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Places: Santiago

Nora Walsh • March 02, 2016



Hidden Treasure: Santiago

When Chile stepped into the spotlight and enchanted the world with its natural beauty and acclaimed wines, capital city Santiago began to attract both globetrotters and investors. “The hospitality

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industry needs to add about 3,000 new rooms to accommodate the city's tourism demand," says Debbie Feldman, global market manager of Turismo Chile, a nonprofit agency that promotes Chile internationally. And with an estimated investment of $400 million, a spate of new hotels has Santiago quickly moving towards that goal.

A cultural renaissance taking place in the historic neighborhood of Barrio Lastarria has caught the attention of luxury hoteliers. Constructed in the 1920s, the building that now houses Luciano K Hotel was once Chile's tallest, and the first to have an elevator and central heating. Chief architect Maximiliano Noguera strove to respectfully merge the property's authentic features, including the original elevator, vaulted doors, and wood parquet flooring, with contemporary additions. "The overall design is a distinctive mix between Art Nouveau and Art Deco," he says.

Nearby at the Singular Santiago, designer Enrique Concha recreated the ambiance of a French neoclassical townhouse using dark oak wood, built-in furniture, painted wallpaper, and original art. One of the biggest challenges Santiago-based principal architect Federico Prieto Schaffer faced was "blending a new building into a landmark area with strict regulations," he explains. The result: a classic contemporary design that enhances the neighborhood with refined public spaces including a streetside restaurant patio and landscaped rooftop terrace.

In the heart of Bellavista, Santiago's bohemian enclave, stands the iconic red mansion Castillo Rojo. Also built in the 1920s, the home was later purchased by a Russian immigrant who transformed it into an artist's residence. In reimagining it, the hotel's designers—Hugo Grisanti and Kana Cussen of local firm Grisanti Cussen—wanted guests to "experience a dialogue with the past," Grisanti says, so they painstakingly restored the building's facade, stonework, fireplaces, and antique furniture. Each room is singularly designed to echo Castillo Rojo's rich history and continue its legacy as "a hub for creative exchange," he explains.

Also recently opened: Hotel Altiplanico Bellas Artes, Tinto Boutique Hotel, and Hotel Cumbres, adding to the host of hotels that have artfully summoned Santiago's past into the present through careful preservation, architectural ingenuity, and a dose of contemporary flair.

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