

TripAdvisor Trumpets Top 10 Castle Hotels in Europe Ireland's Ashford Castle Reigns as Top Stone-Walled Accommodation

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TripAdvisor(R), the world's largest travel community, today announced the top 10 castle hotels in Europe, according to traveler popularity and TripAdvisor editors.

1. **Feathery Fun: Ashford Castle, Cong, Ireland - Average nightly rate \$362**
With its opulent rooms, endless hallways, numerous dining options, and health and beauty spa, you may never leave the estate of the Ashford Castle, built in 1625. But if you do wish to meander outdoors, try your hand at falconry, an ancient art originating in the Far East in 2000 B.C. or, stroll the famous Woodland Walk, restored in 1996 with oak, beech and chestnut trees. As one TripAdvisor traveler pointed out, "Where else can you find 'falconry' as an option to your day on a lake that will take your breath away, in a castle that can only be described as Versailles but better?"
2. **Fit for a King: Thornbury Castle, Thornbury, England - Average nightly rate \$409**
Feel like royalty as you sleep in your bedchamber at Thornbury Castle, built in 1521, where Anne Boleyn, King Henry VIII and Queen Mary II once resided. History buffs can peruse the historical details, including coats of arms, bay windows and arrow loops throughout the castle. As one TripAdvisor traveler said, "Thornbury Castle is a genuine medieval castle with really thick stone walls, low doors and fantastic stone spiral staircases."
3. **Raise Your Glass: Chateau de Bagnols, Lyon, France - Average nightly rate \$663**
Enjoy a glass of Beaujolais while at the Chateau de Bagnols, situated among vineyards and forests in the French countryside. Also an historic monument, the 13th century fortress features Renaissance-period wall and ceiling murals, a dry moat, and a grand entrance across a drawbridge. According to one TripAdvisor member, "Every detail of this hotel is just grand -- the garden, the pool, the rooms, the restaurants for both breakfast and dinner, and the salon for drinks."
4. **Highlands Praise: Inverlochy Castle, Fort William, Scotland - Average nightly rate \$932**
The mountainous backdrop of the Inverlochy Castle, located in the Scottish highlands, inspired praise from Queen Victoria who wrote in her diaries, "I never saw a lovelier or more romantic spot." The stained glass windows, chandeliers and grand hall reflect the elegance of the interior. One TripAdvisor member noted, "From the moment we arrived the beauty hit us, the old castle just looked out-of-this-world with the stunning lake and terraces."
5. **Historically Over-Booked: Castle Hotel Auf Schoenburg, Oberwesel, Germany - Average nightly rate \$240**

The Castle Hotel Auf Schoenburg overlooks the medieval town of Oberwesel, in the Upper Middle Rhine Valley, a World Heritage site. At one time, the castle was home to more than 250 people from 24 families. In 1689, the castle was burned down by French soldiers and remained abandoned for two centuries until its restoration in 1914. One TripAdvisor member said, "Hotel Auf Schoenburg was what I had dreamed of when I wanted to stay in a castle. I felt like I was in the middle ages!"

6. Labor Intensive: Parador de Cardona, Cardona, Spain - Average nightly rate \$166

Atop a spectacular hill, Parador de Cardona, built in 986, was once maintained by the local residents, in exchange for a supply of much-coveted salt. Preserving many original architectural details, the castle contains a medieval restaurant with arched ceilings, wrought-iron torch holders, a Duke's patio, a cistern for storing water and a gothic cloister. As one TripAdvisor member said, "The setting is stunning, the history of the castle and the surrounding area is mind-boggling."

7. Tasty Retreat: Swinton Park, Masham, North Yorkshire, England - Average nightly rate \$463

Surrounded by 200 acres of parkland including a river, lake, and gardens, Swinton Park offers numerous activities including croquet, fishing, and horseback riding. If that doesn't satisfy your appetite, visit the cookery school, a converted Georgian stable, which is run by renowned chef Rosemary Schrager. According to one TripAdvisor member, "This is an absolutely stunning place, from the location to the amenities to the staff, I could not find fault at all."

8. Undercover Charm: Castle Stuart, Inverness, Scotland - Average nightly rate \$475

Once a retreat for the Stuart Family, the Castle Stuart was abandoned- except for reports of an occasional ghost- for 300 years. Put on your Sherlock Holmes hat and discover unknown secret passageways, hidden doorways and the secret revolving door that hastens the walk from the drawing room to the bar. As one TripAdvisor member said, "The house was SO much fun. There was even a secret doorway to get to the dining room, which was gorgeous."

9. Italian Antiquity: Castelletto de Montebenichi, Arezzo, Italy - Average nightly rate \$242

In the heart of the Tuscan countryside, the Castelletto de Montebenichi combines 12th century architecture with 21st century amenities. Frescoes, antique drawings and paintings, sculptures and archeological finds engulf the castle's hallways, while a panoramic swimming pool, sauna, hot tub and gym are just steps away. One TripAdvisor traveler said, "The castle is exquisite - each public room is thoughtfully decorated with the owners' own collections of art and antiques."

10. Brug-ti-ful: Castle ten Berghe, Bruges, Belgium - Average nightly rate \$177

Within walking distance of Bruges, Castle ten Berghe is a perfect base for visiting the historic town and enjoying the Belgian landscape.

Recently expanded, the castle now features eight guestrooms, making getting a room easier. As one TripAdvisor member noted, "The Castle ten Berghes is a wonderful Gothic style castle hidden away down a long driveway and surrounded by its own moat and is crammed full of charm."

"What's great about these top castle hotels is that there is a wide price range, allowing anyone to stay in one of these ancient fortresses and have a truly unique experience," said Michele Perry, director of communications for TripAdvisor. "These castle hotels particularly stood out among the properties reviewed by our 20 million monthly visitors because they offer modern amenities and great service to ensure a comfortable and enjoyable stay."

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