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THE HOT LIST 2011

65 great new hotels

Tuscany

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glorious wineries

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TIBET

Train journey to
the roof of the world

Eurostar escapes

Stylish city breaks in Paris, Lille & Avignon



HOT THE LIST 2011

This year's Hot List covers 31 countries from Argentina to Russia. The 65 hotels in our final selection were chosen after months of research, starting with hundreds of suggestions from our correspondents across the globe. We hope you agree that the final list is extraordinary in its range, from a former 15th-century fishing village to brand-new island resorts, skyscraping city hotels and eco-conscious rural retreats. Take your pick...



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of the hoi polloi spoiling the peace – the owners have bought the surrounding hillsides to protect guests from prying eyes.

WHEN TO GO Around Easter, when the countryside is in spring full bloom.

ROOM TO BOOK A top-floor Deluxe Suite, with sweeping views to Monemvasia. 00 30 27320 66300; www.kinsterna hotel.gr. Doubles from €180

THE ROMANOS, COSTA NAVARINO

Messinia

SUPER RESORT Twenty-five years in the making, super-resort Costa Navarino has made the region of Messinia, in the sleepy south-west corner of the Peloponnese, this year's top Greek destination. The vast development, owned by the Constantakopoulos shipping dynasty, is impressive for its sheer scale and ambition, even if it doesn't always quite live up to the hype. Within Costa Navarino, several resorts are planned, the first of which has just opened: Navarino Dunes, complete with golf course, 4,000-square-metre spa overlooking a kilometre stretch of sandy beach, and two luxury hotels, the ritzier of which is The Romanos. Since it opened last summer, The Romanos has hosted Russian tycoons, German footballers and Hollywood actors. Tiger Woods has also made an appearance. It has 321 rooms and suites set in vast gardens, so it's easy for celebrities to disappear. (It's also easy to get lost, as the signage isn't great.) Bedrooms are simply decorated in pale neutrals; the luxury is in the detail: solid wood floors, 250-threadcount sheets and marble bathrooms. Ground-floor rooms all have private plunge pools. There are cabanillas for outdoor massages and fire-pits for barbecues. The beautifully presented breakfast buffet showcases delicious local products, from organic yoghurt to mini spinach pies. Work it all off with canoeing, mountaineering, archery or squash. It takes 750 staff to keep this mammoth undertaking working smoothly; they are young and a little inexperienced, but unfailingly helpful and cheerful.

WHEN TO GO May, June or September to avoid school-holidaymakers and sunstroke on the dunes.

ROOM TO BOOK A west-facing Premium Infinity room to catch the glorious sunsets over the Ionian Sea. 00 30 272 309 6000; www.romanos costanavarino.com. Doubles from €250

ITALY

BORGO EGNAZIA

Puglia

Even before Borgo Egnazia opened on Puglia's Adriatic coast last May, things were looking lively within a five-mile radius of the fishing village of Savelletri di Fasano. There was the Coccaro Beach Club (bristling with Milanese), and rustic-chic boltholes such as Masseria Cimino and the spa-focused Masseria San Domenico, both owned by the Melpignano family who have now opened Borgo Egnazia, a massive-scale, family-focused resort. Set in 40 acres, with vast

corridors and walls lined in the pale local tufa stone, this contemporary, low-lying resort is bathed in light. Families will like the suites in the 72 two-storey townhouses in a village-style complex (with a kids' club and shallow pool) and, at a higher price, the clutch of 28 three-bedroom super-villas with private gardens and pools. In addition, there is a boutique-style hotel in the main building – the only area to recommend for couples – with 63 rooms decorated in quiet cream-on-cream, lit with glass lanterns. The resort employs two full-time painters to keep the whites looking white, and numerous easy-going staff to plump up the sun-lounger cushions around the vast central pool. There are two beach clubs, two restaurants, one cookery school, a gym and a 1,800-square-metre spa; and there's discounted access to the only world-class 18-hole golf course in the area.

WHEN TO GO April or May, when poppies cover the olive groves; or September, when the sea is still warm and the crowds have left.

ROOM TO BOOK Suite 101 in the main hotel has the best terrace and sea views. 00 39 080 225500; www.borgoegnazia.com. Doubles from €215

CAPRI TIBERIO PALACE

The Capri Tiberio Palace is a short stroll from the island's busy Piazzetta along a narrow, cobbled street lined with elegant boutiques, well positioned for access to the town and just high enough to provide sparkling Mediterranean views from the bedrooms. Once Marriott-branded, it is now privately owned by an Italian (whose wife owns the successful JK Place Capri, near the port), and its new incarnation has seen radical changes. The interiors are now utterly chic in a Miami-meets-Capri way. Interior designer Giampiero Panepinto has combined finds from his travels with local touches, matching sea greens and lemon golds to create a contemporary, breezy atmosphere. The Jacky Bar features whirring fans, a white grand piano, oversized black-and-white photos and Borsalino hats. Taschen has a bookshop in a corner of the elegant lobby, where three gold bowls stand filled with salt, a traditional local welcome. The 57 bedrooms are simple and comfortable, with sea-facing balconies; the 13 suites have chandeliers, Jacuzzis and huge terraces. The food in the restaurant is excellent, from the Gaeta olives to the ravioli Caprese, a melt-in-the-mouth concoction of fresh ricotta and herbs. There are indoor and outdoor swimming pools, a fitness centre and the impressive Blu Mediterraneo Spa by Acqua di Parma, only the second in the world, where one can immerse oneself in the fragrance of the island's oranges.

WHEN TO GO September, when the crowds have left and the light is perfect.

ROOM TO BOOK The Bellevue Suite for its classical elegance. 00 39 081 978 7111; www.capritiberio palace.it. Doubles from €360

PRINCIPE FORTE DEI MARM

Tuscany

Set back from the beach among the genteel villas and gardens of Forte dei Marmi – the über-exclusive holiday resort recently popular with wealthy Russians – the contemporary Principe has shaken up the traditional accommodation scene on this part of the Versilia coast. The decor is pared-down and elegant with warm woods, stone and glass playing backdrop to a who's who of Italian furniture design. The ground floor is a light-filled open space with sitting, bar and restaurant areas contained within retractable glass walls. There's also plenty of glass in the 28 bedrooms, decorated in white, taupe and pale honey colours with gorgeous Tunisian stone bathrooms. The icing on the cake is the spectacular rooftop bar, where more retractable glass and a huge wraparound terrace create an inside/outside space suspended between the Apuan Alps and the sea. Eating options include a gourmet restaurant, tapas-style fusion food on the roof and a classic *spaghetti alle vongole* served on the beach. Although there's a sleek pool and cocooning spa, most guests choose to while away summer days under a cabana at the hotel's beach club. Sounds boring? Then charter the hotel's yacht for a spin up to Portofino. The Principe is aiming high and along with eye-watering prices come exceptional services. Once it has fully settled in, this is going to be one of the very best hotels on the coast.

WHEN TO GO Forte is at its liveliest in August. May, June and September are quieter and cooler.

ROOM TO BOOK The Spatio is a 90-square-metre open space with a huge terrace; 305 is a light-filled corner room with views of the mountains. 00 39 0584 783636; www.principeforte deimarmi.com. Doubles from €450

MONTENEGRO

AMAN SVETI STEFAN

Montenegro

ISLAND IDYLL It took Amanresorts four years to complete the mammoth project of restoring the UNESCO-protected island to its former charm, every detail just-so. This is not your standard resort, but a charming village on its own rocky islet off the dramatic coast of Montenegro, the 'new Croatia'. It was built in the 15th century from the spoils of a battle won by fishermen against marauding Turks, and the former fishermen's cottages now house 50 rooms and suites, all with sea views. They are beautiful, spacious and hi-tech, the furniture and fittings of the very best quality, the palette pleasingly neutral. The only sound is of songbirds and boats. Oleander and olive trees grow along the higgledy-piggledy stone passageways. The look remains artfully rustic, but the service is world-class: recruited locally and trained rigorously, the staff verge on telepathic. The two pools

both have restaurants, and there are many more places to eat and drink in the pretty piazza. It is worth crossing the causeway for the excellent restaurants on the mainland, too. Or to spend lazy hours on one of the four beaches, the loveliest of which is Queen's Beach, a private, perfect little arc of pale-pink sand, like a fingernail, where the water is so clear you can watch fish shimmer past your ankles.

WHEN TO GO June or September, when the super-yachts have returned to Russia and Italy but the weather is warm and sunny.

ROOM TO BOOK The Grand Suite is grand indeed; its terraces have views out to sea in three directions. The Sveti Stefan Suite is even grander, and has its own pool. 00 382 33 420000; www.amanresorts.com. Doubles from €660

THE NETHERLANDS

THE GRAND AMSTERDAM

A building with as august a history as the one that now houses The Grand Amsterdam presents a daunting prospect to anyone wanting to add another chapter to its story. Built in 1578 as a monastery, it moonlighted as a lodge for royal visitors to the city, was later an Admiralty Building, then for nearly 200 years Amsterdam's City Hall (during which time it gained an Art Deco extension), before first emerging as a hotel in the 1990s. French interiors architect Sybille de Margerie has worked a minor miracle in a complete refit, which opened in phases over 2010. She's used the plums, rich browns, deep pinks and oranges that gleam in Old Master paintings to create a style that stands its ground in this monumental setting. It is contemporary without being vulgar, cosy but not twee. The restaurant, Bridges, is already being heralded as one of the town's top 10, thanks to chef Aurélien Poirot's perfectly poised seafood dishes, such as octopus carpaccio, given a subtle turn with pine nuts and mint oil; and there's a really first-rate raw bar. Bathroom TVs, Hermès products and a personal butler service that hits just the right note all do their bit in making what has deservedly become one of Amsterdam's top addresses.

WHEN TO GO Even the city centre manages the odd outburst of tulips in spring. This time of year, when the leaves have not fully formed on the trees, and the autumn, as they begin to fall, are the best times for vistas of the historic buildings that line the canals.

ROOM TO BOOK A room on the upper floor, with views across the Oudezijds Achterburgwal, the canal behind the hotel (quieter and prettier than the one in front). 00 31 20 5553111; www.sofitel-legend-thegrand.com. Doubles from €252

PORTUGAL

VIDAGO PALACE

Trás-os-Montes

Vidago Palace is a resort hotel with *grande-dame* status. Anticipatory service, ➤