



An intimate sitting area at the Monaco is home away from home for two guests.

Hollywood stars on location gravitate to the **Ritz-Carlton Georgetown** ([www.ritzcarlton.com](http://www.ritzcarlton.com); from \$399) or the luxe **Mandarin Oriental** ([www.mandarinoriental.com/washington](http://www.mandarinoriental.com/washington); from \$245), in the city's Southwest quadrant. The R-C's Georgetown location has an unlikely pedigree: From 1932 to 1971, locals brought garbage there for incineration. Reminders of the building's fiery former life include bowls of Atomic Fireball candies and a private dining room inside the smokestack. The massive Mandarin Oriental is a Vegas-scale take on luxury lodgings and houses the elegant CityZen restaurant. The reason stars love it, however, may be the reason you won't. Although close to the Mall, the hotel sits isolated on what feels like a peninsula, far from D.C.'s other attractions.

Tucked among those attractions, and with rates closer to Earth, are the secret small hotels of Washington. Across from the World Bank, the **Hotel Lombardy** ([www.hotellombardy.com](http://www.hotellombardy.com), rates from \$139) has such a discreet entrance that passersby might not even notice it. The tiny lobby may remind travelers of small hotels in Paris, and the attendant-operated elevator is a gracious step back in time. In Dupont Circle, Washingtonians love the **Tabard Inn** ([www.tabardinn.com](http://www.tabardinn.com); from \$128), an eclectic institution cobbled from adjoining town houses. The restaurant serves creative cuisine, and with a fire blazing in the hearth and wood floors, the lounge is the coziest spot in town.

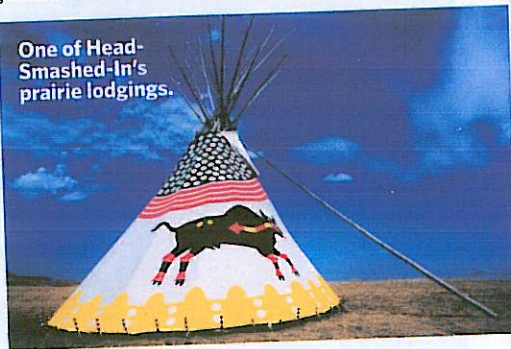
CHECKING IN

## Life on the Plains

A grassroots taste of Canada's native culture.

A original Canadian pride stands as tall as a teepee at **Blackfoot Crossing** ([www.blackfootcrossing.ca](http://www.blackfootcrossing.ca)), operated by the Siksika Nation. Located an hour's drive east of Calgary, Alberta, amid endless prairie grass, this \$33-million historical park offers authentic overnight teepee stays. Before snuggling down with buffalo hides inside your canvas lodging, you can visit a 62,000-square-foot museum whose steel-and-glass silhouette evokes a native encampment. Learn about Siksika dress, deities, and archaeological digs, plus the land treaty Chief Crowfoot signed here in 1877, and dance performances. At dinner outside your teepee, devour a buffalo burger and listen entranced to a storyteller's fireside tales about the trickster Napi. About 100 miles south of Calgary, the **Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump** ([www.head-smashed-in.com](http://www.head-smashed-in.com)), a UNESCO World Heritage site, has teepee stays where guests can learn how to make moccasins. —LUCAS AYKROYD

One of Head-Smashed-In's prairie lodgings.



STAYS UNDER \$150

## Philadelphia, PA and Sydney, Australia

**1 Independent Hotel, Philadelphia.** It's easy to fall for the City of Brotherly Love's Independent Hotel. The new-to-the-scene boutique hotel proffers 24 stylish rooms in a refurbished Georgian Revival listed on the National Register for Historic Places. It's perched in prime Philadelphia real estate a block from the lively Avenue of the Arts performing arts

district. The hotel is a quick stroll away from both the convention center and tony Rittenhouse Square (grab an outdoor seat at Stephen Starr's Parc Restaurant for a bite of bistro fare and people watching). Hotel highlights include hardwood floors, snug wool rugs, exposed brick walls, iPod docking stations, plus convivial perks like free weekly wine-and-cheese

happy hours and a daily breakfast spread. A crystal chandelier and 30-foot-high mural of Philly's iconic Independence Hall, hand-painted by local artist Kim Senior, greet guests in the lobby. From \$149; [www.theindependenthotel.com](http://www.theindependenthotel.com).

—Katie Knorovsky

**2 Hotel Coronation, Sydney.** A visit to Australia would not be complete

without spending a few nights at a pub, and the Hotel Coronation in the heart of downtown Sydney—a 25-minute walk from the Opera House, Harbour Bridge, galleries, restaurants, and shopping—is a good choice. An Australian institution, pubs have served throughout history simultaneously as a hotel, post office, restaurant, store, and meeting place. Modern pubs, or hotels as some locals call them, serve mostly beer and food, but the larger ones also offer lodgings. The Coronation's 21 guest rooms spread over three floors—reached by a cranky old lift. Freshly renovated, the individually decorated rooms offer crisp white linens and views of bustling Park Street. The pub's restaurant features a menu of salads, stir-frys, local oysters, and grilled steaks. The pub's daily special for under \$10 is a great value. From \$78; [www.hotelcoronation.com.au](http://www.hotelcoronation.com.au).

—Kristina Stefanova



Local artwork hangs in the lobby of the Independent.