

COUNTRY LIFE



EVERY WEEK

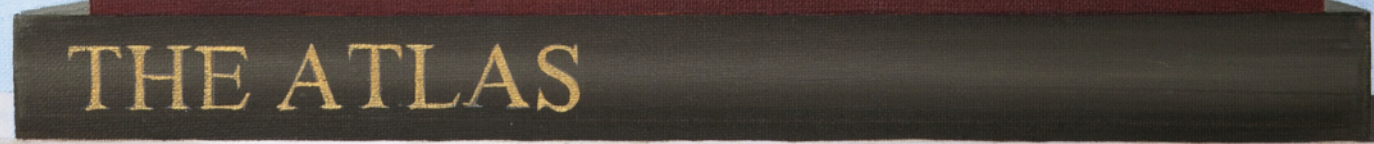
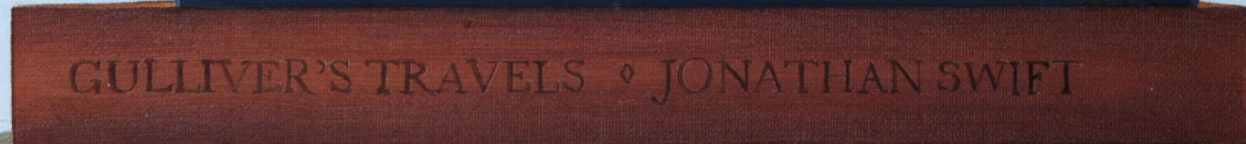
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A world worth waiting for

Travel 2022

Blessed are the cheesemakers

Downton: plaster of paradise



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FUTURE

The top 10

From regal to retro Riviera and everything in between, COUNTRY LIFE rounds up the stylish hotels and villas that should be top of your wishlist in 2022

Retro Riviera Lou Pinet, St Tropez, France

STAYING at Lou Pinet is like taking up an invitation to a very exclusive house party. It's small and private: 34 bedrooms spread across a close-knit cluster of Provençal houses, protected from prying eyes by fragrant pines. St Tropez is only a few minutes drive away, but guests prefer to gather around the hotel's centrepiece, a sea-green tiled swimming pool, on one of the iron-lattice sunloungers or wood and rope hammocks. I burned through two books in as many days, sitting here, fuelled by watermelon juice, zingy guacamole and freshly baked taco chips. In the evening, everyone migrates to the terrace, home to Riccardo Giraudi's Beefbar (there are also outposts in Paris, London, Monaco and Hong Kong). Tables are as popular with non-guests as they are with those staying at the hotel, which means that the people-watching is as good as any restaurant in central St Tropez. As the name suggests, premium cuts of meat are at the heart of the menu, but, come pudding, don't miss the ludicrously large chocolate soufflé. One can easily feed three people.

So, what to pack? A headscarf would be a good start, because Lou Pinet oozes 1960s style. The bold colour palette—coral reds, ochre yellows, navy and flashes of bright blue—is the brainchild of interior designer Charles Zana. Many of the beds sport retro-print headboards; tactile, rough-woven rugs carpet the terracotta-tiled bedroom floors; crescent-shaped sofas pop up in both the private and communal areas. The bathrooms err on the right side of bohemian and it's hard not to fawn over the airy indoor



Time to relax: guests are often found lazing around Lou Pinet's sea-green tiled pool

dining room where breakfast is served. Cane chairs sit beneath a matching ceiling, oversized Crittall windows flood the space with light and a primary-coloured mural—think Picasso meets Matisse—covers the top half of one wall.

Behind the pool there's a subterranean spa with treatments by farm-to-face beauty brand Tata Harper. Book in for a facial to soothe your sun-kissed skin. *RP*
From €430 (about £360) per night on a bed and breakfast basis (www.loupinet.com)

Bohemian The Fife Arms, Braemar, Scotland

WHEN it comes to finding the middle of nowhere, Braemar in the Cairngorms is about as middle as it gets. There's a reason that Victoria and Albert chose next-door Balmoral as the location for their summer getaways. When it comes to getting away from 'it' all, 'it' would have a hard time finding you here.

Should your invitation to join Her Majesty have got lost in the mail, The Fife Arms would make an equally luxurious and elegant alternative. The hotel, a former hunting lodge refurbished and revamped by Hauser & Wirth, provides a slice of luxury with a focus on the past, the present and the future.

Here is a place imbued with both the expected and the unexpected. We expect to see the guests in their stalking gear and their waders. We expect to see staff dressed sharply in Araminta Campbell's bespoke Fife Arms tartan. What we do not expect, however, is a chandelier of glass antlers and neon. We do not expect murals on the walls and ceilings or for the piano to play itself. The proximity of Picasso and Freud to stags, grouse and foxes suggests an eclectic passion for collecting that spans centuries—The Fife Arms is as much about the history of the Highlands as it is about its art-collecting owners.

Past, present and future. For the past, enjoy the storied history of the hotel itself and admire the local area. The front desk can organise a trip with Braemar Highland Experience, which can teach you everything from the



The Fife Arms drawing room, with the eponymous tartan and ceiling artwork by Zhang Enli

best places to walk or how to properly taste whisky. Stalking and fishing are on the cards, too. I teamed up with local gillie Ian Murray, who, as well as being one of the more pleasant fishing companions I've met, is also an enthusiastic expert on local history.

In the present, enjoy the food and drink The Fife Arms has to offer. Casual dining is available at the Flying Stag pub, which enjoys seasonal classic fare (the venison was likely dragged off a mountain that week), or head for the fine dining of the Clunie Dining Room, where the menu changes each day depending on what's available. Don't forget to have a cocktail at Elsa's bar beforehand (named after Elsa Schiaparelli and with photographs by Man Ray) or, post-dinner, a dram of some of the world's finest whiskies at Bertie's

(where the walls are stacked with bottles and the menu is some 72 pages long).

As much as the future presents itself in the varied forms of contemporary art that inhabit the interiors of The Fife Arms, so, too, does the location of the hotel in the context of our ever-changing attitudes to what constitutes a 'holiday'. Whether it's a 10-hour drive, overnight train or one-hour flight from London, the Highlands are an entirely different world and offer meaningful escape. Here is a rural hotel that is both rustic and modern, where city and country folk can be equally at peace. Perhaps that is the future, after all. *JF*
From £250 per night in a Croft Room and £434 in a Nature & Poetry room, both including breakfast (01339 720202; www.thefifearms.com)

Beach La Valise Tulum, Mexico

ALMOST razed to the ground in a fire in 2020, this 11-room boutique in the former fishing village of Tulum has risen from the ashes looking better than ever. Lapped by azure Caribbean water on Mexico's Riviera Maya, it's perfect for modern castaways reluctant to part with their creature

comforts, but content to roam barefoot to breakfast. The heartbeat is an open-sided sitting room, dressed with biscuit-hued sofas, potted plants and distressed copper coffee tables laden with leatherbound tomes.

Despite the hotel's raw beauty (you can walk straight off the beach into the dining

room), nothing has been left to chance. The interior design and accessories have been lovingly curated by designer Roberto Ayala—the visionary behind La Valise's three sister properties. There's a sense of place, especially in my 1,000sq ft master suite, constructed out of indigenous materials and topped by a soaring, 23ft-high palapa roof. The outdoor shower is stuccoed with resin tapped from the native chukum tree; floors swathed in locally made woven rugs. A wicker bench is bookended by two wicker jaguar heads—the animal was worshipped by the Aztecs and Mayans for its hunting prowess and temples were built in its honour.

Spend your days lounging under the Mexican sun on squishy daybeds and tasselled hammocks, listening to the tinkling sounds of the numerous water features and surrounding bird life. *Sarah Freeman*
From £503 per night, including breakfast (00 13 05 999 1540; www.lavalisetulum.com)



At La Valise, the Caribbean waters of the Riviera Maya are just moments away



Pretty and practical: Valency Wood is 'exactly what you want' for a Cornwall staycation

Country chic Valency Wood, near Boscastle, Cornwall, England

VALENCY WOOD is at its best in springtime, when the orchid meadows that surround it begin to bloom and bluebells carpet the forest floor. Beyond the 140-acre confines, the self-catering cottage—which can happily accommodate six people and three dogs—is flanked by farmland. The valley, two miles east of Boscastle and five south of Crackington Haven, slopes all the way down to the ocean at Boscastle Harbour. Here, you'll find proper Cornish tearooms and plenty of inns. The interiors have a pared-back country aesthetic: white walls and a polished, dark wooden floor; a white, wrought-iron spiral staircase, tongue-and-groove panelling and an Instagram-worthy rose-pink kitchen. It's pretty and put-your-feet-up-practical at the same time—exactly what you want on a Cornish staycation.

Valency Wood is available to rent through Unique Homestays, from £1,250 for a long weekend or midweek stay and £1,695 per week (www.uniquehomestays.com/self-catering/uk/cornwall/boscastle/valency-wood/)

Minimalist Juvet Landscape Hotel, Valldal, Norway

JUVET might feel remote—think valleys, big rivers, vivid green and glassy fjords—but it's surprisingly accessible, an easy two-hour drive from Alesund Airport. The faint roar of a waterfall greets you on arrival.

The hotel is both a working farm and the latest in experimental accommodation, a century-old barn that has been ingeniously renovated. A hay loft has morphed into a snug, outdoor seating area, the pigsty into a kitchen and the cow byre into a dining and breakfast room with communal tables. I managed to procure a seat next to a charming Norwegian-Swedish couple who did their best to educate me on all things Scandi.

Acclaimed Oslo-based architects Jensen & Skodvin designed the gorgeous, sleek, chalet-style bedrooms—seek out room two, which hovers over an ice-blue river. The cosy spa, built into the grassy hillside, offers close-up river views, too. Nature is the best decoration—instead of art, huge, floor-to-ceiling windows look out onto an ever-changing landscape and there's little in the way of trinkets to distract you.

The best time to visit is late spring, when the rivers swell, the mountain tops are still

capped in snow and some flowers are starting to emerge (lupins, dandelions, wild garlic). Early autumn is also attractive and there's an abundant harvest (pears, plums, pumpkins). The hotel is closed from December to March, but there's a good mix of activities throughout the rest of the year, including hiking and river rafting. And you must visit Alesund

Town—destroyed by fire in 1904 and rebuilt in a remarkably consistent Art Nouveau style. *Daniel Pembrey* From £160 a night (www.juvet.com). Visit www.visitalesund.com for more information on the wider area. KLM and SAS fly to Alesund from London via other cities; other airlines fly direct to Oslo, a seven-hour drive from the hotel.



Jensen & Skodvin designed the contemporary bedrooms at the Juvet Landscape Hotel

Contemporary Clifton Beyond Villa, Cape Town, South Africa

CLIFTON BEYOND is a thrilling example of inside-outside living—a speciality of South African-based architects SAOTA, a company that has built similar style houses in Los Angeles, Ibiza and Aspen. It sleeps 12 people in six bedrooms (four have balconies; one has an outdoor bath), has a heated infinity swimming pool, home cinema and outdoor dining area with a pizza oven, but the *pièce de résistance* is the view: a jaw-dropping panorama over Clifton Beach and the ocean (the villa sits atop the highest point in Clifton).

Lions Head nature reserve and the eponymous mountain is to one side of the house—the hiking routes up to the top are often clearer than the ones on better-known Table Mountain. If you haven't got a head for heights, head into Cape Town itself (*Big Picture*, page 110), surf at Glen Beach—a couple of sandy strips over; best in the morning and suited to more advanced surfers—or drop in to see the most famous penguins in the world, at Boulders Beach. Clifton Beyond is available to rent through



Clifton Beyond is designed to take full advantage of the views out to the ocean

The Luxury Travel Book, a family-run company that has extensive knowledge of Cape Town and the surrounding area. Staff are on hand before and during your trip to make

personalised recommendations and help book the best restaurants and activities. From £45,000 a week (www.theluxurytravelbook.com)

Art Deco Claridge's, London, England

OH, Claridge's. No matter how many new and exciting (at least to begin with) hotels open in London, its crown never appears to slip. The hotel's popularity might be down to chef Martyn Nail's hugely popular lobster Wellington or because a new bar seems to open every month, inside a forgotten nook or cranny of the Grade II-listed building.

Perhaps it's the decor, the familiar and perennially chic checkerboard floor and duck-egg-blue walls, or that the service is some of the best in the world (check in after a three-year hiatus and the staff will still know which newspaper you like to read in the morning).

Its enduring popularity may also be because the hotel knows exactly how to blend the need for tradition with the need to move forward. Take, for example, the newly refurbished suites, designed by Bryan O'Sullivan and

described as 'Deco for today'. In one, a pink marble and glass scalloped fireplace takes centre stage; in another, you'll find a burr-oak mini bar, inspired by the lives of the Bright Young Things. Blush pinks, soft caramels and pops of that duck-egg blue appear throughout. In March, the hotel will unveil a spa, part of a multimillion-pound subterranean, five-storey building project underneath Brook Street. *RP* From £550 plus VAT per night in a Superior King room (www.claridges.co.uk)



Claridge's continues its design tradition of moving forward, as well as standing still

Modernist The Maybourne Riviera, Roquebrune-Cap-Martin, France

SO much is said about the Côte d'Azur west of Monaco, but there's also plenty to get excited about on the eastern side—chiefly the new Maybourne Riviera hotel. It's a striking glassy box, perched on a steep and rocky peninsula, comprising 69 bedrooms and suites, all with private terraces and sea views.

The architecture might be Modernist (a nod to architects Le Corbusier and Eileen Gray, who both built homes nearby), but the art, glassware, ceramics and furnishings are all a glorious celebration of traditional and regional styles. Now open for its first full season, guests at The Maybourne



Riviera will also have exclusive access to the Maybourne Riviera Beach Club, the hotel's restored gardens and a choice of three restaurants.

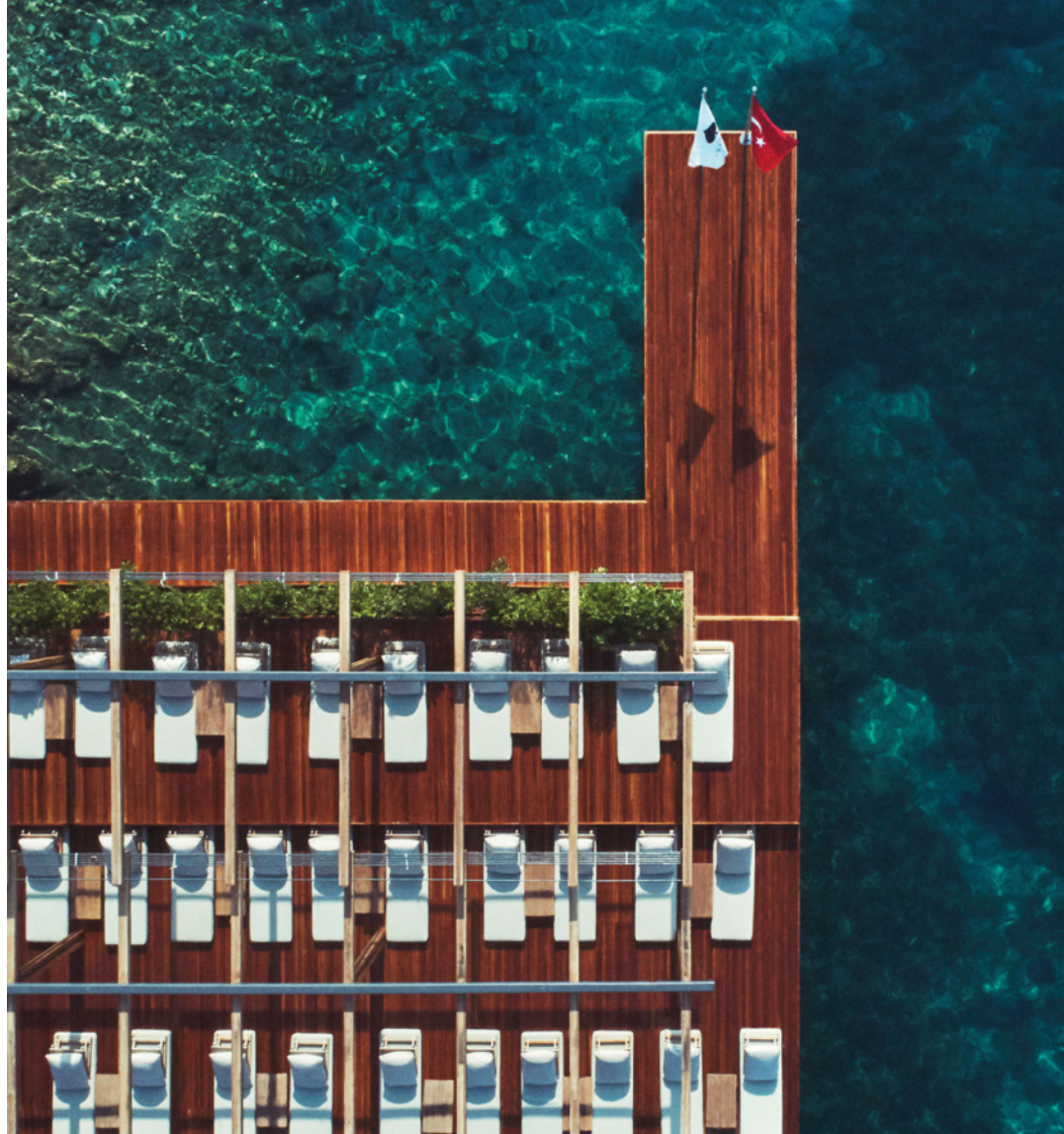
From £750 per night, or £800 including breakfast (www.maybournriviera.com)

1970s glamour Maçakizi, Bodrum, Turkey

WHEN Ayla Emiroglu moved to Bodrum, in the late 1970s, there was little of note to see, save for an unspoiled peninsula dotted with sweet orange and lime trees. She quickly established a hotel and private beach, the Maçakizi, which still stands today—the only difference is the number of visitors. They've grown steadily in the past 30 years, but, at one point in the not-too-distant past, political instability within Turkey and competition from islands such as Mykonos and Ibiza briefly threatened to ruin all the fun. Thankfully, Bodrum is back. Back to its 1970s glamorous heyday. Recent additions to the hotel include Villa Maçakizi and *Maçakizi Halas 71*, a former passenger ferry-turned-luxury coastal cruiser.

The hotel is a few minutes drive from the pretty and upmarket town of Türkbükü and 45 from Bodrum, but there's little reason to tear yourself away from the expanse of canopied wooden decking that looks out over the Aegean Sea. There's also a view of the sea from 27 of the 53 bedrooms (there are 21 suites, too), through the vibrant bougainvillea that clings to the outside of the building. *RP*

From €425 (about £355) per night including breakfast (www.macakizi.com)



An expanse of canopied wooden decking at Maçakizi looks out over the Aegean Sea



Regal Royal Mansour, Marrakech, Morocco

COMMISSIONED by King Mohammed VI, the 1,500 local artisans who built Royal Mansour were not into Minimalism. What you'll find instead are draped linens and marble colonnades, palatial *riads* and ornamental ponds—set within six acres of organic gardens so peaceful you might not see another person for hours. 'We drew inspiration from traditional Moroccan styles—in homage to the Old Wall of Marrakech—and the ancient irrigation systems that brought water from the Atlas Mountains,' explains Luis Vallejo, whose studio oversaw the grounds' expansion last year. Among the lemon and palm trees, chef Yannick Alléno has just opened The Nest. Idyllic, with only some nightjars and parrots for company. *Phoebe Hunt* 🐦
From £900 per night for a one bedroom riad (www.royalmansour.com)

Fit for a king: Royal Mansour was commissioned by Mohammed VI