

## reports

The lobby pool at Hotel QT, in New York.  
Below: The city's Blue Moon Hotel.



## manhattan lowdown

### CHECKING IN

With two new affordable boutique hotels, the eternally expensive city of New York puts out the welcome mat for stylish-but-budget-conscious travelers. Andre Balazs's **Hotel QT** (125 W. 45th St.; 212/354-2323; [www.hotelqt.com](http://www.hotelqt.com); singles from \$125) is happily out of sync with its Times Square address. The 140 small, ultramodern rooms are calming cocoons with soft lights, a flesh-toned palette, and platform beds. Frugal frills are executed with whimsical flair: in place of room-service menus, there are take-out fliers from local restaurants; mini-bar items are sold at the kiosk-style front desk. And—surprise!—there's a pool and a hammam in the lobby. **Blue Moon Hotel** (100 Orchard St.; 212/533-9080;



[www.blumoon-nyc.com](http://www.blumoon-nyc.com); doubles from \$200), a tenement built in the late 19th century, takes a radically different approach to cheap and chic. The 22-room guesthouse, squeezed into a trendy Lower East Side block, is filled with period artifacts and modern luxuries such as wet bars and whirlpools. Nods to the neighborhood's past life can be found at every turn: check out the ethnic restaurant and rooms named after jazz-era bigwigs. —VICTORIA DESILVERIO

**THE INCREDIBLE SHRINKING BOOK** *The comprehensive (and massive) 440-page Phaidon Atlas of Contemporary World Architecture has just been released in a pocket-sized version (\$19.95, Phaidon). Even at one-ninth the original size, it still features descriptions and photographs of more than 1,000 buildings worldwide.*

## MURDER, SHE WROTE

### BOOK

"Too often our only knowledge about American history is remembered from childhood," says *This American Life* radio commentator Sarah Vowell, whose most recent book, **Assassination Vacation** (\$21, Simon & Schuster), recounts her travels from Florida to Alaska to visit all manner of monuments related to the headline-making murders of Presidents Lincoln, Garfield, and McKinley. The book constructs a portrait of America in the 40 years after the Civil War but reads like a renegade field trip for grown-ups. Vowell treks to obvious places, such as Washington, D.C., the site of the Lincoln and Garfield shootings, and Buffalo, New York's Pan-American Expo grounds, where McKinley was assassinated in 1901. She also visits more obscure sites, such as a museum in a Maryland house once occupied by a John Wilkes Booth collaborator and the Adirondack mountain that Vice President Teddy Roosevelt was climbing when he heard of McKinley's shooting. Vowell's favorite stop? The Oneida mansion, in upstate New York. This former residence of Garfield's assassin was also the headquarters for a 19th-century utopian free-love community. Bet you didn't learn that in elementary school. —AMY FARLEY

