

## HOTEL DESIGNS.

### Checking in to review Hotel Le Coucou, Meribel

15 years after first discovering the magic of Meribel in the French Alps, editor [Hamish Kilburn](#) is back – this time to review the destination's [latest ski-in/ski-out luxury hotel](#)...

In-between snow-blanketed fir trees, more than 1,400 metres above sea level in the French Alps, [Hotel Le Coucou](#) is Meribel's latest luxury ski-in/ski-out hotel.



Award-winning French [designer/architect Pierre Yovanovitch](#), who was last year crowned Wallpaper\*’s Designer of the Year, was presented with a blank-canvas brief with his latest hotel project. Within just three years, he managed to create a sensitive architectural shell and fill it with his signature couture approach to interior design, including more than 140 bespoke furniture and lighting pieces – think abstract, animal-like armchairs and ice-inspired chandeliers. “There was so much pressure, because three years is not long for a project on this scale,” says Yovanovitch, “but it was a good challenge and the time restraint spurred me on to create something unique for the area.”

“We were familiar of Pierre’s work and knew instantly that he was perfect for what we had in mind for this hotel.” –  
Kimberley Cohen, Artistic Director of Maisons Pariente.



Image credit: Hotel Le Coucou

With a list of strict local architectural planning constraints to abide by, in regards to using only local materials and regionally-integrated styles, the 55-key boutique hotel quickly became one of the designer’s most ambitious projects to date. “Previously, hotels that opened in ski resorts made a lot of mistakes, especially new-build properties that opened in the ‘70s,” Yovanovitch adds. “It was impossible to create a striking architectural structure because of the town’s uncompromising architecture regulations.”



Image credit: Hotel Le Coucou



Image credit: Hotel Le Coucou

“We had to lose a bedroom in the design stages in order to open up space for the oval-shaped lobby.” – Pierre Yovanovitch.

Despite the hotel seamlessly blending in to the natural winter wonderland location from the exterior (literally positioned on what was previously a piste ski route), inside, Yovanovitch paints a contrasting picture. Through the blonde, wooden-framed automatic doors, an understated check-in desk sits under a large painted oval ceiling. “Originally, the ceiling in the lobby was too low,” the designer explains. “As a result, we had to lose a bedroom in the design stages in order to open up space for the oval-shaped lobby.” The now intricately painted ceiling that forms a backdrop for a chandelier that looks like a melting ice cube is also guests’ first introduction to a loose motif, which continues throughout the hotel: the theme of owls – think of it as the designer’s contemporary flair, or a well-placed obsession.



Image caption/credit: The quirky, understated hotel lobby/Hotel Le Coucou

For the owners of the hotel, [Maisons Pariente](#), there was only ever one designer for the job. “We were familiar of Pierre’s work and knew instantly that he was perfect for what we had in mind for this hotel,” said Kimberley Cohen, Artistic Director of Maisons Pariente. Thanks to the designer’s idiosyncratic take on slope-side luxury, Hotel Le Coucou has made it onto the radar of winter luxury travellers.



Image caption/credit: The colourful bar is scattered with loud furniture pieces that sit on a geometric carpet/Hotel Le Coucou



Image caption/credit: Pierre Yovanovitch's designed Bear Chairs sit in the corridor between the lobby and the F&B areas/Hotel Le Coucou

As well as the property remaining sensitive to its location in order to not lose the charm and personality of the local architecture, the public areas are also a nod to Yovanovitch's stamp in the world of interior design. Several iconic Bear Chairs from his recent collaboration with [R&Company](#), for example, are meaningfully scattered around the public areas, which adds the designer's signature playful and contemporary style inside the shell of what on the outside looks to be a traditional alpine hotel.

"I was inspired to ensure that every room had an amazing view." – Pierre Yovanovitch.

Capturing what you could strongly argue, from a hotels perspective at least, to be the most striking panoramic vistas in all of the French Alps, each of the boutique jewel's guestrooms and suites have been designed to frame postcard-perfect views of undulating mountains: "I was inspired to ensure that every room had an amazing view, that was the most important thing when I came to design these areas," explains Yovanovitch. "Sometimes, the view itself is more important than the décor."



Image caption/credit: Suites and guestrooms/Hotel Le Coucou/Jérôme Galland



Image caption/credit: Suites and guestrooms/Hotel Le Coucou/Jérôme Galland

The 39 suites and 16 rooms are adorned with rich, warm colours and more than 160 contemporary art pieces as well as modern technology. The snow-inspired carpets inject sense-of-place and add a new layer of character into the lodge-like spaces. Although each guestroom and suite share the same motif, each shelter individual elements and somehow still maintain a traditional alpine style.



Image credit: Hotel Le Coucou/Jérôme Galland

The plush en-suite bathrooms, which are layered in marble, feature quality supplier labels and are complete with Italian faucets from Stella, Duravit W/Cs with Ceberit operation panels and Beurer vanity mirrors as well as discreet wash-room style shower that is simple to operate. Character is injected into these spaces with imperfect oval-shaped mirrors and Yovanovitch's bulb lighting.



Image caption/credit: Inside of the chalets/Hotel Le Coucou



Image caption/credit: Inside of the chalets/Hotel Le Coucou

For the main hotel guests, the hotel's indoor and outdoor pool also feature private moments, such as relaxation areas that are nestled poolside underneath sculpted arches. The pool areas, divided by a bay window, create a stunning, trompe-l'oeil effect with views of the postcard-perfect vista outdoors. Down the corridor, six massage treatment rooms with specialist treatments from Tata Harper and a sauna area offer a deeply relaxing experience, and above this area is a state-of-the-art fitness studio and gym.



Image caption/credit: The spa/Hotel Le Coucou



Image caption/credit: The spa/Hotel Le Coucou

While there are three F&B areas in the hotel, the Beefbar restaurant and the adjacent bar create equal statement, as they frame the most spectacular views through unobtrusive floor-to-ceiling windows and are deliberately placed on the ground floor to create a dramatic first impression.



Image caption/credit: The Beefbar Restaurant/Hotel Le Coucou



Image caption/credit: The Beefbar Restaurant/Hotel Le Coucou

The Beefbar restaurant is full of thoughtful nods to the hotel's name, location and character of its owners. A wall of cuckoo clocks above the tables, for example, reflects the traditional decor of the region, and emoji-themed plates create humour in all the right places. In the bar, low-level furniture that, when not sat on, abstrusely depicts an owl sitting on a textured geometric carpet. Together with a pastel pink, blue and mustard palette in the walls and furniture makes this area an exciting instagrammable space that feels warm, inviting and far from stuffy. Meanwhile, the hotel's fine-dining restaurant, Bianca Neve, is located on a lower floor and is ideal for an evening meal, once the sun has disappeared over the horizon and guests' attention can focus inwards. Yovanovitch's artistic mark continues with a strong choice of bold colors, rich materials and an intricate ceiling fresco for good measure.



Image caption/credit: Bianca Neve restaurant/Hotel Le Coucou

Hotel Le Coucou is the third opening for [Maisons Pariente](#) in 2019, following closely behind the opening of Hotel Lou Pinet, Saint Tropez in June 2019 and the reopening of the refurbished Hotel Crillon le Brave in Provence on May 1, 2019. The Pariente family have their sights set on Paris, in le Marais, for a fourth addition to the collection in 2021.



Image credit: Hotel Le Coucou

A destination as precious as Meribel, in my humble opinion, requires a meaningful design eye when it comes to redevelopment. Yovanovitch has proven that rigid architectural boundaries do not automatically limit the level of creativity. Instead, it is clear that his studio's eccentric style was everything and more the destination was crying out for.



Image caption/Credit: Editor Hamish Kilburn saying goodbye to Meribel once more from his slope-side luxury suite at Hotel Le Coucou/[hotel\\_design\\_editor](#)

If anyone was in doubt of Yovanovitch's credentials of being one of the great modern designers of our era, then they have only to check in to a place truly like no other, Hotel Le Coucou is open for business.

#### Suppliers

Bathroom: Duravit, Geberit, Stella | Furniture: Pierre Yovanovitch Studio, R&Company, Ethimo | Lighting: Pierre Yovanovitch | In-room technology: Samsung

*Main image credit: Hotel Le Coucou*

Hamish Kilburn / 10.02.2020

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