

LET A SENSE OF ADVENTURE GET THE BETTER OF YOU

travel



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From the breathtakingly new to the restored and the refreshed, here's your guide to the very best of the Big Apple hotels.

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ONE OF NEW YORK'S HOTTEST PROPERTIES, THE GREENWICH, ENTICES GUESTS WITH THE SPANISH-VILLA AMBIENCE AT ITS RESTAURANT LOCANDA VERDE.



A COUNTRY-STYLE BREAKFAST, **ABOVE LEFT**, AT THE GREENWICH HOTEL; WAIT STAFF AT THE GREENWICH ARE EVER ON HAND AT THE GRAND ENTRANCE TO THE COURTYARD; BREAKFAST CAN ALSO BE TAKEN IN THE SUMPTUOUS DRAWING ROOM, **RIGHT**. IN THE WARMER MONTHS, THE LUSH COURTYARD, **OPPOSITE**, IS A FAVOURED ESCAPE FOR GUESTS.

Ten years on from the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center, New York's hotel scene has never been more vibrant. New hotels are popping up all over the grid – and some of the city's grandes dames have had long-overdue facelifts. *Vogue Living* visits 17 of the best, from classics to those so new the paint has barely dried...

1. The Surrey

WHERE: 20 East 76th Street at Madison Avenue.

PEDIGREE: A storeyed Upper East Side residence hotel, built in the 1920s, reopened in late 2009 after a top-to-toe \$60-million renovation. The graceful dowager has been reborn as a plush *pied-à-terre*, friendly to poodles of both human and canine varieties.

DECOR: Contemporary glamour with a discernible French patois. The beautiful public areas are composed of white, Dior Gray and Chanel Black, a decidedly fashionable palette enhanced by an impressive contemporary art collection, which features pieces from Jenny Holzer, Richard Serra, Claes Oldenburg and Chuck Close (his photorealist painting of Kate Moss is our favourite).

STAY HERE IF: Your taste in hotels reflects that of your wardrobe: monochromatic with expensive accessories and a scintilla of irony, but ultimately as comfortable, discreet and classy as a Chanel suit.

NEIGHBOURHOOD FAVOURITES: Museum Mile, the culture vulture's Shangri-La, is one block away. Art world bigwig Larry Gagosian's new store and gallery is at 980 Madison.

LAY YOUR HEAD: The hotel's 'salons' feel anything but – with large marble bathrooms, gorgeous desks, hand-painted wardrobes, Laura Tonatto toiletries and whimsical design touches such as window-seat cushions hand-stitched with notable New York quotes. Snooze on the impossibly comfortable Duxiana mattresses.

CHOW: Bar Pleiades, an oversized lacquered clutch of a cocktail bar, appeals to the facelift-and-Fendi clientele. Café Boulud, helmed by superstar chef Daniel Boulud, is rather pricey but it's a popular staple with a reasonable *prix fixe* lunch menu.

WE LIKE: The 17th-floor rooftop terrace is uptown's most beautiful summer refuge, replete with a handcrafted cocktail menu.

HOWEVER: Wireless – it should really be complimentary.

WHEREWITHAL: Deluxe Salons start at US\$699 per night.

BOOK IT: Visit The Surrey at thesurrey.com. AP

2. The Greenwich Hotel

WHERE: 377 Greenwich Street.

PEDIGREE: Actor Robert De Niro is the part-owner of this new hotel, next door to his Tribeca Film Center. A member of The Leading Hotels of the World.

DECOR: Italian palazzo/Spanish villa/Hollywood mansion built around a courtyard garden. A new building with old-world charm – worn parquet, old rugs, aged mirrors, reclaimed timber details, vintage overstuffed lounges and chairs, handmade Italian and Moroccan tiles. The artworks of Robert De Niro Sr, the actor's late father, hang in the lobby. The drawing room and Locanda Verde restaurant face the central courtyard garden.

STAY HERE IF: You like an intimate Manhattan hotel that's more like a private club with an insider showbiz buzz.

NEIGHBOURHOOD FAVOURITES: Tribeca Grill, Bubby's, Nobu, The Odeon, Pier 25 amusement park, Hudson River walk.

LAY YOUR HEAD: Each room is entirely different. *VL* stayed in room 416, a Courtyard Room, which has French windows opening on to the courtyard, a comfortable sitting area and a large marble bathroom with, remarkably, its own sauna. All rooms have beautiful, individual bathrooms done out in differing Moroccan tile. Corner suites are light and spacious with glimpses of the river but entry-level rooms are also a good size.

CHOW: The hotel restaurant, Locanda Verde, serves breakfast, lunch and dinner with home-style Italian flair. It's very popular – you'll find it packed and noisy at night. Hotel guests can also take their lamb sliders reclining on comfy sofas by the fire in the hotel's charming Drawing Room.

WE LIKE: The wonderfully atmospheric Drawing Room and courtyard garden. Authentic Japanese Shibui Spa with subterranean pool, and the fact that De Niro's personal trainer is available for appointments in the hotel gym. The complimentary soft drinks and snacks in your room. iPads loaded with classic old movies like *Manhattan*. Those 'wow' bathrooms. We could happily live here.

HOWEVER: The location might be a bit quiet for some, although it's only a 10-minute walk to SoHo and in easy reach of the subway.

WHEREWITHAL: Courtyard rooms from US\$495 per night.

BOOK IT: Contact The Leading Hotels of the World at lhw.com. LT

*“We could
happily live
here”*

“Move in permanently!”



3. Crosby Street Hotel

WHERE: 79 Crosby Street, SoHo.

PEDIGREE: New building from the Firmdale Hotel Group, interior design by Kit Kemp.

DECOR: Country-house cosy mixed with urban boho and a touch of British eccentricity. In keeping with the SoHo neighbourhood, the hotel's collection of contemporary art is impressive.

STAY HERE IF: You love people-watching in a fabulous lobby and bar but also value the sanctuary of a well-proportioned room.

NEIGHBOURHOOD FAVOURITES: Dean & DeLuca, Fanelli's Cafe, Balthazar, Savoy, Ruby's Diner, Anthropologie and Uniqlo.

LAY YOUR HEAD: *V/L* stayed one night in standard room 807 and was upgraded on the second night to suite 1107. The standard room is large and bright, with a wall of windows looking across Lower East Side roofs. The attention to detail is superb – heated towel racks, well-stocked mini-bar, a roomy, handsome bathroom, shower only. The suite is a knockout – two walls of windows overlooking SoHo, paisley fabric walls, striped tweed sofas, dining table, teardrop chandelier, deep bath, ample closets. Move in permanently!

CHOW: The street-level Crosby Bar and Terrace opens on to a manicured sculpture courtyard only for guests. Sit on striped banquettes for the best buffet breakfast we tried, great value at US\$20; set menu lunch or dinner US\$25 for two courses or US\$35 for three; wines all by the glass. Ruinart Champagne Afternoon Tea and a wonderful selection of small plates at the bar. The hot doughnuts were scrumptious.

WE LIKE: The comfy drawing room with honesty bar; Sunday night movies in the orange and purple Screening Room downstairs; the dog-themed works of art throughout the hotel.

HOWEVER: The striking decor is rather feminine – it may not appeal to butch business types or anyone with an aversion to prints.

WHEREWITHAL: Superior room from US\$525 per night.

BOOK IT: Visit Firmdale Hotel at firmdale.com. LT

4. Gramercy Park Hotel

WHERE: 2 Lexington Avenue at 21st Street.

PEDIGREE: When iconic hotelier and Studio 54 creator Ian Schrager acquired the fabled but frowzy hotel several years ago, he turned to contemporary artist Julian Schnabel to weave his idiosyncratic magic.

DECOR: Maximalist suffused with *recherché* sensuality. Schnabel, whose work appears in the hotel's heavy-hitter art collection, riffed on the hotel's bohemian past, evoking an extravagant velvet-filled lair lavished with enormous fireplaces.

STAY HERE IF: You aspire to be an eccentric Gilded Age robber baron right down to your own set of keys to the city's sole private park.

LAY YOUR HEAD: Call it a happy accident: after booking a deluxe room, *V/L* was upgraded to one of the hotel's Gramercy Suites when the room's radiator leaked. Romantic and unapologetically plush, the suite features a sitting room, dining table and a superb view of the park and downtown.

NEIGHBOURHOOD FAVOURITES: The hotel is situated at the crossroads of several neighbourhoods and is an easy stroll to some of the city's best dining options, including the evergreen Gramercy Tavern.

CHOW: *Maialino*, a swank take on a Roman trattoria, serves hearty meals (try the carbonara). Also popular with the upscale brunch crowd.

WE LIKE: The hotel's rooftop Gramercy Terrace – Stanford White meets Auntie Mame – is a suitably lush backdrop for romantic assignations.

HOWEVER: The Rose Bar, with a crackling fire and red felt-covered pool table, is so swank and select that even hotel guests must reserve a table after 9pm. A popular spot on Friday and Saturday nights.

WHEREWITHAL: Standard rooms from US\$475 per night; suites start at US\$750 per night.

BOOK IT: Go to gramercyparkhotel.com. AP



COLOURFUL AND OFFBEAT, THE CROSBY STREET HOTEL APPEALS TO THE DESIGN-SAVVY CROWD WHO REGULARLY FLOCK TO THE CROSBY BAR AND TERRACE, OPPOSITE. ILLUMINATED BY RETRO-STYLE PENDANT LIGHTS, THE BAR BOASTS FLOOR-TO-CEILING WINDOWS THAT OPEN TO THE SPACIOUS COURTYARD. ROOMS ARE RICH WITH DETAIL, INCLUDING HAND-BLOCK FABRICS BY GALBRAITH & PAUL, TOP, AND QUIRKY CANINE-THEMED SCULPTURES AND PAINTINGS, RIGHT. THE CENTREPIECE OF THE LOBBY, BELOW, IS AN ETHEREAL WORK BY SCOTTISH PAPER CUT-OUT ARTIST JACK MILROY.



5. Ace Hotel

WHERE: 20 West 29th Street at Broadway.

PEDIGREE: Here, sited incongruously amid the cheap wig stores and five-and-dimes of Koreatown is the first East Coast foray from Ace, the coolly ambitious Seattle hoteliers.

DECOR: Falling in line with the city's appetite for throwback culture – top hats here, vintage memorabilia there – the property's style, much of which is culled from the antique market in Brimfield, Massachusetts, would make a good double for a *fin de siècle* Vaudeville stage set.

STAY HERE IF: Your band's second single has just gone platinum. Those averse to aggressive hipster affectations (lumberjack plaid, ironic moustaches) might find the art-directed lobby, always buzzing with twittering twentysomethings, a touch off-putting.

NEIGHBOURHOOD FAVOURITES: Shake Shack, the iconic alfresco burger joint in Madison Square Park, is a stroll away. As is Eataly, chef Mario Batali's Mecca of Italian gastronomy.

LAY YOUR HEAD: Not all rooms are created equal and your choice can mean the difference between feeling like a rock star or a lowly roadie. *VL*, not wishing to relive our days at summer camp, avoided the bunkrooms in favour of a medium-sized room, large and comfy and featuring a Smeg fridge, vintage furniture and a turntable.

CHOW: One of the hotel's biggest selling points is its myriad eating options, from Stumptown, the first East Coast outpost of the hallowed coffee roaster, to The Breslin and The John Dory, two perpetually crammed venues from The Spotted Pig's April Bloomfield.

WE LIKE: The permissive party policy. The hotel's mini-bars are stocked with some of our favourite cocktail ingredients including Hendrick's gin and St-Germain elderflower liqueur.

HOWEVER: Service is not the point of this Manhattan hotel. The property's hip insouciance, heightened during busy weekend evenings, will not win over service sticklers.

WHEREWITHAL: Bunkrooms start at US\$259 per night and Medium King rooms start at US\$339 per night.

BOOK IT: Visit Ace Hotel at acehotel.com/newyork. AP



THE ACE HOTEL, THIS PICTURE, IN MIDTOWN MANHATTAN. ART SENSIBILITY IS KEY, WITH ITS GRAFFITI-ENRICHED LOBBY, **BELOW**, AND ROCK-STAR ROOMS WITH LEATHER SOFAS AND AN ARTWORK BY RYDER E. ROBISON, **BELOW LEFT**.



"The art-directed lobby is always buzzing with twittering twentysomethings"



6. Lafayette House

WHERE: 38 East 4th Street at the Bowery.

PEDIGREE: The most intimate project from impresario Sean MacPherson, known for his legendary social spaces (B Bar, Waverly Inn) and quirky hotels (Bowery, Maritime), is an 1840s East Village brownstone converted into a one-of-a-kind guest inn.

DECOR: A long-lost Manhattan, like the backdrop of a Stephen Crane story. Each of the 15 guest rooms was custom designed with the likes of antiques and plush details, including brocade fabrics and hand-printed wallpaper.

STAY HERE IF: If you wish to feel like a local. With its unique ambience and on-the-pulse location, it's the perfect choice.

NEIGHBOURHOOD FAVOURITES:

Lafayette House is placed at the nexus of all the hippest hoods in Manhattan. Take a casual stroll to boutique John Derian Company for homewares and curios, drop by Peels on the Bowery for a laid-back brunch, or sidle up to the bar at Il Buco, one of the city's best Italian eateries.

LAY YOUR HEAD: VL was given room nine, which overlooks 4th Street. Sized like a small apartment with a working fireplace and kitchenette, it featured a Victorian bedhead and a claw-foot bath. Sticklers for mod cons will appreciate the flat-screen televisions, wireless connection and 500 thread-count linens.

CHOW: No breakfast in bed per se, but guests are encouraged to order delivery from an array of local restaurants and cafes. Beyond the stoop, the options are virtually endless.

WE LIKE: Lafayette House's antique fireplaces with working gas fires – what could be more luxurious on a glacial winter day than grabbing *The New Yorker* and curling up in front of the hearth?

HOWEVER: If you're the type of traveller who demands constant coddling, this unpretentious property, bereft of a concierge or full-time reception area, won't be for you.

WHEREWITHAL: Queen rooms start at US\$295 per night.

BOOK IT: Visit Lafayette House at lafayettenyc.com. AP

7. Andaz 5th Avenue

WHERE: 485 Fifth Avenue at 41st Street.

PEDIGREE: In 2010, Hyatt's fashion-meets-finance lifestyle brand renovated the classical limestone and brick fronted 1916 Rogers Peet Building situated across the road from the New York Public Library. It's their most successful urban retreat thus far.

DECOR: The interior has a few decorative winks to the bookworm-friendly location, but the internationally acclaimed designer Toni Chi (who came to Sydney to design Luke Mangan's Glass brasserie), has kept the hotel's spaces crisp and muted with a timber-hewn lobby and airy, industrially accented public spaces.

STAY HERE IF: You're looking for more style than the average midtown business hotel but also the ease and convenience of a big brand. Central but not stifling, the location, near the action but not in the thick of it, will appeal to bibliophiles and history buffs.

NEIGHBOURHOOD FAVOURITES: Stick with the classics with a visit to the Grand Central Oyster Bar, The Morgan Library & Museum or neighbouring Bryant Park.

“A long-lost Manhattan, like the backdrop of a Stephen Crane story”

LAY YOUR HEAD: We booked an extra-large king view room and were glad we did – from our chaise we were mesmerised by the views of the library, Bryant Park and the neon halo of Times Square.

CHOW: The Shop, a farm-able affair, serves Yankee-centric food sourced from iconic purveyors such as Lower East Side institution Russ & Daughters. The bar downstairs, a spacious open-air lair, heats up in the evenings with creative cocktails and shared plates.

WE LIKE: The hotel's perks include free wireless internet, non-alcoholic beverages, snacks and local calls. The in-room footbaths are wonderfully restorative after a day of pavement pounding.

HOWEVER: Part of the Andaz philosophy includes bypassing the traditional reception desk in exchange for staff checking in guests with iPads. It's a nifty concept, but it can lead to some confusion during busy times. One trade-off for the generously sized room is the freestanding glass closets, which don't hold many garments and won't be to everyone's liking.

WHEREWITHAL: Standard rooms start at US\$425 per night.

BOOK IT: Contact Andaz 5th Avenue at andaz.com. AP

8. The Nolitan

WHERE: 30 Kenmare Street at Elizabeth Street.

PEDIGREE: Located in the north of Little Italy (NoLita), this hotel is named after the downtown precinct cherished for its carefree charm and idiosyncratic stores and restaurants. A modestly sized project, the hotel was conceived after a local developer noticed an absence of places to stay in the area.

DECOR: By turns gritty and glamorous, The Nolitan has taken its cues from its downtown compatriots, mixing industrial details (such as concrete pillars and metal pendant lights) with luxurious textural elements (leather, wicker and timber).

STAY HERE IF: You're defiantly downtown and want to be equidistant to some of the best hangouts in the city.

NEIGHBOURHOOD FAVOURITES: L'asso Pizzeria, La Esquina, Torrisi Italian Specialties. Fresh Inc., Calypso, and the fashion-forward shoe stores John Fluevog and Sigerson Morrison.

LAY YOUR HEAD: Each of the 55 rooms features a monochromatic colour palette enhanced by accents such as red cashmere throws. Book one of the cityscape rooms, which afford uninterrupted northern views of the Empire State Building.

CHOW: The lobby lounge, home to a rotating exhibit from the venerable local gallery Lehmann Maupin, serves drinks and tasty snacks throughout the day. The culinary crew behind the acclaimed West Village hotspot Dell'Anima is behind the hotel's rustic American restaurant, Ellabess, headed by acclaimed chef Troy Unruh.

WE LIKE: Guilt-free treats. The hotel's extensive mini-bar, stocked with everything from rosé Champagne to M&Ms and gourmet energy bars, was designed to be affordable. Should you wish to venture out, the hotel loans skateboards, yoga mats and bikes.

HOWEVER: Light sleepers should avoid rooms on low floors, which are within earshot of the busy and heavily trafficked street.

WHEREWITHAL: Neighbourhood rooms start at US\$325 a night.

BOOK IT: Contact The Nolitan at nolitanhotel.com. AP

9. *The Standard Hotel, New York*

WHERE: 848 Washington Street at 13th Street.

PEDIGREE: Hotelier André Balazs' brutalist 20-storey glass hostelry straddles the High Line Park like an architectural rendition of one of Tom Wolfe's masters of the universe.

DECOR: Mid-century Euro chic complemented by some industrial gestures, as imagined by au courant designers Roman and Williams.

STAY HERE IF: You're in touch with your exhibitionist side.

Floor-to-ceiling windows, bathrooms without doors and a reputation for wild parties may scare off retiring types.

NEIGHBOURHOOD FAVOURITES: Jeffrey, the fashion emporium known for its superb shoe collection, fashion canteen Pastis, and Chelsea Market, the best place to load up on goodies for your High Line picnic.

LAY YOUR HEAD: There's no getting around it – the standard rooms are Lilliputian, though all feature excellent views. Spring for a Corner King complete with a tub overlooking the Hudson (a groom with a view!).

CHOW: Like a Gotham microcosm, the hotel offers more scene changes than a night on Broadway. The Standard Grill is a classically styled eatery serving American classics; the frat-friendly Biergarten is home to ping-pong and pilsner; head to the 18th floor for a pair of swishy venues, the glamorous Top of the Standard and its scruffier younger sister, Le Bain.

WE LIKE: The hotel has done away with the traditional desk (who comes here to work anyway?) in favour of a low-slung modular couch with adjustable table – a clever gambit that works well for work and play.

HOWEVER: Light sleepers should avoid the upper floors, which can be rather noisy due to the nightlife spaces above. One small caveat: the requisite cadre of male models and actors, not traditionally known for their service prowess, staffs the hotel.

WHEREWITHAL: Standard rooms start at US\$325 per night.

BOOK IT: Visit standardhotels.com/newyork. AP

10. *The Chatwal*

WHERE 130 West 44th Street.

PEDIGREE: Handsome Stanford White building modernised by Thierry Despont. Part of the Luxury Collection by Starwood Hotels and Resorts.

DECOR: Hyper Art Deco. The porters wear camp bellhop uniforms. Many witty touches such as old bakelite telephones in the hallways.

STAY HERE IF: You're planning on seeing some Broadway and off-Broadway shows. The hotel's theatre district location means you're in walking distance of most venues.

NEIGHBOURHOOD FAVOURITES: Walk to eternally popular showbiz hangouts such as Sardi's and Joe Allen restaurants. Times Square, Radio City Music Hall, Bryant Park are all nearby.

LAY YOUR HEAD: *VL* stayed in room 307, a Junior Suite. Richly appointed rooms with inspiration taken from classic Malletier steamer trunks. Suede walls, embossed leather-wrapped double closets, tweed carpets, black-and-white prints of Manhattan. The vast bathroom has black granite walls, mirrored double vanity basins, Japanese heated toilet that lights up neon blue in the night. Where's the mirror ball?

CHOW: The excellent Lambs Club is open for breakfast, lunch and dinner. Dine on red leather banquettes by a blazing fire (in winter) in the exact room where theatrical legend John Barrymore convened the famous Lambs Club in the 1920s.

WE LIKE: A console opens to become a mirrored writing desk. One of the best mini-bars we've seen is not so mini – a wardrobe cupboard featuring bookshelf stacked with magazines and novels, Chatwal playing cards and an excellent selection of tipples. Free wireless internet. Butler service is standard with all rooms.

HOWEVER: Service is patchy. A butler greets *VL* upon arrival, then disappears forever. The shower could hold a football team (we didn't try) but we didn't find essentials such as shower cap or cotton balls.

WHEREWITHAL: Standard rooms start at US\$645 per night.

BOOK IT: Contact The Chatwell at thechatwalny.com. LT



THE REFURBISHMENT OF THE MARK HOTEL BY FRANCE'S HIGHLY ACCLAIMED DESIGNER JACQUES GRANGE TAKES HIS PARISIAN STYLE TO NEW YORK'S UPPER EAST SIDE. IN THE HOTEL'S LOBBY, **ABOVE**, BLACK-AND-WHITE MARBLE FLOORING HAS A CLASSICAL EDGE, WHILE ABSTRACT ARTWORK AND VINTAGE FURNITURE ADD COLOUR AND TEXTURE TO THE SPACE. THE MARK BAR, **BELOW**, FUSES SCI-FI-INSPIRED LIGHTING AND COUNTRY-STYLE FURNISHINGS, À LA COWSKIN-STYLE UPHOLSTERY THAT WRAPS AROUND THE AMOEBIC-SHAPED FURNITURE. EMBRACING GRANGE'S CLASSICAL-MEETS-CONTEMPORARY AESTHETIC, THE INVITING MARK RESTAURANT, **OPPOSITE**, RUN BY FRENCH ÜBER-CHEF JEAN-GEORGES VONGERICHTEN, PROVIDES LUXURY AND COMFORT. DARK TIMBER SURROUNDS, SENSUAL LIGHTING AND CURVACEOUS FURNITURE MAKE FOR A STRONG DESIGN STATEMENT.



II. The Mark

WHERE: Madison Avenue at 77th Street.

PEDIGREE: An old favourite is updated in high style, thanks to Jacques Grange and a coterie of decorative artists. A member of The Leading Hotels of the World.

DECOR: 1930s Parisian luxury with a big dollop of contemporary glamour.

The striking black-and-white striped lobby is a showcase for some exceptional decorative pieces, such as Ron Arad's 'Ge-Off Sphere' chandelier. The whimsical Mark Bar off the lobby features Vladimir Kagan's freeform cow-print sofas and Guy de Rougemont tables. It's so chic, *VL* felt the need to borrow a poodle.

STAY HERE IF: You're planning on doing some serious public gallery hopping.

NEIGHBOURHOOD FAVOURITES: The Mark is perfectly situated on Museum Mile, a short walk from the Whitney, the Guggenheim, the Metropolitan, the Neue Galerie and the Frick Collection. Central Park is half a block away.

LAY YOUR HEAD: *VL* was upgraded to room 414, category Madison One Bedroom Suite, which features hardwood floors, black-and-white striped marble bathroom with extra-deep bath, powder room, king-size bed, huge closets and separate, spacious sitting room overlooking Madison Avenue. Not a detail is left to chance, from the beautiful compendium of writing paper on the desk to the La Maison du Chocolat macarons on turn-down and the art-gallery-perfect ice cubes in the refrigerator drawer. Gorgeous!

CHOW: Famed chef Jean-Georges Vongerichten is at the helm of The Mark Restaurant, which serves breakfast, lunch, dinner and afternoon teas. The restaurant is supremely comfortable, with an atrium where an excellent breakfast is served.

WE LIKE: Beautiful stationery designed by illustrator Jean-Philippe Delhomme. An iButler service for technological needs. Wardrobe storage services for regular guests. Frederic Fekkai Salon and sleek, well-equipped John Sitaras exercise studio. Complimentary internet access.

HOWEVER: Despite the high standard of The Mark Restaurant, the room service menu is disappointingly limited and service is forgetful. The one-touch remote for blinds, TV, air-con and lighting had a complete meltdown à la *Mon Oncle*. We were quite taken aback that it costs \$225 for an evening gown and \$125 for a cocktail dress to be drycleaned. But when you're off to the famous Costume Institute Ball, it hardly matters, one supposes.

WHEREWITHAL: Superior courtyard rooms start at US\$625 per night.

BOOK IT: Contact The Leading Hotels of the World at lhw.com. LT

12. *HôtelAmericano*

WHERE: West 27th Street at 10th Avenue.

PEDIGREE: Habita, the unfussily cool Mexican brand behind some of the most exciting hotels in Latin America, is bringing its game to Gotham, debuting a 56-room property in Chelsea's western fringe.

DECOR: The Enrique Norten-designed building features an industrial-inspired mesh façade and subtle public spaces.

STAY HERE IF: You're a modern art aficionado on the hunt for a slick crash pad to call home.

We think Michael Tavani, below, of M18 Co. fits right in to the hotel's casual chic aesthetic.

NEIGHBOURHOOD FAVOURITES: The latest section of the High Line is within eyeshot.

Once you've wrapped your modern art pilgrimage, repair to local favourite Bottino for a glass of Barolo.

LAY YOUR HEAD: Guest rooms, designed by Arnaud Montigny, are small and minimal. The monastic palette is accented with mirrored desk fixtures, mustard-yellow ottomans and irreverent furniture such as vinyl Zanotta beanbags.


CHOW: A utilitarian ground-floor bar that dispenses coffee and sandwiches gives way to a Latin-inflected French bistro with outdoor patio. Ride the exterior elevator to the rooftop pool area, home to an alfresco Mediterranean grill which converts to an Argentinian asado (barbecue) during the cooler months. Downstairs, art world luminaries plan their Basel schedules over homemade mescal in the hotel's clubby underground lounge.

WE LIKE: The whimsical approach to Americana, evidenced by harmonicas in rooms, denim bathrobes designed by Loden Dager and retro-cool Sharps toiletries. Rooms feature iPads loaded with a selection of things to do in the neighbourhood.

HOWEVER: The platform-style beds are Shinto shrine chic, but won't appeal to traditionalists looking for a fluffy hotel bed.

WHEREWITHAL: Standard rooms start at US\$325 per night.

BOOK IT: Contact *HôtelAmericano* at hotel-americano.com. AP



*“We like
the whimsical
approach”*

13. *The Pierre*

WHERE: 2 East 61st Street.

PEDIGREE: This landmark 1930 Georgian-style hotel reopened in 2009 with a \$100-million renovation by the Taj Hotel Group. A member of The Leading Hotels of the World.

DECOR: Conservative, subtle and tasteful.

STAY HERE IF: You're at home with tradition, like your corridors wide and your rooms spacious, expect your elevators to be driven by attendants wearing white gloves and fancy a doorman in a top hat.

NEIGHBOURHOOD FAVOURITES: Central Park, Bergdorf Goodman, Barneys, DKNY and Calvin Klein flagships on Madison Avenue, and Bloomingdales.

LAY YOUR HEAD: VL stayed in room 2008, category Cityview Suite. Very plush, creamy apricot, coral and sage colouring with subtle flock and striped velvet contrasts, damask wallpaper. Large drawing room with a glimpse of Central Park, overstuffed sofas and chairs, non-working fireplace, large desk, wi-fi connection (daily charges). Spacious wardrobe. The king-size bed was one of the most comfortable we tried. This room has bathroom facilities for the wheelchair-bound.

CHOW: Breakfast, lunch and dinner is served in Le Caprice, an offshoot of the famous London eatery. Afternoon tea, snacks and drinks are served in Two E Bar.

WE LIKE: Location, location, location, with Central Park on the doorstep, flanked by Fifth and Madison Avenues. It doesn't get more iconic than this. (Hotel guests can order bespoke picnic baskets to take into the park.) Staff ratio of three to one. The serene hush of the hallways. Le Caprice restaurant and bar, snappily Art Deco in black leather and chrome, proved to be an absolute gem – great waiters, delicious food and excellent value if you take the US\$25 *prix fixe* lunch menu.

HOWEVER: The Rotunda, the pretty, circular frescoed room that was one of New York's favourite spots for high tea, no longer serves refreshments. It's not nearly as glam to take tea in the Two E Bar. Like most uptown Manhattan hotels, hefty room service charges make a simple cup of coffee in your room an expensive proposition, even with a strong Australian dollar.

WHEREWITHAL: Superior king rooms from US\$695 per night.

BOOK IT: Contact The Leading Hotels of the World at lhw.com. LT

14. *Smyth Tribeca*

WHERE: 85 West Broadway.

PEDIGREE: Designed by architect firm Brennan Beer Gorman and enhanced by Yabu Pushelberg interiors, this two-year-old hotel is housed in a former corner bank. A member of Thompson Hotels.

DECOR: Sophisticated, understated but with enough warmth to feel like home – treat it as your own Tribeca loft for the evening. Brazilian Modernist furniture mixes with vintage pieces in the hip lobby and bar. Quirky touches such as a wall of vintage alarm clocks. The good-looking staff wear Helmut Lang.

STAY HERE IF: You appreciate restrained comfort and are looking for a low-key neighbourhood where movie stars hang out with their kids. All the subways converge here, so it's never far from anywhere, and it's a short walk to both Wall Street and the throng of SoHo.

NEIGHBOURHOOD FAVOURITES: A short walk to the new One World Trade Center (formerly known as Freedom Tower) on the old World Trade Center site, and dangerously close to the amazing bargains of the Century 21 Department Store.

LAY YOUR HEAD: VL was upgraded to the Smyth Suite, loft-like in size, with its own outdoor terrace, dining room and kitchenette, corner lounge area, master bedroom and two full bathrooms.

Standard rooms have rich walnut panelling and furniture with chrome accents, sleek stainless steel desks and full marble bathrooms.

CHOW: The hotel's French brasserie, Plein Sud, is delightfully rustic and popular with locals. (The chef, Ed Cotton, was one of the finalists on America's *Top Chef* series.) There's a dark, moody, subterranean cocktail lounge, Toro, and bites and drinks are served in the lobby, which has cosy, recessed sitting areas.

WE LIKE: The collection of vintage robots behind the reception desk, the Kiki de Montparnasse 'pleasure pack' (upmarket sex toys) in the mini-bar, great cocktails in the lobby bar, helpful doormen who walked blocks to find us a cab. Despite the chilly weather, we also enjoyed the large terrace of our suite, which has views to the site of the World Trade Center and uptown to the Empire State Building. The Kardashians stay in the Penthouse Suite when they're shooting their New York reality show – but don't hold that against the hotel.

HOWEVER: If you like your hotel rooms opulent in a traditional way, you may not enjoy the minimalist, urban feel of these rooms.

WHEREWITHAL: Queen Superior rooms start at US\$250 per night; Double Deluxe from US\$320 per night.

BOOK IT: Go to thompsonhotels.com. LT

15. *Mondrian SoHo*

WHERE: 9 Crosby Street. SoHo.

PEDIGREE: New high-rise building from Morgans Group hidden behind atrium and rusty gates; interiors by Benjamin Noriega-Ortiz who decked out the Mondrian Los Angeles.

DECOR: Inspired by Cocteau's 1946 film, *La Belle et La Bête*. Dazzling white rooms with blue-mirrored walls, blue and white French toile furnishings, rosé vine-design carpets. The public spaces have emphasis on the 'enchanted' – feathered standard lamps, inflatable banquettes – but already look a little

dated, even though the boutique hotel opened in March 2011.

STAY HERE IF: You're under 30 or wish you still were and find it charming that the front desk answers most requests with "You bet!"

NEIGHBOURHOOD FAVOURITES: Opening Ceremony, De Vera, Café Select and La Esquina, Dean & DeLuca.

LAY YOUR HEAD: Not in rooms but 'sleeping chambers'.

VL stayed in 2102, category Standard King, a corner room. The views of the Empire State Building are fabulous, but the room was small, with limited desk space. Disproportionately large shower stall in the 'bathing chamber' but nowhere to put toiletries. The wardrobe was more like a broom cupboard. In-room iPad (internet charges \$10 a day), trendy Malin+Goetz skin care, but no shower cap. More youth hostel than Beast's castle.

CHOW: Imperial No. 9 restaurant by Sam Talbot serves breakfast, lunch and dinner in a plant-filled atrium. We had a fraction of a giant lemon ricotta pancake for breakfast (delicious), contrasting strangely to the room service offering of teeny model-bite-size squares of pudding. Mister H bar is an 'intimate nightlife concept' dressed up like an old-fashioned speakeasy.

WE LIKE: The romantic rusty gates and vine-covered entrance tunnel. Sweet's '70s pop hit 'Ballroom Blitz' playing in the elevator. The location is great – in a quiet enclave a step away from crazy Broadway, Chinatown and NoLita.

HOWEVER: The service is anywhere from wafty to inept.

VL had to spend an hour setting up the IP address on the in-house iPad. The party vibe in the lobby is fine but there's no security to stop anyone getting to your door. A note on the pillow quotes Samuel Beckett: "Fail Better". Hmm.

WHEREWITHAL: Standard rooms start at \$309 per night.

BOOK IT: Contact mondriansoho.com. LT

*“Uptown's
most
beautiful
summer
refuge”*



“You feel like you’re residing in a classic Upper East Side apartment building among the super-rich”

17. The Setai Fifth Avenue

WHERE: 400 Fifth Avenue.

PEDIGREE: A Zen-like temple of repose in the thick of Fifth Avenue, this brand new hotel, managed by Capella Hotels & Resorts, resides in a 60-storey tower designed by Gwathmey Siegel & Associates. A member of The Leading Hotels of the World.

DECOR: Stealth wealth. Luxurious but glamorous, the hotel’s capacious lobby exudes urban calm, with pops of contemporary art and smoked mirrors.

STAY HERE IF: You prefer to travel with a minimum of fuss. With its fine service, unobtrusive luxury and cavalcade of creature comforts, this hotel appeals to discreet travellers.

NEIGHBOURHOOD FAVOURITES: The Morgan Library & Museum for a cultural interlude; Keens steakhouse, which serves excellent steaks in a time capsule-like dining room.

LAY YOUR HEAD: *VL* was given room 2405, one of the hotel’s 57 Avenue Apartment Suites. Sized more like a plush sky pad than a hotel room, it was overflowing with extravagant creature comforts, from a full-sized walk-in closet to Nespresso coffee maker and kitchenette.

It’s a taste of what it feels like to be a Mr Big type.

CHOW: Room service includes a menu of well-priced and promptly delivered staples. For something special, head to the in-house restaurant, pasta master Michael White’s resplendent Ai Fiori, which was recently awarded three stars by the *New York Times*.

WE LIKE: Guests are encouraged to commandeer the hotel’s car, a sleek grey Maserati Quattro, for a joyride around town.

HOWEVER: With its slick eastern roots, the hotel doesn’t scream New York. If you’re craving more of a sense of place, haul further up Fifth Avenue to some of the more classic hotels.

WHEREWITHAL: Standard King rooms start at US\$550 per night.

BOOK IT: Contact The Leading Hotels of the World at lhw.com. AP

16. Hotel Plaza Athénée

WHERE: 37 East 64th Street.

PEDIGREE: Built in 1927, the hotel boasts elegantly revamped suites and spa. No relation to the Paris hotel of the same name.

DECOR: Luxurious but cosy, intimate, lived-in. Some of the new suites have beautiful outdoor terraces, compact kitchens that can be closed off, sunny atriums and interconnecting rooms – just like a swank apartment, but with room service. Both Elizabeth Taylor and Princess Diana felt at home here.

STAY HERE IF: You want to feel like you’re residing in a classic Upper East Side apartment building among the super-rich, their doormen, personal trainers and dog walkers.

NEIGHBOURHOOD FAVOURITES: Everything pricey – Chanel, Hermès, Armani, Roger Vivier, Michael Kors, N.V. Perricone, Barneys. Bloomingdales is a 10-minute walk.

LAY YOUR HEAD: *VL* stayed in standard room 1404 – a large room and bathroom with plenty of floor and closet space. Classic decor: striped wallpaper, reproduction antiques. This room looks into the windows of other rooms. The hotel has the advantage of being the tallest building on the block, so ask for a room with a city view.

CHOW: Breakfast, lunch and dinner in Arabelle restaurant, under a gold dome. Afternoon tea and drinks, bar food, served in Bar Seine.

WE LIKE: The low-key, friendly atmosphere – distinctly unstuffy, which is why Hollywood celebrities and younger royalty have favoured it for years. Charming female concierges give the hotel a feminine touch. We liked the warm, Moroccan-style interior of Bar Seine and thought it just the spot for a cosy tête-à-tête.

HOWEVER: The hotel lobby is small and there’s not much going on; if you’re looking for a young, happening place, this is not it.

WHEREWITHAL: Executive king rooms from US\$495 per night.

BOOK IT: Contact The Leading Hotels of the World at lhw.com. LT

FLY

Vogue Living chose V Australia and Virgin America for a connection to New York. Across the Pacific, Virgin’s Business Class was roomy, with fully flat beds and turn-down service. With Luke Mangan meals delivered to our seat any time, Virgin’s attentive cabin crew and lots of movies to watch, it felt like being tucked up in bed having a nice lie-in. The conviviality of the boutique bar and the women-only bathroom are appreciated touches. At LA airport, V Australia guests can use the Alaska Airlines Lounge. (We’re hoping a Clubhouse is on the books.)

We then connected with Virgin America for the flight to New York. Virgin has upped the ante in North America, bringing glamour back to the air. The First Class cabin features white leather chairs, with pink pillows and red blankets and pink cabin lights – more like a nightclub than the cabin of an A320. The in-flight catering system, where passengers can use their personal entertainment screens to order refreshments on demand, is nothing short of brilliant. We tried the Premium Economy seats on the way back and the service was just as good.

V Australia’s 777 service to Los Angeles departs from Sydney daily, Brisbane four times a week, and Melbourne three times per week. For more information on V Australia, go to vaustralia.com.au; and for more details on Virgin America, visit virginamerica.com. **VL**

For everything New York, check out the website of NYC & Company at nycgo.com.