

Bloomberg Businessweek

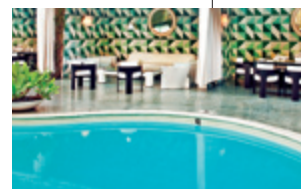
Boutique Hotel Bracketology

An NCAA-style battle for a lifestyle lodging national champion

When New York's Morgans Hotel opened in 1984, its lobby was meant for lounging, the restaurant was intended for more than dinner with grandma, and halls were filled with Robert Mapplethorpe photographs. Widely considered the world's first boutique hotel, it has given rise to today's boutique mania. Now hospitality giants such as Hyatt, InterContinental, and Marriott—which hired Morgans' co-founder Ian Schrager to consult on its new Edition brand—are getting in the game.

According to Portsmouth (N.H.)-based market research firm Lodging Econometrics, there were 410 "branded lifestyle hotels" in the U.S. in the second quarter of 2010, with 62 more set to open through 2011. With all of that growth, it's becoming increasingly unclear what actually constitutes a boutique hotel. "Boutique" has no real definition, so technically no one's right or wrong," says Robert Mandelbaum, director of research at Atlanta-based Colliers PKF Hospitality Research group. "It stands for outside-of-the-box." That means that hotels with amenities ranging from \$8,000 Swedish mattresses and 500-thread-count sheets to, more recently, bathrobes for pets and "spiritual menus" offering sacred texts fit the bill.

The only way to accurately judge a boutique hotel is by evaluating, for lack of a better word, its boutiquey-ness. Herewith, the nation's top newcomers from all regions compete for boutique supremacy. Only one can be crowned champion.



'50s-style cabanas at the Avalon

CONTESTANTS

EAST	SOUTH	MIDWEST	WEST
<p>Ames Boston Opened in 2009; 114 rooms; from \$195/night</p>	<p>The Betsy Miami Renovated in 2009; 63 rooms; from \$249/night</p>	<p>Viceroy Snowmass Snowmass, Colo. Opened in 2009; 173 rooms; from \$225/night</p>	<p>Avalon Beverly Hills Los Angeles Renovated in 2009; 84 rooms; from \$270/night</p>
<p>The Surrey New York Renovated in 2009; 190 rooms; from \$449/night</p>	<p>21C Museum Hotel Louisville Opened in 2006; 91 rooms; from \$199/night</p>	<p>Amangiri Canyon Point, Utah Opened in 2009; 34 rooms; from \$850/night</p>	<p>Hotel deLuxe Portland, Ore. Opened in 2006; 130 rooms; from \$129/night</p>
<p>The Jefferson Washington Renovated in 2009; 99 rooms; from \$300/night</p>	<p>Hotel Saint Cecilia Austin, Tex. Opened in 2008; 14 rooms; from \$295/night</p>	<p>The Wit Chicago Opened in 2009; 298 rooms; from \$109/night</p>	<p>Ace Hotel and Swim Club Palm Springs, Calif. Opened in 2009; 180 rooms; from \$119/night</p>
<p>Hotel Monaco Baltimore Opened in 2009; 202 rooms; from \$189/night</p>	<p>Postcard Inn St. Petersburg, Fla. Opened in 2009; 196 rooms; from \$119/night</p>	<p>Le Méridien Chambers Minneapolis Opened in 2006; 60 rooms; from \$249/night</p>	<p>Edition Waikiki Opened in 2010; 353 rooms; from \$375/night</p>

A Nicoletti Italia "Celebrity Bed" at the Ames



The Surrey
The Ames' apartment suite has Korres products for bathroom pampering. But the Surrey stocks Italian cotton Pratesi bathrobes—for pets.

The Jefferson
The Jefferson lends belts, dress shoes, collar stays, and cufflinks—which is more sophisticated than the goldfish Hotel Monaco lets guests put in their rooms.



21C
The Betsy has orchids on display in the guest rooms. The 21C is situated in a 24-hour art museum with rotating displays.



Hotel Saint Cecilia
The Postcard Inn hosts touring rock bands, but the Saint Cecilia lets you be the D.J. by borrowing vintage vinyl from the library to play on in-room turntables.

Amangiri
Would you rather recharge your electric car at the Viceroy or your soul at Amangiri's secluded 25,000-square-foot spa in the middle of the desert?

Le Méridien Chambers
The Wit provides Rubik's cubes at turndown, but the Chambers offers a better way to stretch your mind: the hotel's 200-odd piece collection of modern art.



Hotel deLuxe
Diner food at the Ace's King's Highway restaurant, the site of a former Denny's, is nothing compared to the religious texts on deLuxe's spiritual menu.

Edition
Star interior decorator Kelly Wearstler gave the Avalon its updated look. However, guests can watch movies under the stars at the Edition's outdoor theater.



The Saint Cecilia stocks caviar in the minibar



The Jefferson
The Surrey's roof garden overlooks Central Park. The Jefferson's spa offers treatments with botanicals from Thomas Jefferson's Monticello garden.

21C
The Saint Cecilia's minibar offers duck rillettes, but the 21C features the crowning sign of boutique kitsch: taxidermy.



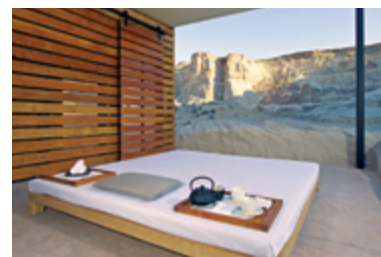
Amangiri
Amangiri sets up local treks, canyoneering, and archaeological tours. The Chambers only provides free admission to Walker Art Center.



Edition
The deLuxe supplies guests with Twister, which doesn't work waistlines like the Edition's in-house bikini boot camp.



Amangiri sits on 600 acres



BLACK AND WHITE PHOTOS: GETTY IMAGES (9)



The Edition offers guests poolside iPads



The Jefferson's restaurant offers 1,200 wines

21C
The Jefferson's lobby display of the founding father's documents is interesting—but not as cool as the Chuck Close and David Hockney pieces at the 21C.

Edition
The Amangiri's courtyard pool is situated around a rock escarpment. The Edition's private lagoon has sand imported from other Hawaiian islands.

21C
The height of boutiquey-ness is exemplified in the 21C's waterfall urinal that doubles as a one-way mirror into the lobby. And its 42 four-foot-tall recycled-plastic penguins, which were shown at the 2005 Venice Biennale. Their current purpose remains unclear.

Exhibitions rotate every six months at the 21C



CHAMPION