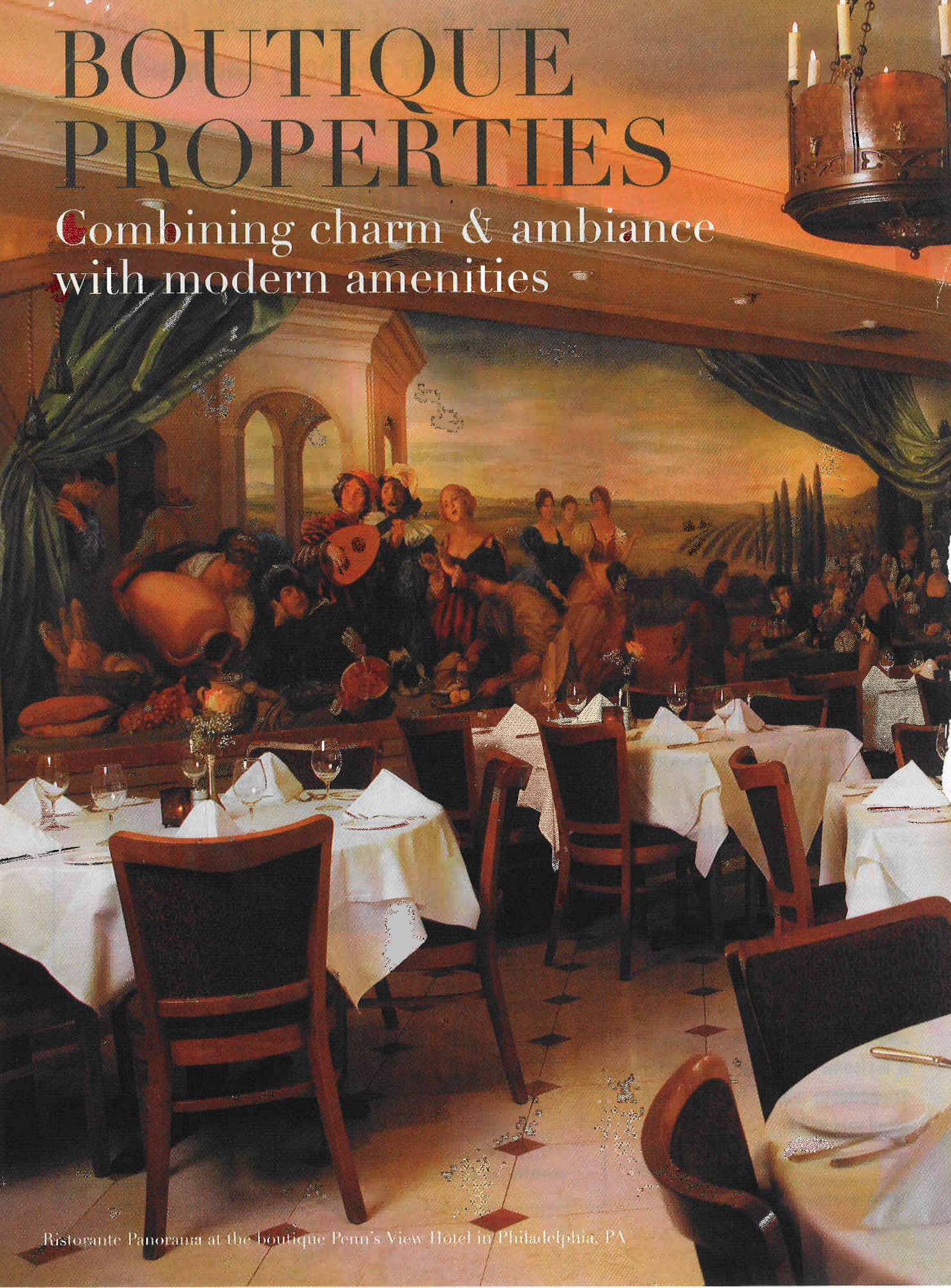



BOUTIQUE PROPERTIES

Combining charm & ambiance
with modern amenities



Ristorante Panorama at the boutique Penn's View Hotel in Philadelphia, PA



At a remote hotel nestled deep in the countryside, a guest sinks into a luxurious soft leather couch to read the paper while being served tea and biscuits next to a crackling fire. The background noise includes a friendly bellman welcoming back familiar guests and inquiring about their travels.

A safe haven, rich in history, this hotel has survived centuries of travelers and is rich in tradition, but at the same time is impeccably kept.

A long train ride away, another guest sinks into a couch and is being served. But this couch actually looks like a piece of artwork. It is clothed in a stark white fabric, and is shaped in edgy curves. Actually, all of the furniture is white.

With jet-black hair, porcelain skin and perfect posture, a server suggests the signature martini, which is the creation of the bartender who is referred to as a mixologist. This hotel is also rich in history. The building was once a bank in the 17th century, but is now one of the hottest haunts in the city - known as THE place to see and be seen.

The visions of the hotel in the countryside versus the hotel in the city may be quite different, but both guests are staying at what is considered a "boutique" hotel. When a guest stays at a boutique property, they anticipate more than traditional decor and standard service; they expect to be enveloped within an "experience." They want something that is all together different than a traditional, branded hotel.

by Melissa McDevitt

Boutique hotels are often independently owned and operated. They can be located in chic urban areas or in quaint remote regions. The one commonality they boast is a unique atmosphere - whether it is charming, historic or uber-trendy.

To sell themselves against the powerhouse, nationally recognized brands, boutiques tout their ability to customize packages and pricing to meet specific client needs, as they typically do not have to adhere to certain brand requirements.

But boutiques sometimes have an uphill battle in terms of sales and marketing. Their resources can be limited by financial restrictions and a lack of access to national databases and client lists. They must consistently perform above par to prove themselves to plan-

ners and rely heavily on "word of mouth" marketing that stems from satisfied clients.

On the other hand, their overall profits can be greater because they do not incur franchise fees, and more often win over clients who become repeat business for them, rendering them less volatile during difficult financial times.

Two of the first boutique hotels in the world opened their doors to the public in 1981: The Blakes Hotel in South Kensington, London (designed by celebrity stylist Anouska Hempel) and the Bedford in Union Square, San Francisco. The Bedford is the first in a series of 34 boutique hotels currently operated under the flag of one of the most eminent players in the boutique hotel world today, the Kimpton Group.

But what exactly is a boutique hotel?

Many boutique properties can be characterized as being small (usually with 150 or fewer overnight rooms), along with providing a high level of service geared toward an upscale clientele.

They usually have charming interiors with a lot of "personality" as well, and may include distinctly different and stylish guest rooms and public areas. And while a number of boutique properties exude the charm and grace of a bygone era, they offer numerous contemporary features and high-tech modern amenities also.

Director of sales and marketing of the Inn at Canal Square, Sandi Filer-

Gothie agrees with this definition in theory, but says that rather than defining her clientele as affluent, she prefers to call them “discriminating travelers.”

Leslie Pattison, U.S. director of sales and marketing for O’Callahan Hotels, says that her boutique property also markets to an audience that is seeking a unique meeting or event experience. This seems to be the mantra of most boutique properties.

Because boutique hotels typically have fewer rooms and more staff per guest than a branded hotel, their costs have traditionally been expected to be higher than those of the big chains. But in the past few years, those costs have come down and are now considered to be “affordably chic.”

Regardless of how one defines a boutique property, one thing is certain; planners who select such venues are looking for more than mere lodging accommodations for their group. They are searching for a true experience.

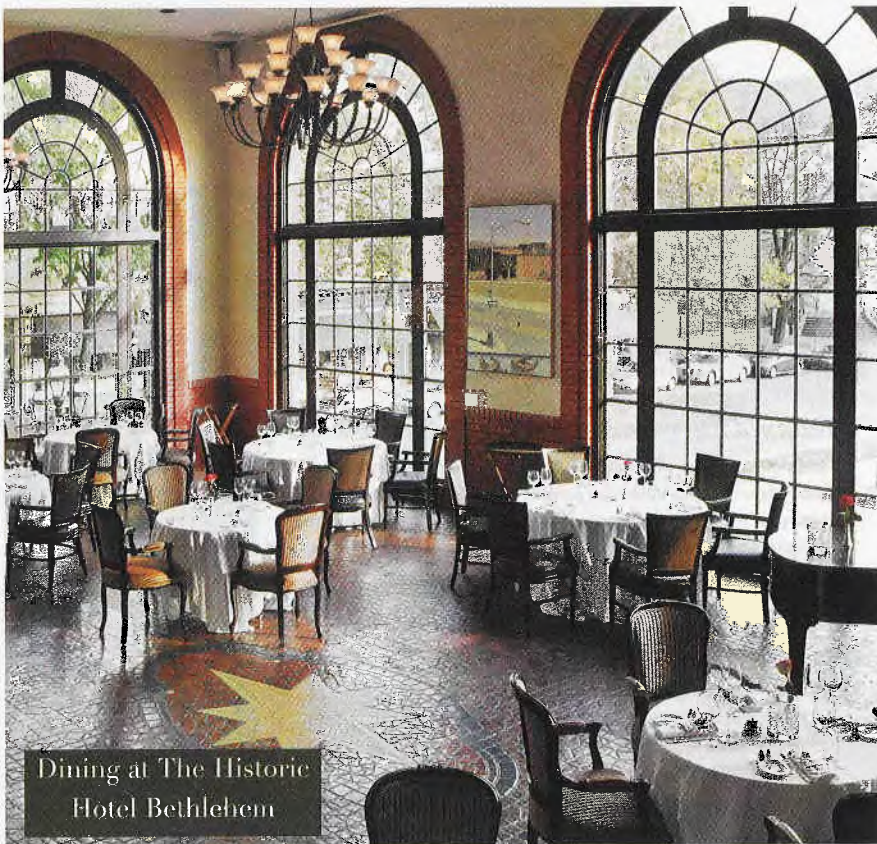
The following boutique properties provide unique atmospheres for groups with discriminating tastes who are seeking an out of the ordinary location and experience for their meeting or event.

While there are numerous other boutique properties that are certainly deserving of mention, those that follow serve as diverse examples that highlight what all boutique properties have in common - the ability to deliver an incredible group experience.

Hotel Bethlehem

Newly restored to its original 1922 grandeur, Historic Hotel Bethlehem’s impressive facade

Nassau Inn



Dining at The Historic Hotel Bethlehem

encases an even more impressive, elegantly appointed interior.

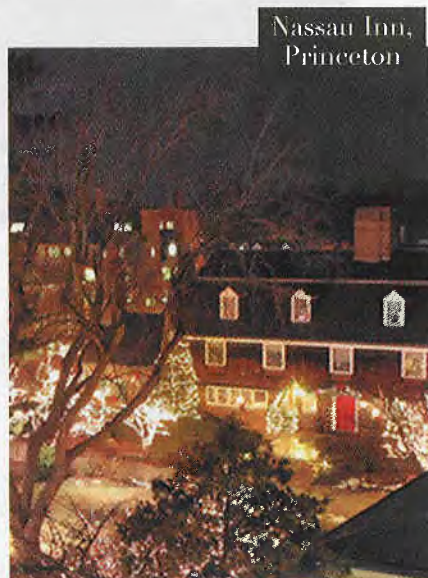
An extensive restoration of the hotel was recently completed and has returned this historic hotel in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania to its original splendor and elegance. Floor-to-ceiling palladium windows provide dramatic views of the historic shopping district just outside its front doors. Seven large murals, painted by George Gray and hung in the Mural Ballroom since 1937, retell the history of the naming of Bethlehem on Christmas Eve back in 1741.

The hotel is located in the heart of the historic district. It is home to 128 guests rooms, including 28 suites with Italian marble bathrooms and period fixtures, and 14,000 square feet of function space for corporate or social events. Historic Bethlehem Hotel offers award winning cuisine and a tradition of Bethlehem hospitality that was begun by the Moravians in the 18th century.

Casual dining in the Tap Room complements the award-winning restaurant 1741 on the Terrace.

A full service property, among the Hotel Bethlehem's many amenities are two restaurants, complimentary wireless Internet access, and a fitness center.

Quaint shops, charming boutiques, museums and great dining can be found in Bethlehem just steps from the hotel, as well.



Located in the heart of Princeton, New Jersey, Nassau Inn prides itself on its charm and elegance that dates all the way back to 1756, along with its meticulous attention to detail. At this full-service downtown hotel, groups can enjoy the property's 203 guest rooms and 10,000 square feet of banquet and meeting space in which the inn can accommodate events for up to 250.

High-tech amenities and top-notch service can be found throughout the hotel, including wireless Internet access and an AV technician on-site to assure that all technical needs are met during events. When it's time to relax, The Yankee Doodle taproom is a great place to enjoy a meal, or just to settle in with a drink next to a fireplace.

The inn attracts many corporate groups, especially pharmaceutical and financial industries because of its central location. Princeton University-related groups take advantage of the space, and the site is popular among social groups, as well.

"Our catering specialists customize menus to our clients' needs and desires. One contact is with the client from the beginning planning stages though the event itself. Clients really like that continuous, personalized attention," says Debbie Rolan, marketing manager for Nassau Inn.

Outside the hotel, everything a group could want is within walking distance. There is Palmer Square, local restaurants, shopping, museums and theaters, along with the renowned Princeton University Campus.