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THE LUXE LIST 2023

*The best new hotels in
the Asia-Pacific region*

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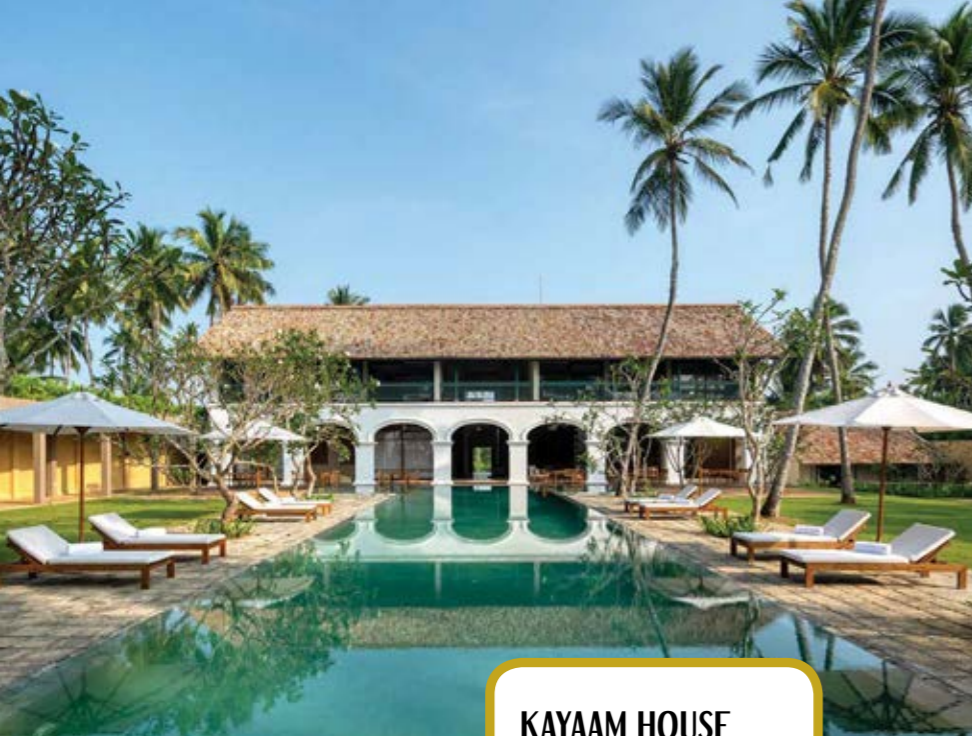
HOUSE PROUD
Inside a guest room at Sri Lanka's Kayaam House.

THE LUXE

WHAT SETS A GREAT HOTEL APART FROM THE REST? IT COULD BE A KNOCK-OUT DESIGN AND NEXT-LEVEL FACILITIES; AN OFF-THE-RADAR LOCALE OR A FRESH TAKE ON A MORE FAMILIAR SETTING; IN-THE-KNOW STAFF AND A STRONG COMMUNITY CONNECTION. THESE ARE THE ATTRIBUTES WE LOOK FOR WHEN COMPILING *DESTINASIAN'S* ANNUAL LUXE LIST, WHICH DRAWS ON OUR CONTRIBUTORS' FIRST-HAND EXPERIENCES TO IDENTIFY THE BEST NEW PROPERTIES IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC REGION. TURN THE PAGE TO DISCOVER WHICH PLACES MADE THE CUT.

OPPOSITE: COURTESY OF KAYAAM HOUSE

LUXE LIST 2023



KAYAAM HOUSE

► TANGALLE, SRI LANKA

Far from the busy beaches of Mirissa and Weligama, this adults-only gem is secluded, sexy, and sophisticated. It's the debut property of luxury hotel group Resplendent Ceylon's more intimate (and affordable) Reverie brand, and you know you've arrived in someplace special when you lay eyes on the gorgeous, palm-lined infinity pool that points toward the ocean. Kayaam House contains just eight rooms and suites, with decor inspired by the tropical modernism of Geoffrey Bawa: think earthy tones with cane, wood, and glass accents. (There's also a separate two-bedroom villa for those wanting more privacy.) At the breezy restaurant, chef Namal Surendra, an alum of Four Seasons at Landaa Giraavaru in the Maldives, serves up whatever is fresh from the market that day, be it ceviche, crab curry, or pumpkin risotto. Elsewhere, a bijou spa offers Ayurvedic treatments and Balinese massages. And when you hit the 11-kilometer-long beach for a sunset walk, there's a good chance you won't bump into anyone else. *From US\$350; thereverie.life.*

—JASREEN MAYAL KHANNA

CAPELLA SYDNEY

► SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA

Capella's first foray outside Asia has put the Singapore-based brand's singular stamp on Sydney. After a seven-year restoration and refit of the former Department of Education building at the north end of the city's CBD, the century-old sandstone landmark now houses 192 rooms and suites, a swanky destination spa, and a skylighted 20-meter swimming pool. Guest quarters start at a generous 46 square meters, with curated artwork and furnishings, objets such as antique compasses, and beds draped in custom Frette linen; for the best views, book a Skyline Suite. The menu at art deco-accented Brasserie 1930 showcases Australian produce and ingredients, like plump scallops from Tasmania's Flinders Island. The hotel's 1,500-piece art collection likewise highlights local artists such as Judy Watson and Otis Hope Carey, whose vivid murals decorate the plush McRae Bar. *From US\$500; capellahotels.com.*

—MAVIS TEO

MONDRIAN SINGAPORE DUXTON

► SINGAPORE

The Mondrian's touchdown in Singapore in June—well ahead of its American stablemates Edition and The Standard, both slated to open later this year—offered an enticing preview of the island state's wave of new international hotel brands. Occupying a prime corner block amid the shophouses of the historic Duxton Hill area, the 302-room property is a glitzy refuge thanks to Los Angeles-based designers Studio Carter and hotshot art consultancy The Artling, which has spent a king's ransom on local and international pieces including Dawn Ng's mesmerizing video installation *Waterfall IV*. True to its brand's decadent DNA, the hotel pulls out all the stops in luring guests out of their rooms to lounge indolently by the 13th-floor pool or sip killer drinks in cocktail bar Jungle Ballroom. No less appealing are its restaurants: Tuscan butcher and chef Dario Cecchini's Bottega di Carna and the Kengo Kuma-designed sushi bar Suzuki. *From US\$330; book.ennismore.com.*

—DAVEN WU

A SHORE BET
Above: Poolside at Kayaam House on Sri Lanka's Tangalle Bay. Below: The bedroom of one of Mondrian Singapore's Shophouse suites. Right: The Karl Lagerfeld's Parisian chic Book Lounge. Opposite: An aerial view of Nay Palad Hideaway.



THE KARL LAGERFELD

► MACAU, CHINA

The first and only hotel designed entirely by the former creative director of Chanel, The Karl Lagerfeld is downright bijoux by Macau standards, with just 271 rooms and suites spread over 20 floors—albeit inside the much larger Grand Lisboa Palace complex. A big name demands a big presence and there's no escaping the late German designer's visage, from a gigantic chrome head in the lobby, to his silhouette plastered on everything from the seat backs to soap. Rooms have a 1980s red-and-black palette mashed with snakeskin, art deco, and chinoiserie. A bit brash, yes, but the facilities are excellent, from contemporary Portuguese restaurant Mesa by José Avillez to the grand Roman-style indoor and outdoor swimming pools and the spa's decadent body massages and 111SKIN facials. *From US\$329; thekarllagerfeld.com.* —LEE COBAJ

NAY PALAD HIDEAWAY

► SIARGAO, PHILIPPINES

When Typhoon Odette swept over Siargao at the tail end of 2021, not even the island's ritziest resort was spared. Nay Palad Hideaway's villas lost their thatched roofs, its restaurant was reduced to rubble, and the once-pristine beach looked like a disaster zone. After first helping to rebuild the local community, the team started with an almost clean slate, bringing back the resort's original architect to spearhead the redevelopment. Opened in June, Nay Palad 2.0 has doubled down on the barefoot vibe that made it so popular in the first place. The villas now feature an additional bedroom but have kept their rattan-and-wood looks, while the main pool and restaurant were rebuilt as a lotus pond-lined lounge area with pillow-strewn alcoves. The service is fittingly easygoing: led by Spanish chef Père Massana, the restaurant has no fixed menu, and even its seating arrangements are fully flexible: guest can dine on the beach, among mangroves, or even in a stilted overwater pavilion. *From US\$890; naypaladhideaway.com.*

—CHRIS SCHALKX

THE ROYCE

► MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA

Fresh from a two-year refurbishment, The Royce returns to Melbourne's boutique hotel scene with a bang, bringing a welcome injection of opulence with it. Set in a 1920s heritage building that was once a Rolls-Royce showroom, the 94-room property is replete with art deco flourishes, mirrored columns, and plush jewel-toned furnishings. The same glamorous hues decorate the rooms, which range from lofts to suites with standalone tubs and big balconies overlooking the leafy South Yarra neighborhood that the hotel calls home—you're a stone's throw from the Royal Botanic Gardens, Yarra River, and National Gallery of Victoria. While you're also within easy reach of Melbourne's top restaurants, The Royce comes with its own dining arsenal at the Showroom Bar, where the menu includes such sophisticated dishes as chargrilled Fremantle octopus, butter-poached lobster rolls, and pork rillettes on champagne jelly. *From US\$270; roycehotel.com.au.*
—NATASHA DRAGUN



BULGARI HOTEL TOKYO

► TOKYO, JAPAN

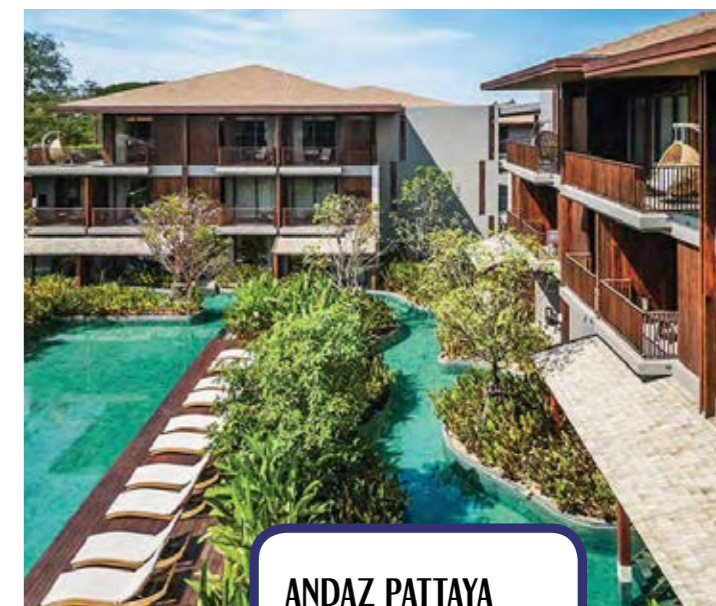
La dolce vita gets the Japanese treatment on the top floors of a city-center skyscraper with a facade as gleaming as the jewelry for which the Bulgari brand is known. An amalgamation of crafts from Bulgari's native Italy and Japan, the interiors feature Murano glass chandeliers and tons of Italian marble alongside fine Japanese woodwork and gold-woven textiles from Kyoto-based kimono atelier Hosoo. The mash-up continues on the food front, with Il Ristorante – Niko Romito serving contemporary takes on Italian classics in a cavernous dining room, and eight-seat Sushi Hōseki doling out bite-size wonders by sushi master Kenji Gyoten. But the hotel's crown jewel is the gem-hued Bulgari Spa on the 40th floor. Accessed by a dedicated elevator, this wellness sanctuary offers muscle-melting treatments and a cabana-lined pool with panoramic views of Tokyo's skyline. *From US\$1,780; bulgarihotels.com/tokyo.*
—CHRIS SCHALKX

COURTESY OF BULGARI HOTEL TOKYO, CHRISTOPHER WISE, OPPOSITE; COURTESY OF THE ROYCE PREVIOUS; FROM FAR LEFT; COURTESY OF KAYAM HOUSE, SHUNTAI, DERRY SUO STEWEMANN

THE REGENT HONG KONG

► HONG KONG, CHINA

Following a two-decade spell under the InterContinental banner and three years of refurbishment, this 1980-built landmark on the Tsim Sha Tsui waterfront has resumed its role as the flagship of the Regent brand. Instantly familiar to old hands, yet thoroughly brought up to date, the entrance now has the feel of an art gallery, decorated with antique wall panels, abstract art pieces, and digital art displays. Beyond, the old ceiling sweeps upward, once again revealing a triple-height wall of glass with knock-your-socks-off views of Victoria Harbour and the Hong Kong Island skyline. It's a panorama that 75 percent of the charcoal-and-cream rooms also share. By the end of the year, there will be an outpost of Nobu, a currently-under-wraps bar, and an executive lounge for the exclusive use of suite guests. In 2024, a new holistic spa will add another reason to visit. *From US\$842; regenthotels.com.*
—LEE COBAJ



ANDAZ PATTAYA JOMTIEN BEACH

► PATTAYA, THAILAND

SUN SPOT
Above: A courtyard pool at the month-old Andaz Pattaya Jomtien Beach. *Below:* A dressing area in the Bulgari Tokyo's expansive Bulgari Suite. *Opposite:* The entrance to the Showroom Bar at The Royce.

The name is SEO bait: Andaz's first Thai property isn't actually in Pattaya but 20 kilometers down the coast from Thailand's tropical Gotham City—far enough away from the scammers and tacky bars for you to forget they're even there. Instead, visitors are met with a golden fleece of beach hemmed with banyans and casuarina trees, hammocks casually strung in between. Alongside lies one of the resort's three swimming pools and the numerous streams and lotus ponds that lace the lush grounds. Contemporary Thai rooms, 204 in total, are spread among sleek low-rise blocks and smartly tie together teak cabinetry and locally woven rattan with modern amber-hued rugs and top tech. Meals are served at three restaurants—Italian, Southeast Asian, grill—set in a village square, with a pretty Panpuri spa on hand for further indulgence. *From US\$286; andaz.com*
—LEE COBAJ



VILLA PALLADIO JAIPUR

► JAIPUR, INDIA

Italy meets Rajasthan at this dreamy country estate on the outskirts of India's so-called Pink City. Founder Barbara Miolini is an Italian-Swiss expat who made her mark on the scene a decade ago with the opening of Jaipur's mesmerizingly blue Bar Palladio, and her latest venture channels the same maximalist splendor but in shades of crimson, scarlet, and rose pink. Spending time at this nine-room bolt-hole feels like you've stepped into a ruby-toned jewelry box.

The exquisite murals have been hand-painted by Jaipuri artisans and all artifacts, lamps, and block-printed linen are likewise locally crafted. When you're done admiring the setting, pause and embrace the slow life—mornings spent on candy-striped pool loungers and long, lazy lunches of wine and housemade pasta.

Villa Palladio also makes an idyllic base for exploring the palaces and bazaars of Jaipur proper, a 30-minute drive away. *From US\$450; villa-palladio-jaipur.com.*

—JASREEN MAYAL KHANNA



TRUE STRIPES
The poolside pavilion at Villa Palladio Jaipur.



JW MARRIOTT JEJU RESORT & SPA

► JEJU, SOUTH KOREA

As a holiday destination, Jeju may not have the cachet of Bali, but island aficionados have long prized this volcanic rock for its unbeatable combination of long summer days and wild landscape of mountains and ancient forests. JW Marriott's first resort in South Korea literally takes the high ground on a vast cliff-top estate facing the East China Sea. A sense of idyllic escapism suffuses every moment. It helps, too, that Bangkok-based hotel designer and longtime Marriott collaborator Bill Bensley has reined in his trademark exuberance in favor of a restrained, soothing palette of basalt rock walls and splashes of yellow inspired by the canola fields that bloom across Jeju in spring. The diversions are endless, with two expansive indoor and outdoor lap pools, a sprawling hot spring spa (due to open this winter), and a terrific stable of restaurants featuring the island's bounty of natural produce such as its famed black pork and sunny citrus fruits. *From US\$746; marriott.com.* —DAVEN WU

FANCY THAT

Above: The reception area at JW Marriott Jeju Resort & Spa. *Below:* Cap Karoso's seaside beach club. *Opposite:* The bedroom of a train-styled suite at Thailand's InterContinental Khao Yai Resort.



ALEENTA RETREAT CHIANG MAI

► CHIANG MAI, THAILAND

A stone's throw from Chiang Mai's Wat Umong temple and meditation center, Aleenta Retreat Chiang Mai is equally zen-inducing. The latest outpost of Thailand's Akaryn Hotel Group zeroes in on serious relaxation and has put its spa at the nexus of a small village of antique Thai houses. Stays start with palm-reading consultations that lay the foundation for personalized programs featuring Tibetan sound baths or Ayurvedic oil massages, while an extensive treatment menu is also available for those not looking to commit to a full-on retreat. The wellness journey continues at The Garden restaurant, which delivers a Thai-Western menu focused on feel-good food and herbal elixirs. The 44 rooms fit every crew and budget: there's a teakwood villa with a private pool and enough bedrooms for an extended family; duplex hideaways with plunge pools on their patios; and roomy suites furnished with Thai crafts in the four-story buildings that backdrop the lot. *From US\$320; aleenta.com.* —CHRIS SCHALKX

CAP KAROSO

► SUMBA, INDONESIA

High-flier hideaway Nihni has long had the monopoly on luxury digs on Indonesia's still-wild Sumba Island. But with the arrival of Cap Karoso on the island's little-visited western tip, those in search of laidback luxe now have another beach retreat to choose from. Its Parisian owners, Fabrice and Evguenia Ivra, envisioned a resort that celebrated Sumba's rich craft culture in a non-traditional way and spared no expense to customize even the tiniest details. They commissioned Indonesian artists for works that reflect the local Marapu culture and worked with Sumbanese woodcarvers on the *ikat*-patterned headboards in every concrete-clad studio and villa. The beachfront restaurant and poolside lounge turn out Indonesian and French classics (flaky croissants, crêpes, and charcuterie boards), while at the communal dining table at Julang, a rotating roster of global chefs throws pop-up dinners with ingredients from the resort's organic farm. *From US\$350; capkaroso.com.* —CHRIS SCHALKX

ALEX GRABCHILEV; COURTESY OF JW MARRIOTT; JEJU. OPPOSITE: COURTESY OF INTERCONTINENTAL-KHAO YAI RESORT. PREVIOUS: ATUL PRATAP CHAUHAN



INTERCONTINENTAL KHAO YAI RESORT

► PAK CHONG, THAILAND

In a dream fulfillment sprung from his youthful love of rail travel, architect-designer Bill Bensley has created a train-themed retreat that harks back to King Rama V-era Siam. Arriving here after the two-and-a-half-hour drive from Bangkok, guests check in at an old-style "station house," which sets the tone for this fantasyland for the senses. Everywhere, from the on-site botanical garden to the pink macarons that appear at turndown, an array of floral colors blossoms. Of the 64 rooms, it's the Heritage Railcar suites and villas that really stand out: they inhabit upcycled vintage train carriages that come complete with canopied balconies and outdoor tubs. Other railcars have been repurposed as restaurants, bars, and the aptly named Back on Track spa. Staff can also arrange excursions to nearby Khao Yai National Park, which counts pig-tailed macaques and barking deer among its abundant wildlife. *From US\$280; khaoyai.intercontinental.com.* —CHRIS WHITE

**TRUNK(HOTEL)
YOYOGI PARK**

► TOKYO, JAPAN

Building on the success of its two Tokyo sister properties, the latest offering from Trunk sits a stone's throw from the Shibuya shopping district, its brutalist concrete facade and foliage-spilling balconies providing a fresh alternative to the glassy hotel towers found elsewhere in the city. The showstopper is the sixth-floor rooftop Trunk Pool Club, where a heated infinity pool overlooks the green expanse of Yoyogi Park. This is Tokyo like never before, with only a hint of iconic landmarks in the distance serving as a reminder of the central location. Inside, Japanese and Scandinavian design traditions are celebrated across 25 residential-style rooms and suites courtesy of Keiji Ashizawa and Copenhagen-based Norm Architects. On the ground floor, Pizzeria e Trattoria L'Ombelico features a dog-friendly outdoor terrace that neatly ties the whole thing in to the surrounding Tomigaya streetscape. *From US\$555; yoyogipark.trunk-hotel.com.* —BEN RICHARDS

INNIT LOMBOK

► LOMBOK, INDONESIA

Those in search of serene isolation need look no further than Innit, the latest addition to a sleepy fishing village on Lombok's southeast coast. Designed by Indonesian architects Andra Martin, Gregorius Supie Yolodi, and Maria Rosantina, its seven villas sink directly into the powdery white sands of a private beach, their wood-slatted facades blending with the bay's undisturbed beauty. A modernist take on the island's traditional stilted houses, each structure features an open sand-floored living space that merges with the beach, while above, bedrooms boast floor-to-ceiling windows that slide open for a fresh sea breeze, tranquil views, and the sound of rolling waves. Stroll or paddleboard the empty coastline, take a snorkeling trip to hidden coves, or simply soak in the infinity pool at sunset—relaxation is the aim of the game here. The restaurant serves Western classics alongside elevated Indonesian dishes from across the archipelago; one standout is the grilled lobster, caught fresh from Innit's very own lobster farm just 50 meters off the beach. *From US\$650; innit-hotels.com.* —LEYLA ROSE

**RISSAI VALLEY,
A RITZ-CARLTON
RESERVE**

► JIUZHAIGOU, CHINA

High in a valley a mere hop and a skip from Jiuzhaigou National Park—a UNESCO-listed wonderland of soaring Himalayan peaks, thick conifer forests, and robin's-egg-blue lakes at the edge of the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau—Rissai Valley's 87 villas reflect the majesty of this remote corner of Sichuan. This is the sixth Ritz-Carlton Reserve in the world, and it's all about escape. Guests will find it difficult to tear themselves away from the late Jaya Ibrahim's sumptuous Tibet-inflected interiors, which feature soft furnishings and artwork produced in the nine villages for which Jiuzhaigou is named. But the resort's thoughtfully curated offerings would tempt even an anchorite from their cell. From wellness experiences and regional dining options, to guided walks, art and cooking classes, and cultural encounters mediated by dedicated personal hosts, Rissai Valley is a celebration of the best of life on the Roof of the World. *From US\$1,470; ritzcarlton.com.* —WARREN SINGH-BARTLETT

OPEN HOUSE

Left: The seven beach houses at Innit Lombok feature sand-filled ground floors. *Right:* Mountain views from the terrace of a two-bedroom villa at Rissai Valley, a Ritz-Carlton Reserve. *Opposite:* An ocean-view suite at The Langham, Gold Coast.



CHRISTOPHER CYPERT; COURTESY OF THE LANGHAM, GOLD COAST; OPPOSITE: COURTESY OF INNIT LOMBOK

**THE LANGHAM,
GOLD COAST**

► SURFERS PARADISE, AUSTRALIA

Even among the gleaming skyscrapers of Queensland's Gold Coast, the three prismatic towers that house The Langham's hotel rooms and residences stand out. The beachfront property is a classy union of muted tones and marble, with huge floral arrangements at every turn. Orchids and roses spill into Palm Court, where afternoon tea is served with views of the palm-lined lagoon-style pool. Perfumed by the hotel's signature ginger-flower scent, the Lobby Bar sees mixologists dial up the theatrics with cocktails like the smoke bubble—adorned Grand Jewel; three floors up is T'ang Court, the Aussie branch of Langham's three-Michelin-starred Cantonese restaurant in Hong Kong. Whether facing the hinterland or ocean, rooms are pared back and restful, with luxe textures and big egg-shaped tubs. Leave the doors of your balcony open to be lulled by the sound of the surf. *From US\$550; langhamhotels.com.* —NATASHA DRAGUN