



Above: The InterContinental Hotel is just a few minutes from Buckhead's shopping hubs.



Above: The 1,993-square-foot Presidential Suite features a California King bedroom with separate living and dining rooms, butler's pantry and Atlanta skyline views.

Left: Sip your way through 70 craft bourbons at Bourbon Bar on the lobby level.

Right: Enjoy Southern-inspired cuisine prepared by chef-restaurateur Art Smith at Southern Art.



Be their guest

Buckhead's InterContinental Hotel gets five stars for service and beyond

STORY: Karina Timmel Antenucci

The first thing I noticed upon arriving at the InterContinental Hotel Buckhead Atlanta early on a Saturday afternoon is the energy. I love a hotel with a buzz about the place, and this chic tower, within walking distance of Lenox and Phipps, certainly has one.

The lobby lounge filled with clusters of cushy chairs is a great place to people-watch in the center of it all—business tête-à-têtes, wedding guests arriving for weekend festivities, a collection of barflies sipping rare bourbons at Bourbon Bar nearby and staff going about their business with so many genuine smiles that it makes me wonder about the InterContinental's training program. From bartender to valet to front desk, I didn't encounter an unfriendly face my entire stay. Add to this hum of activity the lively background music (later on a Saturday evening, it becomes live music) and I found myself bobbing in my seat.

If you are looking to do it up during your staycation, book a room or suite that has Club Level access and enjoy the lounge at any interval during your stay. It offers complimentary daily continental breakfast and an evening cocktail hour, in addition to beverages and snacks throughout the day.

The club's DVD library is also available for a stay-in-your-room respite—no judging, but there *is* also a heated outdoor saline pool and hot tub; just saying.

The 401 rooms and 21 suites, like the hotel's public areas, are decorated in a contemporary style and have an uplifting feel about them. Cheerful yellow walls in many rooms pair with graphically patterned carpets and pops of red in items such as blankets and chairs. I had the good fortune to stay in the Presidential Suite, which I found was more livable than ostentatious. Except for the ginormous bathroom with separate vanity area (need one of those!) and fireplace that turned on with a switch, it almost felt like home ... a home with room service on speed dial and someone who makes my bed, that is.

A highlight of the weekend "away" was the massages at Spa InterContinental, which takes a green and holistic approach to the services and products it offers. I had a soothing WoodSprite Sacred Massage, where Greg, my massage therapist, let me choose from various essential oils that are said to have healing benefits. My husband had an equally enjoyable Deep Tissue Massage (if you can call any deep tissue massage enjoyable).

Relaxed and rejuvenated, we ended our sojourn with Sunday brunch and a bloody mary at the colorful Southern Art restaurant. This is a treat not to be missed. The Bob Page Trio entertained brunchers with super-fun, upbeat jazz numbers that set the vibe while we perused the menu of Southern-inspired dishes and admired the ceiling murals and multi-hued blown-glass chandeliers. The Georgia white shrimp and grits with housemade andouille, okra, hominy, field peas, tomato and shrimp-scallion broth was a textural delight of creamy, salty, sweet, crunchy goodness. And it's worth noting that every accommodation was made by both waiter and chef to create a dish for my gluten-, egg- and dairy-free partner: perfectly grilled chicken breast and mixed vegetables with a side of crispy potatoes.

The InterContinental is truly the whole package. I'll definitely be seeking out the hotel group on future vacations ... and I'll be back soon for that jazz brunch, take two. ■

DETAILS:

InterContinental Hotel
Buckhead Atlanta
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Atlanta 30326
404.946.9000
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Rates start at \$200