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DESTINATIONS

## THE BEST HOTELS IN THE FRENCH RIVIERA

### CHATEAU SAINT-MARTIN & SPA, PROVENCE

There can be few Provençal views as good as the one from the terrace at this hilltop chateau, looking southwards over an Impressionist haze of smoky olive groves towards the village of Vence and, in the distance, seagull-white yachts on the sea. It's a view that guests tend to start the day with, over breakfasts of flaky pastries and fresh eggs, and end on too, with tagine-spiced lamb and bottles of rosé. Dragonflies skim past stonework, an occasional cloud scuds across the sky; this is time-slow-down medieval Provence rather than St Tropez-style bling – though that scene is only a short helicopter hop away. Set to a soundtrack of cicadas, dozy afternoons are spent padding down to the pool and roaming the grounds, past the art trail and circle of lofty cypress trees that forms a leafy sun dial, and down to the insect hotel to see what their rooms are like. Formed out of the remains of a 12th-century Knights Templar castle, with siege-thick walls, and original chapel and tower, the Chateau retains a certain grandiose atmosphere and old-school clout, softened by unruffled, country-classic bedrooms.



Originally turned into a hotel in the 1950s, it later joined the Oetker Collection (alongside [The Lanesborough](#) and [Le Bristol](#), among others) and was renovated in 2018, with the chapel redecorated by artist Erick Ifergan, whose Tree of Life unfurls over the white walls. The spa, using Bamford lotions and oils, gives a serious thwack of no-nonsense treatments, such as a tension-busting deep-tissue massage, tweaked to allow for any personal bugbears; Le Rossino bar, with its wood panelling, 18th-century tapestry and expansive terrace, is relaxing for different reasons. Both restaurants made good and creative use of local ingredients, with pistou, marinated fennel, watermelon granita and sea bass in pistachio crust on the menu – as well as wood-fired pizzas – delivered by waistcoated waiters (the switched-on staff divide their time between here and sister property L'Apogée Courcheval). You can admire the Matisse prints in the restaurant, or head out to Vence to see the artist's chapel; there's also cobbled St-Paul for art studios, and the beaches of course, while the hotel hosts wine-tasting in the cellar, tennis lessons, and chauffeured cars for exploring. This is a refined stretch-out space, knitted into the landscape, for a delicious hit of old-school Provençal romance.

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