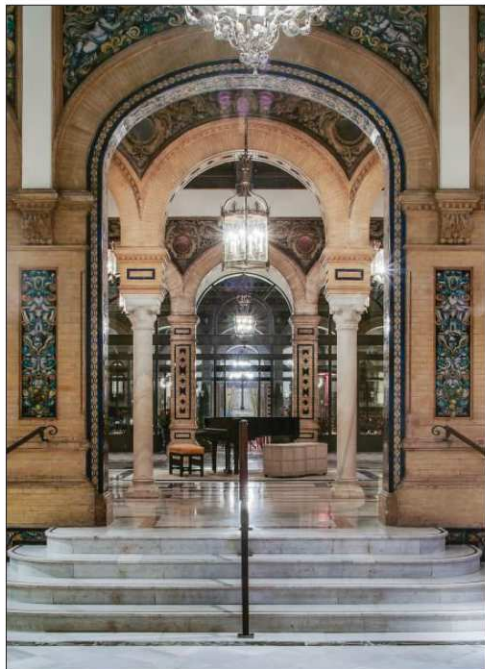


Near Far

Going somewhere? Take us with you!

vacation snapshot

Fort Worth wine merchant Chris Keel (Put a Cork In It) and wife Deedra travel to France every other year, typically sampling wine and eating well. While they got to catch the final stage of the Tour de France as part of their recent two-week trip, Chris counts a wine-and-cheese tour among the highlights. Tour coordinator Debbi Baron grew up in California and worked at a design and architecture firm before moving to Europe and becoming a cheese expert. Along with partner Jean-Paul Bignand, they offer tours in the City of Light and throughout France. "In Paris, we visited cheese makers and then went to her apartment to sample about 20 cheeses and wines," says Chris. "It was very intimate and very affordable, considering it was about a six-hour experience." Planning a trip to France? Check out domaines-terroirs.com.



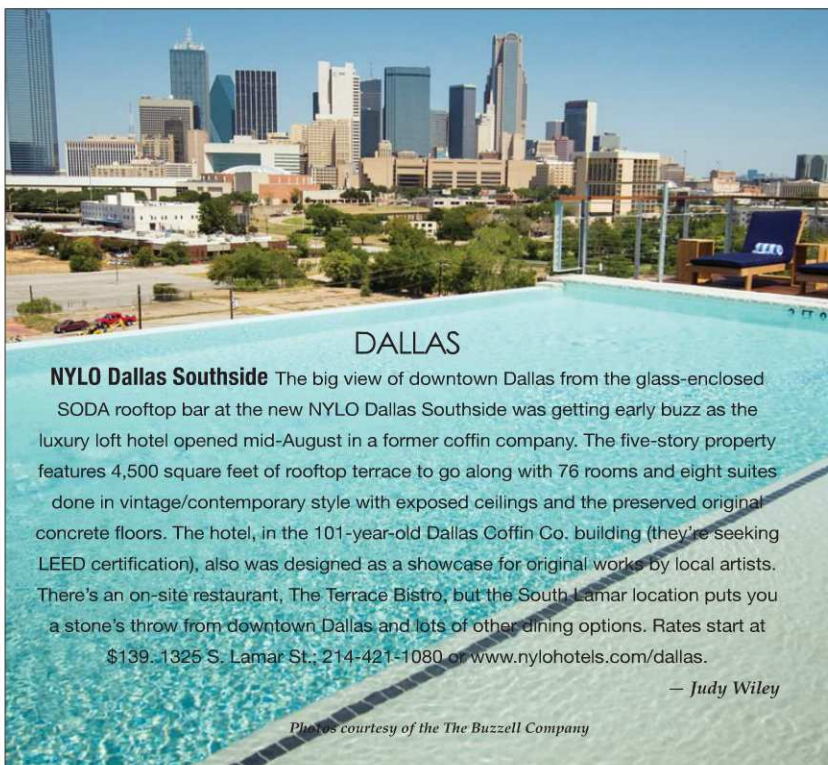
Intricate inlaid marble and tile draw tourists into the lobby of Seville's restored Hotel Alfonso XIII.

SPAIN

Hotel Alfonso XIII *Sevilla* may have regal airs thanks to its beautiful palaces and magical cathedrals, but it also has a surprising dearth of five-star hotels. Which is why luxury-minded travelers anxiously awaited the completed restoration of Hotel Alfonso XIII. In spite of a few challenges — when Starwood's Luxury Collection hired English firm Hirsch Bedner Associates to lead the overhaul, for example, local grumbling ensued — the head-to-toe makeover to the tune of \$25 million was worth the wait. All 155 rooms were overhauled and now communicate a range of styles, from modern and Moorish to contemporary and regal. High-tech touches, sorely needed in the Alfonso's previous incarnation, are plentiful. The Alfonso's public spaces — stunning enough to attract guidebook-toting street traffic — also have been restored. Inlaid marble, hand-painted tiles, and intricately designed ceilings and columns were painstakingly cleaned and repaired by Spanish artisans. Visitors can and should make their way past the lobby and grab a copa of Rioja and some jamon iberico in the handsome tapas bar. Overnighters receive complimentary breakfast and after filling up on the heavenly spread — including fluffy omelets, Spanish cheeses, meats and pastries — head for the front door. All of Seville is at your doorstep. From \$289 per night. 2 Calle San Fernando, Seville, Spain; 011-34-95-4917-000 or starwoodhotels.com.

— Stirling Kelso

Photo courtesy of Hotel Alfonso XIII



DALLAS

NYLO Dallas Southside The big view of downtown Dallas from the glass-enclosed SODA rooftop bar at the new NYLO Dallas Southside was getting early buzz as the luxury loft hotel opened mid-August in a former coffin company. The five-story property features 4,500 square feet of rooftop terrace to go along with 76 rooms and eight suites done in vintage/contemporary style with exposed ceilings and the preserved original concrete floors. The hotel, in the 101-year-old Dallas Coffin Co. building (they're seeking LEED certification), also was designed as a showcase for original works by local artists. There's an on-site restaurant, The Terrace Bistro, but the South Lamar location puts you a stone's throw from downtown Dallas and lots of other dining options. Rates start at \$139. 1325 S. Lamar St.; 214-421-1080 or www.nylohotels.com/dallas.

— Judy Wiley

Photos courtesy of the The Buzzell Company

