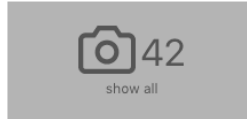
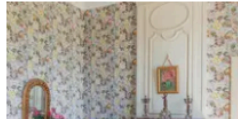


Hotel Château du Grand-Lucé - review

Flight of French fancy in baron's summer palace

CATHY ADAMS | 20 hours ago | 0 comments



So awash is the Loire Valley with Renaissance-era chateaux, all complete with manicured parterre gardens and bursting with Louis XV furniture, that it's hard to know where to start. The 18th-century **Hotel** Château du Grand-Lucé, which opened this June, makes a good case for the top pick.

First impressions

Hotel Château sits proudly on 80 acres in the centre of the village of Grand-Lucé, south-east of Le Mans, surrounded by medieval walls, with just bleached-white gates separating the château from the main village square (although once you're in, you'll feel more than 200 years away).



(Hotel Château du Grand-Lucé)

Looks

It was first built as a summer palace for aristocrat Baron Jacques Pineau de Viennay to host le tout **France**, and it retains that lightness with original limestone and French oak floors. Everything is 18th-century fanciful with fine art, Persian rugs and custom French furniture. There are also cheeky nods to the château's American owners (Pilot Hotels), with moose heads on the walls. The 17 bedrooms are indisputably grand, with accoutrements such as canopied four poster-beds, deep mattresses dressed in Pratesi linen and rich silk curtains in jewel tones.

Feel

Thanks to a sensitive renovation, it is not far off how Baron Pineau de Viennay would have felt rattling around in his summer palace in the 1760s. The bedrooms keep things quiet and low-key; you're not likely to see other guests aside from dinner time. Things quieten down further in the vast grounds, from the potager garden that supplies the kitchen with fresh herbs, to the white oak forest dotted with Greek statues gifted to the baron by Louis XV.



(Adam Lynk)

3

Extras

In keeping with the elegant symmetry of the property, there's a heated circular pool next to an orangerie, plus restaurant Le Lucé —guests don't need a reservation— and bar dressed in deep university green, which hosts the property's only TV. All kinds of activities can be organised by the concierge team, from balloon rides from the château's meadow to racing-car driving at Le Mans.

Outside

Frankly, not much. Grand-Lucé is a charming enough village, with an 11th-century church, a couple of boulangeries and a tabac — but little else. Le Mans is about 40 minutes away by car. But the reason you come to this château, other than to thoroughly decompress, is to use it as a jumping-off point for the 800 square kilometres of the Loire Valley.



(Adam Lynk)

Dark side

As it's designed very much as a chateau away from, er, home, with no reception desk or concierge in the entrance, it can make tracking down staff difficult at times.

In a nutshell

Exquisitely renovated 18th-century chateau for you to channel the vibe of Louis XV.

Details: Hotel Château du Grand-Lucé

Rooms from €650 incl breakfast, chateaugrandluce.com. Eurostar from London to Paris from £29pp. Paris Gare Montparnasse to Le Mans is 1hr by TGV. ■