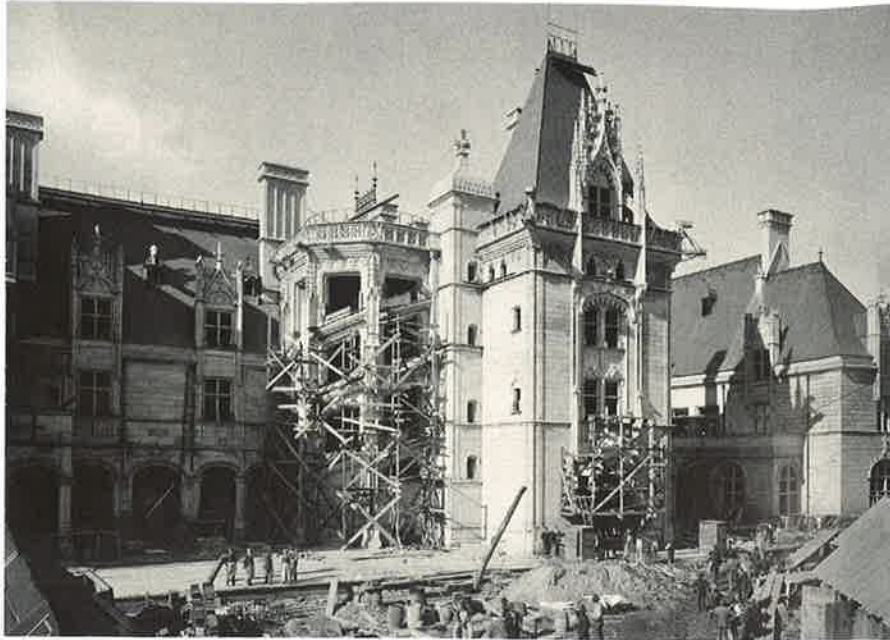


Your guide to
Biltmore House



BILTMORE[®]
Asheville, NC



Scaffolding surrounds the stair tower of Biltmore House.



The Stable Complex, ca. 1894.

Welcome to Biltmore House, home of the Vanderbilts

On Christmas Eve 1895, George W. Vanderbilt officially opened Biltmore House. Three years later, he brought his bride Edith Stuyvesant Dresser to Biltmore, and in 1900, their only child Cornelia was born here.

After Vanderbilt's death in 1914, Edith and Cornelia continued to call Biltmore home, with Edith assuming management of the estate. In 1924, Cornelia married the Honorable John Francis Amherst Cecil, and they lived and entertained in Biltmore House. In response to requests to increase area tourism during the Depression and to bring in money to preserve the estate, the Cecils opened the house to the public in 1930.

Today, Biltmore remains a family business. Vanderbilt's grandson, William A.V. Cecil, owns Biltmore; his son, William A.V. Cecil, Jr., serves as chief executive officer, and his daughter, Diana Cecil Pickering, is vice chair of the board of directors and advisors. Along with 1,800 employees, they continue the preservation of this national treasure.

When you need to take a break

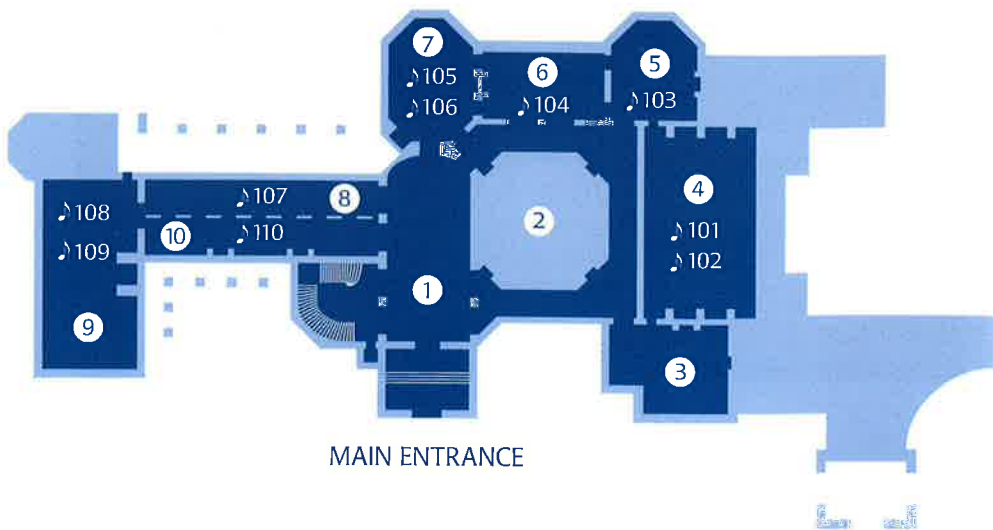
Please exit through the Front Door. If you have an audio tour, please return it to the Audio Attendant and ask for a voucher to resume your tour when you return. Please show your ticket to re-enter the house.



*Left: George Vanderbilt.
Above: Edith Vanderbilt with
her daughter, Cornelia.*

A home for entertainment

George and Edith Vanderbilt welcomed their guests to relax and enjoy all the estate offered. Biltmore House was a collaborative effort between Vanderbilt, architect Richard Morris Hunt, and landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted, whose combined talents created their greatest project. Look for our hosts who can share additional stories.



MAIN ENTRANCE

AUDIO TOUR IN-DEPTH TOPICS Enter these numbers for additional information

101 Banquet Hall Design	104 Vanderbilt's Prints	108 Library Ceiling Painting
102 Christmas at Biltmore	105 Music Room Mystery	109 Napoleon's Chess Set
103 Renoir Paintings	106 Loggia	110 Tapestries
	107 Edith Vanderbilt Portrait	

1 ENTRANCE HALL: This grand space welcomed the Vanderbilts' guests to Biltmore House.

2 WINTER GARDEN: A glass roof illuminates the center fountain sculpture *Boy Stealing Geese* by Karl Bitter, placed just weeks before George Vanderbilt opened the house to his family on Christmas Eve 1895.

3 BILLIARD ROOM: Guests invited to Biltmore often stayed for many days, which meant their hosts needed to provide plenty of amusements. In the Billiard Room, guests played dominoes and billiards, and enjoyed evening refreshments. The custom oak billiard tables were made in 1895.



Banquet Hall table



Detail of Banquet Hall tapestry

4 BANQUET HALL: This impressive room with a seven-story high ceiling and Flemish tapestries from the 1500s was the scene of dinner parties and celebrations, like the annual Christmas party for Biltmore workers and their families. Look up to the right to view the **ORGAN LOFT**, which houses a 1916 Skinner pipe organ.

While the largest dinner held here seated 38 people at the oak table, the Vanderbilts and family members often dined at a smaller table near the triple fireplaces. The table setting gives you an idea of these elegant family affairs, with fine linens, family silver, china, and crystal including five wine glasses per person, illustrating the elaborate dining traditions of the time and George's interest in fine wines.

5 BREAKFAST ROOM: Despite its name, luncheon was served in this room. Portraits displayed in this room include the founder of the family fortune, Cornelius "Commodore" Vanderbilt (above door on right), who was George Vanderbilt's grandfather. His father, William Henry Vanderbilt (shown above display case), was a famed art collector, which greatly influenced his son's love of art. Vanderbilt collected a variety of works including these two paintings by Renoir: *Young Algerian Girl* and *Child with an Orange*.



Above: *Young Algerian Girl*
Below: *Child with an Orange*

6 SALON: In 1895, renowned artist John Singer Sargent visited Biltmore to paint portraits of Vanderbilt's mentors who helped bring his visions of Biltmore to life: architect Richard Morris Hunt (on left wall) and landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted (on right wall). Hunt was a favorite architect of the Vanderbilts and had traveled with his client to Europe while gathering inspiration for Biltmore House. Olmsted, known as the father of American landscape architecture who designed New York's Central Park, the U.S. Capitol grounds, and many parks, considered Biltmore his last great project.

7 MUSIC ROOM: While this room has a striking appearance today, it was left unfinished during George Vanderbilt's time. The Cecil family, Biltmore's current owners and Vanderbilt's descendants, had the room completed in 1976; learn more about their preservation efforts at Antler Hill Village. During World War II, the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. stored priceless paintings and sculptures here for safekeeping.

8 TAPESTRY GALLERY: In this 90-foot-long room, guests enjoyed afternoon tea and music. In addition to 16th-century Flemish tapestries, the art includes a portrait of George Vanderbilt (above Library door) and his mother, Maria Louisa Kissam Vanderbilt (to the left), both by John Singer Sargent. To the right is a portrait of Edith Vanderbilt by Giovanni Boldini, painted 12 years after her marriage to Vanderbilt.



George Vanderbilt



Above: Richard Morris Hunt
Below: Frederick Law Olmsted

9 LIBRARY: Vanderbilt had a passion for books which is evident in his library. It contains nearly half of his 23,000-volume collection, attesting to the 1900 quote from a New York journalist that Vanderbilt was "the best read man in the country." The collection ranges from American and English literature to history, religion, philosophy, art, and architecture. The chess set and gaming table were once owned by Napoleon Bonaparte. Look up to admire *The Chariot of Aurora*, painted in the 1720s by Italian artist Giovanni Pellegrini which originally graced the Pisani Palace in Venice.

10 TAPESTRY GALLERY: As you return through the Tapestry Gallery towards the Entrance Hall, note the oval framed portrait of Edith Vanderbilt by James McNeill Whistler. Although George Vanderbilt was a bachelor when he opened Biltmore House in 1895, he fell in love with Edith Stuyvesant Dresser in 1897; they were married in Paris in 1898 and toured Europe on their honeymoon.

Once in the Entrance Hall, turn right to climb the Grand Staircase.



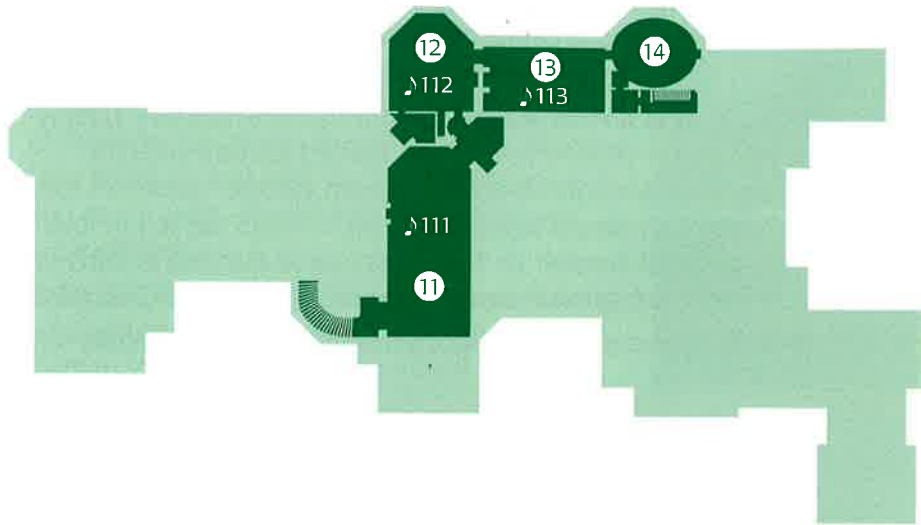
Edith Vanderbilt



Napoleon Bonaparte's chess set and gaming table

Family rooms

George and Edith Vanderbilt's private bedrooms and sitting area comprise this section of the house. Look for our hosts who can share additional family stories.



♪ AUDIO TOUR IN-DEPTH TOPICS Enter these numbers for additional information

111 Going to the Opera 112 Mr. Vanderbilt's Valet 113 Mr. Vanderbilt's Spirituality

11 THE SECOND FLOOR LIVING HALL hosts our temporary exhibition, *If These Walls Could Talk*. Please turn off your audio tour and remove your headphones to enjoy the exhibit focusing on preservation, restoration, and family history.

12 MR. VANDERBILT'S BEDROOM: Offering a commanding view of his estate, Mr. Vanderbilt's Bedroom highlights his attention to detail, with gilded wallcovering and decorative locksets and sconces. Look in his closet to see the early 1900s version of a fashionable wardrobe. Since custom dictated correct clothing for every activity, Vanderbilt might change four to six times a day, keeping his valet quite busy laying out attire for horseback riding, tea, or formal dinner.



Mr. Vanderbilt's bed

While enjoying his luxurious surroundings, Vanderbilt was involved in the day-to-day operation of the estate as well as in philanthropic endeavors including establishing All Souls Church in Biltmore Village, the Biltmore Parish Day School, and the Young Men's Institute for Asheville's African-American community.

13 OAK SITTING ROOM: Joining the family bedrooms is this paneled sitting area where the Vanderbilts shared breakfast and where Edith planned the day with the head housekeeper, Mrs. King. It was Edith's responsibility as hostess of Biltmore to keep track of arriving guests, anticipate their needs, and plan meals and social activities; Mrs. King was responsible for carrying out Edith's instructions and supervising the house staff.

Two portraits by John Singer Sargent are on display in this room: Mr. Vanderbilt's aunt, Mrs. Benjamin Kissam (left), and his cousin, Mrs. Walter Rathbone Bacon (right).



Mrs. Benjamin Kissam

14 MRS. VANDERBILT'S BEDROOM: This feminine retreat became Edith Vanderbilt's room upon her marriage. Her childhood was not easy; after her parents died when she was 10, her grandparents raised Edith Stuyvesant Dresser, her brother, and three sisters. When Edith was in her teens, her grandparents died and the Dresser girls eventually moved to Paris under the watchful eye of their governess.

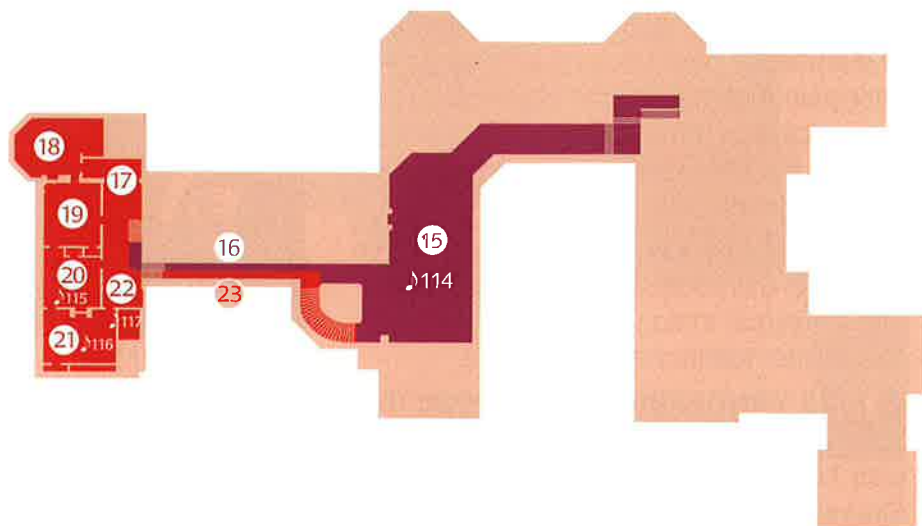
In 1897, Edith and George were on the same ship during a transatlantic voyage and renewed their acquaintance, marrying in Paris in 1898. At 25, Edith became the hostess of Biltmore, responsible for managing the house, visiting estate workers and their families, and bringing gifts to them when babies were born. Statuesque with a tiny waist, Edith liked to dress dramatically and was known for her sense of humor. She also had a passion for photography, often travelling around the estate with her box camera to take photographs.

Be sure to visit The Biltmore® Legacy in Antler Hill Village for more information about Edith Vanderbilt's life on the estate.

Guest retreats

Turn left from Mrs. Vanderbilt's Bedroom and take the stairs to the Third Floor. Go down the steps to the left and continue down the hallway.

The second and third floors of Biltmore House have guest bedrooms and social spaces. The Vanderbilts needed plenty of room for their many guests, since house parties in the early 1900s could last for days.



AUDIO TOUR IN-DEPTH TOPICS Enter these numbers for additional information

114 Book Collector
115 Tyrolean Chimney

116 It's a Boy
117 Child's Play

15 THIRD FLOOR LIVING HALL: The Vanderbilts hosted diplomats, politicians, artists, and writers, who often celebrated special occasions while staying on the estate. One notable event was the New Year's Eve party of 1901, where guests dressed in their finest formal attire for the festivities. The guest list included Joseph Hodges Choate, Ambassador to England, who wrote of the games, dancing, and revelry enjoyed that evening. Also notable are treasures Vanderbilt collected during his travels and family heirlooms. Ask the host to show you items inherited from William Henry Vanderbilt's New York City mansion.

16 THIRD FLOOR HALLWAY: As you walk down this hallway, pause to look through the windows at the magnificent exterior of Biltmore House. The house, constructed of brick and steel with limestone veneer, is adorned with elaborate statues and gargoyles carved by hand. Among the hundreds of craftsmen who worked on the house, highly skilled stonecutters earned the highest wages.

Continue down the hallway through the arched doorway. Turn right and go down the staircase to the Second Floor.



Exterior stone carvings

17 LOUIS XV HALLWAY: These next four bedrooms are the grandest guest rooms in the house, and were opened in 2009 after extensive restoration. More than 250 objects from Vanderbilt's collection were conserved as part of this project, including this 17th-century ebonized German *Schrank* (or wardrobe) with intricately carved and painted doors.

18 DAMASK ROOM: Imagine waking up in this room as a guest at Biltmore and seeing the spectacular views from your windows. Guests such as Anna Roosevelt Cowles, sister of President Theodore Roosevelt, would begin their day with breakfast by the fire before changing into clothing suitable for their morning activities.

19 CLAUDE ROOM: This room is named for the French painter Claude Lorrain, one of Vanderbilt's favorite artists whose prints are on the walls. Close friends and family stayed in these rooms; one frequent guest was William O. B. "Willie" Field, Vanderbilt's good friend who played a major role in his courtship of Edith Dresser. Field, like George, was an early enthusiast of "automobiling," as it was known at the time. Like any other outdoor activity of the time, driving required its own attire including a linen motoring duster, touring cap, gloves, and goggles.

To learn more about motoring in the early 1900s, visit Antler Hill Village to see Vanderbilt's rare 1913 Stevens-Duryea Model C-6 touring car, thought to be one of only 10 in existence.

27 DRESSING ROOMS: Female guests used these rooms to change into appropriate bathing costumes; although the outfits appear heavy and bulky to modern eyes, they were considered quite immodest in the late 1890s when no lady would dream of walking through the house dressed for swimming. Similar rooms for men are located on the other side of the wall.

28 SWIMMING POOL: The 70,000-gallon indoor pool was heated and still has its original underwater lighting. Swimmers could push call buttons, located on the wall near the doors, to order refreshments or to signal they were ready to leave and needed help changing.

29 GYMNASIUM: Keeping fit and healthy were popular pastimes at the beginning of the 20th century. While visiting Biltmore, guests could exercise on the rowing machine, practice on the parallel bars, swing Indian clubs, or toss heavy medicine balls. "Needle Baths" along the back wall were the equivalent of our modern shower massages used to soothe tired muscles.



Halloween Room



Gymnasium



Swimming Pool



Bowling Alley

Servants' domain

Continue down the hall to enter the servants' areas, where the Vanderbilts' guests never visited. Mrs. Emily King, head housekeeper for nearly 20 years, was responsible for running the house, communicating Mrs. Vanderbilt's instructions to the chef, butler, and household staff.

The room down the stairs to the left was originally named the Plant Store Room, and is located directly below the Winter Garden.

30 VEGETABLE PANTRY: This room was used to store fresh fruits and vegetables grown on the estate.

31 WALK-IN REFRIGERATORS: Instead of iceboxes or springhouses to cool food, Biltmore had an early type of mechanical refrigeration. Large metal cans contained milk from the estate's famous dairy cows.

32 SERVANTS' BEDROOMS:

Female housemaids, laundresses, cooks, and kitchen maids lived in the house, while male employees like groomsmen and stable boys lived nearby above the Stable. At Biltmore, each servant had a comfortably furnished, heated, private room—most uncommon for the period. Most servants were allowed two hours off daily but were still on call. They received one afternoon and one evening off per week, and a half day every other Sunday.



Female servant's bedroom

33 PASTRY KITCHEN: The chef used this kitchen to make elaborate desserts—including Edith and Cornelia's favorite cakes—protected from the heat of the Main Kitchen.

34 ROTISSERIE KITCHEN: Roasted meat, such as venison, wild boar, and other game, was prepared here to keep the smoke and grease out of the other kitchens. Hunting parties on the estate provided much of the game.

35 MAIN KITCHEN: The majority of prep work and cooking occurred here under direction of Biltmore's chef, who held one of the most important staff positions in the house. He led a team of more than a dozen kitchen workers who were responsible for preparing meals ranging from staff breakfast at 8:00 A.M. to picnics to dinner at 8:00 P.M. for the Vanderbilts and their guests. The copper pots above the worktable are original to the house.

36 KITCHEN PANTRY: These electric and manual dumbwaiters raised trays of food to the Butler's Pantry and floors above.

37 SERVANTS' DINING ROOM: Whether the Vanderbilts were home or traveling, there were 30–35 servants who had three meals a day in a dining room much like this one. A dining room maid was responsible for setting the table, serving the food, and cleaning up after each meal.

38 SERVICE ENTRANCE: From luggage and trunks to 30 dozen eggs a week, everything needed to run the house came through this door.

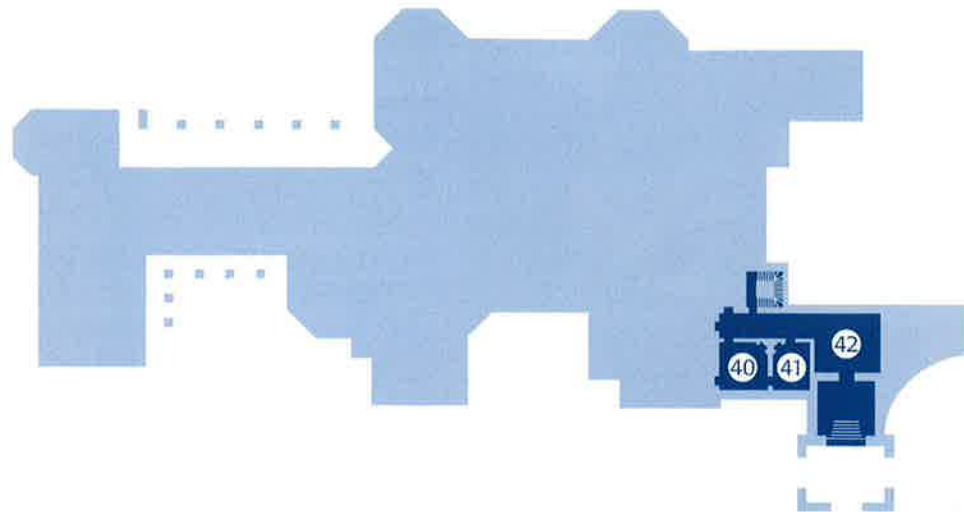
39 MAIN LAUNDRY and DRYING ROOM: The Main Laundry was as busy—and well equipped—as one in a large hotel, with laundresses working into the evening to wash and dry all the laundry. Easing their work was a belt-driven barrel washer as well as a dryer located in the adjoining Drying Room. Some of the damp laundry was dried indoors, draped over rolling racks warmed by heating elements inside.



Main Kitchen

Bachelors' Wing

Please climb the stairs leading to the Bachelors' Wing to continue your visit.



40 SMOKING ROOM: Male guests enjoyed after-dinner cigars, pipes, and brandy in this room. The doorway on the right wall leads to the Billiard Room you saw earlier in your visit.

41 GUN ROOM: Hunting parties were a popular pastime on country estates. Guests selected guns to use on their excursions from Mr. Vanderbilt's collection, which included several rifles and shotguns displayed in the cabinets.

42 BACHELORS' WING HALLWAY: The portraits in *Cornelia Vanderbilt* this hallway depict Cornelia Vanderbilt Cecil and John F.A. Cecil, who opened Biltmore House to the public in 1930 to generate revenue to help maintain the estate and boost local tourism during the Great Depression. At the official opening ceremony, Cornelia said that opening Biltmore to the public "...is a fitting memorial to my father. After all, it was his life's work and creation." Today, the estate is comprised of Biltmore House & Gardens and Antler Hill Village, and remains a family-owned property.



Cornelia Vanderbilt

***This completes your visit to Biltmore House.
Please exit down the hall and to your right.***



Just for kids: Play "I Spy" with Commodore the Lion

MAIN FLOOR Banquet Hall

I spy three acorns carved in stone.
Where are they?

Library

I spy a rabbit and a rooster.
Where are they?

A. The stone fireplace.
B. In the corner of the room's ceiling painting.



SECOND FLOOR

Mr. Vanderbilt's Bedroom

I spy a bathtub. Where is it?

Mrs. Vanderbilt's Bedroom

I spy a little doggie. Where is it?

A. Reflected in the mirror. B. On the desk.



BASEMENT

Halloween Room

I spy a bat, a dragon, and a ship.
Where are they?

Kitchen Pantry

I spy two tiny elevators.
Where are they?

A. Painted on the walls of the room.
b. To your left and right in the pantry.




Discover more fun
at Antler Hill Village

Your visit continues

After leaving the house, turn left into the Stable Courtyard for dining, shopping, and restrooms.

Refer to your Biltmore® Map & Guide for information on estate gardens and Antler Hill Village. The gardens and South Terrace are to your left when facing Biltmore House.

 Make dining and activity reservations, purchase Twelve-Month Passes, and get answers to your questions at Guest Services in the Stable Hallway and at Antler Hill Village.



🎵 AUDIO TOUR INSTRUCTIONS

Starting your audio tour

Your audio tour covers all rooms open to the public in Biltmore House. Refer to the floor plans and enter the corresponding number on your player's keypad to hear information about a room. The message automatically plays.

- For instructions, enter "99" on your keypad.
- Begin your audio tour by entering "1" for the introduction.

In-depth information

For more on Biltmore's artwork and life on the estate, look for the boxes and 🎵 in this guide for the three-digit numbers of in-depth topics. Listen to as many topics as you wish in any order.



Neckloop Telecoil Couplers are available.

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Now that you've seen the house, relax in our backyard.



Make Antler Hill Village your afternoon and evening destination

Discover how the rest of Biltmore's 8,000 acres are just as fascinating as America's largest home.® Wine, dine, play, explore, and relax at our new Antler Hill Village, featuring exhibits, complimentary wine tastings, live entertainment, and farmyard fun. It's the perfect way to continue your estate visit!



Check your Biltmore Map & Guide to plan the rest of your visit today.