and new event technology will definitely play a part in making events safer. Aside from drones, there's also the potential of using facial recognition system as a security measure. You can already find it in computers and mobile devices, but it could also be used to welcome guests to your events and improve the check-in process. Facial recognition is still in development, but it's worth watching this trend closely. It may soon be a common tool used to make sure the right people are given access to the right places. Other potential technological solutions are heat mapping and automated people counters.

- **Cyber Security and GDPR**

Some things will help as well as hinder you. The European Union's General Data Protection Regulation, which comes into force in March will make it more difficult to collect and store your guests' data, but protect yours. You'll have to make certain adjustments to the way you interact with data about your clients and attendees, which might make it more difficult to provide personalised content. However, in doing so it will support your defences against cyber threats. If you don't know how GDPR will affect you and your events, read [our guide to GDPR and event data security](#) to help you out.

## **Event Venues**

The way your attendees interact with your event venues will change in 2018, from new unique event spaces to sustainability. Here are some of the trends to look forward to:

- **Unique venues**

In 2018, people are always on the lookout for originality and authenticity. This can also apply to your event's venue. Even if you're planning an event in a familiar city, you can find somewhere unique that leaves a lasting impression. Think about

the ways the local area can influence how you market an event, and make sure your venue has plenty of scope for customisation and interactivity. If you can host your event in somewhere vibrant and interesting, even better.

- **Interactive venues and event spaces**

As mentioned above, interactive events will continue to grow in popularity in 2018. But what's the next step? How can your event engage all the senses? VR is already on its way, and can create new ways of involving your attendees in events. What better way to advertise Dubai at a tourism conference, for example, than to transport a guest straight into the Arabian desert through using a VR headset? To create a 3D event that involves all the senses, you can add hands-on, interactive displays and nicely-textured audio. There are even ways to stimulate guests' sense of smell, perhaps by periodically spraying scent into the air, although we recognise that not every event needs to integrate this!

- **Sustainability**

By now, we're all aware of the environmental damage caused by ordinary, day-to-day activities. The events industry is not blameless, so we can all make a difference by making 2018 the year of sustainable events. There are some easy solutions, like forgoing the use of paper for invitations and itineraries in favour of technological solutions. You could also do something to encourage reusing and recycling, like handing out free reusable coffee cups to your attendees that they can use during and after your event as a keepsake.

The events industry changes at a rapid pace. The trends we've mentioned will continue to evolve over the course of the year, but new, unexpected ones are likely to emerge — we've barely scratched the surface. It can be a challenge to keep up with the pace of change, but doing so will ensure you can deliver the very finest events of 2018.