LONDON
South Kensington makes a good London base - residential and village-like on the one hand, smart and centrally located on the other, with some of the city’s best museums, parks, shops and restaurants right on the doorstep. The Kensington hotel on Queen’s Gate, occupying four Victorian town houses, has recently emerged from a top-to-toe refurbishment, including the launch of a new-look restaurant appropriately called Town House. The 136 bedrooms have furnishings from the likes of Jamb and Porta Romana. From £246 a night for a standard double room. 020-7589 6300; doylecollection.com/kensington

PARIS
Live like a local and book an apartment in Paris instead of a hotel room. Paris Perfect has a huge range to choose from, including the elegantly furnished two-bedroom Saint-Etienne apartment, which is just across the street from the Eiffel Tower. Paris Perfect also acts as a concierge service, managing dinner reservations, arranging cooking classes and sharing tips on how to avoid the queues at some of the city’s principal sights. From £90 a night for an apartment. ultravilla.com/paris-perfect

CITY BREAKS
LAURA HouldswORTH SUGGESTS CHIC BASES FROM WHICH TO EXPLORE THE BRIGHTEST CITIES

ROME
Soak up the history and grandeur of Rome at Palazzo Manfredi, a seventeenth-century building that has views of the Colosseum, the Imperial Fora and the Domus Aurea villa. With only 15 rooms - this is more of a restaurant with rooms than a hotel - the service is friendly and personal. The Michelin-starred restaurant, Aroma, situated up on the rooftop terrace, serves exquisite food, such as pumpkin and almond ravioli, scallops with mint and fennel fondue, and mascarpone mousse with gingerbread ice cream. It also boasts spectacular views. Double rooms cost from £290, B&B. 00-39-06 7759 1360; palazzomanfredi.com

BARCELONA
A three-minute walk from the Ramblas, The Serras hotel has a strong, contemporary design, combining quirky features, such as headboards made from hydraulic floor tiles (left), with a sense of history - the building housed Picasso’s first studio. Rooms start at £180, B&B, based on two sharing. For sophisticated dining, the concierge can book a table at members-only One Ocean Club (oneoceanclub.com/wp) in Port Vell Marina. Or for great tapas, try Lateral (lateral.com/en) on Carrer del Consell de Cent and check out Boca Chica (bocagrande.cat/en/boca-chica) on Passatge de la Concepció for some of the best cocktails in town. 00-34-93 691 18 68; hoteltheserrasbarcelona.com