

Is this the most rustic hotel in France? Inside the 16th-century farmhouse with ancient beams, stunning bedrooms and a jaw-droppingly beautiful garden

- La Maison D'Ulysse is a former fortified farmhouse near the stunning citadels of Avignon and Nimes
- Tranquility is more or less guaranteed because it's in a tiny village and there are only nine bedrooms
- The garden has been designed to stay fresh all year - it features Mediterranean flowers that aren't thirsty

By [TED THORNHILL FOR MAILONLINE](#)

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The insects in the tiny village of Baron in the Languedoc-Roussillon region of [France](#) are some of the luckiest in the country – because they get to flit from petal to petal in a Mediterranean hotel garden of jaw-dropping beauty.

And the guests are fortuitous, too, for in this walled oasis, they can gaze upon the flitting as they recline by a heated outdoor pool, which sits among flowers and shrubs that look good all year round, because they've been handpicked for their lack of thirst.

Bienvenue, mes amis, to La Maison D'Ulysse – a former fortified farmhouse near the stunning citadels of Avignon and Nimes that has been transformed into a boutique hotel of considerable delightfulness.



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The pool sits among flowers and shrubs that look good all year round, because they've been handpicked for their lack of thirst



The garden, designed and tended to by co-owner Gauthier, sits amid a beguilingly higgledy-piggledy building that has rustic charm in spades



There are comfortingly crumbly parts to La Maison D'Ulysse where leaves sprawl across cracked stonework that has weathered the elements since the 16th century

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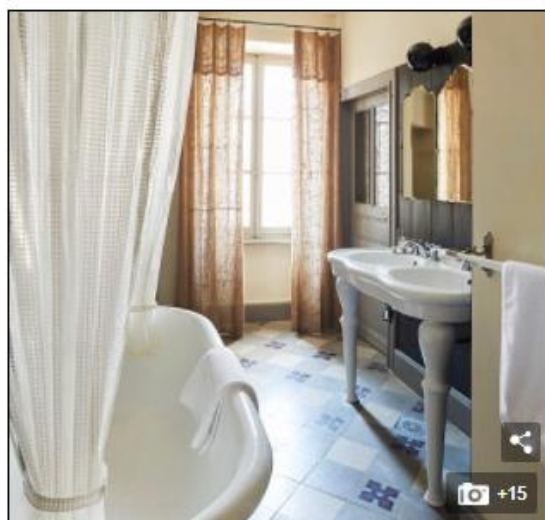
There are comfortingly crumbly parts - where leaves sprawl across cracked stonework that has weathered the elements since the 16th century, when the house was built - stone flagstones and passageways, vaulted ceilings and ancient beams aplenty.

Tranquility is more or less guaranteed because not only is Baron minuscule, but there are only nine bedrooms at La Maison D'Ulysse.

And each one is utterly individual.

They have been eye-catchingly decorated by the other owner, Guy, who clearly has a flair for interior design.

His passion in this department is to blend-in contemporary furniture with the original materials.



There are only nine bedrooms at La Maison D'Ulysse. Pictured is a room called Fleur Dumas



Breakfast and dinner is served in a central courtyard, pictured, with the owners and chefs working the tables

And details matter to him. He even handpicked the radiators. 'They are actual pieces of art,' he tells me.

I agree that as radiators go, they are quite hip, as they have a sort of 1940s look about them.

We check into one of the three suites – called Little Prince. And it's hard to resist describing it as being fit for royalty.

It's a tremendously lengthy affair, with an en-suite bathroom with a rain shower, glorious kings-sized bed, cool orange wardrobe and a separate living room with a kitchenette, illuminated by three funky lights.

The jewel in the crown, though, is the walled terrace, which is aperitif heaven. From here we quaff fine local white wine and gaze down upon the garden and surrounding countryside – and at night up at the stars.



The view from Ted's terrace is enchanting - and the outdoor space a wonderful place for an aperitif



Ted's room is called Little Prince, which features a living room area that contains a kitchenette and funky lighting

PICK OF THE LOCAL SIGHTS

To get the most out of a stay at La Maison D'Ulysse, I'd recommend hiring a car as it's in the middle of the countryside.

Sights

Pont Du Gard



The Roman aqueduct Pont du Gard is within easy reach of La Maison D'Ulysse - and it leaves Ted awestruck

This is Roman engineering at its most bombastic. Pont du Gard is an ancient 35-arch aqueduct straddling the Gard river that's 165 feet high and 900 feet wide. We are awestruck.

Visit www.pontdugard.com.

La Fille Des Vignes

Thoroughly decent wine and food efficiently served in a small square amid Uzes' ancient edifices – and what's more, if you're eating outside on a hot day there's no need to fear burning your head, because straw hats are provided free of charge.

18 Place Albert, Uzes. Visit Lafilledesvignes.com and email contact@lafilledesvignes.fr.

Le Tracteur

Guy books us a lunch at Le Tracteur, a hip restaurant/wine bar/grocery shop that serves seasonally inspired fare in a tree-shaded courtyard. The furniture is junk-yard chic, the food and wine tasty and top value.

30700 Argilliers (8km south-east of Uzes). Call +33 4 66 62 17 33 or email lafamillectracteur@gmail.com.



At La Fille Des Vignes in Uzes, pictured, straw hats are available free of charge to protect delicate heads in the sunshine



Uzes

Medieval Uzes is a joy to behold, with pristine cobbled streets and stunning, beautifully preserved centuries-old buildings.



Uzes, a short distance from La Maison D'Ulysse, is a picture-postcard perfect ancient town

We saunter through it, ducking into boutique shops and soaking up the bubbly market-day atmosphere. Elegant and charming – and there are lots of top-notch restaurants, too.

Avignon

The Papal headquarters in the 14th century, Avignon is where tourists kneel down at the altar of Instagram-baiting antiquity. Busy, but beautiful.

Nîmes

Buzzy, but with added Roman heritage, including a magnificent amphitheatre.

Restaurants

On the first night we sample the hotel's private restaurant, where tables are set up in the central courtyard and in a large room to the side, separated by huge glass doors.

The fodder is excellent and the service superb.

Breakfast is served in the same spot and is also very good (though you may need to be ready to bat away the occasional wasp).

Both meals feature locally produced products, including jams and cheeses, and the service is first-rate, with the chefs and the owners serving the fodder, wine and coffees.



The bedrooms have been eye-catchingly decorated by the co-owner, Guy, who clearly has a flair for interior design. His passion in this department is to blend-in contemporary furniture with the original materials. The room pictured is called Ecume des Jours



Green and pleasant land: The view from Ecume des Jours' balcony is the stuff of dreams



This bedroom is called Ulysse and is located in one of the oldest parts of the building



Charming: La Maison D'Ulysse is intimate and friendly, with the bonhomie of a B&B

ALL ABOARD THE NEW EUROSTAR LOUNGE

Eurostar has recently introduced a revamped Eurostar Business Premier lounge at Gare du Nord - and it's a stylish affair.

Situated on the top floor of the original 19th century building it features high ceilings, marble fireplaces, a cocktail bar and intimate snug spaces, which, train spotters will be pleased to hear, overlook the platforms.

We found it fascinating watching the to-ing and fro-ing of high-speed trains and throngs of passengers threading through the concourse from this vantage point. It was exciting wondering where everyone was going - and where they'd been.

Here I've touched upon one of the best aspects of La Maison D'Ulysse – its intimacy and friendliness.

The hosts, whose English is fluent, are always on hand - not only at meal times but throughout the day - to decant advice about local sights, walks and to book restaurants.

And to just chat in general.

It's a hotel, we muse as we saunter through the garden on our final morning, that has the bonhomie of a B&B.

Bloomin' marvellous.

TRAVEL FACTS

Nightly rates at **La Maison d'Ulysse** start from £182 per room per night based on two people sharing the Ulysse room on a B&B basis.

Eurostar operates a regular service from London to nearby Avignon. Visit www.eurostar.com.

