

10 SPECTACULAR HIKES AND DRIVES

# Sunset

LIVING IN THE WEST

## TASTY FALL SOUPS & STEWS

RECIPES TO WARM UP  
YOUR WEEKNIGHTS

BEST OF  
THE WEST

25 PERFECT  
WEEKEND  
HOTELS

P. 64

Pumpkin soup  
with pumpkin  
seed-mint pesto  
P. 89

Bargain shopping  
for great new plants

PARTY TIME: autumn cider,  
gourmet caramel apples

Fresh-from-the-garden cocktails

OCTOBER 2011

\$4.99US \$6.50CAN



VISIT US AT SUNSET.COM



# Best Hotels in the West

Check in and you're instantly on vacation. Relaxed. Pampered.

Napa Valley's  
Solage Calistoga

RACHEL WELLS

# 2011 Hotel Awards



Smitten by the scenery

**OUR EDITORS** scouted, snooped, and dozed in hundreds of hotels over the past year to find the 25 best for weekend getaways. Although they might feel a million miles away, almost every place is within an hour's drive of a major airport, and most are closer. Service, design, food, and rooms were all scored, plus those details that make a hotel *Sunset*-special: Are those fresh herbs in the cocktails? Does the landscape look native to the area? Can you see the Golden Gate Bridge? But value was paramount. If an expensive property made the list, it earned it with extra services and amenities or by being best in class. So dive in. Your perfect weekend awaits.

## EXTRAS GUIDE

 **FREE BREAKFAST**  **FREE WI-FI**  
 **DOG-FRIENDLY**  **SPA**

*\*For all hotels, prices reflect 2011's starting weekend rates (low season/high season). Scores are out of 100.*



NAPA VALLEY

### Solage Calistoga

Wine country is filled with gorgeous hotels that bristle with Michelin stars, but somehow, Solage manages to have “the best pool in Napa, period,” says our reviewer, a window-walled gym that channels “Martha Stewart’s private gym in Bedford,” and the requisite Michelin star—without costing \$700 a night. Comfy, barn-chic studios with a spiffy pair of loaner bikes and shaded patios create a sanctuary feel, and the spa is one of the best. \$350/\$585; 95 rooms & suites; [solagecalistoga.com](http://solagecalistoga.com) SCORE: 85 🍷 🏠 🛀

BEVERLY HILLS

### Crescent Beverly Hills

Under \$250

The stylin’ rooms at the Crescent are admittedly a tight squeeze, but what vaulted this hotel onto our list is its value score, with under-\$250 rooms in one of the toniest parts of L.A., plus the glamorous art deco design. At night, a high-energy bar and palm terrace make it a great place to meet up with friends. Extra points for fully loaded iPods by the bed, plush HD Design/Eco Friendly toiletries, and room service. \$159/\$219; 36 rooms & suites; [crescentbh.com](http://crescentbh.com)

SCORE: 76 🍷 🏠 🛀

SONOMA

### Farmhouse Inn

In wine country, anyone can put some high thread-count sheets on the bed and charge a bundle. What rockets the inn to the top of Sonoma’s hotels is the truly thoughtful service and attention to food and wine. We’re talking tips from Sonoma’s only master sommelier and a Michelin-starred menu filled with ingredients grown on the innkeepers’ farm, not to mention “the best huevos rancheros of your life.” And there’s no end to the special touches: self-serve counters for bath salts, s’mores, and Italian sodas; spa ingredients from the garden; even private steam rooms. \$350/\$390; 18 rooms & suites; [farmhouseinn.com](http://farmhouseinn.com)

SCORE: 83 🍷 🏠 🛀

SANTA BARBARA

### Inn of the Spanish Garden

This inn won us over with its “mini Chateau Marmont” feeling: Like L.A.’s famous property, “it’s easy to imagine the publicity-shy seeking privacy under a lemon tree in the courtyard.” Spacious, Spanish mission-style rooms with Juliet balconies and graceful ironwork are the reason to book here, and even without a full kitchen, the inn serves a lovely breakfast, room service, and local wines in the evening. \$295/\$349; 23 rooms & suites; [spanishgardeninn.com](http://spanishgardeninn.com)

SCORE: 87.5 🍷 🏠 🛀

RANCHO SANTA FE, CA

### Rancho Valencia

There’s not a thread out of place at this hotel near San Diego. Let us gush: Amazing iced tea at check-in. A suite so large you could move in, like, for life. A great pool and gym. And extraordinary service, as evidenced by the “melt-your-heart turndown” (robes, water, a stuffed animal). For tennis fans, there are 18 courts and pros on staff. \$490/\$578; 49 suites; [ranchovalencia.com](http://ranchovalencia.com)

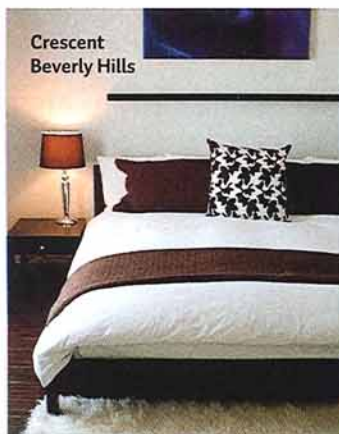
SCORE: 86 🍷 🏠 🛀

#### Wow amenity

BLOOD-ORANGE

ICED TEA

Our sleuth called it “the best iced tea of my life.”



Crescent Beverly Hills

## Strategies for getting even better rates

**GET SOCIAL** The biggest buzz in travel booking are sites like [LivingSocial.com](http://LivingSocial.com) and [Groupon.com](http://Groupon.com), which sell discount vouchers. LivingSocial comes out with new deals on Wednesdays—touting discounts of up to 50 percent that are bookable up to a year ahead. For Groupon Getaways, Groupon teamed with Expedia to reach 135,000 hotels. Both require purchase up-front.

**BE FLEXIBLE** Many hotels are more transparent about rates now, posting price calendars that allow you to time your stay based on when you can get

the best deal. Plus, hotels often tweet bargains to savvy followers days before deals go public.

**SIGN UP FOR FLASH SALES** On private sale sites like [SniqueAway.com](http://SniqueAway.com), [TabletHotels.com](http://TabletHotels.com), and [Jetsetter.com](http://Jetsetter.com), luxe hotel packages run at 20 to 60 percent discounts, and sales generally last a week. But before you pull the trigger, call the hotel directly to ask for a better deal. Flash sites (and deal sites in general) rarely offer the cancellation flexibility that a hotel does, and most require full payment up-front.

# 2011 Hotel Awards

## PORTLAND

### Hotel deLuxe

The deLuxe nails the city-hotel trifecta. It's utterly carless, just steps from downtown and a train ride from the airport. It has a buzzy bar, the Driftwood Room, which is "a Portland institution." And the service rises above the snap-to-attention business hotel m.o. to be warm and personal ("we weren't greeted by name after check-in, but our greyhound, Mini, was"). A recent redo of the bar smartly didn't touch the "dark, clubby interior" but revamped the cocktail list, and movies are

Under  
\$250

screened on the roof in summer. To really feel like an insider, ask for a room that ends in "30" or "03"—they have the best views. \$139/\$169; 145 rooms & suites; [hoteldeluxe.com](http://hoteldeluxe.com)  
**SCORE: 87** 🏠 📶 📺

## ASTORIA, OR

### Cannery Pier Hotel

Built on 100-year-old pilings so it's actually on the water, this hotel deftly captures the spirit of coastal Oregon. "It's what you think about when you think of Astoria," says our scout. Exposed beams and wooden trusses give it a "jaunty, turn-of-the-century maritime feel," historic photos cover the walls, and chauffeured vintage 1930s and 1940s cars are yours for free. Rooms are on the basic side, but the pile-on of freebies (loaner bikes, wine, local author lectures) make up for that. \$189/\$329; 46 rooms & suites; [cannerypierhotel.com](http://cannerypierhotel.com)  
**SCORE: 81** 🏠 📶 📺 🍷 🚲

### Wow amenity

**FREE CHAUFFEURED RIDES**  
Vintage cars shuttle you to and from downtown restaurants.



## LAGUNA BEACH, CA

### Pacific Edge Hotel

Smack on one of the prettiest stretches of beach in all of Southern California and two blocks from town, the Pacific Edge wins big for location. "If the oceanfront rooms were any closer to the beach, they'd be boats." The super-reasonable price point for stylish rooms is a big thumbs-up for value, even if they don't blow you away with plush toiletries and extras.

\$149/\$269 standard, \$239/\$379 beachfront; 132 rooms & suites; [pacificedgehotel.com](http://pacificedgehotel.com)  
**SCORE: 72** 🏠 📶 📺

## DENVER

### Hotel Teatro

If Marie Antoinette had made it to Colorado, this is where she'd stay. The historic hotel in the thick of the theater district has remodeled rooms with cherry finishes and luxe bathrooms, plus a staff who anticipate needs you didn't know you had. But what puts this hotel firmly in awards territory is its food. Expect one of the "top five meals of your life" at Restaurant Kevin Taylor, where the menu—say, coconut mascarpone grits or chocolate toffee fondant—is worth scrapbooking. \$189/\$339; 110 rooms & suites; [hotelteatro.com](http://hotelteatro.com)  
**SCORE: 80** 🏠 📶 📺 🍷

## TUCSON

### Arizona Inn

Two days can easily feel like double that at the elegant, Old World inn, which has a "timeless atmosphere and genteel staff." More than 80 years old, it has managed to hold onto its historic Spanish colonial soul without becoming outdated—even the handmade furniture is lovingly restored by an on-site craftsman. Lush landscaping and trees "create a feeling of luxurious retreat," and breakfast is "superb," the best meal at the hotel. \$159/\$329; 92 rooms & suites; [arizonainn.com](http://arizonainn.com)  
**SCORE: 81** 🏠 📶

## Dial up the perfect escape

The best hotel for you, depending on what kind of weekend you want

### Best for ROMANCE

**Post Ranch Inn**, Big Sur, CA  
**The Lodge at Torrey Pines**, La Jolla, CA  
**Korakia Pensione**, Palm Springs  
**The Inn at Langley**, Whidbey Island, WA  
**Rancho Valencia**, near San Diego  
**Inn of the Spanish Garden**, Santa Barbara

### Best for OUTDOORS

**Devil's Thumb Ranch**, Tabernash, CO  
**The Four Seasons Whistler**, Whistler, B.C.  
**Post Ranch Inn**, Big Sur, CA  
**Sanctuary on Camelback Mountain**, Scottsdale, AZ  
**Rancho Valencia**, near San Diego  
**Cavallo Point Lodge**, Sausalito, CA

### Best for FOOD & DRINK

**The Cosmopolitan**, Las Vegas  
**Fairmont Pacific Rim**, Vancouver, B.C.  
**Hotel Teatro**, Denver  
**Farmhouse Inn**, Sonoma  
**The Lodge at Torrey Pines**, La Jolla, CA  
**Hotel Andra**, Seattle

### Best for POOL

**Solage Calistoga**, Napa Valley  
**Sanctuary on Camelback Mountain**, Scottsdale, AZ  
**The Beverly Hills Hotel**  
**The Cosmopolitan**, Las Vegas  
**L'Hermitage**, Vancouver, B.C.  
**Fairmont Pacific Rim**, Vancouver, B.C.

L'Hermitage Hotel in Vancouver, B.C.

