



Newcomers

USA MIAMI
MONDRIAN

Located on the newly fashionable West Avenue, this sparkling white building is just minutes away from South Beach. Award-winning Dutch designer Marcel Wanders used Sleeping Beauty's castle as inspiration, creating a modern fairy tale property complete with huge chandeliers and spiral staircase.

Details Double from \$275 (00 1 305 514 1500; mondrian-miami.com)

SWITZERLAND LAAX
ROCKSRESORT

Enjoy the last of the winter snow in eastern Switzerland. Situated next to the base station in the popular resort of Laax, you can ski straight from the glaciers to your room. The minimalist wooden and stone cube-shaped buildings blend in with the natural beauty of the surroundings.

Details Double from £90 (00 800 37 46 83 57; designhotels.com)

UK MANCHESTER
VELVET

Canal Street's newest boutique hotel is a plush affair. Spread over four floors, above the well-established bar and restaurant of the same name, it boasts 19 rooms filled with opulent rococo-style furniture. The balcony suites and huge penthouse offer Mary Poppins-like views over the vibrant city.

Details Double from £115 (0844 589 3455; velvetmanchester.com)

SEYCHELLES MAHE
FOUR SEASONS RESORT

This tree-top resort is hidden among lush vegetation and perched above a stunning beach. Snorkel in the Indian Ocean then follow wooden paths through mango and cinnamon trees to reach your secluded villa, with private pool, and admire the view from the sundeck.

Details Double from £490 (00 248 393 000; fourseasons.com)

hotels

Wheretostay

Sue Lawrence finds a room with a view in Florence and Léa Teuscher checks out the latest hotel openings

Hotel of the month

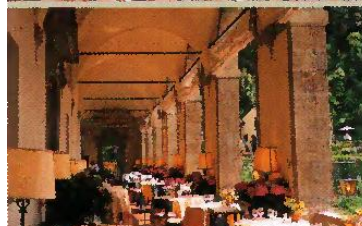


ITALY FLORENCE
VILLA SAN MICHELE

Perched high above Florence in the Fiesole hills and surrounded by fabulous gardens, Villa San Michele is a former monastery dating from 1483. As you approach the villa's imposing facade, attributed to Michelangelo, and enter the ornately decorated reception (it was once the chapel) you immediately feel any city cares disappear. Steeped in art and history, explore the cloisters and search out Nicodemus Ferrucci's 1642 fresco depicting the Last Supper before taking a walk past fragrant lemon trees to the herb and formal Italian gardens. The fabulous swimming pool, situated above leafy terraces, also has spectacular views down to the Duomo and across the River Arno to the Palazzo Pitti and Boboli Gardens. Dinner in the restaurant, La Loggia, is unforgettable. Try chef Attilio di Fabrizio's exquisite baby squid with Tuscan bean purée, ravioli of sea bass or turbot with porcini mushrooms. The cheese board is outstanding: smoked juniper ricotta or aged Pecorino served with chestnut purée; and desserts are to die for (wild herb panna cotta or crunchy cappuccino meringue). Breakfast is equally memorable with fruit, yoghurts and hams supplemented by superb home-baked breads and cakes. To further your culinary experience, sign up for one of the hands-on classes at the cookery school. Rooms and suites are housed in the old monastery or nestled amid the gardens. With period furniture and marble bathrooms all are charming and spacious – offering a stunning window on this enchanting city.

Why go? For the best of Tuscan culture and jaw-dropping panoramic views.

Details Double from €515. Via Doccia 4, Fiesole. Florence, Italy (0845 077 2222; orient-express.com)



FROM TOP LEFT: STRIKING MINIMALISM AT ROCKSRESORT; VILLA SAN MICHELE'S GRAND FACADE AND DINING IN THE CLOISTERS; TROPICAL VEGETATION AND SPARKLING WATERS IN MAHE; BLACK AND WHITE CHIC AT MIAMI'S MONDRIAN

