





ENGLAND
BANKSIDE HOTEL, LONDON

London's center of gravity wobbles this way and that, but the South Bank has clocked a prime view of the action since Roman ships scudded up the Thames. Though never has it seen so much urban drama as right now. Despite a profanity of high-rises gobbling up the sight lines, the Bankside Hotel is appealingly succinct at just six stories behind Blackfriars Bridge, angled to catch the light. It's been curated by Dayna Lee, the film-set designer for *Dances With Wolves*. What it brings to mind, though, isn't Hollywood but the set of a '60s TV show, with bob wigs and mod dresses. It's all those sheer white walls and honeycomb concrete, jaunty Scandi chairs and pottery shelves with lineups of bone-white vases, and abstract shapes in every direction. One of the standout pieces, however, is the ceramic mural running along one wall of the restaurant and bar, picking out scenes from riverside history: Viking boats, fishing, and the Great Fire. Pick up Tom Ford sunnies and even engagement rings from the elevator-side vending machine. A mezzanine gallery with arts titles for browsing leads onto a garden terrace—views of the river and St. Paul's are a little restricted, but you're still in the box seats up here. There's a midcentury positivity, a festival of British optimism; this is a thoughtful pied-à-terre hotel for dedicated followers of London. **FLASH POINT** There are water-carafe stations on each floor, single-use plastics are banished, and key cards are made from paper. +44 20 3319 5988; banksidehotel.com. Doubles from about \$380

FRANCE
BRACH, PARIS

The staid 16th arrondissement hasn't exactly drawn visitors over the years. So it's a testament to the cool factor of Evok Hotels that it can take a former mail-sorting facility in this bourgeois, residential district and make it *le talk* of Paris. After a four-year renovation overseen by designer Philippe Starck, the resulting hotel is as much about a lifestyle as it is a place to crash. For one thing, the buzzing restaurant draws fashionable locals starting at breakfast and continuing until the early hours with its patisserie, plates to share, and potent drinks. A terrace bar, newly opened to coincide with the warmer months, lures the pretty people, as will the rooftop vegetable garden when it's converted into a bar in the summer (currently only suite guests have access). The subterranean fitness club channels a '30s boxing gym and had a wait list the minute it opened. Even the swimming pool has a killer sound system. The party continues in the rooms, each with its own mini concept store (the minibar is so 2018), stocked with premade cocktails by the Avantgarde Spirits Company. The design smacks of Starck's typical sassy eclecticism: walls covered in rich rosewood and leather, African masks and Maasai-style beadwork, and potted cacti next to the bathroom sinks hewn from unfinished blocks of marble. Who knew that the 16th, of all places, would become the city's next hip address? **FLASH POINT** Book the Suzanne Suite for the terrace, where you can soak in a hot tub facing the Eiffel Tower. +33 1 44 30 10 00; brachparis.com. Doubles from about \$565



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