

Soaking up the scenery of Bali's Keliki Valley from the terrace of a tented suite at Capella Ubud.



PHOTOGRAPH BY MARTIN WESTLAKE, STYLED BY PETER ZEVEET HOEHL, BULAN / I AM MODEL MANAGEMENT, HAIR BY MAKEUP BY VANCE & TEAM, JUMPSUIT BY BASA.

# THE LUXE LIST 2018

FROM AN INTIMATE TENTED CAMP IN THE LUSH FOOTHILLS OF BALI TO A CONVERTED 19TH-CENTURY JESUIT RETREAT IN TAMIL NADU, OUR EDITORS AND REVIEWERS HAVE ROAMED THE ASIA-PACIFIC REGION TO BRING TOGETHER DESTINASIAN'S ANNUAL COLLECTION OF THE YEAR'S TOP HOTEL OPENINGS. READ ON TO DISCOVER WHICH NEW PROPERTIES STOOD OUT FROM THE REST IN TERMS OF SERVICE, SETTING, AMENITIES, AND A SINGULAR SENSE OF STYLE.

FEW RESORT BRANDS MIX exotic escapism with sensitive local design quite like Six Senses, and the Bangkok-based hotel group's months-old Fiji outpost is no exception. For starters, it's entirely powered by one of the largest solar microgrids in the South Pacific. It also has its own reverse osmosis plant and water refinery, as well as a farm for vegetables, fruits, herbs, and a pet pig named Sid. The eco-credentials extend to 24 one- and two-bedroom pool villas that incorporate sustainable local materials—pandanus-thatch roofing, grass cloth for wallpaper—in their pared-down but luxurious design. Part of an upcoming residential development on the west coast of Malolo Island—a 35-minute speedboat ride from the mainland—the resort is laid out like an ideal Fijian village with three dining venues and a spa where guests can mix their own body scrubs or embark on sleep, fitness, and yoga programs. At the beachfront Tovolea restaurant, chef Pranil Prasad makes good use of foraged ingredients like *otta* fern heads, while mixologists at the adjacent bar create “living” cocktails with homemade tonics and probiotics. Oh, and the snorkeling and diving is fantastic too, as is the surfing. For novice wave riders, a TropicSurf academy is on hand to teach you the ropes. —679/666-5028; [sixsenses.com](http://sixsenses.com); doubles from US\$935

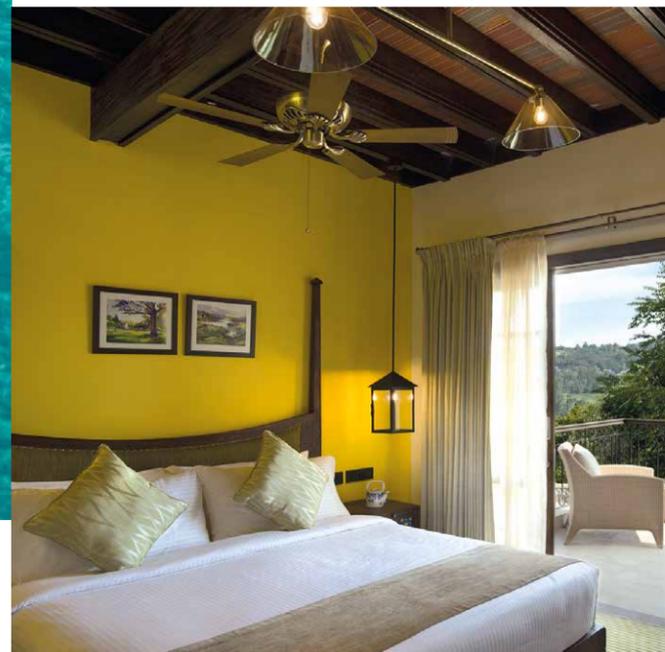


## THE TAMARA KODAI

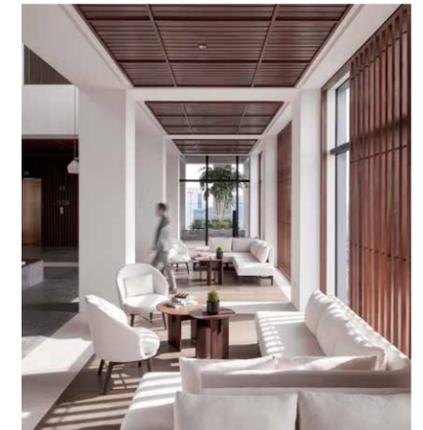
INDIA

→ A converted Jesuit retreat dating back to the 1840s is now the first luxury resort in the green hills of Kodaikanal, eastern Tamil Nadu. The mindfully restored heritage property's vast spartan spaces are minimally but stylishly adorned, with fresh coats of lime plaster and lily ponds enlivening the old cloisters. Bistro 1845 occupies the erstwhile library, a space of monastic stone walls and dark timber beams where you can take breakfast amid leather-bound books or on a lovely patio attended by views of soaring verdure. Next door, La Providence serves a lavish buffet strong on regional Indian cuisine in a former chapel. Guest accommodations occupy a series of new-built blocks that dot the garden, each comprising four exquisite suites (there are 52 in all) done up in a French provincial style. The Tamara Kodai has also given Kodaikanal its first spa and heated outdoor pool, a lotus-shaped beauty that presides over the property from a hillock. But one doesn't come to these hills just to relax. The resort's suave “unique guest experience” manager Syed Mehaboob has crafted a range of activities that include treks along an old mountain path once used by colonial couriers and cycling circuits through shola forests to the picturesque shores of Kookal Lake—just the thing to set you up for a deep-tissue massage back at the spa.

—91-45/4224-8800; [thetamara.com](http://thetamara.com); doubles from US\$275



Clockwise from below: The 41st-floor lobby at Kuala Lumpur's Alila Bangsar; a suite at The Tamara Kodai; Six Senses Fiji's floating day club, Cloud 9.



## ALILA BANGSAR

MALAYSIA

AT A GLANCE, THE ALILA'S location in suburban Bangsar may seem like a minus. But with direct access to a light-rail station, proximity to the nightlife of Jalan Telawi, and enough distance from downtown Kuala Lumpur to be considered a retreat, it is in fact the hotel's gain. Another plus are the excellent food and beverage outlets. At vintage Hollywood-style bar Pacific Standard, mix master Ruben Anandha will concoct a cocktail to match your mood (if in doubt, try his chocolate negroni). Next door at Entier, Fukuoka-born chef Masashi Horiuchi applies French technique to a nose-to-tail philosophy in dishes like oxtail consommé and chicken baked in a salt crust. Filling the top floors of a 41-story apartment tower, the Alila's 143 rooms are simple, spacious, and stylish. Communal lounges with complimentary coffee and snacks on each floor complete the picture. It's great value. —60-3/2268-3888; [alilahotels.com](http://alilahotels.com); doubles from US\$87

## ROSEWOOD LUANG PRABANG

LAOS

→ There's something magical about flying into Luang Prabang, Laos' former royal capital. Surrounded by rain forest and hemmed in by the Mekong, the small mountain town feels far removed from the world outside. This is reflected in microcosm at the new Rosewood, which resides in a jungly valley 15 minutes' drive from town, its 23 rooms, villas, and tents aligned around a natural stream and waterfall. The tropical-elegant look and feel of the resort, by prolific Bangkok-based hotel designer Bill Bensley, draws inspiration from the architecture found in this part of northern Laos—a blend of vernacular and French-colonial heritage—and flows with the grounds' natural contours. While the building exteriors are mainly muted white and gray, inside is Bensley's signature mix of color and whimsy, such as the faux tusk tables and hand-plastered fireplace in the Great House restaurant (which serves a menu of locally sourced farm-to-table cuisine); framed colonial-era newspaper clippings in the riverside villas; and a temple-style mural painted onto the table at the Elephant Bridge Bar. For a safari-esque experience, book one of the hilltop tents—they offer superb morning views of Luang Prabang emerging from the mist. —856-71/211-155; [rosewoodhotels.com](http://rosewoodhotels.com); doubles from US\$820



Above: The bedroom of a riverside suite at Rosewood Luang Prabang. Right: Alila Yangshuo is nestled amid the karst peaks of Guilin. Opposite: The bamboo-clad Ten Tuskers bar at Wild Coast Tented Lodge in Sri Lanka.

THE  
LUXE LIST  
2018

CHINA

## ALILA YANGSHUO

SET AMONG THE TOWERING peaks, river-etched valleys, and bamboo-swathed glens that have inspired Chinese poets and artists for centuries, Alila Yangshuo in Guilin is housed within a former Mao-era sugar mill above a bend in the Li River. The original 1960s buildings have been spruced up by Beijing-based Vector Architects to include a series of lofty public spaces and heritage suites, while the rest of the rooms inhabit an understated new structure that slots seamlessly into its surroundings. On misty days, the view of the pool from the mod-industrial 1969 Bar (which distills its own rum) is especially evocative, though more adventurous guests will thrill to the prospect of guided hikes and rock climbing in Yangshuo's karst mountainscape. Between activities, you can indulge in treatments that utilize local ingredients like black sugar at Spa Alila, or linger over meals at the Sugar House restaurant, where chef Philip Zhu sends out crowd-pleasing Chinese plates such as Guilin noodle soup topped with pickled vegetables, crispy pork, and beef. —86-773/888-3999; [alilahotels.com](http://alilahotels.com); doubles from US\$200



OPPOSITE: MARTIN WESTLAKE



SRI LANKA

## WILD COAST TENTED LODGE

RESPLENDENT CEYLON—THE hospitality arm of Sri Lanka's premier tea brand, Dilmah—has created some beautiful resorts in the highlands of Bogawantalawa Valley and at Weligama on the island's sun-kissed south coast. So it comes as no surprise that the latest addition to its portfolio is a knockout too. Set above a boulder-strewn shoreline near the entrance to Yala National Park, Wild Coast's 28 cocoon-like tents are roomy and restful under their taut PVC membranes, with campaign furniture, copper bathtubs, and gauze-draped beds providing serious creature comforts. Tasty Sri Lankan dishes like buffalo curd-marinated kingfish are served in a domed pavilion where arched openings frame views of the Indian Ocean. But the real attraction is the wildlife. Yala is home to elephants, spotted deer, sloth bears, vivid birdlife, and—the animal everyone wants to see—leopards, and stays here include two game drives a day. Leopard sightings are by no means guaranteed, but the lodge's guides ensure an entertaining and informative safari experience regardless. —94-11/774-5730; [resplendentceylon.com](http://resplendentceylon.com); doubles from US\$894, all-inclusive

THE LATEST ADDITION TO Francophile chef Hiroyuki Hiramatsu's collection of suave auberge-meets-ryokan inns perches on a bamboo-shrouded hillside on Honshu's Izu Peninsula. Built around a 40-year-old *besso*, or country villa, it features just 11 rooms and two tatami-matted Japanese suites, each with a hot-spring bath fronted by sliding glass doors that open onto serene views of Sagami Bay. Like its sister properties in Okinawa, Hakone, and Kashikojima, exclusivity is a mantra here, with prices to match—the top suite, Ume-no-ma (Plum Tree Room), will set you back almost US\$2,000 a night. Mind you, that comes with breakfast and dinner at the inn's sea-facing dining room, where chef Katsuya Miura, who trained at Hiramatsu's eponymous Michelin-starred restaurant in Paris, creates classic French dishes served by stewards in tailcoats. Butter, cheese, and jams are, *bien sûr*, from France. Dotted throughout the property, landscape paintings by Tamako Kataoka and surrealist works by Joan Miró add to the eye candy, as does the owner's impressive collection of antique model ships. —81-557/523-301; [hiramatsu-hotels.com](http://hiramatsu-hotels.com); doubles from US\$1,080, half-board

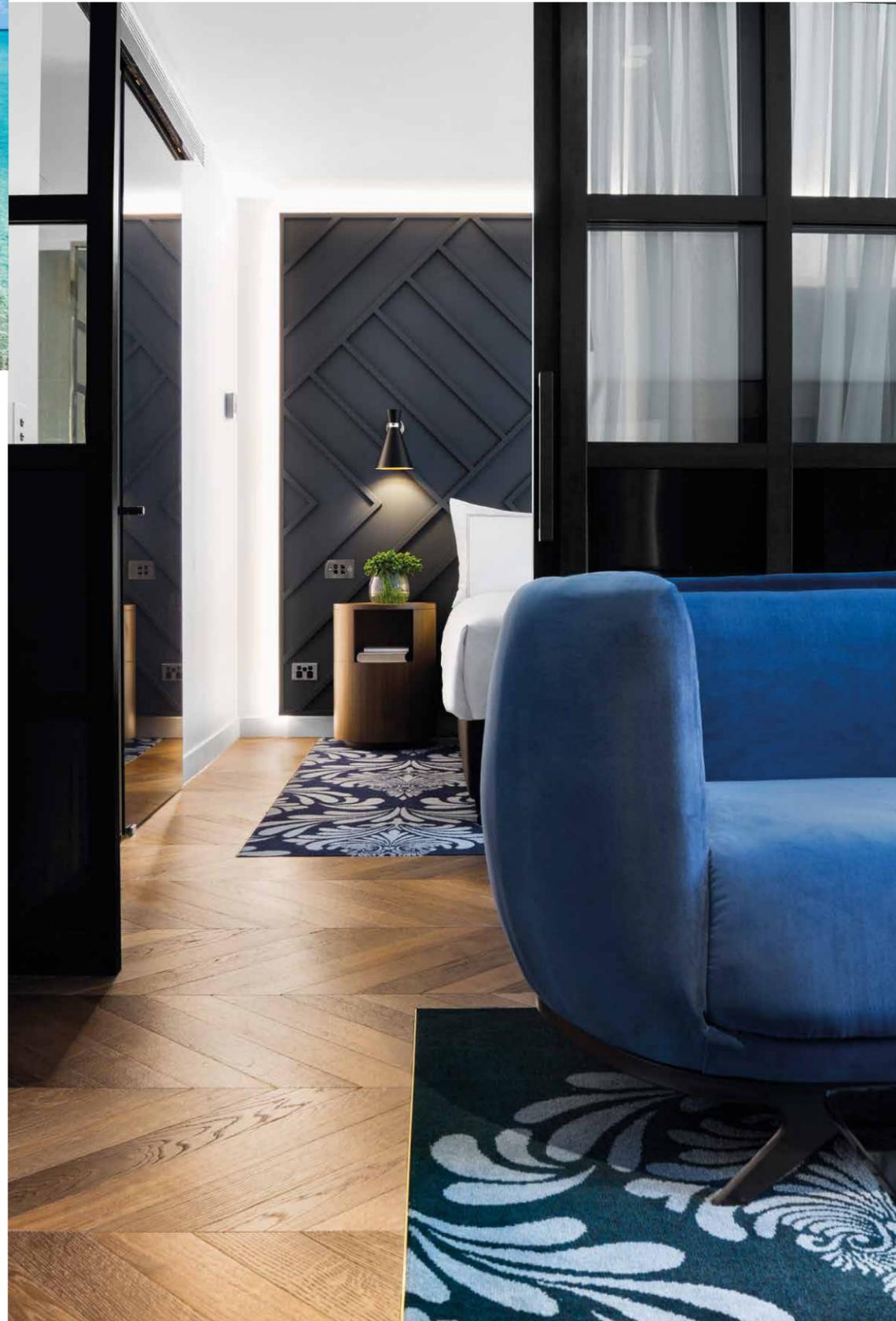
JAPAN



## FAIRMONT MALDIVES, SIRRU FEN FUSHI

MALDIVES

→ How do you improve on the underwater perfection of the Maldives? At the Fairmont Maldives in the northern Shaviyani Atoll, you ask famed underwater artist and activist Jason DeCaires Taylor to create the world's first semi-submerged art gallery. The result is the Coralarium, a perforated silver cube full of figurative sculptures that are part human, part plant, and part coral, accessed via a short snorkel across the lagoon. It's astonishing, but so too are the onshore facilities. The resort's 120 beach and overwater villas, all with their own pools, are oriented toward sunrise or sunset and the decor is carefully curated castaway-chic—think knotted ropes, glass fishing floats, and giant copper bathtubs so big you could sail away in them. There are also tented “jungle” villas tucked inside pandanus-shrouded groves. The crescent-shaped island is petite enough that you can walk from end to end in 15 minutes, but you'll nevertheless be assigned a personal butler with a golf buggy. Get him to take you to the Willow Stream Spa or the Balinese-inspired Onu Onu bar for some beachside bubbly. Dining is another highlight here, with all-day restaurant Raha Market offering local flavors like Maldivian tuna curry, Kata specializing in sushi and robatayaki, and Azure, the most romantic of the bunch, serving superlative seafood at its perch above the lagoon. —960/654-8888; [fairmont.com](http://fairmont.com); doubles from \$US650, half-board



THE LUXE LIST 2018

## WEST HOTEL

AUSTRALIA

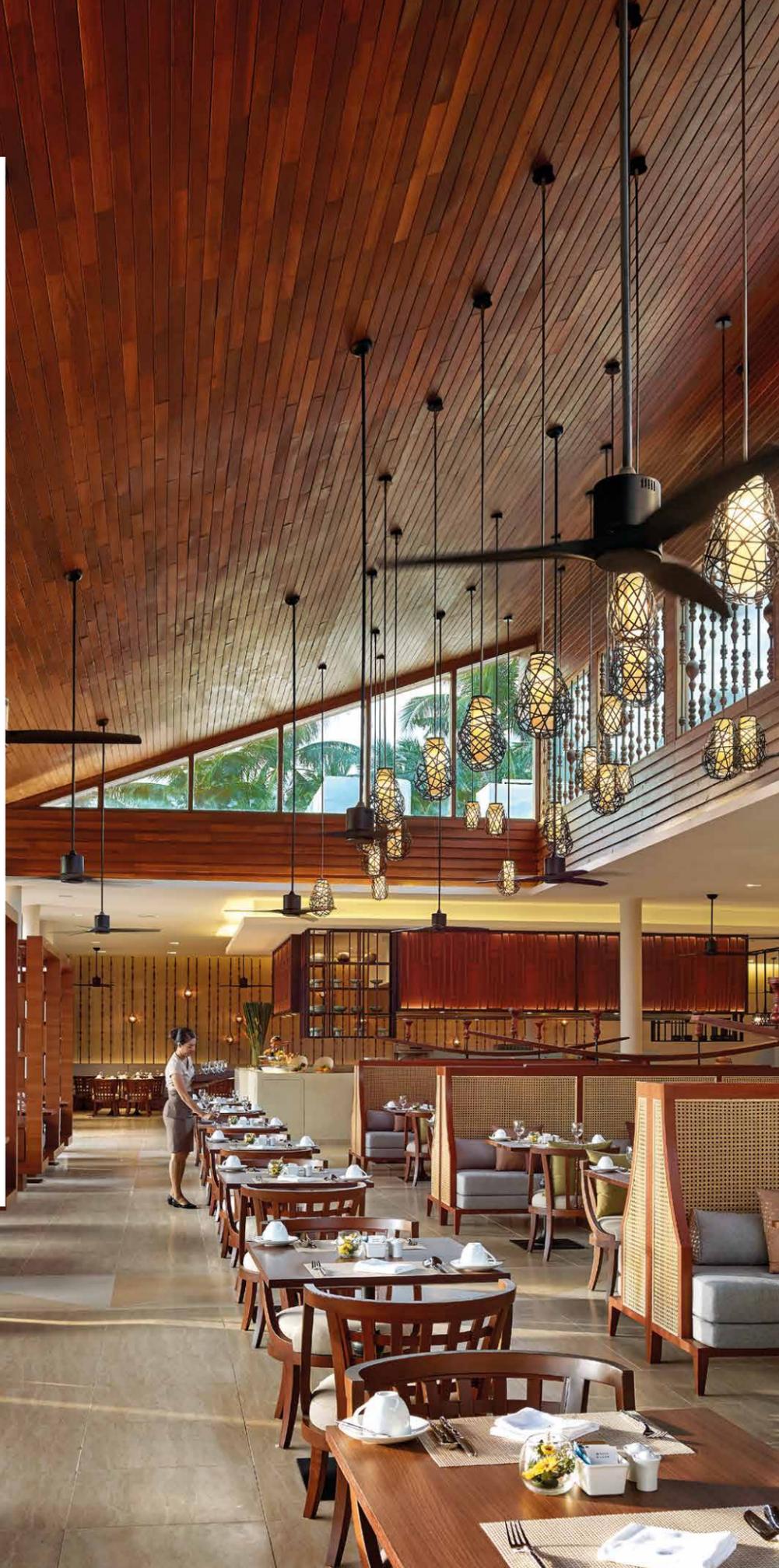
THE HILTON GROUP'S CURIO brand is all about celebrating individuality when it comes to location. Which is why the first Australian outlet in the collection bears no resemblance to its heritage-filled older sisters such as the Hotel del Coronado in San Diego or London's Trafalgar St. James. Instead, West Hotel sits on the verge of Sydney's new Barangaroo precinct, an up-and-coming lifestyle hub with residential and commercial towers, parkland and cultural spaces, boutiques and eateries overlooking the western harbor. The 182 rooms occupy a jewel-like building whose faceted facade looks like it could have been cut from a block of smoky quartz. Inside, the grace notes are Australian botanicals, from the lush atrium garden to leaf-patterned carpets and a painting of a white waratah (the floral emblem of New South Wales) in the lobby. Designers Fitzpatrick + Partners also brought in big vases of native flowers, which add pops of dusty pink and gold to the guest-room palette of blue velvet, marble, dark wood, and brass. Named after the 18th-century botanist Daniel Solander, the hotel's Deco-inspired restaurant-cum-lounge features a jade-green terrazzo bar where you can sample tasty cocktails that continue the floral theme. Nettle gimlet, anyone? —61-2/8297-6500; [westhotel.com.au](http://westhotel.com.au); doubles from US\$368

Left: A suite at Sydney's West Hotel. Opposite, from top: Poolside at Fairmont Maldives; the entrance to The Hiramatsu Atami.

## THE RITZ-CARLTON, KOH SAMUI

THAILAND

IT MAY BE JUST A 15-DRIVE from the airport or the action of Chaweng Beach, but this Ritz-Carlton feels a world away from the rest of Thailand's third-largest island. The sense of seclusion come courtesy of 23 hectares of lush, hilly grounds (a former coconut plantation) that tumble down to a private cove on Koh Samui's northeast peninsula. Tucked amid the greenery are 175 soothingly luxurious suites and pool villas, the best of which are tiered down a steep hillside with commanding views of the Gulf of Thailand. (Tip: Villas on the lower levels don't require as much stair climbing as those above). Six restaurants and bars ensure that guests will never run out of culinary options, with standouts including the lavish buffet breakfasts at Shook! and beachside ceviche and crudo at Tides Bar. It's worth booking a Saturday-night stay alone for the weekly Baan Talat, an alfresco night-market experience held in the courtyard below Shook! that sees an array of food stalls dish up Thai street-eat favorites like fragrant Massaman curry and *sai oua* pork sausages. Tennis courts, a glass-walled gym, a *muay thai* kickboxing ring, and a gamut of water sports will help you work off the calories, while the Spa Village, with its own cabana-lined swimming pool, health bar, and overwater massage pavilions, is bound to impress even the most seasoned spa-goer. —66-77/915-777; [ritzcarlton.com](http://ritzcarlton.com); doubles from US\$568



## CAPELLA UBUD, BALI

INDONESIA

LUSH DOESN'T BEGIN TO describe the jungly surrounds of this tented camp in the central foothills of Bali. Set on the side of a steep ravine near the artists' village of Keliki, it was built in such a way that not a single tree was cut down, so expect to see coconut palms and jackfruit trunks emerging from wooden decks or poking through the canvas-like roofs of the property's 23 tented suites. Bangkok-based resort architect Bill Bensley has fashioned the place as an imaginary encampment of 19th-century European settlers, appointing each tent with carved Balinese doors, big four-poster beds, vintage knickknacks, copper tubs, and stone-clad pools. The food at the main restaurant, Mads Lange, is still finding its footing, but downstairs at Api Jiwa, Sydney chef Matt McCool has devised an utterly remarkable 10-course *robatayaki* menu that spotlights local produce in dishes like frog legs with banana-heart salad. There's also a campfire around which you can sip hot chocolate and roast marshmallows before being lulled to sleep by the sounds of the rain forest. This is whimsical escapism at its best. —62-361/209-1888; [capellahotels.com](http://capellahotels.com); doubles from US\$838

ABOVE: MARTIN WESTLAKE. ALL OTHER PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF THEIR RESPECTIVE HOTELS UNLESS OTHERWISE CREDITED



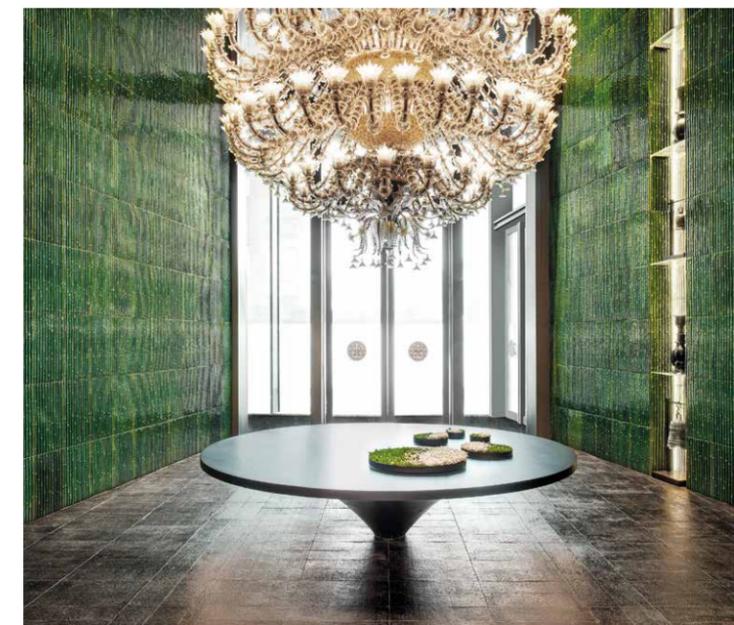
Above: The tents at Capella Ubud are centered on big four-poster beds. Right: The lobby of The Middle House in Shanghai. Opposite: Shook!, the breezy buffet restaurant at the Ritz-Carlton on Koh Samui.

## THE MIDDLE HOUSE, SHANGHAI

CHINA

→ The fourth hotel in Swire's The House Collective is quite the brooding minx. Located slap-bang beside Shanghai's Nanjing West Road and surrounded by shopping and dining options galore, The Middle House basks in urban glamour given its own refreshing spin. The culturally provocative design by Milan-based maestro Piero Lissoni is evident as soon as you enter the intimate lobby, where bamboo-ribboned walls of jade-green porcelain and contemporary Chinese artworks surround a low-slung 3,760-piece Venetian chandelier. Spacious guest rooms decorated with dark-wood floors and streamlined Italian furnishings make you grin with playful touches: pops of canary-yellow and indigo, a complimentary "Maxi Bar," and the giant bedside tassel that triggers the master switch. Cheeky all-glass bathrooms border on promiscuous. Filled with urban buzz, Café Gray Deluxe covers the entire third floor, while Sui Tang Li in the neighboring residential tower serves up modern Shanghaiese and Cantonese cuisine, including excellent dim sum and "five elements"-inspired cocktails. Equally impressive is Mi Xun, a vast subterranean space that is home to a swimming pool, 24-hour gym, juice bar, HYPOXI studio, and a spa using products by Cha Ling, LVMH's new China-tea skincare brand. —86-21/3216-8199; [themiddlehousehotel.com](http://themiddlehousehotel.com); doubles from US\$335

THE LUXE LIST CONTINUED ON PG. 148



## THE LUXE LIST 2018

Continued from page 109

.....

### → AUSTRALIA

#### PARAMOUNT HOUSE HOTEL, SYDNEY

Suburban hotels are becoming something of a trend in Sydney. The latest boutique property to leave the CBD behind is located in the former Paramount Picture Studios headquarters in the buzzy inner-city neighborhood of Surry Hills. Just about everything you touch or taste is created by Australian makers, starting from the moment you check in and are poured a glass of whatever is on tap behind reception (on this reviewer's visit, it was a locally brewed Wildflower sour ale). To honor the 1940s building's heritage status, the hotel's 29 rooms all come with high ceilings and exposed brick walls, the industrial look softened by reclaimed timber floors, potted plants, a mix of Jordan furniture and vintage pieces, and organic cotton bed linens. Some rooms are duplex and come with Japanese-style timber tubs and sunny patios, which happen to make the perfect perch for snacking on the natural wines, Sydney beers, and charcuterie stocked in your minibar. The red-brick building is also home to the Paramount Coffee Project (a café that doubles as a weekend farmers' market), a neighborhood cinema, and Poly, a new restaurant by Mat Lindsay, one of the city's most talented chefs.

—61-2/9211-1222; [paramounthousehotel.com](http://paramounthousehotel.com); doubles from US\$218

#### OVOLO INCHCOLM, BRISBANE

The first of two Ovolo hotels opening in the Queensland capital within the space of a year—the other is taking over the old Emporium site in Fortitude Valley—Ovolo Inchcolm injects serious style into a hotel scene that has (with the notable exception of Brisbane's new W, see below) been typically characterized by cookie-cutter business properties. The Hong Kong brand brings with it everything that guests love about its sister properties in China and elsewhere in Australia: complimentary minibar drinks and snacks, free Wi-Fi and breakfast, and nightly happy hour in the intimate

bar, which happens to double as reception. There's plenty to look at while you check in, from bespoke wallpaper and flouncy staff uniforms created by local designer Kerrie Brown, to a cabinet of curiosities stocked with weird and wonderful *objets*, many of which nod to the building's history as a 1920s medical center. (Fun fact: when General Douglas MacArthur was headquartered in Brisbane during World War II, he was treated here by his personal physician in a room now known as the Socialite Suite.) You'll pass the excellent Salon de Co restaurant on your way to the charming cage elevator that carries guests to their rooms, all individual in design but united in fit-



tings such as original pop art and Apple TVs. There's also an Alexa virtual assistant to help you to do everything from pick a Spotify playlist to get a weather report. Not that you'll need one: Brisbane is one of the sunniest cities in Australia, after all.

—61-7/9866-6467; [ovolohotels.com.au](http://ovolohotels.com.au); doubles from US\$169

#### UNITED PLACES, MELBOURNE

Don't be surprised if you walk straight past United Places without realizing that it is, in fact, Melbourne's newest hotel. Wedged between Victorian terraces in the upscale suburb of South Yarra, four kilometers from the city, the unassuming four-story building

is easily mistaken for a boutique apartment block. And that's the whole point. Owner Daren Rubenstein and designer Sue Carr set out to create a "home-hotel," and the result is a 12-room hideaway that eschews frou-frou but still has the best of everything. Instead of a reception desk, you're welcomed by your on-call butler, who guides you along a dimly lit corridor with a bluestone path that evokes a gentrified Melbourne laneway. Rooms are either "introvert" or "extrovert" in design: the latter overlook the Botanic Gardens and feature earthy hues of olive, dusky blue, and charcoal; others, with views of the city's rooftops, have notes of fleshy corals. All come with Patricia Urquiola's glam "Redondo" sofas, 1960s armchairs by Grant Featherston, velvet curtains, and ceramics by local creative Shari Lowndes. Mirrored bathroom pods, which sit between living and bedroom spaces, are stocked with organic cotton towels and Le Labo amenities from New York, while the minibar celebrates Australian produce, whether it's Two Birds beers or a limited batch of Sullivan's Cove whiskey. You have a full kitchen at your disposal, but it's just as easy to call for room service from on-site restaurant Matilda, helmed by applauded chef Scott Pickett.

—61-3/9866-6467; [unitedplaces.com.au](http://unitedplaces.com.au); doubles from US\$554

#### W BRISBANE

It's been more than a decade since Starwood's W brand departed Australia with the closure of the W Sydney back in 2005. Brisbane, the steamy capital of Queensland, seems a natural fit for its return.

The city's laid-back tropical vibe is reflected in offbeat ways throughout the 321-room hotel, from tongue-and-groove wall panels reminiscent of old Queenslander homes to oversize diamanté-studded flip-flops, boomerang-shaped coffee tables, and a sunrise mural by indigenous artist Reko Rennie. Curved walls and surfaces nod to the ebb and flow of the Brisbane River, which all rooms and the open-air Wet Bar overlook, and a larger-than-life installation of river reeds snakes beside the lobby staircase as if by the water's edge. While mod-Australian restaurant Three Blue Ducks comes courtesy of a Sydney/Byron Bay team known for their farm-to-table ethos, the menu still offers a distinct sense of place through

dishes such as grilled Moreton Bay bugs (a local species of slipper lobster) and kingfish sashimi with papaya and mango. It doesn't get much more Queensland than that.

—61-7/3556-8888; [wbrisbane.com](http://wbrisbane.com); *doubles from US\$243*

→ CAMBODIA

### ROSEWOOD PHNOM PENH

To say the new Rosewood has put Phnom Penh's other hotels in the shade is not just hyperbole: the building in which it occupies the top 14 floors—the 188-meter-tall Vattanac Capital Tower (Cambodia's tallest)—casts a shadow over much of the capital city. Of course, it helps that the hotel also brings the quality and attention to detail that Rosewood is known for, with 175 business-like rooms and suites—by Melbourne-based interior designers BAR Studio—featuring muted earthy tones offset by contemporary Khmer artwork and decorative French shutters that nod to Cambodia's colonial past. Beyond the unobstructed floor-to-ceiling views from each room, it's the food and beverage outlets that grab the attention, from the sharp lines of *izakaya*-style restaurant Iza to sky-high bar Sora, where an open-air deck cantilevered 37 stories above the streets of central Phnom Penh provides the best vantage point in town.

—855-23/936-888; [rosewoodhotels.com](http://rosewoodhotels.com); *doubles from US\$245*

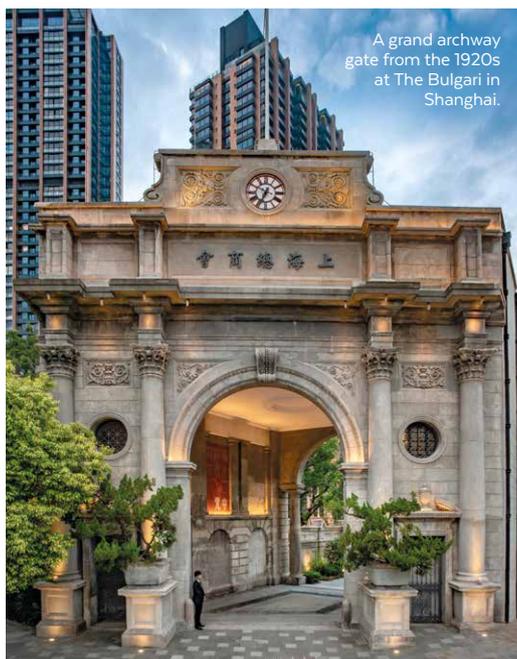
→ CHINA

### AMANYANGYUN, SHANGHAI

Shanghai's far-flung suburbs may not suggest resort idyll but Amanyangyun—located an hour's drive from downtown—is not your average resort. Sixteen years in the making, the property began life as a salvage operation to relocate 50 ancient homes and 10,000 camphor trees slated for destruction in the owner's home village in Jiangxi, 700 kilometers away. Across the vast grounds, transplanted 500-year-old relics now mingle comfortably with sleek contemporary additions, like the lattice-cube lobby carved from golden *nanmu* wood, giving Amanyangyun (meaning “Nourishing Cloud”) an ethereal feel, especially in the morning mist. Minimalist contemporary suites feature two walled courtyards offering a free-standing alfresco

tub and fireplace, the perfect spot to gaze at the stars (and rather a lot of airplanes) overhead. Thirteen four-bedroom Antique Villas have been updated with luxe furnishings and Jacuzzis beneath original interlocking ceiling beams and ornate stone carvings. An on-site organic farm services Aman's Japanese, Chinese, and Italian restaurants (don't leave without trying young Roman chef Andrea Torre's *cacio e pepe* ravioli with black truffle), while the Nanshufang cultural center teaches guests about Chinese calligraphy and screen painting in a 17th-century stone building that was originally a school.

—86-21/8011-9999; [aman.com](http://aman.com); *doubles from US\$730*



A grand archway gate from the 1920s at The Bulgari in Shanghai.

### THE BULGARI HOTEL BEIJING

Amid the luscious riverside gardens that wrap around the Italian jewelry brand's splurge-worthy property in Beijing's Embassy District, the pollution and congestion of the Chinese capital seem a world away. Even more so if you happen to have checked in to one of the hotel's expansive suites, which come with custom Italian furnishings, travertine-clad bathrooms, butler service, and transfers by Maserati limousine. But even the regular rooms exude Bulgari's signature Italian opulence, as do the public spaces, where paintings from celebrated Chinese artist Yan Pei-Ming and antique maps drawn by Franciscan friar

and cartographer Vincenzo Coronelli adorn the walls. If that feels a little museum-ish, it's because the hotel is part of the mixed-use Genesis Beijing complex, where an art museum designed by Tadao Ando will open later this year. Framed by Vicenza limestone and lounge cabanas in the two-level basement spa, a shimmering mosaic-tiled pool vaguely recalls an ancient Roman bath. Back upstairs, the hotel's sole restaurant, Il Ristorante Niko Romito, serves superb—what else?—Italian cuisine under Murano-glass chandeliers.

—86-10/8555-8555; [bulgarihotels.com](http://bulgarihotels.com); *doubles from US\$418*

### THE BULGARI HOTEL SHANGHAI

The second Bulgari hotel to open in China in the last 12 months sits beside Shanghai's Suzhou Creek with high-rise views that take in the Bund and the mega-towers of Pudong. The interiors of the 48-story tower, designed (as are all Bulgari properties) by Milanese firm Antonio Citterio Patricia Viel, are embossed in dark marbles and bronze, with generous branding nods in the Roman-inspired patterns and artworks depicting glamorous Bulgari ads from the 1960s and '70s. Eighty-two monochrome guest rooms are understated and spacious, with Bulgari cashmere blankets and Italian designer tea sets adding extra-luxe touches. The heights of glam and the best views can be found at the upper-level restaurant and bars, where you can dine on eye-wateringly expensive Italian classics or sip sophisticated negronis at the oval copper bar. In

the warmer months, the place to be is the rooftop La Terrazza for a sunset *aperitivo* session. For all its genteel Roman allure, the highlights of this property are its relics of Shanghai's concession-era past. The grounds incorporate the city's first Chamber of Commerce building, a neoclassical pile dating to 1916 that Bulgari has restored to its original coffered-and-domed splendor; today, it hosts a ballroom, Chinese restaurant, and snug whisky bar. Also, be sure to wander across the Italian gardens to the 1920s gatehouse for a rare glimpse of surviving Revolution-era propaganda slogans.

—86-21/3606-7788; [bulgarihotels.com](http://bulgarihotels.com); *doubles from US\$498*

## THE MURRAY, HONG KONG

Hong Kong's most buzzed-about new hotel occupies a former government office tower dating from 1969. Lovers of modernist architecture will admire British architect Ron Phillips' original design, which included deeply recessed windows (to shield the interiors from the tropical sun) and high-arched colonnades. Equally, lovers of contemporary luxury will appreciate the building's sympathetic overhaul by Foster + Partners, the firm responsible for transforming it into the flagship property of Hong Kong-based Niccolo Hotels. Today, the landmark structure houses 336 rooms and suites done up in a low-key residential style with views of either the riotous greenery of adjacent Hong Kong Park or the urban jungle of the Central financial district. Murray Lane, the lobby's Wall Street-inspired bar, is invariably humming with young business types come night; across the courtyard and up one level, Guo Fu Lou draws crowds for its Michelin-starred Cantonese cooking and sensuous André Fu-designed interiors. Crowning it all is Popinjays, a glass-walled rooftop restaurant and bar with a wraparound terrace and works by contemporary American artists Kaws. It's one of the most stunning perches in town.

—[niccolohotels.com](http://niccolohotels.com); 852/3141-8888; doubles from US\$460.

## THE SUKHOTHAI SHANGHAI

Sukhothai's new property in China's biggest city is only the second hotel for the brand, debuting a whopping 27 years after the original opened in Bangkok. But don't expect Thai temple statues and frangipani—this Sukhothai has been immaculately designed for new-age Shanghai. In a bang-on central locale, architects Neri & Hu have created a delicately detailed sanctuary that is stripped of pretense and lingeringly charming. These are rooms you'll want to pack up and take home, from their muted green-and-blush palette to the custom walnut furnishings and cavernous rainshowers. Walls of diatom silica (a porous biomaterial) even help purify the air, regulate humidity, and absorb sound, all much appreciated in Shanghai. On the food front, Urban Café serves up crowd-pleasing Southeast Asian favorites, while its attached lounge offers 80 gins with

pairing tonics and a fresh herb trolley. La Scala also deserves a mention for its simply tasteful Italian menu by Michelin-starred guest chef Theodor Falser; order the black tagliolini with Canadian lobster. There's also a serene basement spa called The Retreat where Thai and Chinese massages are delivered amid lush tropical scents.

—86-21/5237-8888; [sukhothai.com](http://sukhothai.com); doubles from US\$276

→ INDIA

## ITC KOHENUR, A LUXURY COLLECTION HOTEL

ITC Hotels' second property in Hyderabad takes its name and inspiration from the



The lobby at Mantra Koodam.

Koh-i-Noor, the legendary diamond that once rested in a vault in nearby Golconda Fort. The results are undeniably impressive, from the building's unique angular shape to the cut-glass chandeliers and jewel-tone palette of the 271 guest rooms (which include nine sprawling suites). Elsewhere, hundreds of golden bangles hang suspended from the ceiling behind the reception in a tribute to the city's Laad Bazaar, while inlaid *bidri* metalwork covers the pillars in the Golconda Pavilion buffet restaurant. All this sumptuousness is complemented by nifty in-room touches such as iPads for controlling everything from lights to TV, discreet valet cupboards, and Vitamin C

showers. The food, too, impresses. Regional Telangana and Andhra cuisine is the highlight at Golconda Pavilion, but be sure not to miss the kebab-laden royal cuisine of Hyderabad's erstwhile Nizams at the opulent Dum Pukht Begum's. Also on hand is a 900-square-meter spa—the perfect place to recuperate after a day exploring Golconda Fort, the Qutb Shahi Tombs, and the city's other historical sites.

—91-40/6766-0101; [itshotels.in](http://itshotels.in); doubles from US\$160

## MANTRA KOODAM, KUMBAKONAM

Nested in the heartland of Tamil Nadu amid lush paddy fields, conservation-minded Indian hotelier CGH Earth's latest venture brings quiet luxury to the ancient temple town of Kumbakonam. Beyond a shrine set on a tree-embowered water tank, Chettiar-style cottages and bungalows are scattered across lavish gardens and boast vibrant floor tiles and ornate pillars alongside traditional Tamil furnishings. Bathrooms with open-air showers are a welcome touch, while the main pool brings a splash of urbanity to this emphatically rural experience. The restaurant's signature feast is the all-vegetarian "maharaja" *thali*, a platter of 17 different dishes whose nuanced flavors are as intricate as the famous silk saris woven in these parts. Also worth seeking out is a cup of Kumbakonam's beloved "degree coffee" at Mantra Tea Kadai, a shaggily thatched shack stocked with traditional teatime snacks. Guests looking for diversions will find plenty to keep them busy, from visiting a

legendary Vedic school to temple-hopping among the region's staggering architectural masterpieces.

—91-484/426-1711; [cghearth.com](http://cghearth.com); doubles from US\$180

## TAJ EXOTICA RESORT & SPA, ANDAMANS

Ensnared in a secluded cove on India's remote Havelock Island, the Taj group's newest outpost brings five-star luxury to one of the most beautiful stretches of sand in Asia. Radhanagar Beach remains unmarred by seafood shacks, trinket sellers, or many tourists, and the Taj Exotica's 50 luxury villas—built on stilts with curved

thatch roofs that nod to the huts of the Andaman Islands' indigenous Jarawa tribe—fit the vibe perfectly. Interiors feature wood floors, timber walls, and gorgeous canopied beds, with wraparound verandas for snoozing away the afternoons. To protect this biodiversity hot spot in the Bay of Bengal, the site architect fit the villas, Olympic-length swimming pool, and three restaurants into the landscape like puzzle pieces so as to avoid chopping down a single tree. For divers and snorkelers, the local waters boast sea turtles, dugongs, sunken wrecks, and a terrific array of fish; be sure to try a spot of night kayaking in the island's mangroves, which harbor a constellation of bioluminescent algae. The poolside Turtle House restaurant serves a wide range of grilled seafood as well as great renditions of Indian standards and favorites from Taj properties around the world. But the real gem is The Settlers, a 10-seat chef's table that spotlights dishes from the different mainland communities who migrated to the Andamans after India won its independence.

—91-3192/283-333; [tajhotels.com](http://tajhotels.com); doubles from US\$530

### THE OBEROI, NEW DELHI

Reopened earlier this year following a 21-month, US\$100 million renovation, this landmark hotel in the Indian capital has been catapulted squarely into the 21st century courtesy of New York-based designer Adam D. Tihany. Though the foundations and facade of the 1965 building were retained, everything else has been rebuilt, reinterpreting The Oberoi's original glamour for a new generation of guests. Chic minimalism now defines the public spaces and 220 teak-floored guest rooms, which have been significantly enlarged. The furnishings pay homage to New Delhi's city planner and architect, Sir Edwin Lutyens, known for his spider-back chair, while features like iPad controls and inset TV screens in the bathroom mirrors keep things cutting-edge. There's also a central purification system that ensures the air is Norway-pristine. Threesixty° has reclaimed its status as the chic crowd's favorite dining spot, while Michelin-starred London chefs Alfred Prasad and Andrew Wong helm two remarkable new restaurants, one serving contemporary Indian cuisine and the other

modern Chinese. Also new to the mix is a rooftop cocktail lounge that offers one of the best views in town—it overlooks the leafy expanse of the old Delhi Golf Club and Humayun's Tomb.

—91-11/2436-3030; [oberoihotels.com](http://oberoihotels.com); doubles from US\$380

→ INDONESIA

### THE RESIDENCE BINTAN

By virtue of proximity, Singaporeans are well acquainted with the Indonesian island of Bintan, but the first Southeast Asian property by the Lion City-based Cenizaro group has side-stepped the island's northern resort enclave in favor of the seclusion



Poolside at Bali's Six Senses Uluwatu.

of its less-trammeled east coast. Here, 127 whitewashed terrace rooms and villas spread across 70 hectares of manicured grass lawns, tall coconut palms, and luxuriant beach cabbage. Infinity plunge pools feature in the beachfront lodgings and The Estate, a collection of 15 villas perched above a rocky headland. Design-wise, the look is clean and contemporary with subtle references to local traditions: think woven rattan armchairs and hand-carved wooden ceiling fans with leaf-shaped blades. At the spa pavilions, upswept eaves and curving rooflines recall vernacular Riau Malay architecture, whereas The Estate's elevated villas hint at the stilt houses so prevalent in fishing villages all

across Bintan. That nod to the locale is also apparent at specialty restaurant Rica Rica, which gives regional Indonesian classics the modern treatment—try the Balinese-inspired duck breast *betutu*.

—62-778/600-0888; [cenizaro.com](http://cenizaro.com); doubles from US\$192

### SIX SENSES ULUWATU, BALI

Water, water everywhere—Indonesia's first Six Senses resort sits high above the Indian Ocean on the southern coast of Bali, its sloping cliff-top site cascading down to a spectacular infinity pool. Sharing the views are 38 suites and 63 villas, many with private pools of their own. Elegant and airy, the villas—two of which are on the grandest of scales—pair tropical details such as muslin, rattan, and latticework with clean lines, ocean-facing bathtubs, and cool black slate. Local touches abound, from an outstanding cocktail influenced by *jamu* herbal medicine to the curated in-villa Indonesia reading list; sustainability efforts likewise span everything from water purification to an organic garden. A pair of restaurants—Indonesian-international Rocka and Nikkei-inflected Crudo—showcase home-grown produce in dishes like Rocka's not-to-be-missed *binte biluhuta*, a tangy seafood soup from Sulawesi (sambal prepared at the table adds a lovely touch of theater). Butlers—here dubbed “guest experience makers”—come as standard, ensuring Six Senses' place on the top rung of Uluwatu's resort scene.

—62-361/209-0300; [sixsenses.com](http://sixsenses.com); doubles from US\$489

→ MALAYSIA

### BANYAN TREE KUALA LUMPUR

Of the handful of five-star hotels that have opened in Kuala Lumpur this year, the Banyan Tree is perhaps the most charming. It occupies the top floors of a tower flanking the southern edge of KLCC Park (the Banyan Tree Residences are on floors below), with just 55 spacious guest rooms that are among the city's best, each elegantly furnished with hardwood floors, floor-to-ceiling windows, paintings from contemporary art gallery Taksu, and cool touches like chromotherapy showers and high-tech Toto toilets. Just as well endowed are the public spaces: Altitude is a glamorous lounge bar

that serves an afternoon tea of sweet and savory morsels (don't miss the curry broth) to the local hi-so set; cocktail bar Vertigo on level 59 has stunning views over the Petronas Twin Towers; and Horizon Grill, one floor below, is swathed in orange and blue leather furniture, with impeccable service and a terrific selection of steaks.

—60-3/2113-1888; [banyantree.com](http://banyantree.com); doubles from US\$203

#### FOUR SEASONS HOTEL KUALA LUMPUR

A gleaming blue-glass skyscraper next door to the Petronas Twin Towers, this Four Seasons is as glamorous as it is grandiose. The 209 guest rooms on the hotel's lower floors (residences are located above) are accented in beige and steel blue, with oversize showers and Kohler intelligent toilets that light up when approached. In addition to all-day diner CurATE, which boasts multiple open kitchens and superb Levantine cuisine (to be featured at a poolside grill when the hotel fully opens in November), there's also glitzy Bar Trigona for cocktails made with craft spirits and locally sourced ingredients like organic fruits and honey harvested from the bar's namesake bee. But the real star of the show is Yun House, a lustrous Chinese fine-dining restaurant with a stunning flower-studded feature wall and ceramic mural depicting the aftermath of a storm in a rice paddy. Although touted as Cantonese, most dishes on the menu cater squarely to the feistier local palate with lots of salted egg, *belacan*, and Sichuan spices. Purists might balk, but it's all delicious.

—60-3/2382-8888; [fourseasons.com](http://fourseasons.com); doubles from US\$240

#### W KUALA LUMPUR

Another new hotel and residential tower to put down stakes near the Petronas Twin Towers, the 150-room W brings its brand's cheeky yet sophisticated stamp to the Malaysian capital. Design motifs reference rain forest (bamboo-inspired chandeliers; streaming LED lights that mimic waterfalls; tree-bark patterns) and multiculturalism (pixelated batik artwork; lamps resembling the beaded bracelets made by *orang asli*, the Malay Peninsula's indigenous inhabitants), with playful pops of pink and green ensuring things are kept fun and funky. As with other W properties, there's a glam Woobar, a poolside Wet Bar, and an Away Spa, which here occupies an entire floor. At Flock restaurant, live stations cook with an all-star

lineup of ingredients from local farmers and artisans, while Yen features contemporary (albeit pork-free) Cantonese dishes—try the wagyu short ribs slow-cooked in *hua diao* rice wine. Coming up: A members-only club called Wicked.

—60-3/2786-8888; [marriott.com](http://marriott.com); doubles from US\$205

#### → SINGAPORE SIX SENSES DUXTON

For Singapore-based hoteliers Satinder Garcha and Harpreet Bedi, choosing their friend Anouska Hempel to design their latest project, the Six Senses Duxton, was something of a no-brainer, the acclaimed British designer having already worked on their manse off Orchard Road. Indeed, the 49-room boutique hotel—set in a row of eight adjoining mid-19th-century shop-houses in a charming *fin de siècle* stretch in Chinatown—is the perfect canvas for Hempel's fondness for dramatic room-sets. Kudos, though, to architect Faye Moya for her sensitive spruce-up of the old Berjaya Hotel, which preserves the building's period mix of Corinthian pilasters, Portuguese shutters, and timber fretwork. Inside, Hempel wields her palette brush with control as she mixes black-lacquered panels with bold yellow furnishings and lipstick-red accents. No two rooms are alike, though tall guests will find the ceiling heights, even in the suites, something of a challenge. In-house restaurant Yellow Pot, meanwhile, has a wonderful Chinese menu that includes crispy Sichuan-style fried chicken and steamed red snapper. The beds are supremely comfortable, but should travel-induced insomnia be a concern, the hotel's TCM consultant can whip you up a tincture from his herbal dispensary.

—65/6914-1428, [sixsenses.com](http://sixsenses.com); doubles from US\$285.

#### → THAILAND ROSEWOOD PHUKET

Rosewood's debut property in Thailand has 71 villas that tumble down to a 600-meter swath of golden sand at Emerald Bay, a short drive from the hedonism of Patong City. Rooms are elegant in beige and purple, with silk dividers separating living and

sleeping quarters and expansive terraces with big day beds and plunge pools. Equally impressive, the resort's passive solar design, rooftop native gardens, and rainwater harvesting ensure that this is minimal-impact luxury. There are two fantastic restaurants: Red Sauce, manned by a trio of Italian chefs, offers naturally leavened breads and dishes like freshly caught clams in broth; while at the far end of the beach is Ta Khai, a rustic Thai spot serving southern specialties like fried river grass with ocean shrimp, and crab curry with betel leaves. The resort is also home to Asaya, Rosewood's newly unveiled wellness concept. Eschewing the "spa" label, Asaya uses unorthodox therapies like "tapping" and sound to tackle mind over matter in multi-day courses. It is as perplexing as it is pricey. If in doubt, just go for a massage.

—66-76/356-888; [rosewoodhotels.com](http://rosewoodhotels.com); doubles from US\$665

#### WALDORF ASTORIA BANGKOK

Waldorf Astoria's first foray into Southeast Asia occupies 10 floors of a gleaming new condo tower in Bangkok's buzzy Ratchaprasong district. Designed by Hong Kong-based André Fu, the hotel delivers chic, muted interiors punctuated by touches of teal and rose gold. Intricately crafted Art Nouveau elements nod to the brand's New York roots, while local motifs and materials like silk and teakwood place the hotel firmly in the Thai capital. The same design approach extends to the 171 rooms, which feature dark woods, marble-clad bathrooms, and floor-to-ceiling windows offering sweeping views over the Royal Bangkok Sports Club—a rare patch of green in Bangkok's concrete jungle. With six restaurants and bars, the hotel is a dining destination in its own right. On the ground floor, Noma alumna Fae Rungthiwa Chummongkhon creates exquisitely plated Nordic-Thai tasting menus at Front Room. Ten floors up, the upper lobby level hosts Peacock Alley (a Waldorf Astoria signature) and The Brasserie, an all-day dining restaurant. Crowning it all off are The Loft, Bull & Bear, and The Champagne Bar—a trio of ritzy restaurants on levels 55 to 57 that offer tasty tipples and solid American fare.

—66-2/8468888; [waldorfastoria.com](http://waldorfastoria.com); doubles from US\$258

**Reported by:** Natasha Dragun, Devanshi Mody, Daven Wu, James Louie, Amy Fabris-Shi, Lauren Ho, Chris Schalkx, Jason Overdorf, Theodora Sutcliffe, Leisa Tyler, Prachi Joshi, David Tse, Simon Ostheimer, Mavis Teo, Paul Chai, and Christopher P. Hill.