

# **HOTELS OF NORTH AMERICA**

**ALSO BY RICK MOODY**

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# HOTELS OF NORTH AMERICA

*A Novel*

**RICK MOODY**



The author is grateful to Christine Elaine Torok for permission to reprint her Amazon.com review of Haribo Sugar-Free Teddy Bears.

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*Hotels of North America* is a work of fiction. Persons and places in the book are either fictional or are used fictionally. In particular, opinions about hotels contained in *Hotels of North America* do not represent the opinion of the author or the publisher at all, but are, rather, the opinions of a desperate, disgruntled, and wholly fictional hotel reviewer named Reginald E. Morse. There is no evidence whatsoever that he ever strode the earth, harrowing hotel and motel employees globally with his unrestrained and tragicomic invective.

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*For Laurel and Hazel*



# **HOTELS OF NORTH AMERICA**





# **HOTELS OF NORTH AMERICA**

The Collected Writings of  
Reginald Edward Morse

Preface by Greenway Davies, Director, North American  
Society of Hoteliers and Innkeepers

With an Afterword by Rick Moody



# Preface

by Greenway Davies, Director, North American Society  
of Hoteliers and Innkeepers

As I write these lines it's early spring in the Northeast, and Americans of every age and station are getting back into their cold, muddy, salt-befouled automobiles. They are lining up again at the airports, notwithstanding the humorless security protocols of the current air-traffic moment. The siren melody of spring break is calling to the college-age hedonists of America. And before long it will be Memorial Day, one of the heaviest travel weekends of the calendar year. We here in the New World are "on the move," going where the "weather suits our clothes," where we have business, where we have family, or where there is simply good old-fashioned entertainment.

With almost five million guest rooms in the greater United States, and another two hundred and forty thousand available in Canada, these hotels and motels are our residences, here in this part of the world, when we are away from home. Think of that motel by the side of the interstate at two in the morning when you've put in eleven or twelve hours driving your son's dormitory furniture back east, and the double lines on the road are starting to blur into four. That motel is there for you, like a friend outstretching

a hand. Think of that big sexy flamingo-pink Art Deco hotel on the beach in Miami that you stayed in during your first trip to the Florida coast, when you were amazed by the mashing up of Cuban intrigue, dance clubs, and beach culture. What a mark that hotel made on you. That hotel was where you danced until you aggravated your lumbago.

Where once we spent the weekend with family and friends, now we have some fifty thousand distinct hotel properties from which to choose. Think about it. Wherever exhaustion takes place, wherever a young couple wishes to pull over to dance the dance of new love, there's a hotel at the suitable price point. Hotels hilarious, anonymous, modest, opulent, strange. And how much finer is the welcome of that hotel or motel, how much more discreet and accepting is that hotel address, than the household of someone you barely knew in high school who has in the decades since fallen into some pretty unusual habits, including middle-of-the-night binge eating as you lie sleepless atop the uncomfortable foldout couch in the living room. Or, contrarily, how much better is that hotel than the apartment of some down-at-the-heel washerwoman who is now capable of taking into her "guest room" a few foreign nationals and sharing a percentage of her profits with an online front operation funded by Middle Eastern venture capitalists and their cronies.

Only a North American hotel can earnestly equip you with a mint on your pillow. Only a North American hotel has the fully outfitted minibar complete with selection of salty snack foods and popular sweets. Moreover, in today's fast-moving digital world, when you go to choose from our fifty thousand distinct hotel properties, you can have evaluations of the hotels and motels right at your fingertips with just a few clicks of your smartphone. These reviews, through which you might browse at this very moment,

## Preface

provide important criteria. We know that you often rely on ratings for your hotel choices and we appreciate that. And while we here at the North American Society of Hoteliers and Innkeepers think that each and every one of our thirty-two thousand dues-paying members are rolling out the welcome mat in a way that is designed to give you, our customer, exactly what you want, we recognize that you have strong feelings about where you are going to stay tonight, and it is our job to honor those feelings. When you write a review of our member establishments, you should do so without reservation, with joy in your heart and the kind of word choice that we associate with the romantic poets.

However, we here at NASHI recognize that there are times when no matter what we do, despite our best efforts—it's not often but it can happen—very occasionally we are going to let you down. Or we are going to misunderstand your wishes. And we realize that instead of trying to hide away these bad experiences somewhere you will never see them, in some Arctic Circle digital-storage facility, such that we never learn from our shortcomings, we might use your evaluations as part of an ambitious plan to *improve* hotel service in this country beyond its already significant level of achievement. We ought to listen to our critics and prize their sturdy unshakable opinions.

Accordingly, NASHI has conceived of this small, high-end run of books of various online reviews of lodging: the harsh, the laudatory, the fanciful, the elaborate, the joyful, and the melancholy. The inaugural volumes are off the press as we speak, including the hotel pet stories and the frothy poolside-party stories. We also have the already very popular anthology of hotel-related hauntings.

But we have gone even further. We think that whenever we find particular travel writers who are of unique and enduring value, we ought to commission a selection of their finest writings about

hotels too. You may not always agree with these writers in our travel-writing series, but you will find something to make you laugh!

As you know, having laid your hands on this book on the coffee table or atop the desk or perhaps in the bedside drawer, right alongside the Scripture, our idea is to make these collectible volumes accessible to you right in your room, wherever you are lying down, talking on the phone, or watching the television, having kicked off the standard-issue paisley comforter, as it were, and eaten that chocolate mint on your pillow. Many more of these titles will become available in your favorite boutique hotels over the next twelve months. A few will be found exclusively in some of our finest five-star establishments. Consider these one-of-a-kind travel books our gift to you for spending your hard-earned income on hotel rooms and thereby providing, in an unprecedented show of consumer support, a livelihood for our hoteliers and their employees, many of whom are newly naturalized citizens of America and Canada, as well as a rich vein of revenue for states, provinces, and local municipalities. We thank you. Our belief is that your stay in our hotels is not an isolated, forgettable experience, a blip on the screen of twenty-first-century existence. Our belief is that your journey through the many dozens of hotels in which you have stayed is a second life of a sort, an additional life story, a place somewhere between your everyday, commonplace existence and a dream world where your every whim is catered to and your every appetite fulfilled.

*The Collected Writings of Reginald Edward Morse*, which you have before you here, is one such account. It is a heartwarming, funny-bone-tickling volume about the peaks and troughs of itinerant life. It's about rebirth and rehabilitation. (Or so my staff tells me; I haven't had time to read the whole series yet! Which means I need

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a vacation!) It is also, they say, not strictly chronological but is being presented in the same manner in which it was composed, which is to say, most impulsively, as if it were a rack of picture postcards at a roadside attraction overturned by a truculent child and reorganized haphazardly according to the admonishments of some furious dad. Why did Mr. Morse choose to review in this way? Because this is how the nomadic life is organized? Haphazardly, according to the pressures of a grueling economy? Well, we all know how important the top online reviewers are to the future of the industry, and when one of these reviewers, a top-ten online hotel reviewer, strikes a chord, no matter the unorthodox fashion, with a fervent online audience, we can scarcely resist his charms! We hope that tonight, after you get the turn-down service, and after you order the curly fries from the extremely courteous room-service staff, you might read a little here of what hotel life has been like for one man and see in it a reason to book another room, maybe for that spring-break trip you've been planning, that second honeymoon, perhaps, or for Memorial Day. Or maybe just because. After all, everyone deserves a break.

In fact, I expect I'll meet you out there myself one day soon, when we are both on the happy trail of weekend trips to the hinterlands. I'll be the guy with the wife and two teenage children lugging some left-handed golf clubs, looking for the next public course where I might play a round or two. Maybe we could have a drink, or a cup of coffee. We could talk about books! I'll look forward to it.

—*Washington, DC, April 2015*

