

DEPARTURES

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THE ART OF
LIVING OF
NOW
COOL
CHIC
AND
CLASSIC



BLACKBOOK

A GUIDE FOR THE SOPHISTICATED TRAVELER HERE & ABROAD

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GOLDENEYE

Ian Fleming's beloved Jamaica retreat reopens in November after a two-year redo and expansion.

Itineraries

The Get-Away-Quick List

There's still time to book this season at some of the world's most promising new—and revamped—hotels. A global tip sheet.

When it comes to travel between Thanksgiving and New Year's, procrastination can lead to inspiration. "The key is thinking outside the box," says trip planner extraordinaire Lisa Lindblad. "Places that are off the beaten path or not thought of as winter destinations." Bill Fischer, another top agent and travel guru, agrees that there are always rooms to be found: "Clients constantly come to me only days before

they want to depart. We make it work no matter what."

In pursuing last-minute plans, it's smart to look for recently opened or relaunched properties. So DEPARTURES has done just that, calling on industry experts to help find places that haven't gotten overwhelmed by buzz—Soneva Kiri by Six Senses in Thailand, say—or have been flying under the radar while undergoing top-to-bottom renovations and expansions, like GoldenEye Hotel & Resort in Jamaica's Oracabessa Bay. What



CHATEAU DE L'ISLE-MARIE
The small Normandy inn will remain open in winter for the first time ever this year.

follows is the result of a globe-spanning hunt for the most exciting of what's new—and still available—right now.

COUNTRY

People don't think of it, but the English countryside is lovely in winter," says superagent Valerie Wilson, referring to the Dorchester Collection's **Coworth Park** (from \$700; 44-13/448-76600; coworthpark.com), which sits on 240 acres of parkland 45 minutes beyond London. The hotel splits its 70 rooms between a Georgian manor house and several converted stables and cottages, and it offers three restaurants from Michelin-starred John Campbell. In France, Normandy's **Château de L'Isle-Marie** (from \$190; 33-2/3321-3725; islemarie.com) remains open this winter for the first time, with the quiet holiday season an ideal time to explore the D-Day sites. The five-bedroom 17th-century castle is filled with gilt furniture covered in Rubelli silks and has large claw-foot tubs, and there's also a three-bedroom manor next door.

In Stellenbosch, South Africa, outside Cape Town, there's the five-month-old **Delaire Graff Lodges and Spa** (from \$1,255; 27-21/885-8160; delaire.co.za), owned by the founder of Graff Diamonds. Atop one of the highest points of the Cape's vineyards, the hotel's

ten David Collins-designed villas join an 18-month-old winery and restaurant. Stateside, in northern California, the classic **Carmel Valley Ranch** (from \$300; 831-625-9500; carmelvalleyranch.com) just completed a yearlong renovation. Its 500 acres feature a Pete Dye golf course and extensive hiking trails, with views of the Santa Lucia Mountains' foothills. And in Texas, the epically scaled **JW Marriott San Antonio Hill Country Resort & Spa** (from \$230; 210-276-2500; jwsanantonio.com) opened in January on 600 acres, with 1,000 rooms, a 36-hole PGA golf course, a 26,000-square-foot spa and a massive outdoor pool area.

SKI

Last-minute European ski trips are hard to book, but several notable American arrivals have space (including Montage Deer Valley; see "A Winter Montage"). Just outside Aspen, the slopeside **Viceroy Snowmass** (from \$225; 970-923-8000; viceroysnowmass.com) opened last season, quickly becoming a favorite of Joyce Horowitz of Altour: "It's gotten very little exposure, but it's great for children—very close to ski school." The hotel arranges for custom Christmas trees in guests' suites, and presents, too. Formerly

the Vail Plaza Hotel & Club, **The Sebastian** (from \$500; 877-888-1540; thesebastianvail.com) opens December 1 in Vail's village center. The completely renovated boutique hotel has a private club at the foot of the mountain where ski valets warm boots and tune gear. And in November, Vail's Colorado neighbor Breckenridge welcomes its first high-end property, **One Ski Hill Place** (from \$400; 970-547-8800; oneskihillplace.com). It will have ski-in, ski-out access to four of the mountain's major lifts and is a stone's throw from the gondola connecting the slopes to Breck's quaint downtown. This season, Lake Tahoe's **West Shore Café** (from \$300; 530-525-5200; westshorecafe.com) reopens under new ownership after shuttering two summers ago. Once a small restaurant on the lake's tony west side, it now has four two-bedroom suites and two single guest rooms done in a mountain-chic style. And while there are no significant New England openings, Vermont's **Stowe Mountain Lodge** (from \$260; 802-253-3560; stowemountainlodge.com), which landed in 2008 as the only ski-in, ski-out hotel in Stowe, is doubling in size, adding 173 guest rooms and a performing arts center.

THE VILLA FILES HOUSE HUNTING

Agents who have relationships with private owners are the secret to last-minute villa rental. Sylvia Jones (vaanyc.com) has Caribbean expertise, while Ian Holmes (privateworldvillas.com) does Asia and Consensio Holidays (consensioholidays.co.uk) European ski chalets.

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THE SEBASTIAN
In Vail, the 100-room boutique hotel has its own private ski club at the base of the mountain.