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ESSENTIAL Surrey & SW London

the Elmbridge Magazine



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DR RICHARD SHEPHERD
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WHAT'S ON THIS MONTH

WINTER escapes

TRIED & TESTED!

From cosy coastal stays to cultural city breaks, there are plenty of ways to relieve the seasonal gloom. Sophie Farrah wraps up warm



BEST FOR...

Historic Grandeur

On the outskirts of York, Middlethorpe Hall oozes Downton Abbey charm with a casual Lord-and-Lady-have-left-for-the-weekend décor. Nothing about this grand old dame – built in 1699 and reminiscent of Wren's additions to Hampton Court Palace – is too shiny or new, or obviously 'vintage'. The bedrooms are period pieces with huge floor-to-ceiling draped curtains and heavyweight bedspreads, while creaky floorboards and wonky lampshades enhance the antique charm. In winter, there are roaring fires, acres of garden to explore and fine food by two-AA-Rosette-winning Yorkshireman Ashley Binder. Less than two hours by train from London, the Hall is a lovely short walk along the Ouse to York's cultural attractions and Christmas markets.

■ Rooms from £320; middlethorpe.com



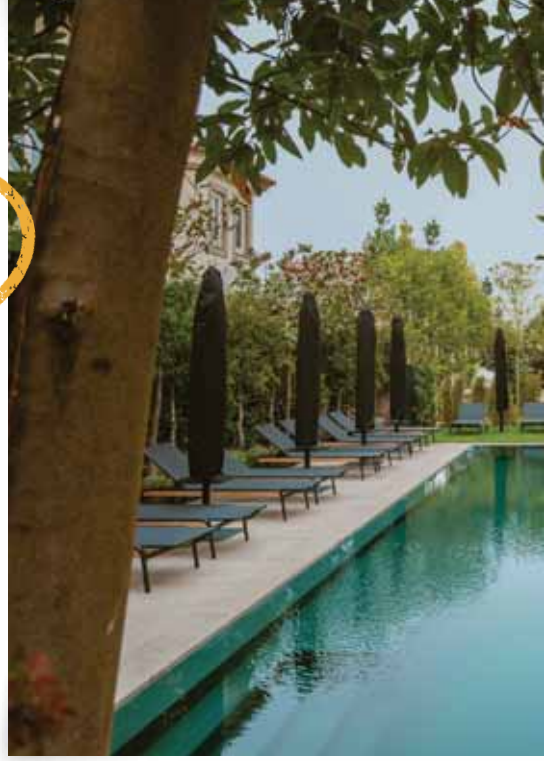
Photo: Jaques Studio

BEST FOR...

A Cosy Pub Stay

A great country pub comes into its own in winter, and the newly opened Jack O'Newbury has all the right ingredients. Set in two acres of grounds in the Berkshire village of Binfield, 'The Jack' is a former village inn given a new lease of life by chef Dom Chapman and restaurateur Nigel Sutcliffe, who first met while working at Heston Blumenthal's Fat Duck Group. Inside, there's an 80-cover dining room, a terrace with an Argentinian grill and 'The Snug' bar with a wood-burning stove, plus 11 individually designed bedrooms split between the pub and a converted barn. Chapman's menu features elevated pub favourites, with European influences and prime British cuts from the grill, while herbs from the garden make their way into the kitchen. Windsor and Ascot are nearby, but after a long lunch and fireside drink, staying put may prove rather more tempting.

■ Rooms from £170 a night; jackonewbury.com



BEST FOR...

Fabulous Food

There's something truly dramatic about the Cornish coast in winter, and Carbis Bay Hotel & Estate is the perfect place to enjoy it. Perched above its own Blue Flag beach near St Ives, the hotel with its vast windows provides a front row seat for storm watching, as powerful Atlantic waves roll into the bay. Take a blustery walk along the golden sand or spectacular South West Coast Path, before warming up in the soothing C Bay Spa with its heated outdoor pool and sauna, both overlooking the sea. As for the food, MOR – the new restaurant from two-Michelin-starred chef Tom Sellers – pairs stunning coastal views with a compelling menu inspired by Cornwall and its oceanic surrounds. With fewer crowds, windswept beaches and mesmerising seas, it's a glorious time to experience this incomparable county at its wildest.

■ Rooms from £320; carbisbayhotel.co.uk



Photo: @sophiefarrahwrites



BEST FOR...

A Cultural Hit

Porto's vibrant food and arts scene, together with its relaxed coastal charm, make it a brilliant winter city break – and Palacete Severo ('Little Palace') is the perfect base. Just a 30-minute walk from the city centre, this 20-room restored historic home has an outdoor saltwater pool, a large, peaceful garden, a swish spa and top-notch food from Michelin-starred chef Tiago Bonito. It also doubles as an art gallery, with a changing programme of exhibitions throughout the building. For a warming winter experience, cross the bridge to Vila Nova de Gaia for port tastings at spots like Graham's Port Lodge or Cálem.

■ Rooms from £256 per night; palacetesevero.com



BEST FOR...

West End Glam

Opened three years ago by tech entrepreneur and son of a circus entertainer, Noel Hayden, Broadwick Soho is a masterclass in wild design paired with pitch-perfect comfort. Inside, it's a heady swirl of 1970s disco chic, bold animal prints, Warhol paintings and Italian Romanticism, whilst the 57 bedrooms are pretty as a picture, with crisp white lines, beautiful textiles and heaps of light. There's a glitzy rooftop bar, a street-level 1950s-style diner, a glorious residents-only nook and a deep red velvet dining room. No room looks the same as the next: all have been joyously conjured up by a vivid imagination – and a deep pocket. Breathe in, imbibe the atmosphere and raise a glass to eccentricity.

■ Rooms from £512 a night; broadwicksoho.com



BEST FOR...

Coastal Character

Winter in Penzance has a charm all of its own. Invigorating seafront walks, independent galleries and shops, excellent restaurants and views across Mount's Bay all make for a compelling alternative to the usual Christmas market city break. Just off Chapel Street, The Bell Tower – built in 1834 as a school – is one of the town's most distinctive landmarks. Inside, a beautifully restored apartment for two combines original architectural details with mid-century furniture and spectacular views across the harbour to St Michael's Mount, with a homemade Cornish cream tea on your arrival. Penzance has no shortage of top places to eat, but you may struggle to tear yourself away from the apartment – the beautiful kitchen, well-stocked bar and record collection provide plenty of reasons to settle in for a cosy night. If you do venture out, however, you'll find everything within walking distance.

■ From £570 for three nights; middlecolensofarm.co.uk/the-bell-tower



Photo: Jake Eastham

BEST FOR...

Pigging Out

Nestled in the rolling South Downs, four miles from Arundel, THE PIG-in the South Downs – part of a popular collection of boutique country house hotels – makes for a wonderful winter escape. Wrap up for a bracing countryside walk before returning to roaring fires, squishy sofas and excellent food. As with every PIG, the kitchen garden is pivotal, supplying much of the hotel's 25-mile menu served in the plant-filled conservatory restaurant. Bedrooms are luxurious and beautiful, or you can bed down in a cosy wagon in the kitchen garden, complete with wood-burning stove and roll-top bath. Restorative treatments take place in the atmospheric Potting Shed, and there's plenty of English wine to try, including bottles produced from grapes grown right outside – best enjoyed by the fire.

■ Rooms from £295; thepighotel.com