

Far & Away

BY JUDY D'EDUARDO

TRAVEL BRIEFS FOR JET SETTERS

Port-able Shopping



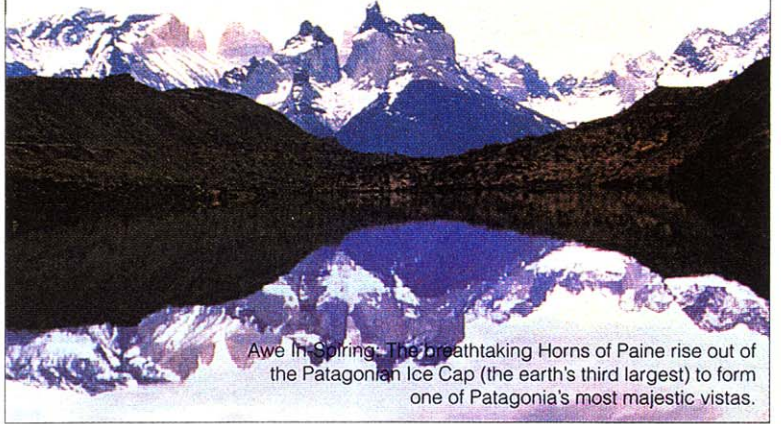
Shopper/author
Suzy Gershman

Before you board the Med-bound *Sea Goddess I* this summer, be sure to pick up and study a copy of Suzy Gershman's best-selling travel book *Born to Shop*. She just may give a

quiz. The authoress will conduct lectures throughout each seven-day cruise as well as lead exclusive shopping tours at each port. Gershman's travel guide books are published by HarperCollins. She also writes for *Family Circle* magazine and regularly appears on *Good Morning America*.

The *Sea Goddess I* departs from Piraeus to Civitavecchia on July 22; Civitavecchia to Monte Carlo on July 29. For information and reservations, call Cunard at: 800-221-4770.

Dateline: Patagonia



Awe In Spring: The breathtaking Horns of Paine rise out of the Patagonian Ice Cap (the earth's third largest) to form one of Patagonia's most majestic vistas.

No one gets to South America's southernmost region by accident. Yet for the ambitious explorer, all roads seem to lead here—eventually. This is a land of extremes, where the azure blue of a January summer sky can turn foreboding without much warning. Perhaps the urge to travel here is largely a combination of curiosity and instinct, guided in part by the desire to visit one of the most remote places on the planet.

In the cone-shaped region of the continent, Chile and Argentina converge on a parallel course to form Patagonia. It begins at 39-degrees longitude and extends south to the Strait of Magellan. At its northeastern point is the Peninsula Valdes, or the "zoo of the Atlantic," named for its variety and abundance of Magellanic penguins, elephant seals, sea lions, orca and right whales and sea birds.

On the Pacific side, Chile's Horns of Paine mountains soar a breathtaking 8,000 feet skyward. Farther south, the Andes' 5,000-mile stretch along the western spine of Chile ends, dropping off suddenly into the Strait of Magellan—an important South American sailing passage discovered by Ferdinand Magellan in 1520. Beyond this splinter of water at the southernmost tip of the continent is the glacier-ringed island of Tierra del Fuego—the 57th parallel, the proverbial "end of the earth."

For itinerary dates, information and reservations, call Outer Edge Expeditions at: 800-322-5235.

The Final Frontier

City Slickers, step aside. Reservations are being taken by Fits Equestrian for its first all-women ride through Wyoming's most scenic—and historic—trails. This special "living history" trek celebrates the women who were involved in the taming of the Western frontier. Two eight-day, seven-night trips have been scheduled, departing July 8 and August 5. For information and reservations, call Fits Equestrian at: 800-666-3487.♦

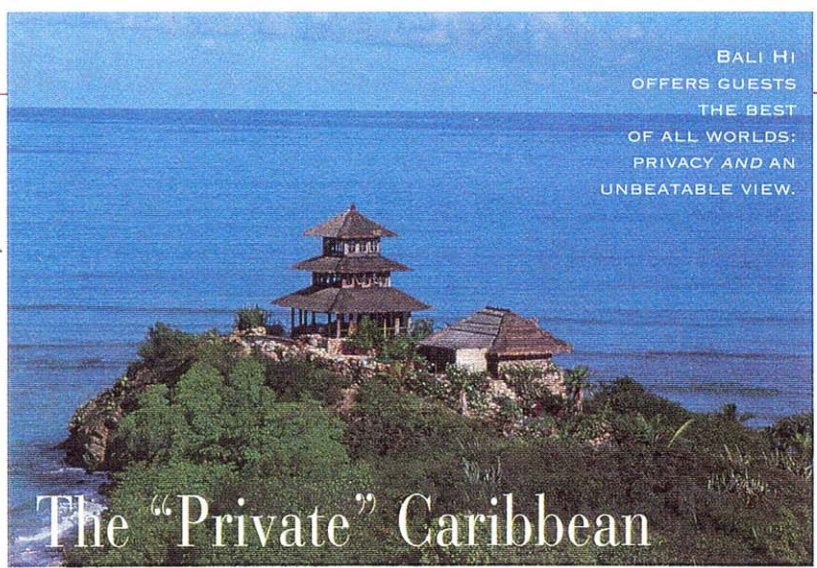
Ride 'Em Cowgirl: Fits Equestrians' first all-women horse trek heads for the hills of Wyoming.



Far & Away

BY JUDY DIEDWARD

TRAVEL BRIEFS FOR JET SETTERS



BALI HI
OFFERS GUESTS
THE BEST
OF ALL WORLDS:
PRIVACY AND AN
UNBEATABLE VIEW.

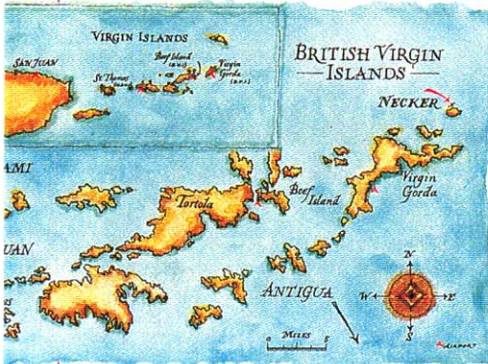
The "Private" Caribbean

You have to travel to the northeastern extremity of the verdant British Virgin Islands to find one of Richard Branson's best-kept secrets: **Necker Island**, an uninhabited 72-acre piece of real estate that he purchased in the early '80s during a house-hunting expedition.

Branson wasted little time in turning this rocky land mass into something quite extraordinary. In 1982 construction began. The top of the island was leveled and on it built a 10-room Balinese-styled main house, reflective of Branson's attraction to the country's architecture and culture. In fact, most of the furniture and fabrics used throughout were handmade in Bali and shipped to the island.

But just as no man is an island, Branson couldn't keep this gem of a getaway to himself. He made it available to rent—the *entire* island, that is—and immediately attracted an elite guest list from business, social and entertainment circles: Demi Moore and Bruce Willis, Steven Spielberg, Harrison Ford, Robert DeNiro, Oprah, Mel Gibson—even Diana and the children—are among those who have claimed the island at one time or another.

The main house is a triumph of masonry and divided into two sections. The common area includes a massive living



room, dining area and full kitchen, all of which is surrounded by a spacious terrace and lower-level swimming pool and Jacuzzi. The other half is home to nine double bedrooms and one master suite. To accommodate extra guests, two authentic Balinese houses sit in seclusion on opposite sides of the island. These extraordinary, three-tiered structures were built in Bali and reconstructed on the island. Bali Hi borders the ocean while Bali Lo sits farther inland. Both are equipped with full kitchen, living room, bath and pools.

Activities are generally limited to watersports, while landlubbers have two options: tennis (on two lit courts) and sunbathing.

As for the cost? If you have to ask, you probably can't afford it.

For reservations and information, call Resorts Management, Inc. at (800) 557-4255

Puttin' on the Ritz—in Naples

After you've cancelled your plans for that luxury European getaway that just won't fit into your busy travel agenda, consider Plan B: a decadent weekend for two at the **Ritz-Carlton** in Naples—Florida, that is. Even though you're close to home, you'll feel as though you're a world away.

In fact, with its three miles of white sand beaches, a championship 36-hole golf course, and the entire city of Naples to explore, you'll think twice about traveling outside the Sunshine State to satisfy your wanderlust spirit.

And true to its reputation for delivering first-class service, the Ritz has been named the number-one mainland resort in the annual *Condé Nast Traveler Readers' Choice Awards*, and has taken top honors for all-around excellence from *Travel & Leisure*.

(For those whose taste for luxury exceeds their budget, you'll be happy to know that from June to September rates are just about cut in half.)

For reservations and information, call (813) 598-3300.

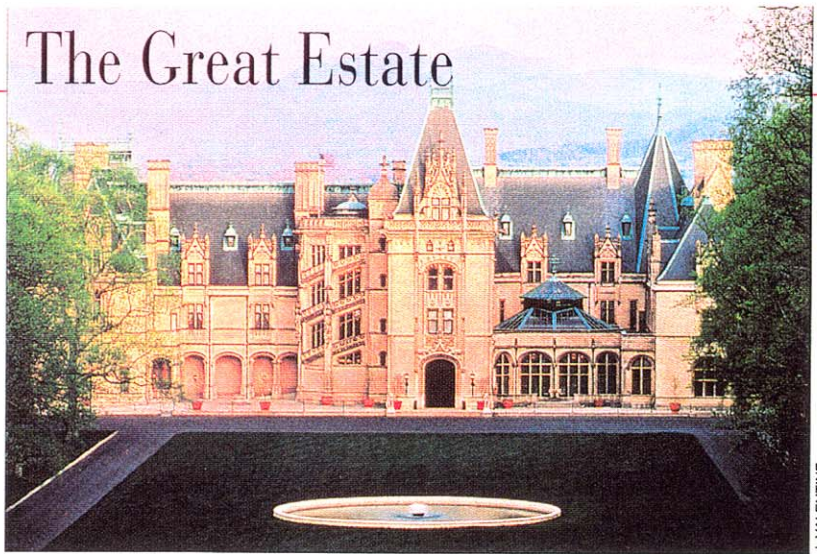


THE VERY TONY RITZ-CARLTON

Far & Away

BY JUDY D'EDUARDO

TRAVEL BRIEFS FOR JET SETTERS



J. VALENTINE

No residence in America brings the glorious Gilded Age more vividly to life than the Biltmore Estate in Asheville, North Carolina, the brainchild of George Washington Vanderbilt, architect Richard Morris Hunt and landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted.

If you love The Breakers Hotel, you owe it to yourself to take a tour through the other half of this genre of grand traditions: the **Biltmore**

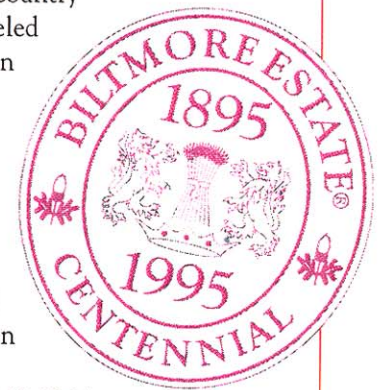
Estate, George Washington Vanderbilt III's spectacular 250-room mansion set on more than 8,000 acres in Asheville, North Carolina—the largest private home in America. But when you go, be sure to pack a token gift. This *grande dame* of residences is celebrating her 100th anniversary. And she's never looked better.

Owned and operated as a historic house by Vanderbilt's grandson William Cecil, more than 80 of the Biltmore's original rooms are open to the public, giving visitors a detailed portrait of one of this country's greatest estates. Thanks to careful preservation of the details of this extraordinary landmark, guests can see the house virtually as it was in Vanderbilt's day. The expansive grounds and gardens were designed by renowned landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted, who was commissioned by Vanderbilt to create a stunning backdrop for his chateau.

Vanderbilt's dream first began to take shape in 1887 when he visited Asheville on holiday. Enchanted by the remote majesty of the Blue Ridge Mountains, he decided to make the spot the site of his country estate. Commissioning architect Richard Morris Hunt, he set out to create a mansion modeled after the chateau in France's Loire Valley. In keeping with Vanderbilt's penchant for modern technology, the entire house was outfitted with central heat, mechanical refrigeration, electric lights and appliances and indoor bathrooms—all supreme luxuries at the turn of the century!

The estate's most recent addition came in 1985, when the original dairy, a 90,000-square-foot farm operation facility, was converted into a state-of-the-art winery. Covering about 100 acres, the vineyards produce some 200 tons of grapes each year—satisfying almost half of the winery's production capacity. Chateau Biltmore Chardonnay, which is produced exclusively from estate-grown grapes, is one of 113 award-winning Biltmore wines. Visitors can tour the winery and sample the vino.

For information on the estate, winery and garden tours and centennial events, call 800-543-2961.



Water Works: LaPlaya's new beach-side pool in Naples, Florida.

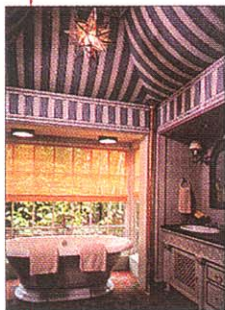
A Noble Effort

Naples' **LaPlaya Beach Resort** is open and ready for business after a year-long shutdown during which it received a \$12 million renovation. The verdict is in and guests give the new look a major thumbs-up. Just ask Jimmy Connors and the entire Champions Tour group who stayed there while playing in Naples last summer. And unlike many of the neighboring properties, which have boardwalk beach access, the 190-room LaPlaya is a 10-pace walk from Vanderbilt Beach. The resort is owned by Noble House Hotels & Resorts of Dallas, creators of the new Jupiter Beach Resort. For information and reservations, call 800-237-6883. ♦

Far & Away

BY JUDY DiEDUARDO

TRAVEL BRIEFS FOR JET SETTERS



Twin Farms

BARNARD, VERMONT

If this is the year when it's just the two of you for Thanksgiving, rejoice! Call your travel agent and make reservations for an intimate holiday visit to Twin Farms in Barnard, Vermont—a 40-minute drive from New Hampshire's Lebanon airport. Set on 235 dreamy acres in the Green Mountain State (approximately 10 miles north of Woodstock), this 18th-century inn could easily warrant regularly scheduled return visits—for two, however. Guests are discouraged from bringing children.

Despite its name, Twin Farms is not a farm. Rather, it is a collection of 13 charming stone cottages positioned around the four-bedroom main house, which dates back to 1795. However, its heyday was in the '30s, '40s and '50s, when it was home to its most famous occupants: Nobel Prize-winning author Sinclair Lewis (America's first) and his journalist wife, Dorothy Thompson. More recently, however, Twin Farms served as a summer residence for Laila and Thurston Twigg-Smith, a prominent Honolulu businessman and art collector. The couple renovated the property and opened it as an inn two years ago. It is indeed a treasure-trove for the senses: oak floors, soapstone counters, cherry cabinets, heated tile floors in the bathrooms, feather beds, and untreated 310-count weave cotton linens throughout.



Twin Farms

For the quintessential Thanksgiving experience, Twin Farms will be transformed by a Martha Stewartesque display of pumpkins, squash and gourds, and chef Neil Wigglesworth will prepare a traditional turkey dinner. Afterwards, there will be just enough time for a leisurely stroll or vigorous hike before guests are summoned back to the table for the pie buffet. With resident pastry chef Michael Recchiuti at the helm, this very important course can be lethal. Flavors run the gamut from classic apple, pumpkin and pecan to a yummy pear-almond with vanilla sauce.

Accommodations start at \$700 a night and go up to \$1,500 for the largest cottage. Space at Twin Farms is limited to 32 guests, and \$8,000 will buy you the entire property—for a day, that is. 800-894-6327.

Darst Victorian Manor

MT. DORA, FLORIDA

Word is out. Mt. Dora's newest bed and breakfast has opened just in time for the fall season—and the perfect away-from-home Thanksgiving minus the airplane tickets.

The brainchild of Fort Lauderdale residents James and Nancy Darst, the manor is an elegant reproduction of a late-18th-century home that seems 200 years ahead of its time: Remote-controlled gas fireplaces, whirlpool tubs and, soon, a generous swimming pool round out its collection of modern conveniences.

Located 25 miles northwest of Orlando, its size is just what you'd expect of a B&B: one two-room suite, one three-room suite and three single rooms (\$125-\$200).

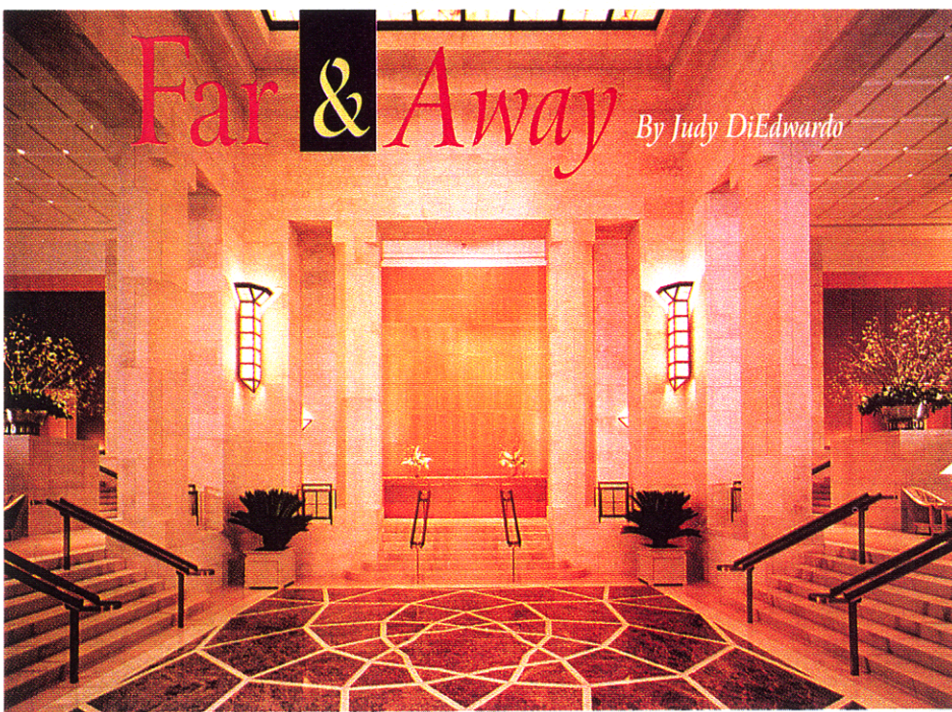
While breakfast is the only meal prepared and served at Darst, the nearby Lakeside Inn Restaurant (800-556-5016) and Gables Restaurant (904-383-8993) await those who come in search of a memorable Thanksgiving feast.

For those who take their postmeal exercise seriously, you couldn't come to a more ideal town: Mt. Dora and biking/walking are famous friends. The sleepy spot's winding, shady streets are perfect for promenading because of the uninterrupted sidewalks and scarcity of traffic. That is, unless there's an antique festival on the rise—then the friendly crowds get even friendlier. Ironically, Mt. Dora does not have a single bike shop, so if you're inclined to tour on two wheels, bring your own. 904-383-4050.

*Bird Calls:
A Trio of
Thanksgiving
Destinations*

Far & Away

By Judy DiEdwardo



Four Seasons Hotel

Four Seasons Hotel

New York, New York

Located at 57 East 57th St. amidst Manhattan's premier corporate and shopping addresses sits the 52-story **FOUR SEASONS HOTEL** — the tallest in New York City and a veritable Shangri-la for those who have called her "home" for even a night.

But it's what's inside that really counts — things like comfort, space and amenities. And the Four Seasons earns stellar marks for all three.

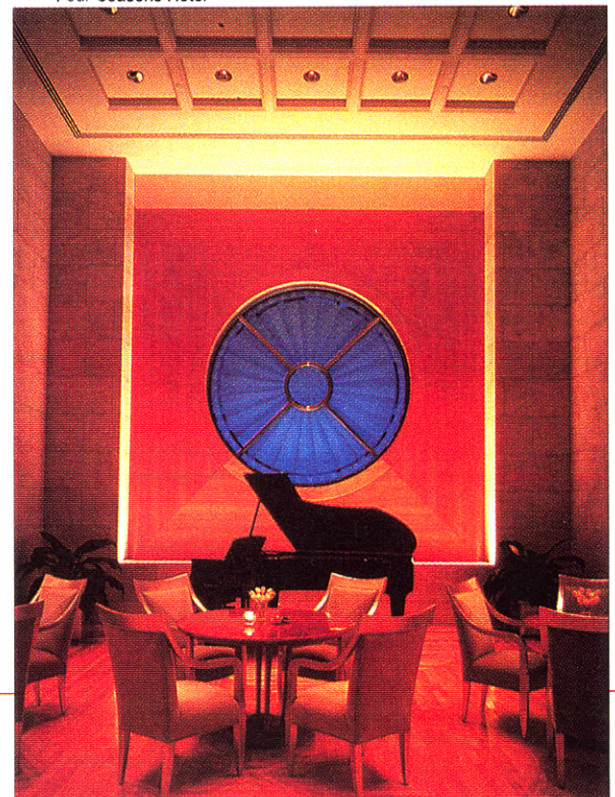
All of its 370 guest rooms, half of which feature full Central Park or city views, are roomier than most: The Four Seasons has the largest standard guest rooms in Manhattan — averaging 600 sq. ft.

For those lucky enough to reserve the palatial Presidential Suite, space is never a problem. This 3,000-sq.-ft. enclave occupies the entire top floor of the hotel and features unparalleled panoramic views of the city.

Amenities span the spectrum, from a room-service breakfast that's included in the room rate to an impressive assortment of spa services.

The hotel's architecture is as legendary as its world-class service. The only I.M. Pei-designed hotel in the Western Hemisphere, the distinctive, honey-colored French limestone, which covers the hotel's exterior and interior is the same Pei used in his expansion of another important landmark on the other side of the Atlantic: the Louvre. 800-332-3442.

Four Seasons Hotel



The Pierre Hotel

New York, New York

Balancing Old World charm with a decidedly modern attitude toward comfort and elegance, **THE PIERRE** can be counted among the Manhattan's coterie of great hotels. Its location on prestigious Fifth Avenue overlooking Central Park doesn't hurt either.

Built in 1930 and completely renovated in 1992, the European-styled Pierre has 53 suites among its 202 guest rooms. It has a host of permanent residents, as well, who occupy 75 apartments.

Despite its reputation for discretion, The Pierre's stunning interiors didn't escape the watchful eye of Hollywood. Al Pacino and company chose the hotel's magnificent Cotillion Room to film that unforgettable tango scene from "Scent of a Woman." Other memorable events have been staged there, as well.

The Pierre's signature space, however, is the Rotunda room on the lobby level. The stunning muraled walls and *trompe-l'oeil* ceiling are an artisan's dream. 800-332-3442.

A REDUX!

Central Park South wouldn't be the same without the **RITZ-CARLTON**. Lest you haven't been to the Ritz since the renovation of '93, you're in for a few delightful surprises. All 214 guest rooms and suites — many with panoramic park and city views — were re-styled to reflect the warmth and elegance cherished by its well-heeled clientele. New additions include a fitness center, as well as the Ritz-Carlton Club, a concierge level on the 16th floor, and new junior suites.

The entire ground floor was redefined to better reflect the sophisticated European hotel atmosphere that has the Ritz-Carlton trademark. 800-241-3333.

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TRAVEL BRIEFS FOR JET SETTERS

Knappogue Castle

COUNTY CLARE, IRELAND

Where the remnants of history meet with the modern world, you'll find Knappogue Castle — a stunning tribute to the architecture that makes Ireland's southern landscape a delight to the eye and a rich bounty for the imagination.

Built in 1467, Knappogue Castle was once home to the warrior clan of the McNamaras. In 1641, it was occupied by Oliver Cromwell's troops and in the early 20th century it served as headquarters for General Michael Brennan in Ireland's fight for freedom. Today, however, it meets more civilized demands with four graciously-appointed deluxe suites replete with exquisite antique furniture, paintings, fireplaces, sunken tubs and canopied king-size beds. Guests can enjoy tea in front of a roaring fire in the sitting room, play the piano in the drawing room, arrange a gourmet picnic on the back lawn beneath the leprechaun tree, read a book in the Rose Garden, or simply play Lord and Lady at a medieval banquet in the Great Hall.

For information and reservations call: (011) 353-1-475-1665 or fax (011) 353-1-475-1012

*~ Home for St. Patty's Day Holiday:
Ireland's Most Enchanting Castles ~*

Luttrellstown Castle

DUBLIN, IRELAND

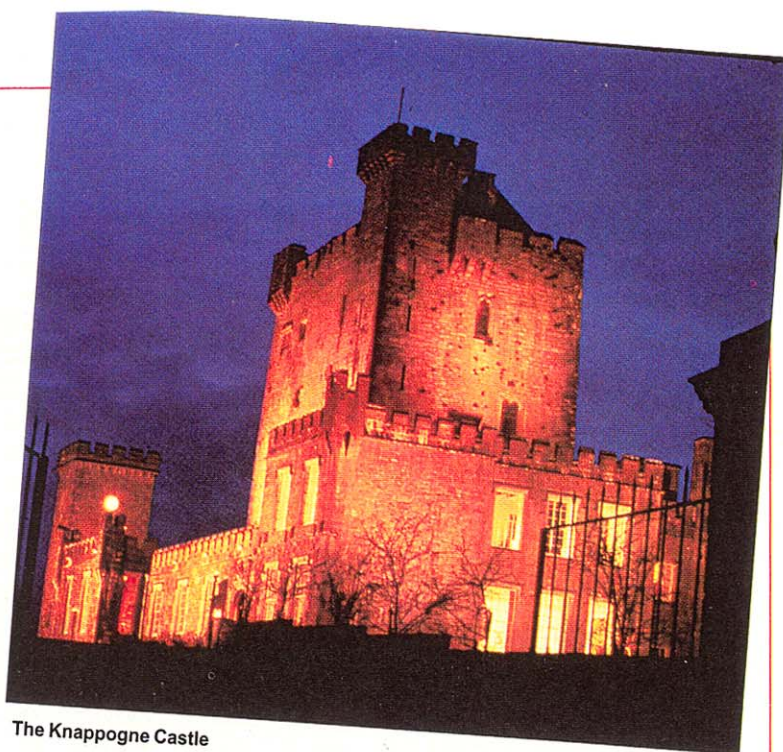


This imposing 60-room Gothic Castle, dating to 1436 and set on 560 acres of scenic undulating parkland, has earned a reputation as one of Europe's most prestigious castles.

Its former grandeur has been polished to a brilliant shine thanks to a recent restoration effort which included its breathtaking 18th-century ballroom. A walk through this magnificent room harkens back to a bygone era when the grand tradition was elegance.

Luttrellstown has long been a center for entertaining royalty and celebrities — from Prince Rainier and Princess Grace of Monaco to Fred Astaire — each of whom became enchanted by this renowned estate.

► 144



The Knappogue Castle

Say Spa-ah

THE GLAMOROUS WORLD OF THE PENINSULA, NEW YORK sits just a few steps from the cacophonous corner of Fifth Avenue and 55th Street.

Formerly the fashionable Gotham Hotel, The Peninsula reflects the beaux arts style of the Belle Epoque Gotham, highlighted by the gracious and elegant lobby and circular sweeping staircase constructed of rich Bianco Classico marble. It's breathtaking and quite grand. But today's travelers do not live by elegance alone.

Exquisite food is mandatory and The Peninsula doesn't disappoint with its sumptuous Adrienne Restaurant and, for lighter cuisine, Le Bistro.

Next stop? The Peninsula's 35,000-square-foot, glass-enclosed state-of-the-art, tri-level rooftop spa. (You'll be especially delighted if you're a Nordic Tracker: They have several.) After your morning workout, take in spectacular views of the city while enjoying cocktails at the Pen-Top Bar and Terrace.

This 23-story hotel features 242 rooms, from \$295, and 35 suites from \$550 for a junior to \$3,500 for the 2,000-square-foot presidential suite.

For information and reservations call: (800)262-9467.



The poshest pampering in town.



Southern Comfort: a Hyatt Key West specialty

Eco-Logic

THE LANDMARK 120-ROOM HYATT Key West has been earning high marks since it opened, but its latest push for eco-mindedness has skyrocketed its popularity among locals. Nothing new, you say? Tell it to the housekeeping staff who last year began toting multi-colored recycling bins on their rounds.

This latest addition should come as no surprise, considering that this oceanfront landmark was one of the town's first to join its "Adopt a Block Program," and do its neighborly duty by keeping clean the lot and public beach next door.

And that's just on land.

Preserving marine life is yet another facet of the Hyatt's ecological focus. "Parrot fish, angel fish and other marine life are fed off the dock on a regular basis," says general manager Ernst Bacher. Winter visitors include manatees from the Tampa Bay area. Lured by the warmer waters around Key West, these friendly endangered mammals can't resist stopping by.

For information and reservations call (800) 233-1234.

The "Perfect" Season

CONVENIENTLY LOCATED IN THE HEART OF LONDON'S Mayfair district, the upscale Four Seasons Hotel creates that exquisite ask-and-you-shall-receive level of service rightfully reserved for such five-star properties. (We would even throw in a sixth star!) And on a hot summer's day—of which the city had plenty this past summer—the Four Seasons is a true oasis: not every upscale hotel in London has air conditioning.



Traditional luxury

So what's their secret? The Four Seasons embodies the essential elements of a fine hotel without sacrificing functionality and practicality for fluff: Whether you want to go horseback riding in Hyde Park across the street or grab a veggie burger at the Hard Rock Cafe around the corner on a busy Friday night (when the wait can be two blocks long),

both requests are handled by an attentive concierge staff with equal aplomb and enthusiasm.

Perhaps then, the aplomb, not the requests, is the true measure.

For information and reservations call: (800) 332-3442.