



Britain's 30 prettiest villages

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for men**



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by Simon Mills (on the bed)

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Fabulous foodie breaks in Europe

Sherry in Jerez, wurst in Berlin and salt cod in Lisbon: **Richard Mellor** picks the most mouthwatering getaways



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A camembert pilgrimage in Orne

Ever heard of Marie Harel? All self-respecting turopiles (cheese lovers) should have because she supposedly invented camembert in the late 18th century. You'll learn that at the Musée du Camembert, one of the many attractions for gourmands in Orne, a hilly, river-splashed corner of Normandy, in northern France, that's often likened to Switzerland (€3, museeducamembert.fr). Other foodie lures include Mortagne-au-Perche's famous blood sausage and Saturday's produce market, plus Hostellerie de la Renaissance, a Michelin-starred restaurant with stylish rooms where seasonal menus — and cookery classes — draw on the cider-making area's apples and pears. **Details** Room-only doubles from £87 (arnaudviel.com). Sail to Caen

Sip sherry in Jerez

Give Seville a swerve: Andalusia's southwesterly city of Jerez de la Frontera has Moorish palaces, fine flamenco and wiggly lanes too, yet fewer tourists and added gastronomic perks. First, try its fruity meloja honey and purchase top-grade jamon iberico de bellota — the very finest of hams — from the lauded producer Montesierra. Then concentrate on Jerez's hallmark: sherry. Sip fino, amontillado or sweeter pedro ximenez alongside locals in *tabanco* taverns before strolling back to the Hotel Bodega Tio Pepe. It's handily positioned next to the Gonzalez Byass winery, which gives tours, and has 27 minimal bedrooms and a cathedral-facing roof terrace. **Details** B&B doubles from £182 (tiopepe.com). Fly to Seville

Gastronomic Galway

Epicureans will be richly rewarded by a visit to this city on Ireland's west coast. There are the Michelin-starred restaurants Aniar — the oyster ice cream is recommended — and Loam, which insists on local ingredients, as well as the nearby Burren, where amid the rock-strewn landscape you'll find chocolate and cheesemakers. Guided walks with Galway Food Tours involve crab, doughnuts and the acclaimed weekend market (£56pp, galwayfoodtours.com). Then there's the Dough Bros, recently named Europe's best pizza takeaway, and excellent breakfasts at the Quay House, an old harbourmaster's home with perky, picture-crammed bedrooms. **Details** B&B doubles from £73 (thequayhouse.com). Fly to Shannon

Snacks to go in Berlin

Berlin has two street-food mainstays. One of the most popular is currywurst, sausages steeped in a curry-style ketchup. This dates from a 1940s food stand in Charlottenburg but can now be enjoyed at takeaways all around the city — Ketch'up 35 in Neukölln serves some of the city's finest. Equally tempting are high-quality doner kebabs, popularised by Turkish immigrants and best devoured at Mustafa's Gemüse Kebap in Kreuzberg. Close by, and ideal after much pavement-pounding, the casual but luxurious Orania.Berlin hotel is hosting eight-course breakfasts (£68pp) on December's first two Sundays, each featuring live music. **Details** B&B doubles from £237 (orania.berlin)

Vienna for veggies

We mostly associate Viennese food with rich chocolate tortes, enjoyed in opulent



Kaffeehäuser, or hearty pork schnitzels. Yet Austria's capital also caters brilliantly for vegetarians. Hollerei has earned acclaim for Asian and Mediterranean dishes served beside a gallery of emerging artists, while the fanciest option is Tian, where the meat-free plates are Michelin-starred. A 25-minute walk away, its Tian Bistro presents a less formal, less expensive alternative. Still craving that sweet hit? The palatial Hotel Sacher is the home of sachertorte — an apricot-filled chocolate creation, the city's most famous cake. **Details** Three nights' B&B from £1,299pp, including flights, transfers and a food-themed half-day tour (abercrombiekent.co.uk)

Poland beyond pierogi

Dispelling the myth that Polish cuisine is all about pierogi (dumplings), this foodie weekend showcases Warsaw's gastronomy with help from local guides. It begins with a four-hour food tour of the capital, visiting different restaurants to sample other specialities including golabki (cabbage rolls) and smoked cheeses. The next day you can choose between a beer or vodka tour, the latter presenting different takes on the spirit



Coquillade Resort, Provence

alongside typical local dishes (sour rybe soups are a classic example). Stay in a historic hotel near the old town's colourful medieval buildings so there's not far to walk after the indulgent tours. **Details** Three nights' B&B from £495pp, including flights, transfers and tours (regent-holidays.co.uk)

Truffles in Luberon

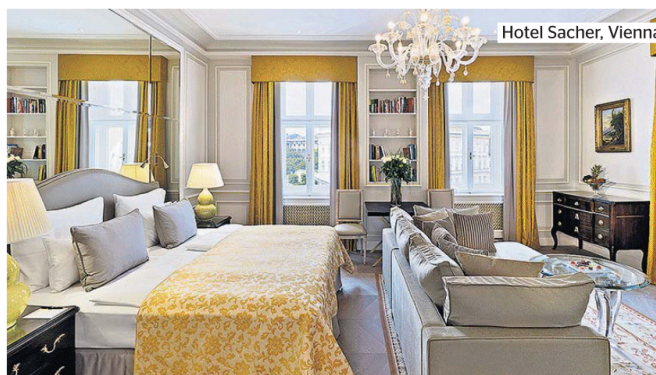
Mid-November marks the start of truffle-hunting season in the Luberon, Provence's prettiest corner. A hillside hamlet turned luxury hotel domain, the Coquillade Resort can arrange experiences (on Fridays) during which you'll visit Carpentras's weekly truffle market near by, have a themed lunch and search for the "black diamonds" below Mont Ventoux with veteran *caveurs de truffes* (truffle hunters) and trained dogs. The day finishes with a tasting menu and custom wine pairings in Coquillade's high-end Avelan restaurant. That leaves ample time to explore the resort's award-winning spa and on-site winery. **Details** Three nights' B&B from £1,565pp, including Eurostar to Avignon,



Sagrada Família, Barcelona



Warsaw old town



Hotel Sacher, Vienna

private transfers and the truffle experience (seventytentravel.com)

Affordable Istanbul

Last month Istanbul was named as the most affordable dinner option by the kitchen supplier Maxima, with the average cost of dinner for two at £15. That's exceptional for a city whose position means Asian, Mediterranean and Middle Eastern cuisines collide. You'll likely spend even less on freshly cooked kebabs, pizza-like pide, or meze at laid-back Galata Kitchen, on a back street in the busy Beyoglu district. Given eating is so cheap, you could splurge on the waterfront Shangri-La Bosphorus hotel, where "baklava butter" and Turkish-inspired afternoon teas are on offer.

Details Room-only doubles from £290 (shangri-la.com)

Perfect Naples pizza

Neapolitan pizza is godly — and specific. As per Unesco's list of intangible cultural heritage, it must be made with certain types of local tomatoes and mozzarella. Numerous hole-in-the-wall joints in Naples's frenetic alleys do fine examples, as do legendary pizzerias such as Di Matteo. Make sure to fold slices, like a napkin, to avoid spillage. The chaotic, intoxicating southern city has many other tasty, traditional plates, namely olive-speckled spaghetti alla puttanesca. Once you've filled up on carbs, the hillside Hotel Paradiso's Bay of Naples views will be the perfect digestivo.

Details Three nights' B&B from £808pp, including flights and private transfers (italia.com)

Custard tarts and salted cod in Lisbon

Go to Lisbon in late November and you should make time to leave the city, taking a 45-minute train to plateau-set Santarem. There, along with bullfighters and fine Tagus River views, awaits the 40th National Gastronomy Festival, showcasing traditional or contemporary Portuguese flavours (November 18-28, £2, festivalnacionaldegastromia.pt). Back in Lisbon's hillside Bairro Alto quarter, stock up on pastéis de nata (custard tarts) at Manteigaria and seek out the capital's hallmark dishes, such as the bifana (pork bun). Above its apartment-style bedrooms, the luxury Lumiares hotel's rooftop restaurant does a gourmet version of salted cod with scrambled eggs, onions and potatoes.

Details B&B doubles from £345 (thelumiares.com). Fly to Lisbon

Barcelona on a budget

Barcelona is perfect for gourmands on a budget. On weekdays La Rita, a longstanding restaurant in the elegant district of Eixample, serves three classic Catalan courses — often including a beef stew or seafood soup — for £10, including wine. Also in Eixample, informal Embat's cooking is unshowy, seasonal and outstanding, yet some mains are priced at less than £8.50. Near the food market La Boqueria, the Gothic Quarter's lantern-lit Mosquito charges small change for Asian-style tapas such as delicate dumplings or steamed pork belly. Continue the money-saving theme by staying at the leafy and equally good-value Praktik Garden boutique. **Details** Room-only doubles from £55 (hotelpraktikgarden.com). Fly to Barcelona

A bellyful in Bologna

It's nicknamed La Grassa (the Fat One) and you'll understand why after a visit to Italy's most gluttonous city. As well as graceful porticoes and striking terracotta rooftops, Bologna has an enviable food CV: prosciutto di Parma, Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese and spicy mortadella sausage hail from here or the wider Emilia-Romagna region, as do such A-list pasta dishes as tagliatelle al ragu alla bolognese and tortellini in brodo. You can sample all of those on a curated itinerary, plus visit chocolatiers that once served Italian kings. An afternoon at a rural cookery school rounds things off. **Details** Four nights' B&B from £1,505pp, including flights, transfers and all activities (originaltravel.co.uk)

Artisan fare in Ghent

As well as quaint streets and quirky waterways, artisan food shops abound in Ghent. Kaas Mekka stocks 300 cheeses, including local goudas and blues. The retro deli Tierenteyn hawks mustards made from a secret centuries-old recipe, while the veteran bakery Himschoot is revered for a broodpudding concocted from leftovers, raisins and cinnamon. The Temmerman sweetshop sells cuberdons — small purple cones with raspberry fillings — while Yuzu and HD Ghent are world-class chocolatiers. Belgian beer is also readily available, of course, as are high-quality cocktails in 1898 the Post's glamorous hotel bar. **Details** B&B doubles from £150 (1898thepost.com). Take the train via Brussels

Bazaar tour in Tbilisi

One of the world's greatest food markets, the Dezerter Bazaar sprawls across two buildings as well as surrounding plazas and lanes in Georgia's cosmopolitan capital, Tbilisi. Named after absconders from the 1921 Soviet-Georgian war, it sells a bewildering array of foods, from pomace brandy to bladdernut flowers and bowls of soaking pickles. The sights, smells and tastes are best experienced with a guide — one who can also take you for meaty khinkali dumplings and cheese-stuffed khachapuri bread. Ten minutes away by taxi, part of the riverside Biltmore Tbilisi hotel occupies a glass skyscraper with market views. **Details** Three nights' B&B from £599pp, including flights, transfers and a half-day food tour (coxandkings.co.uk)

More great trips next page

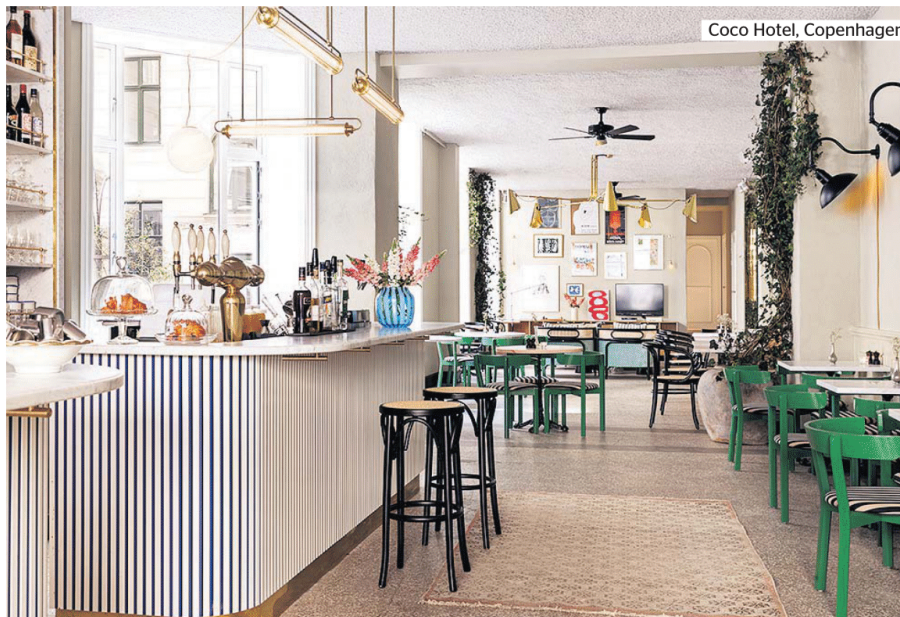
Greek treats galore

Greece's second city, Thessaloniki, comes first for cooking by blending bally Balkan notes with lighter Mediterranean freshness. Feta cheese and kebab-like gyros are ten-a-cent, as are hot, flaky bougatsa pastries stuffed with sweet cream — Bougatsa Giannis's renowned versions are sold all night. Pause also at tavernas in the mazy Ano Poli (upper town) for slow-cooked pork shanks or fava bean dips, and eat mussel risotto facing Mount Olympus at the award-winning waterside brasserie Agioli. Positioned across the main Aristotelous Square, the neoclassical yet natty Excelsior hotel can arrange "Eat like a local" walking tours.

Details B&B doubles from £115 (excelsiorhotel.gr). Fly to Thessaloniki

Kudos for Coimbra

According to the International Institute of Gastronomy, Culture, Arts & Tourism, one of 2021's co-European Regions of Gastronomy is Coimbra and its periphery — and certainly the cuisine of Portugal's elegant former capital more than merits a visit. Aim for the elevated old town, where cobblestoned lanes hug a mighty cathedral, and where tiny taverns serve such *petiscos* (Portuguese tapas) as chanfana (goat meat in a red wine stew), garlicky lamprey fillets or pao de lo sponge cake. Term time shows off the university city's atmosphere at its liveliest, and Casa de Sao Bento's sleek lofts and suites put you close to all the action.



Coco Hotel, Copenhagen

Details Self-catering doubles from £43 (casadesaobento.com). Fly to Porto

Green cuisine in Helsinki

Sustainable dining is on trend in Finland's capital. The upmarket but informal restaurant Nolla has committed to biodynamic organic produce and eco-friendly packaging, but most impressive is its tasting menu's zero-waste policy. Helsinki, which will go meatless at official events from January to reduce emissions, also has the hip Way Bakery,

where almost all the ingredients are now locally sourced, and the vegan café Makers Kahvila, which does a good line in waffles and lingonberry cakes. The central and cheery Klaus K hotel has Green Key certification for its eco-efforts.

Details B&B doubles from £147 (klauskhotel.com). Fly to Helsinki

Tallinn's gourmet revolution

In Tallinn's exceptionally well-preserved old town and regenerated shipyards,

a glut of top-notch restaurants have opened in recent years. Many concentrate on local, foraged produce, while 180° majors on modern Estonian plates with a side dish of Baltic Sea views. Temperatures will be chilly this far north, so you'll want to make an additional stop at Pierre Chocolaterie for acclaimed hot chocolate and a curio-packed living room. With its hot tub and sauna, Hotel L'Ermitage will be equally warming.

Details Three nights' B&B from £470pp, including flights and private transfers (regent-holidays.co.uk)

Great Noma alternatives in Copenhagen

After a move to new, enlarged digs, Rene Redzepi's legendary Noma is back serving dishes involving plant moss or mould. It's still appearing atop global rankings and is as hard to book as Glastonbury. Luckily, many of its alumni now operate their own fabulous (and easier to access) restaurants around Copenhagen. There's Amass, which is ultra-inventive and takes a zero-waste approach to dining — ice cream is made from surplus bread, and crumble from apple skins, for example. There's also Mexican-inspired Sanchez and veg-mad Radio, and don't miss the bakery Mirabelle and its sourdough croissants. The homely but cool new Coco Hotel is near all of them, plus the food-focused Torvehallerne market.

Details B&B doubles from £172 (coco-hotel.com). Fly to Copenhagen



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