



# Getting Away

## Unique Hotels

*Their histories and  
the management behind them*

by Carol A. Palmer

Pool at the Rittenhouse Hotel, PA

# aires

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Guestroom at the Rittenhouse

Rittenhouse Square is one of the original city squares designed by William Penn. Now it's at the center of Philadelphia's most exclusive neighborhood. Its sweet womanly statue holds out a rose to invite you across a leafy, landscaped courtyard. Amazingly, a 35-story steel-and-glass tower jutting skyward behind her leaves the Square's historical ambience undisturbed.

Welcome to the *Rittenhouse Hotel*. Step away from the hum of the nearby business district into a creamy, marble-floored foyer with gold Louis IV-style tapestry armchairs, oriental rugs, and well-chosen objets d'art. Move from the city's bustle into a calm, postmodern atmosphere. Five clocks keep time for international travelers. Flags gently hint that the staff can help in 20 languages.

Stroll into the sedate Cassatt Lounge and Tea Room for a British tea, or in mild weather walk through arched French doors to the sunny garden and fountain, or just admire the art-filled hallways. Let the hotel's lavish colors and fabrics stimulate your fantasies. More towels? Tea in your room at 4PM? Go ahead and ask. Superlative personal attention is the specialty of this house. vice president and general man-

ager David G. Benton can recall building custom furniture for Pavarotti, converting a shower into a steamroom for Bruce Willis, changing a room number for a superstitious guest and removing a door plate reading "Presidential Suite" for a modest businessman.

Benton, cheerful and elegantly casual, loves to tell stories about the hotel's towering standards. A high staff-to-guest ratio and low room count (98) ensure undivided attention. These are the largest guest rooms in the city. Opulent and eclectically furnished, each has a view of the Square or the city. Superb amenities include plush linens and robes, marble baths and separate showers, color TV, master TV/VCRs, video library access, three phones (two with double lines), fax, high speed internet access, voice mail, minibars, closets that lock and fully controllable heat and air.

Benton and his staff also provide personal pampering. This is where 24-hour room service, twice-daily maid service, complimentary limousines and even pet care begin to melt the world away.



The Cassatt Lounge

The concierge is a member of the prestigious Clefs d'Or. The fitness center offers personal trainers. There is also an acclaimed spa and salon, a skylit pool, a ballroom and a comprehensive business center.

Executive Chef Jim Coleman, author of the *Rittenhouse Cookbook* exemplifies Benton's over-the-top philosophy. Overseeing five dining venues, the ebullient Coleman creates heart-healthy recipes that offer joyful yet careful indulgence. Tie on an apron and get ready to sample your way through his kitchen at a "Raid the Refrigerator" party.

Still further over the top are the Rittenhouse's extended-stay suites, with gourmet kitchens and formal dining rooms for stays of a month to a year, at rates from \$9,600 to \$15,000 a month. Distinguished chef competitions, wine tastings and important celebrations constantly build on the hotel's international stature. The hotel has won the AAA Five Diamond Award since 1991 and recognition by Conde Nast Traveler as one of the best hotels in the world.

All this only adds stories to Benton's repertoire. When you hear how Tom Hanks was kept healthy through drastic weight loss for his role in Philadelphia, or what makes guests like Oprah Winfrey, Phil Collins and President George Bush return, you may need Benton for just one more favor. Ask him to keep your real-world address handy. Just in case, once under the spell of the Rittenhouse, you "forget."



The Presidential Suite