

17 BEST FOR WATER BABIES *Cliveden, Berkshire*

With the recent re-pebbling of the driveway at this Palladian villa, another step in the mansion's overhaul is complete. The Livingstone brothers, who took over the hotel, are serious about maintaining the magnificence of the Astors' former home. For all its grandeur, the atmosphere is welcoming. This is a house that revels in a good time, even if we might not remember the Profumo scandal that rocked Harold Macmillan's government in 1963. The pool pavilion, where the cavorting began, is possibly the most magical spot on the estate. DELILAH KHOMO

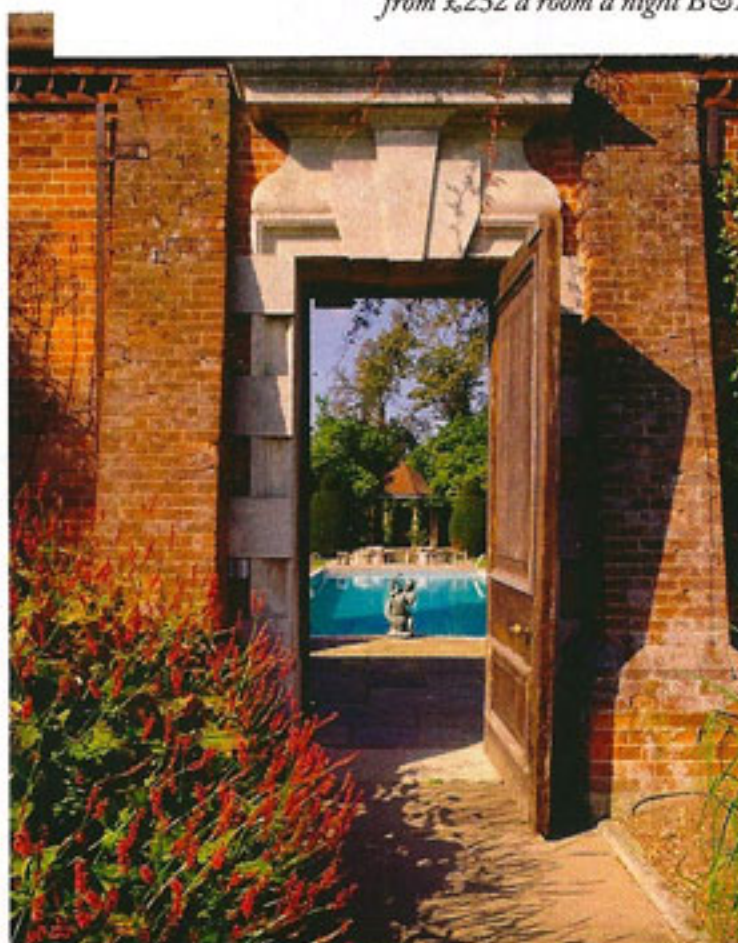
Cliveden (01628 668561; www.clivedenhouse.co.uk), from £252 a room a night B&B.



18 BEST FOR THE IMPULSIVE *Dean Street Townhouse, London*

Check in here impromptu and without luggage and you'll find not only a toothbrush in your room, but also razors, moisturiser, mouthwash, a scented candle, a hot-water bottle, flip-flops, a kettle, biscuits, a torch and a brolly. And what a relief to find a hotel room that oozes such old-fashioned cosiness and unpretentious style. You can sink into a beaten-up leather chair and listen to a Roberts radio. The curtains open simply on a pulley cord, and the electrics work at the flick of a switch. Reassuringly low-tech and anti-design, Dean Street Townhouse is a comfortably charismatic member of the Soho House empire.

Dean Street Townhouse (020 7434 1775; www.deanstreettownhouse.com), from £190 a room a night for non-members.



NEW

19 BEST FOR SMOKERS *The Wellesley, London*

'Cigardens' – gardens for cigar lovers – are all the rage in London's newest hotels. The Wellesley, the capital's latest boutique hotel, offers a smoking room that is a topiary enclave overlooking Hyde Park. Giuseppe Rufo (formerly of the Lanesborough) spent over five years building an extensive collection of cigars, which are sold individually from the humidor.

The Wellesley (020 7235 3535; www.thewellesley.co.uk), from £550 a room a night.



20 BEST FOR ART-LOVERS *Houghton Hall, Norfolk*

Don't miss 'Houghton Revisited', an exhibition of 70 masterpieces, including works by Rubens, Rembrandt and Velázquez. They're being returned from St Petersburg to Houghton Hall – the country pile of the Marquess of Cholmondeley – after 234 years. Houghton, with its 106 rooms and 4,000 acres, is now home to the Earl, his wife, the heir and a spare. Stay in the Water House, a red-brick estate cottage on the edge of the deer park, and enjoy the award-winning walled garden and sculpture park. Hire a Bentley and tour the area in the style of the Belle Epoque heiress Sybil Sassoon, a one-time Houghton resident. Take Holkham Beach walks, and eat just-caught lobster and local samphire in beach shacks. CAROLINE PHILLIPS

'Houghton Revisited: Masterpieces from the Hermitage' is at Houghton Hall (01603 598640; www.houghtonrevisited.com) until 29 September. *Seven nights at the Water House* (sleeps five), from £395, with *Stately Holiday Cottages* (01638 674756; www.statelyholidaycottages.co.uk). □