

THE VINSON VIEW

Quality maniac and master shopper Nick Vinson on the who, what, when, where and why



HOW TO PICK A WINNER

Smaller is better

Avoid very large hotels, unless you want to queue to check in and check out. Aim for 200 rooms or under – the fewer the better.

Avoid new openings

Despite breaking my own rule, I'd advise you to allow any new opening a decent time to settle and have a proper soft launch period. Otherwise, you'll be doing an unpaid trial.

Fair prices

If, like me, you must travel during busy design fair periods, try to see what the non-fair prices are and base your expectations on that figure. Even if you still end up paying the hiked-up rates, at least you'll know what to expect.

Management contracts

Most hotels have an owner and hand over the running of the property to a management company. Longer-term contracts with realistic investment into maintenance ensure that all the basics work. Hotels that change their name after a few years (the 'formerly known as') are to be avoided.

01 Picky Nicky checks in

It's the behind-the-scenes teams that make a hotel good

As you read this, I will have just checked out of the new Edition Miami Beach, having spent the week there for Art Basel/Design Miami. If it was any good, I will have left with a booking for December next year.

Wallpaper* loves getting in there first and keeping you, the readers, up to date with the latest hotel openings. But how do you know if something that looks great on paper, or in this case a glossy render, will actually deliver? The Edition has a hotelier with a great track record in Ian Schrager, the structure and support of a major player (Marriott International, which also runs Bulgari Hotels and Resorts, and Ritz-Carlton), design by Yabu Pushelberg, Miami's blue sky, a pole position on the beach, a well-designed and seductive website, plus residences by John Pawson. Yet I won't know if it's good until I have tried it out.

The Edition won't be my last hotel stay in 2014. Indeed, a quick check of the diary shows 30 different hotel visits this year and ten properties, not all new, that I tried for the first time. Sadly, I can't say that I would volunteer to return to more than three of the ten. Most disappointing was the Parco dei Principi in Sorrento, where I experienced sloppy management, tired staff and a 'luxury' offer totally at odds with

the genius of the Giò Ponti design. I am hoping Unesco will seize it from the Royal Group and find a better owner to nurture it. For \$1,500 a night, the White Elephant hotel in Nantucket offered me a grubby double ring of scum around the bath, a dysfunctional front desk and a general manager who seemed just out of high school. Meanwhile, a visit to the Hospes Palacio del Bailio in Córdoba left me convinced that it had been fitted out (or should I say veneered) by Zara Home.

Happily, I will rush back to those hotels that did make the grade: the Splendido in Portofino, Il San Pietro di Positano and the Four Seasons George V in Paris. Yes, I am fussy, spoilt, have built-in frequent traveller impatience, and can be cruel in my critiques, but since I am usually the one choosing where to stay, I just wish I knew how to pick better and avoid the disappointments.

A property may tick all of my boxes for location, design, décor, amenity and perhaps be a brand I know and trust, but it is the invisible stuff that makes the difference. It's the owner and investors, the management company and, of course, the general manager, his or her team and, most importantly, how they all function together. And sadly, no seductive photo gallery can inform you of whether the team works and delivers. ★



02

French flair in Manhattan

Designer Henri Samuel engaged artists such as César and Philippe Hiquily to create furnishings for his 1970s interiors. Rare works are shown for the first time in New York at Demisch Danant, until 31 January.



03

Art Basel/Design Miami hits

Peter Marino at the Bass Museum of Art; 'Déchainements' collection by Vincenzo De Cotiis (pictured with Marino) for Carwan Gallery; and Murray Moss' symposium 'Can Art Serve Fish?' with Georg Jensen.