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SURFACING HOTEL DÉCOR



One of three fire pits at Jbar, on the roof of the Hotel Solamar in San Diego.

Sandy Huffaker for The New York Times

## Where Fires Are Cool

By ELAINE GLUSAC

**G**UESTS might expect traditional tiki torches in Hawaii or bonfires in mountain resorts like the Park Hyatt Beaver Creek in Colorado, where families gather to hear a storyteller. But the hottest of fires are lighting up in unexpected places, like the rooftops of urban hotels.

"It's a more subtle way of doing lighting," said Michael Achenbaum, president of the Gansevoort Hotel Group (212-206-6700; [www.hotelgansevoort.com](http://www.hotelgansevoort.com)), which will spin off Gansevoort West in Los Angeles next fall with a 20-foot glass-enclosed wall of fire on the rooftop lounge. "With constant movement and constant change, there's a reason people sit in front of fires and fish tanks. It's soothing."

At Gansevoort South, which will open in Miami by early summer, bonfire pits will fringe the lawn that leads to the beach. And at the New York original, the Hotel Gansevoort, management plans to install an outdoor fireplace in the rooftop garden this month, surrounded by couches stocked with throw blankets.

"It's not a money-maker," Mr. Achenbaum said. "It's meant to be a fun element. We're shooting for novelty."

At hotels and resorts nationwide, fire, it seems, has broken out of the traditional lobby hearth or guest room fireplace and is raging across rooftops, patios and pool decks in the form of outdoor fire pits, fire-

places and stoves. For every fiery association — summer camp cookouts, an essential to primitive life or even the danger of the flame — there is a resort incarnation.

"It's an opportunity to maximize the outdoor space," said Ralph Scatena, general manager of the Camelback Inn (480-948-1700; [www.camelbackinn.com](http://www.camelbackinn.com)) in Scottsdale, Ariz., where, beginning in the spring, a \$30 million renovation will add six outdoor fireplaces to supplement two existing outdoor fires and a dozen "chimineas," portable, wood-burning clay stoves, scattered throughout the 125-acre grounds.

"Fires give off ambience, wonderful mesquite smells and beautiful light," he added.

Ten retro butterfly chairs surround the fire pit at the Parker Palm Springs (760-770-5000; [www.theparkerpalmsprings.com](http://www.theparkerpalmsprings.com)) in Palm Springs, Calif., designed by Jonathan Adler as a playful ode to the desert good life.

Owners of the Keyah Grande Lodge (970-731-1160; [www.keyahgrande.com](http://www.keyahgrande.com)) in the San Juan Mountains of Colorado, say they were inspired by African fire rings around which safarigoers swap stories at the end of the day. Their version features a sunken fire pit in a paved deck, ringed by white cedar rockers for viewing the star-filled sky.

Some clubs based in hotels are playing with fire. The celebrity bar owner Rande Gerber's new Stone Rose Lounge at the Sofitel Los Angeles (310-278-5444; [www.sofitel.com](http://www.sofitel.com)) stokes an outdoor fire near guest cabanas. In San Diego, the Hotel Solamar (619-531-8740; [www.hotelsolamar.com](http://www.hotelsolamar.com)) lights

fires in three pits nightly on its fourth-floor roof deck lounge, Jbar.

Fire fuels split between gas, which is considered cleaner and cheaper, and wood, which crackles and pops and smells good. Though it is often associated with cheesy ersatz logs, gas can allow style-conscious hotels to be creative. At the Sky Hotel in Aspen (970-925-6760; [www.theskyhotel.com](http://www.theskyhotel.com)) the two fire pits in the public poolside lounge 39 Degrees were made over this fall; they were covered with synthetic glass shards so that the gas-fueled flames appear to flicker atop a pile of blue crystal cubes.

"As a design hotel you can't overlook the details," said Sky Hotel's manager, John Curnow. "The fake logs are O.K. But putting colored glass in the fire will be cool."

Indoors, wood fires remain a luxury in pricier hotel rooms. Orient-Express Hotels is renovating its early-20th-century Santa Monica bungalows at El Encanto Hotel and Garden Villas ([www.elencantohotel.com](http://www.elencantohotel.com)) to include floor pillows placed around the original wood-burning fireplaces. And the Boulders Resort (866-397-6520, [www.theboulders.com](http://www.theboulders.com)) in Carefree, Ariz., where a bonfire marks the entrance, will introduce a redesign by late this year, but its casitas will still have their kiva fireplaces, stocked with wood and matches.

"We could replace them with gas, and frankly it would make a lot more sense financially," said the managing director of the resort, Michael Hoffmann. "But where's the romance?" ■