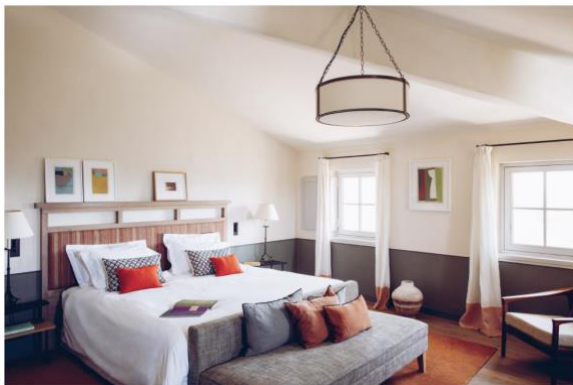


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RETREAT AND RELAX AT CRILLON LE BRAVE



IN THE LOBBY OF THE HOTEL CRILLON LE BRAVE, JUST OPPOSITE THE RECEPTION DESK, STANDS A BRONZE STATUE OF A LOCAL HERO, THE BRAVE CRILLON, ONE OF HENRI IV'S BRAVEST GENERALS DURING THE LATE-16TH CENTURY'S RELIGIOUS WARS THAT RAVAGED FRANCE. THIS IS THE MAN WHO GAVE HIS NAME TO THE PICTURE-PERFECT PROVENÇAL VILLAGE IN WHICH THE HOTEL IS LOCATED – ALONG WITH THE EPONYMOUS LODGING ITSELF, OF COURSE: A FIVE-STAR SANCTUARY FOR BODY AND MIND.

Located 25 miles northeast of Avignon, and nestled at the foot of the 6000 ft-high snowcapped Mont Ventoux (aka the 'Provence Giant'), this enchanting honey-coloured hideaway, a member of the Small Luxury Hotels of the World collection, is the perfect private refuge in which to recharge run-down batteries and reconnect amid utterly unspoilt nature and endless olive groves, far removed from the urban sprawl and hubbub.



The hotel's history begins when the legendary Canadian hotelier and former lawyer Peter Chittick came to Provence in the 1980s, fell in love with the area (and his wife-to-be, the current CBI Director General Dame Carolyn Fairbairn) and decided to stay here. Buying up nine stone houses in this medieval village, he converted them into 34 hotel rooms and suites, every one of them unique, filled with antique furniture and carefully selected artefacts, and suffused with casual elegance and charm.

Fast-forward to Spring 2017, when the co-founder of Naf Naf, fashion and property entrepreneur Patrick Pariente and his two daughters, Leslie Kouhana and Kimberley Cohen first visited. Instantly besotted, Patrick snapped it up for the family business – luxury boutique hotel collection Maisons Pariente. Now, following its Covid enforced closure this most romantic of hotels is ready to open its doors again from 2 July.



There's a palpable physical effect the moment you step over the Crillon's medieval threshold. Shoulders drop and anxieties dissipate as you weave your ways through the higgledy piggledy allies to your designated suite. The bedrooms are all different - airy, elegant and cool in gentle Provencal tones with huge beds, chaise longues and deep baths. And then there's the view, so beautiful, it's difficult to tear your eyes away as the light changes and the colours melt.

It is possible to spend your entire stay holed up here: late breakfasts, lazing by the pool only moving to pad down to the spa located in the former 18th-century vaulted stone stables however venture out and your efforts will be rewarded won't be disappointed. A 34km electric bike trip with Ride & More took us on a tour around Comtat Venaissan, through the beautiful shuttered medieval villages of Bedouin, Fassin before stopping at the Chateau Pesquie vineyard for a picnic lunch of baguettes, cheese, pate, tomatoes, strawberries under the trees.

Whether coming for the La Roque d'Anthéron International Piano Festival, or the gastronomic delights, the area and the hotel are tailor-made to everyone from culture vultures to fine dining fans: the hotel's restaurant La Madeleine is predictably Provencal in flavour and Head Chef Anissa Boulesteix carefully sources her menu ingredients from the region's finest suppliers. Ventoux truffles, red mullet with clams and wild garlic, figs, Provençal pistou and Bergeron apricots from the Rhône Valley are among the gastronomic treasures (try the mouthwatering Risotto with Asparagus and Samphire or the Hen's Nest starter), which guests can enjoy on the panoramic terrace overlooking the surrounding vineyards. Elsewhere, La Table du Ventoux offers bistro-style cuisine, pepped up by herbs been hand-picked from the herb-garden above the swimming pool.

And to drink: savour a glass or two of Côtes du Rhône AOP Ventoux or Châteauneuf-du-Pape, perhaps during an onsite Sommelier tasting in the Crillon's private cellar, with wine locally sourced from some of the most celebrated vineyards in France. Or try the bar, Maison Roche, complete with cosy ancestral fireplace.

However you spend your time in this incredible hideaway, the key word here is tranquil: Crillon Le Brave is a place where you can breathe again.

This feature was first published in Robb Report UK.

Nightly rates at Hotel Crillon Le Brave start from 350 Euros on a bed & breakfast basis.



FOR MORE INFORMATION



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