



Campus Travel™
The Smart Choice

The beauty of boutique hotels



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Sleek in their design and warm in their service, boutique hotels are anything but ordinary in their offering to academic travellers. Individual in every sense, these properties are ideal for those who like their stay to be an experience rather than just a bed for the night.

Inspired design

In the specialised sector of academic travel, the boutique hotel has found its place.

Around the corner and down the road from the conservative and uniform approach of chain hotels, the boutique hotel sits proudly with its own bold signature. A place to engage with the local culture, a place to celebrate style, and a place to enjoy memorable experiences.

In technical terms, the boutique hotel could be defined as having less than 50 rooms, however there are many larger independent properties that offer an intimate atmosphere and service.

So what is it that characterises the true boutique hotel?

Individuality is the hallmark. Every property is one of a kind with unique design and flair. Distinctive and chic, these properties can be charming historical buildings or new-build properties influenced by the local history, culture and art. Character pervades not only the external facade but also the locally-oriented furnishings, artwork, social spaces and dining. Staff are genuine and attentive, service is customised to each guest, and the focus is on creating a stay with a difference.

Lifestyle foundations

Boutique hotels gained traction during the mid 1980s in New York, influenced by the popular culture and modern lifestyle of the city's infamous Studio 54 nightclub. Following the success of a few properties, New York was soon home to other boutique hotels where the lobbies became a social space for guests and local residents alike.

This new breed of hotels espoused the groundbreaking concept of affordable luxury in a stylish and sophisticated environment. Private hotel owner-operators dominated the boutique scene for several years before larger chains started to introduce their own 'lifestyle hotels'.

A unique experience for the academic industry

The boutique and lifestyle hotel market is not confined to just one niche market segment. Offering competitive room rates, these properties are popular with varied clientele including seasoned academic travellers or those from learning or research institutions looking for a more engaging travel experience. During the past year Campus Travel has recognised an increase in interest in and bookings at boutique hotels due to their unique offerings.

While a convenient location is one of the main reasons academic may choose to book boutique properties, other reasons include:

1. Service – a true boutique property offers personalised and sophisticated service with attention to detail. Hotel staff take the time to know their guests and understand their needs in advance so they are never left waiting.

According to Bénédicte Quoniam, Senior Sales Manager at the Hotel Pont Royal in Paris (Affiliated Worldhotels Deluxe Collection), providing special attention to guests is the defining feature of the boutique hotel. "Our personalised service allows us to connect with each guest...We are also seeing increased demand from these guests for specific rooms or views, and for extended concierge desk services."

2. Atmosphere – while many boutique hotels are historical buildings with sensitivity to the original structure and materials used, even the new properties exude character through innovative design that is reflective of local culture. This atmosphere comes not only from decor, ambience and theming, but also the professional, warm and welcoming disposition of the staff.

3. Affordable style – boutique hotels are chic and luxurious yet competitively priced in the market, with rates often more flexible than at standard hotels. Lobbies and cocktail bars can be relaxed and intimate or lively and engaging, accentuated with striking artwork and emotive music. Rooms often feature designer or locally crafted furniture and come equipped with the latest gadgets, from in-house iPods to espresso machines.

4. Bespoke – everything about a boutique property is individual. The true boutique hotel strives to break away from the standard and create its own identity. Some properties partner with acclaimed local chefs and bartenders. Others offer themed rooms, top-line or exclusive locally made bathroom amenities, or environmental sustainability for the eco-conscious traveller.

5. Exclusivity – private clubs, guest-only programs and special guest promotions are among the benefits offered to travellers. Exclusivity goes hand-in-hand with the personalised nature of service, in which guests may be able to request specially made meals or other items specific to their individual preferences.

6. Organisation and traveller specific needs – in some cases, learning organisation travel managers are booking boutique properties to suit the roles and tastes of their travelling scholars.

Sophie Jacou, Director of Sales for Hôtel de Sers in Paris (Worldhotels Deluxe collection), says universities, research and learning organisations are starting to look more closely at boutique properties for their travellers.

“A large portion of our clientele appreciates that a hotel that feels like a second home. They enjoy the privacy and uniqueness a boutique style hotel can offer, while providing all the modern conveniences of home. Because of this, it’s important for boutique hotels to offer facilities – like technology – that are better, or at least as good as the guest would have in their own home.”

Profiling some of the key players

Beckie Mitchell, Digital Marketing Executive, Art Series Hotels in Melbourne, Australia, says the boutique experience is more customisable due to the smaller nature of the property. “Every Art Series Hotel is different and offers a unique experience. Our guests like to feel their stay is special, so we offer services tailored to this,” she says.

Beckie says they can inject more fun into marketing and often trial non-traditional marketing practices. “In 2011 we bought an artwork by world famous street artist, Banksy, hung it in the hotels and asked our guests to steal it. The campaign, called Steal Banksy, was an international success! It was both our connection to the arts and our ability to make decisions quickly and bravely that allowed us to pull off such a popular campaign.”

The hotel group also offers a smart car for guests who just need to run a small errand rather than having to hire a car for a full day. Rates include special extras like art tours and car, bicycle and scooter hire. The hotels also host special events for its guests and clients, from talks with famous artists to in-house games with the likes of tennis legends Venus and Serena Williams.

In North America, Kimpton is the largest and most recognised boutique hotel management company with 40 years in the business and 58 hotels in its collection. A distinctive feature of the group is that every property has a first name identifying the hotel in a fun way, but has Kimpton incorporated as its last name – like a surname that ties it to a family. Ink48 – a Kimpton Hotel (NYC) and The Hotel Wilshire – a Kimpton Hotel (Los Angeles) are just some of the names that make these properties very individual.

Yvonne Ruppert-Gordon, Director Travel Industry Sales for Kimpton, says the group recently rolled out the concept of ‘living like a local’, where travellers can learn something new about the city they are visiting. “One way we encourage this concept is at our Evening Wine Hour where we showcase local wineries or breweries,” she said.

Future directions

Just as it has done since the 1980s, the boutique hotel sector is expected to further expand in the years to come. With more academic travellers appreciating the wide ranging travel, learning and cultural benefits a boutique property can provide, the number of these style of hotels is set to increase worldwide.

Key trends we are likely to experience over the next few years include:

Individuality – with more property owners bringing their personal vision and creativity to hotel design, the boutique sector will continue to differentiate itself even further from the larger chains.

Guest feedback – boutique property owners have been good at listening to what their guests say, particularly through social media. More will actively encourage their guests to share their experiences online and where feasible, will make improvements quickly and easily using feedback and ideas.

Creative marketing – boutique hotels that are savvy with their marketing and flexible in their approach, will go well beyond just offering a competitive room rate. Promotions and packages will be given a creative edge to generate publicity and bookings. Special deals with art galleries, wineries, restaurants, museums and other local places of cultural interest will be offered not only to their guests but also local residents.

Many boutique hotels, including those listed in this paper are available for booking through Campus Travel’s Global Hotel Program.

Campus Travel

Who we are

Campus Travel provides Australia’s most complete service in academic travel management. Our trained consultants understand the distinctive world of academia and are educated in your domestic and international needs. Drawing on our vast experience in travel and our knowledge of your sector, we deliver savvy and flexible solutions, as well as global choice.

Our consultants are skilled advisors in all aspects of travel, from air and hotel bookings, to complex multipoint itineraries, to travel security.

With our blend of dedicated service, industry-first technology and rate negotiation specific to academia, Campus Travel is the ‘smart choice’ for more than 20 universities and research organisations nationwide.

Boutique hotels vs chain hotels – quick comparison

Feature	Boutique	Chain
Overall design	Influenced by local history, culture. Cutting edge Individual, one-off design	Consistent design across all chain properties. Conformative, not distinctive
Service	Highly personalised, high quality. Warm and friendly staff. Excellent attention to detail. Senior staff/hotel manager closely involved in service delivery.	Quality, reliable service that tends to be process-oriented in keeping with chain protocols.
Rooms & suites	Chic, stylish and contemporary. Locally designed furnishings and artwork	Consistent, quality design across all chain properties.
Business facilities (WiFi, meeting rooms etc)	Vary from hotel to hotel depending on size and location	Consistent, high quality across all or most chain properties.
Social spaces, Cocktail lounges etc	Designed to attract both in-house and local guests. Mood influenced by character of the hotel and local area.	Focused primarily on hotel guests. Relaxed ambience.
Hotel lobby, reception area & concierge	Can be open, interactive and relaxed spaces	Often clearly defined, separate areas within the hotel.
Dining	Heavily influenced by local culture. High use of local produce. Partnerships with locally acclaimed chefs and bartenders.	Range of options provided e.g. cafes, bistros and fine dining, to appeal to diverse tastes.

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