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'I've been more worried in small-town America than I was on the streets of Nizwa'
Annabelle Thorpe takes a road trip in Oman



Maiden Bradley House (2)

20 great houses to rival Downton

From a castle for two in Durham to a Welsh manor for 18, **Liz Bird** picks the best historic houses to stay in

For couples and families

1 Maiden's Tower Leeds Castle, Kent

After the day visitors have gone you'll have the 500-acre estate all to yourself when you stay in the 16th-century tower next to the moated castle, once home to Henry VIII. The house has five B&B rooms with sleigh beds, throws and sleek en suite bathrooms. Full English breakfast is served in the 17th-century oak-beamed barn overlooking the moat. Don't miss exploring the castle with its 73ft Henry VIII Banqueting Hall, resplendent with its heavily beamed ceiling and unusual ebony floor. Get lost



A bedroom at Leeds Castle (1)

in the maze or try your hand at falconry. **Details** B&B from £260 per night (01622 767823, leeds-castle.com)

2 Bradley House Maiden Bradley, Wiltshire

This magnificent stately home is owned by descendants of the Tudor queen Jane Seymour; they are happy to give you a private tour. Three light and bright en suite bedrooms, some with wooden floors, period fireplaces and antiques, are in their own wing of the house. Have a full English breakfast or supper in the wood-panelled dining room, play croquet on the lawn or wander through the extensive garden and woodland.

Stonehenge, Glastonbury and the National Trust's Stourhead mansion and gardens are within easy reach. **Details** B&B for two is from £184 per night (alrbnb.co.uk)

3 Tullibole Castle Kinross-shire

Lord and Lady Moncreiff preside over this 17th-century castle approached through woodland on a 260-acre estate. Ascend a spiral staircase to the Great Hall with its enormous log fire where you can take complimentary afternoon tea. The bedroom has wooden floors, antiques, fireplaces and shuttered windows and there's a separate private