

DestinAsian

ANNIVERSARY EDITION 18

FROM ASIA TO THE WORLD

THE 2019

LUXE LIST

THE BEST
NEW HOTELS IN
THE ASIA-PACIFIC
REGION

⊕ TAIPEI, VIENNA, CHAO PHRAYA RIVER



SA PA, VIETNAM

Hôtel de la Coupole

Leave it to Bill Bensley—the Bangkok-based architect and designer behind some of the most imaginative hotels in Southeast Asia—to bring a dose of much-needed razzmatazz to the highlands of northern Vietnam. Resplendent with domes, rooftop pavilions, and wrought-iron railings, Hôtel de la Coupole (part of Sofitel's MGallery collection) is an ode both to Indochine-era haute couture and the colorful textiles of the ethnic minorities who inhabit the misty countryside around Sa Pa, a former French hill station. Bensley's signature whimsical-maximalist style is everywhere, from the grandly glamorous lobby with its plush velvet banquettes and red silk chandeliers, to Le Grand Bassin, an art nouveau-inspired indoor swimming pool complete with green marble pillars, mosaic tiles, and bronze statuary. All told, there are more than 1,000 pieces of original art and antiques (most collected by Bensley at Parisian flea markets) scattered throughout the 249-room property. Serious attention has also gone into the menu at Chic, the rooftop dining room, where sweeping mountain views are matched by classically plated French-Vietnamese dishes such as Sa Pa trout meunière and Hmong-style air-dried beef with mango salad. For a change of perspective, the hotel also shares space with a little train station where guests can hop aboard a carriage for the two-kilometer ride up to the cable car on Mount Fansipan, Vietnam's highest peak. —84-21/4362-9999; hoteldelacoupole.com; doubles from US\$108

KIRIROM, CAMBODIA

Shinta Mani Wild

Your arrival by zip line over a waterfall is the first clue that Shinta Mani Wild is no typical hotel. With just 15 tented suites strung out along a boulder-strewn river on the doorstep of Southern Cardamom National Park, this ambitious jungle camp is the brainchild of Bangkok-based architect Bill Bensley and his Cambodian business partner Sokoun Chanpreda, who originally acquired the 375-hectare concession to protect it from logging. Conservation is at the heart of the operation; guests can explore the surrounding forests with a resident naturalist or join local wildlife rangers on anti-poaching patrols. But luxury is taken just as seriously. Supremely comfortable, the tents are flamboyantly appointed with retro hand-painted murals, vintage knickknacks, and sexy alfresco tubs. Daily-changing menus showcase the best available ingredients — lemongrass-cured salmon with green papaya salad, say, or curried mud crab — while the spa is perfect for post-trek Khmer massages. Sangjay Choegyal, the camp's charismatic manager, is another asset. Having grown up at a Nepalese jungle lodge, he's the ideal companion (schedule permitting) for a spot of *tenkara* fly-fishing, bird-watching, or just a drink at the Landing Zone bar, where the cocktails are botanically inspired and the playlist favors 1960s Cambodian pop. —855-12/223-782; shintamani.com; tents from US\$1,900, full board, for a minimum three-night stay



BRISBANE, AUSTRALIA

The Calile Hotel

The Calile cuts a dramatic form across Brisbane's skyline, its self-described "soft brutalist" building of white curves and arches designed to celebrate the balmy weather and tropical vibe for which this part of the country is known. Locally based architectural studio Richards and Spence crafted breezy hallways with open-air nooks to link the 175 guest rooms, which come in a trio of pastels: blush, eggshell blue, and mint. Textural touches complement the calming colors, from timber paneling and cork flooring to sisal mats and brass trim. All accommodations sport scallop-shaped balconies — be sure to book one that overlooks the 30-meter pool, which is lined with palm trees, striped jade-green umbrellas, and covetable cabanas. You'll be spending a lot of time here, or wandering through the ground-floor boutiques by local brands like Baasike, Dion Lee, and Love Stories. Step out, and you're on James Street in the heart of Fortitude Valley, an ever-buzzy suburb at the city's fringe packed with achingly cool restaurants, bars, and gourmet grocers. But don't miss the hotel's own eatery, Hellenika, which — like its highly awarded sister restaurant on Queensland's Gold Coast — dishes up mod-Greek dishes such as veal dolmades and orzo pasta with spanner crab. —61-7/3607-5888; thecalilehotel.com; doubles from US\$160