

ELLE lifestyle

A PurePod in Kahutara,
New Zealand



SMALL WONDERS



We're constantly being told to "live large" or "think big"—but right now, we're all about downsizing. As these perfect tiny hotels, destinations and experiences prove, good things come in very small packages.



The bucolic setting of Deplar Farm (left) and the almost invisible Sacromonte Landscape Hotel (below)



Marlborough Lodge and grounds (left) and a suite bed at Ignacia Guest House (right)



TRAVEL TIP

"Smaller airports tend to have lower fees, so they can be appealing to travellers looking to save money," says Barry Choi, travel expert. "Many budget airlines in Europe, Asia and now Canada are starting to offer more routes from these smaller destinations." Think John C. Munro airport in Hamilton instead of YYZ or Abbotsford International versus Vancouver. "Keep in mind that they may be farther away from the city you plan to visit, so you'll need to factor in time and transportation costs," adds Choi.

STAY

Staying at a big, buzzy luxury hotel has its pros—we could write a novel about all the people-watching we've done in lobby bars. But sometimes all those rooms, all those suitcases and all those bodies squeezed in with you in the elevator on your way up to your 33rd-floor room can make you feel like just another face in the revolving door of guests. Meet the new generation of boutique hotels: small, intimate spots with only a handful of suites and infinite thoughtful extras to make you feel like you very well could be the only person there...or even on the planet.

northern Iceland may sound daunting, but braving the cold is well worth the thrill of the outdoor geothermal pool, which gives you a front-row seat to the northern lights.

FOR AN ESCAPE FROM THE NON-STOP NEWS CYCLE... At Tongabezi Lodge in southern Zambia—where Harry and Meghan are rumoured to have holidayed—the only Wi-Fi is in the main house, which is just fine because you'll never be on your phone anyway. Best bet: Stay in the property's secluded tree house. Reachable only via a hidden path, the open-plan suite (one of only nine villas on the property) features a king-size bed, a private deck and an open-air claw-foot tub, all perched among the branches of three ebony trees. The front of the room is entirely open, making it feel as if it blends into its surroundings—without sacrificing any of the luxury.



FOR A DESTINATION THAT MAKES YOU FEEL LIKE YOU'RE IN AN EPISODE OF GAME OF THRONES... We can't promise you a Jon Snow run-in at Deplar Farm, but the stunning scenery at this remote luxury lodge, opened in 2016 in the Fljót Valley in northern Iceland, will make you

forget how long it's been since there was a new *GOT* episode. Channel your inner Stark—but with chicer outerwear—with a number of outdoor-adventure activities (Heli-skiing! Whale-watching!), or opt to never leave the fireside in your suite. (There are just 13 on the property, all with major hygge vibes—think textured walls and Moroccan wools.) A winter trip to



FOR A WINE TASTING THAT WOULD IMPRESS EVEN OLIVIA POPE... Let's start with the location: The dozen or so luxe eco-friendly cabins that make up the Sacromonte Landscape Hotel are dotted throughout 101

hectares of land (including vineyards) in southeast Uruguay (about 45 minutes from hot spot Punta del Este). Inside, they are minimalist chic—think low platform beds, cowhide rugs and leather chairs. Meanwhile, the front exterior walls are covered with one-way mirrors, creating the illusion that the cabins disappear into their bucolic setting. Travel the terrain in an electric buggy, catch some R & R by a private pool, indulge at the farm-to-table restaurant or just sip wine on a hilltop terrace—you can do it all at the sustainable resort, which opens this fall.



FOR GOSSIP GIRL TYPES WHO WANT A BREAK FROM THE CITY...

GrayBarns, an upscale spot on the meandering Silvermine River in Connecticut, is idyllic year-round but especially in fall. (Imagine an *IRL Stars Hollow* but with way more privacy and no meddling

Taylor Dooses.) The bougie inn started life as a textile factory before thriving as a hotel in the '50s and '60s, playing host to A-listers like Elizabeth Taylor and Lauren Bacall. The classic-style property (again, very *Lorelai Gilmore*) reopened last year, boasting just six king suites, the restored original post-and-beam structure and a rustic-themed resto called Tavern (whose house-made pasta is calling your name). And GrayBarns keeps growing: Its opening-soon country store, Mercantile, will let you take the inn's old-money vibes back home.

FOR THE FOODIE WHO PLANS VACATIONS AROUND HER TASTE BUDS...

Almost nine million people live in Mexico City proper, but you wouldn't know it once you're inside the verdant grounds of Ignacia Guest House. The chilled-out B & B—a once crumbling mansion that was renovated into five ultra-modern suites last year—is the ideal place to rest your Nikes after a day spent touring the Mexican capital's never-ending roster of architectural and design wonders and foodie destinations. Also key: It's located in Colonia Roma, the city's vibrant gastronomic centre. Still hungry? Cooking lessons are offered by the same couple who make your complimentary breakfast from scratch daily, which you should definitely eat in the courtyard under the 70-year-old orange trees.



FOR INDULGING YOUR INNER HEIRESS...

Grab your tiara and head to Marlborough Lodge, a luxe 10-suite property in sprawling wine country outside Blenheim, New Zealand. Originally a Victorian convent built in 1901, the newly renovated lodge is set on six hectares of gardens and (oh, yes) vineyards. (We recommend partaking in the private wine tastings.) Stay in the Kingfisher Suite—it was originally a nun's chapel and still features the original arched windows, vaulted ceiling and stained-glass windows but with a contemporary and minimalist interior. ➤



PHOTOGRAPHY: LEONARDO FINOTTI (SACROMONTE); CITY FOODSTERS (TONGABEZI LODGE) & DIEGO PADILLA (IGNACIA GUEST HOUSE)



Clockwise, from far lower left: Sol Cinema; Mmuseumm; Miss Boon's Fabulous Vintage Shop; the kitchen at the Heather; Bar Americano; a table for two at Battuto; Bar Annabelle



VISIT

WALES Not only is Sol Cinema a tiny, adorably kitschy mobile movie theatre, it's also powered by the sun: Solar roof panels give it the juice to play movies day or night. Travelling around the United Kingdom, Ireland and beyond, the 1960s holiday trailer screens films on environmental issues (are you sensing a theme here?), and it has plush seats that can accommodate up to eight people.

LISBON Second-hand bookstores have a kind of magic—even more so when you have the place to yourself. Which is pretty much inevitable at Livraria Simão, a shop so small that the owner has to step outside when he has a customer. But he still manages to keep some 4,000 books in his space, on varying subjects and even in varying languages.

NEW YORK Mmuseumm is all about exploring the world through everyday objects from around the globe—foreign toothpaste, a bread-bag clip, a pudding cup. It's housed in a former freight elevator down a random alley in lower Manhattan and measures a mere five square metres.

DUBLIN Miss Boon's Fabulous Vintage Shop carries everything from DVP wrap dresses to straight-out-of-*Mad-Men* retro styles. The only catch is shopping is by appointment only—but you'll appreciate that exclusivity when you're the only person in the one-by-three-metre store.

IMBIBE

EL PEQUEÑO Its name translates to "the tiny," but the just-opened Cuban-inspired speakeasy in Montreal's Old Port serves up major flavour in mostly-rum-based bevies, like mojitos, daiquiris and, of course, Cuba Libres.

THRESOME TOLL BOOTH There's currently a waitlist to get into this nook in Williamsburg, Brooklyn, that fits just three people—you, a friend and the bartender. It's so top secret, you only learn the exact location the morning of your pre-scheduled visit.

BAR AMERICANO You'll find zero artisanal drinks at this nostalgic spot in Melbourne dedicated to the golden era of cocktails—zero chairs too. The "broom-closet-size" speakeasy touts itself as the first standing-only bar Down Under. Be sure to wear your Balenciaga dad shoes.

BAR ANNABELLE With 22 seats, this newcomer to the Calgary bar scene is a bit bigger than the rest of the hot spots on our list, but it's a must-try. Cozy up with a glass of wine or whisky (they offer blends from everywhere from Oregon to Japan) at the pink-onyx bar while listening to Tom Petty on the vintage record player.

BAR PIANO This never-empty spot in Tokyo's bar-filled Shibuya district is so small that it doesn't even have a website. The vibe feels very Marie Antoinette meets *Alice in Wonderland*—think fuchsia lighting, chandeliers and vintage-looking portrait walls.

EAT

THE HEATHER Hamilton, Ont. Seats: 12 Look no further for the epicentre of Hamilton's foodie boom than the Heather in up-and-coming Barton Village. Husband-and-wife duo Matty and Meg Cowan opened their exclusive resto in 2016, highlighting local and seasonal ingredients.

THE BITE HOUSE Forks Baddeck, N.S. Seats: 12 This family-run establishment,

taking up the main floor of the owners' century-old farmhouse, is so internationally popular that it's booked solid for the rest of 2018.

ALDER ROOM Edmonton. Seats: 12 You have to buy a "ticket" (from \$85 a person) in advance, but that gets you an inventive 10- to 20-course tasting menu focused on local seasonal foods. You won't know what you're eating until it's served, but you know it'll be an experience.



BATTUTO Quebec City. Seats: 20 The best Italian cuisine is simple and authentic, and that is Battuto's mandate. This former snack bar is now a sleek, minimalist restaurant serving up handmade pastas, antipasto and tiramisù. ➤

SHOP UPGRADE YOUR TRAVEL GAME WITH THESE MINI MUST-HAVES.

Canvas jewellery holder, Bag-all (\$39, at shopbop.com)



Bluetooth tracker, Tile (\$39.95, at Indigo, chapters.indigo.ca)



Mini brow rescue kit, Tweezerman (\$38.50, tweezerman.ca)



Traveller set, Poketo (\$210, poketo.com)





Clockwise, from top left: Skylodge Adventure Suites; a PurePod in New Zealand; Petrin Tower in Prague; Mustique; L.A.'s Cactus Store; underwater dining at the Conrad in the Maldives; a PurePod at night; a villa at the Conrad

STAY SKYLODGE ADVENTURE SUITES, SACRED VALLEY, PERU

Eat, sleep and stargaze in an intimate Perspex pod suspended above Peru's famous Sacred Valley with views that feel straight out of *Avatar*. A heads-up for acrophobics: You have to scale 400 metres of mountain or take a zipline to get to your private suite.

directions) to get to these eco-friendly clear cabins peppered throughout New Zealand, but it's sooo worth it. The pods, 20 square metres in size, boast all the amenities of a five-star hotel (including meals if you order ahead but not including Wi-Fi—the goal here is to disconnect) with the bonus of complete and utter immersion in nature. Even the glass floors are see-through.

PUREPODS, NEW ZEALAND You have to walk into the bush (don't worry, there are

CONRAD, MALDIVES RANGALI ISLAND, MALDIVES So, the Muraka, a villa in

the Maldives that opens next month, doesn't exactly qualify as tiny. But since a small part of it is underwater—a bedroom, bathroom and small sitting area are set five metres below sea level, a curved clear ceiling the only thing separating you from Flounder, Sebastian et al.—and it's gorgeous, it had to make our list.

THE (TEENY-TINY) MUST-TRY (OR -BUY!) LIST

DATE-NIGHT RESTO Don't let the GeoCities-era website fool you. The restaurant Solo Per Due—which translates to “just for two”—serves up delicious fresh pasta on the daily in a cozy candlelit space in a town outside Rome.

ISLAND Just 500 people live year-round on Mustique (where Princess Margaret, the Queen's sister, used to party with the Rolling Stones and where Kate Middleton and fam regularly vacation). It's privately owned, but you can visit if you have buckets of ducats and a VIP connection or two.

SMALL TOWN Go to Nantucket in autumn. Most of the sunburned sightseers will have gone home by then, so you'll feel like a local. Stay in the newly opened Lilly Pulitzer cottage at the iconic White Elephant hotel.

TOURIST SPOT Petrin Tower, often referred to as Prague's “little” Eiffel Tower, has all

the charm of that other tourist spot but without the hordes. Come for the views, stay for the day and have a picnic in one of the five surrounding gardens.

PLANT STORE L.A.'s Cactus Store will satisfy all your hipster cacti whims—and it does it in a space that's smaller than your bathroom.

PERFUME There are more than 100 fragrances to choose from at the lavish Guerlain perfumery on rue Saint-Honoré in Paris. But if you have the time—and \$60,000—why not make your very own scent on-site following a two-hour private consultation with one of the house's legendary noses.

DESSERT A \$390 sundae sounds excessive, sure, but when it's made with black-truffle-and-dark-chocolate crumble, hibiscus-champagne sauce and silver and gold leaf, like the one on offer at the Baccarat Hotel New York, it's probably worth it. ♦

SHOP TRAVEL ESSENTIALS SO SMALL THEY CAN FIT IN YOUR CARRY-ON.

Steam iron, Rowenta (\$50, at Hudson's Bay, thebay.com)



22-karat-gold-plated-sterling-silver bracelet, Coordinates (\$650, coordinatescollection.com)



Canvas lanyard bag, Tory Sport (\$125, at Holt Renfrew, holtrenfrew.com)



Instax Square SQ6 Instant Camera, Fujifilm (\$160.24, at Best Buy, bestbuy.ca)



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