

Travel

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'We cycled past terraced rice paddies and monasteries – sheer joy'

Paul Bloomfield on a bike trip in Bhutan



The pool at Château de Saint Paterne, Saint Paterne (1)

20 great stays in Normandy

Boutique hotels, luxury treehouses, cosy B&Bs – it's not too late to pop across the Channel this summer, says **Carolyn Boyd**

Orne/South Normandy 1 Château de Saint Paterne, Saint Paterne

This fairytale hotel on the outskirts of Alençon was once a bolthole for King Henry IV of France, who conducted his dangerous liaisons here. These days it's the stylish abode of owner Charles-Henry de Valbray, a chef and

cookery book author, who treats his guests to sumptuous meals in the surroundings of the luxurious candelabra-filled dining room before they retreat to one of the ten rooms. Each boasts decor that is fit for a king. Outside, take a dip in the heated pool or stroll around the 2.5-hectare park that surrounds the chateau.

Details Doubles from €120 (0845 034 0700, mrandmrsmith.com)

2 Château de la Mouchère, near Bellême

Beautiful Art Deco and Arts and Crafts furnishings abound in this gorgeous chambres d'hôtes set in an elegant manor house surrounded by English-style gardens. The house remained in the same family for nearly 150 years, but now it is owned by two former university professors, Roger Huss, a Briton, and his French wife Marie-Monique, who provide a warm welcome to visitors in their three bedrooms and two suites. Each has its own fireplace and is decorated with period furniture. Guests can also take part in their seasonal workshops to learn about making jams, chutneys, compotes and liqueurs.

Details From €85 per night B&B for two (00 33 2 33 83 02 99, lamouchere.com)



3 La Renardière, Bellou-le-Trichard

Where better to admire the countryside of southern Normandy than from a comfy treehouse perched in a 200-year-old sweet chestnut tree? Set in a 25-acre plot that welcomes a variety of wildlife, including roe deer and wild boar, the two-level arboreal abode sleeps five in two different rooms and also offers bathroom with shower and toilet, a small kitchen area and a terrace from which to admire the gorgeous sunsets. By day, those who enjoy the great outdoors will love exploring the surrounding Perche national park.

Details From €150 per night B&B for two (00 33 2 33 25 57 96, perchedansleperche.com)