

Step Back in Time. Amid the hoopla over China's embrace of futuristic architecture, hoteliers are quietly turning historic buildings in Beijing into boutique stays. Here, T+L reveals six of the best. *By* MANUELA ZONINSEIN



The Design Vanguard
Clockwise from far right: The dining room at Guxiang 20, a boutique hotel in Beijing; a sink at the minimalist 3plus1bedrooms; a bedroom at Zhuang.



CHINA

ZHUANG

From the team behind the Face restaurant-bar complexes in Bangkok, Jakarta and Shanghai comes this 16-room hotel housed in a former 1960's Communist Era grammar school. In Mandarin, "zhuang" means village, and in this case, it's the global village that's being alluded to. Indonesian lava-rock statues greet visitors by the lobby while tatami mats mingle with Ming dynasty-style, red-lacquered rosewood furniture and peony print-covered sofas in the guest rooms. Overstuffed beds and deep bathtubs lend a homey touch. Rooms vary a lot in size—opt for No. 305, which squeezes in a cozy parlor into its 20 square meters. The pan-Asian theme continues elsewhere on the premises,

where discerning diners can sup at Hazara, Lanna Thai or Jia restaurants. *26 Dongcaoyuan, Gongli Nanlu; 86-10/6551-6788; facebars.com; doubles from RMB1,200, breakfast included.*

3PLUS1BEDROOMS

The brainchild of Malaysian restaurateur Cho Chong Gee, this recently opened property situated in a 400-year-old *siheyuan* has, as its name suggests, only three guest rooms and one suite. The rooms' rigorous minimalism—nearly all-white interiors with little décor—doesn't exclude modern comforts such as 400-count sheets, iPods and Wi-Fi. All four also boast private courtyards, while the suite and one of the deluxe rooms have rooftop terraces where you can observe

the daily rhythms of life in a *hutong*. (There's a larger terrace that all guests have access to.) As an added bonus, three of Cho's other establishments—the Southeast Asia-inspired Café Sambal, Bed Bar and the plain-chic Paper restaurant—are all within walking distance from the hotel. *17 Zhangwang Hutong off Jiu Gulou Dajie; 86-10/6404-7030; 3plus1bedrooms.com; doubles from RMB1,400, breakfast and daily mini-bar refills included.*

GUXIANG 20

Opened in 2007 on Nanluoguxiang, one of the city's first gentrified *hutongs*, this hotel offers 28 comfortable rooms filled with antique furniture, hand-carved wooden screens and modern comforts like flat-screen TV's. It's