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Page 36

TRUTH IN TRAVEL

JANUARY 2008

SPECIAL 51-PAGE SECTION

GOLD LIST

721 WORLD'S BEST PLACES TO STAY

TOP HOTELS, RESORTS, CRUISE LINES

FEEL-GOOD
VACATIONS

20 ECO-TRIPS
FOR EVERY
TASTE & BUDGET

PULLOUT EXTRA

AUSTRALIA
INSIDER'S GUIDE



Hotel Lucia, Portland

☎87.3 ☎87.3 ☎86.9 ☎95.2 ☎92.1 **89.8**

"All of Portland is at your fingertips" from this downtown hotel near the light-rail. "Sleek and modern decor" means mahogany furniture with a chocolate-cherry stain, accent pieces in ebonized oak, and warm colors juxtaposed with glass and stainless steel bathroom vanities. Typhoon offers "some of the best Thai food ever"; Bo Restobar serves pan-Asian meals. *SS: 127 rooms; 503-225-1717; provenancehotels.com.*

Hotel Vintage Plaza, Portland

☎80.5 ☎87.8 ☎80.5 ☎92.6 ☎85.4 **86.3**

The location of this wine-themed property is "so convenient, close to Pioneer Square." Rooms in green and burgundy are dedicated to local vineyards and "have more personality than your typical room." The oenophilia continues with hosted evening wine receptions that are "a lovely touch and an easy way to meet people." Pazzo serves pizza fresh from a wood-burning oven. *SS: 107 rooms; 877-225-1717; kimptonhotels.com.*

PENNSYLVANIA

Four Seasons, Philadelphia

☎91.2 ☎94.0 ☎95.3 ☎91.2

☎91.2 **92.6**
This seven-story granite block on Logan Square has Federal-style rooms with chocolate-and-butter palettes, toile draperies, and watercolors of Philadelphia landmarks, some of which are "right outside the window." An off-duty staff member walked ten minutes out of his way to Rittenhouse Square with us so we wouldn't get lost. Fountain, newly renovated, serves "some damn fine food," such as Portuguese-style John Dory fillet. *SSSS: 364 rooms; pool, spa; 866-516-1100; fourseasons.com*

Rittenhouse Hotel, Philadelphia

☎91.4 ☎90.2 ☎88.5 ☎95.1

☎90.1 **91.1**
The neighborhood surrounding this sawtooth-fronted hotel on Rittenhouse Square "makes you feel like a resident." Contemporary rooms in gold and blue have Wi-Fi, as well as flat-screen TVs in bathrooms. "Staff are gracious, unpretentious, and helpful." Modern, French-accented dishes at Luceaux include Kobe beef with tripe and macadamia nuts. The spa and indoor pool "make for a great afternoon break." *SSS: 98 rooms; pool, spa; 800-635-1042; rittenhousehotel.com*

RHODE ISLAND

Castle Hill Inn & Resort, Newport

☎79.5 ☎85.7 ☎87.2 ☎92.1

☎82.9 **85.5**
Built as a summerhouse for marine biologist Alexander Agassiz in 1874, this resort has since expanded, adding beach houses and cottages, and sit-on-40 "picture-perfect" acres of a private peninsula off Ocean Drive. Rooms are designed with period antiques, mahogany accents, and gas fireplaces. Cabana Grille's casual alfresco offerings include the surf-and-turf burger and a raw bar. *SSSS: 35 rooms; beach; 888-466-1355; castlehillinn.com*

SOUTH CAROLINA

Inn at Palmetto Bluff, Bluffton

☎100 ☎95.5 ☎72.7 ☎86.4 ☎90.9 **89.1**

This Lowcountry colonial resort near Beaufort has perfect-scoring cottages sprinkled between the waterfront and the forest. "The best rooms we have ever stayed in" have screened-in porches, pine floors, and claw-foot tubs. Staff "remember all the little details," such as washing car windshields and bringing bottled water to golfers. However, "the food was disappointing." *SSSS: 50 cottages; golf, tennis, pool, spa; 843-706-6500; aubergeresorts.com*

Charleston Place, Charleston

☎90.4 ☎92.3 ☎88.3 ☎96.2 ☎91.6 **91.8**

"Set across from the famous market where the locals sell their crafts," the hotel re-creates a seventeenth-century Italian manse with Italian marble in the lobby, a Georgian staircase, and a 12-foot crystal chandelier. Tapes, jacks, and darts give a Southern accent to rooms. Charleston Grill promotes local seafood. *SSSS: 440 rooms; pool, spa; 800-611-5545; orient-express.com*

John Rutledge House Inn, Charleston

☎92.3 ☎92.0 ☎87.5 ☎88.0 ☎84.0 **88.8**

This modern iteration of a 1700s grand residence replicates the era with Italian-marble fireplaces, ironwork, and antebellum antiques in rooms divided between a main building and two "dark carriage houses." There is a small kitchen onsite that prepares breakfast: "I was a little nervous, but our meal surpassed my expectations." *SSS: 19 rooms; 866-720-2609; charminginn.com*

"Traditional with a twist" dishes at Crea 1886, located in the original carriage house, include crab cake souffle with mango puree.

SSSS: 21 rooms; spa; 888-466-1886; charminginn.com

Planters Inn, Charleston

☎77.9 ☎82.6 ☎85.3 ☎94.2 ☎80.6 **84.2**

SSS: 64 rooms; 800-843-7082; plantersinn.com

Boardwalk Inn, Isle of Palms

☎93.3 ☎96.7 ☎79.3 ☎96.7 ☎93.3 ☎86.7 **91.1**

Thirty minutes from downtown Charleston, this inn on a barrier island has a private boardwalk, panoramic ocean views, and "a laid-back island vibe." Spacious rooms have "handmade sweetgrass baskets, a traditional Charleston craft." Staff are experts at planning such activities as eco-tours and bike rides. Sea Island Grill serves Lowcountry seafood and a Sunday champagne brunch. *SSS: 93 rooms; golf, tennis, pool, spa, water sports, beach; 843-886-6000; wddhines.com*

Sanctuary at Kiawah Island Golf Resort, Kiawah Island

☎95.2 ☎92.8 ☎91.5 ☎94.0 ☎93.9

☎94.0 **93.5**

"The location is great if you want to be on the beach" at this barrier-island brick-and-shingle resort. Decor is "full of Southern charm," with jewel tones and, in the lobby, hand-planed walnut flooring that is designed to creak. Rooms, in hues that complement the sea and sand, come with deep tubs. Dine on pan-seared Alaskan halibut at the dinner-only Ocean Room. "I still dream about the Ocean Course," one of five here. *SSSS: 255 rooms; golf, tennis, pool, spa, beach; 843-768-6000; kiawahresort.com*

Woodlands Resort & Inn, Summerville

☎94.6 ☎88.9 ☎88.9 ☎80.6

☎91.4 **88.9**

Built by a railroad baron in 1906 as a winter home, the property has rooms that "epitomize Southern comfort," with four-poster beds, gas fireplaces, whirlpool tubs, and Aveda toiletries. "Gracious and hospitable staff" leave homemade cookies during evening turndown service. The main dining room, with crystal chandeliers and Corinthian columns, serves New American cuisine. *SSS: 18 rooms; tennis, pool, spa; 800-774-9999; woodlandsinn.com*

TENNESSEE

Hermitage Hotel, Nashville

☎94.4 ☎87.0 ☎81.1 ☎87.0

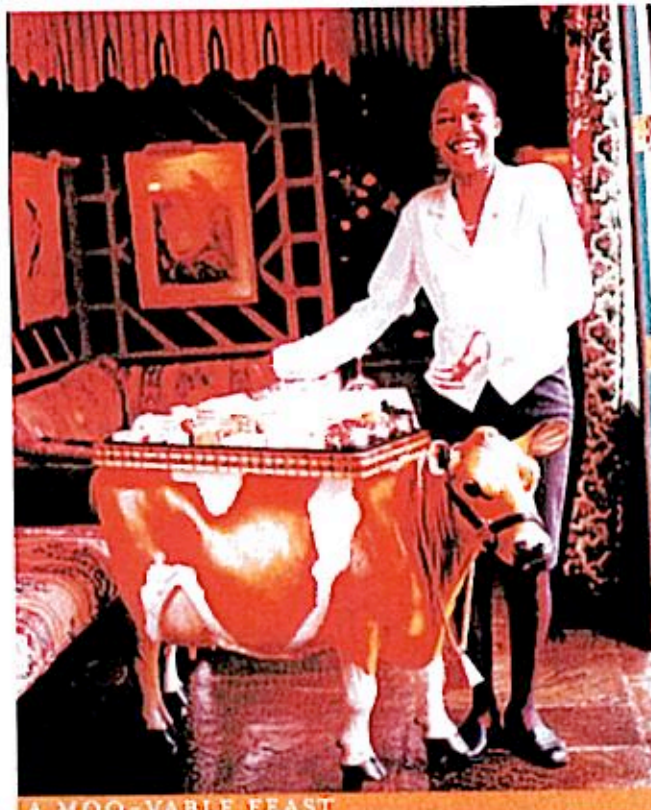
☎85.2 **87.0**

The Beaux Arts style downtown edifice, a meeting ground for presidents, socialites, and gangsters in the early 1900s, is "a haven of peace and comfort, with old-fashioned Southern hospitality." Grecian and Tennessee marble and stained glass skylights accentuate the lobby. "Sumptuous bed linens" mark spacious, classically designed rooms with views of the State Capitol. Order modern Southern cuisine at Capitol Grille. *SSS: 123 rooms; 888-888-9414; thehermitagehotel.com*

Blackberry Farm, Walland

☎87.2 ☎87.2 ☎92.3 ☎82.1 ☎87.2 **87.2**

"A rare and incredible resort find" in the foothills of the Great Smoky Mountains, staff at this 4,200-acre country estate prepare picnic lunches and "well-presented six-course dinners" using ingredients from the farm and the heirloom garden. Meals are "paired with the perfect boutique wines," and snack stations are located throughout the grounds. "I know why it wins so many culinary awards." The Farmstead, with three suites, aarder, and a demonstration kitchen, opened in September 2007. "Beds are just too comfortable."



A MOO-VABLE FEAST

Some restaurants have cheese carts. The Inn at Little Washington, in Washington, Virginia, has Faira, a moo-ing, one-third-scale replica Guernsey cow on wheels.

Market Pavilion, Charleston

☎85.0 ☎90.0 ☎85.0 ☎95.0 ☎95.0 **90.0**

This hotel near the city market is less than five years old, but its gas lanterns, mahogany foyers, and crown molding recall the late nineteenth century in the South. Grill 225, with dark wood and gilded mirrors, specializes in steak. Drinks at the Pavilion Bar, near the cascading rooftop pool, come with "gorgeous views of Charleston." The service is "very cordial and truly charming." *SSSS: 70 rooms; pool; 877-440-2250; marketpavilion.com*

Wentworth Mansion, Charleston

☎88.2 ☎94.1 ☎91.2 ☎84.8 ☎90.9 **89.9**

This converted nineteenth-century mansion "takes you back in time," and the service deserves "its genteel Southern reputation." Wine and hors d'oeuvres are available every evening in public spaces distinguished by chandeliers and Tiffany glass panels. Rooms come with sleigh beds and whirlpool tubs.