



WORDS ELISABETH KING

HOT SPOTS FOR A COOL BREAK

THOUSANDS of new hotels have opened around the world during the last two years, so selecting the pick of such a big bunch is a Sisyphean task. But it is possible to edit the choices down to a short list of hot properties that are attracting major attention for adventure, high design, ultimate luxury and re-tweaked heritage.

One of London's newest five-star boltholes is in Holborn, not Mayfair. Used as a backdrop for the Val Kilmer version of *The Saint* and an episode of *Dr Who*, the neo-classical Rosewood London was built in 1914 and has listed status. The historic interior has been re-jigged by New York designer Tony Chi (Park Hyatt Moscow, Ritz-Carlton Singapore, etc) and antiques fill the public spaces and 242 rooms and 44 suites. Retro-vintage bartenders sporting

and many are available at the bar for a cool refreshing brew followed by a fiery chaser.

Inexpensive flights have made Hawaii the new Bali. To get away from the madding crowd, head to the Andaz Maui at Wailea. A real head-turner, star designer Rockwell Group has re-configured the former Renaissance hotel with an Ambrato stone bridge entry, a wood-filled spa, an open-air lobby with a sand pit and three infinity pools. Farm-to-table Hawaiian food is served family-style at Ka'ana Kitchen. A very sophisticated family, though, which likes dishes such as abalone risotto, lobster ceviche and wagyu strip loin with persimmon. The Bumbye Beach Bar, overlooking powdery Mokapu Beach, is the spot to enjoy local Maui brews such as Bikini Blonde and Big Swell, and evocatively

decadence favoured by Russian oligarchs. The 1947 Bar shelters a glass-enclosed wine cellar, packed with established chateaux vintages and tete de cuvee champagnes. La Table de Partage is a private dining room for those who don't want to mix. For those who do there's The Deelani (seafood and Mediterranean fare) and The Diptyque (Japanese and Asian menus).

Some neighbourhoods have been poised on the cusp of next-hot-thing for so long you could die waiting. But downtown LA has finally made the grade, with the opening of the Ace Hotel Downtown in the Spanish Gothic 1920s-era United Artists Theater. The revamped performance space is as breathtaking as when silent star Mary Pickford trod the boards. Think

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moustaches in Scarfes Bar add a pukka clubland feel, serving smart cocktails, fine wines and craft beers. Another compelling reason to prop up the bar is the collection of 200 single malts and one of the best collections of sloe gins in London. The Holborn Dining Room lures city suits for posh paddock-to-plate English-style grub following slow food guidelines.

Icelandair and easyJet offer cheap airfares to Reykjavik from several UK cities. A small price to pay for spectacular natural scenery and the chance to mingle with great-looking people named Thor and Sif. A magnet for outdoors types, the ION Luxury Adventure Hotel in Selfoss is a sleek modern base for day trips to trout-filled rivers, hot springs, active volcanic areas, riding trails and Lake Pingvallavatn - to dive the continental seam where the tectonic plates of Eurasia and North America meet.

Located specifically for viewing the Aurora Borealis from the Northern Lights bar and deck, the sleek Silfra restaurant specialises in modern Nordic cuisine tracking the slow food movement. Iceland is full of micro-breweries and small batch spirit producers,

named cocktails like One More Sunset and Pimms Rangoon.

Dutch design maestro Marcel Wanders considered every detail in the stunning Mira Moon hotel in Hong Kong's Wanchai district. Inspired by the Chinese Moon Festival fairytale, the backlit jade rabbits, crystal-cut mirrors and staff dressed in hand-stitched Chinoiserie costumes mix and match for maximum eye appeal. The king rooms have freestanding tubs with views of the Hong Kong skyline and the mini bar is free. The Supergiant restaurant offers Chinese/Spanish fusion tapas and boasts "the most valuable wine list in HK". Translation: the cost of the wines is below Hong Kong's average market price for anyone looking to keep hotel bills in check.

Fancy a spa located on its own island or a romantic dinner on a floating pontoon? Owned by LVMH, the Cheval Blanc Randheli in the Maldives is a sister property to the luxury goods group's debut hotel in Courchevel and both feature cigar rooms. The 45 palatial villas (all with butlers), moonlight yoga classes and in-villa spa treatments offer the sort of simple

Gaudi's Sagrada Familia. Hipness begins with a record player in every room, vinyl records on the wall behind the check-in and original artworks by Mike Mills in the 183 high-ceilinged suites. Enjoy a craft brew or cocktail such as Fairbanks Fizz or Handsome Devil in the rooftop bar with views across the city. The L.A Chapter restaurant serves American modern fare from hangar steak to liquorish rubbed duck breast.

A steal by New York standards, The Marlton describes itself as a baby grand and fills the site of Marlton House where Jack Kerouac once spent nights carousing in Greenwich Village. The retro romance remains with wood-panelled walls, roaring fires, cosy rooms and attentive service. Owned By Sean MacPherson of BD Hotels (The Ludlow, The Jane, etc), the plush Margaux restaurant lures non-guests with its spiffy Mediterranean menu, including rabbit lasagna verde and rotisserie Amish chicken. The cocktail bar is open 7a.m to 2a.m, 365 days a year. A block's walk from Washington Square Park, it's the whole SoHo box and dice with today's gentrified vibe. 