

Twenty-five of the World's Best Hotels

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and prepared by the staff of
International Living

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Introduction

What do you look for in a hotel stay? Is it affordability? Location? Amenities? Ambience? Perhaps you require more personal service than the average traveler. Or maybe you're the type of person who simply needs a firm mattress and clean sheets.

What follows is a varied selection of hotel bests. You'll find much of the best luxury accommodation listed, but we've also made a point of including a number of unusual establishments: the Beijing hotel with the best bowling alley...Paris' \$12 per night accommodation...

Traveling the world can be exhausting. We want you to find the best place to lay your weary head—according to your standards.

So here's our best...to you. Sweet dreams!



Kathleen Peddicord
Publisher, *International Living*

1. AUSTRALIA

Sydney's opera lover's pick

The **Regent**, 199 *George St.*; tel. (61)2-9238-0000, overlooks the opera house on Sydney Harbour in the historic Rocks area. Boasting a 24-hour business center and central location (major shopping is just a short walk away), this luxury hotel is ideally suited for tourists and business people alike. The rooms are luxurious and well tended (twice daily maid service is standard) and 24-hour room service is available.

2. BELIZE

Belize City's warmest family feeling

Run by Alan and Ondina Colton, **Colton House**, 9 *Cork Street*, Belize City, Belize; tel. (501)2-44666; fax (501)2-30451, e-mail: coltonhse@btl.net, website: www.coltonhouse.com, is a colonial-style guesthouse with many charming touches. The property boasts tastefully decorated rooms, a large wraparound porch with a charming swingchair, and a self-catering garden room apartment. All amenities aside, it's the warm welcome the Coltons offer that'll ensure your return visit. You're sure to feel like a Colton yourself by the time you bid them goodbye. Try to keep a stiff upper lip.

3. BRAZIL

Ipanema's best babe-watching

The **Caesar Park Hotel**, *Av. NS de Copacabana 500 s. 503*; tel. (55 21) 2548 3562, is located on Rio's most beautiful beach. The interiors are pure class here and the amenities are top-notch. But it's the location that really scores big points for this place. Situated in an elegant neighborhood of Rio de Janeiro, between the sea and the mountains, this hotel is close to local attractions. The hotel offers beach service with lifeguards, sun loungers, sunshades, and fresh fruits served on the beach.

4. CANADA

Montreal's most bolstering breakfast

The historic 15-story **Hotel Chateau Versailles**, *tel. 514-933-3611*, is a European-style boutique hotel housed in an elegant manor house. Gym, sauna, and Internet facilities are available as is round-the-clock room service. Mornings here are a highpoint: the breakfast buffet is a treat that will keep you going until dinnertime.

5. CHINA

Beijing's best bowling

The **Holiday Inn Lido Beijing**, *Jichang and Jiang Tai roads; tel. (86)1-500-6688*, is a great pick-me-up for a homesick American. This place is Beijing's version of a typical American resort hotel and, while there are a few misses, the atmosphere is pretty authentic. Facilities include numerous restaurants and lounges, a health club, a swimming pool, air-conditioned rooms, private bathrooms, color televisions, and direct-dial telephones. The crowning touch is a regulation size bowling alley! All that's missing is your '57 T-bird.

6. CZECH REPUBLIC

Prague's celebrities' choice

Built in 1904 by the present owner's great-grandfather, **Pariz**, *U Obecnih domu 1; tel. (42)2-236-0820*, is a 5-star, art deco hotel with all the amenities you can imagine. Guests can choose from standard rooms, suites, and the "royal tower" suite, which is generally reserved for politicians and pop stars. For fun, go to the *website: www.hotel-pariz.cz/aj/indexaj.html* to see the signatures of all the celebs who havestayed here.

7. CROATIA

Dubrovnik's de-stress best

For a full-service spa experience, **Hotel Valsabbion**, *Pjeskala uvala IX 26, 52100 Pula; tel./fax (385)52-218-033; e-mail: valsabbion@valsabbion.net; website: www.valsabbion.hr*, is the best-equipped facility in Dubrovnik. With a wide range of beauty and relaxation treatments available, this place is one of the best de-stressors we know. On the other hand, if you simply want to chill by the pool, sun yourself on the private beach, or have a leisurely lunch at the award-winning restaurant, no one's going to force you to do crunches. This is your personal time—do what feels right to you.

8. FRANCE

A clean room and a bit of peace and quiet for \$12 (in Paris!)

The **Ephrem Guesthouse**, *Rue Du Chevalier-de-la-Barre; tel. (33)1-5341-8909; fax (33)1-53-41-89-19; e-mail: pax@sacre-coeur-montmartre.com*, which is located in Paris' Montmartre arts district, offers rooms to retreatants for as little as \$12 per night. While this 55-room dormitory is adjacent to the Basilica, how you define your retreat is largely up to you. As such, guests are not required to attend mass or participate in group activities. However, a strict 10:30 p.m. curfew is imposed.

8. GERMANY

Hamburg's best staff-to-guest ratio

Established in 1897, **VierJahreszeiten**, *tel. toll free (800)223-6800 or (49)404-349-40*, is thought by many to be the best hotel in Germany. Situated on Lake Alster, this elegant eight-story gem offers spectacular views, charming interiors, as well as every modern amenity imaginable. For instance, should you need your suit tailored, you may simply call on the services of the in-house Italian tailor. Perhaps you had a special wine

in mind to go with your gourmet meal? Well, chances are the 65,000-bottle wine cellar will have it. Should you have any special requests, a member of the staff is sure to be nearby: 450 employees are on duty to cater to 175 rooms.

10. GREECE

Athens' tender-loving best

The best rooms at Athens' the **Grande Bretagne**, tel. (30)10-33-30-000, offer views of the Acropolis. Boasting a top-notch spa, rooftop lounge, and an outstanding restaurant, this hotel has everything for the traveler in need of tender-loving care. What's more, its central location suits business people and tourists alike.

11. HUNGARY

Budapest's romantic's choice

Incorporated into the ruins of a 13th-century abbey, the **Budapest Hilton**, I Hess Andras ter 1-3; tel. (36)1-175-1000, is situated at the top of a hill overlooking the Danube River. Because of its location—in the history-laden castle district, next to the Mathias Church and Fisherman's Bastion—this particular branch of the Hilton has a uniquely romantic character. While the amenities are pure Hilton (i.e. world-class), this place manages to retain an intimate quality not generally associated with a 5-star establishment.

12. INDIA

Calcutta's best hotel and a horoscope

The **Oberoi Grand**, tel. (91)848-827-5839, boasts a central location and rooms with beautiful private baths and refrigerators. In addition to luxury amenities, such as a swimming pool, health club, restaurants, a shopping arcade, and a disco, this place has an in-house astrologer! Will you find true love at the disco tonight or just have a really good night's sleep? Hmmmm.

13. IRELAND

Sligo's best inspiration for a stuck poet

Markree Castle Hotel, Collooney, Co. Sligo; tel. (353)71-916-7800; e-mail: markree@iol.ie; website: www.markreecastle.ie, has been home to the Cooper family since 1640. Set in the wild terrain that inspired W.B. Yeats, this place could ignite a creative flame in a wet tea bag. For those less poetically inclined, the riding center nearby provides guided horse rides on the spectacular Lough Gill Trail.

14. ISRAEL

Bethlehem's best-kept secret (and keep it that way!)

The Casa Nova Inn, 10 Casa Nova St., is a relatively undiscovered gem. Shhh! The rates at this restored pilgrims' retreat house are low and include a continental breakfast as well as a five-course dinner and late supper. Considering its central location off Manger Square, it's hard to believe this place isn't booked months in advance. Share this information only with your nearest and dearest.

15. ITALY

Rome's most reflective stay

A budget alternative to Rome's expensive hotels, the Franciscan Sisters of the Atonement, via Monte del Gallo 105, 00165 Rome; tel. (39)06-630732; fax (39)06-638-6149, offer rooms with private baths at reasonable rates. The property has a lush garden with pine trees and a rolling lawn. If you're a party animal, this place may not be for you: there's an 11 p.m. curfew.

16. JAPAN

Tokyo's best crash course in Japanese customs

Fukudaya, tel. (81)3-3467-5833, website: www.fukudaya.com, is Tokyo's best traditional Japanese inn or ryokan. A ryokan stay is a wonderful opportunity to experience ancient Japanese rituals firsthand. The rooms are furnished simply with tatami mats and cushions, sliding translucent paper doors, as well as futon beds. After bathing in the Japanese style (in a wooden tub), dinner will be served by a kimono-clad maid. The traditional gardens here provide a perfect environment for quiet reflection.

17. MEXICO

Mexico City's best playground

For a country club feel, **Camino Real, Mariano Escobedo 700**; tel. (52)5-203-2121, is unparalleled. Located at the edge of Chapultepec Park, this adult playground spans over seven acres of lush land. Facilities include pools, tennis courts, a coffee shop, two restaurants, and numerous bars. This is not to mention the disco, where you can show off your country club tan.

18. NICARAGUA

Granada's most affordable luxury

For location, modern amenities, and charming service, **Hotel Colonial**, tel. (505)552-7299, is an excellent choice. Located alongside the city's central plaza, this 26-room hotel offers rooms for as little as \$65 per night (large suites will run you about \$100) and is considered to be one of the most luxurious hotels in town. The pool features a swim-up bar—so, will you back paddle or crawl for your margarita?

19. PANAMA

Panama City's best for business

For five-star amenities and service at bargain prices, the **Hotel Bristol**, *Avenida Aquilino De La Guardia*, is unbeatable. This 56-room boutique hotel has the same look and feel as the best hotels in the world: extremely attentive staff, five-star dining, and a luxurious interior. But this place really scores its points in the “small touches” department. For instance, guests are greeted with a bowl of fruit and given personalized business cards on which their name and the hotel's address is printed. Classy stuff...

20. PHILIPPINES

Most worthwhile drive from Manila

Villa Escudero, *P.O. Box 4, San Pablo*, is situated on a fully operational coconut plantation. For a taste of typical village life, this place is unsurpassed. But this isn't Gilligan's Island: the service, atmosphere, and level of comfort here are all top-notch. Villa Escudero is a two-hour drive from Manila, but it's an experience you'll never forget.

21. SOUTH AFRICA

Johannesburg's best beds

The best way to immerse yourself in South African culture is to stay with a South African family. **Bed 'N Breakfast**, *Eighth Avenue, Melville 2092, P.O. Box 91309; tel. (482)22-067*, operates a network of B&Bs throughout the country. Some stays will be self-catering while, in others—and we recommend this—you'll dine with the family (kind of like a long-lost cousin.)

22. SPAIN

Barcelona's most affordable aesthetics

The **Hotel Colón**, *tel. (800)845-0636*, which stands opposite the historic cathedral in the Gothic quarter, commands some of the most beautiful views in town. Despite its relatively inexpensive rates, some rooms have terraces and all have air conditioning as well as private bathrooms. The rooms here are furnished in plush velvets and dark woods; ornate gilded mirrors hang above antique chairs. For the perfect balance between value and aesthetics, this is your best bet.

23. SWEDEN

Stockholm's thinking person's choice

Notables generally choose the **Grand Hotel, Sodra Blasieholm-shamnen 8**; *tel. (46)8-221-020*, when visiting Stockholm. This luxurious establishment is the best hotel in Sweden and is often touted as the best in the world. With bright staff, two well-respected restaurants, and a vibey bar, this place gets our vote. As most Nobel Peace Prize winners generally stay here, we like to think that great minds think alike...

24. UNITED KINGDOM

Oxford's best tie collection

The 700-year-old **Bear Inn**, *6 Alfred Street, Oxford; tel. (44)1865-728-164*, is positively dripping with history. Oxford alumni still meet at this eccentric place, with its oak beams and low ceilings, to reminisce and sing old university songs. Even if you didn't make it out of high school, this place will put you in an academic state of mind. A collection of more than 4,000 neckties, donated and signed by customers since 1951, hangs on one wall. Browse through ties from members of cricket teams, student societies, and rowing clubs as you soak in the jolly good atmosphere.

25. UNITED STATES

Best historic re-creation in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

For a colonial-style atmosphere and all the modern amenities you can imagine, **Sheraton Society Hill**, *One Dock St.*; tel. 215-238-6000, is a no-brainer. While this place was built in 1986, the overall colonial American effect is quite convincing. Many historic attractions are located nearby—such as Penn's Landing and Head House Square—and some rooms offer views to the Delaware River. Guests have the choice of three restaurants, a fitness center and sauna, a swimming pool, as well as great round-the-clock room service.