



COPY/STEFAN NINK
ILLUSTRATION/JULIA PFALLER

Small retreats

From New York to Munich to Kyoto, major cities around the globe grant themselves the luxury of maintaining gigantic parks right in the middle of the city. The green sanctuaries help satisfy the yearnings of urban dwellers for nature and calm.

The report recently released by the venerable Central Park Conservancy offered welcome news for those who prefer not to sit on the grass in their business clothes: There are now more than 9,000 park benches in Central Park. Again: more than 9,000 – in a single park! This is more than major cities like Vancouver have in all of their parks, and likely more than Hamburg, Cologne and Frankfurt combined. If two business people share a bench at lunchtime in New York, there is enough room for 18,000 people to sit comfortably in Central Park. They can take out their sandwiches and grab a soft drink from a beverage cart, feel the sun on their faces and let the breeze blow their everyday office cares from their minds. Lean your head back and you can see the clouds in the skies above the city – and watch that breeze move and shape them.

In New York, the report about the benches didn't raise many eyebrows. Residents along the Hudson River are used to records, especially when they come from Central Park. After all, it's anything but a typical city park. The rectangle lined by streets and avenues in the middle of Manhattan is the most famous stretch of greenery on the planet. With 350 hectares of bushes and grassland, it's larger than the principality of Monaco, and is home to 26,000 trees and 275 bird species. Those are just cold















numbers, though, and they don't say anything about the relationship between New Yorkers and their park. New Yorkers love it – and how! – because the park offers a peaceful sanctuary in the midst of the bustling metropolis. A retreat. A place to breathe deeply. A piece of down-to-earth nature in the center of a man-made world reaching up into the heavens. And for anyone who works long hours every day in a crowded midtown office (and often

If Broadway is New York's main artery, then the green core of the Big Apple, Central Park, is its soul.

enough spends additional hours on public transport before and after), it's the best place in the world for taking a time-out. There are said to be New Yorkers – and there are, in fact, New Yorkers – who have never laid eyes on any piece of nature other than Central Park. These are people who can tell that it's spring because the park has turned green, and that winter is coming because the trees are losing their leaves. If Broadway is New York's main artery, then this green core of the Big Apple is its soul. Ringing Central Park are some of the most expensive →

Central Park

NEW YORK













- | | | |
|----|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| 1 |  | Carousel |
| 2 |  | Sheep Meadow |
| 3 |  | Zoo |
| 4 |  | John Lennon Memorial Strawberry Fields |
| 5 |  | Shakespeare Garden |
| 6 |  | Summit Rock |
| 7 |  | Great Lawn |
| 8 |  | Metropolitan Museum of Art |
| 9 |  | Public tennis courts |
| 10 |  | East Meadow with soccer field |
| 11 |  | North Meadow with baseball field |
| 12 |  | Conservatory Garden |

More space



English Garden

MUNICH

- | | | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
|  |  | Monopterus viewpoint |
|  |  | "Milchhäusl" organic kiosk |
|  |  | Surfer's wave on Eisbach river |
|  |  | Chinese Tower beer garden |
|  |  | Japanese teahouse |
|  |  | Lawn |
|  |  | Kleinhesseloher lake |
|  |  | Mini-Hofbräuhaus beer garden |
|  |  | Bike path |
|  |  | Amphitheater |

houses and rental apartments in the western world. Because of this, a few years ago someone calculated its worth based on their own property value and came up with the mind-boggling sum of USD 528,783,552,000 (if you find all those commas confusing, that's about USD 530 billion). But, naturally, the true value of a park in the middle of a major city ultimately cannot be determined. A park in the midst of a metropolis is one of the things that can't be bought. They are priceless, and in fact, an outrageous luxury – just like every minute you can manage to steal away from a 12-hour workday. To sit on a bench in front of a fountain and slow the world down to normal speed. To break away from the hectic pace of meetings, video conferences and text messages long enough to enjoy a cup of cappuccino. To meditate. To tune out.

Other major cities also afford themselves a green sanctuary like Central Park, in order to do something good for their citizens. Bangkok has its Lumpini Park, Dublin the Phoenix, London has Hyde Park, and when Hong Kong's business people want to see a bit of green during lunchtime, they go over to Kowloon Park. For anyone living in Hong Kong, or any other Asian metropolis, the idea of an undeveloped piece of land the size of a football field in the middle of the city is practically unimaginable. And if board games or Tai Chi exercises are offered



under blooming fruit trees, visitors could hardly ask for more. In the end, it always seems to be this very longing for a little nature within the megalopolis that makes these “green lungs” such coveted places, and why business people are unable to resist going there between meetings, even if it’s only a for a couple of minutes.

In the late 18th century, Munich’s English Garden was one of the first city gardens in the world to be opened to the general public.

This is the way it is all over the world, including Sydney, Australia. For their lunch breaks, the city’s business people have several piers and highly stylish harbor cafés to choose from. But they prefer to lie on a picnic blanket in Hyde Park and watch the cockatoos as they scurry through the tops of the trees, swooping daringly like remote-controlled model planes.

How very different Ryoan-ji Garden in Kyoto is! It’s not a city park in the western sense, but rather a Zen garden about which books are written and philosophers ponder. You don’t have to know anything about the art of Zen to

enjoy it – a 20-minute lunch break is enough. Business people and ordinary Kyoto residents stroll through its finely raked gravel paths and gaze at its pruned shrubs or the famous gravel bed with stones that symbolize either the universe or vast emptiness – all or nothing. Zen gardens are places that have escaped from the world’s hustle and bustle. They have managed to thwart today’s hectic pace and get away from everyday commotion and the noise of machinery.

Interestingly, these sanctuaries of calm are often the very scene of turbulent activity. Places where the noise of the outside world has vanished – but the disquiet of the mind remains. You can observe this very well on a warm, late-summer’s day – on the grass of Munich’s English Garden, for example. This is also one of the world’s famous city gardens, and moreover was one of the first to be opened to the public at the end of the 18th century. Its popularity has continued to this day, with thousands of Munich residents taking advantage on beautiful late-summer days. Sitting there, with shoes and socks off and your toes in the grass, it is quiet, peaceful, and yet thoughts are running riot in your mind. They collide against each other, voices clatter, whisper, purr, scream and shriek. Those who seek quiet often only hear themselves to start with. But even this noise becomes muffled; it just takes a bit longer sometimes. Often we’re not even aware of it →

More space



Ryoan-ji Garden

KYOTO

- | | | | | | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|
|  |  | Wabisuke camellia trees |  |  | Hojo (abbot's quarters) |
|  |  | Stone water basin |  |  | Zen rock garden |
|  |  | Zorokuan teahouse |  |  | Kuri (priest's quarters) |
|  |  | West Garden |  |  | Chokushi-Mon Gate |
|  |  | Buddha Hall |  |  | Kyoyochi pond |
| | | |  |  | Sanmon (main gate) |

You don't have to know anything about the art of Zen to enjoy Ryoan-ji Garden in Kyoto – a 20-minute lunch break is enough.

until we suddenly feel something is amiss, when in fact it's only the quiet. This is another thing that makes parks so important: the calming effect of the smell of grass, the sight of a flower or the quiet babbling of a distant brook. The fact that your own office building might be located right behind the trees doesn't bother anyone at all – it may as well be in another world.

The visible proximity to the working world, the skyline of skyscrapers behind and above the treetops and the feeling of being in a kind of bubble – this is also part of the magic of a visit to Central Park. You notice how the city presses in around the park, but rest assured that it can't be harmed. It's actually a miracle that Central Park still exists, given that inventive speculators have tried ever since it opened to use the green lawns for all manner of profitable projects. But New Yorkers love their park so

JOURNEY OF DISCOVERY

Where can you go bathing in Central Park? Find the city sanctuary highlights at: www.audi.com/ar2009/cityparks

much that over the years they have prevented the construction of a horseracing track as well as that of an enormous theater. And when an online magazine recently published a satirical item about a planned city airport in the heart of Manhattan, a storm of protest followed. That says a lot about the love that people feel for their park. It should remain just the way it is, their Central Park – that's something New Yorkers are uncharacteristically unanimous on. And if another couple of benches are installed, all the better. ●

Stefan Nink has won the Columbus prize for travel writers five times. The world is his home.

“Being cosmopolitan to me is ...



... not only having a tolerant attitude – naturally – toward other cultures and perspectives; it's also a fundamental value of our society. For a company, being cosmopolitan is also a crucial economic factor.

Internationalization and globalization are aspects of great importance to Audi – especially for the purchasing division. And one of our strengths lies in being able to act within the framework of a worldwide group of companies.

Because a global manufacturing network also requires a global supplier environment, we want to acquire the world's best and strongest suppliers for ourselves.

Audi is also a company that feels and exhibits a strong sense of responsibility toward both its German home and its employees. 'German engineering' continues to be highly valued around the world. But 'made in Germany'

alone would lead us into a dead end. We have to ensure that profitable production will continue to be possible in our country.

This makes it essential to continue promoting our internationalization. Even so, outsourcing abroad is not an end in itself, but rather is subject to the same clear economic and quality requirements as purchasing in this country.

We must succeed in combining the potential of the German location with that in production plants all over the world. In sum, this enables us to bring attractive, top-quality products onto the market at competitive cost. And that can be one result of being cosmopolitan.”

Ulf Berkenhagen, Member of the Board of Management for Purchasing, AUDI AG