

THE GOLD LIST 2019

BULGARI RESORT DUBAI UAE

With a flotilla of boldfaced big-hitters hugging its sunny shores, Dubai isn't exactly short of luxury digs. But what makes the newly opened Bulgari stand out is its location on its own seahorse-shaped manmade island, and its low-slung layout, a pleasing retort to the city's ubiquitous canyons of skyscrapers.

This is down to the group's Milan-based architects, who anchored the hotel so it separates two bays: one an oh-so-quiet stretch of beach lined with villas; the other a super-smart marina with a sweep of restaurants and the Bulgari Yacht Club – a first for the brand. Structures are topped with layers of coral-like latticework; other marvellous textures that draw the eye include backlit green onyx, black granite and woollen Beni Ourain rugs from Morocco, picked out with covetable objects from B&B Italia and Flos. The city centre thrums on the other side of a 300-metre bridge, but with six bars and restaurants at the hotel, there really is no reason to cross it. La Spiaggia is a poolside crowd-pleaser that flips out wagyu beef burgers during the day, while in the evening, a Negroni from the oval Bulgari bar is a punchy aperitif for oysters and bottarga risotto at the neighbouring Niko Romito restaurant.

The wow factor, though, is provided by the immense spa, with its ice fountains, hammam and an indoor pool – lined with a mosaic of real gold tiles, naturally – that has far-reaching views of the sea and the Dubai cityscape though floor-to-ceiling windows. The sense of contented wellbeing isn't limited to the spa. In a land of hyperbole, this is understated perfection that thinks big. +971 4 7775555; bulgarihotels.com.

Doubles from about £420



JK PLACE CAPRI, ITALY

The Italian townhouse hotel redefined. The attention to detail here is painstaking, from the discreetly attentive service to a stylish marine colour scheme that might have appeared on a Thirties racing yacht (Tuscan designer Michele Bonan famously checks each hue under various lighting conditions before approving it). This nautical theme is appropriate for a hotel that rises like the upper decks of a liner above the Mediterranean, with views across to Sorrento, Naples and Vesuvius. Among its competitors, only Punta Tragara enjoys a similar reach-out-and-touch rapport with the sea. Capri Town, and the air-kissing aperitivo joints of its celebrated chicane of a square, La Piazzetta, are just 10 minutes away on the hotel's shuttle. But you'd be surprised at just how many guests never take up the offer. The satisfyingly large swimming pool is difficult to tear yourself away from, and as evening approaches, signature cocktails such as the JK Spritz (a gingery variation on the Venetian classic) have a way of appearing, accompanied by inventive nibbles that ease guests into dinner on the restaurant terrace. This Capri outpost has more of an unashamedly food focus than its sister hotels in Rome and Florence, and Neapolitan chef Eduardo Estatico's menu is light, seasonal and also playful – don't miss his Cucciolone, a popsicle variant on the classic *pastiera* pie of Estatico's home town. If the Italian *dolce vita* is all about living the good life with class, style and confidence, JK Place Capri must be the cult's high temple.

+39 081 838 4001; jkcapri.com. *Doubles from about £875*