



Travel Feature

The World's Best Hotel Swimming Pools

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A hotel pool is much more than just a place to swim laps and burn off calories. A pool can be one of the resort's architectural focal points as well as a place to exercise, unwind or work on a tan after a hard day of business meetings or sightseeing. But, even better for the companies that own and operate hotels, pools can also be moneymakers. While a pool does not generate revenue directly, poolside cafes and bars do--those fruity cocktails with high gratuity fees can be almost as profitable as those other time-honored hotel price gougers: the telephone, room service and the mini-bar.

On the mass-market level, resorts with water parks (slides, tunnels, waterfalls and kiddie pools) have a much higher occupancy rate than a hotel with a plain old swimming pool. According to a 2000 study conducted by **Rochester, Minn.-based JLC Hospitality Consulting** and the World Waterpark Association, hotels with indoor water parks have a 20% higher occupancy than hotels without them and command a higher price. A standard hotel room has an average room rate of \$70, compared with \$130 for a room in a hotel with a water park. Why? Water parks are a huge family draw and can keep both kids and parents occupied for hours--as well as cooled off.

While none of the hotels on our list have slides or dolphin shows--too infra dig--they do have impressive pools. One of the latest architectural trends in pool design is the infinity pool, where the edge appears to drop into the ocean. (No matter how many times we see one of these pools, we still don't understand how they do it.) Underwater music is another trend.

At Los Angeles hotels such as the Mondrian and the Beverly Hills Hotel, the pool is an aquatic extension of the office or the bar. A few lucky people--such as the young Robert Evans, the Hollywood producer whose life and misdeeds were recently chronicled in the documentary *The Kid Stays in the Picture*--have even been discovered poolside. Likewise, the urban hotel pool is a rare find. Two exceptions are the neoclassical pool in Paris' Hotel Ritz and the pool in the sleek Park Hyatt in Tokyo, where guests can swim laps and look at the city from a height of 47 stories.

Pack your flip-flops and your goggles and take a tour of Forbes.com's roundup of the best hotel swimming pools.