A NEW UNDERSTATED ELEGANCE

→ Another classic entering the new year with a facelift is The Gritti Palace in VENICE (www.luxurycollection.com/grittipalace; from €843). Original Rubelli Venetian textiles, rococo-inspired couches and Murano glass chandeliers all feature, along with a new Acqua di Parma Blu Mediterraneo Spa, a refreshed restaurant and the Gritti Terrace overlooking the Grand Canal.

→ While St Katharine's Docks in LONDON doesn't quite have the watery glamour of Venice, it does have the cool new 42m-long Houseboat (www.chicretreats.com; from £200). Moored

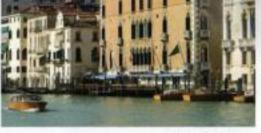
less than a minute's walk from Tower Bridge, this former coal-carrying barge has been reconfigured to include three ensuite bedrooms, a cinema room and sauna. The style merges library-style leather sofas with wood-panelled walls and a log-burner.

→ A fixed mooring is one way of dealing with poor sea legs. Another, in the GALAPAGOS, is to combine short cruises – the function of luxury 100ft M/Y Pikaia I, which lets you swim,



kayak and snorkel amid the wildlife – with somewhere to stay on land, which is the purpose of the new **Pikaia Lodge** (www. pikaialodgegalapagos.com), opening in June on Santa Cruz Island. This 14-room ecolodge sits within a secluded giant-tortoise reserve, beside an extinct volcano crater, and its seven-night sea-and-land packages (from \$7,500 per person) are entirely unique among the islands. +

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Above: The Gritti
Palace on the Grand
Canal, Venice