

## Sunset Tower Hotel

*LA's latest hotspot*

**THE LOWDOWN** This opulent 1929 art deco landmark has had more facelifts than most of the local residents. Its last incarnation was as the Argyle, but it was reopened last year by new owner Jeff Klein, who wanted to create a chic, discreet hideaway hotel. **WHO OWNS IT?** US-born Klein says he is 'freakishly obsessed' with hotels. At the age of 12, he was dragged around Europe; the Ritz Paris and the Hotel Cipriani in Venice later inspired him to create the City Club in New York. Klein wanted something reminiscent of Thirties, Forties and Fifties Hollywood glamour, and says he hates 'over-styled boutique hotels'.

**STAR QUALITY** In 1947, Truman Capote wrote: 'I am living in a very posh establishment, the Sunset Tower, which, or so the local gentry tell me, is where every scandal that ever happened happened...' Guests have included Claudette Colbert, Errol Flynn, Frank Sinatra and Liza Minnelli. **NAME-DROPPING** Expect to bump into Hollywood heroes such as Bill Murray or Antonio Banderas angsting over new scripts by the pool, or cool fashion types including Tom Ford and French *Vogue* editor Carine Roitfeld.

**CONCEPT** To return old-school, understated glamour to Sunset Boulevard.

**WE LOVE...** the snug bar (based on the Hemingway Bar in the Ritz Paris) with its soft amber light, wood panels and baby grand; the Forties wallpaper in the bedrooms; and the limestone-floored bathrooms with deep bathtubs.

**BEST ROOM** The penthouse suite has a wraparound terrace with great views – if you're looking for a venue for that unforgettable LA orgy, stop the search here. The suite has also been home to Howard Hughes and John Wayne (who reputedly kept a cow on the terrace for fresh milk).

**GOOD THINGS** A lot of the original features remain, but it never gets too whimsical. It really feels as though you might bump into Gloria Swanson around the corner. **BAD THINGS** Watery coffee at breakfast; slightly stingy room-service portions.

**IDEAL FOR...** people who want a low-key Saturday night on Sunset Boulevard. The restaurant specialises in simple fare like steak frites. It's also a great place to pick up gossip about some of the biggest stars in Hollywood. **STEPHANIE THEOBALD**

*Sunset Tower Hotel, 8358 Sunset Boulevard, West Hollywood (+1 323 654 7100; [www.sunsettowerhotel.com](http://www.sunsettowerhotel.com)), from \$235 a double a night. British Airways (0870 850 9850) flies to LA, from £418 return.*

# Hollywood double act

*Both of these hip Tinseltown hotels are glamorous hideaways for LA's A-list. But which is the ultimate in cool: the chic urban hang-out that is Sunset Tower Hotel, or the leafy sanctuary of Hotel Bel-Air?*

## Hotel Bel-Air

### *The classic Hollywood hideout*

**THE LOWDOWN** Tucked away in 12 acres of bougainvillea-filled gardens and hidden courtyards, one mile west of Beverly Hills, this pink-stucco mission-style hotel is the perfect celebrity bolthole.

**WHO OWNS IT?** The Sultan of Brunei's brother, Prince Jefri, who bought the hotel 13 years ago and spent \$16m on it.

**STAR QUALITY** Cary Grant, Grace Kelly, Julia Roberts and Tom Cruise have all checked in – the Bel-Air is a true A-list favourite. Don't miss the Fitness Centre, also known as 'Marilyn Monroe Cottage' – it used to be a bungalow, and Monroe stayed in it with husband Joe DiMaggio.

**NAME-DROPPING** Russell Crowe stayed in the Herb Garden Suite (room 264) after he won the Best Actor Oscar for his performance in *Gladiator*. All that's left behind from the celebration party is a sign renaming the suite Crowe's Nest. **CONCEPT** Old-world glamour meets elegant French country house. No two of the 91 rooms are alike. Tapestries and oil paintings hang on the walls, and there are cosy fires in the winter.

**WE LOVE...** The quirky welcoming committee: five white swans wander over the lawns and through the chef's herb garden.

**BEST ROOM** If it's Oscars season, the poolside rooms are the ones to book (they are situated in the former stables, where guests used to keep their horses); with big-hitters such as Graydon Carter and Nicole Kidman lounging around the oval pool, this is where megawatt film deals – and careers – are made.

**GOOD THINGS** As it's in Stone Canyon, the hotel is always five degrees cooler than the rest of Beverly Hills – bliss in the mid-summer months. Look out for the new spa, which opens at the end of this year.

**BAD THINGS** The rooms are spread out, so ask for one near the entrance to avoid trekking back and forth. Mobile reception in some rooms is patchy – a drawback for BlackBerry addicts.

**IDEAL FOR...** publicity-shy celebs such as Tom Hanks (who books the secluded bungalows); and for illicit affairs – the hotel oozes discreet charm, and staff keep their lips firmly sealed about what goes on behind the locked bedroom doors and in the private Jacuzzis. **FRANCESCA MARTIN** □

*Hotel Bel-Air, 701 Stone Canyon Road, Los Angeles (+1 310 472 1211; [www.hotelbelair.com](http://www.hotelbelair.com)). Three nights room only costs from £1,165 a person, including British Airways flights and transfers, with Carrier (0161 491 7640; [www.carrier.co.uk](http://www.carrier.co.uk)).*

