

Back, in Style

JAPAN'S TOURISM INDUSTRY TOOK A HAMMERING IN THE WAKE OF THE 2011 TSUNAMI, BUT TWO YEARS ON SOME INTRIGUING NEW HOTEL OPENINGS ARE HELPING LURE BACK WELL-HEELED TRAVELLERS. PAUL KAY AND JESSICA NG REPORT

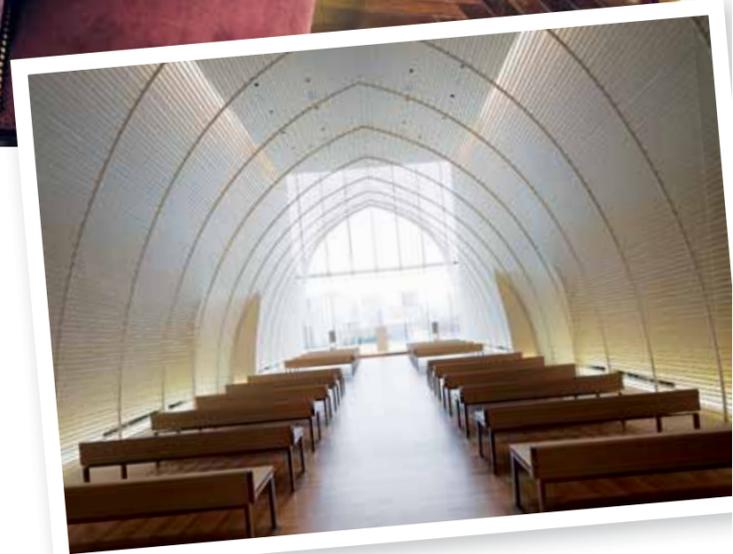


THE PALACE HOTEL TOKYO

Attention to detail is a quality often attributed to the Japanese, and not without reason. But even those who are accustomed to the nation's meticulous drive for perfection will be struck by the Palace's obsession with the finer points. From the elegantly appointed rooms replete with carefully selected amenities and traditional details – such as bath towels from Imabari, Maruyama Nori teas and handmade tea sets from Tochigi prefecture – to the impeccably trained, kimono-clad staff and beautifully measured décor throughout, the Palace will satisfy the most punctilious of pedants and delight lovers of clean, elegant design. Reopened in May 2012 following a US\$1.2 billion renovation that saw the old Palace Hotel demolished and completely rebuilt, the all-new Palace enjoys the same privileged position adjacent to Tokyo's Imperial Palace, primary seat of the emperor and his family. Bordered on two sides by the palace moat with its resident swans, the hotel offers breathtaking views of the Imperial Palace gardens, a 3.5sqkm green space in the heart of the city that was valued in the 1980s at more than all California's real estate, and the twinkling skyline beyond. There are no fewer than 10 restaurants and bars to choose from, including the gorgeous Wadakura (named after the moat used to transfer food to the Imperial Palace),

with its impressive water feature, hand-carved floor and flawless Japanese cuisine; and Crown, a grand French fancy from Patrick Henriroux of La Pyramide fame. The hotel also boasts a near 13,000sqft Evian Spa (only the second to open outside of France) that ranks among Japan's best, and two wedding venues: a serene and light-flooded chapel and an ornate traditional Shinto shrine with painstakingly carved ceilings and walls.

PERFECT FOR Roaming royalty
RESTAURANTS Crown, Wadakura
BATHROOM BUBBLES Anne Semonin
CLASSY TOUCH Beautiful balconies from which to survey your empire
WEBSITE en.palacehoteltokyo.com



PALATIAL SPLENDOR

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT Inside the Evian Spa at the Palace Hotel; the plush Royal Bar; the wedding chapel