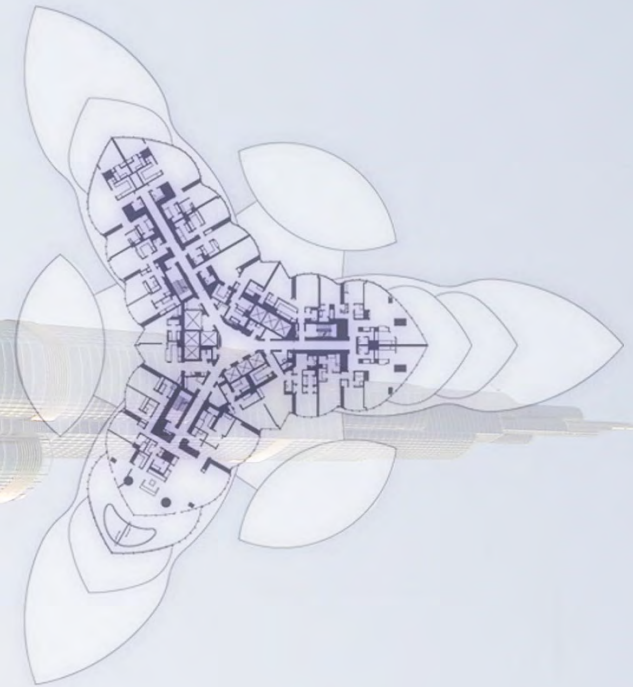


high desert house

Living inside a giant cluster of mushrooms does seem like an odd idea, but there was a good reason for it. The architect practices what's known as Organic Architecture, where designs are inspired by the nature around it. In this case, the 26 "wings" fan out from a central spine down the building, making a kind of ribcage. All of these overhangs create a lot of shade, keeping the inside cool from the harsh desert sun. Ken Kellogg, the architect of the house, thinks that letting the building take on interesting shapes will lead to a better place for people to live. When asked about Organic Architecture, he says, "It is the reinterpretation of nature's principles to create forms in harmony with the landscape, rather than on top of it."

BURJ KHALIFA

2,717 feet. That's over half a mile, and it's the height of the world's tallest building: the Burj Khalifa in the city of Dubai. Designed by the architecture firm SOM in Chicago, the building has a 3-lobed shape when looked at from above: the designers drew their inspiration from a certain desert lily and by historical Islamic architecture. These lobes allow for the most views to the outside and daylight to get to the interior. Inside the Burj Khalifa is an 18-story hotel, 60-stories of apartments, 30-stories of offices, "At.mosphere" - the world's highest restaurant, an observation deck, and a radio station. It's tough being on top though, and there's some stiff competition for the world's tallest building: Saudi Arabia is planning their very own new skyscraper, the Kingdom Tower, which is expected to rise 3,280 feet from the desert sands.



ITHAA RESORT

How would you like to visit an undersea restaurant? Well you can if you go to the Maldives, a group of small islands near India. The design firm M.J. Murphy created the Ithaa resort, which is located alongside a coral reef 15 feet beneath the ocean. To do this, they built the tube-shaped building on land, towed it out in the water, and filled with concrete to make it sink! To create the amazing panoramic window, a special type of glass called Acrylic was used, which wouldn't crack under the water pressure or leak on the guests. For the resort's fifth birthday, the owners decided to allow people to stay overnight -- and turned it into a hotel!



THE BLUE CRYSTAL

It's not made of diamond, but ice! The city of Dubai lies in the Middle-Eastern desert, yet its architects are constantly finding ways of making the impossible happen. Though currently unbuilt, the planned man-made iceberg will contain hotel rooms, restaurants, and ballrooms. German architects Frank and Sven Sauer say that the Blue Crystal "combines the organic forms found in nature with the elemental structure of ice." Unlike the organic design of the High Desert House, though, this building does not exist harmoniously with nature, but instead requires an elaborate and expensive machines to keep all the ice frozen. However, no one can deny the ambition of this project, and must say that the architects are dreaming big!

