

THE HUFFINGTON POST



Suzanne Aaronson

Founder of Suzanne's Files

Posted: January 19, 2010 05:13 PM

What's Worth It: The Mark Hotel, NYC

The Mark Hotel is a New York landmark, and happens to be in my favorite neighborhood (the Upper East Side) so I was thrilled when it re-opened last July 2009, unveiling a new design by French designer Jacques Grange. Grange has been designer of choice for chic homeowners such as Yves St. Laurent, Valentino and Caroline, Princess of Monaco, so I was expecting something pretty special... And wow, Grange doesn't disappoint. For a city hotel? - in a city with so many lovely and plush places to stay? This is a goody -- one to add to our list if you frequent NYC to try; one to stay for planning that special romantic long weekend in Spring.

The Mark is an original 1927 building, but the fusty old-school style was revamped, merging Art Deco glamour with one-off furnishings and artwork commissioned especially for The Mark by Pierre Pabson, owner of the chic furniture boutique Galerie du Passage in Paris: Artists like Ron Arad, Vladimir Kagan and Todd Eberle have all contributed, think: surreal, European, contemporary elegance.

Not only has the Art Deco era influenced the design, the level of service is exactly what you would expect from those times of sophistication, indulgence and style... I was impressed to arrive in my room and find the private bar stocked with my favorite drinks from my former short visit. The concierge and head of staff (a lovely warm Irish woman named Helen) greeted me by name and asked where my dog Henry was - as they were under the impression from my booking he was coming along. Staff is immaculately turned out in outfits from London's Turnbull and Asser, suit-makers to Churchill, the Prince of Wales and James Bond. Don't worry, there's no style over substance, they're also excellently professional and on the ball.

For business travelers, there are all sorts of techy touches: rooms are compatible with laptops, smartphones and MP3 players, there's complimentary WiFi (as it should be at every upscale property but sadly is not the case), private printing and private 212 or 646 numbers that can be assigned direct to any room - perfect for business in bed... If you've managed to leave work at home (lucky!), the specially designed Bang and Olufsen audio-visually include flat screen HD LCD TVs and Blu Ray players. Not quite as geek as you are chic? I just gave the iButler a call and they were there in minutes. Seamless.

I prefer to exercise outside, and with Central Park on the doorstep there is no excuse! But if you like inside, or seeing a personal trainer, the fitness center decked with the very latest in machinery and shiny stainless equipment is open 24 hours a day (see the concierge to book a trainer).

As any New Yorker will tell you, this is not the city where you allow yourself a bad hair day. This has been pre-thought at The Mark; I was impressed to hear that the management got world famous and

talented Frederic Fekkai to open an in-house salon offering his special hair and body treatments. A fab package to do with a girlfriend is 'Chic by Frederic' - a morning or afternoon dedicated to total pampering: blow-out for two, make up for two by Chantecaille, a manicure and pedicure for two and an in-salon Champagne lunch for two from The Mark Restaurant. Your friend will hopefully know enough to thank you with a cocktail at the modern, swirling "cloud" bar at Bar Mark, designed by contemporary artist Guy de Rougemont - sure to become an Upper East Side watering hole fixture on the scene.

Grange and Fekkai aren't the only talents to have lent their expertise to the new, improved Mark... The Mark Restaurant is under the watchful eye of Jean-George Vongerichten (impressive, again): yes, he of three-Michelin-starred 'Jean-Georges' fame. He's worked up a mouth-watering menu for the restaurant. A nice touch is that the same menu is also available at any hour as room service - so you can munch on a Michelin-menu in your PJs! When in the mood for down-home diner - Viand Café, the local diner, is a block away as is the venerable St. Ambreous, one of the best old world coffee's and homemade ice creams in town, not to mention its homey food like spaghetti Bolognese and veal piccata.

The rooms are spacious, immaculately laid out, quiet and so relaxing - the perfect contrast to busy Manhattan streets. Despite all the technology, I'm glad to say that they don't feel overly modern; the beige, creams and browns are warm. Art Deco touches abound, with geometric patterns in the furnishings and period-styled pieces, but it's not too much, just feels elegant. The bathrooms are stunning and well thought out-black and white marble floors, deep soaking tubs (big enough for two romantics) and nickel fittings you wish you could take home with you. If you haven't had quite enough technical wizardry from the bedroom, the vanity mirror doubles as a TV: Personally I prefer relaxing without a hint of sound...

Room sizes range from the small Courtyard rooms to suites with two bedrooms, kitchen, dining room and living room. But even the smallest are plenty big enough, a nice touch in New York that makes every guest feel at home (some might even be at home, the Mark has residential suites too). That's what the Mark is so good at - those little things that make all the difference. You'll 'feel' what I mean the moment you meet Helen... Highly recommend it.

Say Suzanne Aaronson sent you ...

Room rates \$495 - \$1300

25 East 77th Street
New York, NY 10075-1711, United States
(212) 744-4300