

Wallpaper*

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and otherworldly design



High roller

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curves in King's Cross

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from Cape Town to Shanghai

Hot houses

Sun, sea and succulents
with our dream retreats

Plus, Best Urban Hotels shortlist, Officepaper* and Rirkrit Tiravanija's Buñueloni



Bed fellows

Meet the expert travellers we've asked to select this year's Best Urban Hotels, and see our 39 shortlisted sleepovers

PORTRAIT: KIM HÖLTERMAND WRITER: DAVEN WU

By any yardstick, these are the best and worst times to be a city hotelier. Worst, because the competition is brutal. From Paris to Sydney, and from Singapore to New York, you can't flick a credit card without it landing on the boho-chic desk of a newbie hotel, or the hoarding of one that's about to open.

Realising that the globalisation of hotel brands has meant, perhaps, a standardisation of comfort, style and fun, each new hotel promises an out-of-the-box, paradigm-shifting experience or service.

One year, it is in-room check-in and yoga mats. Once it was fridges stocked with gourmet snacks and artisanal booze. Now, it's DIY electronic kiosks and 'experiential journeys'. Today, some hotels have completely eliminated the fridge, along with room service and the *Les Clefs d'or* concierge; while others have hybridised co-working spaces and group rooms.

All this supposedly in response to the fickle whims of the millennial guest, whose tastes and demands – forever changed post-Airbnb – seem to morph faster than the turn-down service.

But since we're glass half-full types here at *Wallpaper*, we prefer to take the view that these fluid times are providing hoteliers with the opportunity to redefine their business model in a meaningful way. As Dean Winter, group director of operations at Swire Hotels (the group includes The Opposite House, The Upper House and, new this year, The Middle House in Shanghai), puts it: 'Travellers today look for ease, authenticity, comfort, space and sincere, measured service delivery.'

Which is not to say we're after oddly conceived gimmicks like bedside podcasts of a gurgling radiator pipe to help guests sleep (true story). Rather, as Juliet Kinsman, the hotel consultant and founder of *Bouteco*, explains: 'We still want hotel environments to unplug us from our ordinary lives, but just

as we're blurring the lines between work and play, we want "home-tels" that offer all the perks of being in a luxury hotel.' In other words, we value a hotel that cultivates a sense of belonging and community. One with an open kitchen and an open bar; an in-house laundromat and mini mart stocked with juices and instant noodles; and a front desk manned by what Winter calls 'unscripted staff' who can speed-dial the best tailor and the best tattooist in town.

It's all about the vibe without the starchy formality and fussy five-star frills, with Kinsman adding that the current brief is for hotels to 'drop any attitude, loosen their collars, and invite the most charismatic people from the local neighbourhood to hang out in their lounge'.

In fact, 'attitude' is a word that crops up again and again during our conversations with hoteliers. 'Times have changed, as has the mindset of the modern traveller,' says Mitchell Hochberg, president of Lightstone, the developer of New York's *Moxy Chelsea*, which is due to open in November. 'We're seeing a new generation of fun-hunting travellers with a self-service mentality, who value experiences and community over material possessions, attitude over opulence.'

These were the parameters that informed us when we scoured the globe for this year's survey of the Best Urban Hotels (see the shortlist on page 207). What these finalists all share, we hope, is a common strand of DNA. Every hotel on our shortlist has real soul, tells a story with a distinctive opinion, and delivers fresh experiences. And to select a worthy winner from this deserving bunch, we've enlisted the help of an expert panel of design-obsessed judges hailing from all corners of the world. Here, we introduce you to these six accomplished globetrotters, while the winners will be announced in our January issue (on sale 13 December).

ABOVE: JASMI BONNEN, FOUNDER OF SKINCARE BRAND NUORI, SHOT AT THE HQ OF DANISH MOTECH START-UP AQUIPORIN, DESIGNED BY NORM ARCHITECTS

DESIGNER NATASHA JEN AT
 THE PENTAGRAM OFFICE,
 PARK AVENUE, NEW YORK

**THE 39 CONTENDERS,
 FROM ACROSS THE GLOBE**

Africa

Hallmark House Hotel,
 Johannesburg, South Africa

Asia & Oceania

Macq o1, Hobart, Australia
 Paramount House Hotel, Sydney,
 Australia
 Tribe Hotel, Perth, Australia
 The Middle House, Shanghai, China
 The Murray, Hong Kong
 The Sukhothai, Shanghai, China
 Hotel Koé, Tokyo, Japan
 Moxy Osaka Honmachi, Osaka, Japan
 Andaz, Singapore
 Six Senses Duxton, Singapore

Europe

Hotel Sanders, Copenhagen, Denmark

Neon, Copenhagen, Denmark
 Hôtel National des Arts et Métiers,
 Paris, France
 The Hoxton, Paris, France
 Roomers, Munich, Germany
 The Fontenay, Hamburg, Germany
 Asmundo di Guira, Catania, Italy
 Hotel Indigo, Warsaw, Poland
 Puro, Gdańsk, Poland
 Verride Palácio Santa Catarina,
 Lisbon, Portugal
 Almanac, Barcelona, Spain
 Eden Locke, Edinburgh, UK
 The Mandrake, London, UK
 The Principal, London, UK

Latin America

Fera Palace Hotel, Salvador, Brazil
 W Panama, Panama City, Panama

Middle East

The Vera, Tel Aviv, Israel
 Mondrian Doha, Doha, Qatar
 Room Mate Emir, Istanbul, Turkey
 Bulgari Resort, Dubai, UAE

North America

Hotel Monville, Montreal, Canada
 The Broadview, Toronto, Canada
 Ace Hotel, Chicago, US
 Freehand, New York, US
 Made, New York, US
 Moxy Times Square, New York, US
 The NoMad, Los Angeles, US

Renovation

Hotel de Crillon, Paris, France



Natasha Jen *▲*
 Designer, New York

As a designer and partner at the design firm Pentagram, Natasha Jen is as seasoned a business traveller as you get. Travelling as much for projects and client meetings as she does to conduct lectures, workshops and speaking engagements at design conferences around the world, Jen is rarely in a city for longer than three days at a time. Due to the nature of her work, the Taipei-born, New York-based designer rarely spends time in her hotel room and so values the fundamentals above all. 'Lighting really changes how you feel at any given time. You need ample lighting if you're in work mode, and if you want to relax, then you have to be able to control the lights very

easily,' she explains. With work trips to Moscow, Pakistan, Geneva and Los Angeles already planned for the coming months, Jen says that she is happy if she can spend three weeks at a time at home. And while she may not have the final say in the choice of accommodation when she's travelling for work, Jen does opt for well-honed boutique hotels when she travels for pleasure; the Condesa DF in Mexico City and Hotel Búbir in Iceland are both particular favourites. Pei-Ru Keh

85,000 miles flown per year
 10 trips taken per year
 18 hotels visited per year

