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The LUXE LIST 2012

THE 30 BEST NEW HOTELS IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC REGION

RODRIGUES
AN INDIAN OCEAN IDYLL

ON THE BUBBLY TRAIL IN CHAMPAGNE

SIAM EASE
Chilling out on the banks of the Chao Phraya at The Siam, one of three standout Bangkok hotels on this year's Luxe List. See page 82

PLUS
RAFTING THE GRAND CANYON

A TASTE OF **THAILAND'S NORTH**





—FEATURES



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2012 LUXE LIST
This year, our roll call of the Asia-Pacific region's best new places to stay is as alluring as ever, spanning a dozen countries and featuring no fewer than 30 hotels that truly stand out from the rest.

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THE GRANDEST ADVENTURE
A rafting trip through America's most treasured natural wonder reveals as much about the Grand Canyon's ancient history as it does about the intrepid spirit of the boatmen—and women—who ride the river that runs through it.
BY AARON GULLEY

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WAKHAN WAYFARING
A collection of photographs taken in Afghanistan's Wakhan Corridor captures the rugged, elemental beauty of one of Asia's wildest landscapes.
PHOTOGRAPHS BY
FRÉDÉRIC LAGRANGE

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A TASTE OF THAILAND'S NORTH
From curried egg noodles and grilled pork sausages to any number of minced-meat salads, the food of Chiang Mai and Chiang Rai offers some of the most complex and intense flavors in the kingdom.
BY CHAWADEE NUALKHAIR

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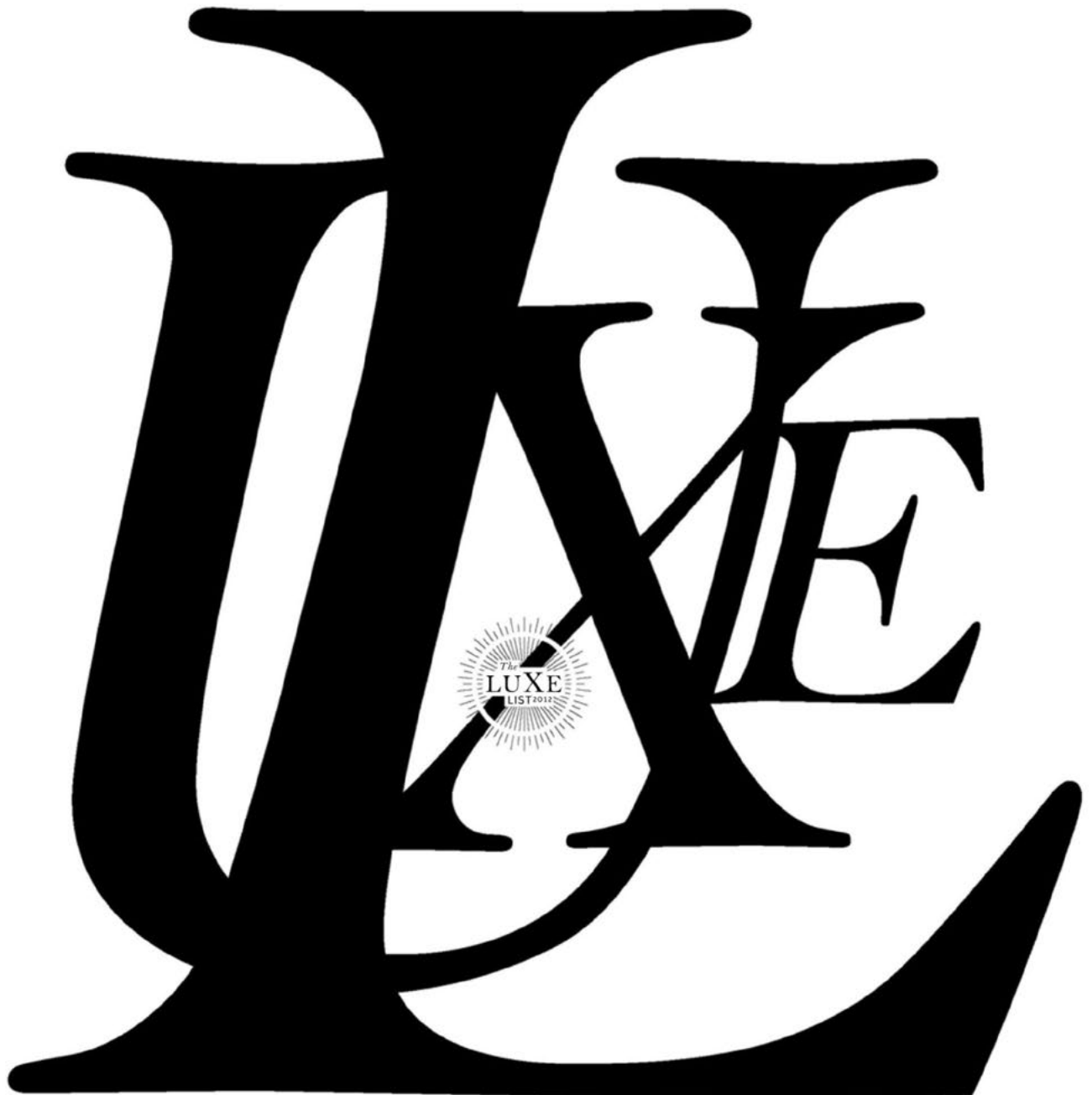
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COURTESY OF PALACE HOTEL, TOKYO; JEN JUDGE; FRÉDÉRIC LAGRANGE; JASON MICHAEL LANG

the
9TH
ANNUAL
LUXE LIST
2012

THIS YEAR, OUR ROLL CALL OF THE ASIA-PACIFIC REGION'S
BEST NEW PLACES TO STAY IS AS ALLURING AS
EVER, SPANNING A DOZEN COUNTRIES AND FEATURING NO FEWER
THAN 30 HOTELS THAT TRULY STAND OUT FROM THE REST.
FROM SUMPTUOUS PRIVATE ISLANDS IN THE MALDIVES
TO A TRIO OF URBANE ADDRESSES IN BANGKOK, READ ON TO DISCOVER
WHICH PROPERTIES WON US OVER IN TERMS
OF STYLE, SERVICE, AND SETTING







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AUSTRALIA
QT Sydney,
Sydney

CAMBODIA
Maison Polanka,
Siem Reap
Song Saa Private Island,
Koh Rong
The Plantation,
Phnom Penh

CHINA
Andaz Shanghai,
Shanghai
Four Seasons Guangzhou,
Guangzhou

JAPAN

Palace Hotel Tokyo, *Tokyo*

Since 1937, the site on which Tokyo's newest five-star property stands has served as the address for the imperial forestry office, for the Hotel Teito, and, until its demolition in 2009, for the iconic Palace Hotel. But while the 23-story building occupied by the resurrected Palace Hotel is brand new, one crucial feature remains the same: unblocked views of Tokyo's Imperial Palace gardens. In a city short on green space, this is a rare asset indeed. By no means, however, is it the only thing drawing guests here. With a moat-side location in the Marunouchi area, the hotel manages to be both glitzy and steadfastly elegant, with Japanese touches in the 290 neutral-toned rooms (most of which come with balconies) ranging from high-thread-count Imabari bed linens to Maruyama Nori teas. If you have time for just one indulgence, book the signature Vitalizing massage treatment at the minimalist Evian spa, or dine in style at Sushi Kanesaka or the Crown: both restaurants are helmed by Michelin-starred chefs.

1-1-1 Marunouchi, Chiyoda-ku; 81-3/3211-5211; doubles from US\$625

Park Hyatt Ningbo,
Ningbo

INDIA
Vivanta by Taj- Bekal,
Kappil Beach

INDONESIA
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Jakarta

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UAE
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Abu Dhabi

VIETNAM
InterContinental Danang Sun Peninsula Resort,
Danang

BEDDING DOWN
Designer comforts at QT Sydney, below. Bottom: A lake-view villa at Park Hyatt Ningbo. Opposite: An elegant corner inside Wadakura, one of the Palace Hotel Tokyo's 10 restaurants.



AUSTRALIA
QT Sydney, *Sydney*

This just-launched hotel couldn't be in a better downtown location, having taken up residence in two historic buildings: the 1920s State Theatre and the former Gowings department store. The outmoded menswear is gone, but neo-Gothic and Art Deco features—including gargoyles—remain, cleverly combined with chic bespoke furnishings and art installations. The 200 guest rooms come in a variety of styles, all with the creature comforts that you'd expect, from oversize bathtubs to indulgent bedding. Helmed by chef Paul Easson, formerly of Melbourne's Rockpool, the brasserie-style Gowings Bar & Grill has all the makings of a hot spot, while the Gilt Lounge is aimed squarely at the A-list cocktail crowd.

49 Market St.; 61-2/8262-0000; qtsydney.com.au; doubles from US\$425

CHINA
Park Hyatt Ningbo, *Ningbo*

For its first resort in Greater China, Park Hyatt cast its luxe wand over an old lakeside fishing village in the rural outskirts of Ningbo, two-and-a-half hours' drive from Shanghai. Taking cues from the original village, the property is laid out as a hamlet of whitewashed buildings with sloping charcoal roofs linked by winding slate paths, bridges, and tea gardens. The misty Chinese-watercolor vista gives way to mod-Zen splendor within. Dramatic white-marble halls are lined with soaring teak columns and gallery-worthy art installations, while the 236 pearl-toned guest rooms come with lake-view terraces and open bathrooms. The village's 500-year-old ancestral hall has been stunningly repurposed as a teahouse serving infusions plucked from the hills; other diversions include the 10-villa Yue Hu Spa and a canal-side restaurant that does amazing things with Ningbo's prized seafood. Guests can visit Buddhist mountain temples by bike or simply soak up the scenery from the resort's infinity pool, which splashes right into Dongqian Lake.

188 Dayan Lu; 86-574/2888-1234; ningbo.park.hyatt.com; doubles from US\$190

