

# Rising Star

Swire Hotels launches its luxury hotel product in China and Hong Kong

By Gary Bowerman

In little more than one year, Swire Hotels—a newly formed subsidiary of Swire Group, one of Asia's largest property, travel and communications companies—is proving to be full of promise. Swire's luxury boutique and business-focused hotels are adding a new dimension to luxury lodging in China and Hong Kong.

Swire Group owns all or part of several hotel properties in Hong Kong—notably the Mandarin Oriental, Hong Kong; the Conrad Hong Kong; and the JW Marriott Hotel Hong Kong—but it has not previously operated its own hotel brand. That changed last

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year, when Swire opened its first hotel, the chic 99-room Opposite House in Beijing's hip Sanlitun district, coinciding with the 2008 Olympic Games.

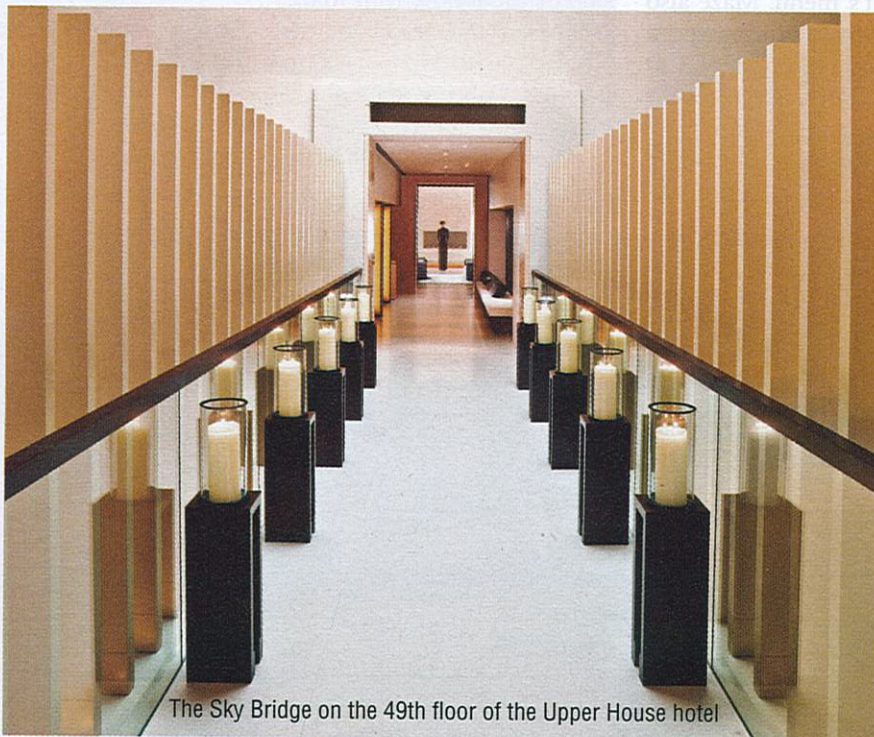
Wrapped in striking emerald- and leaf-green glass, the Zen-infused design for Opposite House was created by Japanese architect Kengo Kuma. Its fashionable design, cherished

collection of contemporary artworks in the museum-style entrance hall and two award-winning signature restaurants—Bei, serving northeast Asian dishes, and Sureno, presenting a blending of southern Mediterranean flavors—have made it the most-coveted boutique stay in the Chinese capital. Chinese and international movie actors, sports stars and celebrities make up an important component of the hotel's guest list.

Following up its Beijing success,



The Opposite House in Beijing is wrapped in emerald- and leaf-green glass.



The Sky Bridge on the 49th floor of the Upper House hotel

Thomas Heatherwick and is meant to evoke the ambience of an exclusive private residence. Inside is a circular bamboo-clad entrance, called the lantern. From here, clients can catch an elevator to the sixth-floor The Lawn—a grassy outdoor "green terrace" which is perfect for alfresco sunset cocktails. Moving higher, a spectacular 49th-floor Sky Bridge leads to the Sky Lounge and signature restaurant, Cafe Gray Deluxe, the brainchild of former New York-based chef Gray Kunz.

Swire also plans to open similar luxury hotels in Shanghai and Guangzhou, though its next move will be to launch a lifestyle-focused business hotel brand, called East. The first East hotel will open in Hong Kong's Tai-koo district in January 2010, and the brand is slated for a rollout in China and other major Asian cities.

The 32-floor, 345-room East hotel will feature a rooftop bar and deck that overlooks the city and a 24-hour gym, swimming pool and juice bar area. A strong focus is being placed on in-room technology, with Wi-Fi, iHome portable touch-screen control panels, an espresso machine and a 37-inch plasma television with laptop connectivity.

This focus on technology and lifestyle design is a deliberate attempt to meet the changing needs of business travelers in Asia, according to Williams.

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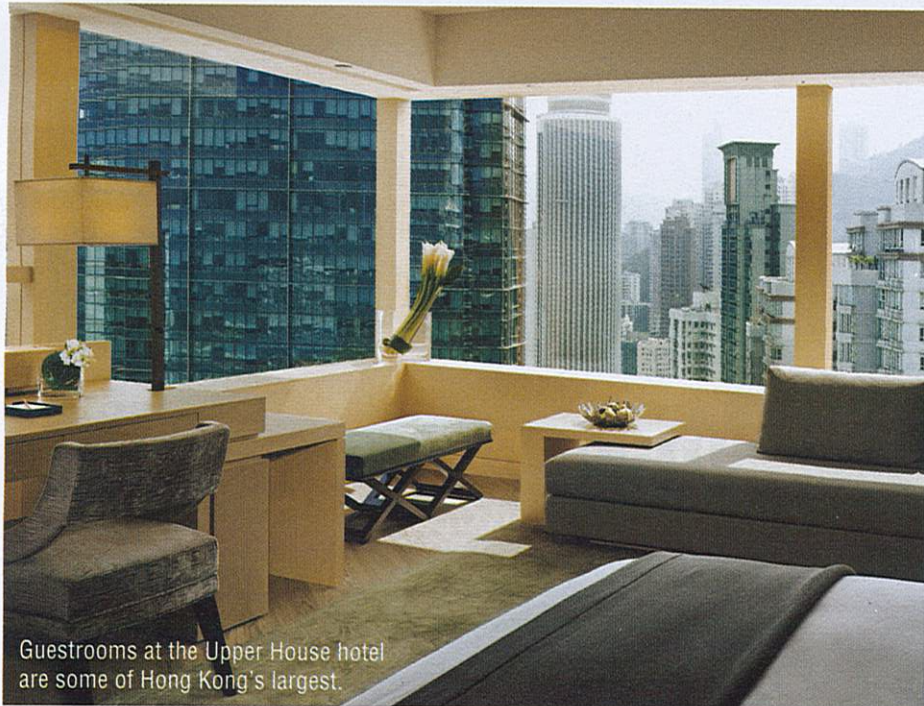
[www.swirehotels.com](http://www.swirehotels.com)

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SWIRE HOTELS



Guestrooms at the Upper House hotel are some of Hong Kong's largest.

Swire opened a counterpart hotel, the Upper House, earlier this month in Hong Kong. Styled by acclaimed designer Andre Fu, the 117-room boutique hotel opened on Oct. 2 at Pacific Place in Admiralty, and features some of Hong Kong's largest rooms, ranging from about 730 to 1,960 square feet, with great views of Victoria Harbour.

"The goal of Upper House is to create a highly individualized small hotel with a dynamic and busy restaurant," said Brian Williams, managing director of Swire Hotels.

Large guestrooms and superlative harbor views are the key selling points, but Upper House's embrace of new design interpretations places it neatly between the boutique and mega-five-star hotel categories. The lobby is accessible via a Bedonia stone doorway facade created by British architect