

Priceless

THERE COMES A TIME WHEN BELLS AND WHISTLES OUTRANK THE RING OF A CASH REGISTER. WE SUGGEST A FEW OUTRAGEOUSLY LUXURIOUS EXPERIENCES



A LONDON LANDMARK AT 150 PICCADILLY, THE RITZ HAS BEEN HOME TO THE GREAT AND THE GOOD SINCE 1906

THE RITZ

For a stiff upper lip and all that, William Kent House at The Ritz London can't be beat. It was completed in time for Queen Elizabeth's 80th birthday celebration and in 2002, it became the first and only hotel to be awarded the Royal Warrant for Banqueting and Catering Services in 2002 by HRH The Prince of Wales.

Take the Prince of Wales' Suite (R82 500) for its delicious secret access to the circular bedroom, but for total privacy, also reserve The Royal Suite (R75 000). Floris products are used in the marble bathrooms. Museum-quality English furnishings are a welcome departure from much of The Ritz's Louis XVI ormolu. You're in a jacket and tie at all times in the public areas so other guests are mainly bankers and politicians rather than hip-hop or movie stars. A personal butler is included in your rate. www.theritzlondon.com.

The 259 suites at The Ritz-Carlton New York, Central Park are among the costliest beds in the city that never sleeps, but you may

want a one-bedroomed Premier Park Suite at R45 000 a night. Feed the horses across the way, escorted by your concierge, or take refuge on the Club Lounge floor for free-flowing refreshments to bolster against the madness of Wall Street or a day shopping and museum hopping. Start the day with classic NY fare of glossed smoked salmon and cream cheese on toasted bagels with finely sliced red onions and baby capers and pop back at any hour for grazing that includes caviar and French Champagne. The only place I experienced comparable service, was at a sister hotel in Kuala Lumpur. Head concierge Frederick Bigler can (and will) arrange for anything from an aircraft carrier to an impromptu wedding in Central Park, and door staff will whistle up a Bentley for you. www.ritzcarlton.com.

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FOR THE GOURMET

And on the gastronomic trail, Richard Holmes singles out special dishes that stand out as the tastes he will remember.

For lunch: a mountain of fresh prawns, grilled barracuda and steamed lobster served right at the water's edge on Medjumbe Private Island. This slender spit of land in Mozambique's Quirimbas Archipelago is the perfect place to forget the outside world exists, and whoever said 'no man is an island' obviously can't afford to visit Medjumbe. It's exquisite.

If the way to a man's heart is through his stomach, then Hong Kong had me at hello. For dinner I'd recommend feasting on sizzling whelk and lobster at the teppanyaki bar at Unkai, perhaps the city's finest Japanese restaurant. As the last sip of Cloudy Bay Sauvignon Blanc trickled down my throat, my chauffeur magically appeared. Business Class back to Cape Town was calling.

And for a nightcap? Well, it'll be hard to beat sitting in my tux on the outside observation deck of a Rovos Rail train, dram of Laphroagh in hand, rattling through the Karoo as a storm unleashes thunderbolts at the surrounding hills. All very James Bond.

Richard Holmes is a freelance travel writer who is rather proud of his capacity for excess. Follow his exploits on www.onanotherplane.com

RESIDENZA NAPOLEONE III

When in Rome, don't do as the Romans, do as the royals instead. The best undiscovered gem in the Eternal City is the Residenza Napoleone III, an aristocratic apartment named after Emperor Napoleon III who lived here with his mother, the former Queen of Holland. If you can imagine the sort of regal setup that would not be out of place in Versailles, then you have an idea of the indulgence created by 150m² of antique décor: massive oil paintings, 16th-century tapestries, parquet floors and stencilled walls. It's also ideally positioned for luxury shopping on the Via Condotti.

The Residenza is the only self-catering apartment I have ever encountered that has a 28-page booklet detailing the provenance of its furnishings. But don't let the term 'self-catering' deceive you. This pied-à-terre comes complete with a French-Moroccan butler on loan from Princess Letizia Ruspoli who lives on other floors in the palazzo.

If you long to eat breakfast off Bulgari silver or have your bathroom hidden behind a 3-metre high, museum-quality oil painting that swings open like a door, then the Residenza Napoleone III is the way to stay in Rome. www.residenzanapoleone.com. 📍

Marcus Brewster is well read, well travelled and has a discerning eye for all things exceptional. www.marcusbrewster.co.za



LA RESIDENZA NAPOLEONE III CONSISTS OF THREE MAGNIFICENT ROOMS. THE RESIDENZA NAPOLEONE SUITE WITH ADJOINING BEDROOM WILL SET YOU BACK R21 500, BUT INCLUDES TAXES AND BREAKFAST