

▶ THE BEST OF ◀

2010

CAMBODIA, CHINA, HONG KONG, INDONESIA, LAOS, MALAYSIA, PHILIPPINES, SINGAPORE, TAIWAN, THAILAND, VIETNAM



ASIA RISING From left: Magnan & Tse, in Hong Kong; Shanghai's Fairmont Peace Hotel, China; at Danny & Company, in Taipei.

SOUTHEAST ASIA'S NEWEST AND HOTTEST RESTAURANTS, BARS, HOTELS, SHOPS AND MORE

Reported and written by LARA DAY, ROBYN ECKHARDT, NAOMI LINDT, DAVEN WU and LIANG XINYI

FROM LEFT: COURTESY OF MAGNAN & TSE; COURTESY OF FAIRMONT PEACE HOTEL; COURTESY OF DANNY AND COMPANY



GET THE GUIDE FOR MORE IDEAS AND RECOMMENDATIONS ON WHAT TO DO IN SOUTHEAST ASIA, GO TO TRAVELANDLEISUREASIA.COM

At 208 Duecento Otto, in Hong Kong.



Eric Raisina's Siem Reap boutique.

The Villa Romonea, in Kep, Cambodia.



Amanfayun, in Hangzhou, China.



Hong Kong's Ben Brown Fine Arts.



CAMBODIA

► **EAT** Phnom Penh newcomer **Yumi** (29a St. 288; 855-92/163-903; theyumi.com; dinner for two US\$20) and its addictive *izakaya*-themed small plates have fast become a must for the capital's foodies—don't miss the slow-cooked ribs and the tempura squid. Book one of 18 spots at charming, wood-paneled **Armand's** (33 St. 108; 855-15/548-966; dinner for two US\$30) for French bistro fare, such as the renowned steak in cognac, flambéed tableside. In Siem Reap, multi-talented French chef Patrick Guerry has transformed Samot Restaurant into the Italian **Trattoria** (Alley West; 855-92/410-400; samot-restaurant.com; dinner for two US\$25), a black-and-white-tiled space with wrought iron chairs serving handmade ravioli, market-fresh seafood and signature pizzas like the TP: mozzarella cheese, olive oil, mushroom and bacon. For excellent value, order the US\$6 two-course lunch.

► **DRINK** One of the capital city's chicest after-hours hangouts, **Saint Tropez** (31 St. 174; 855/23-676-7009; drinks for two US\$8) has electric purple and red décor, leopard-print chaises and thumping DJ's. For a cerebral *tête-à-tête*, try wine bar **Le Sauvignon** (6B St. 302; 855-92/730-250; bar-sauvignon.com; drinks for two US\$7), where you can sip Muscadet in a cozy armchair while nibbling on a platter of Roquefort, Camembert and *chèvre*. Beer lovers will rejoice at Cambodia's new boutique lager:

Kingdom, a pilsener made with the finest German and Czech hops. Call ahead to arrange a tour of the brewery, housed on the Tonle Sap River, or sample the recipe at the leather-and-wood brewpub next door (1748 National Rd. 5; 855-23/430-180; kingdombreweries.com; drinks for two US\$5).

► **STAY** This month Phnom Penh sees the launch of the 1920's-inspired **Sofitel Phnom Penh Phokeethra** (26 Old August Site, Sotheaors Blvd.; 855-23/999-200; sofitel.com; doubles from US\$135), set to welcome business travelers in style. Located along the Tonle Bassac River in an up-and-coming financial district, the hotel offers 210 rooms defined by dark-wood furniture and muted sage, tangerine and burgundy accents. In the seaside town of Kep, the **Villa Romonea** (Kep; 855-12/879-486; villaromonea.com; doubles from US\$120) gives guests a chance to stay in a stunningly restored six-room Modernist villa, with a sybaritic infinity pool overlooking the Gulf of Thailand.

► **SHOP** Siem Reap's favorite haute couturier, **Eric Raisina** (Pokambore Ave.; 855-63/963-208; ericraisina.com), has opened his own boutique at the FCC Angkor Hotel, where you'll find a collection of delicate dresses and scarves edged in the Malagasy's famous silk fur, and finely crocheted tops.

CHINA

► **EAT** A Beijing *cevicheria* may sound counterintuitive, but **Terra** (1 Sanlitun Nanlu, Chaoyang district; 86-10/6591-9148; terrabeijing.com; dinner for two RMB600) pulls it off, with Peruvian chef Gaby Alves offering eight types of ceviche, including salmon and tuna. Be sure to try the sublime empanadas and the first-rate drinks; the five-course brunch has free-flowing caipirinhas, mojitos and even Veuve Clicquot for RMB598. In Shanghai's newly restored Sinan Mansions, culinary dynamo David Laris caters to well-heeled flâneurs at **12 Chairs** (Sinan Mansions, Mansion 26F, Corner of Sinan Lu and Fuxing Lu; 86-21/3368-9527; davidlariscreates.com; dinner menus from RMB800), a private kitchen with just 12 covers. Expect to eat like a monarch: the huge multi-course "King's Feast," featuring a procession of mousses, jellies and terrines, and dishes like whole-roasted pigeon dressed in gold leaf, was inspired by feasts at the court of Henry VIII.

► **DRINK** Beijing tipplers are flocking to **Modo** (3rd floor, Sanlitun Village South, Sanlitun Lu, Chaoyang district; 86-10/6415-7207; modomodo.cn; drinks for two RMB150) for the city's first oenomatic wine dispensers. Choose from a well-chosen list of 16 global vintages—Austrian Grüner Veltliner; Italian Albarino—with tasting portions starting at just RMB10 a pop. Mixology maestro George Zhou is the man behind **George's** (Gate 12, Workers' Stadium, Gongrentiyuchang, Chaoyang district; 86-10/6553 6299; drinks for two RMB100), an instant hit among locals for its low-lit ambience, funky soundtrack and superlative drinks—order a midori sour, or, better yet, ask Zhou to mix you his latest creation.

► **STAY** This year's World Expo saw a boom in luxury openings on Shanghai's Bund, from the storied Art Deco **Fairmont Peace Hotel** (10 Nanjing Rd. East; 86-21/6321-6888; fairmont.com/peacehotel; doubles from RMB2,600), with 270 rooms and suites, to the edgy **Waterhouse at South Bund** (Maojiayuan Rd. No. 1-3, Zhongshan Rd. South, Huangpu District; 86-21/6080-2988; waterhouseshanghai.com; doubles from RMB1,200), whose 19 rooms were individually designed by local architecture duo Neri & Hu. Over in the capital, stylish, mold-breaking hotels are cropping up away from the city center: the 19th-century crystal factory turned 30-room boutique stay **Yi House Art Hotel 798** (Jiuxianqiao Lu, 2 Hao Yuan, 798 Yishu Qu; 86-10/6436-1818; yi-house.com; doubles from RMB970) is tucked away in Dashanzi Art District, while the funky, ultra-high-tech **Langham Place, Beijing Capital Airport** (1 Er Jing Rd., Terminal 3, Capital International Airport; 86-10/6457-5555; doubles from RMB1,200) has 372 rooms and suites just a minute away from the Foster & Partners–designed Terminal 3. Had enough of city life? Head to Hangzhou, where the serene **Amanfayun** (22 Fayun Nong, Xihujiedao, Xihufengjingmingsheng District; 86-571/8732-9999; amanresorts.com; doubles from US\$580) offers 42 expansive, Sino-styled suites, rooms and villas, a gorgeous spa, and original structures dating to the 19th century, all amid lush tea fields and natural forest.

HONG KONG

► **EAT** In a year of high-profile openings—among them Yenn Wong's Autoban–designed

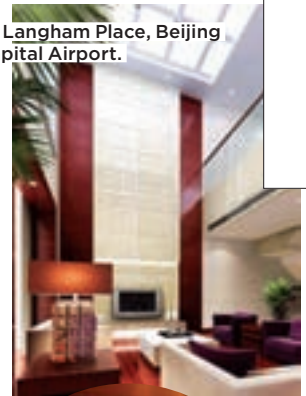
Italian resto-bar **208 Duecento Otto** (208 Hollywood Rd.; 852/2549-0208; 208.com.hk; dinner for two HK\$1,400), and the much-anticipated **Gold by Harlan Goldstein** (2nd floor, LKF Tower, 33 Wyndham St., Central; 852/2869-9986; dinner for two HK\$2,000)—we're most intrigued by **ABC Kitchen** (Shop CF7, Food Market, 1 Queen St., Sheung Wan; 852/9278-8227; lunch for two HK\$350), an unlikely gourmet stall in a humble cooked-food center, run by two chefs from the erstwhile M at the Fringe. Tune out the high-decibel environs and instead focus on the outstanding Western fare—don't leave without trying the sumptuous soft-shell crab with aioli, the melt-in-your-mouth suckling pig and the sticky toffee pudding.

► **DRINK** Perched above the frenzy of Lan Kwai Fong, slick bar-and-restaurant combo **Lily and Bloom** (6th floor, LKF Tower, 33 Wyndham St., Central; 852/2810-6166; lily-bloom.com; dinner and drinks for two HK\$900) lures night owls with its sultry, speakeasy vibe, mod-American fare—think bone marrow with fennel and grapes—and consistently excellent, Prohibition-inspired cocktails; sit down at a wooden booth and order an Old Fashioned. Fancy a Cohiba with your bourbon? Duck inside the hidden whiskey-and-cigar room, where orders are placed by rotary phone and delivered via a secret serving hatch.

► **STAY East** (29 Taikoo Shing Rd., Island East; 852/3968-3968; east-hongkong.com; doubles from HK\$1,400) brings a welcome dose of style to the Canary Wharf–esque Island East, with 345 chic, neutral-toned rooms decked out in natural materials like bamboo and marble. Step onto the outdoor deck of Sugar, the 32nd-floor bar, for killer cocktails and stunning views.

► **SEE** While big-name overseas galleries are tackling the Asian market with slick Hong Kong outposts—among them London's **Ben Brown Fine Arts** (301 Pedder Building, 12 Pedder St., Central; 852/2522-9600; benbrownfinearts.com), whose artists include Candida Höfer and Caio Fonseca—the home-grown, photographer-run **Upper Station** (22 Upper Station St., Sheung Wan; 852/3486-2474; theupperstation.com) is quietly carving a niche for itself as a nexus for the city's thriving contemporary photography scene. Come for the well-curated exhibitions with an Asian focus, and the small but excellent photo-book library. »

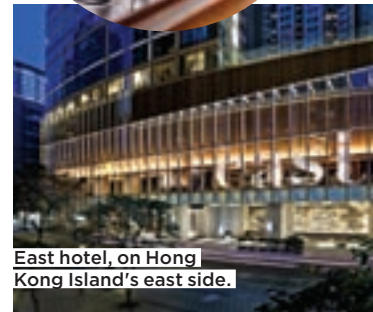
At Langham Place, Beijing Capital Airport.



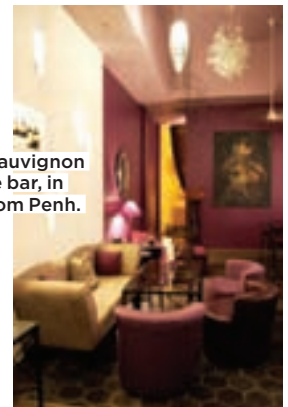
Wine dispensers at Modo, in Beijing.



East hotel, on Hong Kong Island's east side.



Le Sauvignon wine bar, in Phnom Penh.



The art-inspired Yi Hotel, in Beijing.



The Alila Luang Prabang, in Laos.



Bali's Cocoon Beach Club.



At Five Elements Puri Ahimsa, in Bali.



Luang Prabang's relaxing Apsara Rive Droite.



The Upper Station, in Hong Kong.

► **SHOP** Parisian design duo **Magnan & Tse** (*Ground floor, 15 Aberdeen St., Central; 852/2544-8188; magnan-tse.com*) trade in “precious apparel,” blurring the line between clothes and jewelry with a blend of understated cuts and glittering, hand-sewn embroidery, all displayed in their bright, minimalist boutique.

INDONESIA

► **EAT** The first of its kind in Jakarta, **ninety-nine** (*East Mall, Lower ground floor, Grand Indonesia Shopping Town, Jln. M.H. Thamrin No. 1; 62-21/2358-1199; lunch for two Rp200,000*) serves up tasty, no-nonsense fare in an upscale setting, using top-notch ingredients from its food-emporium neighbor: Think salads spilling with perky greens, *croque monsieurs* made with rustic-style bread, and authentic *sup buntut* and *nasi goreng*.

► **DRINK** Locals and expats are flocking to the **Domain Bar** (*Panin Tower B2, Senayan City, Jln. Asia Afrika Kav 19; 62-21/7278-1641; drinks for two Rp220,000*), a slick industrial space in one of the capital's hippest enclaves. Quirky touches—wall plaques sprouting deer antlers; modish purple mood

lighting over the long bar—keep the vibe fun, while a resident DJ and creative cocktails mean the dance floor stays packed long after midnight—try the Raspberry Bramble (fresh berries muddled with sweet lemon juice and gin) or the coffee-infused vodka “moccattini.”

► **EAT, ► DRINK, ► SHOP** Pick up a colorful caftan, refresh with a swim, watch the sun drop behind the Indian Ocean, “lemongrasstini” in hand, then dine on a supper of barramundi *confit*—all within the grounds of Bali's **Cocoon Beach Club** (*Jln. Double Six, Blue Ocean Boulevard, Seminyak; 62-361/731-266; cocoon-beach.com; drinks for two Rp190,000; dinner for two Rp600,00*). The 3,000-square-meter resto-bar along iconic 66 Beach has a pool fringed with daybeds and VIP cabanas, a kitchen helmed by former Sydney Rockpool and Icebergs chef Stephen Moore, and lounge and drinking areas where you can groove to sounds from DJ's spun by around the globe.

► **STAY** Immerse yourself in the healing practices and sacred arts of Bali at **Five Elements Puri Ahimsa** (*Banjar Adat Baturning,*

Mambal, Abiansemal, Badung; 62-361/469-822; fivelements.org; doubles from US\$490), a tranquil resort just 30 minutes from Ubud, with five serene and airy suites constructed from bamboo and nipa thatch with balconies jutting over the Ayung River. Indulge body and soul with treatments ranging from reflexology and chakra balancing to yoga and meditation; or you can even arrange a blessing with a Balinese high priest.

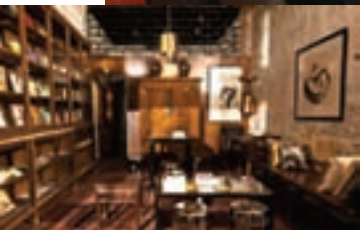
LAOS

► **EAT** After cooking in Geneva, Shanghai and Guangzhou, Piedmonte-born Gerardo Dereviziis renounced urban life for sleepy Vientiane to open **Aria Mixai** (*8 Rue Francois Nginn, Ban Mixai; 856-21/222-589; dinner for two US\$36*). *Cotto* tiles, alfresco tables and an open kitchen make for a relaxed space, while the menu draws on Dereviziis's mixed southern and northern heritage, with dishes spanning the length and breadth of the boot: try the spaghetti with calamari, Puglia wild onions, chili and sliced *bottarga*, or the braised-deer-and-forest-mushroom ravioli with red wine and mountain herbs. Choose from a list of more than 130 Italian wines, and don't forget to finish up with the Turin-style chocolate mousse.

► **STAY** A short stroll from the Mekong, on Vientiane's most charming street, the **Ansara Hotel** (*Quai Fa Ngum, Ban Vat Chan Tha, Hom 5, Muang Chanthabury; 856-21/213-514; ansarahotel.com; doubles from US\$115*) has just 14 rooms and suites, and offers the kind of personalized service only a small hotel can. Rooms are decked out in handwoven textiles, dark wood and rattan furnishings, and each has a balcony overlooking a lush garden. Plan to stay in for dinner: the hotel's restaurant, La Signature, tempts with scrumptious Gallic-Lao creations such as pan-fried *foie gras* with curry. The **Alila Luang Prabang** (*Unit 4, Ban Mano, Old Prison Rd.; 856-71/260-777; alilahotels.com; doubles from US\$170*), sister to the brand's elegant 3 Nagas, marries colonial charm with contemporary lines in its 23 sumptuous suites, spread across a cluster of new and early 20th-century structures—book into a corner pool suite for your own private viewing tower. After sightseeing, recharge with a treatment at Spa Alila or master the art of *laab* at the on-site Ka-toke Cooking School. Luang Prabang's »

FROM TOP: COURTESY OF ALILA LUANG PRABANG; COURTESY OF COCOON BEACH; COURTESY OF FIVE ELEMENTS PURI AHIMSA; COURTESY OF APSARA RIVE DROITE; COURTESY OF THE UPPER STATION

Society Lounge's dining room, in Manila.



The Straits Collection, in Penang.



Cupcakes in Kuala Lumpur, by A Slice of Heaven.



Manila's Le Bistro Vert.



1-Altitude, a 63rd-floor bar in Singapore.

only lodging set on the right bank of the Nahm Khan River, the **Apsara Rive Droite** (*Ban Phanluang*; 856-71/254-252; theapsara.com; doubles from US\$140) has dark timber floors, huge beds and generous soaking tubs in the nine airy rooms, each with private outdoor space overlooking mountains and temples. A boat will ferry you to town in three minutes, but the swimming pool and delicious breakfasts served until 3 P.M. (house-made jam, omelettes, Bolaven plateau-grown coffee brewed in espresso pots) make it hard to leave.

MALAYSIA

► **EAT** At long last, Kuala Lumpur favorite **Cilantro** (*MiCasa All Suite Hotel*, 368-B Jln. Tun Razak; 60-3/2179-8082; cilantrokl.com; dinner for two RM500) has returned after a two-year renovation. Muted earth tones and low lights set the stage for French-meets-Japanese cuisine: think old favorites like *unagi* with *foie gras*, supplemented with lighter, purer Japanese fare. Deliveries from Tokyo's Tsukiji market guarantee stunning seafood—look for Hokkaido scallops in briny sea-urchin sauce and Japanese shellfish stew. Friday set lunches, at RM150 for four courses, are an exceptional deal. Sited in the capital's toniest mall, **A Slice of Heaven by Just Heavenly** (*Level 1, Lot P1-12-01, Gourmet Emporium, KL Pavillion*; 60-3/2287-9866; dessert for two from RM5) bakes *prêt-à-manger* confections that are as lovely to look at as they are delicious: the Red Velvet, a rich yet light

crumbed cake frosted with whipped cream cheese is a best seller, while the Chocolate Durian—dark ganache-frosted *génoise* encasing fresh durian bound with cream—elevates the king of fruits to new heights. Even sweeter: a portion of sales go to help Malaysia's Women's Aid Organization.

► **DRINK** Conveniently tucked between Georgetown, Penang's UNESCO heritage district, and seaside Gurney Drive, **That Little Wine Bar** (*54 Jln. Chow Thye*; 60-4/226-8182; thatlittlewinebar.com; drinks for two RM60) is a welcome addition to a drinking scene dominated by backpacker dives. Run by a globe-trotting European couple, the bistro-bar retains its 1930's row-house façade but goes urban-contemporary inside, with a small bar, velvet banquettes and a blackboard advertising daily specials. Come for the selection of reasonably priced tipples, but stay for nibbles like the delectable house-made duck pasties.

► **STAY** Georgetown's new buzz is embodied in **The Straits Collection** (*47–55 Stewart Lane, 89–95 Armenian St.*; 60-4/263-7299, 262-7299; straitscollection.com.my; doubles from RM400), two rows of once-crumbling double-story shop houses, reimagined as the Penang capital's most stylish boutique lodgings. Nine houses in total each host two roomy suites, all graced with period details—timber doors; interior air wells—eclectic furnishings and semi-open baths with rain showers.

PHILIPPINES

► **EAT** The Philippine capital is going green at **Le Bistro Vert** (*Fraser Place, Valero St., Salcedo Village, Makati*; 63-2/403.1841; lebistro.ph; lunch for two P1,500), a bastion of sustainable eating disguised as a chic, airy café. On the menu are healthy, locally sourced dishes like Tagaytay vegetable lasagne and Palawan cashew-and-herb-crusted sole. Sound too wholesome? Skip straight to dessert with a Valrhona chocolate *sansrival*. Over in Taguig, foodies can't get enough of **Chef's Table** (*Ground floor, Unit 106, The Infinity Tower, 26th St., The Fort Global City, Taguig*; 63-2/399-1888; chefstablemanila.com; dinner for two P3,000), the modern Filipino restaurant of TV chef Bruce Lim—don't miss the steamed *lapu lapu* with savory *ube*.

► **DRINK** Society Lounge, better known as **S Lounge** (*Ground floor, Atrium Bldg., Makati* »

FROM TOP: COURTESY OF SOCIETY LOUNGE; COURTESY OF THE STRAITS COLLECTION; COURTESY OF JUST HEAVENLY; COURTESY OF LE BISTRO VERT; COURTESY OF 1-ROCHESTER GROUP

Artwork at the Kaikai Kiki Gallery Taipei.



Wanderlust hotel, in Singapore.

The Mandarin Gallery, on Orchard Road.



At the Disgruntled Chef, in Singapore.

That Little Wine Bar, in Georgetown, Penang.



Ave. corner of Paseo de Roxas, Makati; 63-2/408-1852; dinner and drinks for two P2,000), delivers French chef Patrice Freuslon's Asian-inflected creations—green-asparagus tempura with poached egg and Hollandaise; ginger *crème brûlée*—in a swish dining room, but the real draw here is the bar-lounge, where Manila's beautiful set let their hair down from 11 P.M. On Fridays, don't miss DJ Elian Habayeb's legendary Groove Sanctuary nights.

► **STAY** Esconced in leafy Salcedo Village, the **Picasso Boutique Serviced Residences** (119 L.P. Leviste St., Salcedo Village, Makati; 63-2/828-4774; picassomakati.com; doubles from P8,560) stands out for its chic, spacious rooms—the smallest, the Malaga Studio, starts at 45 square meters—as well as its in-house contemporary art gallery showing exhibitions curated by Art Cabinet Philippines.

► **SHOP** The capital's most creative denizens congregate at **The Collective** (7274 Malugay St., San Antonio Village, Makati), a former garage turned independent arts-and-design hub: check out **Vinyl on Vinyl** for old-school records, **Sundae** for flirty dresses and galoshes with bold graphic prints, **Crazy Eddie's Shirts, Slacks & Wonder Emporium** for hip menswear (think skinny ties and vintage specs), **Ritual** for affordable gourmet goodies with an earth-friendly twist, and, after-hours, **B-Side**, for funky beats and an *au courant* crowd.

SINGAPORE

► **EAT** Looking more like a punk rocker than the accomplished chef she is, Apasara Navarojanasakul transforms Thai standards with great finesse at **Soht & Baay** (#04-11 Ion Orchard, 2 Orchard Turn; 65/6509-6058; dinner for two S\$120). Highlights include a pomelo salad lashed with palm sugar syrup, creamy otak, and coffee-scented sticky rice and mango.

The Disgruntled Chef (26B Dempsey Rd.; 65/6476-5305; dinner for two S\$130) is Daniel Sia's debut turn as chef-owner. Here the conceit is tapas-style dining, though this alone doesn't explain the taste rush you get from garlic bread with baked bone marrow, or a slow-cooked veal cheek served with Yorkshire pudding.

► **DRINK** In Singapore, the word du jour is "view," which explains the flurry of new rooftop bars. Framed by greenery and a vertiginous infinity pool, **Ku Dé Ta** (Skypark at Marina Bay

Sands North Tower, 1 Bayfront Ave.; 65/6688-7688; kudeta.com.sg) offers a stunning panorama of Singapore's skyscrapers from its 57th-floor perch. Across the bay, **1-Altitude** (One Raffles Place; 65/6438-0410; 1-altitude.com) claims the title of the world's tallest alfresco bar—it's on the 63rd floor—as it reels in tipplers with Indian and Japanese malt whiskies.

► **STAY** While the towering **Marina Bay Sands** (1 Bayfront Ave.; 65/6688-8888; marinabaysands.com; doubles from S\$359) rolls out a brashly overloaded menu of designer shops, glitzy casino and celebrity chefs like Guy Savoy and Tetsuya, those preferring a quieter and more intimate setting should hightail it to the elegant **Fullerton Bay Hotel** (80 Collyer Quay; 65/6333-8388; fullertonbayhotel.com; doubles from S\$480), where every room boasts perfect views of the bay and city. Over in Little India, **Wanderlust** (2 Dickson Rd.; 65/6396-3322; wanderlusthotel.com; doubles from S\$180) tempts with a mix of glam backpacker grunge and quirky design.

► **SHOP** It's easy to lose an entire afternoon wandering concept store **ALT** (#01-01 The Heeren, 260 Orchard Rd.; 65/6732-6677; alt-style.com.sg). On offer is a dizzying variety of grooming products, pet accessories and regional and international labels like Thai cosmetic range BSC Panadda and Shanghainese fashionista favorite Broadcast. Across the road, the four-story **Mandarin Gallery** (333a Orchard Rd.; 65/6831-6363; mandarinalgallery.com.sg) boasts a savvy mix of fashion, Japanese homeware and eateries headlined by the likes of Just Cavalli, Marc by Marc Jacobs, Bathing Ape, Jones the Grocer, Vertu and Henry Cotton's.

TAIWAN

► **EAT** Taipei teppanyaki guru Danny Teng—billed by locals as the "godfather of steak"—has enlisted an A-list team of interior designers, dessert masters and sommeliers for his latest venture, **Danny & Company** (No. 33, Lane 52, Siwei Rd.; 886-2/2705-9911; dannyandcompany.com; lunch for two NT\$2,000). Try the prime dry-aged rib-eye cap steak and sous vide lamb rack, paired with wine from a 170-label collection. Taipei's gourmands are aflutter with the arrival of **L'Atelier de Joël Robuchon** (5th floor, Bellavita, 28 Songren Rd.; 886-2/8729-2628; joel-robuchon.net; tasting menus from NT\$2,680), the newest outpost of culinary titan Joël »

FROM TOP: COURTESY OF KAIKAI KIKI GALLERY; COURTESY OF WANDERLUST; COURTESY OF MANDARIN GALLERY; COURTESY OF THE DISGRUNTLED CHEF; COURTESY OF THAT LITTLE WINE BAR

Phulay Bay, in Krabi, Thailand.



0328; taipei.gallery-kaikaikiki.com), his second outpost in the world (the first is in Tokyo). On show in the light-filled, 390-square-meter space are exhibitions of whimsical Japanese contemporary art, from sculptures and installations to paintings. In Yilan County, **Lanyang Museum** (26144 No. 750, Qingyun Rd., Sec. 3, Toucheng; 886-3/977-9700; lym.gov.tw; admission NT\$100) dispels the notion that Asia's provincial museums are dusty affairs. Exhibitions delve into local ecology, geography and tribal cultures, but most striking is the architecture: the structure's slanting glass-and-rock façade cuts a dramatic contrast against the lush surrounding marshlands.

A design by Taiwan brand Jia Inc.



The Palais de Chine, in Taipei.

Robuchon's fine-dining empire, with executive chef Yosuke Suga delivering his refined French classics such as raw oysters dressed with caviar, and crispy langoustine *papillote*.

► **STAY** The 286-room **Palais de Chine** (No. 3, Sect. 1, Chengde Rd.; 886-2/2181-9999; palaisdechinehotel.com; doubles from NT\$11,000) makes a splashy debut on Taipei's hotel scene with plush neoclassical styling—ornate linen, mirrored ceilings, gleaming chandeliers—and four swanky dining outlets, including superb Cantonese restaurant Le Palais. The newly minted **Le Méridien Taipei** (38 Songren Rd.; 886-2/6622-8000; lemeridien.com/taipei; doubles from NT\$10,300) stands out from Xinyi district's crowd of business hotels with its arts-oriented approach—more than 500 artworks are scattered throughout, while key cards designed by Taiwanese artist Michael Lin open the doors of the 160 guestrooms.

► **SHOP** For chic designer dinnerware, head to the first dedicated boutique of renowned home-grown brand **Jia Inc.** (5th floor, Shin Kong Mitsukoshi Xinyi New Life Square A9, 9 Songshou Rd.; 886-2/2725-2579; jia-inc.com), whose collections meld contemporary aesthetics with Chinese sensibilities: think three-legged bronze casseroles, gourd-shaped saucers and calligraphy-inspired cutlery.

► **SEE** Is Taiwan's art scene 10 years ahead of Japan's? Takashi Murakami thinks so, as evidenced by the **Kaikai Kiki Gallery Taipei** (1st floor, Taiwan Development Financial Bldg., 2 Chongqing South Rd., Sec. 1; 886-2/2382-

THAILAND

► **EAT** It's been a strong year for Thai cuisine in the capital. In addition to Bangkok's two most dazzling fine-dining openings, both in five-star hotels—David Thompson's **Nahm** (27 South Sathorn Rd.; 66-2/625-3388; metropolitan.bangkok.como.bz; dinner for two Bt3,000) at the Metropolitan Bangkok; Henrik Yde-Andersen's **Sra Bua by Kiin Kiin** (991/9 Rama 1 Rd.; 66-2/162-9000; kempinskibangkok.com; dinner for two Bt6,000) at the new Siam Kempinski—two low-key Thong Lo debuts have citizens' taste buds zinging. **Soul Food Mahanakorn** (56/10 Sukhumvit Soi 55 (Thong Lo); 66-2/714-7708; soulfoodmahanakorn.com; dinner and drinks for two Bt1,200), by American food journalist Jarett Wrisley, rolls out beautifully interpreted takes on regional dishes—perfectly crisp southern-style samosas; smoky-sour roast-duck *laab*—while **Phuket Town** (160/8 Soi 6, Sukhumvit Soi 55 (Thong Lo); 66-2/714-9402; dinner for two Bt800) specializes in family-style southern fare, like *khanom jeen* (fermented rice noodles) with coconut crabmeat curry, and addictively hot *nahm prik* (chili-paste dip with condiments).

► **DRINK** Just off Sukhumvit, gastro-bar **Hyde & Seek** (65/1 Athenee Residence, Soi Ruamrudee, Wireless Rd.; 66-2/1685-1523; hydeandseek.com; drinks for two Bt600) delivers a winning combination of gourmet comfort food—ginger-ale-fried calamari; truffle mac'n'cheese—and top-notch drinks. The cocktail list changes monthly, but recent favorites include the Modern Mad Men, with pear-and-rosemary-infused bourbon, and the Siam Sunrays, a vodka-based mix with kaffir lime. »

A room at Le Méridien Taipei.



At the Fullerton Bay Hotel, in Singapore.



Lanyang Museum, in Yilan County, Taiwan.



FROM TOP: COURTESY OF RITZ-CARLTON; COURTESY OF JIA INC.; COURTESY OF PALAIS DE CHINE; COURTESY OF LE MERIDIEN TAIPEI; COURTESY OF FULLERTON BAY HOTEL; COURTESY OF LANYANG MUSEUM



Madame Hien, in Hanoi.

► **STAY** In Bangkok, the 24-story **S31 Hotel** (545 Sukhumvit 31; 66-2/260-1111; s31hotel.com; doubles from Bt2,750) stands out for its whimsical exterior, by Thai architect Dr. Sumet Jumsai: the colorful, nest-like rooftop is impossible to miss, while inside, the 90 rooms have spacious 2.5-meter beds and floor-to-ceiling windows. Over in Krabi, **Phulay Bay** (111 Moo 3 Nongthalay, Muang; 66-7/562-8111; phulaybay.com; villas from Bt19,550) is the first ever Ritz-Carlton Reserve. The 49-villa, Lek Bunnag–designed sanctuary offers views of teakwood pavilions, landscaped greenery and the karst-studded Andaman Sea at every turn. On the banks of Khon Kaen’s Chi River, the charming **Wishing Tree Resort** (114/1 Moo 5, Thapra; 66-43/209-333; wishingtreeresort.com; doubles from Bt2,500) is the latest addition to Isaan’s burgeoning boutique-hotel scene; all 48 rooms have private verandas and walls



The Wishing Tree Resort, in Thailand.

draped with checkered *pha khao ma* textiles.

► **SHOP** Sartorially inclined gentlemen will love the new Thai menswear label **4x4 Man by S’Fare** (4th floor, Central Chidlom, Ploenchit Rd.; 63-2/793-7900), which specializes in contemporary tailored shirts, vests, trousers and jackets, all delivered in breathable cotton that is perfect for Southeast Asia.

Look out for its first boutique, set to open in CentralWorld early in the new year.

VIETNAM

► **EAT** Didier Corlou, Vietnam’s most celebrated chef, delves into the country’s legendary street-food traditions at his latest venture in the capital, **Madame Hien** (15 Chan Cam; 84-4/3938-1588; verticale-hanoi.com; dinner for two 600,000 dong), where dishes like banana-flower salad, pho and lemongrass-duck foie gras are served in a stunning, century-old Hanoian villa. In Saigon’s District 1, diners tuck into cumin-grilled lamb chops and green-bean-and-goat’s-cheese pasta at **Flow** (88 Ho Tung Mau; 84-8/3915-3691; flowsaigon.com; dinner for two VND900,000), a shophouse that’s been transformed into a contemporary brasserie and hung with modern art. The latest addition to An Phu’s culinary awakening is the riverfront

Blu Bar & Grill (53 Vo Truong Toan; 84-8/3744-4111; dinner for two VND800,000); the stylish, resort-like spot serves up treats like Sriracha garlic chicken wings, lamb-and-spinach curry and killer Bloody Marys.

► **DRINK** For a completely fresh perspective, head to **The Rooftop Hanoi** (83B Ly Thuong Kiet St.; 84-4/3946-1901; drinks for two VND200,000), on the 19th floor of Pacific Place Tower. Sure, the views from the alfresco veranda are intoxicating, but the burgundy-and-gold interior, with its brocade couches and glass-beaded tables, is one of the city’s most sophisticated spots to clink glasses. In Saigon, the Franco-Japanese **Ala Mezon** (10 Chu Manh Trinh; 84-8/6291-0447; drinks for two VND170,000) serves inventive cocktails based on Japanese ingredients—*awamori* martinis; So Flavor Tea with green-tea liqueur—in a mix of kitschy spaces: a “girls’ room” is all pink, while a “boys’ room” is equipped with bean bags and a Wii. All too much? Escape to the fourth-floor rooftop terrace and unwind on a daybed.

► **STAY** Travelers to the former Imperial capital of Hue can rest like royalty at the new five-star beach villa **Ana Mandara** (Thuan An Town; 84-8/6291-3030; hotelcollectionindochine.com; doubles from US\$150), whose 78 rooms, with hardwood floors and exposed beam roofs, overlook rice paddies and the South China Sea; Hue’s old citadel is a 20-minute drive. Further along the coast, guests at the 30-story **Sheraton Nha Trang Hotel** (26-28 Tran Phu St.; 84-58/388-0000; starwoodhotels.com; doubles from US\$125) spend days lounging on the 7-kilometer stretch of sand before retiring to rooms blessed with thick white duvets, beige settees and colorful Vietnamese art.

► **SHOP** Hanoi’s chicest fashion designer, **Ha Troung** (278 Duong Nghi Tam Rd.; 84-4/3710-0675; hatruong.com), has opened an eponymous shop in West Lake, where you’ll find her sexy-yet-classic range of tailored, long-sleeved mini-dresses, embroidered tunics and wide-legged pants. In Saigon, source eco-chic, high-design accessories—beaded leather handbags; bamboo-and-jute stationery—by a collection of designers at **Villa Anupa** (17/27 Le Thanh Ton; 84-8/3825-7307; anupa.net). +

The Ana Mandara, in Hue, Vietnam.



Men’s fashion by Thai label 4x4 by S’Fare.



Nahm prik at Soul Food Mahanakorn, in Bangkok.