

## Step Inside Some of the World's Most Historic Hotels

From Aspen to the Bahamas, these 11 stately properties feature centuries of history

By **Jessica Cherner**  
Impressions: **4,800,000**



One of the Ritz Paris's many grand reception rooms, the Salon d'Été opens onto the Grand Jardin.

Though few may argue that traveling is more about experiencing a city than it is about enjoying the hotel, some would beg to differ. After all, a hotel—whether it's a boutique architectural relic with no more than 20 guest rooms, or a sprawling space boasting more than one resident restaurant—has much more to offer than simply a place to spend the night. And, as much as jet-setters and locals alike appreciate a sleek, new build with all of the luxuries of an ultra-contemporary resort, there's something refreshing—and even grounding—about living within walls that have been standing for centuries. Luckily, there's no shortage of historic hotels across the world.

From a 35-room former mansion in Kennebunkport, Maine, to the iconic 19th-century Ritz Paris, the storied lodgings on offer are palpable, to say the least. Whether you're staying local or heading overseas, there's hardly a greater escape than spending a few days in some of the world's longest-established hotels.



The Kennebunkport Inn may be nearly 100 years old, but it's just as elegantly charming as it was the day it opened in 1926.

### Kennebunkport Inn

Like quite a few coastal spots in the U.S., Kennebunkport Inn was a tea merchant's private residence before opening its doors as a hotel in 1926. The inn, which sits on four acres along 400 feet of frontage on the Kennebunk River, still boasts quite a few of the former Federal-style home's original elements, including four open fireplaces, a parlor, a library, a butler's pantry, and a servants' dining room. And by 1961, Kennebunkport Inn had 10 guest rooms in the main building and 26 in the annex, which was constructed in the mid-20th century for locals and travelers alike.

Fast-forward to the turn of the century—2001, specifically—husband-and-wife hospitality experts Thomas Nill and Debra Lennon bought the inn and renovated it to its current glory: A 35-room homage to its former status as a private estate with a subtle infusion of contemporary flair. Not to mention, every Friday and Saturday evening until October 9, Kennebunkport Inn plays host to legendary performer Alan Cumming's cabaret bar, Club Cumming.



The Hamilton Hotel's massive lobby compels guests to take a seat and admire the soaring ceilings above before discovering the rest of the hotel's layered spaces

### Hamilton Hotel

Situated on Washington D.C.'s famed 14th Street, the Hamilton Hotel, a classic European structure with a distinctly American presence, has managed to stand the test of time. Erected in 1851, the stately brick building served as a private school, but only a few years later, Admiral Horatio Bridge purchased the property and transformed it into a hotel dubbed Hamilton as a tribute to Mrs. Hamilton Holly, a family friend and the daughter of founding father Alexander Hamilton.

Sixty years later, in 1921, the Hamilton Hotel was sold to a group of local and New York-based bankers and businessmen who enlisted celebrated architect Jules Henri de Sibour to oversee the hotel's much-needed renovations. The French creative incorporated the hotel's now famous beaux arts and Art Deco elements, transforming the 326-room hotel into the stylish haven the international metropolis desperately needed.



October 12, 2021  
Architectural Digest

Each of Ritz Paris's 16 Prestige suites is decorated to embody the luminaries who spent time at the iconic hotel. The black-and-white Suite Coco Chanel is as sleek as its namesake's storied collections.

### Ritz Paris

Arguably one of the most famed hotels in the world, the Ritz Paris, which opened on the Place Vendôme in 1898, recently underwent a Thierry Despont-led, four-year-long, multimillion renovation that was certainly worth the wait. The glamorous hotel, whose rococo-outfitted suites were designed as apartments, recently unveiled a new dining outpost and bar: Le Comptoir, a gourmet pâtisserie boutique by François Perret, and the new Ritz Bar.

That said, if you've booked one of the 16 Prestige suites, each of which is completely different, there's hardly any reason to leave your room. Plus, each suite honors the local and international luminaries who've called the Ritz home—even just for a short while. Think Coco Chanel, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Frédéric Chopin, and even Charlie Chaplin.



What's a London hotel without a moody bar? The Stafford London's Game Bird boasts a swanky bar complete with velvet stools, dimly lit table lamps, and fluted pillars flanking the impressive collection of bottles.

### The Stafford London

Built as private residences on St. James's Place in the 17th century, the several structures that make up what is now The Stafford London have changed hands quite a few times. In fact, it was formerly Richmond Club Chambers, Green's Private Hotel, and St. James's Palace Hotel, and in 1912, The Stafford opened its doors to guests who can book a room or suite in any of the hotel's three charming buildings: the main house, the mews house, and carriage houses, where the English nobility's thoroughbreds lived.

October 12, 2021  
Architectural Digest

Though the hotel has been around for quite a lot—two world wars, the *Titanic's* demise, and the longest-reigning monarch's coronation—The Stafford London's guest rooms and suites are a masterclass in charismatic contemporary design with jewel-toned tufted quilts, geometric-inspired wallpaper, and unique patterns at play in nearly every nook and cranny.



The Waldorf Astoria on Park Avenue features a new, utterly romantic winter garden with wild vines, cane furniture, and a flood of natural light.

### Waldorf Astoria New York

There is hardly a more coveted New York address than one on Park Avenue, and the circa 1931 Waldorf Astoria is proof. However, the Art Deco landmark that served as five-star living quarters to such A-listers as Cole Porter, Frank Sinatra, and the Duke and Duchess of Windsor wasn't always on its famous block on Park Avenue. The original 13-story Waldorf Hotel was constructed on the site of William Waldorf Astor's mansion at the corner of Fifth Avenue and 33rd Street in 1893 and, four years later, his cousin, John Jacob Astor IV (who died aboard the *Titanic*), built his own hotel, the Astoria Hotel on a neighboring site. In 1929, the hotel owners demolished the building because the general elite was headed northbound, so they sold the site to what would later house the Empire State Building. A different team of developers, builders, and investors bought the Waldorf Astoria name and brought it up Park Avenue to 50th Street.



The Versailles Gardens at the Ocean Club, a Four Seasons Resort, Bahamas, house a collection of disassembled 12th-century cloisters, among other centuries-old pieces.

#### The Ocean Club, a Four Seasons Resort, Bahamas

When George Huntington Hartford II, heir to the Great Atlantic & Pacific Tea Company, bought what used to be called Shangri La from under Swedish millionaire Axel Lennart Wenner-Gren around 1960, his goal was to infuse the Paradise Island hotel with a sense of romanticism and, of course, history. An avid art collector, Hartford scattered across the elegant Versailles Garden an impressive collection of centuries-old sculptures, including Florentine Lorenzo Bartolini's 1829 reclining Venus, an eight-foot-tall stone statue of Hercules, and, perhaps most notable, a series of disassembled 12th-century cloisters. Though the Ocean Club boasts an undeniable European feel—somewhere Marie Antoinette would host a soirée had she lived beyond the 18th century—there's an unmistakable authentically Bahamian feel to it.

Built across a five-mile stretch of pillowy soft white-sand beach, the resort's accommodations—which range from multibedroom villas to luxurious oceanfront rooms just steps away from the beach—are worthy of the A-listers who've spent a few nights here.



The Lygon Arms has a 650-year-long history in the Cotswolds, and it shows.

### The Lygon Arms

Set in the heart of the Cotswolds, a UNESCO World Heritage Site in the U.K., the structure that constitutes The Lygon Arms is so antiquated that its exact history is more or less unknown. That said, some circa-1377 documentary evidence implies that what used to be a proper coaching inn, dubbed The White Hart, stood where the current 86-room, stone-front, Tudor-style hotel does today. And in 1620, a man named John Trevis, perhaps the building's then owner, stonemason, or maybe a local benefactor who sought to preserve his legacy long beyond his death, carved his name into the wall in the structure's entry. Today, however, its deed rests in the capable hands of Iconic Luxury Hotels Ltd., who've honored the former inn's 650-year history in more ways than one.

With charming guest rooms and suites spread across the main house, annex, courtyard, and cottage, there's hardly a shortage of places to spend the night. Not to mention, the accommodations are just as luxurious for guests' dogs, who can nap on and keep the Le Chameau dog bed that will be waiting in the room for them upon arrival.



Hotel Jerome may be more than 130 years old, but the Ken Fulk–designed coffee concept, Felix Roasting Co., is brand new.

#### Hotel Jerome, Auberge Resorts Collection

If there is one hotel that understands the value of timing, it is Aspen’s Hotel Jerome, which swung open its doors during the peak of the town’s silver rush in 1889. Though each of the 99 guest rooms is luxe in its own right, the two 2,000-square-foot three-bedroom residential penthouses are like sprawling mountain-side apartments that come complete with their own private elevators and outdoor terraces.

The hotel may be more than 130 years old, but it’s not quite done adapting to the times. Case in point: Matt Moinian and Ken Fulk’s stylish coffee concept, Felix Roasting Co., just opened, offering a maximalist yet refined space to the already glamorous outpost.



October 12, 2021  
Architectural Digest



The perfectly symmetrical Jared Coffin House is a shining example of classic 19th-century New England architecture.

### Jared Coffin House

Built in 1845 as his family's residence by Jared Coffin, one of Nantucket's wealthiest shipowners during the heyday of the whaling industry, the classic New England mansion now serves as a boutique hotel on the island's powdery sand shores. Though much of the original structure has been expertly maintained, it's had a bit of work done over the years: in 1857, the new owner, local businessman, and collector of customs for the District of Nantucket, Eben W. Allen, constructed a three-story addition housing 16 bedrooms, and in 1961, the Nantucket Historical Trust completely renovated the estate and reopened it as the Jared Coffin House. With 48 rooms spread across two buildings, including the original residence and a neighboring one, the Daniel Webster house, there is definitely plenty of space to spread out.



Set within Washington D.C.'s former Riggs National Bank building, the guest rooms are highly contemporary, with playful patterns and an explosion of color.

Riggs Washington D.C.

Though the heart of many hotels is typically the guest rooms, that of the Riggs Washington D.C., situated within the former Riggs National Bank building, is the resident restaurant, Café Riggs. Emulating traditional European brasseries in every way but one—on the menu—the ground floor restaurant offers a masterclass in interior design by way of citrus-hued velvet swivel chairs, ornately carved coffered ceilings, and dramatic green marble floors so dark that, upon first glance, they almost look black. Of course, the private safety deposit box–inspired stay rooms, which follow the hotel’s Richardsonian Romanesque lead, hardly offer guests a reason to leave their rooms.



Tanque Verde Ranch’s guest rooms exude authentic Southwestern design at every turn

Tanque Verde Ranch

For anyone who wants an authentically delicious taste of Southwestern life, Tanque Verde Ranch should be first on your travel list. This rustic spot in Tucson has been up and running since 1868, when a man named Don Emilio Carrillo moved his family to the area. When the patriarch passed away, he left his beloved ranch to his son, who assumed leadership for a few years before selling his family’s property to a cattleman named Jim Converse in the mid 1920s. Under Converse’s innovative hand, the ranch boomed, nearly forcing Converse to build more and better lodgings than those that stood on the 19th-century property. By 1928, Tanque Verde Ranch was a fully operational hotel with 69 guest rooms. Like his predecessor, Converse sold the ranch to the current owners, the Cote family.

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