

HOT TABLES Best New American Restaurants

TRAVEL + LEISURE

DECEMBER 2004

**St. Bart's
France
San Francisco
Panama
India
Germany
Mexico**

**WISH LIST
HOLIDAY
GETAWAY
GUIDE**

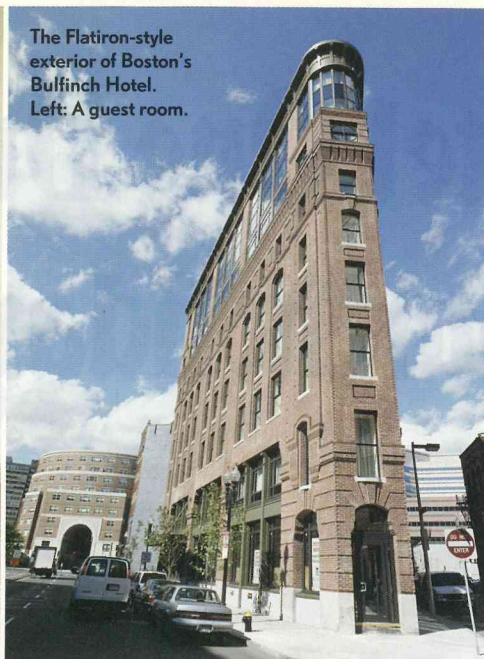
U.S. \$4.50 CANADA \$5.50
DISPLAY UNTIL DECEMBER 28, 2004



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The Flatiron-style exterior of Boston's Bulfinch Hotel. Left: A guest room.



sleeping tight in america

HOTELS Boutique hotels by signature designers are popping up across the country faster than you can say "room service." A few of the latest, from coast to coast: **BOSTON** The **Bulfinch Hotel** (107 Merrimac St.; 617/624-0202; www.bulfinchhotel.com; doubles from \$169) brought in Campion A. Platt (who designed New York's MercBar and the Park Avalon) to re-create its historic building a few blocks from Beacon Hill. The 80 rooms have leather headboards, white-on-white damask striped sheets, and sleek marble bathrooms—all at an affordable price. **NEW YORK** Kimpton's first venture in Manhattan, **70 Park Avenue** (877/707-2752; www.70parkave.com; doubles from \$469), has a pied-à-terre-inspired look—pale stone foyers, mahogany armoires, floor-to-ceiling mirrors—courtesy of the City Club Hotel's Jeffrey Bilhuber. In its Silverleaf Tavern, chef Kevin Reilly (formerly of Union Square Café) puts a contemporary spin on a local classic: a knish stuffed with short ribs. **PALM SPRINGS** Jonathan Adler has converted the former Merv Griffin Givenchy Resort & Spa into the **Parker Palm Springs** (4200 E. Palm Canyon Dr.; 760/770-5000; www.theparkerpalmsprings.com; doubles from \$150). The 144 rooms and villas reflect Adler's quirky sensibility with bamboo-framed leopard-print chairs and bird-themed tapestries. —RIMA SUQI

ISLAND DREAMING Looking for a private escape in the Caribbean? The newly formed Virgin Islands Villa Owners Association (www.caribbeanvivoa.com) streamlines the tricky process of renting, bringing together owners and first-time lessees.

THAT'S ENTERTAINMENT!



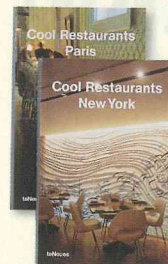
An actor aboard the Crystal Harmony.

CRUISING You no longer have to sit through amateur versions of tired Broadway revues at sea now that smart cruise lines are snazzing up their shipboard shows. **Celebrity Cruises** (www.celebrity.com) has hooked up with Cirque du Soleil on the *Constellation*. Instead of *Hello, Dolly!*, passengers can watch the troupe's contortionists twist and turn on ropes high overhead. **Silversea** (www.silversea.com) developed its own aerial ballet called *Cirque Nouveau*, produced by the award-winning Jean Ann Ryan production company. **Cunard's** *Queen Mary 2* (www.cunard.com) is collaborating with the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art in London to introduce Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest*. RADA also holds acting workshops for passengers. And **Crystal**

Cruises (www.crystalcruises.com) is channeling the Bard, with *The Complete Works of Shakespeare*, an abridged version of Shakespeare's entire canon of plays. —SHERRI EISENBERG

PAPER TRAIL

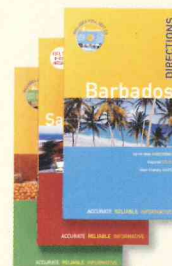
BOOKS A trio of new guides gives insider tips, an intimate look at unfamiliar cultures, and a few unexpected laughs. —H. SCOTT JOLLEY



Cool Restaurants (\$14.95, *teNeues*) lives up to its title with pages of hot spots in New York, Paris, Milan, and other equally stylish cities. Alongside sleek photographs, recipes from top kitchens appear in four languages.



A sense of humor is required when reading JetLag's guide to **Molvania** (\$13.95, *Overlook Press*), a fictional country "downwind of Chernobyl" that's known as "the birthplace of polka and the whooping cough."



The slim Rough Guides **Directions** books (\$10.99, www.roughguides.com) think big with their "Ideas" section (a hit list of what to see and do) and a mini CD-ROM in each volume that has hyperlinks to sites profiled within.