

What IS Boutique?

As representatives for a distinguished community of entrepreneurial spirits, we are often presented with a deceptively simple question: What is boutique?



Some years ago, a new kind of lodging accommodation began to disrupt the trillion-dollar tourism industry. As the boundaries between business and leisure travel grew increasingly blurred, an emergence of a new type of traveler called for a more holistic approach to lodging. Thus, the boutique hotel was born. Perks like free Wi-Fi became givens, and in their absence demand for personalization grew exponentially. The traveler of today is looking for services and features that facilitate a working lifestyle while carving out space for R&R.

The shift away from convention, started by the boutique properties, sparked an avalanche of creative change that has given rise to the industry BLLA has coined as simply "Boutique". But what does it mean?

Boutique is a feeling. Boutique is a belief that cannot be taught. It is a way of life, and most importantly, it is a community.

When boutique hotels burst onto the scene, there was much doubt surrounding the longevity of the movement. Any executive in the hospitality sphere will attest to the gravitational force that pulls hoteliers toward big chain solutions. More beds equal more return, right? While many would have you accept that claim as conventional wisdom, boutique hoteliers have proven time again that it is not bottom lines and ROIs that separate them from the pack, but vision, passion and soul. Intangible, yet invaluable, these are the characteristics that shape our industry and give us staying power, and discerning hoteliers are certainly not the only beneficiaries of the paradigm shift.

For the last two years, BLLA has represented progressive thought-trends (now mantras) on stage at all of our events and conferences. Our association's history will always be rooted in the lodging world, but there is much to be learned from innovators outside of hospitality. Forward thinking entrepreneurs in industries like fashion, restaurants, studio art, nightlife, and artisan coffee have studied pages in the boutique playbook and are using that knowledge to innovate. Without the shackles of being corporate, businesses have room to service their customers and patrons uniquely and individually, earning them not only profits but good community standing.

The massive movement we have witnessed in the boutique space is only reinforced by the many collaborations that result from inclusion in the same community. You wouldn't spend years of time and millions of dollars on a property, pouring over linen options and food selections to simply rent the lobby to the neighborhood's fourth Starbucks, would you?

Passion for experiences, a keen eye for design, freedom, and soul is what defines Boutique. Now that we have won our fight for legitimacy, there is no slowing the turn toward boutique living.

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