

# Small is beautiful: Singapore's 7 best boutique hotels

By Gillian Rhys, for CNN

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12 photos:

**Singapore's boutique hotels: Hotel Vagabond** - Hotel Vagabond's life-size elephants "hoisting" up the main elevator are designed by the French artist Franck Le Ray.

12 photos:

**Artsy vibe** - All Hotel Vagabond's guest room walls.

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**Singapore (CNN)**—Checking into a hotel can be a dreary process.

But not if the front desk receptionist sits behind a brass rhino and you're surrounded by life-sized golden elephant and monkey sculptures.

Bold and whimsical designs like these make boutique hotels stand out among the giant hotel chains in Singapore.

Here are our favorites:

## Hotel Vagabond

The newest kid on Singapore's boutique block is designed by Jacques Garcia of Paris's [Hotel Costes](#).

[Hotel Vagabond](#)'s a little bit of Paris in Singapore, or more specifically in Little India/Kampong Glam.

Ground floor public space is alluring -- dark lighting, bold decorations and red velvet drapes.

It comprises a bar segueing into a Salon and the 5th Quarter restaurant, which focuses on smoking, curing and pickling.

Art is predominant here from the rhino check-in desk and elephant sculpture seemingly crashing through the lobby wall to the video installations in the loos and the lift.

The 41 rooms are similarly "maximalist" and stylish: every space of wall crammed with pictures and richly hand painted screens.

[Hotel Vagabond](#), 39 Syed Alwi Road, Singapore 207630 Singapore; +65 6291 6677

## The South Beach



The South Beach brings together two famed creative minds Norman Foster and Philippe Starck.

A new addition to Beach Road, opposite the venerable Raffles Hotel, is this Norman Foster designed showstopper with interiors by Philippe Starck.

[The South Beach](#) comprises two towers and four conserved colonial low rises.

While there are some 650 rooms and suites, the place is overwhelmingly boutique in feel.

Doing away with the traditional reception, guests are checked in at one of the several freestanding desks -- each one itself a work of art and overhung by a unique chandelier.

Rooms are bright and contemporary equipped with minimalist Japanese-style bathrooms.

Icing on the cake is the 18th floor sky garden, with a wraparound view of Singapore's skyline and rocking chairs from which to drink it all in.

Speaking of which, there's also an infinity pool, a gym and a bar up here.

[The South Beach](#), 30 Beach Road, Singapore 189763 Singapore; +65 6818 1888

## The Club

This handsome colonial building with white facade accented by bright red shutters is found on the corner of Singapore's bar and restaurant mecca, Club Street.

Fresh from a refurb, the design of [The Club](#) mixes period features with on trend Mad Men-esque retro furnishings -- Jewel-colored velvets, 60s-style chairs and panels in dark gray and navy paints.

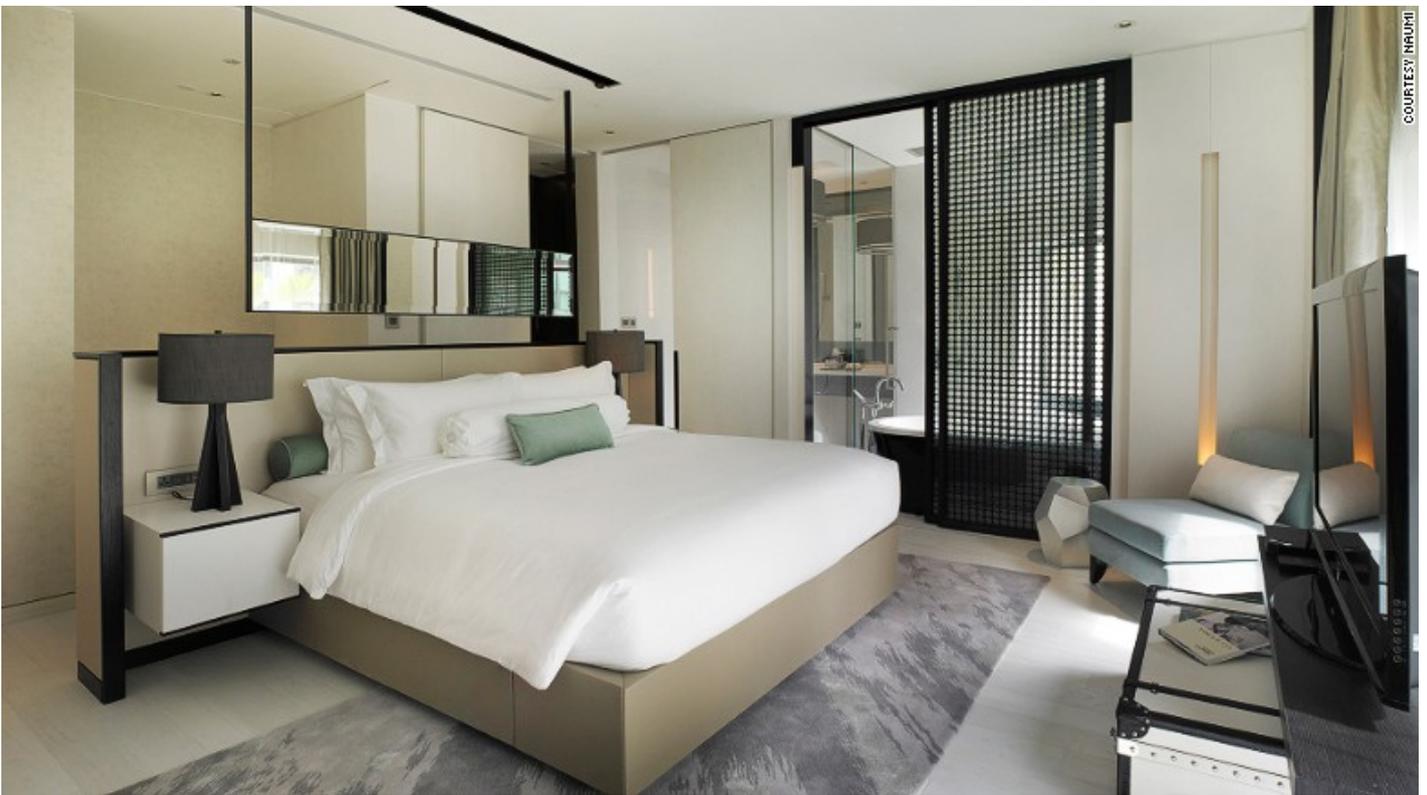
The hotel's hub is Mr and Mrs Maxwell, a loungey restaurant that serves as an all-day diner and local hangout spot.

Up on the roof is Tiger's Milk, the Lion City's first Peruvian bar.

Regulars come for the piscos, the ceviche and the skewers.

[The Club](#), 28 Ann Siang Road, Singapore 069708 Singapore; +65 6808 2188

## Naumi



COURTESY: NAUMI

The Gabrielle and Camellia suites at Naumi are a homage to Coco Chanel.

Naumi's location is great -- smack next to Raffles Hotel and steps away from Raffles City and the City Hall metro station -- but its main draw is its almost hideaway feel.

The hotel sports a very intimate yet ultra-luxury feel, with soft lighting, designer furnishings, high thread count sheets and Apple TV.

While the standard rooms are compact, they're cleverly designed so don't feel cramped.

Those splashing out for a suite will find two designs -- one inspired by Coco Chanel in tasteful monochrome and the other a homage to Andy Warhol, with a more in-your-face pop art theme.

The rooftop swimming pool, complete with cabana recliners and cocoon couches, is a hidden gem accessible only to guests.

The pool is tiny so guests don't really get a workout doing laps, but that's not really the point.

**Naumi Hotel, 41 Seah Street, Singapore 188396 Singapore; +65 6403 6000**

## Klapsons

Klapsons is quite out-of-this-world with its contemporary design and layout.

Originally a commercial space within a tower block in trendy Tanjong Pagar, it reopened its door in 2009 with new design by interior designer firm Sawaya & Moroni.

The lobby is quite the heart stopper -- in addition to the one of a kind furniture pieces, there's a massive steel sphere structure (inside of which is the check-in desk).

The 17 rooms and suites are all unique, with individual layouts and custom fittings.

Some come with showers opening onto balconies and others with indoor or outdoor Jacuzzis.

Rooftop bar Fabrika, festooned with lanterns and giving cityscape views, is a popular hang for the locals.

**klapsons, The Boutique Hotel, 15 Hoe Chang Road #01-01 Tower 15, Singapore 089316 Singapore; +65 6521 9000**

## Wanderlust

What happens when you bring together four homegrown creative firms -- three of them multi-disciplinary agencies with not a single previous hotel client -- and give them free reign to put together a hotel?

The aftermath is captured in 29 unique rooms in Little India, collectively known as [Wanderlust](#).

It's a wacky combination of vintage ads, shades of cement gray, wildly colored furnishings and exposed beams and air ducts for that intentionally unintentional look.

Each design team was given an entire floor of this former 1920s schoolhouse, to transform.

The rooms on the Eccentricity second floor are decked out in a single neon color, so guests can pretend they're sleeping in a space capsule.

The third story -- titled Is It Black & White? -- have stenciled art installations in the Pop-Art rooms, "folded" ceilings in the Origami rooms with a choice of four colors to brighten the space.

Leaving the funkiest for last, the top Creature Comforts floor features rooms that look like they came out of the pages of a psychedelic dream book.

From monsters to typewriters and spaceships, the loft rooms are what the hotel humbly calls "whimsical."

The hotel's Cocotte restaurant is also highly regarded for rustic French food.

[Wanderlust](#), 2 Dickson Road, Singapore 209494 Singapore; +65 6396 3322

## The New Majestic



The New Majestic's compact swimming pool - with peek-a-boo portholes through to the hotel's restaurant.

Owned by the same lawyer-turned-hotelier as Wanderlust, The [New Majestic](#) shares plenty of the nonconformist, loud design attitude of its sister property -- this time in Chinatown.

Housed in a conservation shop house, the interiors are impeccably put together with clean lines, stark white walls and floors and a mix of vintage and designer furniture scattered throughout.

Thirty individualized rooms fall under four broad themes.

There's the Hanging Bed room, with oversized murals and seemingly suspended mattresses; Mirror room offers lots of voyeuristic ops; the exhibitionist-friendly Aquarium room has a glass-enclosed bathtub as its centerpiece.

The Attic suites house loft space beds and twin cast iron bathtubs.

There's a lap pool in the atrium. But be warned -- it has portholes that are visible in the hotel's (modern Cantonese) restaurant.

[New Majestic Hotel](#), 31 - 37 Bukit Pasoh Rd, Singapore 089845 Singapore; +65 6511 4700

With additional reporting by *By Tina Hsiao and Jules Kay, for CNN*

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