

THE VACATION REPORT

EUROPEAN RETREATS

From an Amsterdam art gallery to a former convent in Provence, discover Europe's most unique, luxury guesthouses.

Words by Tilly Macalister-Smith.



SUMMERS/BETTY IMAGES



1 | AMSTERDAM, MAISON RIKA

The slightly wonky and extremely tall brick houses that line Amsterdam's canals are as charming as they are cool. Last year, Maison Rika founder Ulrika Lundgren transformed a former art gallery in 'The Nine Streets' district of Amsterdam into a chic and cosy three storey-high guesthouse. Rooms with black wooden floors are flooded with light thanks to the enormous windows. The ground-floor reception area is filled with scented candles, scrapbooks belonging to Lundgren and artworks by local artists, magnifying the home-away-from-home feel. Indeed, you will be hard pressed to leave. [rikaint.com/sleep-under-the-stars](#)



What to wear...

A Rika tee and skinny jeans by **Frame Denim** are city essentials – wear with **Balenciaga**'s classic leather jacket and studded ankle boots for a tough-luxe finish.



RIKA
Ola leopard-print top
[SHOP NOW >](#)



BALENCIAGA
Classic leather biker jacket
[SHOP NOW >](#)



FRAME DENIM
Le Skinny de Jeanne mid-rise jeans
[SHOP NOW >](#)



CHLOÉ
Susannah studded leather ankle boots
[SHOP NOW >](#)

2 | ANTWERP, BOULEVARD LEOPOLD

Tucked away in the centre of Antwerp's Jewish quarter, this darkly elegant townhouse dates from 1890 and is described by its owners as being in its 'forgotten glory.' Bevelled mirrors, heavy mahogany furniture and roll-top baths introduce an element of romance to the otherwise understatedly neutral house. Despite lo-fi appearances, all amenities are on hand. The first-floor apartment boasts a 19th-century tiled bathroom and its own separate doorbell. Homemade chocolate bread and fresh fruit are served for breakfast. [boulevard-leopold.be](#)



3 | BASILICATA, PALAZZO MARGHERITA

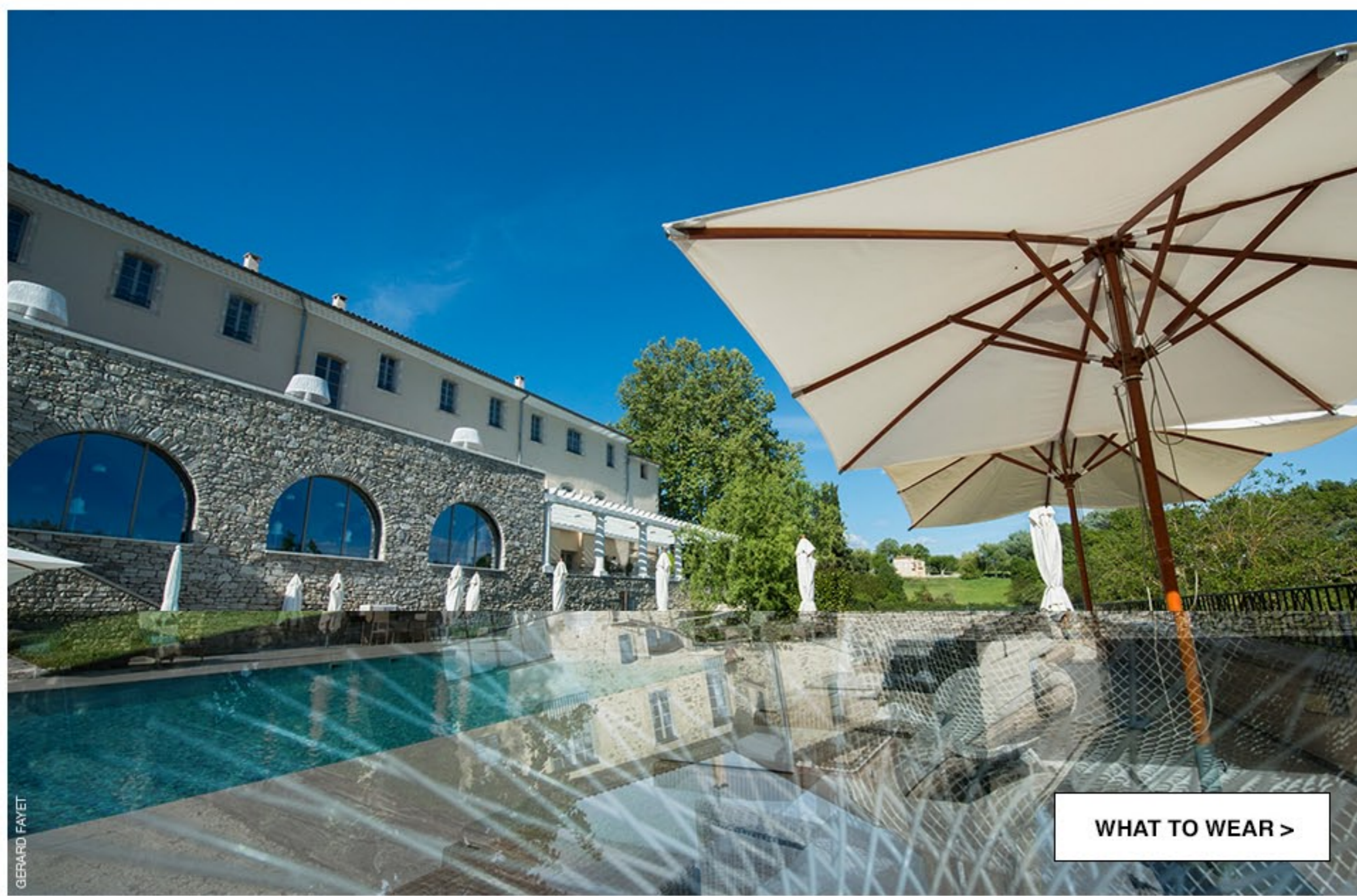
When you learn that Francis Ford Coppola's grandfather was born in the town of this former private residence, the sense of Italian heritage becomes almost palpable. Coppola refurbished the residence in recent years as a passion project and now welcomes guests to enjoy the painted frescoes and palatial bedrooms. The 24-hour kitchen serves locally-sourced food and if you want to immerse yourself further in the Coppola dynasty, choose from the extensive selection of films curated by the director himself in the grand salon. [coppolareorts.com](#)



LISA LAMER

4 | PROVENCE, LE COUVENT DES MINIMES

This breathtaking former convent was founded in 1613 and was once home to the Minimes monks. Today, it is frequented by guests looking to find solace in the hushed cloisters. Botanical studies engaged the monks, and later, missionaries, and the impressive gardens still show the fruits of their labour – orchards and vines populate the lush gardens, designed as a series of enclaves. In 2008, the convent reopened, replete with a pampering L'Occitane spa, and, as the owners say, 'this residence dedicated to relaxation continues to cultivate the same welcoming spirit that has dwelled there for the last few centuries.' [couventdesminimes-hotelspa.com](#)



[WHAT TO WEAR >](#)

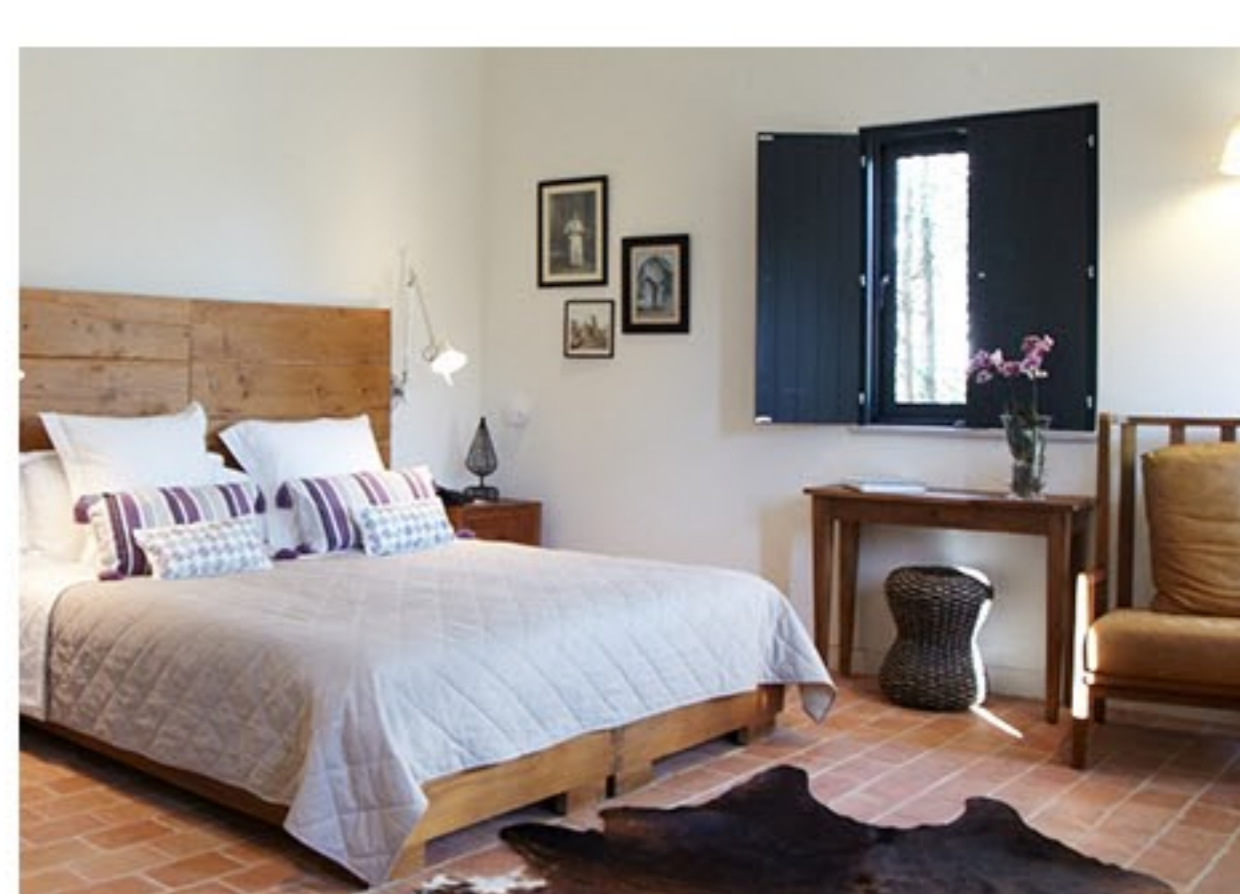


5 | ALGARVE, FAZENDA NOVA

Nestled between lavender bushes and olive trees in the Algarve is Fazenda Nova, a family-owned boutique hotel. Formerly a farmhouse, each room is beautifully in keeping with the natural surrounds. Property owner Hallie Robinson, daughter of Nick Logan who founded *The Face* and *Arena* magazines, has furnished the small library with the entire back catalogue of *The Face* – a fashion insider's dream. Fazenda Nova's menu is directed by the on-site vegetable garden, and the nearby fishing ports provide interest for those who can bear to leave the peaceful surrounds. [fazendanova.eu](#)

What to wear...

Fendi's colour-block bikini is sure to make an impact by the pool. Team with Chloé's boho dress and thongs by Ancient Greek Sandals for sightseeing.



FENDI
Maxi F colour-block bikini
[SHOP NOW >](#)



ANCIENT GREEK SANDALS
Painted eye leather thong sandals
[SHOP NOW >](#)



CHLOÉ
Silk-cloqué flag dress
[SHOP NOW >](#)