

THE  TIMES

Cool hotels: the hottest places to stay in 2011



Canal House, Amsterdam

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Dazzling rooftop pools, exotic villas and first-class food – you’re in for a treat at these new openings

**1 Gansevoort Park Avenue,
New York**

Just opened in the NoMad neighbourhood of New York (that’s North of Madison Square Park), this is the sister hotel to the original and very popular Gansevoort in the city’s Meatpacking District. It’s a funky affair with a cool rooftop pool, a lively bar with purple chandeliers and trendy loft-style rooms with ceiling-to-floor windows. There’s also a gym, a hair salon, spa and an Italian restaurant. The pool has terrific views of the Empire State Building and an unusual mosaic of a “1940s pin-up

temptress”.

Details Gansevoort Park Avenue NYC (001 212 317 2900, gansevoortpark.com) has doubles from £267.

2 Sofitel Vienna Stephansdom, Austria

It looks like a giant glass box that has been squashed and crumpled — an extraordinary new shape in the centre of Vienna that is already considered an architectural attraction in its own right. Sofitel Vienna Stephansdom, which has just opened in the Austrian capital, is designed by the renowned French architect Jean Nouvel and consists of 182 designer rooms decorated with modern art. There’s a super-cool bar and a restaurant, Le Loft, at the top of the structure, with fabulous city views. The hotel also has a spa and reasonable rates for such a swish, new, boutique hotel.

Details Sofitel Vienna Stephansdom (sofitel.com) has doubles from £163.

3 Babylonstoren, Drakenstein, South Africa

This new hotel is on a 200-hectare Cape Dutch farm filled with vineyards, fruit groves and vegetable gardens. Guests are encouraged to go out and pick their own salads to eat at the smart restaurant, which features seasonal produce, almost all of which is sourced from local farms. Gardeners host tours to explain what is grown on Babylonstoren. The dozen suites, in buildings with gables and thatched roofs, are bright and minimalist. Boats and canoes are provided for guests to potter about in the water by a local dam.

Details Babylonstoren (babylonstoren.com, www.bridgeandwickers.co.uk) has B&B doubles from £127.

4 Canal House Hotel, Amsterdam

In the centre of Amsterdam, three 17th-century merchants’ houses have been revamped to create a slick 23-room hotel. The purple and grey rooms have a sophisticated look, with contemporary art adorning the walls. There’s a bar and a restaurant serving modern Dutch and classic European food with locally sourced ingredients. It’s owned by the same people who run the stylish Cowley Manor country house hotel in the Cotswolds and the dark, moody and glamorous L’Hotel in Paris.

Details Canal House Hotel (canalhouse.nl) has B&B doubles from £201.

5 St John Hotel, London WC2

This quirky hotel just off Leicester Square, set to open in February, calls its rooms “urban huts”; minimalist chambers painted white. There are also tiny “post-supper” rooms, which hint at the real motivation of many guests: the restaurant. The hotel is an offshoot of the well-regarded restaurant of the same name next to Smithfield Market. Food is taken “very seriously”, so you won’t find any club sandwiches on the room service menu. St John is one of a clutch of new hotels opening in London this year, including the W Hotel on the former site of the Swiss Centre in Leicester Square in February, and the Corinthia, which will take over an entire city block between Whitehall and Northumberland Avenue when it opens in April.

Details St John Hotel (020-3301 8069, stjohnhotellondon.com) has yet to set room prices.

6 Hotel La Belle Juliette, Paris

Expect brightly coloured bijoux rooms at this small but perfectly formed hotel, which is opening at the start of the year, with interior design by Anne Gelbard, who is best known for her “Home Couture” line. There’s nothing achingly hip or minimalist, merely an elegant look with lime-green sofas mixed with smoky grey chaise longues, fine, old, framed pictures, designer lighting and a general feel of traditional comfort rather than fly-by-night trendiness.

The hotel is well positioned on the Left Bank in Saint-Germain-des-Prés.

Details Hotel La Belle Juliette (hotel-belle-juliette-paris.com) has doubles from £201.

7 Aloft Harlem, New York

Just round the corner from the legendary Apollo Theatre — where Ella Fitzgerald, The Jackson 5, James Brown and Marvin Gaye all played in their formative early days — Aloft Harlem is a new, reasonably priced choice for the Big Apple. The rooms are bright and modern, with subdued lighting, low-level beds and free wireless internet. There is a cool cocktail bar, along with a smart restaurant that serves modern cuisine. Aloft Harlem is only three miles from Yankee Stadium, home of the New York Yankees, and close to the 125th Street subway station.

Details Aloft Harlem (alofthotels.com/harlem) has doubles from £149.

8 Song Saa Private Island, Cambodia

“Song Saa” is Khmer for sweethearts — a nice name for this plush resort on two islands off the coast of Cambodia. When the hotel opens towards the end of this year there will be 25 villas with slick, modern interiors that would not look out of place in the most expensive resorts in the Maldives. Crescent-shaped plunge pools overlook

the sea and there will be a large deck with a restaurant and a chillout area for sunset drinks.

Details Song Saa Private Island (songsaa.com) will have villas from £445.

9 Château les Carrasses, Languedoc, France

With sweeping views of Languedoc's vineyards and the Pyrénées, this château in the grounds of a working winery will have 28 "residences" available to rent. Exposed beams, state-of-the-art entertainment systems, smart kitchens, and neutral colour schemes will make for a tasteful and very comfortable place to stay in the South of France.

Details Château les Carrasses (domainedemeure.com) has standard rooms from £95.

10 Hotel Indigo, The Cube, Birmingham

The Cube is a striking cube-shaped office and retail development in Birmingham's city centre, designed by Ken Shuttleworth, whose architectural team was behind London's Gherkin and the Hong Kong & Shanghai Bank tower in Hong Kong. The offices and many of the shops are already open, and Hotel Indigo is expected to start taking guests in the summer. Rooms will be brightly decorated with pictures of spools of wool (a reference to old local industries). There will also be a Marco Pierre White restaurant.

Details Hotel Indigo (thecube.co.uk) will have doubles from £95.