

# Country room, city chic

Hotels as sleek as anything in central London are now opening in rural areas. **Sally Shalam** looks at six of the best

**E**very five years or so there is a spate of new openings in hotel-land. 2005 is one of those years, the calendar peppered with launch dates from Scotland to the south coast.

What is surprising is that these cool new boltholes are in the country. While Olga Polizzi, the driving force behind the fine-tuned Hotel Tresanton in Cornwall, is refurbishing a London landmark, Brown's Hotel, which reopens its doors in September, her project in Devon, Hotel Endsleigh, will attract far more attention. We have come to expect sleek hotels in London, but sleekness in the country is still a novel enough concept to cause a stir.

The arrival of these new hotels marks a permanent seachange for style, food and service in the country. Some of these establishments are operated by multi-national companies with multi-millions to plough in. Others are small, independent ventures with more limited funds, but they have all come up with new recipes for elegance and excellence. Whether they have eight rooms or 80, the hotels mentioned below are all high-class acts.

## **Hotel Endsleigh**

**Milton Abbot, Devon**  
(01822 870248, website under construction)

### **Opens beginning of August**

In the 1990s, the hotelier Olga Polizzi proved she could create a modern classic with the Tresanton. Now, she and her daughter Alex have turned their hand to a Grade I cottage orné, Endsleigh, which was built in 1812 as a

summer home for the Duke and Duchess of Bedford and their 13 children. The setting could not be more sublime. (The Bedfords had plenty of choice when they picked this spot – they owned one third of Devon.)

Picture sweeping lawns that shimmer with morning dew, a wooded valley and the silvery thread of the River Tamar in the distance. Add in blue sky, birdsong and drinks on the children's parterre (where the Duchess once kept an eye on her brood) and the scene is very inviting indeed. Then there is the house itself, now restored with Polizzi's subtle understanding of an interior – that it is always about the building and not about what the designer can impose.

The 16 rooms are individually furnished with hand-picked antique pieces, yet they avoid Regency pastiche. Bathrooms have original shutters and cast-iron baths, with showers added only where they do not disturb the space. Downstairs is all understated elegance and open fires that infuse the air with a delicious scent. What really sets this place apart, however, is Polizzi's knack of simultaneously turning back the clock while creating the future.

**Wow factor** Oh, the style, the setting...

**How much** From £210 per night b&b; suites £350.

**Four Seasons Hampshire**  
Dogmersfield Park, Hook,  
Hampshire

(01252 853000, [www.fourseasons.com/hampshire](http://www.fourseasons.com/hampshire))

Opened February

In some ways the most exciting hotel opening of the year. For a hotel group that