

to alley

stuff we love...

our collection of people, places
and all things fun and functional



HOORAY FOR HOLLYWOOD

PHOTO COURTESY: HOLLYWOOD HOTEL

I lived in the hills above Pasadena for 25 years, but during that time I never once visited Hollywood. (When you live on the East side of LA, getting to the West side can require a 'copter.) So when I was invited to the Hollywood Hotel, built in 1903 and (then as now) *the* place to stay in town, I jumped at the chance. It's the hotel where Rudolph Valentino had lived and where a renovation is fusing Hollywood glam with 21st-century elegance and amenities. Past the double grand staircase and the Technicolor fountain was my cushy suite furnished with a sleek bathroom, soft bed with down pillows and duvets, and Hollywood memorabilia — an old-time restored movie camera stood in a corner. Not remotely ready for my close-up, I headed outside for the grand tour: I climbed a hilly trail to the world-famous Hollywood sign, walked the Hollywood Walk of Fame and gawked at the famous hand/footprints embedded in the sidewalk at Grauman's Chinese Theater. Then I bee-lined to Los Feliz, a hip 'hood wedged between Hollywood and Silver Lake that's lined with arts and crafts cottages and mid-century apartment buildings and home to the eminently walkable main drags of Vermont,

Hollywood Boulevard and Hillhurst — all crammed with quirky boutiques, restaurants, cafes and ice-cream shops. I devoured billowy Neapolitan pizza at Mother Dough and licked a double-dip ice-cream cone to death from Jeni's Splendid Ice Cream (for pure bliss, top a scoop of Intelligentsia Black Cat espresso with a scoop of Brown Butter Almond Brittle) before wiling away the rest of the afternoon at Skylight Books, one of LA's last independent bookstores. Back in Hollywood, I dined on Mediterranean tapas at trendy Cleo Hollywood before going back to my room to crash. As I slipped between the



silky sheets, I wondered if my claim to fame could be that I had slept in the same room (maybe even the same bed) as Jessica Biel, Kristen Wiig, Aidan Quinn or Drew Barrymore — just a few of the Hollywood celebs who have stayed here recently. \$169-\$199, includes a

complimentary breakfast.

—Carole Jacobs

www.hollywoodhotel.com



Pilgrimage to Natchez

We heard various theories on why the beautiful antebellum homes of Natchez, Mississippi, didn't meet the same fiery fate as many of those across the South during the Civil War. An owner of one of the many homes we visited said, "The Yankees were good to us. We entertained them, and we continued to have our socials to keep the morale up."

That was the elegant, gracious owner of Linden, Jeannette Feltus, who led us on a tour of the home that has been in her family since 1849, originally built in 1785, and now a guest house. Linden, like many other homes, is open year round. To view more homes in this southern city celebrating its 300th anniversary this year, visit during the Spring or Fall Pilgrimage. Costumed descendants welcome guests and regale them with stories of these homes, including tales of bankruptcy, murder and intrigue. Known as the Bed and Breakfast Capital of the World as well as the Biscuit Capital of the World, you'll be graciously entertained as well. —Jan Schroder

The Spring Pilgrimage is March 5 - April 5, when 24 homes will be open; 16 homes will be open for the Fall Pilgrimage September 24 - October 10.

www.visitnatchez.org

5 REASONS TO SPA AT GROVE PARK INN

I've been lucky enough to have been massaged, plunged, scrubbed and oiled down in luxurious spas the world over. But my favorite one is within driving distance of my home in Atlanta — the Omni Grove Park Inn in Asheville, North Carolina. Here are 5 reasons every travelgirl should try it:

1. The location: The Omni Grove Park Inn is one of my favorite resort hotels because of its location in quirky and fun Asheville, filled with ambiance and historical significance.

Built in 1913, the property has hosted 10 presidents and many luminaries. F. Scott Fitzgerald lived here for two years while his poor wife Zelda was in a nearby insane asylum.

2. The indoor water features: You'll be entranced from the second you enter the indoor grottos with several pools, soft lighting and the best feature ever: huge waterfalls that cascade gallons of hot water a minute so you can position yourself underneath for a lovely back or neck massage. Simply heavenly.

3. The outdoor pool with exquisite views: Yes, the outdoor temperature was hovering in the 20s, but we bravely cast aside our soft robes and dashed into the delightfully hot, steaming water of the outdoor pool with views of the huge U-shaped Inn and the Blue Ridge Mountains. Sip a glass of champagne as the sun sets to heighten the experience.

4. The quiet room: Every spa has its version of the quiet room, but what elevates this one is the beautiful fireplace, soft blankets and plenty of comfy chairs and magazines that allow for exquisite indulgence.

5. The snack mix: Worthy of a mention on its own, the Omni Grove Park Inn has the best snack mix I've ever had in a spa, with nuts and magical little chocolate bits that I pick out first. I may have snuck out a few extra when I left, perfect for nibbling on the ride home. —Jan Schroder

Travelgirl tip: If you aren't having a treatment, you can purchase a day pass, available for hotel guests every day and non-resort guests Monday-Thursday. Rates start at \$75.

www.omnihotels.com/hotels/asheville-grove-park



PHOTOS COURTESY: GROVE PARK INN

SLEEP AID

I've traveled with more U-shaped travel pillows that I can count, and until recently, they were all uncomfortable to use and inconvenient to carry. Then

I tried a NapAnywhere pillow and the kinks and hassles became history. Developed by a physician who was sick of ending every flight with a stiff neck, the NapAnywhere is a disc-shaped pillow that can be twisted into any shape to nestle between your head and shoulders. Instead of forcing your neck against a cushion, like standard travel pillows, NapAnywhere supports the weight of your head, so your neck — and you — can relax. Small enough to fit in a laptop case or briefcase, the pillow is the next best thing to flying first class. —Carole Jacobs

Available in assorted colors ■ \$59 ■ www.napanywhere.net

