

2019 BEST BETTER

The 27 Places to Book Now

NEW HOTELS

KATHERINE LU/BREATHE ARCHITECTURE

Every month, we at AFAR receive hundreds of emails announcing hotel openings. And every day we're asked by friends and colleagues, "Where should I stay on my next trip to . . . ?" In this issue, we're answering that question with our first-ever Stay List, a compendium of the best new hotels in the world. These lodgings deliver more than just a place to rest our heads. They connect with their destinations and the people who live there. Each of these 27 extraordinary hotels has been personally vetted by our network of staffers and contributors. Read on for the best places worth booking.

CAPELLA UBUD

Bali, Indonesia

If every new hotel on the island of Bali were as conscientiously developed as Capella Ubud, we wouldn't have to worry so much about the perils of overtourism. The rain forest retreat, designed by architect Bill Bensley, leaves a light footprint. Located 4.5 miles from the crowded village of Ubud, Capella sits along a quiet river in the rice-farming village of Keliki. Not one tree was felled to erect 23 tented, teak-floored accommodations. Doors and headboards were carved by Balinese artisans, and private plunge pools were built with natural stone. There's also a vast saltwater pool, and a fitness center that can only be called exquisite, thanks to its soaring draped-fabric enclosure and hand-painted columns. Elsewhere, Indonesian artworks—batik fabrics, paintings from the village of Kamasan—add to the overall effect. From \$838. capellahotels.com

ANDBEYOND VIRA VIRA

Chile

Chile's Lake District is an adventure traveler's utopia, thanks to its ancient coniferous forests, ice-melt lagoons, and snow-dusted volcanoes—a landscape that lured the Africa-based safari lodge company andBeyond to open there. A working farm and dairy, andBeyond Vira Vira offers six suites, a five-bedroom hacienda, and 12 split-level villas with outdoor fireplaces and hot tubs that face the Liucura River. Guides lead excursions by foot or bike to see pumas, armadillos, and foxes and by kayak and sailboat through waterways in nearby national parks. A helicopter flies skiers above a smoking volcanic crater to slopes in Villarrica National Park. The lodge also offers visits to the indigenous Mapuche community, where guests meet a weaver and have lunch in a traditional home. From \$685. andbeyond.com



PARAMOUNT HOUSE HOTEL

Sydney, Australia

Sydney has long needed more independent hotels with local character. Enter Paramount House Hotel, located in a landmark building that puts guests in the center of the perennially cool Surry Hills area. The former site of the Australian headquarters of Paramount Picture Studios, the 29-room property taps into the district's exciting restaurant and café culture. Paramount Coffee Project, a top vendor, has even set up shop in the lobby. Guest rooms have modern twists that can sacrifice practicality for style. (In the Loft room, the double bed lies on a "mezzanine" floor up a short flight of stairs.) But that is more than made up for by Aesop bath products, quality furnishings by local designers, and, best of all, the chance to stay in the middle of the city's social scene. From \$171. paramounthousehotel.com



NOMAD LAS VEGAS

Las Vegas, Nevada

In a city where glitz is the norm, the understated NoMad Las Vegas is a welcome addition. The NoMad occupies the top four floors of the new Park MGM at the south end of the Strip. The brainchild of the Sydell Group, the team behind the NoMad hotels in Los Angeles and New York, the hotel's 293 rooms have a sophisticated yet comfortable feel, thanks to their oak floors, custom furniture, and art curated by the design studio Be-poles. In the NoMad Restaurant, a friendly staff prepares tableside steak tartare and baked Alaska flambé, as dreamed up by the New York-based hospitality team Make It Nice. From \$199. thenomadhotel.com/las-vegas

ISLA PALENQUE

Panama

On this jungle island off Panama's Pacific coast, you'll likely spot a monkey or a whale before you see another human. And now you can responsibly visit the pristine area, thanks to the arrival of the new ecofriendly Isla Palenque resort. The 400-acre property's sustainability efforts go far beyond the solar panels that heat the showers. Furniture is crafted out of fallen Santa Maria and white cedar trees, and cocktails are sipped out of straws made onsite from papaya tree leaves. Ninety-five percent of staff were hired from the nearby town of Boca Chica, and seafood such as crevalle jack, red snapper, sea bass, and lobster is sourced from community fisheries. The resort's green efforts do not sacrifice style or comfort: The eight spacious oceanfront casitas feature luxurious linens and local crafts, along with outdoor showers and expansive decks that look out over secluded Playa Palenque. From \$780. islapalenque.com

SKYLARK NEGRIL BEACH RESORT

Negril, Jamaica

The appeal of this beach-side resort in the Jamaican town of Negril is reflected in its name, which in island slang means "to laze about." The retreat is the ideal place to do just that: Whitewashed walls and pastel accents lend a relaxed, beach bungalow feel that attracts an artsy, social crowd. The 28 colorful bedrooms, set around a palm-shaded courtyard, are decked out with wood-frame beds, vintage radios, and artwork from reggae album covers. Make new friends over coconut shrimp and callaloo at Miss Lily's, an outpost of the popular New York City restaurant, or settle into one of the hotel's white-and-blue-canopied beach chairs on Jamaica's iconic Seven Mile Beach. From \$145. skylarknegril.com



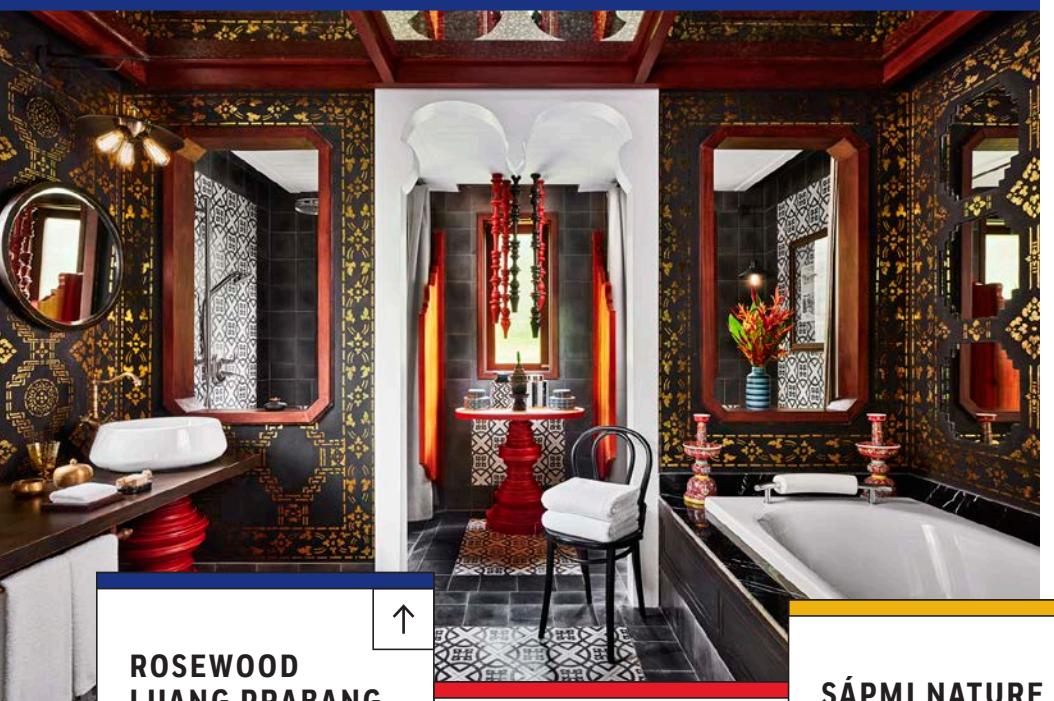
THE LINDIS

New Zealand

On New Zealand's South Island, the Ahuriri River flows past the sheep stations of the Ahuriri Valley beneath some of the darkest, clearest night skies in the world. Few tourists visit the valley, a 2.5-hour drive from Queenstown, but as of last November, there's a new reason to go. The Lindis, a five-suite lodge, faces the winding river and looks out at peaks that soar above the lodge's wavy roofline. Guests enjoy laid-back Kiwi hospitality as they go on guided hikes, try fly-fishing, ride horses along trails lined with wildflowers, or simply take in the unmatched views. At dinner in the blue-stone-lined dining room, chef Cesare Stella's locally sourced dishes, such as anchovy-glazed Te Mana lamb cutlets, pair with New Zealand wines. This spring, three new pod-style wood-and-glass rooms will open near the lodge. From \$1,380, including dinner and breakfast. thelindisgroup.com



PETRINA TINSLAY



ROSEWOOD LUANG PRABANG

Luang Prabang, Laos

The UNESCO-protected town of Luang Prabang is considered Laos's spiritual and cultural center. But those who find their inner peace in nature—and who want to get away from the tourist trail—should head into the dense jungle. Just a 10-minute drive outside of town, the new Rosewood Luang Prabang offers a calming respite within its riverside rooms and suites, waterfall pool villas, and six distinctive hilltop tents. Each accommodation showcases a one-of-a-kind design. The hilltop tents, festooned with fringed lanterns and antique tribal decorations, are surrounded by teak forest and hill views. The mostly Laotian staffers, some of them former monks, take guests on boat rides across the Mekong River to get a glimpse of rural life in nearby villages, offering personal conversations about Buddhist doctrine. From \$532. rosewoodhotels.com

THE ROOMS OF ROME

Rome, Italy

When the Alda Fendi Foundation handed the renovation of the 17th-century Palazzo Rhinoceros to Jean Nouvel, something special was bound to happen. The renowned French architect transformed the historic palace near Rome's birthplace on Palatine Hill into a sanctuary with an Old-World-meets-New aesthetic. Each of the 24 apartments has a unique layout. Some are graced with sliding steel walls that can close off the living room from the bedroom or open to create one massive space. All have well-equipped kitchens designed for guests who want to live the way locals do. Contemporary materials and furnishings are juxtaposed with original paint and decaying frescoes. The location is the clincher: The sixth-floor terrace offers front-row seats to the Roman Forum. From \$284. theroomsofrome.com

MOMBO CAMP

Botswana

Mombo Camp is one of Botswana's most iconic safari retreats. The remote location in the Moremi Game Reserve offers a deep experience with the wildlife-rich Okavango Delta, and the sustainable architecture treads gently on the landscape. In fact, thanks to the recent multimillion-dollar rebuild by Wilderness Safaris, an ecoconscious outfit, the lodge now runs on 100 percent solar power. Builders took care to fit into the same footprint as the previous incarnation of the camp, and arborists worked to protect existing trees. The environmentally sensitive measures have not sacrificed any luxury: Each of the nine tents now has a handsome lounge area with leather sofas and a well-stocked bar cart, plus a private veranda with a plunge pool facing the floodplains. Between game drives, guests might be able to catch glimpses of wildlife from the new 41-foot pool. From \$1,990 per person. wilderness-safaris.com

SÁPMI NATURE CAMP

Kiruna, Sweden

It takes an hour and a half to fly from Stockholm to Kiruna, Sweden's northernmost town, and another two and a half hours to drive to Sápmi Nature Camp, in Laponia, a UNESCO-protected wildlife area in Swedish Lapland. The schlep rewards travelers with immersion in the region's endangered landscape and indigenous Sámi culture. The camp was founded by Lennart Pittja, a Sámi from a reindeer herding family who is passionate about sustainability. He keeps his operation small—just five Sámi-style tents, most with queen-size beds. Guests bathe in a wood-fired sauna and use outhouses or visit a heated central toilet room. By day, visitors go snowshoeing and ice fishing. Meals are feasts of traditional Sámi fare—fish, smoked reindeer—with plenty of meatless options. At lunch, Pittja often gathers everyone around a fire and tells stories of his ancestral heritage. From \$785. sapminature.com



HECKFIELD PLACE

Hampshire, England

It took close to 10 years to complete Heckfield Place, a grand Georgian mansion located 50 miles outside of London in Hampshire. The wait was worth it: Ben Thompson, who worked with British designer Ilse Crawford on the Ett Hem hotel in Stockholm, designed the 45 guest rooms with impeccable nuance. Each room features a different color palette and is furnished with a tasteful mix of one-off modern pieces and antiques sourced from around the British Isles. London chef Skye Gyngell (from the acclaimed Spring restaurant) helms the kitchen of the two on-site restaurants, bringing her elegant touch to bear on everything from afternoon tea to grand dining by a hearth. Almost every ingredient comes from the property's own farm, which is hemmed by a woodland that is home to some of England's most majestic trees. All signs point to Heckfield enjoying a place in the English hotel landscape for a long time to come. From \$450. heckfieldplace.com

KAI SENGOKUHARA

Japan

Near Japan's pampas grass-land—65 miles southwest of Tokyo—the 16-room Kai Sengokuhara adds a welcome new lodging option in northern Hakone for travelers in search of the country's wilder side. Inspired by traditional ryokans, the structure is built discreetly into a hillside. Airy sun-filled guest rooms feature checkerboard tatami-mat floors, and sliding doors lead to terraces with wicker chairs. Private onsen tubs in each room are framed with fragrant cypress wood and filled with milky volcanic waters from the surrounding Owakudani Valley. Between hikes along the region's many idyllic paths, structured art pursuits such as Japanese *tenugui* (towel) painting deepen the cultural experience, as does the food (regional delicacies of beef and abalone, grilled on hot stones). From \$333 per person, including two meals. kai-ryokan.jp/en/sengokuhara

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