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Suite DREAMS

Written by Rali Riley

When I travel, I am usually one of two selves. Traveling with friends tends to kick up the high-energy, hyper-social self: bouncing around town, sharing happy hour apps with fellow travelers and a 3 a.m. cigar outside with the boys. The counter-extreme, most vivid for unaccompanied adventures, is more self-indulgent and introspective: wandering out of the hotel when the day calls, taking whatever streets look the most interesting, a collection of outdoor patios playing host to my Kindle and three o'clock rum and coke, and evenings that turn-in early or turn into the right door of a poetry slam or husky acoustic set. Traveling alone or traveling with your compadres are both the best if you build your mind beautifully and choose your friends—and hotels—wisely.

The W Los Angeles-West Beverly Hills Hotel is one of two W Hotels in Los Angeles (along with a West Hollywood location, and another coming to downtown in 2019) and an oasis for either type of traveler you'd like to be. Their recent \$25 million renovation shows in all the right places: water cascades beneath you as you ascend the front stairs; a 12-foot water wall, reflecting ever-changing projections, greets you as you enter; a central oasis tucks away signature W Living Room seating behind wave-like walls; up a few levels, big bright suites boast more desk space than your home office and a bed you will want to (and can!) purchase for your own master suite; four in-house bars and restaurants—including the sultry and esteemed STK—mean going out can be an elevator ride away; and their pool deck, WET, sprawls out with a footprint as big as the hotel itself. They don't make hotels in LA like this anymore.

With sprawling city views from my suite on the fifteenth floor (one of five suite styles of truly luxurious—and, I must say, thoughtful—design), the wet deck below feels more like Cabo than central LA. Where another hotel might have stacked up 300 more



rooms, the W protected their leafy, secluded pool, rounded out by eleven private cabanas, lounge chairs bathed in all-day sunshine, and an evening itinerary of DJs and dance-offs. Between the pool and vine-covered hotel, a rocky waterfall flows down to the covered outdoor patio of The Backyard, the W's poolside restaurant and bar. Gingerbread French toast drenched in spiced maple syrup and meaty sandwiches with herb fries fill the plates here, and if you eat anything like me (eight times a day and wanting to try everything), they can be a shared affair. Or, opt for breakfast in bed from room service (seriously, do this at least one morning) and just come down for a little Kurt Vonnegut and a few morning Mimosas. The pool hostess radiates the kind of good, authentic energy that can kick a good morning into a marvelous afternoon. A place is only as good as the people behind it, and it's worth mentioning that this truth is one that not only powers the W West Beverly Hills' five-star status, but also leaves you thirsty for more every time you roll out of late check-out.



"...a 12-foot water wall, reflecting ever-changing projections, greets you as you enter..."

One of my favorite things about W Hotels is their highly accessible, full-time W Insider. Be warned: you'll immediately want to be best friends. At the W West Beverly Hills, Melissa is your go-to girl if you want more out of LA than the world-renowned hotspots of the city. She's like a concierge that's tuned into the front edge of what's happening—new restaurants, up-and-coming districts, the cool before anyone else starts calling it so. Whether you're new as morning dew to the area or you know LA like the hours of McConnell's, if you're reading this before the confetti cannons have fired into the New Year, December is the perfect time to discover what's coming up, right now. Read on, for what are we here for but to bring you the best of everything?

If a shopping day was in your stars, throw on a pair of Balenciaga high-tops, mobile-order a car and a latte, and treat yourself to an afternoon on Robertson Boulevard, just a 12-minute drive from the W Lost Angeles-West Beverly Hills Hotel. If you're looking for something more low-key, Melissa recommends checking out Melrose Place—and yes, that's Place. Just a few minutes further on, Alexander McQueen, Marni, Isabel Marant, and the expertly curated cosmetics of Violet Grey, are just a few of the names nestled along the tree-lined street.

Also awesome: split a suite at the W with friends, and make the super-quick trip out to brunch amidst the artisan market and Edison bulbs at Farmshop in Santa Monica—and because I care about you, I am going to seriously recommend the buttermilk biscuit with blackberry preserves, fra'mani ham, and eggs with a side of bacon. Santa Monica is nice, but you've been there. For another neighborhood you can explore from sunrise to sunset (my furthest recommendation from the W at eight miles), try West 3rd Street for a district of all-day dining, drinking, and shopping, or just scoot a bit down the coast after brunch to the younger, more pub-plenty Abbot Kinney in Venice (Melissa recommends Gjelina!).



"...the triple-enzyme oxygen facial at Bliss Spa on the W's second floor will have you glowing by the time you reach the Funk Zone."



Soon, happy hour will be calling and E.P. and L.P. in West Hollywood has all that string-lights-over-fire-pits vibe and airy dual-bar glory (L.P. and the more secluded Frankie's) you want out of a rooftop bar, with an Asian eating house below (E.P). Serving up their dishes family style, with a menu rooted in Thai cuisine with overtones of Chinese, Fijian, Vietnamese, and Californian, it's a perfect place to host the whole crew and a great way to expand your entourage for a night around town. Plus, it's just a 15-minute Uber ride back to the hotel. For other eats, we have it from a good source to make a reservation at Maude or Hinoki and the Bird, both in Century City. At Maude, the dining room seats just twenty-five and a single ingredient inspires a monthly menu of nine tasting plates. This month? Black winter truffles of Perigord.

If you're looking for music, try Piano Bar in Hollywood or Spaghettini in Beverly Hills. There is nothing, I repeat, nothing, like bobbing to good music and good vibes while leisurely lapping up your top-pick of poison in the back of a bar. The W understands this all too well and has perceptively given us their Living Room Bar stocked with Rendition, a free monthly music series inspired by The Weeknd (need I say more). No key card required, Rendition invites guests and savvy locals alike into the late-night vibes and smooth tunes of the Living Room Bar, well-equipped for both the intimate gathering of old and new acquaintances as well as ordering a single double to your pillowed arm chair. The ceiling is a colorful, pulsating canopy of backlit sculptures that look like a glowing herd of stingrays (technically a fever of stingrays, if you're wondering) riding the waves of each mellow beat. Like the stingray, this place feels a little bit hidden, nestled into a cool underground landscape, waiting just under the surface to be discovered as the strong, smooth authority

on being badass that it truly is. David Ryan Harris is playing an encore to an intimate full house of mostly Millennials, with some good-looking Gen Xers. Someone has ordered a round of tequila shots, and suddenly we're throwing one back with Mr. Harris himself. This is not your parents' hotel bar.

Across the lobby there is a place that is also not your daddy's steakhouse: STK is a steakhouse designed for a girls' night out. The décor is dark and edgy with a full wall of white bullhorn sculptures, a DJ drops beats every night, salads are as good as everything else on the menu, the luxurious melt-in-your-mouth meat portions are proportionately portioned, and yeah hi, all these waiters are way handsome. Nothing like topping off a weekend with Maine lobster in herb butter, hearts of romaine in parmesan lemon dressing, mac and cheese, a medium-rare petite filet with Béarnaise sauce, a long hot shower, and a king-sized bed that hugs you into sweet dreams. If you're skipping the Sunday rush and doing a Saturday evening of Santa Barbara wine, the triple-enzyme oxygen facial at Bliss Spa on the W's second floor will have you glowing by the time you reach the Funk Zone; the Bliss massage and a stop at their brownie bar should keep you calm to your core through the rest of the weekend.

Playing where you're staying is a simple, wonderful pleasure never to be underrated while in the vastness of our largest neighbor. Whatever type of travel is calling you down the coast, whenever you feel the pull towards a three-course breakfast in bed, girls' night out without stepping outside, or a shopping spree in the newest neighborhood, there's a W Hotel nestled just west of Beverly Hills waiting to welcome you. ★