

# Less is More

It is now possible to stay at an international hotel virtually anywhere in the world and not know where you are. The décor is the same, the menu is the same and the staff have even been trained to use the same phrases. There is obviously a place, and a demand, for this type of hotel but for many of Audley's clients this is the antithesis of what travel is all about. Staying in small family-run hotels and guesthouses brings one closer to the people of the country, adds to the experience of travelling, and for many is more relaxing. We've included some of our favourites below, these are just a taste of the many we can arrange for you to stay in.



**Hotel Antumalal** Pucon, Chile

Chile's northern Lake District is the setting for the Antumalal with its 13 acres of landscaped garden and own private beach and dock. Created in the Bauhaus style, this hidden jewel's low-slung, unashamedly 60's design was very advanced for its time and provided the inspiration for Chile's renowned Explora hotels. However, the hotel's modernity is combined with cosy comfort and personalised service - it is still run by the Pollak family who conceived the idea, and little touches such as arriving to find your name on the door of your room make your stay a memorable one. Breathtaking panoramic vistas from its vantage point atop a wooded

point overlooking Lake Villarrica can be enjoyed from the hotel's restaurant, lounges or terrace, while each of the 16 rooms has a view of either the lake or the gardens from their floor to ceiling windows. Facilities include a heated outdoor swimming pool and a tennis court, and if you can tear yourself away, the Antumalal's guides will organise excursions for you into the beautiful surrounding countryside on foot, by boat or on horseback, while fishing trips are a speciality. Famous guests to have enjoyed the unique luxury of the Antumalal include Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip, James Stewart and Neil Armstrong.



**The Fern Resort** Mae Hong Son, Thailand

A discovery of ours on a recent research trip in northern Thailand, The Fern Resort was conceived using Thai government funds to encourage development in rural areas. The staff all come from the local Karen villages and dress in their traditional costumes. The resort gives them an opportunity to earn a living and also gives tourists a rare opportunity to meet local people. Nestled in a small valley surrounded by jungle clad mountains and rice paddies it describes itself as an 'eco tourism resort for nature lovers' and to this end there are no televisions or telephones in the rooms. However, there is hot and cold water, air-conditioning and a swimming pool, so you can still enjoy a very comfortable stay. The grounds

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have been deliberately planted with trees that are a food source for animals and birds. Nature trails behind the resort lead into Mae Surin National Park or you can wander along paths through the rice paddies. Longer treks with local guides can also be organized if you can tear yourself away from the truly tranquil surroundings.

**Windermere** Munnar, India

Windermere House is the charming plantation bungalow and the long term home of Captain Matthew who served for twenty five years as the Harbour Master in Cochin. The Captain will happily regale you with stories of his past over a gin and tonic. Windermere is situated about three miles from Munnar in seventy acres of cardamom and tea plantation. In the gardens are designated areas for bonfires and barbecues as well as a viewpoint commanding a magnificent panoramic view of Munnar and the valley beyond. It is possible to see how cardamom is processed in the nearby store and, if feeling energetic, trekking to the caves on the plantation is an option.



**Hacienda San Pedro** Otavalo, Ecuador

San Pedro is a 160-acre working farm set high up in the Andes. On clear days it offers spectacular views of snow-capped volcanoes. With just five simply furnished rooms, each featuring a wood-burning stove, and homely cooking by the owner Alfredo, it is a delightful place to stay. Guest can stroll in the fields surrounding the hacienda, take guided hikes, enjoy horse riding and mountain biking, join in at milking time or even help out in the kitchen.

**Terres Rouge** Banlung, Cambodia

The Terres Rouge stands as evidence that small quality hotels can be found almost anywhere, it is just a case of looking! Ratanakiri province in Cambodia's north-east is a fascinating area that is only now opening up to visitors. Run by an expatriate Frenchman and his Cambodian wife, the Terres Rouges is an all wooden property set just outside Banlung, overlooking a picturesque lake. The rooms open into a communal living area which in turn opens onto a large balcony overlooking the lake. Rooms and living area alike are decked out with indigenous textiles, wall-hangings and an array of sculptures. The restaurant is a blend of Cambodian and French food. Terres Rouges is the only quality option in the whole of north-east Cambodia and makes a great base from which to explore the region.



**Yide Guesthouse** Pingyao, China

It is rare to find somewhere characterful to stay in China, therefore we were particularly delighted to discover the Yide Guesthouse. A delightful eighteenth-century courtyard style guesthouse, the Yide is located on a quiet side street within easy walking distance of Pingyao's main streets. Spread over two courtyards, the rooms are clean and spacious, with modern bathrooms, televisions and water heaters and traditional Qing style wooden furniture and decoration. The property was formerly the mansion of a wealthy Pingyao businessman and has been extremely well preserved. Stone pillars for tying and mounting horses line the driveway, intricate stone carvings and shrines are set in the courtyard walls and at night atmospheric red lanterns are lit in the courtyards and dining room.

