

## LIFESTYLE TRAVEL



## Baumanière: A Provençal dream

1/8



Sixty-one years after its original opening, this charming farmhouse nestled deep in the heart of Provence hasn't lost a drop of its rustically elegant appeal. Boasting a glowing five-star rating, the hotel prides itself on cozy rooms with fabulously French interiors, three cobalt blue swimming pools surrounded by climbing wisteria, and even an open-air spa looking out over the stunning Provence countryside. With the culinary talents of chef Jean-André Charial at the helm of the hotel's gastronomic restaurant, we've fallen head-over-heels for this heavenly hide-out in the South of France.

Dropping your bags at the Baumanière hotel feels like stepping into another world. Nestled in the peaceful pocket of French countryside that is Provence, warm breezes weave softly through olive groves against a soundtrack of croaking crickets and the sun shines down on fields alive with the overpowering fragrance of lavender. Just a stone's throw away from the impressive rock formations of Val d'Enfer where Jean

Cocteau set his 1960 film *L'Étirement d'Orphée*, the hotel occupies a mystical part of France where it seems that every stone has its own story to tell. Its two fabulous French restaurants are a cut above the rest: the delicious duo of Oustau de Baumanière, inaugurated in 1945 as the very first Relais & Châteaux establishment in the world and La Cabro d'Or, a more family-friendly institution opened in 1962, mean that guests have a whole host of culinary options to choose from. Boasting 55 beautifully decorated bedrooms, the hotel has something for each new guest whether they prefer a room in the homely haven of the hotel's two central buildings or a larger setup *en famille* with the option of taking over one of the two charming houses Le Manoir or La Guigou, set back from the other buildings and decorated with traditional warm yellow walls and quaint blue shutters. Once comfortably checked in, there is plenty to discover. Explore the

---

quaint village of Baux de Provence, spend the day unwinding poolside in the sun or treat yourself to Une Olive en Provence, the spa's signature massage that has garnered rave reviews for its relaxation factor. Housing a state-of-the-art fitness centre, the spa itself is a must-see as much for the striking wooden architecture that allows natural light to flow freely into the building as for the view over the pretty and well-pruned English garden that surrounds it. At meal times, choose from the in-house restaurant La Cabro d'Or and the gourmet adventure that is L'Oustau de Baumanière, introducing diners to the delights of Southern French cuisine. With chef Michel Hulin at the helm of the La Cabro d'Or, the menu changes each day according to what he's picked up at the market and puts a strong emphasis on seafood and shellfish.

echoing the chef's childhood spent by the sea with his fisherman father. Over at L'Oustau de Baumanière, Jean-André Charial and Glenn Viel push gastronomic boundaries, echoed in its Michelin starred status. Organic vegetables from the hotel's garden are given pride of place, whilst other scrumptious menu options include succulent suckling lamb, infinitely sweet pigeon breast and enormous langoustines accompanied by crunchy petits pois from the garden, all finished off with a tantalizing Tahitian vanilla millefeuille with a touch of sea salt on the side. The restaurant's wine menu is equally as noteworthy, with Jean-André Charial's biodynamic wine made from grapes grown under the Provence sun in surrounding vineyards taking pride of place. Finally, if you're having trouble with the prospect of returning to real life, stuff your suitcases full with delightful regional delicacies and bring everything from sweet, golden marmalade to rich olive oil back home with you. And guests can even buy the very same soft linen sheets in the Baumanière boutique, carefully selected by Geneviève Charial. Live out your French countryside fantasy and escape the hum of city life at Baumanière.

By Jade Simon, translated by Cosima Baring the 19 May 2016

 Travelista

