

Travel inspiration

# Check in to this year’s most exciting new hotels

These exceptional, distinctive homes from home are a cut above the rest. You just might end up extending your stay, says Fiona Kerr

## United Kingdom

### Hope *Sutherland, Scotland*

Danish billionaire Anders Holch Povlsen already owns vast swathes of Scotland under his Wildland banner, including some of the country’s loveliest places to stay, such as Killiehuntley Farmhouse in the Cairngorms and Aldourie Castle on the shores of the legendary Loch Ness.

Now, Povlsen is restoring a historic hunting lodge and a collection of self-catering cottages on his Sutherland estate, transforming them into an ambitious model of regenerative hospitality called Hope. This is part of Wildland’s broader mission as Europe’s largest conservation project, and guests can witness the work firsthand through guided wildlife tracking – perhaps spotting nesting Golden Eagles – and peatland foraging walks across this remarkable landscape.

*Opens in May; doubles from £1,100, all inclusive with guided experiences daily and outdoor equipment (wildland.scot)*



▲ Fit for a king: the Grade II-listed Castle Lodge offers sympathetically designed suites; *right*, 15 cabins will dot the woodlands of Wildhive Eshott Hall



### Wildhive Eshott Hall *Northumberland, England*

Following on from the popular Wildhive Callow Hall in the Peak District – with its tree houses and back-to-nature ethos – this fledgling British country-house hotel group plants its flag further north with a second property near the Northumberland coast.

Eshott Hall is a handsome, honey-hued Georgian manor and its 14 bedrooms have had an earthy-coloured, print-filled makeover, while the former stables have been converted into six dog-friendly bedrooms. Outside, amid the woodlands and kitchen garden, will be 15 wooden cabins, each with its own

outdoor bath and swing seat on the deck. There’s also botanical massages at The Coach House spa and meat from moorland-grazed livestock on the menu in The Garden Room restaurant.

*Opens in summer; doubles from £195; cabins from £350, room only (wildhive.uk)*

### Castle Lodge *Shropshire, England*

This timber-fronted, Grade II-listed landmark in the foodie Shropshire town of Ludlow was once home to Catherine of Aragon, who now lends her name to

one of the seven sympathetically designed suites in its new guise as a boutique hotel. Other suites are named Henry VIII (suitably opulent) and “The Captain” (a nautical-styled room for 18th-century naval man Frederick Cornewall), each telling a story of the building’s almost 800-year history.

Young-gun Shropshire chef Harry Bullock heads up the restaurant downstairs, serving dishes such as warm crab tarts, beef fat confit ox cheek and a daily pie (woodcock and artichoke, if you will). Ludlow Castle’s ruins are just next door, perfect for a postprandial stroll.

*Opens Jan; doubles from £295, room only (castlodelgeludlow.co.uk)*

There’s nothing like the deepest, darkest days of winter to inspire some serious wanderlust. So, where to go? Whether you’re a dedicated hotel junkie or simply an inspiration-hungry holiday-seeker, consider this line-up of new openings your must-book list for the year ahead.

The class of 2026 ranges from sensitively converted architectural landmarks to remote outposts at the ends of the earth, instant city classics to forward-thinking beach resorts. There’s extravagant luxury from big-name brands, sure, but also well-priced boutique stays from first-time hoteliers.

Every year we sift through hundreds of upcoming hotels to select the ones that do more than simply offer a freshly painted bedroom for the night, instead championing places that stand out for their thoughtful ambition as much as their good looks.

## Mainland Europe

### Mandarin Oriental *Punta Negra Mallorca, Spain*

The eternally popular Mallorca is welcoming a smart new addition with the arrival of Asian-hotel stalwart Mandarin Oriental, set along the cliffs of the picturesque Costa d’en Blanes peninsula, just a 20-minute drive from Palma. The 131 bedrooms, most with crystalline sea views, are decorated in a soothing white-and-wood scheme, with tactile textiles and floor-to-ceiling windows.

Despite the relatively small number of rooms, the hotel boasts an outsized selection of restaurants, with five diverse outposts: Japanese (Nobu-style Matsuhisa), Spanish tapas, Levantine all-day dining, a Mexican taqueria and an open-fire Mallorcan steakhouse (Leña by Dani Garcia), all designed to complement those spectacular Bay of Palma sunsets.

*Opens in spring; doubles from £636, B&B (mandarinoriental.com)*

### Lake Como Edition *Lake Como, Italy*

The most finger-on-the-pulse hotel junkies might have caught this sleek hotel’s two-month preview in September and October last year, but Ian Schrager’s splashy Lake Como destination launches properly just as the temperature starts to tick up this March.

While the exterior of the 19th-century building is a butter-coloured classic, inside it is signature Schrager with a buzzy lobby bar and a mid-century modern feel to the walnut and marble interiors. On Como’s sunset-facing western shore, in the town of Cadenabbia, the Edition brings a fresh contemporary energy to the lake, from its floating pool scene to the biohacking longevity spa.

*Opens in March; rates TBC (editionhotels.com)*

### Zannier Île de Bendor *Provence, France*

In 1951, French industrialist Paul Ricard – perhaps better known for his eponymous pastis – bought a tiny island off the French Riviera town of Bandol. He transformed it from an uninhabited rock into a Sixties jet-set playground, building a mini Provençal village complete with a hotel, restaurants, art galleries and museums.

Now chic hotelier Arnaud Zannier, working with Ricard’s great-grandson, hopes to revive that Côte d’Azur spirit by restoring Bendor as a private island resort. The 93-key hotel will be spread across three locations on the island and will include a wellness hub and five two-storey houses for families beside the harbour. In the spirit of Ricard’s original vision, there will also be plenty of activities to create a convivial miniature world.

*Opens in May; doubles from £542, B&B (zannierhotels.com)*

### Chesa Marchetta *Sils Maria, Switzerland*

Global gallerists Iwan and Manuela Wirth have returned to their native Switzerland for the latest hotel under their Artfarm hospitality arm, which also includes the Fife Arms in Scotland. The fairy-tale Engadine Valley is a suitably arty place for them to land, home to bold contemporary art museums such as Muzeum Susch.

There is a personal connection too. The art-world power couple went on their first date in the 1990s at Chesa Marchetta’s original restaurant, a celebrated spot also frequented by artists such as Gerhard Richter and Jean-Michel Basquiat. Now this historic guesthouse in the quiet village of Sils Maria has been meticulously restored as a 13-bedroom hotel, with the famous restaurant once again turning out seasonal cooking for a cultured crowd.

*Opens on Jan 2; doubles from £428, B&B (chesamarchetta.ch)*

### Orient Express Venezia *Venice, Italy*

It’s all go in the floating city this year, with the legendary Hotel Danieli reopening as a Four Seasons, Mandarin Oriental taking over the San Clemente Palace on its own island, and the enchanting French hotelier Airelles opening on the Giudecca – its first hotel outside France. But will any be as glamorous as Orient Express’s reimag-



▲ Modernist makeover: they don’t skimp on the marble at Lake Como Edition’s buzzing lobby bar

▼ A step up: theatre has been key to Orient Express’s reworking of the 15th-century Palazzo Donà Giovannelli, in Venice

Art is also key: contemporary works from the owners’ family collection feature throughout the hotel and tapped-in experiences include marble-carving workshops with local artisans.

*Opens May; doubles from £612, room only (laurahotels.com)*

### Rosewood Blue Palace *Crete, Greece*

The largest of the Greek islands, Crete is a dependable hit for its sandy beaches, centuries-old culinary traditions and family-friendly resorts. The opening of all-inclusive Ikos Kissamos this year might be getting the school holiday crowd excited, but it’s the arrival of the glossy hotel brand Rosewood that will really cement the island’s luxury hotel scene.

Rosewood Blue Palace is a complete overhaul of the much-loved Blue Palace hotel, which sits on the coast between the fishing village of Plaka and the popular port of Elounda on the north-east of the island. The 154 elegant rooms and suites are the work of Greek architecture firm K-Studio, best known for their cutting-edge design hotels such as Dexamenes in repurposed wine tanks on the Peloponnese.

*Opens later this year; rates TBC (rosewoodhotels.com)*

### Na Praia *Comporta, Portugal*

The Alentejo country estate of São Lourenço do Barrocal is one of Portugal’s most special hotels, transformed by its eighth-generation steward, José António Uva, from a working family farm to an elegant rural retreat.

Now Uva has his sights set on a secluded stretch of Alentejo coast just beyond Comporta, where he’s created a thoughtful hotel spread among the coastal dunes on the edge of a nature reserve. The pace here is deliberately slow, with guided nature walks, an elemental spa and deserted white sand beach to soak up, while breathing in the juniper-scented Atlantic air.

*Opens spring; doubles from £1,320, B&B (napraia.com)*

### Eha *Hiiumaa Island, Estonia*

Estonia has more than 2,000 islands, some no more than rocky outcrops, others like Saaremaa – the largest and westernmost – that are slowly awakening to holidaymakers. This summer, Saaremaa’s neighbour Hiiumaa, part of a Unesco-protected biosphere reserve, will offer a fresh reason to visit: a serene Nordic wellness retreat tucked among its deserted beaches and pine forests.



ining of the 15th-century Palazzo Donà Giovannelli?

This Neo-Gothic pink palace in Cannaregio has been theatrically reworked by Lebanon-born architect Aline Asmar d’Amman, with 47 bedrooms, a gilded ballroom, frescoed ceilings and mosaic floors. The Wagon Bar awaits when the brand’s new Orient Express train to Istanbul begins rolling out of Venice again in 2027.

*Opens in April; doubles from £1,155, B&B (venezia.orient-express.com)*

### Luura Cliff *Paros, Greece*

Is Paros the new Mykonos? Hopefully not, but in recent years there has been a wave of fashionable hotel openings on the laidback Cycladic neighbour of Mykonos and Santorini. No direct flights from the UK help to keep the crowds at bay (either connect via Athens or take the ferry from Mykonos or Santorini) and this year Luura Cliff will be the hotspot that’s turning heads. On the island’s west coast, the whitewashed, adults-only hideout is an exercise in calm and even comes with its own private chapel.



▲ Island time: Rosewood has overhauled Crete’s much-loved Blue Palace hotel

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With only eight suites and three forest cabins, Eha creates programs that are deeply personalised and follow the seasons. In autumn, that might mean forest walks and thermal rituals. These are combined with Estonian healing traditions such as peat wraps, birch branch sauna ceremonies and dawn mist walks, alongside sound baths, aerial yoga and functional nutrition workshops in this secluded corner of the Baltic.

*Opens this summer; three-night retreats cost from £1,800, including all dining and a curated programme of wellness and activities*  
(eharetreat.com)

## Further afield

Delano Miami Beach  
*Miami, Florida, USA*

Ian Schrager defined New York nightlife with Studio 54. By the 1990s, he was doing it again in Miami Beach, in the lobby of his hotel, the Delano, creating the city's thumping social heart.

The famed billowing white curtains of Philippe Starck's Nineties design will remain when the Delano Miami Beach reopens this March, its latest incarnation

created under the exacting eye of former Schrager right-hand man Ben Pundole and hotel juggernaut Ennismore. Expect the pool scene to be back in full swing, while the 171 guest rooms include pool-side suites and sprawling penthouses on the 14th floor of the art deco tower.

*Opens March; rates TBC ([delamohotels.com](http://delamohotels.com))*

## The Cormorant at 55 South

*Puerto Williams, Chile*

At a latitude of 55 degrees south, at the very tip of Chile, The Cormorant will

become the world's southernmost hotel when it opens late this year. Initially available only as part of Silversea's Antarctic expedition cruises (though open to all the next season), this edge-of-the-world stay will allow guests to explore the Fuegian Archipelago – birdwatching and dolphin spotting, kayaking the Beagle Channel and hiking in pristine wilderness – before embarking on the next leg of their voyage even farther south.

These adventures will transform a stopover into a unique subpolar experience, while making the journey from Santiago to ship more seamless.

*Opens in October; rates only as part of a cruise package (silversea.com)*

► **Fields of dreams:** *Magia de Uma* in Bali is set in a peaceful estate, designed in concert with its paddy-field surroundings



Erebero Hills  
*Bwindi Impenetrable*  
*Forest, Uganda*

High-end safari operator Asilia's first camp in Uganda is set on the northern fringes of Bwindi Impenetrable Forest. Gorilla trekking takes centre stage here in a densely forested area that is home to half of the world's remaining mountain gorillas.

The sinuous eight-suite lodge is set among the tree canopy on a hillside overlooking Bwindi, part of a long-term reforestation project. The sensitive plan is to reclaim the land not only as an ecological buffer zone to safeguard the wildlife, but also to create an accessible forest for the local Batwa people, who are no longer allowed in Bwindi for conservation reasons.

*Opens in August; doubles from £819pp, full board (asiliaafrica.com)*

Imperial Hotel Kyoto  
Kyoto, Japan

Japan's Imperial Hotel opened its original outpost in Tokyo in 1890, slowly adding two more in Osaka and the Kamikochi mountains over the next century. This year a fourth joins the fold, set in Kyoto's heritage Yasaka Kikan building along the lantern-lit streets of the Gion geisha district.

Like everything with Imperial Hotels, the transformation has been meticulous and deeply reverent of the former theatre's history. Architectural details such as the façade's original decorative tiling have been preserved and restored, while other terracotta decoration has been carefully reproduced using 3D scanning. The hotel's 55 rooms include some with traditional tatami-mat flooring, and all spotlight Japanese craft traditions with handmade textiles and ceramics.

*Opens in March; doubles from £789, room only (imperialhotel.co.jp)*

Kaia Koh Phangan  
*Koh Phangan, Thailand*

In the heady, *The Beach*-era backpacking days, Koh Phangan was a magnet for its full moon parties on Sunrise Beach (Haad Rin Nok). The ravers are still there, but the rest of the island has moved on, with wellness retreats and design hotels dotted along its sensational beaches.

On the much more peaceful northeast coast, surrounded by a protected national park, Kaia offers a light-footed kind of luxury, with 31 tented suites and four two-bedroom pool villas climbing a lush hillside. Sustainability is woven into the fabric of the resort: floors are made from upcycled teak and rugs from recycled plastics, while ingredients for the restaurant are sourced from the hotel's organic farm and beehives. *Opens this summer; rates TBC (kaiaresorts.com)*

Magia de Uma  
*Bali, Indonesia*

In the past decade, the beach spot of Canggu has transformed from a sleepy fishing village into a social media honypot, with yoga studios and cafés popping up. When Jacopo and Rosa Sertoli turned their family home, a short drive from Canggu, into a small hotel, they were mindful of their impact. They built just 14 rooms and bungalows across the peaceful estate, each from recycled Javanese wood and filled with Balinese furniture and antiques.

The result is a place that feels as though it has always been there, with a sense of story and soul imbued in every object. That story extends beyond the estate walls too, with opportunities to explore the surrounding countryside – hiking up volcanoes, trekking through rice paddies and planting mangroves – not a Buddha bowl in sight.

Now open; doubles from £262, room only ([designhotels.com](http://designhotels.com))

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