



# THE TIMES

## Travel!

### THE 27 COOLEST PLACES TO STAY (THIS YEAR)

Glass cabin in Uruguay? Safari house in Zimbabwe? The chicest little cottage in Scotland? Lisa Grainger checks out the best new hotels and hideaways

#### **01 Sacromonte, Maldonado, Uruguay**

This 250-acre hotel is set within rolling vineyards 45 minutes' drive from the glam Punta del Este, making it an ideal stopover for both beach bums and wine-lovers. Its USP is its photogenic rooms: 13 oblong, minimalist, oak-backed cabins, fronted in one-way mirrored glass that allows untrammelled views of the countryside from bed and bath – yet from the outside reflects only the sky. Doubles from £346 ([sacromonte.com/hospedaje](http://sacromonte.com/hospedaje))

#### **02 Mezzatorre, Ischia, Italy**

This old neo-Moorish castellated hotel – whose guests have included Sophia Loren and Douglas Fairbanks – has been transformed into the chicest haunt in Ischia. Within its ancient walls, the castle now sports Pierre Frey trompe l'oeil wallpaper and Manuel Canovas fabrics. On the outside, balconies sprouting tulip-shaped Slim Aarons-inspired umbrellas look out over jungly garden and stone jetties made for sunbathing. Doubles from £245 ([mezzatorre.com](http://mezzatorre.com))

#### **03 Hoshinoya Guguan, Taiwan**

Each of Hoshinoya's hotels is different: the owners pride themselves on bringing out the best of their surrounding culture and environment, whether it's on a remote island or in Tokyo. Their latest, in Taiwan, is built around hot springs – hence the streams, pools, onsen and waterfalls amid minimalist stone and glass buildings, which allow the bamboo

and forest scenery to flood in. Coolest of all? The garden gazebos, set beside a stream, in which to read on a sofa after a forest bathe. Doubles from £460 ([hoshinoya.com/guguan](http://hoshinoya.com/guguan))

#### **04 Lefay Resort and Spa, Dolomites, Italy**

There are few hotels with views like these: over the peaks of the jagged Dolomites, with 150km of ski slopes to traverse in winter and Alpine bicycle and hiking tracks to puff up in summer. The ClimaHotel-certified building is as natural as its surroundings: soaring A-frame roofs made of local fir and larch, floors of oak and walls of local tonalite stone, all warmed

using biomass systems. The spa is the real star, though: four floors of treatment rooms and five pools behind floor-to-ceiling glass walls that make you feel as if you're in the outdoors, even if you're sweltering in a sauna inside. The Grual restaurant serves up organic gastro food that's better than its name suggests. Doubles from £270 ([lefoyresorts.com](http://lefoyresorts.com))

#### **05 The Newt, Somerset**

Without doubt the most beautiful hotel to open in Britain in 2019, within the grand late-17th century Hadspen estate. Although the original stone house is handsome – and furnished with contemporary, gem-coloured pieces from Tom Dixon, Moooi and Moroso – it's the gardens that are a knockout, with a walled apple orchard to feed an enormous cider press, a mushroom house and greenhouses that supply veg for the two

## **06 Maja Hotel, Kyoto, Japan**

The brainchild of Finnish industrial designer Harri Koskinen, this is more like a hip hostel than a traditional hotel. Rather than rooms, Koskinen has created 60 cosy capsules – or “huts” – lined in light wood, so guests can “hide, rest or sleep” after stashing belongings in a locker. Bathrooms are communal, as are eating areas, into which guests are invited to bring outside food – or there’s Japan’s first Café Aalto, based on Alvar Aalto’s Helsinki bookshop restaurant, serving Scandi delicacies. *Doubles from £56 (maja-hotel.com)*

## **07 August, Antwerp**

The look of this city’s newest hotel is as refined as you’d expect from Belgium’s leading architect, Vincent van Duysen. That it feels quite as serene, though, is thanks to its former inhabitants, Augustine nuns. Van Duysen has transformed their simple former quarters into uncluttered rooms, furnished with architectural pieces, handmade tiles and handwoven rugs, and their spectacular, triple-height chapel into a dramatic bar that sits by a restaurant run by two-Michelin-starred chef Nick Bril. *Doubles from £135 (august-antwerp.com)*

## **08 Lekkerwater Beach Lodge, De Hoop, South Africa**

There’s a reason why former president FW de Klerk was here when he learnt that he and Nelson Mandela had won the Nobel peace prize. He’d needed some thinking space, and this is one of the most remote beaches in South Africa. Today, below fynbos fields and steep cliffs, there’s a simple clapboard lodge whose glass fronts overlook miles of sandy dunes and thundering seas – it’s a favourite site for whales migrating from the Antarctic Ocean. In the main beach house, the chef serves up

delicious dishes, often scented with fynbos herbs and seaweed foraged on the shores. *Doubles from £400 (dehoopcollection.com)*

## **09 Haritha Villas, Hikkaduwa, Sri Lanka**

For lovers of modernism and nature, this resort offers the dream combination: ultra-contemporary architecture and an ancient forested hillside overlooking the sea. The seven villas and two mansions were designed by British architect Gary Fell to be spare

but luxurious: finished in recycled teak and polished concrete inside, with grass roofs and saltwater pools outside. As well as an equally

cool yoga pavilion there’s an on-site Ayurvedic doctor to oversee health MOTs.

*Doubles from £420 (harithavillas.com)*

## **10 Brach, Paris**

A former postal building that’s been turned into the hippest urban hangout in Paris’s 16th arrondissement. Designed by Philippe Starck, it’s a mishmash of concepts and crafts from various continents: Masai beadwork; surrealist photographs; Parisian balconies; Japanese hot tubs. It’s an antidote to Parisian stuffiness, with an in-room “concept store” replacing the minibar, lively restaurants, a huge, busy

gym and a killer sound system around the pool. *Doubles from £420 (brachparis.com)*

## **11 Austin Proper Hotel, Texas**

This Texan city is becoming one of America’s coolest, thanks to its lively music scene and Shoreditch-like vibe. At its heart is the new 32-storey Kelly Wearstler-designed Proper: a mixture of earthy tones and hand-honed historic furniture alongside neon accents that mirror the flashing street lights in the centre of town. The stand-out features? The staircase, covered in a patchwork of 60 vintage rugs, and the rooftop pool, where you can sip

sundowners before a night of band-hopping. Doubles from £269 ([properhotel.com/hotels/austin](http://properhotel.com/hotels/austin))

## 12 Puro Vik, Millahue Valley, Chile

Andean views are the point of this new hotel created by acclaimed winemakers Alex and Carrie Vik – which is why their 19 casas are walled in glass, so guests can wallow in a bath overlooking Chile's Millahue Valley. Decor in the rooms, which are cantilevered from a hill, take their inspiration from various periods and decorative styles, from 18th-century French chateaux and pop art to the landscapes of Japanese artist Utagawa Hiroshige. Outside the glass rooms, there's a restaurant and

world-class cellar a short walk up the road at Vik Chile, as well as stables, a spa and 11,000 acres of wilderness to explore. Doubles from £846 ([purovik.com](http://purovik.com))

## 13 The Lodge at Blue Sky, Utah

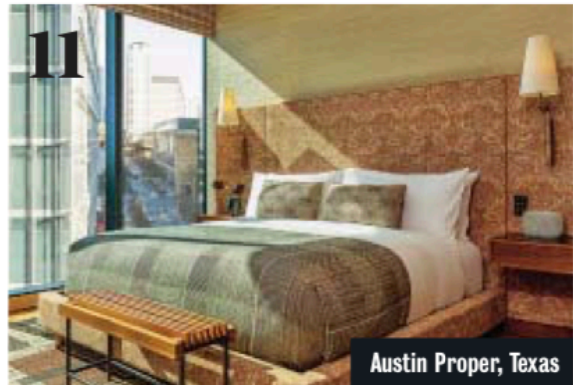
A 3,500-acre ranch in the Utah mountains that offers guests not only immersion in ranch life – horse riding, fly-fishing, skiing, corralling cattle, gathering eggs, feeding creatures at the lodge's rescue centre – but exclusivity in some very pretty interiors, whether that's in a plant-roofed Earth suite or a wooden cabin in the creek. There's organic food courtesy of a James Beard award-winning chef, and whiskey from the lodge's own distillery, both

of which can be packed into picnics for heli-skiing in nearby Park City Mountain Resort or a day's fishing at the creek. Doubles from £518 ([aubergeresorts.com/bluesky](http://aubergeresorts.com/bluesky))

## 14 Caldera House, Wyoming

Owned by billionaire financier Wes Edens, this eight-bedroom Jackson Hole hideaway was designed to be a glam mountain home-from-home but with the best staff and services, including private chefs and guides who were Olympic skiers. There's a cool ski shop and the popular Old Yellowstone Garage Italian restaurant, plus a takeaway café near the adjoining ski tram.

Doubles from £1,748 ([calderahouse.com](http://calderahouse.com)) ➔



Austin Proper, Texas



The Lodge at Blue Sky, Utah



Casa Iris, Italy

## 15 Casa Iris, Orbetello, Italy

Owned by a couple escaping New York, this B&B, within a converted palazzo in the southern Maremma, oozes style. Below its 18th-century frescoes and walls painted in ice-cream shades are curvaceous art deco, mid-century modern and Seventies furnishings. A bonus: the owners are masters at arranging local activities, whether that's wine-tasting or bike trips to the beach.

*Doubles from £225 (casairisorbetello.com)*

## 16 Kyle House, Sutherland, Scotland

Possibly the coolest little cottage in Scotland: a tiny double-storey built for two, surrounded by thousands of acres of moorland, lochs and streams, and just a short electric-bike ride from the beaches of Tongue. The design is part refined Scandi, part rugged Scottish: wood, slate and stone softened with sculptural,

organic furnishings finished in soft, stone-coloured linens and wools. Upstairs there's an enormous tub with views of Ben Loyal, and downstairs such large triple-glazed walls of glass that you don't need to leave the fragrant pine-stacked fireplace to appreciate the scenery. *Doubles from £1,260 for three nights (kyle.scot)*

## 17 Singita Malilangwe House, Chiredzi, Zimbabwe

The recently refurbished home of the American billionaire conservationist Paul Tudor-Jones is now one of the most glam safari houses on the continent. Set atop a hill strewn with giant granite boulders, the five-bedroom house looks out over not only a lake in which hippos harrumph, but 130,000 acres of wilderness and forests inhabited by leopards. Beneath soaring thatched ceilings, chic Afro-centric contemporary interiors lead out to a vast deck with views and a cliff-edge

pool from which to spot elephants as you swim. *From £8,947 for the whole property (singita.com)*

## 18 The Hoxton, Chicago

In the lively Fulton Market area, surrounded by fashionable restaurants, this has become a hub for fun-loving foodies, thanks to its rooftop pool (a rarity in the Windy City) and its underground Lazy Bird cocktail bar with live music. As with other Hoxton hotels, decor is sassy and unpretentious – more like a hipster's apartment than a hotel – with casual dining

based on Mediterranean or Peruvian flavours. *Doubles from £99 (thehoxton.com)*

## 19 Dôce 18 Concept House, San Miguel de Allende, Mexico

This business started out as a tiny shop, Casa Cohen, which provided the inhabitants of San Miguel de Allende with basic daily supplies. Today, an entire row of historic



terraced stone houses has been transformed into an interconnected restaurant/shop/bar/hotel, all of which feature fine Mexican produce. Everything is made locally, from the covetable embroidered cushions to tacos and margaritas at the little Taco Lab bar. *Doubles from £270 (doce-18.com/sleep)*

## **20** **A77 Suites by Andronis, Athens**

This 12-room former house has pretty much everything you need in a city: a private suite whose terrace has views over the quaint terracotta villas of Plaka and up to the Acropolis; pale, soothing interiors within a characterful neoclassical building; a courtyard suite with stone walls and its own open-air seating; at its heart, a sophisticated boutique, stocking some of Greece's finest fashion. Plus a concierge who will arrange private activities, from Greek cooking lessons to a motorboat excursion. Athens doesn't get much cooler. *Doubles from £96 (a77suitesbyandronis.com)*

## **21** **The Freehand Hotel, New York**

One up from a hostel – albeit a very hip one, with bunk rooms handpainted with murals by local artists – is this newcomer from the founders of NoMad hotels. Interiors are by the theatrical Roman and Williams and typical of the Flatiron District: lively and arty, filled with paintings, plants, retro furniture and Levi's-wearing techies having cocktails before a big night out or a cultural event in the hotel, from foodie demonstrations to yoga classes. *Doubles from £137 (freehandhotels.com)*

## **22** **Stamba, Tbilisi, Georgia**

It would be pretty hard for a hotel not to be extraordinary in such a building as this: a cavernous Soviet-era publishing house that's been stripped back to its brutalist bones, with industrial-style rooms and a rooftop pool. At the heart is a courtyard, a double-height library, a lively bean-to-bar coffee roastery and a chocolate bar, where hipsters hang out amid full-sized trees. The hotel has its own helicopter to get to its mountain outpost, the equally cool Rooms Hotel Kazbegi. *Doubles from £144 (stambahotel.com)*

## **23** **Anantara Tozeur, Tunisia**

Two types of person will find this hotel cool. First, desert lovers: the Moorish-inspired resort looks out over a sea of sand. Second, *Star Wars* fans: three of the ten films were shot in Tunisia and sets are dotted about

nearby. For those who want space on earth, there's plenty of that in which to dine on rolling dunes, explore on camels or just to soak in from a pool lounger. If you are looking for extremes there's also Chott el Djerid, the largest salt flats in the Sahara, shimmering with mirages.

*Doubles from £269 (anantara.com/en/tozeur)*

## **24** **Kudadoo Private Island, Maldives**

In a country in which handfuls of new hotels spring up every year, it's not easy to be distinctive. But Kudadoo is. For a start, its double-storey clubhouse is like a giant Japanese-style shed – albeit one that has 989 solar panels on its roof. Within, there's a spa upstairs, to catch the breeze, and a large Himalayan salt room downstairs, for detoxing. Enormous, extremely comfortable, ryokan-style over-water rooms have their own butler and pool. The chef worked under Joël Robuchon and Alain Ducasse and can make pretty much anything, from teppanyaki to avo pizza, which can be worked off in the well-stocked watersports area.

*Doubles from £2,420 (kudadoo.com)*

## **25** **The Pig at Bridge Place, Kent**

Since Robin Hutson established the first of his litter of Pigs in 2011, the little hotels have become so popular that fans have started to book a year in advance. His sixth, just outside Canterbury, is the most rock'n'roll: a rambling 1630s house that became a venue in the Sixties and Seventies for bands such as the Kinks, Moody Blues, Pink Floyd and Led Zeppelin, whose flyers adorn the walls. The decor is a mix of louche in the living areas – a place where Anita Pallenberg might have hung out, amid Biba prints and velvet sofas – and rustic in the hop-pickers'-style huts that are scattered between mushroom house, hen house and farm garden.

*Doubles from £135 (thepighotel.com/at-bridge-place)*

## **26** **Owhaoko Cabin, New Zealand**

This two-bedroom cabin is the only place to stay within almost 7,000 hectares of old Maori hunting grounds on the North Island – and it's precisely this isolation that makes it so appealing. There are waterfalls, rivers to swim in, mountains to climb and Maori guides to provide meals or activities, before you sleep beneath a glass roof.