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DESTINATIONS

## Small Is Beautiful

How boutique hotels are  
capitalizing on  
short-term stays

STORY BY JILLIAN DARA

▶ **THERE ARE MORE** than eight million active Airbnb listings around the globe—yet, as the amount of short-term rental properties increases, user popularity is decreasing. The reason? Boutique hotels can now rival the rental platforms by offering even more personalized stays.

"Today's travelers want consistency, peace of mind, and meaningful extras that enhance their trip," says Bettina Landt, managing director at **White Elephant Palm Beach**. Though Airbnb once offered travelers a more curated way to experience a destination, these details were never considered. This, paired with hidden fees, misrepresentation of accommodations, and lack of customer support, have presented turbulent times for the booking platform, and boutique hotels are positioned to



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capitalize on it.

"We're in the sweet spot between the privacy and individuality people once sought in short-term rentals and the reassurance, service and consistency of a hotel," says Francesco Sardelli, general manager of **The Hari London**. He says boutique hotels now have an opportunity to shine "because they can offer something that's hard to replicate: professional hospitality with heart."

Sardelli has already noticed an uptick in bookings with occupancy rising by 18 percent and direct website bookings up 42 percent since 2023. He's not the only one: At **La Siesta Resort & Villas** in Islamorada, Florida, the five-year average growth of room nights for villas is up 13 percent. Miami's **Mayfair House Hotel & Garden** has witnessed a 35-percent rise in bookings compared to pre-pandemic levels. And in Rome, **Hotel de la Ville**'s overall revenue increased by 350 percent since opening in 2019.

"Travelers are increasingly seeking personalized experiences, safety and a sense of connection to the local culture," says Hima Duggirala, director of marketing at Mayfair House Hotel & Garden. "Our unique aesthetic and curated ambiance resonate with those looking for more than just a place to stay—they want a memorable experience." A unique aesthetic, indeed: Located in the Coconut Grove neighborhood, the hotel features a lush indoor atrium of plants as well as accommodations with a maximalist design. Boutique hotels were already known for their distinctive flair, but this renewed interest has encouraged properties to add even more individual perks.

"We're continually enhancing the villa experience to create more value for our guests," says Sean Leister, resort manager of



## "Today's travelers want consistency and meaningful extras."

La Siesta Resort & Villas. Guests already enjoyed access to amenities including 12 dining outlets and a complimentary water taxi, but now every villa rental includes a private boat slip in the resort marina and a dedicated butler who acts as a personal concierge from arrival through checkout.

Over in Rome, for travelers checking into Hotel de la Ville's suites with terraces, the property now offers a guided stargazing session with a professional telescope and, if desired, an outdoor bed to spend the night under the stars. At The Hari London, Sardelli and his team invested in tailored training "to ensure every interaction is personal and genuine," he says. "We empower our team to notice details, whether that's remembering a favorite drink or suggesting an art exhibition based on a past conversation."

These memorable experiences "keep guests returning," says Landt, furthering how boutiques are poised for success. Boutique hotels are "both a home away from home and a place of elevated comfort," adds Landt, "where guests enjoy the support, attention and conveniences they'd never want to be without, with a team that anticipates needs before they even arise." With amenities galore and increased personalization across the boutique front, why take a rental gamble when a breadth of check-ins around the globe awaits to enhance your stay?

**FROM TOP**  
The Hari London;  
Hotel de la Ville,  
Rome



## BOOKS



**1929: Inside the Greatest Crash in Wall Street History—and How It Shattered a Nation** by Andrew Ross Sorkin (out 10/14)  
Andrew Ross Sorkin is turning his attention to the beginning of the Great Depression, introducing a sprawling cast and a web of causes. It's impossible not to read the book as a cautionary tale about corruption today.



**Playful: How Play Shifts Our Thinking, Inspires Connection, and Sparks Creativity** by Cas Holman (out 10/21)  
Holman creates toys that promote creativity. In her new book, she argues that we start out playful and then suppress those instincts in pursuit of productivity. But that shift can have negative ramifications for our emotional health and work life.