

Check it out: Vue Hotel Hou Hai Beijing

The hotel's design has unified various hutong architectural ornamentations. Picture: Edward Hendricks

CHRISTINE MCCABE THE AUSTRALIAN 12:00AM September 9, 2017

With playful animal statues and stylish interiors, a top-notch Spanish restaurant and verdant lakeside location in Beijing's hutong district, this new hotel offers a fresh style of digs for visitors to the Chinese capital.

The first in a planned collection of design-driven five-star hotels from the Orange Hotels Group, Vue Hotel Hou Hai Beijing has been pulled together by Singapore-based Ministry of Design. The company has taken a compound of 1950s buildings on the shores of Hou Hai Lake and unified the various architectural ornamentations — decorative roof eaves, gargoyles, sculptured balconies — by painting the lot slate grey, highlighting details in burnished gold and linking the structures with landscaped gardens.

The 80 guestrooms and suites, in various sizes and configurations, are sleek and uncluttered, with whimsical embellishments including pink or yellow chairs and ornate pagoda-style bathroom mirrors. All guestrooms are fitted with king beds dressed in finest linens and goose-down doonas, Bluetooth, clever lighting and coffee machine; most ensuites have a tub and some accommodation styles have balconies or terraces with lake or park views.

This very cool fit-out has landed the hotel a gig as the first Design Hotels member in Beijing and a strong selling point will be its locale in a district where historic hutong houses remain in use and the river's banks are lined with bars and cafes.

The reception area of the Vue Hotel Hou Hai Beijing.

Don't miss: A drink in the rooftop Moon Bar for lovely lake views; the venue also serves high tea and weekend brunch.

Dining in: Overseeing in-house dining is Barcelona native and third-generation baker Ignasi Prats, who honed his skills at the three-Michelin-star El Celler de Can Roca in Girona, Spain. He has charge of a streetfront cafe and bakery, and the signature Pink Rabbit Spanish restaurant occupying an old warehouse at the lakeside edge of the compound. Here you'll find an open kitchen, exposed metal and timber trusses and lounge-style seating.

Dining out: In the neighbourhood, check out Quanjude or Duck de Chine for Beijing duck; Rui He Ju or Man Fu Lou for hot pot. There's good Yunnan cuisine at Dali Courtyard and Vietnamese at Nuage.

Ask the concierge: Join locals in the park for morning qigong or tai chi, or a game of footie badminton (where a shuttlecock is kicked from player to player). Or take a jog around the lake before cooling down in the park where a retired musician comes every morning to play his saxophone for an hour or two.

Checking in: Opening room rates from RMB1538 (\$294); suites from RMB 2158, including service charge and VAT.

More: vuehotels.com.cn.

Also try: Jackalope, Mornington Peninsula, Victoria; Macalister Mansion, Penang, Malaysia; Ion City Hotel, Reykjavik, Iceland.

Some accommodation options have balconies or terraces with lake or park views.

ACCOMMODATION BUZZ

• Sage Hotel Ringwood in Melbourne's east is set to open in October with 120 guestrooms spanning five floors atop the Eastland Shopping Centre; 30 minutes from the Yarra Valley, the hotel will showcase the region's wine and food.

- Six Senses Fort Barwara opens late next year, 110km southeast of Jaipur and 30 minutes from Ranthambhore National Park, in a restored 14th-century fort; there will be two restaurants, two pools, a children’s club and a large day spa located in the original women’s palace.
- Early next year, the team behind Sydney’s Paramount Coffee Project will open a 29-room hotel in the old Australian headquarters of Paramount Pictures in Sydney’s Surry Hills; the cafe will double as a lobby for the Paramount House Hotel and there will also be an outpost of Ester restaurant.
- Opening on September 14, Travelodge Central, Hollywood Road in Hong Kong, offers 148 user-friendly rooms in a lively locale, an eight-minute walk from the Sheung Wan MTR station; savings of up to 25 per cent are available as opening specials.
- Peranakan design will be a feature of the 270-room Ramada Plaza Chaofah Phuket opening next year in southern Thailand as part of a larger “urban entertainment centre”, including retail outlets and cinemas.

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