

FOOD WITH A VIEW P107 MUSICAL WARES P114 THE DIAMOND OF KNITWEAR P116

# The Edit

WHERE TO SLEEP, EAT AND SHOP WHEN YOU'RE IN THE KNOW

## STAY HERE

A HISTORIC CHÂTEAU HAS OPENED AS A HOTEL. JESSICA PRUPAS LIVES THE NOBLE LIFE

CHÂTEAU DU GRAND-LUCÉ  
LOIRE VALLEY

€€€€

THE GATES SWING open as we approach in our tinted Mercedes van. The driver pushes the accelerator and we crawl carefully along the gravel path, passing green islands of manicured ground. We reach the grand steps to find a tanned, apparently poreless man at the top, holding a silver tray stacked with two bubbling flutes. I look down at my crinkled high-street shorts, cursing myself for leaving my ballgown at home.

I'm moving into the Château du Grand-Lucé for the weekend – a real, actual palace you can sleep in. Nestled in the wine-producing Loire Valley, the château was built by an enterprising baron in the 1760s and has since changed affluent hands several times before opening as a hotel this year. Guests can indulge their most delusional royal fantasies in its opulent surrounds, all the while being doted on by the intensely attentive staff. >





PRICE GUIDE €€€€ = An absolute bargain €€€€ = Won't hurt your wallet €€€€ = Pushing the boat out €€€€ = Alert your bank manager



Take the poreless man, for example. His name is Skip and we would encounter him many more times over the course of our visit: bringing us Mojitos by the pool; serving us lunch by the pool, taking Instagram shots of us lounging by the pool – and then there was the fish-knife incident.

During a sumptuous six-course dinner served on the restaurant patio, I order the sea bass as my main dish, excited to plunge into the new waters of flexitarianism (I was, until very recently, a longtime veggie). When it comes, I notice a small butter knife by my plate in place of a regular one. I alert Skip to this.

“That’s a fish knife,” he says, chuckling. Normally, I would crumple with shame, but it’s clear Skip is laughing with, not at. Over the weekend, we become something like friends.

And that’s the kind of feeling you’re left with at the château. Yes, it’s as beautiful as any world-class museum – at every turn we’re left gasping at the scene before us. The interior has been recently renovated, but the neoclassical period details all are there, save for a few modern touches. The heartstopping salons on the ground floor – with their soaring ceilings, candy-coloured walls and gleaming chandeliers – would feel untouchable if it weren’t for a welcoming feeling that flows through the building.

The best part, though, is the evening cocktail hour. Guests mingle in the garden, watching the sun slink down behind the manicured hedges while the white limestone palace looms behind them. It’s these moments when you melt effortlessly into château life, no ballgown needed.

[chateaugrandluce.com](http://chateaugrandluce.com)



**CITY BLUES?**  
**THREE MORE**  
**COUNTRY**  
**HOTELS**



**LYGON ARMS**  
**FLY TO BIRMINGHAM**

This old hotel and hunting-lodge restaurant had a glamorous refurb this year, tacking on a brilliant new restaurant and spa to its stately bones.



**ALAIOR TORRALBENC**  
**FLY TO MENORCA**

Housed in a collection of old farmhouses and encircled by vineyards, this island retreat is all whitewashed luxe. Its privileged position on top of a hill means sea views for miles.



**GARA ROCK**  
**FLY TO BRISTOL**

There’s nothing but ocean, sky and rugged vistas at this hotel perched on the edge of the world – or, rather, the edge of Devon’s coastline. Naturally, the seafood here is great.