

# FOOD *and* TRAVELL

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# THE HOT LIST 2017

DESTINATIONS – FOOD TRENDS – DRINKS – RESTAURANTS – HOTELS

**Reviews Cape Town Simon Calder Edinburgh Cocktails Reykjavík**



## Leela Palace UDAIPUR, INDIA

From the moment you step foot on the boat that sweeps you across Lake Pichola to the Leela Palace, you get the impression you're about to experience something special. That initial feeling is confirmed when you're greeted by a flurry of rose petals floating down from a balcony before you're whisked off to one of the 80 standout rooms or suites. Each faces on to the freshwater lake, which is the largest in the bustling city.

Expect elegant, luxurious decor and traditional rugs, an extensive pillow menu, an immense marble bathroom with sunken tub, plus views to the Aravali mountains and breathtaking City Palace. Geometric design is at play throughout the exquisite grounds; there's a dazzling central courtyard, large pool, well-equipped gym and 900sq m outdoor spa complex with treatment tents and therapy suites.

Wake up early for a yoga session in the guava orchard or have the hotel's chefs take you into the centre of the city as part of its Culinary Sojourn package. Here, you can visit the fruit and vegetable markets and sample authentic street food before heading back to the hotel for a private cooking class in the open kitchen or vegetable and herb garden.

Before you make your way to one of the two restaurants for dinner, be sure to embark on the sunset cruise for canapés and chai. Sheesh Mahal, the open-air terrace restaurant, serves up refined Indian classics such as lamb korma, an outrageously light and fresh dhaal, and gatta curry, a Rajasthani gram flour dumpling in yoghurt gravy. Dining Room, the all-day restaurant, offers international dishes and boasts a statement walk-in wine cabinet. It's not difficult to wile away the rest of your evening with a drink in The Library Bar. *AD. Doubles from £669, 00 91 294 670 1234, preferredhotels.com. Jet Airways flies from London Heathrow to Udaipur from £408pp return. jetairways.com*

# Places

This month, we soak up the sun in Morocco, Chiang Mai, admire a stylish upgrade in Oxford



## Banyan Tree Tamouda Bay Morocco

One of the best launches of 2016, this branch of Banyan Tree goes straight to the top of the list of Morocco's best hotels. Relaxed vibes come as standard, with in-water deck chairs, circular lounging sofas and chill-out music piped through poolside speakers. Try Azura, the beachfront restaurant, for freshly baked flatbreads. It may be a new-build but

everywhere you look, there's intricately designed Moroccan architecture. Long corridors give way to arched doorways with mosaic tiles, hanging lamps and carved *moucharaby* wood panels. Each villa comes with its own walled garden, pool and outdoor shower.

Spend an afternoon at the spa, which operates a 'high-touch, low-tech' approach with fabulous

massage treatments and a signature Rainforest experience that follows a hydrothermal circuit.

At the end of each day, you'll be graced with a sunset that turns the sky a glorious dusky pink against a backdrop of towering palm trees and blue tiled roofs. *LF. Villas from £399. 00 212 5396 69999, banyantree.com*

Words by Anna Durkie, Lizzie Frainier, Michael Relfaai; Alex Mead. Photos by Carol Sachs and motkovicz.com

## Tried & Tasted SLEEP



## DHARA DHEVI CHIANG MAI, THAILAND

Arriving at the Dhara Dhevi is like stepping back in time to the ancient Thai Kingdom of Lanna. Set across 24ha of tropical grounds, the resort recreates the 13th-century civilisation in miniature, complete with its own paddy fields, moats, craft villages and fortified walls.

Hop on one of the resort's bicycle to traverse the many winding paths and with each turn you'll meet a different styles of architecture. Every element verges on the spectacular, with an elaborate white tiered lobby that slopes into gilt spires and a grand stairway. You'll find two huge pools, one of which looks out over lush rice fields.

Rooms here are divided between Colonial Suites – which all have high ceilings, marble bathrooms and lavish furniture – and sleek two-storey teak villas that were converted from northern Thai rice barns.

At dinner, sit back and watch traditional dance performances to local music before tucking into spicy Chiang Mai sausages and stir-fried soft shell crab in a fragrant yellow curry at restaurant Le Grand Lanna. *LF. Doubles from £382. 00 66 53 888 888, dharadhevi.com*



## Gourmet bolthole THE ORANGE, PIMLICO

The sun may have set over the Sloane Range but one-time Rangers still know how to throw midweek parties. The Orange, an outpost on the Pimlico fringe, rocks to the sound of oiled public school accents.

Above the bar in the dining room, the menu describes dishes with a copywriter's aplomb: chalk stream trout; hay-baked Jerusalem artichokes; flame-roasted Lyme Bay mackerel. They all taste good but the real stars here are the customers, grouped in small parties – tables of three seem to be the fashion – determined to have fun.

The brouhaha below wafts up intermittently to the hotel rooms above but dies down about 11pm. Bedrooms are charming with little personal touches, like the spiral-bound notepad on the bedside table or the Aesop toiletries in the bathroom (with underfloor heating, by the way).

Colours are muted: taupe bedding, pale *eau-de-nil* silk curtains and oak floorboards. There's decent cafeiere coffee to help the previous night's revellers surface and the breakfast served in the downstairs bar, silent after the previous evening's excitement, is first-class. *MR. Doubles from £205. 020 7881 9844, theorange.co.uk*



# to stay



## OLD PARSONAGE OXFORD

This hotel is exactly what we look for in a contemporary character property. Neatly balancing its 17th-century facade and heritage with a recent refurbishment by Sally Conran, it meets the needs and then some of even the most seasoned traveller. It's a picture-postcard hotel – a former parsonage draped in foliage – and inside retains personality but combines it with a thoroughly modern approach to the latest in-room luxuries, facilities and gourmet food at all hours of the day. Afternoon tea is a must. *AM. Doubles from £155. 01865 310 210, oldparsonage-hotel.co.uk*