

Cheap flight, chic hotel

20

sexy places to stay

You've got the budget airline ticket – now splash out on somewhere amazing, says **Tom Chesshyre**

1 Château de Bagnols near Lyons, France

It's sort of demeaning to call the Château de Bagnols a sexy hotel. It's a grande dame of a building: a 13th-century, painstakingly cared-for castle with important Gothic fireplaces and priceless frescoes. It's a mini-fortress in a picture-perfect hamlet just north of Lyons surrounded by beaujolais vineyards. This hotel isn't thread-count-and-scented-candles sexy (though the sheets are the finest linen). The château has a moat and a drawbridge. It's like saying Michelle Obama or Anna Ford are hot. But they are. And it is. It's not the antique four-poster beds, the Michelin-starred restaurant or the architectural details heaving with significance (though they all help), it's the

fact that the château feels intimate and discreet despite, on the face of it, being hugely imposing.

Simple pleasures are encouraged: in spring you might walk through its cherry

“Climb into a dress-shaped bed for a scarlet woman”

orchard and allow the blossom to caress your cheek. In summer you could just sit in the shade of the renaissance courtyard or dive into the circular outdoor pool on the lawn. In winter you might take a whisky in front of your stone fireplace in one of the 21 rooms. I thought I didn't like the sort of service that means white tablecloths and too many types of cutlery, but here those jobs that, after all, have to be done are undertaken quietly, impeccably and are so artfully dealt with, you can't call it fussy.

Hotness factor All that Gothic stone and marble — darkly sexy.

Details chateaudebagnols.co.uk. Doubles from £415, excluding breakfast. EasyJet has flights to Lyon from Stansted from £50

Lesley Thomas



2 Axel Hotel Guldsmeden Copenhagen, Denmark

Trendy eco-hotel with a cool basement spa and minimalist rooms decorated in a

Balinese style with bamboo furniture. There's an excellent restaurant that uses fresh organic ingredients and has lots of vegetarian options. The superb penthouse has a roof terrace with great views and a secluded hot-tub.

Hotness factor Organic food and superb penthouse.

Details hotelguldsmeden.com. B&B doubles from £125. EasyJet flights from £49.

3 Three Sisters Hotel Tallinn, Estonia

Part of the Design Hotels group, Three Sisters consists of three 14th-century townhouses that have been transformed into a boutique hotel within Tallinn's ancient city walls. Rooms are big, with exposed beams and large baths and all the high-tech gadgets that

you could want. It feels a bit like a James Bond love-nest hideaway.

Hotness factor Boutique love nest in the Old City.

Details threesistershotel.com. Balticholidays.com has two nights' B&B from £193pp. EasyJet flights from £54.

4 Hotel Sacher Vienna, Austria

Sheer opulence in one of the most romantic cities in the world. Rooms manage to be seductively ornate, yet modern and slick at the same time. The blue-themed bar is candle-lit and discreet. The hotel is bang opposite the opera house, too.

Hotness factor Seductive candle-lit bar.

Details sacher.com. B&B doubles from £338. EasyJet has flights from Gatwick from £64.

5 Il Salviatino Florence, Italy

The best reason to stay at Il Salviatino, an historic 15th-century palazzo in Fiesole, in the hills above Florence, is that you can see the sights and make a quick escape — on

“ This grande dame of a chateau feels intimate and discreet... there's nothing too grand about it

”

the complimentary shuttlebus — and find yourself on its peaceful terrace 20 minutes later with a glass of prosecco in hand, enjoying fabulous city views.

The hotel has large, high-ceilinged rooms and a handsome, central staircase. The overall feeling is understated and quiet — almost scholastic, but I grew to like its sobriety and it only goes so far. What student has Bose speakers embedded in the ceiling of his study? Everything, from the bed linen to the solid-oak flooring, is top quality. No bling, no ostentation: just beautiful materials.

A spa, offering the usual Thai treatments, and an outdoor pool, will be completed this year. Food, delivered by the Florentine chef Saverio Sbaragli, is delicious. Typical dishes include home-made spaghetti and beef braised in chianti. Your own “service ambassador” can be called for anything: breakfast, room service, even to accompany you to Florence — should you be short of a date.

Hotness factor Luscious food.
Details salviatino.com. B&B doubles from £433. Ryanair has return flights from Stansted from £34.

Kate Quill

6 Hotel San Francesco Al Monte Naples, Italy

The views across the rooftops of Naples onwards to Mount Vesuvius in one direction and Capri in the other from this hotel on the slopes of San Martino hill are

quite spectacular — especially from the rooftop pool. The hotel is in an old monastery and rooms have ornate, traditional decorations. Not flashy, but classy.

Hotness factor Rooftop views of Vesuvius.
Details laiholidays.co.uk. Three nights

from £245pp, airport transfers included. EasyJet has flights from Gatwick, Stansted and Liverpool from £54.

7 Maison Moschino Milan, Italy

The hottest new hotel in Italy's fashion capital has outlandish rooms with four-poster beds and scrumptious purple rooms with ballgown-shaped lampshades. Created by the Moschino fashion house.

Hotness factor A red, dress-shaped bed for a scarlet woman.

Details hotelphilosophy.com. Doubles from £225. EasyJet has flights from Luton, Gatwick, Bristol and Edinburgh from £60.

8 Gastwerk Hotel Hamburg, Germany

Set in an old municipal gasworks with fabulous loft rooms and giant penthouse suites with vast beds, vibrant decorations and exposed beams. There's a chilled-out spa and a lively restaurant and bar.

Hotness factor Loft life with vast beds.
Details gastwerk.com. Loft doubles from £134, suites from £245. EasyJet has flights from Luton and Gatwick from £54.

9 Propeller Island City Lodge Berlin, Germany

Perhaps the wackiest of our choices, this hotel has rooms with beds designed to look as though they are “flying”, a diamond-shaped room covered with mirrors, circular beds and sunken beds.

Hotness factor Impossibly sexy beds.
Details propeller-island.de. Doubles from £87. Ryanair has flights from Stansted from £6.

10 Stage 47 Düsseldorf, Germany

An OTT, swanky hotel with a film and theatre theme: arty black-and-white pictures of stars are dotted throughout. The public rooms have a boudoir-like feel, with red sofas, black lampshades and



hidden nooks for drinks. Rooms are large. Round the corner from the Savoy Theatre. **Hotness factor** Film star cachet. **Details** stage47.de. Doubles from £139. Ryanair has flights from Stansted from £6.

11 Villa Kennedy Frankfurt, Germany

This elegant five-star hotel, close to the River Main, is based in a mock Gothic palace built in 1904. The rooms are large with muted colour schemes and tasteful splashes of modern art. There's a huge indoor infinity pool and a snazzy spa. **Hotness factor** Classy, Gothic love nest. **Details** villakennedy.com. Doubles from £207. Ryanair has flights from Stansted from £17.99.

12 Hotel Haven Helsinki, Finland

Opened last year, this stylish hotel has a plush upmarket interior with marble floors, original modern art, cool fireplaces encased in glass and a quirky edge. Each of the bedrooms comes with underfloor heating (for the bitter winters). **Hotness factor** High tech hideaway. **Details** hotelhaven.fi. B&B doubles from £127. Easyjet has return flights from Gatwick and Manchester, from £59.

13 The Augustine Prague, Czech Republic

Not so long ago it was monks in robes wandering along these hallways; now it's guests in bathgowns, heading for the bijou basement spa, where "spiritual bliss treatments devoted to delivering purity, energy and balance" are on offer. The Augustine, part of the Rocco Forte Collection, is based in monastic buildings full of vaulted ceilings, parts of which date back to the 13th century. One detached wing, not open to guests, still houses a handful of Augustinian friars. Our room feels as though thought has gone into every detail. There are stylish chairs with V-shaped backs next to amber lights on sidetables on which the works of Dostoevsky and books of love poems are placed just so. Music by Dvorák is playing gently as we arrive. The ceilings are high and, this being a former monk's cell, the walls thick, so there's no worries about noise. After a day's sightseeing — the

Augustine is just below Prague Castle — the downstairs Brewery Bar, with its flickering candles and sense of (monastic) peace, is a great place to relax.

Hotness factor Classical music in sumptuous converted old monk's cells. **Details** theaugustine.com. Doubles from £200. EasyJet has return flights from Stansted, Gatwick, and Bristol from £50. **Tom Chesshyre**

14 Fitzwilliam Hotel Belfast, Northern Ireland

Next to the Grand Opera House, this is a slick contemporary hotel with rooms with lime green and striking zig-zag designs. Recently included in the *Condé Nast Traveller's* "Hot List" of hotels. Highlights include a Michelin-starred restaurant. **Hotness factor** Slick design and Michelin starred restaurant. **Details** fitzwilliamhotelbelfast.com. Doubles from £100. Ryanair has flights from Stansted from £18.

15 Avalon Hotel Gothenburg, Sweden

Rooms at the Avalon have a retro 1960s look — lots of bright designer chairs mixed with high-tech minimalism. The penthouse is vast and there is a lively bar and a

restaurant serving nouvelle cuisine. **Hotness factor** Retro retreat, lively bar. **Details** avalonhotel.se. Doubles from £134. Ryanair has flights from Stansted from £41.

16 Hotel Amanda Haugesund, Norway

This hotel with a film theme is on the waterfront of this small port — a short drive from the western fjords. Rooms are large with beautiful views. **Hotness factor** Lovely North Sea views. **Details** choicehotels.no. B&B doubles from about £115. Ryanair flights from Stansted from £54.

17 Casa Honoré Marseilles, France

You could easily miss Casa Honoré: it's tucked away a couple of streets from the waterfront. Inside, there is a courtyard with a small pool, around which are set four minimalist rooms with designer

bathrooms. It feels like a secret hideaway. **Hotness factor** Minimalist hideaway. **Details** i-escape.com/casahonore.php, casahonore.com. Doubles from £131. Ryanair has flights from Stansted from £48.

18 Hotel Continental Oslo, Norway

This is a stylish hotel with brilliant original art on its walls. The downstairs café was once given rave reviews by Joseph Heller... and the only Catch 22 here is the room rate (it's expensive). **Hotness factor** Upmarket, wonderful art. **Details** hotel-continental.no. Doubles from £213. Ryanair has flights from Stansted from £18.

19 Pousada do Porto Porto, Portugal

An 18th-century Baroque palace that has been turned into an ornate design hotel. There are public rooms full of art and sweeping curtains. Bedrooms are slick and modern. There's a terrific infinity pool. **Hotness factor** Baroque, with cool pool. **Details** pousadas.pt/historicalhotels. Doubles from £216. Ryanair has return flights from Stansted from £59.

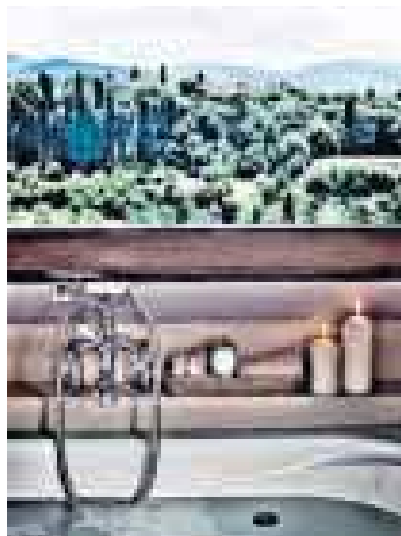
20 Hôtel Le Saint-James Bordeaux, France

I've never shared a room with a Harley-Davidson (or ridden one), but I can't resist clambering on to the beast and pretending to zoom through Bordeaux's vineyards. I may not ride into the French wine capital, but I can see the way through the vines from the light wood bed. All 18 rooms and suites have the same vista, some beds built low to look through the vines, others high to look over them, and also taking in the hotel's sleek pool.

Designed by the French architect Jean Nouvel, who took his inspiration from tobacco-drying sheds, the metal grille exterior of this hotel, ten minutes from the airport at Bordeaux, rises up starkly from the vines. Inside, there are more treats, most notably in the form of Michel Portos, a two-Michelin-star chef who serves up gastronomic delicacies using locally sourced produce in the restaurant. But nothing beats the Harley.



Hotness factor Rev yourself up for a Michelin-starred treat.
Details saintjames-bouliac.com or relaischateaux.com. Doubles from £188, Harley-Davidson suite from £385. EasyJet has return flights from £50.
Jane Knight





Above, Hotel Sacher in Vienna (4)





Object of desire An antique four-poster bed, above, at the Château de Bagnols, near Lyons (1). Right: sheer opulence prevails at the Hotel Sacher in Vienna (4)

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