

Condé Nast Traveler

SPECIAL REPORT
**THE WAR FOR
THE SOUL
OF ALASKA**

TRUTH IN TRAVEL

MAY 2012

HOT LIST

**121
BEST
NEW
HOTELS
IN THE
WORLD**
(INCLUDING 49 UNDER \$300!)

PLUS...

**20 SIZZLING
RESTAURANTS
35 SYBARITIC
SPAS**



AND...

HIPPEST LONDON

(Edgy Pubs, Clubs, Art, Food)

ULTIMATE NEW ZEALAND

(Dream Lodges, Meals, Adventures)

TANTALIZING TANGIER

(Cool Shops, Souks, Scenes)

A TRUE DESERT BLOOM: The brand-new Saguaro hotel in Scottsdale, Arizona.

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YOUR DAILY TRAVEL INTELLIGENCE



Hot Hotels

ON DECK Overlooking Hotel Chocolat's 140 acres on St. Lucia. PAGE 83. Her swimsuit by Eres (see "Where to Buy It," page 200). ▶

Hot List

IT'S MORE THAN JUST A LIST. AS YOU'RE READING THROUGH THESE PAGES, LOOK FOR OUR TAKES ON:

THE HOTTIES

18 little hotel details we loved this year, beginning on page 83.

THE PREDICTORS

5 members of the Hot List class of 2012 predict what's coming next in hotel design, interiors, food, and spas, beginning on page 96.

THE HOT LIST ALL-STARS

8 of our reviewers name their favorite hotel of all time (it wasn't easy), beginning on page 113.

ALSO:

Want even more Hot List? Go behind the scenes on page 24 for:

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All-true tales from the road.

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Hot Hotels

Kremlin and a straight shot by car or train from Sheremetyevo International Airport (no small plus in traffic-clogged Moscow). **The look:** Art Deco and Russian avant-garde inspired, with lots of glass. **The experience:** Aimed at a sophisticated business crowd, Moscow's Inter-Continental delivers a low-key, friendly vibe. It also has some quirks. Glass seems to have been a particular design obsession, resulting in a vertiginous spiral staircase and, in guest rooms, semi-transparent bathroom walls that are not for the shy. On the other hand, the spacious view of Tverskaya, Moscow's main street, is one of the restaurant's natural assets. The menu includes exotic regional dishes such as exceptionally tender lamb from Muslim Dagestan. A full-service Elemis spa, Moscow's first, is due to open this winter. **If only...** the free Wi-Fi connection weren't glacially slow. **The room to book:** Corner executive suites combine views of busy Tverskaya on one side with picturesque rooftops on the other (7-495-787-8887; intercontinental.com; doubles from \$850). 📶 📶 📶 📶 📶

SERBIA

UNDER \$300 **Square Nine, Belgrade**
📞 381-11-3333-500; squarenine.rs; doubles from \$239.
📶 📶 📶 📶 📶

SEYCHELLES

Raffles Praslin, Seychelles
🔥 **The specs:** Eighty-six villas, all with butlers and private plunge pools, set along cement "streets" for golf carts that ferry guests up and down a stony green hill falling to a powdery white sand beach. Shared facilities include two pools and a spa with 13 treatment pavilions. **The look:** The cluster of roofs poking out of the tropical terrain looks uncannily like a luxury vision of a Brazilian favela. Fortunately, villas are spacious and modern with huge private decks and picture windows even for the bathtub; carpets and textiles with coral or leafy patterns echo the natural environment. **The experience:** Raffles offers caviar, champagne, and helicopter trips for the millionaire set, but the main amenity is a superb location on an isolated beach facing Curieuse Island, a nature reserve ten minutes away by private boat; the hotel concierge will arrange a backpack picnic and give directions to a shell-strewn beach. Scuba diving, snorkeling, and sea kayaking are also available. Two restaurants serve fresh seafood. Although there's a children's activity center, most guests are couples, many from Russia or the Persian Gulf states. **If only...** the hill weren't so steep. There are no elevators, and at restaurant peak times you may have to wait for buggy service. **The room to book:** Numbers 297 and 187 have sea views unimpeded by neighbors. Families with small children should book villas by the beach (248-296-000; raffles.com/praslin; doubles from \$631). 📶 📶 📶 📶 📶

THE HOT LIST ALL-STARS



2/8 Al Moudira, Luxor, Egypt

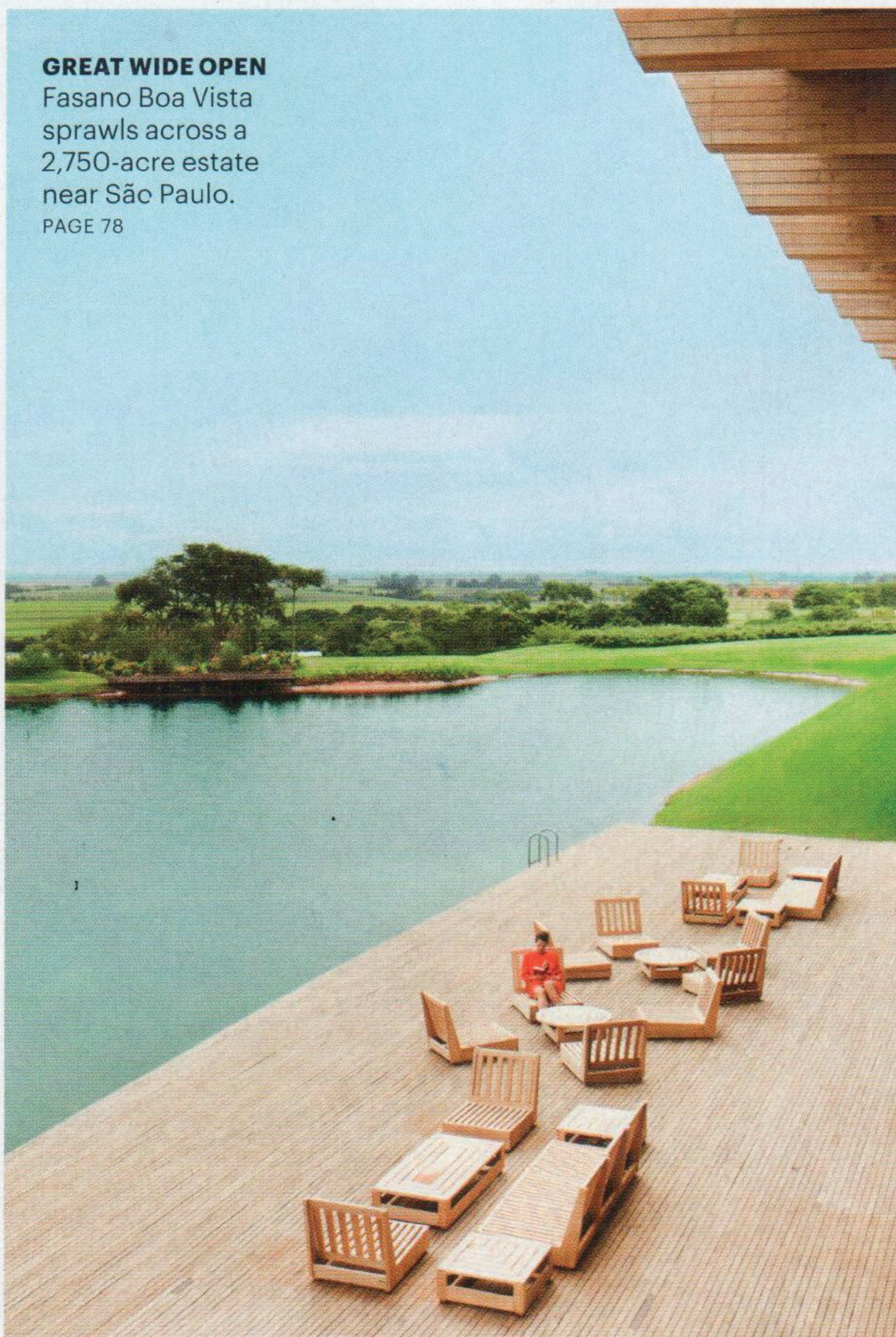
I love places that reflect one person's passion, not some corporate strategy. In 2003, I traveled to Luxor and stayed at the Hotel Al Moudira, whose owner and namesake (Al Moudira means "boss lady" in Arabic) is Zeina Aboukheir, a Lebanese-born jewelry designer who collected salvaged doors, windows, and wooden screens in Egypt and Syria, then designed this desert palace to showcase her collection. The suites express both the austerity of the landscape and the visual richness of Old Cairo; the restaurant serves garden-fresh Levantine cuisine; and the pool is among the most beautiful in Egypt. Aboukheir also had the originality to build next to a rural village on the West Bank of the Nile, far from the mercenary tourism of Luxor's main town. And it's still a great bargain.

—S., HOT LIST REVIEWER SINCE 2000

GREAT WIDE OPEN

Fasano Boa Vista sprawls across a 2,750-acre estate near São Paulo.

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SLOVENIA

Antiq Palace, Ljubljana
📞 386-838-96-700; antiqalace.com; doubles from \$318. 📶 📶 📶 📶 📶

UNDER \$300 **Hotel Cubo, Ljubljana**
📞 386-1-425-6000; hotelcubo.com; doubles from \$221. 📶 📶

SOUTH AFRICA

UNDER \$300 **Alphen Boutique Hotel, Cape Town**
📞 27-21-795-6300; alphen.co.za; doubles from \$253. 📶 📶 📶 📶 📶

Queen Victoria Hotel, Cape Town
📞 27-21-418-1466; newmarkhotels.com/hotels; doubles from \$396.
📶 📶 📶 📶 📶

SPAIN

UNDER \$300 **Mirror Barcelona, Barcelona**
📞 34-93-202-8686; themirrorbarcelona.com; doubles from \$131.
📶 📶 📶 📶 📶

Ohla Hotel, Barcelona
🔥 **The specs:** A 74-room urban sanctuary five minutes by foot from the Plaza de Catalunya. **The look:** Strenuously fashionable, from the strangely eyeball-like orbs that cascade over the facade, to the all-black lobby, to the rooftop terrace. **The experience:** Clearly aiming for the fashionista crowd, the hotel has everything an image-conscious urbanite needs, from a well-equipped gym to a happening rooftop lounge. Yet it saves itself from mere trendi-

ness by doing a lot of things extremely well. Personalized attention starts before arrival, with a questionnaire about pillow and aroma preferences (among the choices: lavender, green tea, and "passion"). Room sizes range from tiny to sprawling, but all have good-size desks, rain showers, and chocolate-covered strawberries in the minibar. Muted blues and purples add color to an otherwise black-and-white decor. The soundproofing is nothing short of miraculous (it has to cope with one of Barcelona's busiest streets), and so are the prize-winning barmen in the cocktail lounge and the cooking in the one-Michelin-star restaurant, Saüc. **If only...** the food at Ohla Gastrobar, the hotel's more casual restaurant, were up to par. **The room to book:** A junior suite, for its huge arched windows and occasionally discounted price (34-93-341-5050; ohlahotel.com; doubles from \$316). 📶 📶 📶 📶 📶

UNDER \$300 **Balcón de Córdoba, Córdoba**
📞 34-957-498-478; balcondedecordoba.com; doubles from \$264.
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Sant Pere del Bosc Hotel, Lloret de Mar
📞 34-972-361-636; santperedelboschotel.com; doubles from \$345.
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UNDER \$300 **Hotel Can Cera, Palma de Mallorca**
🔥 **The specs:** The *palacio* you always wished your great-grandparents had had the good sense to purchase, set smack in the historic center of Palma de Mallorca. **The look:** Upscale Mediterranean, with just enough English country house to suggest that its owners may have another home in the Cotswolds—this is the kind of genteel taste that can only be inherited. **The experience:** Down a narrow street off Palma's old Jewish quarter, Can Cera greets guests with one of the broad, leafy patios that distinguish Mallorcan architecture. A steep staircase leads first to a striking set of sitting rooms where contemporary paintings and ornate chandeliers adorn the bloodred walls, and cozy sofas and a large collection of art books promise lazy afternoons. The 12 cream-colored guest rooms have carved olivewood headboards and ocher floors; teal-blue coverlets are a reminder of the Mediterranean, which shimmers a few blocks away. The staff, eager to offer tours of the house and volunteer information about Mallorca, are similarly welcoming. The in-house Gastro Bar offers simple but well-prepared dishes that range from classic tapas to fusion sushi. **If only...** the rooftop terrace were a smidge larger and more inviting. **The room to book:** The suite, for its private terrace and original hand-painted paneling (34-971-715-012; cancerahotel.com; doubles from \$266). 📶 📶 📶

Le Domaine, Sardón de Duero
🔥 **The specs:** A converted Baroque-Romanesque abbey sur-

Hot List 2012

Editors' picks of the world's best
NEW hotels, restaurants and spas

The Best New Hotels of 2012

We all know what makes a good hotel good: impeccable service, excellent food, beautiful grounds (and let's not forget a bed so plush that you dread going home). But for all of us here at *Condé Nast Traveler*, a good hotel is more than just a blissful temporary roost: It's also a bellwether, an important peek at what you, our readers, are really looking for in your travels, not to mention in the very destinations you're traveling to. This year's Hot List, our sixteenth, includes 121 properties in 49 countries.



SERBIA

SQUARE NINE *Belgrade*

A sleek seven-story, 45-room hotel with a tidy Bauhaus facade overlooking Studentski Trg, one of the city's prettiest squares. It has a terrific location steps from Knez Mihailova, a trendy pedestrian street, and Kalemegdan Fortress, at the confluence of the Danube and Sava rivers. Designed by Brazilian architect Isay Weinfeld, Square Nine gives a dose of modernity to the block without jarring its Secessionist neighbors. The open lobby has the same low lighting, parquet floors, local antiques, and Danish modern-style furniture found in the guest rooms. Walls are hung with sepia postcards of Belgrade—sounds tacky, looks great—and covered with natural linen or cumaru-wood paneling.

MORE FROM THE **Hot List 2012**

Hot List hotel: the best **NEW** properties in the world