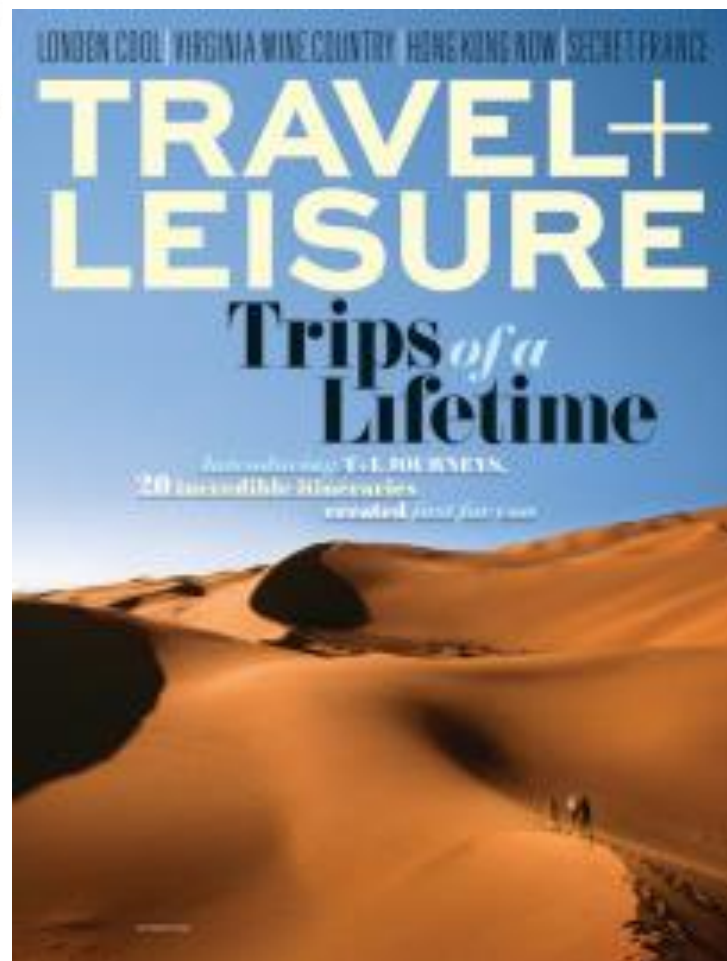


TRAVEL+ LEISURE

SEPTEMBER 2015



GRADUATE HOTELS

The big idea

Alumni can relive their glory days in a college-town hotel that's done its homework on the local scene.

Where they are now

Athens, Georgia; Charlottesville, Virginia; Madison, Wisconsin; Oxford, Mississippi; and Tempe, Arizona

Where they're going next

Richmond, Virginia, and Durham, North Carolina

Starting rate \$119

Graduate Athens, a

stone's throw from the University of Georgia, aims to reflect the city's preppy-but-quirky culture and prove that it "gets" its hometown better than its competitors do. In the lobby, vintage prints hang above glen-plaid-patterned chairs, and the colorful rooms mix details like Georgia-pine-green walls, bright-yellow headboards and collegiate tartan pillows. Our favorite design feature was a framed chalkboard with the chemical equation for sweet tea—a little offbeat, yet substantively Southern. Just like Athens itself.

But the hotel struggles in other ways. While the public spaces, including a coffee shop and a live music venue, are in a former iron foundry with exposed-brick walls and dramatic, beamed ceilings (all but one of the Graduate properties are in repurposed spaces), most rooms fill a lackluster two-story building across the parking lot. In other words: getting from your Athena Suite to the lobby is a bit of a buzzkill. Architectural pitfalls aside, Graduate is a step up for travelers to Athens, as it should be in other small towns, too. graduatehotels.com.

FOR MORE OF THE SEASON'S MOST SIGNIFICANT HOTEL OPENINGS, VISIT TANDL.ME/NEWHOTELS2015.