



The Gallivanter's Guide

100 CLUB

HONEST ADVICE FOR THE WORLD'S TOP TRAVELLERS

Although we did not manage to stay at every great hotel in Paris, this issue attempts to cover those that set or try to emulate the high-end benchmark. Sadly, there was insufficient time to revisit Plaza Athénée, which is one of my favourites, or to see how Lutetia, on the Left Bank, is faring these days. Otherwise, we

bring you the latest would-be stars in the City of Lights, together with the renowned Palace hotels that tend to put the rest of Europe to shame. As you will see, new is not necessarily better, and small is not always more personalised; but what is evident is that Paris, out of all the world's capitals, really does understand high-end

hospitality, even in these challenging times.

Bulgari Paris.

From Milan to Bali, and Shanghai to London, this chic Roman jewellery house has consistently employed interior designers, Antonio Citterio & Patricia Viel, whose



A cosy corner of the Bulgari Lounge, at Bulgari Paris.

THIS MONTH. Bulgari Paris: Page 1. Ritz Paris: Page 4. Four Seasons George V Paris: Page 8. Hôtel Le Bristol Paris: Page 12. Cheval Blanc Paris: Page 15. La Réserve Hôtel & Spa Paris: Page 18. Gallivanter's Gossip: Page 22.



At Bulgari Paris, the Bulgari Lounge, with its huge cast-iron open fireplace, seduces you to stay.

mission is to bring a slice of La Dolce Vita and a touch of Italian flair to Bulgari's hotel projects.

Frankly, I was never a huge fan of the duo's somewhat uniform approach to interior design; but in the case of their seventh outpost in Paris, the final result is truly splendid.

The 76-room property, which was created from a drab 1970's style post office on Avenue George V, was restyled with pale ashlar masonry and bronze window frames, which give this nine-storey structure a pleasing Parisian look that integrates well with the surrounding Haussmann buildings.

With its intimate size and tranquil atmosphere, this is a very appealing boutique hotel. The discreet foyer features a portrait of actress Monica Vitti by Franco-Chinese painter Yan-Pei Ming, whilst Bulgari's signature eight-pointed star is set into the floor, highlighted by a striking metal and Murano glass lighting fixture.

Immediately to the left, there is a small reception area, with leather-trimmed desks, whilst to the right, the open-plan Bulgari Lounge, with its rose gold and yellow silk carpets by Altai of Milan, ceramics from Gio Ponti, plush low-lying sofas and a huge cast iron open fire, seduces you to stay. From here, the space flows seamlessly into a louche bar, with black granite floors and an onyx bar counter. Inspired by a music room that belonged to Yves Saint Laurent, this is a sophisticated spot to enjoy a Negroni, or nibble on sweet or savoury bombs; the Italian equivalent of a doughnut.

Behind the Bar and facing a small inter-

nal landscaped courtyard, Il Ristorante is the hotel's only dining room. With a mere 26 tables; the walls clad in saffron silk, this intimate gem resembles the inside of a Hermès shopping bag.

The atmosphere is quiet and relaxed, and the flavourful cuisine, by Executive Chef Davide Capucchio, is inspiring. Indeed, I would not be surprised to see a Michelin star coming his way soon, such is the quality of everything. This is delicious, no fuss Italian fare, with an emphasis on healthy cooking techniques and a minimal use of

animal fats, such as the perfectly textured Milanese-style escalope, which uses much lighter rice starch for its coating, rather than eggs and breadcrumbs.

Service is right on point, whilst the wide array of Italian wines complements the cuisine exceptionally well. Breakfast stands out as one of the best in Paris, with an à la carte menu offering a choice of Parisian or Italian breads baked on the premises, using three different types of flour, alongside a selection of the best homemade preserves in the city.

Of the 76 rooms, 56 are suites; many of them featuring spacious furnished, heated terraces; or loggias in Bulgari-speak. Most overlook the internal patio, and I was a little worried that the neighbouring school at the rear of the building would marr the peace; but you need not fear, as all the accommodations are pin-drop quiet.

The handsomely decorated rooms sport Italian handcrafted furniture in shades of coffee and hazelnut, with Maxalto sofas and armchairs. The details cannot fail to impress, from walls covered in Shantung silk, and low marble and chrome coffee tables accessorised with brightly coloured art and fashion tomes, to plush herringbone patterned carpeting that references the parquet floors found in Parisian apartments.

The supremely comfortable custom-made beds, draped in Rivolta Carmignani linens and cashmere blankets by Enzo degli Anguioni, are flanked by mirrored bedside tables that, cleverly, conceal various plugs, master switches and neatly folded USB cords.

All mod cons are present and correct,



Bulgari's signature eight-pointed star.



The Bulgari Bar, with its backlit onyx counter, at Bulgari Paris.

with leather-trimmed Illy coffee machines, kettles, and in the top-end suites, mini-bars disguised as a travel trunks. Just about everything can be controlled via iPad, from the lighting and air conditioning, to even the entrance door. The only bizarre omission is the blackout drapes, which are operated manually.

The spacious bathrooms, some of which are equipped with private hammams, are clad in Navona Travertine marble and boast frosted wall lights, and sinks set on mirrored chrome bases. A glass art piece, engraved with the Bulgari Serpenti Constellation motif, is one of the few discreet nods to the

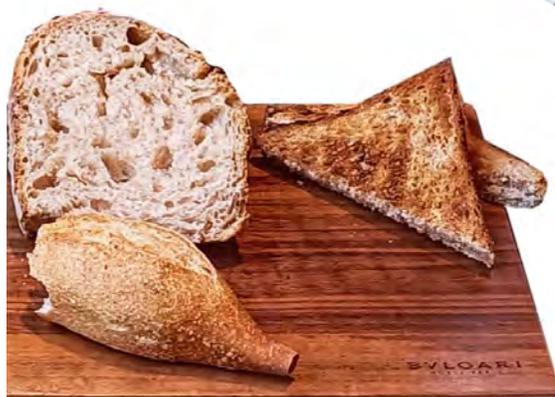
famed Italian jewellery brand.

Plentiful amenities include Bulgari bath products, Himalayan salts and even incense sticks, together with a seemingly endless list of extras that can be ordered through the very guest-friendly in-room iPad. The separate loos are high-tech Toto models, whilst most walk-in closets feature mirrored dressing tables.

I stayed in a very comfortable Deluxe Suite Terrace, #704, which features a dining room and 194 sq ft furnished terrace. However, even one of the 25 airy Junior

Suites, such as #304, is an excellent choice. Even better are the four 1,022 sq ft Executive Suites with Terrace, such as #805; all very residential in style, and able to connect with either a Deluxe Suite Terrace or an Executive Room.

The nicest of the four Bulgari Suites are, in my view, Bulgari I & III, which flow rather better than the slightly larger, Bulgari II & IV. However, the wow factor has to be the jaw-dropping, 4,305 sq ft two-bedroom Bulgari Penthouse Suite, which occupies two floors and features 6,450 sq ft of rooftop gardens and terraces, filled with magnolias, oak, pear and apple trees. Indeed, the only thing missing here is a pool or a jacuzzi, which, I hear, could be in the works.



Despite its size, The Penthouse remains relatively intimate, thanks to a gorgeous mirrored door that can privatise the breathtaking double-height dining room from the sitting room. There is also a fitness room, hammam, and striking glassed-in master bedroom with terraces, affording astonishing close-up

Chef, Davide Capucchio's flavourful cuisine, in the hotel's 26-table Il Ristorante, at Bulgari Paris.



The extraordinary Penthouse Suite, #901, at Bulgari Paris.
views of the Eiffel tower.

The sprawling yet intimate Bulgari Spa is set on two levels and comprises nine Vinzenza stone and Burmese teak treatment rooms; each with their own private showers, and an impressive 700 sq ft Spa Suite, with wooden interiors, double bed, jacuzzi, and a hammam ensconced in green onyx.

The look is a tad on the stark side, and I think that it would benefit from softer

lighting and a splash of colour; but I liked the fact that the Spa boutique is secreted away in a separate room, away from reception.

There are five different Spa brands on offer here, from Augustinus Bader, Bellefontaine, Annané, and 111 Skin, to the somewhat more natural, Amala. The highlight is the Spa's extraordinary jade-green 82 ft swimming pool, flanked by four-

poster loungers and sandblasted glass columns. There is also a relaxing mosaic vitality pool, inspired by Rome's Caracalla baths, a white marble hammam, and an ice fountain. Meanwhile, in both men's and women's changing rooms, you will find infrared saunas, and if you are looking to exercise, there is an impressive health centre, which is an outpost of London's Workshop gym.

Not only is Bulgari Paris an exquisitely designed hotel, but it is also supremely well managed by the charismatic, Sylvain Ercoli, previously of Bulgari London and the Ritz Paris. The hotel's opening was delayed for almost two years due to Covid-19, which gave management time to fully prepare; and this really shows, as every staff member is



Deluxe Suite, #704, at Bulgari Paris.

consistently friendly and professional; quite a few of them having cut their teeth at the neighbouring George V.

If you are looking for a traditional Parisian experience, then this sleek, intimate boutique hotel may not be for you. However, if you value superbly comfortable accommodations, relaxed, professional service and wonderful Italian cuisine, I promise that you will not be disappointed. Frankly, I did not expect to love Bulgari Paris; but it turned out to be the best surprise of this trip. Do go.

bulgarihotels.com

Gallivanter's Rating: ★★★★★

Ritz Paris.

One of the most famous hotels in the world, Ritz Paris is the City of Lights' original Grande Dame and has been a symbol of l'art de vivre à la Française since 1898. Created by César Ritz, it strived to be the finest hotel in the world and was one of



Bathroom of Penthouse Suite, #901, at Bulgari Paris.



The 82 foot jade green swimming pool, flanked by four-poster loungers, at Bulgari Paris.

the first hotels in Europe to introduce in-room phones, electricity, and private bathrooms.

After resting on its laurels for rather too long, in 2012, this iconic property finally embarked on a much-needed renovation. The hotel was closed for an unprecedented four years; its major face-lift overseen by French born interior designer, Thierry W. Despont; famous for restoring the Statue of Liberty in New York.

The brief was to update the hotel and make it lighter and brighter, without sacrificing its legendary old-world allure. Many items were auctioned off; but most of the original antique furniture, light fittings and artworks were retained. Clocks were metic-

ulously restored, whilst damask curtains and embroidered bedheads were given a new lease of life; the signature gold and blue colour scheme retained.

Much of the investment went into updating the back of house, with new plumbing, silent air-conditioning and electrics; but de-



The Lobby, at Ritz Paris.



Le Grand Jardin, at Ritz Paris, with its serried ranks of Linden trees.

spite all this, I am pretty sure that Coco Chanel, who called the Ritz home for more than 30 years, would still recognise it.

Although there was never a grand lobby here, it has been enlarged somewhat so that it now feels airier. Just past the Concierge desk, you find a small reception area, with tall arched windows, and a grand staircase with a sweeping balustrade of polished brass and gilded iron. There are fresh floral displays, custom made Pierre Frey carpets and a long gallery flooded with light that leads to a new bijou circular elevator of translucent glass, painted with

gold figures, that takes you to the various bars and restaurants.

One of these is the visually dazzling Grand Siècle dining room, La Table de L'Espadon, with its painted ceilings and Murano glass chandelier, which dates back to the early days of electricity. The restaurant has been closed since 2021, after the departure of 2-Michelin Chef, Nicolas Sale, who was at the helm of the hotel's kitchens for 6 years. He also oversaw the second fine dining restaurant, Les Jardins de L'Espadon, which is set in an adjacent conservatory and, during my stay, served a splendid à la carte breakfast.

Thankfully, the Ritz has now appointed Chef, Eugénie Béziat, who earned a Michelin star when she was presiding over the kitchens of La Filbuste, in the South of France, which means that the hotel's iconic dining room should reopen this coming autumn or winter.

At the time of writing, the only dining

option was the Belle Époque, Bar Vendôme; a very Parisian restaurant with red velvet booths and a handful of tables beneath a retractable glass canopy, where you can dine to the sound of a live piano. The traditional Brasserie cuisine was very acceptable and well-presented; but did not attempt to compete in the realms of gastronomy.

The Ritz features a further three watering holes; but sadly, I only had time for one. The most famous is, of course, the virtually unchanged Hemingway Bar, with its bar stools, small circular tables, leather ban-



La Table de L'Espadon, at Ritz Paris.

quettes and walls packed with quirky memorabilia and old black and white photographs of the man himself.

However, the brand new and utterly stunning Art Deco, Ritz Bar is not to be missed,



Dining at Bar Vendôme, Ritz Paris.

with its circular bar, crowned with an 8 ft. high brass lantern, etched with a fresco of the zodiac. Here, there is live music and a dramatic light show every day at 5.30 pm, when images of the constellations are projected onto the ceiling. The zodiac-themed cocktails, such as the Erotique, which mixes muscat, fig leaf, floral musk and Cham-

pagne, are superb.

For a totally different experience, there is the historic book-lined Salon Proust; a wood paneled library furnished with plush velveteen armchairs and a wood-burning fireplace. In the afternoon, they serve a traditional sweet-only French afternoon tea, with pastries by Chef Pâtissier, François Perret. His creations can also be enjoyed at Le Comptoir, the Ritz's new patisserie, which is housed in the hotel's former Ritz Bar. In the evening, the lights are dimmed, and Salon Proust turns into a buzzy Champagne Bar.

With 24 separate categories, the 142 rooms, which were reduced in number and enlarged, include 71 suites. All the bathrooms now feature separate walk-in showers with marble benches, three different shower heads, twin vanities and heated floors. Gold-plated faucets are shaped like swans, whilst crystal taps sport one sapphire and one ruby eye. You will also find the hotel's signature peach-coloured towels and bathrobes, which according to César Ritz, enhance ladies' complexions!

Aesthetically, the sumptuous accommodations retain their lavish 18th Century French décor, with classical panelling, floral drapes and headboards, and pale cream



The brand new and utterly stunning Ritz Bar, at Ritz Paris.



The historic, book-lined Salon Proust, at Ritz Paris.

and ivory finishes, with touches of gold, blue, taupe and pink. Beautiful details abound, such as the delicate tulip-shaped lampshades by the beds, and the small, gilded wall clocks. Although the style may be seen as a tad ostentatious for these times, I find it very fitting.

Technology works quite well, with an old-fashioned service remote on the nightstand, touch screen phones, and televisions disguised as large gilded mirrors, or camouflaged on easels.

Opt at least for one of the seriously spacious Deluxe Junior Suites, such as #304, which features a separate sitting area with a comfortable sofa, two chairs and an open fire, and is one of the most pleasant junior suites that I have ever experienced. The bedroom, which overlooks a leafy courtyard, is equally spacious, with its supremely comfortable kingsize, adorned with monogrammed pillowcases. The bathroom is a little small, whereas the dressing room is spacious enough to comfortably accommodate two adults. The mini bar is hidden behind a discreet door and, somewhat oddly, does not feature an espresso machine, although if you ask nicely, they will deliver one in a trice.

If you crave outdoor space, opt for Suite Grand Jardin, #120, with its furnished terrace overlooking the garden; or the Mansard Suite, with its sizeable rooftop garden. On the smaller side, there are the Grand Deluxe rooms with terrace, such as #118,

located on the first floor; a category not featured on the hotel's website.

Further up the scale, an Executive Suite, such as #317, offers a large sitting area, but a rather snug bedroom. A better choice would be a larger Deluxe Suite, such as #329, with its curved walls and garden views.

Some of the hotel's speciality suites take opulence to the next level. Indeed, staying in the lavishly decorated Imperial Suite, that overlooks the Vendôme Column, is probably the closest thing to your own pad in Versailles. The sumptuously restored grand sitting room is decorated in rich shades of

bordeaux and burgundy, whilst one of the bedrooms is a replica of Marie-Antoinette's last boudoir and has been designated as a National Monument.

Of the themed suites, new versions include the very feminine, Maria Callas Suite, which is decorated in pale pinks and pastel fabrics, with a splendid bathroom and hammam. Another striking option is the theatrical 963 sq ft Opera Suite, with its bow window overlooking Opéra Garnier. The Suite that I did not like was the wood-paneled Marcel Proust Suite, which I found somewhat claustrophobic.

For retail therapy galore, head for the Gallery of the Ritz, with its vaulted skylight and bronze lanterns. Resembling a 19th Century covered passage, it is lined with over 90 fashion-oriented shops, together with the new Ritz boutique.

Elsewhere, one of the highlights of the Ritz is its peaceful, manicured 21,500 sq ft Grand Jardin, which is lined with 26 linden trees, set in Versailles planters.

The subterranean two-storey Ritz Club features a 7-treatment room Spa, that uses Biologique Recherche products, a David Mallett hair salon and a state-of-the-art fitness centre. At the heart of the Club is a spectacular Art Deco heated pool, which is hand-inlaid with 800,000 mosaics in fifty shades of blue, and flanked with columns and sweeping staircases; the lighting a little too bright for my taste. Keep in mind that the Ritz is selling Spa memberships and day passes, so you could find it busier



Deluxe Suite, #329, at Ritz Paris.



The evocative Maria Callas Suite, at Ritz Paris.

than most hotels.

Despite the hotel's distinguished pedigree, service, under the excellent General Manager, Marc-Olivier Raffray, is reassuringly



Portrait of Maria Callas, at Ritz Paris.

down to earth, with no pretensions. Staff is unfailingly courteous, pulling out all the stops for an unforgettable experience, including the efficient doormen who greet



Gold plated faucets, at Ritz Paris.

you by name and are always quick to help.

'When I dream of afterlife in heaven, the action always takes place in the Paris Ritz', wrote Ernest Hemingway. I totally agree with the great man; the Ritz Paris is a rare treat and a must for every serious hotel aficionado. If it were not for the lack of a gas-

Four Seasons George V Paris.

The flagship of the Four Seasons group is one of the most celebrated hotels in the world. Why? Simply because it never sits on its laurels.



The Ritz Club, with its Art Deco heated pool, at Ritz Paris.

tronomic restaurant during my stay, this iconic property would score even higher. Do go.

ritzparis.com

Gallivanter's Rating: ✓✓✓✓+

Just take the newly renovated Parisian Suite, #615, which resembles a modern ultra-luxe Parisian apartment, replete with Empire style furnishings, antique Persian rugs and a balcony overlooking the hotel's marble



The new Parisian Suite, #615, at Four Seasons George V Paris.

courtyard. Spread over 1,500 sq ft, this residential abode features an office area with a desk and library, plus a dining room with a fireplace and kitchen. The oversized bathroom, which boasts a huge mosaic-tiled shower, is adorned with intricately crafted parakeets, sculpted in Lalique crystals, and custom designed by Pierre Yves Rochon. This suite radiates elegance and is, without doubt, one of the most beautifully conceived suites I have ever experienced; so

good, in fact, that they could have thrown away the key and locked me away forever.

The other addition is the transformation of the old Empire Suite, #733, which is now the cream and ivory Eiffel Tower Suite, with its sun-flooded bow windows and beautiful wrought iron wraparound terrace, offering panoramic views of numerous Paris landmarks. Both suites connect to other rooms, making them ideal for groups and families.

Another irresistible signature suite is the romantic Penthouse Suite, which boasts the most beautiful bathroom you can imagine; a splendid winter garden dining area and four terraces with close-up views of the Eiffel Tower. Even if you are not overnighting in the Penthouse, a private dinner can be organised there, which is a special experience that I heartily recommend.

Then you have the Presidential suites, which were renovated in 2016; all quite



The new Eiffel Tower Suite, #733, at Four Seasons George V Paris.



View from Eiffel Tower Suite , #733, at Four Seasons.

different, such as #201, which is a glorious mix of old and new, with its oversized wood-panelled sitting and dining areas.

Even a corner Deluxe Room, such as #341, decorated in calming duck-egg blue, cream and soft gold, manages to be simultaneously grand and homely. Interestingly, the hotel is hinting at an upcoming new look, which perplexes me somewhat, as everything is so fresh and well-maintained that I would not change a thing.

What I love most about this hotel is that

no matter who you are, you are always treated like royalty, from your arrival at the airport, where Four Seasons offer a hassle-free VIP plane-to-limousine service, to entering the hotel, where we were whisked away to our suite by an army of chatty and



smiling staff, leaving us barely enough time to soak up the marvellous atmosphere of the lobby, draped in sculptural flower creations by Jeff Leatham. This never fails to take my breath away, no matter how often I experience it.

At every level, there are innumerable good people working at George V, such as the caring Regional VP & General Manager, Jean-Claude Wietzel and the very visible Hotel Manager, Thibaut Drège; both of



whom are terrific hosts.

As with all Four Seasons, suite amenities here are lavish, with chilled vintage Champagne, bowls of berries, chocolates and macarons; and best of all, they are refreshed constantly throughout your stay.

Aside from the outstanding accommodation and top-notch service, Four Seasons George V Paris offers a dizzying array of dining options, including three outstanding Michelin-starred restaurants.

At the heart of the hotel, La Galerie, with its 17th century Flemish tapestries, classic 19th century furniture and sumptuous floral arrangements, is a great spot for people-watching. In the morning, a top-quality breakfast buffet, featuring Middle Eastern options, is displayed in the conservato-



Restaurant Le Cinq, at Four Seasons George V Paris.



Restaurant, Le George, at Four Seasons George V Paris, overlooks the Marble Courtyard.

ry and can be complemented by à la carte dishes, such as creamy avocado on gluten free toast. For lunch and dinner, the all-day menu focuses on traditional French comfort food, such as beef tartare or Hachis parmentier, which are served with the best baguette in town.

Opened in 2015, the Michelin-starred, yet laid-back Le George, with its splendid custom-made neoclassical Pierre Frey carpets, leather tables and Baccarat crystal chandelier, is bright and luminous, thanks to its 23-foot-high glass and steel conservatory, which extends from the main dining room into the marble courtyard. The seasonal

Mediterranean inspired farm-to-table menu by Chef, Simone Zanoni, revolves around quality ingredients, which include fresh vegetables from the hotel's own organic gardens in Versailles. Do not miss the sharing crudo starters, which are particularly memorable.

L'Orangerie, which earned a Michelin star after a mere 8 months of opening, is under the helm of Chef, Alain Taudon. Housed in a glass extension of La Galerie, the smallest of the George V's restaurants only seats 20 people and is therefore a very intimate affair. The emphasis is on light, innovative plant and fish-based dishes, and Taudon's

bold cuisine is a revelation. Try the very unusual lemon sheep kefir milk in a salty shell, which is an oyster-based meringue dessert.

Then, of course, there is Le Cinq, under Executive Chef Christian Le Squer, which was just as good if not better than I remembered. The regal grey and gold dining room features tall potted palm trees, traditional French and English furniture and gold leaf mirrors that reflect the views of the Marble Courtyard. We tried the restaurant's epicurean tasting menu that celebrated 20 years of three Michelin stars, with famed signature dishes, such as the revisited gratinated onion soup, and the ham, mushroom and truffle spaghetti gratin.

There is a unique team of professionals at Le Cinq, such as Eric Beaumard, who is arguably France's most famous Sommelier, and the amiable Assistant Manager, Franck Painchaud; both of whom look after you supremely well, as you sample Le Squer's artistic, culinary creations. Indeed, the team resembles a troupe of ballet dancers, weaving effortlessly between tables.

Finally, there is the small, supremely elegant Bar, that remains refreshingly traditional and is a very relaxing spot for a light, informal lunch or pre-prandial cocktails.

The gleaming subterranean Spa, which was reimaged in 2018, features 6 treatment rooms, including a couple's suite. Luxuriously designed by Pierre Yves Rochon, it blends Greco-Roman influences with contemporary art and chic floral wallpaper.

If you prefer chemical-free skincare, then little will please you here. However, if your idea of a spa experience involves green caviar facials, Champagne bubble scrubs and macarons, then this is the place for you. Irony aside, despite my lack of empathy with the treatments, I really enjoyed this relaxing facility, with its enlarged 56 foot long swimming pool, flanked with cushy loungers, vitality pool and two bijou hammams clad in mosaics and marble. I also appreciated the 970 sq ft fitness facility, which faces the pool and offers all the latest Technogym equipment.

Other than its lack of a chemical-free option in the Spa, this remarkable palace remains one in a million, and I cannot think of a better place to stay in Paris. Do return!

fourseasons.com

Gallivanter's Rating: ★★★★★+



The swimming pool, within the Spa, at Four Seasons George V Paris.

Hôtel Le Bristol.

One of the very few criticisms of Le Bristol is that its design is overly traditional; so having barely emerged from a slow and subtle 10-year renovation, I was curious to see if this chic Oetker family-owned Grande Dame had managed to shake off its old-school image.

The accommodation revamp, by Countess Bergit Douglas and MM-design, follows the makeover of all three restaurants in 2015, and more recently of the enchanting courtyard garden at the rear of the hotel, which now transforms itself each summer into Le Jardin Français; the outdoor extension of Café Antonia, the hotel's all-day-dining lounge.

Another new addition is L'Épicerie des Ateliers du Bristol, where you can buy homemade delicacies, such as the superb chocolate creations by Head Chocolatier, Johan Giachetti, together with handcrafted cakes, pastries and artisanal breads by new Head Pastry Chef, Pascal Hainigue, who mills his own flour in the hotel's on-site bakery. Les Ateliers also features a cheese-ageing cellar and will soon embark on the art of making fresh pasta in the hotel kitchens.

Renovated during the previous round of refurbishments, by the coveted Pierre Yves



Tea, overlooking the gardens at Le Bristol.

Rochon, Le Bar du Bristol is an unusually clubby, contemporary departure from the norm. Obviously, the aim was to attract a younger crowd of locals, and in this respect, I think it works splendidly. The eye-catching décor mixes old and new with an abundance of pine wall panels, mirrored tables, upholstered Giacometti stools, illuminated bookcases, leopard-print silk, mirrors and painted ceilings. On weekends, Le Bar morphs into the neon-lit 'Le Bristol After Dark', ready for the party crowd.

Spread out over three distinct interconnecting buildings, the hotel's 190 accommodations are uncharacteristically spacious by Paris standards. The air of faded, chintzy grandeur is mostly gone; the new look lighter and brighter. However, you sense that the room renovation did not go quite as far as it could, and although I cannot put my finger on exactly what is missing, I felt that, despite the beautiful antiques and the use of expensive quality fabrics, the rooms and suites did not have that sense of opulence shared by similar Grande Dames.

We checked into one of the three Presidential Suites, which were unveiled in 2021, and first impressions were good. The high-ceilinged 1,290 sq ft suite is bathed in light and decorated in soothing coral and blue. However, you soon realise that, in ergonomic terms, it is far from ideal. The dressing room is tiny, requiring an additional wardrobe in the suite's foyer; whilst, even with three sitting areas and no less than four sofas, there is, inexplicably, no dining table. The kingsize bed is adorned with a Loro Piana cashmere throw and custom Quagliotti linens, yet the mattress proved to be surprisingly uncomfortable.

Maintenance issues were numerous, with plugs and USB ports not working, and dated electrics. On the bright side, the white Carrara marble bathroom, with its deep



Presidential Suite, #461, at Hôtel Le Bristol.



Penthouse Suite, #732, at Hôtel Le Bristol.

tub, twin vanity, modest walk-in shower and heated floors, was very good, and well stocked with custom-made amenities by Lorenzo Villoresi, Firenze.

I was looking forward to seeing the mansard-roofed Suite 1925, which pays homage to Josephine Baker, as it looks splendid on the hotel's website; but, disappointingly, I found it small and rather drab. Equally, the Penthouse Suite, #732, with its appealing, flowered terrace, has a massive living room that manages to be somewhat soulless.

Rather nicer was Deluxe Suite, #940, in the Residence wing, which boasts a large walk-in closet and ravishing views of the garden. Meanwhile, in the Matignon wing, I saw a pleasant 595 sq ft Junior Suite, #163, which was similar in style to my Presidential, albeit on a much smaller scale.

Although I have been bemoaning the overly traditional look of the accommodations; one thing I hope will never change is the delightful 6th floor swimming pool, which resembles the deck of a 1920's pri-

vate yacht. It is certainly not large, so forget training here for the next Olympics; but it is an utterly delightful spot for a few short lengths or a nap on the small adjacent sundeck, which affords quaint views of the Paris rooftops.

Other facilities include the very attractive Bristol Spa by La Prairie, which opens onto a pleasant interior garden and features 8 treatment rooms, including couple's suite. There is a dedicated Russian room for Baniya treatments and a Tata Harper cabin,



On weekends, Le Bar du Bristol morphs into 'Le Bristol After Dark', ready for the party crowd.



which is a somewhat more acceptable option if you are looking for a more gentle alternative to La Prairie or Kos. A selection of parent-child treatments, developed by Parisian clothing and cosmetic company Bonpoint, is also on the menu; which, personally, I find questionable, especially when you take a closer look at the product ingredients. However, I would certainly recommend the excellent Bonpoint Kid's Club, which includes Indian tipis, books, and a menagerie of stuffed animals. Socrate, the

hotel's new resident cat, of this very pet-friendly property, is often seen roaming the premises, which I am sure pleases the little ones.

Le Bristol's jewel in the crown is the cuisine, which is truly outstanding. Chef, Eric Frechon is not only at the helm of Epicure, the hotel's signature 3-Michelin conservatory dining room, but also presides over the other two restaurants: the more informal 1-Michelin upscale brasserie, 114 Faubourg, and the more relaxed Café Antonia.

Epicure's formal dining room is a calm, light-filled space overlooking the gardens, and even if you do not partake of Frechon's fabulous fare, you can still enjoy its regal setting for a sumptuous à la carte breakfast, with an abundance of delicious pastries and succulent fruit platters.

114 Faubourg is a less formal affair. This

1-Michelin Brasserie, with its downstairs display kitchen, spans two levels, linked by a wrought iron spiral staircase. The colourful décor, with its artfully lit dahlia motifs, violet carpet and patinated gold columns, might not be to everyone's taste; but nobody could argue about the sheer quality of the cuisine.

Café Antonia is the hotel's all-day-dining lounge. Decorated with crystal chandeliers, heavy drapes and frescoed walls, it is probably due for a makeover, despite its obvious popularity. As it was busy and noisy, we retreated to our suite for some excellent room-service.

Service, under veteran Hotel Manager, Leah Marshall, was generally excellent, particularly in the restaurants. This is a prop-



The delightful 6th floor swimming pool at Hôtel Le Bristol, resembles the deck of a 1920's private yacht.

erty where you really interact with the top-notch Concierge team; a refreshingly traditional approach to service. Another charming quirk is that you get an old-fashioned room key instead of an electronic key card.

Le Bristol generates a lot of repeat business from its loyal guests, who are fond of its subtle charms, heavenly cuisine and coveted location in one of the city's most high-end shopping districts. However, in such a highly competitive market, one wonders if Le Bristol's hard product will stand the test of time for the 21st Century high-end traveller.

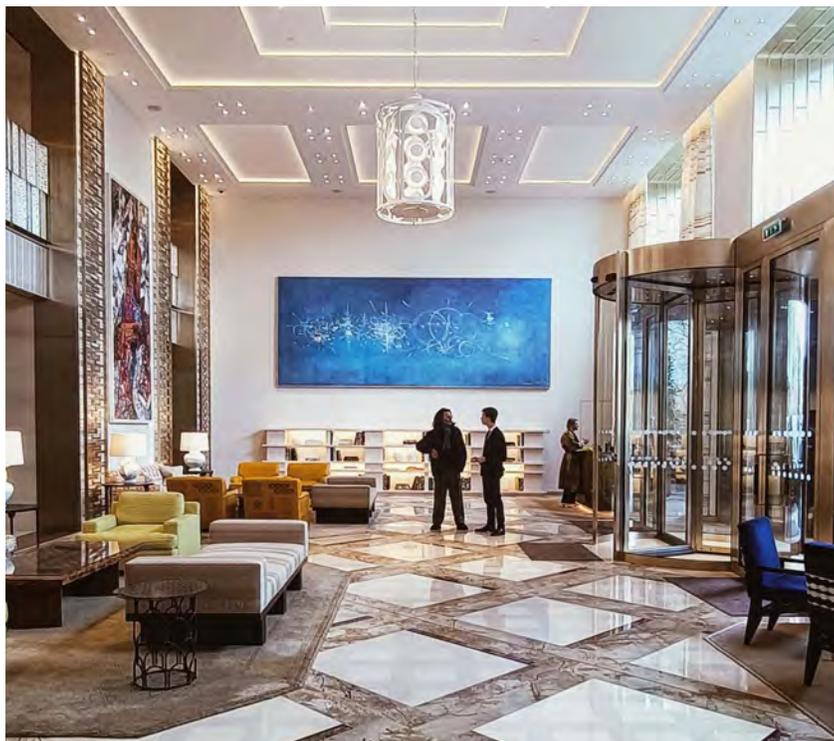
oetkercollection.com

Gallivanter's Rating: ✓✓✓✓

Cheval Blanc Paris.

This eagerly awaited, 72 room property, owned by LVMH, finally opened in late 2021 within the iconic La Samaritaine department store; a 1928 Art Deco gem, built over a 16 year period by architect, Henri Sauvage. The hotel occupies the south side of the complex, with a discreet elevator connecting the two.

Much has been written about the hotel's less than prestigious location, set, as it is in the 1st arrondissement, and facing Le Pont Neuf between Le Louvre and Le Marais. To be honest, it did not bother me at all. For sure, the surrounding area is busy and not particularly glamorous; but I find its riverside location more vibrant than the gener-



The Lobby, at the 72-room Cheval Blanc Paris.

ally insipid Golden Triangle, where most of its competitors are located.

What concerns me most is that this contemporary Parisian palace was designed by flamboyant New York architect, Peter Marino, who is more famous for reimagining various flagship superstores around the world than creating high-end hotels. This could explain why, despite the impressive collection of contemporary art that graces the glittering lobby, such as the two strik-

ing abstract prints of the Eiffel tower by Brazilian artist Vik Muniz, you may as well be stepping into a glitzy shop in Tokyo or Dubai.

The same can be said about Le Tout Paris, the hotel's 7th floor brasserie, where garish retro red and yellow décor, graphic 1980's carpets, raised dining booths and dreadful acoustics reminded me of a noisy high-end American diner, albeit with a splendid terrace affording jaw-dropping views of



Le Tout Paris brasserie, at Le Cheval Blanc Paris, with its jaw-dropping views of Paris.

the City of Lights. This was not helped by the disappointing cuisine. Indeed, even the à la carte breakfast failed to impress, with surprisingly underwhelming pastries and overly cheesy eggs Florentine.

The only aspect that worked for me, besides the gorgeous terrace, was the small marble lounge, decked with Roger Capron coffee tables.

In my opinion, another unwelcome aspect of this new generation hotel is the ubiquitous and unsubtle product placement, which is particularly evident in the Dior Spa; its attractive reception area loaded with shelves of Dior products. This otherwise beautifully designed facility comes with six individually decorated treatment rooms; all fitted with their own onyx showers and high-tech massage tables.

Beyond the Spa, there is a show-stopping 98 ft subterranean infinity pool; the largest of any Parisian hotel. Lined with digital panels displaying animated holographic images of the Seine, you feel as though you are swimming along the river itself.

The wellness area features a hammam,



The Langosteria Bar, at Cheval Blanc Paris.

an ice shower and a sauna. However, if you are allergic to petrochemicals, I strongly advise you to avoid the locker rooms, which reek of one of the hotel's two signature fragrances. Elsewhere, there is an excellent 24/7 state-of-the-art gym, complete with Peloton bikes, and a Rossano Ferretti salon.

If you expect to escape the relentless self-

promotion of the world's largest luxury conglomerate within the sanctuary of your room, think again, as all are stocked with an inordinate amount of Dior bathroom and beauty products, ranging from several types of shower gel and shampoo, to body sculpting creams, face masks and various balms. If so inclined, you could easily fill an extra suitcase to take back home with you.



Plénitude restaurant, at Cheval Blanc Paris.



Products galore, in the Dior Spa, at Cheval Blanc Paris.

Within the hotel's modern understated rooms and suites, which are mostly decorated en-série, textures abound. The look is crisp and contemporary, brimming with bespoke furniture, fine tweeds and velvet, alongside discreet Art Deco flourishes.

Overall, the accommodation is extremely luxurious and comfortable; but, for me, the white-on-white décor tends to lack personality. Sizeable walk-in closets are practical, and the very good marble-clad bathrooms boast twin vanities and showers that double up as hammams.

I stayed in Deluxe Junior Suite, #315, which is probably the hotel's worst room category. Reached via a long L-shaped corridor, the suite's bedroom lacks sufficient furniture; a large empty space between the ultra-comfortable kingsize and the sitting area. The signature glassed-in winter garden, which works so well in the perfectly



formed Seine-facing Junior Suites, such as #510, was devoid of furniture; probably due to the intrusive views of Louis Vuitton's headquarters across the street.

Another issue I have with this hotel is the poor sound insulation. I worry when an hotel offers earplugs at turndown; but believe me, you are going to need them, even if your room is not facing the busy

road separating the hotel from the river. Throughout the day, sirens could be heard distinctly. Equally, internal insulation appears to be a problem, too, particularly for the accommodations on the sixth floor, which are located right below the hotel's restaurants.

Much better are the full Suites; all of which offer similar layouts and only differ in terms of views and location. For example, the bright and spacious 1-bedroom Eiffel Suite, #605, features a pleasant terrace from its sixth floor corner location; whilst the identical Notre Dame Suite, #611, is on the opposite side of the building and affords views of Notre Dame.

Sadly, I did not manage to see the 10,800 sq ft 7-bedroom Apartment, which combines the Ravel and Quintessence Suites. Set on two floors, it features its own 41 ft swimming pool, from where you can admire the Sacré Coeur, plus a wellness area, projection room, expansive terraces and an impressive collection of contemporary artworks.

It was no easy task to dine in this hotel, as all the restaurants were booked solid by locals, eager to discover the latest Parisian hostelry. Management says that they always keep tables for hotel residents; but in our case the promise did not materialise, and I wish that some timely pre-arrival communication would have alerted me to this.

Finally, we managed to secure a spot for lunch at Le Tout Paris, where, initially, we were given the worst table. Subsequently, despite repeated attempts, dining elsewhere



The Eiffel Suite, #605, at Cheval Blanc Paris.



Junior Suite, #315, at Cheval Blanc Paris.

in the hotel proved impossible. To compound the problem, La Langosteria, the hotel's Italian-style seafood restaurant, which is not managed by Cheval Blanc, only had space for us at the counter, after 10pm.

I was hoping that Limbar, the attractive ground floor lobby lounge, would offer an alternative; but currently, it only serves tapas and cocktails in the evening, although I hear that its concept may change soon. With no other alternatives, we retreated to our suite for a very average room service dinner.

Set on the first floor, Plénitude, the hotel's contemporary fine dining restaurant, is decorated in hues of white, yellow and orange and features a striking wine vault, lined with Douglas firs, and displaying some exceptional vintages. The Chef here is Arnaud Donckele, who came from Cheval Blanc St Tropez and was recently awarded three Michelins in less than six months. For dessert, Pastry Chef, Maxime Frédéric,

whom you may remember from L'Orangerie at Four Seasons George V, continues to wow.

Except for Le Tout Paris, where staff, beautifully attired in Patou uniforms, was obviously rushed off its feet, service was of the highest order. Everyone here literally kills you with kindness and tries very hard to please, from the excellent Front Desk team, to the very thorough housekeeping department.

If you believe the hype, Cheval Blanc Paris is the hottest hotel in town. Unfortunately, hottest does not translate into being the best. Paris deserves more than this. chevalblanc.com

Gallivanter's Rating: ✓✓✓

La Réserve Hôtel & Spa, Paris.

But for its theatrical high-gloss scarlet entrance door, you would walk right past this quietly elegant Haussmann hôtel parti-

culier, that houses La Réserve Paris Hotel & Spa. This 40-room boutique property benefits from a brilliant location on a quiet leafy street that runs parallel to the Champs Elysées, a stone's throw from the elegant shops of Rue du Faubourg Saint Honoré. Its leafy views of the Grand Palais and the Eiffel Tower from the upper floors are some of my favourite Paris vistas.

Originally built for the Duc de Morny, Napoléon III's half-brother, this discreet Parisian pied-à-terre was later owned by fashion designer, Pierre Cardin, and finally by Michel Reybier, founder of La Réserve Group. He brought in interior design guru, Jacques Garcia to create the hotel's atmospheric interiors, that blend classic Régence and Belle-Epoque styles in a very successful attempt to reclaim the glamour of 19th

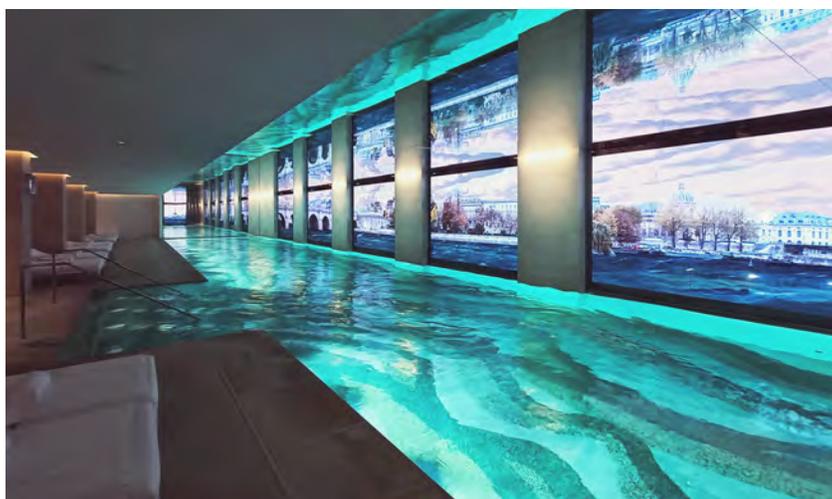


Entrance to La Réserve Hotel & Spa, Paris.

Century Paris.

True to its residential remit, there is no formal reception area at La Réserve; just a voluptuous Louis XV salon, with a couple of discreet desks. Here, you are asked to take a seat whilst your check-in details are swiftly processed, thence to be escorted to your suite. There is, of course, an elevator, as well as a beautiful spiral staircase, with a black and white tiled floor and royal purple carpeting.

This small property offers what is probably the best room product of all the Parisian hotels, with entry-level Prestige Rooms starting at a very comfortable 430 sq ft, and upwards to the palatial 2,730 sq ft Grand



The subterranean swimming pool, at Cheval Blanc Paris, with animated holograms of the Seine.



The voluptuous Louis XV Salon that serves as a Reception area, at the very residential La Réserve Hôtel & Spa. Palais Suite.

Compared to the ornate public areas, the impeccably decorated 14 rooms and 26 suites are less busy, with a colour palette that alternates between bronze, beige, prune, and tea rose. The residential décor combines simple rugs with antique mirrors, silk damasks, gilded boiseries and original artworks, curated by the owner himself. Beds are adorned with crisp Quagliotti linens and velvet bed runners, whilst plump pillows are monogrammed with Michel Reybier's signature elephant motif.

Jaw-droppingly glorious bathrooms are hewn from white Carrara and Turquin blue marble. Expect chrome soaking tubs, massive walk-in showers, twin vanities, and signature red lacquered boxes to store your own toiletries.

Other thoughtful touches include automated Toto toilets, a choice of two types of bathrobes, purified tap water and even dumbbells, yoga mats and elastic bands, should you not be in the mood to use the 24h gym.

Rooms feature elegant private bar set-ups, with Nespresso machines and temperature-controlled kettles; whilst the suites come with large wet bars. There is a real spirit of generosity here, with complimentary non-alcoholic drinks and snacks; the suites with pull-out wine fridges, stocked with a selection of vintages from the owner's own exceptional Bordeaux winery, Cos d'Estournel.

Technology is refreshingly simple, with in-mirror televisions; and, happily, you can

choose to control everything the old-fashioned way or via an iPad.

It is difficult to recommend one room over another as they are all exceptionally good. Even a 540 sq ft Prestige Junior, such as #301, with its concealed pop-up TV and spacious dressing area, is a very acceptable choice.

In summer, however, opt for the unique first floor Junior Suite, #101, with a terrace that runs the length of the suite, and overlooks the hotel's leafy internal courtyard.

Another pleasing option is an 860 sq ft Prestige Suite, such as #306, which looks onto the very attractive Rue du Cirque and features a huge dressing room and a bathroom bathed in natural light.

I, meanwhile, stayed in one of the perfectly formed Eiffel Suites, #302, which has a marvellous bathroom, a spacious sitting area and yet more magical views.

If you need something larger, opt for one of the three 150 sq ft Presidential Suites, such as #304, which are truly superb and



Bathroom of Prestige Junior Suite, #301, at La Réserve Hôtel & Spa, Paris.



Presidential Suite, #304, at La Réserve Hôtel & Spa, Paris.

can be combined with an Eiffel Suite to form a 2-bedroom Grand Palais Suite. Equally sumptuous is the fifth floor Imperial Suite, which offers acres of space, Juliet balconies set with tables and chairs, and a light, viewsome bathroom.

Extraordinarily for such a small hotel, there are three restaurants and a bar, overseen by Executive Chef, Jerome Bancet, who earned two Michellins for his moodily lit, Le Gabriel.

La Pagode de Cos, the hotel's all-day-dining room, spills out in the summer months to the central courtyard. Its Asian inspired brasserie style menu disappointed

at lunch, with a Victoria salad sitting on an inch of sesame dressing, and unappetising dim sum, served with a peculiar wasabi-infused soy sauce. I must have been quite unlucky in my choice, as dinner was infinitely better, with supremely fresh jumbo prawns, served with artichoke hearts and Espelette pepper, whilst the superb list of high-end wines by the glass was a delight.

Breakfast panders to all tastes, with a choice of several menus, including some seriously good vegan and dairy-free options; a rarity in this city.

The sumptuous, yet cosy Le Gaspard Bar is decorated with plush button-back seat-

ing in shades of scarlet and purple, set off by the occasional eccentric artefact, and a grand fireplace. The cocktail list truly impresses and comes with a menu of small, delicious sharing plates to nibble on before dinner.

Do make time for the atmospheric Duc de Morny library, with its emerald, green velvet armchairs, and walls lined with 3,000 antique books. Centred around an engraved marble fireplace, with Corinthian columns, and a moulded coffered ceiling, it is reserved exclusively for hotel guests in the morning, and now also serves the same lunch menu as La Pagode de Cos. For cigar



The Eiffel Suite, #302, at La Réserve Hôtel & Spa, Paris.



Le Gaspard Bar, at La Réserve Hôtel & Spa, Paris.

lovers, a hidden door leads to a bijou smoking room with its own terrace and a selection of 400 cigars.

Amazingly, this small boutique property offers the facilities of a much larger hotel, including its own Spa; a bold gold and red three-room concoction in the basement, which was designed around a seductive 52 ft long swimming pool, with jacuzzi jets.

The skincare line, Nescens, which focuses on anti-ageing treatments, is the only brand available, as I gather that it is also owned by Michel Reybier. I did not give it a try, as I gave up that fight long ago!

Given its small size, I was expecting service at La Réserve to be along the lines of what I once experienced at the old Aman-

resorts; wonderfully personal. Sadly, upon this occasion, it was not the case.

You could sense a lack of motivation and enthusiasm amongst the staff; perhaps



because this boutique hotel has seen its fair share of General Managers over the

past few years. You also need to factor in the acute worldwide shortage of qualified waiting staff, which could explain this unfortunate and hopefully temporary situation.

The lack of personalised attention was mostly confined to the restaurants, where names were not used, my dim sum arrived without chopsticks; wine and water glasses were not replenished, and the drip coffee I ordered at breakfast morphed into a long espresso.

La Réserve is a very grown-up hotel, and not, in my view, for families and children.



I love its elegant and sophisticated atmosphere and its exemplary product. Let us hope that the current service issues are quickly resolved, as this is a truly unique Parisian hotel.

lareserve-paris.com

Gallivanter's Rating: ✓✓✓✓+



Jerome Banctel's moody Le Gabriel restaurant, at La Réserve Hôtel & Spa, Paris.



Gallivanter's

Gossip

EXCELLENT FEEDBACK FROM MEMBERS last month included an endorsement for **The Beaumont** in London, which is much improved since the ever-present Angus Agnew became the hotel's new Guest Services Manager. It sounds as though life there could be back to normal, since Jannes Soerensen left. Elsewhere, a Member put me in touch with ex-Oberoi Mauritius and numerous Michelin-starred restaurants, Chef, **Igor Bocchia**, who has returned to Italy to open a gorgeous little restaurant with rooms in Tuscany's Montepulciano, named **Stelle di Monte** (see right); a rustic idyll with fine Italian fare. stelledimonte.com



IN THAILAND within the extraordinary seascapes of Phang Nga Bay, between Phuket and Krabi, the 148-room **Anantara Koh Yao Yai**, on the untouched island of the same name, is set to open this coming December. Expect a white sand beach, stretching for just over half a mile, and several one- and two-bedroom Pool Villas right on the shore; whilst the Suites are housed in four low-rise constructs, all with ocean views. With a strong emphasis on facilities for children, this could be a great family escape. In **Portugal**, meanwhile, Anantara announce their second property, **Anantara Royal Vila Viçosa** in Alentejo, which transforms a 15th Century monastery into a 50-room hotel; set to open in 2024, and definitely one to watch!

THOSE OF YOU WHO LOVE UMBRIA in Italy, should head to Puglia and the 16th Century palace that is **Palazzo Ducale Venturi** (see right). This is not merely an exquisite historic experience, but also includes a proper Spa with a vaulted underground pool, gym, and a fine kitchen, under Chef, Antonio Russo, who cooks fresh local fare, solely for guests and also offers cooking classes, using the palace's newly restored, original salt ovens. Choose the Ducal Suite, if you can; although even the Deluxe Rooms are very acceptable here. palazzoducalventuri.com Still in Italy, which has proved to be a popular choice for you this summer, I was alerted by a Member to a rather wonderful resort in **Piedmont; Palas Cerequio Barolo**, which is a wine-lover's dream, and, unusually for this region, the five 'suites of the future' are exceptionally contemporary and light. However, if you prefer the historic, then opt for one of the four 'suites of the past'. palascerequio.it



NOTHING STOPS HOTEL DEVELOPMENT! **Four Seasons** take over management of **Hotel Danieli** in **Venice**. Designed by Pierre Yves Rochon, it reopens in 2025. **Rosewood** take over the **Bauer**, Venice, reopening as **Rosewood Hotel Bauer**, also in 2025. **Aman** will open **Aman Beverly Hills** in 2026, which will comprise an hotel, Residences and Aman Club, within eight acres of gardens; part of the multi-use One Beverly Hills complex. In **Switzerland**, meanwhile, **Mandarin Oriental** take over management in Luzern, opening the 146-room **Mandarin Oriental Palace Luzern**, which dates from 1906, at the end of this year.

Published monthly since 1991 by The Gallivanter's Guide, Hill Crest, Malmesbury Road, Minety, Malmesbury, Wiltshire SN16 9QX, UK.

Email: mail@gallivanterguide.com Website: www.gallivanterguide.com

FOUNDER/EDITOR: LYN MIDDLEHURST. **FOUNDER/ART:** DAVID MASLIN. **HOTEL CRITIC:** PHILIPPE SERVAIS.

The Gallivanter's Guide 100 Club is an invitation-only travel advisory for the world's top travellers. Membership includes this monthly newsletter and one-to-one hotel advice from the Editor. The selection of hotels and resorts included in this Guide is made on an entirely independent basis, and all opinions expressed are those of the Editor. Neither the Editor nor other contributors can be held responsible for any problems which may arise through the Member or reader's direct experience of any place, hotel or resort as recommended in this Guide. All information is published in good faith, and the Founders cannot be held responsible for its accuracy. We recommend that you always double check all information with the hotels/authorities concerned.

© Copyright 2022 The Gallivanter's Guide. All rights reserved.

Quotation, reproduction or transmission by any means is prohibited without written permission from the Editor.