



Hotel Reviews by Wanderers Compass: Uncovering Hidden Gems

Description

Our detailed and honest review of the best of best of our hotel stays

Great hotels are like dreams, they transport you to a different reality.
From the book Hotel Magnifique by Emily J Taylor



Gran Hotel Ciudad de Mexico – Hotel Reviews by Wanderers Compass

We estimate that we have stayed at over 1,000 hotels in the many decades we have traveled. This does not include the VRBO and Airbnb vacation homes that were rented. Joelle has Hilton Diamond status and is approaching 1,000 nights on that brand alone. Her Hilton property stays account for only 2/3 of those accommodations. Typically, we stay in all ranges of hotels, from very basic to luxury. As a result, we are discerning travelers. That does not mean we only choose high-end hotels; price does not always define high quality.

Over time, we have determined the three things that matter the most: safety, cleanliness, and excellent service. Those three things are not always tied to the level of the hotel; even the simplest of properties can excel.

As is the case for most of you, we have a budget to adhere to. If we didn't, we would not be able to travel as much as we do. We pay for our travel expenses or use reward points we earn through our credit cards. Hotels are the most costly part of a trip, so we must control those costs. Using these methods has made our trips affordable and allows us to stay at high-quality properties when it is a reasonable option.

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Lagarta Lodge, Costa Rica – Hotel Reviews by Wanderers Compass

Historically, we have not posted reviews on the blog itself; we often mention specific hotels within destination articles. The most common place you will find our reviews is on Google Maps. When we research accommodations, we see them as the most reliable source for current reviews. It has been such an excellent tool, so we joined the review bandwagon on Google Maps. Our Google Map reviews have been massive hits; as of March 2024, we had 54 million views of our reviews and photos. Over

time, we have even gained Google Maps followers.

You can check out our [Google Maps reviews at this link](#).

What we will showcase

Our hotel reviews focus exclusively on unique properties that offer exceptional experiences. Rather than covering every hotel, we spotlight the best of the best from our travels, primarily featuring luxury brands known for their outstanding service and top-notch amenities. However, we've learned that not all luxury hotels are created equal, and many factors contribute to an exceptional stay beyond just the brand. While we've encountered disappointing experiences at renowned properties, we believe that true excellence lies in the details and the overall guest experience.

Our hotel reviews



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November 4, 2024



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[Hotel Boutique Lagarta Lodge – Luxury Eco-Lodge in Costa Rica](#)

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The Conrad Tulum Riviera Maya, an elegant oceanfront resort, provided a luxurious, laid-back experience...

March 30, 2024

How we travel



When traveling, we move around a lot. We hit the ground running in any new destination and squeeze all we can in a day. You will not find us lounging on a beach for days reading a book. On average, we stay at a hotel for two nights before moving on.

That does not mean we shortchange the quality of the accommodations. Every property we pick has been thoroughly examined on multiple platforms. This is our system for choosing accommodation.

1. We first determine the best location at the destination we are staying at. If it is a city, we look at safety, accessibility to public transportation and the airport, proximity to the sites we visit, and dining options. This can be done with Google searches, guidebooks from Rick Steve, YouTube, Google Maps, Trip Advisor, and travel portals.

2. Once we choose the area we want to be in, we first search for any Hilton Properties nearby. We are strong believers in brand loyalty, and the perks are worth that loyalty. If there are no Hilton properties or they are too expensive for our budget, we move on to our avenue to make reservations.

We wrote an article on brand loyalty; [check it out here](#).

3. We make the most of our hotel reservations through reward portals. Our most used travel credit card is Chase Sapphire Reserve, which has provided tens of thousands of dollars worth of free hotel stays over the last few years.

How do we do that? We charge everything on our card and pay the balance off at the end of the month, so we pay no interest and get travel reward points from our purchases. When using these points, you are required to go through their travel portal. Chase purchased a large travel reservation site to make this possible. We enter our destination and begin the research. They have reviews available, but we also use all the other methods mentioned in number two to verify that it is a good choice.

To learn more about getting reward points for free travel, [check it out here](#).

4. If we don't use the above options, we will use Expedia or Booking.com. If traveling Europe, we tend to lean toward Booking.com.

How to Decipher Hotel reviews



Hotel Reviews by Wanderers Compass Adobe photo stock

Here are some essential tips to consider when reading hotel reviews. Here are the steps we take before booking every hotel we stay at.

- Choose from varied platforms, i.e., Google Maps, Trip Advisor, Expedia, etc.
- It is essential to examine only reviews from the last year. Sometimes, the first review is years old, and lots could have happened since.
- Read the reviews, and don't just look at the star rating. Sometimes, it is just a whiny person mad they were not given an upgraded room even though they didn't pay for one. But if someone says the bugs in my room were gross, that is an immediate turn-off.
- Always look at the pictures people provide in reviews. If the hotels seem to be using a bedspread that is not changed between clients, that is a no for us.
- We also seek out the worst reviews to see why they gave that review. It often is petty, but if not, it could be a strong reason not to stay there.

- If there is a negative review, how does the hotel respond?
- If you have booked your hotel way in advance, check regularly if anything has changed. New managers or owners come in. Sometimes, the hotel has closed, and you weren't told (that happened to us once, arriving late evening in a new city to find the hotel shut down). This is your trip; you can be mad all you want at the reservation system, but you will be impacted the most if you haven't stayed on top of your reservation.

Time for a change

As a norm, we are not resort people, but in 2024, we began to wonder what it would be like to make a trip more focused on relaxation and luxury. In early December 2023, we did just that. Why then? Because between Thanksgiving and Christmas, travel is usually much quieter, airfares are substantially reduced, and hotels, especially luxury ones, slash prices. Our destination was Tulum, Mexico. It was a relatively short flight, and we had always wanted to visit Chichen Itza (not like we can relax all the time). Our stay was at the Conrad Tulum Riviera Maya; to put it in a few words, it was a mind-blowing experience. We may have set the bar relatively high for our first luxury-based trip.

During this trip, we realized places like this deserved blog posts detailing what the property offered. In hindsight, several other exceptional properties we have visited deserve special attention. As a result, we now have a Hotel Reviews by Wanderers Compass page.



Malta Hilton – Hotel Reviews by Wanderers Compass

Transparency

To date, we paid for all the stays ourselves, and most did not even know we were travel bloggers, as we wanted the experience to be as genuine as our readers would experience. Our reviews will be honest and detailed. We will cover the pros and cons. There will be lots of photography, of course.

The properties we will review were not expensive during our visit. We tend to travel in the off-season to keep travel affordable and to avoid crowds. To make it on our top hotels list, service comes first, followed by amenities, the quality of the property, and the rooms.

Ready to make reservations?

If you are in the process of booking your accommodations, may we suggest you use one of our affiliate links? This helps strengthen our relationship with these brands. Using our links does not cost you more; they will link to your profile once you are on the site. Each site also offers apartments and vacation home rentals.

If you use these travel resource links to buy something, we may earn a small commission at no additional cost to you. Thank you.

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