

2020

Big Sleep Awards

In our annual awards, this year more than ever we raise a glass to the new kids on the block who've been turning heads and setting the standard for the hotel scene — from urban design dens to stately stays in the country

Turndown service at
Cirqa, Arequipa



THE WINNERS

LEAVE THE WORLD BEHIND
URBAN COWBOY LODGE,
NEW YORK

BOUTIQUE BREAK
CIRQA, AREQUIPA, PERU

CITY SLICKER
ROSEWOOD HONG KONG,
HONG KONG

GOOD EGG
SAORSA 1875, PERTSHIRE,
SCOTLAND

LORD OF THE MANOR
THE NEWT IN SOMERSET,
SOMERSET

BREATH OF FRESH AIR
SONOP, HARDAP REGION,
NAMIBIA

GRAND REDESIGNS
MANDARIN ORIENTAL,
BANGKOK

HANGOUT
DESA POTATO HEAD, BALI,
INDONESIA

GOURMET GETAWAY
CASA MARIA LUGIA,
MODENA, ITALY

LOVE SHACK
PARAGON 700,
OSTUNI, ITALY

SNOW QUEEN
NIEHKU MOUNTAIN VILLA,
SWEDISH LAPLAND, SWEDEN

WELLNESS WONDER
LEFAY RESORT & SPA
DOLOMITI, TRENTINO, ITALY

DESIGN DEN
ARCTIC BATH, SWEDISH
LAPLAND, SWEDEN

COMEBACK KID
THE STANDARD, LONDON

CASTAWAY
LELEWATU RESORT SUMBA,
LESSER SUNDA ISLANDS,
INDONESIA

ON THE MONEY
THE CHOW KIT,
KUALA LUMPUR

THE JUDGING PANEL

KASH BHATTACHARYA
BudgetTraveller.com

JULIA BUCKLEY
Freelance travel writer

LEE COBAJ
Freelance travel writer

EMMA GREGG
Freelance travel writer

LAURA HOLT
Freelance travel writer

JULIET KINSMAN
Luxury travel consultant

JOHN Ó CEALLAIGH
Luxury travel consultant

PÓL Ó CONGHAILE
Freelance travel writer

**NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC
TRAVELLER (UK) TEAM**



The hunting lodge-chic bar at Urban Cowboy Lodge
ABOVE: The Lodge is set in 68 acres of upstate wilderness near the town of Little Indian

Leave the World Behind

Going off-grid needn't mean slumming it. These new, far-flung retreats are well-crafted oases that immerse visitors in the unspoilt beauty of nature

★ URBAN COWBOY LODGE, NEW YORK

Nestled in the Catskill Mountains, this lodge is a gateway to the great outdoors. The 68-acre grounds start with fire pits on the lawn, then fade to a wilderness threaded with hiking trails and creeks. Private decks and wood-burning pot belly stoves are some of the features of the 28 rooms and suites, set across five timber-clad buildings. For the interiors, co-owner Lyon Porter has achieved a nostalgic-yet-chic vibe based on Navajo-inspired geometric patterns, hunting lodge flourishes and antiques. At The Dining Room restaurant, meanwhile, the focus is on 'holistic' dishes and local produce. From US\$175 (£134). urbancowboy.com

RUNNERS-UP

MOUNT MULLIGAN LODGE, QUEENSLAND, AUSTRALIA

Just two-and-a-half hours' drive from Cairns, this getaway at the foot of Mount Mulligan has room for just eight couples. Days are spent hiking, kayaking, fishing or visiting former gold mines. Gourmet meals include pairings with native wines, and there are private tubs on the veranda of every room. From A\$1,700 (£932), all-inclusive. mountmulligan.com

RIO PALENA LODGE, PATAGONIA, CHILE

This imposing new chalet in northern Aysén has just seven en suites. Whether you opt for horse-riding, hiking, wine-tasting or even helicopter fishing, a true Andean adventure beckons. Eight nights, including fishing licences, meals, drinks and local transfers from £5,610, based on two sharing. elevenexperience.com



Walls hewn from local volcanic rock dominate the aesthetic at Cirqa
BELOW: The cuisine at Cirqa draws heavily on regional traditions and produce

Boutique Break

There’s a special place in our hearts for the boutique hotel: with first-class service, plenty of style and just a handful of rooms, these are the twinkling jewels of the hotel scene

★ **CIRQA, AREQUIPA, PERU**
Say your prayers, and if you’re lucky, you might soon find yourself beneath the vaulted ceilings of this 16th-century former monastery in Arequipa. Its walls are hewn from the snow-white volcanic stone that gives the city of Arequipa its nickname: Ciudad Blanca. Its hospitality and impeccable service are an echo of the Augustinian monks who once welcomed travellers here. As a launchpad for the condor-swooped, pulse-quickening Colca Canyon, the hotel’s location is enviable, but there’s certainly a case to be made for simply staying put and soaking up the discreetly decadent vibe. Just 11 rooms, exposed arches, a heated plunge pool and plenty of natural Andean sunlight surely makes this the most seductive stay in Peru right now. From US\$225 (£172), B&B. [cirqa.pe](#)

RUNNERS-UP

CASA ADELA, GUANAJUATO, MEXICO
Set in the Sierra de Guanajuato near San Miguel de Allende, there are only seven rooms at this chic getaway. Adventure itineraries aside, it’s the gentle pace of life you’ll want to savour: think locally-inspired plates served poolside and holistic massages serenaded by hummingbirds in the orchards. From \$229 (£175), B&B. [hotelcasaadela.com](#)

JK PLACE, PARIS
JK Place’s first foothold outside Italy, this townhouse-style stay comprises snug reception rooms, suites with open fires, and a stylish, supper club-style restaurant, Casa Tua. From €758 (£685), B&B. [jkplaces.com](#)



Kowloon Peak View King Room at Rosewood Hong Kong, with stellar views of Hong Kong’s iconic skyline

City Slicker

We wanted to find the hottest new addresses in town — the new hotels that are turning heads and leaving their stylish mark on a city

★ **ROSEWOOD HONG KONG, HONG KONG**
Untold millions were lavished on this property, a long-awaited hometown showpiece for a hotel group that’s owned by one of Hong Kong’s wealthiest dynasties. And that investment shows in no-expense-spared furniture and fittings: think tactile, woollen Loro Piana wall coverings and bathrooms awash with marble, as well as state-of-the-art wellness facilities, a pretty-as-can-be patisserie and jaw-dropping views of Victoria Harbour from 80% of rooms. There’s also a hefty modern art collection and a clutch of superb restaurants. It’s a travesty that the splendour of this high-rise luxury hotel has been overshadowed by a tumultuous 12 months for Hong Kong. But make no mistake, this is a true masterclass in urban luxury. From HK\$4,300 (£423). [rosewoodhotels.com](#)

RUNNERS-UP

GALLERIA VIK MILANO, MILAN
Set within the grand Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II mall, the 89 rooms still feel intimate, largely because each has been designed by a different artist and is a stylish, self-contained bubble in one of the city’s most iconic sights. From €360 (£325), B&B. [galleriavikmilano.com](#)

THE MAYSON, DUBLIN
Mashing-up an old townhouse, a rebooted dockers’ pub and a glass-and-steel extension by the River Liffey, the Irish capital’s coolest kid on the block also brings oodles of contemporary art, a rooftop bar and restaurant and a fantastic basement gym. From €140 (£127), B&B. [themayson.ie](#)

Good Egg

If you’re after a stylish, sustainable stay, a conservation-minded getaway or somewhere with exemplary community spirit, these innovative hotels deliver the green-gold standard in spades

★ **SAORSA 1875, PERTHSHIRE, SCOTLAND**
This luxuriously revamped, 11-room Victorian baronial pile in Highland Perthshire is the UK’s first vegan hotel. Founded by mother-and-son duo Sandra and Jack McLaren-Stewart, it goes far beyond just sustainable, plant-focused grub: everything here is vegan, from the booze in the hotel bar to the cleaning products and upcycled furniture in the lounge. Naturally, the heating comes from 100% renewable energy. Meanwhile, in the kitchen, chef Luca Sordi conjures up five-course dining extravaganzas using produce sourced locally or from the hotel’s gardens, with a tree planted (via Green Earth Appeal) for every dinner served. From £140, B&B. [saorsahotel.com](#)

RUNNERS-UP

JAYA HOUSE ANGKOR PARK, SIEM REAP, CAMBODIA
The kingdom’s first single-use-plastic-free hotel has glowing eco credentials: managing director Christian de Boer is co-founder of the campaign Refill Not Landfill, and the hotel provides free guest bikes; produces its own Cambodian plant-based toiletries; supports local NGOs and donated meals to the local Khmer community during lockdown. Doubles from US\$245 (£186), B&B. [jayahouseriverparksiemreap.com](#)

SINGITA KWITONDA LODGE, RWANDA
Conservation-guided construction meets contemporary chic at this blow-the-budget spot on the edge of Rwanda’s Volcanoes National Park. Initiatives to support locals are woven into wildlife itineraries, and a reforestation programme aims to protect mountain gorilla habitat — a task shared by a burgeoning number of Rwandan lodges. From US\$1,650 (£1,260). [singita.com](#)

Lord of the Manor

With breathtaking settings and exceptional service, some hotels let us live like royalty — even just for a weekend. We tip our hats to these first-class country escapes

★ **THE NEWT IN SOMERSET, SOMERSET**

One of the most talked-about hotels of the past year, The Newt in Somerset could probably win an award for column inches alone. Why? Well, when you're the latest launch from South African power couple Koos and Karen Bekker (of winelands wonder Babylonstoren), you command a certain thirst for more. A stone's throw from Bruton, this stylish country stay hits all the right notes, fleshing out the honey-stoned halls of 17th-century Hadspen House with classy, modern designs. Staying here inspires an almost childlike urge to explore — and there's plenty to discover on this 800-acre estate, including a spa, cider press, farm shop, spectacular gardens and the sumptuous rooms of the Stable Yard and Granary. It's worthy of any discerning lords and ladies of the manor. From £275, B&B. thenewtinsomerset.com

RUNNERS-UP

HOTEL CHÂTEAU DU GRAND-LUCÉ, LOIRE VALLEY, FRANCE

This 18th-century palace near Le Mans is the epitome of Gallic grandeur. Expect immaculate interiors awash with antiques, original oak parquet flooring and canopied four-poster beds. It's all very endearingly French and fancy. From €475 (£428), B&B. chateaugrandluc.com

GRANTLEY HALL, YORKSHIRE

The grand Palladian mansion near Ripon nails first impressions — and the charm continues indoors, too, with everything from a state-of-the-art spa to a wine-tasting room, as well as 47 regal rooms and suites. The numerous dining options include fine fare from Shaun Rankin. From £350, B&B. grantleyhall.co.uk

CLOCKWISE FROM

RIGHT: Freestanding tub overlooking the Namib Desert, Sonop; private yoga class at Sonop; lunch at The Newt in Somerset, made with home-grown garden produce; the 17th-century Hadspen House, The Newt in Somerset



Breath of Fresh Air

There's something magical about escaping to the wilderness and sleeping beneath the stars, and these lodges and glampsites get it just right

★ **SONOP, HARDAP REGION, NAMIBIA**

You'd be forgiven for thinking you'd stumbled into the pages of Livingstone's diary at this remote outpost, set on the southern edge of the Namib Desert. Thanks to a whimsical design that pays tribute to the travel of yesteryear, with antique desks, maps, trunks and brass telescopes, there's a romantic feel to this lodge, the second Namibian property for Zannier Hotels. And while the 10 tents, which blend seamlessly into their rocky surrounds, channel that bygone era, Sonop pulls out all the stops for a luxuriously modern getaway, with king-sized mattresses, white-gloved service and freestanding copper tubs with sweeping desert views. Naturally, there's an exciting array of activities on offer, including hot air balloon trips, private yoga classes and desert horse-riding, but when the most spectacular scenery awaits behind the canvas of your tent, there's perfectly good reason to stay put. From £605, B&B. zannierhotels.com



RUNNERS-UP

PINES' SHELTER, AREIAS DO SEIXO, PORTUGAL

It's all about the barefoot beauty at this laid-back hideaway near Torres Vedras, on the breeze-tickled Atlantic coast north of Lisbon. The scents of pine and salty sea fill the air at the two-berth lodge, which has done away with mod-cons, replacing TVs and wi-fi with hammocks, firewood stoves and dreamy beach views. From €495 (£447), B&B. areiasdoseixo.com

KACHI LODGE, UYUNI, BOLIVIA

In the stark moonscape of the Uyuni Salt Flats, it's fitting that the domes of this solar-powered lodge by Amazing Escapes look extra-terrestrial. Inside, the focus is sumptuous-meets-sustainable, all dressed up with a bohemian air: bright bayeta cushions, low tables and lamps made of cactus wood. It's blow-the-budget territory, but this is as unique and remote as it gets. From £2,990, B&B. kachilodge.com



IMAGES: ED SCHOFIELD, @TIBODHERMY

Grand Redesigns

It takes a bold vision (and a deep pocket) to rewrite a classic. But after some serious sprucing up, these legends of the hotel world are back and better than ever

★ MANDARIN ORIENTAL, BANGKOK

It's been the finest hotel in the Thai capital for the past 144 years and the Mandarin Oriental's latest revamp has ensured it will retain that crown. Following the restoration of the Garden and Authors' Wings in 2016, billions of baht have now been thrown at the River Wing, which flaunts a fresh new aesthetic of powder-blues, crisp white wooden panelling, silk fabrics and teak flooring. The 10-seater Kinu by Takagi is a glittering addition to the already impressive food scene, but The Verandah is still the best spot for breakfast, where you can watch rice barges and long-tail boats criss-crossing the bustling Chao Phraya River. From THB 17,450 (£426), B&B. mandarinoriental.com



The leafy entrance to the Oriental Spa at Mandarin Oriental, Bangkok
BELOW: The Selandia Suite in the newly renovated River Wing, Mandarin Oriental, Bangkok

RUNNERS-UP

RAFFLES SINGAPORE, SINGAPORE

Who says you can't improve on perfection? Asia's legendary grande-dame reopened last year following a multi-million-dollar two-year overhaul, and the results are impressive: the lobby has been lightened, brightened and adorned with a splendid chandelier; the signature tripartite layout remains in the ivory and navy-blue rooms; and there's a coterie of brilliant new restaurants. Service, of course, never misses a beat. From S\$1,300 (£725). raffles.com

ROSEWOOD LITTLE DIX BAY, BRITISH VIRGIN ISLANDS

After a four-year closure, which included a battering by Hurricane Irma in 2017, the iconic resort reopened earlier this year. Its mid-century-modern style has been retained, and the retreat now also includes a tip-top spa and 24-hour fitness centre. From US\$1,200 (£915). rosewoodhotels.com



Hangout

Home to buzzing nightclubs, wellness studios or gallery spaces, these spots are proof a hotel can be the social heart of a neighbourhood

★ **DESA POTATO HEAD, BALI**
The bright minds behind the hugely successful Potato Head Beach Club on the Indonesian isle haven't come up with anything as mundane as a hotel. Instead, their latest project — Desa Potato Head, on the silvery sands of Seminyak — is described as a creative village. This is much more than just a place to sleep; it's a hive of activity that's as much for the local community as it is for the travellers. Made up of a collection of restaurants, cafes, galleries, wellness spaces and a nightclub, the resort is sustainably designed and works to promote contemporary Balinese culture. After a day in the woodcarving workshop, a browse of the library or a night out at the Klymax Discotheque, guests can retire to the 168-room Potato Head Studios, built from recycled brick and offering all-natural toiletries. From £103. potatohead.co

RUNNERS UP

KEX PORTLAND, PORTLAND
Locals feel like travellers and travellers feel like locals at the Oregon outpost of this hip Icelandic concept. It opened with a three-day live-stream of famed music festival Iceland Airwaves and has kept up the tempo with a programme of gigs and art shows. It's all about the community buzz here. Private rooms from \$142 (£108). kexhotels.com

SELINA, BIRMINGHAM
This is the second UK opening for Selina, the hotel-meets-hostel concept beloved by digital nomads the world over. Set in a former Victorian factory in the Jewellery Quarter, it houses everything from a co-working space and cinema room to a wellness studio and coffee shop. As is standard with the Selina brand, guests can expect specially curated events, workshops and unique pop-ups. Micro doubles from £109. selina.com



Gourmet Getaway

Hotels often lead the charge when it comes to the finest gastronomy, so we're raising a toast to the best new hotels where you come for the food — and stay for the food

★ **CASA MARIA LUIGIA, MODENA, ITALY**
The first foray into the hotel world by Italian restaurateur and chef Massimo Bottura, the man behind the three-Michelin-star Osteria Francescana, takes his lauded cooking and serves it up in refreshingly rustic, laid-back surrounds. With just a dozen rooms, Casa Maria Luigia (named in honour of Bottura's late mother) is a homely affair, with a chilled-out music-listening room, landscaped grounds and splashes of eccentric pop art that bring the old Emilia-Romagna estate into the 21st century. But, of course, it's the food that truly wows here, and no experience has been spared: guests receive 36-month-aged Parmigiano Reggiano as a welcome gift on arrival, there's local Lambrusco aplenty, and an exquisite nine-course menu is served in the kitchen with all the spirit of an Emilian family supper. From €450 (£405), B&B. casamarialuigia.com

RUNNERS-UP

THE BULL INN, TOTNES
Sustainability and seasonality are the cornerstones of this south Devon pub, thanks to publican and organic entrepreneur Geetie Singh-Watson. The menu makes good use of the West Country's bountiful larder, placing an emphasis on ethically sourced vegetarian dishes with zero air miles. From £120, B&B. bullinntotnes.co.uk

HOTEL CASA CACAO, GIRONA, SPAIN
Chocoholics, rejoice — the sweet stuff takes pride of place at this understated bolthole from the lauded Roca family. As well as an on-site artisan chocolate factory, cafe and boutique, there's an eye-wateringly good wine list, too, all just a truffle's throw from the medieval city centre. From £250 (£225), B&B. casacacaogirona.com

IMAGES: LAURA CAVICCHIOLI; GREGORY VENERE



One of 11 bedrooms at Paragon 700, Ostuni
CLOCKWISE FROM BELOW:
Paragon 700's outdoor pool; firing up the pizza oven at Casa Maria Luigia, Modena

Love Shack

These chic retreats are all about the romance, from Burton-and-Taylor-worthy honeymoon hotels to weekend escapes beyond your wildest dreams

★ **PARAGON 700, OSTUNI, ITALY**
When the setting is this spectacular, the love story almost writes itself. Set within the only red palazzo in the 'white city' of Ostuni (so named for its dazzling whitewashed buildings), Paragon 700 has all the intimacy of an 11-room hotel, but with the unabashed grandeur of a Renaissance palace. The lavish swirl of frescoed ceilings, cathedral-height doors and monumental, custom-made headboards are enough to sweep any hopeless romantic off their feet. Each room is individually designed and, in a wonderfully fitting renovation, the palazzo's old water cistern is now a plum spa, replete with a hammam and a relaxation lounge clad in Himalayan salt walls. Most importantly, however, given its setting in the sun-baked south, it's (supposedly) the only hotel in town with an outdoor pool. Doubles from €300 (£272), B&B. paragon700.com

RUNNERS-UP

CAMISSA HOUSE, CAPE TOWN
Meaning 'place of sweet water', a name given to the area by the Khoi people, this secluded Cape Town hotel has Table Mountain as its back garden and harbour views from its roof terrace. The eight rooms have egg-shaped bathtubs, bespoke wallpaper and thick rugs, making this the perfect place to be barefoot and blissed-out. Doubles from ZAR 8,610 (£376). camissahouse.com

PARILIO, PAROS, GREECE
This spot on sleepy Paros has all the whitewashed charm you could want from a Greek island hotel, but with seriously ramped-up luxury. Private terraces for all 33 suites, a striking pool and a plush restaurant mean you'll rarely need to step foot off-property. Doubles from €152 (£137), B&B. pariliohotelparos.com



Snow Queen

These piste-perfect winter hideaways represent the very peak of retreats for skiers, spa-lovers and travellers seeking snowy mountain serenity

★ NIEHKU MOUNTAIN VILLA, SWEDISH LAPLAND, SWEDEN

The world's most northerly heli-ski hotel, Niehku Mountain Villa is set some 125 miles above the Arctic Circle in a revamped railway building from the 1900s. This 14-room hangout for hardcore ski fans was reborn from a roundhouse workshop servicing the legendary Iron Ore train line that skirts the nearby Norwegian border. There's ski touring in March, and heli-skiing from March to May among the 6,867ft heights of Mount Kebnekaise, Sweden's tallest mountain. If that wasn't enough then there are some 60 other skiable peaks and glaciers, including round-the-clock down-hilling under the midnight spring sun. All this action is more than enough to merit a session in Niehku's sauna, before having a massage and delving into the 500-bottle vintage wine cellar. 'Niehku', in local Sami, means 'dream' — a fitting name for this fantastical Arctic escape. Doubles from SEK46,000 (£4,000), full-board, including three-days' heli-skiing. niehku.com

FROM TOP: Restaurant at Niehku Mountain Villa; Sami-inspired decor at Niehku Mountain Villa



RUNNERS-UP

FORESTIS, SOUTH TYROL, ITALY

You can't escape the Dolomites in this glass-walled mega-chalet; the jagged, pink-tinged peaks are in stark relief every way you turn. This lofty opening has turned many heads of the ski set, and for good reason: backed by thick forest, it offers ski in/ski out access, with a spa based on pine, spruce and larch treatments for the ultimate in après-ski soothing. From €420 (£382), half-board. forestis.it

HÔTEL LE COUCOU, MÉRIBEL, FRANCE

Here's a ski-in/ski-out hotel designed by French master Pierre Yovanovitch to set traditional chalet styling against panoramic views over the slopes. Stay in one of 55 suites or two private chalets, recover in the Tata Harper spa or swimming pools (yup, plural), and chow down in Beefbar or Bianca Neve, an Italian restaurant by Riccardo Giraudi. From €460 (£415), B&B. lecoucoumeribel.com

Wellness Wonder

There’s always an allure to the hotel spa, but some are true temples of relaxation and offer a first-class ticket to Nirvana. We found the best places to rest and recharge — and in serious style, too

★ LEFAY RESORT & SPA DOLOMITI, ITALY

Feed the soul and redress your imbalances in the Dolomites, a UNESCO World Heritage Site where luxury Italian chain Lefay has unveiled a new high-end spa hotel down the valley from the ski resort of Madonna di Campiglio. It’s a marvel of modernist architecture — soaring pyramid windows and panoramic terraces look down upon valleys and across to jagged peaks. But the jewel in its crown is the four-floor spa, blending global concepts of wellness, from ayurveda to osteopathy. Treatments take place across 20 cabins, and there’s a 24-hour gym and nine saunas, plus indoor and outdoor pools carved from local tonalite rock. Don’t miss the salt grotto, salt-water lake and whirlpool in what’s now one of the largest spas in the Alps. From €260 (£234), B&B. dolomiti.lefayresorts.com

RUNNERS-UP

SHOU SUGI BAN HOUSE, NEW YORK

Combining meditative Japanese philosophies with East Coast design, The Hamptons’ new wellness retreat offers 13 studio rooms, a saltwater pool, fitness pavilion, and hydrotherapy and steam areas — all in striking distance of beaches and upmarket shopping. It’s a step up for the country’s wellness scene, but only for those with (very) deep pockets. From US\$1,220 (£934), B&B. shousugibanhouse.com

HOSHINOYA GUGUAN, TAICHUNG, TAIWAN

Bathing is the name of the game in this sleek new property in the valley of Guguan. Waterways and meandering paths envelop a remarkable complex of Japanese-style communal onsen pools heated with mineral waters. There’s also a private balcony pool attached to each of the 50 rooms. From NT\$18,000 (£469). hoshinoya.com



FROM LEFT: Soaring pyramid windows overlooking the Dolomites at Lefay Resort & Spa Dolomiti; lounge with a wintry view at Arctic Bath; Arctic Bath’s main building, the design of which was inspired by the region’s former timber industry



Design Den

Architects’ wild imaginations can dream up some truly brilliant buildings. We’re celebrating the hotels that truly dazzle, both outside and inside

★ ARCTIC BATH, SWEDISH LANDLAND, SWEDEN

In the pantheon of hold-the-phone hotel designs, Arctic Bath takes some beating. Hidden in the forest of northern Sweden, architect Bertil Harström (part-mastermind behind the equally bombastic Treehotel, just through the woods) has envisioned a breathtakingly brilliant, floating bird’s nest-like structure, inspired by the timber that used to be transported downriver. Surrounding a giant oval ice bath, this wooden centrepiece is home to saunas, a steam room and hot tubs, with half a dozen floating guest cabins near the water’s edge and another six larger spaces on the tree-lined shore. Though it’s open year-round — with summer the perfect time to discover this part of the world’s famous midnight sun — Arctic Bath truly comes into its own in winter. That’s when the Lule river, on which the overwater spa stands, freezes over and the bravest guests can chance a post-sauna dip in the icy waters, before retreating to their own nest to watch the Northern Lights shimmer overhead. Jump in, the water’s lovely. From SEK9,354 (£820), half-board. arcticbath.se

RUNNERS-UP

DEXAMENES SEASIDE HOTEL, ZAKYNTHOS, GREECE

On the sands of Kourouta beach, an abandoned wine factory has been reimagined as the most minimalist of island escapes. In deference to the area’s wine trading history, rows of 1920s cement silos are now a post-industrial-chic backdrop to the Aegean, emphasised with plenty of clean lines, stone hues and polished terrazzo. The result? An utterly stunning place to stay. From €144 (£130), B&B. dexamenes.com

AMANKYOTO, JAPAN

Late Australian architect Kerry Hill is behind this string of sleek, black-timbered pavilions. Set in the wooded outskirts of the former capital, the hotel lets nature take centre stage, and the interiors, too, are a similarly harmonious union of the Aman group’s style and Japanese design: calm and minimalist, with low-slung furniture and airy ryokan bedrooms. From Y140,000 (£1,010), B&B. aman.com





Comeback Kid

From prisons to post offices, many old landmarks can become Cinderellas of the hotel world with a little — well, a lot of — TLC, and these are the ones that got it just right

★ THE STANDARD, LONDON

The funky new cherry on top of King's Cross's regeneration, this is one of the newest additions to the family of the same name, and while the brand has brought all its fun-loving, retro-cool vibes across the pond, it's also been careful to honour its past. The 1970s brutalist icon that formerly housed Camden Town Hall was once pretty humdrum, but its hulking form has remained, and many licks of paint later, it's shaken off its boring, bureaucratic side in favour of a little frivolity. Think classy, 1970s-inspired decor, with rooms that riff on the London Underground; a Sounds Studio that hosts live music events; an irreverent library; and stellar views of neo-gothic St Pancras station. What's more, The Standard has become a destination in its own right, too, with a trio of top-tier restaurants and bars that have set all the food critics' tongues wagging, including the starry 10th-floor Decimo from Peter Sanchez-Iglesias, accessed by the bullet-like lift that zooms up the exterior. From £198. standardhotels.com

RUNNERS-UP

VILLA COPENHAGEN, COPENHAGEN

Billing itself as a temporary home for 'the adventurous, the socially conscious and quality-oriented', this palatial property was once the headquarters of the Danish Post Office. Reimagined as a glamorous inner-city bolthole, it holds up a mirror to one of Europe's most eco-friendly and stylish cities with its sumptuous atrium, rooftop pool bar and 390 stately-yet-modern bedrooms. Best of all, it's just 15 minutes from the airport. From DKK1,971 (£217). villacopenhagen.com

RIGGS, WASHINGTON DC

A bank that once housed the finances of 23 presidents has been given a new lease of life as a sumptuous 181-room hotel. This is the third venture for the company behind acclaimed boutiques such as Pulitzer Amsterdam, and is further proof of Washington's recent rise in cool. There are soaring ceilings, Corinthian columns, leather banquettes and excellent plant-focused fare at the stately Café Riggs. Don't miss the rooftop views across to the Capitol, and the high-concept cocktail menu in the original bank vault. From \$220 (£166) room only. riggsdc.com

IMAGE: TIM CHARLES

View of St Pancras station through one of The Standard's bedroom windows



Bedroom with a sea view
at the Lelewatu Resort
Sumba, Indonesia

On the Money

Who doesn't love a good deal? We wanted to award the hotels offering some serious bang for your buck, where a bed for the night costs under £100



THE CHOW KIT, KUALA LUMPUR

Few cities offer quite the same array of bargain boltholes as the Malaysian capital, and this slick new spot — located close to the exciting hustle and bustle of Petaling Street — is the pick of the bunch. Commanding a corner in the up-and-coming edges of the city, expect a five-star look and feel at three-star prices. Its success comes from cutting back on the unnecessary extras — such as hair conditioner and body lotion. Not that it detracts from the feel of the place: the stylish lobby-restaurant-bar area is peppered with cool local art and crafts, while rooms come with big teak beds, hand-knotted rugs and monsoon showers — in short, a steal. From £40, B&B. thechowkit.com

RUNNERS-UP

HOTEL BROOKLYN, MANCHESTER

Affordable accessibility is the key here and Hotel Brooklyn has completely transformed the idea of what a wheelchair-accessible room can be. Think sensitively designed, with hidden elements like a ceiling hoist over the bed that non-users will be unaware of. These are rooms to aim for, not avoid. A second hotel in Leicester is slated for 2022. From £88, B&B. hotelbrooklyn.co.uk

HI NEW ORLEANS HOSTEL, NEW ORLEANS

Set in a restored historic building on the edge of the French Quarter, this smart hostel takes some beating when it comes to location. Bargain rates aside, what makes this pad stand out is its host of programmes and events designed to improve travellers' understanding of other cultures through the medium of hostelling — so you'll sleep easy knowing your money's well spent. Private doubles from \$99 (£76), B&B. hiusa.org

Castaway

Barefoot luxe ocean villas, private island pampering, and pristine stretches of sand: to be stranded on these remote desert island retreats is the stuff of travel daydreams



LELEWATU RESORT SUMBA, LESSER SUMBA ISLANDS, INDONESIA

If you like your castaway experience to come with generous portions of pampering, there are few better places than this beachfront resort on the unspoilt west coast of Indonesia's Sumba island. Its 27 private pool villas — the idyllic vision of local businesswomen, founder Jenny Tan — have pointed, Sumbanese-style thatched roofs, gorgeous handwoven textiles and showers open to the elements, all set either shore-front or in the clifftop forest. Maraga Spa offers Balinese-style massage and treatments with all manner of fragrant oils in cabins overlooking the Indian Ocean. To tempt you further afield, there are horse-riding and paddy-field excursions, with on-demand surfing, snorkel and scuba in the biodiverse waters. From £250, B&B. lelewatu.com

RUNNERS-UP

THE RESIDENCE DHIGURA, MALDIVES

Located in the southerly Gaafu Alifu, this beach hideaway is about as far-flung as they come and every villa has its own private beach (and pool). These magically-blue southern waters are also known for their varied marine life. From £600, all-inclusive. cenizaro.com

AMBERGRIS CAY, TURKS AND CAICOS

This 1,100-acre private island resort comes with a population of rock iguanas that outnumber its exclusive handful of whitewashed beachfront cottages, a nature reserve, and GPS-equipped golf buggies. Plus, all the bells and whistles you'd expect from an island escape with this price tag. From \$4,000 (£3,340), all-inclusive. ambergriscay.com