



Hotel Review: La Maison d’Ulysse, Baron in France

By Amy Ockelford on 21st October 2017

For 1,000 years a yellow-stone building has stood proud in the village of Baron, in the south of France. First, it took pride in producing silk, later it endured life as a fort, before operating as a farm. But it is only now it has truly found its calling – with Guy & Gauthier at the helm – as a luxury, boutique hotel drenched in heritage and history.

While many people choose to jet off to the Maldives or Seychelles for a relaxing, luxurious holiday, for those who wish to stay closer to home, La Maison d’Ulysse could be the perfect retreat just a hop, skip and jump across the Channel (well, a short 90-minute flight and 60-minute drive from London). La Maison delivers high-end luxury to rival any of the lavish five-star all-inclusive resorts littering the coastline to the south, but it does so from a small, family-run farmhouse with just nine rooms, meaning your entire trip feels personal and intimate.



La Maison d'Ulysse is an ideal place for an unforgettable stay in the South of France

Despite our late arrival in the seemingly deserted hamlet in the depths of night, we were met by a friendly face in Sophie, who greeted us at the huge wooden door. Arriving at night was mesmerizing, the light-lined pathway leading us up to the imposing 11th-century farmhouse which towered above bathed in illuminating lights, framing its structure. Guy and Gauthier had kindly set us an intimate late-night mezze platter and a bottle of rose was already on ice – the perfect way to toast our trip. After (far too easily) sinking the bottle of local, organic wine and filling our empty stomachs with filling food it was time to crawl into bed.

Our room was breathtaking with beautiful red-tiled floors, a wood-burning stove and double aspect windows – and a vast walk-in shower embedded in the wall and tucked behind the queen-size bed. In fact, with their high ceilings and huge dimensions, the rooms almost felt a little too spacious (can that be a criticism!?) and – during our late-season visit – did feel quite cold by night. Reminding us of the personal way in which Guy and Gauthier choose to run La Maison, a small set of specially-produced maps of 'Walks by Gauthier' were set aside in our room – a collection of routes and distances to explore the local area by foot or bike. The author himself met us at breakfast the following day. His passion for the local area was infectious and his knowledge of the sights and landmarks was invaluable in planning our short but sweet stay.



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There's nothing pompous or pretentious about La Maison, it's high-end luxury with modesty, class and sophistication. The attention to detail and quality of finish is flawless and, while the design and interior is fit for a top hotel chain, this hotel has the friendly feel of a small B&B which allows you to embed yourself into the local area and experience the authentic French culture. The farmhouse boasts nine suites and rooms connected by flagstone walkways and beautiful balconies twisted with ivy like something out of Romeo & Juliet. The hotel has a stylish restaurant with vaulted ceiling and full-height glass doors leading out onto a romantic courtyard. There are also two comfortable lounges as well as a Turkish spa. And, as you explore this picturesque, historic building, you can't help but touch everything – the floor, the walls, the textiles. Smooth, modern materials press against age-old building techniques, with rooms adorned with vibrant furnishings from around the globe in a melting pot of interior design and decoration. But Guy and Gauthier's eye for detail works and there isn't a single lightshade or cushion that doesn't look as though it was made for this farmhouse.

While La Maison belongs in the pages of an interior design magazine, it's outside where the real magic lies – in the stunning, sun-drenched wild meadow gardens. After spending the day exploring the pretty town of Uzès nearby, we retreated back to the hotel for an afternoon spent relaxing by the pool. It truly is an oasis of calm, the sun beating down and bouncing off the shimmering water of the 15m-long Marina-inspired pool which is framed by delicate, fragrant flowers, soft grasses and pops of colour. As soon as we were settled in our sleek sunbeds, Sophie appeared with cooling drinks. The only thing to disrupt the peace and tranquility was, unfortunately, the farm work going on across the fields but that's the reality of staying in a former farmhouse surrounded by fields and vineyards.



La Maison d'Ulysse offers a catering service exclusively for guests staying at the quirky and unusual guest house

The stylish and humble couple started renovating the farmhouse in 2006, finishing just three years later and welcoming their first guests in 2009. Since then, Guy and Gauthier's passion project has grown from strength to strength. Guests travel from around the world to enjoy one or two-night breaks to two-week stays at the rustic farmhouse. Forbes cherry-picked La Maison d'Ulysse – 'The House of Ulysse' – as one of the top 25 coolest hotels in the world while it has also been voted one of the best babymoon destinations. The success of the boutique hotel is single-handedly due to Guy & Gauthier's impeccable taste of style and design, marrying the old with the new in perfect union; their vision and dedication to bringing the crumbling farmhouse back to life and putting it on the map as a must-visit destination in the south of France; and their second-to-none hospitality and warmth to each and every one of their guests.

While the homestay boasts the scenery and service of a top hotel, it's that personal touch which makes visiting La Maison so special. Gauthier mingles with guests at breakfast helping them plan their day while Guy arrives later to ensure visitors have all they need throughout the afternoon and into the evening. Breakfast comprises of homemade apricot and fig jams, fresh fruit, locally-made goats cheese and yoghurts, and traditional French pastries. Lunch can be ordered and cocktails are available from Sophie throughout the afternoon. The couple host dinner as we sit down to enjoy a delicious three-course meal of butternut squash soup, roast guinea fowl and dark chocolate mousse complimented, of course, with local wine and freshly-made cocktails.



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While the setting is stunning, we would have been lost without a car. Baron is a beautiful, quaint village exuding French, rustic charm and character. But once you have completed Gauthier's walks and cycle rides, there is little left to do within walking distance. However, a car opens up a whole host of opportunities from the scenic roads which wind through the vineyards, to the pretty Medieval village of Lussan which perches atop a hill with stunning panoramic views, to the ancient Roman aqueduct Pont du Gard crossing the meandering Gardon river. La Maison is perfectly located to venture into the hills and monts to the north or to explore the world-famous coastline to the south.

If you're looking for an oasis of calm to escape the hustle and bustle of modern-day existence, La Maison is like stepping back in time without compromising on comfort and luxury. And if you're looking for a base in order to explore the French countryside, it's also the perfect spot. And no matter your reason for visiting, how long your stay, or where you're travelling from, one thing is for sure, Guy & Gauthier will be thrilled to welcome you and will treat you like old friends for the duration of your stay.



This boutique, stylish hotel is beautifully designed and has a stunning pool

Rates at La Maison d'Ulysse start from £182 per room per night based on two people sharing the Ulysse room on a B&B basis.

British Airways started flying to Montpellier in May this year and flights start from just £38 each way: www.britishairways.com.

Hertz provide hire cars at the major airports in the south of France: www.hertz.co.uk.

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