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CASTLES IN THE AIR

**Binge-watched Bridgerton?
Imagine the high life with
modern-day castles around the world**

Chin Hui Shan

If you have binge-watched the soapy Regency-era drama *Bridgerton* on Netflix, it is likely that you have fallen in love with its decadent manors and classic English castles.

The good news is that you do not have to be English nobility or go back in time to live out the *Bridgerton* fantasy.

From Canada to Ireland and Turkey to India, there are stunning castles that can be rented for a vacation worthy of the lavish *Bridgerton* lifestyle - once travel resumes after the pandemic, that is.

Ahead of the series' second season, which will begin filming in the coming spring, you can still dream about the high life with this list of castles around the world.

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Ashford Castle, County Mayo, Ireland
This regal retreat is possibly the closest people can get to a *Bridgerton* experience.

Think lush green woodlands, tranquil lakeside views and a majestic turreted castle with individually designed rooms that pair old-world grandeur with technology.

Set on the banks of Lough Corrib, the nearly 800-year-old castle offers quintessential country pursuits such as falconry, clay shooting and archery, as well as modern-day zip-lining, just to name a few.

Its over-the-top amenities include a glamorous cinema with 32 red velvet seats and a luxurious spa decked with seashell chandeliers and a Tree of Life mural.



Rates: From: \$842 a night
Info: ashfordcastle.com

Ireland's Ashford Castle (main picture, top and above).
PHOTOS: ASHFORD CASTLE, THE RED CARNATION HOTEL COLLECTION

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Rich colours abound in India's Taj Lake Palace (above and left), which is nestled on Lake Pichola. PHOTOS: TAJ LAKE PALACE, UDAIPUR

2 Taj Lake Palace, Udaipur, India
Seemingly afloat on glistening Lake Pichola and surrounded by the Aravali mountains, this palace-hotel lets guests retreat into their own world. One of the most romantic hotels in the world, the Taj Lake Palace is adorned with white marbled walls, pillared terraces and resplendent gardens.

If you can afford it, splurge on one of the heritage suites. Each suite has its own personality and all are embellished with rich colours, antique furniture, silk fabrics and exquisite mosaics. With its beautiful interiors and 360-degree view of Udaipur, Taj Lake Palace tops this castle-loving writer's list. **Rates:** From \$666 a night **Info:** str.sg/JHJM

3 Ciragan Palace Kempinski, Istanbul, Turkey

If you are looking for a Middle Eastern equivalent of Bridgerton-style accommodation, Ciragan Palace Kempinski is likely the one for you. Guests get pampered with a Turkish bath or unwind in the outdoor infinity pool overlooking the Bosphorus strait. With intricate tilework, antique furniture and abundant velvet and satin upholstery, you can luxuriate like royalty in a complex that once housed Ottoman sultans.

Every room comes with floor-to-ceiling windows and a balcony, for vistas of the gardens or the Bosphorus that divides Turkey. **Rates:** From \$451 a night **Info:** str.sg/HJQ



Ciragan Palace Kempinski (above and left) in Turkey once housed Ottoman sultans. PHOTOS: CIRAGAN PALACE KEMPINSKI



Fairmont Le Chateau Frontenac (above and right) has hosted political leaders, stars and royalty. PHOTOS: FAIRMONT LE CHATEAU FRONTENAC



4 Fairmont Le Chateau Frontenac, Quebec, Canada

Besides mountains and crystal-blue lakes, Canada has its fair share of castle-hotels around the country. One of the most photographed hotels in the world, Chateau Frontenac is known for its dramatic copper spires and extravagant interiors filled with historical artefacts.

Nestled atop a cliff that looms over Saint Lawrence River, the century-old castle romances guests with grand views of the fortified city of Old Quebec. This castle, listed as a National Historic Site of Canada, has hosted political leaders, celebrities and, yes, royalty. **Rates:** From \$312 a night **Info:** www.fairmont.com/frontenac-quebec

5 Schlosshotel Kronberg, Kronberg, Germany

If there is a castle that should be on your bucket list, it is Germany's Neuschwanstein Castle – the inspiration for Disney's Cinderella Castle. Of course, the fairy-tale castle is a tourist attraction and does not accommodate stays.

Travellers, however, can turn to Schlosshotel Kronberg, a castle-hotel that was once the private residence of Victoria, Empress Frederick of Germany, daughter of Queen Victoria.

Perched above the pretty town of Kronberg and set next to an 18-hole golf course, the mixed German Renaissance-style castle is decked out in historic decor and gallery-worthy paintings. **Rates:** From \$383 a night **Info:** schlosshotel-kronberg.com/en



Schlosshotel Kronberg (above and left) was once the private residence of Victoria, Empress Frederick of Germany. PHOTOS: BOOKING.COM



France's Domaine Les Crayeres (above and right) has only 20 guest rooms. PHOTOS: DOMAINE LES CRAIERES



6 Domaine Les Crayeres, Reims, France

A list of castles would be incomplete without a French chateau. Decorated in classical French style, this elegant abode of only 20 guest rooms lets you imagine the aristocratic life. There is a whiff of Bridgerton fantasy in the manicured gardens and palatial setting, and the good life continues with wine-tasting tours and dining at two-Michelin-starred restaurant, Le Parc.

The chateau is closed for the time being due to France's coronavirus restrictions. **Rates:** From \$515 a night **Info:** lescrayeres.com/en

There are vast grounds for exploration at Scotland's Dunskey Estate Castle (right and far right). PHOTOS: DUNSKY ESTATE



7 Dunskey Estate Castle, Portpatrick, Scotland

This Edwardian castle is a secluded gem that combines old-world style with modern updates. From its heritage-rich porch to the elegant drawing room, every room is a new experience. Elevate your experience by doing arts and crafts at the in-castle studio or playing dress-up in the "magic parlour" to complete your stint as "royalty".

Outside, the estate offers walled gardens, vast grounds for nature exploration and outdoor adventures that include forest bathing, kayaking and even partying in the rave cave. Lodges catering to small groups are also available within the estate. **Rates:** From \$719 a night for one person **Info:** www.dunskey.com

