

Travel

The top 20 mountain hotels



Reaching the 360° Leti Hotel in the Himalayas, India, involves a plane, train and automobile, but the journey is worth it for the magnificent views

hotel's doors are now open year-round, allowing guests to take in Arosa's summer activities, such as the 200km of walking paths or the highest golf course in Europe. Those looking for a spa break will also love the Tschuggen Bergoase Spa, which has huge glass sails that reach out of the mountain and channel light into the underground pools and treatment areas.
Details Doubles from £165, B&B (00 41 81 378 9999, tschuggen.ch)

Parador de las Cañadas del Teide Tenerife

Think of altitude and the Canaries may not be the first place to spring to mind, but volcanic Mount Teide, on Tenerife, is the highest point in Spain and the third largest volcano in the world from its base. Just short of the cable car that leads to the summit, the Parador is the only hotel within the surrounding national park and is a million miles from the Anglified resorts by the beach. A lack of light pollution makes for excellent stargazing. The hotel telescope is available to guests every Friday night.
Details Doubles from £150, B&B (00 34 902 54 79 79, parador.es)

St Regis Lhasa Tibet

Stays at the "Roof of the World" just got a little bit more luxurious thanks to the opening of the St Regis in April. In the heart of Lhasa's old town, with Jokhang Temple, Barkhor Street and Potala Palace — the spiritual centre of Tibetan buddhists — all a short walk away. The hotel sets all kinds of new standards for Lhasa: the city's first fine dining restaurant is here, the Iridium Spa is home to a gold-tiled swimming pool and guests get their own personal butler.
Details Doubles from £285, room only (00 86 891 680 8888, starwoodhotels.com)

Uma Paro Bhutan

Visitors to the Metropolitan Hotel and its rock star hangout The Met Bar in London will be surprised to learn that this oasis of tranquility, high on a pine-covered mountain in the Himalayas, is a sister property. What you will find here is peace and solitude where you can immerse yourself in the culture of this shy kingdom.
Details Four nights at Uma Paro and two nights in Delhi, both B&B, from £2,700pp, including international flights (01244 202 085, seasons.co.uk)

360° Leti Himalayas, India

On a remote 2,500m plateau with jaw-dropping views of the mountains, vistas don't come much better than this. Facilities are little more than four simple, yet stylish stone cottages with picture windows, and excellent local cuisine served in the lounge. Getting here by



plane, (overnight) train and automobile, is half the fun, but once in situ, life is incredibly simple: hike to the river and fish, marvel at eagles soaring on the thermals and relax.
Details Three nights (minimum stay) from £1,595pp, full board. International flights are extra (0845 0570600, balesworldwide.com)

Banyan Tree Lijiang

Tibet gets many of the plaudits when it comes to Asian altitude, which means Lijiang — at the juxtaposition of the Yunnan-Guizhou and Qinghai-Tibet plateaus — is a similar proposition but a road less travelled. The Old Town has 800 years of history and is a World Heritage Site, while the Nakhi culture is a beguiling mix of Tibetan and Han Chinese. In the midst of all this is the Banyan Tree, 55 gorgeous rooms that blend traditional Far Eastern style with Western comfort. Dine in the hotel's Moonlight Pagoda, with Jade Dragon Snow Mountain looming above.
Details Four nights' B&B from £1,040pp including transfers but not international flights (020-7978 7333, originaltravel.co.uk)

Kasbah du Toubkal Morocco

Head 90 minutes south from Marrakech to the Atlas Mountains and Jbel Toubkal, North Africa's highest peak. Here, at 1,800m above sea level, you'll find Kasbah du Toubkal, the country's premier mountain retreat. It's a luxury eco-lodge with a twist: it was built and is part run by villagers. Take to the surrounding mountains to visit Berber villages and sample local hospitality.
Details Four nights' B&B from £750pp including international flights and transfers (0844 5732460, vhiphotels.co.uk)

Ngorongoro Crater Lodge Tanzania

Often called the eighth wonder of the world, the Ngorongoro Crater is an area of outstanding natural beauty — a huge unflooded volcanic caldera that is home to 25,000 animals, naturally corralled by the caldera walls. If you head on safari you may see the Big Five (lion, leopard, buffalo, rhino and elephant) as well as zebra and wildebeest. In the midst of this is the Ngorongoro Crater Lodge — three outstanding camps with luxury touches such as personal butler service.
Details Three nights at Ngorongoro Crater Lodge and three nights at the Ras Nungwi on Zanzibar from £3,850pp, including flights and transfers (020-7471 8780, africaodyssey.com)



Virunga Safari Lodge Rwanda

Follow in the footsteps of Dian Fossey, on whom the film *Gorillas in the Mist* was based, with a trip to the Virunga Lodge in Rwanda's Parc National des Volcans. Most people come to spot the gorillas and tracking time is between three and seven hours. Other activities include golden monkey safaris and climbing a volcano.
Details Four nights' full board from £2,195pp plus £350 gorilla permit; international flights are extra (01285 643333, steppediscovery.co.uk)

Solio Lodge Kenya

Leopard is the hardest of the Big Five to spot — so increase your chances on the slopes of Mount Kenya, one of the best places to see them. Opened last year, Solio Lodge has panoramic windows that overlook Mount Kenya. It's malaria-free, thanks to the 2,000m altitude.
Details Doubles from £740 per night, full board (thesafaricollection.com)

Timberline Lodge Oregon

Heeere's Johnny! Timberline Lodge starred alongside Jack Nicholson in the film *The Shining*; this icon on Mount Hood is a US National Historic Monument. The ski's not bad either.
Details Doubles from £110, room only (timberlinelodge.com)

Sanctuary Lodge Machu Picchu

Last month was the centenary anniversary of the rediscovery of Machu Picchu by the American explorer Hiram Bingham. Then, of course, there was no train and bus service to the Inca ruins, and there was certainly no luxury hotel at the gates. Owned by Orient-Express, the Sanctuary Lodge is rather small and blends in to the landscape. As a guest, you are allowed to stay after hours in the ruins.

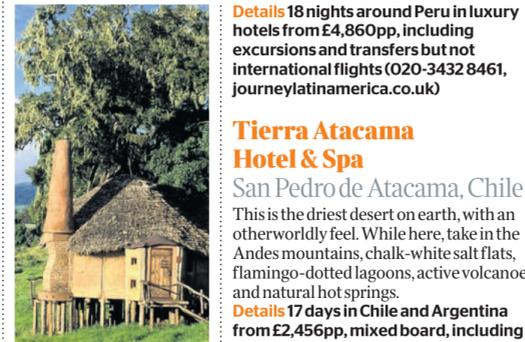


Clockwise from main picture: Tschuggen Grand, Switzerland; Pici du Midi de Bigorre, France; Ngorongoro Crater Lodge, Tanzania; Sanctuary Lodge, Machu Picchu; Aaufberg 1113, Austria; Tierra Atacama Hotel, Chile



Arenal Observatory Lodge Costa Rica

A little shy of our 1,000m limit, we include the Arenal simply because it has the potential to be the most explosive hotel in the world. Viewing platforms and room balconies are all within striking distance of the Volcán Arenal, Costa Rica's most active volcano. Pyroclastic explosions and pouring lava are common sights.
Details 11 nights on Costa Rica, and two at the Arenal Observatory from £3,296pp, mixed board, including flights and transfers (01803 866965, reefandrainforest.co.uk)



Tierra Atacama Hotel & Spa San Pedro de Atacama, Chile

This is the driest desert on earth, with an otherworldly feel. While here, take in the Andes mountains, chalk-white salt flats, flamingo-dotted lagoons, active volcanoes and natural hot springs.
Details 17 days in Chile and Argentina from £2,456pp, mixed board, including internal flights and transfers (020-3432 8461, journeylatinamerica.co.uk)



Puma Lodge Chile

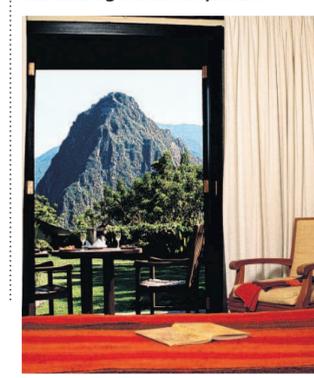
High in the Central Andes, this is the hottest opening in South America since it launched for the ski season last month. The heliskiing has access to 5,000 sq km of virgin snow and 50 glaciers.
Details Seven nights at the Puma Lodge and one night at the Ritz Carlton in Santiago from £8,189pp including heliskiing, flights and transfers (020-7337 9010, exsus.com)

Hacienda Zuleta Ecuador

You can totally immerse yourself in local culture at the Zuleta. This 17th-century colonial landmark is now a farm and you can ride Zuleteño horses, visit the fish farm or learn local embroidery techniques... among verdant hills and deep rivers.
Details Doubles from £240, full board (00593 2 2867 832, latintrails.com)

Göreme Cave House Cappadocia, Turkey

A stay in Göreme is like living out your own troglodyte Tolkien fantasy. Among the tall, thin rock formations, known as "fairy chimneys", this is a village of mainly cave houses sculpted into soft rock. This four-bedroom holiday home sleeps eight and has magnificent views over the World Heritage Göreme National Park.
Details Seven nights from £612 a week self catering (HomeAway.co.uk)



From Tanzania to Tibet, sleep close to the stars in the world's highest hotels (above 1,000m), says James Ellis

Pici du Midi de Bigorre Hautes-Pyrénées, France

Astronomers have been using the observatory on top of the 2,877m Pici Du Midi mountain since the late 19th century — construction began in 1878 — but more important for us, people have been able to stay the night since 2006. Guests ride up on a cable car until 5pm, visit the museum, have dinner and then get access to the main observatory and its 400mm telescope. Stay the night in a basic single room before daredevils cycle back down the mountain after breakfast... the rest of us get back in the cable car.
Details From €229pp, half board (00 33 825 00 287, picmididi.com)

Aaufberg 1113 nr Kaprun, Austria

Look to the mountains in the Austrian Alps, between Zel Am See and Kaprun, and you may just spot this outlandishly modern home, its large, square wooden

“Getting here is half the fun. Once in situ, marvel at eagles soaring on the thermals, and relax”

frontage dominating the landscape as the sun reflects from its floor-to-ceiling windows. Owned by the Hunterberger family and located on the family farm, it consists of two holiday apartments, the 47m Sparrow's Nest, which sleeps two, or the Swallow's Nest, which can accommodate four. Both have natural stone floors, exposed concrete walls, welcoming fireplaces and gorgeous views over the valley to the Kaprun glacier. The Hunterberger's Taxhof restaurant is near by.
Details From €170 a night for two, self-catering (00 49 176 641 150 16, welcomebeyond.com)

Tschuggen Grand Arosa, Switzerland

While this grand hotel has been open for more than 80 years, it has been operational for only half that time thanks to its closing throughout the warmer, summer months. After a refurbishment of the lobby, bar and restaurants, the five-star