



ASPEN'S CROWN JEWEL

Glamorous and louche, the historic **Hotel Jerome** reaches a new peak after a makeover.



(CLOCKWISE FROM TOP) ASPEN STALWART, REVITALIZED; THE 1889 HOTEL JEROME; THE NEW LIVING ROOM; A RENOVATED GUEST ROOM; A JUNIOR KING WITH MOUNTAIN VIEW; THE NOTORIOUS JBAR, ONETIME "OFFICE" OF HUNTER S. THOMPSON.

➔ The grande dame of American ski hotels, the Hotel Jerome is a brick pile that dominates Aspen's Main Street, looking more like a bank building (it is listed on the National Register of Historic Places) than a rumpus room for the rich. Constructed in 1889 by Macy's department store magnate Jerome B. Wheeler to accommodate free-spending silver barons, the Jerome became one of the first haunts of celebrities when skiing was in its youth, drawing actors such as Cary Grant and John Wayne and, later, freewheeling 1960s types like the Eagles and Hunter S. Thompson, who used the hotel's JBar as his office.

The hotel had fallen on fallow times following the 2008 recession but was given a multimillion-dollar renovation last winter under the new management of Auberge Resorts (Auberge du Soleil; Inn at Palmetto Bluff). Thanks to that major face-lift—Aspen's other sport—the Jerome has been reborn.

The lobby is now the Living Room, and the decor is like a mash-up of art moderne and a garage sale at Teddy Roosevelt's estate: Western-themed oil paintings and photographs, a buffalo head, Le Corbusier chairs, and more leather touches than a dominatrix's lair. Designer Todd-Avery Lenahan employed a heavy hand on millwork and molding to achieve an idealized version of Western Victoriana. Cozy touches in the 93 guest rooms—cashmere curtains and a minibar posing as a leather campaign chest—are more Ralph Lauren than Louis L'Amour.

As you would expect in Aspen, the lighting is Hollywood-worthy, and everything and everybody looks swell. The fabled JBar, likely the scene of more bad behavior than any other locale in this storied town, has been appointed with the kind of leather chairs and chandeliers you might find in a gentlemen's club as opposed to a ski bum's launchpad.

All told, the gracious and imaginative renovation has restored the Jerome to its former role as the public living room of Aspen. It's why you might spot local residents like Kevin Costner and Jack Nicholson in for a quiet drink, while Owen and Luke Wilson—or Chelsea Handler and Whitney Cummings—are cutting up a few tables over. As for the famous double "kissing chair" in the lobby, it's been upgraded to a triple-seat model. Hunter Thompson would approve.

—BY EVERETT POTTER

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