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Junior Suite at the Hotel Indigo Paris-Opera has double-glazed windows offering panoramic views.

NEW HOTELS IN PARIS

A quintet of openings makes the City of Light shine even brighter.

THERE'S NEVER a dull moment on the Paris hotel scene, where superstar designers are recruited to imagine suites (Karl Lagerfeld at Rosewood Crillon), a landmark swimming pool is reborn as a hotel (Molitor), Peninsula splashes down in Europe (make haste to the Avenue Kléber!) and Qatari-backed Constellation Hotels snatches up another investment (InterContinental sold Le Grand for a cool \$405 million in December 2014). It's enough to make the heads spin of even the most hotel-obsessed travelers.

Often it's the luxury hotels that have tongues wagging around the world. In fact, the creation in 2010 of the

ultra-luxe "palace hotel" distinction was a way to enhance global visibility of this premium product. In a recent study released by Atout France, the French tourism agency, the country is identified as the destination of reference for international luxury travelers. Haute couture brands such as Louis Vuitton, Chanel, Dior, Hermès and Cartier serve as a showcase of French savoir-faire around the world, and the palace hotels are also a vitrine. Just ask any Parisian hotelier about the palaces, and they'll agree: not only are these ultra-luxe hotels competing to outdo one another, but they are also driving non-competing hotels in the four- and

five-star category to do better, investing in makeovers and customer service.

The result is a boon for consumers and their travel agents. Visitors to Paris, the world's most popular city, are spoiled for choice when it comes to hotel accommodations at every price point. Last year was an exciting one for hotel openings and renovations. Looking for a good new hotel that's not a total splurge? Here are some of the best of the bunch.

Hotel Indigo Paris-Opera

When it debuted at the end of September 2014, the Hotel Indigo Paris-Opera

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The Junior Suite Duplex at Le Cinq Codet can be transformed into a private apartment with an adjoining room, making it suitable for families.



Hotel Pullman Paris Eiffel Tower is housed in a modern glass tower just steps from the iconic structure.

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(www.hotelindigo.com) made headlines as the first in France for IHG's boutique brand, whose properties are closely linked, in design and spirit, to their local neighborhood. Opening in the brand's 10th anniversary year, the Paris property is the 60th Hotel Indigo for IHG around the world. **Travel Agent** met with Christophe Laure, the Paris regional director for IHG, and Vincent Poulingue, the general manager, at the exclusive opening event. "The design is a marriage of the hotel and its surrounding environment," explained Laure. "There's a real neighborhood connection, and the spirit is *maison*—guests really feel at home here."

Located near the Opera in the 9th arrondissement, the four-star hotel reflects the cultural richness of the neighborhood with décor inspired by the ballet and opera (like theater-style curtains and wall murals of dancers). Paris-based Jean-Philippe Nuel is one of the most sought-after French interior designers for hotel projects (including InterContinental Marseille and the Molitor in Paris). Nuel succeeded in creating an elegant, contemporary space inside a traditional Haussmannian building. Of the 57 guest rooms, there are seven duplex suites (four with views of the Eiffel Tower). Suite #601 resembles a Parisian apartment under the eaves. In the downstairs sitting room,

you can sip an espresso from your Nespresso machine and gaze at the Eiffel Tower through an oval window. We also liked #401 (Junior Suite) with its windows all the way around. Every room has wood floors, uber-comfortable mattresses, walk-in showers, free Wi-Fi and a multimedia hub. Reach out to Charlotte de Montgolfier (charlotte.demontgolfier@ihg.com, parin.info@ihg.com, 011-33-14-480-0032), front office manager, for VIP bookings.

The Hotel Indigo's location is a major selling point. It's smack dab in the heart of the bustling grand boulevards neighborhood, but situated on a pretty, pedestrianized street (rue Edouard-VII, just off the Boulevards des Capucines), meaning you can experience the best of Parisian people-watching on the restaurant *terrasse*, minus the car exhaust. "There's a feeling of exclusivity and intimacy that's hard to find in this neighborhood," explained Poulingue.

Tartares restaurant is helmed by Chef Christophe Raoux from the nearby Café de La Paix and offers a fabulous wine selection. Hotel Indigo also has a small, light-filled gym and access to a parking garage.

Le Cinq Codet

Nuel also hit a homerun with a brand new hotel from the owners of Le Burgundy. Opened in November 2014, **Le Cinq Codet** (www.le5codet.com) is a glamorous hideaway in the chic 7th arrondissement. Nuel was given carte blanche to transform a former 1930s-era France Telecom center into a unique five-star hotel. This newcomer is one of our absolute favorites—from the chef's table in the restaurant to the gorgeous, airy spa.

Le Cinq Codet has a residential vibe, like you're staying in the private pied-à-terre of a cultured Parisian—not just any urbanite, but a connoisseur with impeccable taste, who commissioned an architect to design an apartment *sur mesure*. In fact, design lovers will find themselves making mental notes on the décor: the designer chairs, the

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DESTINATIONS

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leather banquettes in the guest rooms, the reception desks shaped like sculpted blocks of marble in a nod to the nearby Rodin museum.

Some rooms, like Deluxe #302 and Duplex #304, have views of the gold dome of Invalides, the nearby monument that houses Napoleon's tomb. These vistas are most remarkable from the private terrace of Le Dôme (#402, the biggest suite), where you can also ogle the Eiffel Tower. Wrapped around the building, the landscaped terrace is equipped with a Jacuzzi. Note that all 67 rooms come with five-star amenities like Nespresso machines and Fragonard bath products. Travel agents should contact Chiara Malaguti (cmalaguti@le5codet.com, 011-331-5385-4568), front office manager, for assistance with VIP bookings.

Hotel Pullman Paris Eiffel Tower

A stone's throw from the city's most famous site, the **Hotel Pullman Paris Eiffel Tower** (www.pullmanhotels.com) completed a 15-month renovation in 2014. The makeover by designer Christophe Pillet—opening up the hotel to abundant natural light—was part of the Accor Group's strategy to update all five Pullman hotels in Paris.

Housed in a modern glass tower, just steps away from the Eiffel Tower, the Pullman is a stylish four-star hotel

with two standout features. The first is the onsite vegetable garden, sprawling across 4,300 square feet, which features beehives and a henhouse for fresh eggs. This is the largest kitchen garden of any hotel in Paris, and it's a pretty (and calming) sight from the hotel lobby. The garden and orchard provide fresh ingredients for Frame, the hotel's restaurant, which also boasts an Enomatic wine machine for dispensing top-quality wines by the glass.

The other noteworthy amenity is the 9th-floor gym with views over the Seine River. Open 24 hours a day, a well-equipped gym like this is rare in Paris hotels. **Booking Tip:** 200 of the hotel's 430 rooms have views of the Eiffel Tower, and some, like Deluxe #306, have balconies overlooking the iconic monument. For VIP bookings, contact Pascal Puerari (011-331-4538-8498), VIP services manager.

Hotel Vernet

On a quiet street off the Champs-Élysées, the **Hotel Vernet** (www.hotelvernet-paris.com) has been hosting fashionable guests for 100 years. After a dazzling renovation that was unveiled in June 2014, the Vernet joined Design Hotels (previously it was a member of SLH). The hotel now belongs to the family-owned Bessé Signature Group, whose collection includes the Bel-Ami (6th arrondissement), Hotel de

Sers (8th), Hotel Edouard 7 (2nd) and Le Domaine de la Bretesche on the Atlantic coast.

The renovation preserved the spirit of the century-old building, accentuating historic architectural details while adding contemporary touches. For example, the restaurant's extraordinary glass skylight, designed by Gustave Eiffel, was carefully restored, while a kitchen window was added to the dining room, allowing a glimpse of culinary theatrics. In the bar, there's a new ceiling fresco by contemporary artist Jean-Michel Alberola, whose work is showcased at the Palais de Tokyo. Colorful carpets, like abstract art, now cover the marble floors.

Interior designer François Champ-saur is a champion of French savoir-faire, and the 50 elegant rooms are designed with organic materials like marble and wood. A striking feature is the curved, wood door that separates the bathroom from the bedroom. Like an undulating wave, these floor-to-ceiling doors have a cocooning effect. We also liked the blue leather desk cover that hides the panel of international electric adapters.

Booking Tips: The Executive Suites have lovely sitting rooms where you could host a small meeting. This first category of suite is also perfect for families because the sofa converts to a bed. Executive Suite #308 has one of the prettiest bathrooms we've seen in Paris, designed with Carrara marble sinks, glass mosaics and brass fixtures by Stella. The best room in the house is #108, a Prestige Suite, which encompasses 700 square feet. The other two Prestige Suites are located on the 6th floor, and though they are slightly smaller in size, they have balconies. The Prestige suites come with espresso machines and Hermès bath products.

The Hotel Vernet is a classy five-star hotel with service to match; two Clés d'or concierges and the reservations staff work closely with travel agents to anticipate the needs of their clients. Contact Hubert Gauton (reservations@hotelvernet.com, 011-331-4431-9800), reservations manager, for VIP bookings.



Accessible Rooms at the Hilton Paris Opera are wheelchair accessible and feature a lowered bed, lowered basin and support handles.