

TRAVELER'S NOTEBOOK



Aristocratic Rome

ITALY A new alternative to a hotel stay in Rome provides a truly exclusive—and imperial—experience. The charming Principessa Letizia Ruspoli (right) has opened her family's 16th-century **Palazzo Ruspoli**, once the home of Napoleon III, to guests, who may stay in an exquisitely restored suite, appropriately named **La Residenza Napoleone III** (left). The palace, which has been the Ruspoli family residence since 1713, is only minutes from the Spanish Steps and just steps from Via Condotti, Rome's main shopping street, yet it seems centuries away from the modern hustle and bustle. To reach the suite, you pass through a Doric colonnade and ascend a grand marble staircase lined with busts of Roman emperors. Upon entering, you'll find three palatial rooms—two reception rooms and a bedroom—that are furnished with the family's museum-quality antiques, priceless paintings and sumptuous pillows and draperies. The suite also has a small bathroom, a powder room and a kitchen, and lest you forget you are still in the 21st-century, a satellite TV, a fax machine and a CD stereo will remind you. A private butler can bring breakfast each morning and can be asked to arrange anything from a candlelit dinner for two to a dinner party for twenty. \$1,176 per night; 011-39-347-733-7098; fax: 011-39-06-6880-8083; prestigiousrome.com. ELIZABETH HELMAN MINCHELLI



Ritzy Aspen

COLORADO The skiing at Aspen Highlands has been a treasured secret for years, but now Aspen's neighboring mountain village is gaining a reputation for luxury, too, thanks in part to the **Ritz-Carlton Club** (below), the first in a series of fractional-ownership residential clubs being developed by the hotel chain. Unlike at Ritz-Carlton hotels, where any paying guest is welcome, the only way to rest your weary boot-clad feet here is to buy a fraction of the club for between \$180,000 and \$490,000 (not bad in a market where the average luxury house costs around \$2 million). In return, each owner, or "member," is entitled to a minimum of twenty-eight days per year in one of the club's seventy-three two- or three-bedroom units; you don't have to fret about maintenance or other ownership issues, but you enjoy the benefits of being at home—and more. On request, the refrigerator will be stocked with your favorite foods, and your belongings will be brought out of storage—family photos will be put on display and your skis will be waxed and ready. Members get discounted lift tickets and on-site parking, and they have ski-in/ski-out access, as well as all the usual Ritz-Carlton trimmings. The club's stone-and-timber exteriors are reminiscent of early-20th-century national-park lodges, but inside it's classic Ritz, with marble bathrooms, plush bedrooms and glorious views. While each unit comes with a state-of-the-art kitchen, and a chef is available to do the cooking, the American cuisine of the club's Willow Creek Bistro might coax guests from their rooms. Perhaps it was the promise of this kind of cozy living that convinced the owners of the Orlando Magic basketball franchise to purchase two fractions in 2000. The team joins a growing list of those who want, for at least one month a year, their own piece of Aspen. 800-278-0121. DIANE TESMEYER

