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Stylish Steals

The world's best new boutique hotels under \$150.

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Palm Springs, Calif.

The third branch in the white-hot Ace chain makes the most of its expansive desert resources:

Occupying a 1965 Howard Johnson, the 9-month-old **Ace Hotel & Swim Club** has a dedicated

stargazing deck near the pool and is in the process

of going fully solar-powered. But design is really the brightest light here. The 180 rooms, with cork floors and tree-trunk tables, have whimsical accents like denim-covered headboards and vintage *National Geographic* magazines scattered about. Throughout the property, designers make playful use of space: An ice-cream truck serves as the poolside bar, and spa treatments take place in Mongolian yurts. The on-site King's Highway restaurant, once a Denny's, is a foodie's riff on a retro diner—think ricotta hotcakes served with maple-crunch butter. acehotel.com, from \$109.

Berkeley, Calif.

Two blocks from the UC Berkeley campus, **Hotel Shattuck Plaza** is just the kind of place grad students at the college's architecture school aspire to live in. The 1910 building reopened in June after a cosmetic overhaul of the 199 rooms: They now have bright new fabrics and vibrant red walls. The restaurant, Five—with its crystal chandelier and arched windows—puts a refined farm-to-table spin on comfort foods with dishes like orzo mac 'n' cheese. hotelshattuckplaza.com, from \$119.

San Francisco

Union Square's 102-room **Hotel Vertigo** takes its theme to great heights. Named after Alfred Hitchcock's 1958 thriller *Vertigo*, which was filmed on location and plays on a loop in the lobby, the property preserves the dizzying spiral staircase featured in the movie, while also sprucing up most rooms with white tufted-leather headboards and orange-vinyl chairs.

hotelvertigosf.com, from \$129.

Los Angeles

When opening the **El Tres Inn** in May, former music execs Melanie Tusquellas and Dave Neupert literally built on the success of their El Chavo Restaurant and Chavito Lounge—they added a trio of soundproof suites above. Befitting its artsy Silver Lake neighborhood, El Tres makes a statement with red-velvet sofas and florid wallpaper. All rooms have private kitchens and come with two free drink tokens for house margaritas. Ask for the Uno suite, which has a turntable and classic vinyl (Pink Floyd, Miles Davis, Dolly Parton). eltresinn.com, from \$125.

San Francisco

The year-old **Good Hotel** promises a novel service: absolution. An orange phone in the lobby connects guests with volunteer activities like sorting cans at a local food bank. The 117

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ecofriendly rooms are each done up with reclaimed-pine headboards, chandeliers constructed out of empty Voss water bottles, and cheeky reminders to BE GOOD painted on the walls. jdvhoteles.com/hotels/good, from \$109.

San Diego

A block from the harbor, the 23-room **Pearl Hotel** is a Palm Springs–style motel that forms a horseshoe around a saltwater pool. In the 2-year-old hotel, cypress-tree stumps serve as coffee tables and pet betta fish as roommates. By the pool, the butterfly lounge chairs and cabanas are the best seats for weekly movies like *Breakfast at Tiffany's*. thepearlsd.com, from \$79.

Teton Village, Wyo.

Pro skier turned hotelier Rob DesLauriers didn't compromise on comfort when going green. His 132-room **Hotel Terra Jackson Hole**—built using old barn lumber—has bathrooms with radiant-heat slate floors and amenities like a full-service spa and an outdoor infinity pool. The hotel is less than a five-minute walk from the Jackson Hole Aerial Tram, and after a punishing day on the slopes, nothing beats soaking in the rooftop hot tub while sipping a fair-trade latte. hoteltterrajacksonhole.com, from \$119.

Astoria, Ore.

A lodge for ferry passengers crossing the Columbia River in the 1920s, the **Commodore Hotel Astoria** was revived by new owners this year. The lobby and 18 rooms combine authentic artifacts (antique books and suitcases), splashy furniture (bright-orange metal chairs), and creative recycling that pairs the old with the new (a coffee table made from the original fir floorboards). Book one of the eight suites that has a view of the river and a private bath. commodoreastoria.com, cabins from \$69, suites from \$129.

Portland, Ore.

Avid shoppers will feel right at home at **The Nines**, which occupies the upper nine floors of the restored Meier & Frank department store building downtown. The lobby shows off a 419-piece collection of paintings and sculptures by Portland artists, and the lounge lets you browse another local treasure: books from the legendary Powell's shop. Many of the 331 rooms, dressed in silver wallpaper and furniture upholstered in turquoise velvet, face a large atrium; the old Meier & Frank space downstairs—behind its original white terra-cotta façade—is now a Macy's. spg.com, from \$149.

Chicago

Chocolate-brown carpets spun from recycled soda bottles are just one of the many earth-friendly details at the **Hotel Felix**. The 225 rooms have motion sensors to control the heat and lighting, and the spa has sustainably produced bamboo floors. Drivers of hybrids park free, but the hotel is a 10-minute walk from the Hancock tower, so you could also skip the car entirely. hotelfelixchicago.com, from \$129.

New York City

Staying at the 133-room **Jane** hotel in the West Village feels a bit like stepping back in time: For starters, the clanky elevator still uses a manual operator. Celeb hoteliers Sean MacPherson and Eric Goode restored the century-old building, which housed *Titanic* survivors in 1912, and dressed it up with bohemian details like zebra-print chairs and mismatched velvet sofas in the lobby. Suited to solo travelers, the 90 wood-paneled single rooms have been fashioned after train and yacht cabins, with built-in drawers underneath twin beds. thejanenyc.com, singles from \$99.

Milwaukee

The **Iron Horse Hotel** was dreamed up a year ago to cater to people visiting the Harley-Davidson Museum down the street. Owner Tim Dixon's goal was to welcome guests wearing everything from business suits to buckle boots. The look in the 100 rooms is all oak floors, exposed-brick walls, and black-leather headboards. And metal hooks for hanging motorcycle gear are just the kind of thoughtful touches to warm a biker's heart. theironhorsehotel.com, from \$149.

Alexandria, Va.

Built on the site of the first Civil War skirmish in 1861, the 2-year-old **Hotel Monaco Alexandria** pays respect to the area's rich history. Free bike rentals are the best way to see the Old Town neighborhood, once home to George Washington and Robert E. Lee and now a shopping district. In the 241 rooms, deep jewel tones echo soldiers' uniforms, including Union-blue and Confederate-yellow throw pillows. With star-shaped mirrors and ink-print portraits on the walls, the Tall Rooms also have eight-foot beds, long enough for Lincoln himself. monaco-alexandria.com, from \$149.

Las Vegas

A marriage of Miami Beach art deco flair and old-Vegas glitz, the 64-room **El Cortez Cabana Suites** is bringing the groove back to the Fremont East area near the Strip. The renovated motel opened in May and has a swanky club-like lobby with Tiffany-blue walls and checkered floors of black granite and white marble. The apple-green rooms have equally mod flourishes: funky trellis-patterned wallpaper and armchairs covered in white leather or black chenille. Even amid Sin City's quest for ever more flashiness, this kind of decadence calls for a double take. elcortezcabanasuites.com, from \$42.

Ilhabela Island, Brazil

In 1997, German native Wolfgang Napirei and his Brazilian wife, Adriana, vacationed off the coast of São Paulo and vowed to return. Eight years later, the couple came back and opened the beachfront **DPNY Beach Hotel**, where the 70 suites have tropical-island decor like king-size canopy beds with headboards embedded with seashells. If you ask nicely, the concierge will tell you about a secret spot where you can swim under a waterfall. dponybeach.com.br, from \$148.

Managua, Nicaragua

Adventure seekers typically sweep through Nicaragua's capital en route to the southern beaches or the northern mountain reserves. **Hotel Contempo**, in the leafy Las Praderas district, gives you an excuse to linger. The 18-room property brings together the brick shells of three 1950s houses, where creamy leather covers the teak and mahogany furniture. If you tire of lounging by the pool, the staff can arrange day trips to colonial Granada or a nearby eco reserve. contempohb.com, from \$130.

Monterrey, Mexico

Since opening last September, **Hotel Habita Monterrey** has given boutique-hotel aficionados a reason to detour to northeast Mexico. In the 39 rooms, floor-to-ceiling windows and a stark black-and-white palette make it feel almost as if you're floating. The sleek minimalism continues in the lobby with mirrored mosaics and exposed-concrete floors. Twin rooftop infinity pools attract crowds for cocktails and views of the Sierra Madre mountains. hotelhabitamty.com, from \$150.

Paris

There's no mistaking **Oops!** for a regular backpacker's dorm. This 2-year-old boutique hostel exudes energy as soon as you walk in the door: Red and white lighted boxes spell out oops! in the lobby (the architect just liked the sound of the word), a mural dresses up the breakfast area, and the 46 rooms have flourishes like electric pink or green walls. The place closes from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. for housekeeping, so be ready to spend the day exploring the neighboring Latin Quarter, a five-minute walk away. Request one of the 12 double rooms, which have private bathrooms. oops-paris.com, from \$85 with breakfast.

Paris

Only Philippe Starck could turn a parking garage in the 20th arrondissement into **Mama Shelter**, a 172-room hotel that draws locals to its weekly live music shows. Quirky phrases are threaded into carpets and chalked on the walls—in the elevator, for example, you'll learn that porcupines can float in water. For bedside lamps in the rooms, which all have kitchenettes, Starck hung illuminated Halloween masks of famous characters such as Batman, Superman, and Han Solo. Best touch: A communal kitchen pantry is stocked with bread and Nutella for late-night noshing. mamashelter.com, from \$126.

Bordeaux, France

Among the region's 18th-century châteaux, the lakeside cluster of mini houses at **Camping de Bordeaux Lac** is an unexpected sight. Ranging from 183 to 377 square feet, the 92 cottages are divided into nine categories, each with its own whimsical motif. Toy sailboats sit on the tables inside the Cabanes de Pêcheurs (Fishermen's Cabins), and the Chalet Prestige looks like it's made of Lincoln Logs. The bungalows, which opened in June, all come with a full kitchen and a patio or porch. camping-bordeauxlac.com, one-bedroom cottages from \$50, two-bedrooms from \$57.

Liverpool, U.K.

You'd think a Beatles-themed hotel would have popped up in the Fab Four's hometown long ago, but the **Hard Days Night Hotel** opened just last year. Beatles memorabilia and artwork is everywhere in the 110-room property: A *Yellow Submarine* jukebox sits in the lobby, and six-foot-tall photos of John, Paul, George, and Ringo line the spiral staircase. harddaysnighthotel.com, from \$141.

Llandeilo, U.K.

A four-hour train ride from London, **Fronlas** (Welsh for "Blue Hill") is a worthy weekend escape. The three rooms in the luxurious Edwardian town house face Brecon Beacons National Park, and they're all about comfort (solar-panel-heated floors, rain showerheads, log fires). If you arrive by train, the husband-and-wife owners will greet you at the door with a free bottle of organic wine. fronlas.com, from \$133 with breakfast, closed mid-October through mid-January.

Edinburgh

A night at the two-room **Millers64** is like visiting your cool cousins. Sisters Shona and Louise Clelland bought and renovated an 1890s row house last summer, taking care to retain details like the turquoise tiles framing the fireplace. Inspired by their 11 years of living and traveling in Malaysia and Thailand, the Clellands added accents such as pewter washbasins from Phuket. Louise uses local ingredients for her Scottish breakfasts, which feature homemade apricot jam. The sisters live on the third floor with their mom, Sally, and are happy to point you to their favorite sites, like Holyrood Palace. millers64.com, from \$133 with breakfast.

Budapest

The glass-paneled **Lánchíd 19** hotel embraces its location right on the Danube River. At

night, the façade comes alive with a colorful light installation, and the rooms on floors four to seven offer unobstructed views of the river. Named after the Chain Bridge, the 2-year-old hotel also has a transparent lobby floor, which allows you to see the excavated remains of a medieval water tower below. Fun design elements are sprinkled throughout the 48 rooms: a magnetic chessboard mounted on a wall, or a platform bed separated from an orange-tiled bathroom by a sliding glass door. designhotels.com/lanchid, from \$101.

Berlin

The Circus Hotel in the Mitte district is the grown-up alternative to a popular hostel that shares its name, just across the square. The 60 individually designed rooms have blue, tangerine, lime, or hot-pink accents, and all have dark-oak floors and flea-market finds like vintage glass vases. The organic restaurant, Fabisch, is named after the family that once owned the 19th-century building. Netbooks and iPods preloaded with local artists like German indie rockers Sportfreunde Stiller are on loan at the front desk. circus-berlin.de, from \$111.

Kui Buri, Thailand

Impersonal tropical resorts are a dime a dozen in Thailand, which is why **X2 Kui Buri** is so refreshing: The staff greets you by name, and chefs are happy to go off-menu and customize meals. The first of four resorts in a growing regional chain, X2 Kui Buri has 23 villas spread across four acres of virgin beachfront on the Gulf of Thailand. Each villa has a terrace and garden, and most have a private pool. The exposed rock in the walls was mined from local quarries, and a peaceful walkway connects the rooms to the pool, the open-air restaurant, and the beach, where candlelit dinners complement the fiery sunsets. x2resorts.com, from \$148 with breakfast.

Siem Reap, Cambodia

Most guests come to see the Angkor Wat ruins about four miles away, but the experience of staying at **Viroth's Hotel** is itself a historic treat: The property is in one of the few remaining examples of New Khmer Architecture, a modernist style that thrived here in the 1960s. Two years ago, owners Kol Viroth and Fabien Martial converted the boxy, two-story villa into a seven-room boutique hotel with a saltwater pool, a rooftop hot tub, and an open-air spa. Each of the rooms has a beige duvet covering a white queen-size platform bed, a woven mat on the gray Khmer tile floor, and dark-brown drapes that open onto a private balcony. viroth-hotel.com, from \$90 with breakfast.

Bangkok

Owner Pylin Jane Sanguanpiyapand grew up in a family that has sold Sherwin-Williams paint in Thailand for decades, so it makes sense that the 31-year-old went color crazy in 2007 when creating the **Seven** hotel. The six guest rooms each use distinctive shades of yellow, pink, green, orange, blue, and purple in the bedding and murals. A red-themed communal space serves as the seventh room, an all-purpose reception area, bar, art gallery, and breakfast nook. sleepatseven.com, from \$88 with breakfast.

Hanoi, Vietnam

The fact that the year-old **Maison d'Hanoi Hanova Hotel** lies in the Old Quarter is both a design challenge and opportunity. The newly built 55-room structure occupies a "tube house"—a traditional type of architecture with a narrow 19-foot-wide façade—requiring a resourceful use of space. Skylights, circular mirrors, and silk lamps maximize airiness, while the redwood floors, scarlet walls, and gray-silk headboards lend an authentic old-world feel. Double-glazed windows help block out the motorbike traffic below, and the city's best tailors are steps away on Hang Gai, or Silk Street. hanovahotel.com, from \$140 with breakfast.

Phnom Penh, Cambodia

It's easy to confuse the **Blue Lime** with an apartment building—only a small gold plaque next to a sliding wooden door confirms you've found the 14-room hotel, opened last year by French expat Alexis de Suremain. Inside, all of the furniture (including the built-in shelves, tables, and window seats) is shaped from concrete. Green-silk curtains and fuchsia and tangerine pillows soften the urban vibe and brighten the rooms, most of which have balconies. Out back, banana and mango trees shade the saltwater pool. bluelime.asia, from \$40 with breakfast.

Cape Town

You have to be a bit of a dreamer to fully understand (and appreciate) the **Airstream Penthouse Trailer Park**, seven aluminum trailers perched on the rooftop of the Grand Daddy hotel. Local artists created fanciful themes for each of the rentals: The all-white Ballad of John & Yoko suite comes with a harmonica, a guitar, and board games for replicating the rock icons' 1969 bed-in; the blue Dorothy trailer is covered in white polka dots to echo Judy Garland's *Wizard of Oz* dress. www.granddaddy.co.za, from \$120.