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The best of the US

THE USA IS KNOWN FOR LEGENDARY HOTELS, AND SUPERB BUSINESS OFFERINGS. SO HOW WELL DO THE TWO COMBINE? **CATHERINE QUINN** PICKS THE BEST OF THE BUNCH

NEW YORK

The Four Seasons

For many visitors the Four Seasons is the New York hotel, and the hallowed lobby is often a stop-off for camera toting tourists anxious to get a glimpse of the rich and famous. The average guest list includes movie stars, business tycoons, pop stars and supermodels, and as you might imagine, a clientele of this standing stems from accommodation of the highest calibre.

Business facilities inside the hotel are no less expansive, with 9,580sq ft of high-tech function space, encompassing nine multi-purpose rooms suitable for grand galas, business meetings or private celebrations.

The hotel also prides itself on a simple yet elegant décor allowing for useful flexibility in event theming and decoration. The jewel in the conference crown is the Cosmopolitan Suite, accommodating special events from 75 to 190. But an elegant Metropolitan Suite and traditional boardroom step in to offer all-day executive meetings or high-level dinners. Two private meeting suites, strategically secluded in a quiet corner of the fifth floor, are also supplied for the purposes of more confidential negotiations.

Even if your expense account can't quite stretch to a penthouse suite and week-long boardroom hire, the enormous selection of resident restaurants are extremely popular with the business community for the New York corporate staple - the business brunch. Just suggesting a meeting here will earn you insider brownie points, but the lovely columned lobby is also a suitably impressive spot even for those unaware of the hotel's legendary reputation.

Four Seasons Hotel New York, 57 East 57th Street, New York, NY, 10022

www.fourseasons.com

Doubles from US\$595

The Ritz-Carlton, Central Park

Many business travellers see little more than the inside of their rooms on busy trips which makes it doubly refreshing that this particular Ritz Carlton enjoys a Central Park location whilst simultaneously boasting a 'heart of the city' vibe. Unlike many well-sited hotels, however, business is the prime concern of this residence, with fast WiFi in every public space, and contemporary meeting rooms decked out with the very latest in conferencing technologies.

Those looking to arrive in their downtown meetings in style will appreciate the chauffeured Bentley access, whilst corporates hoping to relax before the big event will enjoy privileged access to the only one of two La Prairie Spas outside of Switzerland.

The hotel has also thoughtfully laid on a myriad helpful staff, from personal trainers at the extensive Fitness Centre, to a 'Technology Butler' who can aid guests with everything from configuring a tricky Internet connection to hooking up that complicated new Skype phone.

Central Park South, 50 Central Park South New York, NY

www.ritzcarlton.com

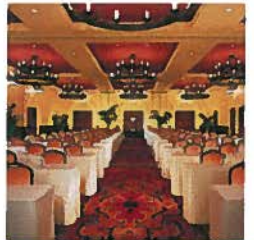
Doubles from US\$595

W Union Square

When it comes to places to see and be seen, the W brand is always a few steps ahead of the competition. And whilst their Union Square branch might not seem as immediately 'business' as some other New York stalwarts, it comes with some major advantages. The W has managed to build a reputation as a destination hotel for non-guests, and the attached Olive Restaurant by Todd English, Rande Gerber's chic Underbar and the understated and effortlessly cool Living Room are all worth the price of a room just for privileged access.

Hosting clients back at one of the hotel's enviable list of entertainment environs will gain you genuine business kudos. But it's all the other little touches which many guests come to appreciate about the brand. These include luxuriously stocked mini bars a 'farewell kiosk' which can print your boarding pass on departure, and a branded fitness centre.

For those wanting to host meetings and events in the hotel 7,000sq ft of conference facilities includes seven state-of-the-art meeting rooms, alongside four studios »



From top: The Four Seasons in Philadelphia; The Ojal boardroom; The Ojal classroom style meeting room; The Rittenhouse chairman suite; The Sanctuary



perfect for a breakout or small reception. The 880sq ft Gathering Place makes a perfect reception area before hosting an event in style in the 2,300ft Great Room complete with original detailing from the 1911 Guardian Life Beaux-Arts Building.

201 Park Avenue South · New York, New York 10003
www.starwoodhotels.com
 Doubles from \$400

CHICAGO

Sofitel Chicago Water Tower

The Sofitel water tower is a genuine landmark on the Chicago skyline - a glittering glass edifice of 412 rooms and 32 floors masterminded by famed design genius Jean-Paul Viguier. The hotel does well to compete with the nearby Museum of Contemporary Art for sheer architectural showmanship, but for most business travellers it is the calibre of the service which raises the Sofitel to internationally revered status.

An army of bellhops, chamber maids, concierge and reception staff are on hand to ensure every need is catered to, from last minute tickets to dry cleaning and restaurant recommendations. With more than 10,000sq ft of downtown Chicago meeting space, Sofitel Chicago Water Tower also provides a spectacular event venue, showcasing an extensive range of amenities for corporate groups. The range includes a 4,500sq ft ballroom and eight meeting rooms, complete with floor-to-ceiling windows for those fabulous Chicago views.

20 East Chestnut Street, Downtown Chicago, 60611
www.sofitel.com
 Doubles from \$120

Peninsula Chicago

Superbly situated right amongst Chicago's towering skyscraper in the 'magnificent mile', the Peninsula lives up to its name with staggering cityscape views. Boasting some of the most spacious accommodation in the region, the hotel is dedicated to making business travellers feel at home in the windy city. This extends to an award-winning room service offering and a comprehensive wellness service, with gym, spa, own spa range and dedicated spa restaurant designed specifically for health conscious diners.

The Peninsula's meeting facility has won coveted five star accolades every year since 2002 and the high rise architecture of the hotel is perfectly suited to housing distinct groups of guests on their own floor with bespoke facilities and an atmosphere rich with understated elegance.

108 Superior Street, Chicago, Illinois, 60611
www.peninsula.com
 Superior room from \$575

BOSTON

The Colonnade

Following the trend for boutiques with comprehensive business facilities, The Colonnade has broken onto the Boston hotel scene to the great acclaim of the corporate world. With a \$25 million renovation it's perhaps not hard to see why this revamped venue has managed to incorporate intimate guest access and practical business facilities so seamlessly. There's an attached brasserie, and rooftop for lounging, all

perfectly appointed with WiFi, whilst the hip location in the Back Bay area makes it the ideal for those hoping to make a statement about their neighbourhood nous.

But perhaps the most impressive achievement for this boutique is the addition of a conference facility worthy of a far bigger brand. This comprises a total of 15 thoughtfully appointed function rooms of various sizes and styles, all fully sound proofed and equipped with the latest technology. Ranging from a traditional ballroom to classic boardroom the hotel can meet the full gamut of business needs.

120 Huntington Avenue, Boston, 02116
www.colonnadehotel.com
 Doubles from \$339

PHILADELPHIA

The Rittenhouse

If you're looking for some luxury to contrast with your Philly Cheese Steak, The Rittenhouse is an exceptional five diamond Philadelphia luxury hotel, located on the prestigious Rittenhouse Square. Boasting a slew of global awards, including Finest Place to Stay, and City's Best Hotel, this is a residence which basks in its status as one of the finest accommodations in the world.

For those making a speedy entrance for business, the Rittenhouse is only fifteen minutes from the city airport, whilst simultaneously being placed in the heart of Philadelphia's elegant boutiques, galleries and attractions. In addition a dedicated extensive business centre is teamed with four distinct conference and meeting venues, with a maximum capacity of 275 in the Grand Ballroom and several smaller choices for more discreet events.

210 West Rittenhouse Square, Philadelphia, PA 19103,
 T. +1 215 546 9000
<http://www.rittenhousehotel.com>
 Weekend rates start from \$270.

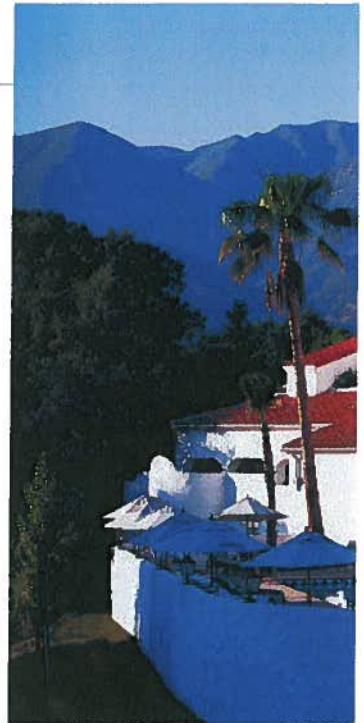
The Four Seasons in Philadelphia

Those searching for old-world elegance will adore The Four Seasons in Philadelphia which comes complete with contemporary classic furnishings inspired by the handsome Federal period. The hotel is the city's first choice for business, being close to the financial and commercial districts yet surrounded by museums, shopping and history at One Logan Square, and comes with a number of enviable business offerings.

This includes facilities for corporate groups from 15 to 550 guests with 10,877sq ft of function space in 14 distinctive venues. The hotel is justifiably proud of boasting the city's only outdoor reception and dining area - a lovely secluded courtyard with a gentle waterfall, whilst five boardrooms on upper floors also form a secluded part of the facility. A Grand Ballroom with adjoining terrace and courtyard, comprises a final striking venue for events. Every gathering can include high-tech audiovisual technology, including wired and wireless high-speed Internet access, and the supervision of a dedicated Four Seasons event planner.
One Logan Square, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 19103-6933
www.fourseasons.com/philadelphia
 Standard rates start from \$395

The Independent

Business travellers tiring of big name brands, and looking



The Ojal Spa



In a city famous for 'don't call us we'll call you', jaded executives will find a welcome reprieve in the Beverly Wilshire

to dip their toe in the burgeoning world of boutiques will find the best of both worlds in Philadelphia's latest hotel. The Independent is a stunning boutique hotel located in the city's historic district, just blocks away from the Convention Center and to Philadelphia's world-class performing arts district.

Despite a diminutive offering of only 24 rooms, guests enter a crystalline adorned four storey hotel lobby and lounge, complete with a striking 30ft hand painted feature wall designed by a local muralist. Whilst each room enjoys a variety of unique features such as fireplaces, exposed brick walls, cathedral ceilings and French windows or loft bedrooms.

At this size, business guests will have to host their events and conference exterior to the hotel, but a dedicated staff support service can help identify the most suitable nearby venues. And for those bored with the mega-hotels of standard business trips, the intimate nature of The Independent will provide a welcome temporary lodging.

The Independent Hotel, 1234 Locust St, Philadelphia, PA 19107
<http://theindependenthotel.com>
Standard and double rooms from \$149

SEATTLE

Grand Hyatt Seattle

Hyatts have renowned status the world over, but this particular branch of the elite Grand Hyatt selection was designed with business travellers in mind, and is situated a stone's throw from Seattle's Convention Centre. With dark wood panelling and low lighting throughout public areas, the hotel cultivates a refined atmosphere for corporate guests and the lobby is perfect for a low key meeting.

Most visitors on conference assignments will most likely be utilising the facilities of the adjoining convention centre, but for ambitious planners looking for overflow space, or those who'd prefer not to leave their hotel, more than 25,000sq ft of meeting and events space is on hand to accommodate bookers.

Business facilities throughout the hotel are also enviably well appointed, with a bespoke business

centre as well as in-room desk and internet facilities and WiFi throughout the hotel.

21 Pine Street, Seattle, Washington
www.grandseattle.hyatt.com
Doubles from \$167

CALIFORNIA

The Fairmont San Francisco

Comprising a hefty chunk of elegant Georgian-style real estate, the Fairmont is an iconic sight in San Francisco's Nob Hill, and the destination of choice for the discerning business visitor. Managing to secure a spot so central that all cable car lines converge just short of the entrance, the Fairmont is close to both downtown and the well known Fisherman's Wharf area with its towering Golden Gate bridge.

The hotel's status is so apparent throughout the US that it even became the subject of Aaron Spelling's popular TV series 'Hotel' which used the hallowed hallways for filming. And if you're looking for a similarly laudable precedent on the MICE side of things, the Fairmont has been the meetings venue of choice for the city's most important events since 1907, and in 1945 played host to delegates from 40 nations to draft the United Nations Charter.

Nowadays the hotel capitalises on these lofty claims with 55,000sq ft of elegant and well-equipped function space. Meeting rooms include everything from grand and glamorous ballrooms for large conferences or conventions, and intimate spaces for smaller meetings. They've also thrown in a free of charge Global Events and Meetings Solutions service for those looking for extra help choosing the best environs for their upcoming event.

950 Mason Street, San Francisco, California
www.fairmont.com
Doubles from \$180

Beverly Wilshire Four Seasons

In a city famous for 'don't call us we'll call you', jaded executives will find a welcome reprieve in the Beverly Wilshire's sanctuary of considered service. Situated smack bang in the heart of Rodeo Drive, the hotel's exterior is part of the landscape of this high-living area of town. But whilst nearby designer shops and boutiques might be known for catering only to the young, beautiful and well connected, the hotel has an altogether more civilised approach to life in LA. From the moment of arrival guests names and particulars are noted, right down to temperature preferences of their chosen room, and staff encouraged (with impressive success) to memorise the names of those staying with them.

Sumptuous marble lobbies and effortlessly chic penthouses are all par for the course in a residence of this calibre, but business types might also be intrigued to know that the hotel was also the scene for popular eighties film *Pretty Woman*, starring Richard Gere as a millionaire executive guest.

Those looking to host events here can lean on the world-renowned standard of Four Seasons' catering, whilst in terms of stats, two high-tech ballrooms seat up to 880 and 330 guests, while six, more intimate function spaces each offers distinctive character.

9500 Wilshire Boulevard,
Beverly Hills, California
)

» FLORIDA

The Breakers Palm Beach

Offering exceptional meeting facilities in an extraordinary setting this exceptional destination combines the best attributes of Florida's sun sea and sand with true business flair. The expanded conference centre, high-level amenities, recreational activities and dedicated service are matched only by the breathtaking ocean views, with full service meeting and event planners attend to every detail. Beachside parties and formal black tie dinners form only part of the compliment of possible services, and some \$250 million has been invested in the continuing expansion and improvement of the business offering since 1990.

One South County Road, Palm Beach, Florida 33480

www.thebreakers.com

Doubles from \$222

Marco Beach Ocean Resort

Enjoying the climatic conditions of nearby Mexico, this is a resort in the true sense of the word, offering a touch of exotic bliss in Florida's balmy climate. But whilst luxury swimming pools and perfect sunbathing conditions are the order of the day, the Marco Beach Ocean Resort still finds time to include an impressive compliment of business facilities.

Winner of Successful Meetings' Pinnacle Award, Marco Beach Ocean Resort provides a variety of elegantly appointed meeting rooms and catering facilities. Whilst business guests can also enjoy casual and fine dining, a spa and fitness centre, pool and hot tub, rooftop gardens, and four miles of white sand beach. The resident Chef Concierge holds Le Clefs d'Or designation, and service provided by all staff is above and beyond the call of duty.

80 South Collier Boulevard, Marco Island, Florida 34145

www.marcoresort.com

Doubles from \$179

OUT OF TOWN

The Umstead Hotel and Spa

When it comes to business offerings outside the big cities, luxury accommodation can sometimes be few and far between. But the Umstead is a shining beacon of global standard in the world of business hotels. Located in humble North Carolina, the hotel has managed to snare membership to both Leading Hotels of the World and Leading Spas of the World, in addition to being the 2009 Mobil Travel Guide Five Star Award recipient and 2009 AAA Five Diamond winner.

Perfectly designed for both conferences and meetings with a difference the Umstead has also made a name for itself as a favourite executive retreat. And despite an impressive natural backdrop has located a mere six minutes from the RDU International Airport, and close to all area attractions in Downtown Raleigh, Chapel Hill, Durham and Research Park.

100 Woodland Pond, Cary, NC, 27513

www.theumstead.com

Doubles from \$359

Calistoga Ranch

Nestled in a private canyon and situated between the towns of St. Helena and Calistoga, Calistoga Ranch is a serene hideaway for the ultimate executive retreat.

Among the 157 acres of trees and hills, 46 guest lodges and several intimate meeting rooms are tucked into this spectacular natural setting, creating the ideal environment for visitors to clear their minds and focus on the task at hand.

Less than two hours north of San Francisco, and accessible by private jet through the Napa County Airport, Calistoga Ranch is an ideal retreat for events and conferences with a difference. And from intimate board meetings to incentive trips, the venue also offers a variety of locations for presentations, breakout sessions and dining.

Guests can try out an afternoon of spa treatments in the adjoining Bathhouse or bring out their competitive spirits with a Bocce Ball Tournament. Additionally, activities in the local area include tours of the famed Napa Valley vineyards, complete with tastings and educational tutorage.

580 Lommel Road, Calistoga, CA 94515

www.calistogoranch.com

Luxury Ranch Lodge from \$879

Ojai Valley Inn & Spa

For those hoping to make best use of America's land expanse, Ojai Valley Inn and Spa offers a sumptuous locale in which to enjoy golf, tennis, and extensive spa facilities. The favourite of many LA based executives, Ojai offers a great chance to team business and pleasure in a perfectly appointed residence.

Only 90 minutes drive from LAX, the resort has recently been awarded a 'Gold Key' by Meetings & Conventions Magazine, and an 'Award of Excellence' by Corporate & Incentive Magazine. This is at least in part to the advantage of out-of-town space and a recently revamped conference offering. OVI boasts 11,000 sq ft of meeting space, and can accommodate groups from 10-450, whilst the expansive new conference centre includes two ballrooms, and numerous meeting and breakout rooms.

The Inn also boasts an advantage of a private and distraction free environment for business, and the resort has a top-rated golf course, spa and tennis facilities for relaxation and down-time. Additionally, an in-house conference team including award-winning chefs are on hand to cater to every minutia of the seamless business experience.

905 Country Club Road, Ojai, California,

93023 www.ojairesort.com

Doubles from \$350

Sanctuary on Camelback Mountain

The Sanctuary Camelback Mountain was Beyonce and Jay Z's choice of location for their honeymoon last year and is a perfect choice for business incentive packages. Sanctuary is a legendary boutique resort located high on the north slope of Camelback Mountain in Paradise Valley.

The resort's Sanctuary Spa offers Asian-inspired treatments along with a relaxing meditation garden, movement studio and fitness centre. Whilst the on-site restaurant features fresh cuisine with Asian accents and an extensive local wine list. Guests can also enjoy the infinity pool, tennis and hiking in the shadows of Camelback Mountain.

5700 East McDonald Drive, Paradise Valley, Arizona, 85253

www.sanctuaryoncamelback.com

Spa Casita rooms from \$199 ●



From top: The Rittenhouse Fountain; The Umstead Hotel