

MR PORTER

THE PALATIAL HOTELS TO LORD IT UP IN NOW

Swap the city for the countryside, temporarily, in these luxurious digs

Words by Mr Adam Welch, Editorial Director, MR PORTER

One of the conversation points around the only-just-finished final season of *Game Of Thrones* was the fact that Ms Lena Headey spent most of it standing by the window of a giant palace, a goblet of wine in her hand, and, reportedly, getting paid \$1m per episode to do just precisely that and nothing more. The obvious reaction to this situation, of course, is: “Why isn’t my life like that?”

But you needn’t be so defeatist: it can be, it can be! We’re not talking here about the huge bundles of cash, unfortunately – those are reserved, in this world, for the people who truly, truly deserve them: TV actors. No, we’re talking about the quietly empowering experience of inhabiting a sprawling castle, manor, chateau or similar building of Westerosi scale. Also: wine!

On a serious note, though we at MR PORTER do appreciate, and expect, a certain amount of classy understatement in most of our day-to-day activities, there are times in a man’s life when it is utterly appropriate to aspire towards a more imperial level of scale and excess. Such as, for example, anniversaries or birthdays. Or Saturdays. When such an urge next takes you, the following properties – all former stately homes, now contemporary luxury hotels – are the ones we would thoroughly recommend. So, pack your best goblet, and book them now.

HOTEL CHÂTEAU DU GRAND-LUCÉ, LOIRE VALLEY, FRANCE



Photograph by Ms Megan Witt, courtesy of The Château du Grand-Lucé

You don't need an excuse to go to the Loire Valley: it is a region famed for the production of everyone's favourite Wednesday-night wine, sauvignon blanc. But, say you needed persuading. How about the experience of spending a night or two in one of the finest examples of neoclassical architecture in a country famed for its fine examples of neoclassical architecture? A sort of Versailles-away-from-Versailles, if you will. We're talking about the newly renovated Hotel Château, the new name for the Loire Valley's Château du Grand-Lucé, which was commissioned in 1760 by Baron Jacques Pineau de Viennay on the site of a medieval castle (the wall is still there, encircling the estate).

Expect a range of architectural and artistic features that you won't see anywhere else, besides the big V (in particular, the painted canvas walls in the Baron's Suite by Mr Jean-Baptiste Pillement, which are similar to the ones enjoyed by Ms Marie Antoinette in the Petit Trianon). The 17-room hotel boasts classical gardens with boxwoods and topiary, a kitchen garden that supplies the restaurant, a spa and fitness salon, a cornucopia of Buly 1803 products and a lake with a two-person rowboat, which you can take a very refined spin, should you wish.

If that's not enough château for you, there are many more in the surrounding area, as well as the Bercé Forest, a short drive away and the Mr Steve McQueen-approved town of Le Mans, home to the race of the same name. Biking and horse riding are also good options. But, yes, so is drinking. If you wish, the hotel can arrange you a daytrip that involves hopping between private vineyards. They'll even supply you with a picnic basket full of baguettes and cheese to soak up the alcohol, too.

Yes, it all sounds not bad at all, but one of the best things about Hotel Château is that it does not actually open until early June, which means if you book now, you could be among the first, very smug people to throw up some defiantly decadent Instagram pics of yourself strutting around its capacious interiors.

The vibe: neoclassical elegance. Ever-so-slightly grand.

The food: yes, delicious, but what about the wine?

Best for: King Louis XV impressions.

Downton factor: *c'est quoi ce*, "Downton"?

What to pack



AMI
Camp-Collar Appliquéd Cotton, Linen and Ramie-Blend
Shirt



JACQUEMUS
Wide-Leg Virgin Wool-Twill Shorts