

Hotel reviews

● Four Points by Sheraton, Chicago, by Glen Mutel

While it might not give the most amazing first impression, the Chicago Downtown Four Points has got all the important things right. The hotel doesn't look much from the outside, the lobby is small and unimpressive and the bar a little charmless, but the rooms are bright and well-appointed, with comfortable beds, decent bathrooms and alarm clocks complete with iPod docks — always a welcome feature. In a courtyard behind the foyer,

I was surprised to find a swimming pool with Jacuzzi, and there's also a gym (which admittedly, I didn't go near). The buffet breakfasts were varied, delicious — the omelettes fabulous, the waffles fattening beyond belief — and served up by extremely pleasant staff. Perhaps most importantly, the hotel is ideally located on the Magnificent Mile, with Chicago's best shops, sights and parks to hand. On top of this, rooms can go for as little as \$100. T: 312 981 6600. www.starwoodhotels.com



● Club Med La Palmeraie, Marrakech, by Katie Reich-Storer

Located in the tranquil La Palmeraie area, this is one of three Club Med properties in Marrakech. Aimed at families, it offers a picturesque setting in which to enjoy a full-on Club Med all-inclusive experience. Our standard room was perfectly comfortable, with a sunny balcony and large walk-in shower, but no bath. The only gripe here was the lack of air-conditioning, which is switched on only in summer, despite hot temperatures in spring. The restaurants, too, were a bit of a let-down. The main eatery is buffet-style and despite offering

an impressive selection, the food just didn't live up to expectations and was often lukewarm and tasteless. The specialty Moroccan restaurant did have a better atmosphere, but we were rushed in and out at lightning speed and the food lacked flavor and authenticity. Staff were in the main friendly, especially in the restaurant, but didn't speak very good English, so non-French speakers might struggle. But what most people come to Club Med for are the activities and there are plenty on offer, from cookery classes to aqua aerobics. There is also a spa (see review on pg 83). T: +212 2442 5800. www.clubmed.us



● Gloucester Park, London, by Maria Pieri

Gloucester Park offers 100 contemporary-styled serviced apartments, ideal for business travelers looking for a long-stay alternative to a hotel. The one-, two- and three-bedroom apartments feature air-con, balconies, en suite granite bathrooms, Miele kitchens, flat-screen TVs, DVD players, wi-fi and secure underground parking. Added touches include a friendly 24-hour concierge desk, in-house maintenance and daily maid service, plus a welcome hamper packed full of British goodies — jam, shortbread, eggs, cheese, milk, bread, chocolates and cereal. Linen and towels are a

given and a range of Molton Brown products can be found in all the bathrooms. Its central location, in the heart of London's residential Kensington district, within easy reach of Kensington Gardens and Knightsbridge, makes Gloucester Park perfectly placed for both business and leisure. Gloucester Park is one of a range of individually developed London apartment units belonging to the Cheval Group and although the minimum stay tends to be three months, it usually proves more cost-effective than a hotel, as well as offering travelers a high level of independence and privacy. T: +44 20 7373 1444. www.chevalgroup.com

