

Six of the world's best hotels

A selection of the most exciting places to stay in 2011

Rural retreat in the UK

Coworth Park, Berkshire

Britain has “yet another stylish country-house hotel” – and this latest addition to the pack is perhaps the finest, says Harper's Bazaar. Part of the Dorchester Collection, Coworth Park sits on a 240-acre estate near Ascot, just 45 minutes from London.

At its heart is a whitewashed Georgian mansion, formerly the residence of the 17th Earl of Derby, which offers 30 guest rooms, “lavish” public spaces and a formal restaurant. There are a further 30 rooms in a converted stableblock, some with free-standing baths and all with “original abstract and equine artwork”. Elsewhere on the estate are several cottages, a lakeside house with three bedrooms, and a “rusticated eatery” helmed by the Michelin-starred chef John Campbell. The “eco-luxe” spa has a large indoor pool, relaxation area and gym. 01344-876 600, www.coworthpark.com; from £253pp b&b.



Luxury in Laos

La Résidence Phou Vao, Luang Prabang

With its heady mixture of gleaming temples and crumbling French colonial architecture, the Laotian town of Luang Prabang is “probably the loveliest in Southeast Asia”. And La Résidence Phou Vao is its most charming hotel, says Tatler. Low-key and “timelessly in tune” with its surroundings, it is like a “colonial eyrie” above the town, calm and yet within earshot of its evocative sounds: “the cluck-cluck of chickens, far-away drums”. The food is “earthy and delicious” – “curries appear in earthenware pots, pyramids of rice are wrapped in banana leaves, beef broths come in huge glass bowls”. At night it is magical, with candles hoisted into the treetops and set adrift in jars on the pool. 00856-71 212 194, www.residencephouvao.com. Cleveland Collection (0845-450 5732) offers five nights from £1,615, incl. flights and transfers.



A family weekend in the Cotswolds

Calcot Manor, Gloucestershire

Calcot Manor is a “plush” country-house hotel that is ideal for families, says Condé Nast Traveller. Set in 220 acres of meadowland outside Tetbury in the Cotswolds, it has 35 rooms, all individually decorated with “luxurious” furnishings. Most are housed in converted barns and stables beside the main building, which dates from the 14th century. There are two eating places – the Conservatory and the Gumstool Inn, a traditional pub – and the spa is “fantastic”, with a 16-metre pool, outdoor spa pool and sauna. But best of all are the facilities for kids: a crèche open every day from 9am to 5.30pm, and a play area for those aged eight and over, equipped with games consoles, computers and a cinema. There's even a website, www.calcotkids.com, to explain what's on offer. 01666-890391; doubles from £240.



Escape to the New Zealand wilderness

Matakauri Lodge, New Zealand

Queenstown, on New Zealand's spectacular South Island, is all about adventure – hiking, heli-skiing, riding. But Matakauri is different, says Harper's Bazaar. On the shore of Lake Wakatipu, this “bijou retreat” is a good base for anyone wanting a part of the action, but is even better for “quiet contemplation”. Overlooking the jagged peaks of the Remarkables, it recently reopened after an overhaul. Inside, everything is fresh and light but saturated with colour, “cleverly mirroring the landscape”. With log fires in each of the 11 villas, it is “intoxically comfortable”, and the food is “exquisite”. If that doesn't lull you into a state of bliss, the spa and “views of *Lord of the Rings* country” will. www.matakauri.co.nz. The Ultimate Travel Company (020-7386 4646) offers a nine-night trip, with three nights at Matakauri, from £7,875pp.



A historic hotel in France

La Mirande, Avignon

La Mirande is like a “grand and gracious private house”, says Tatler – but one with a deliciously “exotic” edge. Originally the palace of a 14th century cardinal, it feels like something out of *Dangerous Liaisons* thanks to its beautiful 17th century façade and the horde of 18th and 19th century treasures within. The Stein family, its owners since 1987, have given every space its own character – from the 21 guest rooms to the glass-covered atrium, where pastries are in constant supply; the Salon Rouge with its “heavenly” silk wallpaper; and the garden, overlooked by the walls of the Popes' Palace. The food is “French cooking at the top of its game”: even the dull-sounding “carrots done three ways” are “exquisite”. “Thomas the sommelier, Roman the barman” – everyone here is “a hit”. 0033 (0) 4 90 14 20 20, www.lamirande-avignon.com. I-escape (www.i-escape.com) offers three nights from £580 for a double room.



Copenhagen's best boutique hotel

Nimb, Copenhagen

Copenhagen is one of Europe's hottest destinations, home to a restaurant recently voted the best in the world (René Redzepi's Noma) and a host of exciting new designers. In the Nimb, it has a boutique hotel to match, says Condé Nast Traveller – a “fantastical yet incredibly hip place” overlooking the Tivoli Gardens, the city's much-loved traditional fairground. The hotel's 19th century façade looks like “an Arabian palace”, but inside it is a temple to modern Nordic design. The décor is pale and “unfussy”, incorporating dark oak and grey Öland stone, and each of the 13 rooms is decked out in rich fabrics and a mix of contemporary and antique furniture. There are three restaurants, one of which – the Michelin-starred Nimb Herman – specialises in contemporary Danish cuisine. 0045-88 70 00 00, www.nimb.dk; doubles from £305.



For The Week's own insider tips and exclusive offers, please visit www.theweektravelclub.com.