

SPRING 2021

DEPARTURES



Expressive
Interiors

Once Upon a
Time in Mexico

Global Hotel
Happenings

The Science
of Beauty

A SENSE OF PLACE

vegan-friendly ribs and spiced pine soups, all enjoyed under the sparkle of crystal chandeliers suspended from industrial ceilings.

Seaview sundowners and serious eats are on the menu at **Sal** (*jumeirah.com*), a pop-up housed inside a mirrored cube on the Burj Al Arab's pool deck. The king crab trenette pasta is already becoming a local favourite. Over at the Park Hyatt, **Twiggy by La Cantine's** (*twiggy.ae*) breezy beach club offers sunbeds and private cabanas with direct access to a 100m creek-side infinity lagoon.

For more new restaurants than you could squeeze into even a long weekend, Dubai International Financial Centre (DIFC) continues to be the hotspot. Head to **Hutong** (*hutong-dubai.com*) for contemporary northern Chinese cuisine and a weekend brunch centred on free-flow dim sum. Bright yellow parasols provide shade on the buzzing rooftop at **Amazónico** (*amazonicorestaurant.com*), where Latin American flavours

mix with rainforest-inspired interiors. Japanese anime characters sit alongside high-end liquor and omakase dining at **Clap** (*claprestaurant.com*), and **L'Atelier de Joël Robuchon** (*atelier-robuchon.ae*) has also made its much-anticipated Dubai debut in a typically elegant setting.

The biggest international import is a members-only space spread over four floors and 6,000 square metres of space in DIFC's new ICD Brookfield Place Tower. **The Arts Club** (*theartsclub.ae*) makes its first foray outside London with dazzling interiors by Milan-based Dimore Studio and a collection of three restaurants, seven bars, luxuriant lounges and a Burj Khalifa-view roof terrace.

Finally, for a low-key neighbourhood vibe in Jumeirah, **Lana Lusa's** (*lanalusa.com*) mid-century Portuguese interiors and home-style recipes – including custard tarts to write home about – are proof that the city, as vibrant as ever in 2021, has something for all moods.



Above: the ultra-private Baobab Treehouse, at Xigera Safari Lounge; right: a pool with a view from the bridge-top Kruger Shalati



From top: the spacious terrace of EALA's Argantos suite, which boasts its own private spa; the pool area at Casa di Langa

Italy's New Inn Crowd

Italy's northerly reaches, from Venice to Piedmont, welcome four newcomers this year – as well as a newly renovated building, Il Palazzo, on the **Villa Lario** (*villalario.com*) estate on Lake Como. The 19th-century edifice is home to eight new, individually styled suites – boosting the property's total to 18 – and features sunset views over the water, perfect for aperitivi. On Lake Garda, meanwhile, **EALA** (*ealalakegarda.com*) brings its modern, ship-like profile to Limone sul Garda on the western shore, complete with 1,500sq m spa, private garden and beach and the second outpost of Alfio Ghezzi's Michelin-star restaurant, Senso. In Venice, the property on everyone's lips is **Ca' di Dio** (*v-retreats.com*), set next to the Arsenale with views of San Giorgio Maggiore. Conceived as an extended private home by designer Patricia Urquiola with nods to the city's – and building's – past, there are 66 rooms, a pair of restaurants and two private courtyards. On the other side of the country, in Piedmont, **Nordelaia** (*nordelaia.com*) is a 12-key farmhouse-turned-hotel with a five-hectare spread and vines that will eventually grow the hostelry's own wine. Standout London design studio These White Walls is responsible for the decor, while the culinary concept is by way of Michelin-star chef Andrea Ribaldone. Finally, **Casa di Langa** (*casadilanga.com*) is another Piedmont opening with all the makings of a classic: a picturesque 42ha domain with forests, vineyards and kitchen garden; 39 peace-imbued rooms, each with a private terrace; a locavore restaurant buttressed by a wine academy and cooking school (a cellar rich with rare vintages from sister properties Vietti and Enrico Serafino); and an ecologically minded spa using all-natural ingredients. – BN





Africa Confidential

In the past year, the siren call of Africa's wonderfully wild, wide-open spaces has grown louder, and now, a raft of new lodges in some of the continent's remotest – and most beautiful – corners are here to stoke our collective wanderlust. Every aspect of life in the just-opened **Xigera Safari Lounge** (*xigera.com*) is deeply rooted in its setting at the heart of the Unesco-listed Okavango Delta in Botswana. Rising on stilts, each of the 12 guest suites boast magnificent views of the floodplains ahead, and are stuffed with crafts and artwork by African talents – a sumptuous home base for days filled with sunrise yoga, expert-led wildlife-tracking excursions, and alfresco meals informed by local culinary traditions. Meanwhile, the new **Kruger Shalati** (*krugershalati.com*) is an eyrie of the high order – literally – set, as it is, in a brilliantly resuscitated 1950s train parked atop a decommissioned bridge suspended some 15 metres above the Sabie river, in South Africa's Kruger National Park. Generous floor-to-ceiling windows in each of the hotel's 31 rooms offer a unique, bird's-eye perch from which to spot Big Five game all hours of the day. In another ground-breaking concept, much of the **Kisawa Sanctuary** (*kisawas sanctuary.com*), a 300ha property on Mozambique's unspoilt Benguerra Island, was 3D printed with ultra-sustainable sand and seawater mortar. A quintet of gastro outlets and a standalone spa rooted in traditional Chinese medicine are the perfect complement to the resort's 12 thatched-roof bungalows – each with their own infinity pool and private stretch of beach. – *Claudia Whiteus*

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: © XIGERA, © THE PLACE FIRENZE, © KRUGER SHALATI



The Place To Be

Owner Carlo Babini Merlo and general manager Claudio Meli discuss their new Florence hotel, The Place Firenze.

How did you make JK Place an instant classic – and a new model of Italian hospitality – in 2003?

CB: We acquired JK Place just three months after its doors opened, having fallen in love with the design concept, the ambience, and the level of service and detail, the kind that only a very small structure can give. What most impressed me, however, was how it felt like you were entering the Florentine house of a well-travelled host – and the credit for this goes entirely to Claudio Meli: he's the smith who forged a new model of hospitality.

What is your concept for The Place Firenze?

CM: The Place Firenze is a natural evolution of our close relationship with Florence and Tuscany, and our mission to share transformative connections where others are just selling rooms. We're going to bring this up a few notches so that The Place Firenze becomes a kind of clubhouse, a portal on Florence, its people, personalities, private homes, craftsmanship – and I'm not talking about pre-packaged "experiences" but real encounters that are tailored to our guests' passions and interests. The Place Firenze is your backstage pass to a Florence very few outsiders get to see, a contemporary city with a Renaissance soul, where an aristocrat with a vast wine estate and an artisanal shoemaker working in a tiny bottega are both part of the same proud tradition – and both speak with the same Florentine accent!

How do you hope guests will remember their stay?

CM: Alongside that great feeling of having found their home in Florence, we will add to the welcome a sprinkle of eccentricity, a pinch of surprise and a giant serving of love for this beautiful land. 📞 theplacefirenze.com – *As told to Thomas Midulla*