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UK

THE STANDARD, LONDON

The pendulum of London's centre of gravity has been pulled this way and that but is increasingly swinging to once-seedy King's Cross, with Central Saint Martins moving in and Heatherwick Studio's Coal Drops Yard taking over a run of former industrial store houses. The area's red-light and rave backstory wasn't going to deter the Standard hotel group, known as much for its partying as its naughtiness, from opening its first hotel outside the USA. But when this outpost was first announced, taking over a brutalist council building amid the wheelie-suitcase maelstrom of Euston Road, there was still speculation as to whether it could conjure that same glamour as its American cousins. Well, it has – due in part to retro-futuristic interiors worthy of *2001: A Space Odyssey*. It is now the go-to for the capital's creatives who throng the lobby, a psychedelic take on a municipal library given a millennial update with a podcast-recording booth, and ground-floor bar Double Standard, an unorthodox homage to the classic pub. A bright-red external lift leads to top-floor restaurant Decimo, where Peter Sanchez-Iglesias serves Mexican-Spanish dishes including tortilla with caviar among macramé hangings and cactuses in a setting redolent of Seventies California. It's almost a relief to move from this heady atmosphere to the cool minimalism of the rooms. Rich wood and white walls make the most of the building's unusual architecture; from the highest level, the views of Bloomsbury are unparalleled. **FLASH POINT** Ask for one of the handful of suites with an outdoor bath on the balcony. No other London hotel has anything quite like it. standardhotels.com. *Doubles from £265*

MEXICO

FOUR SEASONS LOS CABOS COSTA
PALMAS, BAJA CALIFORNIA SUR

The eastern cape of the Baja California peninsula is like the Cabo of the 1960s, when a trip down to its tip was still largely about dirt roads and drinking tequila in the sun. Just under an hour's drive from the big hotels that now tightly pack the stretch of coast between hectic Cabo San Lucas and charming San José del Cabo, this cactus-studded landscape appeals to travellers looking for an alternative experience. Set right on the beach, against the backdrop of the Sierra de la Laguna Mountains, the Four Seasons is by far the area's smartest stay (Aman is due to open next door in 2021). Exclusivity is of course a draw – a handful of celebrities from LA are rumoured to have bought villas. But then there's also a strong outdoor-adventure pull, from snorkelling in nearby Cabo Pulmo National Marine Park, where giant polka-dot whale sharks hunt for plankton, to quad-biking empty sand dunes. While there might not be the bars and restaurants to rival Los Cabos, they're hardly missed. Toes-in-the-sand El Puesto is the spot for ceviche and Margaritas; for a proper sit-down meal, an outpost of beloved Greek restaurant Estiatorio Milos serves seafood suppers. All 141 rooms are designed to blend into the surrounding desertscape with sliding glass doors that lead to private terraces, as well as views of the Sea of Cortéz. And unlike on the rough, rocky Pacific side of Baja, the waters here are as tranquil as a lake.

This Four Seasons arrival has let the secret out of the bag. **FLASH POINT** Ground-floor rooms have their own plunge pools which are kept at a refreshing temperature – a treat after a dip in the bathwater-warm sea. fourseasons.com. *Doubles from about £700*

