

# Lancut castle through the eyes of a visiting New-York journalist, Martha Blair

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## The Lancut castle

“The moment you sweep through the great gateways and up the drive to Lancut you are transported back 400 years, when the lord of the manor cracked the whip and the serfs scattered before his carriage. Not that Count Alfred Potocki, owner and grand seigneur of Lancut, has ever cracked the whip, but it is into just such a feudal atmosphere that you come...fantastic to the Western mind...unbelievable unless you have actually been there...amazing, fascinating and incredibly beautiful. There stands, the same Lancut, built in 1621, preserved through the centuries and brought completely up to date as far as not only comforts but real luxuries of life are concerned.

[...]

“Despite the fact that Lancut is so vast that it would take weeks and weeks really to learn your way around, one thing strikes you shortly after you have wandered through a few of the 200 rooms. This is that every room looks as though it were lived in. There are books, cigarettes and flowers in every single apartment and a clock that is going.”

## A dinner at Lancut

“That night we had a gala dinner and all ate too much. So as to give one Lancut menu, we will choose the one we had that evening. First came the clear soup...then iced trout...after that the most delectable beef in a pastry well... with that several vegetables and little sauted potatoes with a salad served with the home-cured ham, which is simply marvellous and not a bit like any ham I have ever eaten...tiny spring beans... for dessert there was a mousse and cake...after that a choice of frais de cassis, raspberries, peaches and lemon. No cocktails are served in Lancut. You have vodka at the table and then beer and wines of all kinds. We had Sasha Guitry’s new play in the little marble theater which had been freshly decorated with coral pink geranium trees and then, after a glass of champagne, to bed for all”.

## The Lancut band playing on the main lawn on a Sunday morning

“There are 40 members of the band, and to me, it was an amazing sight, to see them in their own music. We kept time, gold braid and musical instruments gleaming in the bright light. They played folk songs and national anthems. They sang, whistled and stamped to their own music. [...] Just before it was time to walk back to the castle for luncheon, at a request from Count Alfred, they played the “Star Spangled Banner”, which of course, caused me to burst into a flood of patriotic tears.”

## The four-in-hand

“My last adventure at Lancut took place in the afternoon when again the four-in-hand came prancing and clattering up and into the great stone entrance hallway.

“Now I will take you for a real spin”, said Count Alfred.

The trick is to ride at full speed from the outside driveway through the three small inner courtyards of the castle. Every turn has to be made at right angles and the archways from one leading into the other are barely wide enough to let the four-in-hand pass by. We did it, and did it with the outmost dash and skill.

I congratulated Count Alfred on being the best whip I had ever come across. He told me that at a dinner party in New York his partner, whom he had not met before, after reading his card said: “Oh, are you the man in Poland who drives his coach-in-four right through his own house?””