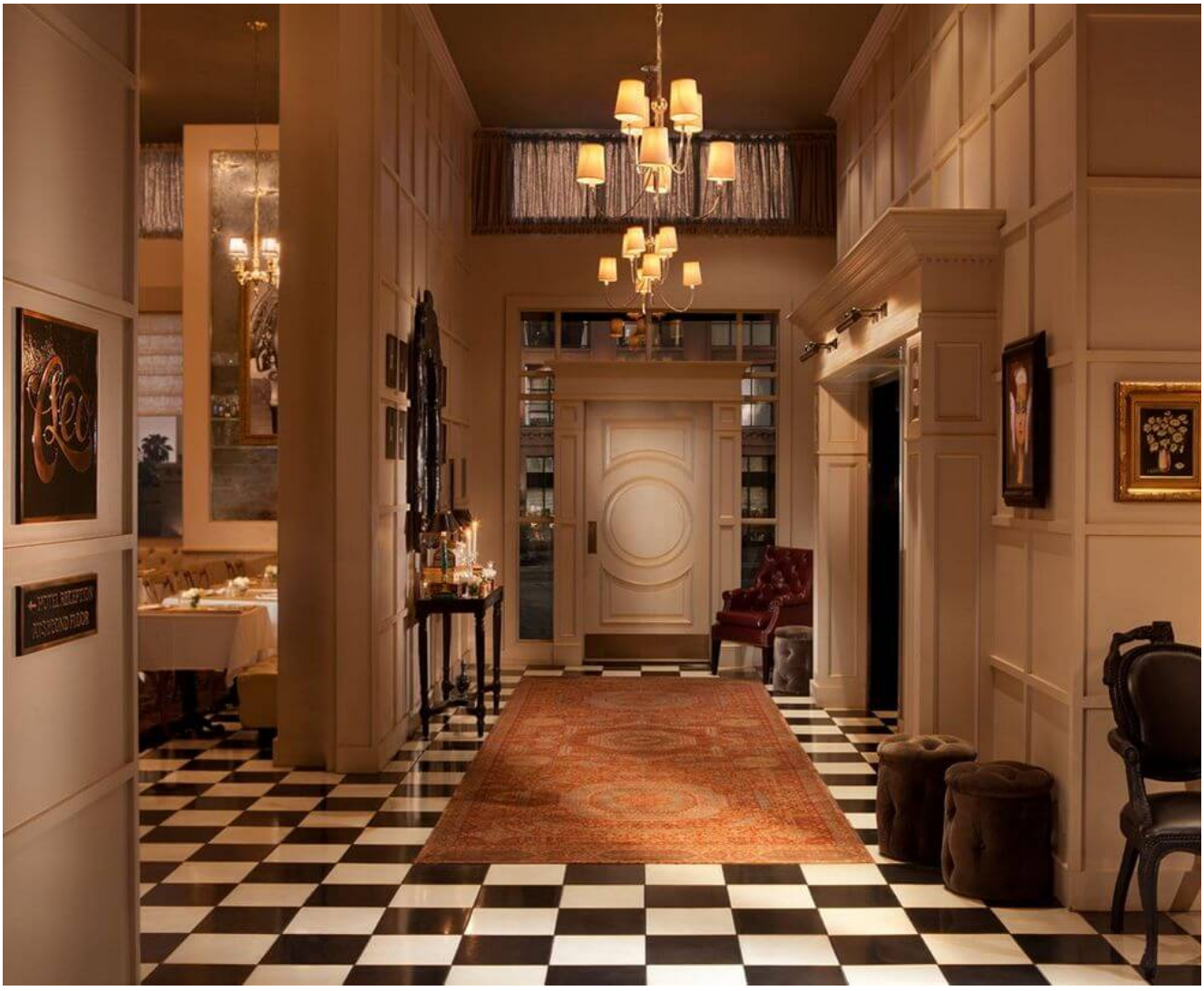
REVIEW: The Redbury Hollywood Hotel

Every now and then there’s a boutique hotel that surprises me. The Redbury in Hollywood is one of those hotels.

The Redbury is located in the heart of Hollywood. You would choose this hotel because of its location, but upon staying you’d realize you had also found a little gem.

The lobby of the hotel is split between the bottom floor and the second floor. The look is moody, dark, and sensual. The 70’s-style-meets-dutch-manor is unique and luxurious but unpretentious.



You walk into the hotel right here

The check-in process mimics that of a small boutique, there's a single check-in desk where you're given your keys and whisked away to one of a few unique suites. There was a lot of dedication to details in the guest rooms. They have poles (which you are free to hang from), working record players with lots of groovy jams, and in some of the rooms – great balconies which overlook the busy Hollywood scene just outside.



Redbury Hotel Rooms do not lack in style

There's something different about the decor, which even goes as far as using linoleum floors, but combining it with distressed leather couches and artwork befitting of an exhibition at Art Basel.

The public spaces on the second floor, and the restaurant Cleo round out the property. There's plenty of lounging to do at the hotel lobby bar, and the outdoor patio enclosed by the building is a great way to spend some quality time in the (usually) beautiful Los Angeles weather.



The Lobby Bar. A casual and relaxing affair

If you’re looking for a quaint little hotel in the heart of Hollywood, the Redbury is your place.

– RATING –

Hard Product:

-Location (How close is this to top attractions in the surrounding area?)

9/10

–**Cleanliness** (Is the grout in the bathroom clean? How good is maid service here?)

8/10

–**Upkeep** (Is the hotel in need of a remodel, or is it being constantly kept up?)

8/10

–**Public Spaces** (How unique/inventive/useful are the public spaces?)

7/10

Soft Product:

–**Service** (How good is the service here?)

8/10

–**Restaurants** On-Site (Are the restaurants on site somewhere even the locals would go to?)

10/10

–**Concierge** (Specifically, how effective is the Concierge at helping you with a new locale?)

8/10

TOTAL: 58/70

(35/70 is average)

PROS:

- It’s got style in spades
- The restaurant within the hotel is incredible for Mediterranean cuisine
- Prices are usually very competitive for some large rooms

CONS:

- It’s a small boutique hotel, so don’t expect a ton of offerings outside of the room, a restaurant, and a nice bar

SECRETS:

- Ask for an exterior facing room, or you might be left with one facing a literal brick wall (of the neighboring buildings)

REVIEW: The Sixty LES in New York

New York, the city that never sleeps, the Big Apple, the capital of the world. The metropolis that many consider to be the premier urban center of the US is one of the greatest places to stay, not only because of the cornucopia of activities, but because of the diverse range of hotels available.

I've stayed at about a dozen properties just in New York alone over the years, but one of that I keep on coming back to because of its location and simplicity is the Sixty LES (formerly known as the Thompson LES).

Now my general rule about finding a hotel in New York is that it's all about neighborhood. You first choose where you want to spend the majority of your time, and then you figure out where to stay based on that. I just so happen to love downtown Manhattan. The neighborhood bodegas, the small corner stores, and the patchwork of buildings that resembles a "Where's Waldo" picture makes me happy.

The Sixty LES is situated in an ideal corner of lower Manhattan, right on the corner of Allen and Houston (pronounced How-Sten for all you locals). It's contemporary, simplistic, and oozes of style. Keep in mind, this is not your regular luxury hotel, this is hip, young, and edgy.



The lobby seating area captures the essence of the hotel perfectly. A juxtaposition of concrete, leather, and faux fur

The rooms are bare concrete, and some might argue that it feels a bit cold, but here in lower manhattan, it just feels right. The lightboxes above the beds feature the work of Lee-Friedlander, and the bathrooms are just plain cool looking.

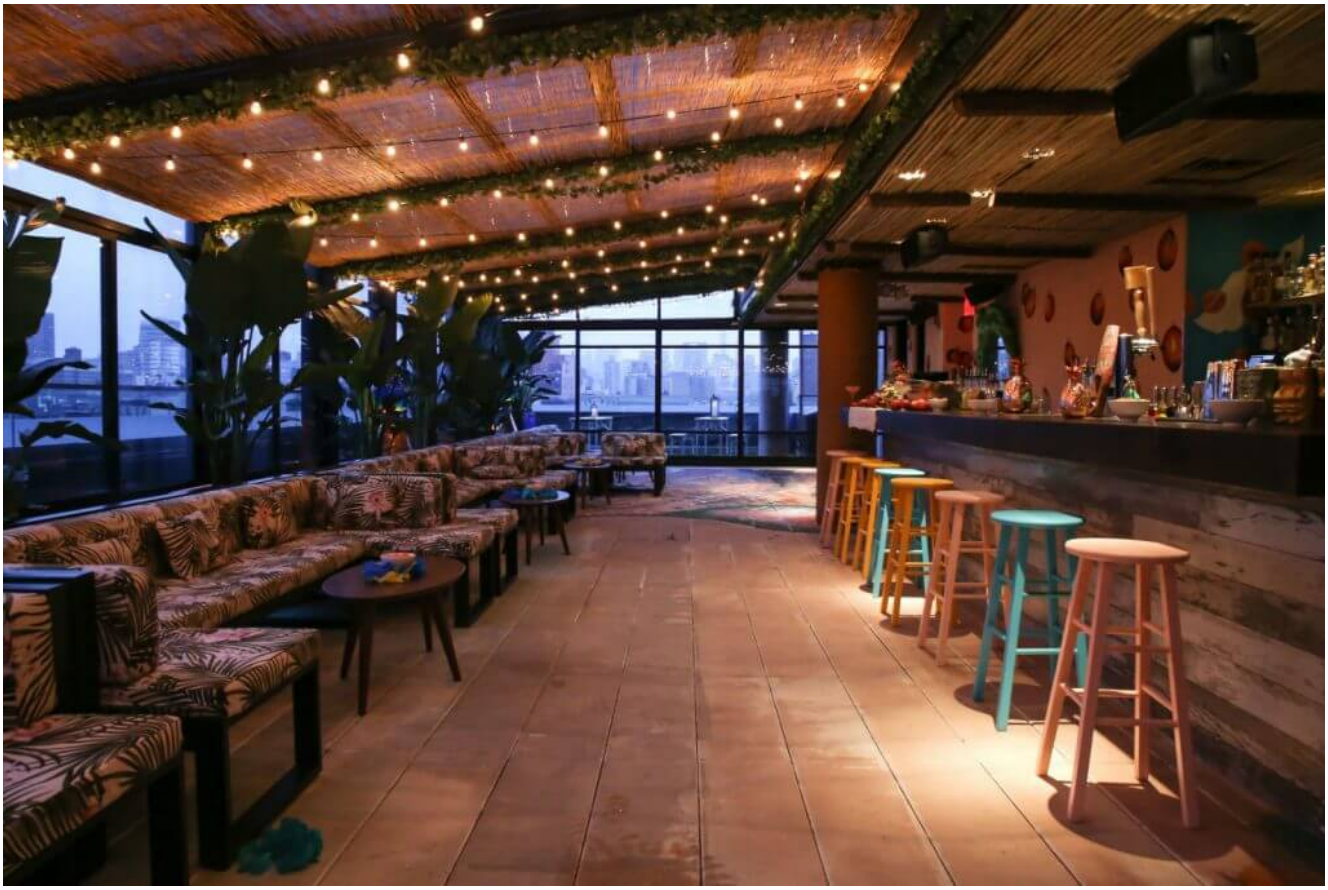


You can’t help but feel hip in these rooms



Two of my favorite features are the stone tubs and teak wood bathrooms

Many of the rooms have views as well, which is tough to find in Manhattan given that every other building is just as tall as the one you're in. However, in lower Manhattan, the height of the Sixty LES helps it rise above the neighborhood. The property takes full advantage of this benefit through the rooftop patio, named Tiki Tabu. During the summer months it's open to the outside, where you can lounge on the grass patio while sipping on a tropical drink.



Its a great place to relax and unwind. The Tiki Tabu rooftop bar

Overall, this is a great place to stay and the neighborhood could keep you occupied for hours. So if you’re looking for a downtown Manhattan spot right in the middle of hipster central, then the Sixty LES is calling your name.

RATING:

Hard Product:

-Location (How close is this to top attractions in the surrounding area?)

10/10

-Cleanliness (Is the grout in the bathroom clean? How good is

maid service here?)

8/10

-Upkeep (Is the hotel in need of a remodel, or is it being constantly kept up?)

8/10

-Public Spaces (How unique/inventive/useful are the public spaces?)

9/10

Soft Product:

-Service (How good is the service here?)

8/10

-Restaurants On-Site (Are the restaurants on site somewhere even the locals would go to?)

9/10

-Concierge (Specifically, how effective is the Concierge at helping you with a new locale?)

7/10

TOTAL: 59/70

(35/70 is average)

PROS:

- Wonderful location if you enjoy the neighborhood of lower manhattan
- Interior decor is really unique and contemporary

CONS:

- Could use a bit more upkeep, rooms seem to get a lot of use

SECRETS:

- This hotel has many different room types. Ask for a cheap upgrade once you get there and are checking in. More likely than not they can accommodate you.

REVIEW: The Gant in Aspen – A Wonderful Full Service Condo Resort

Aspen is one of those fabled ski destinations that every snow aficionado yearns to visit at least once in their lifetime. Home to legendary Ajax mountain (Aspen), along with Highlands, Buttermilk, and Snowmass, it's a historic town with both history and character by the spades. There's only a few luxurious accommodations that you can actually rent here (if you don't count the numerous multi-million dollar mansions scattered throughout the slope-sides). One of the only ones that ranks high on the luxury list, yet offers the amenities and laissez-faire attitude of a rental condominium unit – is the Gant.

A simple property located just on the edge of town, the Gant Aspen possesses three tiers of condos for rent. All three are plenty fine accommodations but if you want modern, definitely go for the Premier.



This is the Standard Tier Condo Finish



This is the Premier Finish Condo



The Premier unit bathrooms were plain gorgeous

Differences in materials aside, all of the units have real fireplaces, full kitchens, and all the amenities you would want in a ski-worthy condominium. That includes a washer/dryer in most units, a heated room for you ski gear, and great living room spaces to relax and spend some quality apres-ski time in.

The property also just underwent a $5 million renovation in its common area building, which houses a full gym, a small restaurant and bar, and a lovely fireplace and sitting area for when you need to rest those sore legs from a day of hitting the slopes. In the summer a rooftop terrace houses another bar and hosts live events.



This is where you’ll be unwinding with a cocktail at the Gant!



Need to unwind in the heated pool or sauna? They've got that too!

There's a few qualities which I especially loved about this property. One, the service was impeccable. Everyone who worked there knew you by name, things were delivered in a timely manner when requested, and of course there was the ever omnipresent Gant shuttles. You see, Aspen is a decent sized town, and sometimes when it's 5 degrees out you really don't want to walk too far. The Gant Shuttles run from morning until 11PM and they will pick you up from anywhere in town and will even take you to the airport. More surprisingly, I never had to wait more than five minutes at any point for a shuttle. This was by far one of the most impressive features of the property.

Although this isn't a full service resort (no room service), it is certainly a full-service condominium property. Maid service was on par with what i've experienced at most five-star resorts, and I thoroughly enjoyed my stay and recommend

this as one of the top properties to stay at when visiting Aspen/Snowmass.

RATING:

Hard Product:

-Location (How close is this to top attractions in the surrounding area?)

10/10

-Cleanliness (Is the grout in the bathroom clean? How good is maid service here?)

9/10

-Upkeep (Is the hotel in need of a remodel, or is it being constantly kept up?)

9/10

-Public Spaces (How unique/inventive/useful are the public spaces?)

8/10

Soft Product:

-Service (How good is the service here?)

8/10

-Restaurants On-Site (Are the restaurants on site somewhere even the locals would go to?)

5/10

-Concierge (Specifically, how effective is the Concierge at helping you with a new locale?)

9/10

TOTAL: 58/70

(35/70 is average)

PROS:

- Incredibly polite and efficient service
- Maid service was impeccable
- Units were in great shape

CONS:

- Although not a truly full service hotel, it would've been nice to have had a full service restaurant on site

SECRETS:

- Be sure to opt for an upgraded suite if you want something more modern

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REVIEW: FOUR Restaurants you HAVE to try when visiting Los Angeles

Food is an integral part of travel. Every time I travel to a new destination I feel that the best way to learn about the locals and the culture is to immerse yourself in the cuisine.

That being said, Los Angeles is a melting pot, being a metropolis with over 12 million people from every corner of Planet Earth. Truthfully, there are almost too many great

restaurants in Los Angeles to narrow down to just four, so rather than doing that, i've narrowed it down to four CATEGORIES of which i've given a few suggestions in each. Being a foodie and having ate at almost every single "top restaurant" in Los Angeles as rated by the Zagat List, i've had the pleasure of experiencing most of what the city has to offer. Sure, you could go on Yelp and look for restaurants, but sometimes those reviews just aren't accurate. Hopefully my experiences will help you choose where to grub in the delicious city of Angels. Without further ado, here goes my list:

ASIAN FOOD

- **Din Tai Fung** – This one is a local dumpling house, with other sister locations around the world. It's been rated by many chefs such as Anthony Bourdain as one of their favorite restaurants in the **world**. Of course, you have to get the pork xia-long-bao. They're little morsels of juicy pork goodness steamed in their own broth in thin-skinned dumpling shells. Although there's locations in Orange County, Washington state, and Japan, China, and Taiwan, if you're in Los Angeles you should definitely check this place out.



They’re pockets of heaven

- **Genwa Korean BBQ –** Coming to Los Angeles and not experience Korean BBQ is like going to ..well, China, and not having Chinese food. Los Angeles hosts the largest population of Korean expats outside of Korea, and their food is absolutely phenomenal. Genwa is an upscale version, and as is the case with all Korean BBQ, the highlight are the small appetizer plates which come with every meal, things such as kimchee, egg stew, sweet and sour potato. The meats are freshly cut and butchered in the back, and cooked for you on a hot plate with seasoned onions and garlic.



Korean bbq yumminess

- **Sugarfish** – This is one of my favorite sushi spots in Los Angeles. It's been rumored that California actually has more sushi restaurants than all of Japan. I wouldn't doubt this, and on any drive around LA you'll notice that there are dozens of Japanese sushi restaurants. Sugarfish happens to be a Los Angeles based chain, and they're known for their incredibly affordable prix fixe menus, served with impecabble service. Sure, there's a LOT of other sushi options, but you WONT find anything close in quality to Sugarfish

for reasonable prices of $25-40 a person (that includes usually 8-12 pieces of sushi and a few handrolls).

NEW AMERICAN

- **Providence** – This is a Los Angeles staple, and showcases everything you want to love about seafood. It's a michelin star restaurant with a 20 something course menu and some of the most innovative and delicious seafood you'll find in town. Make sure to plan a 3-4 hour course here as it takes a while. It's certainly one of the best places to check out Los Angeles fine dining.



Providence's decadent Uni dish

- **INK –** Michael Voltaggio's restaurant has enough press to make any restauranteur jealous, and it's all well deserved. Innovative dishes such as the aromatic salt covered charcoaled potatoes served with a side of reduced vineger, or the luscious brown butter cooked egg filled gnocchi all make for a hedonistic meal. This is widely regarded as the vanguard of great cuisine in Los Angeles



They look a bit funky, but they certainly don’t taste funky

MEXICAN FOOD

- **Leo’s Tacos –** Any visit to Los Angeles is incomplete without dropping by a taco truck. These are staples of the food community and Leo’s is particularly delicious. There’s TWO Leo’s in Los Angeles, and the better one has been in the Eagle Rock neighborhood for well over 20 years (It’s just 10 minutes north of Downtown Los Angeles), and the difference between their tacos/burritos and the rest is that they cook them “El Salvadorean” style, which is to say with a bit more moisture in the meat. The food is authentic here, and like all taco trucks, you order at the stand, then they serve it to you on a plate that you quickly finish on the side of the street. Yes, it’s not tableside

maitre’d but it sure is delicious!

I hope you all enjoyed this article, and visit these amazing establishments!

REVIEW: The Loews Hollywood Hotel – Location Location Location

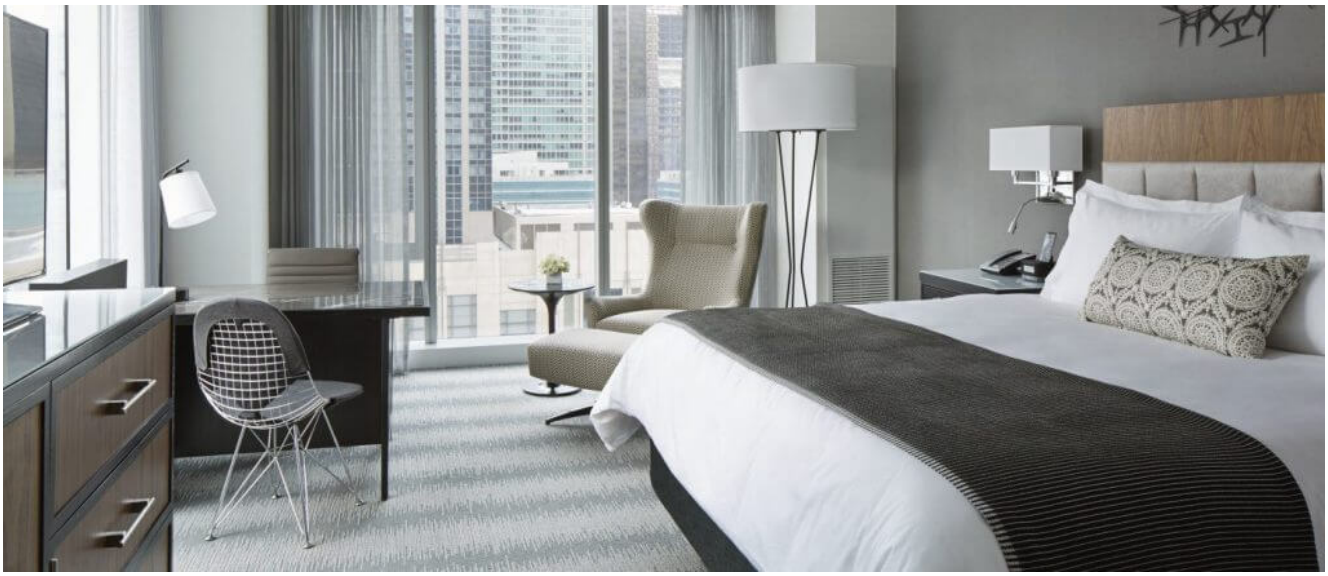
The Loews hotel in Hollywood was formerly a Renaissance, but in 2013, the Loews chain acquired the property and went with a huge remodel. I’ve stayed at this hotel both before and after the remodel and my thoughts are below!

The property is now significantly nicer than it used to be, as far as aesthetics are concerned.



The lobby is a spanking new place, and it’s nice and modern.. if that’s your thing

There’s a modern vibe to it, with dark woods and light marble, and although I love the look of it, there’s a coldness to the whole place that makes it feel a bit hollow. The rooms have been renovated, but they still retain the low ceilings from the Renaissance hotel era of the building. The furnishings are great to look at but also feel a bit cheap. The glass tops to the surfaces just aren’t something I normally associate with a 4-5 star hotel.



The rooms are beautifully decorated, but the materials are a bit subpar, so they are going to show with age quite quickly

Service is decent at this hotel, but nothing stands out. The staff at check-in were curt and polite, but didn't go out of their way to show that this was a hotel that would go above and beyond.

There is one aspect of this property that stood out, and that was the spa. If you stay here at the Loews i'd recommend checking out Balance Spa. The staff here were absolutely professional and the spa was a hidden gem, with a very relaxing zen vibe.



It's awesome! Calming and beautifully executed.

Lets talk about location – This hotel is really great if this is one of your first visits to Los Angeles, and you want to check out the Hollywood area. It's right at the epicenter of Hollywood – Hollywood & Highland, and just a few blocks from

the stars on the Boulevard, and all the other sights associated with Hollywoodland. If that's what you're seeking, there really isn't another luxury property as close as this one. If that's of little importance to you, i'd recommend checking out some of the other countless luxury hotels within Los Angeles. There's just too many gems to settle for this average luxury hotel.

RATING:

Hard Product:

-Location (How close is this to top attractions in the surrounding area?)

10/10

-Cleanliness (Is the grout in the bathroom clean? How good is maid service here?)

8/10

-Upkeep (Is the hotel in need of a remodel, or is it being constantly kept up?)

7/10

-Public Spaces (How unique/inventive/useful are the public spaces?)

6/10

Soft Product:

-Service (How good is the service here?)

7/10

-Restaurants On-Site (Are the restaurants on site somewhere even the locals would go to?)

5/10

-Concierge (Specifically, how effective is the Concierge at helping you with a new locale?)

6/10

TOTAL: 49/70

(40/80 is average)

PROS:

- Location couldn’t be any better
- Decor is modern

CONS:

- Nothing stands out about the hotel
- Service could use some work, it’s not terrible by any means, but it doesn’t stand out

SECRETS:

- This hotel is a view hotel, ask for a high room!

REVIEW: The Four Seasons in Vail

In my travels, I have yet to find a Four Seasons which doesn’t wow me with both service and spectacle. The Four Seasons in

Vail is no different.

If you check out the roster of hotels on the Four Season website, you'll notice that the majority of them revolve around Snow & Surf. There's a reason for this. Instead of being a typical hotel chain which caters to clients at multiple locations, the typical Four Seasons is oriented towards the vacationer. Their properties on the slopes are especially well refined for this purpose, and I always recommend trying to stay at a Four Seasons if you're looking for a snow vacation.

This property seems a little newer than the Four Seasons I recently visited in Whistler, and it's a stunning showcase of wood & stone, fitting in perfectly with the Tyrolean village of Vail.



It's a beauty

The public spaces are abound at this property, with cozy fireplaces and a gorgeous bar to relax and unwind after a day on the slopes.



Fancy an Apres Skiing moment? Four Seasons is happy to help

The rooms are understated and elegant, with attention to detail in the soft product – clothes folded for you by maid service, turn down service with night time snacks. After staying in hundreds of luxury properties some of these things can seem repetitive (and I write that without any flippancy), but the Four Seasons always amazes me by the consistency of their service and this Vail property doesn’t stray from that.



The room is conservatively decorated but extremely well kept, the fireplace is a plus when skiing

PROS:

- Service is impeccable, par for the course at a Four Seasons
- The hotel is particularly new (as of 2017)
- Everything here is oriented towards helping you save time, from the private shuttle service which runs every 5 minutes, to the ski in/ski out valet service

CONS:

- The rooms have absolutely nothing wrong with them, but the muted tones could easily be replaced with something a bit more colorful or exciting

SECRETS:

- The ski in/ski out valet service is great for saving time, but if you want a greater selection of skis/boards i'd go to the Christie's ski shop in town and rent from there, they also have their own ski in/ski out service

right next to the main Gondola in Vail

THINGS TO DO:

- Check out my article on the Sebastian to read about things to do in Vail!

REVIEW: The Sebastian in Vail

I really wanted to love the Sebastian – the timeless decor, the enormous rooms, the boutique touches. This is a boutique hotel done right (for the most part). Almost everything about this hotel was perfect except for ONE glaring issue I had. It was enough of an issue that it keeps me from recommending it over the Four Seasons in Vail. However, we'll get to that later.



The lobby..yes its cozy

The minute you walk into the property you notice how well built everything is. There’s a solidity to everything about this hotel, from the extreme insulation in between the floors and rooms, to the stunning timeless decor, and the multimillion dollar artwork, the property screams class and elegance.



Yes, all the artwork is real. And real pretty.

The hotel has a boutique feel to it, in the sense that everyone knows your name, and that nothing feels corporate about the property. The foyer housing the restaurant Leonara is a gorgeous setting, with staircases winding up and down the three terrace room as if you were in a real life version of Escher's stairs.

Upstairs there's a game room, where pinball machines, arcade games, a pool table, air hockey, and numerous other activities exist for young and old. The attention to many public spaces

for everyone to lounge and relax in really is what sets this mountainside resort apart from the competition.



It’s a dimly lit picture, but this is the owner’s lounge, a quaint dark room with leather bound books and tons of mahogany

The rooms themselves are also beautifully decorated, immaculately kept, and barely show their 7 year age.



Beautiful decor makes you feel right at home

The location also couldn’t be better, right at the heart of Vail village, you are only about a five minute walk from the base gondola, and within spitting distance of pubs, restaurants, and more shopping than your Amex will want to partake in. Everything is fine and dandy except for one VERY large problem I had. TERRIBLE room service. Half of the time room service didn’t come to my room until 4PM. The other half of the time, they made glaring errors, like forgetting to pick up trash, neglecting to refill water bottles in the room, or taking my robe away without replacing it with a fresh one.

I would normally overlook some of these issues but with a 5-star hotel costing north of $750/night you do expect perfect maid service and turn down service. This hotel really does deserve to be #1, but until they can clean up their maid service, I just can’t recommend it to friends and family without a few reservations.

PROS:

- Stunning property with tons of style
- Awesome public spaces – above and beyond
- Great insulation in between rooms. Really was a quiet and serene experience

CONS:

- Maid service could really use some help
- It’s too bad they didn’t put fireplaces in these ski-friendly rooms
- The ski valet had a terrible selection of items to rent

SECRETS:

- Don’t order room service, order in from the late night restaurants all throughout Vail

THINGS TO DO IN THE AREA:

- Do visit Sweet Basil, a dining establishment that is nearing a 4th decade in Vail. It’s incredible cuisine and worth every penny!

REVIEW: The L’Auberge Hotel in Del Mar

Although I travel a fair amount, when I can’t get away for a lengthy vacation I tend to explore areas and hotels in the Southern California region. One of my favorite parts of being in California is the length of highway that runs North and South along the coast. It’s called PCH, and it offers epic views, convertible-perfect cruises, and that Beach Boys California surfin’ vibe that is unmatched.

One of my favorite stretches off of PCH happens to be the area South of Orange County all the way to San Diego. On the northernmost side of San Diego County is a little town called Del Mar, which was built for the “rich and famous”. It’s a quaint area with beautiful bluffs, white sand beaches, and gorgeous year round weather. There’s a few of my favorite California hotels here as well, one being the L’Auberge, and the other being the Rancho Valencia. The L’Auberge is a cute little boutique hotel, with rooms overlooking the ocean, and restaurants and shops all within walking distance.



The lobby has a Martha’s Vineyard vibe to it

The lobby is a gorgeous and cozy affair, with dutch-colonial influence and small spots to sit and chat. The doors open to the pool and the outside patio, where it’s almost possible to do year round dining due to the perennially serene weather. The rooms themselves follow up with Oceanside touches, such as wicker chairs, colorful pillows, and blonde and white accents. The bathrooms aren’t particularly stunning, but you can’t help but appreciate the vibe of the entire hotel. There are certainly hotels with nicer fixtures and finishings, but at the L’Auberge all of it comes together as a whole to provide a unique luxurious Oceanside experience without a hint of pretentiousness. The textured walls, lime green accents, and live flowers in each room really add to the overall atmosphere.



The rooms are not large but decorated in quaint seaside cottage manner



The pool which overlooks the ocean is a great place to relax and enjoy good company and a cocktail

One of my favorite things about this hotel is actually the spa. It’s small and you’ll have to book ahead to get a spot, but it’s a separate building next to the main lobby that houses some of the most attentive and incredibly luxurious treatments i’ve had a boutique hotel. Their outdoor couples massage is highly recommended, and the tub on the patio completes that experience.



The spa is a hidden gem here

PROS:

- The atmosphere of the place just screams “beachside”, everything from the decor to the location is cohesive
- The views are incredible from almost anywhere on the property
- The prices are usually pretty reasonable

CONS:

- The rooms, although updated, could use a slight refresh (January 2017)
- The main restaurant in the lobby is nothing to write home about, but the patio dining is highly recommended

SECRETS:

- I love the spa, so be sure to check it out!

THINGS TO DO IN THE AREA:

- Walk through the footpath from the back of the hotel right over to the seaside bluffs. It’s just a staircase away to a great morning jog, or a peaceful walk down the beach. Going SOUTH on the beach will yield a calmer experience with less people!

HOTEL REVIEW: The Peninsula Tokyo – Near Perfect?

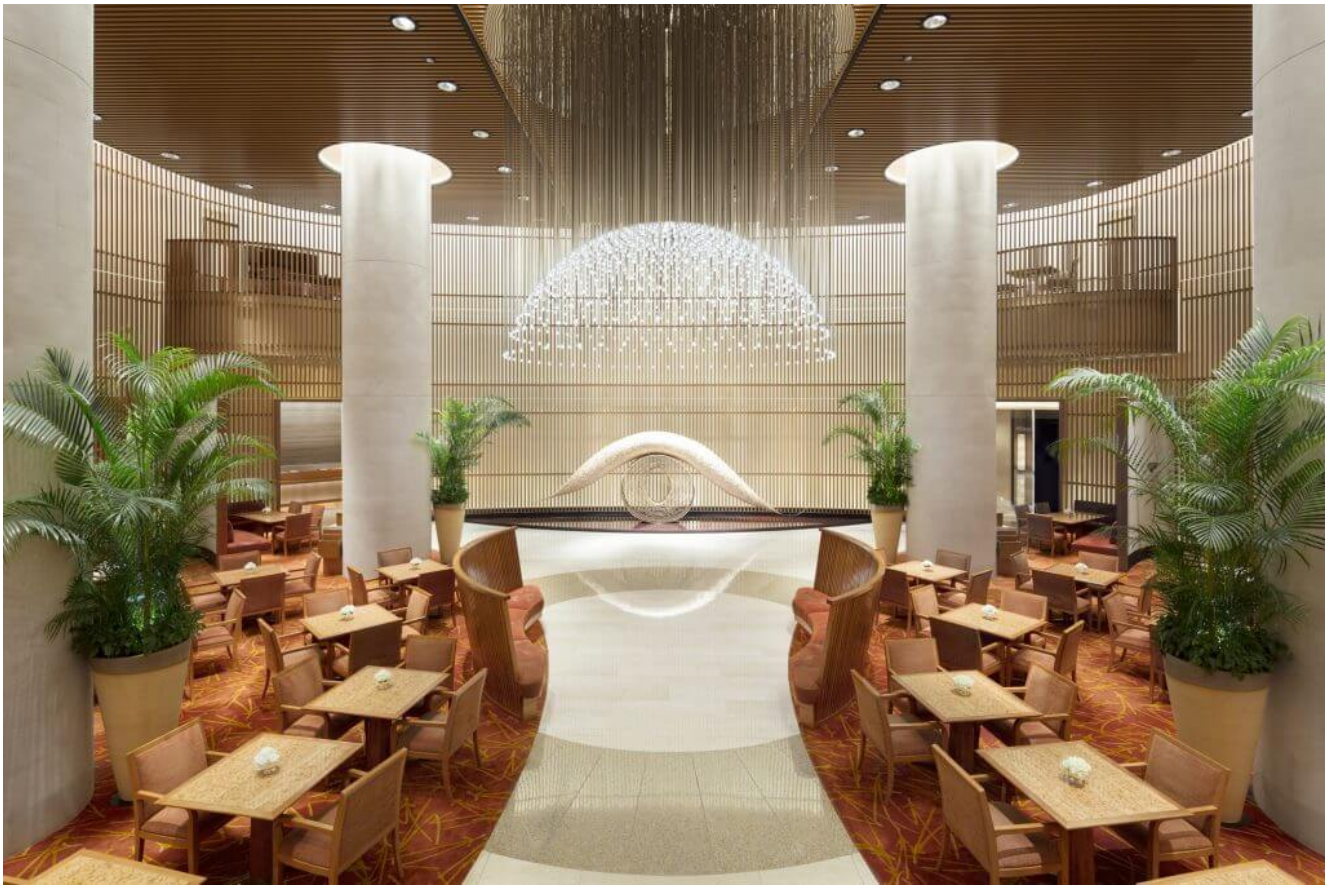
Let me preface this review with my opinion that there is NO modern place in the world currently like Japan (I’m writing in 2017 here folks). The country itself provides such a shell shock of an adventure in cultural amalgams, assaulting every one of the senses, and provides any traveler with stories to tell for days.

The Peninsula is a chain that prides itself on service and class. I would argue that in those regards, it stands at parity with the Four Seasons, the Ritz-Carlton or even the St. Regis. However, with only ten hotels in its chain as of this writing, it is relatively tough to find a Peninsula when traveling. If you’re in Tokyo, however, I recommend you book here.

Lets start off with the physical details. The hotel is gorgeous with large suites, beautifully decorated and elegant public spaces, and impeccable attention to cleanliness and detail.



Right in the heart of Ginza!



The lobby is absolutely stunning

It’s tough to find sizable rooms in Japan, and especially in a great area with good value. Surprisingly, if you book far enough ahead, the Peninsula does so. As of this writing, the average prices about 30-50 days ahead are sub-$500 per night. Service is impeccable – one of my tests that I perform when at a hotel, is the purposeful littering of my socks, in order to test the efficacy of housekeeping. Not only did the staff at the Peninsula fold up my belongings during housekeeping service, but they also left a note with a pre-filled laundry service ticket, asking in a polite manner if I would like my laundry done.

There is also the added bonus of the house cars, one of which is a vintage Rolls Royce.



That’s the awesome vintage vehicle you can ride in

The location couldn’t be any better if you were trying to see

some action in the city. Ginza district is next to the Imperial palace and is known for its shopping. Japanese consumerism is unlike anything else in the world, there's stores in Ginza where you can create your own CD's, have custom decorated deserts made for you, buy luxury charcoal products, or pretty much find anything your consumerist heart desires.

There's tons of great options in Tokyo, but I cannot recommend more wholeheartedly – The Peninsula.



Did I mention the heated floors in the bathrooms?

PROS:

- Service here is bar-none
- Absolutely stunning bathrooms with heated floors and electronic bidets
- Location is great, walk everywhere in the Ginza district

CONS:

- Its so nice you don’t want to leave (I know, that’s not really a con)

SECRETS:

- There are often specials run at this hotel due to intense competition amongst the luxury chains in Japan and declining tourism. Make sure to do google searches when planning your trip for 4th night frees, or seasonal specials

THINGS TO DO IN THE AREA:

- Timeout has a great article on local shopping.

REVIEW: A Luxury Experience in Whistler – The Four Seasons



If you've ever perused an Apres ski list, or searched for the largest ski resorts in North America you're sure to find

Whistler-Blackcomb near the top. Part of the glorifying experience of Whistler is embodied by the fact that there's so much to do after you hop off the mountain. The Four Seasons is the logical choice if you're wanting to be close enough to the action, but far enough away to enjoy some peace and quiet.

The property is located just above Whistler Village in what is called "Upper Village", a three minute car ride or shuttle away from Whistler Basecamp, but also only a five minute walk from Blackcomb's base lift. Upon entering the hotel you're instantly greeted by cozy spaces, a living room in the corner with a TV and fireplace, a downstairs basement with a game room, the choice of two different bars/restaurants with tucked away spaces, and some other cool little nooks and crannies. I was told that this particular hotel was designed to mimic a personal ski chalet and I have to agree that the FS Resort Group did a great job designing this property.



That’s the living room. I spent a lot of time here



The main lobby. Christmas decorations really jazzing it up

There’s a lot to love about this hotel, the ski concierge service which makes renting equipment a breeze. You go downstairs, get fitted, and the next morning your equipment is ready to go twenty feet from the base gondola. The restaurants were both delicious and priced relatively affordably for a five star property. The staff were attentive and knowledgable, and the outdoor pool and jacuzzi were an incredible reprieve at the end of a long day down the mountain.

I did have one minor quibble about the hotel, which is that the rooms themselves were not quite as spectacular as other Four Seasons properties. There was nothing particularly exciting about them, and the furniture could’ve used a refresh. However, none of this would prevent me from recommending the property to anyone visiting Whistler.



The rooms are a bit old school.

There are certainly a lot of choices in this town, especially since it had its Olympic debut a few years back, but the Four Seasons is at the top of my list and will remain there. If you are looking for other choices, however, I would recommend looking into the Sundial Boutique and the Fairmont Chateau. Both properties are a little older than the Four Seasons, but offer similar accommodations with slightly less amenities, but at a slightly lower price.

PROS:

- The awesome layout of the public spaces. It's inviting, warm, and functional
- The staff is just as good as you'd expect at a Four Seasons. Everyone from the maid to the check-in staff were courteous, thoughtful, and helpful
- The shuttle and car service really made this location easy to get to. You can call for a pickup from anywhere in town to get back to the hotel.

CONS:

- The rooms could use a refresh when it comes to the furniture

SECRETS:

- If you're coming in the winter, use the ski concierge to your advantage. They even rent out jackets, pants, and other items. Also, avoid the rush at the end of the day when dropping off your equipment, wait about 15-30 minutes past when the mountain closes and you won't be stuck dropping your rental gear back off

THINGS TO DO IN THE AREA:

- Mongolie Grill is a staple in this town, and has incredible food for a great price. It's a unique concept that's hard to find in many places and although it's not really "authentic" Mongolian food, it really hits the spot after a long day outdoors!

REVIEW: The Pasea Huntington Beach – A Pacific Coast Getaway

Lets start by saying that I can almost give this place a 100% recommendation. It's almost there, but like my experience at the Seattle Thompson, everything is in place, except for excellent staff. At first glance, everything about this hotel makes me want to recommend it. The lobby and public spaces are gorgeous. The pool is large, with plenty of seating, and faces the Ocean. The restaurant downstairs, Tanners, is a stunning establishment with a cherry-wood burning fire in the kitchen, and dishes worthy of a Michelin mention.



The lobby is graced by enormous windows and a tall ceiling, beautiful furniture, and the instant feel of a coastal vacation



The Pool is gorgeous, and located directly facing the Ocean, making it feel somewhat like a Miami-esque hotel. Not a bad thing!

The rooms have unique touches, like free water, complimentary bottles of wine in the suites, and guitars tuned and ready for your plucking pleasure. You can tell thought went into the decor. It's timeless, yet modern, clean, and fits in perfectly with the vibe of Surfer-centric Huntington Beach. Location is also superb, with the new Pacific City mall next door. There's a cool co-op space in the Pacific City Mall with eclectic choices for food and drink.



The bathrooms are some of the nicest i've seen…

Where the hotel falls behind its facade, however, is in service. The Concierge was barely helpful (and I happened to meet two of them), and seemed flustered. This is one of my first tests of a hotel, asking what should be the equivalent of a well-versed local (the concierge), what to do, where to eat, or what to see. If they cannot respond with answers appropriate to the season, the guest's preference, or provide a gamut of variety in their suggestions, then they are not a top-notch concierge. I also find that the quality of the concierge most often matches with that of the quality of the other staff. The hotel is new (As of December 2016), and it it showing some teething problems. I do expect, however, that over time there will be a level of quality that hopefully reaches that of some of the larger luxury chains.



Great Restaurant, check. Great Pool, check.

PROS:

- Stunning property
- Great Location
- Amazing restaurant on property (Tanners)

CONS:

- Concierge and staff are still a bit new and unpolished

SECRETS:

- This hotel is one of the cheapest in the area. It’s a great steal if you want to be near Newport Beach but want something more modern, hip, and fun

THINGS TO DO IN THE AREA:

- Definitely set some time aside to hang out in the mall next door. There’s a variety of restaurants and bars worth your time.

REVIEW: The Thompson in Seattle

Seattle has seen an arrival of quite a few new hotels in the past few years.

The conflux of fresh restaurants, retail shops, and convention spaces has led to the need for greater capacity. The Thompson is one of those new hotels, and those of you who have been to Los Angeles or New York will probably recognize the boutique chain, known for the famous Roosevelt Hotel in Hollywood. The style is modern and hip, with a bit of art deco thrown in.

The hotel itself is centrally located next to the historic waterfront quarter of Downtown Seattle. It’s part of an entire “Condotel” complex, which includes residential units alongside hotel units. The lobby itself is a cozy affair, with a sitting room right next to the check-in desk. There is also an expansive restaurant in the lobby which makes incredible cocktails and serves a great Sunday Brunch.

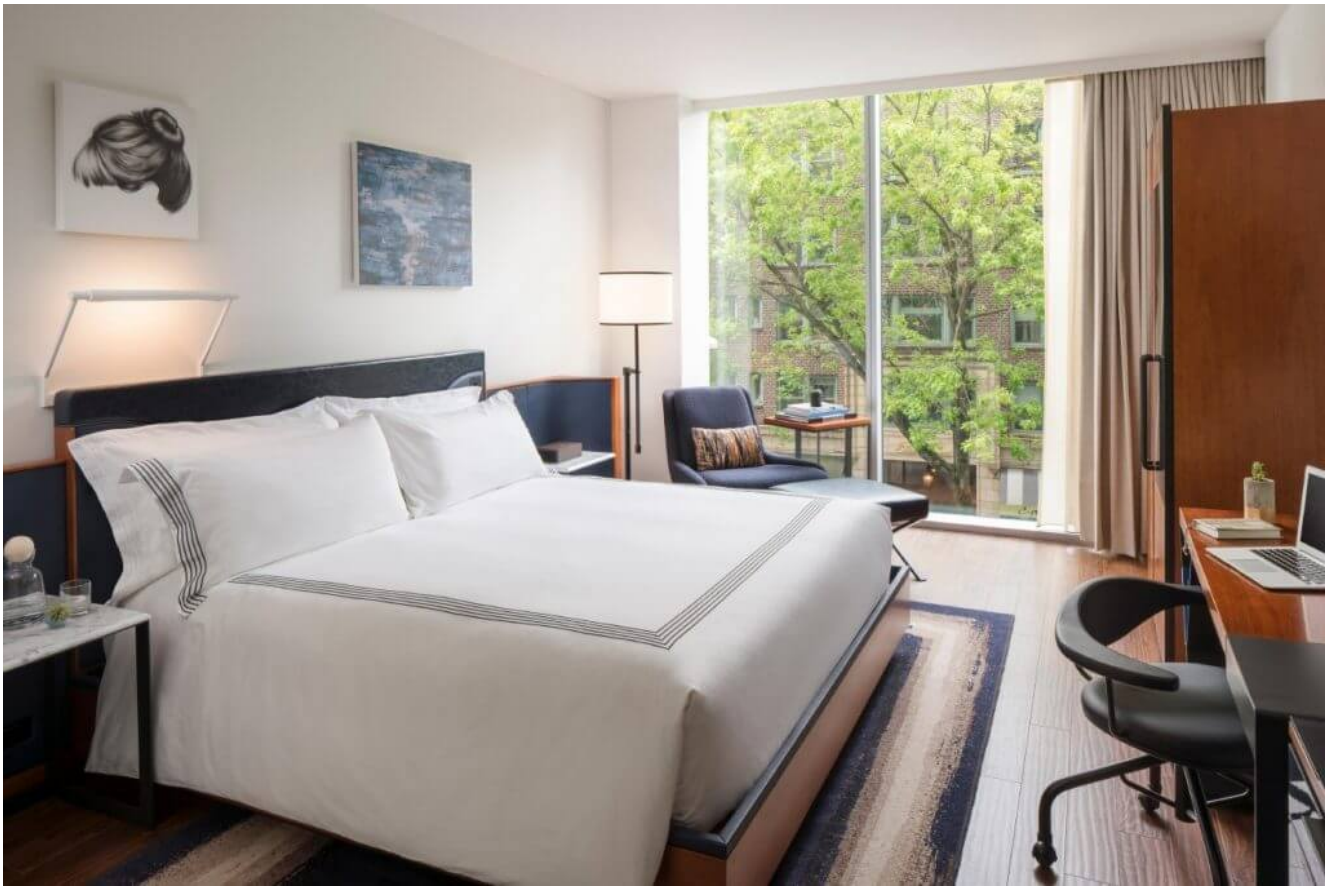


It’s a cozy lobby, which feels nice and homey in (sometimes) overcast Seattle

The rooms are well designed, albeit with cold bathroom surfaces, and the modern design has enough character to distinguish itself from the other bread and butter hotels such as the Hyatt or Westin.



It’s a nice bathroom, but a bit cold – especially in a city like Seattle



The rooms themselves are warm though…

Unfortunately, because of the location of the hotel, most of the rooms don't have views. There are obstructions on all sides unless you are on one of the higher floors, and this makes for a hard time when choosing a room at the property.

The service is also suffering, with staff that mean well, but appear to be new and not well versed (at the time of this writing in December 2016). I'm sure this will change as the hotel gets a bit more traffic.

The pinnacle of the property is NEST which boasts itself as the highest rooftop bar and lounge in Seattle. The views are outstanding up top, but the space is small, with half of it dedicated to an outdoor patio which is unusable most of the year.

Overall, I would recommend this property if you are looking for something hip and unique in Downtown Seattle. However, if you prefer a more seasoned hotel staff and consistent service,

I would recommend the Grand Hyatt, the W Seattle, or the Four Seasons.

PROS:

- New Rooms, you can still smell the fresh paint (December 2016 writing)
- Rooftop views from Nest are incredible and it’s a great place to hang
- Great food at the lobby restaurant – especially for Brunch

CONS:

- Staff are warm and hospitable, but seem to lack the experience and knowledge of more seasoned staff at other local hotels
- The bathrooms are very cold and sterile – albeit very cool to look

SECRETS:

- Nest is often booked for private events so be sure to check ahead of time before going upstairs or even booking a reservation at the hotel. This is one of the primary reasons to stay her and you want to make sure you get to experience it!

THINGS TO DO IN THE AREA:

- Check out the BEST clam chowder in the US at Pikes Place Chowder which is just down the street
- There is an oyster reverse happy hour also nearby at Elliots Oyster House and it is exquisite if you love Oysters. Their selection and freshness can’t be beat almost anywhere else in the country.