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**150 HOTELS**  
with location-inspired architecture, ambience,  
and amenities • eco-stewardship • an ethic  
of giving back to the community



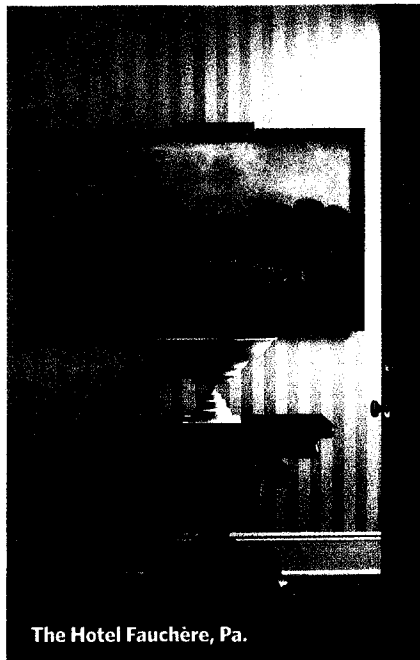
**SENSE OF PLACE...** With the cadence of a lullaby, these three words neatly sum up the properties celebrated here. To travel well, we believe, is to soak up authenticity. And where we spend the night is part of the picture. Does the hotel incorporate—and share—the soul of its location? Are resources respected and conserved? When possible, is the food put on the table local? Does the property play a vital role in the community, sharing some of its profits with local causes, for example? ¶ These criteria grow out of our mission (see page 4). The true *Traveler* experience doesn't stop at the hotel lobby. Rather, it can (and should) be reinforced and enhanced there. ¶ To assemble this list, we put out a call for hotel nominations to people far and wide, from local travel experts to seasoned travelers. We detailed our criteria and asked them to recommend hotels and inns that fit the bill. After sending out in-depth questionnaires to the more than 600 properties nominated—and conducting further research—we arrived at our list of 150 properties in the United States, Canada, Mexico, and Caribbean region. ¶ You likely will see some old favorites—as well as a few surprises. It's a diverse lot, from rustic to luxurious, dirt cheap to splurge. ¶ Sense of place and a sweet night's sleep. Welcome to the "Stay List."

**BATTLE HOUSE, Mobile, Ala.** Recently renovated downtown historic hotel one block from bay. Once a destination for debutantes and politicians (including Jefferson Davis and Woodrow Wilson). Elaborate moldings, portraits of kings, ballroom, and dining under magnolia-blossom stained-glass ceiling. 238 rooms; \$189-299; [www.rsabattlehouse.com](http://www.rsabattlehouse.com).

**MENTONE SPRINGS HOTEL, Mentone, Ala.** Restored Queen Anne Victorian hotel built in 1884—oldest in Alabama—known for the restorative powers of its mineral spring water. Formal gardens, wraparound porch, fireplaces in suites, queen beds in all rooms. Fresh trout in the restaurant. Refreshing: no TVs or cell phone service. 9 rooms; \$85-215; [www.mentonespringshotel.com](http://www.mentonespringshotel.com).

**CAMP DENALI, Denali National Park, Alas.** Rustic, family-owned outpost deep in the park. Hillside log cabins with handmade quilts, woodstoves, propane lights, hot plates. Vegetables grown in the on-site greenhouse. Explore glacial rivers, boreal forests, and alpine tundra with local naturalists. Grand scenery everywhere; even outhouses have views of nearby Mount McKinley. 18 cabins; \$1,365-3,185 for 3 to 7 nights and all meals. [www.campdenali.com/cd/index.php](http://www.campdenali.com/cd/index.php).

**KENAI BACKCOUNTRY LODGE, Kenai Peninsula, Alas.** Roughing it in style. Fronting a glacial-gouged lake, the former 1930s hunting lodge camps out in the middle of 2.2 million truly spectacular acres of the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge. Remote, to be sure: accessible by boat only. Hand-hewn log cabins. Yukon tents. Staff naturalist. See moose. Drink Chardonnay. Take sauna. 10 rooms; \$1,075-1,275 for two nights, all meals and activities included; [www.alaskawildland.com/kenaibackcountrylodge.htm](http://www.alaskawildland.com/kenaibackcountrylodge.htm).



The Hotel Fauchère, Pa.

**SHERATON WILDHORSE PASS RESORT AND SPA, Chandler, Ariz.** Modern resort run by Gila River Indian community in Sonoran Desert. Designed with guidance from Pima and Maricopa tribal elders. Authentic tribal prints in rooms; native basketry and pottery on display. Fire-pit storytelling sessions in winter. On-site golf, spa, and equestrian center. Nearby: some 1,500 wild horses. 500 rooms; \$159-479; [www.wildhorsepassresort.com](http://www.wildhorsepassresort.com).

**THUNDERBIRD LODGE, Chinle, Ariz.** Former trading post on Arizona Navajo reservation at

the mouth of Canyon de Chelly. Inside: pink adobe-style rooms with Navajo paintings, free Wi-Fi, satellite TV, air-conditioning. Native American food in dining hall. Outside: cottonwood trees, Navajo-guided tours of ruins. 74 rooms; \$59-155; [www.tbirdlodge.com](http://www.tbirdlodge.com).

**HACIENDA DEL SOL GUEST RANCH RESORT, Tucson, Ariz.** Spanish colonial property in desert foothills of Santa Catalina Mountains. Went from private girls school to hideaway for celebrities such as Clark Gable and John Wayne. On-site spa and restaurant. Handmade sleigh beds and armoires, painted tiles. Vintage swimming pool and hot tub with mountain views. 30 rooms; \$109-495; [www.haciendadelsol.com](http://www.haciendadelsol.com).

**HOTEL CONGRESS, Tucson, Ariz.** Downtown hotel and music hot spot with oldest cowboy bar in town. Southwestern art deco decor with copper highlights; restaurant floor made of 177,000 pennies (and one peso). Rooms outfitted with antique iron beds, old-fashioned radios, and rotary phones that connect to a 1930s switchboard. 40 rooms; \$69-119; [www.hotelcongress.com](http://www.hotelcongress.com).

**LOOKOUT POINT LAKESIDE INN, Hot Springs, Ark.** Homey B&B overlooking Lake Hamilton, with views of Ouachita Mountains. Arts-and-crafts-style architecture with rich wood floors and locally crafted oak furniture. Nature reigns: thermal hot springs, native-plant gardens, hiking galore. A breakfast treat: raspberry-stuffed French toast. Mindfulness retreats and watercolor classes. 10 rooms and a 2-room condo; \$137-337; [www.lookoutpointinn.com](http://www.lookoutpointinn.com).

**POST RANCH INN, Big Sur, Calif.** Wild coast, wildly romantic property. Cliffside houses and rooms blend with native redwoods, oaks, and grasses. Soak tubs for two. Infinity pool for all. Spa with benefits: house shaman available for Destiny Retrieval and Divination sessions. Sierra Mar restaurant's seasonal organic dishes equally spiritual. 30 rooms; \$550-2,185; [www.postranchinn.com](http://www.postranchinn.com).

**MIRACLE MANOR RETREAT, Desert Hot Springs, Calif.** A streamlined "spa-tel" that offers up a mix of cool interiors and nurturing warmth. Hot springs, pool. Indigenous plants like cholla and barrel cactus. Organic cotton bedding, robes. No TVs. No phones. Just millions of stars in the night sky. 7 rooms; \$435-600 for 2 nights; [www.miraclemanor.com](http://www.miraclemanor.com).

**ORCHARD GARDEN HOTEL, San Francisco, Calif.** Eco-chic; decidedly "green." The first Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED)—certified hotel in California. Rooms in tones of green, white, and gold with Egyptian-cotton sheets, organic bath products. Room key-card conservation (it snuffs your lights when you leave). Organic entrées, veggie soups, cheese-and-wine pairings at Roots restaurant. 86 rooms; \$219-499; [www.theorchardgardenhotel.com](http://www.theorchardgardenhotel.com).

**EL CAPITAN CANYON, Santa Barbara, Calif.** A dandy mix of cool minimalism and just-right luxury: creek-side cabins and safari-style tents tucked into an oak-fringed Central Coast canyon. Beyond-room pleasures include yoga, wine tastings, beachcombing, hiking, horseback riding in the foothills. Enjoy a cabin barbecue prepared by your own "camp butler." Enhancement program for native coastal plants in full swing here. 108 cabins, 26 tents; \$125-350; [www.elcapitanacanyon.com](http://www.elcapitanacanyon.com).



**RATES:** The range of prices in each hotel listing represents the lowest rate in the low season to the high rate in the high season.

**TENAYA LODGE, Fish Camp, Calif.** Hi, Sierras! A newly refurbished (2006) retreat. Carved grizzlies greet guests in lobby. Native art in the corridors. Cookouts. Hikes. Rooms done in alpine decor offer forest views and warm duvets. Low-flow plumbing to conserve water. Lights dimmed for eco-responsibility and nighttime stargazing. 244 rooms; \$119-285; [www.tenayalodge.com](http://www.tenayalodge.com).

**THE AHWAHNEE, Yosemite National Park, Calif.** A tradition as inviolate as the park's famed Half Dome rock. The 1920s arts-and-crafts resort is all contrast: delicate stained glass and soaring stone fireplaces; massive beams and elaborate hand stenciling. Slate roofs and LED lighting. Historic Mural Room immortalizes native fauna and flora. 123 rooms; \$400-990; [www.yosemitepark.com](http://www.yosemitepark.com).

**BROWN PALACE HOTEL AND SPA, Denver, Colo.** Historic downtown grande dame has courted presidents and rock stars with its eight-story atrium lobby and Victorian-style rooms. Staff historian provides hotel tours. Property served by an original artesian well. Gracious afternoon tea. Cocktails and tapas in lobby. 241 guest rooms and suites; \$189-425; [www.brownpalace.com](http://www.brownpalace.com).

**DUNTON HOT SPRINGS RESORT & SPA, Dolores, Colo.** Tucked away along the Dolores River are a dozen 19th-century log cabins restored by Native American craftsmen and furnished in creature-comfort style. Soak in a tepee-sheltered spa with direct feeds of geothermal water. Yoga. Hiking. Dine on fresh-picked local chanterelles and beef from local ranches. 12 cabins; \$300-475; [www.duntonhotsprings.com](http://www.duntonhotsprings.com).

**ARMSTRONG HOTEL, Fort Collins, Colo.** A full refurbishment in 2004 polished a 1920s-era downtown gem. Down comforters on mod-looking beds set in contemporary Wi-Fi-enabled suites complement original pine floors. Traditional awnings green down electric costs. White-noise machines make for sweet dreams. 37 rooms; \$89-149; [www.thearmstronghotel.com](http://www.thearmstronghotel.com).

**REDSTONE INN, Redstone, Colo.** Old-fashioned resort tucked between pine trees and mountains in former coal-mining village. Swiss chalet architecture, centuries-old clock tower, hand-pegged craftsman furniture. In-room guest books detail history and geography of area. Snowshoeing and sleigh rides in winter; fly-fishing, hiking, and wine receptions on veranda in summer. 35 rooms; \$60-235; [www.redstoneinn.com](http://www.redstoneinn.com).

**BREADLOAF MOUNTAIN LODGE AND COTTAGES, Cornwall Bridge, Conn.** Revolutionary War-era inn and cottages. Original hardwood floors and chestnut beams mesh with plasma TVs and wireless Internet. Steps from Appalachian and Connecticut wine trails. On-site fly-fishing school; kayaking and bird-watching on grounds. Local produce, meats, and sundries. Owners grew up fishing on the river, wishing they could own the inn. 11 rooms; \$115-470; [www.breadloafmountainlodge.com](http://www.breadloafmountainlodge.com).

**THE WILLARD INTERCONTINENTAL, Washington, D.C.** Centerpiece of capital history two blocks from the White House. Presidential patrons date back to Franklin Pierce, and Ulysses S. Grant popularized the term "lobbyist" in reference to historic lobby. Edwardian furnishings, views of Jefferson Memorial and Washington Monument, and a gallery dedicated to hotel's heritage. 332 rooms; \$349-4,199; [www.washington.intercontinental.com](http://www.washington.intercontinental.com).

**THE MOORINGS VILLAGE, Islamorada, Fla.** Restored 1930s cottages on what was originally a coconut plantation estate. Blessedly far removed from bustle of Key West, which is about 85 miles away. Setting: 18 acres of beach-front land amid palm trees and bougainvillea. French doors and wraparound verandas. Black-and-white photographs, historic navigation charts, and wooden fishing poles memorably set the scene. 30 rooms; \$275-1,500; [www.mooringsvillage.com](http://www.mooringsvillage.com).

**HERLONG MANSION HISTORIC INN AND GARDENS, Micanopy, Fla.** Corinthian-columned neoclassical mansion turned B&B. Mahogany floors and claw-foot tubs inside; jasmine-covered gazebos, magnolia trees, and oaks draped with Spanish moss outside. Walk down a two-lane country road to visit the antiques shops of small-town Micanopy, oldest inland settlement in Florida. 12 rooms, 2 cottages; \$99-349; [www.herlong.com](http://www.herlong.com).

**WATERCOLOR INN, Santa Rosa Beach, Fla.** Gulf of Mexico luxury within 499-acre community and nature preserve. Nestled amid white-sand dunes, the classic beach resort stands no higher than four stories, preserving shore views. Outdoor cabana showers. Staff naturalists help protect area wildlife. 60 rooms; \$400-845; [www.watercolorinn.com](http://www.watercolorinn.com).

**GLEN-ELLA SPRINGS COUNTRY INN, Clarkesville, Ga.** Cozy B&B in foothills of Blue Ridge Mountains. Meadows and perennial gardens surround, and all rooms open onto a rocking-chair-filled porch. Country-comfortable pine-paneled walls, chintz bedspreads, and local handicrafts. Gas-log fireplaces and whirlpool tubs in suites and penthouses. Order fresh rainbow trout in restaurant. 16 rooms; \$150-265; [www.glenella.com](http://www.glenella.com).

**GREYFIELD INN, Cumberland Island, Ga.** A family-run Carnegie mansion built in 1900 on

## intelligent quarters

How to land the perfect room? Our experts check in.



Miracle Manor Retreat, Calif.

If you've ever stayed at a historic hotel, you probably know that there are rooms and then there are rooms: Some are spectacular, while others are just so-so. How do you make sure you're offered the keys to decent quarters at that charming landmark where no two rooms are alike? The New York Marriott East Side, a 1926 Gothic, Romanesque, art deco hotel where Harry Houdini once performed, has 646 rooms and a mind-boggling 105 room types. But for simplicity's sake, rooms fall into just two amorphous categories: deluxe and superior. "The right room is really a matter of your perspective as a guest," says Michael Powlen, the hotel's resident manager.

In the end, finding the perfect accommodations means matching your tastes

to the hotel's available room inventory. Short of an in-person visit, phoning the property remains the most effective way to make sure you'll get the right room.

"Call the front desk in advance to make a room request or inquiry," says Robert Mandelbaum, a hotel analyst for PKF Hospitality Research. Explain your desires—do you want a view, extra space—something more private?—and ask if there's something they can recommend. Don't call the toll-free reservations line—those queries are often handled by a call center, and employees may not have firsthand knowledge of the property.

Which is not to say the Internet can't be a useful tool. "Go to a hotel's website, where you'll likely find a variety of room stylés, based on the view or amenities," says Bjorn Hanson, an analyst at PricewaterhouseCoopers. "If you see something you like, you can call and ask for the room number and go from there."

Some smaller properties might be able to offer you a room this way, but many larger hotels with automated reservations systems won't assign a room until several hours before you check in. What then?

"It is perfectly okay to ask to see a room before check-in," says Susan Rodger, who manages the Fairmont Hotels & Resorts' rooms division. "Most often, a hotel will do its best to find something that is suitable within the category booked." If you don't like the room you're assigned, ask to move. If there's another available room, most properties will accommodate your wishes.

Does the hotel assign a room on the basis of how and where you booked? Analysts say that although hotels are reluctant to admit it, they do, in fact, block off the better rooms for members of their frequent guest programs, visitors paying with platinum cards, or people who have booked through a preferred travel agent. Guests who reserve their hotel online—and particularly those paying heavily discounted rates—tend to get assigned the less desirable rooms. Common sense. Yes, you get what you pay for.

—CHRISTOPHER ELLIOTT

