

CONCIERGE

What's hot around the region

BEST OF THE REST

Find out about where you can take a private train, go llama walking before dinner, or jump into a giant-sized bed whilst indulging in a spot of astronaut role-play.

Following the success of i-escape.com's first **Alternative Hotel Awards** a year ago, they have come up with another hot list, celebrating the most unusual experiences and hotel features unearthed by the website's reviewers over the last year of worldwide explorations. A full list of winners can be found at: www.i-escape.com/links/alternativeawards2008

BEST FOR WOULD-BE ASTRONAUTS

Hotel Cocoon, Brazil: The recently opened Hotel Cocoon in Salvador, Brazil, has been designed like a giant space ship from a 1950's sci-fi film. The staff dress in citrus uniforms as though they had just walked off the set of *Thunderbirds*, the pool changes colour every five seconds, and notices and menus are addressed to astronauts rather than guests.



BEST FOR THE STRESSED

Le Castel, France (above): Ex newspaper hack Jon and partner Nick love a dose of the bizarre. Inside their historic Normandy chateau, Le Castel, you'll find a shiny white grand piano perfect for Elton-style crooning, while outside a pair of llamas grazes the immaculate lawns. Stressed out guests are invited to take these placid beasts for a stroll around the grounds or into the village of Montpinchon.

BEST FOR LONERS

The One Hotel, Cambodia: At the aptly named The One Hotel in Siem Reap, Cambodia, you won't be queuing to check in, or moaning about noisy neighbours: you're the only guest! Owner Martin Dishman offers just



the one double room, but it's a real beauty. The One Hotel is in the heart of the old town, with a designer lounge that opens onto a narrow passageway and a shaded roof terrace where you can loll about on a comfy daybed or slip into a hot tub and gaze up at the night sky.

BEST FOR YOUR INNER CHILD

Art Hotel Luise, Berlin (above): If the big bad world is all too much for you, book room 107 (Mammelstrau) at the Art Hotel Luise in Berlin: the bed is 50 percent oversized in every dimension, so climbing into it and snuggling under the vast duvet makes you feel like a little child again. To leave the real world even further behind, ask for room 309, where a sloping bed suspended on chains, along with two aircraft seats and a log book on the fold-out table, gives the impression of flying through the skies.

BEST FOR TRAIN LOVERS

Villa Creta, Crete: Take the train... to dinner! At Villa Creta on the Greek island of Crete, the owners have installed a toy train to shuttle between the two family-sized villas and their own home, where they cook dinner for guests. If you prefer a bumpier ride, you can borrow one of their horses (it's a working farm) or ride a mountain bike to the top of rocky Mt Yiuouhtas, sacred to Zeus.

BEST BATHTUB

Fumba Beach Lodge, Zanzibar: There are some strong contenders here, with Heritage

Suites in Cambodia and bb22 in Sicily topping the list of egg-shaped in-room tubs, while Periscope in Athens deserves an honourable mention for the rooftop Jacuzzi in its Penthouse Suite as well as Holm House in Wales for its shiny bronze monster of a tub in the Flatholm room. But the prize must go to Fumba Beach Lodge in Zanzibar, whose Baobab Suite has a treetop Jacuzzi, the perfect place for sociable sundowners after a day of strenuous snorkelling and sunbathing.

ONLY HOTEL IN THE WORLD ON ITS OWN TIME ZONE

Six Sense Hideaways, Vietnam (below): Six Senses Hideaway sets all the clocks in the hotel one hour ahead of the rest of Vietnam and urges guests to do the same with their watches. The reason? To encourage visitors to get up in time to catch the stunning sunrise over the two-km crescent beach where the resort is set.

