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FEBRUARY 21, 2026

## The Luxe Hotels That Let You Sleep Next to the World's Finest Artwork

New accommodations across the globe are offering you an up-close view of revered masterpieces after hours.

By MARK ELLWOOD, MICHELLE TCHEA



Courtesy of Casabianca



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Last year, [Valentina de Santis](#) and her family opened an unlikely addition to their hospitality empire, which already included the world-famous, award-hogging [Passalacqua hotel](#) on Lake Como: [Casabianca](#). It's a contemporary-art museum housed in an all-white 1930s mansion (hence the name) in the heart of Como town. Both her parents, Paolo and Antonella, are ardent art lovers with a particular fondness for Arte Povera. To celebrate their joint 70th birthday, they resolved to grant the world easier access to their lifetime's collection.

"It's about making people embrace the idea that art can make your life better and can enrich you," de Santis says. The family even opened an on-site restaurant, [Cova Casabianca](#), but something was lacking. "We're still hoteliers in our hearts." So this summer, as de Santis exclusively reveals to *Robb Report*, the property will open three ultra-exclusive suites. Guests in these rooms can spend the night with works by [Michelangelo Pistoletto](#), [William Kentridge](#), and more.



Gilberto Zorio's work *Stella Pozzuoli* commands a room at Casabianca.  
Courtesy of Casabianca

The best hotels have always displayed great art. It's a shortcut to cachet for any five-star stay to partner with a local museum and showcase canvases and sculptures that otherwise would be in storage. But Casabianca and a raft of other openings take this idea one step further: the chance to *sleep* with the world's finest artworks.

Casabianca's suites are currently under construction on the house's third floor. De Santis collaborated with artists, including Roger Selden, to design them. "The idea is that [the rooms] will be artwork themselves," she explains. "Some of the first guests we hope will be artists and gallerists." There's no dinner service at Cova, but you can arrange after-hours catering in suite, as well as private tours. Guests will also be granted access to facilities at both [Passalacqua](#) and [Grand Hotel Tremezzo](#), the family's other hotel.



The green-hued Marbre suite at La Fiermontina Museum in Lecce, [Italy](#).  
Martina Loiola

There's a similar allure in the four suites at the [Fiermonte Museum in Lecce](#), in Puglia, where guests can use the in-room lanterns to roam the hallways of the tiny property dedicated to the namesake painter and violinist Antonia Fiermonte. The five-year-old Airelles-operated [Le Grand Contrôle](#) at Versailles offers V.I.P. treatment with after-hours admittance to the palace and grounds. In Vienna, [Villa Beer](#)—a masterpiece built by architects Josef Frank and Oskar Wlach on par with Frank Lloyd Wright's Fallingwater—is slated to reopen as a museum after a years-long restoration this spring and includes three guest rooms in the attic. Prefer not to share the bathroom, 1930s-style? Then book them out in a block.



The exterior of Josef Frank and Oskar Wlach's Villa Beer in Vienna.  
Stefan Huger

Lisbon's Museu de Arte Contemporânea Armando Martins, or MACAM, opened last March with a five-star hotel on premise. "Many hotels describe themselves as 'art-focused,' using art mainly as decoration or branding," says director Adelaide Ginga. "We're fundamentally different." It occupies an immaculately redesigned 18th-century palace with more than 600 pieces of entrepreneur and engineer Armando Martins's private art collection. With 64 individually designed rooms, suites, and studios, MACAM provides hotel guests exclusive access to the grounds, and they can sleep, swim, and dine surrounded by Portuguese oil paintings and sculptures dating back to the late 19th century.

Clara Arte Resort opened inside the Inhotim Institute in Minas Gerais in Brazil last year, where guests not only have late-night entry to the museum but also can pop into informal art talks each evening at the piano bar. The O.G., of course, is Benesse House, the high-end hotel that anchors Naoshima, an island in Japan's Seto Island Sea that has become a must-visit destination thanks to its vast assortment of site-specific pieces—and five of Monet's *Water Lilies*. The hotel's museum wing grants guests after-closing admission to the galleries. (Keep an eye out for owner Soichiro Fukutake, the magnate owner of Berlitz language schools. He's rumored to have his own private apartment concealed within the main structure.)



An aerial view of Naoshima, Japan's Benesse House Hotel.  
Courtesy of Benesse House

It's a natural extension of the urge to immerse yourself in art that's ever-increasing—less low-brow than a walkthrough at a Van Gogh experience and more connoisseur's bragging rights. “To be able to speak about your behind-the-scenes all-exclusive-access experiences tells a far better story than the price tag on your latest designer bag or luxury-watch purchase,” says Robb Report Travel Master Jason Squatriglia.

Still, some experiences like this are truly priceless: Airbnb's 2019 contest, *A Night With Mona Lisa*, generated over 182,000 entries for the opportunity to sleep in a specially built pyramid inside the Louvre. Candidates had to submit not a wire transfer but an essay answering the question “Why would you be the Mona Lisa's perfect guest?” Then again, with the right connections, what's to stop you from staying with her, too?



## Mark Ellwood

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British-born, NYC-based Mark Ellwood is *Robb Report's* editor-at-large. He has lived out of a suitcase for most of his life, covering luxury in all its forms across the world. Among his favorite recent assignments: tracking the trends of China's millennials in its capital of cool, Chengdu, and sitting by the campfire with the cowboy poets of Wyoming. He has also spent a weekend on Japan's remote, multibillion-dollar art island and assessed the caliber of various vodkas as a judge at the Cocktail World Cup. Mark appears regularly to talk about luxury on television, radio and podcasts. His most recent book is *Bargain Fever* (Penguin-Portfolio).