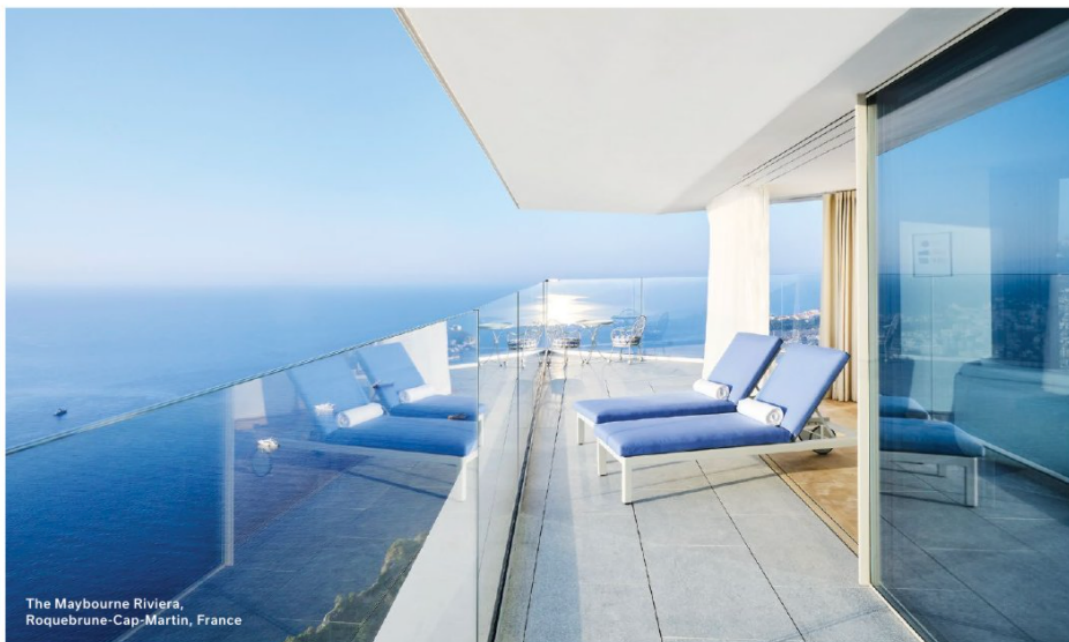


# ANDREW HARPER'S Hideaway Report®

JANUARY 2022

SINCE 1979

Traveling the world in search of truly enchanting places



The Maybourne Riviera,  
Roquebrune-Cap-Martin, France

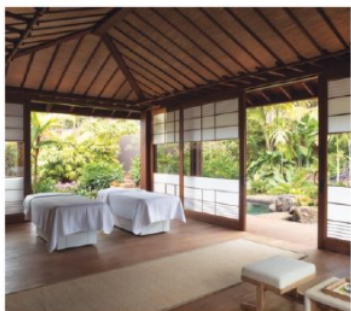
## EDITORS' CHOICE AWARDS 2022

**D**espite everything, 2021 was a surprisingly successful year. Our choice of international destinations may have been severely restricted, but thanks to the introduction of effective vaccines, we were at least able to travel freely within the United States. And we even managed to find our way back to Mexico, Costa Rica, Italy, France, Portugal and East Africa. Over the course of 12 months, we stayed in 87 hotels and resorts and dined at 69 restaurants, in addition to those at the properties we reviewed. Most important, a majority of the hotels that we visited seemed relatively close to normal. Some prices may have been preposterous, but at least restaurants and spas had reopened. When reaching a judgment,

we made some allowances, but, in general, we insisted on the highest standards and felt comfortable that our assessments would prove fair and reliable. Alas, it is impossible to know precisely what 2022 will bring. There seem to be grounds for qualified optimism. Certainly, the owners and employees of hotels and restaurants around the globe would be thrilled to see the return of the American traveler, to say nothing of the wildlife rangers and environmentalists for whom the tourist dollar is often their most important source of revenue. So let us hope, for all our sakes, that experiences in far-flung lands will once again become a regular and agreeable feature of life in the year that lies ahead. Bon voyage! — *Andrew Harper*

# Hideaway of the Year – Four Seasons Sensei Lanai

LANAI CITY, HAWAII



**T**oo seldom do I find a hotel that creates an extremely positive first impression and manages to only get better from there. Located in the cool highlands of Hawaii's most exclusive publicly accessible island, much of which is owned by Oracle founder Larry Ellison, the completely refurbished Four Seasons Sensei Lanai has 96 rooms but remains very much a hideaway. According to some estimates, Ellison spent \$75 million renovating the former Lodge at Koele. Remarkably, the property now ranks as my favorite Hawaiian resort despite its lack of ocean views or a beach. Instead, it offers glorious botanical gardens laced with footpaths and streams, surrounded by lily-speckled ponds and enhanced by world-class contemporary sculptures.

Striking artwork adorns the property's interiors as well, including the fine restaurant, Sensei by Nobu. There are two contrasting menus: One offers dishes with "nutritional balance," while the other features more indulgent options. Everything

we tried was delicious. (A shuttle also gives guests access to the restaurants and beach at the 213-room Four Seasons Lanai on Manele Bay.) We had booked a package that included a generous activities credit and took advantage of private nutritional and fitness counseling sessions, as well as snorkeling excursions and sunset cruises. But it is the world-class spa that I pine for most. My traditional Lomi 'A'e massage took place in an extraordinary private pavilion with its own sauna, steam room and garden. It was always a pleasure to return to our quiet and spacious Koele Deluxe Room, but when I had time to relax, I was drawn magnetically either to the immense pool or the warm waters of the tranquil Onsen Garden. Bliss.

The Sensei Lanai is Four Seasons' first attempt at a wellness resort, and it succeeded far beyond my expectations. Crucially, the property overcame the chronic staffing difficulties suffered by so many hotels in 2021. I hope to make a week's stay an annual tradition.



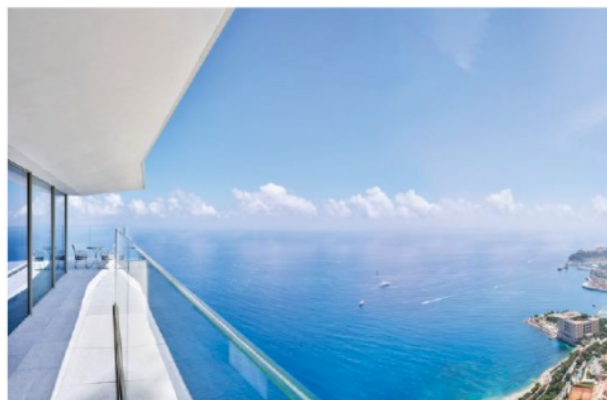


## Hotel Château du Grand-Lucé

LE GRAND-LUCÉ, FRANCE

Located about 50 miles north of the city of Tours, the 17-room Hotel Château du Grand-Lucé opened two years ago after lavish renovations. The recent overhaul was the work of American hotelier Marcy Holthus, the owner of the Washington School House Hotel in Park City, Utah. Our Corner King Room Garden View was one of the prettiest accommodations we've ever seen in France, with unforgettable views over the gardens from two tall windows draped with silk curtains. At the hotel's

restaurant, Le Lucé, chef Maxime Thomas presents a regularly changing menu. We dined on white asparagus roasted with chestnut honey and veal fillet with stuffed morels and ramps. A bistro menu is served in the hotel's attractive bar. The château also has a heated outdoor swimming pool and electric bicycles for guests to borrow. The sumptuous property is a wonderful addition to an evolving roster of hotels from which to visit the incomparable Loire Valley.



## The Maybourne Riviera

ROQUEBRUNE-CAP-MARTIN, FRANCE

The 69-room Maybourne Riviera hotel enjoys a peerlessly dramatic site overlooking the Mediterranean. Recently, the property has been subject to a \$120 million makeover by Irish hotelier Paddy McKillen, owner of the Maybourne Group, which includes Claridge's and The Connaught in London. A new six-story wing has been built into the cliffside. Our accommodations in the original building immediately reminded me of the interior of a luxury yacht. And since its balcony was

enclosed by plate glass, we could enjoy the panorama of Monte Carlo from virtually anywhere in the suite. The hotel has two restaurants overseen by three-star chef Mauro Colagreco. These include the superb Ceto, where the menu features fish and shellfish prepared in ways that highlight the natural flavors of the wild seafood. The Maybourne Riviera has a private beach club for anyone who wants to spend a day by the sea. But this dazzling cliffside aerie is essentially a self-contained escape.



## The Maker

HUDSON, NEW YORK

In recent years, the city of Hudson has found a new identity as a retreat for New Yorkers, drawn by affordable real estate and the region's scenic grandeur. The Maker hotel comprises 11 rooms spread across three buildings: a Georgian mansion, a Greek Revival building from the 1840s and a carriage house dating from the 1890s. The public areas are a tour de force. Original features, like the mosaic floors and hand-painted floral wallpaper, have been lovingly restored, and a remarkable

private art collection adorns the walls. The Bedrooms are on the small side, but the property also comprises Lofts, Studios, one Apartment and four sumptuous and atmospheric Maker Studios. Amenities include an excellent restaurant serving seasonal dishes made primarily with local ingredients, a lively café and a huge gym. The Maker provides a hospitable and exceptionally stylish base from which to explore the dramatic landscapes and cultural attractions of the Hudson Valley.



## Primland Resort

MEADOWS OF DAN, VIRGINIA

Located on a spur of the Blue Ridge Mountains, the 12,000-acre Primland Resort has been one of Virginia's best-kept secrets — until now. The property was purchased by Auberge Resorts Collection last year, and word is out about this scenic estate. The 26-room 72,000-square-foot lodge is set on an emerald plateau surrounded by the fairways of the Donald Steel-designed Highlands Course. Dotted around the property are three Fairway Cottages, three adults-only Tree Houses and

four Pinnacle Cottages containing four units each. Guests have three restaurants to choose from, along with a pool, spa and tennis courts and a long list of activities that includes hunting, hiking, fly-fishing, horseback riding, nature walks and RTV excursions. The most unusual feature of the resort, however, is its observatory, which holds two state-of-the-art telescopes where visitors can tour deep space with an enthusiastic resident astronomer. Primland is too good of a secret to keep.





## Commodore Perry Estate

AUSTIN, TEXAS

Perched on a knoll adjacent to the historic Hyde Park neighborhood, this sophisticated hotel, nestled amid a 10-acre stone-walled estate, is a little world unto itself. It is the first urban property from Auberge Resorts Collection, and it has been a significant addition to the social life of Austin since it opened in mid-June 2019. The 54 guest accommodations, all showcasing interior designer Ken Fulk's whimsical décor, are divided between the Perry mansion, a 10,800-square-foot

Italianate structure dating from 1928, and an inn with a more contemporary design. Common spaces include a circular wood-paneled library, an intimate cocktail bar and Lutie's, a restaurant serving "Texas heritage cuisine." As we relaxed with cocktails on the loggia, overlooking the immaculately maintained English-style gardens dotted with fountains and sculptures and the lovely oval swimming pool, we felt far removed from the city, even though the property is just 3 miles north of downtown.



## Montage Healdsburg

HEALDSBURG, CALIFORNIA

Sonoma County accommodations tend to be smaller hide-aways rather than grand spa resorts, a fact that makes the opening of the Montage Healdsburg all the more notable. It feels tucked away, set amid 258 acres of vineyards and oak forest, but the property is just a few minutes' drive from Healdsburg's main square. Although convenient to town and numerous wineries, the resort is also highly conducive to my favorite vacation activity: indolence. The 130 accommoda-

tions are scattered around the hilly estate, and had we never left our large Deluxe Mountain King Room, we would still have had a wonderful time. But it would have been a shame to miss lounging beside the pretty main swimming pool, not to mention the superlative local cuisine served on the panoramic terrace of the Hazel Hill restaurant. With this resort, Montage has significantly raised the bar in Sonoma. To have done so in the midst of a pandemic is no small achievement.



## Park Hyatt Aviara

CARLSBAD, CALIFORNIA

Set on 200 acres, this 327-room seaside resort recently underwent a \$50 million renovation that transformed its accommodations, reimagined its public spaces and added a new restaurant. The spacious rooms and suites now come in a restful color palette of cream and gray with accents of blue and rose. And all have either private balconies or terraces that survey the palm-lined lawn or the Batiquitos Lagoon nature preserve. This family- and pet-friendly hotel offers something

for everyone: an 18-hole golf course designed by Arnold Palmer; six tennis courts; a Splash Pool Deck for kids, plus an adult pool surrounded by private cabanas; and a 15,000-square-foot spa. And there are now three dining options: the Pacific Point bar and restaurant; Ponto Lago, for Baja-inspired cuisine; and Ember & Rye, a steakhouse helmed by celebrity chef Richard Blais. Park Hyatt Aviara is a wonderful place to spread out for an extended stay.



## Hotel Esencia

PLAYA XPU-HA, MEXICO

A stay at this intimate hotel offers the chance to bask on a dazzling white-sand beach that lines a beautifully preserved stretch of the irresistible Riviera Maya. Originally the vacation villa of Italian duchess Rosa de Ferrari, this glamorous property encompasses 29 lodgings scattered across the grounds, two pools and three restaurants that offer creative cuisine highlighting freshly caught seafood. Our stand-alone Jungle Suite featured white-on-white interiors, two terraces and

a heated plunge pool. The suite's minimalist design formed a dramatic counterpoint to the lush canopied jungle surroundings. Meandering along a palm-lined footpath past sun-bathing iguanas and free-roaming peacocks, we had the sense of being a privileged guest at a magnificently exotic estate. The hotel's timeless and aristocratic atmosphere, secluded location and refined simplicity make Esencia one of the most exceptional properties in Mexico.





## Nayara Tented Camp

LA FORTUNA, COSTA RICA

Nayara Tented Camp is situated beneath the dramatic 5,437-foot Arenal Volcano and close to Costa Rica's largest lake. Its 21 luxury tents are part of a larger complex, but the other two resorts are so buried in greenery, the scale of the property is effectively disguised. Our air-conditioned suite was elevated on stilts, with sweeping views over the forest canopy. Inside, we found a king-size bed, hardwood floors and a bath with a freestanding tub. Beyond glass doors was a wonderful

outdoor shower, screened by bamboo walls. Our huge terrace came with loungers, a hammock, a green marble plunge pool fed with water from hot springs and a glorious volcano view. During our stay, we ventured on an escorted bird-watching hike, trekked through the nearby lava fields and kayaked on nearby Lake Arenal. Nayara Tented Camp is an imaginative and stylish new resort, with an exceptionally relaxing atmosphere created by consistently obliging staff.



## Airelles Château de Versailles, Le Grand Contrôle

VERSAILLES, FRANCE

With the opening of the 14-room Airelles Château de Versailles, Le Grand Contrôle, Versailles finally has a hotel worthy of one of France's most famous destinations. The property offers a refined approximation of life in the Château de Versailles during its heyday. It occupies three 1652 brick-and-stone buildings located on the edge of the château complex, overlooking the gardens of L'Orangerie. The hotel's proximity to the château facilitates private visits to the chambers

of Queen Marie Antoinette and after-hours entry to the Hall of Mirrors. Each room is individually decorated. Our Junior Suite was spacious and light filled, with oak parquet floors, a gilded mirror over the marble fireplace, a crystal chandelier and a décor of Pierre Frey floral-print fabrics and wallpaper. Chef Alain Ducasse supervises the hotel's superb restaurant and has created a menu inspired by dishes that were actually served at the court of Louis XIV.



## Belmond Castello di Casole

CASOLE D'ELSA, ITALY

Tuscany is an exquisitely beautiful region blessed with numerous luxury resorts centered on historic castles and palaces. And the 39-room Belmond Castello di Casole is now arguably the finest of them all. As soon as we walked into the flower-filled entry hall with its polished onyx floor, I suspected that we were in for something special. Our sizable Executive Junior Suite in the palace had a strong sense of place and memorable views, but my favorite feature was its stunning

white marble bath, stocked with customized Acqua di Parma products. The vaults of a former winery behind the palace contained the remarkable spa, decorated with Etruscan artifacts, and a sensational mosaic-tiled infinity pool overlooked a vast sweep of unspoiled countryside. A nearby flower-lined terrace was a divine place for a sunset aperitivo. Inside, the stylish main restaurant served delectable local cuisine. Throughout our stay, the staff were notably attentive.



## Castello di Reschio

LISCIANO NICCONE, ITALY

How surprising that one of Italy's most glamorous new resorts should pop up in Umbria, Tuscany's much earthier neighbor. The 36-room Castello di Reschio can provide a base for sightseeing, but the 3,700-acre estate is also a destination in itself. It was impossible to find an interior space that wasn't sumptuously chic, whether the conservatory-like Palm Court, the valley-view gourmet restaurant or our Castello Suite. Throughout, the Jazz Age-inspired décor dazzled. The dramatic

spa occupies a former wine cellar and has an unusually plush couple's treatment room. Its centerpiece, however, is the "Roman bath," a large saltwater pool surrounded by candles, where I had an unforgettable Watsu treatment. Flanked by umbrella pines, the main swimming pool is exceptionally striking, while beyond it are world-class stables and the casual Ristorante alle Scuderie. This resort can be rather formal, but the staff is unfailingly friendly and helpful.





## Angama Mara

MAASAI MARA NATIONAL RESERVE, KENYA

Angama Mara comprises two self-contained camps, each with 15 freestanding suites, which have separate dining areas but share a horizon pool, fitness center and boutique. Both camps have uniquely spectacular locations on an escarpment 1,000 feet above the plains of the Maasai Mara. The 1,075-square-foot canvas structures are contemporary in style and feature spacious sitting areas, soaking tubs, walk-in showers and 36-foot-wide glass fronts that open onto private

panoramic balconies. Amenities include Italian glassware, Maasai plaid throw blankets, Africology toiletries and a pair of Nikon binoculars. Food at the camp is imaginative and attractively presented; the staff are well trained and unfailingly hospitable; and the game viewing is routinely spectacular. Unusually, younger children are made welcome. Angama Mara is a stunning exemplar of a new generation of safari camps that consciously eschew all traces of the colonial past.



## Little Chem Chem

BURUNGE WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA, TANZANIA

With just six large tented suites, plus an open-sided lounge and dining areas, Little Chem Chem surveys an expanse of a savanna that extends to the shore of Lake Burunge. The comfortable and stylish tents come with king-size beds, rush matting and campaign-style furniture. Baths provide twin sinks and walk-in showers, while additional outdoor showers are enclosed by stone walls that are tall enough to provide a sense of security but low enough to allow their occupants to observe

the waterbuck and impala grazing nearby. The owners of Little Chem Chem, Fabia Bausch and Nicolas Negre, are Swiss and French, respectively, and their nationalities seem to inform the outstanding cuisine. The camp is set on a 62-square-mile private concession contiguous with Tarangire National Park, and the wildlife viewing is consistently excellent. Aside from game drives, activities include Maasai cultural visits and excursions to see the vast flocks of pink flamingos on Lake Manyara.