

How To Get Boutique Hotel Style

Shop with Liz Lambert to see how she created Austin's coolest new place to stay. BY JENNIFER MCKENZIE FRAZIER



Stay in style at the Hotel Saint Cecilia.

Though she's a lawyer, hotelier, and entrepreneur, when asked to describe herself, Liz Lambert says "creative." Her Hotel San Jose in Austin was once a beat-up flophouse and is now one of the most stylish boutique hotels in the nation. When she opened it on South Congress Avenue, she changed the entire landscape of the area. Her latest pet project around town? Hotel Saint Cecilia, which she turned from an 1880s Victorian mansion into a sophisticated yet edgy 14-room getaway. Come with us on a tour, and pick up some style and shopping tips along the way.

Liz's New Hotel "With Hotel Saint Cecilia, I think of the Rolling Stones in the early 1970s. It's beautiful decadence," she says.

Named after the patron saint of music, the intimate boutique hotel is anchored by a renovated mansion formerly known as the Miller-Crockett House. Liz added three gray stucco bungalows to the sprawling property, pairing the old and new. She did the same with the interiors.

Hästens Swedish mattresses (one carries a price tag of \$27,000), breakfast trays with silver tea sets, a minibar stocked with caviar, and magnificent



Texas hotel maverick Liz Lambert

chandeliers contrast with a turntable in every room, chain mail curtains, velvet furnishings and wallpaper, and photos of legends such as Hunter S. Thompson and The Beatles. It's Austin country club class meets London nightclub fashion.

Details: *Weekday rates start at \$250 a night for a studio. Suite 4, with its own private backyard and fire pit, costs \$450 per night. 112 Academy Drive, Austin, TX 78704; www.hotelsaintcecilia.com or (512) 852-2400. **Editor's Tip:** The exclusive hotel lounge is known as the most sought-after invitation in town. To visit, you have to be staying at the hotel or invited by a guest. ➔ turn to page 34*

TRAVEL

“I saw a picture of Mick Jagger in the early seventies standing in front of an old Victorian. Regal and, at the same time, rock and roll.”

Liz’s Favorite Austin Shops Liz handpicks every element of her hotels—from the sheets on the beds to the pictures on the wall. When asked if she has a stylist who shops for her, she replies, “No. That would be like having someone eat for you.” While she scours several consignment stores and flea markets, these are her favorite boutiques in Austin.

• TESOROS TRADING COMPANY

She says: “Tesoros has a huge selection of handmade crafts from around the world, including Uzbek and Bolivian textiles. I shop here when I don’t have time to travel.”

We say: Go for the intricate, one-of-a-kind jewelry (love the dangly earrings), Cuban movie posters, and handwoven bags.

Info: 1500 South Congress; www.tesoros.com or (512) 447-7500

• MERCURY DESIGN STUDIO

She says: “Owner Steve Shuck is a merchandising genius. I walk through sometimes just to be inspired by his ever-changing room vignettes.”

We say: Expect a showplace of beauty—from jewelry to furniture, including tables, lamps, and light fixtures—with an added touch of quirkiness (a stuffed rat runs through a maze in a glass-covered table and tortoise shells hang on the walls).

Info: 209 West Second Street; www.mercurydesignstudio.com or (512) 236-0100

• UNCOMMON OBJECTS

She says: “Shopping here is like digging through your grandmother’s attic, if your grandmother was a pack rat with amazing taste. Sometimes you have to walk through the store twice just to see everything, and it’s pretty hard to leave without finding some treasure.”

We say: Packed with oddities of all shapes and sizes, this antiques emporium stocks everything from vintage cowboy boots and old advertising signage to nostalgic metal lunchboxes (we’re on the lookout for Wonder Woman) and peeling-paint furniture.

Info: 1512 South Congress; www.uncommonobjects.com or (512) 442-4000 •



Liz’s Shopping Tips

1. Informed choices are worth the time.

My grandmother, Lucille, had a black belt in shopping. She would give the whole store a once-over before going back to make a purchase. I was confused by this as a kid. Now I realize it’s the key to successful shopping.

2. Avoid trendy things. Use magazines and trend or decor Web sites as tools, not dictators.

3. Look for design elements in unusual places. Sometimes I am inspired by a shell or a twisted piece of wood I find or a paint color I see in graffiti.

4. Shop local. Finding an out-of-the-way shop or independent craftsman is the best way to discover unique pieces that are the cornerstones of an interesting environment.