

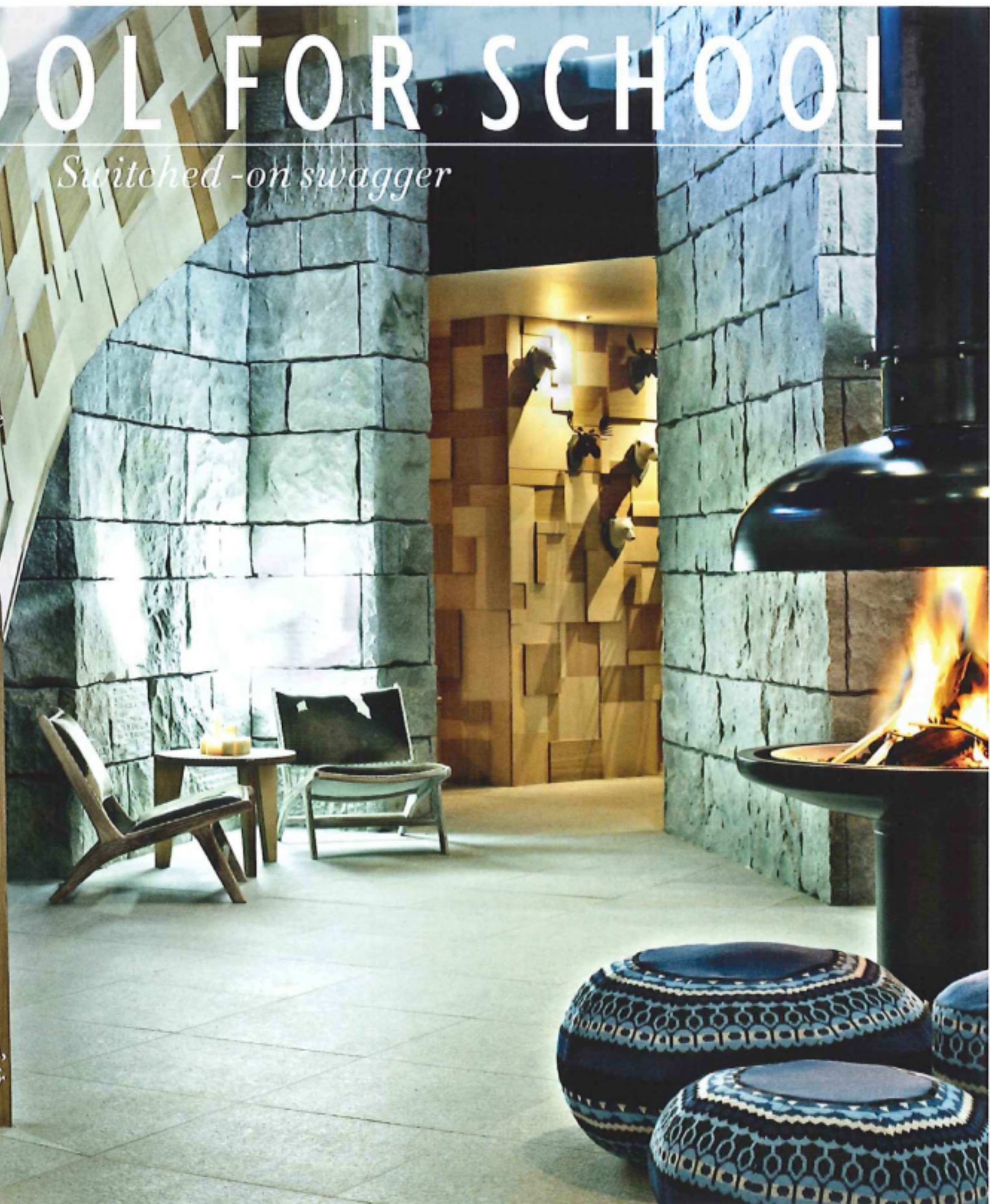
TOO COOL FOR SCHOOL

Switched-on swagger

ALTAPURA

VAL THORENS, FRANCE

Val Thorens has always been the high-altitude guaranteed-snow part of the Trois Vallées, perfect for a ski day trip and an OK lunch. But to stay there? We'll leave that to the Dutch and the cheap package kids, right? Not any more. The wonderful Sibuet family, who have previously graced us with the restored Alpine farmhouse chic of Les Fermes de Marie in Megève, have just opened Altapura, the first serious place to bed down in this valley. Yet there is none of the gentle alpine prettiness. If Les Fermes is soft and organic, Altapura is bold and unforgiving. The look inside is all hard lines, pale-birch furniture and 3D cladding, natural-stone bathrooms and vibrant fabrics in limes and pinks. Built for the iPhone generation, it has a Mac Mini in every room and an über-cool sprawling wall of old skis that climbs the grand staircase with you. And now that the third valley has got its very own Folie Douce for après and La Fruitière for a blowout lunch, VT's moment has arrived. *Website* altapura.fr
Book it Kaluma Travel (01730 260263) offers seven nights from £1,320, including flights, transfers and breakfast.



AAVA RESORT

KHANOM, THAILAND

Tucked down in Southern Thailand, the bit no one ever really gets to, is Khanom. Being able to point out Khanom on a map is practically a party trick. It's not Phuket or Pha-Ngan or Samui. It's not even an island. And it's totally unheard of. For now. There are white powdered stretches of deserted beach, where you only have the odd fisherman for company. There are waterfalls in the hills, mountains pocketed with mossy caves, pods of pink dolphins in the sea and a vast national park. And to top it all, there's a hotel hotspot called Aava, with a Finnish owner who looks like Eminem. It is beautifully designed (Scandi with a Thai twist), with big villas that spill into the pool, minimalist rooms with angular furniture, rain-showers and dark wood throughout. Bringing the brood? Adoring Thai nannies take care of babysitting and kiddie activities. But there is lots of grown-up fun to be had too. Food at the Aalto restaurant is incredible and there's a properly pampering little spa. This is a place to chill, away from the hordes. It's also very affordable for what it is – a brilliant step up from the full-moon huts but not as bank-busting as a serious resort jaunt. *Website* aavaresort.com
Book it Cleveland Collection (020 7843 3596) offers four nights from £1,360, including flights, transfers and breakfast. ▷

