

ALASTAIR SAWDAY'S SPECIAL PLACES TO STAY  
FRENCH HOTELS:

La Maison de Rhodes  
18, rue Linard Gonthier  
10000 Troyes

An exceptional find, a 16th-century timber-framed mansion that once belonged to the Templars. Monsieur Thierry's breathtaking renovation has brought a clean contemporary style to ancient bricks and mortar. Highlights include an interior courtyard of cobble and grass and heavy wooden doors under the coachman's porch that give onto the street. The house sits plumb in the old quarter of Troyes, on the doorstep of the cathedral. Bedrooms are bona fide jaw-droppers\_ expect the best in minimalist luxury. Huge beds are dressed in white linen, ancient beams straddle the ceiling. Walls are either exposed rough stone, or smooth limestone, often a clever mix of both. Bathrooms, too, are outstanding; most are enormous and have terracotta floors, big bath tubs, fluffy robes. Views are to the cathedral spires, the courtyard or the formal gardens of the Museum of Modern Art, directly opposite. A perfect blend of old and new, an exhilarating architectural landscape. Troyes is full of wonders, though the bibulous may be tempted to venture beyond the city walls.

The region is quite well-known for its local tippie\_ Champagne.