

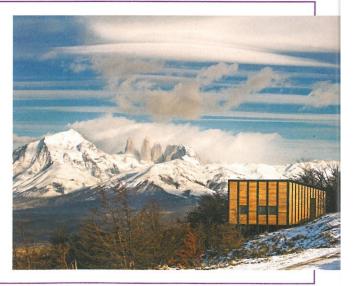


## SWITZERLAND LE GRAND BELLEVUE, GSTAAD

This used to be one of Gstaad's famously grand, formal hotels - and the best located, in its own park in the centre of town - until old Etonian Daniel Koetser and his interior-designer wife Davia bought and transformed it. Now it feels more like a luxury country-house hotel than a turreted, turn-of-the-century Swiss pile, with big reception rooms that manage to be both stylish, with bespoke furniture by George Smith and Soane, and eclectic - there's a life-size tweed camel in the lobby. And what's on offer is second to none: for families (kids' club, playroom, private cinema); for skiing (on-site ski hire, complimentary lift transfers, personal guides); and for wellbeing (an amazing subterranean spa with Bamford and Cellcosmet treatments, a huge pool, a gym and eight different steam rooms, from traditional hammam to Himalayan salt room). Even the hairdresser is a Swiss celebrity. Bedrooms are calmly decorated, with the best beds, TV and audio gear and in-room iPads. As for food, choose from a sushi bar, a cosy chalet serving fondue, and Leonard's, the Michelin-starred restaurant. With its zinc-topped circular bar and wonderfully comfortable, specially designed chairs and banquettes, the dining room is fashionably laid-back, with food to match: pitch-perfect sharing plates, risotto, Wiener schnitzel and bouillabaisse. FLASH POINT The exclusive Gstaad Yacht Club is here, too, so great people-watching is guaranteed. +41 33 748 0000; www.bellevue-gstaad.ch. Doubles from about £230

## CHILE AWASI PATAGONIA

In the adventurer's playground of Chilean Patagonia, intimate, eco-conscious newcomer Awasi shines brighter than the gleaming Lago Sarmiento it overlooks. Rather than being confined within the Torres del Paine National Park, Awasi stands on a ridge above 6,000 hectares of private reserve, giving a sense of space and solitude usually only afforded to the local gauchos. And make like a gaucho you will: the 12 secluded villas by architect Felipe Assadi are modelled on the cattle-herders' cabins, beer-blond log houses with corrugated roofs that gleam like silver fish in the forest. Inside, it's all grandpa armchairs and log fires, with king-sized beds centered so you can watch the dramatic landscape from your pillow. How to tackle the immensity of the natural surroundings? In total freedom: Awasi assigns each villa a private guide and four-wheel-drive on call 24/7. Gallop across the steppes, stargaze in secluded canyons, track the puma, then cosy up for cocktails in the main lodge, where you can feast on king crab and Austral hake. FLASH POINT For the chance to explore Patagonia on your own terms, Awasi is priceless. +56 222 339641; www.awasi.com. Villas from about £1,260 per person for a three-night stay, including all meals, excursions and transfers







West 8th Street between Fifth and Sixth Avenues still shows signs of the gritty insolence that's been knocked out of the rest of Manhattan. Which is something that evidently appealed to the groovecutting hotelier and restaurateur Sean MacPherson who's converted an old students' dorm into this Twitter-trending place to stay. There are 107 bedrooms in the narrow seven-storey building, all tiny (save the two penthouse suites) and gizmo-free, other than a basic phone and bog-standard TV. But my, they are pretty. MacPherson was inspired by traditional Parisian guesthouses, and he clearly has an eye for cake-icing mouldings, gold sconces and bevelled mirrors; the bathrooms are black-and-white-tiled studies in vintage glamour. The ground-floor lobby is low-lit, wood-panelled, warmed by an enormous fire in winter and well-padded with sofas and leather chairs; there's a retro espresso bar and plenty of art books on the shelves. At night the cocktail bar, around the corner from the main entrance, is busy with neighbourhood hipsters and out-of-towners ordering Double Rye Manhattans and Bohemian Sidecars at double-figure prices while waiting to slide into a booth at Margaux, the bistro, and order grilled lamb chops or buckwheat rigatoni. FLASH POINT If you're after pint-sized style on a budget, this is the place. +1 212 321 0100; www.marltonhotel.com. Doubles from about £150