

THE BEST OF 2018

This year, our cities shot up with a legion of luxe hotels, while F+B spots gave us fresh takes on traditional cuisines, sustainable menus and craft drinks. Here are some of our favorite newcomers.



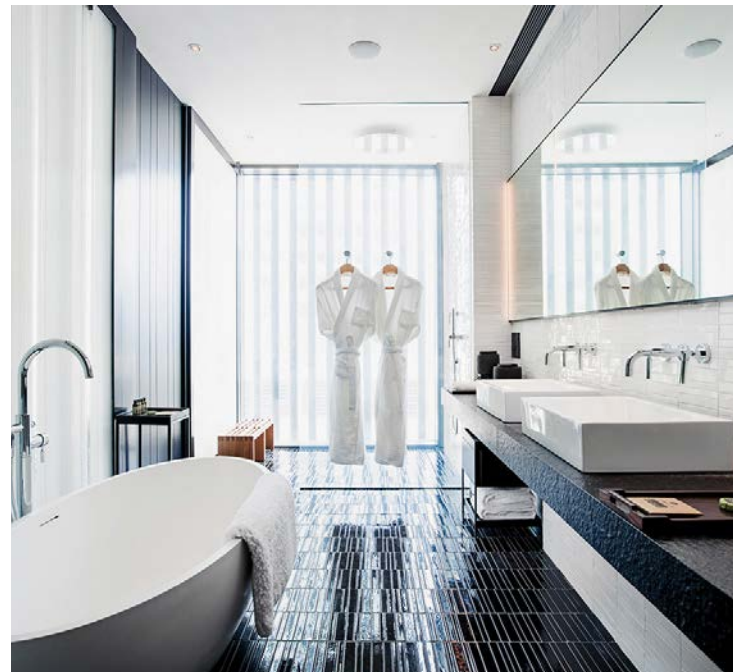
CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: All skyline, all the time at Banyan Tree Kuala Lumpur; a new home for Singapore's Stolen boutique; the fig and walnut Machine Gun Jack from Manila bar The Back Room; Brisbane's new urban resort, The Calile; a splash of color in Bali with beach club Tropicola; boutique Paramount House Hotel in Sydney; Wagyu, Peruvian-style at Ichu, Hong Kong; pro cocktails at the new SugarSand beach bar at Hotel Indigo Bali.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: LEIGH GRIFFITHS; COURTESY OF STOLEN; COURTESY OF THE BACK ROOM; SEAN FENNESSY; COURTESY OF TROPICOLA; TOM ROSS; COURTESY OF ICHU; COURTESY OF SUGARSAND

CITY SLEEPERS

High-end hotels bloomed in big cities this year, offering a variety of luxe options you'll want to book for more than one night.



FROM LEFT: Contemporary furnishings deck the Sukhothai Shanghai; monochrome style in The Middle House's one-bedroom residence.

SHANGHAI LUXURIOUS NODS TO THE CITY'S HISTORY AND TRADITIONS WERE THE RUNNING THEME IN THIS YEAR'S HIGH-END HOTEL BLOOM IN THE PEARL OF THE ORIENT.

+ Opened in September, the latest project by American visionary and pioneer of boutique hotels Ian Schrager artfully fuses old-world grandeur with luxurious modernity at **Edition Shanghai** (editionhotels.com; doubles from RMB2,018). The Art Deco building is home to 145 guest rooms, each fitted with custom designed furniture, Anichini bed linens and thoughtfully curated

textiles. The hotel boasts nine dining outlets and lounge bars, including two on the rooftop, offering some of the best panoramic views of Pudong's futuristic skyline.

+ Located in the heart of busy Nanjing Road, the **Sukhothai Shanghai** (sukhothai.com; doubles from RMB2,080) is an urban oasis. The rooms are cozy and contemporary with custom furnishings and textured green clay walls—we were told the minerals help with air purification. Don't miss the mesmerizing digital feature art piece in the lobby by Japanese studio teamLab—an illustrated village and rice field is broadcast in real time.

+ **The Middle House** (themiddlehousehotel.com; doubles from RMB3,500) is Swire Hotels' latest addition in Shanghai, featuring 111 rooms as well as 102 residences designed by Italian architect Piero Lissoni. From sexy Italian contemporary furniture and black-and-white styling to the fine details in lattice woodwork of traditional Chinese motifs, the hotel celebrates the best of old and new Shanghai. Guest rooms and the spacious residences are decorated with cheeky postmodern art works by William Furniss where objects sit by the still-life photography of usually a bird cage or vase—it's all in the little details here.

+ Part of the Suhe Creek waterfront project, the **Bulgari Hotel Shanghai** (bulgarihotels.com; doubles from RMB3,800) opened in June, housed in the restored 1916 Chamber of Commerce building and connected to a modern sky tower. Surrounded by lush private gardens, with a rooftop for 180-degree views of The Bund and Pudong's staggering cityscape, the Bulgari Hotel Shanghai is a masterful blend of the brand's Italian elegance blended with layers of rich Shanghai history. The sixth in the group's collection, the hotel is also home to China's first Bulgari chocolate boutique. — JULIANA LOH

FROM LEFT: DAVE TACON; COURTESY OF THE MIDDLE HOUSE

KUALA LUMPUR ADDING EXTRA HEIGHT TO ITS SWEEPING SKYLINE, NEW FIVE-STAR RETREATS HAVE MADE THIS MORE THAN JUST A STOPOVER CITY.

+ Opened in June, the first Malaysian property from **Banyan Tree** (banyantree.com; doubles from RM910) is a resort haven in the CBD. Occupying the top seven floors of the Banyan Tree Signatures Pavilion building, the skyline views here are enviable. Floor-to-ceiling windows light every room and even the signature spa, and Vertigo Bar on the 59th floor is where you should park yourself at sunset.

+ Across the road and managed by Banyan Tree, **Pavilion Hotel** (banyantree.com; doubles from RM498) opened this month

atop the same-name mall. The 325-room hotel also has a rooftop infinity pool, contemporary Japanese restaurant Ebisu and intimate bar Whisky Cove.

+ **Four Seasons Kuala Lumpur** (fourseasons.com; doubles from RM893) opened in July, adding serious luxury to the KLCC. The opulent rooms come with full marble bathrooms, 180-degree views and plush king beds; dining options also spoil, with global buffet Curate, fine-dining dim sum at Yun House and creative craft cocktails at Bar Trigona.

+ South of the CBD, **Alila Bangsar** (alilahotels.com; doubles from RM391) is set within the cultural center of Little India. Eco-focused rooms make use of timber and natural stone, while a three-level atrium at the lobby takes guests to a

plant-lined pool, French restaurant Entier, and Pacific Standard bar.

+ The quirky design of **W Kuala Lumpur** (marriott.com; doubles from RM829) takes inspiration from the city: a topographic view of KL covers the lobby floor; batik designs pattern feature walls; and jungle elements are symbolized in cushions. The Wet Deck pool bar provides the party, while the Away Spa offers a celeb-style detox.

+ **The RuMa** (theruma.com; doubles from RM848) opened last month, and its design honors Malaysian artisans with woven furnishings, copper ceilings and handcrafted bronze accents. Their "hostmanship" service means 24-hour check-in and checkout, all-day butler service and a free mini bar. — ELOISE BASUKI



Four Seasons' cocktail den, Bar Trigona.

SYDNEY THE HARBOR CITY CONTINUES TO GROW WITH NEW BOUTIQUE ROOMS AND SEASIDE SANCTUARIES.

+ The opening of **Paramount House Hotel** (paramouthousehotel.com; doubles from A\$240) in ever-hip Surry Hills was the last notch in the cultural rebirth of the 1940s Paramount building, which also houses Golden Age Cinema, Paramount Coffee Project and new arrival Poly restaurant. The 29-room boutique hotel offers a variety of layouts featuring big windows, terrazzo-tiled bathrooms and Japanese-style wooden

tubs. Australian-sourced amenities celebrate local faves, with Aesop toiletries; mini-bar snacks by nearby barbecue joint LP's Quality Meats; natural wines by Tom Shobbrook from the Barossa; and linens by Melbourne-based Cultiver.

+ Over in Sydney's more bohemian Inner West, **The Collectionist Hotel** (collectionisthotel.com.au; doubles from A\$153) fits in with its individualist neighbors, calling itself: "no normal hotel." Guests can choose-their-own-adventure at check-in, picking their favorite room from four types and 39 unique interiors: "Artisan" rooms flaunt

handmade art pieces like colorful ceramics on forest-green walls; "Moonshine" rooms have painted murals (choose from rolling clouds or graffiti-style imagery) and full kitchens.

+ Sitting pretty between Darling Harbour and development project Barangaroo, **West Hotel** (westhotel.com.au; doubles from A\$238) opened in January to add a dose of designer sophistication. The 182 premium rooms are complemented by Solander Dining and Bar's modern Australian fare and botanical-inspired cocktails, best sipped in the festoon-lit garden atrium. — E.B.



FROM TOP: The Collectionist's Pepo Melone room; West Hotel's gleaming exterior.