

HOW SUITE IT IS

Rick Reilly, Sports Illustrated

You're a hardworking NBA star, trying to feed your family on \$9 million a year. The league is cruelly making you get dressed up. It's hell. You need a day off to rest, relax and recuperate in a peaceful hideaway.

Naturally, you choose Las Vegas.

You start by calling George Maloof, the Playmate-dating co-owner of the Sacramento Kings, and book a suite at the über-trendy Palms casino, which the Maloof family also owns. The Palms is the Sands, 50 years later, only with silicone. This is where, last week, you could've hung with Derek Jeter, partied with David Ortiz, taken a timeout with Chris Webber and seen Britney Spears milling around.

But which suite?

Should you book the brand-new, \$50,000-a-night Hardwood Suite, which has its own basketball court -- complete with three king-size Murphy beds that pull out of the court walls?

Or maybe you should go for the Kingpin Suite, which has two full-length bowling lanes, 100 pairs of shoes and some 30 balls? It's hell to be in the rooms beneath it, but it's Jeter's favorite.



The Hardwood Suite has only been open since New Year's Eve, but already Hulk Hogan, Carmen Electra, Chris Webber and Dennis Rodman have been there.

Greg Cava/SI

The Crib Suite (DJ booth)? The Erotic Suite (shower with stripper pole and multicolored flashing lights)? Any of the 24 NBA suites (12-foot-high doors, nine-foot-high shower nozzles and eight-foot beds)?

You decide on the 10,000-square-foot Hardwood Suite. After all, with its locker room (nine lockers and three showers) and beds enough for 10, you can bring nearly all your teammates. They'll love having their own cheerleaders (\$750 each for four hours) to root them on. You can even rent a ref (about \$250). Everyone will get a jersey with his name on it. Plus, *your* name will be painted right on the court. (In case you forget.)

To get to Vegas, you charter a jet (about \$15,000 round trip from Los Angeles), and the Palms picks you up in one of its lime-green, tricked-out, 22-inch-rim Escalades (free). You're huge, so they've assigned you your own casino host and security detail, anytime you need them, day or night (free). They sneak you in the VIP entrance in the back, then straight up to your room.

Dude, it's even suiter than you thought! It only *starts* with the basketball court. There's a basketball-grained leather wall, butler service and a revolving couch. (You can tell Coach you were practicing your 360 spin moves all weekend.)

It's got its own full-service bar, and a 10-person Jacuzzi in the middle of the living room (you know -- in case the cheerleaders get sweaty). One of the Murphy beds folds down right under the hoop. You can literally *sleep* in the lane, thus approximating life as Greg Ostertag.

When the game's over, it's time to get *out* there. Well, not out *there*, among the great unwashed, of course. No, the Palms takes you into the high-roller VIP gaming room, where if you play blackjack for \$15,000 a hand, the suite is on them.

Don't try to bet on an NBA game, though. It's not allowed at the Palms. Hell, at one time people were disgusted that the NBA allowed a casino owner to have a team at all, but that's so 15 minutes ago. The NBA All-Star Game will be in Las Vegas in 2007, and guess which is the players' hotel.

If your cards earn you a little stackable legal tender, why not splurge at the in-hotel tattoo parlor? It's a little touch the Maloofs put in especially for tatted-up, posse-dragging superstar jocks -- and those who want to act like tatted-up, posse-dragging superstar jocks. A Milwaukee Brewer was just in and got something cool: baseball stitches ringing his right biceps. But you get yourself a full-color Satan (\$600).

Won't Mom be proud?

It's almost two in the morning, which means Rain, the Palm's achingly cool hip-hop club, will really start hipping and/or hopping. You want to be in the VIP section? Please. You'll be in the VIP section *inside* the VIP section -- one of six luxury skyboxes with your own bartender (\$1,000). As your gyrating fans look up at you, you can gaze down at them like the Pope from his balcony at St. Peter's.

They say scandalous things happen in those skyboxes, but you are comforted by the hotel's motto: *What happens at the Palms never happened.*

Sadly, the sun comes up and it's time to get back to the real world -- playing boring old pro basketball in front of packed houses of adoring fans who would give a kidney and a half to be you for a weekend. You've gone through about \$75,000, not counting gambling wins or losses.

And you think, *Damn, at only \$9 million a year, it's going to take me more than half a game to make it back!*

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