



Every hotel has a story to tell, but some of those stories are a little more extravagant than others. From maharajas' palaces to historic manor houses, 15th-century pilgrim refuges to presidential hangouts, there's a host of intriguing hotels out there, each with its own unique history.

Here we round up some of the best, ready for you to sell to clients seeking somewhere more than just a place to rest.

### 1 OMNI SHOREHAM HOTEL, THE US

Washington DC's Omni Shoreham was designed to impress, with art deco architecture, an indoor ice rink and an all-out opening night featuring then-teen idol Rudy Vallée.

Over the following years it became the place for every presidential inaugural ball, from Franklin D Roosevelt in 1933 to Bill Clinton and Barack Obama. President Harry S Truman is said to have played all-night poker games here in the 1940s and 50s, and numerous politicians have since called it home.

It didn't escape the rock'n'roll scene, either. In 1964 the Beatles hired out the entire seventh floor on their first visit to the US, and guests can now see their handwritten set list in the lobby.

Residents claim to have heard spooky goings-on in some of the 834 rooms, and there's now a dedicated Ghost Suite.

Elsewhere there's a charming courtyard and garden, restaurant,

substantial spa and pool.

**Book it:** Collette stops here on its 10-day America's Historic Hotels trip, which costs from £2,539 including most meals and based on two sharing, excluding flights. [gocollette.com](http://gocollette.com)

### 2 TREETOPS LODGE, KENYA

There are several reasons Treetops should be on a list for those interested in hotels with history; as well as becoming Kenya's first safari lodge when it opened in 1932, it's the place where 25-year-old Princess Elizabeth was staying when she heard of the death of her father, King George VI, in 1952.

"For the first time in the history of the world, a young girl climbed into the tree as a princess and climbed down as a queen," wrote hunter Jim Corbett in the hotel's logbook, summing up a moment that was to go down in history.

With its position on an ancient elephant migratory route in the Aberdare National Park, the hotel continues to draw in wildlife lovers with excellent game-viewing opportunities, and there are various activities available in the surrounding area, including nature walks, trout fishing and horse riding.

**Book it:** Somak Holidays offers a four-night, four-star Thorn Tree Safari from £681 based on two sharing on a full-board basis in June. The package includes one night at Treetops but excludes flights.

[somak.com](http://somak.com)

### 3 THE DON CESAR, THE US

Perhaps better known as the 'Pink Palace' for its flamboyant facade, this bright-coloured building in Florida was the go-to for high society when it opened at the height of the jazz age in St Pete's in 1928.

It drew in the likes of F Scott Fitzgerald, Clarence Darrow and Franklin D Roosevelt, before being bought by the army in 1942 and turned into a military hospital to house soldiers from the Second World War. Two years later it became a US Air Force convalescence centre.

After being vacant for several years it reopened as a hotel in 1973 and has since been heavily renovated, now boasting two beachfront pools, a rooftop garden and a vast spa, all overlooking the Gulf of Mexico. Water sports, kids' activities and even pet programmes are available, and it's all set right by a seven-mile white sand beach, meaning the surroundings are as alluring as its back story.

**Book it:** Prices start at \$299 per night based on a room-only stay between June and August. [doncesar.com](http://doncesar.com)

### 4 HOTEL DE ROME, GERMANY

For something a little different, look to Rocco Forte's Hotel de Rome in Berlin, once the headquarters of the Dresdner Bank.

Here clients will find a swimming pool in a former jewel

vault, a grand ballroom in the old cashiers' hall and suites in what were once the directors' offices. Gold-leaf mosaics line the walls of the spa as a reminder of its history, and there's a thick steel door leading into a treatment room that was once used to protect the vault.

The now five-star hotel was built between 1887 and 1889, and - after its Dresdner stint - served as the GDR's state bank during the Soviet era. Much of the building was destroyed when the Berlin Wall fell in 1989, but renovations have since restored much of its original heritage.

Among the newer features is a rooftop terrace, where guests can sip a cocktail while admiring the city below, and an elegant tea room where marble columns are a throwback to its days as the bank's lobby area.

**Book it:** Osprey Holidays offers two nights at the five-star Hotel de Rome, including flights from London, from £561. [ospreyholidays.com](http://ospreyholidays.com)

### 5 PARADOR DE SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA, SPAIN

Spain's Parador group certainly knows how to do heritage hotels, and among its most iconic properties is the Hostal dos Reis Católicos, a former 15th-century pilgrims' hospital located at the end point of the Camino de Santiago pilgrimage route.

It served as a hospital for walkers from 1499 and is considered by some to be





**LEFT:**  
Hotel de  
Rome,  
Germany

**RIGHT:**  
Fairmont  
Chateau  
Lake Louise,  
Canada

**BELOW:**  
Taj Rambagh  
Palace, India



→ the oldest hotel in the world. Located opposite the city's iconic cathedral, it's built around Renaissance and Gothic courtyards and is filled with ancient tapestries, statues and antiques. Galician cuisine is served in ornate restaurants, one of which used to be the stables for the hospital.

There's a plethora of landmark sites nearby, so it's ideally located for clients wanting to explore the city - even if they're not quite drawn by the idea of walking the 500-mile Camino first.

**Book it:** Three nights at the Parador Hostal dos Reis Católicos costs from £598 with Kirker Holidays, including flights from London, transfers, accommodation, breakfast and the services of a Kirker concierge. [kirkerholidays.com](http://kirkerholidays.com)

**6 TAJ RAMBAGH PALACE, INDIA**  
Cox & Kings says this 19th-century palace is one of its best-selling hotels among higher-end clients, and it's easy to see why.

Originally a garden house for the prince's wet nurse, the building later became a hunting lodge before being expanded in the 20th century to house the maharaja of Jaipur. After India gained independence it became the Government House, and was converted into a hotel in 1957.

The palace now houses 78 restored luxury rooms and suites, with elaborate decor filling the interiors - think hand-carved marble latticework, sandstone balustrades and ornate cenotaphs. Guests can explore the Mughal Gardens and dine

in what was once the palace ballroom - complete with crystal chandeliers and 18th-century French architecture - or try yoga, meditation and Indian treatments at the spa, safe in the knowledge they're staying somewhere that is, quite literally, fit for a prince.

**Book it:** Abercrombie & Kent has a six-night Incredible Royal Escapes by Taj Hotels trip, which includes two nights at Taj Rambagh Palace, private transfers, domestic transport and BA flights from London. Prices start at £3,499.

[abercrombiekent.co.uk](http://abercrombiekent.co.uk)

**7 FAIRMONT CHATEAU LAKE LOUISE, CANADA**

In 1882 a man named Thomas Wilson stumbled upon a lake while working on the Canadian Pacific Railway. Eight

years later, a one-storey log cabin was built as a hotel for outdoor adventurers coming to the area - now Banff National Park - with Swiss mountaineers teaching visitors how to climb and ski.

It gradually grew in popularity and the cabin expanded to become the chateau, welcoming the likes of Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Philip. The 552-room hotel now draws in winter sports fans from across the world, with the likes of ice climbing, dog sledding, snowmobiling and ice fishing all available. For those wanting to see the peaks in a different light, it offers hiking, canoeing, mountain biking, rafting and more in the summer.

**Book it:** A Winter Mountain Adventure Package is available year-round, which includes £60 credit to use on guided →



→ mountain activities, food and spa treatments. Rates are from £202 per night, based on single or double occupancy.  
[fairmont.com/lake-louise](http://fairmont.com/lake-louise)

**8 RAFFLES HOTEL, SINGAPORE**  
Home of the Singapore Sling, which was created here in 1915, Raffles' flagship property began life as a modest 10-room spot on the site of a former beach house.

It hit a heyday in the late 1800s, with the likes of Joseph Conrad and Rudyard Kipling passing through, before serving as a gathering point for British families in the Second World War and later as a temporary camp for released war prisoners.

In 1991 it reopened after a \$160 million project that restored the hotel's original colonial style. Today it is just as glamorous, with high ceilings and period furniture in suites overlooking the gardens.

There are 14 restaurants and bars, including the illustrious Writers Bar, designed in honour of the novelists that have graced its floors throughout history.

**Book it:** Kuoni offers three nights with breakfast in a courtyard suite, including BA flights from Heathrow and group transfers in resort. Prices are from £1,173, for a May departure.

[kuoni.co.uk](http://kuoni.co.uk)

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**9 INKATERRA LA CASONA, PERU**  
This 16th-century, stone manor house was one of Cusco's first colonial buildings, set on what was once the training grounds for an elite Inca army.

Spanish conquistador Diego de Almagro and South America's iconic liberator Simón Bolívar both stayed here, and it now features 11 suites with baroque furnishings alongside original stone arches, log fires and an arcaded courtyard.

Colonial antiques, ancient murals and pre-Columbian textiles are all on display in its halls, and there's also a Yacu therapy room which uses local products for its treatments – worth suggesting to clients wanting to get a real insight into all things Peruvian.

**Book it:** Journey Latin America offers a seven-day trip to Peru from £1,917 based on four nights



ABOVE: Raffles Hotel, Singapore

BELOW: InterContinental Marseille Hotel Dieu, France

at Inkaterra La Casona and two nights at Inkaterra Machu Picchu. The price includes excursions to the Sacred Valley, PISAQ ruins and Machu Picchu, transfers and return Vistadome train tickets to Machu Picchu.

[journeylatinamerica.co.uk](http://journeylatinamerica.co.uk)

**10 INTERCONTINENTAL MARSEILLE HOTEL DIEU, FRANCE**

From its inauguration in 1866 – hosted by Napoleon III – until its closure in 1993, Marseille's Hotel Dieu served as the city's main hospital, but its history goes back even further.

It was built on the site of the 12th-century Saint-Esprit Hospital, meaning it's effectively

witnessed everything from the plague to the world's first modern cataract surgery.

The listed building opened as a hotel in 2013, and now houses a Michelin-starred Mediterranean restaurant alongside an indoor pool, Clarins spa and romantic terrace overlooking the Notre Dame de la Garde Basilica. Staircases and vaulted passageways from the 19th century remain, and there's a mosaic fragment on display which dates back to 200BC – now that's what you call heritage.

**Book it:** Three nights' room-only with flights from Stansted costs from £413 with SuperBreak in early September.

[superbreak.com/agents](http://superbreak.com/agents) **TW**



## UK heritage hotels

### LITTLECOTE HOUSE HOTEL, BERKSHIRE

This medieval mansion was once inhabited by William and Elizabeth Darrell, Jane Seymour's grandmother. It was used as an armoury and garrison in the 1600s, then housed officers during the Second World War.  
[warnerleisurehotels.co.uk](http://warnerleisurehotels.co.uk)

### BALLYGALLY CASTLE, NORTHERN IRELAND

A 700-year-old castle, this is the only 17th-century building still used as a residence in Northern Ireland. Said to be haunted, it has a 'ghost room'.  
[hastingshotels.com](http://hastingshotels.com)

### DE VERE WOTTON HOUSE, SURREY

Once home to the Evelyn family, this grand estate dates from the 17th century and combines original features with a century-old restaurant.  
[phcompany.com](http://phcompany.com)

PICTURES: HENRY MORENO; JAIDEEP OBEROI; ERIC CUVILLIER; BRUCE BUCK; TAJ HOTELS PALACES RESORTS/RAY MAIN