

# STAY AND PLAY

Get acquainted with the hotels where there's so much fun to be had inside, *you'll never want to leave*

**BEST FOR HIPSTER**  
**CRED: Mama Shelter, Los Angeles**

The first American outpost from the French-owned Mama Shelter crew is designed by Thierry Gaugain (Philippe Starck's protégé), so you'll be stepping into a world that's been expertly designed to encourage playfulness. The 70-room hotel in the heart of Hollywood likes to be unassuming; housed in a white '30s-era building, it's only once you enter that you realise just what you're in for (and even then, the team pride themselves on the surprises you'll discover over the course of your stay).

The lobby houses a foosball table, bar, restaurant and fireplace with plenty of seating. During its renovation, the ceilings were lowered to create an intimate feel and are now painted black to act like an art installation – artists have turned it into a hipster Sistine Chapel with drawings and cheeky turns of phrase

(it makes waiting for your coffee an entertaining exercise). Postcards and polaroid snaps scattered around amp up the homely feeling, and there's a wall of gumball machines stocked with sweets in case you're hungry – after all, this is not a regular mum, but a cool one. Proof of this fact is evident around 6pm, when the downstairs area becomes a magnet for the city's coolest crowds who choose to wind down with cocktails at the lobby bar (each with names like Mama Mia or Mr Mom) or a bite to eat in the communal-style kitchen.

If you want to snap a panoramic shot of LA, the rooftop bar is the place to go. You'll find couches to curl up on with friends, and tables and chairs if a romantic dinner is more your speed. The rooms vary in size, but even the smallest is comfortable enough to empty the contents of your suitcase on the floor (go on, make yourself at home). Each has an iMac – it doubles as a TV and a computer, but its coolest function is the Photo Booth. Snap some shots on yours (opt for one of the provided masks if you want to go incognito), and if you elect to make them public, you may spot them on the computer in the lobby. It'll keep the party vibe alive until the last moments of your day.

▲ [mamashelter.com](http://mamashelter.com)

## BEST FOR A SAINT-HONORÉ PILGRIMAGE:

*Hôtel La Tamise, Paris*

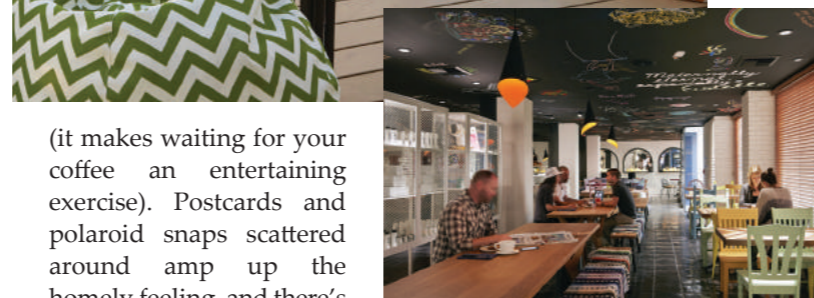
There are plenty of wonderful places to stay in the French capital, but for those seeking a quintessentially Parisian getaway, it's hard to turn down this boutique hotel. A short walk from the Metro and surrounded by the city's most magnificent attractions – the Louvre, Musée d'Orsay, Jardin des Tuileries, Avenue des Champs-Élysées and, naturally, fashion boutique Colette – La Tamise is itself steeped in the kind of enviable history other hotels can only aspire to. Originally a family-owned manor built in the mid-19th century, it was converted into a 19-room hotel in 1878, attracting British and American travellers on a post-university adventure. Later, it became a hotspot for the models of local couturier Madame Grès (her studio was just around the corner) as well as fashion legends like model Twiggy and photographer Patrick Demarchelier.

The hotel prides itself on having stayed true to its stylish and artistic roots – it's equal parts traditional and modern, with velvet and tweed upholstery in the bedrooms and chic parquet floors and stained-glass window details throughout the lobby. Most rooms offer money-can't-buy views of Rue d'Alger and the Tuileries garden, some from a balcony, and the decor is exactly what you'd expect in this part of the world – luxurious, understated and the tiniest bit opulent (think brass finishings and a bathroom mosaic courtesy of artist Mathilde Jonquière).

The in-house restaurant serves up fresh, seasonal dishes, while the expertly curated wine list and pastries from nearby favourite

Fauchon will ensure you're so wrapped up in what's in front of you that you'll completely forget to check your phone for hours at a time. A place to kick up your heels and turn in at sunrise, this is not (but you needn't wander far to find a vibrant bar or club worth visiting). It's a drawcard for a different reason; it's the place to live out your French fantasies, upon plush velvet chairs, drinking rosé from Provence and practising your *langue française* over duck foie gras and truffle ravioli. We all know those kinds of evenings are priceless. ⇨

▲ [paris-hotel-la-tamise.com](http://paris-hotel-la-tamise.com)





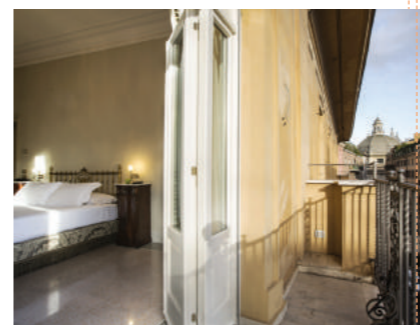
**BEST FOR STAYING UP  
ALL NIGHT: *The Hoxton, London***

A relatively new addition to the hotel scene, the ethos of the fast-growing Hoxton chain (one is just about to open in Paris' 2nd arrondissement, with Williamsburg up next) is perhaps best exemplified at its Holborn outpost, in the centre of London. Despite the fact that it lies just beyond the foot traffic-heavy areas of Soho and Covent Garden, you'll never find a hotel lobby that's as populated at any time – day or night – as this one. That's not a bad thing. On the contrary, you'll find it quite nice to saunter down for breakfast at in-house restaurant Hubbard & Bell and see morning meetings taking place or freelancers nabbing a table by the window and ordering their first of many flat whites for the day. If you plan to catch up on your emails, a sleep-in will most definitely inhibit your chances of getting a table to yourself but the lo-fi, communal atmosphere means sharing tables – and wine, later on – with new friends is just part of the fun.

What The Hoxton lacks in typical hotel features – a pool or gym – it makes up for in atypical ones: a beauty parlour, chicken shop and lobby DJ spinning tunes well into the night. Yet while the music doesn't stop until about 1am, the noise, thankfully, doesn't carry up into the 174 rooms upstairs. The rooms are admittedly small (the smallest is the "Shoebox" at 14 square metres and the biggest is the "Roomy" with 23 square metres), but each is practical and cool, with

vintage chairs, an appropriate amount of throw pillows and wallpaper illustrated with cute little drawings, the kind where you'll always spot a detail you didn't notice before. If you haven't quite mastered the art of packing light, you may struggle to find a place for all your shoes. But The Hoxton doesn't want you to stay holed up in your room all night – they'll provide the essentials, like a comfortable bed, a decent shower and coffee and tea supplies, but they know that their customer is prone to a little FOMO and doesn't at all mind being the last to leave the party.

▲ [thehoxton.com](http://thehoxton.com)



**BEST FOR CINEMATIC  
NAME-DROPPING:  
*Hotel Locarno, Rome***

Set in Rome's vibrant art precinct – nearby galleries include the Gagosian, the Russo gallery and Magazzino – this 66-room Art Nouveau hotel was boutique before "boutique" was even a thing. In the '70s, when hotel chains began populating the Eternal City, owner Maria Teresa Celli commenced a renovation that saw each room given a unique makeover – no two were the same, right down to the bathroom fixtures. Celli later purchased a palazzo adjacent to the hotel and filled it with larger, more deluxe suites, 18 in total. To this day, it feels more like a guesthouse of yesteryear – the rooms are filled with antique furniture, oil paintings, stuccoed ceilings and Lynchian red drapes, though mod cons like wi-fi, air-conditioning and satellite TV aren't forgotten.

As beautiful as the quarters are, it's the hotel bar that's the main attraction – it's been that way since the '60s, when director Federico Fellini was a regular, and, in truth, it almost feels as though you're stepping back in time when you swing by for aperitivo (actually, history is so important

here that the original poster promoting the hotel's opening, designed by Anselmo Ballester, still hangs in the lobby). The lighting is low, the music just right and the tchotchkes so on-point that you'll desperately want to shove something in your purse as a souvenir of your visit (but your conscience will get the better of you, of course).

There's no shortage of places to grab a drink once you're here. On the roof, the bar provides sweeping views of the city and across the Tiber River, and is a favourite of both locals and expats in the height of summer. In cold weather, the lounge offers plush seating in front of the open fire and the bar staff, under the tutelage of mixologist Nicholas Pinna, will happily whip up one of their original cocktails for you (if your taste extends into the more VVIP zone, there's a decent collection of rare bottles behind the counter, too). The courtyard, which connects the two buildings, is open year-round and is the perfect place to escape the sun beneath the shade – and scent – of the blooming wisteria. It's absurdly pretty, so ensure your phone is fully charged and its storage isn't full. □

▲ [hotellocarno.com](http://hotellocarno.com)



Words: Laura Collins; Photography: Francis Amlanti; Rita Platts; Mauro Sostini; Gilles Trillard