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'If I had to choose a region to stay in for ever, it would be Puglia'

Chef Theo Randall on his top places to eat in Italy

CHÂTEAU DE MERCUÈS



2 Château de Mercuès

The 20 best French châteaux

From a fairytale castle in the Dordogne to a manor house in Normandy, **Carolyn Boyd** picks the top B&Bs and historic hotels

1 Château de Chenevière Normandy

Not far from the D-Day beaches, this elegant Norman mansion dates from the 18th century and was inhabited by the Germans during the Second World War, when the château was a stud farm. These days guests can enjoy the walled garden, exotic trees, heated outdoor pool

and tennis courts. In the château the 29 bright rooms come with iPod docks and L'Occitane toiletries. Foodies can enjoy the excellent Botaniste restaurant or the pop-up restaurant in the garden during the summer months.

Details Doubles are from €220 (£170), breakfast is €25 (00 33 2 31 51 25 25, lacheneviere.com). The ferry port of Caen-Ouistreham is 40 minutes away

2 Château de Mercuès Lot

Wine lovers will adore the Château de Mercuès and its sensational wine cellar, which, along with the winery, is hidden away under the château's terrace. Sip the excellent vintages as you admire the breathtaking views across the Lot Valley. Its owner, Georges Vigouroux, is a pioneer of the malbec grape and has developed a new generation of cahors wines. The château dates from the 13th century and its rooms are a blend of modern decor with classic features, such as polished floors, wood panelling and antique furniture.



Details B&B doubles cost from €225 a night (00 33 5 65 20 00 01, chateaudemercues.com). Toulouse airport is 85 minutes away

3 Château de Riell Pyrenees

The spa at Château de Riell taps into the hot spring 150 metres below. Its thermal pool is set in an exotic greenhouse, while the bathing pools, used for water-based treatments, are set in green, ivory, black and amber marble. The hotel has 19 rooms and suites in the château and adjoining cottages, and the view of Mount Canigou will make your heart soar. ▶