



Hotel Reviews by Wanderers Compass: Uncovering Hidden Gems

Description

Our detailed and honest review of the best of best of our hotel stays

Great hotels are like dreams, they transport you to a different reality.
From the book Hotel Magnifique by Emily J Taylor



Gran Hotel Ciudad de Mexico – Hotel Reviews by Wanderers Compass

We estimate that we have stayed at over 1,000 hotels in the many decades we have traveled. This does not include the VRBO and Airbnb vacation homes that were rented. Joelle has Hilton Diamond status and is approaching 1,000 nights on that brand alone. Her Hilton property stays account for only 2/3 of those accommodations. Typically, we stay in all ranges of hotels, from very basic to luxury. As a result, we are discerning travelers. That does not mean we only choose high-end hotels; price does not always define high quality.

Over time, we have determined the three things that matter the most: safety, cleanliness, and excellent service. Those three things are not always tied to the level of the hotel; even the simplest of properties can excel.

As is the case for most of you, we have a budget to adhere to. If we didn't, we would not be able to travel as much as we do. We pay for our travel expenses or use reward points we earn through our credit cards. Hotels are the most costly part of a trip, so we must control those costs. Using these methods has made our trips affordable and allows us to stay at high-quality properties when it is a reasonable option.

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Lagarta Lodge, Costa Rica – Hotel Reviews by Wanderers Compass

Historically, we have not posted reviews on the blog itself; we often mention specific hotels within destination articles. The most common place you will find our reviews is on Google Maps. When we research accommodations, we see them as the most reliable source for current reviews. It has been such an excellent tool, so we joined the review bandwagon on Google Maps. Our Google Map reviews have been massive hits; as of March 2024, we had 54 million views of our reviews and photos. Over

time, we have even gained Google Maps followers.

You can check out our [Google Maps reviews at this link](#).

What we will showcase

Our hotel reviews will be of unique properties that were exceptional experiences. Our goal is not to review all hotels, just the best of the best from our travels.

How we travel

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Conrad Algarve Portugal – Hotel Reviews by Wanderers Compass –

When traveling, we move around a lot. We hit the ground running in any new destination and squeeze all we can in a day. You will not find us lounging on a beach for days reading a book. On average, we stay at a hotel for two nights before moving on.

That does not mean we shortchange the quality of the accommodations. Every property we pick has been thoroughly examined on multiple platforms. This is our system for choosing accommodation.

1. We first determine the best location at the destination we are staying at. If it is a city, we look at safety, accessibility to public transportation and the airport, proximity to the sites we visit, and dining options. This can be done with Google searches, guidebooks such as from Rick Steve, YouTube, Google Maps, Trip Advisor, and travel portals.

2. Once we choose the area we want to be in, we first search for any Hilton Properties nearby. We are strong believers in brand loyalty, and the perks are worth that loyalty. If there are no Hilton properties or they are too expensive for our budget, we move on to our avenue to make reservations.

We wrote an article on brand loyalty; [check it out here](#).

3. We make the most of our hotel reservations through reward portals. Our most used travel credit card is Chase Sapphire Reserve, which has provided tens of thousands of dollars worth of free hotel stays over the last few years.

How do we do that? We charge everything on our card and pay the balance off at the end of the month, so we pay no interest and get travel reward points from our purchases. When using these points, you are required to go through their travel portal. Chase purchased a large travel reservation site to make this possible. We enter our destination and begin the research. They have reviews available, but we also use all the other methods mentioned in number two to verify that it is a good choice.

To learn more about getting reward points for free travel, [check it out here](#).

4. If we don't use the above options, we will use Expedia or Booking.com. If traveling Europe, we tend to lean toward Booking.com.

How to Decipher Hotel reviews



Hotel Reviews by Wanderers Compass Adobe photo stock

Here are some essential tips to consider when reading hotel reviews. Here are the steps we take before booking every hotel we stay at.

- Choose from varied platforms, i.e., Google Maps, Trip Advisor, Expedia, etc.
- It is essential to examine only reviews from the last year. Sometimes, the first review is years old, and lots could have happened since.
- Read the reviews, and don't just look at the star rating. Sometimes, it is just a whiny person mad they were not given an upgraded room even though they didn't pay for one. But if someone says the bugs in my room were gross, that is an immediate turn-off.
- Always look at the pictures people provide in reviews. If the hotels seem to be using a bedspread that is not changed between clients, that is a no for us.
- We also seek out the worst reviews to see why they gave that review. It often is petty, but if not, it could be a strong reason not to stay there.

- If there is a negative review, how does the hotel respond?
- If you have booked your hotel way in advance, check regularly if anything has changed. New managers or owners come in. Sometimes, the hotel has closed, and you weren't told (that happened to us once, arriving late evening in a new city to find the hotel shut down). This is your trip; you can be mad all you want at the reservation system, but you will be impacted the most if you haven't stayed on top of your reservation.

Time for a change

As a norm, we are not resort people, but in 2024, we began to wonder what it would be like to make a trip more focused on relaxation and luxury. In early December 2023, we did just that. Why then? Because between Thanksgiving and Christmas, travel is usually much quieter, airfares are substantially reduced, and hotels, especially luxury ones, slash prices. Our destination was Tulum, Mexico. It was a relatively short flight, and we had always wanted to visit Chichen Itza (not like we can relax all the time). Our stay was at the Conrad Tulum Riviera Maya; to put it in a few words, it was a mind-blowing experience. We may have set the bar relatively high for our first luxury-based trip.

During this trip, we realized places like this deserved blog posts detailing what the property offered. In hindsight, several other exceptional properties we have visited deserve special attention. As a result, we now have a Hotel Reviews by Wanderers Compass page.



Malta Hilton – Hotel Reviews by Wanderers Compass

Transparency

To date, we paid for all the stays ourselves, and most did not even know we were travel bloggers, as we wanted the experience to be as genuine as our readers would experience. Our reviews will be honest and detailed. We will cover the pros and cons. There will be lots of photography, of course.

The properties we will review were not expensive during our visit. We tend to travel in the off-season to keep travel affordable and to avoid crowds. To make it on our top hotels list, service comes first, followed by amenities, the quality of the property, and the rooms.

Ready to make reservations?

If you are in the process of booking your accommodations, may we suggest you use one of our affiliate links? This helps strengthen our relationship with these brands. Using our links does not cost you more; they will link to your profile once you are on the site. Each site also offers apartments and vacation home rentals.

It is important to price out properties on various sites. [Expedia](#) is a US-based company, whereas [Booking.com](#) is Europe-based. Not all properties appear on both, so check both. Our personal first choice is Booking.com. If the establishment has a website, check the price there as well.

[Booking.com](#)

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If you use these travel resource links to buy something, we may earn a small commission at no additional cost to you. Thank you.



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March 30, 2024



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Our Top Recommended [Travel Products and Resources](#)

[Squaremouth.com](#)

Our favorite travel insurance site!

If you book a trip, don't forget to get travel insurance within 14 days of your first booking. We could not be stronger advocates of being well-insured. Not just for the little stuff but the big things like medical emergencies. We never leave home without it. Over the years, we have used many sites but have now found our go-to place. [Squaremouth.com](#) does a fantastic job; it has a user-friendly interface, uses top-rated and reputable insurance carriers, and most policies cover COVID-19 medical issues and cancellations. They also mediate on your behalf if you have problems with your policy.

To empower you as a consumer, we suggest you read our [blog post](#) on the importance of travel insurance and how to get the best coverage from top-rated companies for an affordable price.

[MedjetAssist](#)

Medical transport back home from anywhere in the world

They are the premier global air medical transport. One caveat to travel insurance is that medical evacuation usually gets you to the closest facility to care for you. Medjet gets you back to the U.S. to the hospital of your choice once you are stable enough to fly. They cover COVID-related transport as well.

[Medjet](#) carries its own policies. These policies are only for transport and do not cover other aspects of travel insurance. They have individual trip policies starting at \$99 and annual policies for around \$300. Most of their policies limit the age to 74 and younger. Prices are not based on age below that.

To learn more about how Medical Evacuation membership with Medjet Assist works, check out our [blog post](#) for a more detailed review.

[Expedia.com](#)

Hotels, home rentals, BNBs, flights, and other transportation & tours

[Expedia](#) is a US-based company whose mission is to power global travel for everyone and everywhere. Whether planning a family vacation, booking for business, or organizing the trip of a lifetime, they are a fantastic resource. Wanderers Compass focuses on independent travel, and using sites like [Expedia](#) makes that possible. Every aspect of travel you need, from airfare, accommodations, rental car, and cruises to activities to do at your destination, can be booked on [Expedia](#).

[Booking.com](#)

Hotels, Home rentals, BNBs, Flights, and other Transportation & Tours

[Booking.com](#) connects millions of travelers to memorable experiences, various transportation options, and incredible places to stay – from homes to hotels and much more. It is one of the world's largest travel marketplaces for established brands and entrepreneurs of all sizes.

We always check Expedia and Booking.com to verify prices. At times, one is sold out of rooms while another at the same place has rooms. We also often find some European hotels, especially smaller ones, on Booking.com but not on Expedia. It could be they are a Europe-based company. Try both before booking accommodations.

[Vacation Rental By Owner \(VRBO\)](#)

Are you traveling with a family or having an extended stay at your destination?

With over 2 million bookable vacation rentals, [VRBO](#) connects homeowners with families and vacationers looking for something more than a hotel for their trip. The [VRBO](#) community offers families or groups various rental property types such as condos, cabins, lake rentals, beach houses, etc.

[VRBO](#) is now under the Expedia group's ownership, which many were worried about, but it hasn't panned out to be a concern. It is a massive network with access to all lodging forms should issues arise. Joelle has used VRBO for many years with her family and has had no problems with it.

[Viator](#)

As the leading marketplace for travel experiences, [Viator](#) believes that making memories is what travel is all about. And with 300,000+ experiences to explore—everything from simple tours to extreme adventures (and all the niche, interesting stuff in between)—making memories that will last a lifetime has never been easier.

With industry-leading flexibility and last-minute availability, it's never too late to make any day extraordinary. This one site has it all and has experiences throughout the world. We use them often during our travels, especially for food tours. We especially take the time to read the reviews provided.

[Amazon.com](#)

An excellent source for travel essentials and guides

We now have our own Amazon Storefront with all our favorite travel accessories and gear in one place. Check out our travel store at the link below.

[Wanderers Compass Amazon Storefront](#)

Amazon is one of the most comprehensive online shopping sources in the world. Teams worldwide provide lower prices, better selection, and rapid delivery on behalf of customers. They offer a vast

inventory, and their 1.7 million small and medium businesses worldwide selling on Amazon.com offer extensive options to customers.

We buy most of our travel books, accessories, and luggage from Amazon. We have ordered up to two days before travel and get what we need.

HYDAWAY

This is not your ordinary drinkware company. The **HYDAWAY** difference is what their products do when you're not using them. Practical and portable, HYDAWAY doesn't take up unnecessary space in your already-packed life or pile up in landfills. We all know that trying to pack light while being environmentally conscious can be difficult. Having the right items can make a world of difference.

HYDAWAY provides that.

We have used their collapsible water bottle, carrying case for the water bottle, and collapsible insulated drink tumbler. They are all lightweight and durable. A conservation-focused product you can be proud to buy.

Use our Promo Code. WANCOM15, at checkout for 15% off your Hydaway order

Welcome Pick-ups

(Airport and sightseeing service)

A global leader in ground transportation for travelers. They help hundreds of companies worldwide enhance their services and boost their revenue with our 5-star ride experiences and hassle-free automation.

Founded in 2015 in Athens, Greece, **Welcome Pick-ups** goes above and beyond the standard transfer service as the first company to deliver a holistic, in-destination travel experience. From the moment a traveler arrives at a new destination until they return home, Welcome accommodates all their travel needs (transfers, travel products, things to do, information) as the easiest, friendliest, and most personalized solution.

PhotoAiD

Do you feel like you are wasting time visiting an on-site photographer only to be embarrassed by the photo? Would you like control of the final product? Get the perfect VISA or passport photo online with PhotoAiD.

When traveling, you often need to apply for official documents such as a passport, ID, and different kinds of licenses or cards. Those applications require a picture that must meet specific conditions to be accepted, depending on the country. Now, it is possible to take this picture at home without the help of a professional photographer. PhotoAiD allows you to take the perfect biometric photo you approve without leaving home.

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