

GRAND
OPENING**High and Mighty**

TEETERING ON THE rim of a deep gorge, **Alila Jabal Akhdar** (www.alilahotels.com) is the first upscale resort in Oman's secluded Al Hajar mountain range. Opened in May, the 78-room retreat is surrounded by rose-covered hillsides and walnut and peach orchards in the shadow of the country's loftiest peaks, some 90 miles southwest of Muscat. The property's fortresslike facade, sculpted from pink-hued ophiolite stone, borrows from traditional Omani architecture. Inside, guests are greeted by the sweet scent of frankincense before heading to rooms outfitted with richly colored rugs and pottery from the nearby village of Bahla. In the Juniper Restaurant, Omani-Mediterranean cuisine makes use of fruits, nuts, and vegetables grown in the nearby valleys. —LEO BEAR

STAR OF THE SEAS

A stellar new ship prepares to set sail.

The French cruise company Ponant will expand its luxury fleet this April with the addition of **Le Lyrial** (www.ponant.com), a 122-cabin ship designed by the architect Jean-Philippe Nuel. Named for the Northern

Hemisphere's Lyra constellation, the new vessel will take to the seas in high style, sporting contemporary leather furnishings, glossy wood-paneled walls, and floor-to-ceiling windows. Unlike its namesake, however, *Le Lyrial*

will not be confined to a single hemisphere: Following an inaugural season cruising the Mediterranean, Adriatic, and Aegean seas, the ship will head south for the icy shores of Antarctica. —JACKIE CARADONIO

SMALL WONDER

VIRGINIA'S INN AT Little Washington has long drawn East Coast epicures with its whimsical design and 10-course "gastronaut's" menu.

Following nearly three years of renovations, the Relais & Châteaux property has now expanded its domain with the addition of the **Parsonage** (www.innatlittlewashington.com), a Victorian-era mansion located across the street from the inn. The London-based designer Joyce Conwy Evans—who was responsible for the original inn's eclectic interiors more than 30 years ago—led the renovation of the seven-room annex, which made its debut in April. Her creation is a perfect match for its predecessor's theatrical style, featuring Tunisian tiles, English fabrics, French antiques, and Carrara-marble bathrooms. A foyer draped with a tent of green and white fabric hosts the Parsonage's cocktail hour, which is frequently followed by a walk across Main Street to visit chef Patrick O'Connell's award-winning restaurant for Maine lobster or truffle-stuffed pheasant. —J.C.



BOTTOM: GORDON BEALL