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More Boutique For Your Money

By Chic Retreats

Individuality matters to hotels in the boutique sector. These small, chic hotels endeavour to ensure that you get the best possible experience during your stay.

Staying at a boutique hotel is about more than just staying in a quirky building or having an MP3 player in your room. A truly hip hotel looks at the complete experience a guest can have - from the products in the bathroom to the availability of room service - so that you really feel you've had value for money.

Many of these hotels include things in the price of your room that everyday hotels wouldn't, and give you access to services that many hotels wouldn't be able to. It's these additional features and services that make boutique hotels excellent value for money, no matter how much you're paying.

Technology - boutique hotels cater for business travellers as well as discerning holiday makers and so the latest technology is a must - unless your hotel is a true retreat. Therefore, expect to find WLAN and LAN systems, cable or satellite TV and music systems. In addition, some city hotels also make use of key-less entry systems and electronically controlled curtains or blinds.

Relaxation - many of the hotels in this sector offer spa and other relaxation areas. Some hotels include full Turkish Baths, ideal for winding down at the end of the day, whilst others incorporate their own signature spa products into their treatments. Gyms are also incorporated into some hotels, along with pools and Jacuzzi baths, to ensure that there's no excuse for guests feeling stressed during their stay.

Food - the food is a vital part of the boutique mix. Although a few boutiques concentrate on design and don't offer food other than breakfast, most have invested in stylish restaurant and casual dining areas to attract guests and locals, and then hired innovative chefs who use local produce to produce classic and contemporary dishes. With good styling, clever marketing and faultless cooking, boutique dining can put the hotel on the map and certainly encourages people to book into the hotel for short breaks, romantic weekends or full holidays.

Location - not many "high-street" hotels can boast the types of locations occupied by boutique hotels. From old industrial buildings to 18th century townhouses; elegant beach villas to European castles,

boutique hotels are usually in stunning locations, or right in the heart of the city, a stone's throw from the best shopping or the most popular tourist destinations.

Chic Retreats is a collection of small, individual hotels around the world that offer the traveller a true taste of luxury and service. Visit our website now by clicking on

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What Makes A Hotel "Boutique"?

By Chic Retreats

The term "boutique hotel" has been widely used in recent years, but what does it mean and why should you stay in one?

There are lots of companies that claim to specialise in boutique hotels. For many, a boutique hotel is simply one that's not part of a national or international chain and that distinguishes itself by its design, location or additional features. Many hotels aspire to be a boutique hotel without actually achieving it. Overall, there are four main elements to the true boutique hotel:

Size

Large hotels can be cool, trendy and chic, but they can't be boutique. Just as the word is used to describe small, design-led specialist shops, so it applies to hotels. Hotels that apply the term "boutique" to themselves or have it ascribed to them are usually small - certainly less than 50 rooms and in some cases with only one or two. Their size contributes to the atmosphere and service that characterises a hotel with a difference. Whilst size might count in terms of the number of rooms, it doesn't follow that those rooms must also be small. In fact, a hotel that could easily accommodate 20 rooms might choose instead to create just ten, but make them spacious and luxurious, catering to the boutique market.

Design

When the first boutique hotel was opened in New York in 1984, by hotel entrepreneurs Ian Schrager and Steve Rubell, it was praised for its original design and quirky nature. Designed for those who really wanted to participate in their travel rather than passively take it all in, Morgans, and those that followed it, challenged the way we thought about hotels. Although Schrager would not now describe his hotels as boutique, the name has been applied to those hotel who followed in his footsteps as far as design is concerned. From clean and contemporary to themed rooms and classic elegance, a boutique hotel must have a clear design theme and attention to detail.

Service

The hallmark of an excellent boutique hotel is its service. Whether the hotel chooses to assign a personal butler to each guest, or just hires and trains staff to anticipate your every need, the service at

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a boutique hotel is really what it should be at any hotel: ensuring that your stay goes without a hitch, that you can get transport, opera tickets or excellent meals when you want them and making you feel at home rather than feeling like you're a nuisance.

Location

Boutique hotels are scattered all over the world, from 24-hour cities like New York, London and Rio De Janeiro to island havens in the Indian or Pacific Oceans. What often sets them apart are the buildings that contain them. From former plantation houses to old textile mills, towers and palazzos, the type of building often forms the basis of the design and it is the blend of architecture, design and service that turns what could be just another hotel into a boutique one.

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