

Clockwise from top left: Castlebrac's seaside location; the lap pool borders the ocean; its stylish rooms; La Fosse chef-owner Mark Hartstone; its pretty exterior; local mussels; one of Slieve Donard's sizeable rooms; its chic pool; the grand hotel

Tried & Tasted

SLEEP



CASTLEBRAC DINARD, FRANCE

Clinging like a limpet to the cliffs of Brittany, Castlebrac and its 25 rooms have commanding views over the Bay of Prieuré. A tidal rise of 5m and glimpses of the fortress town of St Malo make this a vista you will spend hours admiring from the sunny patio deck.

The building used to be the national aquarium and the hotel's decor gives a nod to its past with piscatorial murals and portholes in the Aquarium Bar. Bedrooms are sumptuously appointed with marble bathrooms, vibrant fabrics and art deco-inspired furniture. Clever use of the building's higgledy-piggledy contours gives multiple room and suite combinations, so it's ideally suited to family groups as well as couples.

Behind the hotel, the sleepy town of Dinard comes alive in spring as second home owners from Paris descend at weekends. This most British of Brittany towns retains an air of 1950s glamour thanks to its 400 listed villas, while stripy beach tents are more reminiscent of Enid Blyton books. *GR. Doubles from £229. 00 33 2 9980 3000, castelbrac.com*



Gourmet bolthole LA FOSSE, CRANBORNE

Driving the narrow, winding roads towards Cranborne, the sat nav loses its signal. Luckily the charming village is so small that it's easy to spot La Fosse.

The peaceful Victorian B&B, just a 20-minute drive from the Dorset coast, is run by husband-and-wife team Mark and Emmanuelle Hartstone. Their six light and airy rooms, named after local cheeses, all feature Cowshed products in the compact bathrooms.

Don't expect designer furniture but do expect a local, seasonal, standout menu in a restaurant with just six tables. A starter of perfectly spiced Wiltshire chorizo with poached egg and medlar purée made way for a baked mushroom stuffed with greens and spinach gnocchi. The winner, though, is Mark's cheeseboard, twice voted Dorset's best. There are 11 bite-sized cheeses, running from mild to stonkingly strong; served with quince paste, dried and fresh fruits and crackers.

Wile away the rest of the evening in the sitting room with a well-sourced bottle of red and a game of Scrabble. *AD. Doubles from £75. 01725 517 604, la-fosse.com*

to stay

in the Caribbean, settle in at a homely B&B in Dorset, Irish coast and soak up Fifties glamour in France



SLIEVE DONARD CO. DOWN

Situated in the shadow of the stunning Mourne Mountains, you'll receive a warm Northern Irish welcome at Slieve Donard Resort & Spa.

With a beach on one side and Royal County Down Golf Club on the other sublime views are standard. Dine on seasonal dishes such as pan-seared Kilkeel scallops with Gracehill black pudding at Oak Restaurant then retire to one of the 180 luxe rooms. *HR. Doubles from £110, hastingshotels.com*



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