

it list

THE T+L EDITORS' CHOICE AWARDS

2008

The Caribbean Sea view from the rooftop of a beach casita at Mexico's new Mandarin Oriental.




THOMAS LOOF

A good hotel is a place to rest your head; a great hotel has the power to transform the travel landscape. For *Travel + Leisure's* third annual It List, we trekked (literally) across the globe to determine the select properties you'll be going to next. Here, from beach resorts to city hideaways, our editors' picks for the best new hotels of 2008.

the top 30 new hotels in the world

| NORTH AMERICA | SOUTH AMERICA | EUROPE | AFRICA AND THE MIDDLE EAST | ASIA, AUSTRALIA, AND NEW ZEALAND |
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A guest-tent compound at the new Banyan Tree, in the Maldives.

[BEACH] MADIVARU, MALDIVES

BANYAN TREE MALDIVES MADIVARU

Banyan Tree drops the Maldives' gauzy white-on-white aesthetic in favor of the Indian Ocean's version of safari style: elaborate tents, a jungle setting, and its own wildlife-filled reef just offshore. Yes, the price is steep, but this is a camping trip without comparison. On the edge of the North Ari Atoll, Madivaru is accessible by seaplane, and sits on a coral island so small we were able to navigate it on foot in 20 minutes. A maximum of 18 guests stay in canvas compounds serving as living, sleeping, and spa/bath rooms. Quarters are furnished with leather folding chairs, teak campaign desks, and steamer trunks that were a tad too *Out of Africa* for our taste. On the other hand, who cares when the gracious Maldivian staff is there to indulge your every whim—whether it's a sunset cruise on a traditional sailboat, impromptu barbecues under the Southern Cross, or one-on-one underwater expeditions to view baby sharks, green turtles, and graceful eagle rays. *North Ari Atoll; 011-960/666-0760; banyantree.com; doubles from \$4,600, all-inclusive.*

[BEACH] CAPRI, ITALY

J.K. PLACE CAPRI

Surely the new J.K. Place Capri is one of Europe's most stylish recent openings. And that it can be found on Capri—which, despite its reputation, still has some unspoiled corners—is music to our hotel-obsessed ears.

This charming spot is sing-out-loud gorgeous, and in its mellow atmosphere, we felt like we were staying at a chic friend's house. The design is nautical with a twist: round porthole-style interior windows, sea-blue walls, crisp white sofas, bronze imitation Greek statues, and houndstooth-print stools. Guests have complete run of the house; we loved picking fresh chillies from the garden to sprinkle on pasta at lunch, and drinking Bellinis on the terrace while watching the bathers on the beach below. 225 Via Provinciale Marina Grande; 39-081/838-4001; jkcapri.com; doubles from \$791, including breakfast.



[BEACH] RIVIERA MAYA, MEXICO

MANDARIN ORIENTAL RIVIERA MAYA

If ever you had any doubt about the arrival of the Riviera Maya, a once-sleepy stretch of sand 40 miles south of Cancún, then try booking a room at the new Mandarin Oriental, one of the most anticipated hotel openings this year (we had to put our name on *two* waiting lists to get in). Hassle aside, it's easy to see why the property is red-hot. The winning Mandarin formula—exemplary service, forward-reaching design, a first-rate spa—has taken root in a pristine Mexican coastal environment. Acres of mangrove forest, including an on-site cenote, surround a lovely—albeit small—stretch of powdery sand. The 128 boxy white villas give beach chic new meaning, with polished stone floors, rough limestone walls, spare four-poster beds, and sculptures by prominent Mexican artists. We'll admit, we did experience a bit of sticker shock at checkout. But it's worth it. This is the most sophisticated resort on Mexico's eastern coast. *Playa del Carmen; 800/526-6566 or 52-984/877-3888; mandarinoriental.com; doubles from \$700.*



Relaxing on the rooftop of a beachfront casita at the Mandarin Oriental, on Mexico's Riviera Maya. Opposite: A J.K. Place Capri guest room.



THIS PAGE: THOMAS LOOF. OPPOSITE: JEAN-MARIE DEL MORAL



A guest villa at Six Senses Hideaway Yao Noi, in Thailand. Opposite: Taking in the Great Barrier Reef view from a private infinity pool at Australia's Qualia.



[BEACH] YAO NOI, THAILAND


SIX SENSES HIDEAWAY YAO NOI

This is Asia at its best—all the beauty of a remote destination without the hassle of being entirely off the grid. On the island of Yao Noi, only 45 minutes by boat from Phuket, lucky guests are surrounded by lush jungle, tiny fishing villages, and untouched beaches. Six Senses is known for its luxe-castaway formula, and this resort of 56 villas, with untreated-wood-paneled interiors and private plunge pools, perfectly melds location and design. And though the property mirrors sister outposts in the Maldives and Vietnam, we didn't mind. In this pristine environment, Six Senses has been able to realize the brand's signature style—and then some. *Phangnga*; 66-76/418-500; six-senses.com; doubles from \$1,000.

[BEACH] HAMILTON ISLAND, AUSTRALIA

QUALIA

Billing itself as Australia's first seven-star hotel, Qualia has the requisite luxury trappings (personal infinity pools, a 1,000-bottle wine cellar). But the real stars here are architect Chris Beckingham and chef Stephane Rio, who have modernized the notion of an Australian reef resort. The airy one-bedroom pavilions combine native styles (corrugated-iron roofs, wide eaves) and materials (plantation hoop pine, Bowen granite) with restraint; each pared-down space is both contemporary and authentic. At the restaurant, Rio uses indigenous ingredients in unexpected ways—even for breakfast, when waffles are served with sweet and nutty wattle-seed and Kaffir-lime syrups. 61-2/9433-3349; qualia.com.au; doubles from \$1,395.



The colorful pool deck at the Haymarket Hotel, in London.
Opposite: A treatment room at the Guerlain Spa in Florida's Regent Bal Harbour.

[CITY] LONDON, ENGLAND

HAYMARKET HOTEL

"Why not have some fun!" may well have been what Kit Kemp said as she released her arsenal of bold colors and supergraphic effects on the public spaces of the former American Express London headquarters in the heart of the theater district. Masters of the clubby/cozy/contemporary (e.g., London's Soho Hotel, Knightsbridge Hotel, and one of our all-time favorites, the Charlotte Street Hotel), the designer and her husband and business partner Tim Kemp know how to create properties that strike a perfect balance between a classic English manor house and a buzzy, film- and art-world haunt. 1 Suffolk Place; 44-20/7470-4000; firmdale.com; doubles from \$495.

[CITY] BAL HARBOUR, FLORIDA

REGENT BAL HARBOUR

Make no mistake: Regent's first property in the United States wants nothing to do with South Beach. While it's got the beautiful beachfront and plenty of headline-grabbing features (the country's first Guerlain Spa, a \$4 million art collection), there's no Euro-lounge sound track pumping into the lobby. This is a place for *adults*—which is appropriate, given that the Regent is also the first major hotel to open in the old-line Bal Harbour Village in 52 years. Here, it's all about the signifiers of luxury: Anichini bedding, plasma television screens embedded in bathroom mirrors, and a dazzling crystal chandelier. At times, it might seem over the top, especially when coupled with service that's a tad overbearing (resolutely solicitous restaurant waiters actually *thanked* us for enjoying our dish), but the hotel is a welcome alternative for those in search of Miami's more grown-up side. 10295 Collins Ave.; 800/545-4000 or 305/455-5400; regenthotels.com; doubles from \$750.



THIS PAGE: DAVID NICOLAS. OPPOSITE: CHRISTOPHER STURMAN

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The Philippe Starck-designed bar at Rio de Janeiro's Hotel Fasano. Opposite: A guest room at the JIA Shanghai.

[CITY] RIO DE JANEIRO, BRAZIL

HOTEL FASANO RIO DE JANEIRO

Restaurateur Rogério Fasano established himself as a tastemaker par excellence with his flagship Fasano hotel in São Paulo. And now, the opening of the second Fasano, in Rio's perennially chic Ipanema, sees his talent for infusing environments with social cachet reach critical mass.

To design the 91 rooms, Fasano made an unexpected choice: Philippe Starck, whose penchant for provocation (not to mention plastic) doesn't intuitively jibe with laid-back Carioca chic. But it works. Fasano's own preference for warm, natural palettes seems to have toned Starck down.

Rooms and suites are spare and breezy, with white walls, leather-upholstered Mies daybeds, Amazonian wood side tables, and at least two burnished Sergio Rodrigues chairs. 80 Avda.

Viera Souto; 55-11/3896-4000; fasano.com.br; doubles from \$620.



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[CITY] SHANGHAI, CHINA

JIA SHANGHAI

GREAT VALUE

Ensnconed in a 1920's building on fashionable West Nanjing Road, the 55-room JIA brings a much-needed dose of boutique intimacy to the city's booming hotel scene. Its eclectic Asian-contemporary interiors were parceled out among a trio of up-and-coming designers—Andre Fu, BURO Architects, and Darryl Goveas. They crafted a well-choreographed hideaway of dark wood floors, richly embroidered fabrics, and elegant birdcages, which sit alongside Knoll and Moroso furniture. *Jia* means "home" in Mandarin, and given how frenetic Shanghai is, we loved the property's host of cozy amenities: well-stocked marble kitchenettes, in-room board games, and help-yourself (complimentary) tea and bottled water. There's even free Wi-Fi—still a luxury among upscale properties. 931 W. Nanjing Rd.; 86-21/6217-9000; jiashanghai.com; doubles from \$371.

FROM LEFT: COURTESY OF THE FASANO; COURTESY OF JIA SHANGHAI



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The pool deck
at Namibia's
Onguma Plains.

[RUSTIC] ETOSHA, NAMIBIA
**ONGUMA PLAINS,
THE FORT ON
FISHER'S PAN**

Northern Namibia is Africa's Next Great Safari Frontier—in part owing to its incredible plethora of wildlife, but also because of its wealth of high-quality luxury lodges, like this camp on a private 50,000-acre game reserve, five minutes from Etosha National Park. While the design of most southern African lodges skews toward either safari chic or super-Modernist (Singita), Onguma takes the bush lodge in a bold new direction. All carved antique doors, billowy curtains, and reflecting pools, it's as if a casbah had been relocated to the continent's south. The main lodge features brushed-metal sconces, Middle Eastern lanterns, and long mirrors in distressed wooden frames. Two of each guest room's walls are made of canvas; they can be opened to reveal a mesh window that makes the plains look like an Impressionist painting. At night, the resort requires that you zip yourself snugly into your room (which can feel claustrophobic). But it's a safety precaution, because lions roam nearby. 264-61/232-009; onguma.com; doubles from \$702, all-inclusive.



On a lookout deck of a guest cabin at Costa Rica's El Silencio Lodge & Spa. Opposite: In a private plunge pool at the Azura Lodge, in Mozambique.

[RUSTIC] BAJOS DEL TORO, COSTA RICA
EL SILENCIO LODGE & SPA

**GREAT
VALUE**

Costa Rica has long had the rugged eco-travel niche sewn up. But until now, well-heeled travelers who wanted total solitude without sacrificing luxury had few options. So we took note when the owners of the top-notch Hotel Punta Islita decided to open this upscale-granola retreat on 200 acres 90 minutes north of San José. The 16 cottages are plush enough (gas fireplaces, L'Occitane amenities). It's all about being out of touch here—there are no computers, in-room TV's, or even cell-phone reception, which might not work for some type-A travelers. But when you're sitting on a lookout deck with a whirlpool, perched high above the forest, it's a blissful reminder of how precious *el silencio* can be. 011-506/2291-3044; elsilenciolodge.com; doubles from \$480, including meals.



SEE THE SLIDE SHOW

Did you know you can tour these amazing hotels online? Check out bonus photos—available only on travelandleisure.com.

[RUSTIC]

BENGUERRA ISLAND, MOZAMBIQUE

AZURA LODGE

While the other island groups in the Indian Ocean—the Maldives, Seychelles, Mauritius—are chockablock with luxury hotels, the isles of Mozambique have lagged behind. Now, with the opening of Azura, a 14-villa hideaway on Benguerra Island, the country finally has a property that can compete with the best the region has to offer. Azura is pulling out all the stops: private plunge pools, a chef imported from the U.K.'s Michelin-starred Fat Duck. But what makes it really special is the barefoot vibe: unlike many of its ilk, the resort is thoroughly authentic. The buildings were handmade from trees felled by past cyclones; rooms are outfitted with artisanal furnishings (the wooden beds were carved by local craftsmen); and gracious islanders make up the butler staff. 27-11/258-0180; azura-retreats.com; doubles from \$1,150, all-inclusive.

[RUSTIC] SAN PEDRO, CHILE

TIERRA ATACAMA HOTEL & SPA

This 32-room adventure hotel in the Atacama Desert is one of the most ambitious new design statements in South America. The owners, along with a team of architects, photographers, and a landscape painter, were inspired by the surrounding landscape. But rather than building in the traditional manner, they used unorthodox materials (plates of oxidized iron, sandblasted glass) alongside adobe, rammed earth, and shale for a fresh take on desert style. In some cases, important details seem to have been afterthoughts. While architecturally stunning, the pool lacks shade—it's too hot to swim during the height of day. These foibles are forgiven when you consider the inspired interiors, Midcentury-style furniture covered in raw linen, cowhide throws, curtains made from desert seeds. In fact, it's all so well done that you could almost overlook the main attraction, the Atacama Desert. The hotel employs a staff of expert guides to take you biking in the salt flats, climbing on volcanoes, and hiking high in the Andes. 800/829-5325 or 56-2/263-0606; tierraatacama.com; doubles from \$1,390 for two nights, all-inclusive.



The pool at Tierra Atacama Hotel & Spa, in Chile. Opposite: The Ara Starck-painted ceiling at Le Dalí, at Paris's Le Meurice.



THIS PAGE: MICHAEL JAMES O'BRIEN. OPPOSITE: DAVID NICOLAS

[RENOVATION] PARIS, FRANCE
LE MEURICE

Just as we were getting ready to write Philippe Starck off as too nineties for words, he bounces back with a tonic redo of this Paris institution's principal public spaces. Starck is not in the habit of having his thunder stolen, but he makes a familial exception here. Covering the famous glass dome in the formerly very buttoned-up Jardin d'Hiver dining room (now the witheringly scene-y Le Dalí) is a heroic canvas painted by his daughter Ara in the manner of Chagall. If you've ever questioned the power of design to shake up a hotel's constituency, stop by for a drink in the bar Le 228: overnight, the crowd has gone from fuddy to fabulous, even if everyone forgets to notice that some of Starck père's visual jokes are a little stale (by our reckoning, it's time to take the mirror off the floor and hang it on the wall again). Rather more urgently, someone has to resolve the disconnect between the ironic new common areas and old-school Frenchness of some of the guest rooms (we're told all are due for an overhaul). 228 Rue de Rivoli, First Arr.; 800/650-1842 or 33-1/44-58-1010; lemeurice.com; doubles from \$1,139.

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[RENOVATION] JODHPUR, INDIA

UMAID BHAWAN PALACE

Welcome to the palace: “a living testimony to the royal ethos of India,” as heralded by the embossed and gilded brochure. And is it ever, with 26 acres of landscaped gardens where peacocks display their plumage, and 76 guest rooms, including 40 raj-worthy suites in what is purportedly one of the world’s largest residences. That elegant figure in the linen tunic may well be Gaj Singh II, the maharajah of Jodhpur, who resides in one wing with his family. A 105-foot central cupola sheds a golden light that appears to waft through the long corridors. Built in the Art Deco style of the 1930’s for the grandfather of the current maharajah, Umaid Bhawan Palace sparkles after a \$15 million renovation by Taj Hotels Resorts & Palaces. If the hotel sounds familiar, that’s because Liz Hurley and Arun Nayar held their wedding celebration here last year—one sure reflection that this sprawling golden-yellow structure is ready for prime time. 866/969-1825 or 91-291/251-0101; tajhotels.com; doubles from \$876.

(Continued on page 233)

The India Mahdavi-designed Coburg Bar, at London's Connaught.



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(Continued from page 207)

[RENOVATION] LONDON, ENGLAND
THE CONNAUGHT

In the newly hip Mayfair district, this landmark brick Victorian has reclaimed the glory of its golden era thanks to a \$140 million renovation, creating a sophisticated throwback that no soulless Modernist hotel could ever hope to emulate. Classicist designer Guy Oliver supervised the preservation of bur-nished mahogany paneling, gilded scrollwork, and formal Adams fireplaces; fortunately, a welcome infusion of 21st-century fun saves the 123-room Connaught from being too somber. Witness the cartoonish Julian Opie cameos in the aubergine-and-slate Coburg Bar (created by India Mahdavi), film-noir nights with buttered popcorn, and chinoiserie cocktail cabinets filled with DIY martini fixings. This summer, Parisian star chef Hélène Darroze arrives to reinvent the venerable restaurant menu. Features like a room-service trolley that dispenses sweet treats to guests every afternoon are also clear indications that this clubby enclave remains jolly (but never Olde)

England at its best. *Carlos Place*; 866/599-6991 or 44-20/7499-7070; *the-connaught.co.uk*; doubles from \$940.

[RENOVATION] NEW YORK CITY
THE PLAZA

Honestly, we don't require 24-karat-gold-plated Sherle Wagner faucets in our hotel bathrooms, though there's lots that's pertinent in Fairmont's \$400 million remake of Henry Janeway Hardenbergh's 1907 Beaux Arts icon. Savagely ripped out in the forties by then owner Conrad Hilton, the layout of the Palm Court's famed stained-glass ceiling was re-created pane-for-pane, with the help of New York City's Landmarks Preservation Commission. Touch-screen AMX systems in the 282 guest rooms deliver on their promise to make easy the tasks of controlling lighting, contacting the concierge, and summoning your white-gloved butler. But the Plaza, still wet behind the ears since its March reopening, has a long way to go. Service is a little shaky (it took 39 minutes for an ice bucket to be delivered). We also regret that most of

the Central Park views went to the building's 152 new condos. (Try to score one of the Plaza or Deluxe rooms adjacent to an Edwardian Park Suite—they're the cheapest ones partially overlooking the park.) Still, for a European-palace-style experience, this is the only game in town. *Fifth Ave. at Central Park S.*; 800/441-1414 or 212/759-3000; *fairmont.com*; doubles from \$1,000.

[COUNTRY] CACHI, ARGENTINA
LA MERCED DEL ALTO

GREAT VALUE

Imagine Tuscany crossed with Pancho Villa's Mexico, and you'll have some sense of the cultural and geographic richness of Cachi, in Argentina's Andean region, a three-hour drive from the northwestern provincial capital of Salta, where lush mountains, wine country, and dusty desert pueblitos meet. If the area's charming character isn't enough to get you there, then La Merced should do the trick. This regal adobe building looks like a centuries-old Spanish-colonial hacienda. Inside the cloistered, whitewashed rooms you'll >>

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find pitch-perfect indigenous design: terra-cotta floors, woven rugs and embroidered wall hangings, hand-hammered silver chandeliers, soaring caned ceilings, and stylishly austere furniture. The result is a refined estate that's both traditional and irrefutably contemporary. 54-3868/490-030; lamerceddelalto.com; doubles from \$160.

[COUNTRY] THE COTSWOLDS, ENGLAND
COTSWOLDS88HOTEL

There are plenty of mod manor hotels in the Cotswolds—a swath of countryside in southwestern England that has become Britain's answer to the Hamptons. But the design of Cotswolds88hotel stands above them all. Eschewing the neutral minimalism that has become de rigueur among chic properties, owner Marchella De Angelis combines graphic and unusual upholsteries (vinyl snakeskin is a recurring theme), eclectic Midcentury

and antique furniture, an impressive collection of Murano glass, and the odd bit of mock taxidermy (was that a pair of stuffed crows in the dining room?). It's utterly delightful and unexpected. But we found that not everything was as seamless as the décor. De Angelis, who also cofounded a nightclub in Shoreditch, has taken a few unwelcome cues from her nightlife background by pumping too-loud music into the lobby and even peppering chastising notes throughout ("Walking boots and wind jackets are not permitted in the dining room"; "Rudeness to staff will not be tolerated"). We hope she'll realize that hotel clientele deserve to be treated better than a rowdy bar crowd; fortunately her competent and friendly staff shows better manners. *Kemps Lane, Painswick; 44-1452/813-688; cotswolds88hotel.com; doubles from \$374, including breakfast.*

[COUNTRY] TE AWANGA, NEW ZEALAND
THE FARM AT CAPE KIDNAPPERS

Pastoral chic has never looked this good. Located on a working sheep and cattle farm in the North Island's Hawke's Bay, one of the country's top wine



The Farm at Cape Kidnappers, in New Zealand's Hawke's Bay wine country. Opposite: A hacienda-style bedroom at La Merced Del Alto, in Argentina's Cachi region.



regions, this 26-room lodge uses natural fabrics, woods, and metals in sophisticated ways: halls are adorned with black tin animal sculptures, chairs are upholstered with shearling, and burlap curtains hang from large metal grommets. There are plenty of leather armchairs and heavy wooden tables, but details like black-and-white sheep photographs and barn doors that close off indoor spaces add a nice tongue-in-cheek touch. With attentive (sometimes too attentive) service, excellent local wines, and a full range of amenities (the cliff-hugging championship golf course is spectacular), the Farm navigates the fine line between formality and accessibility. *448 Clifton Rd.; 64-6/875-1900; capekidnappers.com; doubles from \$880, including breakfast and dinner.*

[SMALL] **TANGIER, MOROCCO**

HÔTEL NORD-PINUS TANGER

Tangier is fast recapturing the glamour of its glory days, and with the opening of this five-room *riad*, located along the seawall of the casbah, the Old Town finally has the chic little inn it deserves. French hotelier Anne Igou spent 16 months restoring an 18th-century pasha's palace, and while most area properties predictably emphasize their Moroccan settings, Igou's hotel reflects her own whimsical style. Here, North African fabrics and antiques (chandeliers from a Syrian mosque and Egyptian inlaid chests) share space with contemporary leather armchairs by Jacques Adnet and Charlotte Perriand gooseneck lamps. The hotel is a work in progress—which is both good and bad. The traditional dining room is not quite up to speed, and we missed the presence of an authentic hammam, but Igou's penchant for constantly updating the design—a Venetian lamp here, a Braque lithograph there—reflects the vibrancy of the ever-evolving streets »

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The indoor-outdoor lobby of La Purificadora, in Puebla, Mexico, below left. Right: Marrakesh's Riad Meriem.



beyond the hotel's hand-carved doors. *11 Rue du Riad Sultan; 212-61/228-140; nord-pinus-tanger.com; doubles from \$439, including breakfast and dinner.*

[SMALL] BODRUM, TURKEY
CASA DELL'ARTE

If the 90's was the decade of the design hotel, then let's call the 00's the era of the art hotel. One of the best examples of the trend comes in the form of the appropriately named Casa dell'Arte, set in a tranquil corner of Torba Bay, in the southern Aegean resort town of Bodrum. More than 200 original Turkish paintings are displayed at this beachfront villa, including portraits by well-known Turkish artist Nuri Iyem. Accents in the 12 guest rooms are meant to complement the artwork, from the carefully considered (and primarily natural) lighting to the subtle details (faux skin rugs, sinuous light fixtures). *Mutlu Sokak; 90-252/367-1848; casadellartebodrum.com; doubles from \$700, including breakfast.*

[DESIGN] MARRAKESH, MOROCCO
RIAD MERIEM

GREAT VALUE Riads are popping up in Marrakesh at a rapid clip (they are now said to number more than 1,000), so it takes a really special property to make a splash in this North African style capital. Created by

New York-based decorator, photographer, and art collector Thomas Hays, the five-room Meriem manages to be delightfully original without going over the top. Everything here is understated—from the soothing Costes-like palette of muted mauves, pale grays, and dark creams to the well-edited mix of art and objets like framed fabrics from Africa and Asia, original paintings by Moroccan and European artists, and photos from Hays's own extensive world travels. We especially loved the lighting: sconces, lamps, and lanterns, many pierced with tiny pinholes, and all placed in just the right spots, creating speckled patterns that make the riad magical after dark. *97 Derb El Cadi, Azbetz; 212-24/387-731; riadmeriem.com; doubles from \$330.*

[DESIGN] PUEBLA, MEXICO
LA PURIFICADORA

GREAT VALUE Mexican hoteliers are just beginning to explore the notion of adaptive reuse by turning old structures into design-forward, modern hotels. Grupo Habita was a trailblazer when it sheathed a dilapidated 1950's building in Mexico City in a frosted-glass envelope, and with the opening of La Purificadora, it has brought the same concept to the colonial town of Puebla, a UNESCO World Heritage site. The company

enlisted legendary Mexican architect Ricardo Legorreta and his son Victor to repurpose a 19th-century former water purification plant (from which the hotel takes its name) into this 26-room property. By far our favorite spots are the lobby—with its triple-height ceiling, gray slate floors, purple low-lying couches, and a completely open wall—and the rooftop bar, which has a transparent swimming pool that runs along the building's edge. The only gripe is the hotel's location: though on the fringe of Puebla's historic center, it's separated from the cobblestoned streets by a multilane boulevard. 802 Callejón de la 10 Norte, Paseo de San Francisco; 800/337-4685 or 52-222/309-1920; lapurificadora.com; doubles from \$155.

[DESIGN] PARIS, FRANCE
HÔTEL LE BELLECHASSE

Three years after garnering raves as the creator of the Marais's fanciful Hôtel du Petit Moulin, couturier Christian Lacroix is back with a discreet (at least from the outside) 34-room hideaway, seconds on foot, our stopwatch confirms, from the Musée d'Orsay. (Indeed, you can practically hear management crow, "Location, location, location.") And in a city where hotels tend to lean more toward the classic than the cutting-edge, the

property's debut is all the more grand. Lacroix heaps the same famously baroque, magpie sensibility on Le Bellechasse as he does on his *robes du soir*, and like those hysterical patchwork bonbons, you either love the hotel or it gives you a headache. (We love it.) In colors picked from a psychedelic garden, the eye-bending photo-transfer collages are a trip and a half—in one guest room, top-hatted, frock-coated dandies with butterfly wings wrap around both walls and

ceiling. We're less crazy about the fiberglass bathtubs, and the lobby, a sexless space, definitely needs shooshing up. But there's much to admire in the staff's esprit de can-do. 8 Rue de Bellechasse; 866/376-7831 or 33-1/45-50-22-31; lebellechasse.com; doubles from \$455.

[GREEN] EASTER ISLAND, CHILE
POSADA DE MIKE RAPU,
EXPLORA EN RAPA NUI

Finally, with the opening of Explora's »



At the Casa dell'Arte, in Bodrum, Turkey.

30-room LEED-certified lodge on Easter Island, there's a top-notch hotel fit for this legendary destination. Located about 10 minutes outside the main town of Hanga Roa and built to blend into the landscape, the hotel uses local wood and stone. Ornamentation is kept to a minimum: the intent is to showcase the natural scenery. It's a success in the rooms—where wild horses wander right outside the window. But the result can also be cold, as in the dining area, where hard-edged metal furniture reminded us of a corporate cafeteria. Still, this has little bearing when you consider what works: the resort strives to maintain a light footprint with a host of initiatives (a water-treatment system, energy-efficient lightbulbs, biodegradable cleaning products). And Explora has made a point of hiring a staff of islanders—much to the benefit of guests. There's nothing like watching the sunset from the rim of the Rano Kau volcano while a tattooed guide explains the legend behind his culture's ancient Birdman ceremony. Or having the staff prepare a lunch of just-caught tuna tartare under a tent on

Anakena Beach, while *moai* statues stand guard nearby. 866/750-6699; explora.com; doubles from \$2,348 for three nights, all-inclusive.

**[GREEN] JACKSON HOLE, WYOMING
HOTEL TERRA**

Enviably set on the slopes of one of America's most legendary ski resorts, Hotel Terra marks the debut of the Terra Resort Group (the country's first eco-hospitality brand). The 72-room property is modern (along Nouveau Western lines, with black wooden furniture and faux-suede curtains), high-tech, and seriously committed to the environment. Where Terra shines is in delivering green in subtle ways. Those floor-to-ceiling windows? They regulate temperature and capture natural light, all a part of the building's LEED-certified design. The linens are 100 percent organic, as are the products at the spa. And the rooftop hot tub is maintained with nonchemical cleaners. Then there are several simple additions that we hope will become hospitality standards: aluminum dispensers in bathrooms (eliminating wasteful plastic containers), Sigg-style water bottles in rooms (available for purchase at the end of a stay) that guests can refill at stations throughout the hotel,

and—hallelujah!—recycling bins discreetly placed in closets. 3335 W. Village Rd.; 800/631-6281 or 307/739-4000; hotelterrajacksonhole.com; doubles from \$399.

**[GREEN] KANGAROO ISLAND, AUSTRALIA
SOUTHERN OCEAN LODGE**

New Zealand took the luxury-lodge limelight years ago. Now, with the opening of Southern Ocean Lodge, on Kangaroo Island, a sparsely populated wilderness a 30-minute flight from southern Australia's Adelaide, the Aussies have retaliated with their very own "superlodge." Unlike most Kiwi properties, Southern is contemporary in design—and it's extremely green to boot. The 21 spacious suites cascade down a ragged cliff face overlooking remote Hanson Bay; they're outfitted with limestone floors, artwork by island artisans, and outdoor terraces complete with daybeds. Though owners James and Hayley Baillie purchased a nice swath of the wildlife-filled island, they developed only 1 percent of their total acreage, leaving the rest of the land in a trust to protect it against future development. The lodge itself operates sustainably: air-conditioning is not required, as the property was >>

itlist

Explora en Rapa Nui, on Easter Island.



it list



Outdoor terraces at Australia's Southern Ocean Lodge.

CAROLINE WEST

constructed to take advantage of natural weather patterns; it has an advanced water-management system; and energy usage is kept to a minimum. Each guest is informed of the resort's sustainability policy upon check-in, underlining how integral conservation of the surrounding environment is to the resort's philosophy. *Hanson Bay; 61-2/9918-4355; southernoceanlodge.com; doubles from \$1,670 for a two-night stay.*

[BUSINESS] SINGAPORE ST. REGIS SINGAPORE

GREAT
VALUE

This 299-room property just off Orchard Road marks both the debut of St. Regis in Southeast Asia and the first international luxury hotel to open in Singapore in more than a decade. This is all impressive, but where the property stands out is in the service. The multilingual butlers are rigorously trained, and we found their graciousness refreshing in the midst of Singapore's often harried atmosphere. Our night butler, of his own accord, presented us with two different types of lens cleaners for our eyeglasses. The next morning, a double espresso was waiting for us when we woke up. Butlers are even equipped with BlackBerrys, so you can reach them wherever they are. The hotel is classic in feel, a fact which belies the modern glass façade. Interiors do acknowledge the St. Regis's Asian setting (we loved the chinoiserie armoires and works by contemporary Chinese artists), though

details like the Czech crystal chandeliers and Regency-style furniture are a tad old-fashioned for our tastes. *29 Tanglin Rd.; 877/787-3447 or 65/6506-6888; stregis.com; doubles from \$319.*

[BUSINESS] TOKYO, JAPAN PENINSULA TOKYO

It's no easy feat to raise the bar in a city like Tokyo, where upscale hotels seem to populate every corner. Which is why Peninsula pulled out all the stops for its first outpost in the city. The group spent 15 years looking for the perfect piece of land, and finally found a lot surrounded by parks, virtually across the street from the Imperial Palace and blocks from the Ginza. And unlike other hotels in its category, which are typically in preexisting office buildings, the 24-story tower is the first freestanding luxury hotel to be built in 10 years. The incredible palace views—the best of any Tokyo hotel—won us over, but Peninsula didn't stop there. The rooms are among the city's largest, starting at 544 square feet, and—appropriately—its most high-tech. Gizmos range from the convenient (bedside consoles that control drapes, panels that display outside temperature and humidity) to the luxe (Lavazza espresso machines) to the incredibly useful. We never realized how handy a personal nail dryer could be. *1-8-1 Yurakucho, Chiyoda-ku; 866/382-8388 or 81-3/6270-2888; peninsula.com; doubles from \$586. +*