



LEFT, FAR LEFT AND CENTRE LEFT: FOOD FRESH FROM THE FARM AT THE MASSERIA TORRE COCCARO. BELOW LEFT: GREYWALLS, MORE HOME THAN HOTEL. BOTTOM LEFT: TRENDY MEETS TRAD AT THE COTSWOLD HOUSE HOTEL

where to stay

Melanie Leyshon relishes the Cotswolds, Katie Monk revels in rural Italy, while Craig Brown soaks up Scottish atmosphere

MASSERIA TORRE COCCARO PUGLIA, ITALY

Inland from the Adriatic, in the heart of the Apulian countryside, this hotel and working farm is an idyllic gourmet retreat. Surrounded by ancient olive groves, vines and orchards, its position between agricultural land and sea means produce is fresh and plentiful. Vegetables come from the organic patch, meat from the farm animals and the hotel makes all its own pasta, cheeses and olive oil. Dinner is served in the candlelit courtyard – traditional dishes of broad bean purée and prawns, orecchiette with broccoli, griddled lamb, washed down with a local Primitivo or Placeo Chardonnay. Parts of the building date back to the 16th century, when it served as a garrison, and some of the rooms are housed in the former watch tower, with views out to sea. Budding chefs can try the hotel's cookery school.

Foodie diversion: Visit nearby Monopoli for fantastic local seafood at Osteria Perricci.

Details: Doubles from £172 per night, including breakfast. Masseria Torre Coccaro, C da Coccaro 8, Savelletri di Fasano, Puglia (00 39 080 482 9310; masseriatorecoccaro.com).

Come here for: fresh produce, home cooking and an education in Apulian cuisine.

GREYWALLS EAST LOTHIAN, SCOTLAND

Hidden on the edge of Gullane, a picturesque village amid rolling countryside, Greywalls Hotel keeps its magic well concealed. You don't actually see this magnificent Edwardian stately home until you swing into its vast circular courtyard. Owned by the Weaver family since 1924 (it became a hotel in 1948), Greywalls has a sense of being a home first, and a commercial venture second. Each of the 23 rooms is individually furnished with antiques, and all offer views either over the famous Muirfield Golf Course and the River Forth or the immaculately maintained gardens. Chef David Williams's food matches the stunning setting; relying entirely on local seasonal produce, his menu features deft and imaginative dishes that have deservedly earned him three AA rosettes.

Foodie diversion: Glenkinchie Distillery, Pencaitland, East Lothian (01875 342004) is one of the last remaining east coast lowland distilleries.

Details: Double room costs £300 per night, including breakfast. Greywalls, Muirfield, Gullane, East Lothian, Scotland (01620 842144; greywalls.co.uk).

Come here for: luxury home comfort in an idyllic setting.

COTSWOLD HOUSE HOTEL CHIPPING CAMPDEN, GLOUCESTERSHIRE

The sleepy Cotswolds is fast turning into a destination for the fashion-conscious, and at the cutting edge is Cotswold House Hotel. Ian and Christa Taylor bought this Regency townhouse hotel eight years ago and chucked out the chintz in favour of no-expense-spared modern interiors, where trendy meets traditional. The couple's good taste extends to fine dining in their formal restaurant, Juliana's, recently picked out as a rising star by those discerning Michelin inspectors. And it's easy to see why. The seasonal menu is not slavishly local, but offers the best of British, such as Dorset crab, Scottish beef, and scallops and turbot from the coast. It's also adventurous – sweetbread croquettes and crab tortellini, anyone? Dishes come with designer touches: vegetables are puréed, steaks trimmed to attractive shapes and food shaped into rounds and nicely stacked. The cooking is exquisite, and each course paves the way for the next. It's easy to find room for the light-as-air fig tart served with a spicy star anise ice-cream, or the choice cheese selection that takes in Wigmore from Berkshire, Cornish Yarg and Irish Cashel Blue. The interesting wine list caters for deep pockets, with Cristal 2000 champagne at £300, but also offers a more affordable selection such as Chablis or Pinot Grigio. Those wanting to eat more casually should pitch up at the hotel's Hicks Brasserie or dine from the same menu at the Pavilion Terrace. The rooms in the main house are reached via the centrepiece spiral staircase, but you can opt for spacious suites and rooms in garden outbuildings. You can book fairly priced doubles, or suites at city-bonus prices, but all have the same high standards. Tea trays come with Robert Welch designer cutlery, and there are plasma TVs, Acqua di Parma toiletries and even a pillow menu. If firm synthetic isn't to your liking, call down for fluffy white goose down or duck feather. Depending on the weather, you can relax with the latest DVDs, head out to the garden for a gentle game of croquet, or take a walk along the Cotswold Way National Trail that runs all the way to Bath.

Foodie diversion: Bennetts Fine Wines, High Street, Chipping Campden (01386 840392; bennettsfinewines.com).

Details: Double rooms cost from £140; junior suites from £425. Cotswold House Hotel, Chipping Campden, Gloucestershire