

DESTINATIONS OF THE WORLD
news

Essential travel intelligence

November 2020

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Conquering peaks and other
purposeful pursuits in Cape Town

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Exploring the city's luxury
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SEASONAL WONDERS IN THE BRITISH COUNTRYSIDE

AS AUTUMN GIVES WAY TO WINTER across much of Europe, the changing of the seasons sees the skies fill with migratory birds en route to warmer climes or winter nesting sites. At Four Seasons Hotel Hampshire, a rural retreat set in 500-acres of unspoiled British countryside that's home to dozens of bird species, this time of year marks a particularly exciting time for birdwatchers, who can spot countless itinerant visitors stopping off to rest and fish at nearby Tundry Pond.

Eagle-eyed hotel guests can espy Great White Egret, Little Egrets and Cormorants, as well as

Great Crested Grebes, Shovelers and Tufted Ducks, who put on a show of diving beneath the water in search of mussels. House Martins, Swallows and Grey Heron are regularly spotted at this time of year, as well as year-round residents including thrushes, finches and woodpecker, plus three species of owl and birds of prey such as Buzzards, Red Kites, Kestrels and Peregrine Falcons.

To assist would-be bird-spotters in their hunt for avian visitors, the hotel has partnered with Swarovski Optik to create a guided birdwatching experience, led by ornithologist John Clark.

Equipped with the latest high-quality Swarovski Optik binoculars, guests will accompany Clark on a two-hour walk around the estate, looking out for the birds in their natural habitat, undisturbed by human noise thanks to the long-range binoculars.

As well as birdwatching, guests at Four Seasons Hotel Hampshire can embark on various countryside pursuits, from fishing and falconry to croquet and cycling trips, or unwind in the hotel's spa, housed in an 18th-century stable block. From GBP £150 (US \$196) for groups of up to five guests. www.fourseasons.com

MOUNTAINS ON THE MIND IN MUNICH

THE HILLS ARE ALIVE AT MANDARIN ORIENTAL, Munich, but not with the sound of music. Fresh from a landmark refresh courtesy of Hamburg interior design studio cm-Design, each of the hotel's 48 guestrooms and 25 suites have been injected with a bold new look to commemorate the hotel's 20th anniversary, with an eclectic and colourful blend of styles, colours and patterns and an extensive new art collection throughout.

Each of the rooms features original works by local artist Felix Rehfeld, whose colourful mountain landscapes are rendered in oil paint, a reminder of the Bavarian city's position as the gateway to the German Alps. In the hotel lobby, a collection of 100 miniature mountain paintings by Rehfeld forms the centrepiece of the new art collection, while each of the suites feature a porcelain mountain massif created exclusively for the hotel by Nymphenburg, the Royal Bavarian porcelain manufacturer, which is based in Munich.

Back in the guestrooms, cm-Design has worked with brands including French furniture maker Ligne Roset, Bavarian design firm Felix Graf and Hong Kong textile manufacturer House of Tai Ping to create interiors that blend contemporary style with heritage elements. New in-room perks include a private bar with daily treats from Matsuhisa Munich, which debuted at the hotel in 2015, and a daily Champagne experience. To mark the renovation, the hotel is offering a Staycation by M.O. package including daily breakfast, a bottle of Champagne, daily credit of EUR 100 (approx. US \$120), early check-in and late check-out and daily breakfast, from EUR 600 (\$710) per night. www.mandarinoriental.com



EXPLORE TRANSYLVANIA WITH ROMANIAN NOBILITY

SURROUNDED BY THE CARPATHIAN MOUNTAINS in the heart of the Romanian countryside, there's more to Transylvania than vampires and folktales. This picturesque landscape of wild forests and rolling hillsides is a playground for outdoor enthusiasts and culture vultures, with dozens of small villages and miles of hiking trails to be explored. But where to stay?

In the village of Cris, mother and son team Gladys and Nikolaus Bethlen – the latest generations of a family whose history dates back almost 800 years to the time when Count Miklós Bethlen founded the village and established Bethlen-Cris castle – are acquiring and renovating a collection of crumbling historic buildings and turning them into country escapes. Working with local designers Stefanie de Castelbajac and Melanie Etten-Ruppell, the Bethlens are restoring the 300-year-old buildings to their former glory and creating Transylvania's first rural luxury escape.

From next spring, visitors will be able to rent the four-bedroom Caretaker's House and the two-bedroom Depner House for exclusive use, or pick from the four beautifully designed rooms at Corner Barn. The houses and guestrooms will be finished with antique kilim rugs, white-tiled wood-burning stoves and Tom Dixon lighting, with modern sculptural staircases made by local craftsmen and original wooden beams preserving the character of the buildings.

Guests can dine in the comfort of their house or visit the Kitchen Barn, where resident chef Tatiana will prepare hearty breakfast and delicious evening meals using organic produce from the family's farms, orchards and forests, as well as fresh fish plucked from nearby rivers, served with quality local wines. The surrounding landscape is a blank canvas for adventurous souls, with guided hikes, cycle trips and horseback rides offering glimpse of the Romanian countryside, and visits to local wineries, bear-spotting expeditions and tours of nearby UNESCO sites promising to make Transylvania a trip like no other. www.bethlenestates.com

PHOTOS: Philip Vile



ROME, BUT NOT AS YOU KNOW IT



INTREPID TRAVELLERS WHO CONTINUE TO EXPLORE the world in spite of restrictions and complicated entry requirements will be rewarded by crowd-free experiences in many of the world's capitals this winter, nowhere more so than Rome. The Italian capital's attractions, which are usually crawling with tourists, remain quiet as 2020 draws to a close, affording visitors the chance to explore without the crowds.

Guests at Rome Cavalieri, a Waldorf Astoria Resort, can make the most of the quiet streets and explore the city at their own pace in a Fiat

500 Spiaggina; one of three new experiences the grand dame hotel is offering this season. Visitors will pick up their all-electric Fiat 500 at the gates of the hotel and set off on a four-hour or full-day zero emission tour, following a route suggested by the concierge or simply exploring at leisure.

Travellers can also explore Ostia Antica, once the major harbour of ancient Rome and now the largest archaeological site in Europe, on a guided horseback tour. After some basic riding instruction, guests will set off through the site before dismounting and exploring

a Renaissance village on foot, then finishing the tour with an aperitivo in front of Giulio II Castle.

For a more sedate experience, art aficionados can visit a studio-laboratory where experts painstakingly restore the priceless works of art that adorn many of the city's museums. Guests will watch as the professional restorers demonstrate the techniques used to breathe new life into a Caravaggio painting, at the same time gaining insight into the methods that made the 17th-century artist a master of his craft.

www.romecavalieri.com