

Each of the 55 elegant villas at Capella Shanghai, Jian Ye Li are accessed through a private courtyard.



THE LUXE LIST 2017

OPPOSITE: TODD ANTHONY TYLER. MODEL: MANDY. HAIR AND MAKEUP: KEI. DRESS BY TINA GIA

IT HAS BEEN ANOTHER EXCITING YEAR FOR HOTEL OPENINGS IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC REGION, WITH THE BEST OF THE NEWCOMERS RANGING FROM A RESTORED RAJASTHANI FORT TO A PAIR OF PRIVATE-ISLAND RESORTS IN INDONESIA AND A RAVISHING HERITAGE PROPERTY IN SHANGHAI. THEY'RE A DIVERSE BUNCH, TRUE, BUT WHAT EACH OF THE 30 PROPERTIES SELECTED FOR OUR LATEST LUXE LIST HAS IN COMMON IS THE MAKINGS OF AN INSTANT CLASSIC. SIZED UP FOR THEIR LOOK, LOCATION, SERVICE, AND VALUE BY OUR ROVING BAND OF REPORTERS, THESE ARE THE PLACES YOU'LL WANT TO BOOK FOR A SUPERB NIGHT'S STAY.



AHANGAMA, SRILANKA

The Sandhya

— Sri Lanka goes Scandinavian at this casual-luxe haven on the creamy sands of Kabalana Beach, a 30-minute drive east of Galle on the island's southern coast. With nine airy studio suites, the ultra-cool, adults-only hideaway eschews the usual colonial trappings for clean architectural lines and mid-century modern-inspired furniture, accentuated with high-thread-count bed linens, Spa Ceylon bath products, and Bluetooth-enabled speakers. Centered on fresh seasonal ingredients, the culinary offerings here comprise a lean but perfectly executed menu of comfort foods; a signature blended popcorn and leek velouté is unmissable, as are the crispy vegetable pakoras teamed with a piquant tamarind-and-date sauce. Whether unwinding by the ocean, immersing oneself in the property's jet-black shipping container pool, or exploring the historic sites of nearby Galle Fort, guests of The Sandhya are bound to find it an ideal roost for their next Sri Lankan sojourn.

— 94-765/700-007; thesandhya.com; doubles from US\$200



SHANGHAI, CHINA

Capella Shanghai, Jian Ye Li

► Hidden in a charming corner of the city's former French Concession, Capella Shanghai transforms one of the largest remaining pockets of traditional *shikumen* laneways into a romantic all-villa urban resort. Built in the 1930s by French settlers, the estate originally comprised 200 two-story houses connected by narrow red-brick alleyways and lush inner courtyards. It's now home to just 55 villas and 40 private residences, and the once-bustling alleys are a tranquil guest-only retreat adorned with climbing roses and bronze sculptures. Each one- to four-bedroom villa comes with living and entertainment rooms, bedrooms, marble bathrooms, and a rooftop terrace, all connected by a steep stairwell as per the original layout. Interiors by the late Jaya Ibrahim (this was his final project) are a fresh update on 1930s French-chinoiserie sophistication in warm golden tones, with lofty ceilings and traditional red wood-framed windows enhancing the sense of heritage indulgence. Then there's le Comptoir de Pierre Gagnaire, which serves exquisitely considered yet refreshingly simple French cuisine. Like Capella Shanghai itself, it's proof that classic elegance never goes out of style.

— 86-21/5466-6688; www.capellashanghai.com; villas from US\$687



The overwater Whale Bar at St. Regis Maldives Vommuli Resort. Opposite, from top: A "secret garden" at Capella Shanghai; a newly double-height lobby space anchors The Sandhya in southern Sri Lanka.

DHAALU ATOLL, MALDIVES

St. Regis Maldives Vommuli Resort

— The latest addition to St. Regis's portfolio of beach resorts celebrates the marine life that surrounds it: overwater villas echo the form of manta rays; the Ayurveda-focused spa is shaped like a lobster; the library, a spiral seashell; and the main bar, a whale shark. The concept might sound camp, but rigorous minimalism renders it impressively modern. Singapore's WOW Architects spent four years realizing the property, in part because of precautions taken to protect tiny Vommuli Island's dense jungle of palms and pandani. That original vegetation now casts its wild shade over a yoga studio, Middle Eastern and pan-Asian restaurants, and the resort's cathedral-ceilinged garden and beach villas. Underpinned by a team of personal butlers, service is excellent, while niceties extend to the rooftop of Alba—the opulent Mediterranean restaurant—where a telescope is on hand for stargazing. One of the best daytime views, however, awaits at the spa's alfresco hydrotherapy pool, from which guests can soak up an unobstructed Indian Ocean vista.

— 960/676-6333; stregismaldives.com; doubles from US\$2,470



Opposite, from top: A guest wing at Azerai in Luang Prabang; harbor views from a room at Hobart's MACq 01. Bottom right: The dramatic approach to Alila Fort Bishangarh.

LUANG PRABANG, LAOS

Azerai

— Legendary hotelier Adrian Zecha, founder of the Aman group, has chosen the temple-studded town of Luang Prabang as the first location for his new, more affordable brand, Azerai. Located opposite the night market and just blocks from an incredibly beautiful stretch of the mighty Mekong River, the hotel discreetly opened its doors last December without any fanfare—characteristic of Zecha's penchant for subtlety. A heritage bungalow built for the French military in 1914 (in a later life it became the Phousi Hotel) has been given a facelift with a Buddhist temple-inspired roofline, teak accents, wraparound balconies, a serene spa and yoga pavilion, and 53 rooms. This all frames a 25-meter swimming pool—a rarity in Luang Prabang's UNESCO-listed heritage zone—that shimmers under the dappled shade of a century-old banyan tree. Rooms boast the calm, Zen-like vibe that's become synonymous with Aman properties, and while they're smaller and more modest than your typical Aman accommodations, they retain a meticulous attention to design—think handmade furniture, daybeds, and intricate, hand-stitched Hmong textiles. Inside the resort's airy, relaxed Bistro restaurant, British chef Ben Faker serves up authentic, family-style Laotian dishes that take advantage of the area's rich and abundant produce. —856-71/262-333; azerai.com; doubles from US\$250

HOBART, AUSTRALIA

MACq 01

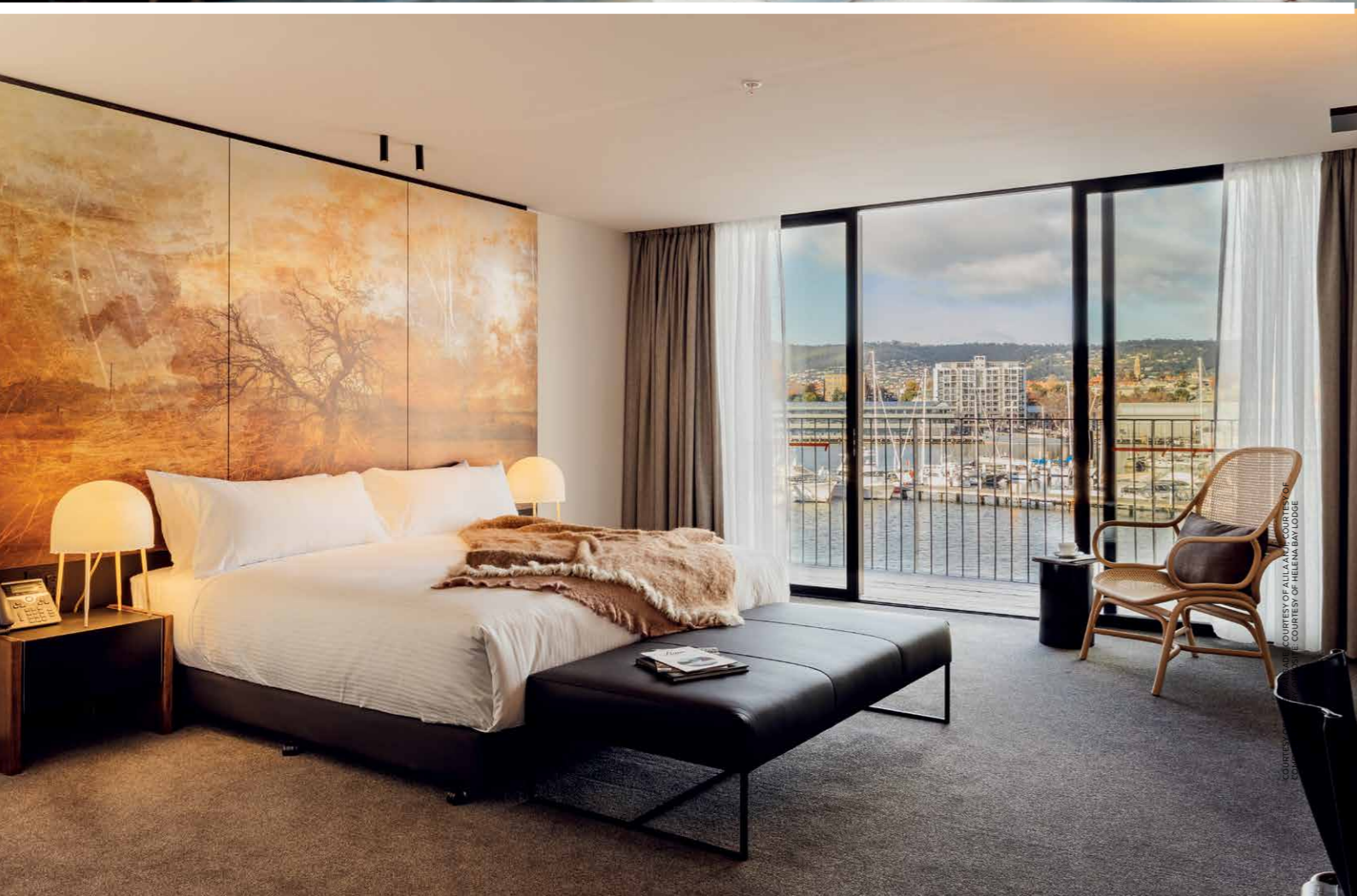
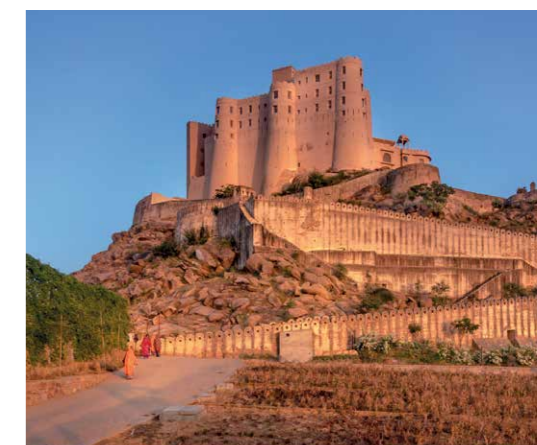
— The newest hotel in Tasmania not only showcases the state's most forward-thinking designers, but also tells the tales of Tasmanians past and present. A low-slung timber-and-glass pavilion, MACq 01 occupies a finger of reclaimed land (it was once a dock for whaling ships) on the Hobart waterfront. The 114 rooms are named after local "characters" such as Woretemoeteryenner (an Aboriginal girl taken from her tribe by British sealers in the early 19th century), 1970s TV exercise queen Sue Becker, and cricket legend Ricky Ponting. Plaques on guest room doors offer some explanation, with details added by the hotel's roaming "storytellers." Locals are also behind the decor: artist Troy Ruffles crafted dramatic bedheads; Duncan Meerding, who is legally blind, designed lamps based on his filtered impressions of light; and indigenous artists created *objets* that nod to the state's early industries. The food at the dockside Old Wharf Restaurant is likewise regionally focused, with Derwent Valley lamb, Spring Bay mussels, Bruny Island oysters, and Cape Grim beef on the menu. Also on hand are Tasmanian whiskeys and gins—but that's another story. —61-3/6210-7600; macq01.com.au; doubles from US\$276



JAIPUR, INDIA

Alila Fort Bishangarh

► India's latest fortress hotel stands out as much for its architecture—influenced by both the Mughals and the British—as its understated luxury. There is no bustle of colors or capricious design elements that characterize your typical Rajasthani palace conversion; instead, the 59 rooms and suites favor a more muted, pared-back look that accentuates the grandeur of the surrounds and the luminous quality of the traditional Rajasthani plasterwork on the walls. Billed as the first internationally managed resort in the Aravalli Hills, the 230-year-old fort sits monumentally atop a rugged granite rise, its battlement and turrets returned to their former glory following a seven-year restoration. Inside, Rajput huntsman's food—cooked on open fires or in hot sand—is served on the terrace at Nazaara, while organic cocktails and cognac are the order of the day at Madhuveni bar. And after an afternoon spent exploring the city of Jaipur (an hour away) or nearby Bishangarh village, bespoke massages await at the Spa Alila, tucked away in the fort's former dungeons. —91-142/227-6500; alilahotels.com; doubles from US\$210



BALI, INDONESIA

Hoshinoya Bali

— Just a half-hour's drive outside Ubud, the first overseas outpost of Japan's Hoshino Resorts effortlessly fuses Balinese craftsmanship with Zen-like sensibilities. Architect Rie Azuma and landscape designer Hiroki Hasegawa have converted a sloping site above the sacred Pakerisan River into a resort village around three canal-style pools, a reference to the island's communal *subak* irrigation system. Thatch-roofed pavilions and poolside terraces feature in all 30 villas, whose minimalistic, timber-dominated interiors come with batik-printed box lanterns, sliding glass walls, and, in most cases, exquisite woodwork screens that are backlit above the low platform beds. Hoshinoya Bali is arguably even more alluring after dark, when each structure—particularly the “floating” gazebos stilted above the hillside—resembles a forest-enshrouded jewel box and the sound of gushing water seems to gain renewed intensity. Candles lead guests into the open-air dining room for a 10-course Balinese *kaiseki* that sees coconut shavings transformed into tempura flakes atop a roe-flecked egg custard, and a subtle blend of Indonesian spices—cardamom, coriander, cumin, ginger, black pepper—added to grilled gindara in sweet miso. It all makes for an inspired combination. —81/50-3786-1144; hoshinoyabali.com; villas from US\$452

A hillside gazebo at Hoshinoya Bali. Opposite, from top: Inside Naked Castle's plush Glenturret whisky bar; Indochine chic at The Anam.



MOGANSHAN, CHINA

Naked Castle

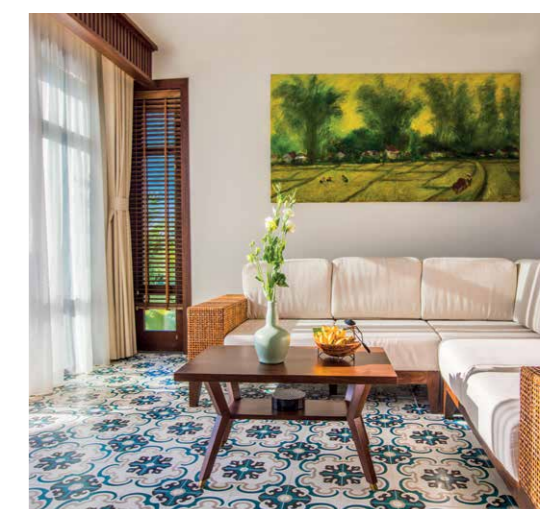
— Credited with bringing Moganshan—an early-20th-century mountain resort beloved by Shanghai's urban elite—back from obscurity, Naked Retreats has debuted its most exclusive property to date, complete with a turreted castle. Situated just uphill from Naked Stables, which opened in 2011, Naked Castle is perched 800 meters above sea level overlooking a verdant panorama of tea plantations and bamboo-shrouded mountains. Of the 77 farmhouse rooms and bungalows, the streamlined Cliffside suites are the ones to book: they come with huge window-front bathtubs that hang right out over the mountainside. Apart from a dramatically cantilevered infinity pool, there's a bowling lawn, day spa, and hiking trails to explore. The pinnacle of the resort is a re-creation of the hilltop's original British-style castle, built by a Scottish doctor in 1910. A central stone staircase, classical soundtrack, and whisky lounge evoke bygone glamour, while its guest suites—with themes like Gangster, Diva, and Dungeon (complete with bedside chains)—conjure countless possibilities. —86-21/6431-8901; nakedretreats.cn; doubles from US\$276



CAM RANH PENINSULA, VIETNAM

The Anam

► For travelers who feel that the resort town of Nha Trang is all noise, an attractive, tranquil alternative is taking shape a 30-minute drive to the south on the Cam Ranh Peninsula. One of the first properties to open here is The Anam, a 213-room resort whose name is inspired by a historical appellation for Vietnam. The newcomer spreads over five finely landscaped hectares with the stately Song Lo headland to the north and a serene beachfront lapped by the East Sea. Elsewhere, guests will encounter three infinity pools, a Bali-themed spa, a 3-D cinema, and a soon-to-open Greg Norman-designed golf course. The design references the tropes of Indochina—Hue-style imperial roofs, big-bellied jars, mosaic tile-work, and ubiquitous lanterns—while accommodations are divided between huge villas (many with private pools) near the beach and rooms in the main guest wing. Dining choices are kept simple, with three restaurants that include the Saigon Bar, hung with photos by noted Nha Trang photographer Mai Loc. Perhaps what is most remarkable is the sense of space that The Anam imparts, especially amid the grassy expanses of lawn between the villas, where guests will find it all too easy to disconnect. —84-2583/989-499; theanam.com; doubles from US\$200





WELLINGTON, NEW ZEALAND

QT Museum Wellington

► While this hotel still bears features from its previous incarnation as businessman-turned-art-collector Chris Parkin's Museum Art Hotel, a multimillion-dollar makeover by hip Australian brand QT has completely transformed most of the 163 rooms and public spaces. Curator Amanda Love was brought in to oversee the property's extensive art collection, which now includes a rotating roster of paintings, sculptures, and oddities. And staff uniforms have been replaced by "costumes" created by Broadway designer Janet Hine. While the eye-popping decor in restaurant and cocktail bar Hippopotamus hasn't changed, the eatery's menu has been given a makeover, and it's been joined by Asian-fusion joint Hot Sauce. Refurbished rooms are quirky yet comfortable with black-brushed slate bathrooms, designer lamps, super-soft gel beds, and minibars stocked with artisanal treats from across the city. Each also displays a selection of books hand-picked by the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, which sits on the waterfront just across the street. This isn't the only alliance between the two establishments: QT Museum also offers guests a behind-the-scenes tour of the national institution.

— 64-4/802-8900; qthotelsandresorts.com; doubles from US\$157

BANGKOK, THAILAND

Park Hyatt Bangkok

— Occupying the upper 24 floors of the sinuous Central Embassy tower, this Yabu Pushelberg-designed property (the first Park Hyatt in Thailand) is the epitome of understated luxury. Its airy, minimalist check-in area, interrupted only by statement pieces from local and international artists, provides a welcome refuge from the chaos of downtown Bangkok. The 222 guest rooms and suites evoke a similar feeling, and a medley of neutral colors and natural materials provides the backdrop for a relaxing stay. Touches like bergamot-scented Le Labo toiletries and fresh blueberries as a welcome treat reinforce the idea that opulence can be found in the smallest details, a mantra that repeats itself throughout the hotel's design and service. The semi-autonomous Penthouse Bar + Grill, designed to resemble the swanky pad of a well-traveled bachelor, brings several exciting dining and drinking options to the top floors of the hotel. With New York-based design firm AvroKo taking the lead in its creation, the highly polished and over-the-top look of this three-level entertainment space would make Jay Gatsby blush; menu prices, however, are surprisingly reasonable for a hotel of this caliber.

—66-2/012-1234; bangkok.park.hyatt.com; doubles from US\$226

Above left: An executive suite at QT Museum Wellington. Opposite, from top: The Park Hyatt Bangkok's reception area; poolside at Kokomo Private Island in Fiji.

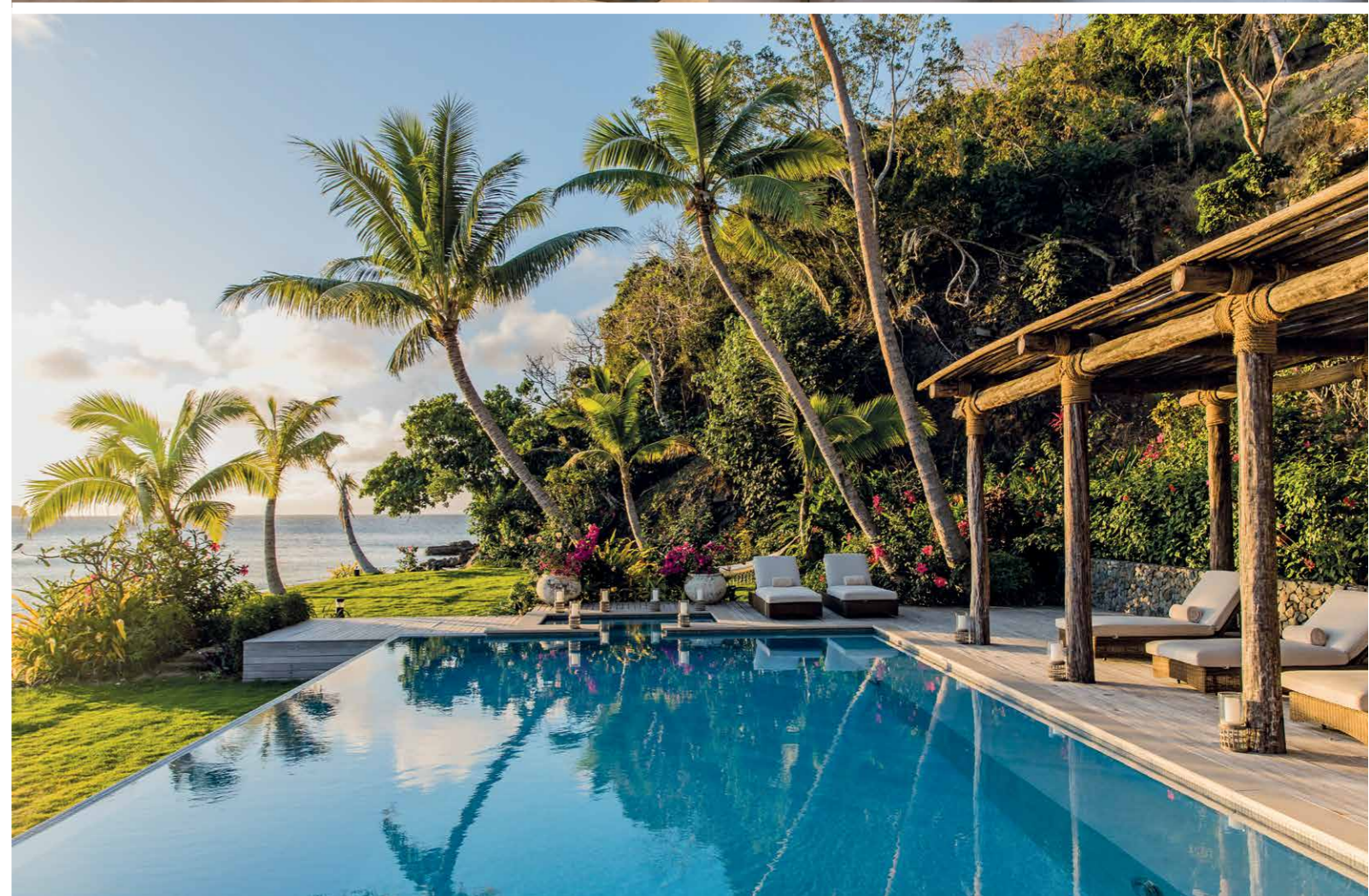
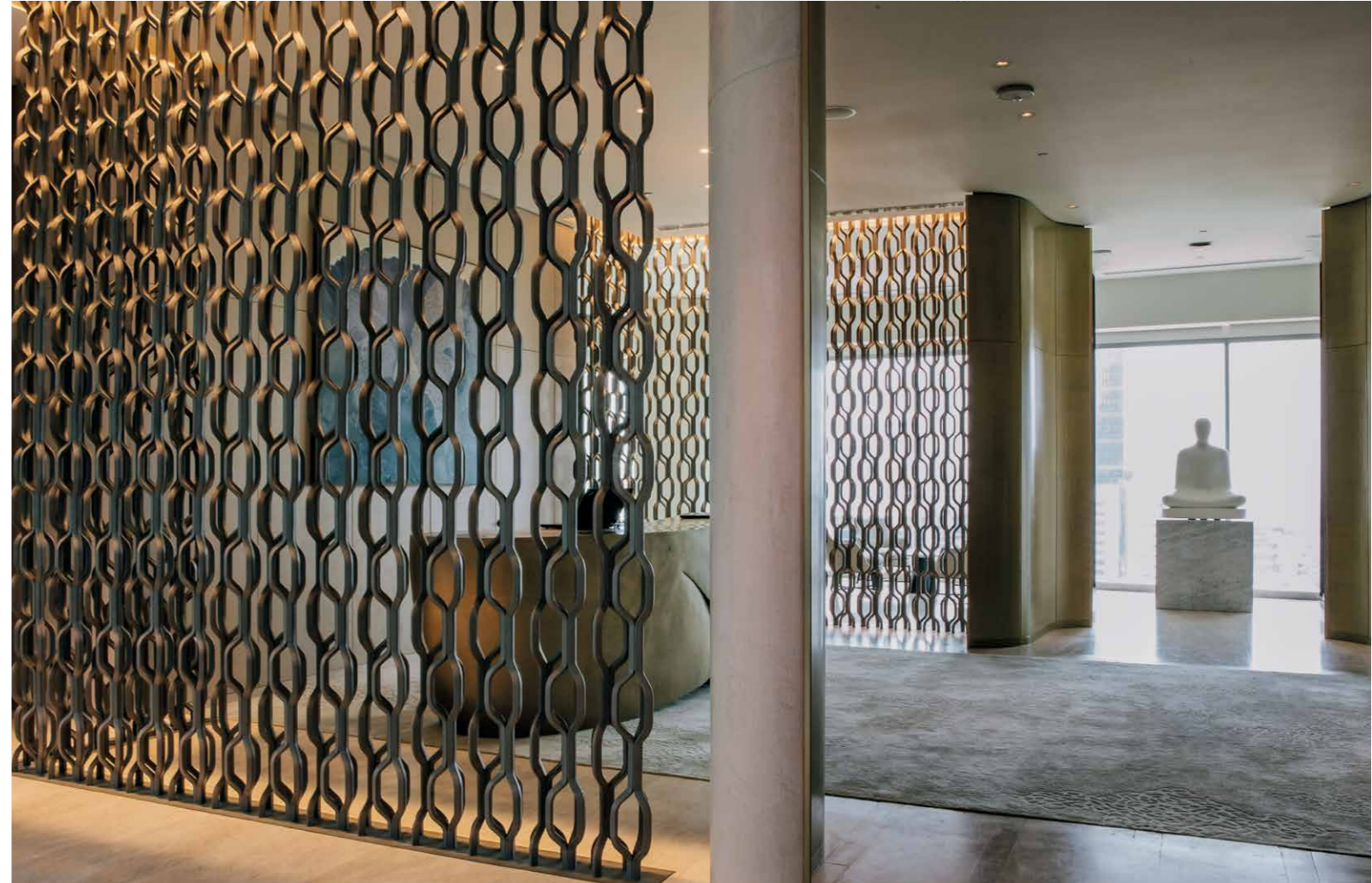


KADAVU ISLAND GROUP, FIJI

Kokomo Private Island

— As the seaplane comes in for landing, you can easily see what inspired Australian property tycoon Lang Walker to build his first resort on this palm-fringed speck in Fiji's southernmost island group. Kokomo's location on the edge of the pristine Great Astrolabe Reef is idyllic and, with a PADI-certified dive center on hand, it offers guests a multitude of ways to experience the vibrant underwater world. Just 27 villas are dotted along the beach and up into the hillside, including the Walkers' own palatial beachfront residence. The interiors are minimalist and spacious, opting for a neutral palette to complement the natural beauty that surrounds each villa. Families are a top priority for Kokomo, and its Kaji Club looks set to be one of the best kids' escapes in the South Pacific, though couples will find no shortage of tranquil and romantic hideaways. One of these is the pirate-chic Walker D'Plank bar, where personal preferences take the place of menus; it's also the perfect spot for watching the sunset. Chef Anthony Healey, formerly of Fiji's acclaimed Laucala Island resort, leads the kitchen, experimenting with fresh seafood and extraordinary presentation, including *nigiri* served on a bed of shells and a palate-cleanser encased in a dome of ice. The resort feels less like a hotel than your personal slice of the Walkers' family paradise.

—679/776-4441; kokomoislandfiji.com; doubles from US\$1,995, including meals.



TOP: CHRISTOPHER WISE; ALL OTHER PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF THEIR RESPECTIVE HOTELS, UNLESS OTHERWISE CREDITED

THE LUXE LIST 2017

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> AUSTRALIA

Jackalope, Merricks North

Young entrepreneur and filmmaker Louis Li is putting the state of Victoria's Mornington Peninsula on the map for something other than its great wines. An hour's drive south of Melbourne, Jackalope marks Li's first foray into the hotel business, and what a debut it is: the property is, quite simply, stunning. Many of the 46 rooms offer views over the vineyard (Willow Creek) on which the low-slung building sits, with monochrome interiors and bespoke furnishings courtesy of Melbourne sister act Zuster. The deep-soak Japanese tubs in each room are black, as is the 30-meter infinity pool and a glossy seven-meter-tall sculpture of the hotel's namesake jackalope (a folkloric jackrabbit with horns) by local artist Emily Floyd. The restaurants and bars bring equal whimsy both in name—Doot Doot Doot, Flaggerdoot, and Rare Hare—and design. But their style doesn't come at the expense of substance, with the former already garnering rave reviews for its seasonal tasting menus that draw from the hotel's kitchen garden and select peninsula producers.

—61-3/5931-2500; jackalopehotels.com; doubles from US\$520

> CHINA

The Sanya Edition, Hainan Island

It can't have escaped anyone's attention that the resort city of Sanya on Hainan Island has been attracting more than its share of luxury hotel brands. Few, though, have managed to capture the imagination quite as vividly as the crescent-shaped Sanya Edition. For the Asian debut of his Edition brand, Ian Schrager has pulled out all the stops. For starters, he tapped the Singapore-based architects SCDA to create a sleek silhouette of grandly proportioned blocks of gray stone and dark timber that fan out over the sprawling 22-hectare site, which includes an artificial lagoon filled with purified seawater, two swimming pools, and a clutch of restaurants and bars. Schrager's interior design team, meanwhile, has dressed the calm, capacious rooms—there are 500 in total, plus 17 pool villas—in white stone, pale oak, and wispy ceiling-height drapes that encircle the bed, a theme that's carried over in the two-story all-white spa. The resort truly stands apart

from the pack with an unusually well-stocked bookshop filled with tomes on art, design, photography, and architecture, alongside eye-catching installations and art pieces by contemporary Chinese artists that have been curated by Beijing's Ullens Center for Contemporary Art.

—86-898/8835-9999; editionhotels.com; doubles from US\$258

W Shanghai - The Bund, Shanghai

You feel like you're about to wander into a nightclub—or a wall—as you navigate the lobby at W Shanghai, where the scene is dark, thumping, and achingly hip, especially by night. Let the bleached smiles and flashy footwear of the clientele light your way to the central WooBar with its DJ deck, or the expansive WetBar, which hosts champagne-fueled summer pool parties backdropped by Shanghai's zeitgeist skyline. Back inside, the reimagined '70s-style guest rooms pop with slinky yellow-velvet window lounges, aqua bathrooms, and silver-tiled walls (a gilded take on classic Shanghai brick alleys). On the bed, a pair of giant chopsticks and a gold lamé cushion in the shape of a Shanghai *xiaolongbao* dumpling with the words “bite me” set an unabashedly flirty tone. Martini glasses and a cocktail shaker stand at the ready, while the impressive neon city views through curving windows seem custom designed to the psychedelic W color palette. The Kitchen Table, a stylish all-day bistro with black-and-white floors, copper lamps, and alfresco poolside tables, serves a seriously tasty buffet breakfast, and you can work off the calories at the well-equipped gym and cycle room or in the indoor and outdoor swimming pools (though you could just float about on the inflatable gold flamingos instead).

—86-21/2286-9999; starwood.com; doubles from US\$314

The St. Regis Shanghai Jingan,

Shanghai

Shanghai has often been called the New York of China, so it comes as no surprise that this outpost of the venerable Manhattan-born St. Regis brand feels right at home in China's most cosmopolitan city. Away from the hotel-crowded Bund riverfront, the high-rise property resides in the downtown Jingan district, a short saunter from parks, museums, temples, and the fashionable shopping and dining of Nanjing West Road. Exuberance prevails in the triple-height lobby, adorned with chandeliers the

size of small swimming pools, giant urns of fresh flowers, and gold-trimmed carpets. Jazz music sets a jaunty vibe as travelers and local trendsetters lounge on tufted leather armchairs in shades of sherry and olive and butlers sashay through the scene. Presenting sweeping city views from the 36th to 68th floors, 491 elegant guest rooms and suites feature soothing blue silk walls and pale marble bathrooms, with pops of flamboyance in the stingray-upholstered work desk and tasseled gold curtains. Guests can choose from six restaurants and bars, including traditionally styled Cantonese and Japanese dining and the not-to-be-missed St. Regis Bar, where a Shanghai-inspired riff on the Bloody Mary—the Mary Jing—is made with fig-infused vodka, yellow tomatoes, and osmanthus honey.

—86-21/6257-9999; starwoodhotels.com; doubles from US\$470

> INDIA

Ayana Fort Kochi, Kochi

This 200-year-old courthouse building has been transformed into a boutique hotel with chessboard floors and 16 big high-ceilinged rooms furnished in a restrained Art Deco style. Located in the historic center of Kerala's Malabar Coast, The Ayana isn't right on the waterfront, but its sexy rooftop pool offers magnificent views of the harbor from which spices have been transported for at least 2,000 years. Other local attractions—including the Portuguese-built St. Francis Church (where Vasco da Gama was originally buried) and Mattancherry Palace—are within easy reach. There are three in-house dining options offering everything from a full English breakfast to kebabs, but guests will also want to work in a meal at the nearby Brunton Boatyard's History Restaurant, where the menu compiles dishes from the various historical communities—Syrian, Dutch, Portuguese, British, et al.—that have called Fort Kochi home. The hotel can also arrange excursions into Kerala's scenic backwaters aboard a traditional *kettuvallam* houseboat.

—91-484/301-1711; ayanahospitality.com; doubles from US\$160

Chittoor Kottaram, Kochi

Taken over by Kerala-based boutique hoteliers CGH Earth a few years back, Chittoor Kottaram, the erstwhile residence of the Raja of Cochin, has been revamped and relaunched under the guidance of British philanthropist Lady Helen Hamlyn, a keen

supporter of local restoration projects. The 18th-century backwater retreat in the sleepy village of Cherranelloor has only three bedrooms—the master suite spans the entire upper floor—and can only be booked in its entirety, making it ideal for small groups. Now a repository for Lady Hamlyn's idiosyncratic collection of art and antiques, the former palace is filled with period details and updated fixtures, though the grounds are just as appealing. An octagonal temple pond has been transformed into a swimming pool, lush palm-studded lawns lead down to a private dock for boat excursions, and a waterside gazebo sets the scene for lunches and dinners prepared as you watch (young chef Sandeep Satheesan's gourmet dinners play with local cuisine—think Kerala "cannelloni" of gourd tubes stuffed with yam and spinach in a rich tomato gravy). Come evening, guests can look forward to exclusive performances by musicians from the 800-year-old Chittoor Temple next door.

—91-484/301-1711; cghearth.com; exclusive rental from US\$835

Narendra Bhawan, Bikaner

The brainchild of aristocratic model-turned-hotelier Manvendra Singh Shekhawat, this former royal mansion, replete with intricate *jali* lattice screens and red sandstone arcades, has been reborn as a fanciful tribute to its onetime resident Narendra Singh, the last maharaja of Bikaner. His eclectic tastes are immortalized in the 82-room hotel, where Bombay Art Deco, Portuguese tiles, Rajasthani tribal art, and a bright red baby grand piano make for a chic yet whimsical combination. Regally dressed butlers on each floor cater to your every need, while guest quarters celebrate the life and times of the late maharaja, with room categories recalling his youth as a globe-trotting bon vivant, his military career, and the modernist style favored by post-independence Indian architects. Elsewhere, guests can unwind in a gentlemen's smoking room and a "withdrawing room" for ladies, where chandeliers droop with Basra pearls; take a dip in the rooftop pool; and, at the Pearls & Chiffon restaurant, sample Bikaner's royal cuisine against a Victorian-style backdrop. For something

wilder but no less indulgent, opt for a sun-downer with a spread of fresh fruit and pastries at a nearby desert oasis.

—91/7827-151-151; narendrabhawan.com; doubles from \$187

Roseate House, New Delhi

This sister property to the recently rebranded, Lek Bunnag-designed Roseate in South West Delhi is situated at Aerocity, a burgeoning hospitality district near Indira Gandhi International Airport. With such jet-set credentials, guests can expect rooms as sleek as an iPhone X, plenty of marble, oak, velvet, and high-tech gadgetry, and a plush 71-seat movie theater aptly



A view from the lobby at Roseate House.

called Upstage. Other highlights include a rooftop spa—the five-hour Aheli Journey treatment is the ultimate in pampering—and a quartet of dining options, including pan-Indian restaurant Kheer and rooftop Japanese lounge Tara. The Roseate brand was launched by India's Bird Hospitality last September, and now includes a trio of smart hotels in London too, making it one of the few Indian hotel groups to go global.

—91-11/7155-8800; roseatehotels.com;

doubles from US\$132

► INDONESIA

Bawah, Anambas Archipelago

Remoteness is an increasingly elusive state

these days, but it's one that you'll experience at Bawah, a cluster of hilly islands with three lagoons, 13 beaches, and just 35 rooms. Located to the northeast of Singapore in Indonesia's Anambas Islands, the resort somehow feels like it has been dropped at the ends of the earth—partly because getting here entails ferries, flights, shuttles, and boat transfers (a seaplane from Batam will start services in November, shortening the trip). But Bawah's take on eco-conscious luxury is well worth the schlep. Beachfront and garden villas with a bamboo exoskeleton have canvas roofs, recycled teak floors, and roller shutter-style walls that can turn the room into an open-air space at the touch of a button. Overwater villas boast large decks and steps leading straight into clear turquoise seas. Beyond the rooms, marine-themed art pieces grace two bars, and Tree-tops restaurant dishes up fine fusion cuisine by an Italian chef formerly at Singapore's Mandarin Oriental. Outdoors enthusiasts have plenty to keep them occupied, from a roster of water sports to stargazing sessions and jungle hikes. Even more memorable is the staff. Unfailingly warm, good-humored, and without any sense of hierarchy, they're collectively known as the Bawah Family. The name makes sense: You'll miss them when you leave.

—No telephone; bawahisland.com; all-inclusive from \$1,960

Cempedak Private Island, Riau Archipelago

Ten years after launching Nikoi Island in Indonesia's Riau Archipelago, Australian banker-turned-hotelier Andrew Dixon and his partners have done it again, opening a second eco-resort just a half-hour speedboat ride away. Fresh off his work on Bali's Mandapa, a Ritz-Carlton Reserve, New Zealand-born architect Miles Humphreys—along with Balinese bamboo specialists Chiko Wirahadi and Ketut Indra Saputra—were recruited to create a grown-up fantasy of a Robinson Crusoe getaway. While Nikoi was constructed with driftwood, the buildings of 17-hectare Cempedak are made entirely of sustainable bamboo, recycled teak, and rubber wood, and topped with grass-thatched roofs. Fringed by thick stands of jungle that also act as

privacy screens, the 20 double-story pool villas are dressed in organic linen, cotton mosquito netting, and bamboo ceiling fans. There are no walls, not even in the second-floor bedroom and shower—the better to catch the sea breezes and to be lulled to sleep each night by the sound of the softly lapping ocean waves. By day, diversions include tennis on a grass court, nature walks, scuba diving and snorkeling in the surrounding crystalline waters, while the cocktail bar's timber deck is a dramatic front-row seat for watching the sunset, thanks to its position high above the jungle treetops.

—62/811-700-8040; cempedak.com; doubles from \$360

Hotel Indigo Bali Seminyak Beach, Bali

The first-ever beach resort from the Hotel Indigo brand has made its debut on the southern end of Seminyak's Mesari Beach, bringing a fresh injection of style to one of the liveliest neighborhoods on the island. Its 270 spacious rooms and suites—most with swinging daybeds on their ocean-facing balconies—as well as 19 pool villas are spread across almost five hectares of meticulously landscaped grounds. References to the local milieu are everywhere, from the outdoor artworks in the expansive lobby space to the *tenun songket* (a traditional Balinese textile) motifs seen about the resort. That kind of flair extends to the smaller details—think custom-made pottery from Bali-based Kevala Ceramics, room service in tiffin carriers known as *rantang*, and a special "Seminyak blend" by homegrown company Dharma Teas. A taste of the island can also be found at Hotel Indigo's signature Balinese restaurant, Salon Bali, where delicacies such as *babi guling* (suckling pig) are served as part of an eight- or 12-course menu. Other facilities include a beachfront bar, a pottery-making workshop, and a spa that offers everything from nail treatments and reflexology sessions to muscle-melting Balinese massages. There's still more to come, with the attached SugarSand beach club slated to open by year's end.

—62-361/209-9999; seminyak.hotelindigo.com; doubles from US\$290

► MALDIVES

Milaidhoo Island, Baa Atoll

Barefoot luxury takes on a distinctly Maldivian flavor at this 50-villa island in the UNESCO-designated biosphere reserve of Baa Atoll. Discreet nods to local culture include lacquerware on the walls, an *undhohalhi* (swinging daybed) by the pool in each villa, and candy-colored front doors modeled on those of native homes. Less subtle but entirely welcoming is Ba'theli, a modern-Maldivian restaurant and lounge set above the lagoon in a trio of faux fishing boats. In the afternoons, the teardrop-shaped isle seems cloaked in silence with its guests out on excursions to nearby Hani-



Poolside at Hotel Indigo Bali.

faru Bay, at yoga sessions on a nearby sandbar, or being pampered in the overwater spa. Later hours bring champagne and sun-downers in the sand-floored Compass Pool Bar, or in-villa evenings of room-service meals designed to promote good sleep with dips in those large private pools, whose floors light up with LED stars at dusk.

—960/660-0484; milaidhoo.com; doubles from US\$1,900

► SRI LANKA

Santani, Kandy

A scenic journey through highland jungle, pint-sized villages, and along the serpentine bends of the Hulu River brings you

to Santani, an eco-luxe wellness retreat perched on a secluded hillside. Upcycled decor accents the otherwise minimalistic communal areas, with high ceilings and large windows bringing in fresh mountain air. Each of the 16 standalone rooms are ingeniously designed to mimic the cool interior of a cave, with a single glass wall and sliding doors opening onto the balcony. The concept is driven by what Santani terms "Wellness 2.0," which involves meeting an on-site Ayurvedic doctor who crafts a personalized retreat plan including treatments, massage, yoga, meditation, and diet. But it isn't just the design or the level of attention that gives Santani its wow

factor. From a salad of Indian pennywort and bulgur with tamarillo and grapefruit salsa, to the homemade pepper ice cream on a multi-textured strawberry platter, the dishes that emerge from Santani's kitchen are as tantalizing as they are wholesome. And with a 25-meter infinity pool, thermal salt soak pool, sauna, and steam room, self-care has never felt so good.

—94/76-399-1919; santani.lk; doubles from US\$450, full board

► THAILAND

Bangkok Publishing Residence, Bangkok

This unusually themed property in the Thai capital's Old Town area literally and figuratively sits between the grand riverside luxury hotels and the hip, small-scale boutique lodgings popping up in Chinatown just a few blocks away. Housed inside an old printing factory on historical Lan Luang Road, the eight-room hotel blends 21st-century luxury with a touch of nostalgia. The lobby doubles as a museum preserving the history of the owner's family publishing business, with vintage typewriters, antique printing blocks, and kooky keepsakes all sourced from the family archives. Rooms are charming and well-appointed with thoughtful touches like Marshall speakers and incredibly comfy micro-gel mattress toppers. On the top floor, the lush rooftop garden is a welcome retreat after a day spent exploring the Old Town. Here, guests are invited to soak away their aches in the greenery-clad Jacuzzi, or pour themselves a cup of tea and relax with a maga-

zine in the annexed library: staying true to its theme, the hotel stocks a wide range of travel and lifestyle publications. The only thing missing is an on-site restaurant, but local favorites like the cozy lunchroom Eden's and Mediterranean-inspired venue Seven Spoons are just a short walk away.

—66-2/282-0288; bpresidence.com; doubles from US\$145

137 Pillars Suites & Residences, Bangkok

Taking up the top eight floors of a brand-new, 35-story skyscraper in upscale Thonglor, 137 Pillars Suites is one of the latest arrivals on Bangkok's hospitality scene, but its history runs deeper than most hotels in the capital. Its sister property, 137 Pillars House in Chiang Mai, is a suave reinvention of a teakwood mansion that was once part of the East Borneo Trading Company's northern headquarters, and careful details in the Bangkok outpost recall this 19th-century heritage. Each of the 34 high-ceilinged suites, which start from 64 square meters, comes with a balcony and rocking chair; Jack Bain's Bar is gentlemanly with dark leathers, gilt, and old black-and-white photographs of its namesake Trading Company manager; and Louis Leonowens, who established the original Chiang Mai office, has his lady-killing ways immortalized in an old London cab named Louie that woos guests with champagne as they're chauffeured around town. Despite its high-rise confines, 137 Pillars manages to pack in a golfing green and pro shop on the fourth-floor terrace, a Japanese hair salon that's separate from the organic spa, and two infinity pools: one underneath Nimitr restaurant—which, being at the forefront of modern Thai cuisine, draws a crowd of its own—and the other on the roof with cabanas that look out over the city.

—66-2/079-7173; 137pillars.com; doubles from US\$440

Villa Mahabhirom, Chiang Mai

Unlike most luxury hotels in Thailand's second-largest city, you won't find any Lanna architecture at Villa Mahabhirom. Instead, the hotel pays homage to the rich history of Central Thailand. Set inside a lush garden in Chiang Mai's leafy Umong area, this small but opulent property con-

sists of 23 historical Thai houses sourced from villages in the central region. Each one was dismantled, then meticulously reconstructed and fitted with mod-cons such as Italian marble bathrooms with high-tech Toto toilets. All villas feature their own open-air living areas, and two or three can be booked together to form a private garden courtyard and saltwater plunge pool. Surrounding the villas, a carefully selected mix of antiques, contemporary furniture, and artworks from the owner's private collection adorn the common areas. Look out for the commissioned sculptures by Mae Rim's Thongma studio, several of which take pride of place outside the lobby. On-site dining options include the chic Mahabhirom Tea Room and the Krua Mahabhirom restaurant, specializing in Thai home-style cuisine with a focus on fresh, locally sourced ingredients. The hotel's *khao soi*, a northern Thai coconut curry soup, is delectable—even by Chiang Mai standards.

—66-53/271-200; villamahabhirom.com; doubles from US\$317

Hotel Bocage, Hua Hin

While most beachfront hotels in Hua Hin flaunt their waterside location, the new Hotel Bocage sets its focus firmly inward. It sits atop the city's liveliest retail and entertainment destination, Seenspace, sister mall to the one in Bangkok and an indoor-outdoor complex of restaurants, cafés, and design-led stores. Both Seenspace and the Bocage were designed by Thai starchitect Duangrit Bunnag to be irrepressibly mod-

ern, with precise lines and a brutalist, semi-industrial aesthetic. Flanking a lobby that resembles a chic living room, the six high-ceilinged rooms start at a generous 40 square meters, with floor-to-ceiling sliding doors and balconies looking out onto Seenspace's green roof and the Gulf of Thailand beyond. A palette of white, gray, and black dominates, complementing the

polished concrete floors, with furnishings from Italian designer brands: low-slung platform beds by Porro, sofas by Living Divani, and, in the glass-walled bathrooms, white Antonio Lupi showers and freestanding tubs. On the whole, the rooms are refreshing for their near-monastic restraint. Guests also enjoy access to the impressively



A shophouse-lined street at Phu Quoc's JW Marriott.

long pool at Oasis beach club in Seenspace; there is no restaurant at the Bocage, but you will never lack for choices at the places to eat in the mall right below.

—66-91/712-8822; hotelbocage.com; doubles from US\$160

> VIETNAM

JW Marriott Phu Quoc Emerald Bay Resort & Spa, Phu Quoc

The first property of its class on Vietnam's emerging paradise island is exceptional for a few reasons, but most of all because it demonstrates that luxury can be about more than standards or excess—it can also tell a story. The JW Marriott has all the amenities one would expect from a resort of its caliber, as well as direct access to what is arguably Phu Quoc's finest stretch of beach. But what really impresses is the way designer Bill Bensley's distinctive vision, which imagines it as the former campus of a long-lost university with a focus on the evolutionary sciences, is brought to life. Every facility and design element, from the lavish, fungus-themed fantasy land of the Chantarelle Spa, to the biological illustrations decorating the beautifully appointed rooms, right down to the beakers used as glasses in airy beachside bar Mixology, is another facet of a meticulously constructed narrative. The attention to quality and detail prevents the fable from feeling too contrived, and creates an accommodation experience like no other.

—84-297/377-9999; marriott.com; doubles from US\$400

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