Mind your manors

From a baronet’s private playground in Ireland to gothic gorgeousness in London, these lovingly restored grand estates channel the aristocrat lurking within even the most egalitarian traveller.

ST PANCRAS RENAISSANCE
Euston Road, London, UK.
+44 (0) 345 543 120 ($290m ($508m) of restorations, the former Midland Grand Hotel reopened in May 2018, 128 years to the day after its original opening, as Marriott’s new St Pancras Renaissance Hotel. The grandiose gothic façade remains, along with some decidedly modern twists: St Pancras station’s taxi rank is now an airy lobby with original Ballow-blue ironwork and glass skylights; the Ladies’ Smoking Room now welcomes both genders. The Gilbert Scott suite has been lovingly restored to its original 1860s style; rooms in the new wing are more contemporary. From £208 ($320).

BALLYFIN
This late-Georgian mansion, now a 15-guestroom luxury hotel, has survived several incarnations, from family home to Catholic boarding school, but retains many of its original features. Visitors come toe to iron-shod toe with the armoury of Sir Charles Coote, Premier Baronet of Ireland, standing guard over the ornate Stair Hall. Guests are encouraged to throw themselves into the activities of the estate’s past: whether that be fishing the icy lake, strolling around the 143ha of surrounding estate or even playing a social game of croquet on the emerald lawns.
From €600 ($810) for a single room to €4,500 ($7,183) to hire the entire estate.
County Laois, Ireland. +353 (0) 57 867 1544. www.ballyfin.com

STAY
Where I stay

Jean-Christophe Babin
President & CEO, ETON House

NHOV MILANO, MILAN
“The Pillow is the ultimate fusion of art and hospitality. Rarely have I stayed anywhere so original, with outrageous art everywhere. Yet with all its colourful, underground flavour, it is still welcoming and comfortable. I particularly like the lounge bar in the open inner courtyard, which allows a glimpse of the trendy Milanese parties. Just outside is theNavigli dining district, the Duomo and the quirky early-19th century orange tram.”
35 Via Tornabuoni, Milan, Italy.
+39 (02) 6490 841, www.nh-hotels.com

ASK THE CONCIERGE

Andrea Kaib
Kygie, Marrakech

When friends are in town I take them for a drink at... Kosybar, making reservations for the beautiful terrace that overlooks El Badi Palace’s floodlit walls.
The restaurant that best shows off Marrakech has to be... Le Zin, with its beautiful garden, great food and excellent atmosphere. If you are lucky, you could even meet a star.
For the perfect gift or momento... I’d shop in the open-air souks (markets) of the Medina, the ancient city walls of Marrakech.
Couple’s wanting a romantic dinner for two should consider... Aneve’s Flying Carpet tower, an open-air restaurant with incredible views. It has traditional dishes and pillows and delivers a traditional dining experience.
If I wanted to see some great art... I’d be heading to the Arts in Marrakech: Biennale festival (February 28–March 4, 2012) for the best from local artists.
If I was a tourist with a free day I would... take a car and drive and explore the surroundings of Marrakech, including Ourika, the Atlas Mountains and their hidden villages.

MACDONALD FRIMLEY HALL HOTEL & SPA
Lime Avenue, Camberley, Surrey, UK.
+44 (0)272 453 100, www.macdonaldhotels.co.uk/frimleyhall From its ivy-draped outer walls to the surrounding woodlands, Macdonald Frimley Hall Hotel is every bit the quintessential English country hotel. Original features that enhance the 19th-century property include the ornately carved wooden staircase and heritage-listed wallpaper. Mahogany furniture and four-poster beds dressed in creamy textures lend a romantic air to the bedrooms. A £5 million ($7.7m) refurbishment includes the luxe Vitality Health & Beauty spa, adding a modern touch to the manor’s property features. If playing lord and lady of the manor tires, punters can get their thrills from nearby Ascot Racecourse and Windsor Castle. From £80 ($140).