

6 FESTIVE BREAKS

Catherine Murphy picks out seasonal hot spots.





Best for family

As the host of the 2014 Irish Open, five-star **Fota Island Resort and Spa** in Co Cork prides itself on its golf course and academy but over Christmas and New Year you might be more inclined to combine relaxation and exercise at the resort's spa, which has a fitness centre, indoor swimming pool and hydrotherapy suite. Then indulge in a festive foodie treat with meals in the Fota restaurant and Amber Lounge.

Price to pay ... A one-night family B&B package (two adults, one child) costs €195. A family room for two adults and two children costs €255. Two nights in a self-catering lodge costs €415.

Festive must-do ... Fota Island's woodland surroundings will take on a magical atmosphere this Christmas with *Imagine*, a Christmas experience with Santa visits for the children. *Imagine* runs until December 23. Admission is €20 for children, €12.50 for adults. (021 488 3700; fotaisland.ie)



Best for privacy

An hour east of Agadir, **La Gazelle d'Or** in Taroudant, Morocco, is a timeless hideaway for the privacy-seeking jet set, loved-up couples and world-famous politicians - Jacques Chirac was a faithful visitor. Situated in sublime bougainvillea gardens, between the snow-covered Atlas Mountains and sea, this five-star hotel offers colonial-style hunting lodge surroundings and understated luxury. Accommodation is simple, with Moroccan-styled cottages scattered throughout the gardens and private terraces from which to enjoy the scent of orange groves. As befits a hotel that has been crowned best Moroccan cookery school in the world and hosted chefs such as Yotam Ottolenghi, La Gazelle d'Or will host a lavish New Year's Eve dinner, including food from its own organic farm.

Price to pay ... Rates for New Year's Eve are €770 per room per night. (+44 20 7097 8786; sanssoucicollection.com)

Festive must-do ... Indulge in some New Year's shopping

in nearby Taroudant, a charming walled town that's been nicknamed "Little Marrakech". A medieval Berber market town, it has souks to rival the medina of Marrakech. Shop for Moroccan rugs and locally produced argan oil.

