



the hotel book At first glance, this hefty tome looks as though it's merely a compendium of the usual suspects, the five-star spas and resorts that figure in any well-heeled traveler's itinerary. Thankfully, it's anything but. While some of the properties included here may well pamper their guests with Pratesi bedding, the true

luxury of these destinations lies in their remoteness, heart-stopping vistas or unique history.

With gorgeous photographs by Don Freeman and a true sense of adventure on the part of writer Daisann McLane and editor Angelika Taschen, *The Hotel Book: Great Escapes North America* is like a cross between the oh-so-discriminating Relais & Châteaux and the Lonely Planet guides. More elegantly assembled than the former and less irreverently chatty than the latter, it's revelatory, inspiring and—if you can't drop everything and head off to one of its featured spots right away—a little frustrating. The latest in Taschen's Great Escapes series (previous volumes explored Europe, Asia, Africa and South America), the book ranges geographically from British Columbia to Nantucket. And while the bulk of its selections sit west of the Mississippi (including Hawaii), New York, Wisconsin, Louisiana and Florida are also represented.

Although the book includes the landmark the Ahwahnee lodge in Yosemite National Park, and such luxe getaways as Napa Valley's Auberge du Soleil (where cottages go for \$2,800 a night), it doesn't overlook more obscure and less pricey accommodations. Just miles from the hubbub of the Wisconsin Dells, a family-packed playland of water rides and miniature golf, lies Frank Lloyd Wright's Seth Peterson Cottage. Designed in 1958, this late-career commission sits in wooded seclusion high above the waters of Mirror Lake. Anchored by a massive sandstone hearth and



outfitted with simple plywood furniture, it is a jewel-like distillation of Wright's most fundamental principles. Out West, in Taos, New Mexico, there's the former home of idiosyncratic arts patron Mabel Dodge Luhan. Her adobe, built in the 1920s, features windows painted by frequent visitor D.H. Lawrence, and a bare bones room on the third floor whose curtainless windows offer a sweeping view of the desert. Other unique accommodations are the Shady Dell RV Park in Bisbee, Arizona, where you can be put up in a beautifully restored aluminum trailer; the handsomely furnished tents at El Capitan Canyon in Santa Barbara, California; and the swank tree houses of the Post Ranch Inn in Big Sur.

McLane's text (presented in English, French and German) is clean and simple, offering a brief description of each property and its history. In addition to including the necessities (addresses, rates, etc.), McLane cleverly adds a "book to pack" suggestion. For rusticating in one of the Persian-carpeted cabins of The Point, the former Rockefeller camp in the Adirondacks, she recommends Edmund Morris' *The Rise of Theodore Roosevelt*. For a visit to Tucson's Hotel Congress, where historical detail and hip intervention create a colorful atmosphere, she proposes John Toland's *The Dillinger Days* (the outlaw hid out here in 1934).

Freeman's photography artfully captures the ambiance of these singular escapes, and his informative documenting of these spaces makes this volume as much an interior design book as a travel guide. Sprinkled throughout the shots of lobbies, dining rooms, and guest rooms are telling asides: a bowl of fruit resting on a wooden rail where someone carved the initials M.H.; a tacky panoply of James Dean memorabilia for sale in the Hotel Paisano, in Marfa, Texas. Birds and horses appear, as do a forest of power-generating windmills and a rolling laundry hamper from housekeeping. No, not your usual suspects ■ *Thomas Connors~The Hotel Book: Great Escapes North America, Daisann McLane, 400 pages, \$39.99/hardcover, Taschen*