



SPAIN

LITTLE BEACH HOUSE BARCELONA

It takes imagination and sensitivity for a global brand to turn a much-loved local favourite into a chic little beach hotel without accusations of cultural imperialism. Soho House has done just that with this Barcelona arrival. Originally built in the 1950s and admired for its Art Deco-style appearance, it is situated right on the sand at Garraf – a tiny, off-the-radar stretch of shore half-an-hour's drive south of Barcelona, cradled by rolling hills covered in scraggy Mediterranean pines. The design team ditched the old hotel's lino and laminex tables to create a calming concept with handmade, natural-wood decor, combined with a measured dose of the group's signature hedonism. There are only 17 rooms, including one duplex with a private terrace, so staying here feels more like a cheeky weekend away with your best friends. Everybody greets each other in the restaurant, where lunch is selected from an ice-packed fish counter, or when claiming their striped sunbed on the beach. DJs in the bar – a stunning space where the floor-to-ceiling windows let a sea breeze in – provide gently rocking vibes in the evenings. Massages using Cowshed products are given outdoors on the terrace. The vibe in Garraf is off-beat. With this opening, Soho House injects the town with an alluring dose of urbane sophistication and the right amount of local sensibility.

FLASH POINT If the urge for the bright lights of Barcelona hits, there is a shuttle bus between Little Beach House and Soho House Barcelona. +34 935 221 552; littlebeachhousebarcelona.com. Doubles from about £215

NAMIBIA

SHIPWRECK LODGE

There is remote. And then there is the Skeleton Coast, a desolate sweep of coastline along the Namibian Atlantic that feels utterly isolated. Shipwreck Lodge is from the heavily conservation-driven outfitter Natural Selection, and has now opened as the area's first smart hotel with a point of view worthy of such otherworldliness. The collection of 10 wooden cabins set against a flaxen sand-dune were designed by Namibian bio-architect Nina Maritz to look much like the many destroyed ships that have run aground here over the centuries. Through porthole windows, guests view a haunting, foggy landscape which is home to desert-adapted lion and antelope. During the day, four-wheel-drives whizz up and down tawny dunes, past parched terrain and along the edge of the brooding Atlantic which crashes onto marbled sand, littered with long-lost whale bones. In the evenings, after the sun has burnt the mist away, fynbos-infused gin and tonics are served on the beach. When the shore gets too chilly, it's onto dinner in the main area, where sofas, cushions, candles and blazing fireplaces keep things cosy once the all-but-certain sandstorm hits. The lodge scene in Namibia is frenetic: this one slows things down to a speed that reminds guests they are at the ends of the earth. **FLASH POINT**

Go for a drive down the roaring dunes outside the lodge, so called for the sound the air makes between the tyres and the sand as the car nosedives at 180 degrees. +264 61 228 104; naturalselection.travel. Doubles from about £650

