



My personal experience of the Public hotel in New York

I'd had my eye on Ian Shrager's new concept hotel since it opened last summer, and the pictures I'd seen online had really whetted my appetite. I wanted to take a look next time I visited New York. I finally got my chance in November, when we needed a room for BDNY, Boutique Design New York, a hotel trade fair and conference. We liked the quirky exchange of emails when we booked – they made us feel part of a community, and I was starting to like the place already.

The check-in experience was great, albeit slightly awkward, because the room category we'd booked wasn't available on the Saturday when we arrived. We ended up moving rooms twice, though at least this meant we had the chance to inspect three rooms in one trip, and I really liked all of them. The standard rooms are nearly all the same, differing only in their views and bed sizes. The second one was a couple of storeys higher, which made all the difference: the view was a lot more impressive. The queen-size bed was a bit small for my husband and me, especially since it was on a low wooden platform right by the window, so every centimetre counted. On the second day, a room became vacant in the category we'd booked, so we had to move one more time before we got exactly what we wanted.



Camping in the city

The rooms – As you've probably guessed by now, I liked them. The interior design of the public areas is beautiful yet sometimes a bit 'noisy', but when we took the lift to the rooms, we entered an oasis of tranquillity. I immediately thought: yes, this is the perfect antidote to all the bustle outside. And the minimalist decor made it almost like camping in a major metropolis – or perhaps glamping, what with all the sensitive details and beautiful, high-quality natural materials. The owners call it "luxury for all", and I can only agree. This kind of luxury made it difficult to get out of bed in the morning, but being right at the heart of the city made the effort worthwhile.

The room worked well, its cosy, cave-like feel reinforced by the fleece used as a bedcover during the day. It also made intelligent use of a compact space. For example, there's no

notepad, just a few sheets of paper in a specially made box: you don't need a whole pad, so why not do your bit for the environment?



The many facets of F&B

The public areas – Ian Schrager's Studio 54 revolutionised the late-1970s New York club scene. When he diversified into hotels in the 1980s with Morgans, also in New York, and invented the boutique hotel, he was tapping into a social trend. He is still doing this today, most recently with his hotels for the Edition Group co-designed with Marriott, which have really cool basement clubs.

And the theme continues with his latest baby. The Public hotel boasts a hip rooftop bar with a 360-degree view of the city, attracting long lines in the evenings. Club door staff are another Ian Schrager invention: he employed them at Studio 54 to make sure he got exactly the right mix of guests. But the hotel has other equally sophisticated F&B options, and there really is something for everyone.

When you enter the hotel via the long runway outside, you can either take the stylish escalator straight upstairs or stop for a snack at the downstairs bar. The rooms have bottled water but no minibars, which are less of a necessity these days. There are three bars on the ground floor, serving coffee, drinks, and snacks. The open seating area outside them is sometimes used as an overspill area at breakfast, and in the evenings, when celebrity chef Jean George's adjoining restaurant is always busy. By day, the big tables and simple wooden benches are transformed into a workspace with free WiFi. This lures locals into the hotel, making it a great place for visitors to pick up insider tips.



The hidden bar

Despite its modern image, the whole hotel has a really warm feel. Almost everything seems to be clad in natural wood, including the ceilings. The contrasting plywood-textured concrete pillars enhance the welcoming, contemporary mood, and (mostly indirect) illumination is used to create highlights in the true sense of the word.

I made one interesting discovery on the first floor, where I was amazed by the quiet, relaxed atmosphere. It felt like a big living room: there was no music, and many guests were actually talking to one another rather than hunched over their laptops. This was a bar, though it wasn't immediately apparent where the drinks came from, since the shelves behind it were decked with works of art. It was not until I'd ordered that I realised that the drinks were hidden in secret cupboards behind the wood panelling. Not having to look at serried ranks of bottles was so much easier on the eye, making the ambience even more relaxed and intimate. I'd found a new favourite place.

This hotel really does have many facets, and I think the whole concept is a very successful response to a new type of lifestyle. People travel differently these days. They like to get beneath the skin of a city, adopting a more thoughtful, personalised approach to exploration – and the one thing they can't stand is cookie-cutter uniformity. I can't wait to go back and discover even more.



With best wishes, Corinna Kretschmar-Joehnk