

Quirky and classic Portland hotels have something for everyone

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People who relish travel learn to avoid the cookie-cutter creations often found in the suburbs or out by the airport.

Fortunately, Portland has a terrific selection of downtown lodgings, from quirky to classic in a variety of price ranges. Some feature impressive collections of local and national art; as well as memorable cuisine and proximity to theaters, museums and river recreation.

"While there are some similarities to Seattle in terms of weather and ambience, Portland is smaller, more accessible," said Shoshanna Cohen, spokeswoman for the Ace Hotel, which attracts travelers seeking economical lodging options. "Portland has so many creative juices flowing in terms of our film festivals, First Thursdays art gallery walks and world-class art right here in our hotels."

Here is a selection of Portland's newer lodging choices:

Hotel Lucia

A stunning and popular lodging choice is the Hotel Lucia. I was wowed by its lobby's collection of art, its friendly staff and the cozy library, where I found a warm fire and a guest knitting.

Throughout the hotel is a vast collection of David Hume Kennerly's photos of the Kennedy family and other world leaders, such as Leonid Brezhnev and ... "Seinfeld's" Kramer. In the relaxing, elegantly furnished rooms, guests can choose different pillows or even select from a spiritual menu, with texts for followers of many of the most popular religions and spiritual pathways -- or you can just watch TV.

Just off the lobby is Typhoon!, one of the city's finest Thai restaurants. Even better, it provides room service.

Hotel deLuxe

Just a few blocks away is the Hotel Lucia's sister property, the newly renovated Hotel deLuxe, which takes the shimmering elegance of Hollywood's golden era and runs with it. In this rainy city, the deLuxe brightens the mood with light, alligator-textured hallway wallpaper, and buttery yellows and lime-sherbet-colored rooms.

Each floor has a classic film theme: The Rebels (adorned with photos of Ford, Wells, Kazan), the Immigrants (Wyler, Preminger and Lang) and others. In the lobby is Gracie's restaurant, as well as the Driftwood Bar, in case you don't feel like venturing out.

The Hotel deLuxe is a few blocks off Broadway, but Portland's public transit makes it easy to enjoy local foods, festivals and fun.

While Portland is easy to navigate, it's friendlier to pedestrians and bicycles. So unless you enjoy circling one-way blocks looking for elusive parking spaces, at most Portland hotels it's best to throw your keys to the valet for the duration of your stay and take the easy-to-use Max light rail and street car. If you fly, the Max light rail goes from Portland International Airport to downtown.



Modera lobby with "Venus in Wax." Photo: Deston Nokes

