

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 at 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!
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REVIEW: The Ananda Boutique Hotel in Cartagena

If you've ever dreamt of that lazy getaway in a "cute" little hotel filled with luxurious amenities where you can wander into the streets and lose yourself in the middle of a UNESCO Heritage Site. Well, that's the Ananda Boutique and that's Cartagena.