

WHERE TO STAY

INSIDER REPORTS ON THE BEST SPOTS TO BED DOWN. EDITED BY LYDIA BELL

VIVE LA FRANCE!

NEW GALLIC HOTELS AND VILLAS
TO MAKE A BEELINE FOR

The pool at Mas le Gaudre, a restored country house in Provence

PHOTOGRAPH: BRUNO SUET



MAS LE GAUDRE

PROVENCE

This resplendent 18th-century-style mas is just over a mile's cycle or jaunt on foot from the heart of Saint-Rémy-de-Provence – a discreet gate from the gardens opens straight onto the Alpilles hiking paths. Provençal architect Alexandre Lafourcade and his wife, Céline, led a magnificent restoration of its limewashed façades, traditional shutters, timeworn stonework and deeply cosy interiors. On the ground floor, life gravitates towards the vaulted kitchen, which opens onto courtyards and flower-scented gardens.

Built in white stone from Les Baux-de-Provence quarries, it's a handsome spot to whip up ratatouille after returning from the local market. There's a sitting room with original fireplaces and a grand piano; a library that has a billiard table; even an orangery. Eight en suite bedrooms are arranged across the upper floors, finished in muted Provençal palettes of soft blues, ochres and earthy reds, a warm contrast to all that pale stone. There are plenty of corners to explore after breakfast (whipped up by the housekeeper). Alexandre's mother, landscape architect Dominique Lafourcade, designed the gardens that occupy two meadows split by a small stream; their shaded paths, olive and cypress trees, chicken coop and little teahouse tucked into a bamboo grove have views of the grey-blue Alpilles. Long lunches under the trees to the tune of thrumming cicadas, late-afternoon swims in the basin-style pool and starlit dinners are the blissed-out order of the day.

LANIE GOODMAN *From about £2,715 per night; maslegaudre.fr*





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HUCHET BEACH HOUSE

LES LANDES

Tucked behind the dunes, where pine forests and marshes meet the Atlantic, this restored 1858 hunting lodge, with its fishermen's cottages and a tiny chapel, occupies one of the wildest stretches of the Landes coast. Salt air, wide skies and the steady pulse of the sea make this a quietly spectacular beach stay. It's no wonder the late chef Michel Guérard and his wife, Christine, fell in love with this remote and cinematic spot in 1997, gradually restoring the main house and its outbuildings into a family retreat – one that's classified as a historical monument and set within a protected natural reserve. They filled the houses with objects gathered over decades of travel – Chinese lacquer cabinets, African statues, nautical relics, Gien porcelain, richly coloured carpets – to create a lived-in feel. Daughters Éléonore and Adeline now oversee things, including two charming cottages, Rose des Vents and Alouette des Mers. Each has a sunlit bedroom, fireplaces and deep marble bathtubs, along with a housekeeper and private chef. Guests of the cottages have access to the main house – a Landes-pine pavillon anglais with a creamy façade and Basque-red shutters – for lounging and dining. Days follow the tide: early walks along an empty beach, then morning yoga, swimming in the surf, cycling through resin-scented pine forests and drifting by boat along the Courant d'Huchet. At sunset an apéritif of oysters and Guérard Champagne appears, followed by grilled meat or fish from the Bay of Biscay. LG
Cottages from about £1,300 per night; lespresdeugenie.com

VILLA ALMANARRE

CÔTE D'AZUR

Hyères, affectionately known as the City of Palms, was a sunnily-climbed convalescence spot for royalty and wealthy expatriates in the 19th century. These days it's known for a cutting-edge art and design scene and a certain bling-free, laid-back wildness of spirit. Set back above the coast in the hills of Costebelle, newly restored Villa Almanarre dates from 1885. It was built as a winter retreat, and its pistachio-coloured façade, bow windows and friezes by 19th-century architectural ceramicist Jules Paul Loebnitz bring theatrical flair to this quiet spot among the pines. Alexandre and Céline Lafourcade, who also renovated Mas le Gaudre (above left), worked with decorator Juliette Macherey to steer the heritage in a graphic and whimsical direction, with stripes, florals and figurative motifs paired with lime greens, soft pinks, celadon and butter yellow. Shell lamps, scalloped tables, patterned rugs and playful wallpaper soften any sense of formality and the seven en suite bedrooms, children's dormitory, generous living spaces and terraces make the house perfect for celebratory buyouts. The landscaped grounds by Dominique Lafourcade blend exotic planting with a vegetable garden. Fresh eggs are collected from the henhouse in the mornings and it's a short stroll to Almanarre, a long, sandy beach where windsurfers scud. The pièce de résistance is the pool, finished in a glittery golden mosaic that bathes guests in that cure-all Mediterranean light so revered during Hyères' golden age. LG
From about £1,742 per night; @villa.almanarre



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VILLA LA MADONE

CÔTE D'AZUR

From the outside this private retreat reveals little. Designed in the 1980s by Jean-Michel Wilmotte, it perches on a sloping hillside above the coast, hidden behind a gate on a bend in the road. The sheer scale becomes apparent only from the inside. Six luminous bedrooms unfold across a series of levels and terraces linked by stairways and outdoor paths, surrounded by flower-filled stepped gardens by Jean Mus. Oak doors by Axel Vervoordt and works curated by Oraé in collaboration with Galerie Valérie Delaunay define the elegant interiors; after a visit to nearby museums or a jaunt to the local open-air market, one can retreat to the library, a haven of calm lined with art books. At the home's heart is the marble kitchen, its stone sourced from Verona, which invites immersion into the sea view through a wide, steel-framed window with rounded edges. Here guests whip up Provençal feasts or pick treats from menus created by Michelin-starred chef Alain Llorca.

Beyond the main living space the villa opens into pared-down bedrooms in palettes of white, buff and sand, each bathroom sporting a different cut of veined or zigzagging marble. Add to all this a cinema, a gym, a wine cellar curated by sommelier Franck Thomas, a pool facing the Cap Ferrat peninsula that's ensconced in expansive lounging areas, housekeeping staff and a concierge service on speed dial. Oh, and the beach. This secluded spot is set above one of the Riviera's most sought-after stretches, so it's minutes away.

LG From about £47,800 per week; riviera.savills.fr



VILLA JUNOT

PARIS

Montmartre is a legendary artistic cradle. André Breton created Surrealism here and residents Joan Miró and Max Ernst took part in the movement's first exhibition in 1925 – the same year art deco was ratified by an international exposition. A century on, these achievements are celebrated by the rebirth of Villa Junot, the art deco townhouse of Parisian composer and opera singer André Mauprey. Set in an exquisite little Montmartre enclave, it was built in 1926 and opened as a staffed haute rental last summer. Five-bedroom Junot is the sixth French property from Iconic House, founded by Provençal tech entrepreneur Thibaud Elzière and his brother Robin Michel to offer next-level villas with bespoke service for privacy hunters and top-echelon creatives. Theatrically reimagined by Paris's Claves Architecture, the grand salon has a cathedral ceiling, internal Juliet balcony and custom-made carpet emblazoned with the score of *L'Opéra de Quat'sous* translated by Mauprey. Surrealist motifs are everywhere: a dining table creates a skewwhiff optical illusion; a plaster fireplace melts into drapery and a telephone wittily alludes to Dalí's lobster phone. The restored mosaic in the master bathroom recalls the influence of the discovery of Tutankhamun on art deco. Lithographs by Dalí up the ante, alongside a screening room, Technogym and spa painted with Magritte-like clouds. But the real showstopper is the rooftop with glimpses of Sacré-Cœur and the Eiffel Tower.

STEPHANIE RAFANELLI From about £8,640 per night; iconic.house

PHOTOGRAPHS: 3MILLE; ALICE MESGUICH; MARTIN MORRELL/COMO HOTELS & RESORTS.
ARTWORK: MAURO FERREIRA

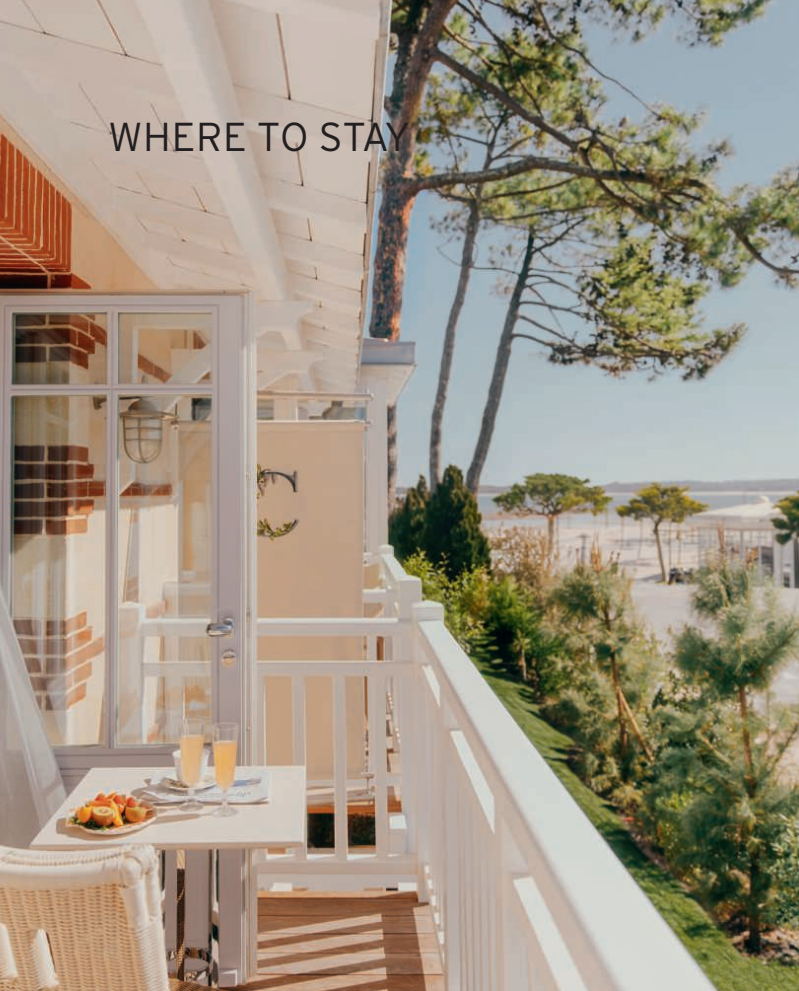
COMO LE BEAUVALLON

CÔTE D'AZUR

Le Beauvallon has ridden Riviera highs and lows since opening in 1914. In 10 acres of palm-shaded gardens sloping to the sea, the burnt-orange belle époque grandee hosted Winston Churchill, Colette and Audrey Hepburn before fading into obscurity, and closing in 2008. Now it's back, reborn under the Singaporean behemoth Como Hotels and Resorts, one of two headline French openings this year (see also Como Cordeillan-Bages on page 50). The beach club, Beauvallon Sur Mer, has a 25-metre mosaic pool surrounded by camomile-yellow umbrellas, a rooftop bar and a seafront restaurant by Dorothée Delaye (who revamped Gabrielle Chanel's former apartment). Guests are spirited to Saint-Tropez by speedboat from its jetty. The dowager's facelift will either raise smiles or eyebrows, depending on tastes. Colourful handblown vases and sculptures are scattered around. Showstopping Beauvallon Suites, with glass bathtubs, and the 2,150-square-foot Como Suite exude a Miami-modern aesthetic, dazzling with white palettes and furnishings, and floor-to-ceiling windows to draw the eye relentlessly to the ocean. Just 42 rooms and suites guarantee the place doesn't get crowded, even in high season. The micro Como Shambhala retreat has a gym and daily yoga. But the biggie is the Med-Asian restaurant, Beauvallon Sur Mer by Yannick Alléno (he of the 18 Michelin stars). Its lightly blanched strawberries with lavender are a world-class finale. DENNIS BRAATZ *Doubles from about £725; comohotels.com*



WHERE TO STAY



VILLA COLETTE

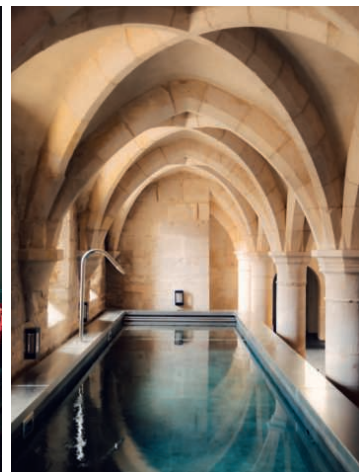
CAP FERRET

For those who return year after year, Cap Ferret – a finger-shaped peninsula about 40 miles west of Bordeaux – has it all: soft-sand beaches; wild coastal landscapes; pine forests; and oysters pulled fresh from the Arcachon basin. “It’s the one place I know that best expresses French quality,” says designer and longtime resident Philippe Starck. Until now the one thing it lacked was a top-drawer five-star hotel. Which is precisely why Starck and his close friend and collaborator Laurent Taïeb of Paris’s Too Hotel created Villa Colette. The newly opened handsome brick and white-painted Arcachon-style home, in a garden set back from the Boulevard de la Plage, looks as if it has always been there. Themed around an invented resident, Colette (a screen legend steeped in “happy nostalgia”), the hotel is awash with playful touches yet captures Cap Ferret’s carefree spirit. In the light-filled restaurant (a good spot for lobster ravioli with a crisp Bordeaux white) there are watercolour portraits of fictional grandes dames on tilted mirrors. A buttercup-yellow lobby decked out with Starck’s custom pieces, and the sun-dappled veranda, the top spot for teatime cakes, melt away urban weariness. And 28 deeply cossetting rooms, including six suites, are a medley of powdery pink stripes, floral rugs and a mirrored frieze with surreal “vintage” postcards. There are electric bikes on tap for exploring the oyster huts along the basin, and surf lessons can be arranged on the wind-whipped Atlantic side. LG Doubles from about £345; villacolette.com

LES SOURCES DE VOUGEOT

BURGUNDY

“God made only water, but man made wine”, so the proverb goes – especially in Burgundy. It’s only natural, then, that Les Sources de Vougeot occupies a converted medieval abbot’s home in the village of Gilly-lès-Cîteaux on the Route des Grands Crus near Dijon. The residence, Château de Gilly, abuts the famed Côte de Nuits vineyards and is the third property from the Collection des Hôtels du Vignoble, which specialises in building discreetly upmarket stays amid France’s best known vineyards. The hospitality group bought it in 2022 before a top-to-toe renovation; now 49 rooms and suites are scattered across several buildings dating from the 14th to the 18th centuries. There’s a mix-and-match approach that works beautifully here: exposed beams, enormous fireplaces, vaulted ceilings and tall windows alongside contemporary mirrored tables, designer chairs, floral wallpaper and modern art. Restaurant-wise guests can choose between the casual L’Auberge des Cîteaux or fine dining at minimalist Le Clos de la Tour, where 21st-century takes on regional classics such as croque escargot – a version of traditional snails with parsley butter – are paired with an impressive Burgundy wine list, bien sur. The viticultural theme extends to the Caudalie Spa, set in a 14th-century wine cellar that now houses a sauna, exercise studio, two pools and rooms for guests who want some vinotherapy: a set of treatments based on – yup – the healing properties of grapes. JANE KNIGHT Doubles from about £310; sources-hotels.com



PHOTOGRAPHS: JULES FOCONE; JULIUS HIRTZBERGER

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AIRELLES LE GRAND CONTRÔLE

PARIS

The first hotel on the grounds of the Palace of Versailles opened in 2021. Its spirit, though, is resolutely 18th century, from the staff's jaunty frock coats to the acres of toile de Jouy and period furniture recreating the inventory of Louis XVI's finance minister, Jacques Necker, a former owner. In Necker's day the bar was a chapel, and his daughter, Madame de Staël, hosted soirees in what's now the elegant salon-slash-library. Neither enjoyed today's Carrara marble-lined spa, trays of Ladurée macarons or banquets in Alain Ducasse's Michelin-starred restaurant (a heady backdrop to breakfast). The hotel's newest ornament, Le Pavillon des Jardiniers, is a privatisable wing with two palatial suites where mercury-spotted mirrors and elegant escritoirs coexist with walk-in wardrobes and Japanese-style toilets. Guests sleep on pillows monogrammed with their initials and can wake like the Sun King to a lantern-bearing butler drawing a bath to the strains of classical music. The wing's informal restaurant, La Table des Jardiniers (Ducasse again), serves up French comfort food – pot-au-feu, faux-filet – and the same views as the suite: the palm-lined Orangerie and the Hundred Steps to the palace. Besides rare access to the gardens, stays include after-hours visits to the Petit Trianon and the royal apartments, so guests can glide down the Hall of Mirrors meeting no other reflection but their own.

CLODAGH KINSELLA *Suites from about £3,985 per night; airelles.com*



COMO CORDEILLAN-BAGES

BORDEAUX

Pauillac, Bordeaux's most prestigious appellation, plays host to this longtime beacon among oenophiles – launched in 1989 by the Cazes family of the nearby Château Lynch-Bages. Now they've blended their nous with new partners Como, whose three-strong French portfolio includes another wine-slanted sibling, in Burgundy, and, as of this spring, a belle époque outpost near Saint-Tropez (see page 47). Regular Como collaborator Paola Navone has tossed out the heavy brown carpets, and a pale-toned palette elevated by velvet and stripes now reigns in the tranquil public spaces and 28 bedrooms. Most overlook the glorious 17th-century turrets crowning reception; the best suites enjoy a private lawn by the lap pool. The gym and sauna are more pared-back than the group's reputation for megawatt spas might suggest, but the food and wine – let's face it, why guests come here – are stellar. In a major coup, the bar-restaurant, whose suntrap terrace hugs the vines, is overseen by Fabien Ferré, the youngest ever chef to rocket straight to three Michelin stars from zero, at Provence's Hôtel & Spa du Castellet. Seafood and vegetables (turbot and lovage are highlights) star on à la carte and set menus, and the cellar stocks 1,600 vintages. A six-minute stroll leads to Bages, whose pretty square, revitalised by the Cazes family, juggles a fine bistro, bazaar and their winery. This is a place to enjoy exclusive tours and tastings, make a bespoke cuvée or point two wheels in the direction of famous Route des Châteaux neighbours such as Mouton-Rothschild and Lafite. CK *Doubles from about £300; comohotels.com*

PHOTOGRAPHS: COMO HOTELS & RESORTS; VINCENT LEROUX