



EUROPE

LE COUVENT DES MINIMES HOTEL & SPA PROVENCE, FRANCE ◀

At the end of a quiet country road in the tiny village of Mane stands the Couvent des Minimes, a honey-coloured, 17th-century convent surrounded by orchards and olive groves. The retreat has recently been converted into a subtly chic, 46-bedroom hotel and spa with a delightfully unpretentious atmosphere. The bedrooms are all deeply comfortable and furnished in a clean-line medley of chocolate-brown and beige, with leather-topped desks, parquet floors, stained-oak armoires and fluffy white duvets. The restaurant is headed by talented chef Philippe Guérin, who excels in refined southern specialties:

foie gras with ham and prunes in a flaky crust; Sisteron lamb with rosemary (from the garden) and baby carrots; and a thyme-infused chocolate and salted-butter caramel pastry for dessert. The small but lovely spa offers a wide choice of signature treatments, including a hot verbena-and-lemon scrub and a detox 'grape cure': a grapeseed and nut scrub, and warm grape and essential oil wrap. There's also a heated indoor pool with a sauna and hammam, should the mistral blow in. **When to go** July/August, to see the famous lavender fields at nearby Plateau de Valensole. **Room to book** The romantic Cassine beige and burgundy suite under the bell tower. Doubles from \$280. couventdesminimes-hotelspa.com; relaischateaux.com.

NO. 1 PERY SQUARE HOTEL & SPA LIMERICK, IRELAND ▼

Limerick, Ireland's third largest city, is on the rise, and No. 1 Pery Square is its new standard-bearer. Overlooking a tree-lined park, this 20-room hotel, created from two 18th-century townhouses, brings luxury country living to the city. The large Period Style Rooms have huge beds (made up with fine Irish linen) and freestanding baths. The smaller, more contemporary, Club Rooms have individual touches such as Aran throws over the beds. The Irish ethos is key, even in the hotel's biggest wow factor, the largest urban spa in Ireland, where guests can bliss out in an Irish Mist Steam Shower. At Brasserie One, the ingredients for this excellent, French-influenced diner are sourced from top artisan Irish producers. **When to go** July for the Shannon International Music Festival. **Room to book** Any of the Period Style Rooms. Doubles from \$310. oneperysquare.com.



YORK & ALBANY LONDON, ENGLAND ▲

It's not hard to imagine Gordon Ramsay's two-word response to anyone who might question the wisdom of opening a gourmet guesthouse on the edge of London's rough-and-ready Camden Town, but the resulting restaurant with rooms is a more eloquent riposte to the doubters. Opened last September by Ramsay and his culinary collaborator Angela Hartnett, York & Albany occupies an 18th-century, John Nash-designed building next to Regent's Park. The interiors are by Russell Sage, whose attention to detail is legendary; it's said that he occasionally turns up out of the blue to move a vase slightly to the left. Fronted by a sleek bar, the restaurant is laid out on two levels: the high-ceilinged ground floor, in cream, grey, black and

white, which opens onto a patio in summer; and the clubby, red-walled basement. The food – Modern European with an Italian bias – is beautifully presented and delicious (tender venison served with creamy polenta was a highlight). Next to the bar is Nonna's, a deli overflowing with culinary goodies. Upstairs, the 10 bedrooms are decorated in an uncluttered, neo-Regency style, with antiques, floral wallpaper panels, extremely comfortable beds and white-tiled or slate bathrooms. Spacious Room 4 bucks the traditional trend, with Bond-villain leather chairs, stage spotlights and whitewashed brick walls. **When to go** In the northern summer, when the patio is open and Regent's Park is in full bloom. **Room to book** Traditionalists should book the Regency Suite; modernists will prefer Room 4. Doubles from \$310. gordonramsay.com/yorkandalbany.