

The 50 BEST HOTELS IN THE WORLD

*Looking for somewhere
inspirational to stay this year?
Here Telegraph Travel writers
pick their all-time favourites – in
price brackets to suit all budgets*

**Up to £150
per room per night**

1 The Luggier Cornwall

The setting for this 17th-century inn could not be better. Sandwiched between the cliffs in the tiny fishing village of Portloe – the fiercely sloping landscape of which has spared it from development – this whitewashed hotel looks out across the harbour. But it is not just about the location – the 22 rooms are as bright and welcoming as the amiable staff, while the food (given its seafront position, fish features heavily) is superb. If you plan to push the boat out, opt to stay in

the miniature cottage for something a bit special.

● www.luggierhotel.co.uk

2 Mama Shelter Paris

Cheap but chic, with quirky decor by Philippe Starck, and a buzzing bar and restaurant attracting cool Parisians. Beds feel luxurious; standard extras include Kiehl's toiletries, free Wi-Fi and iMac televisions. The bedside fancy-dress masks are possibly not for everyone, but the price is.

● www.mamashelter.com

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3 Hotel Alpenrose

Wengen, Switzerland

This is the best sort of traditional, family-run hotel. You won't find designer furnishings or trappings, but it's a comfortable, well-run three-star set on a plateau at the edge of a pretty Alpine village, with great views over the valley below (opt for a south-facing balcony room). It has a welcoming lounge with log fire, books, games and Wi-Fi, friendly owners and staff, and a loyal band of regulars who return year after year to ski or walk in the mountains.

● www.alpenrose.ch

4 Palazzo Zichy

Budapest

This elegantly refashioned former Hungarian count's palace is an impressive fusion of 19th-century Habsburg-era elegance and 21st-century (Italian designer) style. Beautiful, spacious lobby; sleek contemporary rooms; a funky sitting room area; and a great location in a wonderfully atmospheric part of Pest. A bargain to boot.

● www.hotel-palazzo-zichy.hu

5 The Inn at Narrow Passage

Woodstock, Virginia

In the heart of rural Virginia, this beautifully restored and homely colonial inn served as Stonewall Jackson's headquarters during the American Civil War. Bedrooms are charmingly old-fashioned and filled with period antiques and each has a working fireplace. Breakfasts are the thing here; try the blueberry pancakes and French toast.

● www.innatnarrowpassage.com

6 The Mountain Retreat Inn

Yangshuo, China

Outstanding hideaway on a bend of the Lu Long River, a few miles outside the tourist town of Yangshuo in Guangxi province and surrounded by distinctive limestone karst peaks. American-owned, it has 29 rooms, all with air conditioning, and 29 staff, who all come from local villages and provide charming service. Ask for a river-view room.

● www.yangshuomountainretreat.com

7 Dean Street Townhouse

Soho

In the heart of Soho, this hip urban hideaway is part of the Soho House collection and a masterful example of its trademark style of marrying the cool with the comfortable. All 39 rooms come with a king-size bed with Egyptian linen, a drenching rainforest shower, a tastefully cream Roberts Radio – and seven big bottles of Cowshed spa products to play with. If you're coming to town to party, this is the base.

● www.deanstreettownhouse.com

8 Parador Zafra

Extremadura, Spain

Zafra huddles tight, white and bright on the scorched Extremaduran tableland. Towering over it like a *caballero* among peons, the Parador Zafra is a 15th-century fortress without, Renaissance palace within. As a hotel, it has forfeited none of its ducal elegance. Above the arcaded courtyard, rooms retain the period nobility that suited Hernán Cortés. He holed up there, pre-American discovery, on the run from a jealous husband (though there was no swimming pool in his day). You should follow suit.

● www.parador.es or www.keytel.co.uk

9 Corte de Lugas

Lugas, Spain

High above Villaviciosa, the farming hamlet of Lugas is so remote that they have yet to hear what happened to the Spanish Armada. Except at La Corte, a grand stone-and-wood farmstead where the welcome is sharp and frankly Anglophile. Upgraded in baronial style – all beams, open fireplace and four-posters – the family-run spot has warmth, dignity and good food, in equal measure. A cracking base for the Atlantic coast or Picos de Europa mountains.

● www.lacortedelugas.com

10 Couvent d'Hérépian

Hérépian, France

Next time someone urges you to "get thee to a nunnery", come here. Hidden away in a small town at the foot of the Haut-Languedoc mountains, the former convent has been converted into lovely contemporary suites, without losing the winding, stone-built integrity.

Sisters would still find their way around the compact place, but might be surprised by the sober extravagance of the comfort, the terraces, little spa and pool, and, especially perhaps, the vaulted wine bar. Warm informality infuses the place, from the central kitchen – where you meet for table-d'hôte dinner – to the lounge-library, winter terrace and garden beyond.

● www.garrigaerorts.com

£150-£300 per room per night**11 Oltre Il Giardino**

Venice

This intimate hotel not only has a beautiful garden – a precious thing in Venice – but also six stylish rooms that break the Venetian decorative mould (no heavy brocades, velvet swags and the like) while preserving plenty of pleasing period details. Unlike other excellent mid-range hotels in the city – notably La Calcina (www.lacalcina.com) – it's also centrally located, close (but not too close) to the Rialto.

● www.oltreilgiardino-venezia.com

12 La Residence

Franschhoek, South Africa

An 11-suite extravagance on the slope of Franschhoek, the Cape village that is probably South Africa's prettiest. No expense has been spared. Each of the suites has its own decor theme, from Buddhist retreat to French decadent, while the public areas are a riotous collection of Louis XIV furniture, Persian carpets, plus *objets*, art and fabrics from India, Indo-China, France, Italy and everywhere else. And it works thanks to the impeccable taste of Liz Biden, the proprietor.

● www.laresidence.com

13 Château de la Chèvre d'Or

Eze, France

Remembering the location of your room may require some concentration as the 30-odd spacious suites are dotted around this walled village. Decked out in Italian marble and Parisian antiques, they boast whirlpool baths and large terraces with sweeping views of the Mediterranean.



Inside the grounds, a series of intricate terraces drops towards the ocean, revealing quiet courtyards, swimming pools and Moroccan-style gardens, while the chateau itself is all high ceilings and vast chandeliers. Give a Gallic shrug to austerity and book a table at Philippe Labbe's fabulous restaurant (two Michelin stars).

● www.chevredor.com

14 Calcot Manor nr Tetbury, Gloucestershire

The trouble with so many family hotels is that they leave either parents or children feeling short-changed. But Calcot Manor manages to deliver for all ages. It's luxurious without being precious, has superb, well-staffed children's den areas for young and older children, and an exceptional spa, with a lovely indoor pool. Service is spot on and the food is good – both in the formal restaurant and in the family-friendly Gumstool pub.

● www.calcotmanor.co.uk

15 Mykonos Grace Hotel Mykonos, Greece

This chic little hotel is in a great setting, just outside Mykonos town, with sweeping sea views from the lovely pool and bar. Rooms are simple but stylish, decorated in white and pastels; many have balconies overlooking the sea. The quality of the food is well above average and there is a small spa offering excellent treatments. It is sophisticated without being daunting, deeply relaxing, and beautifully run by attentive staff.

● www.mykonosgrace.com

16 Four Seasons Hotel Gresham Palace Budapest

A swirling pattern of more than a million mosaic tiles guides you through the dazzling lobby at the heart of this restored temple of Art Nouveau. Here modern chandeliers blend perfectly with original stained glass and velvet furnishings to create stately 21st-century comfort. Perfectly situated at the foot of Budapest's Chain Bridge, this new grand dame of eastern Europe is crowned with a contemporary rooftop spa complete with sweeping views of the Danube.

● www.fourseasons.com/budapest

17 Blancaneaux Lodge Belize

The film director Francis Ford Coppola used this as his secluded mountain bolt hole for several years before throwing open its doors to the public. It now has 20 airy bungalows on stilts dotted around a tree-covered hillside overlooking a babbling stream. There is a lovely restaurant and bar (featuring the original ceiling fan from *Apocalypse Now*), and charming staff.

● www.coppolareorts.com/blancaneaux

18 Villa Marie Saint Tropez

A refreshingly unpretentious hotel on an undeniably ostentatious stretch of the Côte d'Azur, the Villa Marie is a rambling Provençal villa, with beautiful, high-ceilinged rooms, an understated, Parisian-chic clientele and an excellent restaurant with views over vineyards down to the bay of Pampelonne.

● www.villamarie.fr

19 Rasa Sayang Resort & Spa Penang, Malaysia

A beautiful setting in a 30-acre tropical garden reaching out to the beach, a Spice Market café serving a medley of Chinese, Indian and Malaysian dishes, classically elegant (Shangri-La-style) rooms (the best with giant-sized, petal-strewn bathtubs on terraces within earshot of the sea) and, in the superior Rasa Wing, a happy hour of free-flowing champagne and exquisite canapés.

● www.shangri-la.com

20 East Hotel Hamburg

Jordan Mozer, a Chicago-based architect, has transformed this former iron foundry into a bravura display of designer exuberance, a feast for the senses – and one of the coolest places in Hamburg. Dramatically lit curvy pillars tower in the three-storey-high Asian-themed restaurant; differing scents define each floor; free-standing baths and futuristic curves are the mark of the rooms. Looking for the wow factor? You'll find it here.

● www.east-hamburg.de

21 Hotel de Toiras Ile de Ré, France

An enchanting, elegantly furnished seaside hotel in a chichi French

resort. A 17th-century former ship owner's house, it has been imaginatively and sensitively restored, and the restaurant is exquisite. Each of the 20 rooms is named after a local historical character; ask for one overlooking St Martin's busy harbour.

● www.hotel-de-toiras.com

22 Grootbos South Africa

Found on one of the world's finest whale-watching coastlines, this five-star retreat offers unadorned luxury without the guilt. Every effort has been made to assimilate these fabulous private lodges – complete with all mod cons, state-of-the-art bathrooms, four-poster beds and unsurpassable views – into the environment. And what an environment: a 1,750-hectare reserve that is home to more than 740 different species of plants and the impossibly white sands of Walker Bay.

● www.grootbos.com

23 The Taj Mahal Palace Mumbai

Try to forget what happened here in 2008 and focus instead on the illustrious history of India's most celebrated hotel. Opened in 1903, it has played host to everyone from the Beatles to Barack and Michelle Obama. Its vaulted ceilings, tranquil courtyard and airy, colonial bedrooms are a marvellous introduction to traditional Indian style.

Excellent spa, too.

● www.tajhotels.com

24 Aria Prague

Malá Strana's most appealing former palace serenades its demanding guests with jazzy modernist designs by Rocco Magnoli; top-drawer in-room stereos equipped with Mozart and Beethoven playlists; views overlooking a formal Baroque garden straight out of Shakespeare; and a staff musicologist. The incredible location and grand service complete the magic.

● www.ariahotel.net

25 The Hotel das Cataratas, Iguaçu Falls, Brazil

Opened in 1958, the 193-room Hotel das Cataratas has a pink-



and-white facade, extensive tropical gardens and colonial-style rooms with hardwood floors, and lies deep inside Brazil's Iguacú National Park. Guests who rise early can enjoy a near private viewing of a cacophonous, 2.5-mile-wide waterfall aptly described as "an ocean falling into an abyss", then take dreamy walks through a naturally spritzed rainforest rich with colourful birds and flowers.

● www.hoteldascataratas.com

26 The Sukhothai

Bangkok

Appropriately named after an ancient Thai capital, the Sukhothai is palatial in size, style and décor, contemporary in service and amenities. If you want traditional Thai elegance – in fabrics, cuisine, art and ancient Khmer-style carvings – this is arguably the best that Bangkok has to offer, with its rooms the very definition of Far Eastern luxury.

● www.sukhothai.com

27 The Ritz,

Madrid

Opened by King Alfonso XIII in 1910, Madrid's grandest five-star hotel has just celebrated its centenary, an event marked by the revamping of rooms and the luxurious spa and gym. All 167 rooms and suites are different. The location is superb, by the Prado museum and a short walk from the Retiro park.

● www.ritz.es

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28 Abbaye de la Bussière
Bussière, France

When the British Cummings family arrived at this former Cistercian abbey in 2005, they took vows of luxury and elegance – now amply fulfilled. Slotted into the hidden Ouche (pron: “Oosh”) valley and surrounded by 35-acre grounds, the magnificent old pile is sumptuous with comfort, stately style and temptations enough to distract the most ascetic of abbots. Not least in the Michelin-starred restaurant. Among the very best Burgundian establishments, in short.

• www.abbaye-de-la-bussiere.com

29 Château de la Barre
Sarthe dépt (near the Loire Valley, France)

The de Vanssay family has occupied the honey-stoned chateau since the 15th century. The present, 20th count and his Anglo-American countess welcome you as if all those centuries have been building up to your arrival. There's a convivial voluptuousness about the public rooms and bedrooms, all restored in the brightest possible period style. Stateliness is softened by civilised gaiety – notably at dinner with the hosts. Outside, the chateau grounds stretch for ever. Beyond them, the Loire Valley.

• www.chateaudelabarre.com

More than £300 per room per night**30 Crillon**
Paris

For sheer style, there is nowhere in Paris – possibly in the world – to beat the Hôtel de Crillon. The polished marble floors, the gilded stucco, the glittering chandeliers, and the oh-so-discreet and efficient service are the epitome of what a palace hotel should be. Rooms vary enormously – some are palatial, some much more modest – but all are smart. The showpiece restaurant, Les Ambassadeurs, has one of the best wine lists anywhere.

• www.crillon.com

31 Four Seasons George V
Paris

Further up towards the Arc de Triomphe, and much bigger and

perhaps a little brassier than the Crillon, with slightly showier service, the George V vies for the top spot in Paris. It has an Art Deco rather than an 18th-century heritage, but the feeling is just as much that of a city palace. The rooms – of a good size and more consistent than the Crillon – are in Louis XV style. Le Cinq is the gastronomic restaurant, currently holding two Michelin stars.

• www.fourseasons.com/paris

32 Le Taha'a
French Polynesia

This private resort offers one of the last chances to see what French Polynesia was like before it got too popular. Set on the small islet of Motu Tautau, it offers that winning honeymoon formula of overwater villas, spacious decking, complete privacy, faultless service and shallow azure waters. The villas themselves are spacious, with dark wood furnishing, stark white linens and even a glass-topped trunk at the foot of the bed with views of the ocean beneath. For those who prefer a snorkel and mask, the resort's coral garden offers snorkelling to rival that on the very best reefs.

• www.letahaa.com

33 Southern Ocean Lodge

Kangaroo Island, Australia
From the moment you walk into the limestone-clad, open-plan lobby you are confronted by a wraparound screen of floor-to-ceiling glass to show off this wilderness-and-wellness retreat's dramatic Southern Ocean setting – with gentle rollers in summer or thunderous breakers in winter. The views from all 21 suites (each named after a shipwreck) are no less impressive, the food is fresh and imaginative, and the service always comes with a smile. There can be few better places to be shipwrecked.

• www.southernoceanlodge.com.au

34 The Peninsula,
Hong Kong

Opened in 1928, this is the Peninsula group's flagship property and Hong Kong's most historic hotel. You have a choice between the original building or

the soaring tower that was built around the original in 1994 and which commands outstanding views of Victoria Harbour and beyond. The service remains the best in modern hospitality; the restaurants, particularly the French-influenced Gaddi's and the Philippe Starck-designed Felix, are superb; and the traditional afternoon tea, taken in the glorious lobby, remains one of the former colony's great traditions.

• www.peninsula.com/Hongkong

35 Four Seasons
New York

From the moment you walk into the soaring, marble lobby, designed by IM Pei, you know you are in a grand hotel. It is modern grand, for it was only completed in 1991. Since then, however, it has towered over Manhattan's hospitality landscape and is one of *the* places to be seen in New York. The concierges are walking encyclopedias, the location on 57th and Park is central uptown, and the 364 rooms are bright, with silk-lined walls and furniture of English sycamore. From rooms above the 40th floor, there are superb views of Central Park. L'Atelier du Joël Robuchon is also worth a visit.

• www.fourseasons.com/newyork

36 The Gleneagles Hotel
Auchterarder

Staff here make it seem the most natural thing in the world to get every detail right. It's expensive, but good value for money, with access to 850 scenic acres of Perthshire, a shooting school, gun-dog school, off-road driving centre, tennis and croquet – not to mention a superb spa and three championship golf courses. Standards are universally high, and there is a refreshing lack of stuffiness – guests of all ages are made to feel very welcome.

• www.gleneagles.com

37 Villa San Michele
Florence

A converted 15th-century Franciscan monastery (with a façade reputedly designed by Michelangelo), the Villa San Michele has 46 rooms with



magnificent views over Florence and the hills of Tuscany, an achingly romantic restaurant and terracotta-floored, butter-yellow rooms.

● www.villasanmichele.com

38 Little Palm Island

Florida Keys

A tiny private island reached by speedboat from the Lower Florida Keys, Little Palm Island was once a favourite playground of presidents (Roosevelt and Truman) and still draws American celebrities (Michael Jordan, Ivana Trump, Drew Barrymore) to its 30 secluded bungalows. The beach is narrow, but the sense of peace and privacy (there are no televisions or phones) is first-class.

● www.littlepalmisland.com

39 Parrot Cay

Turks & Caicos

A 1,000-acre private-island resort with a chic, almost south-east Asian vibe, 35 minutes by boat from Providenciales. With a white-sand beach, holistic spa and two excellent restaurants, it offers the best kind of barefoot luxury. Stay in a private villa, with its own pool, on the beach.

● www.parrotcay.com.bz

40 COMO Shambhala

Begawan Giri, Ubud, Bali

The former, and somewhat eccentric, Begawan Giri hotel was transformed into the world's most luxurious – and effective – holistic retreat by COMO hotels in 2005. Everything, from the location and vernacular design to the spa and wellbeing programmes, is impeccable. With butler service to ensure that nothing dissipates that just-back-from-the-spa feeling, it's impossible not to feel rejuvenated.

● www.begawan-giri.com

41 Maia

Seychelles

Thirty simple but beautifully done villas, all with private pool and butler service, on a secluded peninsula landscaped with exotic plants. With 230 staff, service at this French-managed resort is exemplary; and though it is well placed for exploring the other

islands on the resort's own luxury yacht or Mahe's lively capital, 30 minutes' drive away, you will probably want to stay put most of the time. Gorgeous spa with outdoor treatment rooms.

● www.maia.com.sc

42 The Dorchester

London

There are several contenders in London, including Claridge's, the Connaught and now the Savoy. But for us, the Dorchester has pulled ahead this year: superb restaurants (we even like the Scottish murals in The Grill), skilful but friendly service and that unbeatable location overlooking Hyde Park. The urban-chic design of the new spa is innovative and wholly appropriate for the location. Our favourite room: The Terrace Suite.

● www.thedorchester.com

43 Park Hyatt

Tokyo

The *Lost in Translation* hotel is still the one to head for in Tokyo and it begins on the 38th floor of the Shinjuku Park Tower. Bedrooms are sumptuous, with fabulous views of the city. Overall attention to detail is second to none. Head for the New York Bar and Grill on the 52nd floor – it's expensive but the cocktails and steaks are worth it.

● www.hyatt.com

44 Four Seasons

Istanbul

Housed within the ochre-coloured walls of a former prison, the austere cells of the infamous Sultanahmet jail have been replaced with large, airy rooms and Ottoman-era antiques. The atmosphere is elegant and rarefied (just 65 rooms and suites), and the hotel's verdant courtyard provides a welcome respite from the hubbub of one of the world's most populous cities. Hagia Sophia and the Topkapi Palace are moments away, while the call to prayer from the neighbouring Blue Mosque resounds evocatively throughout the hotel.

● www.fourseasons.com/istanbul

45 Jumbay Bay

Antigua

Serene, idyllic and utterly cut off from reality. Nowhere does sheer escapism better than this tiny island resort just off the coast of Antigua. You arrive by motorlaunch, take up residence in your beachside suite – most of them completely rebuilt in 2009 – and relax under a palm tree. And that is it. An army of helpers will ensure you have everything you need, and all meals, facilities and drinks (except for premium wines) are included in the room rate. Reality hits only when you pay the bill.

● www.jumbaybayresort.com

46 PuLi

Shanghai

In a city where new luxury hotels seem to be going up every month, the PuLi is a truly cool and tasteful medium-sized property in the Jing'An district. The rooms are large, modern and well designed, and feature large flat-screen televisions, iPod docking station, Bose Wave music system and free high-speed internet. The cool marble lobby has a bar more than 100ft long and there is a small but lovely garden just outside the lobby. Food in the Jing'An restaurant is outstanding.

● www.thepuli.com

47 Villa Feltrinelli

Lake Garda

Charming 19th-century Italian villa with 13 rooms in the main house and seven more tucked away in the grounds (go for the Boat House). Fabulous food cooked by chef Stefano Baiocco which you can eat wherever you like: by the lake or pool, in a gazebo in the grounds, or even in the villa's well-stocked wine cellar. You really do feel as if you're staying with friends, albeit ones that own a fabulous lakeside villa. This is everything a small, intimate country-house hotel should be.

● www.villafeltrinelli.com

48 Villa Spalletti Trivelli

Rome

The spectacular Roman town house of the blue-eyed and blue-blooded Count Giangiacomo Spalletti Trivelli has been turned into the city's most aristocratic luxury hotel. Ideally placed between the shopping street of Via Nazionale and the presidential



palace, this antique and art-stuffed palazzo boasts opulent interiors of such historic significance that they are listed by the Italian heritage ministry. But there's no haughtiness or condescension: the customer is king here and from the spa to the turndown service, it all works to perfection.

● www.villaspalletti.it

49 Residenza Napoleone III Rome

Not a hotel in the conventional sense, but then it's hard to imagine any hotel in Rome, or any other city for that matter, with rooms as sumptuous as the two suites in this majestic 16th-century palazzo. The antiques, Roman busts, priceless

oil paintings and vast, silk-draped canopy bed are much as they were when Napoleon III lived here in 1830. And unlike many of Rome's luxury hotels, which languish on, or beyond, the peripheral Via Vittorio Veneto, the patrician Residenza is centrally located on Via Condotti, Rome's smartest shopping street.

● www.residenzanapoleone.com

50 The Carlyle New York

Discreet, elegant, the Upper East side retreat for the likes of Mick Jagger and David Bowie when they are in town. This is Old World New York with all the modern facilities you would expect from a

contemporary hotel. It also has two of the best entertainment rooms uptown: Bemelmans, the famous bar that is both classy piano lounge and purveyor of the best martinis in the neighbourhood; and the Café Carlyle, a wonderful supper club where you can hear, among others, Woody Allen and his trad jazz band when he's not filming.

● www.thecarlyle.com

● Contributions from Graham Boynton, Adrian Bridge, Simon Horsford, Tim Jepson, Francisca Kellett, Lee Marshall, Maggie O'Sullivan, Natalie Paris, Anthony Peregrine, Nigel Richardson, Caroline Shearing, Charles Starmer-Smith, Joanna Symons, Nigel Tisdall, Will Tizard and Nick Trend



ALAMY





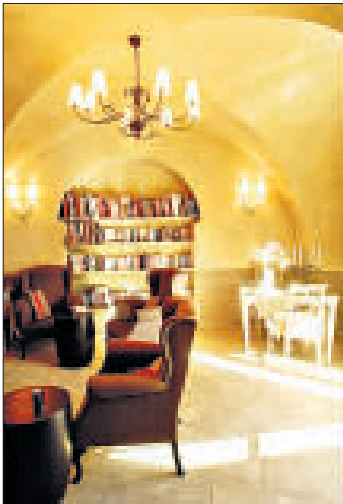
Jumby Bay Resort in Antigua, top, is the ultimate in Caribbean escapism; the Four Seasons George V in Paris has the feel of a city palace





The New York Grill at Tokyo's Park Hyatt, top, offers magnificent views; period style at Château de la Barre; the romantic Villa San Michele in Florence





The Taj Mahal Palace Hotel, opposite the Gateway of India, has hosted presidents and rock royalty; bathtubs strewn with petals are just one of the luxurious features of the Rasa Sayang Resort in Penang; grab a drink at the futuristic East Hotel, one of the coolest places in Hamburg; and the secluded Couvent d'Hérépian has been modernised without losing its integrity



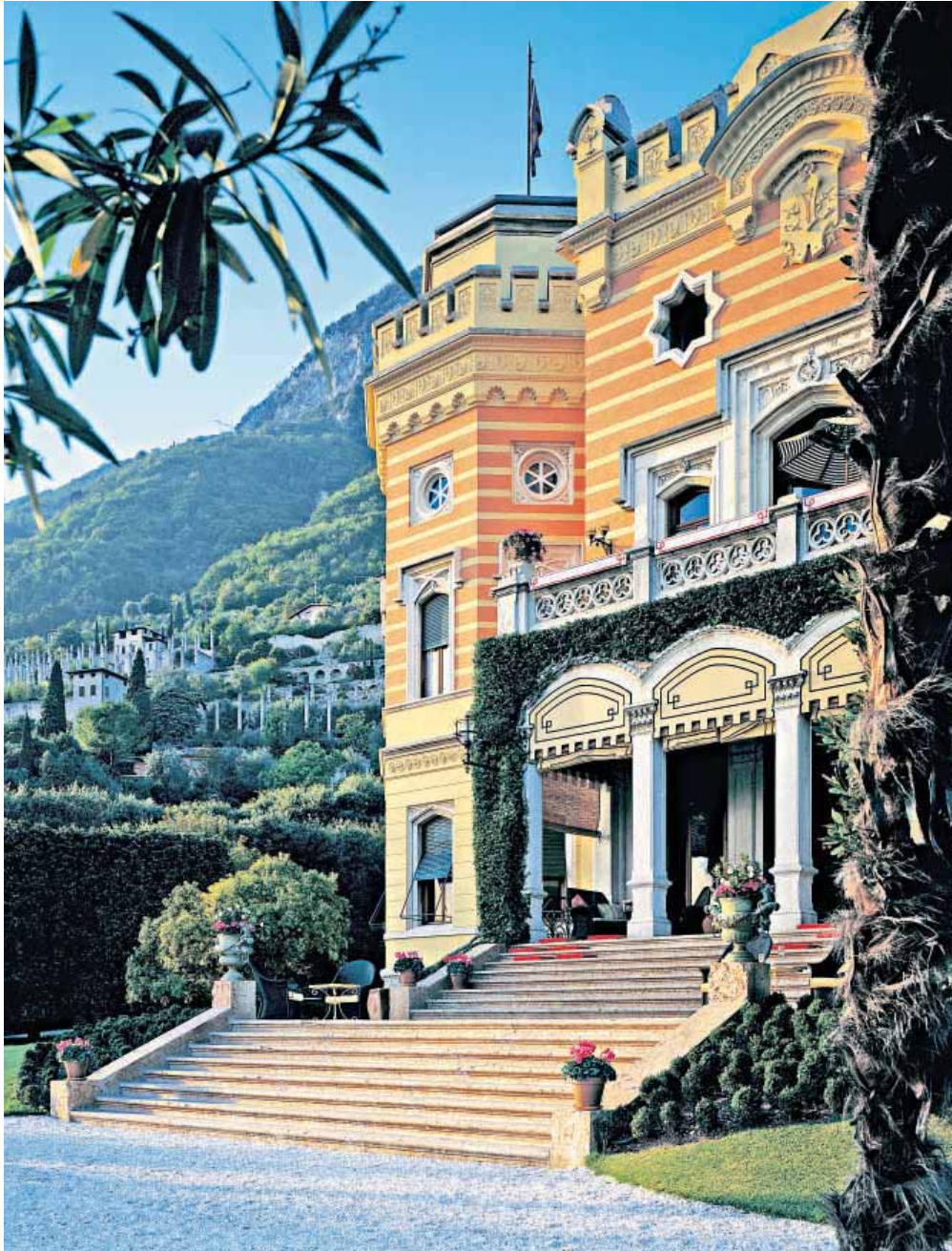


JON HICKS/CORBIS/ALAMY

Soak up some French sea air at the elegant Hotel de Toiras in Ile de Ré, with views overlooking St Martin's harbour







The Villa Feltrinelli on Lake Garda is everything a small, intimate country-house hotel should be

