

TRIPADVISOR REVEALS EUROPE'S TOP TEN CASTLE HOTELS

From Medieval Manors to Regal Retreats: Lord it like a King

LONDON, UK. – March 4, 2010 – TripAdvisor®, the world's largest and most popular travel community, today announced the top ten castle hotels in Europe, based on TripAdvisor editors and travellers. From medieval manors to regal retreats, staying in a castle is a fascinating way to experience history first-hand, while treating yourself to a beautiful weekend away at the same time.

1. Château des Ormeaux, Loire Valley, France

Le Chateau des Ormeaux was built on the upper reaches of the Loire Valley in the reign of King Charles X. Nowadays it is a refined and welcoming guest house ideally located in Touraine and close to the region's famous vineyards. The rooms are furnished with period antiques and offer magnificent views of the valley. As on TripAdvisor traveller said, "For something romantic and a little bit different we thoroughly recommend this Chateau."

2. Château de Verrières, Loire Valley, France

Peacefully set in a four acre park, Verrières allows you to discover the charm and history of the Loire Valley. This hotel has kept its private mansion atmosphere, with its authentic decoration and its period furniture. As one TripAdvisor traveller explains, "Spoil yourself in regal elegance at this stunning Chateau, furnished in the style of Napoleon III."

3. Castle Stuart, Inverness, Scotland

Built by James Stuart in 1625, a stay in Castle Stuart transports you back in time. Each of the eight bedrooms are named after the clans who fought and died for "Bonnie Prince Charlie" at Culloden, and are decorated in their individual tartan. As one TripAdvisor traveller said, "The highlight of our stay was the candlelight romantic dinner with the bagpiper in the large dining room. We felt like a king and queen."

4. Castle Hotel Auf Schönburg, Oberwesel, Germany

Schönburg Castle is situated above the Medieval town of Oberwesel in the UNESCO World Heritage site of the Upper Middle Rhine Valley. The castle was first mentioned in history books as far back as 911. As one TripAdvisor traveller explains, "A stay here brings you back to the time of kings and queens....if you have one night on the Rhine, stay here."

5. Ashford Castle, Cong, Ireland

Dating back to the 13th century and surrounded by lush forests, Ashford Castle is renowned for its stunning grounds, with romantic gardens and striking views over the Lough Corrib Lake. The owners even offer falconry lessons in the grounds. One TripAdvisor traveller said, "Absolutely breathtaking views, old world charm and the highest level of service I've ever experienced."

6. Castelletto di Montebenichi, Bucine, Italy

Located in the heart of Chianti, Castelletto di Montebenichi offers medieval accommodation situated among olive groves, vineyards and beautiful Tuscan landscape. This hotel fuses ancient works of art with high-level comfort. As one TripAdvisor traveller said, "Just an amazing place, built in the 1100s - the atmosphere is incredible".

7. Thornbury Castle, Gloucestershire, England

Thornbury Castle is England's only Tudor castle to open as a hotel. Enjoy a regal night's sleep in the Duke's Bedchamber where King Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn slept or choose the Gloucester Bedchamber and wake up to a view of the oldest Tudor gardens in England - the Privy Garden and Goodly Garden. As one TripAdvisor traveller said, "We were treated just like the King and Queen of the Castle."

8. Parador de Cardona, Cardona, Spain

This impressive ninth century fortress dominates the valley of the river Cardona and features a tower dating back to the second century. Despite its ancient moats, towers and walls the castle also boasts rooms with modern facilities plus a sauna and gym. As one TripAdvisor traveller said, "The Parador delivers the castle atmosphere you expect and the long drive up to reception is quite a thrill."

9. Chateau de La Villaine, Loire Valley, France

Located in the heart of Chateau Country, Chateau de La Villaine offers ancient accommodation surrounded by a lush estate boasting gardens and a landscaped park. Antique lovers should reside in the Empire Room, featuring a 150-year-old empire bed, while The Marquise Room, located in one of the towers, offers spectacular views. As one TripAdvisor traveller said, "The Chateau is wonderful, the decoration enchanting and grounds stunning."

10. Parador de Jaen, Jaen, Spain

Overlooking the city of Jaen and featuring breathtaking views of the Sierra Morena hills and mountains of the Sierra Nevada, this 13th century Arabic-style fortress was once captured and occupied by Ferdinand III. As one TripAdvisor traveller said, "The Parador is very austere, retaining the castle like feel of the fortress it abuts, and it so sprawling that you can be there without ever really passing other guests."

"Whether you're a die-hard history buff hoping to experience some authentic sights or simply looking to enjoy a weekend in a grand mansion, TripAdvisor travellers have done the hard work for you by recommending all sorts of castle hotels to suit your interest and budget," said Emma O'Boyle, spokesperson for TripAdvisor.

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