

LUXE
for
LESS

NEW The Huntley, Santa Monica, USA

Checking into Santa Monica's latest boutique hotel, near the beach, is like being admitted to the city's hottest club. A vision of movie-set cool, it's just been given a makeover by Thomas Schoos. In the lobby, oversize leather armchairs, orchids and smooth wooden 'bowl' chairs are offset by a wall covered in paint-dipped piranhas. In the rooms, neutral colours and gadgets enhance the urban oasis theme; in the bathrooms, the view from the shower stretches up to Malibu. For 360-degree vistas, pop up to the glorious Penthouse restaurant and bar, where white cabanas and sheer gauze curtains flow in the breeze through open skylights.

Who goes LA's A-list.

Top tip Hidden behind reception is a great little shop.

Must-do Drink at the Penthouse, worth it for the view alone.

Downside It's so hip, it looks like a smile hurts some of the staff.

The Huntley (+1 310 394 5454; www.thehuntleyhotel.com),

from \$340 a room a night.



Hôtel Plaza Athenée, Paris, France

Lazy location managers, look no further. Rooms at the front have ancient windows framed by red carnations, offering a superb view of the Eiffel Tower; inside, the decor is resoundingly Gallic, with dainty dressing tables and plenty of pistachio and chintz. The effect is to make you feel as though you are living in a merry pastiche of Paris, in which the only other tourists are arty Jil Sander-clad types perched on gilded chairs, taking tea in the lobby. It's only after dark, when the bar and restaurant open, that this grande dame shows her naughty side. Ask the barman to fix you a few Rose Royales, then stumble to the restaurant for Alain Ducasse's daunting, delicious menus.

Who goes Bon viveurs, Americans.

Top tip Verify your room view on booking.

Must-do Eat in – the food is the best in town.

Downside The service can be snooty.

Three nights, from £1,035 a person B&B, including flights and transfers, with Elegant Resorts (01244 897506; www.elegantresorts.co.uk).



NEW NYC London Hotel, New York, USA

Housed in a beautiful skyscraper, the NYC London is perfectly located for a Manhattan weekend break, the neighbourhood – a mass of skyscrapers – providing an exhilarating buzz. All rooms are suites, with vast bathrooms, designed by the über-cool David Collins. The ground-floor London Bar is packed with showbiz scenesters, rappers and cashed-up business types. The two-Michelin-starred Gordon Ramsay restaurant serves food in a beautiful deco-style dining room.

Who goes Kanye West, Steve Martin, Donna Tartt; weekenders.

Top tip Go to the River Café for breathtaking city views.

Must-do Watch ice-hockey at Madison Square Garden.

Downside Not for vertigo sufferers.

NYC London Hotel (+1 212 307 5000; www.thelondonnyc.com),

from \$499 a room a night.