



Clockwise from top left: Six Senses Bhutan's Gangtey lodge; designed in collaboration with Thai studio Habita, the property features the liberal use of local materials such as hemlock wood; the Bumthang lodge boasts calming forest views; guests can enjoy a scenic breakfast on the terrace overlooking pine trees at the Paro Lodge



SEEK THE UNIQUE

More than just a home for the night, these hotels serve as destinations offering a chance to experience masterful architecture, thoughtful interior design and boundless inspiration on how to live better

SIX SENSES BHUTAN Bhutan

Soulful escapes are par for the course in Bhutan, a country with a careful approach to tourism that has resulted in authentic experiences that are becoming rarer by the day. One of the few luxury hotels to set up here is Six Senses Bhutan, a collection of five lodges in Paro, Thimphu, Punakha, Gangtey and Bumthang that opened between 2018 and 2020.

Designed in collaboration with Thai studio Habita Architects, the hotel's ethos is grounded in simplicity and harmony, expressed through the use of local materials such as hemlock wood and ashlar stone. The hotels are

meant to be experienced together as a circuit, and at each stop travellers are welcomed into spacious, light-filled rooms—even the smallest is a generous 645 sq ft. Floor-to-ceiling windows and oversized decks allow one to take in the towering peaks, quiet valleys and flowing rivers; views that can also be enjoyed from the vantage point of expansive baths and private pools that feature in some of the lodges. The most impressive detail is the commitment to pursue the greenest route possible in construction and design, befitting the first carbon-negative country in the world.



ADDITIONAL REPORTING: HONG XINYING OTHER IMAGES: COURTESY OF RESPECTIVE BRANDS



HEALING STAY KOSMOS HOTEL Ulleungdo Island, South Korea

Untouched, rugged places are fodder for architects looking to create a statement. Case in point: Healing Stay Kosmos Hotel in the geological marvel that is Ulleungdo Island, a long drive east plus a three-hour ferry ride from Seoul.

Perched on a craggy seaside cliff, the hotel's curvaceous architecture stands tall against the island's rocky landscape. If we didn't know any better, we would be convinced it was the lair of a *James Bond* villain. Conceived by Chanjoong Kim, principal of The System Lab, the hotel's fluid lines are said to depict a seashell. It's evident that the structure is inspired by its surroundings, specifically the nearby ice-pick-shaped Songgot-bong mountain. Startlingly high ceilings are meant to usher in the positive energy (or *chi*) flowing throughout the island, while the nature-themed interiors, based on elements like wind and fire, help guests regain a feeling of balance. The most stunning detail of all? The soaring windows that frame the otherworldly volcanic formations, including Elephant Rock.

Clockwise from top left: The architectural design of the Healing Stay Kosmos Hotel takes inspiration from the form of seashells; the hotel is located on a seaside cliff on South Korea's Ulleungdo Island; soaring windows look out to views of the striking volcanic formations



SHISHI-IWA HOUSE Karuizawa, Japan

A powerful tribute to nature and architecture—that is the simplest way to describe Shishi-Iwa House, a collection of “intimately crafted architectural masterpieces” in Karuizawa, a mountain resort town near Tokyo. The first two light-filled houses were created by acclaimed architect and Pritzker Prize laureate Shigeru Ban. This year, they're launching the third house, SSH No.03, designed by Ryue Nishizawa, the co-founder of SANAA and another rare recipient of the Pritzker Prize.

Nishizawa's first-ever hotel project is characterised by an intellectual, minimalist approach influenced by *ma*, the Japanese concept of negative space. The 10 rooms

and one cabin villa embrace a “less is more” philosophy, sparsely decorated and built using hinoki wood and sustainably sourced timber. The hotel has 10 pavilions linked by winding walkways and garden courtyards that put the focus on the surrounding greenery. Lovers of Japanese craft are in for treat as it houses a collection of about 50 original *ukiyo-e* woodblock prints from artists including Utagawa Hiroshige and Shibata Zeshin in the 1840s, as well as Azechi Umetaro and Sekino Junichiro in the 1960s. SSH No. 03 is also crafted as a wellness escape, with a bathhouse and tea house, and plans to provide massage, yoga and meditation sessions in the future.



Clockwise, from top left: Architect Ryue Nishizawa picked iconic designs such as Arne Jacobsen's Fritz Hansen Swan chair to match the understated interiors of SSH No. 03; the rooms feature tatami mat flooring and are built using sustainably sourced timber



DESA POTATO HEAD Bali, Indonesia

Think of the coolest spots in Bali, and something from Potato Head Group will invariably spring to mind. Established by entrepreneur Ronald Akili, Desa Potato Head was ahead of the curve when it opened in 2010 in Seminyak, Bali as the first creative and carbon-neutral village celebrating art, design, food, music and wellness.

The newest part of this buzzing destination is Potato Head Studios, an arresting, modern hotel designed in partnership with OMA, the practice founded by Rem Koolhaas. Sprawling tropical greenery softens the ultra-brutalist architecture, and dotted around the complex are numerous art pieces such as the collaboration with Futura2000 called "Pointman - River Warrior", a sculpture made from repurposed waste materials found in Bali. The use of renewable and eco-conscious materials is a thread running through the hotel's 168 rooms, which feature a recycled-plastic chair and accessories from British designer Max Lamb as well as homegrown creations sourced from Indonesian artisans. All in all, it is another pioneering example that delivers on Potato Head's mantra of "Good Times, Do Good".

From top: Desa Potato Head is a destination celebrating art, design, dining, music and wellness; the hotel plaza was inspired by traditional Balinese courtyards; the rooms feature eco-conscious furnishings and pieces by local artisans



THE JOHRI JAIPUR Rajasthan, India

Dubbed the Paris of India, the romance of Jaipur stretches far beyond its grid-like urban architecture. From the Hawa Mahal's pink sandstone facade to the precious gems to be found in the city's bustling bazaars,

the capital of Rajasthan is an aesthete's travel dream.

The best boutique hotels are those that capture the magic of the destination, and the Johri Jaipur is a good example. Set in a carefully restored 19th-

century home called Lal Haveli, the five-suite hotel is a feast for the eyes. New York-based designer Naina Shah's clever interplay of colour, texture, pattern and art imbues each space with a distinct personality.

One suite features blush-hued walls with scalloped patterns, while another is swathed with baby-blue paint juxtaposed with red and white floor tiles. One of the most mesmerising decor details is in the Pukhraj Lounge, where one can inspect the hand-painted murals depicting the wilds of Rajasthan while enjoying "high chai". The house also boasts a private courtyard—an ideal al fresco respite before venturing out to the colourful chaos of the Jewellers' Bazaar, just a few steps away from the hotel.



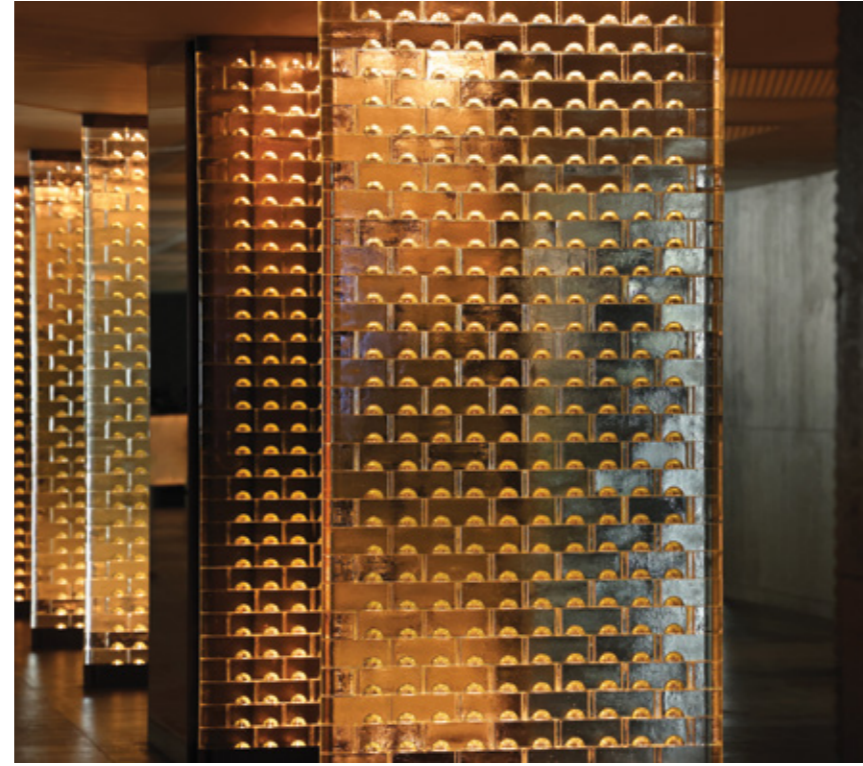
From top: Soft, pastel tones enhance the serene mood of the rooms in the Johri Jaipur; the courtyard of the hotel, which occupies a former residential home built during the 19th century

REGENT HONG KONG Hong Kong

Victoria Harbour is lined with hotels left and right, but few are as well placed as the Regent Hong Kong, which occupies a prime stretch with the best cityscape views. It marks a homecoming for the brand—this was once the flagship hotel of the Regent—and it brought renowned architect Chi Wing Lo on board to lead the two-year transformation.

As it opens in stages this year, guests will uncover Lo's overarching vision, founded on providing a serene sanctuary. Upon arrival, one is greeted by a "Golden Illusion" passageway in the lobby, which consists of 16 glass-brick screens that filter in light referencing Chinese

liu li glass art. The idea of light and reflection is evident throughout the hotel: there's an onyx check-in counter, a misty effect on the lobby's glass balustrades, and a mesh-patterned mirrored sliding door in the guest rooms. The hotel also features art from local talents and handmade furnishings from Lo's namesake brand. The most masterful stroke is the way he enhances the picture-perfect views through well-thought-out design that draws the eye outside. According to Lo: "a beautiful view without a special vantage is merely a postcard anyone can buy; a view without a frame is simply a view that has not passed through the eyes' lens."



From top: Glittering glass screens play with light and reflection; the elegant rooms maximise one of the prime features of the hotel—its amazing cityscape views



HOTEL DE LA COUPOLE - MGALLERY Sapa, Vietnam

With its glorious art nouveau and neoclassical influences, this majestic mountainous resort would look right at home in a Wes Anderson-directed film. But it truly exists in real life, and is not mere fantasy; situated up in the mountainous Sapa region in Vietnam, the Hotel de la Coupole - MGallery

presents an enchanting escape from the everyday.

Dreamt up by American hospitality design maestro Bill Bensley, the hotel presents a series of stage-like vignettes that marry inspiration from the local hill tribes and the exclusive world of

haute couture in Paris. This eclectic and playful mix includes tasselled lampshades and mirrors that reference the traditional clothing and headgear that the village women don, along with framed vintage illustrations sourced from France.

Among its most spectacular spaces is the vast indoor swimming pool, which brings to mind Hungary's grandest baths and spas, and Chic, the property's French restaurant with a glamorous catwalk and wistful views of the mountains beyond.

From top: The fun tassels and geometric details on the decorative lighting playfully reference the world of haute couture and the headdress of the local hill tribes; decadence meets an eclectic array of details in the Presidential Suite of the Hotel de La Coupole - MGallery in Sapa, Vietnam

