

MUNKACSI

Bazaar

Harper's

JANUARY 2013
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TRAVEL HOT 100

The eye has to travel

BAZAAR

DESTINATIONS

*Celsius restaurant
at Huvafen Fushi*

Frontier spirit

This year, we return to cherished classics and also discover more distant, exotic locales in the quest for a wild and wonderful escape

1 MALDIVES

Snow-white sands, iridescent green leaves, sparkling lagoons and palm-tree-studded islands: the paradisaic cliché of the Maldivian landscape helps to ensure its enduring popularity. Best of all, the hotels improve year on year. New in the archipelago is Niyama on the south-western atoll of Dhaalu. Yoga, t'ai chi and Zumba are available, as well as diving, water sports, *dhoni* trips and excursions to marine-biology labs. Party yourself fit at the world's first underwater club, Subsix, six metres under the Indian Ocean. Niyama's Tribal restaurant is a stylish campfire experience, with dining pods surrounded by hot-rock grills, *asados*, woks and open flames cooking South American, African and Asian-influenced cuisine. Alternatively, its Edge restaurant is 500 metres out to sea, and reached by boat.

Niyama's creator, Per Aquum, has also renovated its laid-back, luxurious resort, Huvafen Fushi, with an exceptional underwater spa. Whether you choose deliciously healthy food at Raw or Sicilian cuisine at Fogliani's, you'll be dining barefoot. For the ultimate in self-indulgence and seclusion, head to the uncharted northern fringes of the Maldives, where the California-based

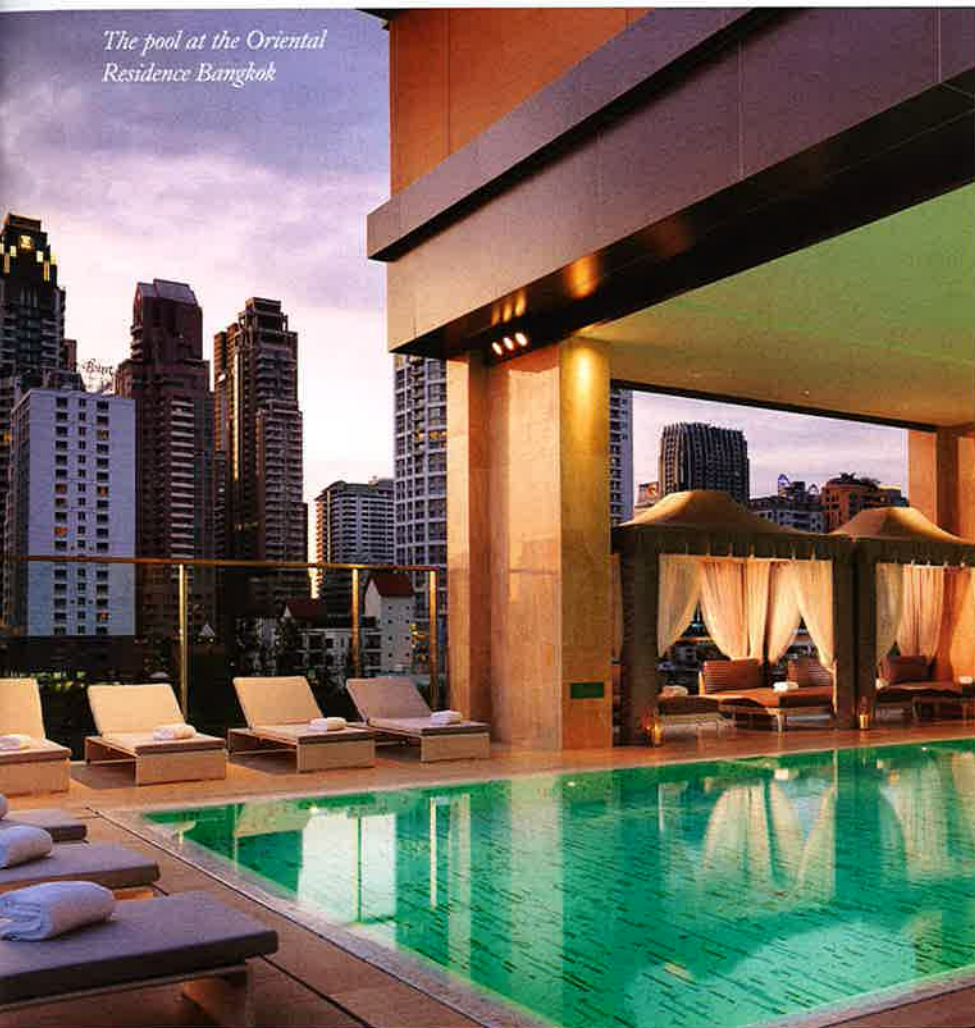
brand, Viceroy, makes its Maldives debut. The 61 modern villas contain oversized bedrooms and expansive baths, and have private plunge pools.

The opening of the Six Senses Laamu last year proves eco-consciousness has never been more chic. There's a driftwood grand piano, a 66-foot tower of glass offshore sheltering a wine cellar, and an organic restaurant on stilts; with 10-foot waves on its lee side, the resort is the best option for surfers. Divers should also try the Residence. It offers villas with butlers, a Clarins spa and pristine dive sites – full of barracuda, rainbow-coloured reef fish and whitetip sharks – due to the resort's secluded position in the remote southern Maldives.

EMMA WOOLF

Seven nights in a beach studio at Niyama, from £2,749 a person B&B, including flights with Qatar Airways from London Heathrow and seaplane transfers, with ITC Classics (01244 355550; www.itcclassics.co.uk). Niyama (www.niyama.peraquum.com). Huvafen Fushi (www.huvafenfushi.peraquum.com). Viceroy Maldives (www.viceroyhotelsandresorts.com/maldives). Six Senses Laamu (www.sixsenses.com/sixsenseslaamu). The Residence (www.the.residence.com/maldives).

The pool at the Oriental Residence Bangkok



8 BANGKOK

The Thai capital is chic once again. David Thompson's offshoot of Nahm, his restaurant at the Halkin in London, has hit its stride at the Metropolitan, and tempting mid-range deluxe lodgings include the Ariyasom in a 1940s villa, and the stylish Sofitel So. But the coolest place to stay is the Siam, owned by a local pop star with a penchant for antiques and curios. Set beside the Chao Phraya River in the district of Dusit, it has 39 rooms, pool villas, frangipani-scented courtyards, a Sodashi spa, a restaurant and a cookery school. Another new retreat, the Cabochon, is located in the charming Walpole Building in Sukhumvit and has just four studio rooms and four suites, plus a rooftop lap pool. In contrast, the new Oriental Residence Bangkok in the business and embassy district is home to 145 fully serviced and finely detailed apartments (with up to three bedrooms) in cream and pale grey. **SUSAN KUROSAWA** *Three nights at the Siam* (www.thesiamhotel.com), from £1,154 a person; *three nights at the Oriental Residence Bangkok* (www.oriental-residence.com), from £716 a person; both including Jet Airways flights, with Ampersand Travel (020 7289 6100; www.ampersandtravel.com). *The Cabochon Hotel* (+66 2259 28713; www.cabochonhotel.com), from about £85 a person a night B&B.

9 ISTANBUL

Another year, another tranche of new hotels opening in Istanbul. The luxury *marques* have mostly got their feet under the table – now the cool-kid chains are moving in. The latest is the ultra-modern Marti Istanbul in the heart of Taksim, the city's commercial and retail hub, pitched at culture-loving visitors, with two-night breaks offering a museum pass granting entry to attractions including the Hagia Sophia and Topkapi Palace. Elsewhere, in the business district of Levent, the Istanbul Edition, developed by Ian Schrager and Marriott, adopts a retro-chic aesthetic: shaggy carpets, bronze and white gold, oak-clad walls and leather-tufted ottomans. This is a hub for 'new' Istanbul: it has a huge Espa spa, a Cipriani restaurant and a nightclub. If you seek a low-key bolthole, the 23-room House Hotel Bosphorus in lively Ortakoy is on the water, with great views. It's a sensitive, modern reimagining of a 19th-century waterside *yali* and has an aura of relaxed chic. The Shangri-La Bosphorus, a 168-room behemoth behind a historic façade, and the Viceroy's foray into Istanbul are also opening this year; while the world's biggest Soho House is set to open in 2014.

LYDIA BELL

Marti Istanbul (+90 212 987 4000; www.martiistanbulhotel.com), from about £160 a room a night. *The Istanbul Edition* (+90 212 317 7700; www.editionhotels.com), from about £230 a room a night. *The House Hotel Bosphorus* (+90 212 244 34 00; www.thehousehotel.com), from about £140 a room a night B&B. *The Shangri-La Bosphorus* (www.shangri-la.com). *The Viceroy* (www.viceroyhotelsandresorts.com).

The Sakirin Mosque in Istanbul

