

Escape

ONE-ROOM WONDERS

What's the attraction?

Spending a night in a tree house has enduring romantic appeal, particularly when the tree house in question is a scaled-down replica of a French chateau, complete with turrets. There are three secluded tree houses set on the grounds of The Chateau des Les Arbes estate. The castle-like Montbazillac has bucolic views of the surrounding Dordogne countryside with its twisting meadows and thick forests. There's just one secluded room and an outdoor hot tub, however guests also have use of a communal pool and endless possibilities for walking and cycling. The tree house starts at £213 per night through Canopy & Stars (01275 395 445; canopyandstars.co.uk).

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A castle of your own? A treehouse just for two? A private castaway island? Aoife O'Riordain reveals that small is beautiful when it comes to romantic retreats

Ice, ice baby

Struggle up with your loved one in the snow. If sub-zero temperatures don't appeal, then the Swis have come up with a hot igloo. Perched at an altitude of 2,272m at the Igloo Dorf camp (00 41 41 612 2726; igloo-dorf.com), in the shadow of the Matterhorn near Zermatt, this igloo-like tent is made from canvas, decked out with sheepskins and a wood-burning stove. Prosecco and nibbles are laid on and guests will take 100 for a nocturnal snowscape ramble. The igloo costs \$969 (£488) per night, full board, including activities.

Going to the chapel

La Cappella is a rather special one-bedroom holiday home near the pretty town of Sarzana on Italy's Ligurian coast. As the name suggests, it's a stylishly restored chapel with exposed brick walls and an arresting chequerboard marble floor. There's a small kitchen set in the erstwhile altar, but the real showstopper is the retractable roof, which makes sleeping under the retreating stars a possibility. Fittingly, the dramatic Gulf of Poets, which inspired the likes of Byron and Shelley, is a short drive away. Weekly rental starts at £1,600 through Meriton Charles (00 39 05 859 2096; meritoncharles.com).



What they say about it

"The supreme happiness in life is the conviction that we are loved"
VICTOR HUGO

"A loving heart is the truest wisdom"
CHARLES DICKEENS

"And what's romance? Usually, a nice little tale where you have everything as you like it, where rain never wets your jacket and gnats never bite your nose, and it's always daisy-time."
DHLAWRENCE

Castaway in style

If you truly want to get away from it all, The Sarojin (00 66 76 427 9004; sarojin.com) in Khao Lak on Thailand's west coast offers the ultimate castaway experience. Couples staying at the resort get the chance to spend a night on their own on the powdery white sands of Ko Tao Khao in the Andaman Sea. Guests dine on the island's shores before retiring to a tent with the sounds of the waves to lull them to sleep. Six-night stays from £2,215 per couple, with transfers from Phuket, a Thai cookery lesson and a stay on the island. Flights extra.

In the lap of the gods

It can be a challenge to find attractive one-bedroom villas with their own pool in the Mediterranean, which is what makes The Stone House so special. With decor that could be splashed across the pages of an interior magazine, this holiday home for two perches in the foothills of Mount Panazolour in Corfu. There's everything you need at the house to never have to leave, including a pool with far-reaching views out to sea. But if you do, there is plenty to explore nearby including the stunning Achille Beach. Weekly rental starts at £1,500 through Scott Williams (01963 33046; scottwilliams.co.uk).

Pretty as a picture

Annes Grove is a mini gothic-style castle - actually a gate lodge on a historic estate - in the picturesque landscape surrounding Ockfordsmeade in County Cork. Restored by the Irish Landmark Trust (00 35 3 1670 4733; irishlandmark.com), its simple interior is softened with antiques. There is also a small kitchen, a living room with a wood-burning stove, a bedroom reached via a twisting stone staircase, and a pretty walled garden for a frost-free dining in warmer weather. A three-night break costs from €320.

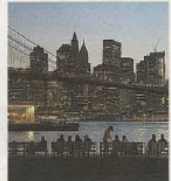
Insider information

The Villa Metax in Umbria is a gorgeous bolthole for two tucked deep in the woods with the lovely town of Città di Castello a short drive away. Inside is an open-plan living-dining-sleeping area upstairs and a kitchen downstairs - all of it lived up by the owners' colourful and light-hearted design touches. It's all very down to earth, fun and unafraid and, with its shady garden and pool, it would make a blissful escape.
Michael Cullen, editor-in-chief, escape.com.



Room for two (clockwise from main) the Sarojin's island escape; Annes Grove, Co Cork; Igloo Dorf; the Montbazillac treehouse

O&A TRAVEL UNRAVELLED



This week: Can you recommend a safe and central place to stay for two young women in New York?

Q I'm sending my daughter and her friend to New York City as a 21st birthday present. Could you advise me as to which areas I should look for a hotel that would be central and safe? Name withheld

A What an excellent birthday present. New York City is dream territory for a girls-only break, with endless opportunities for sightseeing, shopping, eating and drinking. However, they'll only be able to purchase alcohol if they've both turned 21 and must remember to carry ID at all times if they wish to do so. If this is a first-time visit, your daughter and her friend will probably want to be based in Manhattan, so that they can access the city's highlights with ease. Each of the island's neighbourhoods has its idiosyncrasy: the arty villages around Greenwich, the hip Lower East Side, stylish SoHo, the wealthy Upper East and West Sides abutting Central Park, the buttoned-up Financial District and tourist-mobbed Midtown. Tribeca, the 'Triangle Below Canal Street' in Lower Manhattan, enjoys a low crime rate and is characterised by converted warehouses near the Hudson River. However, the accommodation in this compact district tends to be correspondingly expensive. Just north of Tribeca is the bohemian West Village, where they'll find an intimate but buzzy atmosphere, with enough restaurants, shops and nightlife to keep them satisfied. An affordable hotel option here, a short walk from the delightful High Line park - which has transformed a disused elevated train track - is The Jane Hotel (00 212 934 6700; thejanehotel.com) which offers ship's cabin-style rooms from \$114 (£71). Another inexpensive stay can be found on the up-and-coming Bowery, sandwiched between characterful Nolita and the Lower East Side at The Bowery House (00 212 837 3373; theboweryhouse.com). Expedia.co.uk offers four-night flight and hotel packages here from about £630pp. When out exploring the city, busy hubs such as Penn Station and the Port Authority Bus Terminal should be approached with caution. Similarly, taking a taxi at night can be preferable to using the Subway, while it's not especially dangerous, it can be intimidating after dark.

Independent.co.uk

<http://www.independent.co.uk/travel/news-and-advice/romantic-retreats-oneroom-wonders-8492082.html>



Romantic retreats: One-room wonders

A castle of your own? A treehouse just for two? A private castaway island? Aoife O'Riordain reveals that small is beautiful when it comes to romantic retreats

AOIFE O'RIORDAIN | WEDNESDAY 13 FEBRUARY 2013



VIEW GALLERY

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