

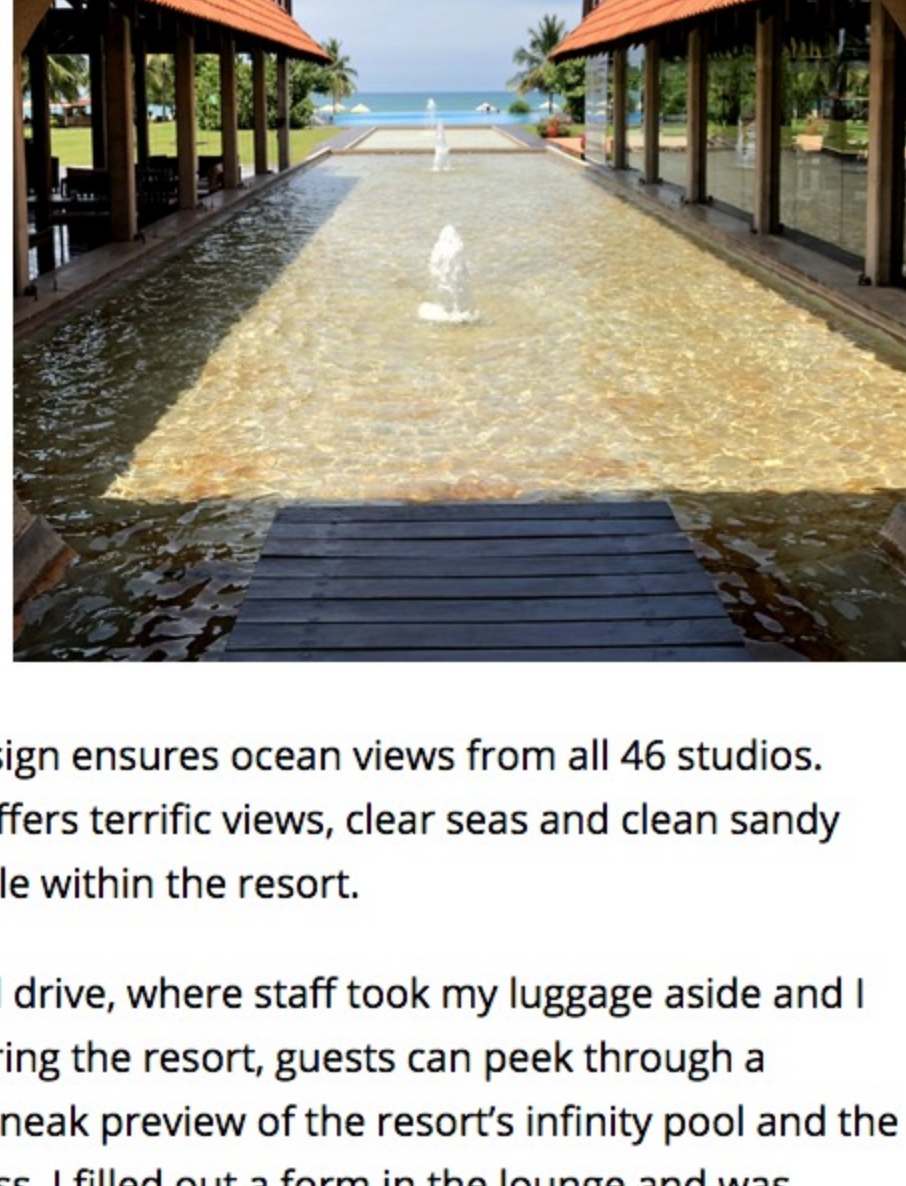
CHECKING OUT - TRAVEL REVIEWS

The Selling Travel team's latest reviews of accommodation, flights, cruises and more - personally tried and tested

Uga Bay by Uga Escapes

by Benjamin Corren | August 2018

This large, welcoming property is the perfect retreat for those exploring the lesser-trodden east coast. The bay views are stunning and the beach itself is remote and peaceful, with guests very unlikely to be hassled when out relaxing. It's easy to go out jet skiing, kayaking or windsurfing or to plan excursions to see local attractions. Perfect for families but suitable for all.



THE LOCATION: Located on Sri Lanka's east coast, Uga Bay actually sits on the bay of Passekudah and its semi-circle design ensures ocean views from all 46 studios. Though not close to any town, the area offers terrific views, clear seas and clean sandy beaches, plus most amenities are available within the resort.

THE CHECK-IN: I was greeted in the hotel drive, where staff took my luggage aside and I was offered a welcome drink. Upon entering the resort, guests can peek through a circular feature which offers a tempting sneak preview of the resort's infinity pool and the sea beyond. Check in was a simple process, I filled out a form in the lounge and was handed my room keys before being escorted there.

THE ROOM: My 540 sq-foot Ocean Studio was on the upper level of the building, providing the best views. It was light, airy, clean and comfortably furnished with a king size bed, flat-screen TV, desk, iPod docking station, safe, complimentary wifi, outdoor balcony and a separate bathroom with a shower. There 44 studio -with Beach Studios on the ground floor offering direct access to the sand and Ocean Studios upstairs, with step access only. There are also suites and two villas.

KEY FACILITIES: There are two spa suites offering a range of therapies including massages and facial treatments and an on-site gym. The hotel also has a games and family room with a selection of books and DVDs to borrow. Water sports and diving are available for an extra fee.

RESTAURANTS AND BARS: Guests can dine in the public restaurant or choose to have dinner in their room. The main bar and restaurant area has inside and outside seating and combines a Mediterranean vibe with a traditional Sri Lankan feel. Glass walls lend ample light to this comfortable dining space where guests can try various international dishes alongside traditional Sri Lankan fare and fresh locally caught fish.

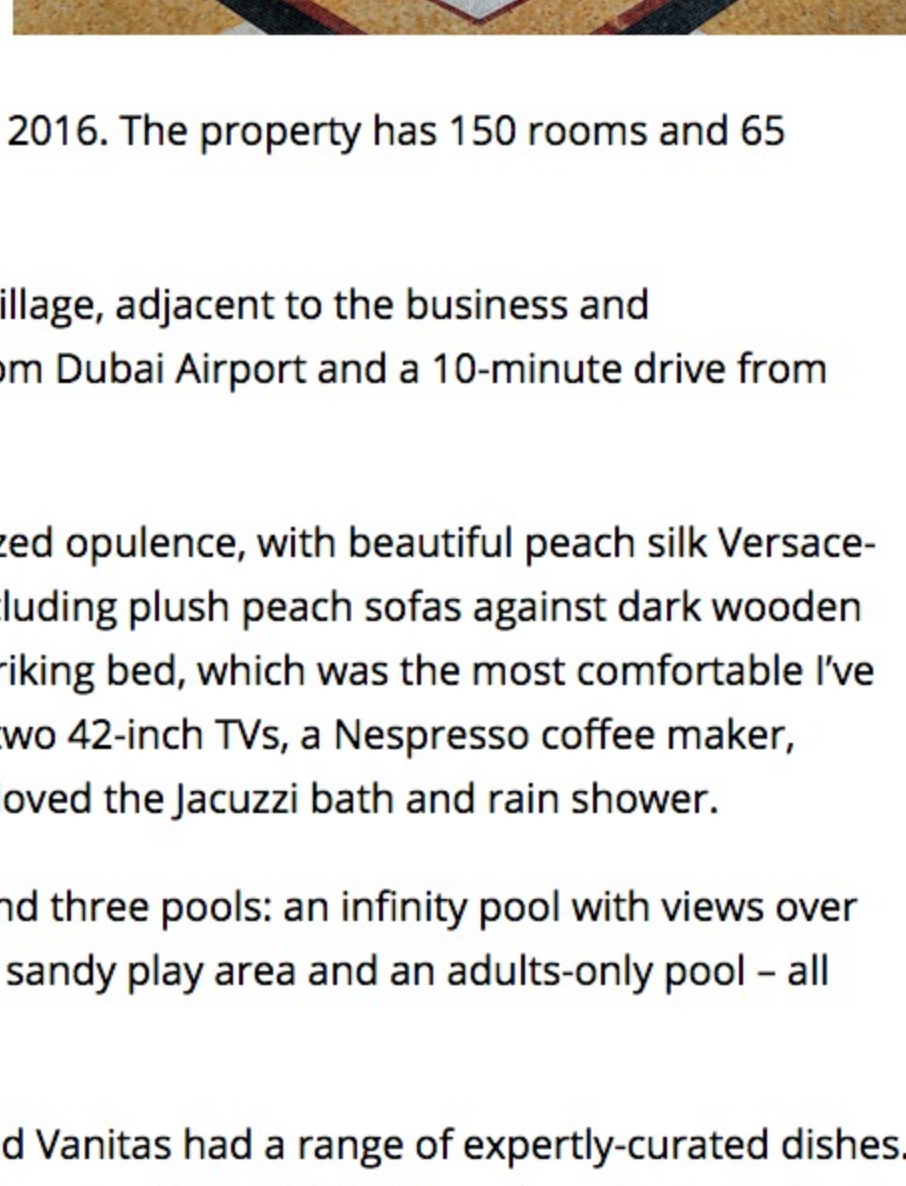
RATES: A double Ocean Studio is priced from \$311 a night (low season from September 16 up to December). Prices do vary and suites or villas are more expensive.

THE DETAILS: A: Uga Bay by Uga Escapes Coconut Board Rd, Kalkudha, 30410, Sri Lanka
W: ugaescapes.com/ugabay

Palazzo Versace Dubai

by Lisa Merrigan | July 2018

You can feel Versace's presence as you enter the grand reception, where Gianni's original design drawings hang above the beautiful Italian marble mosaic flooring.



Orchids, bred exclusively for the hotel, are everywhere and give off a calming aroma. This Neoclassical masterpiece is in a fabulous location and has all the luxury and glamour you'd expect - but a sense of tranquility too.

THE BACKGROUND: Donatella Versace-designed, the hotel opened in November 2016. The property has 150 rooms and 65 suites.

THE LOCATION: In the heart of Culture Village, adjacent to the business and entertainment districts, a few minutes from Dubai Airport and a 10-minute drive from Dubai Mall and The Burj Khalifa.

THE ROOM: My spacious Grand Suite oozed opulence, with beautiful peach silk Versace-designed bedding, matching furniture including plush peach sofas against dark wooden floors, perfectly placed cushions and a striking bed, which was the most comfortable I've ever slept in. There was a butler service, two 42-inch TVs, a Nespresso coffee maker, Versace amenities and wifi. I particularly loved the Jacuzzi bath and rain shower.

KEY FACILITIES: An award-winning spa and three pools: an infinity pool with views over the Dubai Creek, a kids pool with a lovely sandy play area and an adults-only pool - all with fantastic staff on-hand.

RESTAURANTS AND BARS: Italian-themed Vanitas had a range of expertly-curated dishes. I also tried Persian Enigma, headed by a two-star Michelin Chef from Iran. Fantastic food can also be had at Giardino. Q's Bar offers a living room-style experience for live entertainment - next generation talent all selected by music legend Quincy Jones. You're certainly never stuck for something to do as the hotel provides complimentary transfers to Dubai Mall, Festival City Mall, Dubai Parks & Resorts, Laguna Mer and Nikki Beach.

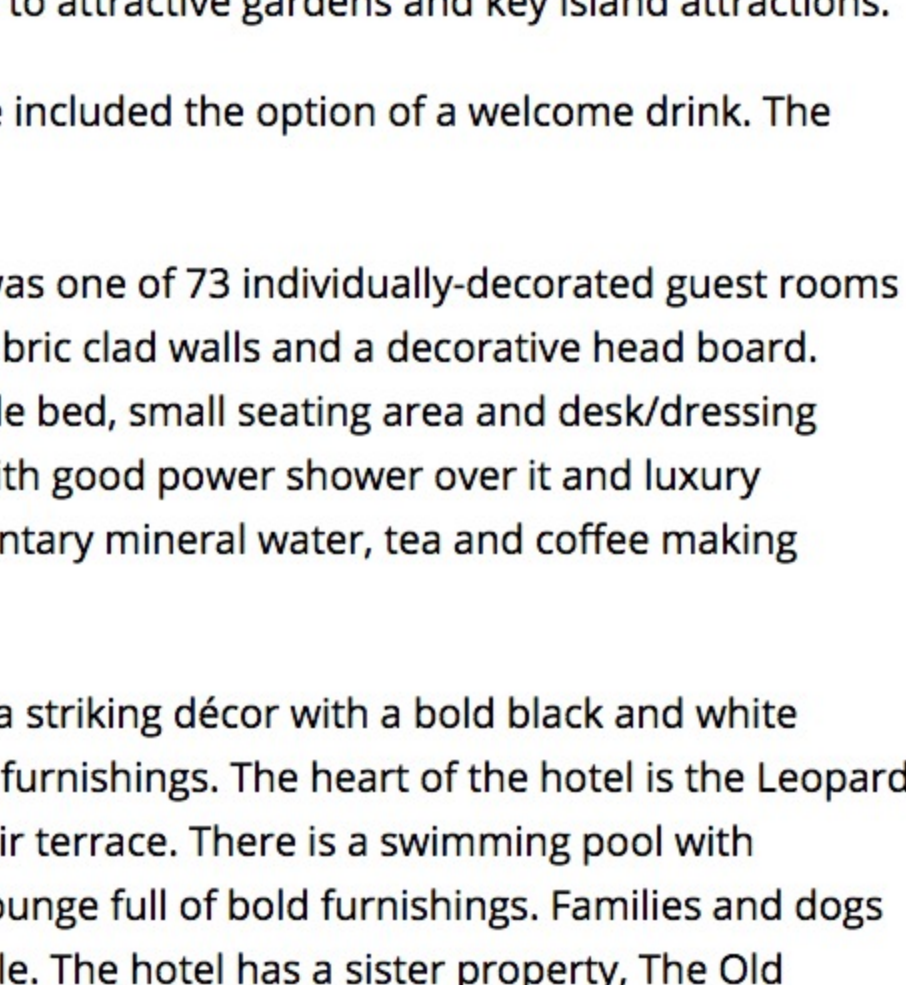
RATES: If Only... offers three nights in a deluxe city view, half-board from £1,135pp, with flights.

THE DETAILS: A: P.O. Box 128431, Dubai, UAE. W: palazzoversace.ae T: +971 4 556 8888.

Duke of Richmond Hotel, St Peter Port, Guernsey

by Julie Baxter | July 2018

This distinctive boutique hotel is set on an historic site just a short walk from the heart of Guernsey's capital St Peter's Port. Every room is individually furnished with lots of character and the public rooms have a dramatic style. The terrace and pool create a quiet oasis looking out to the sea and the location makes it a great base from which to explore the island.



THE BACKGROUND: There is thought to have been a hotel on this site since the early 1800s. The Duke of Richmond was a Master of Ordnance who commissioned a famous early map of Guernsey (1769). The property was taken over by Red Carnation Hotels in 2011 since then it has had a complete refurbishment.

THE LOCATION: Set in a quiet residential area, seven minutes walk from the heart of St Peter Port - Guernsey's capital, and close to attractive gardens and key island attractions.

THE CHECK-IN: A warm friendly welcome included the option of a welcome drink. The check in process was quick and easy.

THE ROOM: : My 'Classic Double Room' was one of 73 individually-decorated guest rooms with a distinctive style of lavish drapes, fabric clad walls and a decorative head board. While compact, it included a queen double bed, small seating area and desk/dressing table. The small en suite included bath with good power shower over it and luxury toiletries. The room came with complimentary mineral water, tea and coffee making facilities, hairdryer, safe, and wifi.

KEY FACILITIES: This boutique hotel has a striking décor with a bold black and white check flooring and dramatic animal print furnishings. The heart of the hotel is the Leopard Bar and Restaurant and adjoining open air terrace. There is a swimming pool with cabanas and sunbeds, and also a guest lounge full of bold furnishings. Families and dogs are welcome and there is parking available. The hotel has a sister property, The Old Government House Hotel, a short stroll away, offering guests additional lounge and bar facilities and a spa, all created from the original 18th century Old Crown Offices.

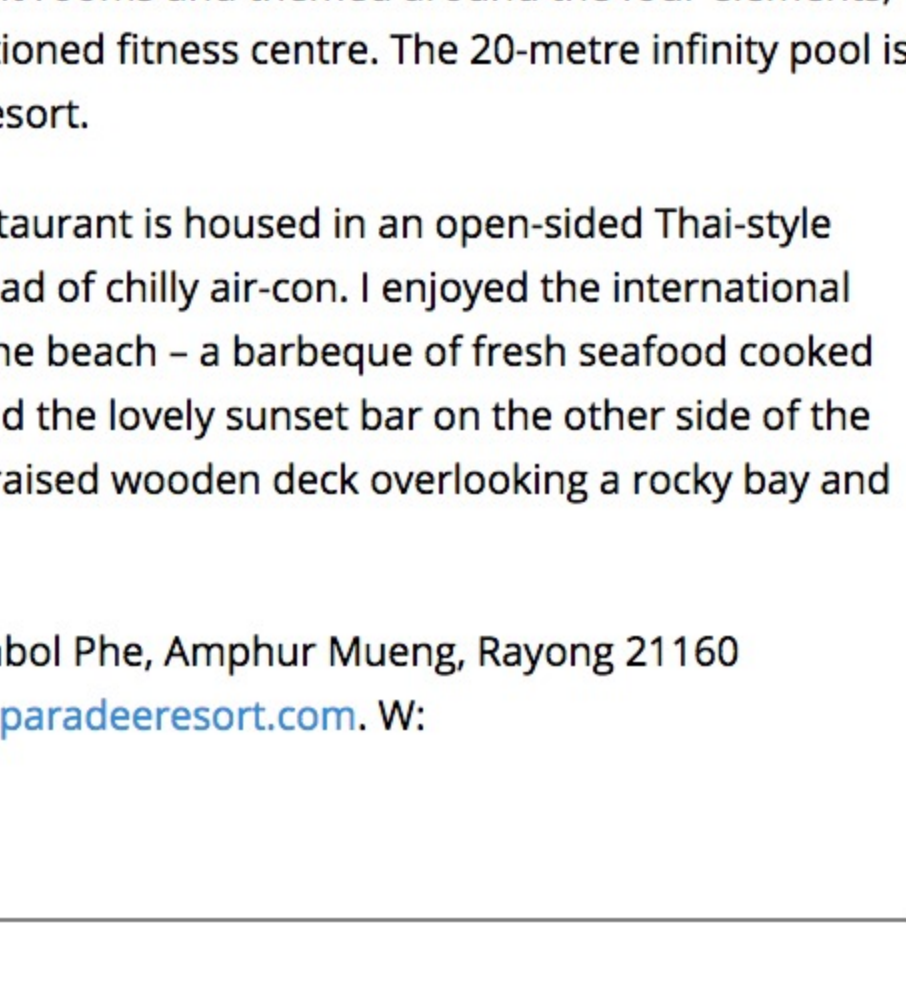
RESTAURANTS AND BARS: Dining is in the Leopard Bar and Restaurant, a light and airy conservatory-style dining room leading to the wide open-air terrace, on the first floor. As the weather was fine during my stay I ate on the terrace looking out over the Candie Gardens and down to the port and sea beyond. The swimming pool is accessed via a spiral staircase from here and provided a walled sun trap.

THE DETAILS: Cambridge Park, St Peter Port, Guernsey, GY1 1UY. T: +44 (0)1481 726 221 E: reservations@dukeofrichmond.com W: dukeofrichmond.com

Paradee Resort - Thailand

by Laura Gelder | June 2018

Barefoot luxury is one of those terms that's bandied about a lot but this place truly embodies just that. From the moment you step off the boat, welcomed by a long line of smiling staff, including chefs in their white hats, you feel special. The resort is lush, the rooms are comfortable and cosy and the food great. Koh Samet is only three hours from Bangkok and, unlike many Thai islands, has retained its small island charm.



THE BACKGROUND: Samet Resorts owns seven properties on Koh Samet and this five-star villa resort is its most luxurious.

THE LOCATION: The south of the island, a 20-minute drive from the main town of Si Khao in the north, which effectively makes it an exclusive beach, and on a beautiful beach of fine white sand.

THE CHECK-IN: This is done at the mainland office on Jadet Pier. Cold towels and drinks are distributed as guests are asked to select their preferences for room scent, soap and a choice of red, white or sparkling wine for their complimentary bottle. I went for lemongrass and red!

THE ROOM: My Garden Villa reminds me of a Mexican hacienda, with heavy wooden doors opening onto a terrace with a covered seating area and two large sun loungers. Inside the walls are a warm, distressed yellow with natural accents in wood, wicker and bronze. There is a small anteroom with a sofa seat and then an archway leads through to the bedroom which has a large muslin-draped four-poster bed, table and chairs and day bed. The bathroom has a huge sunken bath, and outside rainforest shower (lovely unless, like me, you're terrified of mosquitos and need to shower after dark). I shared a lap pool with six others but other room categories have their own plunge pool.

KEY FACILITIES: A spa with four treatment rooms and themed around the four elements, a breezy book-lined library and air-conditioned fitness centre. The 20-metre infinity pool is set above the beach at the heart of the resort.

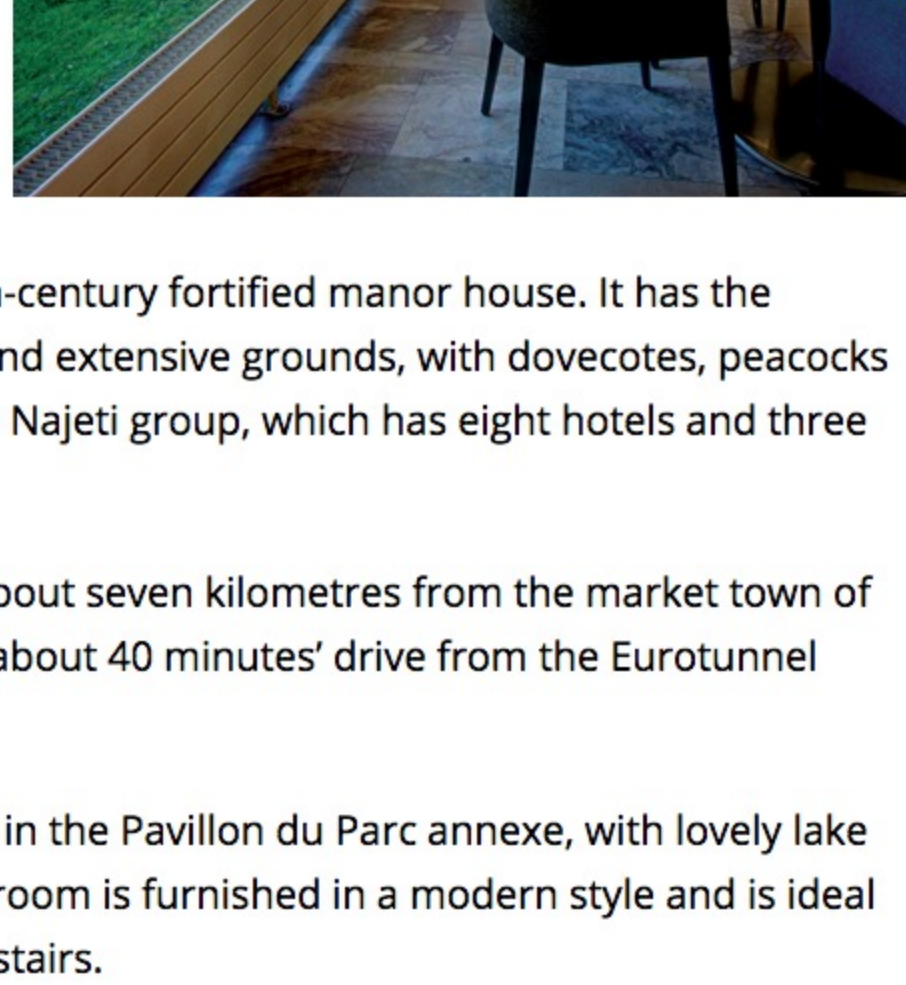
RESTAURANTS AND BARS: The main restaurant is housed in an open-sided Thai-style sala which encourages cool breezes instead of chilly air-con. I enjoyed the international breakfast buffet here but ate dinner on the beach - a barbeque of fresh seafood cooked in front of me. There is also a pool bar and the lovely sunset bar on the other side of the island, less than a ten minute walk, on a raised wooden deck overlooking a rocky bay and serving great cocktails.

THE DETAILS: Koh Samet: 76 Moo 4, Tumbol Phe, Amphur Mueng, Rayong 21160 Thailand. T: +66 (0)38-644-284-6. E: rsvn@paradeeresort.com. W: samedresorts.com/paradee

The Lenox Hotel Boston - USA

by Steve Hartidge | June 2018

Located in one of Boston's hippest neighbourhoods, this ultra-comfortable hotel has classy and attentive staff - from the bell hops to the room cleaners - who go out of their way to preserve the hotel's reputation for service. It's also reasonably priced throughout - \$13 for a cocktail in one of Boston's top hotels is a steal! My whole experience here was top-drawer.



THE LOCATION: In the central Back Bay neighbourhood, the 11-storey, 214-room red brick hotel has been peering down on Boylston Street since 1900. Boston Common and the boutiques and galleries of Newbury Street are close-by.

THE CHECK-IN: I was warmly welcomed by door staff who had my bag in the lobby before I had settled the taxi fare. The reception, with its chandeliers and Turkish-looking carpets, is off-set to the right of a busy area flanked by a bar and a restaurant. It is both historic - with quirky features like a working flimbox from the early 1900s - and super-stylish, although a little on the dark side thanks to its caramel tiled floor and brown wooden features.

THE ROOM: My 450 sq-ft Junior Suite was chic and stylish, with two queen beds, a 55-inch TV, couch, Bluetooth stereo system, a crystal chandelier and lamps and an iron-caste lobby with a working fireplace (the staff will light it for you). The large marble bathroom had eco-friendly Beekman amenities.

RESTAURANTS AND BARS: City Table is a popular spot for breakfast and dinner; a lively pub, Solas, serves beers, spirits and pub grub for pre-game baseball crowds heading to nearby Fenway Park; and the upmarket City Bar has a table menu and a list of classic cocktails.

THE DETAILS: A: 61 Exeter Street at Boylston, Boston, MA. W: lenoxhotel.com. T: 1 617 536 53 00

Najeti Hotel Chateau Tilques - France

By Richard Williams | June 2018

The hotel has a three-star rating only because it has no lifts. St-Omer's bars and restaurants serving Flemish-style cuisine are close by, as are boat trips on the Audomarois marshes. It also makes a relaxing rural stopover for travellers enroute to Champagne or Paris using the Eurotunnel. This is value accommodation in a historic building in beautiful grounds.

THE BACKGROUND: The impressive Château Tilques was built in neo-Flemish style in 1891 on the site of a 17th-century fortified manor house. It has the remains of a moat, a lake, and extensive grounds, with dovecotes, peacocks and modern sculpture. It is now by the Najeti group, which has eight hotels and three golf courses, mainly in northern France.

THE LOCATION: Set in the countryside about seven kilometres from the market town of St-Omer, in the Pas-de-Calais region. It's about 40 minutes' drive from the Eurotunnel terminal at Calais.

THE ROOM: We had a large corner room in the Pavillon du Parc annexe, with lovely lake and garden views from the balcony. The room is furnished in a modern style and is ideal for a family, due to an extra bedroom upstairs.

KEY FACILITIES: There's a 15-metre swimming pool, with kids' paddling pool, in an annexe in the grounds. There is also a hard-surface tennis court, and a giant chess set.

RESTAURANTS/BARS: The Bar and Lounge are three comfortable connecting rooms with ornate French period furniture, dark oak panelling and lawn views. The restaurant is a light, airy conversion of the old stable block and its signature 'filet de boeuf' is cooked to your taste over an open fire.

RATES: €136 to €190 per room per night (€16 extra for breakfast), but there is a flexible pricing system.

THE DETAILS: A: 12 rue du Château, 62500 Tilques. W: tilques.najeti.fr. T: +33 3 21 88 99 99