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ITALY

FROM UNSUNG CITIES & HIDDEN RETREATS TO
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DISCOVER ITALY'S LESSER-KNOWN ATTRACTIONS

KENYA

Walking with lions: crossing
the Maasai Mara's wildest
conservancies on foot

WALES

Celtic ruins, Arthurian legends
and local flavours along the
scenic Coastal Way

BIG SLEEP AWARDS

THE WORLD'S BEST NEW
HOTELS, SELECTED BY OUR
PANEL OF EXPERT JUDGES

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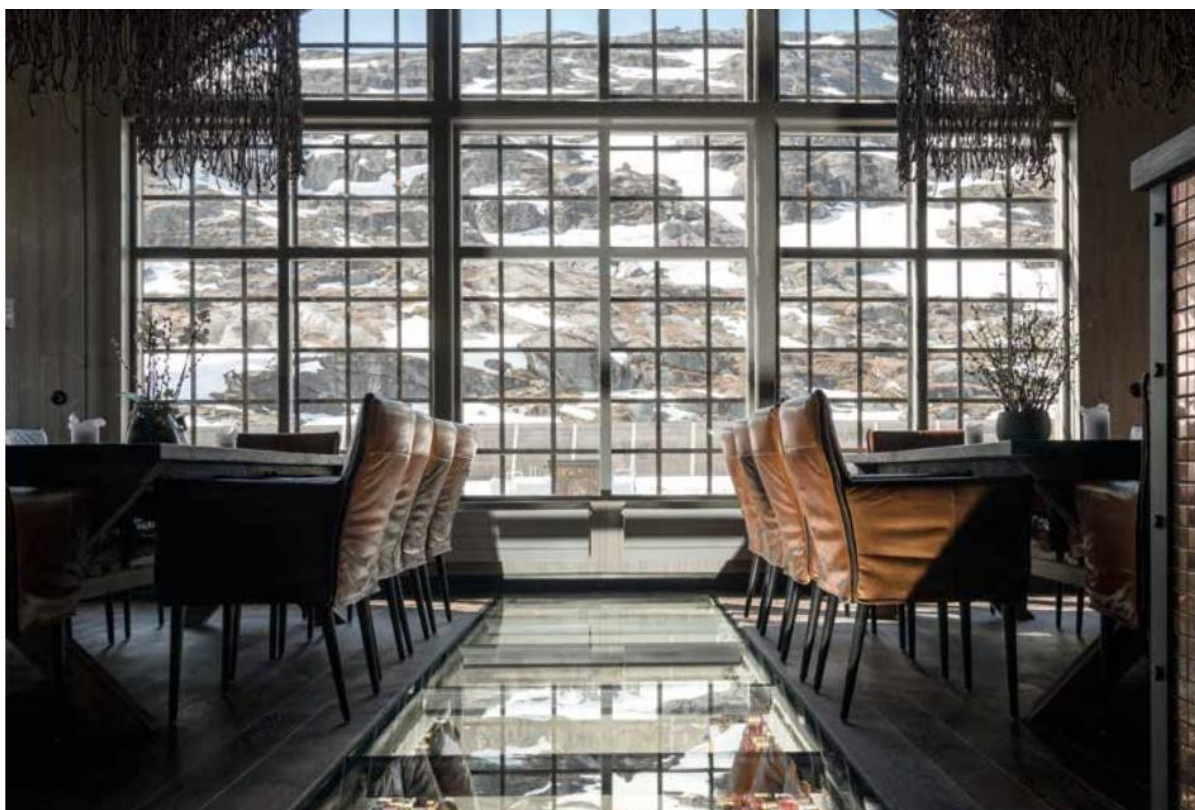
INDIA

PALMA

MEXICO CITY



ALSO: BUFFALO // CAPPADOCIA // KUALA LUMPUR // LAUSANNE // OSAKA // ZIMBABWE



Snow Queen

These piste-perfect winter hideaways represent the very peak of retreats for skiers, spa-lovers and travellers seeking snowy mountain serenity

★ NIEHKU MOUNTAIN VILLA, SWEDISH LAPLAND, SWEDEN

The world's most northerly heli-ski hotel, Niehku Mountain Villa is set some 125 miles above the Arctic Circle in a revamped railway building from the 1900s. This 14-room hangout for hardcore ski fans was reborn from a roundhouse workshop servicing the legendary Iron Ore train line that skirts the nearby Norwegian border. There's ski touring in March, and heli-skiing from March to May among the 6,867ft heights of Mount Kebnekaise, Sweden's tallest mountain. If that wasn't enough then there are some 60 other skiable peaks and glaciers, including round-the-clock down-hilling under the midnight spring sun. All this action is more than enough to merit a session in Niehku's sauna, before having a massage and delving into the 500-bottle vintage wine cellar. 'Neihku', in local Sami, means 'dream' — a fitting name for this fantastical Arctic escape. Doubles from SEK46,000 (£4,000), full-board, including three-days' heli-skiing. niehku.com

FROM TOP: Restaurant at Niehku Mountain Villa; Sami-inspired decor at Niehku Mountain Villa



RUNNERS-UP

FORESTIS, SOUTH TYROL, ITALY

You can't escape the Dolomites in this glass-walled mega-chalet; the jagged, pink-tinged peaks are in stark relief every way you turn. This lofty opening has turned many heads of the ski set, and for good reason: backed by thick forest, it offers ski in/ski out access, with a spa based on pine, spruce and larch treatments for the ultimate in après-ski soothing. From €420 (£382), half-board. forestis.it

HÔTEL LE COUCOU, MÉRIBEL, FRANCE

Here's a ski-in/ski-out hotel designed by French master Pierre Yovanovitch to set traditional chalet styling against panoramic views over the slopes. Stay in one of 55 suites or two private chalets, recover in the Tata Harper spa or swimming pools (yup, plural), and chow down in Beefbar or Bianca Neve, an Italian restaurant by Riccardo Giraudi. From €460 (£415), B&B. lecoucoumeribel.com

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