

SELF-GUIDED
ACTIVITY



The Ringling
CA' D'ZAN



STEP BACK IN TIME

Imagine you are in the year 1927. You have been invited to Ca' d'Zan as a guest of John and Mable Ringling, who are eager to show you around their recently completed dream home.

You are visiting at an exciting time—the Ringlings and their staff are getting ready to host a party tonight! The house is bustling with activity as the staff prepares for the party and the guests begin to arrive.



In the late 1920s,

ladies would wear dresses like this one and gentlemen would wear suits paired with hats and fashionable ties.



As a guest at Ca' d'Zan, it would be easy for you to call for the household staff with the electric annunciator system installed throughout the house. Almost every room has a button that you could push to let the staff know that you required assistance. **As you move throughout the house, see how many of these buttons you can find!**



BALLROOM

The Ballroom was made for dancing; if you have any doubt about that, look up! The focal point of the ballroom is the ceiling, which depicts whimsical dancing couples from around the world.

Before the party, the household staff would be busy clearing the furniture from the adjoining room to make more space for dancing—notice that the teak floors extend straight through both rooms in order to expand the dance floor for larger parties. All of the windows in this room would be open and you could hear live musicians setting up outside on the terrace, getting ready to perform later in the evening.



EXPLORE MORE AT HOME:

Look up styles of dance and music that were popular in the late 1920s. For dance, the Charleston is a good place to start. For music, start with the song *Blue Skies* by Irving Berlin.



THE COURT

When you entered the Court, the first thing you would hear is music from the organ. The entire

house had to be designed around this room's organ and its 2,289 pipes, which are hidden in the walls around the Court. The organ pipes ranged from pencil-sized all the way up to 12 inches in diameter!

The Court would also be buzzing with activity. The furniture in this room was arranged into smaller groupings where you could play cards or have conversations, so the

household staff would be putting decks of playing cards within easy reach and setting out fresh flowers from the rose garden for decoration.

Since there was not air conditioning in the house when the Ringlings lived here, the many French doors

in this room would be opened to let in breezes off the bay. But because Ca' d'Zan was John and Mable's winter home, they did install a heating system that they could turn on if the evening got chilly.



This photo was taken by Mable Ringling in the 1920s and shows how the furniture in the court was arranged.

BREAKFAST ROOM

Next you reach the Breakfast Room, where you would be able to sit down with John and Mable and plan activities for your visit. While the staff got the house ready for the party, you could enjoy some of Ca' d'Zan's amenities: perhaps swimming in the pool, exercising on the tennis court, or sunbathing on the private beach. The Ringlings' yacht would also have been available to take you on a cruise and picnic.



The Ringlings' yacht was named Zalophus, which means "sea lion" in Latin.

The Breakfast Room features Mable's favorite color, green, on both the dining chairs and the venetian blinds in the windows. **Look for other uses of the color green as you move between rooms!**

PANTRY

The Pantry was one of the most active service areas of the house. In this room, staff might be rinsing Mable Ringling's china and crystal in preparation for tonight's dinner service. The sink is made of a soft metal in order to reduce the risk of breaking dishes while washing them. When you look closely at the sink, you can see all the dents and dings from dishes hitting it over the years!



The windows throughout Ca' d'Zan are made of tinted glass in a variety of shades. Which color is your favorite?



When someone summoned the staff from another area of the house, an arrow on this annunciator panel would swing and point to the room where assistance was requested.



FOYER

The Foyer was the formal entry area of Ca' d'Zan. On the day of the party, it would be set up for entertaining—dinner parties, card parties, and luncheons all took place here.



As you move towards the Dining Room, notice the door next to the grand staircase—behind it is an elevator. Technology like this reminds us that Ca' d'Zan was a thoroughly modern house for 1927 with many luxurious amenities.

DINING ROOM

The Dining Room is one of the more opulent rooms in the house, with dark paneling on the walls and gold accents. The ceiling was designed to look like wood—but it is actually painted plaster!

This table has twenty leaves that allow it to expand and accommodate more guests. The party tonight will have so many guests, the household staff will move the table out of the Dining Room and into the Foyer!



EXPLORE MORE AT HOME:

This graphic shows a place setting for a formal dinner, like those the Ringlings hosted in this room. Using resources like the internet or your local library, can you identify what each dish, cup, and utensil would have been used for?



KITCHEN

Throughout the Staff Quarters, you would be able to smell the delicious food cooking in the Kitchen. The Ringlings' cook would have fired up all four stoves: the Kitchen has two gas and two electric stoves, each set soldered together. There are also three electric refrigerator units in the house—one in the pantry, one in the kitchen, and one in the taproom.



Even with all the heat from the stoves, the mint green walls would help to create the illusion of being cool. The original paint also contained small amounts of arsenic to keep various pests under control—but don't worry, there is nothing harmful in the paint today!

EXPLORE MORE AT HOME:

Mable Ringling grew her own citrus, and she would have wanted you to try some during your visit! Try using this recipe for a refreshing 1920s dessert!

Recipe

Orange Velvet

Mix one pint cream, one pint milk, one pint sugar, the juice of two oranges, and the juice of two lemons.

Freeze and enjoy!



STAFF QUARTERS

With about a quarter of the home dedicated to the Staff Quarters, Ca' d'Zan could easily accommodate the eight staff members who lived here while the Ringlings were in residence. When you walk into this part of the house, you have a chance to see where they lived and worked.

EXPLORE MORE AT HOME:

The Ringlings' household staff included a butler, a chauffeur, a cook, and a maid. Research what each of these roles would have entailed in the 1920s. What would life have been like as a staff member at Ca' d'Zan?

1 BELVEDERE

A tall tower tops Ca' d'Zan. Its name, Belvedere, means "beautiful view."

2 BALCONIES

Four bedrooms in the house originally had private balconies.

3 LEVELS

In addition to the first and second stories, the house has a basement, a third floor game room that can't be seen from the exterior, and a fourth-floor bedroom below the open tower.

4 TERRACE

An open porch behind the house, called a terrace, encourages visitors to relax and enjoy the beautiful bay views. You may even spot a manatee or a dolphin swimming by.

5 DOCK

The Ringlings kept their yacht, *Zalophus*, docked off of the terrace

EXPLORE MORE AT HOME:

Look up an image of the exterior of the Doge's Palace in Venice, Italy, which was one of the Ringling's inspirations for the design of their home. What do you notice about the building that is similar to the Ca' d'Zan?



THE EXTERIOR OF CA D'ZAN

Now that you have gone through the house, you should have a better understanding of what it might have been like to be a guest at Ca' d'Zan in the late 1920s. Now, we invite you to spend some time looking at the outside of the house to learn more about the actual building!

SHAPE HUNT

How many of these geometric shapes can you find on the exterior of Ca' d'Zan? Where did you find them?



Circle



Half Circle



Square



Rectangle



Diamond



Trapezoid



Octagon

CA' D'ZAN CHALLENGE

- 1** The terrace is made up of different kinds of marble. How many types can you see?
- 2** If your footstep is about 1 foot long, how long is the marble terrace? Try walking the length to find out. (Adults, your footsteps are about 18 inches long)
- 3** Quatrefoils—forms that look like flowers with four petals—decorate the space above the windows on the second floor. What other plant or animal decorations can you find on the house?

Ca' d'Zan Challenge Answers: 1 Six kinds of marble; 2 200 feet by 40 feet; 3 Examples include baskets of flowers, seahorses, vines, and winged lions.

EXPLORE MORE AT HOME:

Learn more about the objects in Ca' d'Zan by visiting our collections online at emuseum.ringling.org

Here are a few objects to get you started! Enter the numbers below in the search box on eMuseum to learn more about objects featured in this brochure!

SN11198.3 SN1062 SN1032 SN1031

The Ringling

THE JOHN & MABLE RINGLING MUSEUM OF ART
STATE ART MUSEUM OF FLORIDA | FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY

5401 Bay Shore Road, Sarasota, FL 34243

941.359.5700 | ringling.org



#TheRingling