

BRITISH

GENTLEMEN'S QUARTERLY

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'I want to make amends'

LEWIS Hamilton

refuses to skirt the issue

By Teo van den Broeke Photographed by Daniel Sannwald

**+ The billionaire
e-car wars**

James
Dyson
vs
Elon
Musk

By Stuart McGurk

**+ Caitlin
Moran**

'Corbyn
was a
gamble
that
failed'

By Alastair Campbell

Exclusive report

Did EDM kill Avicii

By William Ralston



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All roads lead to Rhône



The region's best-known chef, Anne-Sophie Pic, points out that

Valence is right in the centre of all good things food-wise in France. Provence is just to the south, the Alps and the Ardèche are on the doorstep and it's right in the Rhône Valley, with the atmospheric N7 road, once the favoured route to the Côte d'Azur for sun-seeking northern Europeans, at its heart.

So, for a few deeply indulgent days away eating great food and drinking fine wine, it doesn't get much better than here.

And if you don't have time to cruise the N7 (for which a pure-bred Bentley or an in-your-face Ferrari is a must) then the Eurostar from London's St Pancras to Paris does the job perfectly well – and it's a lot quicker.

A couple of stops from the Gare Du Nord to board a TGV express at the Gare De Lyon and a rental car at the Valence TGV station and you're soon on the road to **1. Château Du Besset** (chateaudubesset.com), which overlooks the Rhône Valley. It's difficult to imagine a better-value dinner than the offering at its magnanerie, which you can follow by a night in one of three beautifully decorated rooms. The *table d'hôte* menu (£35) provides three inventive courses of local produce, including cooked meats and cheeses, a roast filet mignon with chorizo sauce and French staples such as *tarte au citron* or the less French tiramisu. The local wine is more than drinkable, too, led by the various offerings of Hermitage.

If you manage to lay off the local Hermitage wines, then day two should get off to an early start en route for **3. Le Carré D'Alethius** (lecarredalethius.com) in the Côtes Du Rhône village of Charmes-Sur-Rhône – before which there are a few treats in store along the way.

In the riverside villages surrounding Valence, the gastronomic landscape is as Gallic as the setting...

Story by Jeff Mills



Train fares from London St Pancras to Valence on the Eurostar and TGV, from £110 return. eurostar.com

First, a visit to the **4. Hôtel De La Villeon** (hoteldelavilleon.com) in Tournon-Sur-Rhône, an exquisite 18th-century mansion recently restored to its former glory, where you can stay in one of 16 guest rooms and spend hot afternoons relaxing in the rooftop gardens with views over the old town.

Consider a stop-off at the idyllic Tain-L'Hermitage for lunch at **5. Cité Du Chocolat Valrhona** (citeduchocolat.com), where there's plenty of opportunity to taste the various confections,

including lunch dishes (ever tried chocolate salad dressing?), but leave time (and room) for Le Carré D'Alethius itself: not so much for

the modern hotel but more for the exceptional cuisine of Michelin-starred chef Olivier Samin, who trained with Anne-Sophie Pic. This is a place to splash out, so submerge yourself in the £132 menu, which includes a wine flight.

For lunch the next day, book the chef's table at **6. Auberge De Montfleury** (auberge-de-montfleury.fr) between the Coiron massif and the Ardèche River. It's not the easiest place to find but worth seeking out to eat in the kitchen and watch the chef prepare your food right in front of you. Stay overnight at the excellent Michelin-starred

hotel-restaurant **7. Le Clair De La Plume** (clairplume.com) in the shadow of the medieval fortress at Grignan, where a table overlooking the garden provides a truly memorable experience.

The last day of this grand *gastronomique* tour is the star attraction herself, Anne-Sophie Pic, now overseeing one of the restaurants at London's Four Seasons Hotel and rightly revered for the five-star **8. Maison Pic** in Valence (anne-sophie-pic.com), as well as its three-Michelin-starred restaurant, a stylish modern shrine to the best that the Rhône Valley can provide. **GQ**