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beach camp

In the retail and culinary spheres, pop-up concepts are now de rigueur, but temporary hotels may soon be all the rage. In December, Design Hotels launched the Papaya Playa Project, 99 beautifully refurbished cabanas set on a half-mile of beachfront in ancient Tulum, Mexico, slated to end its run on May 5th. The brainchild of Design Hotels CEO and founder Claus Sendlinger, the Papaya Playa Project, an adult playground of sorts, encompasses a spa embracing Mayan rituals, organic cuisine, and international DJs. The stars, of course, are the rustic oceanfront, garden, and

economic hardships through his pet project. "I wanted to show the government you do not need to demolish palapas to get the right target group," he says. "Tulum is one of the hottest places for people working in a creative environment, whether from London, Mexico City, or Madrid."

To reflect that energetic spirit, the Berlin-based design team turned to local craftsmen—carpenters, stone workers, and weavers—to construct furniture, baskets, and lamps. In the reception area, guests are greeted by an installation of playful, contemporary piñatas,



jungle cabanas tricked out with private decks and high thread count linens (the flashpacker set will gravitate toward the shared bath/bunk bed layouts).

Sendlinger, who now resides in Tulum, brings a refreshing perspective to a city saddled with

while bright, colorful lights invigorate Pirate Bar (Design Hotels' team included lighting and stage designers). "It's industrial, pure design," Sendlinger points out. "Some of these stools you could put in the MoMA Design Store."

room at the inn

For the renovation of the Westport Inn located in its namesake scenic coastal Connecticut town, New York designer Alicia Cannon, founder of AJC Design, drew inspiration from "sandy beaches, organic materials, and understated, clean lines. We wanted a timeless environment with a modern and organic aesthetic," she says, adding that "a champagne taste [was achieved] on a beer budget."



There's a sophisticated beach house feel throughout the hotel's 117 guestrooms and public spaces. Distressed wood floors are done in a white wash finish to emulate those found on a pier, warm beige hues represent sand, while textural wallcovering "provides depth of color," she explains. Pops of color come in the form of turquoise in the lobby and salmon in the guestrooms, and antique brass finishes add a weathered, been-there-forever touch.

The standout: the lobby. "It has a residential quality so one feels very much at home," says Cannon, who worked on the project with New York architecture firm VM Design. "You want to nestle on the sofa with a glass of wine and a great book."

garden in the sky

Architects Ribas & Ribas and Jean Nouvel have been making their mark on the Barcelona skyline for years with dazzlers like the Torre Agbar 'pickle' and peaceful Miró Museum. Now, Hotel Catalonia Fira will feature their first vertical garden.

Consisting of hundreds of palm trees which will extend upward between Catalonia Fira's 26-story towers, the garden will make this 4-Star unique in the city. Opening this spring, it will be one of the loftiest buildings in Barcelona at 360 feet high with 13,000 square feet in event room space, a panoramic restaurant on the 14th floor, a spa, and a rooftop terrace with a 65-foot-long dramatic pool.

When it opens later this year, Catalonia Fira's 357 guestrooms and public spaces will be outfitted in shades of black and white with green accents. Natural light will flood the hotel during the day, and a Chinese shadow theater effect will be used in the evenings. "The sun plays a game of light and shadow; during the night we play the same game with artificial light," says Jose Ribas Folguera.

