

World

COLLECTIONS



People, Places, Pleasures
An issue of style

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CONCIERGE

A WORLD of exceptional accommodation.



Four Seasons The Biltmore Santa Barbara is arguably the best hotel in Santa Barbara, the lovely Southern California coastal city of Spanish and Mexican styles.



Four Seasons The Biltmore, Santa Barbara

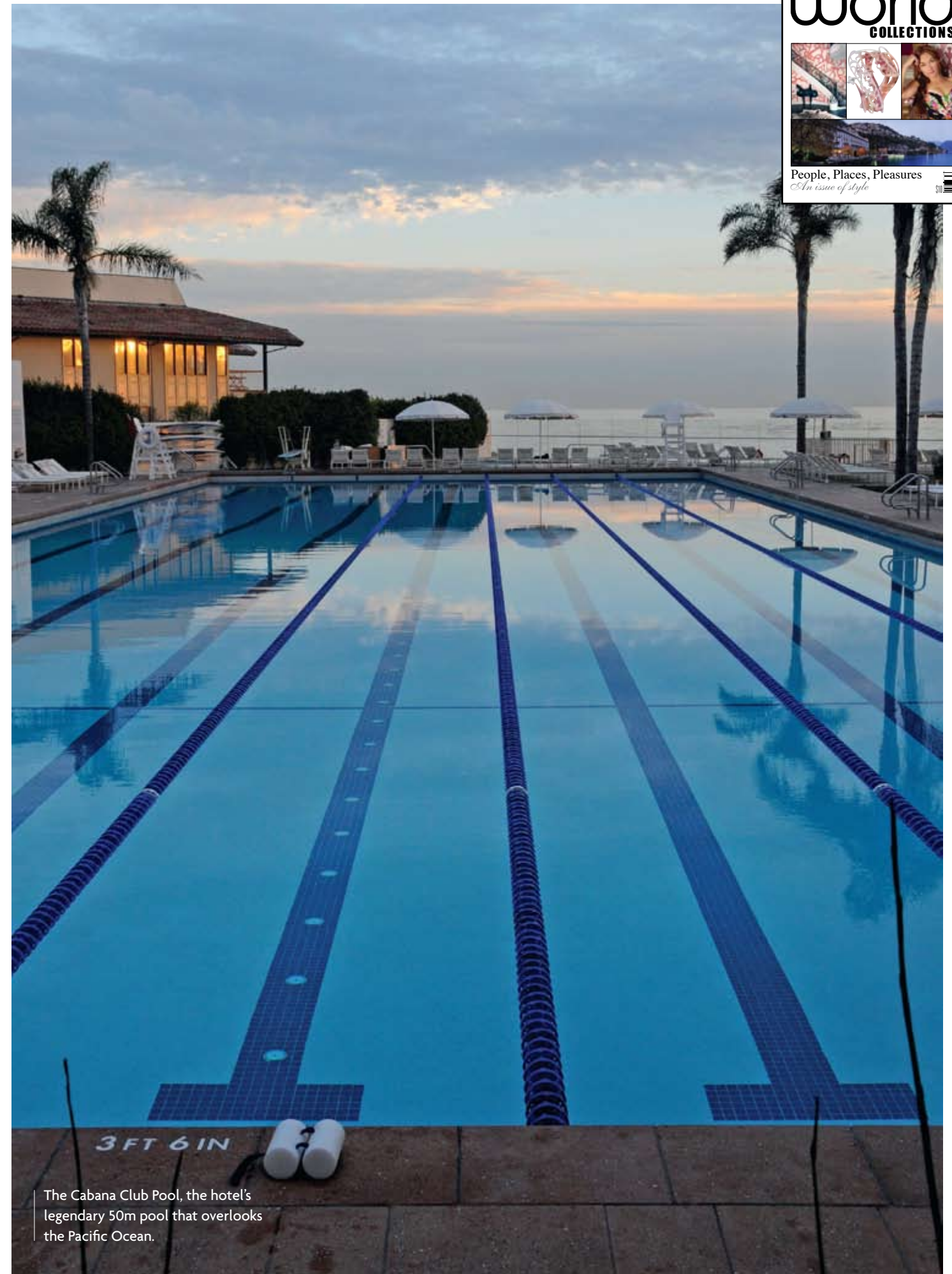


The architecture of Santa Barbara, California, tells the story. Once part of Spain's New World empire, Santa Barbara (and much of Southern California, for that matter) remains a coastal city of Spanish and Mexican styles despite the fact that it has been a part of the US since 1846. By the late 1800s, Santa Barbara, a short drive up the scenic Route 101 from Los Angeles, became known as a health retreat and luxury holiday destination and in some ways it still evokes that quality, for it is here that some of Hollywood's rich and famous live.

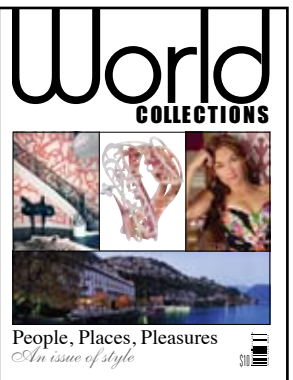
Four Seasons The Biltmore Santa Barbara is arguably the best hotel in town. Built in the Spanish colonial style, the hotel features 207 beautifully designed rooms and suites and a collection of 12 cottages secluded at the back of the property for guests wanting even more privacy. Each of these cottages contains three to five guest rooms, each with its own private entrance.

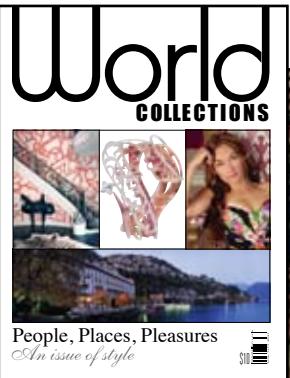
The hotel's Bella Vista restaurant features three distinctive weekly prix fixe dinner nights and a showcase of the finest Californian wines. The restaurant's sophisticated interior, accentuated by its fireplace, wine wall and expansive ocean views, is truly one of the best places in Santa Barbara to enjoy an evening – whether you are a guest of the hotel or not. Treatments at the spa are enhanced by its proximity to the sea and a rose garden. Here, the art of well-being is based on treatments that merge the bounty of the sea with botanicals from the garden.

As with all Four Seasons hotels and resorts, a championship golf course is close by – in this case Sandpiper, one of the top 25 public courses in the US, is a short, complimentary shuttle ride away. Meanwhile, across the way, guests commonly spend time at the Coral Casino Beach and Cabana Club Pool, the hotel's legendary 50-metre pool that overlooks the Pacific Ocean. Directly below is the alluring surf at Butterfly Beach. www.fourseasons.com



The Cabana Club Pool, the hotel's legendary 50m pool that overlooks the Pacific Ocean.





Fairmont San Francisco



The list of royalty, presidents and other heads of state who have stayed at the Fairmont San Francisco is long – and the list of those who are famous (or infamous) for others reasons is even longer. The Fairmont San Francisco is one of America's finest grand historic hotels.

Framed photographs hanging on the walls tell the story: candid shots of the British Royal Family, US Presidents Truman, Kennedy, and Bush (the father), Ella Fitzgerald, Caruso and Tony Bennett (the Fairmont is where the crooner first sang *I Left My Heart in San Francisco*).

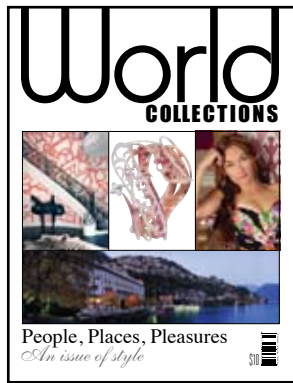
Tony Bennett and President Kennedy are two of the more famous people to have taken up residence in the hotel's legendary three-bedroom, US\$12,500-a-night Penthouse Suite. The suite, with its two-storey circular library, a billiard room covered in Persian tiles, living room with a grand piano, and a terrace with panoramic views of the city and the bay, spans the entire eighth floor.

The Fairmont San Francisco has featured in movies such as Alfred Hitchcock's *Vertigo* and the Clint Eastwood flick *Dirty Harry*. But our favourite story is written next to the photos of filmmaker Orson Wells and San Francisco publishing magnate William Randolph Hearst. Wells had based the main character in his dark classic *Citizen Kane* on Hearst and not long after the film's release the two men met by chance in one of the hotel's lifts. Hearst had been so incensed by Wells' portrayal of him, he did everything in his power to have him tossed out of Hollywood. No one knows for certain what was said in the lift but one version is that Hearst remained stone-faced and ignored Wells' cheeky invitation to the movie's San Francisco premiere.

Today, the Fairmont is as much a part of the character of San Francisco as cable cars and the Golden Gate Bridge. Fairmont Hotels and Resorts, as the company is formally known, has a host of fine hotels scattered throughout the world, yet even after more than 100 years the Fairmont San Francisco remains among the very best. The hotel sits at the corner of California and Mason Sts, atop Nob Hill, with spectacular views of the city and the bay.
www.fairmont.com



The Fairmont
San Francisco is
as historic as it is
grand.



The Peninsula Tokyo

Since The Peninsula Hong Kong opened its doors in 1928, The Peninsula Hotels worldwide have established a reputation for quality and service second to none. The recently opened Peninsula Tokyo is no exception.

The Peninsula Tokyo has 314 rooms and 47 suites, each spacious and stylish, with details that matter – from bedside curtain controls to nail-polish dryers. Conveniently located in the Marunouchi district, the hotel has terrific views of Imperial Palace Gardens and Hibiya Park. Highly recommended is the hotel's exclusive tour of the Imperial Palace grounds (one guide for two people, chauffeured there and back again, with lunch thrown in). After dark, Tokyo's neon skyline is best viewed from Peter, the chic bar on the 24th floor.

Traditional afternoon tea is served each day in the Lobby, while the Michelin-starred Hei Fung Restaurant specialises in the very best Cantonese cuisine. Since February, diners have had the pleasure of tasting the food of accomplished chef Adam Mathis, who joined the hotel from The Peninsula Manila.

The Peninsula Spa by ESPA features a range of treatments that incorporate Oriental, Ayurvedic and European techniques. We note that the restaurant and the spa have won multiple awards.

This year The Peninsula Tokyo is introducing an "Enriching Your Life" theme that includes healthy eating, caring for body and mind through wellness programmes, learning new skills through cultural and cooking programmes and the celebration of special occasions. Family heritage, tradition and community involvement are also among the building blocks that make a Peninsula Hotel, no matter where, more than just a place to rest your head.

www.peninsula.com

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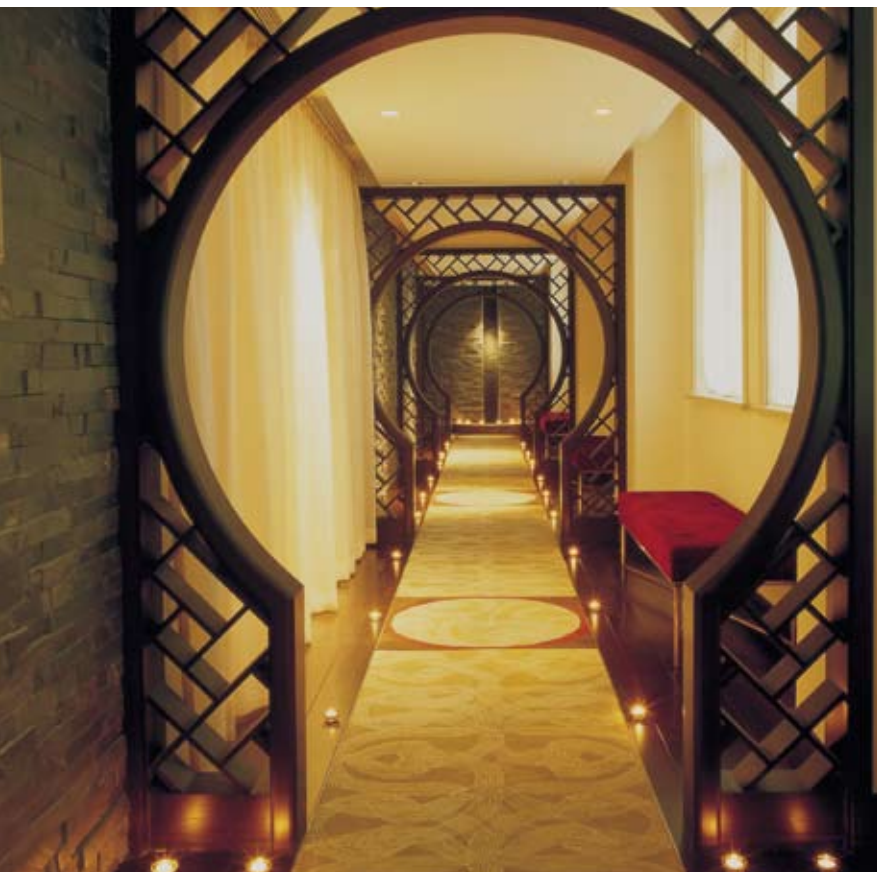
An issue of style



The Langham, Yangtze Boutique, Shanghai



The Art Deco charm of the Langham, Yangtze Boutique makes it unique among Shanghai's hotels.

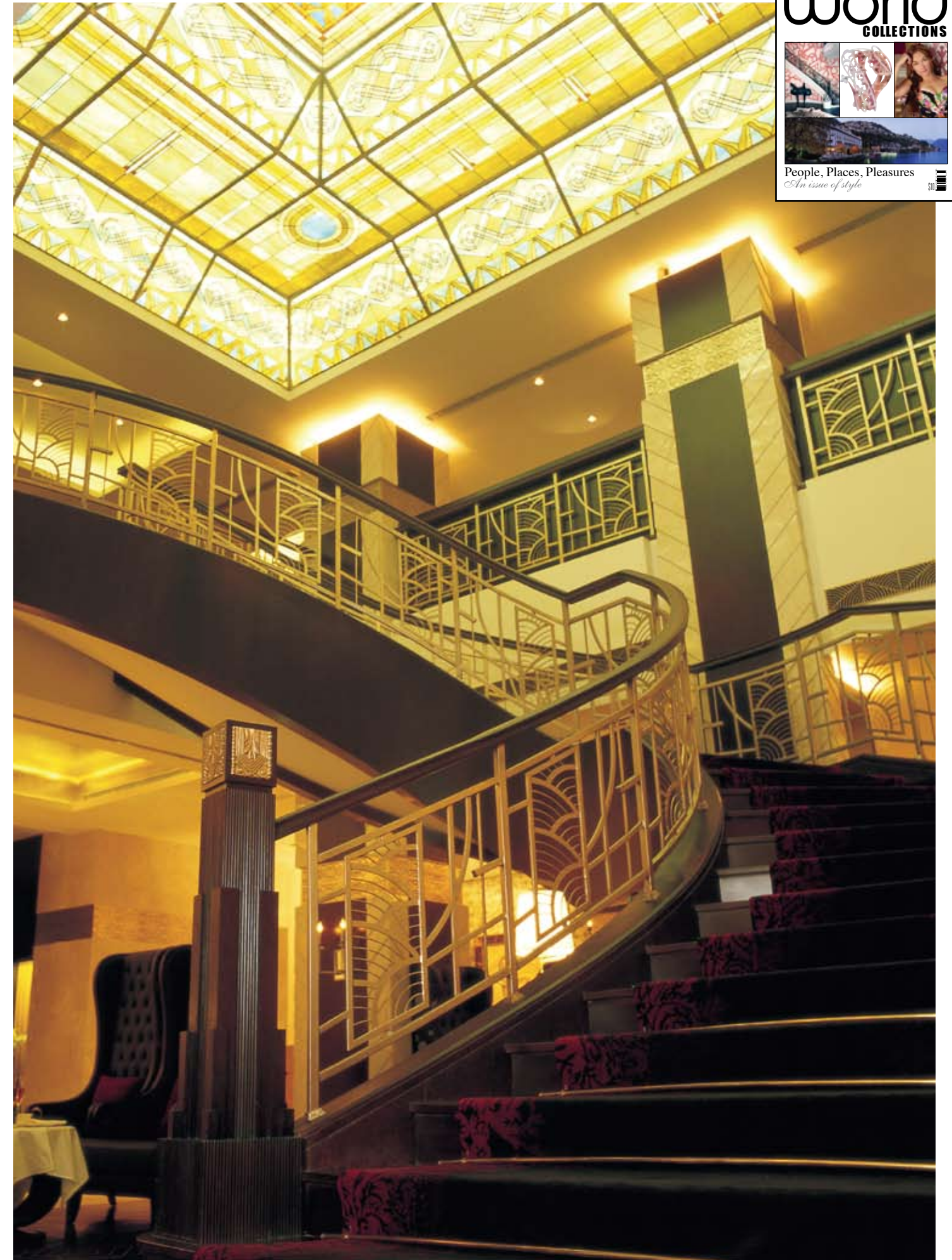


This, the first boutique hotel from Langham Hotels International, opened in May last year in Shanghai. Located in the heart of the city near Yunnan Rd, The Langham, Yangtze Boutique Shanghai is an intimate haven from this bustling city of 19 million souls. The original Yangtze Hotel opened in the 1930s, an Art Deco masterpiece and heritage building, now fully restored to its former glory, albeit with all the modern features we've come to expect from a top hotel.

The Langham has 96 rooms and suites, some with balconies, and each recalls the Art Deco elegance of Old Shanghai. The building's history, combined with its modern sophistication and technological innovations, make it unique among Shanghai's hotels. Its five restaurants include one of the city's finest, T'ang Court, a Michelin two-star restaurant specialising in Cantonese cuisine. Next door is The Bar, a Deco-inspired cocktail bar with the ambience of a private club.

At the Chuan Spa, traditional Chinese medicine and healing is practised by therapists who restore harmony to mind and body by balancing the five basic elements: metal, wood, fire, earth and water. A complementary health club includes a fitness centre, a vitality hot pool, sauna and herbal steam room.

The Langham, Yangtze Boutique Shanghai is within easy walking distance of the city's most significant attractions, including People's Square and People's Park, where early-rising locals practise t'ai chi; the beautiful Shanghai Art Museum and the Museum of Contemporary Art; and, for those who wish to shop till they drop, Nanjing Rd. Further along, Nanjing Rd meets the famous Bund. And if you care to venture further afield – to the historic Yuyuan Gardens, perhaps, or even across the Huangpu River to the new business district or Pudong – the hotel's 24-hour concierge service will help you find your way. www.langhamhotels.com





Blanket Bay, Glenorchy

Blanket Bay announces itself in discreet bronze letters on a slab of rock beside the Rd to Glenorchy, and a winding drive brings you to the impressive stone-and-timber lodge overlooking the northern end of Lake Wakatipu.

The setting is a stunner and the pristine lake and mountain panoramas have helped make Blanket Bay, 45 minutes' drive from Queenstown, one of the country's most-awarded luxury retreats. In January its place among the world's elite hideaways was sealed when it became the second-highest-scoring property in the world on *Condé Nast Traveler's* prestigious Gold List for 2010, with perfect scores for location, rooms and service and near-perfect counts for food and property design.

Despite being built from local schist stone and recycled timber, Blanket Bay has the feel of a grand hunting lodge in, say, Montana. This is not surprising, since the lodge is owned by an American, Tom Tusher, who bought the 26 lakeside hectares back in 1974. Construction began in 1997 and last year Blanket Bay, a member of Small Luxury Hotels of the World, celebrated its 10th anniversary.

The main lodge has five guest rooms and three spacious (65 sqm) suites, each with its own fireplace, walk-in wardrobe,

huge bathroom complete with tub and steam shower and broad terrace. Two separate twin-suite chalets offer extra privacy and space.

At the heart of the lodge is the Great Room, where floor-to-ceiling windows frame the exquisite view across the lake. Deer-antler chandeliers hang from the vaulted ceiling and, outside, steps lead down from a stone terrace to ornamental ponds and lawns.

Drinks and canapés are served in the wood-panelled Den before dinner in the elegant dining room, in the wine cellar or, in summer, out on the terrace. Blanket Bay chefs have won numerous awards over the years and executive chef Mark Sycamore presides over a changing menu of fine Pacific Rim cuisine.

The Games Room Pub Bar is popular for a drink and a game of pool after dinner. Other onsite activities include a gym, steam room and spa and a heated outdoor pool.

Summer is high season at Blanket Bay, with fishing, walking, horse-riding, mountain-biking, canoeing and jetboating on the Dart River all the doorstep. In winter you can visit Queenstown's ski fields or go heliskiing from the lodge. www.blanketbay.com

Blanket Bay, at Glenorchy, near Queenstown offers mountain and lake panoramas that set it apart among New Zealand lodges.

Treetops, Rotorua



Treetops, near Rotorua, is a native forest retreat for hunting and fishing, horseback riding and the tastes of indigenous wild foods.

Treetops, hidden away some 10km out of Rotorua, is the perfect escape for anyone interested in trout fishing, horseback riding, hunting or simply walking its long and windy scenic trails through native forest. A visit to the profoundly romantic Bridal Falls, an easy 30-minute stroll from the lodge, is a must.

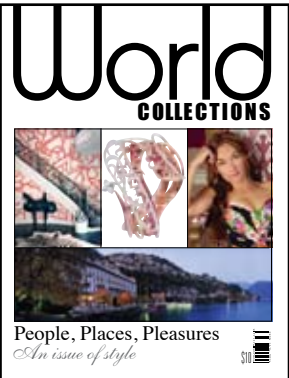
International acclaim first derived from its proximity to world-class fly fishing sites. Treetops, a 1,000ha native forest alive with native birds, deer and even a small herd of Cape Buffalo, has its own streams and lakes stocked with trout, but guests will often venture out with top guides to fish a region that is as fishing-famous today as it was when the American writer of westerns, Zane Grey, ventured this way nearly 100 years ago (Lake Rotorua, for example, has the highest per-hour catch rate in the world). Today, Treetops has its own helicopter service for guests wanting to enjoy the best of back-country fishing.

For our part, we were not there to fish or hunt (the estate has deer, pheasant and wild pigs) but to simply get away for a weekend and do something different, which in our case

meant a two-hour horseback ride through the property led by Diddy, the estate's expert horseman, followed later in the day by a one-hour introduction to the Treetops Maori Indigenous Food Trail with chef Eru Tutaki. The estate has also introduced a Wild Food Cooking School & Experience.

Breakfast and a four-course dinner are included in the tariff. On our first night, the choice was between pan-seared snapper or oven-roasted rack of lamb; the second night either South Island salmon fillet or eye fillet of beef. Each meal was accompanied by a generous menu of the finest New Zealand wines, which for us translated into a Marlborough Pinot Noir one night and a Central Otago Pinot the next. How owner John Sax came to create Treetops is a fascinating story in itself but we'll leave for you to learn, either from the website or, better still, by spending time there yourself. For now, we note that Sax's vision continues to win international acclaim: last year Treetops – a member of the Small Luxury Hotels of the World – was the only New Zealand property listed among *Travel + Leisure* magazine's Top 25 hotels in the world.

www.treetops.co.nz



The Lyall, Melbourne



The Lyall Hotel in Melbourne is just south of the central city in leafy South Yarra.

A small, privately owned hotel 15 minutes by tram from the city centre, The Lyall is one of Melbourne's hidden gems. With just 40 one- and two-bedroom suites, each with a private terrace, it is as quiet as it is charming, though conveniently located for shopping along Toorak Rd and Chapel St. All rooms are non-smoking and each comes with a kitchen, complimentary tea and coffee and a mini-bar, so one night, tired after a full day out walking, shopping and sightseeing, we brought our own wine back to the room and fixed a light evening meal for ourselves. We capped off the night with a drink in the hotel's Champagne Bar. The hotel restaurant serves breakfast and lunch.

The Lyall is an award-winning hotel with a gym and a spa that's one of the best hotel spas Downunder, according to one leading American travel magazine. Our schedule was tight, so



there was no time for a spa treatment, but next time – and there will be a next time, for this is a hotel with a high return occupancy rate – we're going to try the Deep Cleansing Moroccan Rassoul.

Complimentary high-speed wireless internet, 24-hour concierge, valet parking, bikes for exploring the city and its parks in a different way (Fawkner Park is just up the street), a business centre and meetings rooms and an "Executive Shopping Privilege Card" that secures discounts at a select number of local shops, are part of the package. Again, The Lyall is the only privately owned five-star hotel in Melbourne and as we were leaving to catch a tram into the city one morning, we bumped into the owner, Peter Thomas. Our friendly chat underlined the intimate scale of his fine hostelry, a member of Small Luxury Hotels of the World. www.thelyall.com



The views from the penthouse suite of Sydney's Diamant Hotel speak for themselves.

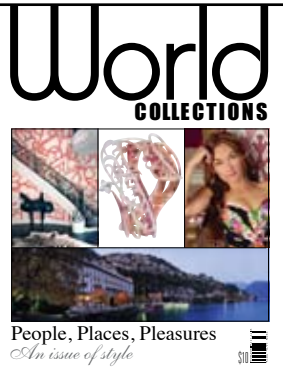


Diamant Hotel (Penthouse Suite), Sydney

Next time you're in Sydney why not look down on the city rather than have it look down on you? The Diamant Hotel, set in the triangle formed by Potts Point, Darlinghurst and Kings Cross, recently unveiled a magnificent Penthouse Suite overlooking the city skyline and harbour, with "rock star" interiors adding to the lofty impression.

Designed by architects Burley Katon Halliday and managed by Eight Hotels Australia, the new penthouse includes two spacious outdoor balconies with panoramic city and harbour views, a gourmet kitchen and an open-plan living and dining space. This oasis in the sky also features floor-to-ceiling windows, state-of-the-art entertainment systems and private access, with the latest in security systems. The master bedroom has a walk-in closet and en suite with spa bath. There are two other guest rooms, each with its own ensuite bathroom. All rooms are non-smoking. The hotel has a 24-hour concierge and a private butler service is available on request for penthouse guests.

The Gazebo Wine Garden, Bayswater Brasserie and the Piano Room are just three of Sydney's more noteworthy restaurants within easy walking distance of the hotel. But should you prefer in-house dining, the Adelphi is cool. The Diamant is considered among the best hotels in Sydney for business meetings, so if you want to make an impression, this could be the city's best bet. www.diamant.com.au





East meets West and old meets new, peacefully, at the American Colony in Jerusalem.

The American Colony, Israel



This 120-year-old boutique hotel in the heart of Jerusalem is a fairytale-like landmark for its classic Arabian arches, elaborate furnishings and opulent suites in a tranquil and romantic setting. For, as ancient as it feels, each room has the latest technology to keep businessfolk and casual guests up to speed with news and events around Jerusalem and the world.

The hotel has twice been named the best hotel in the Middle East by a leading American travel magazine, which doesn't surprise us, with its blend of old-world charm and modern conveniences. Over the years guests have included famous actors (Lauren Bacall, Sir Alec Guinness) and writers (John le Carré, Graham Greene), among others. In fact it was Baron Ustinov, the grandfather of actor Peter Ustinov, who played a major role (no pun intended) in converting what was once a palace for a pasha and his four wives into the Western-style hotel that

it is today.

The Colony, as it's known locally, has thrived in this turbulent region of the world because it has always been "neutral ground", owned by Americans, British and Swedes, not Arabs or Jews. In that way it has a reputation as something of a haven, where Arabs and Jews meet without rancour, and for that reason it's a hotel popular with international media and diplomats.

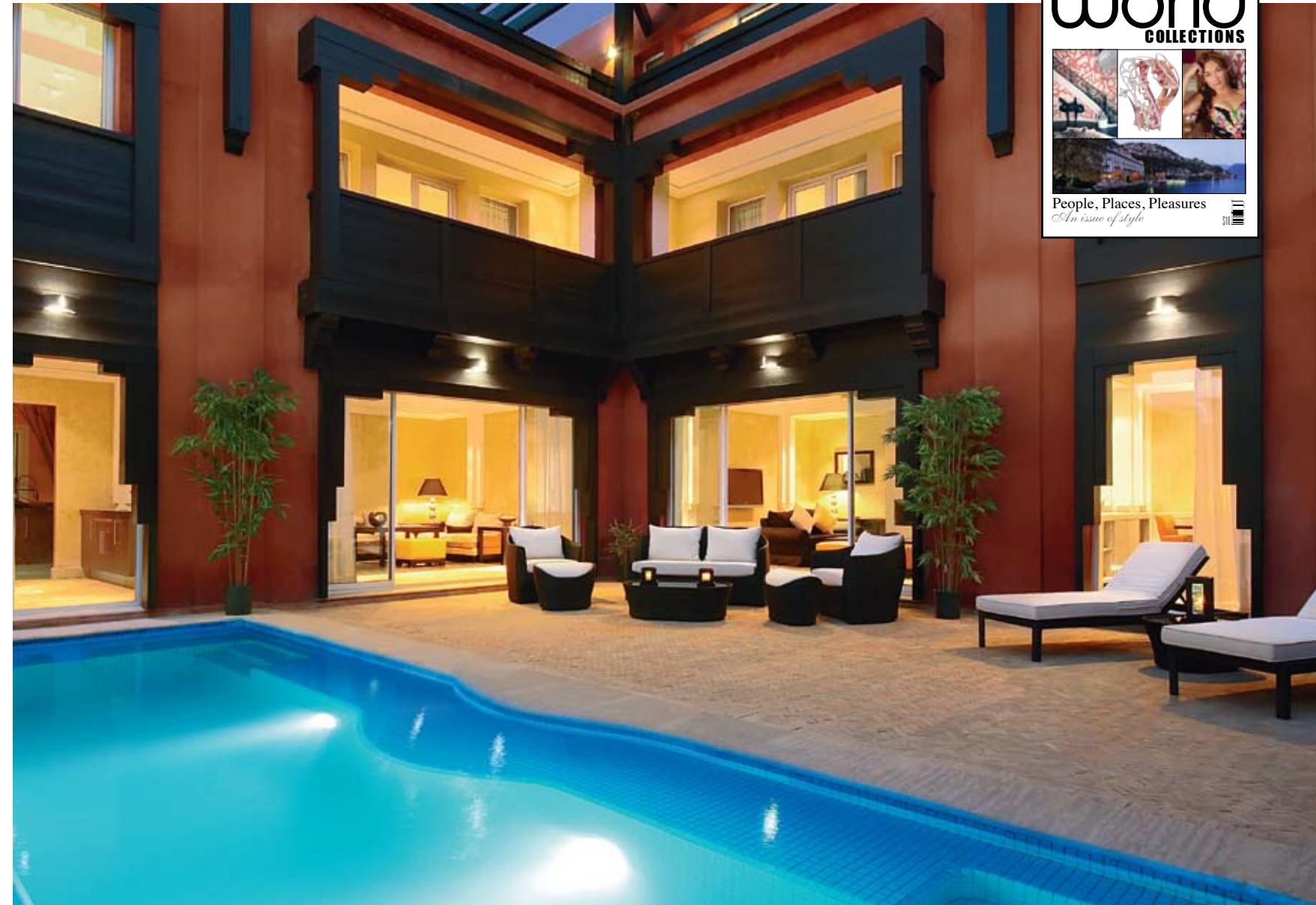
Moreover, the American Colony is known as one of the best places in Jerusalem to eat. The Courtyard restaurant and its Turkish fountain is one of the city's most popular escapes for breakfast, lunch and dinner. The Cellar Bar is cool, literally, thanks to its stone foundations that date to the origins of the hotel more than a century ago. The hotel is centrally located and within easy walking distance of the city's major sites, including the Damascus Gate in the Old City. www.lhw.com



The American Colony is an oasis in the heart of a turbulent region.



The Ryads Naoura Barrière in Marrakech is serene and contemporary, but with an exotic Moroccan heart.



Hotel et Ryads Naoura Barrière, Morocco

Set behind high walls in the city of Marrakech, Morocco, Naoura Barrière is a two-hectare property with 85 hotel rooms, quaint lanes and 26 ryads (traditional Moroccan houses with enclosed gardens) – a secluded citadel with an exotic North African heart.

The ryads, each with its own swimming pool, are privately owned but managed for rental by the hotel. Ryad guests are free to use the hotel facilities, including the pool and the restaurants.

As for the hotel itself, deep shade and bright natural light from blue Moroccan skies, oasis greenery and ochre-pink walls, all blend magnificently with the colours of Marrakech. Each room is a classical beauty featuring huge open bathrooms and large terraces with views of the gardens with their dazzling flower beds.

All rooms and suites are elegantly designed to create the feeling of being in a private residence rather than a hotel room and their interior serenity forms a welcome contrast with the hectic bustle of the medina outside. At night the enchanting U Spa Naoura is lit up by a thousand candles. The hotel belongs to the Lucien Barrière Hotels group and is a member of Leading Hotels of the World. www.lhw.com





Thirteenth Century Ashford Castle was once owned by the Guinness brewing family.



Ashford Castle, Ireland

You'll find Ashford Castle sitting prettily in County Mayo, on the west coast of Ireland. The castle was built in 1228 but its present incarnation dates back to the middle of the 19th century, when it was bought by Sir Benjamin Guinness, founder of the famed Dublin brewery. Sir Benjamin turned the castle into a hunting and fishing lodge and set out the formal gardens that today occupy more than 120ha and make for quiet, relaxed strolls at the beginning and end of the day.

A member of Leading Hotels of the World, Ashford Castle is found a short drive north of Galway on the banks of Lough Corrib. By the end of World War II the Guinness family had moved on, leaving its new owners to convert the property into the five-star hotel it is today, with 83 rooms – none of which are alike. Four dining rooms range from the classical and ultra-elegant George V Room to the casual Drawing Room.

When not enjoying their beautiful rooms or the fine cuisine, guests commonly occupy their time with a menu of outdoor activities, from fishing on Lough Corrib and the River Cong (guides are available) to horseback riding out of the estate's private equestrian centre and playing golf on the nine-hole parklands course designed by well-known Irish architect Eddie Hackett. But in Ireland nothing seems more than a half-day's drive away. One of the nicest drives from Ashford Castle is out to the west coast along the scenic Galway Bay Road. Cruises on Lough Corrib to St. Patrick Island include a visit to 500-year-old St. Patrick's Church. In 2009 Ashford Castle was declared the best resort in Ireland by readers of *Condé Nast Traveler* magazine. www.lhw.com

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