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AMERICA'S CASTLES BY YACHT

Singer Castle is built on Dark Island, midway between the northeast U.S. and Canada in the Thousand Islands region.



SINGER CASTLE

In bringing to life his fanciful vision of Singer Castle, Frederick Bourne spared no expense. The self-made millionaire, the fifth president of the Singer Sewing Machine Company and once Commodore of the New York Yacht Club, built his private home on Dark Island in the Thousand Islands region between the northeast U.S. and Canada. He hired Italian stonecutters to shape tons of granite quarried from nearby Oak Island into stones for the 28-room castle, complete with clock tower, turrets, terracotta-tiled roofs, boathouses, elaborate marble fireplaces, secret passageways, dungeons, grass tennis court and then-state-of-the-art early 20th-century electric and plumbing systems.

“The design was inspired by Sir Walter Scott’s novel about Woodstock Castle in Scotland. Bourne commissioned American Beaux-Arts-style architect Ernest Flagg to design a hunting-style lodge as a surprise for his wife and their nine children,” says Thomas Weldon, president of Dark Island Tours.

Originally called “The Towers,” the castle soon became a hot spot for Bourne’s business contemporaries and celebrity visitors, including Cornelius Vanderbilt and Vincent Astor. After Bourne passed away in 1919, his daughter Marjorie added a wing with a sports therapy room, plus a squash court and other amenities, and spent more than 30 summers on the property with her husband, Alexander Dallas Thayer.



Today, visitors can arrive by boat to the castle. “The water depth is thirty-five feet, and we have over six hundred feet of docks (in total) on both sides of the island. We can take just about any vessel,” says Weldon.

From the South Boathouse dock, walk up the brick bridle path to a massive wooden door with a polished brass lion knocker. Entering the Great Hall, several suits of armor stand guard over medieval weaponry, a granite fireplace and a variety of antiques, including some of the many historic Singer sewing machines that decorate the castle.

Guides lead visitors on a 45-minute informative tour through four floors of original furnishings and artifacts, revealing secret passageways and pointing out quirky innovations such as a wind dial in the ceiling that is connected to a weather vane atop the building. From the wine cellar, with more than 600 terracotta slots for bottles, to the fourth-floor female staff dormitory, guests can learn about life as both servant and business entrepreneur in the Gilded Age.

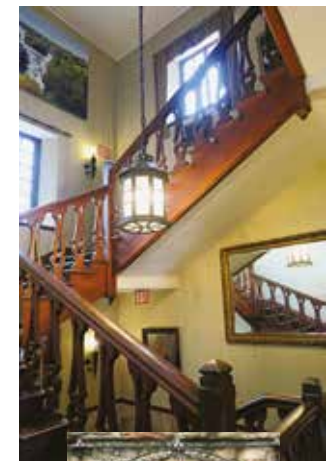
Guests who stay overnight in the two-bedroom Royal Suite can call the seven-acre island home. “We want visitors to feel as if Frederick Bourne had personally invited them,” says Weldon. Play table tennis or shoot hoops in the maple-lined squash courts, wander through the rooms and savor a catered dinner and continental breakfast anywhere, including in the tearoom, dining room, drawing room, loggia or front terrace. Overnight guests are also privy to a private tour that includes a visit to the inner workings of the five-story clock tower (where Westminster Chimes toll every 15 minutes), secret stairwells, dungeons, squash court, the North Boathouse’s male servant quarters and 125-foot boat slip with giant chimney funnel for Bourne’s 100-foot steam yacht *Delaware*, and the original powerhouse with coal boiler, generator and battery room.

“We like to think we’re a living, breathing castle. Why keep it as a stuffy museum?” says Weldon. singercastle.com



BY BOAT

Singer Castle on Dark Island can accommodate any size yacht with 600 feet of docks and 35 feet of depth. Call ahead at (877) 327-5475 or hail them on channel 16.



On a tour, guests will see secret stairwells and a five-story clock tower, where Westminster Chimes toll every 15 minutes.



Owner Frederick Bourne was the fifth president of the Singer Sewing Machine Company, so it’s not surprising to find a Singer among the collections (right).



Inspired by the grandeur of Old World castles, American royalty – for the most part, self-made captains of industry – built monuments to their success a century ago, complete with drawbridges, secret passageways and turrets. Necee Regis explores six of these castles from the Thousand Islands to Honolulu. Pull up by yacht and step back in time.

PHOTOGRAPH: COURTESY OF SINGER CASTLE

PHOTOGRAPHS: COURTESY OF SINGER CASTLE (TOP RIGHT), NECEE REGIS



Don't miss

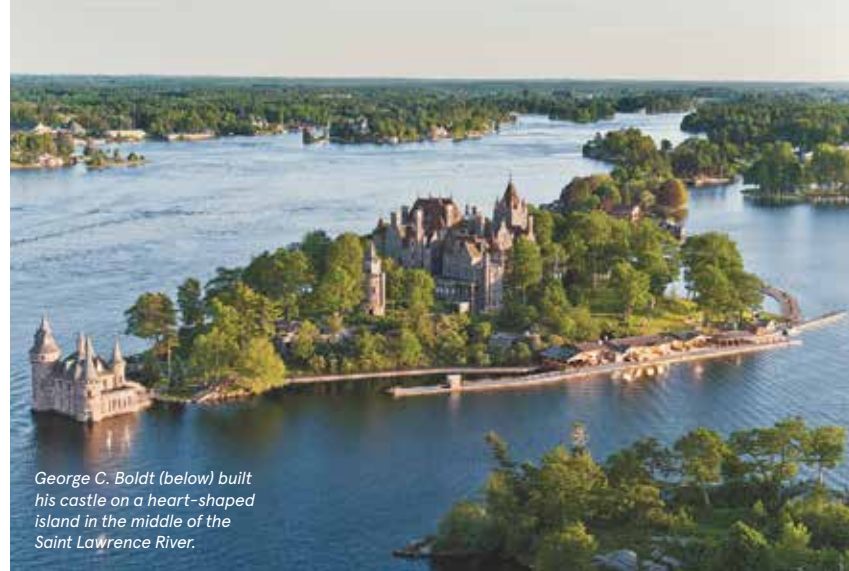
On the mantle in the formal dining room, look for a replica of the Bronco Buster sculpture on loan from the Frederic Remington Art Museum in nearby Ogdensburg, New York. The original resides in the Oval Office.

BOLDT CASTLE

The story of Boldt Castle is a tragic tale of love and loss. In 1900, millionaire hotel magnate George C. Boldt, proprietor of the Waldorf Astoria Hotel in New York City, broke ground on a six-story, 120-room summer dream home as a tribute to his beloved wife, Louise. Boldt employed 300 workers to execute his vision to create a Rhineland-style castle on Heart Island in the center of the Saint Lawrence River's Thousand Islands region.

"Boldt even had the island reshaped into a heart, rounded at the top with a point at the bottom," says Shane K. Sanford, director of operations and maintenance. The monumental structures on the seven-acre island, complete with tunnels, a powerhouse, Italian gardens, a drawbridge, children's playhouse and dovecote, were never completed. In 1904, Louise unexpectedly passed away, and a heartbroken Boldt telegraphed the island and demanded all construction be stopped. He never returned.

The property sat vacant for more than 70 years, ravaged by weather and vandals, until the Thousand Islands Bridge Authority – which now owns and operates Boldt Castle and the nearby Boldt Yacht House – began a painstaking rehabilitation and restoration project. About 50 percent of the castle is open to the public, including the library, dining room, master bedroom suites and the newly finished first-floor kitchen, as work continues one room at a time.



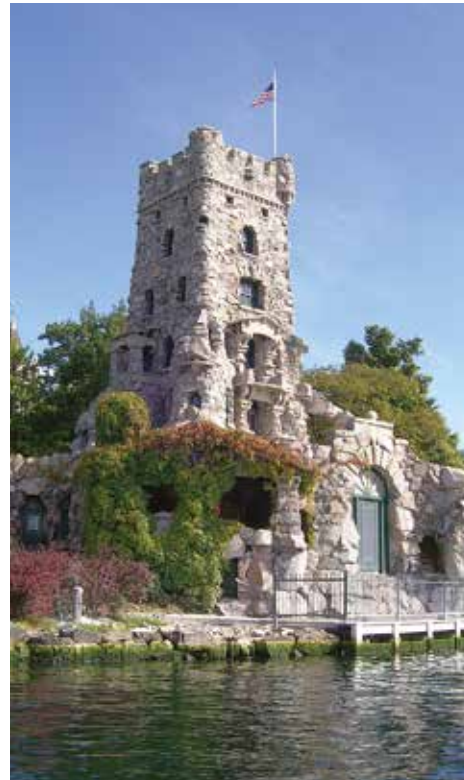
George C. Boldt (below) built his castle on a heart-shaped island in the middle of the Saint Lawrence River.

BY BOAT

With advance notice, Boldt Castle's dock can accommodate vessels up to 75 feet. Larger vessels can anchor nearby and tender in. Heart Island is a U.S. Customs Port of Entry.



"The Boldt story is more than just the castle. He was very much into boats and boating," says Sanford. The Boldt Castle Yacht House, built in 1903 on nearby Wellesley Island, is a quick shuttle boat ride across the river. The 64-foot-high shingle-style structure features towers, spires, steep-pitched gables and 128-foot covered slips that once housed the family's yachts and enormous 106-foot houseboat *La Duchesse* (on display in the Antique Boat Museum in nearby Clayton, New York). Visitors today can view some boats from the original Boldt fleet such as *P.D.Q.* (Pretty Damn Quick), a 1904 raceboat with original 24-hp Barber Brothers Engine. boldtcastle.com



Above: The Grand Staircase was recently renovated while restorations continue in the Playhouse (above center). This tower contains a ballroom, a billiards room and even a bowling alley.



Representing boats of George Boldt's era is the 63-foot 1892 steam yacht *Kestrel*, which was donated to the Thousand Islands Bridge Authority and now resides at Boldt Castle's Yacht House.



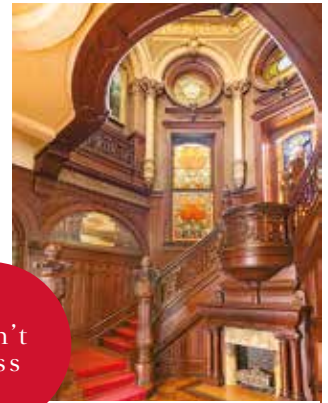
BISHOP'S PALACE



Bishop's Palace, the ornate Victorian-style wonder built for lawyer, railroad entrepreneur and politician Colonel Walter Gresham in the late 19th century, is celebrated as a historic landmark in Galveston, Texas. Located in the East End Historic District, the palace – also known as Gresham's Castle – is easy to spot. Designed by architect Nicholas Clayton, the gray sandstone and granite building is straight out of Hollywood-fantasy central casting. Soaring three stories high with four round turrets, Romanesque and depressed Tudor arches, wrought-iron railings, carvings of real and imaginary creatures, steep roofs and numerous sculptural chimneys, the museum is now managed by the Galveston Historical Foundation.

Completed in 1892 for Gresham, his wife, Josephine, and their nine children, the 50-plus-room castle offers an intimate glimpse of upper crust life in the Victorian era. Tours of the historic interior, offered daily, include first-floor rooms with 14-foot coffered ceilings, marble columns from Sienna, ornamental fireplaces from around the world, elaborate carved wood architectural elements, plus period paintings and furnishings. galveston.com/bishopspalace

Colonel Walter Gresham's wife, Josephine, painted the cherubs on the ceiling in the formal dining room.



The 40-foot-tall octagonal mahogany staircase is framed on five sides by stained glass panels and illuminated by an octagonal skylight.

BY BOAT

Minutes from the Gulf of Mexico and right off the Galveston Ship Channel, the Galveston Yacht Basin is two miles from Bishop's Palace and can take large yachts. galvestonyachtbasin.com

PHOTOGRAPHS: OPPOSITE: COURTESY OF THOUSAND ISLANDS BRIDGE AUTHORITY; THIS PAGE: COURTESY OF GALVESTON HISTORICAL FOUNDATION (BISHOP'S PALACE), THE FRIENDS OF IOLANI PALACE (BOTTOM LEFT), HAWAII TOURISM AUTHORITY (TOP, JOHNSON) (BOTTOM RIGHT)

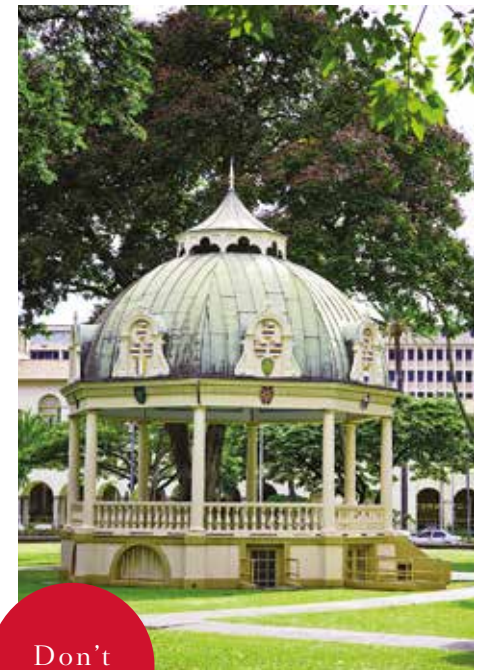


IOLANI PALACE

Just steps from downtown Honolulu, royal blue and gold painted-iron gates open to a world of opulence and grandeur at Iolani Palace, the official residence of Hawaii's last monarchs and a National Historic Landmark. King Kalakaua built his majestic residence on sacred ancient worship grounds in 1882. Today, the public may tour its meticulously restored grand halls, throne room, state dining room and private suites, including the bedroom where Queen Liliuokalani was held under house arrest following the overthrow of her government in the late 19th century.

BY BOAT
Close by is the largest yacht harbor in the state of Hawaii, Ala Wai Yacht Harbor, 2.3 miles from the Iolani Palace; it takes vessels up to 85 feet. alawaiharbor.com. Larger yachts can head to the Ko Olina Marina, 25 miles away with slips up to 200 feet. koolinamarina.com

The full glory of Polynesian history and Hawaii's royal heritage are on display in every crystal chandelier, gilt-edged chair and crimson carpet. Furnishings and objects, sold after the monarchy was overthrown, have been recovered from 36 states and four foreign countries. Visitors can see original Gothic-Revival, Asian and European furnishings, polished Hawaiian wood staircases, vases and statuary from England, India and France, and framed paintings of the island's royalty including King Kalakaua and Queen Liliuokalani by noted American portraitist William Cogswell. iolanipalace.org



On the palace grounds, the ornate Coronation Pavilion looks like a fanciful crown.

CASTLE FARMS

Tucked into the bucolic landscape of northern Michigan, Castle Farms offers old-world charm crossed with modern-day delights. The French Renaissance-style stone castle, complete with fairy-tale turrets and formal gardens, was the brainchild of Albert Loeb, the acting president of Sears, Roebuck and Co. Built in 1918 as a model dairy farm, with architecture inspired by castles and barns in Normandy, France, the property once housed more than 200 head of Holstein-Friesian cows and 13 pair of Belgian draft horses, and was the largest employer in the county.

After stints as an art gallery, summer theater venue and rock concert venue – hosting The Doobie Brothers, The Beach Boys, Bob Seger, Willie Nelson, Aerosmith and more – the farm was purchased in 2001 and restored to its earlier glory. On self-guided tours, guests can visit the extensive gardens and forest paths, play a game of giant chess, feed native rainbow trout in the pond, enjoy a picnic lunch at Birch Lake (food available for purchase on site), wander through cobblestone courtyards and visit the 1918 Museum, exhibiting memorabilia from the Great War era. Don't be surprised to see bridal parties posing for portraits at this celebrated wedding venue. castlefarms.com



The King's Grand Courtyard provides a magnificent view of the grounds.

BY BOAT

The Charlevoix City Marina, just a mile-and-a-half from Castle Farms, enjoys a very protected harbor and has accommodated yachts up to 175 feet. cityofcharlevoix.org/city-departments/marina.html



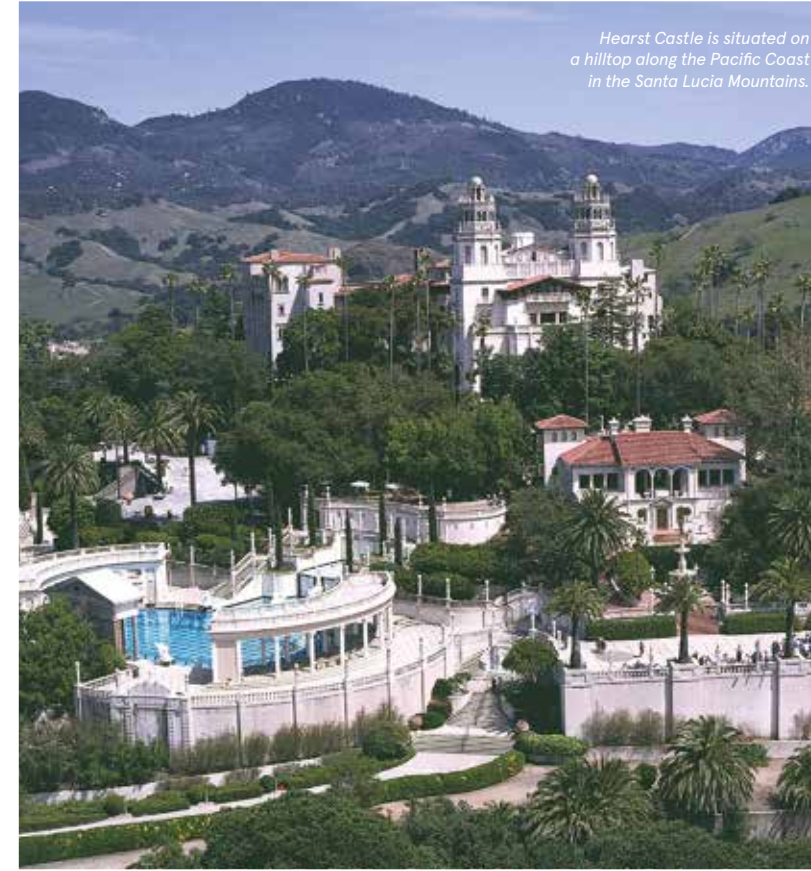
Don't miss

The Model Railroad, the largest in the state of Michigan, features more than 70 G-scale trains operating on more than 2,500 feet of track.

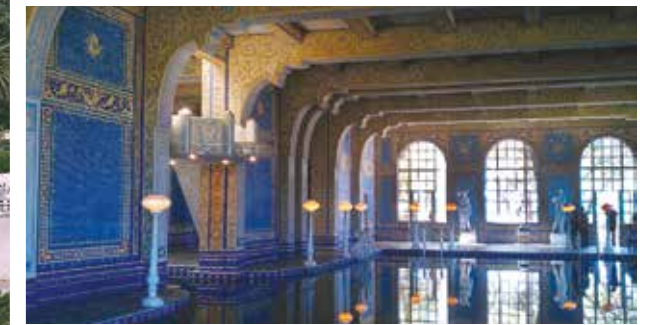


Made of 100 percent recycled metal, Norm the dragon stands guard over the castle from the Dragon's Lair.

PHOTOGRAPHS: COURTESY OF CASTLE FARMS, HELLO AERIAL (BOTTOM)



Hearst Castle is situated on a hilltop along the Pacific Coast in the Santa Lucia Mountains.



Don't miss



The Neptune Pool's beautiful serpentine tiles and marble columnnades overlooking the sea.

BY BOAT

The Morro Bay Yacht Club, 30 miles to the south, has six mooring balls and a 150-foot dock for visiting yachts. mbyc.net



PHOTOGRAPHS: VICTORIA GARAGLIANO/COURTESY OF HEARST CASTLE (TOP LEFT, TOP RIGHT, CENTER), CECILE GAUERT (BELOW RIGHT, BELOW LEFT, BOTTOM)

HEARST CASTLE

When William Randolph Hearst inherited more than 250,000 acres of ranchland overlooking the Pacific Ocean, he dreamed of a magnificent estate to showcase his art collection. The year was 1919, and he called his whimsical vision "La Cuesta Encantada," Spanish for "Enchanted Hill." By 1947, his 165-room hilltop aerie, designed by architect Julia Morgan above the village of San Simeon, was complete.

Sprawling across 127 acres of lush terraced gardens that bloom year round, the Mediterranean Revival-style complex of ornate guesthouses and the twin-towered Casa Grande are filled with European treasures passionately collected by the newspaper magnate and politician. Hearst's eclectic collections included Flemish tapestries, Persian rugs, Tiffany lamps, 18th Dynasty Egyptian sculpture, antique French furniture, 400-year old Italian and Spanish ceilings, fragments of Roman temples, Renaissance paintings and other historic works of art.

Visitors can see all of this and more on several distinct guided tours of the estate, now a museum, and imagine what it must have been like to hobnob with the *crème de la crème* of Hollywood elite and other influential guests who flocked there in its heyday, including Greta Garbo, Cary Grant, Charles Lindbergh, Winston Churchill and President Calvin Coolidge. hearstcastle.org