

# The Big Six

By Laura Holt

# Wildflower retreats



## The Grove Wales

This Pembrokeshire pile is hugged by a wildflower meadow that blooms at its brightest between April and June. Drive towards the hotel in early spring and you might also be greeted by one of the season's most dazzling spectacles: a sea of brilliant bluebells nodding their heads in the wind. Previously a derelict house, it was brought back to life by local boy and first-time hotelier, Neil Kedward, who spent years restoring the former wreck and ramshackle grounds into one of Wales's best hotels. Go to wade through knee-height meadows, eat fresh local produce in the award-winning restaurant and spot butterflies dancing beside the pond.

► *The Grove, Narberth, Pembrokeshire, Wales, SA67 8BX (01834 860 915; thegrove-narberth.co.uk). Doubles start at £180, B&B.*



## Apokryfo Cyprus

In the 19th century, this cluster of old stone buildings housed Cypriot wine producers who worked near the village of Lofou to bottle the local tittle – an amber-coloured dessert wine called Commandaria. Today, it houses those who come to drink in the flower-cloaked slopes of the Troodos Mountains, which bloom in spring when the island's mild weather and moist climate beckon the buds from their seasonal slumber. Set out for hikes in the morning, then laze by the pool come afternoon.

► *Apokryfo, Troodos Mountains, Cyprus (00 357 2581 3777; apokryfo.com). Doubles start at €150, B&B.*



## Le Borette Italy

The spring landscape of Monti Sibillini National Park in central Italy sees the vast Piano Grande upland plain explode into a luminous display of wild crocuses, narcissi, tulips, poppies and orchids. The best time to visit is May, though an early summer visit in June can also be a joy. For a prime roost over all this undulating scenery, place yourself at Le Borette, an old farmhouse with terracotta-tiled terraces for taking in the sweeping views and four self-catering apartments which sleep between one and five people.

► *Le Borette, Sarnano, Monti Sibillini, Italy (00 39 0733 657487; leborette.it). Two nights from €180, self-catering.*



## Auberge Ostapé France

A stay at this auberge puts you within reach of the beaches of Biarritz and the verdant slopes of the Pays Basque. The main 17th-century shell has been converted into 22 suites, each named after a different tree such as Aritzia (oak) and Leizara (ash). The best have direct access to the former farm's 100-acre grounds. Grab a packed lunch prepared by the chef, then head out along the Way of St James pilgrimage route, past wild rose bushes, hydrangea and tulips, to the foothills of the Pyrénées.

► *Auberge Ostapé, Bidarray, Pays Basque, France (00 33 559 3791 91; ostape.com). Doubles start at €180, room only.*



## Fazenda Nova Portugal

This country-house hotel sits a short drive inland from the beaches and lagoons of the Ria Formosa nature reserve. Owned by Londoners Tim and Hallie Robinson, it features 10 acres of grounds where almond and carob trees thrive, herb gardens grow and an olive grove produces oil for the farm at each harvest. The simple and romantic site was designed by a local landscape gardener, Maurice Levy. Spend days lolling about in the orchard or stroll down garden paths lined with lavender and rosemary bushes to find the pool.

► *Fazenda Nova, Estiramentens, Algarve, Portugal (00 351 281 961 913; fazenda-nova.eu). Doubles start at €155, B&B.*



## Milia Greece

This rustic Greek retreat is surrounded by the White Mountains of western Crete. The area is known for its profusion of violets, crocuses and common poppies that carpet the hillsides between April and May. Walking trails guide visitors around the rugged but beautiful landscape, past herds of grazing cattle and finally back to the hotel where accommodation is in a series of stone cottages and the advice for an evening's entertainment is: "Do nothing. Grab a book!"

► *Milia, White Mountains, Crete, Greece (00 30 28210 46774; milia.gr). Doubles start at €77, B&B.*