

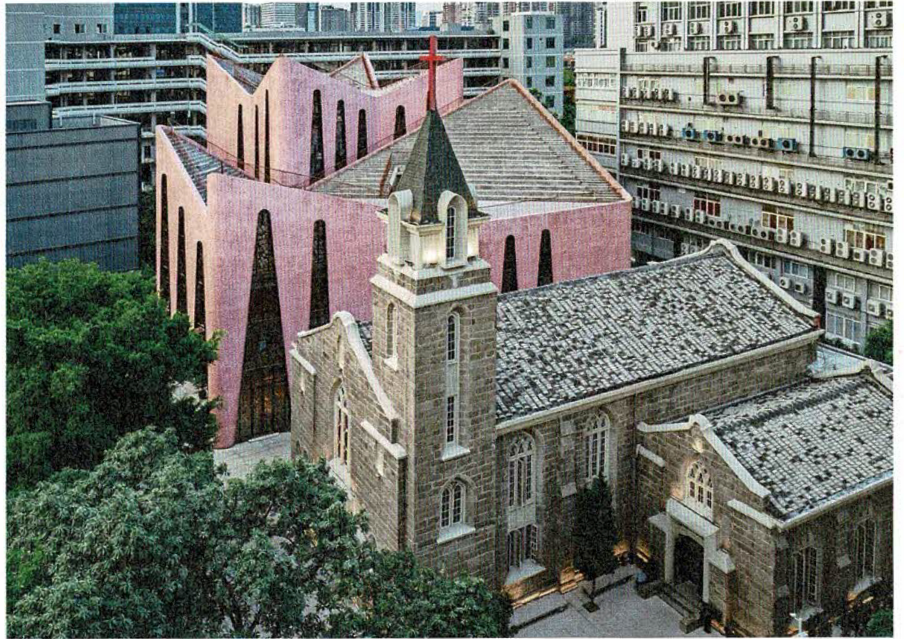
### Colombia

## Rocky miracle

First impressions can be odd. Why would anyone build a shrine over a wild river gurgling down a canyon? The answer is simple. A miracle is said to have happened here, by the rocky cliff of Las Lajas, Colombia, when a seven-year-old deaf and mute girl suddenly told her mother that the Virgin Mary was calling her. On a rock wall, there's a mural of the Virgin on the mountainside with Saint Francis of Assisi and Saint Dominic at her feet. The rock behind it is said to be deeply saturated with the colouring of the image, and the mural appears to have become part of the rock. The fact that you have to navigate a bridge over a roaring river simply adds to the general sense of wonder.

**Go see** the Las Lajas Sanctuary and Bridge at night, when both are lit up in dramatic hues of purple, blue and green.

*See previous pages.*



### China

## Pretty in pink

True, the city of Fuzhou in southeast China already had a church, built in the 1930s. But over the last decade, the Huaxiang Church congregation grew so much, swelled by many young believers, that it became too big for the building. Chinese-Swiss architecture firm Inuce was hired to solve the problem. Instead of a predictable annex, they presented Fuzhou with a whole new chapel. Poured from bubblegum-pink pebbledash concrete, with a sinuous white interior and elongated arched windows, it's almost as if a cheery cartoon spaceship has landed next to the original church. Now, where to house all the new-new visitors?

**Elevate your experience** and visit the rooftop amphitheatre, which was added to accommodate outdoor services.



### Thailand

## Vision in white

The Wat Rong Khun – or White Temple – in Chiang Rai is the stunning project of one man, Thai visual artist Chalermchai Kositpipat. He sees the temple as his offering to Buddha and has a truly unique vision. The outside of his elegant design is bright white, with details of glittering glass. Inside, Kositpipat painted colourful murals that blend Buddhist images with contemporary ones. It's an overwhelming place, and there is more to come. The construction of the temple – which opened in 1997 – is on-going and will probably not be finished until 2070. **Don't be surprised** to see Harry Potter and Hello Kitty among the more traditional symbols adorning the temple.