

DEPARTURES



Making a Splash

L.A.'s hotels have always been defined by their pools—and the social scenes surrounding them. “The pool was important,” says Tony Curtis, the actor whose recent memoir, *American Prince*, chronicles his years as a Hollywood lothario. During a stay at the **Beverly Hilton** in the mid-sixties he would phone the pool attendant from his suite. “Then I would go down, and there would be a spot set up where I could see the girls and they could see me,” he says. “It couldn’t have been better.”

The pink-and-green **Beverly Hills Hotel** pool, meanwhile, has been known for celebrity antics of its own since the twenties, though it was two decades later that Katharine Hepburn famously dove into it fully clothed. The **Four Seasons**, for its part, is about Hollywood dealmaking and cabana massages. And Chateau Marmont? Low-key hangover tending.

“A pool is part of the Hollywood lore,” says David Collins, the designer of the **London West Hollywood**, one of the city’s newest hotels. And the pool there is very old Hollywood glamour meets British country garden, a place where stylish Europeans lounge among white-rose topiaries and pool concierges patrol the deck hourly with, say, an Evian mistler or a frozen-fruit skewer designed by Gordon Ramsay, who oversees the hotel’s restaurant.

As for the rooftop pool at the Mediterranean-style **Montage**—with mother-of-pearl tile accenting the edges,



The mosaic-tiled pool on the rooftop of the Montage

laminar jets producing water arcs overhead, and a sound system streaming classical music underwater—it’s a spazkie urban oasis, where transplanted country club members read *The Wall Street Journal* and gaze out at the Beverly Hills view. That’s a move pioneered by the **Peninsula**—during Ali Kazakci’s tenure there before he moved to the Montage—the place for postbide pedicures and reflexology.

And at the recently opened **SLS**, Philippe Starck’s decidedly Alice in Wonderland-esque pool attracts international hipsters, with its whimsical chairs, chess

sets, citrus trees in oversize planters, gigantic framed mirrors propped against the periphery, and a constant loop of chill-out music.

The same can be said for the soundtrack at the Swarovski crystal-lined pool on the roof of the new **Thompson**, where at about 6 p.m. the lounge chairs are converted into couches and the Bohemian chic, in attendance, turn parents into party dresses for an evening at ABH, which stands for Above Beverly Hills, the aptly named lounge.

—SALLY HORCHOW

