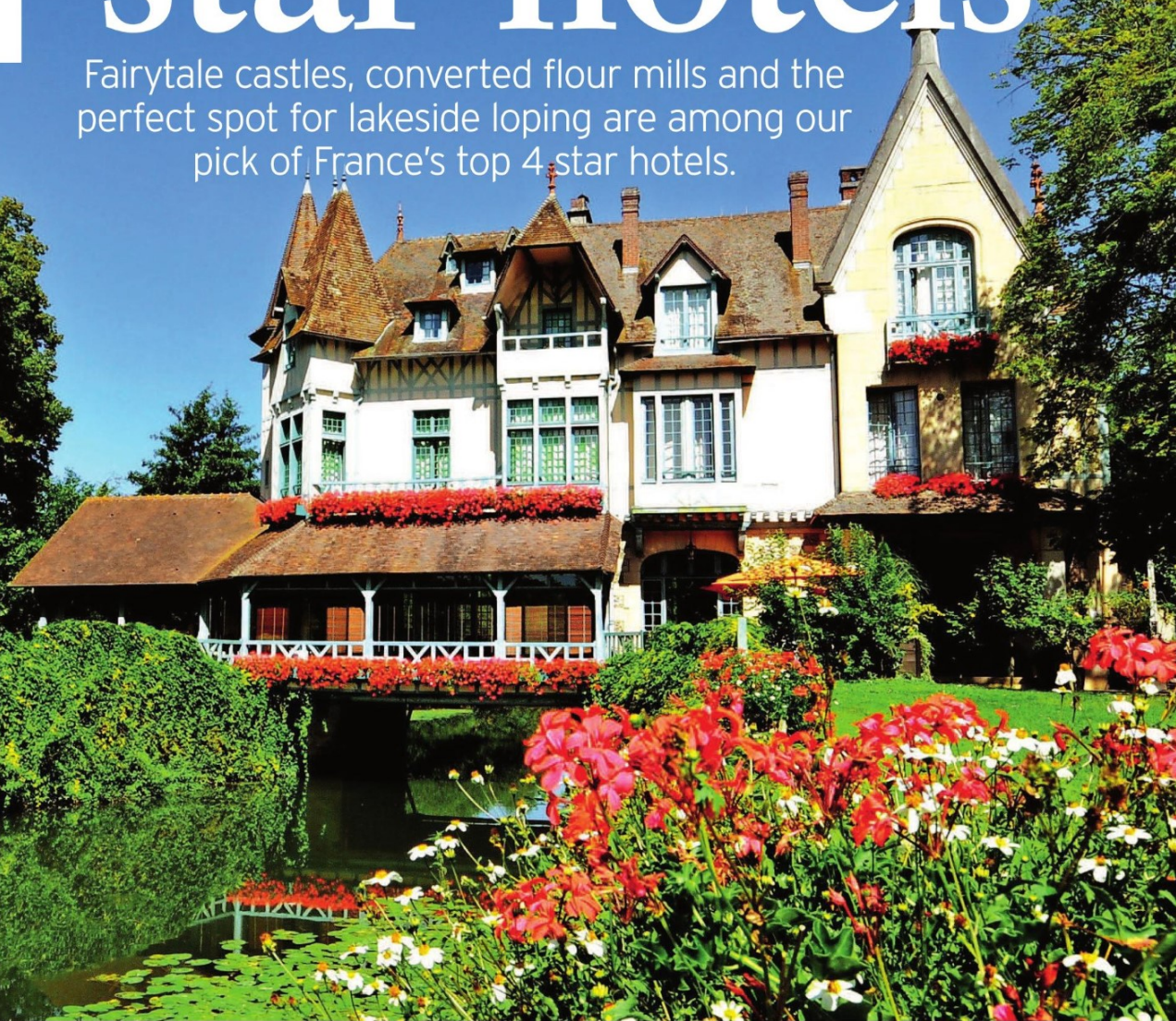


4 *Where to stay* star hotels

Fairytale castles, converted flour mills and the perfect spot for lakeside loping are among our pick of France's top 4 star hotels.



▲ LE MOULIN DE CONNELLES Connelles, Normandy

Dine by candlelight beside the Seine at the Moulin de Connelles, an historic flour mill of white stone and flint with pointed towers and half-timbering in duck egg blue. Then sleep in bedrooms that seamlessly combine both contemporary and antique design. Located deep in the heart of Impressionist country, you are just a stone's throw from the glorious ruin of Château Gaillard.

Doubles from €100, breakfast €18

Tel: (Fr) 2 32 59 53 33

moulin-de-connelles.fr



WHERE TO STAY

◀ CHÂTEAU DES DUCS DE JOYEUSE Couiza, Aude

Enjoy a unique stay in this imposing castle built on the land of the Cathars, which dates back to 1540. Have a drink in the evening outside at La Cour des Ducs (The Dukes's Court) or a fine dinner there with plenty of local produce. Don't miss the old chapel which has been converted into a lounge and dining rooms. There are plenty of sightseeing opportunities with more castles and abbeys to be visited in the area, or for adventurous types activities include horse riding, kayaking and hiking.
Doubles from €110, breakfast €16
Tel: (Fr) 4 68 74 23 50
chateau-des-ducs.com/fr/hotel-restaurant-carcassonne

▼ LA CROIX DE SAVOIE Les Carroz, Auvergne- Rhône-Alpes

The first *bioclimatique* (sustainably designed) hotel in Rhône-Alpes has been owned by the same family since 1960. After an extensive period of renovation, it re-opened in 2011 with a renewed emphasis on caring for the environment. To complement the 28 well-appointed bedrooms and suites, there are two restaurants, meeting rooms, a panoramic terrace and the Mountain Spa with weekly vinyasa yoga classes. Skiers will be pleased to know that snow is guaranteed from Christmas to Easter and there are 265km of pistes to enjoy within the Grand Massif.
Doubles from €106, breakfast €22
Tel: (Fr) 4 50 90 00 26
lacroixdesavoie.fr



▲ HÔTEL WINDSOR Nice

This Riviera residence has been run by the same family for over 60 years, but it's certainly not stuck in the 1940s. Every year since 1989, the owner has asked a different contemporary artist to redesign one of the bedrooms; almost like a permanent art installation. There are 31 unique *chambres d'artistes* to choose from, as well as 25 more traditional rooms adorned with beautiful frescoes. Regional specialities on offer in the restaurant include the delicious Menu Niçois, which includes the world-famous *salade*. In summer, you can even dine outside in the 'jungle', a lush, shady oasis. After a day of exploring Nice, relax in the heated outdoor swimming pool and or take advantage of the spa facilities including a hammam and sauna.
Doubles from €92, breakfast €9-14
Tel: (Fr) 4 93 88 59 35
hotelwindsornice.com



and a delightful picnic, which must be ordered in advance. A stay would not be complete without sampling the signature dishes of Sebastien Bras, including poached endives with saffron and marinated char. The restaurant hit the headlines this year for being the first Michelin-starred restaurant to be allowed to bow out of the listings scheme out of choice, but you can still taste the three-star quality in every mouthful.
Doubles from €330, breakfast €30
Tel: (Fr) 5 65 51 18 20
bras.fr

◀ LE SUQUET Laguiole, Aveyron

Nature is at the heart of this family-run hotel, from the fresh, delicate cuisine served in its renowned restaurant, to the bedrooms, most of which are deliberately positioned at ground level to allow guests to be at one with the Earth. All of the rooms enjoy expansive views across the Aubrac plateau. Wander around the verdant gardens, which are unusual in not following the classic, symmetrical French style being left to freely flourish. Explore the surrounding countryside armed with the hotel's information sheets

www.completefrance.com



▲ MANOIR DE MALAGORSE Cuzance, Dordogne

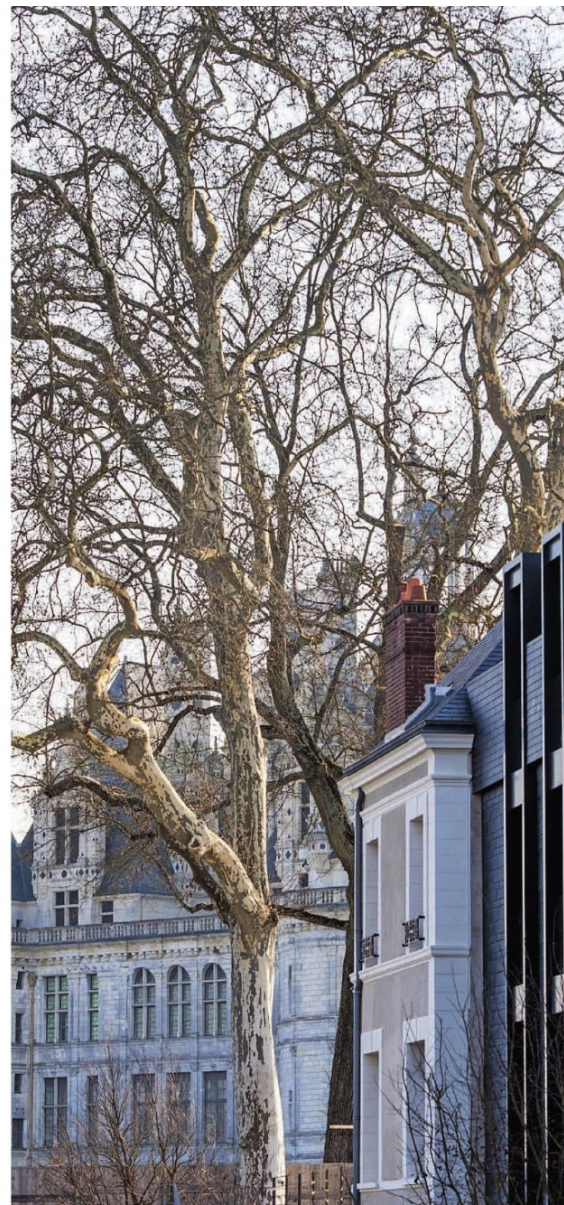
The ideal blend of a warm atmosphere created by a family home but with all the creature comforts of a hotel. The 19th century *manoir* is set in the rolling countryside of south-west France. The owners are all about the small details with fresh flowers in every room, fragrant herbs on your pillow and quirky antiques with a story to tell. The main house contains four large bedrooms and the renovated stable block has two suites. The living room situated in the old bakery is a great place to unwind. Malagorse is set in 10 acres of peaceful land and has a swimming pool and an elevated terrace to admire the glorious views.

Doubles from €160 (breakfast included)
Tel: (Fr) 6 89 33 54 45
manoir-de-malagorse.fr

▼ HÔTEL LOUVRE Lens, Pas-de-Calais

A row of old mining houses has been transformed into a brand new 52-bedroom hotel facing the Musée Louvre-Lens. The traditional character of the homes has been maintained by keeping the original structure and authentic brick facades. In a nod to the town's mining heritage, black coal has been chosen to coat the walls. Due to open its doors in October, the epicentre of the hotel will be a large garden and the different guest areas are connected by glass structures for maximum light. Football fans can watch local team RC Lens in action with their matches shown in the bar, in the hope it will bring tourists and locals together through a mutual love of the game.

Doubles from €100, breakfast €15
Tel: (Fr) 6 26 28 85 87
hotel-louvre-lens.com



▲ RELAIS DE CHAMBORD Chambord, Centre Val de Loire

Live like royalty in this newly-renovated country house, just fifty metres from the instantly recognisable spires of the Château de Chambord, at the heart of the largest enclosed park in Europe. The hotel, which started life as kennels for the king's hunting hounds in the 17th century, now boasts 55 smart bedrooms overlooking either Le Cosson river or the majestic château itself. Splash out on a Junior Suite Chambord, which comes with an exceptional view of the château, a spacious lounge area and sometimes a private garden. A highlight of the hotel is the stunning library, where you can unwind with a game of snooker or chess. Enjoy classic French cuisine with a majestic view in the Grand Saint Michel restaurant, and you can even dine al fresco on the terrace in the warmer months.

Doubles from €148, breakfast included
Tel: (Fr) 2 54 81 01 01
relaisdechambord.com

◀ VILLAGE CASTIGNO Assignan, Hérault

You'll struggle to find another hotel like this in France – or even in Europe. As the name suggests, once upon a time it was a village – now, after being transformed by a Belgian couple, the former village square acts as the nucleus of the hotel. Uniquely-decorated guest rooms are spread across various villas and stable blocks painted in rich pink and purple hues and some come with their own swimming pools. Here you can have the French adventures of your dreams; driving Citroen 2CVs around the countryside, taking a horse-drawn carriage to the market and picking grapes for the organic Castigno wine in the surrounding vineyards. Plentiful dining options include a Thai eatery. WiFi is only available in public areas.

Doubles from €130, breakfast from €23
Tel: (Fr) 4 67 24 26 41
villagecastigno.com





▲ **L'ATELIER DE DONAT**
Malbuisson, Bourgogne-Franche-Comté

The banks of Lac de Saint-Point, France's third-largest natural lake, are home to this boutique hotel. With two bedrooms and four spacious suites all enjoying views over the water, it is the perfect spot for birdwatchers. Its proximity to the lake also allows for easy bathing and canoeing opportunities in summer, and in winter you can even don ice-skates and glide across its frozen surface. Ducasse-trained chef and proprietor Raphaëlle Vernier is at

the helm of the on-site bistro, offering a selection of locally-sourced dishes such as fillets of perch and trout. It's also the perfect base for exploring the Jura Mountains.

Doubles from €130, breakfast from €10
Tel: (Fr) 3 81 89 42 43
latelierdedonat.com



▲ **ERMITAGE DE CORTON**
Chorey-les-Beaune, Bourgogne-Franche-Comté

With its prime location on Burgundy's renowned Route des Grands Crus, it's difficult to find a better hotel for wine lovers. The Ermitage boasts its own extensive wine cellar, from which you can drink *Grand Crus* by the glass. A real treat is the private tastings hosted by the resident sommelier, accompanied by *bouchées* specially-crafted by the chef to highlight the best food and wine pairings. If you fancy a bike ride to blow away the wine-induced cobwebs, the hotel prides itself on being particularly welcoming to cyclists and is a member of the Accueil Vélo scheme. Guests benefit from a choice of itineraries, safe bike parking and repairs.

Doubles from €132, breakfast from €18
Tel: (Fr) 3 80 22 05 28
ermitagecorton.com

NEXT MONTH

WHERE TO STAY FOR THE BEST FOOD AND DRINK.



▲ **HÔTEL LE MAREUIL**
Paris

Located in the very heart of Paris, just off the Place de la République in the Marais district, this hotel is within 10 minutes walking distance of the trendy Oberkampf and Canal Saint-Martin. It has been open for five years and has 35 rooms, including 19 new rooms after an extension in July. All feature large beds, free WiFi, complementary drinks, a safe, air conditioning, Fragonard cosmetics, bathrobes and slippers.

Among the best rooms are those with balconies on the sixth floor, affording fantastic views of the rooftops of Paris. The full American buffet breakfast is open from 7am to 10.30am and served in the rooms until noon. The hotel features a fitness room and hammam, and its friendly staff are happy to suggest restaurants, shopping areas and where to go for drinks.

Doubles from €150, breakfast €18
Tel: (Fr) 1 47 00 78 76
hotelmareuil.com

PHOTOGRAPHS: COCHISE OBY; SLUCHESE; GILLES TRILLARD; ANNE EMMANUELLE THION; CHÂTEAUX ET HÔTELS COLLECTION; HOTEL MAREUIL