

TRAVEL

Flexible Workspace Meets Luxury Stay at Chantilly's Chicest New Hotel

Located 50km from Paris in scenic Chantilly, the restored château is designed for both holidays and working away from home

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It's not always possible to leave work entirely behind when you go on holiday. So why not give it a positive spin? That's the thinking behind the emerging flexible workspace trend "workation" destinations: places that offer all the indulgence of a luxury hotel, but with on-site office facilities that feel anything but chore-like. Step forward Jeanne & The Forest, a newly opened hotel in Chantilly, France, which embodies this concept in the chicest way possible.



Romain Ricard

Chantilly is famous for several things, among them lace, vanilla-flavoured Chantilly cream, and a popular racecourse; you can enjoy all of these during your stay at Jeanne & The Forest, but the hotel is specifically aimed at travellers who blend leisure with business, looking for a flexible workspace. It has two flexible workspaces suited to both individual and group use, as well as a freestanding, multifunctional building called The Hangar, which is designed to foster “creativity, collaboration and productivity”.



Romain Ricard



This diverse offering comes in part thanks to the hotel's unique architectural history. It's set in the Château de Montvillargenne, which was built in 1911 for Baroness Jeanne de Rothschild and combines Neo-Norman, British and French stylistic influences. Surrounded by a large park designed by landscape architect Charles Masson (a hero of the Art Deco movement), the château became a Catholic novitiate and girls' boarding school after World War Two, during which time it acquired a Modernist concrete cloister in the shape of a T (courtesy of the Mother Superior, who was a trained architect). This building is now The Hangar, with its simple, refined style still intact.



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In the 1970s, Château de Montvillargenne became CREAM, a workshop and training centre for craftspeople; in 1985, it opened as one of the largest château-hotels in France. Both of these eras have left their mark on the site's latest iteration, which opened in June and has been masterminded by Studio Chantal Peyrat. Peyrat has taken inspiration both from Jeanne de Rothschild herself – a woman with a passion for gardens, in particular roses and orchids – and from the grandeur of the château, which still has many of its original features by Rothschild family architect Léon-Maurice Chatenay. “Our first task was to assess everything that needed to be preserved, restored or reinterpreted,” the designer says. “We aimed for a refined historical narrative, with a true dialogue between past and present.”



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Period details that have been worked into the new décor include the majestic wooden panelling, fireplace and parquet floor of the Social Club, where guests can dine looking out over Italian-style terraces; and the coffered wooden ceiling and chequered marble floor in the La Table restaurant. Peyrat has combined these elements with playful interventions, such as the overscaled floral wallpaper in the restaurant (a tribute to Jeanne de Rothschild's botanical knowledge), a wallcovering composed of old book pages in the Social Bar, and black mirrored ceilings in the bar/restaurant corridors. "Combined with black-and-white chequered flooring, they create the illusion of walking upside down," says Peyrat. "There are numerous scenographies around the hotel that evoke its history: stylised herbariums, butterfly collections, and mirrored bird-and-branch wall sculptures in the guest rooms."



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The 119 rooms and suites – which are divided into “No Work” and “Pro Work” spaces, chosen according to the emphasis of your stay – also feature whimsical gestures such as headboards decorated with adapted ceiling roses. Peyrat has incorporated antique furniture and motifs from the Belle Époque and Art Deco eras in reverence to the château’s heritage (if you want a real taste of Rothschild-style living, book Jeanne’s former retreat, room 226, which looks out over the park to a forest in the distance). The “Pro-Work” rooms have a more minimal, industrial feel, inspired by the Brutalist style of the CREAR workshop building.



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