

Andrew Harper's Hideaway Report®

MARCH 2014 | OUR 35TH YEAR

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TRAVELING THE WORLD IN SEARCH OF TRULY ENCHANTING PLACES

HOTEL REVIEW *excerpted from the March 2014 issue*

A Civilized Oasis in Avignon: La Mirande

HIDDEN ON A TRANQUIL SIDE STREET BEHIND THE PALACE OF THE POPES, LA MIRANDE IS ONE OF THE most reliably enchanting hotels in the world and a place to which I return again and again with a renewed expectation of pleasure.

The 27-room property occupies a biscuit-colored stone building that was once owned by the Emperor Napoleon III's doctor. Its historic pedigree is also derived from a stately 17th-century façade and a magnificent 14th-century dining room. Aside from its peaceful location, the attributes of the hotel that I particularly appreciate are the consistently gracious service, the fine restaurant and the profound sense of place.

The rooms are decorated in a traditional Provençal style, with China trade prints or toile de Jouy fabrics on the walls, antique furniture, and painted wooden bed frames and side tables. Sisal rugs cover the polished parquet or terra-cotta floors. One of the great delights of the place is listening to church bells through open windows at night and then waking to the sound of birdsong from the lovely garden, planted with lavender and rosebushes. (The best views of the garden are from the new Deluxe Rooms in the recently completed addition to the hotel.) Baths come with high-quality replicas of 19th-century fixtures, and most have soaking tubs as well as showers.

In addition to enjoying chef Jean-Claude Aubertin's excellent cooking in the formal dining room — don't miss his roasted Provençal lamb with vegetable terrine, since it's not only delicious but a fine excuse (as though one were needed) to order a good bottle of Châteauneuf-du-Pape — I always relish a table d'hôte dinner served in the old kitchen. I recommend this convivial meal, since the setting is beautiful and the occasion offers a good opportunity to chat with other



hotel guests, most of whom are worldly and well-traveled.

The hotel also offers excellent hands-on cooking lessons. Chefs lead guests to the local market, help them to select the best ingredients and then, back at the hotel, to cook a Provençal meal. La Mirande may lack a pool and a spa, but I am invariably content with a glass of rosé in the fragrant garden at the end of a warm summer afternoon. 🌿 96

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