

## THE BEST...



### THE BEST PARISIAN PALACE

**T**he three most romantic words in the English language? The Ritz, Paris. Coco Chanel lived there for 34 years, and Fitzgerald, Proust, Maria Callas and Charlie Chaplin were regulars. César Ritz's landmark on the Place Vendôme has had its first renovation since 1898; gone are big-bottomed TVs and the scary orange shower curtains that wound themselves round your legs like wet pythons. Designer Thierry Despont has recreated the 142 rooms with white-hot style technology: the Ritz now has the first Chanel spa in the world; there's a retractable roof on the terrace for all-weather power lunches and a secret tunnel for VIP access; and legendary barman Colin Field, the Matisse of martinis, has come home to the Bar Hemingway. [ritzparis.com](http://ritzparis.com)

THE  
BEST LIST  
by VICTORIA MATHER

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## Frontier Adventure

**S**o you want a private park, packed with bison herds, bighorn sheep, African oryx and mountain lions? Bigger than many of the national parks in the USA—and all for you? Then Ted Turner's Armendaris Ranch (360,000 acres) is your animal, in the Chihuahuan Desert, south New Mexico. The media mogul's ranches are yours for the asking, including his own domain Ladder Ranch (156,439 acres, with house manager, private chef and private guides). The property includes a ghost town, Hermosa, and four tributaries of the Rio Grande: the Animas, Seco, Palomas and Cuchillo streams (think John Wayne). Watch out for Chiricahua leopard frogs and the Rio Grande cut-throat trout. This is riding, mountain biking, hiking and releasing your inner *Dances with Wolves*. [tedturnerexpeditions.com](http://tedturnerexpeditions.com)



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## WINTER SUNDOWNER

**A**ll that the swallows (as the British expats are known) migrating to Cape Town this winter need to know is that darling Nigel Pace has triumphed. His private members' club The Stack, near Mount Nelson, is a must-visit for its fun bar, fab no-fuss brasserie (both of which are open to non-members), and whizzo cocktails by head barman Derrick Erwee. Nigel's wife, Sarah Ord, has popped The Stack with colour and vibe. [thestack.co.za](http://thestack.co.za)



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## Panda Bonanza

**C**hengdu seems like the Basingstoke of China. Wrong. It is Panda Central, gateway to South East Asia, and the place to stay is the Temple House. The bedrooms are thought through to the brilliant effect of the guest not having to think at all: everything is in the right place. The house is also absurdly beautiful: you enter through a Qing Dynasty courtyard. And Chengdu is the beating heart of Sichuan gastronomy. The Temple House can arrange a visit to the Giant Panda Research Base—panda heaven. They eat, they scratch their bottoms, they have a think and a siesta. If only all our lives could be like this. [ampersandtravel.com](http://ampersandtravel.com)



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## DUTCH HOUSE

**B**est to grab those Euro-weekends pre-Brexit. Canal House, Amsterdam, is a 21st-century incarnation within a 17th-century merchant's house in funky Jordaan, near Anne Frank's house. Rooms are ranked helpfully as Good/Better/Great/Exceptional/Outstanding/Best. It's Dutch paintings (including fireplaces and velvets) meets 21st century, with one of the largest gardens in Amsterdam's centre, plus a Garden House for 10 and a Summer House for two. Glamour without city clamour. [canalhouse.nl](http://canalhouse.nl)

