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In Newsweek Magazine

BUCKINGHAM PALACE HAS NOTHING ON YOU

Apr 10, 2005 8:00 PM EDT



Want to stay in a luxury vacation home without making a lifelong commitment? You're not alone. A growing number of vacationers are choosing to spend their time off in rented villas. According to Abercrombie & Kent, an international luxury-travel company, the number of customers renting luxury homes has nearly doubled in the last three years, with the Italian idylls of Tuscany and Umbria the most popular destinations. Properties range from rustic farmhouses to renovated estates with seven bedrooms, swimming pools and groomed gardens. And if you want concierge services--a cook, housekeeper or local chauffeur--the rental agency can provide that, too. A sampling of some rooms for rent:

TUSCANY--Borgo Bernardini is a 12-bedroom estate equipped with a library, wine cellar and banquet hall, surrounded by weeping willows and fountains. Relax in the inner courtyards or by the fireplace. (\$55,490 a week; villa-rentals.com)

COTE D'AZUR--A private elevator takes guests from the road to their rented villa, Mirabelle, overlooking the Mediterranean. Lying below a medieval French village, this home offers a private gym. (\$25,500 a week; villa-rentals.com)

MARRAKECH--For some Moroccan magic, rent out Dar Iman, with its kasbah-style architecture and 180-degree views of the Atlas Mountains and forest. (\$15,468 a week; villa-rentals.com)

QUINTANA ROO--The traditional Casa de Mariposas (House of Butterflies), on Mexico's tropical Isla Mujeres, sleeps six on plush Egyptian bedding and has new appliances and a rooftop terrace ideal for sunsets over Cancun's skyline. (\$1,000 a week; viviun.com)

BAHAMAS--The colonial-era Albany House, nestled on Lyford Cay in New Providence, about half an hour from Nassau, contains a home theater, two heated pools, a tennis court and a grand piano. (\$7,143 a night; caribbeanway.com)

BALI--A five-bedroom villa, surrounded by fruit trees, bamboo and a jungle stream, includes Jacuzzis and private walled gardens and was designed in harmony with Balinese cosmology. (\$8,000 a week; villagetaways.com)

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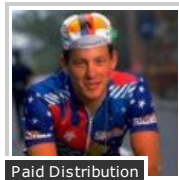
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