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HOTELS BY DESIGN

WOW

SPECTACULAR POOLS FROM AROUND THE WORLD

TEXT LAUREN HO

PUNTA CALIZA ISLA HOLBOX, MEXICO

There are at least two reasons to visit the newly opened Punta Caliza. The first is its location in a sleepy fishing village on Isla Holbox, an island just off Mexico's Yucatán Peninsula. The second reason is its impressive architecture by Guadalajara-based firm Estudio Macías Peredo Arquitectos, which has anchored the hotel around a central triangular saltwater swimming pool that laps right up to the threshold of each of the 12 bedrooms and connects to their smaller, private plunge pools.

The building itself is a modern, more angular interpretation of Mayan architecture, constructed using traditional techniques. So, tidy guano-thatched roofs and limestone

walls and floors – sealed using chukum tree paste – make way for clean-lined rich timber interiors and bespoke furnishings using red cedar from the owners' tree farm. The hotel is family run, so expect a convivial atmosphere, including in the kitchen, where the food has a strong Mexican flavour, with daily breakfast specials such as *chilaquiles* (tortillas cooked in salsa or mole, served with eggs). Activities here are purely leisure based, so do not feel guilty for lazing poolside for an entire day – at least in this case there is no need to wake up early to nab a sun lounger.

Doubles at Punta Caliza cost from \$200, B&B (puntacaliza.com)

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CAPELLA UBUD BALI, INDONESIA

The town of Ubud has long been celebrated by Bali junkies for its seductive sense of exotic escapism, and while its main drag might have buckled to rampant urban development, the interiors of Ubud still elicit an idyllic nostalgia. At the Capella resort, located on the banks of the tumbling Wos River in the village of Keliki, architect and designer Bill Bensley has sensitively inserted 22 one-bedroom tents and a two-bedroom lodge among the lush thickets of rainforest and terraced rice paddies, taking care not to disturb any existing trees.

Each individually styled tent takes its cues from the resort's nineteenth-century European colonial adventure theme, with dark timber carved floorboards, handpicked

antique furniture, standalone copper baths and large outdoor decks, each with its own saltwater pool. Activities include a jungle boot camp, while the spa menu features treatments based on different phases of the moon.

Do not miss out on Mads Lange, the camp's split-level restaurant, where you can enjoy a mix of dishes from *nasi goreng* to caviar-topped blinis, while overlooking The Cistern, a former water storage facility for the Dutch army that has been transformed into a 30-metre pool, which cantilevers dramatically over the dense emerald jungle.

Doubles at Capella Ubud cost from \$838, B&B (capellaubud.com). For tailor-made trips throughout Indonesia, go to Scott Dunn (020-3811 3126; scottdunn.com)

CESAR DEL ROSO/SHANGHAI LANTIK

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OMAANDA NAMIBIA

For its first African venture, Zannier Hotels could not have picked a more idyllic spot, within the sprawling grasslands of its own 9,000-hectare nature reserve just outside Namibia's capital city, Windhoek. Framed by the ridges of the Awas Mountains, Omaanda's 10 huts take their cue from traditional Owambo architecture, with clay shells and hand-finished thatch roofs. Designer Géraldine Dohogne has dressed the interiors in a pleasingly low-key blend of local materials, with African tribal pieces including hand-carved wooden bedside tables, artisan-woven headboards, traditional carpets and decorative antiques, ranging from

ceramic bowls to water jars, all in refreshing muted tones.

Distractions include game drives, rhino tracking and the chance to spend time with a local tribe. After a morning viewing the region's abundant wildlife, head back to the camp for a dip in the infinity pool, perfectly positioned overlooking a water hole, and admire the spectacular scenery dotted with grazing zebras, giraffes and elephants.

Doubles at Omaanda cost from €573 per person, full board (omaanda.com). For tailor-made holidays throughout Namibia, including a stay at Omaanda, go to Abercrombie & Kent (01242-386500; abercrombiekent.co.uk)



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DÁ LICENÇA ESTREMOZ, PORTUGAL

When it comes to location, Vitor Borges and Franck Laigneau, owners of the newly opened Dá Licença, could not have picked a prettier spot. The seven-room (four suites and three bedrooms) hotel is set in 120 hectares of a national eco-reserve, speckled with olive groves and with a small Alentejo village beyond. It is a quiet bolthole that is far from the madding crowd, but still within easy reach of the historical town of Estremoz, with its medieval castle and weekly Saturday market.

Local architects Procalle converted this cluster of nineteenth-century agricultural buildings on a farm that was once owned by a nearby convent. There are two bedrooms in the main house, with the remaining room and four

suites – two with private pools – in the nearby outbuildings. Dark granite floors, limewashed walls and local pink marble form the canvas for a collection of furniture and artwork – drawn mostly from the Scandinavian *jugendstil* and Rudolf Steiner's anthroposophic movement – from Franck's own collection. The former olive mill will open soon as a restaurant but, for now, you will want to be in the circular pool – said to be inspired by the moon and the 1902 Giuseppe Viner painting that hangs in one of the private dining rooms – with a cocktail, while the setting sun turns the surrounding hills a deep orangey pink.

Doubles at Dá Licença cost from €270, B&B (dalicenca.pt) □

