

THE AUSTRALIAN

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EVERYTHING FROM OUR FIRST
100 ISSUES



SUSAN KUROSAWA HAS RACKED UP THE FLYER MILES TO LIST HER FAVOURITE HOTELS

THE SIAM, BANGKOK

Take a dress-circle plot beside Bangkok's Chao Phraya River, a family of Thai hoteliers with loads of style and vision and you have the tropical oasis that is The Siam. There are 39 butler-attended suites and villas with courtyard pools and four-posters in three decor themes. In the moodily lit Opium Spa, there's a tiled hammam and impeccable design details. Family member (and rock star and actor) Kris Sukosol Clapp uses The Siam as a showcase for many of his valuable oriental antiques and oddities. More: thesiamhotel.com.

LE ROYAL MONCEAU RAFFLES, PARIS

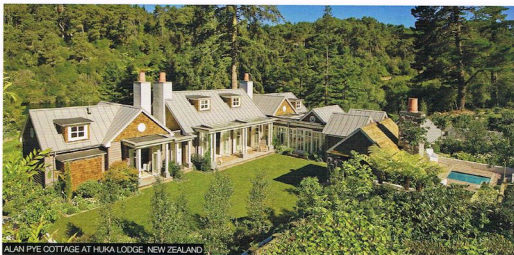
I am entranced with the sense of fun at this Parisian property. Philippe Starck was given free rein to create the interiors during its two-year restoration. The mood at the 149-room hotel, which reopened in 2010, has recaptured the 1920s, when the original was a salon for artists and writers. Coco Chanel swished through; Ernest Hemingway was in residence. Now it has a coveted "Palace Distinction" heritage ruling, a choice of Michelin-starred dining rooms and pastries by Pierre Hermé on Paris's best breakfast buffet. More: leoyalmonceau.com.

FOUR SEASONS RESORT, BORA BORA

Wooden piers lead to 100 overwater bungalows with ladders dipping into a virtual ensue sea; it's the Robinson Crusoe idyll gone five-star and some of these coveted hideaways even have private pools perched on docks like luxury hot tubs. Unlike many top-notch getaways, this resort is also pitched at families, and seven beachfront villas are perfect pads for parents and kids. The cathedral-like Kahia Spa offers treatment rituals that engage with old-time traditions and a pantry of local ingredients, including powdered black pearl. More: fourseasons.com/borabora.

CLAYQUOT WILDERNESS RESORT, CANADA

On the westernmost edge of Vancouver Island, this retreat bills itself as "remote, refined and remarkable" and let's add "rather scary" when it comes to the neighbours — a population of black bears that can climb trees and run as fast as horses. After initial alarm, I settle into a couple of days of delightful outdoorsy activity and calm sleeps in a "luxury tent" connected by boardwalks to the mother lodge. Hiking with First Nations guides, mountain biking, whale-watching and fishing are on offer. Loved every second. More: wildretrat.com.



ALAN PYE COTTAGE AT HUKA LODGE, NEW ZEALAND



HOTEL MAJESTIC, KUALA LUMPUR



LE ROYAL MONCEAU RAFFLES, PARIS

BANYAN TREE LANG CO, VIETNAM

This chic property wins the location, location, location trifecta — a seaside position amid the meandering 280km Laguna estate, an hour from Da Nang; 49 huge white-walled and gated villas with garden pools; and an 18-hole, par-71 championship golf course. All the lodgings have lagoon or beach views and local pan-Asian decor touches, such as coloured silk lanterns and textiles and lacquered screens. The stand-out dining option is Saffron in a pitch-roofed pavilion on a high hill. More: banyantree.com.

HOTEL HOTEL, CANBERRA

Here we have a major design development in every sense, from the residential-style lobby with its library nook and witty fittings to the mid-20th-century sofas in the 68 guest rooms. It might feel more Copenhagen than Canberra, but the list of Australian artists and craftspeople involved stretches almost to 60 and their creative work encompasses a neat array of repurposed materials. More: hotel-hotel.com.au.

LIKULIKU LAGOON RESORT, FIJI

Everything at the couples-only Likuliku Lagoon on Malolo Island, northwest of Nadi, is about water. Perched on stilts like so many wading birds standing in a wavy line are 10 overwater bures with ensuite bathing pavilions; land-logged guests nestle into 35 bures beside the crescent beach. 18 with private pools. New Zealander Ihaka Peri is in charge of the kitchens. I know of no better Fijian bolthole. More: likulikulagoon.com.

THE ARMANI HOTEL, DUBAI

There's a comprehensive strategy of Armani branding at this 160-room outpost of the Giorgio Armani empire, from towels to sugar cubes stamped with a blocky capital A. Eleven room categories come with curved walls, columns and dusky decor. "Minimalist opulence" is the official tag. In-room technology includes a remote controller with camera that allows you to see who is at your door and then unlock it without leaving bed. More: dubai.armanihotels.com.

ALAN PYE COTTAGE AT HUKA LODGE, NEW ZEALAND

Near Taupo on the North Island, this cottage was opened in 2008 and named for the Huka estate founder. Built of cedar, stone and brick and trimmed in white, the two-bedroom cottage's bespoke style has an arts-and-crafts quality. Virginia Fisher, the country's finest hotel outfitter, has created a supremely comfortable bower with the feel of a country squire's residence. More: hukaretreats.com.

HOTEL MAJESTIC, KUALA LUMPUR

This 1932-built colonial pile has been thoroughly restored and revamped from historic top to toe with a new adjoining Tower Wing and a spa pavilion that references Charles Rennie Mackintosh's Willow Tea Rooms in Glasgow. The accommodation picks are the 47 suites in the original five-storey building with black-and-white marble bathrooms and butlering at all hours. More: majestick.com; lhv.com.