



GILDED AGE The gold-accented reception area at the Hotel Missoni in Kuwait. PAGE 106

rants, a piano bar, and a cigar lounge. **The look:** Unobtrusively neutral with accents in cardinal red and occasional nods to tradition (silk embroidery, mother-of-pearl inlay). The diverse artwork is commissioned through a program supporting contemporary Indian artists. At night, the reflecting pool is lit by torches that seem to float upon the water. **The experience:** Located in the wealthy commercial district of Gurgaon and close to both the international and domestic airports, the hotel is an excellent choice for business travelers. Butler service and spa treatments are round the clock, and the 24-hour fitness center has a 55-meter outdoor heated pool. Amaranta serves fresh crab and lobster from Indian waters. **If only...** the service were more consistent. **The room to book:** A fourth-floor Premier room for maximum privacy and an expansive view, or a Premier suite with a cantilevered private pool (91-124-245-1234; oberoihotels.com; doubles from \$640).

Leela Palace, Chanakyapuri, New Delhi
AAA The specs: An opulent new 260-room high-rise in New Delhi's diplomatic district. **The look:** Over-the-top fin-de-siècle maharaja luxe—double-height reception rooms hung with massive chandeliers and filled with gilded furniture, the couches plumped with elaborately brocaded pillows, tables laden with vast urns of flowers, and piccolo variations of the same played through the foyers and guest rooms. **The experience:** The Leela coosets you with a practiced hand from the moment you step into the limo sent to meet you at the airport—chilled towels, ice water, a beguiling sitar sound track... of course. Rooms are appointed just so for cocooning comfort, afternoon tea is accompanied by a string trio, and dining options range broadly. Choose among ca-

sual international in glass-walled Qube, classic Indian in a formal setting at Jamavar, Japanese at Megu, and, at a branch of New York's Le Cirque, delicious French and Italian. **If only...** the limo were free across the board—standard-room guests must pay \$87 for the service. **The room to book:** Disregard the usual concerns about room size (all are large) and view (undistinguished from even the highest floors), and opt for one on the club floors for access to all-day luxe hospitality and complimentary airport transfers (91-113-933-1234; theleela.com; doubles from \$300).

INDONESIA

W Retreat & Spa, Seminyak, Bali
AA The specs: A five-story, 237-unit hotel built around a lagoon pool on one of the best stretches of the Seminyak shoreline; 76 rooms in the main wing face the sea. The prime location is within walking distance of many of the island's best new restaurants on booming Jalan Petitenget. **The look:** Futuristic—more South Beach than Balinese village—with an emphasis on natural woods and gray volcanic stone. The spa is an architectural tour de force, with rounded corners, recessed blue lighting, and the aura of an elegant spaceship. **The experience:** The opera begins with a magical overture: The wide, breezy lobby has a wall of hand-blown glass and takes in a panoramic view of the sea and Bali's rugged southern peninsula. Rooms come with Bose surround-sound home cinema, 350-thread-count W signature bedding, and walk-in showers that are big enough for two. Personal trainers are available at the well-equipped gym, and free yoga classes are led daily in the adjoining garden. The haute-Asian cuisine, though pricey, rivals Bali's best. North Americans and young

THE PREDICTORS



ARCHITECTURE

THE EXPERTS Peter Stamberg and Paul Aferiat, architects and interior designers, The Saguaro (see page 122).

SIGNATURE STYLE Brighter is better. With their punchy paint jobs and clever designs, the duo have transformed museums, showrooms, and Park Avenue princesses' pads.

WHAT'S NEXT IN HOTEL ARCHITECTURE

- **Color explosions** "Post-recession, there was an unrelenting tendency toward all things neutral: whites, beiges. But now that we're a little removed from it, it's time for optimism—and color. The standard hotel room has always been neutral, with color added through two pieces of art. Look for those proportions to change over the next year: Think bright rooms with black-and-white art instead."
- **Big bathrooms** "Your hotel room should be sybaritic. Nothing conveys that better than a freestanding tub, walk-in shower, and double sinks—even if the actual room is diminutive by comparison."
- **Lobbies for lounging** "Once, you almost felt like you needed permission to go into a hotel lobby. But the new crop of hotels are becoming so inclusive that they seem to almost welcome loiterers. Look for more long tables, accessible power strips, and indoor-outdoor aesthetics that encourage people to walk right in."

professionals from Southeast Asia come for the Seminyak club scene; some of the hottest watering holes are an easy walk down the beach. Service throughout the hotel is superb. **If only...** the whimsical touches didn't include stickers of winged pigs flying across guest-room windows, marring the magnificent view. **The room to book:** Suite 528, on the top floor at the ocean end, has a view that may hold you hostage (62-361-4738 106; whotels.com; doubles from \$400).

IRELAND

Ballyfin, County Laois
AAA The specs: A 15-room country retreat on a Georgian estate in Laois (pronounced *leash*), an hour and a half from Dublin. **The look:** Eighteenth-century elegance: oil paintings of the former lords and ladies of the house, tufted banquettes, glittery chandeliers, elaborate cornices and friezes, and a secret door that leads to a glass conservatory decorated with Greco-Roman statues. **The experience:** Situated on 600 emerald-green acres, Ballyfin embodies every Irish cliché, from a lake surrounded by mystical thickets to a mossy stone tower for climbing. Each guest is met by a crew of courtly butlers lined up on the manor steps, then whisked into a grand, golden dining room, where lunch (Irish salmon baked in a pastry crust, soup made with tomatoes from the garden out back) is served by a snappily dressed garçon. The afternoon might be filled with a long walk (parasol optional), or boating, fishing, or horseback riding on the grounds. And then there's cocktail hour, when fur-clad ladies take prim sips of prosecco in a library stocked with antique and modern tomes. The large rooms are period too, but not obnoxiously so: Their sitting areas might be adorned in 1700s-era lamps, plates, and paintings, with a floral valance above the bed, but there's also a bathroom stocked with Irish-seaweed-derived Voya amenities and a hidden mini-fridge filled with gratis yuppie treats (elderflower soda, anyone?). Fred Cordonnier's fancified country dishes, like phyllo-wrapped local pheasant with chicory and elderberries, are paired with wines from a well-stocked cellar. **If only...** the spa were better. It's just some treatment rooms, and the services are only okay. **The room to book:** The Lady Caroline Cootie Room, where the lady of the manor once slept. It's done in beige and powder blue, with a rococo ceiling and sunlight streaming in through big easterly windows (353-5787-55866; ballyfin.com; doubles, \$1,240).

ISRAEL

UNDER \$300 **Beresheet Hotel, Negev Desert**
AAA The specs: A 111-room new-build on the rim of the Ramon

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