



FINCA CORTESIN ANDALUCIA, SPAIN

Marbella has grown up a little since it was a small town frequented by in-the-know Sixties regulars such as Prince Rainier, Grace Kelly and Jimmy Stewart. As the money rolled in, it became more Costa del Oro than Sol – and for a certain clientele, where you stayed was just as important a signifier as the Tesla model you had valet-parked or the handbag you took to the pool. Finca Cortesin lies a little aloof from all this, though, between Marbella and the superyachts of Sotogrande, in the foothills of Sierra Bermeja. The labels aren't exactly high street, but they're worn understatedly; I think of it less as a place to see and be seen than a place simply to be. It's the epitome of an Andalusian country house, designed by the late Duarte Pinto Coelho, with doors salvaged from a castle and oil paintings and palatial antiques from around Spain, Portugal and Morocco – though bright pops of colour and neon artworks in the bedrooms and pretty fabric-covered walls prevent it from ever getting too serious. And the team here, led by Rene Zimmer, make you feel very much at home. There's a real sense of intimacy despite its size – technically it is a golf hotel (its greens are hosting the women's Solheim Cup tournament in 2023) but I'd never describe it as one. Of the restaurants, El Jardín de Lutz is a favourite for its authentic takes on Spanish classics, with the lawns and olive-filled gardens just outside to walk in afterwards. It's a happy place for me. DM Doubles from about £470; fincacortesin.com





SIX SENSES YAO NOI
PHUKET, THAILAND

It begins with a subtle shift from indigo to violet, starlight fading in the night sky. Silhouettes of dragons appear on the horizon; the jagged limestone karsts of Phang Nga Bay. The Andaman Sea is seemingly lit from beneath in a preternatural shade of cerulean. In a flash of scarlet and flame orange, the day arrives, greeted by the unfurling of lotus flowers and the calls of hornbills, kingfishers and coucals. I'm not an early riser but I would change the habits of a lifetime if every morning looked like those at Six Senses Yao Noi. The sunrises are just one of the reasons I'm always angling to return to this tropical island resort off the coast of Phuket. Others include the breezy villas with their driftwood canopied beds, sunken sea-view bathtubs and decks large enough to cartwheel across; the sunny staff who make guests feel only-child special; and the communal half-moon infinity pool set high in the hills, forming a crescent above the bay. Then there's the spa, cleaved into the jungle and offering lemongrass teas, hot herbal massages and wellness rituals (my favourite is the Signature Yao Noi Journey, featuring a coconut scrub and steam) which last for hours and leave me glassy eyed, in a good way. The food mostly comes from local fishermen, or the hotel's gardens, mushroom hut and chicken coop – poached Phuket lobster in coconut broth, perhaps, or hot-and-sour grouper curry. To spend time here is a joy – a reminder of the beauty of nature and the possibilities that arrive with each new dawn. *LC Doubles from about £505; sixsenses.com*

AMAN TOKYO
JAPAN

Japan's capital is many things – sprawling, neon lit, nocturnal – but one word not often used to describe it is relaxing. I registered this dissonance approximately an hour after I last checked into Aman

Tokyo. More precisely, while floating 34 floors above ground, inhaling and exhaling with a meditation teacher in a white space, distracted only by vivid sunset views. Aman has, of course, long been a byword for a certain kind of crisp zen wellness. Yet there's something extra special about discovering it among the skyscrapers of a megalopolis, surrounded by the impeccable geometry of late Australian architect Kerry Hill, who was long inspired by Japanese design and considered this one of his finest works. Aman destinations have tended to focus on nature and heritage, so transplanting the concept to the big city in 2014 was a bolder move than it seems now. The lobby still turns heads, with its towering ceiling, abstract blooms and kimono-clad musician plucking the strings of a *koto*. The bedrooms always seem to me more akin to mindfulness spaces, with their aromatic hinoki-wood, sliding screens and staggered levels. The food and the service are impeccable – of course they are – but the spa is the real scene-stealer, a place of complete sensory purity that hovers unperturbed over the fizzing city. The latest treatments cover everything from Shinto purification rituals to *iaido* sword training. But really it's a form of therapy just being here, as Tokyo glimmers and grows below. *DANIELLE DEMETRIOU*
Doubles from about £730; aman.com

