This week: SF Bay Area, Savannah, Romania, Paris, and L.A.

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In Paris' Restaurant Rech, Alain Ducasse focuses on seafood…

Northern California's Waterfront Respite

Nick's Cove & Cottages. This historic site features waterfront cottages (*photo, right*) and a restaurant lovingly renovated into a dreamy and luxurious retreat amid the pristine northern California landscape. It is located approximately 30 miles north of San Francisco, adjacent to the Point Reyes National Seashore. Visitors will feel like they have stumbled into a charming 1930s fishing village. Twelve cottages, outfitted with vintage ephemera, are either on the water or across the highway, with views of tranquil Tomales Bay. Luxury abounds (heated marble bathroom floors, quality linens), but the down-home vibe of the friendly staff keeps it real. Stick with classic seafood dishes (chowder, local barbecue oysters, crab) in the adjoining restaurant. Pros: stunning setting; cozy and authentic vintage appeal; modern amenities. Cons: water-view cottages flank the highway; only one place to dine; no cell phone service. 23240 Highway 1, Marshall, CA. 415/663-1033 (ph.). 415/663-9751 (fax). www.nickscove.com. 12 rooms. In-room: no a/c, safe, kitchen (some), refrigerator (some), no TV (some), Wi-Fi. In-hotel: one restaurant, room service, bar, beachfront, no elevator, parking (no fee), some pets allowed (fee), no-smoking rooms. AE, MC, V. Rooms start at $175.

Southern Comfort in New Orleans

MiLa. Chefs Slade Rushing and Allison Vines-Rushing, from Mississippi and Louisiana, respectively, merged the names and cuisines of their home states to produce MiLa. The restaurant defines a new Southern elegance with a comfy, chic atmosphere and culinary tributes to each chef's childhood memories of Southern cooking. The results are dishes like pan-roasted sweetbreads with black-truffle grits, and roasted grouper with creamed mustard greens. All of the produce comes from a working farm in Mount Hermon, Louisiana. Insider's tip: Take a seat at the bar, and try the hot deer sausage and cheddar biscuits. 817 Common St. CBD. 504/412-2580. www.milaneworleans.com. No lunch Sat. AE, D, DC, MC, V. Median entrée price: $28.

A Seafood Mainstay in Paris

Rech. After restoring the historic Paris bistros Aux Lyonnais and Benoît to their former glory, star chef Alain Ducasse has turned his piercing attention to this seafood brasserie founded in 1925. His wisdom lies in knowing

what not to change: the original Art Deco chairs in the main floor dining room; seafood shucker Malec, who has been a fixture on this chic stretch of sidewalk since 1982; and the XXL éclair, which has attracted locals for decades. Original owner Auguste Rech believed in serving a limited selection of quality products, a principle that suits Ducasse perfectly, and from the compact open kitchen upstairs, young chef Baptiste Peupion turns out impeccable dishes such as octopus carpaccio with Genovese pesto, lobster ravioli, and astonishingly good clam chowder. Save room for the whole farmer's Camembert, another Rech tradition. 62 avenue des Ternes. Parc Monceau. 01-45-72-29-47. www.rech.fr. Closed Sun. and Mon. AE, DC, MC, V. Median entrée price: €28 (approximately $41 USD).

In Los Angeles, an Alternative to Sushi

Robata Bar. It seems as if LA has a sushi bar on every corner. Robata Bar now offers this sushi-saturated city a dining alternative, serving *robatayaki* — skewers of meats, veggies, and seafood grilled over hot Japanese charcoal. It's a clean, healthful style of cooking paired with Japanese beers and sake. In addition to grilled shiitake mushrooms, shrimp wrapped in bacon and chicken hearts, this lively little eatery (modeled after a type of Japanese pub called a nomiya) also serves sashimi, tartars, and an oyster with quail egg and *uni* (sea urchin) shooter. And if you really need a sushi fix, sister-restaurant Sushi Roku is next door. 1401 Ocean Ave. Santa Monica. 310/458-4771. www.robatabar.com. Reservations not accepted. No lunch. AE, D, DC, MC, V. Median entrée price: $20.

A Luxurious Option in Romania

Carol Parc Hotel. Until recently, five stars in the Romanian capital could only get you a high-end chain: a Marriott, Hilton, or Novotel. The luxurious Carol Parc may herald a welcome trend toward cozier boutique properties that combine hi-tech business amenities, like in-room Internet and plasma-screen TVs, with the intimacy of a private home or villa. This particular building dates from the early 20th century, when mansions began sprouting along upscale Carol Park, a mile south of the city center. No expense was spared in the renovation, including the addition of a dazzling 40-foot Murano chandelier (imported from Italy) in the lobby. Each of the rooms is designed differently, but most incorporate tasteful 19th-century pieces — antiques and reproductions — with high ceilings, big inviting beds, and lavish draperies and fabrics. Some rooms have wood-burning fireplaces. The neighborhood is still a little seedy, but it's making a comeback. Pros: romantic; friendly staff; Bulgari toiletries in the baths. Cons: 20-minute walk to the center of town; no fitness room (under construction). 23-25 Aleea Suter, Bucharest. 021/336-3377 (ph.). 021/335-4913. www.carolparchotel.ro. 17 rooms, 2 suites. In-room: safe, refrigerator, Ethernet (no fee). In-hotel: restaurant, room service, bar, laundry service, concierge, executive floor, public Wi-Fi (no fee), airport shuttle, parking, some pets allowed, no-smoking rooms. AE, DC, MC, V. Rooms start at 550 RON (approximately $221 USD).

A Modern Upgrade in Historic Savannah

The Marshall House. Savannah's first hotel — it opened for business in 1851 — completed a $1.5 million-dollar renovation in January 2008. New linens, window treatments, pillow-top beds, flat-screen TVs, and custom furniture (replacing dated and clumsy wrought-iron beds) add modern comfort and style to this city favorite. Historic details like original windows and claw-foot tubs in some rooms add charm. Ask for an odd-number room on the second floor if you want access to the wide and relaxing second-floor porch with tables, chairs, and overhead fans. Pros: complimentary breakfast every morning; wine and cheese Sunday through Thursday evenings; located in downtown Savannah, within walking distance of the river and city attractions; empty in-room mini-fridge. Cons: walls are thin; rooms can be dark; weak Wi-Fi. 123 East Broughton St. Historic District.

912/644-7896 (ph.). 912/234-3334 (fax). www.marshallhouse.com. 68 rooms. In-room: safe, refrigerator, Wi-Fi. In-hotel: 1 restaurant, 1 bar, laundry service, concierge, public Wi-Fi, parking (fee), no-smoking rooms. AE, D, DC, MC, V. Rooms start at $249.

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