

CONSUMER LIFESTYLE MAGAZINE OF THE YEAR

WIN TWO NIGHTS
AT LONDON'S
LANGHAM HOTEL

Condé Nast Traveller



TRUTH IN TRAVEL®

MAY 2006 £3.50

THE HOT LIST 2006

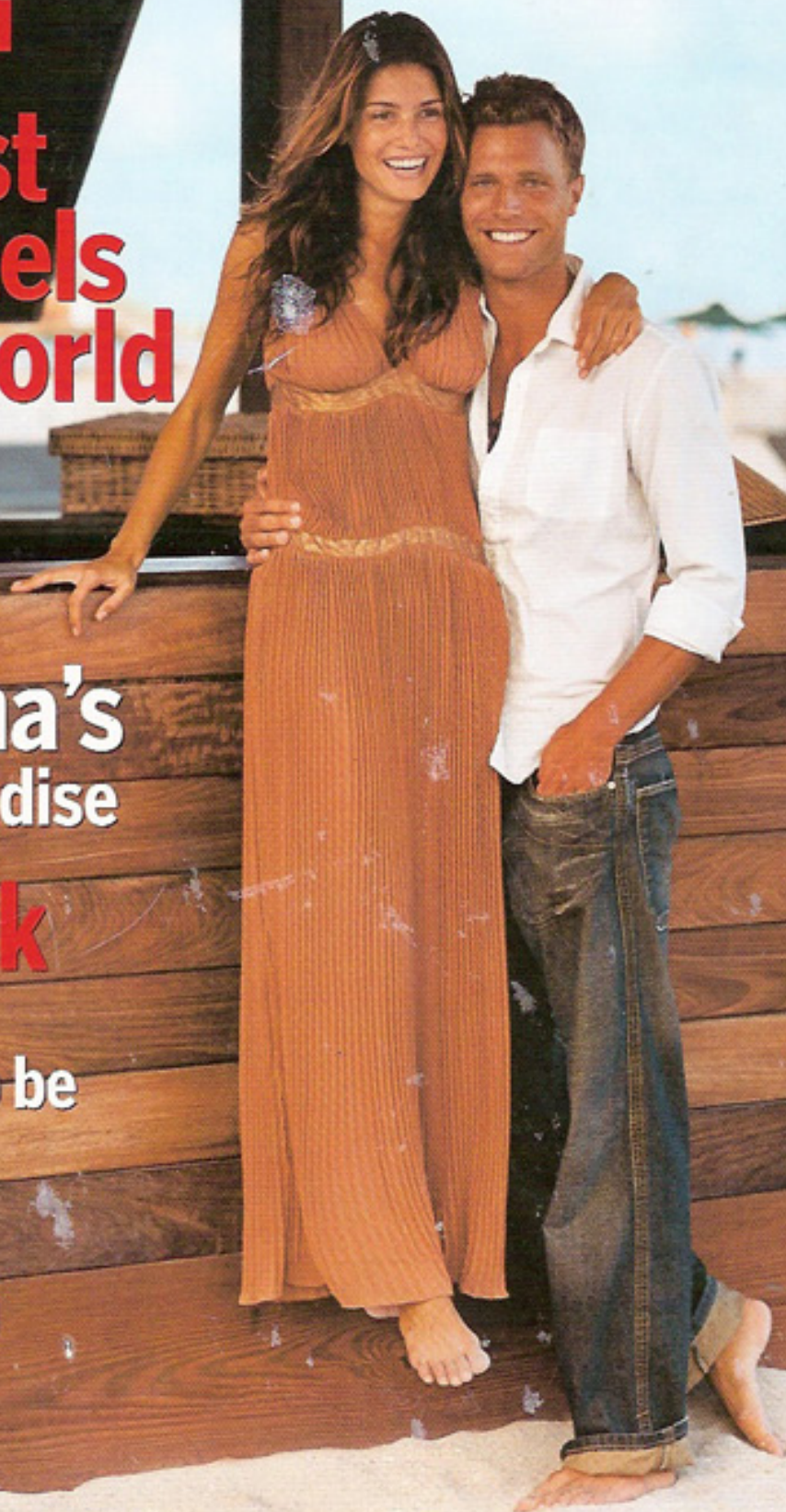
60 best
new hotels
in the world

Argentina's
natural paradise

New York
Why Harlem
is the place to be

ISLAND
HOPPING
in the Adriatic

Istanbul An insider's guide to the historic city with a new, fashionable face



THE PURE Frankfurt

UNDER £150 This is without doubt the hippest new hotel in town, a 50-bedroom, city-centre sanctuary for sharp-suited bankers. Behind its elegant façade – it was built in the 19th century as a textile factory – are virginal interiors created by the Romanian architect, Oana Rosen. Breakfast is served in an all-white lounge furnished with white-leather banquettes and chairs from the Italian furniture house MDF. White floors continue into the bar and reception, which are themselves linked by a Thassos stone counter. Touches of humour are provided by porcelain stag's-head coat hooks and video projections. The bedrooms have white-leather headboards, oak parquet floors, shiny, black Zabrano furniture and pleated lampshades, all made to Rosen's designs. There are few decorative touches; only huge mirrors and LCD flat-screen TVs hang on the walls. The hotel is equipped with the first example of Shair™, the on-demand media jukebox for practically limitless music and videos. In summer the timber-decked courtyard terrace comes into its own.

WHEN TO GO In high summer when the banks of the River Main open for business and all the bankers have left town.

ROOM TO BOOK Any of the fifth-floor rooms, with full-height doors to a terrace overlooking the courtyard.

Niddastrasse 86, Frankfurt, Germany (00 49 69 710 4570; www.the-pure.de). Doubles from €140

GREECE

IMARET Kavala

The scruffy northern Greek port of Kavala might not top your list of honeymoon destinations, but this historic hideaway in the Old Town is shamelessly romantic. Built by the Egyptian Pasha Mohamed Ali in 1817, the walled seminary languished for almost a century until a local tobacco magnate

convinced the authorities to let her restore it. The result is downright decadent. Twenty-seven generously sized rooms and suites overlook three courtyards linked by arched promenades, sprinkled with bubbling fountains, fragrant orange trees, and secret nooks heaped with cushions. Oriental interiors blend original features – wooden sleeping platforms, huge fireplaces, vaulted roofs pierced with skylights – with luxe updates such as Molton Brown candles, Bulgari toiletries and Frette linen. Huge bathrooms with sunken marble baths and picture windows (with sea, harbour or garden views) encourage indulgence. You can drift through domed pools lit by dozens of candles, get scrubbed up in the shimmering amethyst hammam, or rubbed down in the womb-like treatment rooms. The former prayer room, with its antique chess set and rare books, also invites quiet contemplation. Breakfasts are lavish and service impeccable in the elegant restaurant, where the Mediterranean evening menu features organic ingredients from the garden. Tours can be arranged to the ancient theatre of Philippi (Greek dramas are staged under the stars in summer), Nestos National Park and far-flung Thassos island.

WHEN TO GO Any time the urge to escape overcomes you.

ROOM TO BOOK One of the three Water Garden Suites, which have two bathrooms so that couples can enjoy private bath treatments with relaxing essential oils.

30–32 Th. Poulidou Street, Kavala, Greece (00 30 2510 620151; www.imaret.gr). Doubles from €250; suites from €550

PERISCOPE Athens

As the first hip hotel in Kolonaki, the most exclusive neighbourhood in Athens, Periscope was long overdue. An award-winning team of international architects have turned the awful Athenian Inn, a 1970s relic, into a cheeky homage to 21st-century minimalism. The location, among the upscale boutiques, restaurants and bars of Haritos Street, is a coup. It's especially fortuitous that Ratka, the dining choice of Athenian high society, is next door, because there's no restaurant and a

surprisingly limited room-service menu. This doesn't seem to bother the expense-account city slickers in the compact, black bar, fitted with Ferrari-red lacquer tables and revamped leather Mini Cooper seats. When the barflies tire of the surreal videos of giant crustaceans invading Athens, they can zoom in on their unsuspecting neighbours using a joystick linked to a rooftop periscope. The urban surveillance theme carries through to the 12 soundproofed 'torpedo' rooms and junior suites decorated in shades of grey, where ergonomic design meets macho gadgetry (free broadband, built-in sound systems, swivelling LCD TVs, and electric blinds). Resolutely urban, Periscope plays on its downtown location – ceilings are plastered with aerial photographs of the surrounding concrete jungle, adjustable light boxes feature panoramas of Athens by day and night, and a trompe l'oeil mural covering the exterior wall captures the shifting shadows cast by the surrounding blocks of flats.

WHEN TO GO Spring, for a pre-summer fix of sunshine, shopping, and late-night partying.

ROOM TO BOOK The split-level Penthouse Suite, with its balcony bar and glass-walled Jacuzzi at eye-level with the Acropolis, is made for memorable one-night stands.

22 Haritos Street, Athens, Greece (00 30 210 7297200; www.periscope.gr). Doubles from €275; suites from €375

ITALY

VILLA BORDONI Tuscany

UNDER £150 The first four-star hotel in the Greve area, Villa Bordonni is a solid, whitewashed, patrician house in

a spectacular, quintessentially Tuscan setting in the heart of Chianti Classico country.

There is a delightful walled garden and a small swimming pool, from which there are wonderful views of the surrounding olive groves and vineyards. Inside, the style is rustic-chic, with strong colours, trompe l'oeil paintwork, beautiful fabrics and country antiques. The first-floor living room (where complimentary tea is laid out at 5pm) has a big open fire, which is very much the heart of the house in winter. The colour schemes in all 11 bedrooms are inspired by the gorgeous, antique Vietri floor tiles in the bathrooms. This may be rural Tuscany, but there's no lack of techno wizardry: the bedrooms have plasma-screen TVs, DVD/CD players and modern ports, and there is Wi-Fi in the public spaces inside and out. Food and wine play an important part in any stay at Villa Bordonni. Refined Italian dishes are on offer in the excellent restaurant and there is a year-round programme of cookery courses and wine tastings. The hotel appeals equally to culture vultures seeking a top-quality retreat after a hard day's sightseeing and to sloths who are into lazing by a pool in beautiful surroundings with good food and wine close at hand.

WHEN TO GO Foodies should time their visit for the grape or olive harvests (September and November).

ROOM TO BOOK Each is different and appealing in its own way. Montefioralle is

a large room with a cast-iron bath at the foot of the bed; Le Colognole is a sunny suite at the top of the house with sweeping views. Via San Cresci 31–32, Località Mezzuola, Greve-in-Chianti, Florence, Italy (00 39 055 884 0004; www.villabordonni.com). Doubles from €190; suites from €250

MONACO

MONTE CARLO BAY HOTEL & RESORT Monte Carlo

Thanks to its relaxed and surprisingly chic atmosphere, the long-awaited, 334-room Monte Carlo Bay Hotel & Resort, a €50-million extravaganza, is already proving popular with families and young professionals alike. A self-contained, Mediterranean-style village, it is packed with recreational and gastronomic choices: a casino; souvenir and sportswear boutiques; a Cinq Mondes spa; a small gym; five restaurants in season; a private dock and helipad; and two swimming pools, one an artificial sand-bottom lagoon surrounded by palms and botanical gardens. There are 11 floors of near-identical bedrooms decorated in a contemporary style with dark-wood furnishings, giant plasma-screen TVs and spacious white bathrooms; nearly all have private sea-view terraces. Come sunset, a glamorous crowd gathers in the Blue Gin bar to sip melon Martinis and blue Mojitos, while serious foodies head straight for the superb (and affordable) Blue Bay gastronomic restaurant, where Martinique-born Marcel Ravin dishes up his fusion-inspired cuisine (foie gras with spun sugar; spicy shrimp with tropical fruit Dim Sum; iced pear soufflé with green tea) from his open-plan kitchen.

WHEN TO GO May for the Grand Prix; autumn for Indian-summer temperatures and fewer tourists; winter for the heated indoor-outdoor pool and the spa.

ROOM TO BOOK Suite 1001, a duplex with stupendous views, or the corner suite 302. 40 avenue Princess Grace, Monaco (00 377 98 06 25 25; www.montecarlobay.com). Doubles from €300; suites from €750

THE NETHERLANDS

THE COLLEGE HOTEL Amsterdam

Within months of opening, The College Hotel won the Prix-Villegiature Paris award for 'Best Interior Design of a Hotel in Europe'. The 1894 building is a former school, a role still evident in the wide staircases, high ceilings and converted gymnasium, now a trend-setting restaurant under chef Schilo van Coevorden (previously of Blakes Hotel). All things Dutch are celebrated, most noticeably with a 1.5-metre-high Delft-blue tulip vase in the onyx and Fendi-leather bar, which has become one of the hottest watering holes in town. There are also seven chandeliers in the public areas (the largest is in the ladies' Powder Room and features diamond crystals). The colours used in the restaurant (moss greens and cream) and bar (orange, lavender and brown) are toned down to warm browns in the 40 bedrooms. All the furniture is unique to the hotel, designed by FG Stijl and hand-crafted in Italy. The restaurant tables and chairs ➤

