

# sleeper

HOTEL DESIGN, DEVELOPMENT & ARCHITECTURE

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A MONOCHROME MOOD  
PIECE BY JEAN NOUVEL

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TAKE YOTEL TO A NEW LEVEL

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HOTEL DESIGN PIONEER

TORONTO HOTELS • ALEXANDRA CHAMPALIMAUD • KINGDOM TOWER • HOTEL LONE - CROATIA

# Check-In

Based at Rockwell Group Europe's Madrid office, Creative Director **Diego Gronda's** ideal hotel stay is a Peter Zumthor-designed paradise in the Kyoto hills, where walking barefoot is a must.

## Where are we?

We are in the Kyoto hills overlooking the old city and the sea, surrounded by a century old bamboo forest close to the Arashiyama Park.

## How did you get here?

Before landing in Narita, I took a shower in the Airbus 380 first class spa. To add contrast to the 17 hour flight, an aerostatic balloon will take me to Kyoto. The trip takes a few hours which allows me to enjoy the colours of autumn while having a Thai massage at the bottom of the balloon basket. The views and the silence are breathtaking. Our arrival to the hotel does not disturb this shrine of nature.

## Who are you sharing your room with?

I am travelling alone this time. Friends will join me tomorrow.

## Is there anything you would like waiting for you in your room on arrival?

It is dusk. Shoji screens open onto a natural thermal pool steps away from the bedroom. Warm *sake* waits on a floating tray.

## Who's at the concierge desk?

Caroline Ng from Four Seasons, Hong Kong.

## And the owner / manager?

My good friend and hotelier Yutaka Noda.

## Describe the hotel building, your room and the view...

The building "floats" in the woods and overlooks the old city of Kyoto. Everything is made out of wood. Art is designed and materialised every day with flowers and

leaves of the surrounding forests. In my suite, the bed is perfectly centred to a huge opening overlooking the forest, sea and city. The steam coming out of the natural springs blurs the views adding a mystical edge to the experience. You can tell by the wood aroma that the solid cedar wood bathtub has just been sanded for me. There is a perfect harmony between the room and the outdoor terrace. You can't tell where one or the other starts and ends. Being barefoot is a must.

## Who designed it?

The original architects are unknown but its insertion into the XXI century was done by architect Peter Zumthor. Furniture was designed by Christian Liagre.

## What's the restaurant / bar like?

In a small, isolated pavilion in the woods, a Robotayaki table is set. Fresh fish, vegetables and meats are on display. No need to speak Japanese, anything you point at is grilled in front of you to perfection.

## Who are you dining with this evening?

1. Argentine writer Jorge Luis Borges
2. Natalie Portman
3. Peter Gabriel
4. Indian film actress Aishwarya Rai
5. Film director Peter Greenaway
6. Peter Brooke

## Who's manning the stoves?

Ferran Adrià with Jose Andres for appetizers, Nobu Matsuhisa for entrees, and Marije Vogelzang for desserts and food art.

## And what's on the menu?

Starter: Raw and cooked beetroot salad with caviar, courgette flower tempura stuffed with mozzarella, cappuccino of black truffle jus with almond foam, deconstructed green asparagus, spherical olives, and parmesan frozen-air with muesli  
Main: Tuna tempura rolls, lots of toro, rock shrimp on lime stone lettuce, mushroom salad, and lobster with wasabi pepper sauce  
Dessert: White funeral dinner desserts and any food-art experience Marije might propose.

## Would you like something to drink with that?

We will need a good sommelier such as Alexander de Grape (I'm serious about his name) from Gray Kunz restaurants.

## What music is on the iPod on your in-room docking station?

1. Peter Gabriel with Nusrat Ali Khan
2. Rodellinda by Frederic Handel
3. Red Hot Chili Peppers
4. Glenn Gould variations on Rachmaninov
5. Django Reinhardt

## What's on the movie channel?

The TV was removed from the room before my arrival. Smart GM!

## What's in the mini-bar for a night cap?

Vintage port and fruit sorbets.

## What toiletries would you like to freshen up with?

Surprise me.



**Name:** Diego Gronda

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[www.rockwellgroup.com](http://www.rockwellgroup.com)

**Notable hotel projects:**

Le Meridien Hotel – Oran, Algeria;  
Harbour Bar and Wasabi restaurants  
at The Taj Mahal Palace – Mumbai;  
Restaurant Jaleo at The Cosmopolitan  
of Las Vegas; W Hotel & Spa  
– Vieques Island, Puerto Rico;  
W Paris-Opera (in progress)