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Via Tullia

PLACES TO STAY

# 10 of the best hotels in the South of France

*Our summer pick of brilliant places to stay*

1 May 2022

The South of France is a vast area that unfurls from glitzy seaside hangouts (St Tropez, Cannes, Saint-Raphaël) to thriving cities (Marseille, Avignon) and small, inland villages set among the craggy mountains and olive groves. This is our pick of the 10 top stays across the area to inspire your next getaway.



## 1. Les Roches Rouges, Saint-Raphaël

It's the dazzling light that strikes guests the moment they step inside this stylishly revamped Fifties waterfront retreat. The brainchild of boutique group Beaumier, which teamed up with Paris-based design firm Festen for its first Côte d'Azur property, the concept is refreshingly straightforward: an easy-going hotel, right on the water, inspired by the colours of the shimmering cobalt Mediterranean and rusty orange rocks. Fifty near-identical rooms, some facing the sea, some the garden, all have whitewashed walls, polished-concrete floors, minimalist furniture and balconies with canvas butterfly chairs. But the real star attraction is the 30-metre saltwater pool carved out of the rock, which spills over right into the sea. The freshwater lap pool is surrounded by sunbeds and waiters bearing trays of Rinquiquin, the local peach apéritif. There are two great restaurants serving everything Provençal, from pissaladière (onion tart) to steamed cod with garlic mayonnaise and vegetables or roast lamb with rosemary. There's also a little snack hut. Teas of cream-filled tarte Tropézienne can be balanced with paddleboarding and kayaking. In each room there are also walking-sticks for hikes along the pebble beach, or a less strenuous wander to the Institut Esthederm spa for a mineral-packed tan-boosting treatment. Afterwards, laze in a hammock with a copy of *Tender is the Night* (F Scott Fitzgerald's former digs are close by). *Lanie Goodman*



Guillaume de Laubier

## 2. Hotel du Cap-Eden-Roc, Cap d'Antibes

Life isn't perfect. That's why we have places like Hotel du Cap-Eden-Roc, where the world's most glamorous people descend every summer to live on what feels like an impeccably styled film set. The last day of my most recent stay here – the one I had reserved to spend entirely by its [swimming pool](#), cut into rocks overlooking a glittering blue Mediterranean Sea – turned out to be grey and overcast. By this time, I had already experienced the other attractions: the rose garden, the tennis courts, the private cabanas where I enjoyed a massage, the restaurants that manage to feel casually chic in the day and all dressed up at night, and the Manolo Valdés exhibition on its perfectly manicured lawns, where pine trees are being carefully planted to eventually replace the imposing ones standing now. This is a place where nostalgia is kept alive, where corridors are filled with photographs of its most famous guests from the past 150 years, where golden sunshine infuses everyone and everything with an air of romance, so that your time here feels lengthened and expanded, and etched in memory no matter how short your visit actually is. You will leave so well taken care of, so well-fed, so intoxicated by the heady, fragrant summer breeze, that even a cold final day on the French Riviera will not taint your mood. Instead, it seems like just a little twist in the plot, enough to make you believe that the rest of your life is pretty perfect after all. *Divia Thani*

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Via Tolila

### 3. Maybourne Riviera, Roquebrune-Cap-Martin

Here is a game-changer for this chunk of the Riviera. Amid the soignée old-world grandes dames, this paean to ambitious nouveau luxe from the Maybourne Hotel Group (The Berkeley, Claridge's and more) faces the future playfully. It is a brazen block of white criss-crossed lines and floor-to-ceiling glass by veteran French architect Jean Michel Wilmotte. The cavernous lobby is a show-stopper, with its colossal sculpture of an intertwined couple by Louise Bourgeois. But the real draw is the light. From the terrace of the Riviera Restaurant (dishes with the finest products from Liguria to Nice), and from each of the 69 rooms and suites, the panorama of mega-yachts and swooping hang-gliders unfurls. Rooms range from apartment-style suites with wrap-around terraces to hill-hugging Corniche rooms with pine-shaded patios. There's a cutting-edge holistic spa and an indoor and outdoor pool - the latter built into rock so you see only a mirage-like haze of water, sea and sky. The roll call of chefs is starry. Jean-Georges Vongerichten's Pool Bar serves truffle pizza and lobster rolls; Japanese chef Hiro Sato steers the sushi; pastry wizard Benoit Dutreige the divine tarts. The culinary high point is Ceto, Argentinian chef Mauro Colagreco's 'ode to the sea'. *Lanie Goodman*

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#### 4. Crillon le Brave, Vacluse

Regulars at this rambling, extraordinary place at the foot of Mont Ventoux will know that the seven stone houses Crillon le Brave occupies once formed part of a prosperous hillside settlement, abandoned after World War II. Swiss and American second-homers snapped up the lovely buildings in the 1970s, and hotelier Peter Chittick and his now wife converted their first property in 1989. Robin and Judy Hutson (of Hotel du Vin and The Pig) joined as investors years ago, and Judy redesigned many of the rooms during a recent refurbishment, giving them a lighter, distinctly seaside feel. Bedroom, suites and houses are all connected by passageways and courtyards. La Tour, aka Room 33, is one of the most thrilling, with twin bathtubs, a tower-top terrace and an arched window looking out over the olive groves and vineyards. *Sophie Dening*

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Ana Lui

## 5. La Divine Comedie, Avignon

You'd never guess it but behind a massive unmarked iron gate at the end of an impasse lies a magnificent secret garden – Avignon's largest – and a supremely chic new five-room **maison d'hôtes**. After seven years of painstaking restoration, Parisian owners Gilles Jauffret (an interior designer and self-professed antique-market addict) and Amaury de Villoutreys have transformed this former residence for cardinals into an enchanting theatrical space filled with rescued church relics, hand-painted screens, rich fabrics and crystal chandeliers. But a museum it is not: beyond the unique decor (inspired by Naples, Venice and the Middle East), the bedrooms are also deeply comfortable. Most romantic is Aphrodite, with its big round bed, ceiling-high white gauzy curtains and huge terrace for cocktail hour. Wild beasts and whimsy also feature: there are tables with Shrek-like feet, a life-size baby elephant sculpture in the salon, and a vintage merry-go-round horse watching over the stairwell. Wherever your eyes fall, there's something to discover, including the collection of 200 historical regional artworks that decorate the monumental curved staircase. After breakfast in the sunlit conservatory, explore the garden (with a terrific view of the Palais des Papes' crenelated towers), then follow the jasmine-scented path to the stone pool and a spa pavilion. Jauffret and de Villoutreys will arrange a private dinner in the orangery, or you can step next door to their bar, Le Complot, a converted barn where a switched-on theatre crowd drink local wines alongside plates of sardines and foie gras. *Lanie Goodman.*

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Photo: Anne-Sophie A. / gettyimages.com

## 6. Tuba Club, Marseille

You'll be forgiven for walking right past one of France's most talked-about openings of the past few years. Set in the *Marseille* fishing neighbourhood of La Corderie, on the edge of the Calanques National Park, this is classic business-up-front, party-in-the-back territory. The former scuba-diving centre once frequented by conservationist Jacques Cousteau is not only facing the sea, it's practically in it. Those who come without a *swimsuit* for a cocktail on the rocks – as in actual rocks – consider yourself forewarned: you will get splashed. Inside, a subtle *Seventies* disco-school theme flows throughout: a wooden beaded curtain in the restaurant, rough-hewn ceramic vases that look as if they were recovered from an ancient shipwreck, Fernand Léger flame-shaped wall lamps. But that's all part of the appeal of this five-bedroom hotel and restaurant, founded by a self-dubbed friends collective of design and hospitality veterans, which has fast become the hangout for a creative set: staying here is an instant shortcut to the South of France's hippest scene. *Sam Liberman*

8000 7000 5100



## 7. Cheval Blanc St-Tropez

There are good reasons why, in the first half of the 20th century, the [French Riviera](#) in general and St Tropez in particular became the stuff of legend. This is one of them. When it opened in 1936, La Résidence de la Pinède, as it was then known, was an elegant, uncomplicated maison by the sea, a short distance from the town centre. When it reopened in 2019, having been acquired by LVMH, it had been transformed into Cheval Blanc St-Tropez. Though outwardly still the same elegant, uncomplicated maison by the sea, things had actually changed beyond recognition. The interiors by Jean-Michel Wilmotte manage to be at once soothing and startling, with Provençal art everywhere you look. A 20th-century classic has turned into a 21st-century one, with no loss of charm. Cheval Blanc makes for an intriguing contrast with its sister property on St-Tropez's main square, White 1921 (another LVMH gem), as well as with much-loved Hôtel Byblos, and it holds its own in spite of competition from the likes of Michel Reybier's [La Réserve Ramatuelle](#) and Jocelyne Sibuet's effortlessly stylish [Villa Marie](#).  
*Steve King*

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*Read the full [Cheval Blanc St-Tropez hotel review](#)*





## 8. Epi 1959, Ramatuelle

A pin-up hotel when the French Riviera was the most fabulous place to go on holiday – especially for stars of the silver screen – has been rebooted for a new generation. Italian designer Monica Damante has rebooted rooms with old-world charm – full of vintage ceramics and sisal rugs. The restaurant serves seasonal Franco-Californian dishes with lots of vegan hits (rare in France). The closest village is Ramatuelle which is smaller and quieter than the other towns on the [Riviera](#). Understated, breezy sophistication on the quieter Riviera – this is a retro oasis for rosé by the pool. *Tom Morris*

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## 9. La Colombe d'Or Hotel and Restaurant, Saint-Paul-de-Vence

Twenties café-hotel La Colombe d'Or is where Hitchcock came to finish writing *To Catch a Thief*. There's a pretty little garden with a tiled pool, where locals sip the lightest rosé and feast on local dishes. The art collection rivals any of France's major museums – an extraordinary hangover from the early 20th century, when guests would pay for their lodging with their work, meaning you can now spot pieces by the likes of Matisse and Picasso hanging on the walls. And the setting is fairytale perfect – on the top of a hill in medieval Saint-Paul-de-Vence, the second most visited [village in France](#) after Mont-St-Michel.

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Richard Haughton

## 10. Villa la Coste, The Luberon

Built into a pretty hillside, this 28-suite villa – an assembly of low-slung rectangles in natural stone with green-planted roofs – looks as though it may have sprung up from Mother Earth when no one was watching. The latest addition to the 600-acre Château La Coste, a wine estate and contemporary arts centre, it combines deep comfort with a minimalist, vaguely Asian vibe. Each of the big, valley-facing bedrooms is a luminous space with floor-to-ceiling windows and a vast terrace. There are gauzy white four-posters and all-marble bathrooms. Museum-quality art abounds (a Perriand bookcase, a Hirst painting) as do places to eat. Steps away is the glass jewel-box Louison and Le Salon, serving all-organic specialities such as chicken with olives and lemon-fennel tart. But the real star of the show here is the landscape, a wondrous vista of pines, oaks and distant foothills entirely in sync with the uncluttered aesthetic of the hotel.