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!

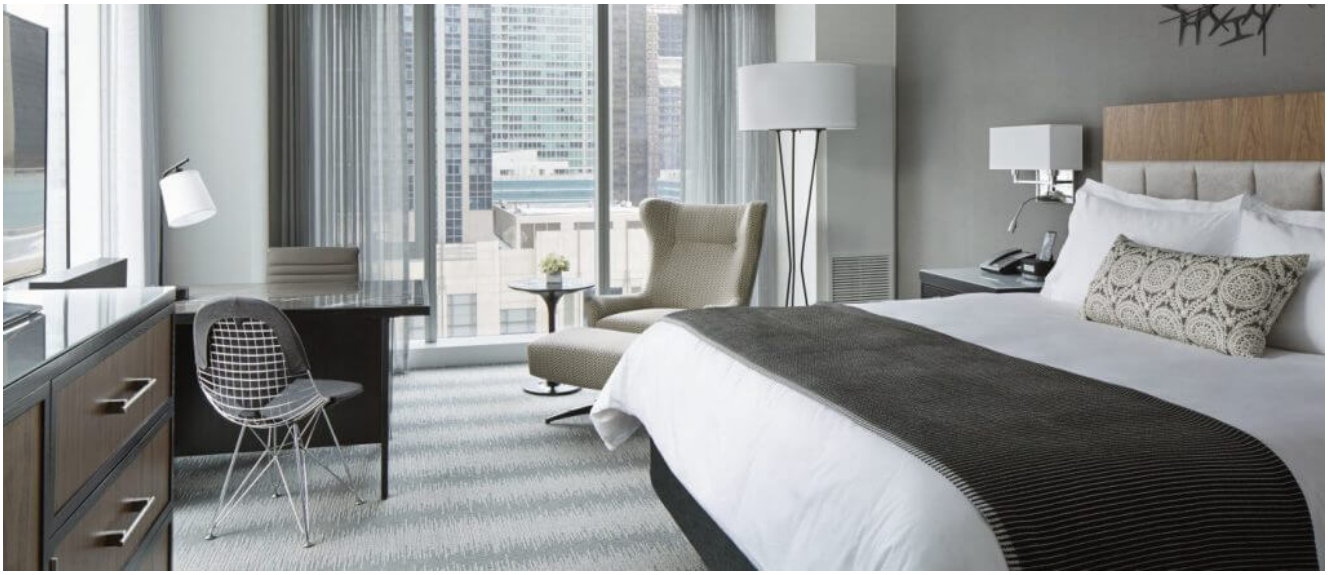
The property is now significantly nicer than it used to be, as far as aesthetics are concerned.



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?

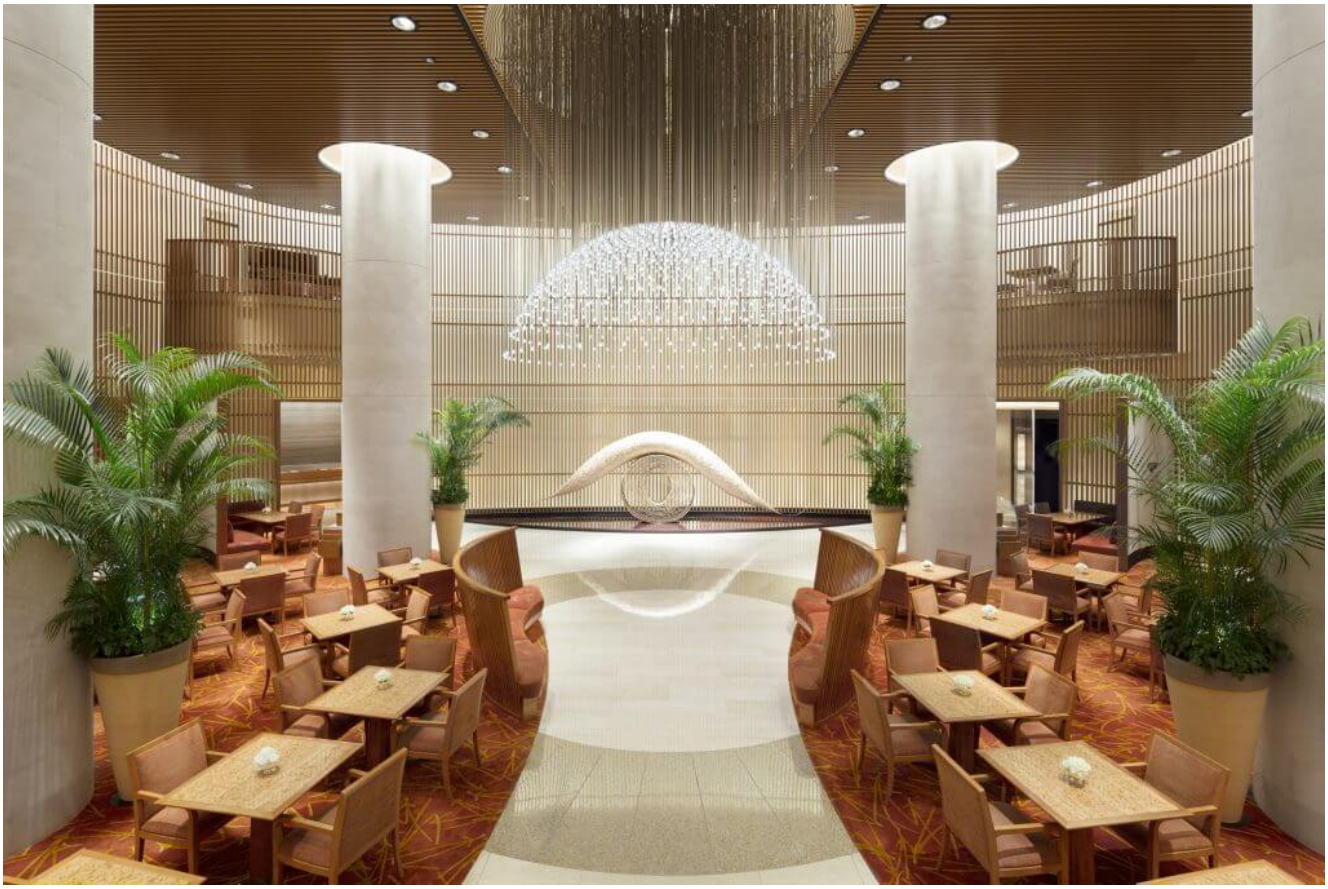
Let me preface this review with my opinion that there is NO modern place in the world currently like Japan (I’m writing in 2017 here folks). The country itself provides such a shell shock of an adventure in cultural amalgams, assaulting every one of the senses, and provides any traveler with stories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

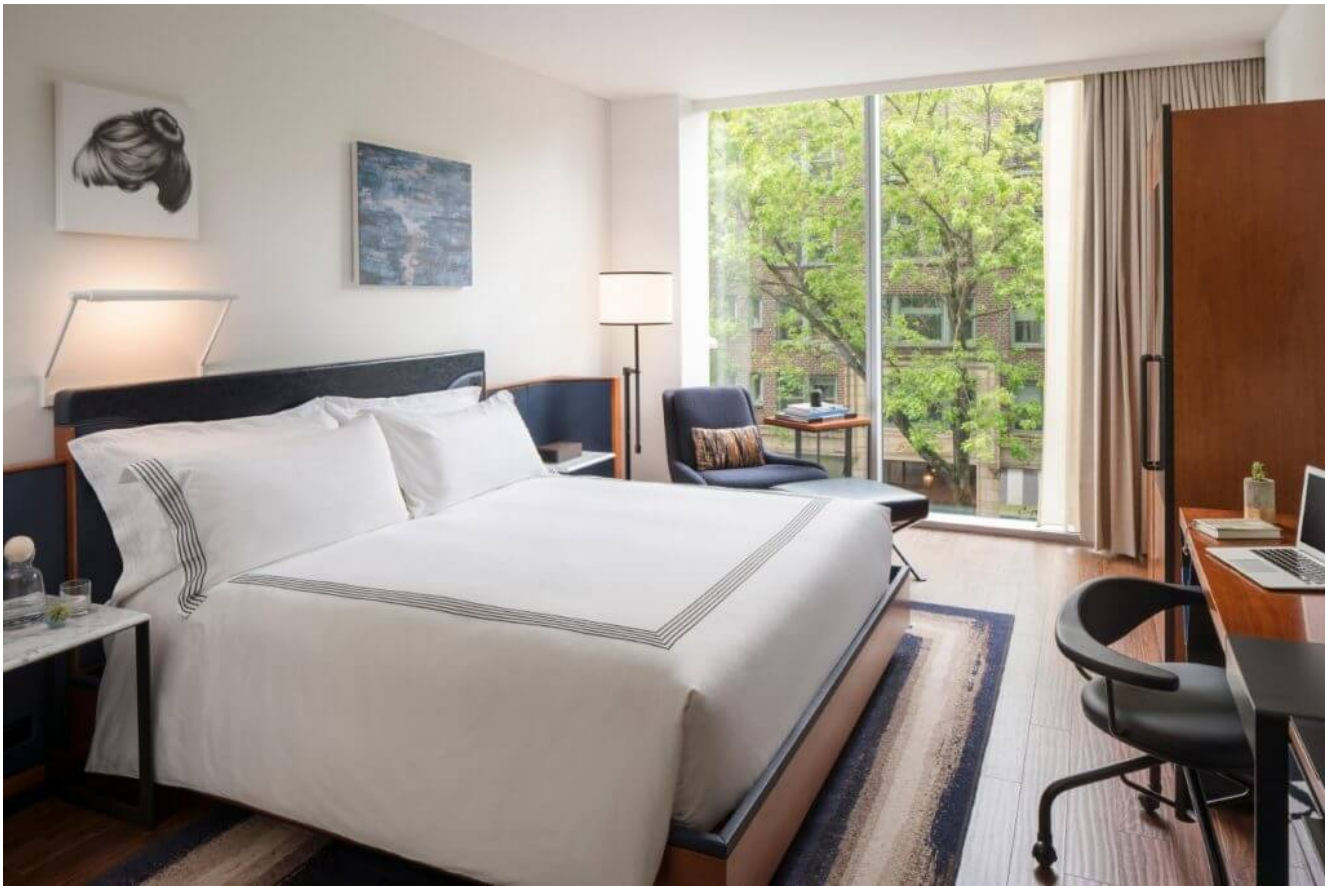


It’s a cozy lobby, which feels nice and homey in (sometimes) overcast Seattle

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.

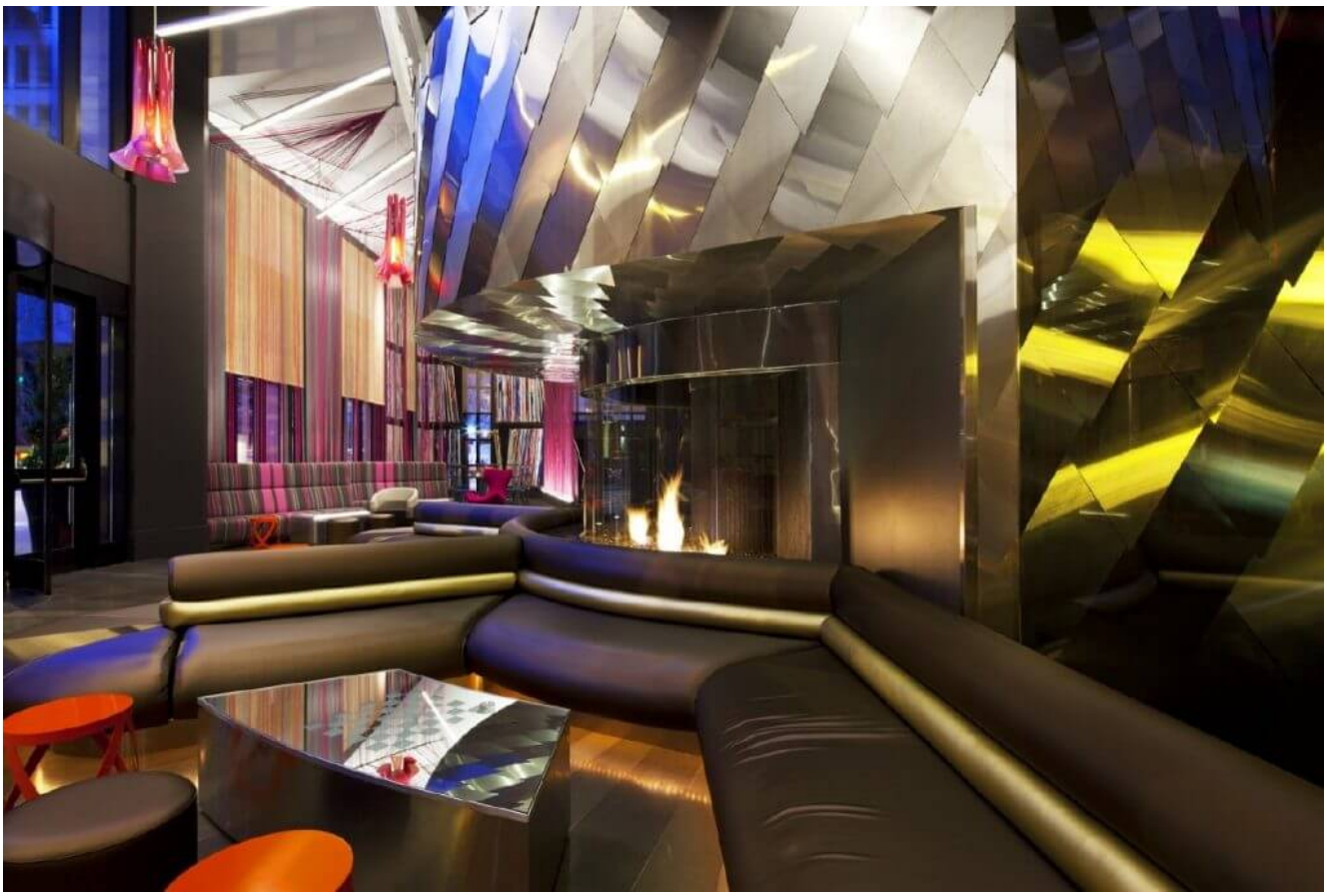
REVIEW: The W Hotel in Seattle has the BEST BED in the world

I always check out the W hotel in whichever city i'm in, and now that Marriott and SPG have merged, points can be transferred between the two – making life much easier if you're a fan of both brands.

The W in Seattle is an older property, but was recently renovated (in 2016). How is it now? Pretty darn good. Why would one choose the W Seattle with the dearth of luxury hotels in the city you ask? Well, the views are one reason, and two, the service.

I couldn't recommend the W in Seattle up until this year because it was getting a bit long in the tooth, but now with its renovation – it's one of the go-to's in Seattle.

When you enter, you're greeted by the expansive lobby which organically melds into the bar and the lounge area. It's a cozy space with an oversized fireplace and lots of secluded seating.



The Lobby, it’s nice

The rooms themselves are a nice size, which is hard to find in downtown Seattle. They’re also renovated and have some of THE comfiest beds i’ve ever experienced (Yes SPG, your beds ARE Heavenly). Now i’ve slept in Heavenly bed setups at other SPG properties, but this one was exceptional. I don’t know if it was because the rooms were so new, or because they had a different mattress top at this one but i’d love to hear reader’s opinions!

Now if you wanted to see what the views looked like check out the pic below. The combination of great location and height of the building makes this one of the nicest properties around for expansive views of the beautiful Seattle skyline. There’s only a handful of luxury hotels with views like this and the W Seattle is one of them. The icing on the cake is that most of the rooms at the W have a view because of how the building is situated on a hill.



That’s the renovated room there

The service is impeccable at this property, the gym has new equipment now, and did I mention the bed or the views?

PROS:

- VIEWS VIEWS VIEWS!
- Service is impeccable – I think it was on par with some Ritz-Carlton’s i’ve stayed at
- The remodel did this hotel good

CONS:

- It has low ceilings – I really had to reach here

SECRETS:

- If you’re an SPG member ask them for drink tickets, they’re usually pretty accommodating here!

REVIEW: The Best Hotel in Copenhagen – the Nimb

So you wanna go to Copenhagen and you’re looking for the perfect place to call home for a few days? Look no further than the NIMB hotel. Denmark is ostensibly the happiest country in the world (Google “Happiest country on Earth”), and to top that off – the Nimb Hotel is located at the entrance of Tivoli Gardens – which is one of the happiest places in Copenhagen. Combine the two and you get a winning combo.



Why they chose to build this as a Moorish Mansion i'm not quite sure – but it's pretty awesome nonetheless

There's not that many choices in Copenhagen, especially if you want something luxurious and want to stay in a centralized location. With those two parameters in place you have the Nimb Hotel, and the Hotel D'Angleterre. When you enter the Nimb, you do so from the street side, and the hotel is unassuming. It's a small lobby with some oversized lanterns and decor you would most likely see in someone's countryside Mansion. However, with 17 suites in total, that's exactly what you're getting at the Nimb.



That's the lobby. Small and cute – not unlike the hotel itself

The service is impeccable, everyone speaks perfect English, the front desk receptionist has excellent advice, and it's all very personable. They recognize each guest, and everytime you

enter and exit you give the front desk your key (no electronic keycards here!). Think of it as a very fancy full service B&B. The rooms are large, have beautiful wood flooring, Bang & Olufsen equipment throughout, and my favorite feature – heated floors in the bathrooms!



Any room with a fireplace is great in my book!

The rooms themselves also have fireplaces and so should you choose to use them, the front desk will send an employee to come open the flue and light it up for you. I highly advise visiting Copenhagen in the winter time – and though it's a city that is great year round, the holidays seem to have an extra abundance of Christmas spirit. There's a saying in Denmark which is called Hygge (it's the warm fuzzy feeling you get from good friends, winter sweaters, and a cup of hot chocolate), and there is nothing more Hygge than being at the Nimb with a glass of Glogg, sitting in front of the upper lobby fireplace, overlooking Tivoli Gardens.



Grab a seat, grab a drink, and have some great conversation with friends new and old in the upper lobby bar – overlooking Tivoli Gardens

PROS:

- Location is amazing – its across from the main train station which has direct access to the airport, and it has direct access to Tivoli Gardens
- Great personalized service with 17 rooms and suites, personable and highly knowledgable staff members
- Everything about the property screams high quality and makes you feel like you're in a bed & breakfast with all the amenities of a full service hotel

CONS:

- This is really nitpicking – but there's no late night room service

SECRETS:

- If you ask the front desk, they will supply you with free tickets to Tivoli Gardens which is attached to the Nimb. They're free and in the winter it's the largest Christmas market in town (and possibly in the world). It's dare I say – magical.

THINGS TO DO IN THE AREA:

- If there was one thing that really stood out to me in Copenhagen it was the cuisine. This place is a foodie paradise, the seafood is incredibly fresh and served in some really unique methods. Take advantage of this and check out all that the city has to offer (food wise).

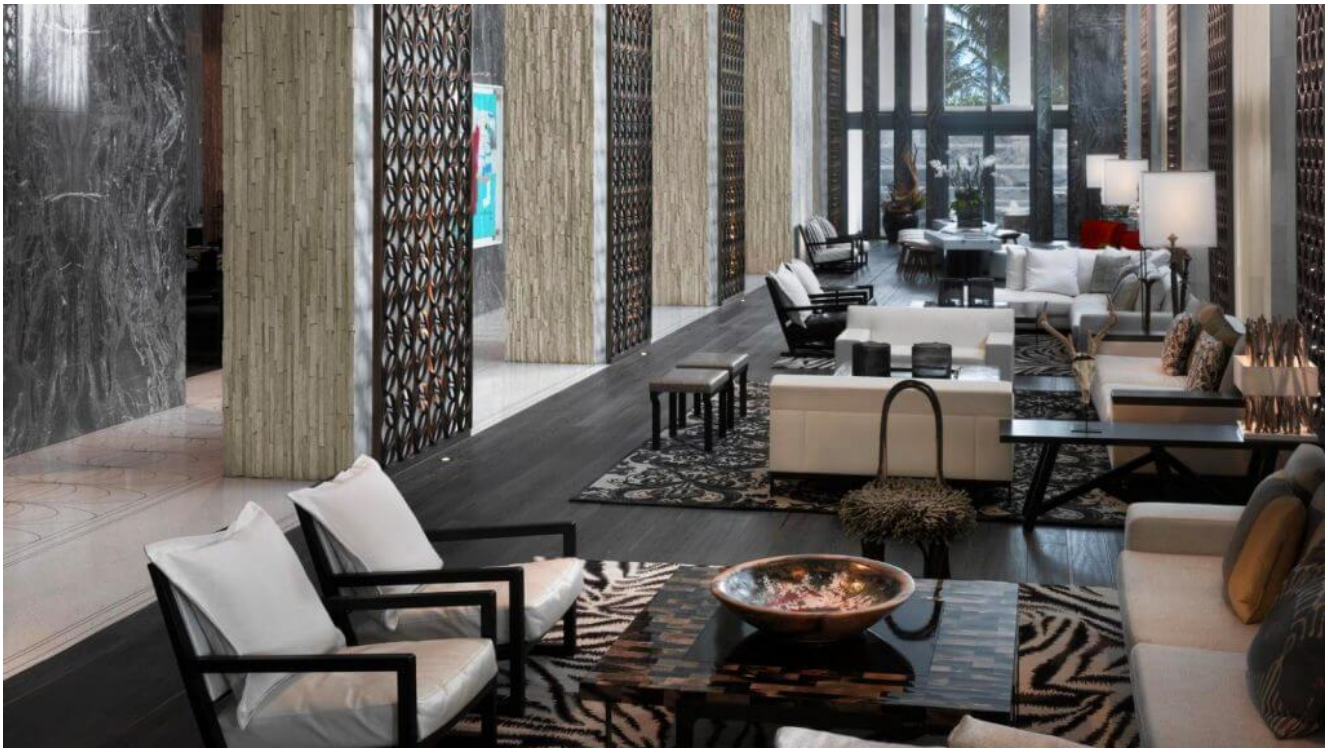
REVIEW: The W Hotel in South Beach

So I visit South Beach quite often, and most of that is driven by the fact that there are so many cool hotels to explore and stay at. Yes, the beaches are nice, the scenery isn't too shabby, and the food and entertainment scene really are about as close to Ibiza as you can get without hopping over the Atlantic, but I really have to give it up to the choices of hotels in Miami Beach.

The W Hotel there is no exception, and it is probably one of my favorite W's that i've visited. There's two reasons for that – the room selections, and the incredible pool area.

Lets start with the lobby – it's a marble affair with plenty of seating areas and one of my favorite restaurants – Mr. Chow's. The ceilings are magnificently tall, and there is a definite air of modern opulence that you feel the minute you

walk in.



That’s the lobby, it’s pretty

However, lets get to the bread and butter – the rooms. It’s no secret that i’m usually a bigger fan of hotels that have a uniqueness to them. This can often be tough to find in chain hotels, but the W manages to do this quite often even while still instilling a “W-ness” to a property. At the South Beach location, you get a choice of over a dozen types of room categories. The result is some really cool floorplans including ones with staircases that lead to rooftop jacuzzis, and other rooms with their own gardens or multiple balconies. They do all possess the same styling, however, which is not a bad thing because the white wood and gloss black furniture gives a futuristic look to the hotel keeping in line with the Asian-mod-deco look of the entire place.



Check out that spiral staircase which leads to…



…a sweet rooftop jacuzzi

The other favorite feature of mine is the enormous pool and the surrounding pool deck area. There seems to always never be enough space to lounge around at most South Beach hotels, but this has never been a problem for me at the W. If you want a cabana, they've got plenty of those, and if you just want a chair, well they have plenty of those as well. The lush greenery, the dining tables spread amongst the palm tree forest, these are all calming and relaxing features that make this one of my favorite pools in South Beach.

PROS:

- Pool area is one of the best in a South Beach hotel
- Rooms are spectacular, great views and incredible floorplans

CONS:

- Often incredibly expensive, you do get what you pay for, however

SECRETS:

- If you are an SPG member, the combo points + cash works really well at this property for securing great deals

THINGS TO DO IN THE AREA:

- Check out my other South Beach articles to read more about this! I've covered it extensively in my review of the SOHO House: South Beach

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REVIEW: The Modern Honolulu

This hotel is pretty unique in its own right, because if I were to drop you off here and you took a quick look around you'd probably think you were in Ibiza, or Miami, or somewhere else a bit hipper or party-oriented.

The Modern Honolulu is truly one of the only contemporary art-deco-esque hotels you can stay at in Hawaii, not just Honolulu, but at any of the islands (save maybe the Andaz Maui).

The hotel is a small one by Hawaii standards, with "only" 352 rooms. They're all beautifully decorated, however, with white contemporary furniture and artwork reminiscent of of 90's Miami. The common spaces, however, are what really make this hotel one of my favorites in Oahu.



Check out that awesome lobby. That bookcase opens and closes too!

The lobby hosts some really cool cocktail parties during the weekends, and the pool is a teak affair which makes you feel like you’re lounging on a very nice yacht.



Check out that pool deck. Got Teak?

Many people make the mistake of booking a hotel on Oahu on the beach, but that’s not why you visit Oahu. Sure, there are beautiful stretches on the North shore, near Hanauma bay, and even in Waikiki, but you visit Oahu because you want to take in the culture of Hawaiian living, the incredible cuisine, and because you want to mingle and socialize in paradise. Leave the beach time to places like Maui, the Big Island, and Kauai.



If you read the name of the hotel you'd know what you were to find in the rooms

Did I mention that the service is also impeccable at this property? The staff was willing to help in any way possible at all times, and they did an incredible job making sure my party and I were well taken care of.

PROS:

- The only option on the island for a modern hotel
- Amazing pool area with teak wood decks and a great view
- The service is top notch

CONS:

- There's no beachfront, but I don't consider this that necessary at a hotel on Oahu

SECRETS:

- The pool chairs get taken up pretty quickly, so I highly recommend calling ahead to reserve them, this is rare that a hotel lets you do that.

THINGS TO DO IN THE AREA:

- Food trucks in Oahu are huge, especially the well known shrimp truck – Giovannis. However, you can avoid the long drive and the line if you go to this little known food truck area in Waikiki right behind the Trump hotel. See the map below where it says Five Star Shrimp (north middle side of the map)

