



There are an estimated 700,000 hotels and resorts around the globe with 15.5 million rooms. So, among those hundreds of thousands of properties – and with Airbnb already notching up 81,000 properties – what exactly does it take these days to truly elevate a hotel beyond a place to sleep the night?

Is it the designer fitout, the extensive pillow menu, the mini bar stocked with your beverage of choice? Perhaps it's the pot of tea or handwritten note left by the turn-down fairies, or the extraordinary architecture or history stretching back to a time of kings and conquerors.

Knowing you're sleeping where presidents, royalty or Hollywood starlets have laid their head is thrilling, but hotels can't be complacent if they hope to entice today's savvy experiential-led travellers, especially in the age of Airbnb.

Attention to detail and the ability to anticipate guests' needs before they're even aware of them can take a hotel stay to another level, says Jeremy Nordkamp, general manager of The Calile Hotel, Brisbane, Australia's current hotel darling.

Baillie Lodges director Hayley Baillie believes it's about creating a sense of place unique to the hotel's location – architecture, local staff, regionally sourced food and drink, cultural relevance and experiences – that allow guests to better understand the destination they're visiting.

Here is Traveller's list, among that total of 700,000, of truly exceptional overseas hotels (along with the standout stays of some of Australia's top hoteliers) that we consider are destinations in their own right, unto themselves guaranteeing so much more than just a place to lay your sunhat. Be warned though: you can check in to these extraordinary places but you almost certainly will never want to leave.

FIVE SUPERIOR ACCOMMODATION STYLES YOU MUST TRY

THE RUSTIC NORTH AMERICAN INN

The Willows Inn, two hours from Seattle, embodies the best of North America's charming inns complete with Noma alumni chef, 15 cosy rooms and exemplary Pacific north-west hospitality.

willows-inn.com

THE LUXURY KIWI LODGE

The legendary Huka Lodge, on the banks of the fast flowing Waikato River, pioneered the luxury lodge concept which New Zealand does so well. Everyone, including the Queen, has stayed in Huka's 25 luxe suites and cottages where days revolve around excellent food, impeccable service and bespoke activities.

hukalodge.co.nz

THE RAMPED-UP GLAMPING STAY

Perched between dense rainforest, verdant rice fields and the sacred Wos River, the Bill Bensley-designed Capella Ubud offers 22 lavish tented retreats with private saltwater pools, espresso machines, tea stations, vast wooden terraces and a private collection of antiques and artwork. capellahotels.com

THE CLASSIC JAPANESE RYOKAN

Nishimuraya Honkan, in the charming onsen town of Kinosaki, is one of Japan's most beautiful ryokans owned by the same family for seven generations. More than 150 years old, it offers 34 Japanese-style rooms, sculpted gardens and its own hot spring.

nishimuraya.ne.jp

THE DUDE RANCH

South-west hospitality, cowboys, sleigh rides and haute mountain cuisine are on offer at the Home Ranch in the Elk River Valley. Choose from rustic cabins or cosy lodge rooms and tackle outdoor pursuits such as snowshoeing, cross country skiing and horseback riding. homeranch.com