

NEW Chateau Mcely, Czech Republic

Sculptured sheep graze the lawns of this 17th-century castle, an hour from Prague. It was acquired from the state for a song by Inez, a young Slovakian widow, when she married entrepreneur Jim Cusumano; the result is the labour of their love. The original furniture was long looted, so Jim and Inez sourced antiques and new furnishings. The effect is of a stylish family home, not without eccentricity. Each room is unique, the walls are pastel, and bedlinen and armchairs are in seductively rich colours.

Who goes Sophisticated young Czech couples, Austrians, diplomats.

Top tip Book the romantic Corner Suite.

Must-do Explore neighbouring castles.

Downside It's seriously cold in mid-winter, so remember to bring a warm coat.

Four nights, from £2,096 a room, including flights and transfers, with Abercrombie & Kent Private Travel (020 7190 7750; www.abercrombiekent.co.uk).



NEW Romaneira, Portugal

In the cool emerald hills of northern Portugal, where leafy terraced vineyards roll down to the stately Douro River, two ancient stone quintas have been restored to a level of sophistication previously unseen in an area more famed for its natural beauty. The interiors recall a Parisian salon; each suite is a different essay in refined elegance. The restaurant, under the guidance of Michelin-starred Philippe Conticini, opened in the autumn. Meals can be served in the vineyard or down by the river. Smiling staff can be seen but not heard, and successfully anticipate your every wish. A real gem of a place.

Who goes Top executives in need of R&R.

Top tip Indulge in Romaneira's own wines.

Must-do Swim in the infinity pool, with the 400-hectare estate spread out before you.

Downside The cost.

Romaneira (+351 254 732432; www.maisonsdesreves.com), from about £785 a room a night full board, including driver, guides, boat trips, massage and hammam.



Arlberg Hospiz Hotel, Austria

The 650-year-old Arlberg Hospiz is the best ski hotel in the world. It's a self-contained holiday base in a lonely location among snowdrifts. The Arlberg is the ski area shared by St Anton, Lech and Zurs, and the Hospiz is at the heart of it. Rooms are intelligently configured for families, and the children's club takes care of the little monsters until 9pm. This is one of Europe's snowiest places; you are more likely to be marooned than suffer snow shortage.

Who goes Keen skiing gourmets and well-to-do families.

Must-do Ski.

Top tip If driving, take snow chains.

Downside The ski area is not forgiving for beginners.

From £365 a room a night half board. The five-star Arlberg Hospiz Hotel is a member of Preferred Hotels & Resorts. Book with Resort Escapes and receive a US\$100 activity credit with your booking. For more information about Resort Escapes or to book, ring 00800 323 75051, or visit www.preferredhotelgroup.com/resort.



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