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grand duchy

This summer, a stay with a duke is a must. Do it in style at Hôtel de Crillon

By DELILAH KHOMO

Old-world glamour drips from every corner of the Hôtel de Crillon. With its magnificent Corinthian colonnade, Coustou sculptures and Versailles-worthy interiors, the sumptuous former home of the Duke d'Aumont has drawn gasps of pleasure since 1758. But then, its façade was designed by Ange-Jacques Gabriel, principal architect to Louis XV, so no doubt Marie-Antoinette felt at home when she visited to take music lessons. The property later passed to the Duke de Crillon and has stood proud through the reigns of two French kings, the French Revolution, the rise and fall of the Napoleonic Empire and the covenant of the League of Nations – which was signed in the mansion's very own ballroom in 1919.

The Crillon, which became a hotel in 1909, today appeals both to the old school and the new guard, following an exacting five-year, expensive restoration (in excess of



Clockwise from top left, Suite Duc de Crillon; Lauren Bush at a ball at the Crillon in 2000; the hotel's marble interiors

€200 million) to polish its baroque charm and high-octane Franco-phone chic.

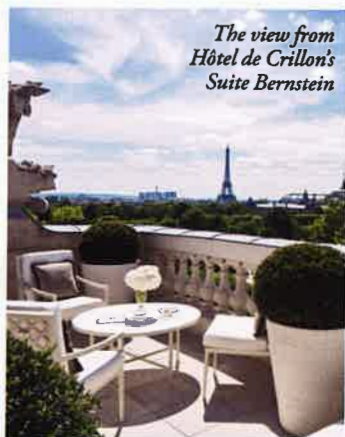
The sweeping black-and-white marble staircase, with its towering arches and lofty pillars, is so grand you'll feel inadequate descending without a tiara or white tie, like the glittering roll call of debutantes who come for the legendary Crillon Ball.

Guests can take tea in the Jardin d'Hiver or savour a perfectly chilled

glass from a choice of the cellar's 213 champagnes in the gilded bar. A pre-dinner dip in the subterranean gold mosaicked swimming pool is a must – as is dinner itself, at the Michelin-starred L'Ecrin.

On the second floor in the Suite Duc de Crillon, overlooking the Rue Boissy-d'Anglas, everything is *luxe, calme et volupté*, with floor-to-ceiling windows, a silk-draped bed and a gargantuan bath carved out from a single piece of Carrara marble and adorned with bath oils and tonics from the wonderfully romantic apothecary Buly 1803. It's the fantastical, precise attention to detail that stands out – in the mornings, charming staff conjure a perfectly laid-out breakfast, and there are butlers available to organise everything from last-minute opera tickets at Palais Garnier to sugary birthday confections for your children. If ever there was a moment to let them eat cake...

Book it: Stay at Hôtel de Crillon from £842 per night. rosewoodhotels.com



The view from Hôtel de Crillon's Suite Bernstein

More hotels fit for a duke...

THE GRITTI PALACE

Every detail here reminds guests that this Renaissance palace was, in the 16th century, home to Andrea Gritti, Doge of the Venetian Republic. From the acres of damask on the walls to the brocatelle on the Rubelli antique chairs, all is grand. An atmosphere of quiet exclusivity prevails in Bar Longhi, a masterpiece of a space, while the Riva Lounge, with its private pontoon overlooking the Grand Canal, is still the best spot in Venice for a Bellini. marriot.co.uk

HOTEL ENDSLEIGH

Set among 100 acres of romantic Grade I listed gardens that sweep down towards the River Tamar, this bucolic retreat was built as a fishing lodge for the 6th Duke of Bedford, and was frequented by his descendents over the following centuries. Today, it's still all about classic British elegance: wood-panelled drawing rooms and floral bedrooms, complete with roll-top baths and chaises longues. It's grand but never pompous – exactly what an English country-house hotel should be. hotelendsleigh.com

VILLA SOLA CABIATI

One of Lake Como's greatest private villas, beloved of the 18th-century Serbelloni dukes who summered there, is now available for hire. It's got a glorious pool, idyllic garden and a great stone staircase cascading down to the water's edge – not to mention a collection of Riva boats that guests can drive. grandhoteltremesso.com

HOTEL IMPERIAL

Duke Philipp of Württemberg's palatial former residence is a maximalist's dream of velvets, chandeliers and tapestries – and each of the 138 rooms is unique. Brahms, Wagner and Mahler were all regulars, as was Charlie Chaplin, who famously declared, 'Stay at the Imperial and feel like an Emperor'. It's still the smartest address in Vienna. marriot.co.uk