Grad Pads

Boutique hotels in college towns are the best treat for parents since tailgating

I don’t remember if it was my daughter’s first or second chance call from college when I realized how much work her education was going to be. “I’ve got my schedule, Daddy. I’m not sure if you need to come up and see me two or three weekends yet. There’s Parent’s Day and then the Homecoming, and then there’s…”

I stopped listening about them. “Me, too?” Between tuition and housing and food and textbooks and more clothes and an unapproved bonbon, wasn’t this costing me enough money already?

The answer, as you may imagine, was no. I was expected to travel to Oxford (Oh! Miss! and then Stillwater (Oklahoma State) often to see my daughter. Which wouldn’t have been so bad if the hotel options in small college towns weren’t so unsavory.

Last year, I found myself in a college student, that’s changing thanks to a new crop of boutique hotels in college towns across America. Graduate Hotels are popping up in places like Madison, Wisconsin, Athens, Georgia, and, you even Oxford, Mississippi.

The boutique is trying to offer modern amenities while giving a nod to the traditional and the colleges that define these towns. “A Graduate Hotel is not just a place to sleep,” says Dan Weinberg, CEO of 11 Capital Partners/Graduate Hotels. “It’s a reflection of our guests’ experiences.”

EXAMPLE: Graduate Athens, Georgia, showcases locally sourced, vintage and contemporary art that references the community and university. Weinberg says the unique setting of the hotel, with its exposed beams and brick walls, is what sets it apart from other Graduate locations.

Hop In a Hot-Air Balloon

Riding in a hot-air balloon should top your bucket list

Hot-air balloons are pretty from below, but nothing beats a 2,000-foot-high view. The Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta takes place next month, Oct. 3-11.