

# THE WEEKEND AUSTRALIAN

# Travel + LUXURY

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## 5 MUST-SEE FESTIVALS IN BALI

### TAKE-OFF TIPS

Secrets to snapping up a bargain airfare

### WHAT'S COOKING?

Chef Poh Ling Yeow on adventures near and far

## CONFESSIONS OF A TOUR GUIDE

Bucket lists, scary scenarios and what guests shouldn't do

# Conjuring Proust in Paris

CHRISTINE McCABE

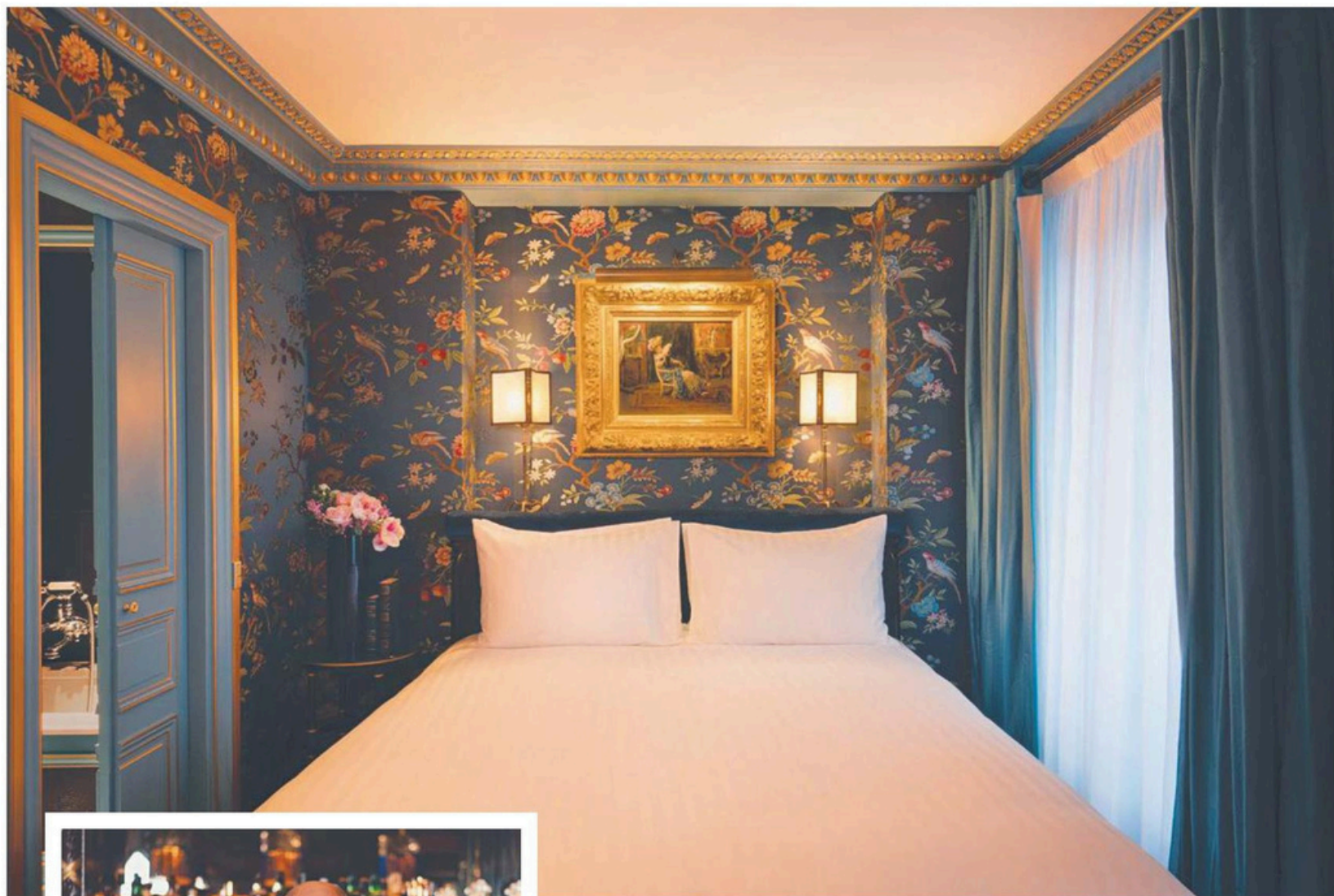
**T**he opulent interiors of leading designer Jacques Garcia are as quintessentially French as the life and work of Marcel Proust. On a quiet street in the heart of Le Marais in Paris, Garcia celebrates the famous French writer, and the glamorous salons of the Belle Epoque he evoked, in Maison Proust, a restored six-storey townhouse. Each of the 23 guestrooms and suites is named for the artists, writers and actors who populated Proust's world.

Opened last year, the hotel has added another impressive string to its bow, announcing a new permanent "residency" with legendary bartender Colin Field, famous for mixing the drinks at Bar Hemingway in The Ritz Paris for about three decades. Every Friday, he is in-house at Maison Proust, whipping up cocktails such as the Picasso martini.

Every guestroom has been decorated to reflect the personality of its namesake, whether that be Jean Cocteau, Sarah Bernhardt, Colette, Baudelaire or Renoir. Sumptuous carpets, museum-quality art, moulded ceilings and Cordoba leather-lined bathrooms are deeply luxurious touches. Attention to detail is evident everywhere, including silk-lined walls, Pierre Frey fabrics, and lampshades daubed with passages from Proust's *In Search of Lost Time* (Remembrance of Things Past).

Guestrooms begin at a snug 20sqm and range to a three-bedroom suite. Junior suites have a sitting room, small writing cabinet and tall windows looking on to plane trees; the Marcel Proust executive suite has its own library. A serious collection of 19th-century art across the hotel includes an autographed copy of *Remembrance of Things Past* and a letter from Proust to Princess Soutzo, with whom he was infatuated. The collection was amassed by the hotel's founders as they scoured auction houses and antiques markets during its 3½-year restoration.

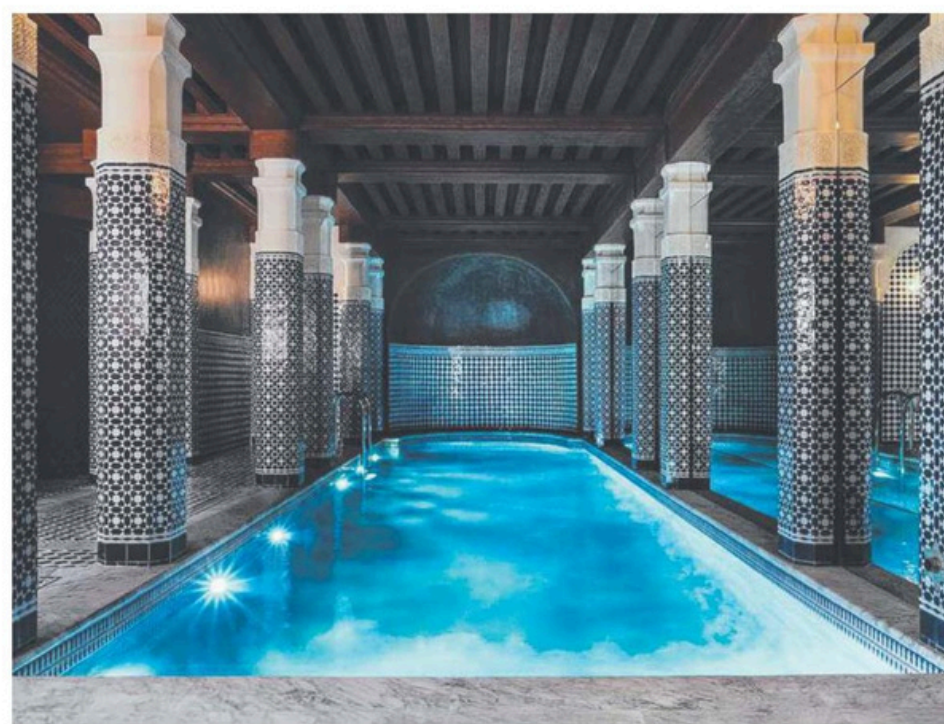
A small Moroccan-themed day spa is especially



striking and features a lovely 10m swimming pool flanked by tiled columns. There's a hammam and three treatment rooms with products by La Mer.

The hotel's ground floor spaces are wildly romantic. The cosy Winter Garden and small bar is anchored by a huge fireplace, the room kitted out with chandeliers and blue banquettes. Most impressive is the tiny circular bibliotheque set beneath a ceiling daubed in a gold-leaf sunburst, the walls lined with a thousand leather-bound volumes. Maison Proust joins two other hotels in Paris, Maison Souquet in Montmartre and Maison Athenee near Place Vendome, as part of The Collection Maisons Particuliers.

From €800 (\$1326) a night with breakfast. [maison-proust.com](http://maison-proust.com)



Maison Proust guestroom, main; swimming pool in the spa, above; acclaimed mixologist Colin Field, above left

## FOLLOW THE READER

### On memory lane to simpler days

JENNIFER RIATTI  
FREMANTLE, WA

A recent newspaper travel ad for Sri Lanka sends my mind back 45 years, arriving early one morning in Colombo, with street lamps casting a pale sheen across the dusty main road into the city. A few lights glow in windows; carts and bicycles pass slowly in the humid air. Basic accommodation is found with a friendly welcome at the front desk. We rest in our small room and then take a quick breakfast of sweet tea, finger bananas and warm bread. Off to explore.

Everyone is awake and moving now. Streets are filled with life and smells. Piles of brightly coloured fruit, charcoal braziers burning, narrow

shops selling everything from plastic buckets to canned food, rattan brooms and fabrics. Rickshaws and bicycles loaded to overflowing with firewood, fresh produce, chickens, eggs and families. We note some old, well-maintained British cars, reminders of the island's long road to independence.

At the main bus station, we inspect the timetable for Pottuvil, our east coast beach destination. Meantime, we take trips to Kandy to view the temples and spend a glorious afternoon at Colombo's Galle Face Hotel, sipping G&Ts and watching kites being flown on the beach. Bound now for Pottuvil, we make it early to the bus station, where local passengers are clearly fascinated by our light hair and surfboards. Small children point, others run up to touch us and scamper away. The bus arrives and somehow everything gets loaded aboard, including goats, chickens, machinery, an industrial sewing machine and our surfboards. A few passengers occupy the roof, with prayers offered as the long journey begins.

There are frequent stops to unload and reload until we finally approach the coast. The last part of the journey is on a buffalo cart with enthralled children skipping behind. For six weeks we stay with a family in one of their little huts, helping at the school, showering modestly at the well, eating curries and rice. We watch the fishermen and enjoy the warm sea. Memories of the kindness of the people still linger and cause me to smile.



#### WRITE IN TO WIN

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