

This copy is for your personal, non-commercial use only. To order presentation-ready copies for distribution to your colleagues, clients or customers visit <http://www.djreprints.com>.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052970203935604577066180282261296>

SITES & SIGHTINGS

Holiday Inns

This year, let someone else worry about the tree

By Jackie Cooperman

December 16, 2011

Convincing as Perry Como may be, home isn't everyone's ideal place to spend the holiday season—too much roasting, wrapping, hanging, icing and cleaning up after visiting relatives. Festive hotels can be perfect spots to enjoy the revelry while dodging the chores; lower-key destinations offer refuge to travelers who want to escape from commercialized celebrations of Christmas, Hanukkah and New Year's Eve. This winter, properties around the world have options for a range of tastes, from very traditional to decidedly alternative.



Inn on Biltmore Estate BILTMORE

Christmas trees, including a showpiece 34-foot-tall Fraser fir. Guests at the four-star Inn on Biltmore Estate can take wreath-making classes at A Gardener's Place or indulge in a Gingerbread Tea, complete with a cookie house to assemble and decorate. From \$299 per night, 1 Lodge St.; biltmore.com

Top Tree Traditions in North Carolina

Every year the 8,000-acre Biltmore estate, which the Vanderbilts first opened to their friends and family on Christmas Eve in 1895, goes all-out with holiday décor. Nearly 200,000 lights are strung around the Asheville property and candlelight concerts are held in the evenings. This season the massive Biltmore House holds 57



La Quinta Resort & Club, California LA QUINTA RESORT & CLUB

'Wonderful' Comes to Life in California

Frank Capra worked on his holiday classic, "It's a Wonderful Life," at the La Quinta Resort and Club in 1945. Last year, the resort began an annual tradition that honors the film by transforming the main plaza into an ersatz Bedford Falls, with cobblestone streets adorned with Christmas wreaths, actors dressed in period costume ringing bells and

screenings of the movie every Saturday night. Despite the lack of snow in the California desert, the hotel bar will offer a wintry George Bailey cocktail made with Bailey's Irish Cream, St.

Elizabeth Allspice Dram, white crème de cacao and gingerbread syrup. From \$149 per night, 49-499 Eisenhower Dr.; laquintaresort.com



Memmo Baleeira DESIGN HOTELS

New-Agey New Year in the Algarve

Overlooking Sagres Bay on Portugal's southern coast, the sleek and modern Memmo Baleeira is an option for letting the new year wash over you. Owner Rodrigo Machaz spends Dec. 31 riding waves with guests who like a little chill (the weather tends to be in the 50s and 60s). In the evening there are sunset drinks on Cabo de São Vicente beach, and dinner with views of fireworks exploding over the ocean. The next morning, enjoy a lazy late breakfast

and a New Year's Day yoga session. From 95 euros (about \$128) per night, Sítio da Baleeira; memmohotels.com



Mandarin Oriental, Tokyo MANDARIN ORIENTAL HOTEL GROUP

East Meets West in Japan

The five-star Mandarin Oriental, Tokyo brings Asian influences to its year-end celebrations. Mark New Year's Eve in the city's temples, which are open all night; on Jan. 1 a troupe of traditional Edo firefighters will perform at the hotel, offering blessings for health and peace. Guests receive a handmade Zodiac fan and a Japanese woodblock print depicting seven lucky gods aboard a treasure ship, which is said to provide good fortune if tucked under a pillow before bed. From Dec. 22 to 25, guests who book the Mandarin Oriental's Christmas Package will find surprise gifts in their Christmas stockings. From \$581 per night, 2-1-1 Nihonbashi Muromachi, Chuo-ku; mandarinoriental.com/tokyo

An Evening of Indulgence in the Maldives

New Year's Eve at the "barefoot luxury" resort Soneva Fushi starts with a sandbank

Champagne reception and a concert by local drummers. Afterwards, guests return to the resort's island to bike along torch- and lantern-lit jungle paths, visiting themed "pit stops," including a Thai street market with cocktails and a live band, a Japanese area serving sushi and sake and a Mediterranean tapas bar with flamenco music. From \$560 per night, Kunfunadhoo Island, Baa Atoll [SONEVA FUSHI](http://soneva-fushi.com)



Soneva Fushi, Kunfunadhoo Island, Baa Atoll [SONEVA FUSHI](http://soneva-fushi.com)



Hotel Astoria in St. Petersburg ROCCO FORTE HOTELS

Blinging in the Holidays in Russia

Rocco Forte's Hotel Astoria in St. Petersburg is getting bejeweled this year, with Cartier ornaments adorning Christmas trees in the lobby and in the hotel's five presidential suites. Cartier is also redecorating the Astoria's library, transforming it into a "fairy place" with gingerbread houses, toys, chocolate figures, candles and glittering garlands. From 9,000

rubles (about \$290) per night, 39 Bolshaya Morskaya; thehotelastoria.com

THE OFF DUTY 50 HOLIDAY GIFTS »



Corrections & Amplifications

The Biltmore estate in Asheville, N.C., offers holiday wreath-making classes at its Gardener's Place. An earlier version of this article incorrectly said the classes take place at another part of the property, the Inn on Biltmore Estate.

