

The 101 best hotels in the world

*Amalfi Coast or Mexican Riviera? Where to moor a megayacht or hide away in seclusion?
Welcome to the definitive directory of the world's most talked-about pleasure palaces.
Pack up, summon the private jet – we're off!*

STAIRWAY TO HEAVEN

Borgo Santandrea on the Amalfi Coast, where 244 steps take you from the beach up to the top of the hotel



Hotel Château du Grand-Lucé's Jardin Exotique has a swimming pool, original greenhouses and an orangery

Baronial interiors are an ode to the remarkable history of the château

HOTEL CHÂTEAU DU GRAND-LUCÉ

Loire Valley, France

A bolthole for Rousseau and Voltaire, Hotel Château du Grand-Lucé reached the end of the Second World War with barely a scratch – despite having a stash of the Louvre's paintings concealed under the stage of a theatre built in the stables. Built for the baronial Pineau de Viennay family in 1760, the whole place is redolent of a distinguished past. You can sense it in the pale tuffeau-stone façade and the palatial interior rooms – stone flags and parquet floors, huge mirrors and antlers – of which the most stately is the dining room, its pink-painted panelling hung with an oil portrait of Napoléon III. The château combines all the elegance of *ancien régime* nobility with subtle modern amenities and attention to the detail of grand-luxe *Américain*: air-con, thumping water pressure, high-thread-count cottons and smartphones in the bedrooms to call reception. Though no two are the same, rooms all share a 'marble,

chandelier and Boulle-style' aesthetic, with Hermès silk cushions and comfortable mattresses and linen from Rivolta Carnignani. And among the Toile de Jouy and de Gournay chinoiserie, there are crystal decanters for bedside water and woven baskets with red wine, apricot jam, a baguette and playing cards – all encouraging you to embrace an 18th-century life of pure pleasure. Even in this silken context, the gardens are almost implausibly lovely. The 80 acres are laid out like a mini Versailles: a panoply of walkways, vistas and statues scattered in the woodland (some presents from Louis XV). And guests are given a map to navigate their way around, whether on foot or electric bike: through a potager on a lower level, around the lake studded with stepping stones, past a small waterfall and resident geese. But the most fantastical spot to take a dip is the circular pool in the centre of the walled Jardin Exotique, a suntrap with borders of roses and dahlias, greenhouses and an orangery. *Doubles from £565 (chateaugrandlucé.com).* □

