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.

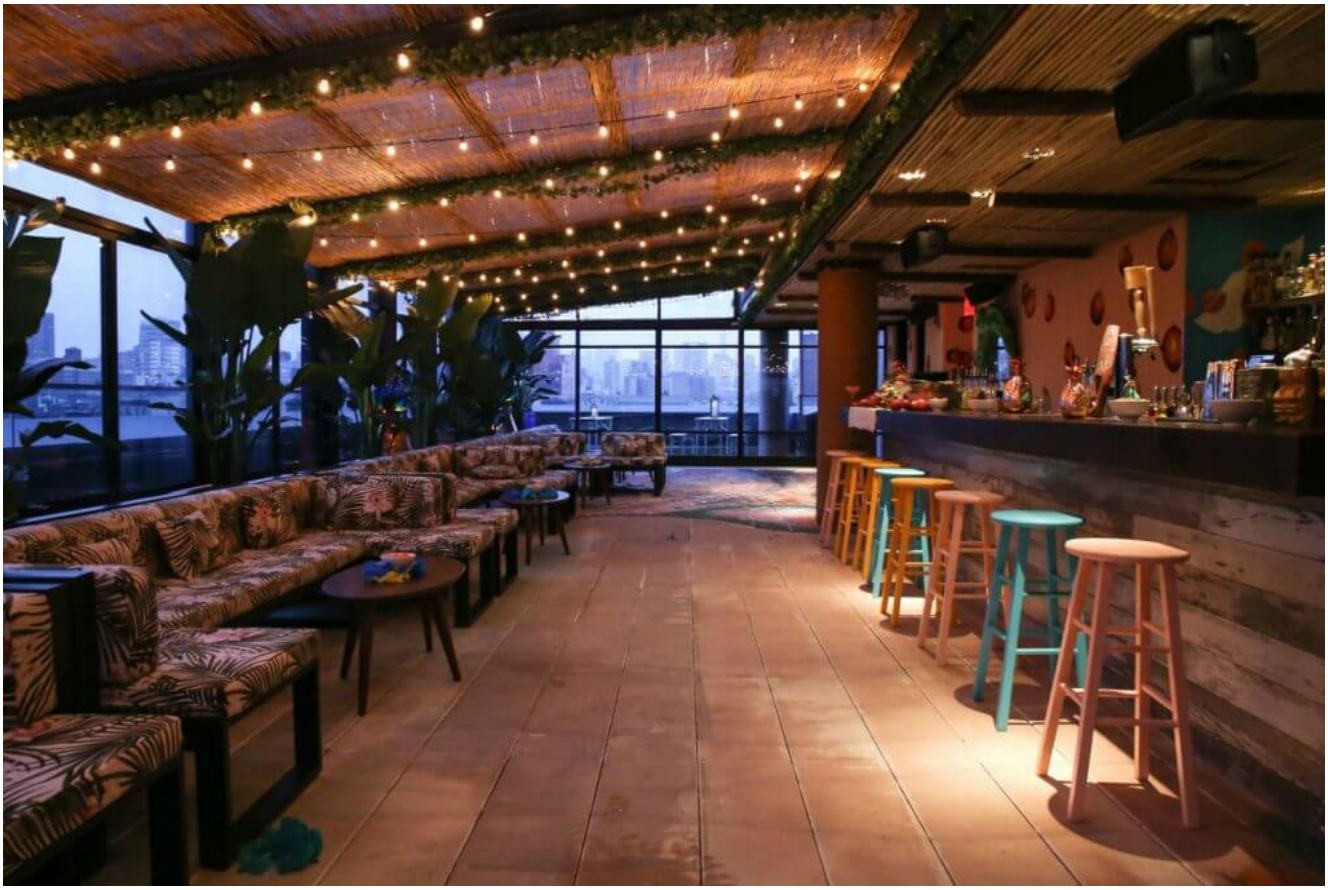


You can’t help but feel hip in these rooms



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 Loews Hollywood Hotel – Location Location Location

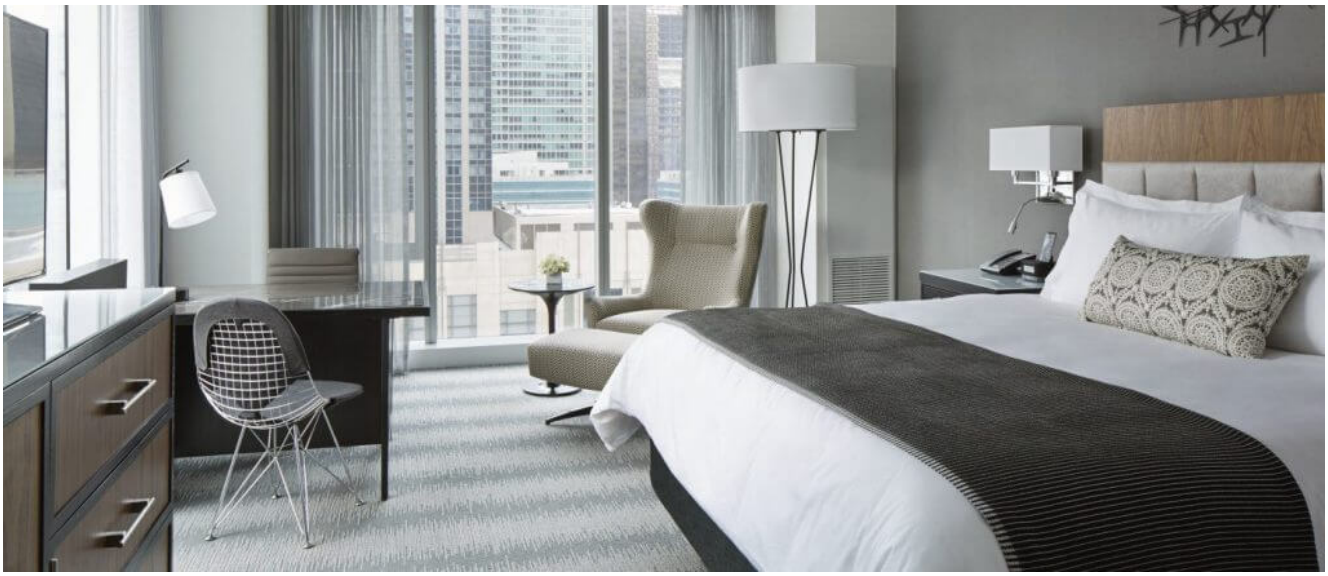
The Loews hotel in Hollywood was formerly a Renaissance, but in 2013, the Loews chain acquired the property and went with a huge remodel. I've stayed at this hotel both before and after the remodel and my thoughts are below!

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 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.

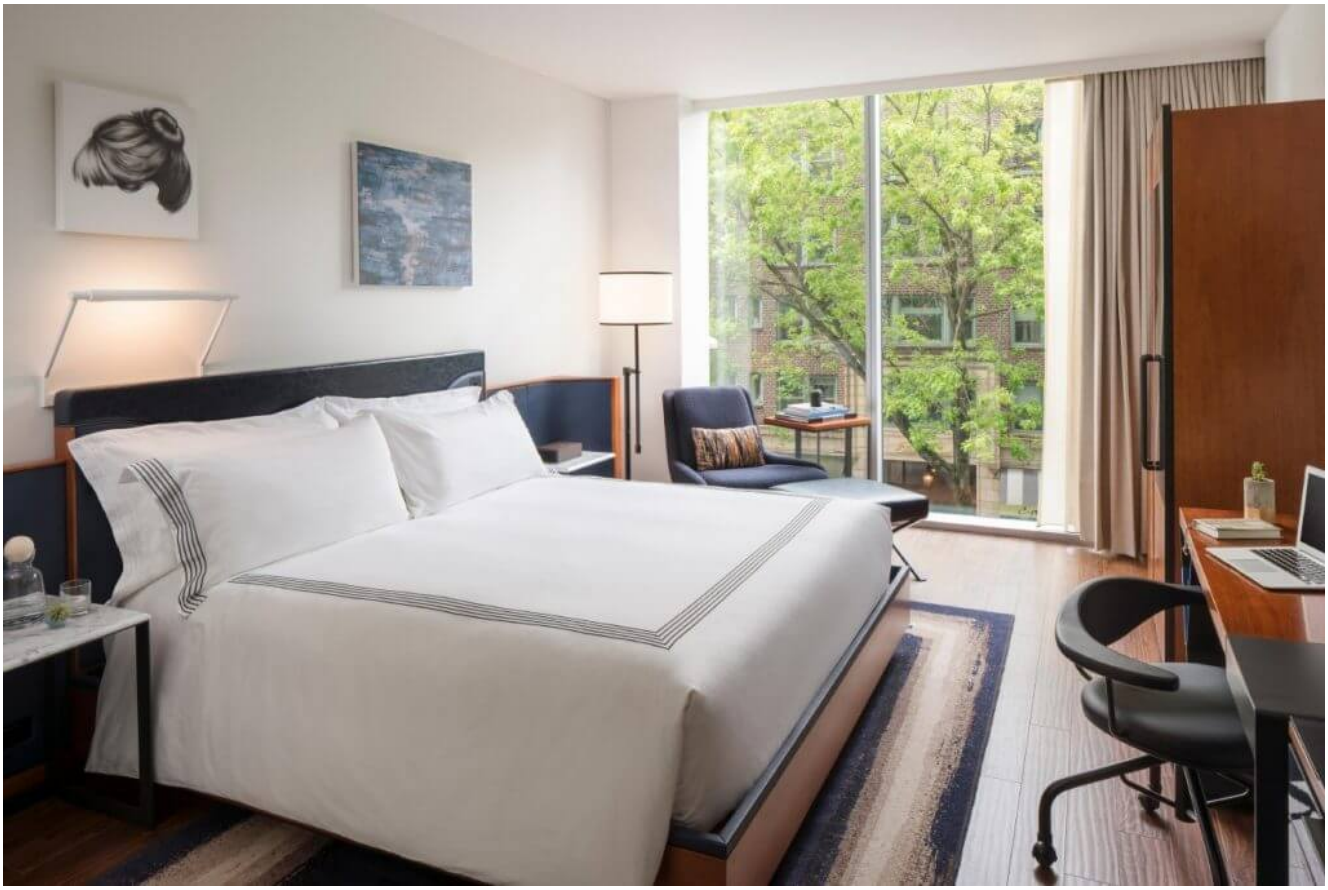


It’s a cozy lobby, which feels nice and homey in (sometimes) overcast Seattle

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.

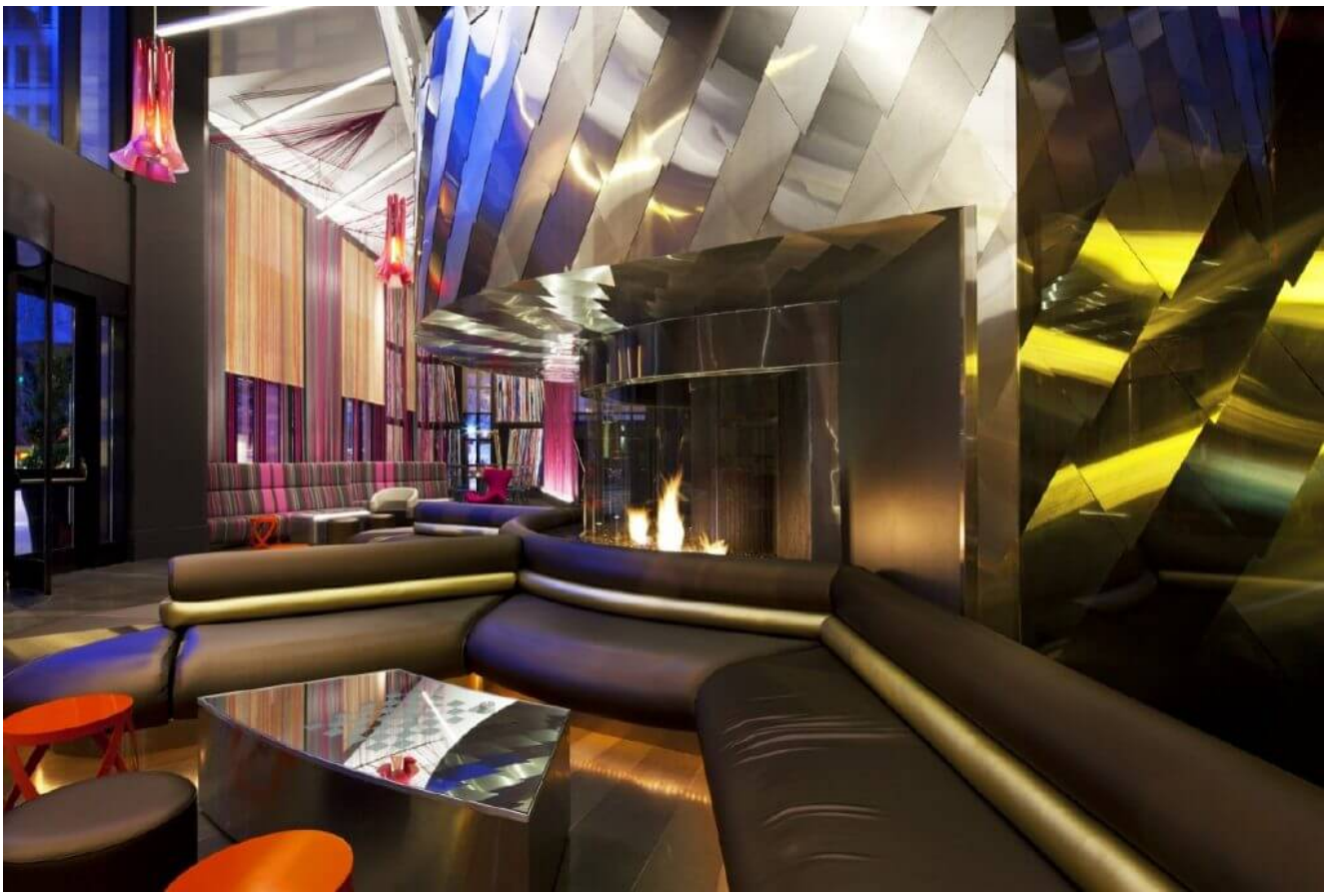
REVIEW: The W Hotel in Seattle has the BEST BED in the world

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:

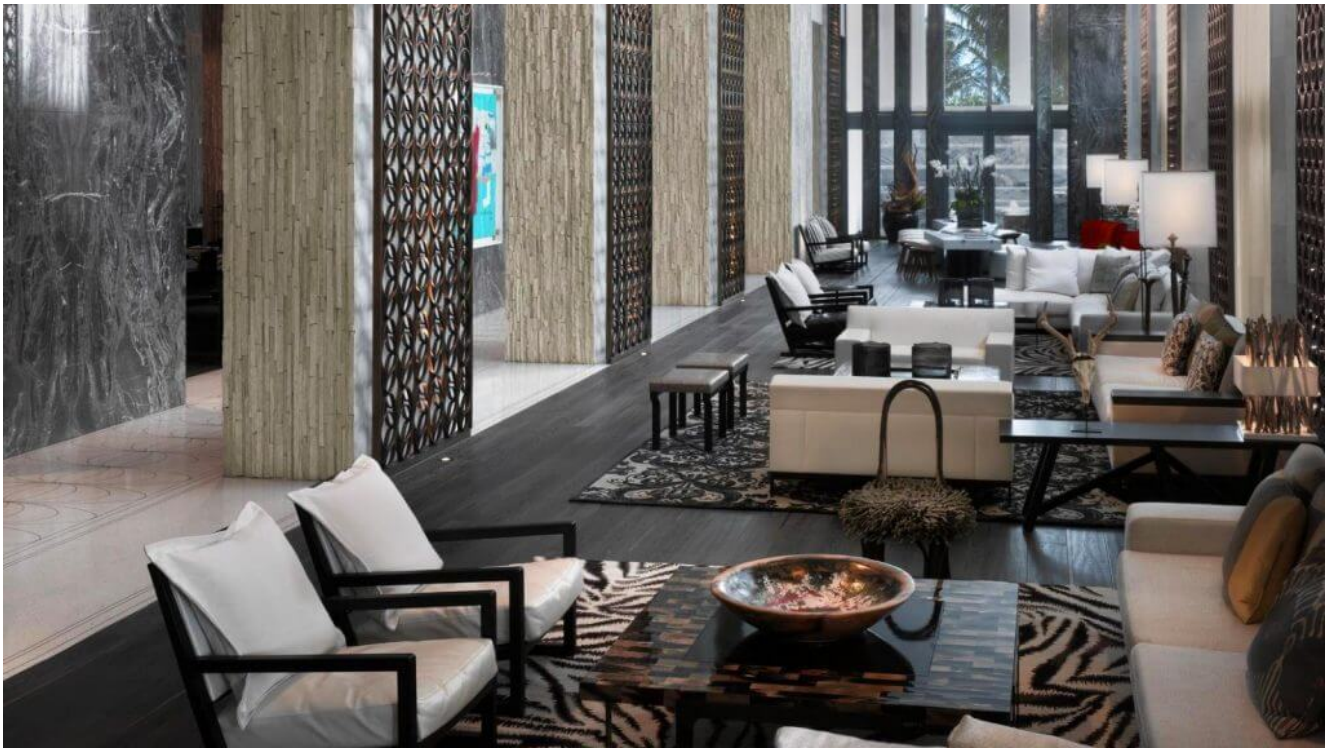
- If you’re an SPG member ask them for drink tickets, they’re usually pretty accommodating here!

REVIEW: The 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 London Hotel in New York Is Just Plain Awesome

Lets just start by saying that there are a LOT of hotels in New York, just as there are a lot of people/restaurants/cars/pick your item here. I've managed to stay in approximately a dozen different ones but always seem to come back to the same handful. The London in New York is in that handful.



The London's signature entrance, you go to enough of these around the world and you know what you're gonna walk into

What makes this hotel unique amongst the sea of possibilities really is the simplicity of it. You know you'll get modern accommodations, great service, and no frills. Some might call it austere, but I call it New York. Most of the times you choose a hotel in NY based on where in town you want to be.

This one is great if you're spending time uptown or midtown. Its prime location near MOMA, Times Square, and Central Park make it a holiday time favorite of mine.



The lobby is classic black and white, timeless and elegant

What I love the most about the London, though, are the views. It's one of the tallest buildings in midtown, and with that comes some pretty epic straightline views all across the city. Make sure to ask for the highest room possible when staying here. The rooms themselves have these beautiful aged wood floors, and simple modern furnishings. I wouldn't call this the plushiest hotel, but the simplicity of it sits well in my book.



The views. That’s the best part of this hotel by far

PROS:

- The Epic views
- The location puts you in midtown without putting you next to Times Square
- Did I mention the views?

CONS:

- Not a lot of frills at this hotel, what you see is what you get

SECRETS:

- The best views IMO are of Central Park so look for that north facing room if you can!

THINGS TO DO IN THE AREA:

- There’s too many things to mention in NYC, but one of my first stops is always one of the MomoFuku chain of restaurants.

REVIEW: The Island Hotel in Newport Beach – The Best spot for 4th of July Fireworks in Orange County

So for those who haven't been to the Orange County coast of California, you may not be familiar with the swathe of land that covers approximately 60 miles from Northern tip to Southern tip. This swathe of land also happens to have an incredible variety of hotels from resorts such as the Rancho Valencia in the south, to the Island Hotel in Newport Beach all the way on the North. My preference has always been for the resorts on the Southern end of Orange County (Including the Ritz-Carlton in Laguna, the Monarch Beach in Laguna, or the Montage also in Laguna).

However, sometimes you need to be in a particular place and don't feel like driving an hour just to get to somewhere you need to be. If it so happens that you need to be spending time in Huntington Beach or Newport Beach – then your best option, in my opinion, is the Island Hotel.

This property isn't particularly new, nor is it particularly flashy, but what it does have it does very well. The tone of the property is muted and beach-reminiscent. Pastel tones carry the property and make it feel light and airy and even though it is still a few miles from the Ocean one would think they were right on the beach when entering the lobby.



Check out those pastel beachy tones

The rooms themselves have great expansive views, as the building is exceptionally tall and although they’re not as updated as I would personally prefer, they still have a well-built luxurious quality to them and the mattresses are comfortable, the entertainment systems are updated, and bathrooms are kept exquisitely clean.



The rooms aren’t the most modern, but they’re comfy and luxurious still

My favorite features at the hotel are the poolside fireplace – a great place to have a glass of wine and unwind for the night, and the rooftop lounge – replete with awesome views all the way to Los Angeles and of course towards the Ocean.



This is where you want to spend your time when you're here



Oh yea, spend some time up top as well. It's on the 12th floor

PROS:

- This hotel has excellent service, and even though its not the newest property it has been very well maintained
- The fireplace and rooftop lounge really are excellent features that you don't find in many hotels in the area
- They have an incredible room service menu and it's 24/7

CONS:

- The hotel could use a slight update, things are wearing well but it wouldn't hurt to refresh the colors or furniture to something more modern

SECRETS:

- I highly recommend checking last minute rates at this hotel, they are often pretty cheap. Also, you can often get a good room upgrade once you get to the hotel, the suites are pretty great bargains and are very nice – a step up from the standard accommodations and worth the extra $$.

THINGS TO DO IN THE AREA:

- Check out Balboa Island – rent a Duffy and cruise the harbor, eat frozen dipped bananas at the original Banana Stand
- This is the best place to spend 4th of July, but book early, as the Island Hotel is the BEST place to watch fireworks down in Orange County (the height of the building really lends itself to this)

REVIEW: The Andaz West Hollywood – Your spot on the Sunset Strip

I've stayed at nearly every hotel on Sunset strip, and most of them are pretty unique in their own way. The Andaz West Hollywood stands out for being the most modern and updated of the properties on the strip, and whenever someone asks for a recommendation for something modern this is where I send them.



The view from Sunset Strip (Your ad on side of building may vary)

The lobby is clean and small, with an open check-in concept that Andaz is known for. This means that there is no large check-in front-desk with employees standing at the ready. Instead, there's a few laptops on some unassuming desks located next to refreshments and couches. The feel that this is supposed to connote is one of casualness and modernity. It does the job.



The minimalist lobby, notice the check-in "stands" in the distance

The hotel itself is a smaller property, but that's because the Andaz believes that this property is all about the location around it and they don't expect you to spend a lot of time

within the hotel. There is a restaurant on the side of the lobby, which is beautiful, but rather expensive. It's not a bad place to grab a bite, but I would recommend checking out everything else that Los Angeles has to offer – it IS the foodie capital of the US.

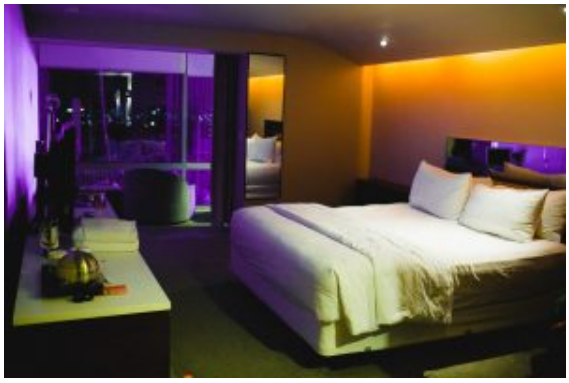


The lobby restaurant is gorgeous AND expensive

The reason you come to this hotel, though is because the service is good, the rooms have beautiful floor to ceiling windows with breathtaking views, and there's a very cool rooftop pool with expansive views of the surrounding Hollywood Hills, Downtown LA, and sometimes when there's not so much smog – views all the way to the Pacific.



The rooftop pool where you'll want to spend a lot of time



Floor to ceiling windows unveil the beautiful view from the high-up Andaz which is already on the high-up Sunset strip area

PROS:

- One of the only modern hotels on Sunset strip
- The views from the rooms and rooftop pool are pretty fantastic
- Walking distance to everything in the area (and there's a lot)

CONS:

- There's not a lot to the hotel itself, it's a small property

SECRETS:

- This is a place you want to stay at during the summer months or when it's hot in LA, because otherwise the rooftop pool and lounge is otherwise pretty useless

THINGS TO DO IN THE AREA:

- This is Sunset strip, which means you are within walking distance to some pretty legendary bars and restaurants. Check out the lounge at Chateau Marmont, it's cheeky and hip and always "in".
- Walk over to the Rock & Reilly's bar if you want a cool

place to have a drink and watch a game. This bar also has an incredible selection of whiskeys (Go figure – it’s an Irish pub)

REVIEW: A little slice of heaven – Andaz Papagayo

Staying at this hotel was one of the best experiences I have had in a while. I know, it may sound like hyperbole, but the Andaz really knows how to do things right when it comes to their resort in Costa Rica. I was lucky enough to stay here during low season which turned out to be a blessing in disguise as the resort was exceptionally placid and relaxing with only a few people around.



This is the view that you'll be seeing every morning as you have an amazing breakfast

One of the first things you'll notice when you enter the Papagayo Peninsula and then the Andaz is just how secluded it all is. Costa Rica, in general is already a getaway, but at the Andaz the buildings just meld into their environment making guests feel at one with the nature around them. When I was choosing whether to stay at this hotel, or the Four-Seasons down the street I decided upon the Andaz due to its newer build and more zen-like atmosphere. I did get a chance to visit the Four Seasons one night and my decision, in retrospect, was correct.

There's a lot of things to love about this property, its direct beach access and water-based activities, including jet-skiing, snorkeling, paddle-boarding, and snorkeling, to its

beautiful set of infinity edge pools that span across the entire width of the resort. What I love most about the hotel, however, was the fact that the management has spent a lot of time training the staff to make you feel as if you were an old friend, and valued guest. This is especially important when you're at a secluded resort and spend a significant amount of time on the property.



Modern, relaxing, and awesomely integrated into the mountainside – Big ups to the Andaz hotel chain for this one!

The staff went out of their way at each moment to know the names of the guests, to know my personal preferences in drinks and food, and to impart some personal tidbits about Costa Rica – once they knew it was my first time there. The concierge was extremely helpful in planning activities, and one of my favorite things about the resort was the mixology bar and the mixologists on staff. The complexity and innovation that went into some of the beverages that the staff made for me was

almost incomprehensible (yes, it's that good).



They take mixology to a whole 'nother level here. I really can't begin to describe how amazing the drinks are at the Andad Papagayo

The spirit of "Pura Vida" (Google it, because that's a whole 'nother article in itself), is especially prevalent here, and I cannot hesitate to recommend this as a must-see and must-stay at property if you're ever in Costa Rica.

PROS:

- Beautiful modern property with amazing rooms/bathrooms, it's a lot newer than the more expensive Four Seasons next door, and a lovely property
- The service is bar-none. I would put it at the same level as a Ritz-Carlton Reserve, which is saying a lot
- All the awesome activities were put together with lots

of planning and thought, the mixology classes, coffee classes, forest hikes – you won't feel at a loss when finding things to do here
- The food is incredible, lots of amazing cuisine for vegetarians to meat lovers alike

CONS:

- Some of the restaurants were closed on certain days due to it being low season, but that ended up not being an issue as there were shuttles to the Four Seasons next door when added variety was needed

SECRETS:

- Check out the adults-only pool next to the spa, it's got a nice secluded atmosphere to it
- The ceviche at Ostra is incredible and a must have

THINGS TO DO IN THE AREA:

- I highly recommend the ATV tours through the company that Andaz's concierge uses, it's a fun adventure through rivers and rainforest that shows some of the beauty of Costa Rica (hidden waterfalls, local towns, etc)

REVIEW: The W Scottsdale Hotel

So I already wrote about one of my favorite hotel's in Scottsdale (you can read about it here), but the W is probably my second favorite and depending on my mood it sometimes comes in #1 as well (Variety and all that jazz).



Probably the #1 reason why I like the W in Scottsdale – its pool – and let's not forget, it's always hot in Scottsdale so this is of prime importance.

So you're probably wondering, how does it compare to the Valley Ho? Well, they're two different spots. The Valley Ho is very much a boutique hotel with all the associated qualities, there's less of a corporate feel, some cheeky elements and details, and a property that feels much more tailored to an off-the-beaten-path experience. The W, however, does much of this in the traditional W manner – which is to say, corporate but still with some passion and uniqueness.

The rooms are probably the second best part of this hotel (after its very cool elevated rooftop pool area). They are clean, modern, large, and have great views of the surrounding area.



Clean, warm, modern, and luxurious. It matches the desert vibe quite well

Lastly, I can’t help but mention that the lobby and public spaces are spot on (albeit a bit small) for a W. The fireplace and little cubby areas throughout the lobby make for great spots to hideaway and have a drink and some great conversation – just what hotel lobbies were meant for.

PROS:

- Great pool, like really great – lots of space, lots of chairs, and lots of fun
- Even though it’s not the newest hotel it’s still got a modernity and class to it

CONS:

- Not necessarily a con, but across town there exists a pretty good hotel called the Valley Ho, you’ll just have to pick your poison

SECRETS:

- You have to check out the SPG points + cash options on this one, because it's an expensive hotel in general and you can save a lot of money with the cash + points booking options

THINGS TO DO IN THE AREA:

- Take a golf cart ride with one of the local carts that roams around downtown Scottsdale, and have them give you a tour. It's a cool little town with some pretty unique dive bars, restaurants, and art galleries and the best way to get a lay of the land is to have a golf-cart tour!

REVIEW: The Hotel Del Coronado

The Hotel Del Coronado is a hotel that holds a special place in my heart. Having grown up in Southern California, my family spent many summers down in San Diego, and one of the go-to spots that we would always visit was the Hotel Del Coronado. It was always the family tradition to spend some time on the beach in front of the Hotel Del and to grab one of their juicy burgers while watching the sun set over the Pacific.

However, it was NEVER a family tradition to *stay* at the Hotel Del Coronado. Why? Because the rooms were either in the old "Victorian" tower and old and stuffy, or they were in the "newer" tower which was just not quite as nice as the Loews Coronado Resort.

Everything else about the property was exquisite – the public spaces had an old school elegance, the elevator harkens back to the 1800's with manual controls, and the ballroom is a sight to behold by itself, but we never chose to actually stay in the rooms at the Hotel Del.

This changed recently, because as of 2014, a major renovation was completed at the Hotel Del Coronado. The rooms in both towers have received significant changes, and the public spaces have been refreshed, with special care taken to preserve the national treasure that the hotel actually is (it's a historic site – and yes, some swear it's haunted ;).



One of the renovated rooms at the Hotel Del Coronado – I can now highly recommend it!



The Thanksgiving dinner at the ballroom is exquisite and HIGHLY recommended

The best part of the Hotel Del Coronado is that it embodies the beachy California vacation vibe that so many try to replicate but very few actually achieve. It also has so much history to it that it's practically a given that should a president or governmental figure visit San Diego they stay at the Hotel Del Coronado.

Service is also incredible at the Hotel Del, but it's much better if you choose to stay in the Victorian historic side of the hotel, this is something I highly recommend doing – especially post-renovation.

If you do visit the Hotel Del, be sure to visit the underground gallery and marvel at the history of the place –

it’s all setup in a mini-museum type setting. All in all, I am happy to now be able to recommend the Hotel Del Coronado as a prime property that everyone should stay at if they visit Coronado island.



Get your burgers at the pool and just marvel at the great weather and the historic beauty of the Del

PROS:

- Location wise, the Hotel Del Coronado is the best place to be on Coronado Island, the nearest competition is the Loews and it’s located in a more rural area down the

peninsula
- The hotel has so much character, it’s not just another cookie cutter resort

CONS:

- The service could be slightly better, it’s not bad by any means but it doesn’t necessarily reach the levels of smaller Ritz properties or the Mandarin Oriental’s standards
- The pool is a bit small and has very little seating

SECRETS:

- Try brunch at the ballroom, its better food than the rest of the restaurants, and the environment is stunning

THINGS TO DO IN THE AREA:

- Rent a surrey (four person bike) and just ride around Coronado island. It’s a great way to spend the day and enjoy the beauty of the island, the greenery of the golf course on Coronado, and to check out all the little shops around the peninsula