

hot spots The Chanler, Rhode Island

Where is it? This 1865 mansion turned boutique guesthouse was the first to be constructed along the cliff walk overlooking the Atlantic Ocean in Newport, Rhode Island, in the United States. In the spirit of one-upmanship, every subsequent mansion in the neighbourhood was created along ever more ostentatious lines; the cliff walk is now a dramatic billionaire's row, with 11 properties open for historic tours, thanks to the Preservation Society of Newport. **Luxurious or basic?** It is luxurious – president Theodore Roosevelt was once a guest. The 20 rooms are sumptuous and individually themed (as was the fashion in the 19th century) but feature a host of up-to-date amenities. Reached through the landscaped grounds, the ocean and

garden villas have a more modern layout, with the added luxury of an outdoor spa and sauna.

Who should visit? The Chanler is ideal for romantics or anyone wanting to splurge. Some locals have been known to take up residence there while renovating their mansions. Newport is the home of the America's Cup and, in June, the harbour fills with colourful flotillas and sails.

What's on the menu? Overlooking the Atlantic, the Chanler's Spiced Pear restaurant serves a more adventurous menu than most American international/fusion restaurants. Apart from the usual Italian/French mixture, the Spiced Pear also uses ingredients such as sake and cumquats, drawing influences from India, Japan and China. Occasionally, the menu

pays homage to Rhode Island's regional delicacy, creamy quahog clam chowder. Locals compare Newport to the Hamptons in New York state – except here, you can actually get a table at a good restaurant.

What else is there to do? The most popular mansion to visit on the cliff walk is the Breakers. It was originally owned by the Vanderbilt family when they were one of the richest dynasties in the world. Photographs are not permitted inside but they don't do the preposterous interior justice anyway. Another mansion, Rosecliff, was a location for movies *The Great Gatsby* and, more recently, *True Lies*. Outdoors there is the Green Animals Topiary Garden, inhabited by 80 topiary critters. If you're feeling a trifle stuffy, you can charter a classic 1921 wooden cruiser



Adam McCulloch

called Pam from J-Class Management (www.jclass.com).

What's the bottom line? Basic rates start at \$2,300 a night. For more information, visit www.thechanler.com and www.newportmansions.org. Adam McCulloch

spree Cherry Creek Mall, Denver, Colorado

You have 24 hours in Denver, Colorado. Your teen-queen daughter wants to act like a Hilton sister and go designer-label shopping, you want to treat yourself and hubby wants to tuck into some American-style nosh. Your preference is somewhere with a touch of class. Divide and conquer at Denver's premier shopping destination.

Ten minutes from downtown Denver sits Cherry Creek Mall

(3000 East First Avenue, tel: 1 303 388 3900; www.shopcherrycreek.com), an upmarket shopping experience that features about 160 outlets of international-designer standard on two floors.

Before you hit the shops, take your ID to the guest services centre outside Neiman Marcus and pick up your Passport to Shopping, which gives overseas guests discounts at more than 60 stores.

Start with department-store consumer paradise in the shape of **Neiman Marcus** (tel: 1 303 329 2600), **Saks Fifth Avenue** (tel: 1 303 393 6333) and **Foley's** (tel: 1 303 390 2200). Step into Saks Fifth Avenue to find 7 for All Mankind jeans for about US\$200 or Kiehl's Lip Balm #1 in a tube for US\$5.50. Who cares what you spend as long as you emerge with the Saks shopping bag that makes everyone think you're a billionaire?

Visit **Lacoste** (tel: 1 303 394 0113) for crocodile-emblazoned chic and **MAC** (tel: 1 303 399 8777) for rouge cheeks on the first floor; then head upstairs for **Coach** (tel: 1 303 393 1772) and **Burberry** (tel: 1 303 388 2700) before indulging your inner Martha Stewart at **Williams-Sonoma** (tel: 1 303 394 2226) homeware store, where that lead-crystal Riedel Cornetto decanter is waiting to be yours for US\$175.

Send the teen queen to **Urban Outfitters** (tel: 1 303 399 5606) for Ben Sherman T-shirts, Levi's jeans and Harajuku Lovers hoodies (US\$78). Keep her away from **Occhiali da Sole** (tel: 1 303 393 7127), however, or she'll be demanding US\$300 Oliver Peoples sunglasses just like Mary-Kate and Ashley Olsen.

Send hubby to **Oakley** (tel: 1 303 316 7707) for eyewear for himself and remind him **Cartier** (tel: 1 720 941 1900) is two shops down and **Tiffany & Co** (tel: 1 303 322 4747) directly opposite for surprises. He can take the little blue box to the **California Pizza Kitchen** (tel: 1 303 388 5686) as his own reward. Rachael Oakes-Ash



review

The Definitive Guide to the Da Vinci Code Paris Walks
Peter Caine (Orion)

You've read the novel, cracked the code, seen the movie, bought the T-shirt, followed the court cases and probably wondered if Jesus and Mary Magdalene really were an item. But wait! There's more – because the spin-offs just keep spinning. Dan Brown's *The Da Vinci Code* is indubitably a thrilling read and there was never a doubt, having sold 40 million-plus copies, it would form the basis of an economic phenomenon. Which is where this book of strolls comes in.

Knights Templar, Freemasons, medieval torture methods, crypts and keystones: they're all here, significance explained. More importantly for *DVC* anoraks, their relation to the book is revealed, helping fans picture themselves as part of the plot as they promenade through the Bois de Boulogne.

Caine takes the novel's profusion of symbols and cyphers and wrings meaning from them, examining their origins and revealing their places in a tangible Paris. The Arago Plaques, for example, "give physical form to an abstract idea, marking out the meridian of Paris", he says. Baphomet, according to Caine "the key to *The Da Vinci Code*", and an otherwise human figure with wings and devilish horns, was worshipped by the Knights Templar. Follow *Paris Walks* to the Church of St Merry and there he is, "crowning the portal".

Caine and his wife, both art historians, founded guided-tour operator Paris Walks in the mid-1990s. They have now made the entire city a movie tie-in, and invested their approach to it with verve.

The Definitive Guide to the Da Vinci Code Paris Walks is available from branches of Page One and Dymocks, priced \$120. Stephen McCarty

