

2019

Big Sleep Awards

Exceptional service? Menus to die for? Boudoirs fit for Sleeping Beauty? Whatever it is that truly makes a hotel special, we're celebrating it in our annual awards, where we reward the best new tastemakers, trendsetters and game-changers in the business

IMAGE: NIKOLAZ PANIASHVILI

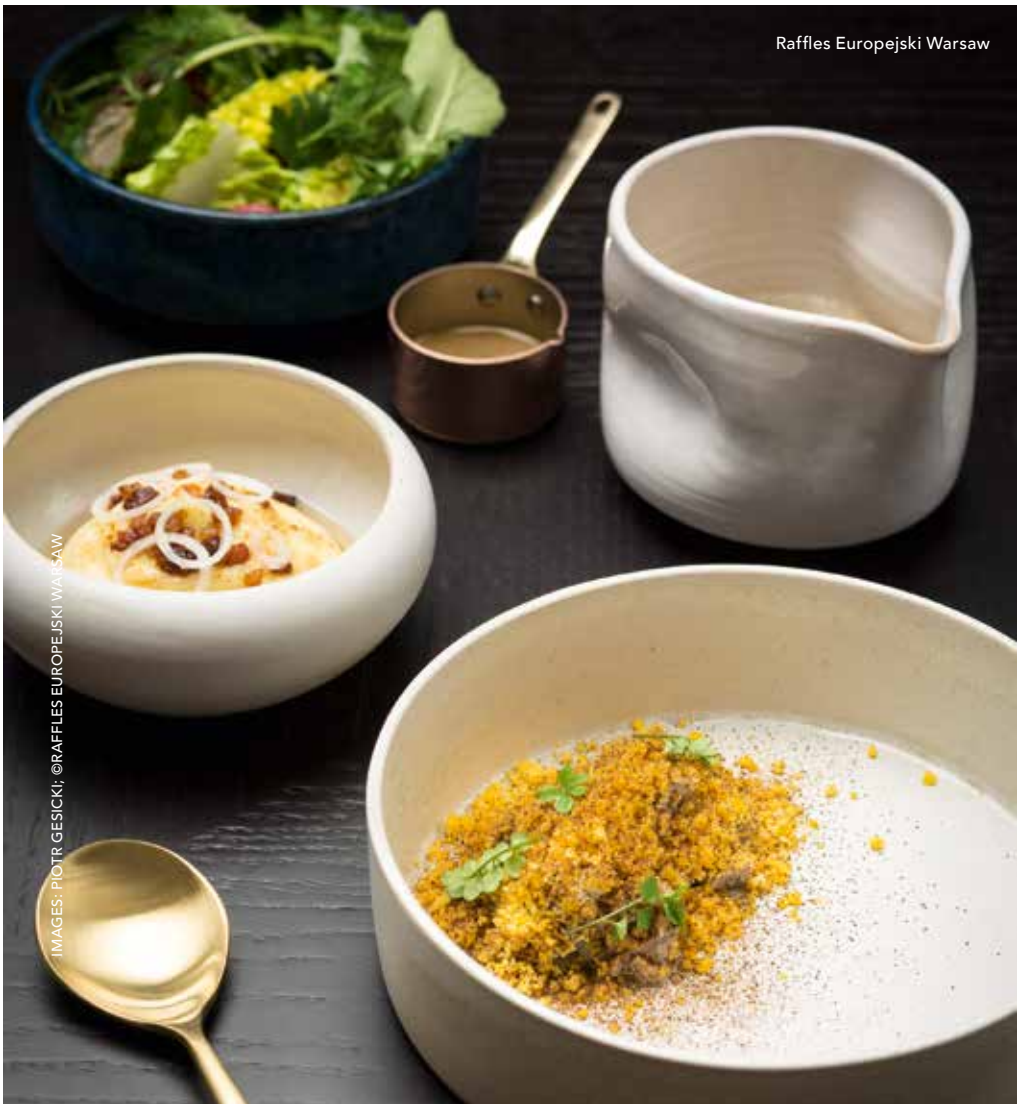


THE WINNERS

- CITY SLICKER**
RAFFLES EUROPEJSKI
WARSAW
- CASTAWAY**
ISLAS SECAS, PANAMA
- HANGOUT**
STAMBA HOTEL, TBILISI
- GOURMET GETAWAY**
BLESS HOTEL, MADRID
- LORD OF THE MANOR**
HECKFIELD PLACE,
HAMPSHIRE
- GRAND REDESIGNS**
HÔTEL LUTETIA, PARIS
- WELLNESS WONDER**
THE RETREAT AT BLUE
LAGOON, ICELAND
- BOUTIQUE BREAK**
THE FIFE ARMS, BRAEMAR
- DESIGN DEN**
MORPHEUS, MACAU
- LOVE SHACK**
CAN BORDOY GRAND
HOUSE & GARDEN,
PALMA DE MALLORCA
- BREATH OF FRESH AIR**
SHIPWRECK LODGE, NAMIBIA
- ON THE MONEY**
ALILA BANGSAR,
KUALA LUMPUR
- CLEAN & GREEN**
SHINTA MANI WILD,
CAMBODIA
- SNOW QUEEN**
EXPERIMENTAL CHALET,
VERBIER
- GAME-CHANGER**
THE ANNEX, TORONTO
- COMEBACK KID**
PARAMOUNT HOUSE HOTEL,
SYDNEY

THE JUDGING PANEL

- JULIA BUCKLEY**
Freelance travel writer
- FRANCISCA KELLETT**
Freelance travel writer
- JOHN O'CEALLAIGH**
Luxury travel editor, *The Telegraph* / telegraph.co.uk
- LEE COBAJ**
Freelance travel writer
- JULIET KINSMAN**
Freelance travel writer
- DAVID WHITLEY**
Freelance travel writer
- EMMA GREGG**
Freelance travel writer
- PÓL Ó CONGHAILE**
Freelance travel writer
- NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC TRAVELLER (UK) TEAM**



City Slicker

We wanted to find the ultimate urban nest. Who's the new girl in town? Or is there a chain that's really turning heads? After a hard day's exploring, here's where we'll want to rest our weary bones



RAFFLES EUROPEJSKI WARSAW
OUR PANEL SAID: Why has it taken luxury brands so long to wake up to the Polish capital? This grande dame, dating from 1857 when it opened as the Hotel Europejski, has been given some much-needed pizzazz by Raffles, and the result is every bit as sumptuous as you'd expect. The glamorous, sensitive restoration offers the largest rooms and suites in the city, a lavish patisserie, intriguing Polish art, and the Europejski Grill, where a considered array of national favourites are served up in style. But don't skip what must be Warsaw's poshest spa, where the walls twinkle with 1960s mosaics and products come courtesy of Sisley. raffles.com/warsaw

Runners-up

- THE MIDDLE HOUSE, SHANGHAI**
Set in the heart of downtown just off Nanjing Road, the Middle House is a sensual city retreat. Dotted with an art collection MoMA would envy, rooms come with dark wooden floors, porcelain headboards and smoky tones, and the restaurants and bars are superb. themiddlehousehotel.com
- UNITED PLACES, MELBOURNE**
This sleek spot on the edge of the Royal Botanic Gardens delivers understated style in spades — contemporary architecture, cool hues and gorgeous tactile touches like concrete walls and obsidian bathtubs. unitedplaces.com.au



Hangout

If you lived nearby, you'd be here all the time — a place you can't wait to show your friends, where the cocktails are snazzy and the DJ spins the best tunes



STAMBA HOTEL, TBILISI

OUR PANEL SAID: An old Soviet printing house catapulted into the 21st century, Stamba makes a lasting impression. Its big, brutalist skeleton has been injected with all the creativity that's coursing through the Georgian capital's veins right now — floor-to-ceiling bookshelves dominate the design, minibars come with cocktail kits, and faintly art deco touches meld with all that bold concrete. But it's the effortless cool that makes Stamba stand out: there's an 'amphitheatre' performance space for concerts, a photo museum curating the best local and international photographic talent, the pastel-pretty Pink Bar, an on-site coffee roastery and Café Stamba, where you'll be queuing with the locals for a cheesy khachapuri. stambahotel.com

Runners-up

NOMAD, LOS ANGELES

The old Bank of Italy was one of Downtown's grandest buildings when it opened in 1923, but today it's one of the city's most happening hotels. There's a landmark restaurant, swish cocktail bar and a rooftop pool with views as far as the Pacific. thenomadhotel.com

THE LINE, AUSTIN

Paying homage to its roots as a jazz club, The Line is an extremely good-looking neighbourhood hangout for anyone with a love of music and good times. Whether for frozen margaritas in the lakeside infinity pool or intimate gigs in the rooftop bar, The Line knows how to draw you in. thelinehotel.com/austin

LEFT FROM TOP: Aviator Room, Stamba Hotel; Pink Bar, Stamba Hotel

IMAGE: @HELGALAUFEYPHOTOS

Wellness wonder

Plenty of places offer R&R, but some do it better than others. We want to dissolve our worries in the Jacuzzi, have those knots in our necks massaged away and come back feeling like a new person



THE RETREAT AT BLUE LAGOON, ICELAND

OUR PANEL SAID: Who knew hot water could be so cool? Last year, Iceland's steaming Blue Lagoon completed a significant expansion, opening The Retreat at Blue Lagoon — a minimalist sanctuary of wellness right on the edge of the country's most famous landmark. The star of the show is, of course, its subterranean spa, built into the jet-black, 800-year-old lava flows, where the Lagoon's salt, silica and algae take a starring role in the treatment offerings. In addition, there's a restaurant that reimagines Iceland's culinary traditions as well as 62 suites encircled by those pearly, mineral-rich waters. bluelagoon.com

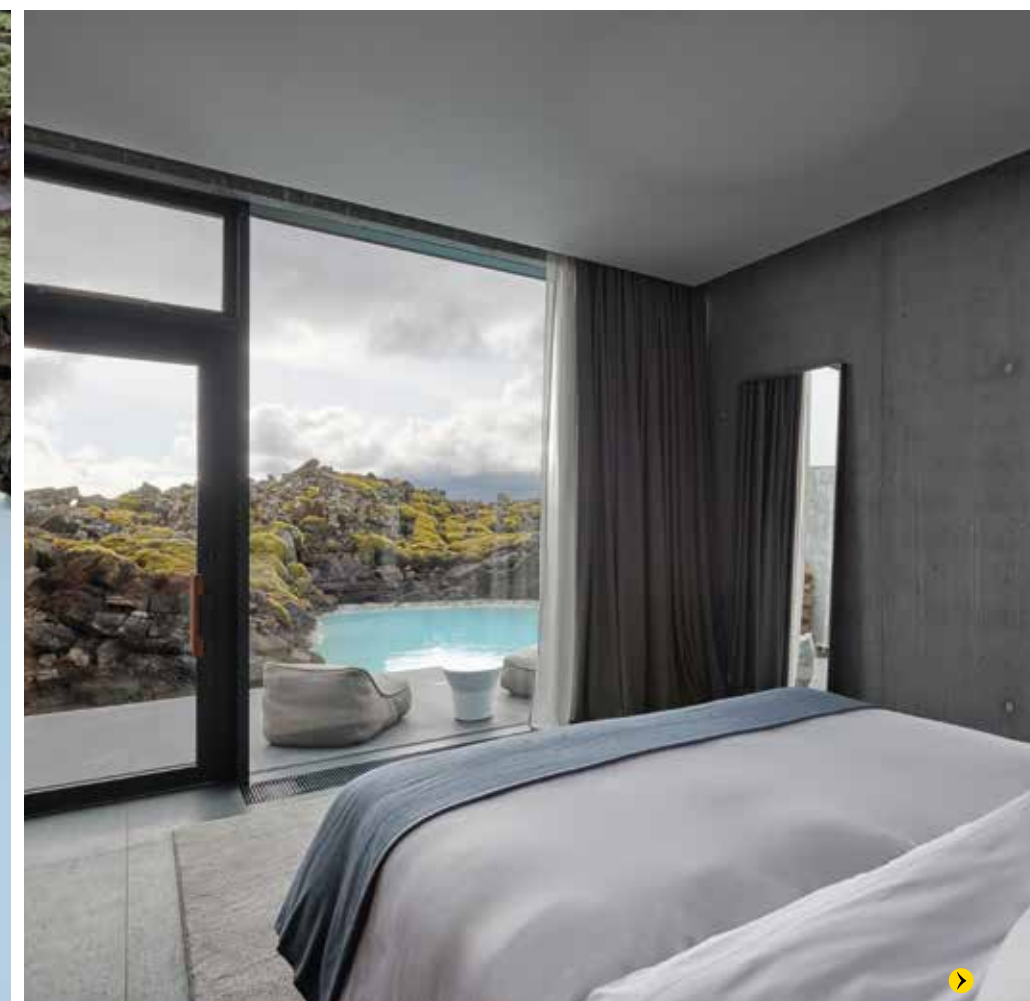
Runners-up

EUPHORIA RETREAT, MYSTRAS, GREECE

This pretty, pine-scented getaway in the Peloponnese does Hellenic-inspired wellness par excellence. Nutrition takes a leading role here, with a lengthy list of first-class facilities, too: a Himalayan salt room and a traditional hammam to name a few. euphoriaretreat.com

BHUTAN SPIRIT SANCTUARY

Set high in the Himalayas with just 22 rooms, this is wellness at the highest level — meditation with monks, yoga and Tibetan massages — and guests can even join therapists on a forage for ingredients to be used in their treatments. bhutanspiritsanctuary.com



Design den

It's amazing what architects can dream up, so we wanted to reward the very best when it comes to aesthetics: the cleverly conceived and the bewitchingly boundary-pushing



MORPHEUS, MACAU

OUR PANEL SAID: One of the last buildings designed by the late Zaha Hadid, Morpheus (at the City of Dreams complex) is more than just a design den, it's a marker for all future hotel architecture. It feels like a living, breathing creature. Its exterior is a silvery slab wrapped in an exoskeleton, pierced with gigantic holes, while inside, contemporary pieces of art abound. There are curves and bends, webs of drooping glass, vast floating platforms and lipstick-red-glass elevators zooming up and down the walls like something from an '80s video game. Spectacular. cityofdreamsmacau.com

Runners-up

ROOMS OF ROME, ROME

Fashion icon Alda Fendi's treatment of an 18th-century palazzo defies easy categorisation. Its 24 apartments are designed by Jean Nouvel, and stellar art takes centre stage. theroomsofrome.com

CAPELLA UBUD, BALI

Flintstones-esque infinity pools and a colonial-chic cocktail tent: Bill Bensley's creation is a bonkers-brilliant blend of Balinese design and hipster glamping, deep in the heart of lush, green rainforest. capella-hotels.com

FROM LEFT: Guest room, Morpheus, Macau; cabins, Shipwreck Lodge; cabin interior, Shipwreck Lodge



Breath of fresh air

Ah, the great outdoors — but back-to-nature needn't mean slumming it under the stars. Glampsites, decked-out yurts, safari lodges, geodesic domes and luxury cabins. Where would you choose to bed down?



SHIPWRECK LODGE, NAMIBIA

OUR PANEL SAID: The remote, desolate Skeleton Coast makes a dramatic setting for the standalone cabins of Shipwreck Lodge. Marooned on windswept dunes, attention turns first to the lodge's design: the angular, solar-powered cabins' quirky shape is inspired by the ships that came to grief along this notorious Atlantic coastline. And being this remote, the outdoors takes centre stage: rare species of flora and fauna, sea breezes and starry night skies. This isn't just a true get-away-from-it-all retreat but a remarkable example of how accommodation can thrive in the most unlikely of destinations. shipwrecklodge.com.na



Runners-up

COLLECTIVE HILL COUNTRY, TEXAS

This is rustic, Texan-style glamping with a dash of luxury — decadent tented hideaways with en suites and wood-burning stoves, with the chance to get out and discover the great outdoors on horseback. collectiveretreats.com

WA ALE ISLAND RESORT, MYANMAR

Set on the Mergui Archipelago, Wa Ale is both eco-friendly and luxurious. The 11 tented villas and two treehouses, set in a 9,000-acre wildlife reserve surrounded by the Andaman Sea, offer an off-radar slice of paradise. waaleresort.com



FROM LEFT: Shinta Mani Wild;
Islas Secas Reserve & Lodge

Clean & green

Is it making a positive community impact? Has it gone carbon neutral? A hotel's eco credentials are a big part of its guest appeal, something these sustainable sanctuaries have taken to heart



SHINTA MANI WILD, CAMBODIA

OUR PANEL SAID: Hotel designer Bill Bensley is a green go-getter who has safeguarded an 865-acre patch of pristine Cambodian rainforest from mining and logging for this eco-tourism endeavour. Opened last December with 15 exclusive tents peppered along the Tmor Rung river valley, it has a 1960s jungle safari vibe, with decorations including faded carousel horses and antique ship lanterns. This is a green beacon of conservation, where at least 75% of staff are locals, tents are suspended to allow migratory movements below, and experiences include patrolling the jungle with Wildlife Alliance rangers. [shintamani.com](#)

Runners-up

VALSANA, AROSA, SWITZERLAND

Skiing and 'green' don't usually make happy bedfellows, but this stylish number is a breath of fresh mountain air. It's the first Swiss hotel to have an ice battery and the restaurant, Twist, serves organic vino. [valsana.ch](#)

ANDBEYOND TENGILE RIVER LODGE, SOUTH AFRICA

This safari pad merges eco-technology with upcycled materials. Stone and sleepers salvaged from the Selati Railway have been turned into flooring and cladding, while the roofs are covered in sand for minimal impact on the surrounding area. [andbeyond.com](#)

Game-changer

Some hotels aren't afraid to take a risk by trying something different — but only a few get it right



THE ANNEX, TORONTO

OUR PANEL SAID: This hotel is all about getting out and about in the local area. No room service means you'll have to head out for breakfast, no on-site parking means jumping on public transport, and check-in is done digitally in advance. Minimalist boudoirs have big beds, and there's plenty of local art, music and food collaborations that testify to the eclectic spirit of this part of town. [theannex.com](#)

Runners-up

UNIVERSITY ARMS, CAMBRIDGE

There was a buzz about this place before it even opened — and for good reason. It's pepped up the city's hotel scene and a table at the hotel's Parker's Tavern is the hottest ticket in town. [universityarms.com](#)

TWA HOTEL, NEW YORK

Based at John F Kennedy International Airport, this 512-room hotel has an observation deck, museum and rooftop pool. Dating from 1962, Eero Saarinen's original TWA terminal has been reborn as the lobby, while rooms offer exhilarating views of the runways. [twahotel.com](#)

Castaway

From barefoot, beachfront villas to stilted cabins on a private island, we'd happily be stranded on these desert island retreats, where you can truly get away from it all



ISLAS SECAS RESERVE & LODGE, PANAMA

OUR PANEL SAID: Escapes don't get much more castaway than this. Opened earlier in the year, amid the jade-green, tropical waters and rocky islands of Panama's Gulf of Chiriquí, this retreat has a colourful, Neverland-esque history of shipwrecks and buccaneers. Nine ocean-view *casitas* make up this desert island dream, each clustered around a private pool, and days can be spent doing yoga, fishing, or heading off in search of the archipelago's abundant wildlife, including manta rays, sea turtles and frigate birds. [islassecas.com](#)

Runners-up

JOALI, MALDIVES

Nowhere says paradise quite like the Maldives, and this resort in the Raa Atoll does more than enough to keep up the islands' reputation, with its blissfully blue waters, outdoor baths, thatched villas and exceptional service. [joali.com](#)

ZURI ZANZIBAR, TANZANIA

This getaway on Tanzania's 'Spice Island' is the ultimate in idyllic island escapes. Expect fine seafood, hammocks, and a picture-perfect spot on the island's calm northwestern shores. [zurizanzibar.com](#)





Lord of the manor

The best rural retreats are beacons of hospitality, featuring classy design, top-notch service and glorious cuisine, all the while honouring their heritage



HECKFIELD PLACE, HAMPSHIRE

OUR PANEL SAID: This might just be the perfect reimagining of a country house hotel. The revamped, 17th-century Georgian mansion overlooks groomed parkland, and with breezily cool interiors by Ben Thompson (protege of designer Ilse Crawford), a cinema, organic farm and an impressive cultural calendar, it all equals laid-back country style for the 21st century. A huge draw is the hotel's food: superior home cooking under the creative culinary direction of chef Skye Gyngell. Expect produce from the grounds, and heartfelt hospitality at residents-only restaurant, Hearth. heckfieldplace.com

Runners-up

THE LANGLEY, BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

Guests will feel like nobility at the Duke of Marlborough's former country pile, now a supremely chic, 41-room Georgian country escape, complete with extensive grounds and a world-class spa. marriott.co.uk

CHÂTEAU LAFAURIE-PEYRAGUEY, BORDEAUX

The transformation of this 18th-century wine estate into a luxurious hotel has seen a careful restoration, involving spectacular chandeliers and the creation of a sumptuous restaurant. lafauriepeyragueylalique.com



Gourmet getaways

Hotel kitchens sparkle with some of the world's greatest culinary talent. We ate our way through taster menus, Michelin-starred delicacies and seasonal ingredients to bring you the cream of the crop



BLESS HOTEL, MADRID

OUR PANEL SAID: Martín Berasategui may be Spain's most decorated chef (he's accrued a dazzling 10 Michelin stars to date), but his ventures in the Spanish capital have been scarce until now. At his new restaurant, Etxeko, dishes are inspired by his native Basque Country — gazpacho; grilled octopus on pepper puree; and dry-aged Txuleta beef with bone marrow and piquillo peppers, for instance — all served up amid handsome crimson banquettes and mosaic floors. And if you need to lie down after dinner, Bless will see to that with its spacious, refined boudoirs. blesscollectionhotels.com

Runners-up

D'UNE ÎLE, NORMANDY

Along with Théo Pourriat, Bertrand Grébaut — from Paris restaurant Septime — transformed a French country house into a show-stopper of a restaurant with rooms that champions rustic, regional produce. duneile.com

BLACK BULL, SEDBURGH

Hyper-local yet audaciously worldly: Manchester street food stalwarts Nina Matsunaga and James Ratcliffe bring Asian culinary flair to a chic 17th-century inn on the Cumbria-Yorkshire border. theblackbullsedbergh.co.uk

IMAGE: WWW.ROBERTOCASTANO.COM

FROM LEFT: Heckfield Place; grilled octopus on pepper puree, Etxeko restaurant, Bless Hotel

Paris skyline
BELOW: Hotel Lutetia



Love shack

Romantic retreats that have it all — hammocks for two, private plunge pools or honeymoon suites that’d make Casanova blush



CAN BORDOY GRAND HOUSE & GARDEN, PALMA DE MALLORCA

OUR PANEL SAID: Romance has an address in Palma’s beautiful old town. Full of baroque and gothic charm, this majestic addition to the Majorcan capital is the ultimate urban love nest, with regal rooms, gorgeous old-meets-new aesthetics and butler service. A soak in the heated pool is a must, and the walled garden is a secluded suntrap worthy of Romeo-and-Juliet-style serenades. [canbordoy.com](#)

Runners-up

GARA ROCK, DEVON
Need to escape it all? This discreetly nautical-inspired escape on the dramatic south Devon coast serves up chic, cosy rooms, fresh seafood, a spa and superb sea views to boot. [gararock.com](#)

PALAZZO DANIELE, PUGLIA
This 19th-century palace has been turned into an achingly pretty hideaway hotel. A warren of courtyards and cosy nooks, this is real, barefoot romance without the schmaltz and rose petals. [palazzodaniele.com](#)

Boutique break

Behold the Fabergé eggs of the hotel world: perfectly proportioned, stylishly designed and, of course, singled out for their top-notch service



THE FIFE ARMS, BRAEMAR

OUR PANEL SAID: With feted art dealers Hauser & Wirth at the helm, expect the extravagant at this former hunting lodge once visited by Queen Victoria: lavish wallpaper, tasteful touches of Victoriana and a stag suspended from the ceiling. Not that it’s style over substance here — the hotel’s 46 bedrooms are all uniquely designed, each one inspired by the heritage of the surrounding area and brought to life with a collection of more than 14,000 carefully selected antiques, artworks and furnishings. Mountain views abound, Scottish pub classics are served at the bar, and there’s even a bijou spa in which to recover after a hike in the hills. Cue the bagpipes — this Highland bolthole hits all the right notes. [thefifearms.com](#)

Runners-up

PALAZZO BOZZI CORSO, LECCE
With interiors by Laboratoire Design Rabat, this 18th-century baroque palazzo is a dazzling new design hotel in Italy’s southern Puglia. The gleaming chrome bar is the place to be for cocktail o’clock, and morning coffee is served in the 10-bedroom property’s ‘secret’ garden. [palazzobozzicorso.com](#)

HOTEL AMPARO, SAN MIGUEL DE ALLENDE
With original touches, pared-back design and splashes of bold, colourful textiles, this chic, five-room addition to the Mexican town’s hotel scene is boutique bliss at its understated best. [hotelamparo.com](#)

Grand redesigns

Some hotels are destinations in their own right, and these institutions — the big-hitters and the grandes dames — have got all dolled up and are now back in business



HOTEL LUTETIA, PARIS

OUR PANEL SAID: Four years and €200 million (£180 million) after closing for renovation, the Left Bank’s leading lady reopened her art nouveau doors last summer. In a city where five-star hotels are par for the course, the Lutetia stands out for heritage alone, having ushered in everyone from Picasso to Pitt, Joyce to Jagger. Its new generation of guests can nod off in one of 184 contemporary-styled rooms and suites, take a dip in the marble pool, or sip a cocktail at the beautiful Bar Joséphine, replete with restored ceiling frescoes. Mark our words — this is a new benchmark for hotels a la parisienne. [hotellutetia.com](#)

Runners-up

MANDARIN ORIENTAL HYDE PARK, LONDON
Everything from its rooms to its restaurants (one of which is Dinner by Heston Blumenthal) have been redone with plenty of panache in the biggest refurbishment in the hotel’s 117-year history. [mandarinoriental.com](#)

THE DATAI LANGKAWI, MALAYSIA
Following a \$60 million (£47.9 million) makeover, the island getaway is back with a bang. New features include extended restaurants, spa pavilions, a nature centre and three additional rainforest pool villas. [thedatai.com](#)

IMAGES: SIM CANETTY-CLARKE



FROM LEFT: The Fife Arms



On the money

Coming in at under £150 a night, these rooms deliver serious bang for your buck without scrimping on comfort, style or service



ALILA BANGSAR, KUALA LUMPUR

OUR PANEL SAID: Set atop a domino of black glass in Bangsar, Kuala Lumpur's hippest neighbourhood, the Alila Bangsar has everything you could want from an inner-city sanctum: 360-degree city views, a rooftop pool, top-quality restaurants and minimalist rooms that look like they've been pulled straight from the pages of a design magazine. A stay here won't break the bank, either — rates are remarkably affordable for a hotel of this standard and location, with studios starting from as little as £65, B&B. alilahotels.com

Runners-up

THE COW HOLLOW HOTEL, MANCHESTER
What might just be the city's coolest opening this year is also a steal. A room in the warehouse turned urban nest — with creature comforts aplenty — is yours for just £85 a night. cowhollow.co.uk

CITIZENM, COPENHAGEN

Bright, brilliant and a little bit brash, this young hotel chain's bold design is always a winner. But the key to this Scandi success? Beds for £110 in the notoriously steep Danish capital. citizenm.com



Verbier, Switzerland
LEFT: Alila Bangsar

Snow queen

After a day hitting the slopes or hiking across glaciers, we want to return to a true winter palace with roaring fires, mountain views and an apres-ski experience that's second to none



EXPERIMENTAL CHALET, VERBIER

OUR PANEL SAID: Laid-back and clubby, this sparkling opening in the Swiss Alps is about as urban-cool as ski hotels gets — an off-shoot of a boutique brand that began life in Paris as a speakeasy bar. Emblematic of the new-era luxe hotels that are blossoming across Europe's smarter ski resorts, this new take on mountain luxury is decked out in bright tiles and muted velvets — banish all thoughts of traditional tasselled curtains and silver-service dining. Its buzzy brasserie is fronted by Gregory Marchand, a Jamie Oliver protege, and an airy cocktail bar graces the first floor. experimentalchalet.com

Runners-up

SHELDON CHALET, ALASKA

Set high on a glacial outcrop, Alaska's poshest ski pad comes with wrap-around windows that make the most of its remote setting in Denali National Park. sheldonchalet.com

CALDERA HOUSE, JACKSON HOLE, WYOMING

This wintry hideaway nestled beneath the mountains of Jackson Hole is one of several smart new openings within the elite US resort. Expect an ultra-modern, eight-suite lodge with a plush, Wild West aesthetic. calderahouse.com



Paramount House Hotel
RIGHT: Exterior of Paramount House Hotel

Comeback kid

We've seen everything from prisons to palaces undergo transformations into high-flying hotels — and these are the ones that got it just right



PARAMOUNT HOUSE HOTEL, SYDNEY

OUR PANEL SAID: Right in the middle of the hip Surry Hills neighbourhood is a blockbuster of a renovation, housed in the former headquarters of Paramount Picture Studios. The 1940s-era brick building has been jazzed up with a copper-coloured herringbone-patterned facade and is appropriately cool for this part of town, with bare walls, high-end furniture and exposed brass plumbing. There's also a rooftop recreation centre, a killer Aussie-style breakfast and screenings at the Golden Age cinema next door. paramounthousehotel.com

Runners-up

COMO CASTELLO DEL NERO, TUSCANY

Guests can live like a king in this 12th-century castle converted into a country escape with 50 rooms, pristine gardens, two restaurants and fittingly regal decor in the rolling hills of Chianti. comohotels.com

THE JAFFA, TEL AVIV

In its newest incarnation as an elegant hotel, the former hospital and monastery in the ancient port of Jaffa has kept many of its original features, such as high vaulted ceilings and stained glass — this time shot through with a dash of contemporary style. thejaffahotel.com

