

## Mind your manors

From a baronet's private playground in Ireland to gothic gorgeousness in London, these lovingly restored grand estates channel the aristocrat lurking within even the most egalitarian traveller.



### BALLYFIN

This late-Georgian mansion, now a 15-guestroom luxury hotel, has survived several incarnations, from family home to Catholic boarding school, but retains many of its original features. Visitors come toe to iron-shod toe with the armour of Sir Charles Coote, Premier Baronet of Ireland, standing guard over the ornate Stair Hall. Guests are encouraged to throw themselves into the activities of the estate's past; whether that be fishing the icy lake, strolling around the 243ha of surrounding estate or even playing a social game of croquet on the emerald lawns. From €600 (\$810) for a single room to €14,500 (\$19,583) to hire the entire estate.

County Laois, Ireland. +353 (0)5787 55866. [www.ballyfin.com](http://www.ballyfin.com)



### Where I stay

Jean-Christophe Babin

President & CEO, TAG Heuer

#### NHOW MILANO, MILAN

"The Nhow is the ultimate fusion of art and hospitality. Rarely have I stayed somewhere so original, with outrageous art everywhere. Yet with all its colourful, underground flavour, it is still welcoming and comfortable. I particularly like the lounge bar in the open inner courtyard, which allows a glimpse of the trendy Milano parties. Just outside is the Navigli dining district, the Duomo and the quirky, early-20th century orange trams." 35 Via Tortona, Milan, Italy. +39 (02) 4898 861. [www.nh-hotels.com](http://www.nh-hotels.com)



### ST PANCRAS RENAISSANCE

Euston Road, London, UK. +44 (20) 7841 3540. [www.marriott.co.uk/hotels/travel/lonpr-st-pancras](http://www.marriott.co.uk/hotels/travel/lonpr-st-pancras)

After a decade of renovations and £200m (\$308m) of restorations, the former Midland Grand Hotel reopened in May, 138 years to the day after its original opening, as Marriott's new St Pancras Renaissance hotel. The grandly gothic facade remains, along with some decidedly modern tweaks. St Pancras station's taxi rank is now an airy lobby with original Barlow-blue ironwork and glass skylights; the Ladies' Smoking Room now welcomes both genders. The Gilbert Scott suite has been lovingly restored to its original 1870s style; rooms in the new wing are more contemporary. From £208 (\$321).



### MACDONALD FRIMLEY HALL HOTEL & SPA

Lime Avenue, Camberley, Surrey, UK.

+44 (0)1276 413 100. [www.macdonaldhotels.co.uk/FrimleyHall](http://www.macdonaldhotels.co.uk/FrimleyHall)

From its ivy-draped outer walls to the surrounding woodlands, Macdonald Frimley Hall Hotel is every bit the quintessential English country home. Original features that enhance the 129-year-old property include the ornately carved wooden staircase and heritage-listed wallpaper. Mahogany furniture and four-poster beds dressed in creamy textures lend a romantic air to the bedrooms. A £5 million (\$7.7m) refurbishment includes the luxe Vital Health & Beauty spa, adding a modern touch to the manor's property features. If playing lord and lady of the manor tires, punters can get their thrills from nearby Ascot Racecourse and Windsor Castle. From £100 (\$154).

## ASK THE CONCIERGE



Andrea Kolb


AnaYela, Marrakech

### When friends are in town I take them for a drink at...


Kosybar, making reservations for the beautiful terrace that overlooks El Badi Palace's floodlit walls.


 **The restaurant that best shows off Marrakech has to be...** Bô Zin, with its beautiful garden, great food and excellent atmosphere.

If you are lucky, you could even meet a star.

 **For the perfect gift or memento...** I'd shop in the open-air souks (markets) of the Medina, the ancient city walls of Marrakech.


 **Couples wanting a romantic dinner for two should consider...** AnaYela's Flying Carpet tower, an open-air restaurant with incredible views. It has traditional drapes and pillows and delivers a traditional dining experience.


 **If I wanted to see some great art...** I'd be heading to the Arts In Marrakech Biennale festival (February 29-March 4, 2012) for the best from local artists.

 **The best markets can be found...** at the incomparable souks, they have whatever it


is you are looking for, with markets for everything from shoes, traditional carpets and tuniques to leather, lamps and food.

 **For vintage finds...** head to Bab El Khemis and its traditional market home in the north of the Medina. It's very good for antique furniture and carved doors.

 **If it's raining...** go to Les Bains de Marrakech and enjoy a massage or the classic *hammam*, our traditional steam bath.

 **Sights that are over-rated include...** the new modern area, which doesn't capture the magic of the city, or have the history.

 **Marrakech's best-kept secrets are...** riding horses, not camels. Around Marrakech you'll find some great stables. Just take a horse, a guide and a picnic with you. Really cool and very romantic.

 **If I were a visitor with a free day I would...** take a car and driver and explore the surroundings of Marrakech, including Ourika, the Atlas Mountains and their hidden villages.

**"The souks have whatever you are looking for: shoes, leather, carpets, food"**