



STYLISH STAYCATIONS

As more travellers choose to stay at home for holidays,
Asian urban resorts are offering design that transports.

Rebecca Lo finds out how it is done.



Call it a perfect storm of factors: climate change wreaking havoc on holiday destinations, air travel delays or road traffic, overcrowding during peak season, and a general penchant towards discovering one's own backyard. Staycations in key urban centres are becoming increasingly popular with locals who want to take a passport-free break from their nine-to-five grind.

In response, hoteliers are offering bespoke and boutique experiences, imbuing properties with all the trappings of a far-flung resort for guests to stay longer at the seaside pool, linger over meals or add another spa treatment.

SEASIDE ESCAPADES

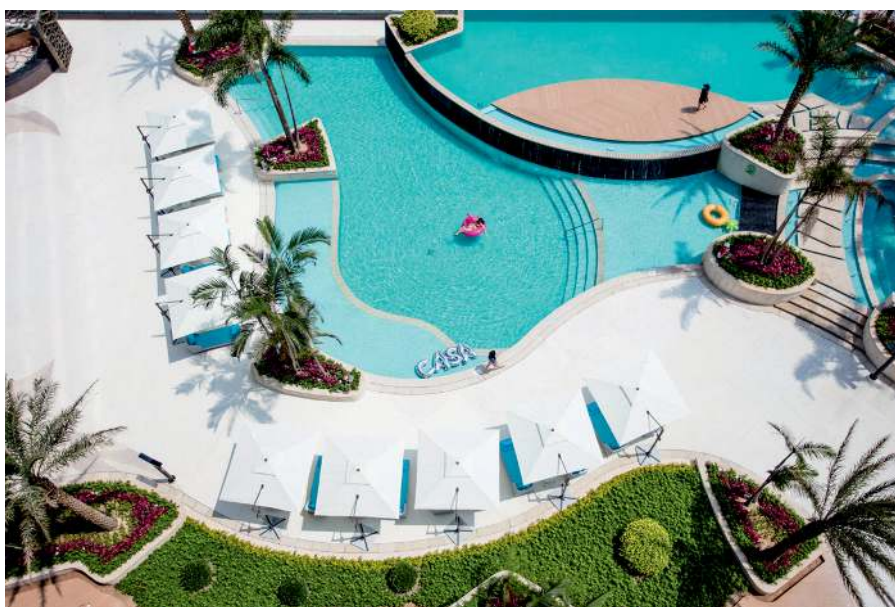
Open in May 2017 on an unlikely spot for a five-star 546-key luxury property, Kerry Hong Kong takes advantage of its Hung Hom site with numerous references to its industrial seaside past. It is architect Andre Fu's largest project in his hometown to date, and his firm AFSO pulled out all the stops to create a distinctively localised resort atmosphere. "This 16-storey hotel has been designed as an urban resort, seeking to evoke an experience of relaxed luxury in one of the world's most dynamic cities," notes Fu. "It celebrates the life of the harbour – from the water silhouette that has been adopted as a key motif to the vast alfresco experiences created at multiple levels throughout the hotel journey.

The unique opportunity to explore outdoor terraces that adjoin indoor spaces is distinct to Kerry Hong Kong, and it was very much a hand-in-hand process to ensure that the two create a direct synergy. The context of Hung Hom is perhaps most celebrated at the hotel's destination Chinese restaurant, Hung Tong – a dining venue that pays tribute to the area's historical past as a dock."

Sited next to Hung Hom Ferry Pier, Kerry Hong Kong offers a curving facade oriented southeastwards towards Victoria Harbour as it merges with Kowloon Bay. For a resort ambience, Fu ensured that the hotel's strong connection to the outdoors was maintained throughout the property with choice indigenous trees, shrubs and flowering plants to soften the transition from architecture to landscape. "For the arrival experience, we opted for plants that were more sculptural, to evoke a lush envelop," explains Fu. "On levels three and four, where the hotel's all-day dining cafe and pool deck are, we introduced a strong palette of tropical landscaping with a bolder use of rustic textures. Meanwhile, the unique terrace adjoining Red Sugar on level seven is adorned with wild plantations to provoke an industrial yet rural sensibility." Anchored by a central bar, the plants help to define intimate areas while forming a subtle frame for the 270-degree harbour panorama.



Kerry Hong Kong – from left Red Sugar Terrace; Lobby Lounge Terrace; Lobby with harbour view; architect Andre Fu creating a distinctively localised resort atmosphere



Bangkok based Gaw Capital Partners Hospitality's Macau Roosevelt is designed by Gulla Jónsdóttir; A vertical living plant sculpture in the lobby; Poolside that adds to the resort feeling



HOLLYWOOD HAVEN

Although Cotai is better known for its high rolling venues, there is ample room for less mass, more design driven offerings in this thriving part of Macau. At the western extreme of Macau Jockey Club facing Jinwan in China across the Xijiang River is Macau Roosevelt. Open last summer and operated by Bangkok based Gaw Capital Partners Hospitality (GCPH), the 368 key purpose built property boasts some of the best views of the race track, along with unobstructed vistas of Cotai's most iconic casino resorts. GCPH was already familiar with Los Angeles based architect Gulla Jónsdóttir's glamorous design for the original Roosevelt Hotel in Hollywood, and looked to the Iceland native to work her magic again.

"Macau Roosevelt definitely has a resort feeling," states Jónsdóttir. "We saw that the lotus has a significant meaning and mythical beliefs rooted in Chinese culture. This beautiful, delicate flower has purity, which we translated into our design throughout the rooms. It almost creates a poem: the lotus is blown by the wind at the headboard bronze wall, and carried through the space in the form of petals at the entry door. The flower is also carved into the tiles around the swimming pools as blossoms emerging from the pond."

The most distinctly resort aspect of Jónsdóttir's oeuvre is Casa Roosevelt. The third floor all day dining restaurant, bar and private wine lounge spills out to a poolside lounge with private cabanas. Different levels offered by three interconnected outdoor swimming pools offer different

experiences. Adjacent to the pool and adjoining the restaurant is a large fitness centre. Casa Roosevelt is the perfect place to spend the day with every whim catered to – Hollywood style. “We applied Macau’s Portuguese patterns inlaid to the flooring of Casa Roosevelt,” reveals Jónsdóttir. “The inlay process is an old handcrafted technique that we thought befitting.”

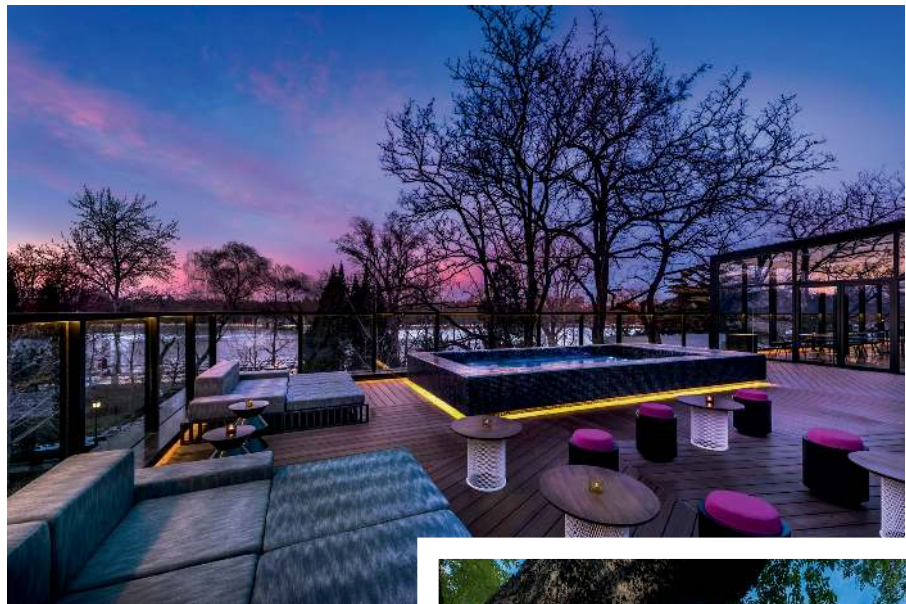
HUTONG HIP

Nature was also incorporated into Vue Hotel Houhai Beijing to instill a resort ambience, but in a completely different way by Singapore based architect Colin Seah, founder and design director of Ministry of Design (MOD). Houhai, a centrally situated district near a lake and park where locals continue to practise *erhu* or *tai chi*, is dominated by alleyways flanked by courtyard residences known as hutongs. Vue was formerly a 1950s budget hotel and MOD was tasked by local operator Orange Hotels Group to give its first and flagship property a contemporary aesthetic.

MOD gutted the structure and enlarged the 80-key hotel with expansive rooms that include private decks or balconies looking towards the lake. “The Vue brand’s ethos was to draw from the specific local context – and transform it in a whimsical or unexpected manner,” elaborates Seah. “In the case of Vue Houhai, we imagined a narrative where lakeside animals such as deer, rabbits and foxes come to life as human like mascots or companions for hotel guests. Colour scheme wise, the palette always pairs a base tone such as dark timber or grey stone with a highlight accent colour such as pink spray paint or gold leaf, to mirror the dialogue between old and new, tradition and heritage.”

Taking advantage of the boutique hotel’s abundant outdoor spaces, MOD was careful to position views oriented towards the lake or inwards at landscaped courtyards. “The type of planting and trees selected respond to the seasons,” reveals Seah. “In summer, the courtyards and roof bar are shrouded in thick green foliage whilst in winter, the bare branches frame the sky in a very dramatic fashion. Houhai Lake also comes into full view from the rooftop bar in the winter.” **AHCT**

Kerry Hong Kong photography courtesy Kerry Hong Kong | Vue Beijing photography by Edward Hendricks | Macau Roosevelt photography by Kelly Puleio



Vue Hotel Houhai Beijing is oriented towards the lake with abundant outdoor spaces – The Moon Bar; Singapore based architect Colin Seah; exterior; and deck

