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Minor Hotel Group



The Hot List





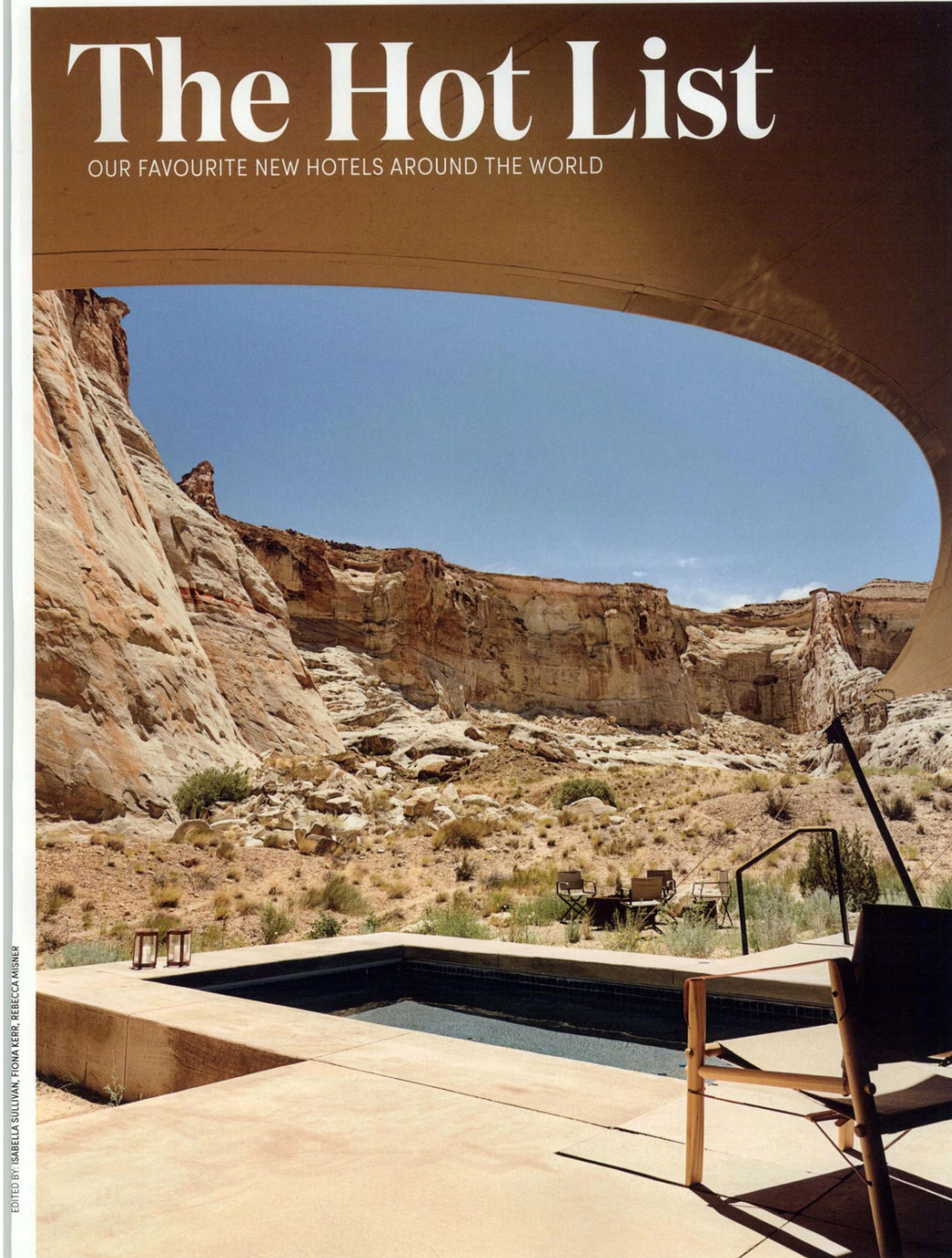
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JAPAN

AZUMI SETODA, IKUCHIJIMA

Beneath waves of grey roof tiles, a sliding door in a jigsaw of dark timber marks the quiet entrance to this hotel. Located on an island famed for its lemons in Japan's Seto Inland Sea, it is as understated and exquisitely executed as you'd expect from Adrian Zecha, the original Aman founder. The first opening for his new Azumi brand, co-created with Naru Developments, aims to reinvent the traditional ryokan for contemporary times. Azumi Setoda has taken over a 140-year-old residence with a pared-back renovation by Kyoto-based architect Shiro Miura. The loosely communal restaurant is a central hub that serves modern Japanese plates with a Silk Road edge (octopus sashimi, coriander and tofu), tapping into the island's shipping-route heritage. An inner garden is wrapped by 20ft cedar fences known as kakine, showcasing a cherry tree and curved pines.

Nearby is Azumaya – a meditative space on the site of a former teahouse. The 22 guestrooms are no less serene: swathes of light wood; paper screens rising only halfway to draw focus to the garden moss; low beds; *hinaki*-cypress tubs. But it's no bubble: Azumi is rooted in community, reflected in its experiences – fruit picking, temple visits – and neighbourhood projects (it repaved the main street outside the hotel). It's perhaps best embodied by Yubune, its sleek sento bathhouse just opposite, where visitors and locals soak together in steaming baths, lemons bobbing on the surface.

FLASH POINT This a truly inclusive retreat: families should check into one of the four two-storey rooms, while Yubune has 14 simpler spaces for those on a budget. *Doubles from about AED 2,400. azumi.co*



THE HOT LIST



SEYCHELLES

ANANTARA MAIA SEYCHELLES VILLAS

Already dominating holiday hotspots across the Asia Pacific, Middle East and the Indian Ocean, Anantara has added another corner of paradise to its burgeoning portfolio: Seychelles. Taking over operation from Thailand Minor Hotels Group, the luxury hotel brand has rebranded Maia Seychelles Villas, an ultra-exclusive collection of 30 thatched villas on the island of Mahé.

To create the new aesthetic, Anantara drafted in the help of American designer Bill Bensley, but the beautiful location has been untouched: spread across granite clifftops and backing onto Anse Louis beach and 30 acres of jungle. Beneath the cooling tropical thatch of the 250-square-metre villas, guests are greeted by Hermès bathroom amenities, rainfall showers and private terraces with infinity pools, sunken bathtubs, gazebos and daybeds. Those familiar with Anantara will recognise the Anantara Spa, hidden in the resort's gardens and an oasis of Balinese-inspired treatments using Omorovicza products. Guests can arrive here, kick off their shoes and put away their wallets, thanks to the resort's Beyond All-Inclusive offering. Dining can take place in the privacy of one's villa, on a private stretch of sand – the ideal spot for a proposal – or three F&B outlets, where five chefs champion five cuisines. Beach yoga, watersports and yacht and helicopter are all popular pursuits.

FLASH POINT A short walk away from the hotel you'll find the National Botanical Gardens, lush with palms, orchids and home to Aldabra tortoises and fruit bats. *Villas from AED 7,360. anantara.com*