

United Kingdom

Go on adventures closer to home in these beautiful period British houses, now transformed into state-of-the-art, chic destination hotels

Top 10

Hotel Endsleigh

Tavistock, Devon

In the early 19th century, the Duke and Duchess of Bedford owned a third of Devon and chose this site, one of the prettiest parts of the country, for a summer house for themselves and their brood of 13 children. Surrounded by woodland, the house has terraced lawns and gardens that stretch down to the River Tamar.

Olga Polizzi and her daughter Alex have transformed this beautifully appointed property into an intimate 16-room hotel, employing their exceptional attention to detail and artful understanding of interiors. Opened in August this year, the hotel offers the same calibre of service and overall quality as its sister property, the renowned Hotel Tresanton in St Mawes, Cornwall.

X-factor The decor, which reflects Olga's immaculate taste and style throughout the establishment. It is a sumptuous mix of modern elements and original period details – hand-painted wallpapers, classic bathroom fittings and wooden panelling – nothing looks out of place.

Rooms to ask for Room 5, for breathtaking views from the bedroom and bathroom, and its original, free-standing bath. With its tiny balcony, original wallpaper and garden views from the bed, room 8 will no doubt be popular, too. Room 3, once used by the Duchess herself, is light and airy; it also has a free-standing bath and views of the woods. Rooms 1 and 2 in the Children's Block are suites, with a very grand bathroom in the former, and pretty views from the sitting room in the latter. The attic rooms, numbers 14 and 15, also have garden views.

The crowd Stylish Italians and the occasional celebrity (with their pet pooches) – just like the loyal patrons of the hotel in Cornwall.

Treat yourself to... romantic picnics in the grounds of the house – search out the grotto studded with shells, minerals and local rocks for some Victorian magic, or choose instead to take a leisurely stroll in the lush surroundings of the hotel's colourful woodland garden.

Must do Fish on the Tamar (the hotel has seven fishing spots on the river); explore the untouched Devon countryside and the rugged hills of nearby Dartmoor; indulge in clotted-cream teas on the lawn in summer; and, in winter, curl up by an open fire with a book from the library.

If only... all the rooms had views of the same quality and the pool, promised for next year, already existed.