



What's in Store for '24?

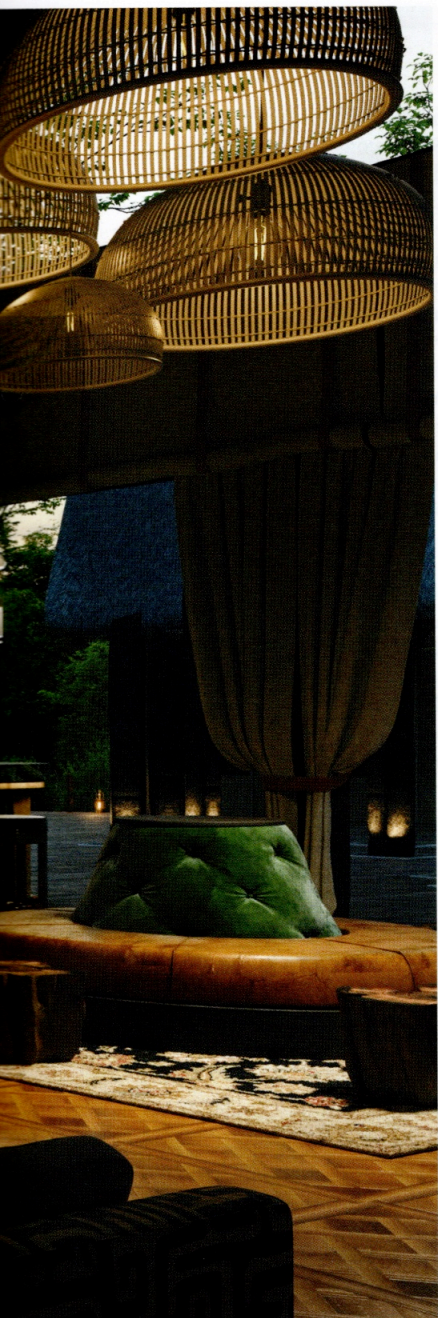
The most anticipated hotel openings of the coming year.

The new ethos underpinning the most noteworthy hospitality launches next year? Straddling the divide between pampering and pushing boundaries. “People want to be on the edge of the wilderness,” says Jules Maury, who runs Scott Dunn Private, noting that “it’s about being one step back from being completely abandoned in the middle of nowhere”—

a sentiment heard more than once. “You’re in the middle of nowhere, but not having to think for yourself, versus a place where there are lots of other hotels and people looking at you,” says Christopher Wilmot-Sitwell, of Cazenove & Loyd. In other words: Hotels are increasingly trying to be destinations in themselves, the over-the-top properties reason enough to visit, no matter how remote.

Clockwise from above: The deluxe-lodge interior at Atzaro, soon to open in Botswana’s Okavango Delta; sea views from a villa bedroom at the Anantara Mina Al Arab Ras Al Khaimah Resort; embracing the laid-back local lifestyle at Habitas Santa Teresa, on Costa Rica’s coast.

The raft of new private-island resorts is one expression of this idea. Note the soon-to-open Soneva Secret, a 14-villa Maldives destination offering state-of-the-art wellness treatments in an ultra-luxe setting. Maury calls him a genius and says the property will be “somewhere more than a spa—it will be for people to go and learn how to change their life.” Book the Castaway, the first floating villa in the Maldives.



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Across the world in the Caribbean, there's another new private-island hideout—this time a former pirate stronghold known as Matt Lowe's Cay. The 48-acre site will be reborn as a Montage hotel next year. "The Bahamas hasn't had anything spectacular for some time, and the Abacos are remote but easy to access," says John Clifford of International Travel Management. The property encompasses 50 suites, each with its own private pool; the 46-slip marina will make it easier for day-tripping yachties to spend time at the various beach bars and restaurants.

Mexico's most noteworthy opening—Banyan Tree Veya's newest, in Valle de Guadalupe—shuns hubs such as Cancún or Los Cabos in favor ➤



of more out-of-the-way northern Baja, where the hotel can be its own draw. The 30-villa ultramodern hotel will sit in the wine area there, far from the built-up hubbub. “It’s a region that’s been lacking great properties, and it’s intriguing because it produces fantastic wines,” Clifford says. He also points further south, to Amanvari, on Baja’s eastern coast. “It’s away from the riffraff and on the Sea of Cortez, which was Jacques Cousteau’s favorite place in the world. It’s so untouched.”

The new Atlantis in Dubai might have had a headline-grabbing opening this year (mostly thanks to Beyoncé’s concert), but in 2024, luxe-minded travelers can venture beyond the default glitz of the Gulf to a lesser-known emirate just 45 minutes north of Dubai. The Anantara Mina Al Arab Ras Al Khaimah Resort is a 174-room property set amid a beachfront landscape that remains largely undeveloped. “It’s a really good contrast, and it can work really well,” says Wilmot-Sitwell. Meanwhile, in São Tomé and Príncipe, the tiny, two-island nation off the west coast of Africa,

entrepreneur Mark Shuttleworth will reopen the most spectacular of the three hotels he owns on the smaller of the two, Príncipe—which, at 55 square miles, is virtually a private island unto itself. The 18-room Bom Bom sits at its northernmost tip surrounded by turtle-nesting sites; wander across the spindly wooden bridge to a pristine islet offering dramatic sea views.

In better-known locales, hotels are trying to conjure a sense of adventure in a different way, carving out a haven amid the bustle. Santa Teresa, the

Below: The intimate, wellness-focused Soneva Secret will feature the first floating villa in the Maldives. *Bottom:* The rugged landscape of Valle de Guadalupe, site of the new Banyan Tree Veya, also produces fantastic wines.



onetime hippie surfing hub on Costa Rica’s coast, has been deluged by development in the past decade, but the arrival of Mexico-based Habitas revives its appeal to luxe travelers such as Wilmot-Sitwell. “It tries to pick up on a vibe—and this is somewhere that used to be for a bloody good surfer who’d take five college mates there with him,” he says, noting that Costa Rica’s much-improved network of scheduled charters makes reaching this area faster and easier than before. There will be standard rooms, but the best option is one of the 10 luxury tents tucked away amid the beachfront greenery.

Meanwhile, the latest addition to the Okavango Delta in Botswana will offer a similar hideout: Atzaro sits in the game-rich Moremi Reserve on the southern edges, with access to both the savannah and the delta. It will be operated by African Bush Camps, run by Beks Ndlovu, a renowned safari specialist. “He’s always adored the Okavango, and it’s always been his place,” says Maury. The 12 suites have private pools and midcentury-inspired decor plus alfresco “star beds” for open-air naps. **Mark Ellwood**

