

# list

TRAVEL • EXPLORE • ENCOUNTER

## CITY OF DREAMS

+ Explore Riyadh through our comprehensive guide to the fast-paced and ambitious capital



### SPECTACULAR RIYADH

A Preview of Event Season in the Capital

### NOSTALGIC CLASSICS

Neighbourhood Restaurants

### MEET THE CHEF

The Women Evolving Saudi Cuisine Globally

### RIYADH ON FILM

See the City Through Ali Kalthami's Lens





**SARAH KHAN**

Sarah has reported from seven continents for The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, and many other publications. She was editor-in-chief of Condé Nast Traveller Middle East, and is now a contributing editor at Condé Nast Traveller and Robb Report. In this issue, she meets Saudi cultural consultant Alaa Balkhy in New York's Lower East Side (p 32).



**HAYLEY ALEXANDER**

Hayley champions the best in food, wellness, and city happenings across the region. She indulges in quirky bakeries, relishes seafood dinners, and paints restaurant ambience with words. In this issue, she puts together a guide to the first ever Riyadh Fashion Week, including the best places to dine in the capital (p 86). Her writing has featured in Harper's Bazaar Arabia, FACT Magazine, Time Out (UAE and Saudi), and more.



**SARAH ALANSARY**

Sarah is a Saudi photographer based in Riyadh. She is passionate about documenting life through photographs and using them to shed light on different aspects of culture and society in the Kingdom. Her work has been exhibited at organisations such as Sharjah Art Foundation and The Saudi Arabian Society for Culture and Arts. You can experience her approach in her stunning photo essay (p 130).



**WILLIAM MULLALY**

William is a writer, film critic, and broadcaster. He currently serves as the chief film correspondent for Arab News. He has contributed to Esquire Middle East, Harper's Bazaar Arabia, GQ Middle East, The National, and Grazia Middle East. In this issue, he speaks to Saudi filmmaker Ali Kalthami about his city-defining film, Mandoob (p 144).



**SHAISTHA KHAN**

Shaistha is a Toronto-based freelance journalist and writer who has reported from Saudi and the wider Gulf region for more than three decades. Her byline appears in BBC Travel, Vogue Arabia, Harper's Bazaar Arabia, National Geographic Traveller, Travel + Leisure, and many more. In this issue, she interviews modern-day explorer, Sheila Russell, unearthing lesser-known chapters in Saudi history (p 140).



**JEREMY LAWRENCE**

Jeremy is a writer and presenter who has edited Time Out Dubai, launched Esquire Middle East, and run the Arabian Business Group. In this issue, he writes about his experience as a first-time visitor to Riyadh (p 68).



**KHALIDA ALSULAIMAN**

Khalida is a Saudi pastry chef with years of experience in the culinary world, and a children's author. In this issue, she reviews Sadelle's Riyadh, the iconic eatery's latest global outpost (p 118).

**COLE HAAN**  
*Make your great escape*

Shop Online  
www.colehaan.sa

colehaan.ksa



# Postcards from New York

Saudi content creator and cultural consultant Alaa Balkhy takes us around the Lower East Side, the trendy Manhattan neighbourhood she calls home

— TEXT  
Sarah Khan

— PHOTOGRAPHY  
Adam Shaarani

**“WHAT DO I LOVE ABOUT NEW YORK? WHAT’S NOT TO LOVE?”** Alaa Balkhy exclaims. The Saudi content creator grew up in Jeddah before touching down in the city over a decade ago, and it immediately got under her skin. “It’s everything you see in the movies,” she says. “It’s a place of self-expression. I love the subway. I love that it’s so diverse.”

These days, Alaa splits her time between Jeddah and New York, and when she’s in Manhattan she immerses herself in the edgy, quirky, and

exceedingly hip Lower East Side neighbourhood, where she lives.

“My apartment makes it feel like home. My family, my husband, my daughter make it feel like home. The fact that I fit in makes it feel like home,” she says.

Here, the content creator takes us on a walking tour of her favourite spots, from where she heads to when she’s in search of just the right hostess gift, to her vote for the best pizza in New York.







## FASHION FINDS

“**Sandy Liang** is a New York-based designer. Her items are very feminine, romantic, flowy, with a lot of ruffles and bows,” Alaa says.

Another top pick? **Bode**, a luxury brand by Emily Adams Bode Aujla, who has won global accolades including CFDA awards and a Woolmark Prize.

“Her clothes are so beautiful, she works with vintage textiles to create these one-of-a-kind pieces,” she says. “It’s such a nice vibe – it feels like Wes Anderson camping.”

## DINING DELIGHTS

The Lower East Side is a trendy dining destination, with no shortage of hip eateries to choose from. Two of Alaa’s go-tos happen to serve Spanish fare.

“**Cervos** is a Spanish restaurant with small plates, and it’s always fully packed. **Ernesto’s** is Basque food. The vibe is really nice, and they have an ice cream pop-up with Morgenstern’s, with flavours like flan, and a lot of Spanish desserts, but in ice cream form,” Alaa explains.

And when she’s craving something healthy, she makes a beeline for **Hawa Smoothies**. “It’s a very low-key juice bar, and it’s so good. It’s one of these ‘if you know, you know’ spots.”

## THE PERFECT GIFT

When Alaa wants to pick up cute mementoes for friends and family, she has a few options nearby to choose from. “**Coming Soon** has home decor, tableware, and serveware from local brands. It’s the best place to get gifts from,” she says.

Another area favourite is the eclectic **Top Hat** on Broome Street, with a charming curation of accessories, stationery, and more: “It’s cute, they have a lot of Japanese products.”





TASTE OF HOME

Where does Alaa head when she’s craving familiar Middle Eastern flavours? “**Manousheh** is our local place. It’s by this guy called Ziad, he’s Lebanese and grew up in Kuwait. They have the best manaesh in the city – it’s really, really good, it reminds me of home.”

SUITE SPOT

A new addition to the area is the 113-room **Nine Orchard Hotel**, which opened in a century-old landmark building last year. “It used to be a bank, and they kept a lot of the original interiors, so the hotel is beautiful,” Alaa says. “The Corner Bar restaurant is amazing.”

MARKET VALUES

“**Dimes Market** is the best small market in the area,” says the cultural consultant, who often pops in for pantry staples. “It has everything from local brands, whether it’s beans, olive paste, labneh, harissa, matcha.”

SELF-CARE SAVIOURS

Alaa never has to venture far when she’s looking for some pampering. “**AKIKO Nails** is a Japanese spot with the best nail design and nail art – that’s where I go for my nails,” she says. “And Christine Chin does the best facials in the Lower East Side, she’s amazing. They call her ‘mean Christine.’”

CAN’T-MISS SLICE

If you want to see a New Yorker’s face light up, just ask them what their favourite pizza is. While opinions may vary dramatically, few topics get residents as universally excited. For Alaa, the choice is clear – **Scarr’s Pizza**.

“The guy makes the dough, the sauce, everything is made in this little space on Orchard Street,” she says. “Their pepperoni is beef, which is amazing, and they have a vegan caesar salad that is so good. It’s so cosy, and they always have hip-hop music. It’s the best.” 🍷