

Travel with the wow factor

# THE DESTINATION HOTEL

Whether you're looking for a seaside hotel in tune with its Cornish setting, Parisian swank or an Indian Ocean hideaway, here are six stunning hotels that are not just a place to drop your bags and rest your head, but destinations in themselves

REPORT Laura Ivill



The Scarlet, Cornwall

## WEST COUNTRY LUXE

**The vibe:** Contemporary yet relaxing. The Scarlet sits up on the cliffs overlooking a vast sandy cove on Cornwall's north shore. As a couples' escape, it's all about leaving work behind and padding from beach to spa to terrace, soaking up a vista of sea, sand and sky, reading the papers, then watching the sunset with a cocktail.

**Design notes:** Three hotelier sisters have built a 37-room eco-hotel from scratch. It's entirely inspired by the setting, with the balconies, restaurant and spa all overlooking sweeping Mawgan Porth bay.

**Finishing touch:** The landscaped rainwater swimming pool is unique in Britain.

**While there:** North Cornwall is stunning – take a romantic stroll over to nearby Watergate Bay, cycle the lanes, go horse riding on the beach, or just take the hotel dog, Jasper, for a walk before breakfast. Cornwall off-season is cementing its reputation as an upmarket destination for food lovers. Padstow, home to the Rick Stein empire, is just up the coast.

**Details:** The Scarlet has doubles from £180 per night, including breakfast (scarlethotel.co.uk). Travel by First Great Western from Paddington to Newquay, from £66 first-class return (firstgreatwestern.co.uk).

**Then on to:** Hotel Tresanton, St Mawes (tresanton.com). Olga Polizzi's quintessential Cornish hotel is on the waterfront of a village of whitewashed cottages, right on the tip of the wild and pretty Roseland Peninsula. Polizzi's family have visited St Mawes for years, hence her vision to create a welcoming home-from-home with the whitest, crispest linens and individually furnished rooms. And if you find yourself admiring the art, it's for good reason – Patrick Heron, Barbara Hepworth, Julian Dyson and Stanhope Forbes are among the local painters displayed on the walls.



The Upper House, Hong Kong

## CATHAY SOCIETY

**The vibe:** Spacious haven of serenity. With Thomas Heatherwick as architect, studios of 730sq ft are standard, occupying the top 11 floors of a 49-storey tower. You'll get views over green, wooded hillside and the spectacular harbour. The interiors are green tea, ice blue and grey, revved up with champagne gold and deep purple in the top-floor restaurant, Café Gray Deluxe (above). There, as darkness falls, the light-filled breakfast and tea venue turns into a buzzing dinner destination.

**Design notes:** Andre Fu's design brief was "calm and comfort". He's achieved it with slate, limestone, nickel, marble, oak and bamboo – and scarcely a lick of paint.

**Finishing touch:** With its floor-to-ceiling windows overlooking the water, Fu uses bronze fins to frame the jaw-droppingly good panorama of harbour and sky at Café Gray Deluxe.

**While there:** From the hotel, join the locals in an early-morning stroll up the Mid-levels hillside, then shop for all the big-name brands at Pacific Place.

**Details:** Room-only at the Upper House costs from HK\$2,888 (£241), excluding taxes (upperhouse.com). BA flies London to Hong Kong from £591 return (ba.com).

**Then on to:** The Peace Hotel, Shanghai (fairmont.com/peacehotel). This Art Deco gem on the river front hosted both Noël Coward (who wrote *Private Lives* in one of the suites) and Madame Mao (who ran the Cultural Revolution from here), and is open again after a three-year refit. Then, hide away in secluded luxury at the new Aman resort, Amanfayun, near Hangzhou, arguably the most scenic city in China. It's designed like a traditional village, only for "Aman junkies" – the well-heeled hotel obsessives attached to the brand's service and style (amanresorts.com).



Alila Villas Uluwatu, Bali

### CLIFFTOP SANCTUARY

**The vibe:** Purist-meets-traditional Balinese design in this all-villa resort on a plateau of limestone cliffs on the quieter south side of the island. Each villa has a private pool and cabana overlooking the ocean, with indoor and outdoor rain showers.

Wood, stone, rattan and water features are used to fashion a light and airy, open-plan contemporary aesthetic, which also catches the breeze.

**Design notes:** This resort, just a year old, has been designed to blend in with the landscape. Alila is a small but interesting new chain of hotels, and the resort's sustainability credentials are impressive, including water recycling, energy efficiency, the use of local materials and a social commitment to the community.

**Finishing touch:** Each villa has a butler service tailored to your wishes, from moderately attentive ("private") to significantly more ("indulgent").

**While there:** At Uluwatu, a choice of excursions will help you explore the island, taking you to temples on a guided walk (the kind that includes champagne and canapés) or to local food markets followed by a cooking class. There are also spa therapies and yoga instructors on hand.

**Details:** Alila Villas Uluwatu has one-bedroom villas with pool for US\$907 (£589) per night including breakfast and taxes. Fly Singapore Airlines from London to Bali via Singapore, from £590 return (singaporeair.com).

**Then on to:** Ubud Hanging Gardens (audleytravel.com). This tranquil resort is set amid the lush, green cultural centre of the island.



Viceroy, Palm Springs

### DESERT COOL

**The vibe:** Simply glam. The Viceroy is one of the most striking of all the Desert Modernism hotels in the eternal sunshine of Palm Springs. Built in 1933 as a bungalow hotel for the Hollywood set, its 67 rooms and villas are set around courtyards for a high-design yet intimate, country-club feel. Robert Downey Jr and Miley Cyrus are among those to check in.

**Design notes:** LA-based interior designer Kelly Wearstler has blended the Thirties architecture with mid-century Hollywood Regency. The colour scheme is lemon yellow with white and grey details on black, and with so much sunshine, it works.

**Finishing touch:** The Estrella Spa's outdoor treatment cabanas mean you can hear the hummingbirds and enjoy the garden scents while you relax.

**While there:** Admire the low-slung angular architecture of William Cody's Horizon Hotel, the Movie Colony Hotel designed by Albert Frey and the landscaped grounds and funky eateries of the Parker, redesigned by Jonathan Adler. Check out the achingly cool Ace, where every bungalow has its own record player and vintage furniture. Take a Jeep tour to explore the San Andreas Fault or fly into the desert by balloon (palmsspringsusa.com).

**Details:** The Viceroy has low-season, room-only doubles from \$120 (£77) or a two-bed villa for \$600 (£389), plus taxes (viceroypalmssprings.com). BA flies Heathrow to Los Angeles from £470 return (ba.com).

**Then on to:** Chateau Marmont, LA (chateaumarmont.com). Built in the Twenties as apartments, the legendary Sunset Strip version of a French château is owned and run by hotel impresario André Balazs. He has kept intact its history of Hollywood scandal and indiscretion, while making it a home-from-home for today's stars.



Hôtel de Sers, Paris

### PARISIAN AFFAIR

**The vibe:** Historical private residence sprinkled with contemporary designer touches. Thus red velvet and gilt are combined with chairs covered in retro-floral fabrics and Missoni cushions. Be inspired.

**Design notes:** The Hôtel de Sers was originally built in 1880 close to the Champs-Élysées as a mansion for the Marquis de Sers. Thibault Vidalenc took over the hotel from his family in 1999 and set about giving it a new lease of life. Architect Thomas Vidalenc (Thibault's cousin) was only 29 when he completed the renovation in 2004, stripping away the layers to re-establish its ambience as an elegant home. But the result is masterly and mature, with specially designed rosewood and steel furniture in the 56 rooms and suites, which are modern but nonetheless give an elegant nod to the setting and evoke classic French interiors.

**Finishing touch:** It's an interesting mix of art on the walls, with photographer Annsophie Lombrail's scenes of Parisian life hanging alongside original portraits in oils of previous occupants.

**While there:** At the Petit Palais there's an exhibition on the work of Yves Saint Laurent entitled *40 Years in the Making (1962-2002)*, until August 29.

**Details:** Room-only at Hôtel de Sers costs from €550 (£482) per night (hoteldesers.com). Eurostar return London to Paris costs from £69 (eurostar.com).

**Then on to:** The Plaza Athénée, Paris. The Belle Époque grand hotel near the river now also houses the Dior Institut spa – surely a destination in its own right. A spa package, which includes two one-hour treatments, costs from €810 (£700) for two sharing a double room, with continental breakfast (plaza-athenee-paris.com).



Las Ventanas al Paraiso, Mexico

### PACIFIC INDULGENCE

**The vibe:** Fun-loving, five-star pampering. On the very tip of the Baja Peninsula on the Pacific coast, Las Ventanas beach resort of 71 suites is all about private movie screenings on the beach, tequila tasting and celebs checking in for some me-time.

**Design notes:** You'll get a strong sense of place here, as Ventanas has embraced both Mexican heritage and the extraordinary setting of the golden craginess of this coastline and the deep blue of the Sea of Cortez. The public areas are influenced by the clean lines of contemporary Mexican buildings, with hand-tooled finishes using local materials, plants, colours and craftsmen. The desert landscaping uses a riot of indigenous wildflowers.

**Finishing touch:** The suites have their own telescopes for whale-watching by day and star-gazing by night.

**While there:** Just about everything you could think of is on offer – tennis, golf, sports fishing, horseriding – and plenty you'd not thought of yet. Rent a convertible Mini Cooper S or Porsche Boxster for the 180-mile Cabo Loop and cross the Tropic of Cancer. The desert-meets-ocean vistas are breathtaking.

**Details:** Las Ventanas offers suites from US\$529 (£344) per night including breakfast (lasventanas.com). American Airlines flies London to San José del Cabo via Dallas from £844 return (aa.com).

**Then on to:** The Condesa DF, Mexico City (mrandmrsmith.com). After immersion in the dazzling offerings of Las Ventanas, downshift at this charming "modern ethno" boutique hotel. It's cool without being pretentious, in an easygoing part of town, while the verdant terrace is a haven in this exhilarating, but demanding city. **LX**