

CHARMING HOTELS



CITY
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SEA
•
COUNTRY

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CITY • COUNTRY • SEA



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Relais Châteaux (*Château Tour des Puits, The Point, Château Roumégouse, El Castell, Les Terrasses*)

Pere Planells (*Saignon Hotel, L'Hostalet 1701, Château Plessis, Las Brisas Hotel*)

Cookie Kinkead (*Hacienda Katanchel*)

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Introduction

CHARM

Although the term charming expresses a feeling that is quite subjective, observers nevertheless often agree when objects, ambiances, or situations are charming. In order to achieve this feeling, a series of distinct aspects must obviously be brought to such a level of perfection that their total impact rises above what each of these aspects might inspire separately. In the case of hotels, charm derives not only from the style of the building, the suitability of the decor, and the excellence of the service, it also derives from the overall impact of these characteristics, as well as from certain less definable qualities such as the pleasantness of the surroundings, and the imaginativeness and personability of the hotel's execution.

This book presents a carefully chosen selection of twenty-seven hotels that are indisputably charming. These each have a unique flavor and an ambience that is meaningful to nearly any observer. Charm is not the only quality that these hotels have in common, however.

All adhere to the highest standards of professionalism. Having paid such meticulous attention to providing a personal touch, these hotels lie well outside the mainstream of the hospitality industry.

We have divided the hotels into three groups according to whether the hotels are in an urban, rural, or coastal setting. By dividing the hotels into these groups, we are reaffirming the basic principle

which says that decorative and architectural solutions used in hotels must respond as specifically as possible to the particular needs of the guests themselves. This division leaves intact the individual personalities of the hotels, because in each chapter we find solutions that are unique.

In the urban group, for example, we find hotels as diverse as the Lowell, the Hiragiya Ryokan, the Parador de Granada, and the Sloane, among others. The Lowell, on New York's Upper East Side, is the epitome of the classic urban American hotel, with a stern and respectful demeanor typified by its eighteenth and nineteenth century engravings. This demeanor has been preserved even during recent renovations. The Hiragiya Ryokan in Tokyo provides another important reference point, with its exquisite interior design based on folding screens, gold leaf, Zen-inspired painted papers, and lacquers. In contrast, the magic of the Parador lies in its synthesis of Christian and Arab cultures, as exemplified by its austere, monastic stonework made more refined by the delicate coloring of the Arab tiling. Finally, in the heart of London we find the exalted Victorian style, making the Sloane an irresistible temptation for our collection.

The hotels featured in this book belong to categories that are best

ing Hotels

described by giving several well-defined examples of each. This is true not only for the hotels in the urban category, but also for those in the rural and coastal categories. Villa San Michele, for example, which is in the heart of the Tuscan countryside, was born as a rugged Franciscan monastery, and many of its attractive qualities are due to the survival of the original chapels, cloisters, and inner patios. The Roumégouse Château, in the French Lot region, is a fanciful, nineteenth century Neogothic building. Its decoration is almost worthy of a museum, since each well-maintained piece of furniture is an original. Good French taste keeps this weighty legacy from feeling oppressive, however.

Formerly belonging to the Rockefeller family, the Point is a magnificent enhancement to its beautiful natural setting. Its rooms are distributed in several separate sections along the bank of Lake Saranac in an Adirondack forest. In a completely different setting and with other architectural and decorative styles, we find the Hacienda Benazuza. This hotel is set amidst Arab-Andalusian gardens 15 minutes from Seville, in an oasis surrounded by mature olive trees and by buildings with intense colors, such as traditional limestone white, ochre red, and a vivid yellow.

Although many of the buildings with artistic merit that are found in the

city and the countryside are historical, the same is not necessarily true of hotels along the coast. The hotels featured in the third section are often completely new buildings, conceived to fit into and take advantage of the cliffs, rocks, and sand of their coastal environment. In this section we present several examples of fine hotels from the Mediterranean region along with several from the Caribbean, such as the Guanahani, Jacke's Place, Jamaica Inn, and the K Club.

All of these hotels are extraordinary. Jamaica Inn has long been a local favorite, but it has also hosted such famous international guests as Sir Winston Churchill and Errol Flynn. The K Club in Barbados is a tranquil paradise on a deserted beach near a nature reserve. Jacke's Place is in Treasure Beach, a Jamaican fishing village. The rooms of Jack's Place are individual cabins, giving the hotel a flavor of the local buildings. The Guanahani is an intimate hotel on the island of Saint Barthélemy. It has been designed to be as open as possible to its breathtakingly beautiful surroundings, which include tamarinds, palms, and coconuts, the lush tropical gardens, the intense blue of the water, and the nearby corral reefs.

The hotels featured in this collection are all exceptional for their rare charm and warm elegance.



A photograph of a hotel courtyard. The scene is viewed through a series of arches supported by columns. The floor is tiled with a diamond pattern. Several potted plants are visible, including a large one in the foreground. The text "city Hotels" is overlaid in the center.

city Hotels

the sloane

Chelsea, London, UK

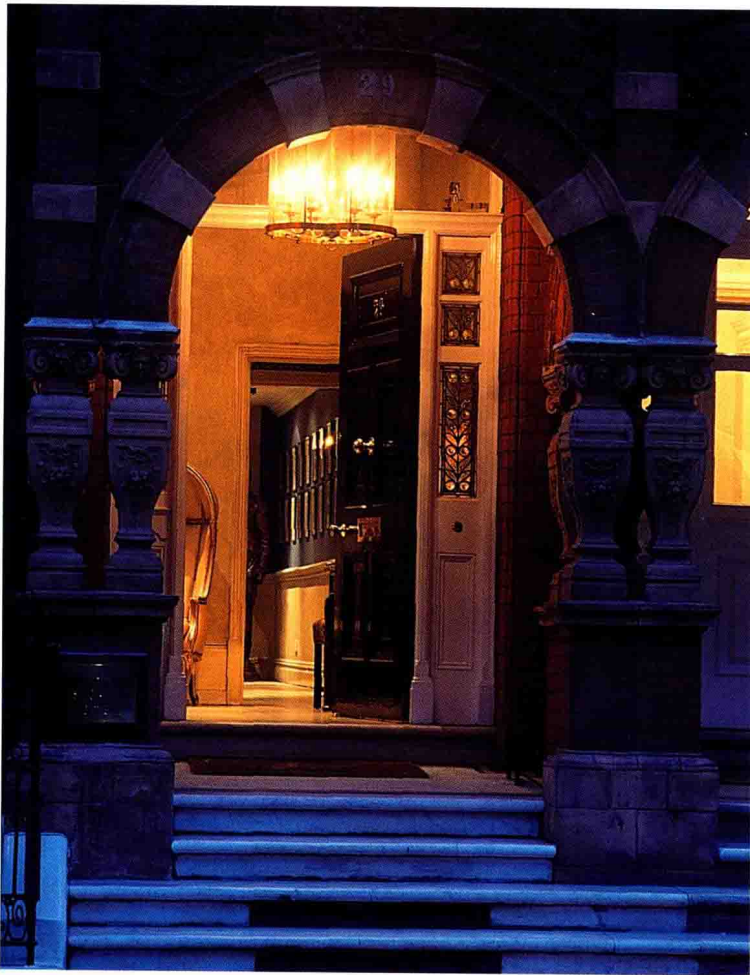
The Sloane is a small and intimate hotel located in the heart of London in a Victorian mansion. The hotel is near one of the most highly coveted commercial zones and has easy access to London's financial district, the City. This fact determines the hotel's orientation. Most of its regular guests are high-level executives and the services offered by the hotel are expressly conceived for them. This even extends to the food offered, which emphasizes a healthy diet.

However, efficiency does not disdain the imagination. The Sloane is an establishment that shows striking personality in its decor. The twelve rooms have been individually designed with originality and even with a sense of fantasy. Even the smallest piece of furniture merits attention: thick brocades, smooth silks, upholstery with gentle tones, delicate cushions with antique cases, art objects of every style, from the most Victorian to the purely Neoclassical. All this is an active exercise in eclecticism that holds many surprises. Its formula seems to be to achieve maximum comfort with the greatest originality. Guests may enjoy a broad view of Chelsea from a terrace on the upper floor in a room where receptions are held. This is the perfect space for the English custom of taking tea, and is also a delightful place for having breakfast, lunches, or cocktails.

Each room has enough space for the guests to feel at home, with a specific space for relaxation. The guests are afforded maximum privacy, both in the rooms and in the central business services area. The superlative respect given by English service, the atmosphere of choice antiques, and the Victorian mansion itself all complement the unique combination of services offered by the Sloane.







Plan view of the entrance with its wooden stairs.



Detail of one of the sitting rooms in the hotel.



The guest rooms are decorated with thick brocades and gentle tones.