

STAYING POWER

From French mansions resting atop ancient limestone cliffs to 500-year-old settings in South Tyrol, here we peek through the keyholes of boltholes that have stood the test of time and a few newer sanctuaries that look set to do the same. Whether you're on a whistle-stop tour or a more languorous holiday, these are the places we recommend hanging your hat in the year ahead.



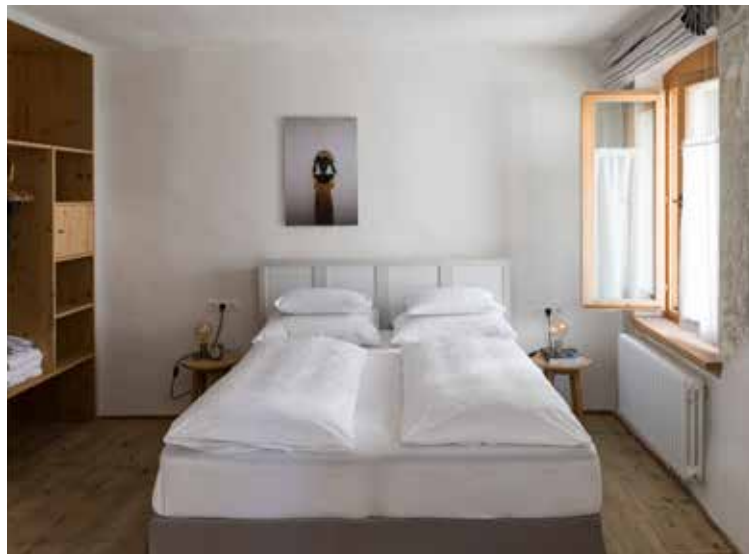
1477 REICHHALTER LANA, SOUTH TYROL

Klaus Dissertori (*pictured*), the founder of 1477 Reichhalter, grew up in family-run Hotel Schwarzschnied in Lana, a mountainous village known as the orchard of South Tyrol. The town of 11,000 stretches between Bolzano and Merano in the shadow of the Vigiljoch, whose rugged slopes are dotted with apple orchards and vineyards.

The Schwarzschnied, housed in an old blacksmith's workshop, opened its doors in 1981 and served as Dissertori's training ground (he studied economics in Munich instead of attending hotel school). Upon returning to his hometown, Dissertori took up the reins at the Schwarzschnied but always dreamt of opening his own space.



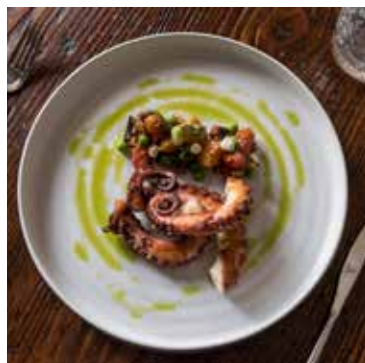
“Locals and visitors come together here, that was always the idea”



A run-down townhouse nearby ended up being the perfect counterpart. “The house stood empty for nearly a decade,” says Dissertori of the historic building dating from 1477. “I passed it almost daily and saw the potential.” At the beginning of the year, work began on turning the long-forgotten house into a carefully restored hotel; seven months later the 1477 Reichhalter opened.

Dissertori teamed up with architect Zeno Bampi and interior designer Christina Biasi-von Berg to refurbish the space while trying to retain its traditional features. “We kept as much as possible as it was,” says Dissertori, glancing up at the façade, whose mint-green shutters and doors have been brushed up (there is also a matching set of Pelago bikes parked in front).

The entrance opens into a wooden-floored hallway that doubles as the lobby; doors on either side lead into the restaurant. “This had been a tavern. All we did was polish the floors and restore the wood panelling; most of the furniture was already here,” says Dissertori of the restaurant, gushing over the Italian-inspired homecooked meals that are served by Martina and Andreas Heimsch, his childhood friends.



“Locals and visitors come together here, that was always the idea,” he says, adding that almost all ingredients are sourced from nearby farms and that the *vitello tonnato* has become a house classic.

The rooms, which are upstairs, number only eight, so it feels personal and homely here. The wooden floors were kept intact where possible and the plastering on the walls restored. “I went to visit countless flea markets in Italy to find the right antiques,” says Dissertori as he steps inside the Erasmus room (each is named after former owners of the building), which is furnished with mid-century modern pieces. The Marshall radio by the window is the most modern feature in the room: there is neither a television nor a telephone to be found. Instead there are stacks of carefully curated books, from an architectural tour of Lana to the history of the Bauhaus. “The guest is here to get a sense of the place, the house and this space, and that’s best done without the distraction of a TV,” says Dissertori.



Each room has just one piece of art on the walls (if you don’t count the picturesque views): a large picture by Jasmine Deporta, who photographed performance artists in the old house, representing the life of the building’s former owner. Each photo has been placed where it was taken. This level of thoughtfulness defines everything Dissertori has done with the hotel.

His family, and his brother in particular, provided valuable assistance. “We worked on this project day and night. It’s the realisation of a dream. It’s not a hotel for everyone; it’s for design-minded people,” says Dissertori, stepping out onto the rooftop, which overlooks the town below and the castle of Braunsberg on a cliff in the verdant mountains.

These days Dissertori splits his time between the two hotels, often accompanied by his dog Bruno. “In my eyes the classic hotel has died: places like this are the future.” — MSS 1477reichhalter.com



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PHOTOGRAPHER: LUCA MENEHIEL



**THE BOWER
BYRON BAY**

One of 11 properties under the umbrella of Byron Beach Abodes, The Bower reimagines the classic beach motel in one of Australia's most popular coastal holiday spots. The property is set in bushland just a stone's throw from the beach and shops; owners Taliah and Sein Lowry married Byron Bay's relaxed tropical vibe with the contemporary elegance of a downtown New York boutique hotel.

The pair had toyed with the idea of relocating stateside with their young family but parked the idea when the palm-fringed Byron Bay property became available in 2016. A year later, the hotel – complete with 14 suites, a self-contained barn studio and two cottages sleeping up to 10 guests – opened its doors.

Architect John Burgess was determined to give the former motel “a new spirit and identity”. He realised his goal with the help of landscape designer Daniel Kemp and interior designer Kate Sacks. Each space has been treated individually and features soft furnishings in natural fibres, one-of-a-kind artwork, vintage collectables and plenty of Byron Bay's year-round sunshine. — CR thebowerbyronbay.com.au

COMMENT: Set on one of Byron Bay's oldest properties, the hotel and standalone cottages dotted throughout tropical gardens feel like they have always been here.



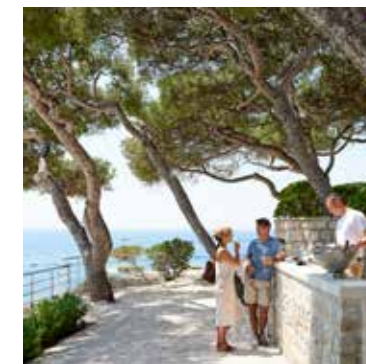
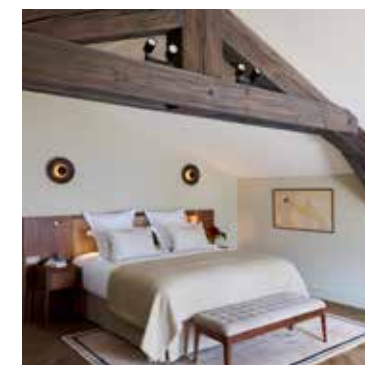
**LES ROCHES BLANCHES
CASSIS, FRANCE**

The mansion housing Les Roches Blanches was built into the limestone cliffs of the Cassis coast in 1877. The sheltered *calanques* were prime spots for nudist swimmers before the house was turned into a hotel in the 1920s, which reopened this summer after a makeover led by Parisian architect Monika Kappel (*pictured*).

“To rehabilitate such a storied French Riviera hotel was a unique opportunity, as my favourite challenge is to give a second life to places that are richly steeped in history,” says Kappel. In keeping with the hotel's art deco spirit, the architect restored many of the original features and introduced plush period armchairs, palm-patterned wallpaper and black granite floors with brass inserts.

The refurbishment brought high-flying visitors back to the retreat. In its heyday the 36-room hotel welcomed Winston Churchill and Edith Piaf; today the likes of former French president François Hollande and actress Julie Gayet visit to take in the view.

It's the contrast between the rough white rocks and sleek interiors that gives this place its charm



It's the stunning Mediterranean-facing cliff location and the sharp contrast between the rough white rocks and sleek interior that give this place its charm. Not to mention the serene swimming pool surrounded by aromatic pine trees and the beach accessible by a staircase built into the limestone.

The Belles Canailles restaurant is another highlight. Chef Jean-Paul Cudennec serves a Mediterranean menu rich with seasonal produce and fresh seafood. Sipping a glass of Cassidian wine on the clifftop terrace overlooking the sea is reason enough to visit. — DHZ roches-blanches-cassis.com

COMMENT: Both regulars and newcomers feel at home here. Thankfully the luxurious hotel has not tried to tame the wild landscape.

IMAGES: DIDIER DALMAS



ALEX HOTEL DUBLIN

While Dublin's restaurant scene has flourished, the stock of decent design-minded hotels hasn't stirred much – until now. The former industrial area north of Merrion Square has been revived with a 103-key affair overseen by interior architect John-Henry Boyle of Dublin-based practice 21 Spaces.

The Alex Hotel's open lobby leads to a fetching dining area dotted with low fabric-covered banquettes, a peachy colour scheme and 1950s-style furniture. Up front you'll spy a brace of sturdy Belfast-made walnut desks on which itinerant freelancers and lingering guests are chatting, usually with a coffee from the adjoining Steam Café.

Upstairs, the rooms are generous in size and adorned with soft throws from Foxford Woollen Mills, walnut armoires and leather headboards made in (not of) Cork. "I've always tried to look at the materials we use. They're very precious and I don't take them lightly: timber is a scarce commodity, as are ceramics or marble," says Boyle, in his distinctive Donegal brogue, of the space owned and run by O'Callaghan Hotels. "I don't need people to react but I like the idea that they might be touched by some aspect of the design." — JAF thealexhotel.ie

COMMENT: Due attention has been paid to tactility: the velvet, wool, brass and wood finishes create a homely atmosphere – and that's before you've been shown to your room.

KENSHO PSAROU MYKONOS

Buddhist awakenings aren't the first thing to spring to mind when visiting buzzing Psarou beach on the party island of Mykonos – but Kensho strives to provide a peaceful and comfortable seaside retreat. "Absolute relaxation is what we offer," says George Semertzakis of Kensho Hotels. "Mykonos is known for its partying but you can't party all day; you need a few hours to relax."

The boutique hotel strives to distinguish itself with every detail of its architecture and services. The 70-strong staff are discreetly familiar with their guests. "We contact our customers prior to their arrival as we want to understand their needs," says front-office manager Apostolos Michalovits.

Architect Alexandros Kolovos has interspersed aged wood and stone to instil a sense of continuity between the Cycladic white bungalows and the sun-soaked landscape. The 32 rooms, furnished with Gervasoni teak chairs, acacia tables by Kenneth Cobonpue and white linens by Crist, come with plunge pools or hot tubs, as well as sea views.

In the kitchen, chef Ippokratris Anagnostelis mixes local food with Peruvian and Japanese influences. We recommend the ceviche made from Greek sea bass and scallop skin, kiwi and zesty *leche de tigre*. — NS kenshomylonos.com

COMMENT: From its whitewashed wooden architecture to its flavourful fusion food, Kensho Psarou offers guests a serene retreat by the island's most famous beach.

THE LUMIÈRES HOTEL & SPA LISBON

The Bomporto Hotels Group, established in 2015, has made it its mission to transform historic buildings in need of restoration into boutique hotels. The Lumières Hotel & Spa in Lisbon, housed in an 18th-century palace, was its first project. "When we saw the building it was just three walls, scaffolding and graffiti but what attracted us to it was its location and the building itself," says founder Chris Eddis. Together with business partner Peter Lowe, Eddis found a way to keep the palatial structure intact while incorporating 53 rooms, two restaurants and a spa within.

Creative director Sam Lawrie oversaw the interior design and drew inspiration from the hotel's buzzing neighbourhood of Bairro Alto. All the rooms, meanwhile, come fitted with a kitchen, Smeg appliances and a fully stocked complimentary minibar.

Peckish guests can visit Mercado, the hotel's informal restaurant, where chef Miguel Castro e Silva serves traditional pastries and *petiscos* (finger food). Another pleasant way to wind down is at the spa. "Lisbon is very hilly and the best way to get around is by foot, which can be exhausting," says Eddis. "With the spa we are hoping to offer guests a relaxing end to the day." — GSL thelumieres.com

COMMENT: Every room features a framed fragment of a poem by Fernando Pessoa. Each piece was hand-pressed in an age-old letterpress studio on the Azores Islands.

OVOLO NISHI CANBERRA

The Nishi Building has been a game-changer for the formerly humdrum Australian capital. When it opened in 2014, the building and the surrounding precinct of New Acton gave the bureaucratic centre a design-led cultural hub, complete with a cinema, shops and workspaces. Its centrepiece is the 68-room Ovolo Nishi (formerly Hotel Hotel), recently acquired by Hong Kong's expanding Ovolo Hotels brand.

"This hotel is unlike any other in Canberra," says Ovolo Nishi's general manager Nicole Short. "It's helped attract a new market of leisure travellers. We get staycationers and visitors from surrounding areas who come to Canberra for the art galleries and food."

First impressions count: Ovolo's lobby features an impressive timber installation by Melbourne's March Studio and the rooms marry concrete and cork to create cosy and simple spaces. The developers of the hotel, Nectar and Johnathan Efkarpidis of the Molonglo Group, personalised each room with bespoke furniture, colourful fabrics and eclectic artwork.

The hotel's bar-restaurant Monster has Italian terrazzo flooring studded with old-fashioned floral carpets and sofas; the Efkarpidis brothers wanted it to look like their Greek grandmother's living room. — AB ovolohotels.com.au/ovolonishi

COMMENT: At every turn there is evidence of the passion and playfulness of Ovolo Nishi's founders and owners.

PHOTOGRAPHERS: MARK DUGGAN, PEDRO GUIMARAES • MARCO ARGUELLO



UMITOTA
TESHIMA, JAPAN

It's hard to fathom that a sofa could be the highlight of a house tour but the cushions in a sunken section of the living room are where Yuri Kikuchi beckons first-time visitors to sit. "From here you see the rice paddies behind the house and the sea through the glass front door," he says.

This is the view that Akira Minagawa, fashion designer and founder of Japanese label Minä Perhonen, had in mind for the renovation of the two-storey house on Teshima, a small island of 800 in Japan's Seto Inland Sea. The house opened in April as a holiday rental called Umitota ("sea and field"). "Minagawa wanted the landscape to be visible from every room," says Kikuchi, whose employer, Circle House, owns and manages the property.

While modest in scale, Umitota is a sign of change on Teshima. Since the first Setouchi Triennale contemporary-art festival in 2010, thousands of visitors have come by boat every year for the island's art installations and slow pace.

The island is covered in pine forests and olive and lemon orchards; in summer it blossoms with wildflowers



PHOTOGRAPHER: MASAKAZU KUROIWA



The island is covered in red pine forests, olive and lemon orchards and twisting two-lane roads; in summer it attracts cyclists and blossoms with wildflowers. Its beaches are pristine and storks roam the fields. “It’s idyllic and there are still few tourists,” says Kikuchi, who moved here from Tokyo a year ago.

It’s hard to believe that for decades Teshima had been associated with rubbish. The island’s western tip was the site of an illegal industrial-waste dump from the late 1970s until court battles and grassroots activism brought attention to the plight of the island’s residents. In 2000 the government began removing the waste and contaminated soil from the island and dismantling the facility. Art has since broadened the island’s appeal but accommodation remains rustic.



“From here you see the rice paddies behind the house and the sea through the glass front door”

Two years ago, Circle House’s owner Mitsuko Fukutake asked fashion designer Minagawa to give the disused property a makeover. Built in the 1970s, the house had been a getaway for a family of longtime Teshima residents.

Together with Shinichiro Ogata of Tokyo design firm Simplicity, Minagawa set out to preserve the wooden building’s original structure while reimagining its interior as a mix of Nordic and Japanese design. With its hip-and-gable roof covered in fired-clay tiles, the house resembles others on the island – but with some Minagawa alterations. He moved the entrance to the building’s sea-facing side and hired stone masons to make the countertops and bath tubs from volcanic rock found around Teshima.

Minagawa also recruited volunteers to join him in covering the exterior walls with abalone shells. “I wanted this house to have a place in the history of the island,” he says. — KH umitota.jp



COMMENT: The house feels lived-in thanks to Minagawa’s careful curation, from the Minä Perhonen upholstery to the Iga-yaki ceramic pots in the kitchen.