

THE PEAK

HONG KONG

JUNE 2016

A MAN OF MANY PLACES

Russian billionaire Vladislav Doronin made his fortune building a property empire. He rose to fame as the jet-setting owner and chairman of Aman, the resort name favored by A-list celebrities and the billionaire crowd.

STORY RYAN SWIFT

It has been a tumultuous legal road, but property magnate Vladislav Doronin has finally gained sole ownership of a particularly glittering jewel – the Aman. Doronin brings many things to the business: a sense of scale, appreciation of wellness, love of architecture and above all, ambition. *The Peak* posed a few questions to the proud owner of one of the world's top names in luxury hospitality.

Tell us about the new Amans in the pipeline. Where are they and what's your broader growth strategy?

I have installed a new top management team who are driven and motivated to grow the business. We do not have plans to radically transform the brand, but we will improve and strengthen it, bringing in new architects and expanding our wellness, food and beverage concepts for guests.

My strategy is to continue to build the same Aman but not horizontally, we will build these vertically in cities. To grow our portfolio, we are already exploring possibilities in Hong Kong, New York, London, Paris and Sao Paulo.

The strategy is to continue to grow our resorts in the most outstanding locations. We recently opened our first urban hotel in

Japan. Aman Tokyo is the largest Aman with 84 rooms and since its opening has been hugely successful, enjoying the highest rates of any hotel in Japan. It has been consistently fully booked and was widely acclaimed to be the world's best new hotel and spa.

How would you compare the future Aman under your leadership to the original Aman?

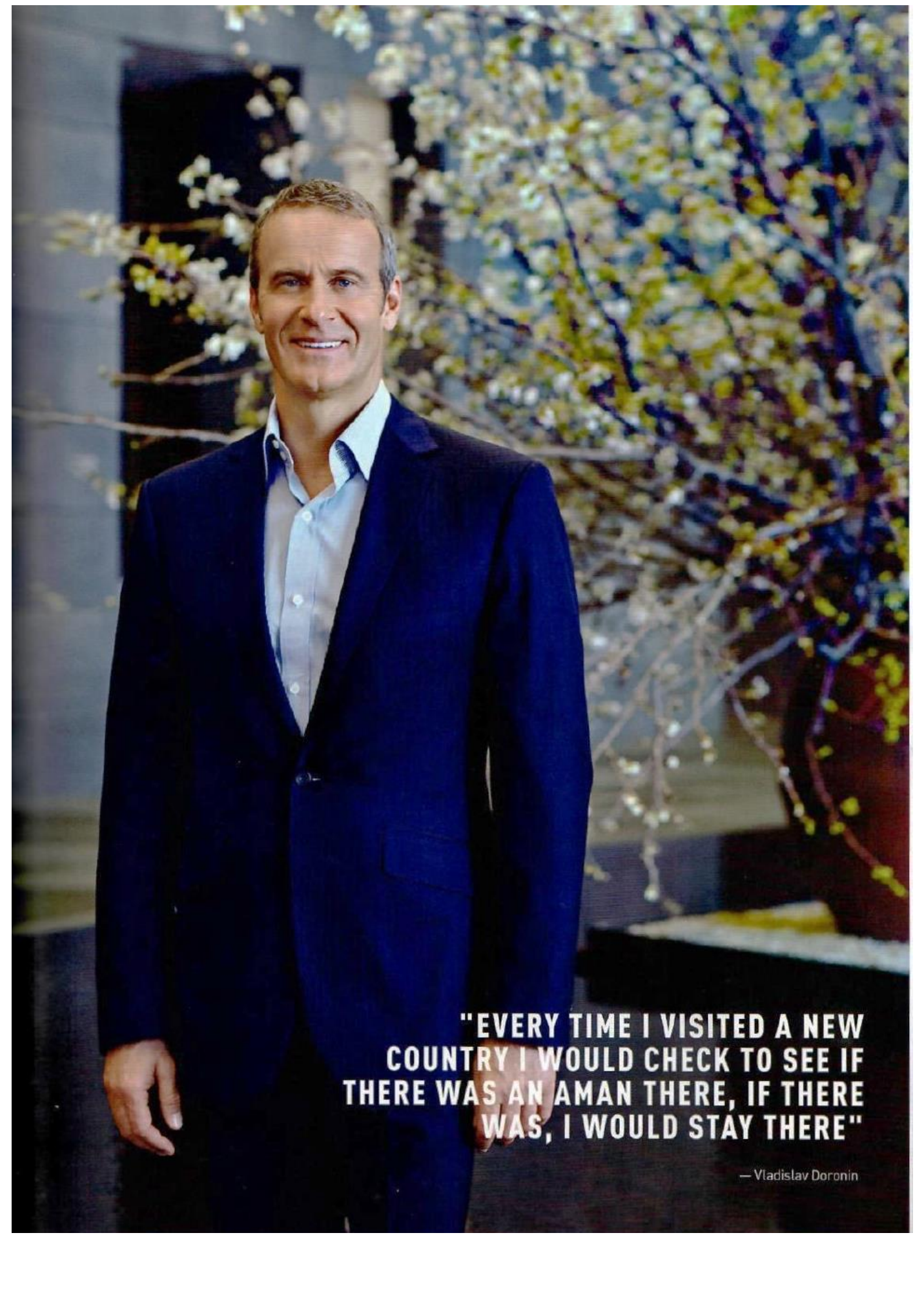
The reason I bought Aman is that it is one of the most exceptional brands and has a good platform to expand into urban development. This strategy was proved correct with the successful opening of Aman Tokyo, setting our benchmark moving forward.

What is on your priority list when opening a new Aman resort? What are you looking for in a location, setting, and environment?

The most important factors for any Aman are the location and the aesthetic. Aman Tokyo overlooks the Imperial Palace gardens, Amangalla is set in a UNESCO World Heritage Site in Sri Lanka near a 16th century fortified city, and Amanjiwo in Indonesia is moments away from the 9th century Buddhist temple of Borobudur. Our locations are unique. We never compromise and we never will. This is the approach we are taking with the urban Amans. If the top location is not available, we would rather wait.

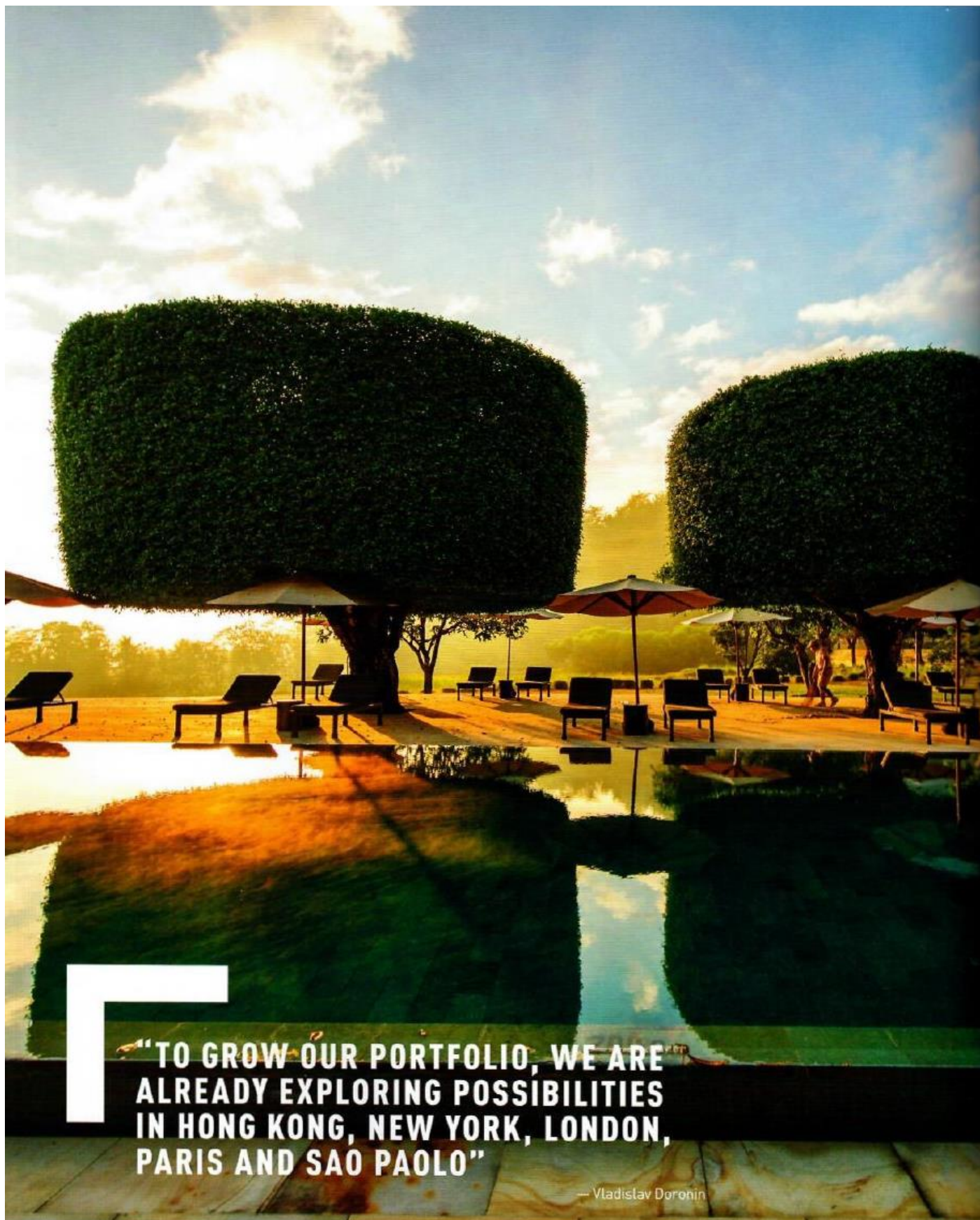
THIS PAGE
Aman Tokyo is the group's first urban property



A man with short, light brown hair and a slight smile is standing outdoors. He is wearing a dark blue suit jacket over a light blue button-down shirt. Behind him is a large, out-of-focus tree with white and yellow blossoms. The background also shows some architectural elements like a doorway.

**"EVERY TIME I VISITED A NEW
COUNTRY I WOULD CHECK TO SEE IF
THERE WAS AN AMAN THERE, IF THERE
WAS, I WOULD STAY THERE"**

— Vladislav Doronin

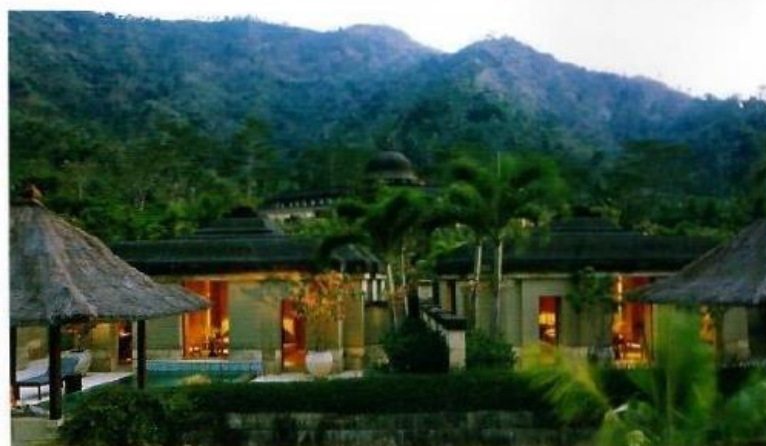


**“TO GROW OUR PORTFOLIO, WE ARE
ALREADY EXPLORING POSSIBILITIES
IN HONG KONG, NEW YORK, LONDON,
PARIS AND SAO PAULO”**

— Vladislav Doronin



FROM LEFT
Main swimming
pool at Amanjiwo;
Pool Suite at
Amanjiwo



You're a self-proclaimed 'Amanjunkie', is that what inspired you to invest in Aman?

An 'Amanjunkie' is a nickname of loyal Aman clients, those that have been to many Amans and have 'collected' their experiences globally. I started visiting Aman in the 1990's when I was living in Hong Kong. My first Aman experience was in Phuket at Amanpuri. Amongst my favourites are: Amanjena (Morocco), Amanyara (Turks & Caicos), Amangiri (Utah, USA), Aman-i-Khas (Rajasthan, India) and Aman Tokyo.

Every time I visited a new country I would check to see if there was an Aman there, if there was, I would stay there.

I initially fell for the brand's ethos, treating every guest like a dear friend in the home of a host and identified with the rigorous attention to detail in design, architecture and service. I had the

same approach to detail in all of my businesses.

Who are some of the architects you've appointed for upcoming Aman resorts?

We are about to announce a new resort in China located just outside of Shanghai, which will open in 2017. The resort will be set in an ancient forest of majestic camphor trees that have been transplanted from Fuzhou where they were due to be felled to make way for a dam. The residences and villas are designed by Kerry Hill Architects and will be constructed using materials from salvaged villages from the Ming and Qing dynasties, which would have otherwise been destroyed in the process of creating the Fuzhou dam. In other forthcoming projects, I am using talented architects that are new to Aman

"WELLNESS HAS GROWN TO BECOME MORE RELEVANT TO OUR GUESTS AS PART OF THEIR EXPERIENCE"

— Vladislav Doronin



and I look forward to announcing the details in due course.

What's in store for the future of Aman?

The future of Aman is to grow with urban and exclusive resort development. We have also created a new Aman wellness concept and have launched our first Ayurvedic and holistic wellness programmes at Amanbagh in India and immersive retreats at Amanpuri in Phuket.

We launched private jet expeditions, which have been extremely successful and have redefined the bounds of travel and are a series of extraordinary voyages that are not only a convenient and

comfortable means of travel – but true to the Aman ethos. Each trip is hosted by an Aman General Manager, giving it that personal touch.

Where do you think the top end of the luxury hospitality business is heading to in the next three to five years?

Fewer and better rather than many options! This is true for design, food, entertainment and wellness. Guests are looking for memorable experiences. This, more than anything, is where we excel. Many other hotels and resorts are losing the human touch which in turn means many guests lose their connection and loyalty.



Wellness has grown to become more relevant to our guests as part of their experience – health, fitness and spiritual relaxation enables people to feel young and we have noticed guests of all ages are consistently looking for healthy alternatives and ways to keep active.

Tell us about your Qigong. How did you discover it and what kind of regular practice do you do?

I discovered Qigong many years ago through a Qigong master. I work very closely with him and we recently had an amazing experience at Amanjiwo in Java, where I was able to practice Qigong in front of Borobudur, a 9th century Mahayan Buddhist temple

and UNESCO World Heritage site decorated with thousands of etched stones depicting the life and teachings of Buddha.

In Amankora in Bhutan we run a number of Spiritual Immersion retreats, which I would recommend for those wishing to combine unique cultural adventures with yoga, meditation, spa treatments, and lectures amidst the dramatic landscape of Bhutan.

Tell us about the country house Zaha Hadid designed for you. How much input did you have and what was it like working with her?

Zaha was a futuristic genius, a 22nd century architect! I had wanted to

develop with her in Moscow but the city planners refused permission because the site was too close to a public park. I decided to build my private house with her. The exterior was completed a year ago and we are working on the interior at the moment. I am proud that this is the only private residential commission by the great, late Dame Zaha Hadid.

How often do you come back to Hong Kong?

I regularly travel to Amanpulo in the Philippines and always make sure to stop in Hong Kong on the way back – it's one of my favourite cities. I like its energy. I always try and visit David Tang's China Club when I am in Hong Kong. ㊟

FROM TOP
Amankora and its surroundings;
Gangley Lodge living room at Amankora;
exterior of a villa at Amankora