

10 Intimate URBAN HOTELS

MOST BIG CITIES have their share of grand hotels, opulent palaces where the attentive service and abundant amenities make guests feel like royalty. And such places certainly have their role. But there is something more deeply romantic about small, intimate hotels that serve as oases—secret hideaways, almost—amid urban bustle.

New York City's Inn at Irving Place may perfectly embody the type. Its location in the historic Gramercy Park area, inconspicuously wedged between the commercial intensity of midtown Manhattan and the gritty and hip neighborhoods

farther downtown, makes it a sort of enclave within an enclave. The impression is enhanced by the fact that in the two adjoining 1830s Federal-style townhouses that make up the Inn, you can linger over a Continental breakfast, partake of afternoon high tea and sup at Verbena, one of New York's finest restaurants, on the garden level beneath the Inn. (Verbena is run independently but

supplies room service to guests—as do a local bistro and martini bar.) The 12 luxurious, antique-filled rooms and suites evoke the Gilded Age; modern comforts like CD players, minibars and Net access are all discreetly tucked away. The overall effect is homey, refined, gracious.

If you do decide to venture out, the Inn is near much of the best that the city has to offer. Among the neighborhood's own highlights are the city's only private (that is, fenced in and locked) park and the gloriously abundant Union Square Greenmarket, both about two blocks away. Stepping back into the 19th century is pricey: Rooms range from \$325 to \$495. The Elsie de Wolfe suite is the largest; the rooms in back are the quietest. —SUZANNE WOOLLEY



10 urban oases

SEATTLE
Inn at the Market (\$255)
800-446-4484

SAN FRANCISCO
The Union Street Inn (\$200)
415-346-0424

LOS ANGELES
Argyle Hotel (\$265)
800-225-2637

HOUSTON
Lancaster Hotel (\$170)
800-231-0336

NEW ORLEANS
Soniata House (\$195)
800-544-8808

CHICAGO
Hotel Burnham (\$209)
877-294-9712

PHILADELPHIA
The Rittenhouse Hotel (\$220)
800-635-1042

BOSTON
Fifteen Beacon (\$350)
877-982-3226

NEW YORK
Inn at Irving Place (\$325)
800-685-1447

WASHINGTON, D.C.
Morrison House (\$200)
800-367-0800 (in Alexandria)