

**HOTEL CHECK** **BERLIN**



**WHAT'S IT LIKE?** The 100-year-old Hotel Adlon Kempinski is a faithfully reconstructed bit of history, its venerable opulence restored in a manner belied only by its freshness. Although a Kempinski property, the Adlon capitalizes on its identity: instead of a brand channel that the guestroom TV opens on, there is a very interesting History Channel-style documentary about the life of the Adlon.

Since its first opening, it has hosted royalty, aristocrats, and celebrities of the old and new West (think Marlene Dietrich, then Michael Jackson). A guest can still imagine the balls, conferences and splendor that took place just a stone's throw from the Brandenburg Gate.

The bright lobby has the classical dignity of light marble ordered around a carved fountain, punctuated by eruptions of gilt wood and fresh flowers. The hotel bar is semi-detached by a platform and winding low marble bannister. The wood-rich elevators combine period-brass hardware with a keyscan security sensor—an unobtrusive black nub below the brass floor buttons—that allows only guests above the first floor. This is a neat summary of the reborn Adlon's historic aesthetic and modern functionality.

The Adlon survived the Second World War and brief conversion to a military hospital, only to be largely gutted by a fire. It continued to operate under various purposes until 1984. Kempinski rebuilt the Adlon in its original spirit after the Berlin Wall fell, and the hotel guests see today has been in continual operation since 1997.

**WHERE IS IT?** The Hotel Adlon Kempinski could hardly be better-placed for the business or diplomatic traveler: the U.S. Embassy and the Reichstag are nearby, the Potsdamer Platz and the Gendarmenmarkt business districts are less than a mile away, and Berlin radiates outward from the hotel's downtown location. Shopping and dining are a 15-minute walk away at the Friedrichsbahnhof, a central Metro station and bustling shopping-mall density of



stores. Of course, the Brandenburger Tor looming over the entrance to the Adlon makes it very easy to navigate by taxi. Its adjacency to the fine square of Pariser Platz and the historical parade thoroughfare of Unter den Linden make for one of Berlin's most sterling addresses.

**HOW MANY ROOMS?** 306 deluxe rooms, 48 junior suites and 30 suites of varying size and furnishings. Wheelchair-accessible, hypoallergenic and nonsmoking rooms are available.

**ROOM FACILITIES** Typical of service at the Adlon Kempinski, the porter highlighted every feature of interest in the room, and demonstrated how to work the laptop-sized safe. My room was saturated with indirect halogen lighting, inset so as not to disturb the muted gold bedboard and accents, dark wood trim, and cream carpeting. The entry corridor was a study in wood, with handsomely patterned blonde parquet flooring and considerable closet space. The floor-to-ceiling windows opened over a peaceful courtyard and view through a massive skylight into a second-floor dining room.

A very comfortable bed was enhanced by a pillow menu that included hypoallergenic, horsehair and biological (organic) dried corn kernels—I ordered the horsehair and corn pillows, and was surprised that I slept best on the latter. Work was easy at a desk amply supplied with 110V and 220V outlets, many of

which were discreetly boxed into a nearby business wardrobe including data, Internet, and fax lines. Two phones were handy, and one was cordless. Wireless and broadband Internet were available for a fee.

The television was unremarkable and medium-sized, set into a large, doored entertainment center of light wood. The bathroom was large and floored in black stone, with Kempinski-branded amenities, two jars of bath salts, and one bath oil included. Rainshower and free-hand massage heads decked out the shower stall, which had the added comfort of a smooth stone bench.

Hair dryer, robes, slippers, and minibar were also provided. The only real omission was the lack of an iron and ironing board; my clothes had arrived in a slight muddle, and not only did I have to request an iron and board every morning, but one morning the front desk told me regretfully that none were available at the moment. It was only a ten-minute wait, but that was surprising in such a first-rate hotel.

**RESTAURANTS AND BARS** The Adlon guest is spoiled for choice with restaurants: the Quarré offers high-class service and refinement, the Adlon Stube showcases regional specialties, and the Michelin-starred Lorenz Adlon eschews gastronomic fads for modern and purist cuisine. The Lobby Lounge and Bar is a great place to people-watch while listening to the grand piano and enjoying cocktails or afternoon tea.

**BUSINESS FACILITIES** The library-like business center had four computers, networked to printers. Security privileges permitted me use of my mobile devices. Meeting rooms from 322 to 5,382 square feet are available, with fax, PC, high-speed Internet, wireless Internet access, overhead/slide projectors, screens, and integrated camera system with live coverage of conferences or speeches.

**LEISURE FACILITIES** The Adlon's exercise and recreation facilities cover over 8,600 square feet and include a heated indoor swimming pool, whirlpool, ladies' and gentlemen's saunas, steambath, solarium, pool bar, massage area, fitness room with cardiovascular equipment and a Mediterranean-themed spa.

**VERDICT** This bastion of classical elegance should be the pride of Kempinski and Berlin.

**PRICES** Rooms start at \$420 and range up to \$16,000 for the Presidential Security Suite.

**CONTACT** The Hotel Adlon Kempinski, Unter den Linden 77, 10117 Berlin, Germany; tel. 49-30-2261-1111, fax 49-30-2261-1116; [www.hotel-adlon.de](http://www.hotel-adlon.de)

—Alex Féthière





a destination in its own right; though it's located on the property, its relationship with the Hotel is more balanced than dependent. Every night I was there, hotel guests mixed with locals at this welcoming spot. Dio Deká's bar is just as pleasant a place to pass the time, and offers a number of Greek beverage specialties.

**BUSINESS FACILITIES** Hotel Los Gatos feels more like a resort in regards

**WHAT'S IT LIKE?** Hotel Los Gatos is a cozy, welcoming complex of sand-colored stuccoed buildings in the sleepy Silicon Valley-area town of Los Gatos. The décor is Mediterranean villa-style, with quirky and quaint furnishings that lend an air of casual elegance to the warm interior. Fountains babble out front and in the Tuscan-landscaped courtyard by the pool, and the placid atmosphere is best enjoyed lounging there or on the private balconies attached to most of the 34 suites.

**WHERE IS IT?** Los Gatos is a small town, but flush with Silicon Valley cash—upscale boutique shopping and antiquing may be enjoyed within walking distance of the hotel, and wineries and restaurants are a point of local pride. The scenic area is couched among the foothills of the Santa Cruz Mountains, a short drive from San Jose International airport and downtown San Jose.

**HOW MANY ROOMS?** There are 72 rooms total, including 34 suites. The entire facility is non-smoking.

**ROOM FACILITIES** The rooms are charming and personal, without compromising technology or comfort. An electronic lock on the door was designed to appear natural on the wood. My Junior Suite was equipped with overstuffed, velvety dark wood furniture, and a cream/sand color palette accented with rich green, red and gold. The comfortable medium-sized desk

was well-suited for work, and integrated its technology discreetly: the lamp was a handsome vintage design, and the T1 wired Internet connection was set flush into the wood. A two-line phone with voice-mail was nearby.

A dark green marble countertop over the minibar featured a few bottles of wine and a coffeemaker. The safe was in the closet across from the iron and board, and secured by a custom PIN or credit card. Near the couch and balcony, the television was recessed into a decorative alcove. When it got a bit chilly at night, I took the edge off with the gas fireplace built into the wall dividing the bedroom and the main room; it was quite capable of heating the entire guest room, and its lovely flames were equally visible through the glass from the bed on one side, or the couch on the other.

The bathroom was spacious and relaxing, with rustic glazed-tile floors and soaking tub. Beside the toilet chamber, a separate shower stall had a bench and tiled interior similar to the floor. Aveda amenities were in generous supply, and a basket from the hotel's Preston Wynne spa offered luxury goodies for a fee.

The bed and room were sumptuous, with the bay windows blocked by heavy red, green and gold curtains. Light could be hermetically sealed out, which could be dangerous given the comfort of the bed. Another television with CD and DVD player faced the bed.

**RESTAURANTS AND BARS** Dio Deká's excellent Hellenic cuisine makes the restaurant

to its business center, which is just a computer and printer on a nice wooden table off the lobby. Its meeting space is serious, however: over 4,500 square feet of indoor and outdoor meeting space is available, and meeting rooms receive generous natural light and offer views with balconies and verandas. Full catering can be arranged with Dio Deká. Video-conferencing equipment and audio-visual technology is current.

**LEISURE FACILITIES** The full-service Preston Wynne day spa is in the basement, but could be fathoms under the sea for all the peace it offers. In addition to treatments and massages, it offers a steam shower and sauna. A gym across the street has a partnership with the Hotel whereby guests may use its cardio equipment, weights and indoor pool for free.

**VERDICT** Hotel Los Gatos is well-rounded on every front, delivering a balanced array of amenities and services for the business or leisure traveler. The charm of the lodgings, restaurant and town blend nicely into a memorable experience just under the northern California radar.

**PRICES** Rooms start at \$189 per night for a Deluxe Guestroom and range up to \$275 for the Grand King Suite.

**CONTACT** Hotel Los Gatos; 210 E. Main Street, Los Gatos, CA 95030; tel. 866-335-1700, fax 408-335-1700; [www.hotellosgatos.com](http://www.hotellosgatos.com)

—Alex Féthière



**HOTEL CHECK** MACAU

# Rocks Hotel



Deluxe twin room

**WHAT'S IT LIKE?** This recently-opened boutique hotel is already something of a local favorite. During my three nights there, I noticed wedding photos being snapped in the lobby and a lot of guest traffic in all parts of the hotel. And it's no wonder; The Rocks overlooks the water at the end of busy Fisherman's Wharf.

The Victorian-redux décor builds on pale yellow with cream accents, and the furniture is all lushly upholstered dark wood. Rococo ironwork graces the numerous outdoor balconies, which are set into a white and sea-green façade with arched French doors, allowing guests to take the sun a bit before hiding in the arctic cold of their rooms. All rooms have balconies with river views.

**WHERE IS IT?** At the end of Fisherman's Wharf, a rehabilitated peninsula once used for maritime traffic. The promontory has been worked over into a splashy stretch offering entertainment, food, retail, hotel, marina, convention and exhibition facilities that together constitute the first themed entertainment attraction in Macau's tourism history.

**HOW MANY ROOMS?** The Rocks has 72 guest rooms.

**ROOM FACILITIES** My deluxe room was handsomely furnished with two full-size dark wood post beds, a desk, a television cabinet, a night table and a small table with a lounging chair beside it. Feather duvets topped the beds, and they were necessary to ward off the chill blasting from the A/C. I was miffed to discover no sheets, just the duvet, after I'd figured out how to adjust the A/C. The desk included plugs for Internet and local voltage; a converter for worldwide plug accommodation was thoughtfully provided (but was absent in the room of a traveling colleague).

Complimentary cabled Internet was available, and moved briskly for the most part.



Vic's Café

A Philips CD player/radio (mp3 capable) with speakers stood on top of the desk.

Fans of lush bathrooms would drop at the sight of the raised-back, brass-claw-footed bathtub that stood at one end. A glass-walled shower stall with a rain showerhead and separate hand shower extension was built into the opposite corner. The sink had a lighted shaving mirror and a brass/glass stand beside it proffering all the customary amenities and then some: disposable razors, hairbrushes and toothbrushes with thimble-sized toothpaste tubes neatly packaged. I was happy to see a volume dial that suggested a sound conduit from the 32-inch LCD cable TV, but when I turned it, I found a Russian radio station completely independent of what was on TV. This was linked back to a dial on the wall near the nightstand, which when turned provided music or Chinese and Russian programs.

**RESTAURANTS AND BARS** Sky Lounge is a polished bar atop the hotel, with a terrace that overlooks the Friendship Bridge and the neon façade of the nearby Sands Casino. The service is stiff, and I was surprised to see a jigger used to measure the alcohol for my drink! It might have been less startling had it been filled to level.



Guest room bathroom

Vic's Café is the downstairs restaurant off the lobby, where breakfast can be enjoyed in a light-flooded large room. Steam trays, baskets of pastries and plates of vegetables and fruit were out for the morning, but the tastiest fare was the Chinese items. A bar is behind Vic's Café, styled after an English pub. Both close at 1 a.m. Of course Fisherman's Wharf has some 24-hour places nearby, which begin to

buzz around 2 a.m.

## **BUSINESS AND LEISURE FACILITIES**

The Rocks has a gym, but no pool. The business center is not open 24 hours, but offers secretarial services. Meeting space is on par with the hotel's size: a 12-person meeting room can be booked. Anything larger can easily be found on Fisherman's Wharf. For those with combustible money inconveniently retained in their pockets, the Babylon Casino is just a coin's throw away—and open 24/7, like most in Macau.

**VERDICT** Charming and bright, this cute little item is close enough to the hubbub of Fisherman's Wharf to feel centrally located. Fortunately, its front is perpendicular to the Wharf, affording some peace to those who want to turn their backs and listen to the waves of the Pearl River lapping on the rocks.

**PRICES** From MOP1010 (HKD980) for a Deluxe room.

**CONTACT** The Rocks Hotel, Fisherman's Wharf, Macau, China; tel. 853-2878-2782; [www.rockshotel.com.mo](http://www.rockshotel.com.mo)

—Alex Féthière