



Courtesy The Willard InterContinental

HOTELS AND RESORTS

These Hotels Are an Integral Part of Black History

While many historic hotels are long gone, these properties allow for a firsthand glimpse into America's Black history.

BY SHERYL NANCE-NASH

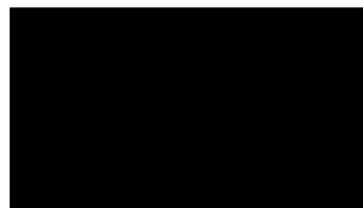
February 10, 2021

Hotels have always been more than just a place to sleep. The most storied accommodations come with a rich history, based on their location or guests that have passed through the doors. Many hotels with [ties to Black history](#) have long closed or been destroyed, but several still remain today. If the walls could talk, we can only imagine some of the stories they would tell.

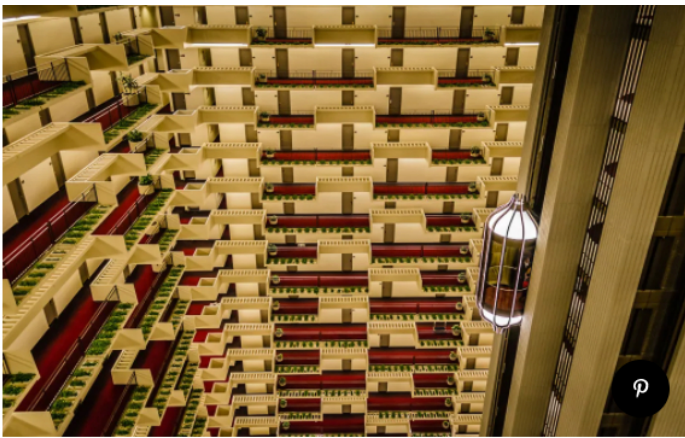
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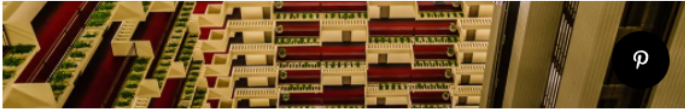
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Courtesy Hyatt Regency



Courtesy Hyatt Regency

Hyatt Regency Atlanta

Atlanta was the cradle of the Civil Rights Movement, and there was a time when Black travelers weren't allowed to check into hotels. The **Hyatt Regency Atlanta** is known as one of the first hotels in the city to welcome Black travelers, and was the home for Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s final Southern Christian Leadership Conference in August 1967. King called the Hyatt the "Hotel of Hope," and Coretta Scott King stayed there frequently until her death in 2006. In 2017, 50 years after the SCLC event, the hotel renamed its executive suite—a 1,600-square-foot space that overlooks the atrium lobby—after Coretta Scott King. It features memories of her life, captured in photographs of her, her family, and events celebrating her accomplishments.

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Courtesy Six Acres Bed & Breakfast

Six Acres Bed & Breakfast, Cincinnati

Cincinnati's location across the river from **Kentucky** made it a pivotal part of the **Underground Railroad**. One key path was through the community of College Hill along Hamilton Pike. Former safe house **Six Acres Bed & Breakfast**, which is on that route (now renamed Hamilton Avenue), is a home built between 1850 and 1860 by abolitionist and farmer Zebulon Strong. According to documents at the Ohio Historical Library, Strong's farming wagon had a secret storage space, which he used to hide

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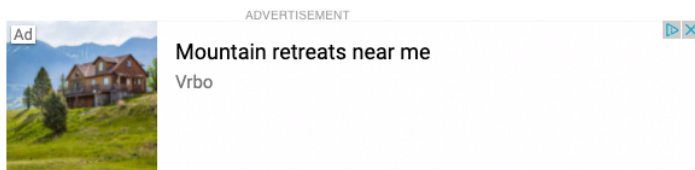
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passengers. He put crows on the top of the wagon and took them to the house to stay until they could safely make their way to the next safe house. Owner Kristin Kitchen restored the home to its previous likeness between 2001 and 2004.

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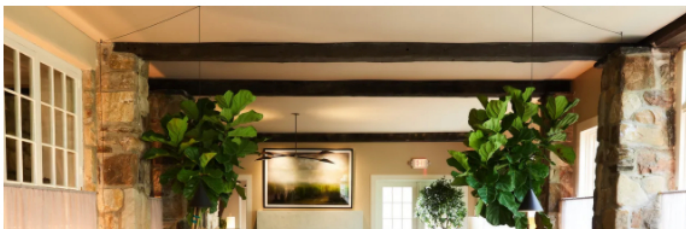


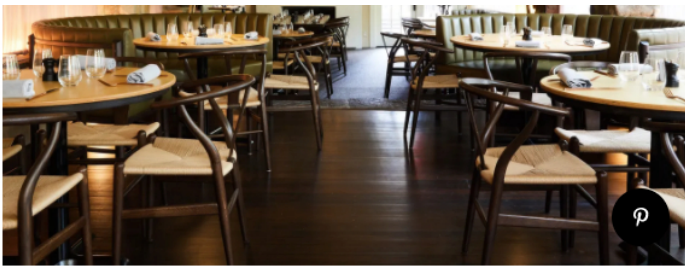
Courtesy Big Game Bimini Club

Big Game Bimini Club, Bimini, Bahamas

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. loved the peace and quiet of Bimini, and he often stayed in room 3 at the [Big Game Bimini Club](#). He worked on speeches—including his Nobel Prize acceptance—in his room and by the pool, and is commemorated in a plaque and photo at the hotel. In 1964, King visited the island with Adam Clayton Powell Jr., the first African American congressman from New York. Powell introduced King to Ansil Saunders, the legendary king of the [bonefishers](#) at the time, who fished with King at Bonefish Creek. During a visit in 1968, King wrote his famous Sanitation Workers speech, the last speech he would give before his assassination days later.

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Courtesy Troutbeck

Troutbeck, Amenia, New York

In both 1916 and 1933, [Troutbeck](#), a historic estate hotel in New York's [Hudson Valley](#), played host to the Amenia Conferences, which were critical to the development of the NAACP. The conferences brought together Black and white leaders to discuss ways to improve race relations. The hotel was once owned by Joel and Amy Spingarn; Joel, who was Jewish, was one of the NAACP's leaders and helped formulate the strategy that fueled the organization's growth. W.E.B. DuBois became a frequent visitor at Troutbeck and introduced the Spingarns to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., who later became a recipient of the Spingarn Medal, established in 1914 to acknowledge outstanding achievement by an African American. King wrote a letter in 1957 thanking Spingarn for the prestigious honor, and no special access is needed to see this historical artifact—there's a copy in every guest room.

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Courtesy The Willard InterContinental

InterContinental the Willard Washington, D.C.

One of the best-known speeches is Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream," delivered on August 28, 1963, at the Lincoln Memorial. The speech that changed the world was edited and fine-tuned by King and his advisors in the lobby of [The Willard](#). The story goes that bellhops created a secluded area in the lobby so that King could work uninterrupted. You can visit the hotel's museum to learn more about his historic visit, or enhance the experience with a stay in the Martin Luther King Jr. Suite. It is not the same room he stayed in, as the hotel closed in 1968 and then was renovated and reopened in the 1980s, but it is a room named in his honor.

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enhance the experience with a stay in the Martin Luther King Jr. Suite. It is not the same room he stayed in, as the hotel closed in 1968 and then was renovated and reopened in the 1980s, but it is a room named in his honor, with views of the [Washington Monument](#). It features a spacious entry foyer, with an adjacent guest bath and butler pantry, spacious living room (inspired by the baroque style architecture of the Oval Office at the [White House](#)), and a bedroom located down the hall with a separate entrance.

Book now: ihg.com



Courtesy Magnolia House

Magnolia House, Greensboro, North Carolina

The [Green Book](#), an annual guide for [Black travelers](#) during the Jim Crow era, included vital information about lodging and restaurants that would serve them, as well as lists of Black-owned businesses. The [Magnolia House](#) is one of only four Green Book sites in [North Carolina](#) still operating. It was a respite for regular folks and celebs like James Brown, Ray Charles, Jackie Robinson, and Ike and Tina Turner. Owner Natalie Pass Miller and her father are restoring the home, which will welcome overnight guests later this summer. In the meantime, they are hosting Sunday brunch (also available for pick-up and delivery) and museum visits. In February, the museum will host *Navigating Jim Crow: The Green Book and Oasis Spaces in North Carolina*, featuring African American travelers and descendants of Green Book site owners.

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