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# DEPARTURES

*Holiday*





Clockwise from top left: The Omaanda resort overlooking the Namibian veld; hotelier Arnaud Zannier; 1898 The Post, Zannier's hotel in Ghent, Belgium.

## Chain of Jewels

Meet the under-the-radar hotelier behind some of the world's cultiest new lodgings. *by Ben Ryder Howe*

**"SOME CUSTOMERS EXPECT** the same thing—the same service, the same type of food, the same interiors," said Arnaud Zannier, the founder of Zannier Hotels ([zannierhotels.com](http://zannierhotels.com)). Though he was speaking by telephone, a distinct Gallic shrug could be heard. "I prefer surprise," continued the 45-year-old scion of an industrialist family based near Lyon.

Zannier owns four hotels—his first opened in 2011—and as his guests can attest, there is no cookie cutter. Logos are in short supply ("Just a stamp," said Zannier. "I'm not selling a brand"), as are signature motifs or styles, though "if the guest is sensitive to details, I think there are certain elements they will recognize," he added. The hotels themselves seem to have little in common: a chalet in the French Alps; a converted post office in the medieval city of Ghent, Belgium; a complex of villas near Angkor Wat.

Zannier hopes that guests at his properties—who, he said, "can afford

anything"—will not leave without having had a Proustian moment or two, such as finding an antique silver hairbrush on a nightstand (vintage objects furnish all of Zannier's rooms).

This fall Zannier is seeking to avoid repetition yet again with a property in Namibia, while partnering with Angelina Jolie on local conservation. The resort, called Omaanda, consists of ten "soberly luxurious" huts in the Namibian veld, surrounded by a Manhattan-sized wildlife sanctuary. Anchoring the project is an elephant and rhinoceros hospital funded by Jolie, who met Zannier while filming *First They Killed My Father*, her 2017 drama about the Cambodian genocide (her family stayed at Phum Baitang, Zannier's Cambodian property, which she reportedly called "the best hotel she has seen in the world").

In the spring Zannier will open a second resort in Namibia, followed by two more down the road. An additional property in Vietnam will open next year.