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Foreign Best Westerns

by
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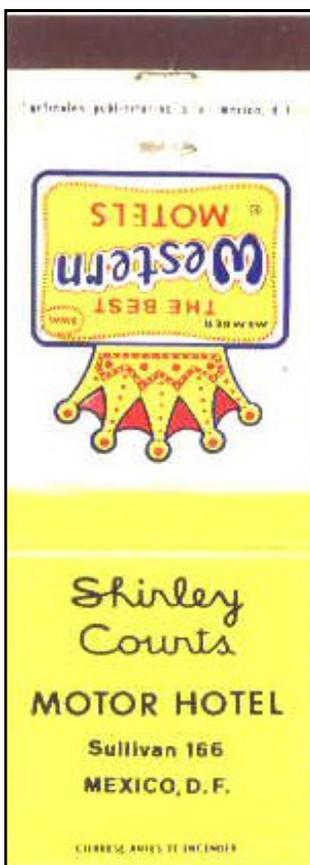
I happen to collect all of the usual chain Hotel/Motel lines...Holiday Inns, Sheratons, Hiltons, Best Westerns, and the like. I always approach all of these collections with the same goal in mind...to put together the most *complete* collection of that chain's covers that I possibly can.

That means that while I collect the usual stock and non-stock covers put out by that chain, I also collect one each of each type of national (no address) cover and foreign covers of that chain, as well.

The Nationals are usually 'blah' covers, but they're part of the overall collection...part of the chain's *story*, as it were. The foreign covers, though, are a different matter. Each and every one is a delight to add to my collection. Many of these covers are not just 'foreign,' they're *exotic!* They're often the ones that elicit the "oh's" and "ah's" from onlookers.

Best Westerns fall into this chain Hotel/Motel category, and I've collected them for over 20 years, now. The covers, themselves, go all the way back to 1948, when the first Best Western cover appeared (issued by Diamond Match Co., Chico, CA...just a hundred miles from where I'm sitting right this minute).

The chain, itself, actually started with a dozen motel owners getting together for group purchases. Later, it evolved into a Phoenix, AZ,-based co-op with over 2,200



separate locations. As the chain grew, it established some sites at a number of foreign locations, including Canada, England, France, Italy, Mexico, New Zealand, Puerto Rico, Switzerland, and the Virgin Islands. In all, some 24 different countries worldwide could boast of having Best Westerns within their borders.

Any Best Western location can supply you with a catalog of Best Western sites, although only domestic, Canadian, and Mexican locations are listed. For a complete listing of foreign locations, Best Western will send you a brochure if requested. Your local Best Western can give you the number to call. And if you go to Best Western International's web site (<http://www.bestwestern.com/travelprofessionals/internationallinks.asp>), you can get links to the various countries that have Best Westerns in them, although it's piecemeal rather than all one list.

Today, Best Western International is the largest hotel chain in the world, with 4,200 hotels (they call them 'hotels', rather than 'motels') in 80 different countries.

From these foreign locations, a variety of covers and boxes have been issued over the years, a few being pictured here. How many are there? Who knows? I actually only have a handful, myself, but it would have been enlightening to get numbers from people like the late Ken Riggs (whose Best Western collection numbered over 12,000 the last time I heard), or the late Bob Oliver (who, years ago, had 1,265 non-stock Best Westerns), or the late Kent Morris (who had a large Best Western collection, as well).

In the meantime, we can search, advertise and wait...three of the best collecting techniques there are. Even if Best Western should go out of business tomorrow, the challenge will always be there for collectors!

