

travelista

Wander woman **Sophy Roberts**
fast-tracks international intelligence
on where to be and what to see

→ Sofia Coppola's 2003 film *Lost in Translation* made **JAPAN** a place of pilgrimage for luxury-hotel junkies – specifically, the Park Hyatt Tokyo. Now the capital has a new contender to the crown: **Palace Hotel Tokyo** (www.palacehoteltokyo.com; from £399), located moat-side to the Imperial Palace with views of the royal gardens in Marunouchi. This 290-room, 23-floor tower (a rebuild of an existing property) has contemporary interiors inspired by garden greens and cherry-blossom reds. And next spring will see guests benefiting from direct access to Otemachi subway station via the hotel's basement.

→ Where Japan merges old and new with confidence, **CHINA's** hotels sometimes seem more adept in the art of historical pastiche: a faux Imperial aesthetic here, knock-off tribal inspirations there, to create disingenuous, inauthentic experiences of a nation's history that was pretty much decimated by 20th-century politics. **Twelve at Hengshan** (www.luxurycollection.com; from £200), a new 171-room hotel opening on September 16 in **SHANGHAI**, stands apart for its sophisticated approach. The interior design subscribes to the Chinoiserie tradition, but the building is boldly modern in conception, by which Hengshan's Scarpa- and Corbusier-inspired architect Mario Botta means to communicate that you could only be staying in China in the year 2012. The hotel is located among the art-deco buildings of the city's old French Concession, where colonial gardens

once formed the backdrop of that elegant tea-and-opium scene so immaculately described in Ishiguro's masterpiece *When We Were Orphans*. Hence the elliptical courtyard lung of green Botta has placed at the heart of this hotel.

→ **CORFU**, the second largest island in the Greek Ionians, may have a partially ghettoised identity, with its string of tacky developments running from south of Corfu Town up towards Nissaki, but there remains much old-school glamour (Jacob Rothschild still owns the best house on the island) in the villas that pepper the 10-mile northeast coastal curl from Nissaki to Avlaki Beach. This is where you want to be; and a 20-minute drive from Kassiopi (midway along this strip and where some good boat hire can be found) you will discover



Above: **SJ Villa's Kipseli House** on Corfu's northeast coast. Below: **Bar Lounge Privé** at the **Palace Hotel Tokyo**



Above: an up-close encounter with the grizzly bear from **Entrée Canada**





Above: the hotel and estate of Castello di Casole in Tuscany.
Below: the Tea Tent at San Camp, Botswana

→ **TUSCANY** is another perennial destination that doesn't disappoint. This month it's the turn of **Hotel Castello di Casole** (www.castellodicasole.com; from €630) – a 10th-century castle occupying a 4,200-acre private estate within striking distance of Siena and San Gimignano – to make some noise. It took nearly six years to transform this slice of history into a 41-suite hotel, which opens this month. With American developers and operators, this is no *mamma-papà* outfit but a full-service resort with a state-of-the-art spa, two restaurants, a game reserve and 28 “farmhouse” villas – available for rental as well as full and part ownership.

→ In **AFRICA**, meanwhile, the drive for luxury-in-the-wilderness continues to gather pace, as evidenced by **San Camp** (www.unchartedafrica.com; from \$1,000 per person per night), which recently reopened after a three-year overhaul and a very brief season last year on the

edge of **BOTSWANA's** Makgadikgadi Pan. The star guide, Ralph Bousfield, doesn't do things by halves, leading safaris with Kalahari bushmen and immersing clients in initiation rituals and the locals' very particular cuisine. To get deeper into the landscape – formerly a lake that once watered all Botswana – guests can take a quad-bike safari and uncover such surprises as the fossilised remains of extinct giant zebra.

→ Wildlife viewing in **CANADA** is gaining momentum, too. At the end of July the grizzlies come out to play (and feed on the spawning salmon). For those who truly want to get up close to the animals, Marc Télio of **Entrée Canada** (www.entreedestinations.com) – the go-to, on-the-ground specialist for western Canada and Alaska – has introduced a new, extreme four-night trip on the Taku and Nakina Rivers, close to the Yukon border (from about £4,950). You helicopter in,

stay in rustic cabins and walk with grizzlies under the expert guidance of bear-man Phil Timpany. +



Above: the Mario Botta-designed Twelve at Hengshan, Shanghai

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