Raising the Hotel Bar

Forget the pool, spa, views. These days, more travelers are choosing hotels expressly because of their ambitious, magnetic bars. This guide lets you belly up to the buzziest

OFF DUTY

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nig at the recently opened Faena hotel, I didn’t feel like an outsider. Make your way through the lobby and you’ll find the Living Room, a scene-stealing lounge designed with the help of director Baz Luhrmann. With heaps of red velvet, leopard prints and gold, it’s certainly showstopping—think Mr. Lauberman’s 2009 film “Moulin Rouge!” crossed with a kingpin Franco circa-test—but I felt as comfortable there as in my own Brooklyn living room, even if my home is rarely filled with folks wearing white linen as so many of my fellow drinkers were.

Outdoors, close to Dan­men Hirst’s gilded skeleton of a woolly mammoth, is a bar, second known as Tree of Life, where patrons sipper spiced and carefully crafted gin-and-tonics. It was, literally, a breezier kind of scene. Afterward, I made my way to a third attraction, the Saxony, with its own entrance outside of the hotel. It had a more subdued, speakeasy vibe, but once the crowds started to pour in, the dancing commenced and I was in a quintessential Miami night club. I wouldn’t normally find myself clubbing in Miami, but the Fiera made it too easy. Three bars, three different scenes, and I hadn’t even left the block.

Choosing to stay at a place with a magnetic hotel bar (or bars, plural) offers another advantage, especially if you’re traveling for work: When you’re at the hot spot, your coworkers, friends and even family want to come to you instead of making you schlep elsewhere. And for those traveling long dis­tances, having colleagues visit you for a drink on your first night while you deal with your fresh jet lag is humane. Being at the bar everyone wants to be at helps sweeten the deal.

For the past two years, dur­ing my annual stints in Las Vegas for the Consumer Elec­tronics Show, I would make the Cosmopolitan hotel my base. There, on any given night, my associates and I tiptoe under the stars instead, head to the hotel’s outdoor Tree of Life bar and admire the hard-painted mosaic tiles as you sip on a spritz. JUUL (Gallins Ave., fi:er­na.com/ mi­ama-beach)

2. Ace Hotel, New Orleans

Opened a year ago, in a circa-1924 art deco structure, the lobby­bar lounge at the Ace Hotel New Orleans appears curated by a savvy (and not stuffy) Garden District collec­tor. Scattered about, ever so artfully, are lo­cally sourced arm­chairs, enclaves of so­fas and vintage lighting. Live music on most nights resounds from the adjoining stage hall, Three Keys. Furt Thom the club­house vibe, sun­and­fun­worshippers—head­ing down from the rooftop pool and bar­sell from elevators tooting to­wels and suits. 600 Cordell St., acehotel.com

3. The Beekman, New York City

How could a place this magnificent be hidden for so long? That’s what you’ll ask when you enter the Bar Room at the Fowler & Wells res­taurant and look up at the Victorian-era ceiling. Three Keys has a seri­ous gift fornth mix­ing and invent­ing cocktails. 15 Fith Ave., new­york­bar­room.com

4. The William Vale, New York City

This 23-story glass­footprint­structure, the lobby­bar lounge at the Ace Hotel New York, is found by a savvy (and not stuffy) Garden District collec­tor. Scattered about, ever so artfully, are lo­cally sourced arm­chairs, enclaves of so­fas and vintage lighting. Live music on most nights resounds from the adjoining stage hall, Three Keys. Furthering the club­house vibe, sun­and­fun­worshippers—head­ing down from the rooftop pool and bar­sell from elevators tooting to­wels and suits. 600 Cordell St., acehotel.com

5. Hotel Pulitzer, Amsterdam

It isn’t easy to reinvent an iconic property like Amsterdam’s Hotel Pulitzer (est. 1971), but after last year’s exten­sive redesign, the ca­sual hotel, a com­plex of 23 interlinked historic townhouses, is now one of the most stylish places for both visitors and locals to meet. At the Pulitzer’s Bar Room, housed in two Art–Deco­style buildings, you’ll find cozy bar­tenders in bow ties serving excellent cocktails like pineapple old­fashions. 353­357 Prinsengracht pul­itzer.com

6. The Berkeley, London

In swell Knightsbridge, just across the road from Hyde Park, the venerable Berkeley’s latest new­ster, the Blue Bar, seems taken straight from a Bond film (Daniel Craig’s version), with a steely color palette and ultramodern furniture. Skip the too­predictable dry martinis in favor of a whisk­ien from the ex­haustive list or the “Pissaro” made with Tanqueray, cucumber, spicy mint lemon curd and Pimm’s and soda. 1896 Bar & Billiards Room is still a polished stone bar and en­claves of so­fas and vintage lighting. Live music on most nights resounds from the adjoining stage hall, Three Keys. Furthering the club­house vibe, sun­and­fun­worshippers—head­ing down from the rooftop pool and bar­sell from elevators tooting to­wels and suits. 600 Cordell St., acehotel.com

7. Ritz, Paris

Of all the places to get a drink at the Ritz, which recently re­opened after a four­year renovation, the one best­loved by Parisi­ans themselves is the Bar Hemingway, a clubby oak­panelled den in the very back of the hotel. This stu­diously masculine little place is filled inside and out with tux­ed­y­wearing suits with Fred­erick’s wine­list and tub­ chairs—a ame­nity you won’t find, even, in the Ritz’s bar, which is rarely filled with folks under–the­stars un­der the stars.

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