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## SLEEPING WITH ROYALTY

Laurie Werner Wed Apr 11 13:30:00 EDT 2007



LAUNCH SLIDESHOW Leading Hotels of the World Mi castle, no castle

The 18th-century castle has a dining room that could easily seat 80, a choice of 20 bedrooms with vintage Oriental carpets and four-poster beds, and a corridor lined with portraits of the current occupant's ancestors. After exploring the royal residence, you head outside to stroll the formal gardens, try a little clay shooting, and walk several acres with the owner's dogs. Upon your return, afternoon tea awaits in the drawing room, served on the family's heirloom silver and brought to you by ... what's that? ... a lord!

Over the last few years, royals who have inherited castles in current or former titled abodeholds of nobility like Scotland, Ireland, England, Italy and India have decided to open their palatial estates to outsiders. And it's not just for a tour, as is common with many stately homes. Royals are allowing guests to live in the castle as if they were a member of the family, an image furthered by the fact that they remain in residence because it's their home, too.

In truth, it's probably not the royals themselves pouring the tea and carrying the dishes (they do have an image to maintain, after all), but they're supervising the service and fraternizing with the guests, giving advice on the area and filling them in on the house and family history.

See our slideshow of castles with royal residents.

Take, for instance, La Residenza Napoleone III, a sumptuous three-room suite in Palazzo Ruspoli in Rome. Stay here and you're bound to have some contact with the effervescent Principessa Letizia Ruspoli, who created the suite next to her family's apartment in the palace. Guests of Glen Castle in County Limerick, Ireland will no doubt encounter Desmond FitzGerald, the 29th Knight of Glen, whose family has owned the land for some 800 years and who still lives in the castle with his family. And House of Stuart descendant Charles Stuart, who restored the 17th-century tower house Stuart Castle near Inverness, Scotland

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