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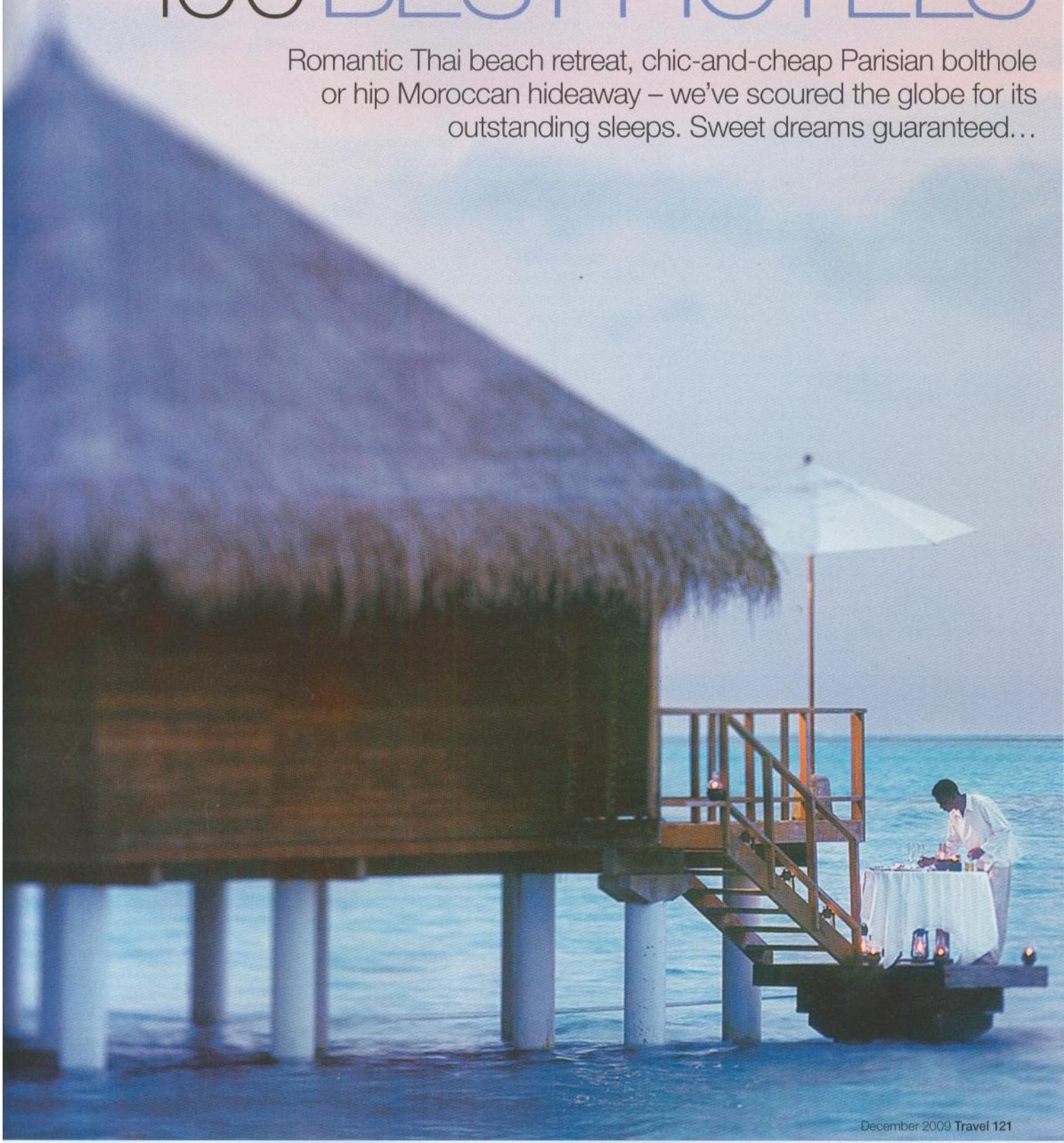
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THE WORLD'S 100 BEST HOTELS

PLUS Paris, Thailand, Edinburgh, Milan, Florida, The Dolomites, Bali, The Caribbean, Malaysia – and the *inside* info on how to get upgraded...

THE WORLD'S 100 BEST HOTELS

Romantic Thai beach retreat, chic-and-cheap Parisian bolthole
or hip Moroccan hideaway – we've scoured the globe for its
outstanding sleeps. Sweet dreams guaranteed...



Europe

1 I want: A five-star London weekend – somewhere classic, but not old-maidish

You need: The Connaught

Because: It was a capital landmark for more than a century – and after a scouring overhaul to blow the cobwebs off last year this Mayfair beauty has been deposited fashionably in the 21st century. Even if you only swing by for a quick Martini in the leather-and-platinum-look back bar, you'll be treated like the grandest guest. Which should persuade you to stay longer next time – ideally in room 518, with its sweeping Afghani-inspired decor.

And how: Doubles from £390, room only (020 7499 7070, www.the-connaught.co.uk).

2 I want: An up-to-the-minute design hotel in an authentic corner of Venice

You need: AD Place

Because: This newly opened 12-room den is a designer dream, where Neo-Baroque (trendy, curly legged tables and chairs) mixes with a touch of Designers Guild (swagged curtains, piles of cushions, stripey wallpaper). Bedrooms are done out in sorbet shades and the whole thing is wrapped up in a period Venetian palace beside a lapping canal.

And how: Doubles from £165, B&B (00 39 041 241 3234, www.adplacevenice.com).

3 I want: A southern-Spanish retreat that's near the beach but not in the thick of things

You need: Casa la Siesta, Andalucía

Because: It's 10 minutes from the beach and 10 minutes from the sugar-cube hilltop village of Vejer de la Frontera, yet this hacienda-style hideaway stranded in the sierras feels nicely cocooned. The welcome is rapturous (beer and soft drinks are on the house); the seven rooms are exquisite, furnished with antiques, chandeliers and roll-top tubs; and the paella one of the best you'll sample in Spain (and it's cooked by an English hostess, Amelia).

And how: Doubles from £158, B&B (00 34 699 619430, www.casalasiesta.com).

4 I want: A well-styled little Paris hotel that's not scarily trendy

You need: Le Marceau Bastille

Because: The central yet not touristy location, Bastille, is a boon: from here you can hot-foot it west into the swinging Marais quarter, or north to the nightlife of Ménilmontant. As for the hotel itself, it's bright, clean, arty (see the lobby exhibits), smart – and if it's a little short on space, the beds are crisply comfy, and the staff always discreetly there for you.

And how: Doubles from £130, B&B (00 33 1 4343 1165, www.hotelmarceaubastille.com).

5 I want: A special place to stay in Nice without the city's *grande-dame* price tag

You need: Hôtel Windsor

Because: The 26 artist-designed rooms of this unassuming lodge, a block or three back from the sea, are gently wacky without being tacky. Each is a one-off, among the highlights No. 23, created to resemble the story inside of a pyramid, with a wall light like a flaming torch; or try No. 116, with its wicker armchairs. It feels colonial, with thick leaves of palms, magnolia, avocado and lemon trees in the pretty hotel garden beyond the windows.

And how: Doubles from £84, room only (00 33 4 9388 5935, www.hotelwindsornice.com).

6 I want: Somewhere comfortable to base myself for the Northern Lights

You need: Hotel Rangá, Iceland

Because: This luxury lodge, one hour east of Reykjavík, is probably the best place on Earth from which to witness the display. Between now and 2014 you've got a better than average chance of catching the show, thanks to exceptional meteorological conditions. Rooms are eccentrically luxurious – splash out on the Antarctic suite and you'll get a whirlpool tub with views of Mount Hekla.

And how: Doubles from £170, B&B (00 354 487 5700, www.hotelranga.is).

7 I want: A romantic base just a cross-Channel hop away in France

You need: Château Tilques, St Omer

Because: Bring a loved one here for a long weekend and he or she will know you mean

business. If romantic resistance doesn't fade when faced with the vast grounds, the soaring Neo-Flemish facade and the sumptuous period comfort, the relationship is doomed. You can still have a jolly nice time, though, exploring St Omer, the splendid La Coupole WWII museum and the Opal coast, before dinner at the chateau's first-rate restaurant.

And how: Doubles from £128, room only (00 33 3 2188 9999, www.chateautilques.com).

8 I want: A time-warped long weekend in old Dublin

You need: The Merrion

Because: This amalgamated row of Georgian townhouses could have been beamed in from the age of Jonathan Swift. Rooms are a period-faithful composite of corning, thick drapes and statement fireplaces. They're more expensive in the original buildings than in the modern annexe, but if you want atmosphere, you certainly won't regret the extra outlay.

And how: Doubles from £130, B&B (00 353 1 603 0600, www.merrionhotel.com).

9 I want: An elegant Bordeaux bolthole that's high on style but low on euros

You need: The Majestic

Because: It's the classiest value-for-money in the world's wine capital: white-stone and wrought-iron dignity and, within, refinement beyond the three-star rating. Rooms may not all be huge, but they have that chic contemporary taste, which typifies smart French women. And all this in the city centre, handy for everything, including excursions to the vineyards.

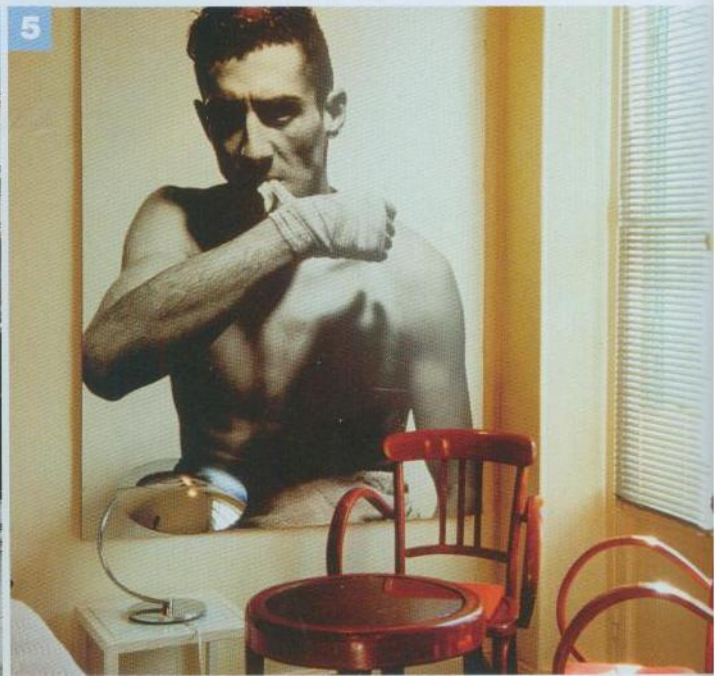
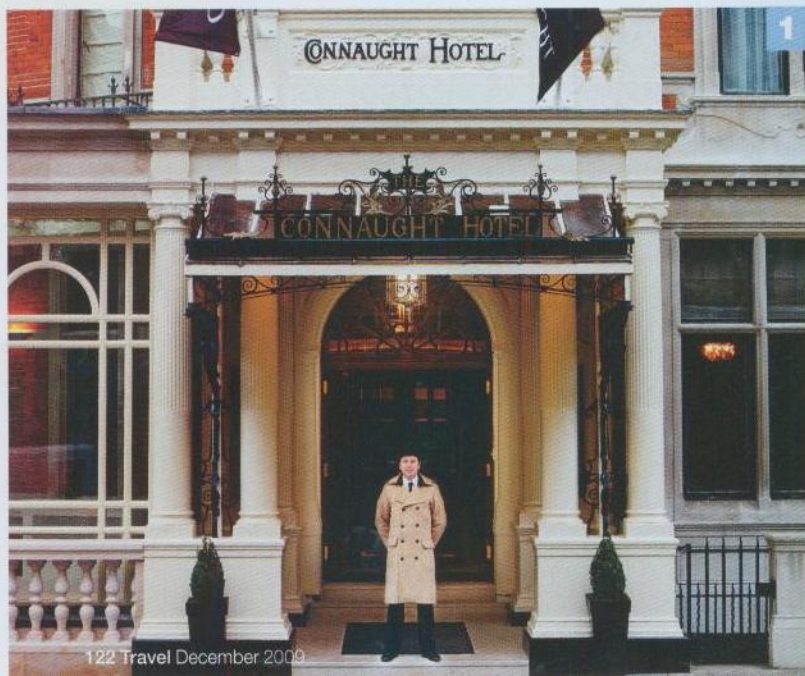
And how: Doubles from £75, room only (00 33 5 5652 6044, www.hotel-majestic.com).

10 I want: A cosy Cornish place serving hearty food

You need: The Gurnard's Head, Nr Zennor

Because: This pub on the wild coastal road between St Ives and Land's End attracts the most discerning diners. Try lamb rump and berry fool, overnight in one of the rooms, then breakfast on kippers and homemade bread.

And how: Doubles from £85, B&B (01736 796928, www.gurnardshead.co.uk).



High dining: Hotel de Rome's rarefied restaurant – the perfect after-party antidote to wild nights in Berlin. Opposite, from left, London landmark The Connaught; artist-designed decor at Hôtel Windsor, Nice

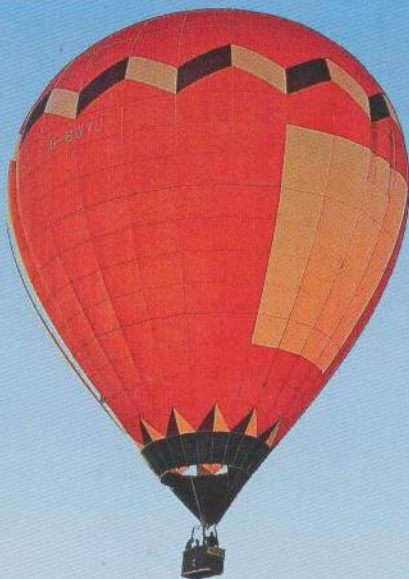


11 I want: A grown-up, luxury crash pad for post-party recovery in Berlin

You need: Hotel de Rome

Because: You're bound to overdo it in Germany's party-loving capital; this former bank, now the hippest outpost of Rocco Forte's upmarket chain, is the best place to recover. You'll notice how elegant it is as you walk through the door, into a lobby sparkling with chandeliers and expensive vases filled with flowers. But behind the Doric columns there's a proper sense of fun: it's most obvious on the rooftop terrace, where city high-rollers meet for sundowners; and in the superb, Blumenthal-esque restaurant. Better still, staff expect misbehavers: breakfast is served until 2pm at weekends and the spa does a 'Cleansing' package for detoxing.

And how: Doubles from £361, room only (00 49 304 606090, www.hotelderome.com). >



12 I want: A decadent country pile to retreat to after a blustery Dartmoor hike

You need: Bovey Castle, Devon

Because: This grand pile froths over with the necessary ingredients for an ego-centric escape: doting staff in livery, valley views, designer drinking dens, chic suites (designed by Camilla Parker Bowles's sister), a stylish spa and Championship golf course. Built by WH Smith's son as a rural pleasure pad on the old London-to-Cornwall train line, it stands out in a county littered with country-house hotels thanks to its location, right on the edge of Dartmoor National Park. The perfect day? Follow one of the Bovey trails over lakes, through fields and past cows, before collapsing with a large G&T by the fire.

And how: Doubles from £175, B&B (01647 445000, www.boveycastle.com).

13 I want: A boutique hotel in a crowd-free corner of Provence

You need: Jardins Secrets, Nîmes

Because: Behind a door in a blank wall, on one of Nîmes' sunny streets, lies one of the most enchanting check-ins in southern France. Staying in this 17th-century townhouse is like visiting classy cousins with art, antiques and the flair for making you feel you belong. The gardens are indeed secret, and there's a spa, should the refinement grow too stressful.

And how: Doubles from £173, room only (00 33 4 6684 8264, www.jardinssecrets.net).

14 I want: An elegant but cheap hotel, bang in the middle of Barcelona

You need: Hostal Oliva, Passeig de Gràcia

Because: Round the corner from the city's

wildest architectural whimsies, in the heart of the elegant Eixample district, this family-run hotel couldn't be more Barcelona if Gaudí were on hand to welcome you out of the hotel's wood-and-glass lift. A fabulous, friendly cheapie despite the pricey address, the hotel has tiny singles, but doubles are roomy and spotless – worth every euro for location alone.

And how: Doubles from £58, room only (00 34 93 93 488 0162, www.hostaloliva.com).

15 I want: To lose myself in the wilds of northern Spain – but not stint on comfort

You need: La Corte de Lugas, Asturias

Because: There is a green hill far away, and spread across it is a village that's so remote, they've not yet heard what happened to the Armada. This is where you will find La Corte,

a farmstead with baronial trappings (plenty of wood-and-stone, galleries, four-posters, a great fire) and a beaming welcome from the González family. You've never been further from a straw donkey – this is a cracking four-star base for the Atlantic-pummelled coast, with the Picos de Europa mountains rising dramatically behind.

And how: Doubles from £95, room only (00 34 985 890203, www.lacortedelugas.com).

16 I want: Affordable luxury and fine food in deepest, most beautiful France

You need: Hotel le Haut Allier, Le Pont-d'Alleyras, Massif Central

Because: Wedged in the Allier gorges, this place is so far off any beaten track that it gets yesterday's sunshine. The Haut Allier was

once a repair for anglers; now it's been given a friendly design makeover – all tree sculptures and metal installations – and a complete food overhaul. It's a hell of a spot to find in the middle of mountainous nowhere.

And how: Doubles from £75, room only (00 33 4 7157 5763, www.hotel-lehautallier.com).

17 I want: A discreet, celebrity-endorsed hideaway in Mallorca

You need: S'Hotel D'es Puig, Deià

Because: Mallorca is supposedly home to sun, sea and sunburned Brits. But a mere hop from the tourist crush around Palma lies Deià, a tiny village in the island's north. This peaceful stone hideaway is tucked among orange groves, with a pool shaded by poplars. The closest you'll get to a rowdy gathering here will be spotting a famous face or two mingling with musicians in the local taverna.

And how: Doubles from £112, B&B (00 34 971 639409, www.hoteldespuig.com).

18 I want: An Amalfi Coast love-nest that radiates classic movie-star glamour

You need: Hotel Santa Caterina, Amalfi

Because: Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton hid out here after falling in love and causing a scandal on the set of *Cleopatra*. Since then, generations of VIPs (from Brangelina to the Clintons) have sought refuge at this 19th-century palazzo on the summit of a cliff. The Santa Caterina tumbles down to the Med in a series of citrus groves and terraces, two glass lifts descend to a pool and rocky cove, and a vast wine cellar and mouth-watering menu at the restaurant tickle your tastebuds.

And how: Doubles from £220, B&B (00 39 089 871012, www.hotelsantacaterina.it).

19 I want: To do the Isle of Wight in style

You need: The Hambrough, Ventnor

Because: This seaside retreat is a chintz-free vision of neutral decor and wrought-iron balconies. Michelin-starred Chef Robert Thompson has raised the standard of the hotel's restaurant, while the seven bedrooms have views of St Boniface Down and azure sea, fringed by palms thanks to the island's balmy microclimate. Blink and you'd swear it was the French Riviera.

And how: Doubles from £170, B&B (01983 856333, www.thehambrough.com).

20 I want: A hip, but also homey, hideaway in fashion-obsessed Milan

You need: Townhouse 31

Because: In this too-cool-for-school city, a cosy retreat is a welcome surprise. The lobby casts an out-of-Africa spell with glowing rugs, tribal art and cacti, while rooms display chic natural tones. Flex your cards in the designer showrooms on nearby Corso Venezia, then recover with a Martini in the 31's courtyard bar.

And how: Doubles from £158, B&B (00 39 027 0156, www.townhouse.it).

21 I want: The newest and hottest of all Barcelona's 'statement' design hotels

You need: W Barcelona

Because: This is the first architectural head-turner on the seafront since Hotel Arts opened 15 years ago with its unmissable white-steel

'exoskeleton'. W – you may know the tongue-in-cheek, disco-design brand – now rises in competition, like a giant yacht sail billowing 26 storeys over the port. It's a monster – 473 nightclubby bedrooms behind a facade of silvery glass – but it's a beauty. Particularly the summit bar, looking out over shore and city.

And how: Doubles from £252, room only (00 34 93 295 2800, www.starwoodhotels.com).

22 I want: Somewhere smart, with an open-air pool, for a summer weekend in Istanbul

You need: Four Seasons Hotel Istanbul at the Bosphorus

Because: The city clusters along the lazy blue Bosphorus, and this recent arrival is the best on the waterfront: a revamped Ottoman palace. Insist on a room in the main building rather than the plain new wings, then grab your cozzie and head down to a cabana by the pool. Stay on for sunset drinking and dining at the terrace bar and restaurant, and make the most of that magic aquatic view.

And how: Doubles from £422, B&B (00 90 212 381 4000, www.fourseasons.com/bosphorus).

23 I want: Quirky luxury in the Lake District

You need: Randy Pike, Ambleside

Because: This one-time hunting lodge was christened back in the 19th century, so don't blame owners Andy and Chrissy for the daft name. They've converted part of their house into two gorgeous guestrooms, decorated with quirky wallpaper and flea-market style furniture; each has a patio with views across the Wray Castle Estate to Windermere. If the

rain holds off, breakfasts of smoked salmon and scrambled eggs are served alfresco, as Jemima Puddle-Duck look-alikes waddle by.

And how: Doubles from £180, B&B (01539 436088, www.randypike.co.uk).

24 I want: A designer 'find' in Florence

You need: Riva Lofts

Because: This all-suite hotel is a 30-minute amble along the River Arno from the city centre (you can speed up the commute by borrowing one of Riva's antique bikes). But what you lose in location you gain in apartment-sized rooms and a garden with pool and hammocks. The hotel used to be the home of architect Claudio Nardi (he's designed shops for Dolce & Gabbana), and the bare-brick interiors filled with designer furniture are super-stylish.

And how: Doubles from £192, B&B (00 39 055 713 0272, www.rivalofts.com).

25 I want: A restaurant with rooms in a hip and happening London neighbourhood

You need: The Fox & Anchor, Clerkenwell

Because: This inviting sliver of a pub serves real ale, meat from nearby Smithfield market and goose-fat chips. It's a waist-busting spread, but if you've booked one of the six rooms upstairs, you won't have to heave yourself far afterwards. These are about as far from your average chintzy pub rooms as you could imagine: metallic hues, free-standing baths, velvety furnishings and plasma screens.

And how: Doubles from £112, room only (020 7250 1300, www.foxandanchor.com). >



Clockwise from top left, front stunner: The Fox & Anchor's fine facade; fish dish at The Hambrough, Isle of Wight; view the Bosphorus from Istanbul's latest Four Seasons; W Barcelona bedroom



26 I want: Somewhere cheap and funky in central Amsterdam

You need: Citizen M

Because: Rooms come with Phillips 'mood pads' that control just about everything. Choose green, pink, red or blue lighting, and an appropriate soundtrack (nodding off or getting ready to hit the town?). Loos and showers are contained neatly in futuristic, frosted-glass capsules, leaving room for an enormous bed and precious little else. You check in via computer, but there are helpful staff on hand, should you find yourself overwhelmed by the gadgetry. **And how:** Doubles from £74, room only (00 31 208 117055, www.citizenm.amsterdamcity.com).

27 I want: A clean, comfortable seaside B&B serving excellent food in Wales
You need: The Porth Tocyn Hotel, Abersoch
Because: This North Wales retreat has been in the same family for 60 years and some of the furnishings (flowery armchairs, grandfather clocks) look as if they've been around longer, but that's part of its charm. Kids can splash in the heated outdoor pool, and days are spent walking along dune-backed beaches. The restaurant is the best in the area – go for seafood bisque followed by tender Welsh lamb.
And how: Doubles from £90, B&B (01758 713303, www.porthtocynhotel.co.uk).

28 I want: A novelty check-in this Yuletide that's fun for parents and children
You need: Hotel Kakslauttanen & Igloo Village, Lapland
Because: The 20 glass domes peeping out of the snow at this Lapland hotel make it look like a fairy-lit UFO landing site. Inside these heated, snow-muffled cocoons, you can lie on your bed, swathed in cosy fur throws, and gaze at the lovely Aurora Borealis for hours. There's pampering in store, too, at the world's largest smoke sauna, followed by snowy treks through the Narnia-esque forest to pan for gold.
And how: Double igloos from £310, B&B (00 358 16 667100, www.kakslauttanen.fi).

29 I want: To holiday around the Italian Lakes, in true Grand Tour fashion
You need: Grand Hotel Villa Serbelloni, Bellagio, Lake Como
Because: Affluent elegance has long measured itself against the natural splendour of Lake Como, and nowhere is more affluent and elegant than the Serbelloni. Rising at the point where Como does the splits, it's the sort of place that US billionaires copy, chandelier for chandelier, in the Arizona desert. Arrive with an entourage to do justice to the frescoes, carpets, marble and string quartet at dinnertime.
And how: Doubles from £340, B&B (00 39 031 950216, www.villaserbelloni.com).

30 I want: An elegant escape on a fine stretch of French-Basque coast
You need: Villa Catrie, Guéthary
Because: Guéthary is one of the loveliest villages along this stretch of Basque coast – a collection of white houses trimmed with oxblood-red woodwork. At its heart is the retro-elegance of Villa Catrie. It shouldn't be a surprise; Edwardian style has been part of the Basque mix since our Prince of Wales swanned about Biarritz, just up the road. The Catrie does it brilliantly, without walloping the wallet.
And how: Doubles from £111, room only (00 33 5 5947 5900, www.villa-catrie.com).

31 I want: A romantic Dutch retreat with all the 'canal-view-trimmings'
You need: Seven One Seven, Amsterdam
Because: Tucked away on Prinsengracht, a mere skip from the grand art and artefact-filled Rijksmuseum, this 19th-century canal house is one of Amsterdam's poshest addresses. Eight rooms and suites are a luxuriant mish-mash of high windows, bold colours, Modernist touches and swirly white

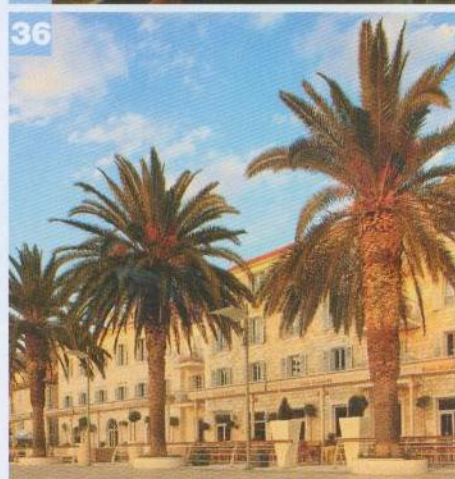
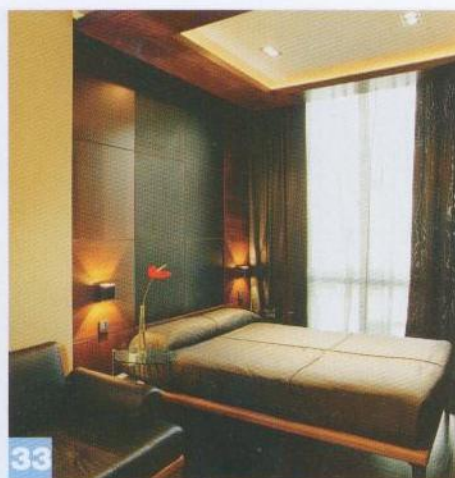
plasterwork. And with no restaurant, spa or other hotel furniture, it's like staying with a rich relative: stoke the fantasy by the fire in the drawing room over afternoon tea.
And how: Doubles from £390, B&B (00 31 20 427 0717, www.717hotel.nl).

32 I want: Somewhere small but perfectly formed for a boozy weekend in Burgundy
You need: L'Auberge de la Quatr'Heurie, Bèze, Burgundy
Because: With beams, hanging hams, meat roasting on spits and a smiling host with mutton-chops, the Quatr'Heurie is so much the typical *auberge* that it's almost a caricature. Corridors weave and creak, bedrooms show up where you least expect them. Food is copious at traditional tables. There's even a wry humour: one suite has a double bed, double bath and double toilet. All that, and Bèze is up there among Burgundy's most comely villages.
And how: Doubles from £62, room only (00 33 3 8075 3013, www.quatrheurie.com).

33 I want: A super-trendy design hotel, slap-bang in the centre of Madrid
You need: Hotel Urban
Because: This exercise in leather, glass and metal is as close to Madrid's heart as you could hope to be – five minutes from the hub of Puerta del Sol, on the same stretch as the Spanish Parliament and in the middle of the Paseo del Arte. Owned by Barcelona hotelier-cum-archaeologist Jordi Clos, Urban is stuffed full of finds from his digs, from the artefacts in the rooms to the museum in the basement. Madrilenos don't come here for the broken pots, though, they come for the vibe, packing into the ground-floor Glass Bar early – that's anytime after 10pm – and heading to the rooftop pool terrace later.
And how: Doubles from £180, room only (00 34 91 787 7770, www.derbyhotels.com).

34 I want: A tranquil base for a motoring holiday in the mountains of Languedoc
You need: The Couvent d'Hérépien, Hérépien
Because: A sense of tranquillity hangs about this ex-convent, even if little of the monastic remains. This is for sybarites who need their calm complemented with modern colour and comfort. There's a tiny reception and next to no formality in a downstairs warren (dining-kitchen, bar/lounge, terrace) where you wander at will, a guest, not an intruder. There's a dinky spa and a pool in the garden, while beyond, Languedoc rises to mountains, gorges and rivers.
And how: Doubles from £105, room only (00 33 467 118715, www.couventherepien.com).

35 I want: An authentic taverna holiday on Captain Corelli's island of Kefallonia
You need: Nicholas Taverna, Fiskardo
Because: This simple, terracotta-roofed B&B, overlooking the yacht-dotted harbour of Fiskardo, is all about the outlook, stretching to the island of Ithaca (Odysseus's hometown). Nicholas, the inn's proud proprietor, often charms his guests into an ouzo-fuelled Greek dance, and the Med beyond seems to sway in time to the music. Peek from the terrace:



Above, from top, city sleek: suite at Hotel Urban, in the heart of Madrid; Riva Hotel, on the palm-lined promenade in hip Hvar Town

Odysseus would have given 1,000 ships for this view, and you've got it at a pinch.
And how: Doubles from £55, room only (00 30 26740 41307, www.greekhotel.com/ionian/kefaloni/fiskardo/nicolas).

36 I want: Style, comfort and nightlife on the Croatian Riviera
You need: Riva Hotel, Hvar
Because: Most visitors to this fashionable Adriatic summer spot end up at the Riva's bar, a waterfront terrace where Caipirinhas are sipped on cubist wicker seats. It's all seconds from the Carpe Diem club, a celebrity haunt. Check in to the hotel and you can stumble back at the end of the night to one of the boutique-chic rooms, exuding panache in black-and-white photos and harbour views.
And how: Doubles from £157, B&B (00 385 2175 0750, www.suncanihvar.com).

37 I want: Genteel lodgings in old York
You need: The Grange Hotel
Because: Five minutes' from York's ancient city walls, The Grange excels in very English, very old-fashioned cossetting. Rooms here aren't themed or full of trendy furniture. Instead, 36 warm and elegant bedrooms (three with four-posters) soothe the senses with duck-egg blues and creams, in an escalating scale of ruffles and twirls. Expect a church-bell wake-up call on Sunday – and roast dinner at the excellent restaurant.
And how: Doubles from £130, B&B (01904 644744, www.grangehotel.co.uk). >