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Swire Hotels Prepares To Open A "House" In Chengdu And Go "East" To Miami

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Fans of [The Opposite House](#) in Beijing and [The Upper House](#) in Hong Kong (both Forbes 4-Star rated) can start making their plans to visit Chengdu, where a third “House” is due to open next month. The Temple House features a 100-room hotel and 42 serviced apartments and is the latest offering from [Swire Hotels](#), which has developed a bit of a cult following for its atypical approach to management of high-end hotels. Later this year it plans to open a Miami outpost, under its East flag (which has locations in Beijing and Hong Kong), but unlike many other luxury groups that have as many as a dozen openings every year and focus on having a “pipeline” of new projects, you’ll have to be satisfied with these two as there are no further new hotels currently announced.

8 Questions You Should Ask Before Staying In A New Luxury Hotel

The reason is simple. Whereas most of your favorite luxury hotel brands are what the industry refers to as “asset light,” not owning the hotels you stay in, simply managing them for third-party owners and collecting fees, Swire Hotels limits its activity to managing hotels in developments owned by its parent, property developer Swire Properties. The group is in turn is part of [John Swire & Sons, Ltd.](#), a U.K.-based global conglomerate with interests in everything from the production and distribution of carbonated beverages to retailing cars and motorcycles, operating Cathay Pacific Airways and cold storage logistics, which is why it will open a hotel in Florida.

First, back to China. Chengdu is designed by [Make Architects](#) (you may know their work from the London Olympics) and is part of the local government’s conservation project to preserve surrounding heritage buildings next to the

thousand-year-old [Daci Temple](#). According to a press release, “The three-dimensional woven façade combines modern design with the traditional Chengdu architectural elements of timber, brick and step stones. Elegant bamboo trees frame the hotel’s entrance, which is set in a beautifully restored hundred-year-old Chinese courtyard building first built in the Qing Dynasty. Although Chinese Emperors have previously stayed at the Daci Temple, The Temple House evokes the modest houses provided for scholars who came from different parts of the world to study at the Temple.”



The Temple House in Chengdu opens next month.

Leisure facilities include Mi Xun, an urban day spa, and an indoor pool with natural light and a gym. For dining, Tivan will feature a wood-fired pizza oven in an open kitchen and an extensive wine list. Jing is a stylish bar that will have DJs and offer local beers and handcrafted cocktails, plus an extensive list of wines and champagnes by the glass. Teahouse is about healthy food and drink while The Temple Café combines Chinese, Asian and Western offerings as well as “grab and go.”

Luxury Executives Select Their Favorite Hong Kong Hotels

Like its other properties, Brian Williams, the group’s Managing Director, says the focus will be on personalized service and individualized experiences. A former executive at Mandarin Oriental, he was thrown into senior management in his mid-twenties, when as a hotel manager at the group’s Hong Kong flagship, the general manager passed away suddenly, and he was allowed to run the hotel during the multi-year period it took to name a

replacement. Decades later when he arrived at Swire, he created a different take on how to run a luxury hotel, including cross-training staff to handle multiple functions, a philosophical led approach to rule books, something at the time was not in line with the thick manuals and highly scripted way many companies delivered service, plus a clutter free approach to guest rooms, getting rid of all the flyers, magazines, directories and pamphlets you typically have to clear away before you can set your own papers down.



The Temple House reflects Swire Hotels' approach to individual experiences.

East in Miami will be another example of how a focused approach is working well for Williams and Swire. Whereas many groups with tens of hotels and a filing cabinet full of new projects rely heavily on consultants for many aspects of the product, including restaurants and bars, Swire's limited growth meant once it was decided that authentic Latin American cuisine would be the right fit for the Miami property, at the expense of putting on 30 pounds he has now lost, the MD was able to make multiple trips to South America personally scouting for the right restaurant partner. On one journey he dined at 26 restaurants over four-day period. He finally settled on Parilla restaurant [Parador La Huella](#), which he says was the one common choice among 15 experts and insiders who he asked to provide him their recommendations. That said, it turned out the Uruguayan family run establishment had been approached by other hoteliers, and it took Williams yet another trip, some extra eating and schmoozing to convince them his hotel was the right choice.

The location of East on Brickell Key dates back to a former Swire Chairman, who in the Seventies bought the undeveloped island as a potential location for a refrigerated storage facility. However, the evolution of Miami means it is today some of the area's most expensive real estate. It is already the location of the Mandarin Oriental, for which Swire's property side is the majority owner.

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East is part of a \$1.05 billion multi-use development, [Brickell City Centre](#), and will have 263 rooms and suites, plus 89 serviced apartments that can be rented on a nightly basis as well as long-term. Like the other House and East hotels, it will be represented by [Preferred Hotels & Resorts](#). Plans include a 40th floor rooftop bar and 24,000 sq. ft. of event and banquet space with bay views, plus a lawn that can accommodate outdoor events for up to 300 partygoers. A 20,000 sq. ft. leisure deck will include four pools. The spa will include two suites for couples.

Next year Swire will celebrate its 200th anniversary. If you weren't familiar with the company before this, it could be because the group's philosophy is stated as, "Esse Quam Videri," which translates, "To be rather than to seem to be." In other words, do your job well and then let other people notice what you did, instead of trumpeting your own horn. If you are waiting to hear about more plans for more Swire hotels, you'll be disappointed. Williams says, his team is working hard to get Chengdu and Miami open and running, and besides that he has nothing else to talk about.