

# Travel

Travel Home Features

## Wanderlust: Repurposed Hotels

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A recent Hong Kong staycation at Ovolo Southside had me thinking about repurposed hotels. The former warehouse near Aberdeen has been refitted with 162 pared down guest rooms of aesthetically exposed pipes and raw brickwork balanced by puffed-up beds, powerful rain showers and meditative South China Sea views. Leave it to hoteliers, I reflected under my fluffy covers, to redefine 'recycling' as something far more luxurious than cardboard and dreary plastic bottles.

As my credit card bills will attest, I've been fortunate enough to stay at many fashionable second acts the world over. One particularly chic time warp, a 1914 Belle Epoque mansion on Lima's Rímac River waterfront, emerged in 2013 from a painstaking two-year makeover as Hotel B ([hotelb.pe](#)). Authentic details abound, such as the original Spanish red and grey floral tiles and the sea-facing roof deck, while modern touches include the street front eatery, headed by Limeñan celebrity chef Oscar Velarde, and original contemporary artworks by up-and-coming Peruvian artists. The pieces are on loan from the adjacent Lucia de la Puente Gallery and are hung throughout the 17 guestrooms and public areas, enhancing the already stylish surrounds.

"Hitler's architect, Albert Speer, insisted this be built in the Danish classical style," said a cover girl-worthy front desk attendant while showing me to my room earlier this year at Das Stue ([das-stue.com](http://das-stue.com)), housed in Berlin's former Danish embassy on the edge of Tiergarten Park. "The Danes didn't really want to move in," she continued as we entered one of the 78 photogenic rooms. As if to balance the imposing stone building's controversial history, Spanish architect and designer Patricia Urquiola filled the interiors with playful details like the ground floor bar's leather hippo and my room's endearing giraffe sculpture, itself an ephemeral standout.

Further European upcycling can be found in Paris where Boulangerie Room ([boulangerieroom.com](http://boulangerieroom.com)) is a 19th century bakery-turned-loft, and its sister property, La Maisonette, a hidden 1789 courtyard house turned holiday rental.

My next Parisian recycled sleep will be at Molitor ([mltr.fr](http://mltr.fr)), a 1929 Art Deco swimming pool (where the bikini was first launched in 1946) turned boutique hotel, complete with Clarins spa and a rooftop bar. I also intend to revisit Corral del Rey ([corraldelrey.com](http://corraldelrey.com)), a 17th century palace hidden down the twisting alleys of old Seville, and to check out Vault Karakoy ([thehousehotel.com](http://thehousehotel.com)), Istanbul's newly opened 63-room reinvention of the 1863 neo-Renaissance Credit General Ottoman bank. Original details retained here include the marble staircase, five-metre-high stenciled ceilings and ceramic tile work.

Closer to home, I lived out my maharani fantasies in one of the 64 hotel guest rooms at Umaid Bhawan Palace ([tajhotels.com](http://tajhotels.com)), the Art Deco home of Jodhpur's Maharaja Umaid Singhji and his family. I shared their views of Mehrangarh Fort, described by Rudyard Kipling as 'the work of angels and giants', and dined on royally delicious tandoori chicken.


We will all have to wait a few more years, however, for one of the world's most anticipated revivals. The Peninsula Yangon is set to be housed inside the former Myanmar Railway Headquarters, a Victorian building dating from the 1880s and one of the Burmese capital's oldest existing colonial remnants.


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