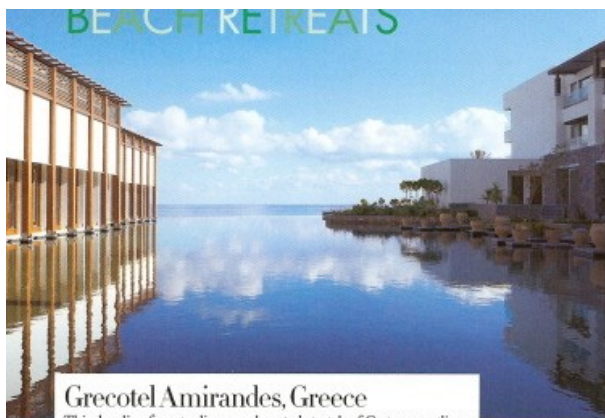


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Grecotel Amirandes, Greece

This dazzling five-star lies on a deserted stretch of Cretan coastline. Its architecture is inspired by the nearby ancient Palace of Knossos – but this is a truly modern palace, with cutting-edge technology and fabulous service. Rooms are finished in local Milato stone, timber and glass, and each is linked by covered walkways lined by pools and lagoons. There's also a stylish bar, five excellent restaurants and cafés, a huge saltwater pool and a spa offering ayurvedic treatments. At the nearby Agreco Farm, guests are welcome to help cultivate the organic produce and sit down to a Cretan feast (about £43 a person) served on the farm's terrace. Expect around 12 courses of treats including lamb with wild artichokes, and curd-cheese pancakes with quince paste.

Who goes British and European families and couples.

Top tip Splash out on a villa overlooking your own private terrace, plunge pool and tidy stretch of beach.

Must-do Visit the Palace of Knossos, site of the Minotaur's labyrinth. Seven nights, from £1,375 a person B&B, including flights and transfers, with Scott Dunn (020 8682 5000; www.scottdunn.com).



Inmo Divers Home, Egypt

The ultimate Red Sea scuba hangout, a charming alternative to the expensive international resorts along this coast, Inmo is located in quiet Dahab, north of Sharm el-Sheikh. The elegant Arabic-style hotel has white-domed roofs and a great dive school. Presided over by the charismatic Mohamed and his German wife Ingrid, the place is cosily familial, with views over the Gulf of Aqaba. Children love the man-made cave and waterfall, the parrots and the tortoises. Dining is inside or out by the pool, with a mixture of Egyptian and Continental dishes. The diving is great, and horse-riding along the beach at sunset is breathtaking. This is one of the best-value holidays on offer in Egypt.

Who goes Diving fiends, backpackers and families.

Top tip If en famille, book a larger terrace room with sea views.

Must-do Take a camel ride into the desert.

Inmo Divers Home (+20 69 3640 370; www.inmodivers.de), from about £17 a room a night B&B, including transfers.



Grand Hôtel des Bains, France

A fin de siècle elegance still lingers over this hotel, which lies on the sandy beaches of the Breton coast, hidden behind a white gate and a lime-tree-lined pathway – although the building itself has been updated in an informal New England style. With views over the metallic waters of the Baie de Locquirec, the restaurant is famed for its foie gras and smoked salmon, both produced on the premises; there is also an exquisite 'Menu Minceur' for those watching their weight. This is a place to come and recharge batteries. There are various yoga and creative courses on offer, and a detox programme at the spa, which offers hydrotherapy, algae body wraps, a hammam and an indoor saltwater swimming pool with sea views.

Who goes Writers and artists come for the light; French actors, to detox and de-stress; and Euro royalty, for peace and sophistication.

Top tip Enjoy the local cider at nearby Brasserie de la Plage, where the hotel chef moonlights.

Must-do Hike along the nearby Côte de Granit Rose to view the natural art exhibit of pink and orange rock formations.

Downside The weather is as unpredictable as in the UK. From about £120 a person a night B&B, with i-escape.com (0117 942 8476; www.i-escape.com).