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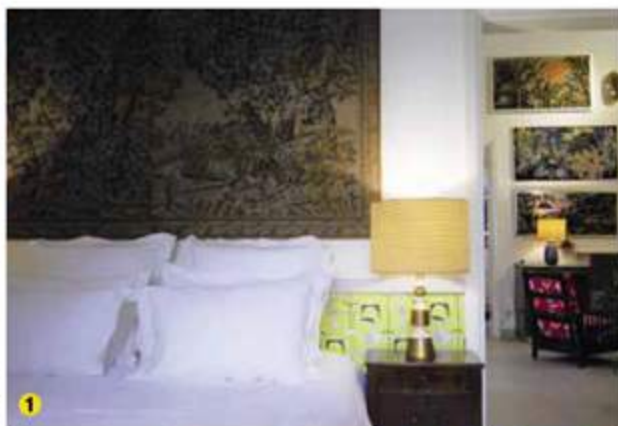
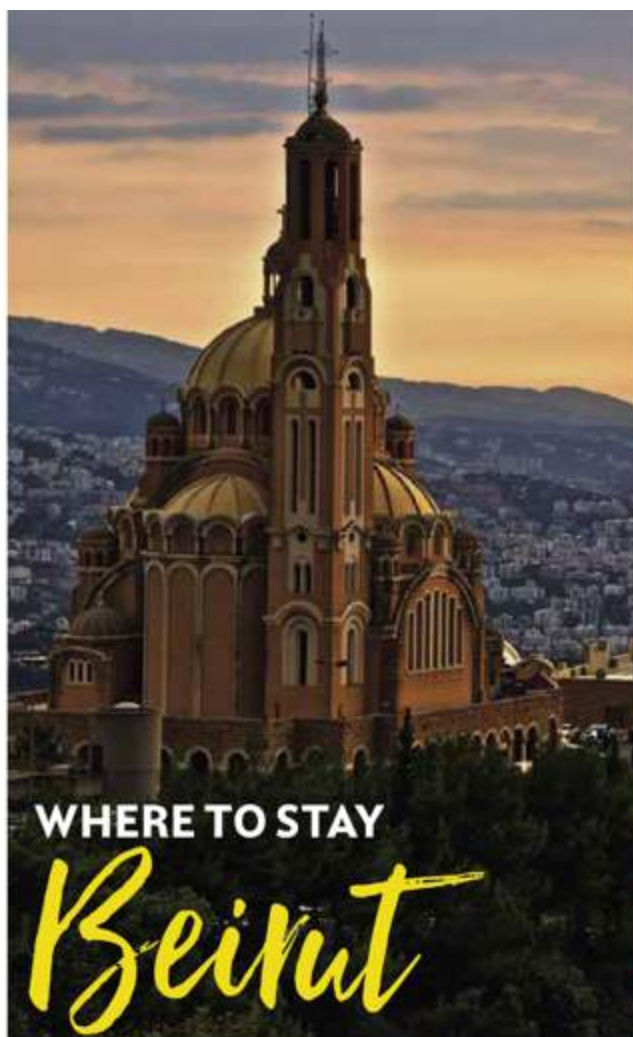
Keeping it weird in the arty Texan boom town

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The hotel scene in the Lebanese capital is going from strength to strength, with bold new openings making their mark on the city

1 BEIT EL HAMRA

When Beit El Hamra opened in June, it was quite unlike the rest of Beirut's glitzy five-stars, or the renovations that many rivals are currently undergoing. This was a project with a true 21st-century ethos: locally run, with a local vibe. That's partly thanks to its owner: Kamal Mouzawak, a prominent Beirut hotelier and restaurateur who's opened a clutch of B&Bs or *beits* (homes), all named after Lebanese towns and villages.

The latest is this, Beit El Hamra, located in the dynamic district that was once the intellectual, bohemian area of the city, Hamra. A ground-floor conversion of a 1950s yellow villa, giving onto a garden filled with kapok trees, Mouzawak and his team have evoked the neighbourhood's heyday with vintage furniture, original fabrics and wallpapers. The result is a triumph — think fresh, bright design with a seriously trendy vibe.

It's a retro home-from-home. The four en suite rooms, which are all on the ground floor, have a blousy feel, with colour-popping vintage wallpaper, patterned curtains and fabric-covered chairs, plus multiple picture frames filled with art and plenty of trailing plants. Two rooms have a balcony, and another overlooks the shaded garden. From £112. soukeltayeb.com



3 ARTHAUS GEMMAYZE

This glam, 19-room boutique hotel in the boho 'hood of Gemmayze has been a long time coming. Set to open its doors by the end of the year, this much-anticipated addition to the hotel scene should be worth the wait, with its four interlinked houses sporting marble-clad floors, lush gardens, a pool, rooftop bar and even rotating art exhibitions. From £208. arthaus.international

2 HOTEL ALBERGO

The Albergo ('hotel' in Italian) has long been one of Beirut's ritziest grande dame hotels, and this year it's due to get even fancier, with a new wing set to open by the end of 2019. It's already been built, they're now just mulling over the decor — which, when you're already well-known for your sumptuous and traditional rooms, complete with glittering chandeliers, is no easy decision. From £272. albergobeirut.com

4 URBAN CENTRAL SUITES

In the suburb of Dekwaneh, 10 minutes from downtown, these sleek digs may not be the most central offering, but don't let that put you off. These kitchenette-equipped studios and suites are perfect for a more self-contained stay. The large, modern rooms all have balconies, there's a rooftop restaurant and pool, and friendly staff are always happy to help. From £77. urbancentralsuites.com
JULIA BUCKLEY

