

[TRAVEL]

Spring DREAMSCAPES

NOW THAT WINTER HAS FADED,
CELEBRATE BY THINKING
OUTSIDE THE GETAWAY BOX
BY AMBER GIBSON

MANDARIN ORIENTAL, MARRAKECH Marrakech, Morocco

This wonder appears like a mirage, a desert oasis nestled in the heart of 20 hectares of olive groves and gardens featuring 100,000 fragrant roses. April is a lovely time to visit, before the sweltering summer heat arrives. With 54 private villas among landscaped gardens and nine suites in the main building, the level of privacy here is unmatched. Architecture and design is a blend of Berber and Andalusian-Arabic, with villas resembling intimate *riads* (a type of traditional Moroccan house with an interior garden/courtyard). It's hard to pull yourself away from your private pool, Jacuzzi, and spacious courtyard—with a kitchenette, outdoor shower, and lounge chairs for sunbathing. Berber motifs etched above the bed and handwoven wool rugs

are quintessentially Moroccan, and bath amenities (scented with grapefruit and rosemary) are locally made as well. The lobby boutique features more local handicrafts, including intricately embroidered babouche Moroccan slippers.

The kid's club features cultural activities like local pottery-making instruction, Arabic calligraphy, and Berber carpet weaving. Although the resort is secluded and romantic (even at full occupancy, it doesn't feel crowded), the Mandarin Oriental team is expert at planning family outings, too, like cooking classes or a sidecar tour of the Medina (aka “the old city”).

The spa combines elements of Moorish cathedrals and Arabic mosques, and was constructed with Marrakech's

famous deep-red bricks. Treatments here include hammam experiences and massages with argan oil (a Moroccan beauty secret for generations), while antique Berber pottery from the owner's own collection decorates the relaxation lounge. Rates start at \$1,210. **Route Golf Royal, Marrakech, Morocco, mandarinoriental.com/marrakech**



PHOTOS COURTESY OF MANDARIN ORIENTAL HOTEL GROUP



MONTAGE LOS CABOS

Baja California Sur, Mexico

Cabo has stellar weather all year round, but April is one of the best times to visit, for its warm sunny days and the tail end of the magical whale watching season. (You might catch migrating humpback and gray whale stragglers from your spacious terrace overlooking Santa Maria Bay.) Montage Los Cabos opened in May of 2018 as the first international property for the American brand, and boasts one of Cabo's few swimmable beaches. It has even received Blue Flag certification from the Mexican government, signifying high environmental and quality standards.



Montage is known for its stellar kids club and catering to luxury family getaways, so Easter weekend (April 21 and 22) is particularly festive and busy. Adults can sneak off to Spa Montage while the kids are occupied and try the signature two-hour Jewel of Baja treatment, highlighting the region's indigenous damiana desert shrub, known for its aphrodisiacal properties. Begin with a gentle scrub using a local sea sponge followed by a warm damiana and agave honey wrap and four-hand full-body massage.

Dine al fresco beside the fire at Mezcal for elevated contemporary Mexican food; innovative twists on tacos and tamales are followed by fresh local sea bass served with vegetable ragout and hazelnut green molé. Try the xocomulli dessert with molé poblano chocolate ganache, charred ancho chile meringue, and tortilla ice cream. Guests preferring to cook for themselves can book a residence and the attentive staff will have the Sub-Zero refrigerator stocked with favorite foods upon arrival to prepare on the Wolf outdoor grill.

If you love it so much you don't want to leave, purchase one of 52 turnkey two- or three-bedroom condominiums through Montage Residences Los Cabos, with the option of joining Twin Dolphins, a private club across the street that includes an 18-hole Fred Couples Signature golf course, miles of hiking and biking trails, paintball, archery, axe-throwing, and a private campsite.

Rates start at \$975 and \$3,250 for two-bedroom residences. **Tourist Corridor, Cabo San Lucas, Baja California Sur, Mexico, montagehotels.com/loscabos**

BARDESSONO

Napa, California

Yountville is this legendary wine region's most charming town, and April is a perfect time to visit, when flowers are in bloom but summer crowds have not yet begun. It's also the season when wineries are releasing their white and rosé varieties that showcase a lighter, brighter side to Napa Valley beyond its famed Cabernet labels.

Bardessono is Yountville's most luxurious all-suite hotel, and one of just seven LEED Platinum Certified accommodations in the United States, with underground geothermal heating systems, rooftop solar panels, and drought-resistant landscaping. The simple, serene architecture incorporates salvaged Monterey cypress, walnut, and California bay wood, as well as local limestone. It's all very earthy—an atmosphere of subdued elegance and with ample privacy, as individual suites are tucked away among foliage. All 65 guestrooms have private furnished courtyards or balconies, deep soaking tubs, and gas fireplaces. Steam Spa Suites include an indoor steam shower and outdoor shower, both equipped with REN Clean Skincare toiletries. The newest additions are three one-bedroom villas with private plunge pools and outdoor fire pits—which can be combined for a grand three-bedroom retreat.

The heated rooftop pool is open year-round, with complimentary yoga classes on weekends. Book an in-suite massage and there's almost no need to leave your spacious room until it's time for dinner. Chef Thomas Keller's wondrous restaurant, The French Laundry, is within easy walking distance, even in heels, but if you'd rather dine at Bardessono, a certified organic chef's garden inspires the cuisine at Lucy with fresh herbs, fruits, and vegetables. Guests who forego housekeeping service are invited to plant an herb in the garden, and are gifted seeds to plant at home—a thoughtful reminder of your wine country getaway. Rates start at \$650. **6526 Yount Street, Yountville, California, bardessono.com**



FAUCHON L'HÔTEL

Paris, France

Fauchon is legendary among Parisian gourmets, akin to the rep of Harrods and Fortnum & Mason in London. The gourmet food company has become synonymous with indulgence, culinary delights, and hedonism, and nowhere are all better displayed than at its first hotel, fittingly located on the Place de la Madeleine, where founder, Auguste Fauchon, first sold fresh food as a street vendor nearly 150 years ago. All food products served at Fauchon L'Hôtel, from pastries and jam to mustard and foie gras, come from the company's flagship store just a block away—one-stop shopping for the best wines, condiments, cheeses, meats, and sweets in all of France.

April is arguably *le meilleur temps* to visit Paris, with mild weather and smaller crowds before the summer rush of tourists. It's even nice enough to people watch on the terrace of Grand Café Fauchon while enjoying breakfast, coffee, or a glass of wine or tea-infused cocktail. Check into one of 54



stylish modern rooms, complete with Dyson Supersonic hair dryers and a magnificent custom-designed Roche Bobois gourmet bar filled with a dozen complimentary (that's right!) sweet and savory snacks. The macarons, nougat, and chocolate are among the finest you'll find in the city. (No wonder Pierre Hermé and Dominique Ansel were both former Fauchon pastry chefs.) Pro tip: the gourmet bar is replenished daily, so feel free to plunder treats as gifts.

New this spring, guests can enjoy afternoon tea on board a private boat while cruising the Seine. You can even make your own tea blend at the new boutique adjacent to the hotel. The foodie theme even carries through to the Carita Beauty Spa, where massages are enhanced with fruit and dessert-inspired aromatherapy oils, and all treatments conclude with macarons and tea.

Rates start at \$540. **4 Boulevard Malesherbes, 75008 Paris, fauchon.com/en/fauchon-hotel**

KEX PORTLAND

Portland, Oregon

This Northwest gem of a city bursts into spring bloom with gorgeous rhododendrons, azaleas, cherry trees, and roses. Its unique brand of irreverence and quirkiness lends itself to unconventional luxury, as in this buzzy new design hotel, which adds a brand of Nordic cool to the hip Central Eastside neighborhood. This is the Icelandic company's second location following the original in Reykjavík, which was a hostel complete with Michelin star restaurant. KEX Portland has some hostel-style rooms, too, but the 14 en-suite options have comfortable, spacious, and flexible configurations for families and large groups. Décor juxtaposes eclectic contemporary touches with vintage European furniture, including refurbished fireplace mantel headboards. There's a rooftop bar, too, as popular among locals as guests, along with a 12-person sauna, and the hotel even brews its own Icelandic beer.

Restaurant Dóttir is the sister eatery to Reykjavík's Michelin-starred Dill, with the same chef, Óli Ágústsson, as culinary director. Although Ágústsson won't be in the kitchen every night, Executive Chef, Alex Jackson, cooked at Michelin-starred Sons & Daughters in San Francisco before returning to Portland for this opportunity. The menu blends Icelandic sensibility with Pacific Northwest ingredients, including local lamb from Cattail Creek and foraged mushrooms in the creamy soup. Precise plating and pure ingredients shine in dishes like brown butter-seared cabbage, roasted with apple cider vinegar and dill oil and with rich caramelized whey sauce.

Rates start at \$220 for the deluxe family room en-suite and \$350 for the private eight-bed en-suite. **100 NE Martin Luther King Jr Boulevard, Portland, Oregon, kexhotels.com**

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