

Asia and Australasia

INDIA/BHUTAN

The Palani Hills of southern India isn't the most accessible of places, but those who love small, undiscovered gems should endure the journey to **Rajakkad** (below left). Pallam Palace, the central building of the estate, is set around a pattern of courtyards, verandas and pools with eight authentic bedrooms, a library, dining room and sitting room. In a landscape of high, rolling hills and rainforest, the new **Vivanta by Taj Madikeri** at Coorg in the Karnataka district is a nature-lover's retreat, with a series of eco-designed rooms and villas among the trees, all with picture windows and fireplaces. Last September in Bhutan, the 11-room lodge **Uma Punakha** was opened as a sister property to Uma Paro, allowing for a two-centre stay in the picturesque Himalayan kingdom.



CHINA

Architecturally, **Twelve at Hengshan** (right) in Shanghai is avant-garde to say the least. Designed by Italian Mario Botta, the hotel has just five floors (it's located in the low-rise heritage district of Shanghai) surrounding an elliptical internal 'secret' garden with cherry trees, bamboo groves and streams. Interiors feature oriental screens, silk lanterns, hand-painted wallpapers and latticework. The rooftop, all-day brasserie **Tops & Terrace**, with its private garden gazebos, is a great place to linger.



VIETNAM/MYANMAR (BURMA)

In central Vietnam, Laguna Lang Co is Vietnam's first fully integrated hospitality development comprising a top-notch golf course and upmarket residences and hotels. One of these is the new **Banyan Tree Lang Co**, with 49 all-pool villas, where design inspiration has been drawn from Vietnam's rich cultural and historical heritage. Nearby, the Intercontinental group has also been



busy with the launch of the **Danang Sun Peninsula Resort** (above left), created by acclaimed architect and interior designer Bill Bensley. Yes, it's a big resort, but the location, on a forest-clad hillside overlooking the sea, and the design, are stunning. In Myanmar, on the eastern shore of the Irrawaddy River, near the ancient temples of Bagan, the 85-room part-brick, part-tented **Bagan Lodge** is due to open imminently.

MALDIVES /SRI LANKA

Development continues apace in the Maldives. New kids on the block include **The Residence** (left), way down south in the Gaafu Alifu Atoll, where 94



thatched villas vary between beach and overwater. LVMH, better known for Champagne and luxury goods, is making headway with hotels. New to the portfolio this year will be **Cheval Blanc Randheli**, designed by Jean-Michel Gathy and featuring 45 elegant, contemporary villas. Any trend forecaster will tell you that Sri Lanka's moment is almost upon us. New to the east coast is small, rustic and remote **Jungle Beach Resort**.

THAILAND

Thai pop celebrity Krissada Clapp worked with Bill Bensley to create Bangkok's latest fashionable address - **The Siam** (right). A muted colour scheme combined with natural textures, lush plants, art-deco overtones and a vast, private collection of antiques makes for a serene and thoroughly unusual riverside retreat in the city's historic Dusit district. On Phuket, **The Surin**, redesigned by Ed Tuttle (see 'The game changer'), has opened next door to the Amanpuri; and rumours are afoot that Christina Ong of Como Hotels will be opening beachside **Point Yamu** at the end of the year.



MALAYSIA

George Town, the capital of the Malaysian island of Penang, saw the opening last year of **Macalister Mansion** (right), where the interiors of a 100-year-old house have been refashioned into a modern, eight-room hotel. There's a strong visual impact to the hotel, with an emphasis on both design and art. On the island of Langkawi, the **Four Seasons** hotel has opened a Geopark Discovery Centre to offer guests an educational insight into South-East Asia's first Unesco-listed area and its 550 million years of geological history. Off Borneo, near Kota Kinabalu, the luxurious **Gaya Island Resort** is accessible only by boat.



AUSTRALIA/NEW ZEALAND

Created from the heritage-listed Gowings department store and adjacent State Theatre buildings in the heart of the central business district, the quirky, cutting edge **QT Sydney** (below left) arrived on the scene last September. Describing itself as a 'playground for those who love art, design, fashion, music and food', this hotel is a vibrant new hub for the city. Set high on a ridge overlooking Lake Wanaka and the peaks of New Zealand's South Island, **Tin Tub** is a new luxury lodge with five rooms - the perfect base for an endless variety of outdoor pursuits. >

