

# TIMES ONLINE

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## Europe's coolest hotels

**Right across the continent, cool new places to stay are opening up. Susan d'Arcy lists the best**



Susan d'Arcy

If you love hotels, this summer will be a good one. Across Europe, there is a host of smart new places to stay, from radically chic boutiques in Paris and Milan to stripped-down seaside hideaways in Croatia and Capri. Here's our pick of the glossy new addresses; just make sure you get in there before the crowds catch on.

Unless stated, all hotel prices are on a B&B basis

### **GREECE MYSTIQUE, Santorini**

Lounging on a balcony at Mystique, in the village of Oia, might be the most romantic way to watch the sun set yet devised. It slinks behind Santorini's volcanic caldera with sylphlike grace. The island is lush with gorgeous honeymoon hotels, but Mystique, opened last month, threatens to beat them all. Its 18 villas are carved into the cliff face, each overlooking the caldera, and every one flat-screened and hi-fi'd. There's locally quarried limestone on the floor, original art on the walls, cushions clad in antique textiles. Shame that the name conjures up visions of a tight-trousered 1970s lounge band.

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**Details:** 00 30 22 860 71114, [www.mystique.gr](http://www.mystique.gr); doubles from £280. Excel Airways (0870 320 7777, [www.xl.com](http://www.xl.com)) flies from Gatwick, Manchester and Newcastle.

### MYKONOS GRACE, Mykonos

Mykonos is authentically A-list these days – so chic that star restaurateur Nobuyuki Matsuhisa sets up a summer outpost of Nobu there. The island has plenty of fashionable five-stars, but the new-look Mykonos Grace is effortlessly glamorous, and half the price of many of its rivals. The hotel reopened last month after a full-on facelift. The rooms now have a delectable airiness, with lots of trendy Venetian plaster, Starck-esque fittings and spacious terraces, some with hot tubs. The popular Agios Stefanos beach is on the doorstep; thumping nightclubs are a five-minute cab ride away.

**Details:** 00 30 22 890 26 690, [www.mykonosgrace.com](http://www.mykonosgrace.com); doubles from £100. Olympic Holidays (0870 999 0338, [www.olympicdirect.com](http://www.olympicdirect.com)) has flights from Gatwick and Manchester.

### HOTEL BELLEVUE, Dubrovnik

Top hotels in the Croatian capital are beautiful but a bit old-fashioned – more hip op than hip-hop. Enter the brilliantly boutique Bellevue, which opened in March. Its new owners have spent a year and £14m transforming it from a three-star also-ran into a five-star ode to organic chic, with drop-dead gorgeous views over the teal waters of Miramare Bay. Rooms have been given a dash of panache by Renata Strok, mother of one half of the fashion label Gharani Strok, a favourite with Kate, Keira, Kylie et al. She has used lots of billowing muslin and soft marine tones to recreate the fresh-air ambience of a luxury yacht. And they come complete with an appropriate soundtrack – waves crashing against the hotel's private beach below.

**Details:** 00 385 20 330 000, [www.hotel-bellevue.hr](http://www.hotel-bellevue.hr); doubles from £125. Fly there from Gatwick with Croatia Airlines (020 8563 0022, [www.croatiaairlines.com](http://www.croatiaairlines.com)) or British Airways (0870 850 9850, [www.ba.com](http://www.ba.com)).

### THE ADRIANA, Hvar

Hvar is Croatia's answer to St Tropez: no bikini is too tiny, no billionaire too slimy. In fact, it might even be more yachtie now than the Côte d'Azur. Opening this month, the Adriana never knowingly undersells its contemporary theme – neutral colours are lifted by vermilion, ochre and aubergine accents, and there's lots of frosted glass and moody black-and-white photography. The rooftop terrace has a heated seawater pool, a pine-shaded yoga deck and what promises to be a buzzy bar, all with photo opportunities looking out over Hvar's elaborate Italianate cathedral, the Venetian piazza, the harbour and the bay.

**Details:** 00 385 21 750 750, [www.suncanihar.com/adriana](http://www.suncanihar.com/adriana); doubles from £183. Fly to Dubrovnik (see above).

### **HOTEL FOUQUET'S BARRIERE, Paris**

Just what springtime needs: another irresistible reason to visit Paris. Opened in November, the Barrière is perfectly pitched on the corner of the Champs Elysées, and decorated by the fashionistas' favourite, Jacques Garcia, the only designer who can make Versace look understated. So that will be lashings of louche chocolates and lush creams in the bedrooms, vampy velvets for the furniture, and embroidered leather for the lobby walls, then. Even the flat-screen televisions are encased in sharkskin or hidden behind mirrors. Where better to sip champagne than on the hotel's outdoor terrace, which is adorned with hundreds of tree branches dipped in silver. Now that's flash.

**Details:** 00 33 1 40 69 60 00, [www.fouquets-barriere.com](http://www.fouquets-barriere.com) ; doubles from £450. Eurostar (0870 518 6186, [www.eurostar.com](http://www.eurostar.com)) has returns from £59, and Air France ([www.airfrance.co.uk](http://www.airfrance.co.uk)) flies from nine UK airports, plus Dublin.

### **LA RESERVE, Paris**

What discerning travellers want is a home from home, not an anonymous reception desk and surly room service. Opening this month on Place du Trocadéro, in the fashionable 16th arrondissement, La Réserve really promises to deliver. Decorated in muted mushrooms and jet blacks, its 10 luxury apartments have cutting-edge technology for the boys, indulgent travertine bathrooms for the girls, and views of the Eiffel Tower or everyone. Each comes with housekeeping, concierge, chef and masseur; some have private gardens, others their own cinema.

**Details:** 00 33 6 75 38 92 99, [www.lareserve-paris.com](http://www.lareserve-paris.com) ; from £1,158 a night, minimum three-night stay.

### **CAPELLA CASTLEMARTYR, Co Cork**

This 17th-century rococo manor house in Ireland, once home to Sir Walter Raleigh, is set in 220 romantic acres, complete with ruined castle and historic chapel, and opens as a hotel next month. The classically styled bedrooms are pure quality, with Pratesi linens, Waterford glassware and complimentary minibars filled with freshly baked soda bread and local cheeses. The hotel likes its buzzwords, and everything is "experiential". Spa treatments are based on the lunar cycle, and you can catch your supper with the local fishermen or watch Irish dancers on the lawn.

**Details:** 00 353 21 464 4050, [www.capellacastlemartyr.com](http://www.capellacastlemartyr.com) ; doubles from £360. Aer Arann (0870 876 76 76, [www.aerarann.ie](http://www.aerarann.ie) ) flies from Bristol, Cardiff, Edinburgh and Leeds Bradford; returns from £37.

### **BELLINTER HOUSE, Co Meath**

The Celtic tiger purrs away contentedly at this Palladian pile, put together by the team behind Dublin's perennially popular POD nightclub. Opened in December, Bellinter is set in genteel Meath parkland on the bonny banks of the Boyne, perfect for an Austen-esque evening stroll. The bedrooms go for bold fabrics, groovy vintage furniture and top-of-the-range entertainment systems. Some are sexily split-level, others have ultra-indulgent dressing rooms. The food is

scrumptious (try the fresh oysters from Carlingford Lough), and the spa is organic (using the seaweed-based Voya range, whose fans include Catherine Zeta-Jones).

**Details:** 00 353 46 903 0900, [www.bellinterhouse.com](http://www.bellinterhouse.com) ; doubles from £153. Fly to Dublin with Ryanair (0871 246 0000, [www.ryanair.com](http://www.ryanair.com) ), Aer Lingus (0870 876 5000, [www.aerlingus.com](http://www.aerlingus.com) ) or British Airways (0870 850 9850, [www.ba.com](http://www.ba.com) ).

### **LA BANDITA, Tuscany**

This isn't so much a hotel as a cool pad that belongs to the friend of a friend, and happens to have views over the Val d'Orcia nature reserve – the sort of soft-focus, cypress-studded landscape that made Merchant Ivory a fortune. Those once-removed friends are John Voigtman, the former manager of the Strokes and Christina Aguilera, and Ondine Cohane, upmarket-magazine writer. Four years ago, fed up with the fast lane, they decided to pool their travel experience and create a bolt hole where guests can really loosen their stays. It opens this month, and it's romantically rustic, with air con and plenty of attitude.

**Details:** 00 39 333 404 6704, [www.la-bandita.com](http://www.la-bandita.com) ; doubles from £135, room-only. Fly to Florence from Gatwick with Meridiana (0845 355 5588, [www.meridiana.it](http://www.meridiana.it)).

### **JK PLACE, Capri**

Its sister property (also in Italy, in Florence) is already favoured by the likes of Jade Jagger, and this breezily insouciant boutique hotel looks set to revolutionise hospitality on the Amalfi coast – traditionally as sickly sweet as a bottle of limoncello. Opened in March, it's all seaside pastels, glamorous contemporary furniture, scented candles and chunky coffee-table books. It is also the only hotel on the island with a seafront location – though beaches in Italy tend to be for sashaying along rather than swimming off.

**Details:** 00 39 081 838 4001, [www.jkcapri.com](http://www.jkcapri.com) ; doubles from £278. Fly to Naples with EasyJet ([www.easyjet.com](http://www.easyjet.com) ), BMI (0870 607 0555, [www.flybmi.co.uk](http://www.flybmi.co.uk)) or BA (0870 850 9850, [www.ba.com](http://www.ba.com)).

### **THE CHEDI, Milan**

Hotel-industry insiders never utter the name Adrian Zecha without mentally genuflecting. First as Mr Amanresorts, lately as Mr GHM, Zecha is the brains behind some of the world's most exclusive hotels. He opened the 250-room Chedi in April, his first GHM property in Europe, and the style is Italy meets Indonesia, with an oriental stamp on everything from design to ambience. Even the hotel's signature scent is a blend of green tea and mandarin. Its location is lousy – in the residential Bovisa district, a 15-minute taxi ride from the centre – but that won't deter Zecha fans such as Madonna and Lenny Kravitz.

**Details:** 00 800 37 46 83 57, [www.designhotels.com](http://www.designhotels.com) ; doubles from £78. Fly to Milan with BA (0870 850 9850, [www.ba.com](http://www.ba.com) ), Alitalia (0870 544 8259, [www.alitalia.com](http://www.alitalia.com) ), Jet2 (0871 226 1737, [www.jet2.com](http://www.jet2.com) ) or Flybe (0871 522 6100, [www.flybe.com](http://www.flybe.com) ), or to Bergamo with Ryanair (0871 246 0000, [www.ryanair.com](http://www.ryanair.com) ).

### **THE OTHER SIDE, Norway**

The next big thing in top-end travel is extreme luxury, and The Other Side, in Neiden, looks like being right on message. Opening in December, this high-concept lodge struts its stuff on a pristine plateau in the desolate tundra, overlooking the Barents Sea. Its dozen bedrooms draw inspiration from the traditions and beliefs of the local Sami people – think crackling log fires and decadent drapes of fur – and each room is based on an element. The Wind House is on stilts, the Water House above a pond, and so on. All come with panoramic views. Nocturnal pursuits include the northern lights in winter, midnight sunbathing in summer, and Dr Zhivago dog-sledding any time you like.

**Details:** 00 47 7899 6203, [www.theotherside.no](http://www.theotherside.no) ; doubles from £233. Fly to Kirkenes (an hour from Neiden) with Norwegian Air Shuttle ([www.norwegian.no](http://www.norwegian.no)), via Oslo.

### **AQUAPURA, Douro Valley**

New this month, this is Portugal's first six-star resort – and what a stellar location. Aquapura snuggles down in the divine Douro Valley, Unesco-protected and smothered in vine-draped hills. There are 50 discreetly decadent rooms inside the resort's meticulously restored 19th-century manor house, plus 21 ultra-private suites dappling the woodland. Pampered princesses will be in raptures, because the hotel spa has been designed by the team behind Hodson Bay, Ireland's latest wellness wonder. And as well as a ravishing range of rubs and scrubs, Aquapura has food by a disciple of Alain Ducasse and barrels of the local tiple.

**Details:** 00 351 21 360 0040, [www.aquapurahotels.com](http://www.aquapurahotels.com); doubles from £150. Fly to Oporto with TAP Portugal (0845 601 0932, [www.flytap.com](http://www.flytap.com)), or Ryanair (0871 246 0000, [www.ryanair.com](http://www.ryanair.com)).

### **L'AVENIDA, Majorca**

This hip hideaway is a 100-year-old modernist mansion set among the citrus groves of Soller. Opened in March, it has been freshly squeezed into the 21st century: the original frescoes and sweeping marble staircase have been fairydusted back to their best, while the eight bedrooms smoulder with contemporary sexiness. That means extravagant Cole and Son wallpapers, Bonacina chairs, black-marble chandeliers and Philippe Starck bathrooms – all with jaw-dropping views onto the Tramuntana mountains. Forget oranges, this is one for the BlackBerry set.

**Details:** 00 34 971 634075, [www.avenida-hotel.com](http://www.avenida-hotel.com) ; doubles from £106. Airlines flying to Palma include BMI Baby (0871 224 0224, [www.bmibaby.com](http://www.bmibaby.com) ), Flyglobespan (0871 271 0415, [www.flyglobespan.com](http://www.flyglobespan.com) ) and Monarch (0870 040 5040, [www.flymonarch.com](http://www.flymonarch.com) ).

### **MARQUES DE RISCAL, La Rioja**

Bilbao's Guggenheim Museum is an undisputed masterpiece of avant-garde architecture. Now, its designer, Frank Gehry, has created his first hotel, the flamboyant Marques de Riscal, deep in the rolling hills of La Rioja Alavesa. Gehry's trademark titanium is ever-present, while his signature sensuous curves and soaring ceilings ensure the interiors are a tour de force, too. The hotel can be challenging on a practical level – but who said sleeping in a sculpture would be easy? Also there: a restaurant overseen by the region's only Michelin-starred chef, and a Caudalie Vinotherapie spa – you can soak in a merlot bath.

**Details:** 00 800 3254 5454, [www.starwoodhotels.com/luxury](http://www.starwoodhotels.com/luxury) ; doubles from £200. Fly to Bilbao with BA (0870 850 9850, [www.ba.com](http://www.ba.com) ), EasyJet ([www.easyjet.com](http://www.easyjet.com) ) and Iberia (0870 609 0500, [www.iberiaairlines.co.uk](http://www.iberiaairlines.co.uk) ).

### **CORRAL DEL REY, Seville**

This sophisticated urban retreat opened in March, a new venture from the family behind Hacienda de San Rafael, an A-list haunt just outside town. Their new property offers cool, spacious rooms in the palest olive greens and champagne creams, complimented by 17th-century beams, marble columns and fine art. It's in the old quarter of Barrio Alfalfa, a five-minute stroll from the cathedral – though you can get an eyeful of its gothic glory from Corral del Rey's rooftop garden and plunge pool. Dine under the stars there – or, for a more intimate evening, in the vaulted cellars that were rediscovered during the palace's restoration.

**Details:** 00 34 954 227 116, [www.corraldelrey.com](http://www.corraldelrey.com) ; doubles from £190. Fly to Seville with Iberia (0870 609 0500, [www.iberia.com](http://www.iberia.com) ) or Ryanair (0871 246 0000, [www.ryanair.com](http://www.ryanair.com) ).

### **REINA VICTORIA, Madrid**

Best known as Mr Cindy Crawford, Rande Gerber is the brains behind some of America's blingiest bars. Since November, he's gone to Spain, ensuring that Madrid's newest hotel has the hottest social scene in the city. The rooftop bar is fabulously chic, while the restaurant is very El Bulli – unsurprising, since head chef Jaime Renedo studied under the gastronomic galactico Ferran Adria. The bedrooms are by Keith Hobbs (who outfitted celebrity bolt holes such as the Metropolitan in London and the Clarence in Dublin), so they come with preloaded iPods, 300-thread linens and organic Aveda essentials.

**Details:** 00 34 91 701 6000, [www.solmelia.com](http://www.solmelia.com) ; doubles from £112. Airlines flying to Madrid include EasyJet ([www.easyjet.com](http://www.easyjet.com) ) and British Airways (0870 850 9850, [www.ba.com](http://www.ba.com) ).

### **OYSTER RESIDENCE BEYAZ YUNUS, Olu Deniz**

Turkey's Olu Deniz is one of the Med's most magnificent bays, but until last month its hotels failed to live up to their location. That's when Beyaz Yunus came to the rescue. Dreamt up by Chelsea School of Art graduate Gunsenin Gonal, its seven suites have the intimate atmosphere of a Moroccan riad. Their flat-screen televisions and outdoor hot tubs are softened by artisan rugs and furniture, and surrounded by bougainvillea-draped terraces that tumble to the Aegean. Better still, Gonal runs one of Turkey's best restaurants, the White Dolphin, so the just-caught red snapper will be grilled to perfection.

**Details:** 00 90 252 617 0765, [www.oysterresidences.com](http://www.oysterresidences.com) ; the hotel cannot be booked direct, so go through Exclusive Escapes (020 8605 3500, [www.exclusiveescapes.co.uk](http://www.exclusiveescapes.co.uk) ), which has a week from £850pp, including half-board and flights this year (from £1,100pp next year). Fly to

Dalaman with British Airways (0870 850 9850, [www.ba.com](http://www.ba.com) ) or Cyprus Turkish Airlines (020 7930 4851, [www.kthy.net](http://www.kthy.net) ).

### **ADAM & EVE HOTEL, Antalya**

It opened in December, and the toned and the tanned will be tweaking their dental-floss bikinis there this summer. It's an unapologetic altar to hedonism, with "the longest cocktail bar in the world", a two-storey nightclub and a pool for "late-night revellers looking to make a little mischief". The main pool ("the world's longest", naturally) has sun loungers submerged in the shallows for those who overdo it but can't make it to the spa. The Adam & Eve claims to be the world's sexiest hotel, and its 400-plus white-on-white bedrooms have floor-to-ceiling mirrors, their own son et lumière systems and party-size whirlpool baths. The top suite even has its own DJ booth.

**Details:** 00 90 242 715 2444, [www.adamevehotels.com](http://www.adamevehotels.com) ; half-board doubles from £235. Fly to Antalya with Turkish Airlines (020 7766 9300, [www.thy.com](http://www.thy.com) ) or get a charter flight from Charter Flight Centre (0845 045 0153, [www.charterflights.co.uk](http://www.charterflights.co.uk) ).