

**EUROPEAN**

# TRAVEL & LIFE

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## CHATEAU STYLE

Some enchanted  
evening wear in the  
Loire Valley

The New Vienna

Coastal Portugal

Working Klosters

Muscan Citadel

English Cooking

Paris Perfection

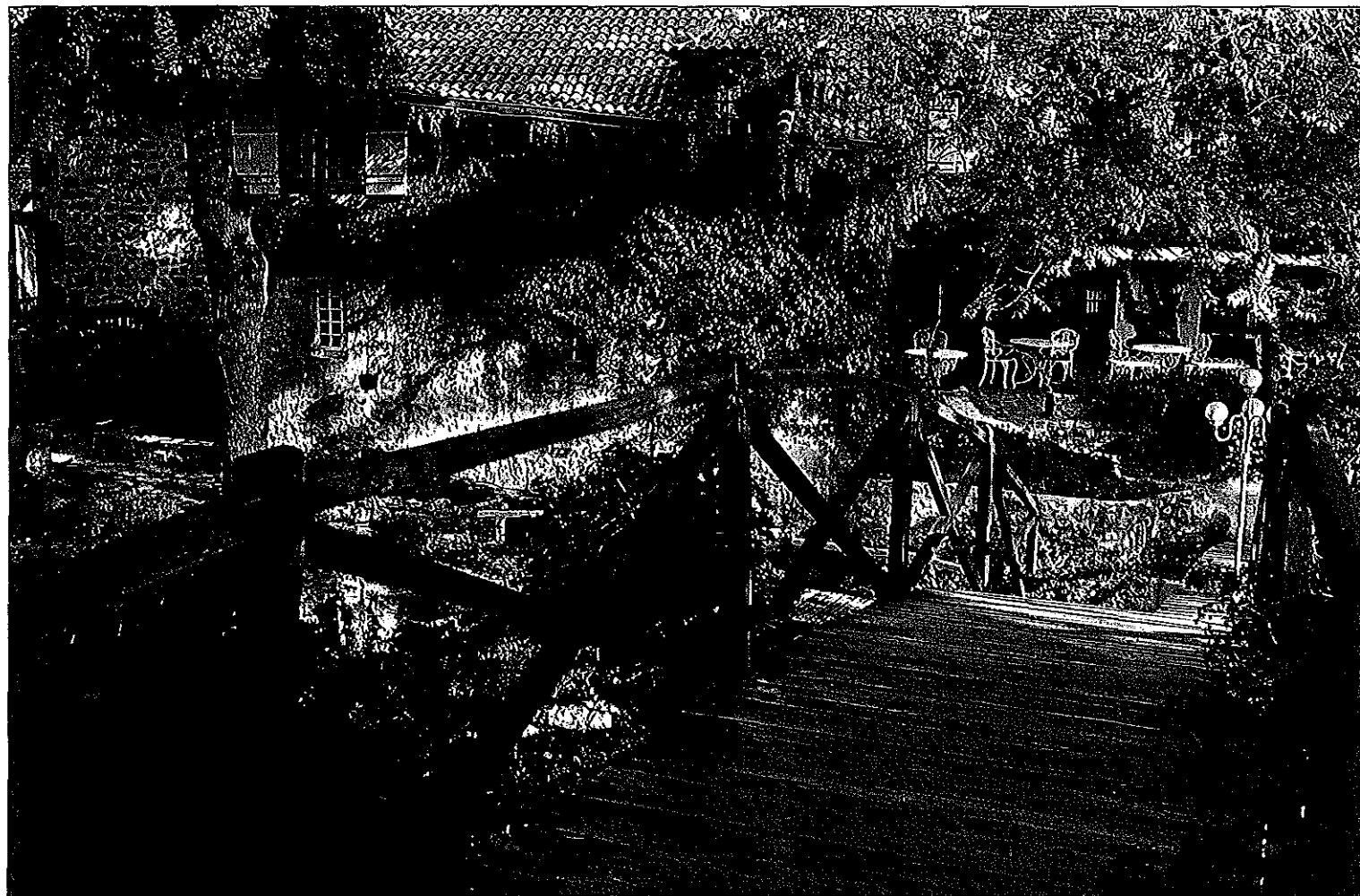
Great Barrier Reef

PATRIC WALKER'S  
NEW YEAR'S HOROSCOPE



*Buried deep in the heart of France, the Moulin du Roc is the perfect country inn with eleven soothing rooms, irresistible cooking, and the ultimate luxury—privacy*

# A Little Riverside Romance



The garden at the Moulin du Roc looks like a scene by Matisse or Bonnard, the kind of place you'll never want to leave.

**M**oulin du Roc is a place for savoring life. This seventeenth-century walnut mill has been converted into a sort of rustic Ritz on the Dronne river in the Périgord region of southwestern France. My wife and I stayed in a room, under the eaves, that is a dream of a setting, a perfect hideaway. Up its own narrow flight of stairs and decorated in lush crimsons, glowing rusts and reds, it has a vast canopied bed, richly veneered antique writing desks and bureaus, and perfect silk-covered side chairs. Large plants and handsome rugs, wallpaper, and draperies surrounded us with leafy forms and silken flowers. We felt like characters in a novel by Colette. In the mornings, the *café complet* spread on a silver tray atop the marble-topped dresser enhanced the image.

Having the Moulin as our base meant that we always felt well rested and well nourished as we tracked about the tiny village of Champagnac-de-Belair or bicycled to the trout streams, the prehistoric caves, and other attractions of the Dordogne. The Moulin's ambience ensures content-

P L A C E S  
W E L O V E

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ment, and its food is a wonderful source of satisfaction. The cooking is done by Solange Gardillou, who owns the inn with her husband, Lucien. She has two stars from Michelin, a rating of 16 in Gault Millau, and no one would be surprised if she became one of the few women in France to earn three stars.

The setting for her meals is enchanting and warrants changing out of sneakers and jeans into something more suitable to the surrounding brocades and damasks, the cotton net curtains with flowered appliqués, the porcelain table lamps. Ornate service plates and silver knife-rests provide the comforts and style of true luxury. Feeling totally pampered, we feasted on the best ingredients of the Périgord, prepared with a flawless, rather nouvelle technique based on traditional recipes. Our first course might be fresh foie gras—incredibly creamy and flavorful, light and rich at the same time—served on one occasion with a very slightly poached pear, on another with an artichoke bottom. Or foie gras steaks cooked in honey and raspberry vinegar, the ultimate sweet and sour dish. Or firm-fleshed smoked trout or *jambon de canard*—a light, smoky rendition of duck flesh. From there we might move to a flower-petal arrangement of light and dark medallions of *pintade* (guinea fowl) in a coarse-grained mustard sauce; or a blossom form of medallions of lamb cooked with sweet garlic, a mound of *cèpes* in its center. There would be rich cheeses followed by a splendid dessert like the symphony of walnut sweets—one the texture of clotted cream, another a warm cake, the third an ice cream.

After the lush dinner, we often had our espresso, chocolate truffles, and candied orange rind out in the garden, where you are sure to feel more like *fin de siècle* noble folk than American tourists. The Moulin is closed for a month from mid-November to mid-December and again between mid-January and mid-February, but for the rest of the year, the country air and the sounds of chirping birds and rushing water lend as much charm to the inn as the gilded sconces do. The pervasive sensation is one of warmth and complete comfort, a feeling of being at home and thoroughly cosseted.

It's just a short walk past fine tapestries and windows that open to the pastures of the Périgord. And then back up to that secluded room above. —NICHOLAS FOX WEBER