

# PASSPORT TO THE EXCEPTIONAL

With a grand and glorious world open for exploration, the choices on where to travel are dazzling and sometimes overwhelming. After travelling to countless countries over the past few years, travel journalist **Jared Ruttenberg** shares some of his top global destinations.



## SPA BREAK



### ENGLAND'S SOUTH LODGE

Just beyond Surrey's transition into Sussex, South Lodge is a grand and handsome country house, renowned for its modern and extensive spa. We felt like children in a wellness sweetshop: the spa features include a 22m infinity-edge pool and a thermal suite with a botanical sauna, salt steam room, aromatic infusion room, and an awakening bucket shower. The hydro experience continues outdoors with a beautiful natural pool and a heated vitality hydrotherapy pool. Treatments are available in dedicated rooms, along with meals from the Botanica restaurant. In addition to traditional country house accommodation, the Reeds offers a collection of semi-Scandinavian eco-lodges built around a lake. A short walk through the garden from the spa, these provide an inviting modern stay. If the tranquil lakeside setting isn't enough, then the spa-enabled copper bathtubs on the deck and the complimentary mini-bar with British Bubbles will hit the spot. If the bottle needs replenishing, have more delivered to your room or, as we did, take a short drive to a local wine estate for a quick tasting and restock.

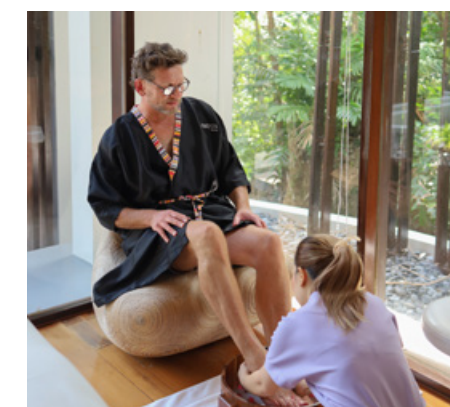
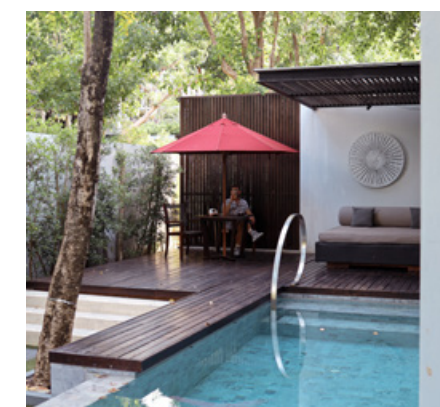
[exclusive.co.uk/south-lodge](https://exclusive.co.uk/south-lodge)

# HERITAGE STAY

## NORTHERN IRELAND'S TITANIC BELFAST

The world's most famous passenger liner needs no introduction, but did you know you can now stay in the very place where the mighty Titanic was conceived? The once busy drawing rooms of Harland & Wolff shipbuilders are now home to a heritage hotel, offering guests the chance to step back in time and sleep in the very dockyard where the ship was imagined. The hotel features various room categories spread around central meeting spaces, including the cathedral-like Drawing Office Two and Wolf Grill.

An astonishing 500 artworks and photographs adorn the hotel spaces, tastefully transporting guests back to the Golden Age of ocean travel. Stepping outside, an impressive glass building dominates the view: the Titanic Belfast. Inside, the ship's tragic story is told through interactive displays, including an exciting shipyard ride. Together, the hotel and museum create one legendary location. [titanichotelbelfast.com](http://titanichotelbelfast.com)



# ISLAND ESCAPE

## RENAISSANCE KOH SAMUI

I arrived in Thailand just days before the highly anticipated release of White Lotus 3 and headed to the same island where it was filmed: the sun-drenched Koh Samui. With the Four Seasons fully booked (the actual filming location), I chose the five-star Renaissance Koh Samui. For the next few days, I experienced my own White Lotus adventure — minus the drama, of course. Accommodation options include comfortable hotel rooms or, my preference, the pool villas with private courtyards and inviting pools. As with most island escapes, full-board or all-inclusive packages offered the best value, and with three dining options, it was a delightful indulgence, from classic Pad Thai to Massaman Curry and sumptuous Wagyu burgers. At the spa, we enjoyed the best massage we had in Thailand, followed by relaxing in the pool, ocean, and our private pool, keeping us blissfully cool.

[marriott.com](http://marriott.com)



## WINE

**FRANCE: CHÂTEAU DE BERNE**

The very name Provence exudes an air of European sophistication—no surprise since the region is France's oldest wine-producing area. Desiring to taste my way through the rosé wines, I visited the impressive Château de Berne, a Relais & Château five-star hotel. Pointed conifers and manicured vines guide the drive in until the striking stone building appears. Provençal heritage and style pervade the experience, combined with understated elegance. My spacious apartment featured a Juliet balcony, where I sipped wine while admiring the vines. My two-hour tasting of the Château de Berne range broadened my understanding and appreciation for the wines, and you'll want to take home a bottle or two of their iconic square-shaped bottles. Interestingly, wine tourism isn't as prevalent in Europe as in South Africa, but the staff were quick to mention that experiences in our beloved Winelands shaped their offerings. The result is a sprawling estate with a labyrinth of discoveries, a world-class spa, excellent dining, and an unforgettable experience that rivals any back home.

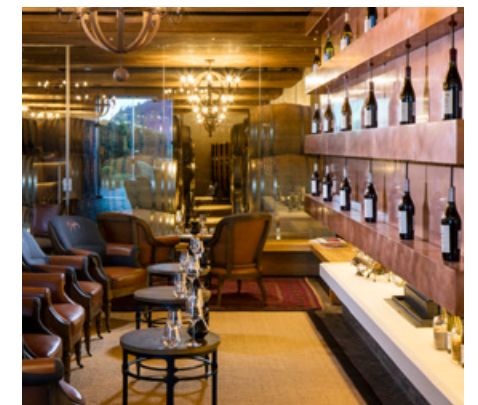
[chateauberne.com](http://chateauberne.com)

# CULTURE FIX

## MALLORCA'S SON BRULL

While Mallorca's party reputation might precede it, the last two decades have seen a rise in the island's luxury offerings, which are far from the maddening crowd. Positioned as a rural sanctuary in the heart of the Mediterranean, the five-star Relais & Chateaux property is perhaps the island's best-kept secret. Son Brull was initially built as a 12th-century Arabic farmhouse, later converted into a monastery in the 18th century. When the Sau family took ownership in the late 90s, new life was breathed into it, transforming it into the prestigious boutique hotel it is today. Avoiding the typical glitzy, cookie-cutter resorts, the family chose instead to tap deeply into Mallorcan culture, ensuring every aspect of the hotel and its offerings are rooted in it. From the staff and cuisine to the décor – everything is proudly local and tells the Mallorcan story. For local cultural excursions, visit Can Vidalet to sample local wines, Teixits Vicens for traditional spun textiles, or walk the steep hill to Pollença's Puig de Maria convent.

[sonbrull.com](http://sonbrull.com)



# PROUDLY LOCAL

## LEEU COLLECTION, FRANSCHHOEK

Finally, what would a global roundup be without a proudly South African inclusion? In the Winelands village of Franschhoek, the Leeu Collection offers guests five-star treatment across two delightful settings. Leeu House sets the bar high as the village's most luxurious stay, where attention to detail and intuitive service turn visitors into repeat guests. If you venture off the property, Franschhoek's top restaurants are just a minute's walk away. Paying homage to the humble spice, they celebrate cooking's most central ingredient through carefully crafted courses that showcase various spices in tasty and creative ways. Next door, Protégé offers a more casual experience without compromising the allure of fine dining. Minutes from town, on the foothills of the beautiful mountains that cradle Franschhoek, Leeu Estates is the proud sister property—a sprawling retreat amid acres of meticulously maintained gardens. Alongside the luxurious lodgings, you'll find the Leeu Spa by Healing Earth, the award-winning La Colombe restaurant, Everard Read Gallery, and my personal favourite: the wine studio, where you can taste the exceptional Mullineux & Leeu Family Wines. All of this makes for a destination experience, set within South Africa's wine and gastronomy centre.

[leeucollection.com/SA](http://leeucollection.com/SA)

