

hot spots Les Crayères

Where is it? Located in France's Champagne region, this grand hotel is set in a lush, seven-hectare park and is a short train ride from Paris.

Vintage or modern? The main house, dating from 1904, was home to the Pommery family and Parisian royalty before being sold in 1980. In 1983, chef Gerard Boyer and his wife Elyane opened the hotel.

Who goes there? French dignitaries, actors and well-heeled foreigners flock to the hotel, its grounds and three restaurants. Michael Douglas and Robert De Niro are among the Hollywood celebrities to have stayed here. It is a favourite with executives from nearby champagne houses such as Veuve Clicquot.

What's the decor like? Antique. French decorating wonder Pierre-Yves Rochon, whose design credits include Paris' George V and the Sofitel in Chicago, gave the hotel the air of a classical French chateau. Many of the paintings were found at Parisian flea markets and new pieces combine with old to create an effect the French call *maison bourgeoise*.

What about the guest quarters? Each of the 20 rooms, 17 of which are in the chateau, was decorated uniquely by Rubelli, Frey, Canovas and Flipo of Laura Ashley. Room 22 revels in a safari motif and others in floral design. The exclusive Princess rooms overlook the grounds.

What's new? A 70-square-metre suite on a floor all to itself. Decorated in



a contemporary style, the brightly lit suite features an enormous bath and sitting room.

How's the service? With a three-to-one staff-to-guest ratio, the service is unparalleled. No wonder Les Crayères

has been voted top hotel in the world by *Condé Nast Traveler*.

What about the food? With appetisers ranging from €35 (\$333) to €110 and entrees going for €50 to €70, dining can easily exceed the cost of a room. Thierry Voisin, who has worked with chef Boyer at Les Crayères since 1988, whips up amazing French dishes at the hotel's Michelin two-star restaurant. And champagne lovers will bubble over the 290 choices.

And the bottom line? Rooms cost from €275 to €475 a night.

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