

TRAVEL

TOP OF THE WORLD

Matt Rudd stays at the Shard, Europe's





SPAIN

MODERN DESIGN, GALICIA, SLEEPS 8 Don't just have a beach holiday: at **Castro Baroña**, you can live out your Grand Designs fantasies, too. Owned by its architect, clad in timber reclaimed from local larch trees, and the wall of glass on the ground floor slides back to create a space that's half room, half terrace. There's no swimming – but cross the lane out front and you'll be in the water quicker than Kevin Spacey. Cloud can say "magnificent seaside living". Santiago de Compostela airport is a 50-minute drive. £1,906; 020 7351 6384, sjvillas.co.uk

FARMHOUSE, ALICANTE, SLEEPS 8 Knobbly stone walls, sky-blue tiling, a forest of olive trees – inside, **Xaymaca** (ref 2365) is a riot of colour and original details. But it's the outdoors you'll appreciate most: this restored 19th-century farmhouse. At the front, a flower-fringed courtyard with a burbling fountain is the place for alfresco meals. At the back, there's a pool and an orchard of lemon, loquat and avocado trees for lazy afternoons.

The nearest beach is five miles away; Alicante airport is an hour's drive. £1,906; 020 3384 7066, spain-holiday.com

PORTUGAL

WATER MILL, MINHO, SLEEPS 4 The river doesn't just run past this place (ref 566). It flows under the hallway, too. You can watch it through a glass panel in the floor – one of many architectural flourishes in a property that is as much arty apartment as former water mill. Outside, a pool with teak decking sits amid the willows; beyond lie vinho-verde vineyards and the beaches of the Costa Verde. Porto airport is an hour's drive. £1,372; 0800 988 5586, villaretreats.com

CROATIA

SEASIDE APARTMENT, DALMATIA, SLEEPS 4 Keep things simple and cheap with a seafront first-floor flat near Unesco-protected Trogir (ref TG002). Geometric floor tiles and fuchsia cushions create an upbeat atmosphere indoors, and the view onto

A room with a big view Above, the timber-clad modernism of Castro Baroña, in Spain. Top left, Infinito, in Sicily. Bottom left, Villa Sea, in Turkey

the water from the balcony is just as cheerful. It's a minute's walk to your morning swim, and Split airport is only 15 minutes away by car. £619; 020 8888 6655, croatianvillas.com

COUNTRY VILLA, ISTRIA, SLEEPS 6 Maya (ref 3185) is a big house for six people. It's a pretty one, too, with pale stone exteriors set off by natty sky-blue shutters. Inside, french windows and tiled floors keep things cool and airy. Outside, the lawned garden and 26ft pool scream playtime, while three shaded terraces offer refuge for anyone with a good book. The harbour town of Vrsar is 12 miles away; Pula airport is a 45-minute drive. £1,995; 01954 261431, vintagetraavel.co.uk

GREECE

SIMPLE RETREAT, ITHACA, SLEEPS 4 The sunny balcony out front is perfect for a yoghurt and honey breakfast; the vine-covered terrace at the back is the place for a souvlaki supper. And in between? **Villa Megaskinos** is a simple stone house amid olive and lemon trees. You could stay put

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