

EVERETT POTTER'S TRAVEL REPORT

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GETAWAYS

# 20 Memorable Hotels in 2012

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Shangri-La Hotel, Paris

What were our favorite hotels in 2012? The contributors to Everett Potter's Travel Report covered the waterfront from Maine to Maui, not to mention Paris, London and the Caribbean. Here are the hotels we didn't want to leave - and the reasons why we'd gladly return to each and every one of them next year.

## Arenas del Mar, Manuel Antonio, Costa Rica

Steve Jermanok

Think of Costa Rica and you imagine a rainforest overflowing with ripe foliage, silky sand beaches that serve as a welcome mat to the pounding surf, and a landscape abundant with wildlife viewing opportunities. A hummingbird would be nice, but even more exciting is something with fur, like a monkey or a sloth. Well, on the outskirts of Manuel Antonio National Park, on the central coast of Costa Rica, there's a resort called Arenas del Mar that offers all of the above. Indeed, the boutique property is as close to a tropical paradise as one can get in this Central American getaway. Spacious suites are nestled into the rugged cliffs overlooking the Pacific. Walk onto your outdoor deck in the morning and you can watch the waves crashing against the rocks and spewing its foamy spray on the beach. You may also find a white-faced monkey popping his head out of a branch to greet you or view a sloth sleeping under the shade of a large banana leaf. [www.arenasdelmar.com](http://www.arenasdelmar.com)

### **Aria Hotel, Prague**

Geri Bain

Are those original Chagalls and Picassos? I asked about the artwork throughout the lobby, dining room and library of the Aria Hotel. The answer was "yes." In fact, the owner rotates his collection into the hotel on an ever-changing basis. But what really sets this 51-room hotel apart is attention to detail. A music theme is subtly infused into the entire experience, from décor to its full-time music director/concierge, music library and screening room. And the discreet, intuitive service is just what you'd expect from a hotel that has hosted former president Bill Clinton and other world leaders. <http://www.ariahotel.net/>

### **Awasi, San Pedro de Atacama, Chile**

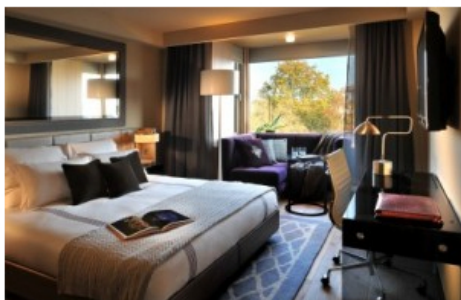
Cari Gray

Within the town of San Pedro sits the oasis of Awasi, with just eight suites and a small pool. Outside of the hotel lie sweeping views of volcanos, arid canyons, scenic cacti forests, bubbling geysers and even expansive salt flats. All these big distractions makes the intimate and stylish Awasi all the more enjoyable. The staff anticipates needs and plans daily custom outings for each couple to these surrounding landscapes. The young chef delights in the way that few Chilean or even global kitchens accomplish. The rooms are perfectly proportioned, made of thick adobe to insulate against the desert colds and hots. [www.awasi.cl](http://www.awasi.cl)

### **Bald Mountain Camps, Oquossoc, Maine**

Everett Potter

The Maine sporting camp is an endangered species, and that's one reason I checked into Bald Mountain Camps on the shores of mighty Lake Mooselookmeguntic this past summer. Dating from the late 19th century, Bald Mountain hosted sportsmen like Teddy Roosevelt who fished for the legendary brook trout here. I did the same, and the fishing remains superb, on the lake and in nearby rivers like the Kennebago. But many families try other activities after a morning of fly-casting, from kayaking to mountain biking. Others simply command a chair and gaze at the wild lake while reading a fat bestseller. The central lodge and 14 rustic cabins, each with its own fireplace and screened-in porch, are simple, comfortable and about all you need. Dinners are hearty, in a dining room festooned with trophies. Night music is provided by the loons, wood smoke perfumes the air, and daybreak is an opportunity to wake up with a flying leap into the choppy waters of Mooselookmeguntic. One word as I come up for air: heaven. [www.baldmountaincamps.com/](http://www.baldmountaincamps.com/)



### **Belgraves, London**

Marc Kristal

Belgraves, the new Thompson hotel in London, is at the top of my list this year. Interior designer Tara Bernerd focused on material sumptuousness in both the public and private spaces, and installed thoughtfully chosen furnishings and objects, many of them vintage, so that the place feels comfortable and substantive rather than hip and disposable; Marx Hix's restaurant, which takes up half the lobby, successfully continues his tradition of simply prepared, ingredient-driven English cuisine; and the staff is unfailingly helpful and friendly, utterly devoid of snobbishness, and impeccably trained. Plus it's hard to beat the location, on Chesham Place in the heart of Belgravia. [www.thompsonhotels.com/hotels/london/belgraves](http://www.thompsonhotels.com/hotels/london/belgraves)



### **The Covent Garden Hotel, London**

Dalma Heyn

To celebrate our 20th anniversary we decided to see theater and to stay in this perfect “boutique” hotel. Each room is unique and impeccably decorated in traditional English style by Kit Kemp. Everyone on the staff referred to us by name, and they were warm without being intrusive or disingenuous. When we returned for our dropped-off key at night, they didn't need to ask which room we were in. The first-floor library/bar is like sinking into the sumptuous, lavishly appointed study in the loveliest country home you can imagine, yet it's only five minutes from almost every theater in London. The Honor Bar, from which we poured many a cognac and glass of wine, is elegantly outfitted with every liquor, liqueur or Champagne we could desire. The main floor — with its fabulous breakfast buffet in the Brasserie Max on the left, and the concierge on the right, and the fresh fruit to take along with you as you wish – makes it feel like you're coming home each time you arrive. But home was never so perfect. [www.firmdalehotels.com/london/covent-garden-hotel](http://www.firmdalehotels.com/london/covent-garden-hotel)

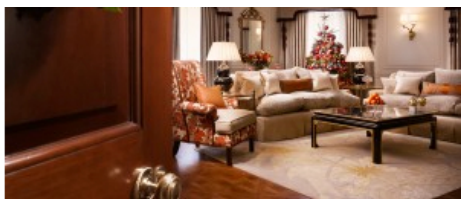


### **Deetjen's Big Sur Inn, California**

Richard West

Since 1970, my paradisiacal hideout has been Deetjen's Big Sur Inn, about 30 miles south of Carmel-By-The-Sea, an incomparably funky-romantic collection of 20 cabins and rooms tucked in Castro Canyon on Highway One where the Santa Lucia mountain range and towering redwood groves meet the Pacific Ocean. I love its intimacy, the humanity of proportions, Fabio the Inn's fat cat, the lack of noise (no TV, no radio, no Internet or cell phone connection/reception). Room 13's a favorite—queen bed, wood-burning stove, day bed beneath a gurgling Castro Creek. And the Inn serves the best breakfasts and dinners between Carmel and San Luis Obispo. A true Shangri-Lodge. [www.deetjens.com](http://www.deetjens.com)





### **The Dorchester, London**

William Triplett

While I love to fly, any distance beyond one time zone is always a biorhythmic challenge to me. Few things worse, I submit, than a dawn landing in Europe after a sleepless flight from the East Coast and then arriving at the hotel only to be told my room won't be ready until well past Noon, local. When I've thought to call ahead and request an early check-in, some hotels have accommodated. Then there's London's Dorchester. When I called before takeoff, I was asked what time they should expect me and would I like breakfast? Now, I rarely have anything more than tea after a long flight; just point me to the bed. After an effortless check-in, I walked into a luxuriously quiet and comfortable room – with drapes drawn, bed turned down, and a pot of English Breakfast on the night stand. As he left, the porter said the front desk would not put through any calls until I told them otherwise. I want to live there. [www.thedorchester.com/](http://www.thedorchester.com/)



### **Drumbuie Farm, Scotland**

Julie Snyder

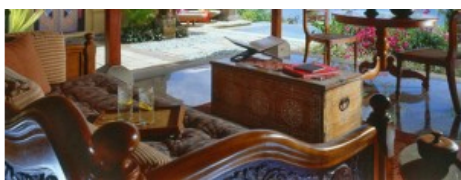
After hiking more than 14 miles along Scotland's Great Glen Way, all we cared about at day's end was a hot shower and a decent bed. Drumbuie Farm, just outside the village of Drumnadrochit, delivered in style with a comfy four-poster and modern bath in a handsomely appointed guest room. The next morning—between bites of a luscious lox scramble in the sunny breakfast room—we soaked in the pastoral panorama and brilliant blue of Loch Ness. But the best natural attraction at the Urquhart family's bed-and-breakfast was its lazily-grazing herd of hairy, sweet-faced Highland cattle. [www.loch-ness-farm.co.uk/](http://www.loch-ness-farm.co.uk/)

### **Dunton Hot Springs, Colorado**

Ann Abel

Way off the grid in southern Colorado, Dunton Hot Springs is the antithesis of our over-connected, deskbound lives. The 1880s ghost town-turned-luxury resort is a romanticized fantasyland of frontier life (minus any actual hardship), a remote enclave of 13 hand-hewn log cabins and a central saloon with Butch Cassidy's name carved into the century-old bar. This isn't roughing it: The homestead cabins have been tricked out with all sorts of modern creature comforts, like heated floors and rain showers. The grub—served at a communal table—is surprisingly excellent, the fly-fishing superb, and vibe wonderfully relaxed. The lithium rumored to be in the namesake hot springs might have something to do with that. [www.duntonhotsprings.com](http://www.duntonhotsprings.com)





### Four Seasons Resort Jimbaran Bay, Bali

Buzzy Gordon

Four Seasons Jimbaran Bay — one of two Four Seasons resorts on the island of Bali — gets my vote. Guests stay in stunningly designed villas featuring luxurious living quarters, outdoor dining areas, tropical gardens, and private pools with ocean views. The service is impeccable, and the spa's signature treatments are not to be missed. [www.fourseasons.com/jimbaranbay/](http://www.fourseasons.com/jimbaranbay/)



### Four Seasons Resort Punta Mita

Amiee White Beazley

It's easy to access paradise. The property has all of the amenities Four Seasons is known for, plus an amazing 55-foot yacht on which to cruise Banderas Bay and a golf course featuring "Tail of the Whale" natural island green. The restaurants are by Richard Sandoval and the views from every room take your breath away. AC off, doors to a sea view patio open as the ocean air moves through. Sound of waves crashing as night falls. Tequila at sunset. Late night swims in the infinity pool. Morning breakfast followed by walks on white sand beaches collecting coral. Instant peace, served daily, by the most attentive staff in Mexico. [www.fourseasons.com/puntamita/](http://www.fourseasons.com/puntamita/)

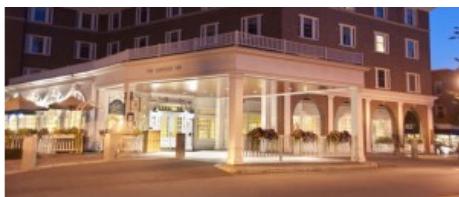


### The Grand Hotel Casselbergh, Bruges

Jenny Keroack

The lobby of the 118-room Grand Hotel Casselbergh in Bruges has the air of a palace, with beautiful paintings, open fireplaces, and intimately-grouped posh furnishings. Combined from three aristocratic residences just steps from Burg Square, this elegant hotel mirrors the graceful beauty of its historic city. Like a castle keep, our generously sized room, with its vaulted ceiling, lovely tapestries and spacious bathroom, could only be reached by climbing a narrow, winding staircase. And the front desk staff made us feel like we had our own personal secretaries. [www.grandhotelcasselbergh.com](http://www.grandhotelcasselbergh.com)





### **Hanover Inn, Hanover, New Hampshire**

Bobbie Leigh

The newly renovated Hanover Inn has been redone, but it's not stuffy. It has all the bells and whistles you need to be in touch, soothing decor, terrific contemporary art, but above all an amazingly gracious staff. You'll receive several calls from the front desk to find out if you need anything, if you are comfortable, if they can do anything for you. I've never felt so cosseted. I took the bus home and the doorman/porter left his post and carried my non-wheeler for me to the bus stop. After many years on the road, glitz and glamour don't impress me, although I do like chocolates or Toll House cookies on my pillow at night. But sincere thoughtfulness, not scripted words that seem to mean nothing, trumps all and the Hanover Inn exemplifies what is missing in so many other places. [www.hanoverinn.com/](http://www.hanoverinn.com/)



### **Hotel Le Village St Barth, St. Barts**

Ed Wetschler

For years, Caribbean expert Ian Keown, a contributor to this site, had urged me to visit Hotel Le Village St Barth, and now that I've finally stayed there, I know why. This is not a luxury hotel — not by St. Barts' standards — but my suite was spacious and tasteful, the views of the water from my hillside terrace (and from poolside and the breakfast room) were breathtaking, the well-equipped outdoor kitchen pleased me as much as it used to please Craig Claiborne (although his outcomes were better), the rates were reasonable for St. Barts, and — here's the bonus — you could walk down the hill to the beach and an array of restaurants instead of renting a car and challenging St. Barts' hairpin-turn roads. [www.villagestjeanhotel.com/](http://www.villagestjeanhotel.com/)

### **Hotel Le Village St Barth, St. Barts**

Ian Keown

Hotel LeVillage St.Barth, hands down. It's less an inn than a hillside garden sprouting hibiscus and gaiac trees and dainty tropical cottages, perched just above St.Barts' most photogenic beach. Patios and terraces are wonderfully private, European fixtures and Caribbean verve add contemporary flair, kitchens can help keep costs down and you can walk to nine bars and restaurants. A recent two-year restyling brings the room count to 28, mostly suites, and a new 4-star rating. Above all, it's great value.

[www.hotelvillagestjean.com](http://www.hotelvillagestjean.com)

### **Migis Lodge, Maine**

John Grossmann

WiFi in the woods. That mix of the new and the old prevailed throughout a July stay at Migis Lodge, a venerable New England resort on a peaceful shore of Maine's Sebago Lake, less than an hour's drive from Portland. The rustic cabin-like rooms have updated bathrooms

and flat screen TVs. With the lake only 30 yards from our front porch, ours stayed dark all weekend. We read. Hiked the resort trails. Kayaked. Swam. I, for one, welcomed the addition of barbecued pork ribs to the traditional lobster picnic supper. The Abenaki Indian word for “the place to steal away to rest,” Migis (My’ gus) is precisely that. [www.migis.com](http://www.migis.com)



### **One Aldwych, London**

Joan Scobey

At One Aldwych, London’s theater-district Edwardian stunner, it isn’t the screening room (and weekend movies), the lap pool with the underwater sound system playing Mozart, or the loaner laptop. It’s not the bronze “Boatman With Oars” in the soaring lobby, or the art in the sleek contemporary guest rooms. It’s that when I come down for breakfast, they know what I want (one poached egg, yogurt, strong coffee). No place makes me feel as priveleged and well cared for as “One A.” [www.onealdwych.co.uk](http://www.onealdwych.co.uk).



### **Shangri-La Hotel, Paris**

Sallie Brady

Travel time is precious time– something that is well understood by the concierge and reception team at the Shangri-La Hotel, Paris. I had checked into my elegant room in this glittery one-year-old gem in the chic 16th arrondissement, taken in the breathtaking view of the Tour Eiffel that would flash its disco light show in the evenings, and organized myself for my first outing. Pausing at the concierge desk I had a list of questions, including where was the closest SFR, where I could top up my French téléphone portable, or cellphone. The concierge searched and then said, “Madam, let us do it for you. You will waste too much time getting there and waiting.” I knew he was right–with typical French bureaucracy it had taken me almost two hours to buy the phone the year before. Thanks to the concierge, I had time to visit the Musée Guimet, an Asian art museum that was just around the corner. This premium level of service was consistent throughout my stay at this stunning hotel that’s housed in the Palais d’Iéna, the former home of Prince Roland Bonaparte. However, I did leave the Shangri-La with one disappointment. The general manager had wanted to show me La Suite Impériale, which had been Bonaparte’s private apartment and maintained that era’s decoration. Sadly, it was occupied. When I checked out of the Shangri-La in the early morning hours, I caught a glimpse of perfectly coiffed Condeleezza Rice also leaving the hotel with suitcases. I think I know what room she stayed in. [www.shangri-la.com/paris/shangrila](http://www.shangri-la.com/paris/shangrila)

## Sheraton Maui Resort, Hawaii

Tom Passavant

Knocked out? Soothed? Very glad to be there? That would be the Sheraton Maui Resort & Spa, set on 23 acres (!) of drop-dead gorgeous beachfront within Maui's Kaanapali Beach Resort. Not only is this property in tip-top shape for a 50 year-old, but the entire Kaanapali complex of hotels, condominiums, and restaurants—the very first to open in the state of Hawaii and also celebrating its golden anniversary this fall—is a reminder that when it comes to beachy getaways, older can often be better. [Sheraton-maui.com](https://www.sheraton-maui.com) and [kaanapaliresort.com](https://www.kaanapaliresort.com)



## Stein Eriksen Lodge, Deer Valley, Utah

Gerrie Summers

What attracted me to Stein Eriksen Lodge in Utah, were the words *world-class spa*. Add to that a luxury suite with a spacious bathroom with a jetted bathtub, wood-burning fireplaces in the living room and bedroom, and a private deck with a hot tub and serene mountain views. Sold! Of course all of that means very little without world-class service—and in this area, the resort does not disappoint. Named for Norwegian alpine skier and Olympic gold medalist Stein Eriksen, it is Utah's only Forbes Five Star, AAA Five Diamond lodge, with ski in/ski out access to Deer Valley Resort, a four star gourmet restaurant with an elegant European ambiance and a menu that varies by season. Did I mention a fabulous spa? I'm so taken with this resort; I might actually learn how to ski. OK, you won't see me on the mountain on skis, but you'd definitely see me strolling on the property past a beautiful variety of flowers and rock gardens with cascading crisp and clear water, on my way to the spa to get the Ski and Hiker Boot Relief Treatment and the Alpine Glow." [www.steinlodge.com](https://www.steinlodge.com)

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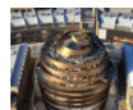
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