

Experiencing the Past – Monasteries Turned to Luxurious Hotels

The austere nature of living among nuns and monks had been perceived by most people as somewhat tedious; low-lighted rooms, beds with lumpy mattresses, ordinary tables, depleted chairs and whitewashed plaster walls. As religion goes on with modernization, this is no longer the situation in some convents and monasteries.

Recently, more and more convents and monasteries have evolved into luxurious hotel-like establishments and you might even feel a bit guilty thinking how their previous occupants used to live. However, there are still some properties which did not deviate beyond the usual way of living allowing travelers like you to still feel the real essence of nurturing your spiritual needs. Whether you opt to choose newly renovated religious establishments or those which are traditional ones, the experience will definitely let you catch a glimpse of its past.

It was said that the renovations of religious structures is not just mainly for the structure's restoration, it is also a way to make every traveler's experience a lot memorable. Below is the list of some unique religious properties you might want to visit when you travel.



El Convento in Old San Juan, Puerto Rico

Among the first converted religious buildings is the El Convento in Puerto Rico which now celebrates its 50th anniversary since its renovation in 1962. Improvements have continued since then making it very comfortable with full of modern amenities. It has 58 rooms and its past goes back to 1651 as the Monastery of Our Lady of Carmen of San Jose. The hotel has swimming pools, fitness center, spa, restaurants and a veranda terrace which is just perfect for evening cocktails. El Convento is absolutely prestigious. In fact, the government designated it as the official guest house provided for the visiting head of states, dignitaries and even celebrities.

Sofitel Santa Clara in Cartagena, Colombia

This Sofitel was established in 1621 by the Spanish colonizers in the city of Cartagena de Indias which is one of the best-preserved colonial cities in South America. In 1984, the historical city was declared a

UNESCO monument. Today, the hotel has 119 rooms in which 17 of them are high-end suites. The interiors are the mixture of ancient walls with modern touch. The hotel also has its own pool as well as its own spa equipped with hammam, Jacuzzi and solarium. During the renovation of the hotel, many colonial artifacts were discovered and they are now displayed throughout the hotel. Colonial Cartagena is indeed a living museum.

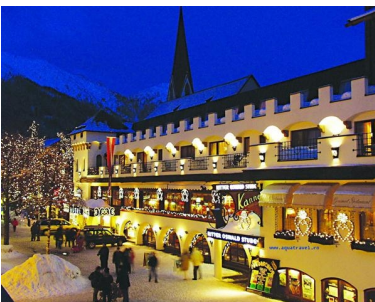


Hotel Monasterio in Cuzco, Peru

As a former Spanish monastery built in 1592, Hotel Monasterio is among the oldest converted religious building in South America. The hotel has 126 rooms painted in buttery neutral colors embellished with religious colonial art. From the rooms Cusco's Central Square can be seen. Something very extraordinary about the hotel are its oxygen-enriched rooms which assists visitors adjust with the thin air since the hotel is located at 11,000 feet above sea level. Hotel staff can also arrange Orient express train travel to Machu Picchu.

Park Hall Country House in Clacton-on-Sea, UK

The Park Hall Country House is a former monastery built in 1360. Though it was believed to have been built earlier, the recorded history of the land indicates that it was built in 1016. During the renovation, false walls were unearthed and some paintings from the middle age are being discovered. Today, the hotel is being embraced by wide farmlands and gardens. Guests can stay either in the main house in antique-filled spaces which are favorite among newlyweds or in the scattered buildings and cottages on the grounds. The Cart Lodge and Hay Barn are just few of those, featuring a soaring half-timbered loft space, giving a true medieval ambience.



Hotel Klosterbrau in Seefeld in Tirol, Austria

Hotel Klosterbräu was said to be built 450 years ago. Today, a new five-star luxury hotel with more than

100 rooms has been built within the grounds of the complex with traditional Alpine style. The town of Seefeld is one of Austria's most popular resorts. The pastoral mountain setting gives the environment as seen on the movie the "Sound of Music". The hotel also offers other services such as arrangement for golf and tennis courses at nearby venues. The newest attraction of Klosterbrau is its more than 4,000 square-meter Spiritual Spa. The themes of the spa are what the establishment calls as the 10 pillars of contemplation which includes health through fire such as saunas and open fireplaces and health through crystals and stones used for massage therapy.

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