

The 30 best B&Bs in France

Chic châteaux, Alpine guesthouses, country manors and city bolt holes.
Carolyn Boyd picks her top places to stay this summer



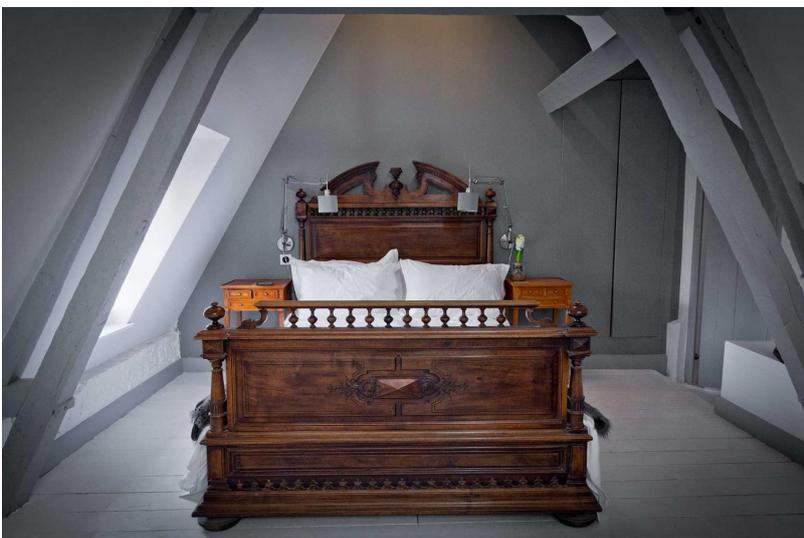
Château de Pont-Rilly, Normandy

THE NORTH

1. **Maison 76, Montreuil-sur-Mer, Pas-de-Calais**

Ideal for a quick getaway over the Channel, Montreuil-sur-Mer has a host of gourmet food and wine shops to stock up at before heading home, as well as a thriving restaurant scene. Maison 76 is a boutique B&B set in an 18th-century apothecary, owned by Tim Matthews, an expat who is one of the brains behind the town's reinvention as a foodie hotspot. With four individually designed bedrooms, the house also has a beautiful courtyard garden with a small swimming pool and a welcoming drawing room in which to relax, and serves a generous gourmet breakfast.

Details B&B doubles cost from €175 00 33 360 85 08 49, maison76.com)



Maison 76, Pas-de-Calais

2. Château de Pont-Rilly Sottevast, Normandy

Just 15 minutes' drive from the ferry terminal at Cherbourg, the moated Château de Pont-Rilly is a real find. The charming owners, Annick and Jean-Jacques Roucheray, have restored the 18th-century ruin they bought in 1982 (Jean-Jacques spent three weeks making the front door). Within are three traditional rooms with wood panelling, parquet floors and spacious modern bathrooms, while gîtes in the grounds cater for longer stays. A delicious breakfast is served in the flagstone-floored dining room where an original spit mechanism is still on show around the fireplace.

Details B&B doubles costs from €150 a night, with a minimum two-night stay (00 33 233 40 47 50, chateau-pont-rilly.com)

3. Relais 12Bis, Paris

Just a few minutes' walk from the Eiffel Tower, this stylish chambres d'hôte offers a peaceful retreat from the hustle of the French capital. Its interiors have been carefully chosen from designer boutiques by the owner, Sabine Schwarz, and each bedroom is named after an artist, with original exhibition posters and catalogues to carry on the theme. Schwarz and her affable husband, Phillipe, are friendly hosts and the gourmet breakfast is excellent, with freshly squeezed orange juice and delicious pastries.

Details B&B doubles cost from €198 (00 33 6 84 42 32 73, relais12bis.com)

4. Villa du Châtelet near Compiègne, Picardy

Built for the 19th-century composer Léo Delibes, who wrote *Duo des Fleurs* (of British Airways advert fame), this elegant mansion is owned by Alix de Lauzanne and her family. There are three spacious bedrooms on the upper floors, decorated in sophisticated toiles and floral patterns, looking out over the gardens towards the Compiègne forest. Breakfast is a generous affair, and make sure, too, to opt for the evening table d'hôte — De Lauzanne also runs a cookery school from the villa and her menus are superb. The house is five minutes from the newly renovated Armistice Museum and a little farther to Château de Pierrefonds.

Details B&B doubles cost from €120 (00 33 662 43 12 95, villaduchatelet.com)

5. Manoir de Kerledan Carhaix-Plouguer, Brittany

The 15th-century Manoir de Kerledan in central Brittany is set in two and a half acres of exquisite gardens, which include topiary hedges and parterres, a flower meadow, a croquet lawn and a rose garden. There are four sumptuous bedrooms overlooking different parts of the property, while evening meals are cooked using produce from the kitchen garden and orchard. Manoir is a good base for exploring inland Brittany.

Details B&B doubles cost from €95 (00 33 298 99 44 63, kerledan.com)

6. Le Clos de Bellefontaine Bayeux, Normandy

The town of Bayeux is so much more than its millennium-old tapestry: its medieval architecture, vibrant market, beautifully curated town museum and mighty cathedral make it a great destination, as well as a good base for exploring the D-Day beaches. A short stroll from the centre is Le Clos de Bellefontaine, an elegant mansion set in a secluded and manicured garden with three guest bedrooms. The spacious main bedroom is decorated with antique prints and furnishings, while the others are more modern in style. Meanwhile, the host Carole Mallet's bountiful breakfast provides a gourmet start to the day.

Details B&B doubles cost from €135 (00 33 681 42 24 81, sawdays.co.uk)

7. Les Hautes Sources Eure, Normandy

A favourite bolt hole for Parisians in search of a weekend rural idyll, Les Hautes Sources is also a short drive from Monet's garden at Giverny. The 19th-century maison overlooks the Eure Valley and has been restored by its young owners to an exceptional standard. Two of its three bedrooms are vast, the third slightly smaller, while the little cottage in the grounds and the newly built treehouse offer a great abode for families.

Details B&B doubles cost from €130 (00 33 672 84 91 89, les-hautes-sources.fr)



La Bellême Bleue, Normandy

8. La Bellême Bleue Le Perche, Normandy

One of Normandy's hidden delights, the Perche regional national park is home to sleepy villages and towering forests, as well as being a hotbed for antiques, bric-a-brac and flea markets. Bellême is one of the most charming towns in the area. Here, La Bellême Bleue, which opened last year, embraces the town's vintage vibe in its four individually styled rooms, where bold and characterful wallpapers work perfectly with carefully chosen antique and vintage furniture.

Details B&B doubles cost from €90 (00 33 233 25 29 75, labellemebleue.com)

THE WEST



Aux 4 Cornes, Longèves, Vendée

9. Aux 4 Cornes, Longèves, Vendée

Not every farm has its own turreted tower, but this unusual B&B in the Vendée countryside makes the most of its unusual outbuilding, housing four of its five guest rooms. Each of the rooms has been decorated individually, whether it is a pop of modern colour or a seaside theme (although it's an hour to the coast). But it's the welcome from the owners Stéphanie and Pascale Laurent that most enchants visitors, with excellent evening tables d'hôte and breakfasts. There's also an enticing outdoor pool and beautiful grounds.

Details B&B doubles cost from €80 (00 33 251 50 54 38, aux4cornes.com)

10. Demeure Valeu du Rivage, Vendée

Ten minutes from the A83 motorway between Nantes and Niort, this welcoming three-bedroom chambres d'hôte makes the perfect pitstop. The friendly hosts Isabelle and Olivier Cline have renovated the manor house delightfully, blending the 15th and 17th-century features with tasteful and modern decor. The breakfast is worth the stop alone, with a gourmet spread of pastries, galettes, homemade jams and yoghurts. Linger a while longer than one night and you can enjoy the pool and pretty back garden before venturing to nearby sights such as La Rochelle and Île de Ré.

Details B&B doubles cost from €100 (00 33 251 30 93 10, valeaudurivage.com)

THE SOUTHWEST



Les Dix Arches, Pyrenees

11. Les Dix Arches Bagnères de Bigorre, Pyrenees

The Pyrenees are a great destination for skiing, hiking and for Tour de France fans attempting challenging cycling routes such as Col du Tourmalet and Col d'Aspin. Les Dix Arches B&B is close to the centre of Bagnères de Bigorre and a fantastic base for the area. There are five simple yet pleasantly decorated rooms, and the British owners, Andy Crichard and Caroline Euman, are on hand to advise on the many activities in the area. With so much to do, breakfast is a suitably lavish affair, with bread, pastries, fruit and yoghurts, along with a cooked breakfast, to set you up for the day, while complimentary snacks are waiting for when you get home.

Details B&B doubles cost from €60 (00 33 562 91 21 98, allezpyrenees.com)

12. Le Pavillon, Saint-Émilion

Surrounded by vineyards just outside the centre of Saint-Émilion, this exquisite B&B is set in a 19th-century villa and run by a British-Australian couple, Nikki and Julian Garofano, who combine what they love about luxury hotels with a laid-back and welcoming atmosphere. The five rooms are beautifully decorated in neutral tones, with huge comfortable beds and Nespresso coffee machines. It's just a five-minute walk into the village centre, perfect for a twilight amble to one of the excellent restaurants.

Details B&B doubles cost from €250 (lepavillon-saintemilion.com)

13. La Source Beynac, Dordogne

Gorgeous, cobbled Beynac is topped by a 12th-century château and spills down a hillside to the shallows of the Dordogne River, its lower fringe a lovely spot for a swim or a canoe excursion when the water is deep enough, or a paddle and an ice cream when it's not. Up above, at the crest of the hill, lies La Source, a B&B with only a suite sleeping four, a "grand chambre" sleeping three and a little separate house for two with kitchenette in the garden. Exposed stone walls and chandeliers, antiques and tapestries add up to an exceptional haven.

Details B&B doubles cost from €120 (00 33 553 59 52 75, la-source-beynac-et-cazenac.com)

14. Villa Lascaux, Dordogne

This contemporary guesthouse offers a striking alternative to the traditional rustic abodes on offer in the Dordogne. Set in a bioclimatic house, built using natural materials and designed to limit energy and water consumption, the villa offers five bright, modern rooms, each with a terrace overlooking the beautiful countryside. Breakfast is a lavish affair, with bread, pastries, cereals, juices, coffee and tea, while the hosts also offer an evening meal using fresh, organic vegetables and seasonal products. The maison d'hôtes is only ten minutes from the Lascaux caves.

Details B&B doubles cost from €130 (00 33 688 67 81 68, villa-lascaux.com)

15. Le Château Valmy, near Perpignan

With views across its own vineyards to the Roussillon coast beyond, the stylish 19th-century Château Valmy in Argelès-sur-Mer has a more modern vibe than most château abodes. Its five spacious rooms are individually styled with splashes of colourful decor. Relax in the outdoor pool and hot tub, and dine in the restaurant, which attracts locals and visitors for its excellent menu of local flavours, including fish from the coast, accompanied by flights of the château's wines.

Details B&B doubles cost from €160 (00 33 468 81 25 70, chateau-valmy.com)

16. La Villa de Mazamet, Tarn

This stunning B&B in southwest France is a great base for exploring attractions such as Carcassonne and Albi. Set in the sunny town of Mazamet, this 1930s mansion is in a walled garden and overlooks the Montagne Noir mountain range. Its five large and airy rooms feature luxurious beds and linens, elegant decor and all mod cons. There is also a spa offering massages and other treatments, a hot tub and sauna, as well as a superb outdoor pool. The only challenge is to tear yourself away from it all to see the sights.

Details B&B doubles cost from €110 (00 33 563 97 90 33, villademazamet.com)

CENTRAL

17. La Cimentelle, Avallon, Burgundy

One of the highlights of a French B&B is the evening table d'hôte, and you can't get better than those at La Cimentelle. Stéphane and Natalie Oudot cook amazing meals to eat in their eclectic home or the sunny garden. Tuck into Burgundy's many regional classics, accompanied by the best local wines, or take part in one of their cookery classes. The five rooms (two of which sleep six) are decorated in rich coloured velvets and satins, with charming vintage furniture and wooden floorboards. As well as their beautiful gardens, the roof-terrace swimming pool is a wonderful suntrap.

Details B&B doubles cost from €95 (00 33 386 31 04 85, sawdays.co.uk)

18. Les Fleurons, Amboise, Loire Valley

Set in a former library, this 17th-century townhouse has been transformed by the British owners, Carolyn and Tim Knowlman, into an elegant guesthouse, with four light and spacious rooms looking out over the River Loire or towards the Château d'Amboise. Decorated in pretty fabrics, with crisp white bed linen, each room has tea and coffee-making facilities, while breakfast is a convivial affair around a shared table in the cosy living room. Its central location makes parking a little tricky, but it's a short walk to Amboise's historic attractions, including the château and Le Clos Lucé, Leonardo da Vinci's former residence.

Details B&B doubles cost from €155 (00 33 247 30 61 45, lesfleurons-amboise.com)



Le Ferme de Marie-Eugénie, Burgundy

19. Le Ferme de Marie-Eugénie, Bruailles, Burgundy

This bucolic farmhouse in the heart of the Bresse countryside is owned by the jolly Marie-Eugénie Dupuy and has a magic about it that brings people back time and again. Her warm welcome, along with her gourmet evening meals (this is the land of the famous Bresse chickens and the much-loved classic dish coq au vin) and sumptuous breakfasts are attractions in themselves. The five bedrooms, some with four-poster beds, are decorated in soft grey tones and make the perfect haven for a longer stay, or an overnight stop. Being a little more than 30 minutes from the A6, this makes a perfect pitstop on the drive south.

Details B&B doubles cost from €135, dinner from €35pp (00 33 385 74 8 1 84, bnb.lafermedemarieeugenie.fr)

20. Les Maisons de Concasty, Boisset, Auvergne

In the mountainous heart of France, at the crossroads of Cantal, Lot and Aveyron, the 300-year-old Maisons de Concasty makes a wonderful escape from the world. The guesthouse has three bright and airy bedrooms, each with a large en suite, and the generous host Martine Causse serves a bountiful breakfast with produce from her own garden. There's a hammam and sauna, and massages or yoga sessions can be arranged.

Details B&B doubles cost from €248 for two nights (00 33 471 62 21 16, lescollectionneurs.com)

21. La Pause Val de Loire, Chabris, Loire Valley

Not far from the magnificent Château de Valençay, La Pause Val de Loire opened last autumn and has three calming bedrooms overlooking the vast Loire countryside. Rooms are decorated in neutral tones and linens to enhance the natural stone walls and rustic wooden beams, and there's a sun-drenched communal breakfast room and lounge area. The British-French hosts, Natalie and Ian Moore, serve a delicious "FrenGLISH" breakfast and, with Ian's day job being a stand-up comedian, it may come with a side order of his signature dry wit.

Details B&B doubles cost from €90 (00 33 254 40 18 73, lapausevaldeloire.com)

THE EAST

La Villa 1901, Nancy

22. La Villa 1901, Nancy

Close to the city centre, this stylish chambres d'hôte has five rooms, each individually styled, with dark greys and black complemented by pops of vibrant colour and eclectic accessories. The exception is the attic room, which feels a little like a Scandinavian chalet, with all furnishings in white and natural wood, and sheepskin rugs. There is wifi, flat-screen TVs and coffee and tea-making facilities in each room. It's all achingly cool, but it makes the perfect base for exploring the sophisticated city of Nancy, with its excellent restaurants and great shopping, as well as its famous art-nouveau architecture.

Details B&B doubles cost from €165 (00 33 630 03 21 62, lavilla1901.fr)

23. La Maison d'à Côté, Pontarlier, Doubs

Nudging up against the Swiss border, the town of Pontarlier is famous for its history of absinthe and was once the heart of production of the green fairy, with a few distilleries producing it again since the ban was overturned in 2011. The town attracts walkers exploring

the nearby Jura Mountains, and the Maison d'à Côté makes a superb place to relax. Set in a medieval building in the town centre, the two bedrooms are carefully decorated with antiques and vintage finds, and on-trend colours, making it feel more like a hip Parisian apartment than a traditional B&B.

Details B&B doubles cost from €90 (00 33 381 38 47 18, lamaison-da-cote.fr)

THE ALPS



Château des Allues, Savoie

24. Château des Allues, Savoie

To the south of the mountainous Bauges Natural Regional Park, this charming guesthouse is run by Stéphane Vandeville, a passionate gardener-cum-chef who grows a huge variety of fruit, vegetables and herbs in 88 raised beds in the château's garden. His home-grown produce gets pride of place on his evening menus. He also runs workshops on how to create your own kitchen garden. Set between Chambéry and Albertville, it has sensational views from the pretty bedrooms.

Details B&B doubles cost from €155 a night (00 33 675 38 61 56, chateaudesallues.com)

25. Val des Sens, Isère

The views from the terrace of this homely guesthouse are nothing short of sensational; it's a spot you could enjoy for hours, gazing out towards the Vercors mountains. Meanwhile, a perfectly positioned hot tub is a great place to soak and relax after a day's hiking or exploring in the incredible landscape. There are three charming bedrooms, decorated in neutral tones that complement natural features such as stone walls and wooden floors. Valérie Pénard and her family are welcoming hosts, with a generous breakfast and delicious evening meals.

Details B&B doubles cost from €95 (00 33 650 39 69 30, le-val-des-sens.fr)

THE SOUTH

26. Domaine de Rhodes, Avignon

Five minutes from the historic centre of Avignon, the Domaine de Rhodes is a charming guesthouse set in a former 16th-century hunting lodge. Its five rooms are named after famous and historical Avignon figures, and include period features and furnishings, as well as views over the pretty grounds where plane trees offer shade from the Provençale sun. There is also a pool in which to cool off, and it's only a five-minute drive from the centre of Avignon, making it a great base for seeing this spectacular part of Provence.

Details B&B doubles cost from €95 (00 33 682 95 72 87, domainederhodes.com)

27. Les Sardines aux Yeux Bleus, Uzès, Gard

The village of Uzès, not far from Nîmes and Avignon, is one of the south’s most enchanting destinations, with its vibrant market and medieval history. Near by is the chic bolt hole Les Sardines aux Yeux Bleus, where the three rooms blend rustic features such as stone walls and terracotta tiled floors with breezy linens and Swedish design. There’s a vine-shaded courtyard for an alfresco breakfast or lazing in the sun, as well as a small swimming pool.

Details B&B doubles cost from £98 (0117 946 7072, i-escape.com)



Le Mas du Chanoine, Côte d’Azur

28. Le Mas du Chanoine, Saint Paul de Vence, Côte d’Azur

In the Alpine foothills above the Côte d’Azur, this B&B is a peaceful place to relax. There is a large swimming pool with breathtaking views of the surrounding villages and countryside, gardens scented with lavender and bougainvillea, and a boules court for evening games while sipping pastis. Inside, the three rooms are decorated in muted shades of green, orange and terracotta, while the two-bedroom family apartment is done out in more contemporary tones.

Details B&B doubles cost from €160 (00 33 627 27 16 49, sawdays.co.uk)

29. Château Mentone, Var

The millennium-old vineyard and very swanky *ferme-auberge* (no rustic farmer’s wife’s tables here) make this estate a go-to place for those exploring the hills and forests of the Var. There are five rooms along with a fantastic spa, a large outdoor pool and tennis courts.

Details B&B doubles cost from €135 (www.chateauxhotels.co.uk)

30. La Bastide du Château Rasque, near Draguignan, Var

The four large and breezy rooms of Château Rasque just outside the pretty village of Taradeau near Draguignan form part of a family-run wine estate and have spectacular views over the surrounding forest. There’s a swimming pool, and gourmet evening meals can be arranged. The rooms are a great base for discovering other vineyards in the area and it’s a 40-minute drive to the coast.

Details B&B doubles cost from €180 (00 33 494 99 52 20, chateau-rasque.com)

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