



What's Hot

From hip restaurants to hot hotels and happening travel spots, travel writer *Heidi Fuller-love's* regular column focuses on what's cool, new and now in France ... and beyond.

Images courtesy of AliKats and Macdonald Berystede Hotel

What's new – home and away

Retro foods have made a comeback so you should be getting your sidebars, manhattans and other old-fashioned cocktails at L'Entrée des Artistes (lentreedesartistespigalle.com), a cosy boho Parisian cafe with gorgeous vintage decor and live music. Closer to home, in Melbourne, you'll find classic drinks at The Everleigh (www.theeverleigh.com), an award-winning bar serving a range of classic cocktails in an intimate setting.

While in the French capital, don't miss the brand new Philharmonie de Paris (philharmoniedeparis.fr/en), a futuristic new music complex said to provide a "uniquely intimate listening experience".

If you're travelling to Abu Dhabi and want to get your "France fix", head to the new Louvre museum (louvreabudhabi.ae).

This collaboration with the Paris Louvre showcases artworks from all around the globe.

Spring is a great time to discover Sydney's Goods Line (www.youtube.com/watch?v=_1hxqNDuwUM), a new public space created around an abandoned railway line similar to New York City's High Line.

Finally, for a lot of fun in a paradisiacal setting, hop on a flight to Singapore and take the short ferry ride to Indonesia's newest attraction Funtasy Island (www.funtasyisland.com). Discover the world's largest eco theme park spread over a whopping 328 hectares of tropical islands when it opens in late 2015.

What's hot – hotels home and away

Want to be the first to book that bed? Watch this space!

It's an exciting time for hotel openings. The glitzy, historic Ritz

(www.ritzparis.com) reopens in Paris at the end of the year after extensive renovations. The room that's a recreation of Marie Antoinette's Versailles boudoir is expected to be stunning.

Francophile New Orleans is also buzzing with new hotels. My pick of the bunch is The Old No. 77 Hotel & Chandlery (old77hotel.com), a charming, vintage-style sleepy in a 19th-century warehouse. Its restaurant, Compère Lapin, is run by former *Top Chef* contestant Nina Compton whose culinary delights include curried goat.

In Queensland, Lizard Island (www.lizardisland.com.au) offers oodles of barefoot luxury in a sumptuous series of refurbished suites and villas overlooking the Great Barrier Reef.

What's chilled – pampering

If you're passing through London on your way to Europe and need a spot of pampering after that long-haul trip, check into Macdonald



Berystede Hotel & Spa (www.macdonaldhotels.co.uk/Berysted). Travel the short distance from Heathrow Airport in chauffeur-driven style with Parker Car Service (parkercarservice.co.uk). This recently refurbished, French chateau-style hotel surrounded by carefully tended gardens, has a plush restaurant where you can have a traditional English cream tea or gourmet meal.

Relax in the hotel's spa with glass-fronted indoor pool and outdoor heated hydrotherapy pool where it's fun to lounge in all weathers. Best of all, for long-haul travellers, spa treatments include a blissfully relaxing Cellutox Aroma Spa Ocean Wrap with pressure-

point face massage, as well as aroma stone therapy and various types of deep tissue massage.

What's on – festivals

Packed with culinary events and festivals, the coming months have plenty to offer travellers seeking cool festivals. Here are my top two:

The Grape Harvest Festival, Montmartre, Paris (7-11 October)

www.fetedesvendangesdemontmartre.com

A wine-flavoured fiesta in the heart of one of Paris' most historic quarters where vines are still grown. Expect wine-tasting events,

poetry readings, live music and much more.

The Melbourne Festival, Melbourne (8-25 October)

www.melbournefestival.com.au

One of Australia's best cultural festivals, this lively, exciting event attracts some of the world's top musicians, artists and performers.

CLOCKWISE - FROM LEFT PAGE TO RIGHT

The bath at AliKats Riverwood Lodge; the exterior of the Philharmonie de Paris; the Grande Salle at the Philharmonie de Paris; hydro pool at Berystede Hotel & Spa





THE REVIEW

Check in to a luxurious AliKats mountain chalet (alikats.eu) this autumn and lap up the late-season sunshine along with plenty of healthy activities in the Savoyard market town of Morzine.

Where is it?

Bathed in the microclimate of mighty Mont Blanc and studded with charming wooden chalets clustered along the Dranse River, Morzine is a paradise for autumn thrillseekers. It is at the heart of the fabled Portes du Soleil ski region.

First impressions?

I arrive at AliKats' plush new Riverwood Lodge at nightfall and catch a glimpse of carved wooden chalets and moonlit snowy peaks. As I enter the spacious pine-panelled lounge, I'm greeted with an appetising plate of canapés and a blazing log fire.

With its wooden beams, pine floors and huge bed, my room is like a luxurious log cabin. I laze in the outdoor hot tub counting stars, then fall asleep listening to the wind swishing through pine trees and the soft hooting of owls.

On the terrace the next morning, I gaze at snow-capped peaks etched in a sky as blue as the roof of a Santorini church. I breathe in lungfuls of fresh mountain air. It's easy to see what attracts celebrities to Morzine.

What can you do there in autumn?

Although there are dozens of winter ski activities ranging from ski joëring to snowmobiling, autumn is Morzine's best-kept secret. At an altitude of around 1200 metres and with some 25km of well-maintained tracks, the floral pastures of the Manche Valley are ideal for hiking and mountain biking. You can also go hang-gliding from nearby peaks, golf in Les Gets or try your hand at canyoning. This is also the best time to spot wildlife including chamois and wild boar, and to enjoy my favourite autumn activity, mushrooming. You can take your finds to any pharmacy to have them identified as edible or not, and Alikats will be happy to transform them into a sumptuous dish.

What's the food like?

Each chalet has a resident couple who cook and generally look after you. During my stay, every night was a gourmet adventure. Dishes ranged from pomegranate glazed duck breast to delicious cheese fondues. Make sure you leave room for dessert: the fruit and hazelnut pavlova is amazing.

Any good restaurants nearby?

Yes! Gourmet restaurant L'Atelier d'Alexandre, inside the very chic Hôtel Le Samoyède (www.hotel-lesamoyede.com). The food is exquisite: the lentil velouté with smoked trout is rich and satisfying; the sautéed beef fillet served with butter beans and wild mushrooms melted in my mouth; and I hardly had room for the iced almond nougat smothered in stewed apricot and rosemary cream.



Anywhere for a spot of pampering?

At higher altitudes your hair tends to go frizzy, so I really enjoyed a special hair treatment at Un Cocon au Pays des Flocons (www.uncoconaupaysdesflocons.com). The Léonor Greyl treatment involves applying a range of products, including sweet-smelling magnolia oil, to leave hair soft, sleek and shiny.

Don't miss?

A trip to L'Alpage (www.alpage-morzine.com), the shop of cheesemaker Nicolas Baud. Here, you can learn how local specialities Tomme, Abondance and Reblechon are made, then sample some of these cheeses in Nicolas' snug, stone-clad restaurant, La Ferme de la Fruitière. ♣

You heard it here first:

Attention property hunters interested in buying a home in Finistère! In an attempt to bring fresh blood into the village, the mayor of Berrien (+33 2 98 99 01 14) is offering plots of land for sale at €1 per square metre.

Giving back:

If you're heading to a developing country, visit Stuff Your Rucksack (www.stuffyourrucksack.com). This brilliant organisation tells you what to take with you to help local charities.

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AliKats Riverwood Lodge's family room; The town of Morzine; the lounge at AliKats Riverwood Lodge

