

THE  TIMES

# LUXE

THE DESIGN ISSUE 19.05.12

Portrait  
Nick Knight

'I want to make women feel good'

Victoria Beckham on frocks and fast cars

PLUS Thomas Heatherwick, Amanda Harlech, Manolo Blahnik, Renzo Piano, Tom Dixon and Gilbert & George

Travel

# 6 of the best DESIGN HOTELS

## *Trehotel, Harads, Sweden*

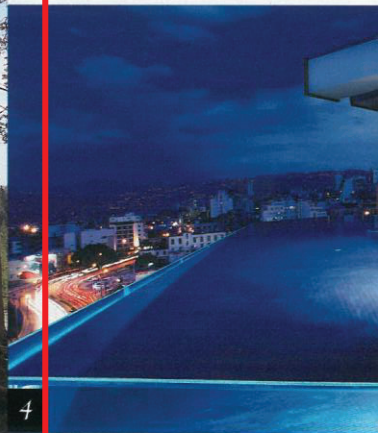
**Design ethos** At the Trehotel, five concept treehouses are suspended amid the towering trunks of a century-old pine forest in northern Sweden. The brainchild of three of the country's top architects, Thomas Sandell, Bertil Harstrom and Marten Cyren, these first five houses have been so successful that the next phase has world-renowned architects clamouring to put their stamp on them.

**The experience** Choose to stay in the Cabin (this page), UFO, Bird's Nest, Mirrorcube (overleaf) or Blue Cone, each suspended up to six metres above the ground and accessed via a ramp, bridge or retracting ladder. The beauty of the

forest, the views over the Lule River, horse-riding, dog-sledding, trekking and kayaking are a tonic for the senses.

**Luxx loves** The eco credentials. Underfloor heating, lighting and wifi are powered from hydroelectric sources, and wool insulation keeps the cabins warm in winter.

**Get me there** Wexas Travel ([wexas.com](http://wexas.com)) offers three days and two nights at the Trehotel, from £925 per person in summer, including return flights from London Heathrow to Luleå via Stockholm and transfers of an hour's drive to the village ([trehotel.se](http://trehotel.se)). »



PETER LUNDSTROM, WLD TREEHOTELISE

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### Amanruya, Bodrum, Turkey

**Design ethos** “Organic” and “traditional” is how the late Turkish architect Turgut Cansever described his vision for the resort’s 36 cottages with private terrace and pool, which sit amid pine trees and olive groves that slope down to a private beach. The Ottoman influence is everywhere – from the Turkish *mangal* fireplace in your sitting room to the handmade rugs and throws from Istanbul.

**The experience** The sense of space and light is overwhelming. Each house is secluded and airy, with linen sheets, mahogany furniture, a large garden and a bathroom that could house... well, a house. If bored by your own private pool and room service, there is always the 50-metre green-marble infinity pool, library and four dining rooms for distraction.

**Luxe loves** The details. An olive tree is always in sight, even from your bath; the bathroom products come in china vessels rather than plastic; and plates of dried fruit, cakes and figs are constantly replenished.

**Get me there** Cottages from £655 per night (plus tax and service), including a 30-minute private transfer from Bodrum Airport. Turkish Airlines flies from London Gatwick to Bodrum from £252 return in May. Visit [amanresorts.com](http://amanresorts.com), [gototurkey.co.uk](http://gototurkey.co.uk) and [thy.com](http://thy.com).

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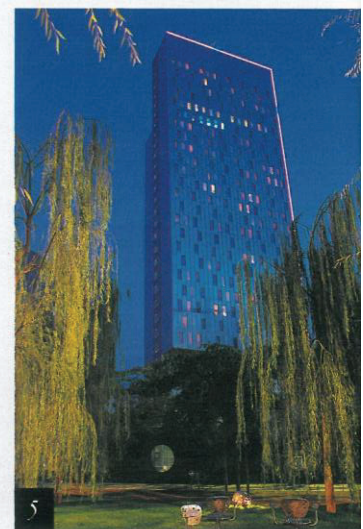
### The Upper House, Hong Kong

**Design ethos** From the Thomas Heatherwick-designed ground-floor entrance, to the sculptural skylight in the top-floor bar-restaurant, the Upper House is a world away from the Identikit corporate hotels of Asia’s most madcap city. Created by

the dynamic young architect Andre Fu, his aim has been to minimise the stress of this bustling metropolis and maximise relaxation.

**The experience** Entering the hotel is akin to having a massage – soothing lanterns, dark tones and soft music set the intimate, luxurious tone. Check-in takes place in the privacy of your room, outside of which a subtle light switches on to indicate when you are in, ensuring that the chance of a shock dressing-gown moment is unlikely. Your stay is made as easy as possible – light switches, for example, are designed for simpletons. Bedrooms start on the 61st floor, so it feels like a serene home in the clouds.

**Luxe loves** Soaking in a Ren Moroccan Rose Otto-scented bath with a view of the lush green hills to your left and the skyline of Kowloon to your right. If you time it right, you’ll wallow while the city’s spectacular light show goes on outside each evening at 8pm. **Get me there** Rooms from £320 per night ([upperhouse.com](http://upperhouse.com)).





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*Le Gray,  
 Beirut, Lebanon*

**Design ethos** Beirut is the hippest city in the Middle East, but it was Le Gray, with its 87 rooms and suites designed by Gordon Campbell Gray and Mary Fox Linton, that really put it on the map for the boutique-hotel crowd. Its contemporary architecture is the backdrop for more than 500 artworks, from the resin-studded elephant in the lobby to the David Reimondo burnt-toast installations at breakfast. It's like staying in Moma.

**The experience** The communal spaces truly wow. Bar Three Sixty is a cool penthouse hangout with wrap-around views of the city, mountains, sea and the mosque below. The Zen-like spa is an unexpected haven of calm beneath the hectic city streets and its candlelit decor of simple thin wooden slats feels like you have entered a scene



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from *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*.  
**Luxx loves** Listening to the Islamic prayer calls at dusk from the rooftop infinity pool.  
**Get me there** Deluxe doubles from £212 per night, excluding the 10 per cent VAT but including breakfast (campbellgrayhotels.com). Middle East Airlines flies from London Heathrow to Beirut from £454 return (020-7467 8000; mea.com.lb).

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*ME Barcelona*

**Design ethos** This funky hotel is in one of Barcelona's tallest buildings, designed by Dominique Perrault, creator of the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris. The exterior is clad in perforated aluminium, a Perrault trademark, which changes its look throughout the day as the sun moves. Splashes of red, blue and green glass call to mind the stained-glass windows of Gaudí's great Sagrada Família cathedral in the city below.

**The experience** Stepping inside, the red and white decor is a fresh and punchy contrast to the dusty streets. Bedrooms are flooded with sunlight from spectacular windows, an impression amplified by the mirrors all around.

**Luxx loves** The Dos Cielos restaurant on the 24th floor, run by the twin chefs Javier and Sergio Torres. The dining room hums with the chatter of Barcelona's jet set feasting on squid-ink risotto or foie gras ravioli. And on the 29th floor a newly created garden will soon be growing organic veg for the kitchen.

**Get me there** Doubles from £140 plus VAT. Visit me-by-melia.com.



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*Palais Namaskar,  
 Marrakesh*

**Design ethos** The Palais was conceived by a billionaire who travelled the globe collating the "best bits" of the most inspirational hotels and resorts in a project with Philippe Starck's protégé, Imaad Rahmouni. Eight years in the making, it takes the minimalism of the Banyan Tree in Phuket and the tranquility of the Hôtel du Cap on the Côte d'Azur and re-interprets them in the Moorish style. Nestled between the Atlas mountains and the Djebilet hills 30 minutes from Marrakesh, it has been designed around the Chinese principles of feng shui, with everything from water walkways and bougainvillea-scented paths designed to enhance harmony and health.

**The experience** Stepping into this fragrant resort feels like entering a vast Moorish paradise. The rooms, suites and villas (with terrace, Jacuzzi or pool) and Balinese-inspired gardens of waterfalls and lakes, cover an area the size of ten football pitches, yet the mature planting feels as if it has been here for ever. Time is spent lolling on hammocks, relaxing by the pool or in the spa, chatting over a fresh mint tea, or shopping in the souks of the city.

**Luxx loves** Indulging in quiet contemplation. Each self-contained villa (or palace if you wish, for there are two) is perfect for some me-time.

**Get me there** Suites cost from £317 per night, including breakfast. Visit palaisnamaskar.com or oetkercollection.com. British Airways flies three times per week from London Gatwick to Marrakesh from £162 per person return. Visit ba.com or call 0844 4930787. ✈



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