

Best Hotels in the West



Check in and you're instantly on vacation. Relaxed. Pampered.

Napa Valley's
Solage Calistoga

RACHEL WETILLI

Smitten by the scenery

OUR EDITORS scouted, snooped, and dozed in hundreds of hotels over the past year to find the 25 best for weekend getaways. Although they might feel a million miles away, almost every place is within an hour's drive of a major airport, and most are closer. Service, design, food, and rooms were all scored, plus those details that make a hotel *Sunset*-special: Are those fresh herbs in the cocktails? Does the landscape look native to the area? Can you see the Golden Gate Bridge? But value was paramount. If an expensive property made the list, it earned it with extra services and amenities or by being best in class. So dive in. Your perfect weekend awaits.

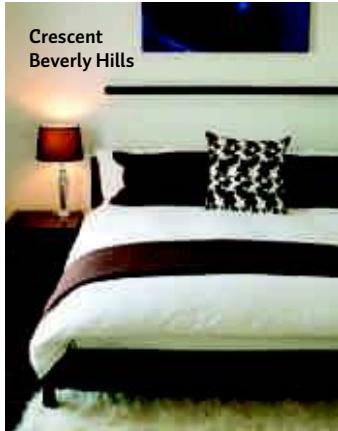
EXTRAS GUIDE

-  **FREE BREAKFAST**
-  **FREE WI-FI**
-  **DOG-FRIENDLY**
-  **SPA**

*For all hotels, prices reflect 2011's starting weekend rates (low season/high season). Scores are out of 100.

**NAPA VALLEY****Solage Calistoga**

Wine country is filled with gorgeous hotels that bristle with Michelin stars, but somehow, Solage manages to have "the best pool in Napa, period," says our reviewer, a window-walled gym that channels "Martha Stewart's private gym in Bedford," and the requisite Michelin star—without costing \$700 a night. Comfy, barn-chic studios with a spiffy pair of loaner bikes and shaded patios create a sanctuary feel, and the spa is one of the best. \$350/\$585; 95 rooms & suites; solagecalistoga.com SCORE: 85   

**BEVERLY HILLS****Crescent Beverly Hills****Under \$250**

The stylin' rooms at the Crescent are admittedly a tight squeeze, but what vaulted this hotel onto our list is its value score, with under-\$250 rooms in one of the toniest parts of L.A., plus the glamorous art deco design. At night, a high-energy bar and palm terrace make it a great place to meet up with friends. Extra points for fully loaded iPods by the bed, plush HD Design/Eco Friendly toiletries, and room service. \$159/\$219; 36 rooms & suites; crescentbh.com

SCORE: 76   **SONOMA****Farmhouse Inn**

In wine country, anyone can put some high thread-count sheets on the bed and charge a bundle. What rockets the inn to the top of Sonoma's hotels is the truly thoughtful service and attention to food and wine. We're talking tips from Sonoma's only master sommelier and a Michelin-starred menu filled with ingredients grown on the innkeepers' farm, not to mention "the best huevos rancheros of your life." And there's no end to the special touches: self-serve counters for bath salts, s'mores, and Italian sodas; spa ingredients from the garden; even private steam rooms. \$350/\$390; 18 rooms & suites; farmhouseinn.com

SCORE: 83   **SANTA BARBARA****Inn of the Spanish Garden**

This inn won us over with its "mini Chateau Marmont" feeling: Like L.A.'s famous property, "it's easy to imagine the publicity-shy seeking privacy under a lemon tree in the courtyard." Spacious, Spanish mission-style rooms with Juliet balconies and graceful ironwork are the reason to book here, and even without a full kitchen, the inn serves a lovely breakfast, room service, and local wines in the evening. \$295/\$349; 23 rooms & suites; spanishgardeninn.com

SCORE: 87.5  **RANCHO SANTA FE, CA****Rancho Valencia**

There's not a thread out of place at this hotel near San Diego. Let us gush: Amazing iced tea at check-in. A suite so large you could move in, like, for life. A great pool and gym. And extraordinary service, as evidenced by the "melt-your-heart turndown" (robes, water, a stuffed animal). For tennis fans, there are 18 courts and pros on staff. \$490/\$578; 49 suites; ranchovalencia.com

SCORE: 86   **Wow amenity****BLOOD-ORANGE ICED TEA**

Our sleuth called it "the best iced tea of my life."



Strategies for getting even better rates

GET SOCIAL The biggest buzz in travel booking are sites like LivingSocial.com and Groupon.com, which sell discount vouchers. LivingSocial comes out with new deals on Wednesdays—touting discounts of up to 50 percent that are bookable up to a year ahead. For Groupon Getaways, Groupon teamed with Expedia to reach 135,000 hotels. Both require purchase up-front.

BE FLEXIBLE Many hotels are more transparent about rates now, posting price calendars that allow you to time your stay based on when you can get

the best deal. Plus, hotels often tweet bargains to savvy followers days before deals go public.

SIGN UP FOR FLASH SALES On private sale sites like Sniqaway.com, TabletHotels.com, and Jetsetter.com, luxe hotel packages run at 20 to 60 percent discounts, and sales generally last a week. But before you pull the trigger, call the hotel directly to ask for a better deal. Flash sites (and deal sites in general) rarely offer the cancellation flexibility that a hotel does, and most require full payment up-front.

2011 Hotel Awards



SCOTTSDALE, AZ

Sanctuary on Camelback Mountain

Built into the hillside overlooking Paradise Valley and Camelback Mountain, the 53-acre resort is that special type of Southwest hotel: cushy and super luxe on one hand, but with "a spiritual, almost Zen-like" feel on the other. Not to get too hippie-dippie, but there's something magical about the red rock hills—and the hiking trails, pool, tennis courts, and outdoor patios are all designed to let you soak it in. **\$235/\$520; 105 rooms & suites; sanctuaryoncamelback.com**

SCORE: 79

2011 Hotel Awards



SEE SUNSET'S PICKS FOR 50 GREAT HOTELS
UNDER \$150: sunset.com/5ounder150



BIG SUR, CA

Post Ranch Inn

The hotel is a "crazy-expensive, one-of-a-kind experience," says our sleuth, but works hard for your money so you never feel nickel-and-dimed. Ocean-facing rooms have an "edge-of-the-world quality" that no other Western hotel quite matches, and the sense of privacy is thrilling, with a great yet "mostly invisible" staff and 25 buildings that melt into the hillside. Cliffside pools and private hiking trails let you revel in Big Sur's glorious landscape. And in addition to free yoga classes, snacks, drinks, and breakfast, you'll save on gas, seeing as "you'd be nuts to leave here during your stay." *From \$595 year-round; 39 rooms & suites; postranchinn.com*

SCORE: 85





LA JOLLA, CA

The Lodge at Torrey Pines

We could go on and on about the stunning setting on a bluff above the glimmering Pacific; the restaurant with its killer wine list; the croquet lawn; the turndown chocolate. Or we could just say this is the highest-ranked hotel in the whole shebang, a hair shy of a perfect score. "One of the most beautiful hotels anywhere," where "public spaces are a testament to the art of woodworking," it opened in 2002 but embraces the early-1900s Craftsman ideal of building to match the landscape. Beaches are minutes away, but you'll feel no desire to leave.

\$305/\$495; 170 rooms & suites; lodgetorreypines.com SCORE: 98  



Wow amenity

CANINE CONCIERGE
Hippo the French bulldog makes sure your pet feels at home.

VANCOUVER, B.C. L'Hermitage Hotel

L'Hermitage occupies three floors of a 32-story residential tower, but far from being a turnoff, the unexpected location creates an oasis of calm in the middle of downtown and gives "a feel for what it's like to be a Vancouverite." And you only wish your apartment had amenities like these. There's the garden terrace with a 50-foot heated saltwater

Under \$250

pool, lined with rhododendrons and dogwoods. The L'Orangerie lounge with cushy club chairs for reading. Even a canine concierge. **\$183 U.S./\$229 U.S.; 60 rooms & suites; lhermitagevancouver.com**

SCORE: 80  

PASO ROBLES, CA Hotel Cheval

At first glance, the room rate at the horsey-themed Hotel Cheval, just off Paso's central square, felt high with no restaurant or on-site

gym. Yet the inn won us over with A+ service, its winey Pony Club Bar, and a lovely central-courtyard design scattered with firepits. Plus the rooms are stellar: Each has an easy-to-use-fireplace, real coffee fixin's (as in grinds and cream in the room), and a balcony. Extra points for running the breakfast buffet till 10! **\$315/\$350; 16 rooms; hotelcheval.com** **SCORE: 78**   

BEVERLY HILLS

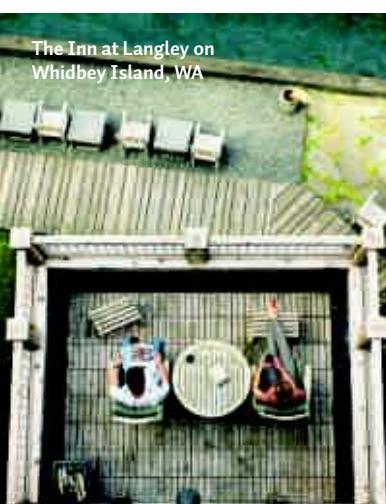
Beverly Hills Hotel

The pink hotel at the power crossroads of Sunset Boulevard and Rodeo Drive is old Hollywood at its finest. The iconic design and genuinely warm staff ("everyone greets you by name") make it feel "like Eloise would live there." And despite shiny newcomers, it still "pretty much defines Beverly Hills" and the glitz that can make a weekend escape: pool cabanas for rent, gorgeous palm trees, free car service, and a movers-and-shakers scene that's seen everyone from Liz and Dick on down. The mini cookies at turndown don't hurt either. **\$475/\$635; 210 rooms & suites, including 23 bungalows; beverlyhillshotel.com** **SCORE: 89**  

WHIDBEY ISLAND, WA

The Inn at Langley

Sure, lots of hotels are on the water, but what sets the inn apart is that every single room has a gorgeous ocean view and private balcony—no one is stuck over the parking lot. Plus, the wood fireplaces, deep soaking tubs, chef's herb garden, and symphony of local ingredients at the restaurant make this one of the most >**73**



2011 Hotel Awards

PALM SPRINGS

Korakia Pensione

"Transportive," "magic," and "totally glorious," says our sleuth. Not only does the price feel like an error in translation, but the atmosphere—Mediterranean meets Moroccan, with bougainvillea, arbors, and hanging lanterns—almost shouts "across-the-pond escape." Korakia's devotion to its guests is what truly sets it apart, though. Fresh flowers and fruit in your room. Loaner bikes. Sunscreen at the pool. Even nighttime movies in the courtyard. All yours, for free. **\$159/\$249; 28 rooms & suites; korakia.com** SCORE: 92 

Under
\$250



2011 Hotel Awards



SAUSALITO, CA

Cavallo Point Lodge

Cavallo, a former army base turned hotel right next to the world's most beautiful bridge, gets major points for its "soulful, creative use of a historic site," landing it on our list of Bay Area contenders. The perks? Free yoga in a converted chapel, massages at the "cathedral-ceilinged" spa, and hard-to-find apertifs and beers at Farley Bar, right next to the Michelin-starred Murray Circle restaurant. And just steps from your room are coastal trails that "zigzag for miles through the Marin Headlands." \$280/\$360 for historic rooms, \$330/\$360 for contemporary; 142 rooms & suites; cavallopoint.com SCORE: 82.5



SAN FRANCISCO

Hotel Vitale

From any floor, you could chuck a sustainably farmed oyster shell and hit the waterfront's Ferry Building—the gourmet hub of the city—across the street. Plus, many of the lavender-scented rooms have dazzling views of the Bay Bridge. But location isn't the only reason the Vitale edges out the city's other great hotels—there's the buzzy bar, rooftop spa, and great design that gives your room a "chic little urban pied-à-terre" feel. As our scout says, "even locals want to stay here." \$279/\$399; 200 rooms & suites; hotelvitale.com SCORE: 83



quintessentially Northwest hotels around. Just a ferry ride from Seattle, the inn draws people for its pricey dinner tasting menu, but we think "the free breakfast is even better." \$225/\$290; 26 rooms & suites; innatlangley.com SCORE: 87

TABERNASH, CO

Devil's Thumb Ranch

Under
\$250

The luxe-yet-cozy 6,000-acre ranch has all the bells and whistles—sweeping mountain views, a great spa, and every outdoor activity you can imagine. But what sets it apart from other beloved Rockies resorts is that you really can get away here for a weekend: It's only an hour and a half from Denver. Your overstuffed chair by the fire and deep soaking tub can make it hard to leave your room, so if there's one activity

that you do, make sure it's the evening sleigh ride with a "real-life cowboy." \$250/\$345 cabin, \$199/\$250 lodge room, \$90/\$150 bunkhouse room with shared bath; devilsthumbbranch.com SCORE: 84

SEATTLE

Hotel Ändra

It should be enough that room service is a direct line to restaurateur Tom Douglas's Lola, a Greek Mediterranean hot spot connected to the lobby. But when it comes to style, Hotel Ändra in Seattle's shoppy Belltown neighborhood trumps anything within a wide radius. The original 1926 bones remain, with Swedish minimalist interiors and rooms (alpaca headboards, toiletries from Stockholm) that are so comfortable, you could spend a weekend there. Add in a staff who "bend over backward" and the "personal living room" vibes in the book-filled lobby, and you have the ultimate city escape. \$179/\$269; 119 rooms & suites; hotelandra.com SCORE: 86

VANCOUVER, B.C.

Fairmont Pacific Rim

The Fairmont's attention to detail is in a class of its own, even for a luxury hotel. You'll spend the first 15 minutes in your room, wondering, "How did they know I liked this song? Where did they get this tea? Wait, the bathroom mirror is

also a television?" It doesn't stop there. There's the "outrageous, freakishly automated" fitness room with water, towels, and touch-pad controls at every station. The "graceful, proficient" staff who always greet you by name. A concierge who doesn't just give you directions but hands you a map with local attractions handwritten in. Even with an ideal downtown location, you'll find yourself aching for your room. \$282 U.S./\$353 U.S.; 377 rooms & suites; fairmont.com/pacificrim SCORE: 88

LAS VEGAS

The Cosmopolitan

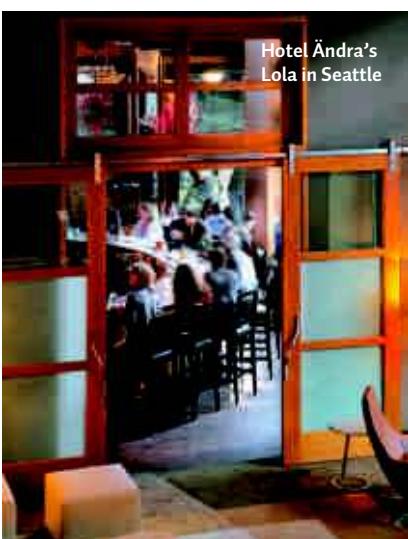
All the conventional casino-resort wisdom gets turned on its head at the new Cosmopolitan, which is what we love about it. First, they've ditched "the roster of A-list, no-show chefs for a cast of creative kitchen cooks with something to prove." Craft cocktails are king at the hotel's three main bars, where you'll notice "bartenders from other restaurants stooled-up, asking questions." And details like digital art columns at the check-

in desk and restored cigarette machines that spit out artwork for 5 bucks a pop make us feel like credit-card-carrying adults, not conventioneers or frat boys. Plus, the rooms have a million perfect little details: "black-and-white Fornasetti wallpaper gazing at you from the back of your closet, colored pencils instead of pens, fat stacks of art books." \$195/\$350; 2,995 rooms & suites; cosmopolitanlasvegas.com SCORE: 86

Wow amenity

BRILLIANT ARTWORK

This 6-foot fiber-glass high-heel sculpture thrills.



2011 Hotel Awards

PORLAND Hotel deLuxe

The deLuxe nails the city-hotel trifecta. It's utterly carless, just steps from downtown and a train ride from the airport. It has a buzzy bar, the Driftwood Room, which is "a Portland institution." And the service rises above the snap-to-attention business hotel m.o. to be warm and personal ("we weren't greeted by name after check-in, but our greyhound, Mini, was"). A recent redo of the bar smartly didn't touch the "dark, clubby interior" but revamped the cocktail list, and movies are

Under \$250

screened on the roof in summer. To really feel like an insider, ask for a room that ends in "30" or "03"—they have the best views. \$139/\$169; 145 rooms & suites; hoteldeluxe.com

SCORE: 87 

ASTORIA, OR Cannery Pier Hotel

Built on 100-year-old pilings so it's actually on the water, this hotel deftly captures the spirit of coastal Oregon. "It's what you think about when you think of Astoria," says our scout. Exposed beams and wooden trusses give it a "jaunty, turn-of-the-century maritime feel," historic photos cover the walls, and chauffeured vintage 1930s and 1940s cars are yours for free. Rooms are on the basic side, but the pile-on of freebies (loaner bikes, wine, local author lectures) make up for that. \$189/\$329; 46 rooms & suites; cannerypierhotel.com

SCORE: 81 

Dial up the perfect escape

The best hotel for you, depending on what kind of weekend you want

Best for ROMANCE

- Post Ranch Inn**, Big Sur, CA
- The Lodge at Torrey Pines**, La Jolla, CA
- Korakia Pensione**, Palm Springs
- The Inn at Langley**, Whidbey Island, WA
- Rancho Valencia**, near San Diego
- Inn of the Spanish Garden**, Santa Barbara

Best for OUTDOORS

- Devil's Thumb Ranch**, Tabernash, CO
- The Four Seasons Whistler**, Whistler, B.C.
- Post Ranch Inn**, Big Sur, CA
- Sanctuary on Camelback Mountain**, Scottsdale, AZ
- Rancho Valencia**, near San Diego
- Cavallo Point Lodge**, Sausalito, CA

Best for POOL

- Solage Calistoga**, Napa Valley
- Sanctuary on Camelback Mountain**, Scottsdale, AZ
- The Beverly Hills Hotel**
- The Cosmopolitan**, Las Vegas
- L'Hermitage**, Vancouver, B.C.
- Fairmont Pacific Rim**, Vancouver, B.C.

Wow amenity

FREE CHAUFFEURED RIDES

Vintage cars shuttle you to and from downtown restaurants.



LAGUNA BEACH, CA Pacific Edge Hotel

Smack on one of the prettiest stretches of beach in all of Southern California and two blocks from town, the Pacific Edge wins big for location. "If the oceanfront rooms were any closer to the beach, they'd be boats." The super-reasonable price point for stylish rooms is a big thumbs-up for value, even if they don't blow you away with plush toiletries and extras.

\$149/\$269 standard, \$239/\$379 beach-front; 132 rooms & suites; pacificeedgehotel.com **SCORE: 72**  

DENVER Hotel Teatro

If Marie Antoinette had made it to Colorado, this is where she'd stay. The historic hotel in the thick of the theater district has remodeled rooms with cherry finishes and luxe bathrooms, plus a staff who anticipate needs you didn't know you had. But what puts this hotel firmly in awards territory is its food. Expect one of the "top five meals of your life" at Restaurant Kevin Taylor, where the menu—say, coconut mascarpone grits or chocolate toffee fondant—is worth scrapbooking. \$189/\$339; 110 rooms & suites; hotelteatro.com

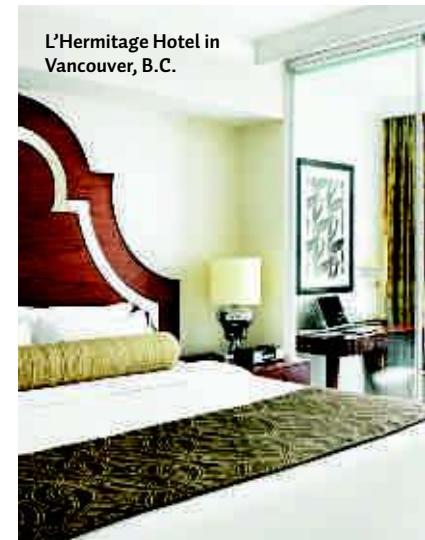
SCORE: 80 

TUCSON Arizona Inn

Two days can easily feel like double that at the elegant, Old World inn, which has a "timeless atmosphere and genteel staff." More than 80 years old, it has managed to hold onto its historic Spanish colonial soul without becoming outdated—even the handmade furniture is lovingly restored by an on-site craftsman. Lush landscaping and trees "create a feeling of luxurious retreat," and breakfast is "superb," the best meal at the hotel. \$159/\$329; 92 rooms & suites; arizonainn.com

SCORE: 81 

L'Hermitage Hotel in Vancouver, B.C.





CLOCKWISE FROM RIGHT: JOHN SUTTON, MARTIN TESSLER

WHISTLER, B.C.

The Four Seasons Whistler

Stay at enough ski resorts, and it can feel like everything comes out of the same faux-Bavarian mold. Which is why the Four Seasons Whistler, despite being a huge ski-in/ski-out resort, wins with its intimate feel. Maybe it's the servers in white fuzzy hats who take your drink order while you're soaking in the slopeside hot tubs. Or the ski concierge who "unbuckles your boots, for crying out loud," says our scout. This is a ski resort with heart. **\$309 U.S./\$410 U.S.; 273 rooms & suites;** fourseasons.com/whistler

SCORE: 78