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THE BEST DESTINATIONS, FLAVOURS & TRAVEL TRENDS EVERYONE'S TALKING ABOUT

CHINA

THE TEMPLE HOUSE, CHENGDU

Western city has two main claims to fame: its panda reserves and scorching Sichuan food. But it was another of Chengdu's fortes, namely, that London-based architects Make seized on for their weaving of old and new. The Temple House, the latest from Swire Hotels (The House in Beijing, Hong Kong's The Upper House). The multi-layered building knit together old-world opulence with modernity: the dramatic staircase is actually an ornate, 100-year-old courtyard building; the basketball court has been fashioned from entwined brass filaments, while the tower has intriguingly perforated brick walls. A staircase swoops over the pool, with its magnificent Art Deco-style skylight, and the Tivoli bar, where Italian dishes – from polenta to pappardelle – are served in a jade-green interior. Resurface at ground level and myriad mini-match different moods, such as the outdoor Jing bar for retro-chic including Sichuan Mule (vodka spiked with ginger and peppercorn). Somewhere serene, head for the teahouse set in an ancient, renovated building. **FLASH POINT** This is a compellingly original collision of trad and modern Chinese culture, reflected in its popularity with a hip, local crowd. +86 28 6636 9999; templehousehotel.com. Doubles from about £215



UNDER
£150

AUSTRIA

GRAND FERDINAND, VIENNA

Vienna can do grand pretty well. Just look at the armfuls of silver at Princess Sisi's Hofburg Palace, the cherubs at the Belvedere, the sheer balls of the place. But lately it's been learning how to do grand more discreetly, with less stodge. So while this hotel has an impeccable imperial address on the 19th-century Ringstrasse, not far from the Albertina, it occupies a democratic, clean-lined Fifties building that was once a secret-service HQ. There are tinkly Lobmeyr chandeliers and black marble, and white-jacketed waiters who will glide over to pour a flute of Veuve, but also a flurry of Moroccan tiles, modernist glass bricks, a fairy-white rooftop restaurant with a plunge pool outside, a standalone goulash bar. There's even a dorm with Orient-Express-style bunks for €30 per night, though you might prefer to board one of the seventh-floor suites instead, with their long terraces, freestanding tubs and man-sized floor lights. Those looking for a little *Gemütlichkeit*, that untranslatable expression of contentment, need look no further. **FLASH POINT** The ground-floor brasserie, with its Habsburg menu, has all the atmosphere of a classic Viennese coffeehouse but without the gawpers. +43 1 91 880 400; grandferdinand.com. Doubles from about £140

UNDER
£150

FRANCE

LE PIGALLE, PARIS

shly scrubbed façade and plant-lined balconies, this neoclassical looks more like a private home than a hotel. The 9th arrondissement has been an edgy neighbourhood popular with rock bands and their managers, and the 40-bedroom Le Pigalle is proud of this track record, serving all things bawdy and bohemian. The lobby is a vintage-style lounge with headphones hooked on the walls for guests to sample tracks on a console in the corner. There's even a Wurlitzer jukebox outside the entrance. This is the kind of place you'll see a pink-haired singer named Milla Jovovich interviewed and instrument-toting musicians with dreadlocks. Le Pigalle-brewed ale at the bar. Chef Camille Furmony, a 'flavour guru', no less, sources the freshest ingredients, from thyme-sprinkled country-style pâté. Victor Kiswell, the in-house music guru, has a vinyl selection for your in-room turntable (expect Gainsbourg, David Byrne and Nineties hip-hop). The small sunlit rooms are decidedly Parisian – mixed Poire Williams in the mini-bars. There's even a weekly live performance, just to add to the fun. **FLASH POINT** This is a Parisian (South Pigalle) locale that succeeds in being a creative showcase of bohemian spirit. +33 1 48 78 37 14; lepigalle.paris. Doubles from about £110

