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HOTEL SELECTION

As befits the most popular tourist destination in the world, there's no shortage of good hotels in France, yet searching the internet for suitable accommodation can leave even the most seasoned of travellers feeling somewhat overwhelmed. Happily, *France Today's* expert team of editors and writers, who spend countless hours criss-crossing *l'Hexagone* on assignment each year, keep their own 'black books' of France's most stylish lodgings. The following pages feature a specially curated, personally vetted selection of accommodation options, ranging from a country estate in the Provençal countryside to a design-driven hideaway overlooking the golden dome of Les Invalides in Paris. Every one these hotels boasts a distinctive sense of place and friendly service – what's more, each is newly opened or has recently been renovated.





The sumptuous Domaine de Manville offers the best that Provence has to offer

DOMAINE DE MANVILLE, LES BAUX-DE-PROVENCE

You'd be hard-pressed to find a prettier place in Provence than the medieval village of Les Baux-de-Provence. This new destination resort, which opened last June, lies at the foot of the picturesque hilltop village. A member of Small Luxury Hotels of the World, the intimate, 30-room retreat is sited on a postcard-perfect estate which was once a working farm.

Although the best of Provence is on its doorstep, you may find it difficult to tear yourself away from the Domaine's sumptuous facilities – there's a spa, a sparkling pool, a ten-seat movie theatre and an 18-hole golf course at your disposal.

Billed as a 'five-star country palace' that reflects the best of the Provençal lifestyle, the Domaine de



Hôtel Jules César has been treated to a recent makeover by Christian Lacroix

Manville has also become a coveted spot for weddings.

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HÔTEL JULES CÉSAR, ARLES

Designer Christian Lacroix has become a darling of hotel owners, as evidenced by his prolific projects in Paris et les provinces. One such example is the five-star Hôtel Jules César in Arles, which recently enjoyed a Lacroix makeover.

The hotel occupies a former 17th-century Carmelite convent and Lacroix sought to highlight such original architectural details as the cloister and period windows.

Adorned with large wall murals, each of the 52 rooms are decorated with style and personality. The hotel takes advantage of its sunny southern climate – the new Cinq Mondes spa opens onto an aromatic cloister garden and the terrace of the Lou Marqués restaurant, where the seasonal produce steals the show, is a delightful spot for summer meals.

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BERNARD MAGREZ LA GRANDE MAISON, BORDEAUX

Last December, the buzz in Bordeaux was hotel debut of famed French businessman Bernard Magrez, whose empire encompasses four *Grands Crus Classés*, including the Château Papa Clément vineyards.

Nicknamed 'l'Homme aux 40 Châteaux', Magrez is a proud Bordelais, born and raised in the Aquitaine capital. Hence his desire to open a fine gastronomic

restaurant in early December, the French media was atwitter that the restaurant was booked solid for two months in advance. Needless to say, the wine selection is superb, with a unique cellar offering all 259 *Grands Crus Classés de Bordeaux*.

La Grande Maison, located across from the Institut Culturel Bernard Magrez, only has six suites, each sumptuously decorated in the style of Napoléon III, with period antiques and floral fabric wall coverings. The bathrooms, which are done up in



Above and below: Gallic business titan Bernard Magrez's La Grande Maison in Bordeaux; the Balthazar Hotel & Spa, Rennes' first five-star establishment



restaurant in his home town, alongside a luxurious hotel where you can sleep off your food coma.

To do so, Magrez partnered with Michelin three-star chef Joël Robuchon, much to the delight of Bordeaux's food-loving populace.

grey travertine and Carrara marble, come with Hermès amenities.

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BALTHAZAR HOTEL & SPA, RENNES

There's a lovely new place to stay in the pretty capital of Brittany. Part of Accor's MGallery collection, the Balthazar Hotel & Spa is the first five-star hotel for the city of Rennes. It took four years of construction work to connect two town houses on the Rue du Marechal Joffre near the Place ➡