

Travel

Deluxe Destinations and Deals



The Glitz, the Glamour: The Hotel Ritz

At Madrid's **Hotel Ritz**, there was a time when women could not wear trousers and a gentleman *had* to don formal attire for dinner! Fortunately, 100 years after its founding, management has eased up on the dress code. To mark its milestone centenary this year, the legendary hotel is staging delightful celebrations through September: Executive chef Jorge Gonzales, of the hotel's elegant Goya Restaurant, will recreate dishes reflecting the evolution of cooking styles throughout the century, including the hotel's 1936 New Year's Eve gala dinner. Perhaps best of all, there is a discounted package: Book a minimum three-night stay and the hotel will reduce the normal rate for the first night to 100 euros. (The special rate is for a classic room, priced from €535 [approximately US \$686] per night, including the daily extravagant breakfast buffet.)

The Ritz's 137 rooms are all decorated sumptuously—and differently—with lavish wall coverings swathing the chambers, exquisite antiques, fine porcelains, and crystal chandeliers. Even the laundry bags are classy—embroidered white piqué—and frequent guests are given sinfully plush bathrobes, custom-embroidered with their initials. The roster of hotel regulars is legion: Princess Grace and Prince Rainier honeymooned here; American heiress Barbara Hutton cavorted with *toreros* upstairs; kings and queens from just about every royal family tree have camped here, as have Madonna and Plácido Domingo, Arthur Rubinstein and the Jonas Brothers, Salvador Dalí and Manolo Blahnik—not to mention Fidel Castro and Yasir Arafat.

Little wonder that *Travel & Leisure* consistently includes the Ritz in its Best Hotels of the World List; it also appears constantly on *Condé Nast Traveler's* Gold List. And if history, cuisine, elegance, and service are not enough, the hotel is so centrally located that you'll fall out of bed and land in a trifecta of monumental museums: Museo del Prado, the Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza, and the wonderful Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia...and it's a short hop to the bucolic Retiro Park and the famed Plaza Mayor.

Ruth J. Katz writes the travel features for *Promenade* magazine and has written about travel for *Diversión*, *Golf Connoisseur*, *New York Home*, and many custom-published magazines. She has traveled to more than 50 countries and rarely says no to an opportunity to pack a bag and get on a plane to learn about a new culture or country.

◀ PREVIOUS PAGE 1 2 3 [Print this article](#)

Comments

Anonymous
February 23, 2011
9:09pm

What a wonderful article! Not only does it have me dreaming of an elegant trip to Le Manoir or the Ritz in Madrid (both of which sound unbeatable) but I promptly joined the Voyage Prive website (thank you for the invitation) so I may actually go somewhere fun in the near future! Not just dreams but action - this is my kind of website. Keep up the good work.

Current Columns

ON THE TOWN
Midwinter Medley: Film, Theater, Arts and More

CITYHARVEST
A Locavore in Winter: Fat Pickings

MOVIN' ON
Savoring the Second Half of Life

HOME DESIGN
Abracadabra! Double-Duty Furniture

CITYGOURMET
Divine Libations for Non-Drinkers

CITYARTS
Women Antiques Dealers

CITYSTYLE
Reboot for the Chills of Winter

Current Features



Gauguin and His Women



The Kids Are All Right ... What About the Parents?



The E-Date Chronicles: Meeting Your Match



The Encore Generation: Making a Difference



On the Avenue: Steering



Disparate Housewives

AS RITZY AS IT GETS: CÉSAR RITZ



Ritz

Nicknamed the "king of hoteliers and hotelier to kings," César Ritz (1850–1918) was a formidable Swiss. And, yes, he is the man behind the word *ritzy*. He was considered a pioneering *wunderkind* in his day, intuitively knowing what it takes to serve and cosset the wealthy. A man of

impeccable taste, he wisely partnered with Auguste Escoffier (arguably the father of modern French cuisine), when the two opened a restaurant in Baden-Baden. (It is not surprising that today there are two Ritz hospitality-college campuses in Switzerland, a country that is considered *the* destination for an education in the hospitality trades.)

The duo were "summoned" to London by no less than Richard D'Oyly Carte to become the chief honchos (manager and chef) of the *Savoy Hotel*, still one of London's finest. Ritz then went on to spearhead the building of the *Ritz in Paris* (also an enviable property), then the *Ritz in London*, where the afternoon tea remains so emblematic of fine English tea services there are five seatings!