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LUXURY

FRONT & CENTER



A TOUCH OF PARIS

Sofitel New York brings the City of Light to the Big Apple.

BY MERILEE KERN

With so many hotel options in New York City, it's difficult to be distinctive. But the Sofitel New York hotel effectively sets itself apart from the pack by bringing the French style of luxury living to discerning guests looking to take a bite out of the Big Apple.

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Images From Left to Right: HUBER Presidential Living Room and Office, Sofitel Exterior at Night, Gaby Restaurant, HUBER Twins Double Suite



While boutique in its service sensibility, Sofitel New York encompasses a 30-story building overlooking 44th and 45th streets. The hotel offers 398 guest rooms and 52 suites—including a presidential suite—that exude a sophisticated, modern European ambience and a Paris-to-New York jet-set style. In fact, the hotel's structural design is one of masterfully executed Parisian Art Deco melded with 1940s Manhattan glamour, courtesy of architect Brennan Beer Gorman who was awarded for the "best new skyscraper for design and functionality" upon the property's opening in 2000.

Designed by renowned Parisian designer, Pierre-Yves Rochon, the property's Art Deco yet contemporary interior décor, is reminiscent of an upscale, formal private club, but also radiates the warmth of a gracious home. Perched majestically near the lobby staircase is l'Oiseau—the Bird—a sculpture by Jean-Michel Foulon, which is said to be soaring upward to convey a feeling of flight in silent tribute to the bicentennial of the French Revolution. Overall, the sensory effect is transportive as Sofitel New York emanates a sophisticated Parisian-chic countenance.

PARISIAN IMMERSION

In a town where it can be difficult - if not impossible - to distinguish oneself, Balendra Nagesvaran, Vice President of Hotel Operations for North America and General Manager of Sofitel New York, is eager to point out precisely why she feels this hotel offers its guests a distinctly different level of hospitality. "The hotel is infused with the French art de vivre," she explains, "and brings elements of French culture to the guest experience, such as a 'bonjour' at check-in, Parisian Art Deco-inspired guest rooms, elegant floral displays, and exquisite Brasserie cuisine at Gaby." Nagesvaran continues, "The hotel's location is also a differentiator. We're in the heart of Manhattan's bustling theater district and just minutes away from Fifth Avenue, the center of Manhattan's business, art and cultural scenes."

Nagesvaran also commented on Sofitel New York's commitment to impeccable internationally-oriented service. "The passion and attention to detail that is generated by our hotel staff is a stand out for me," she says. "Our hotel is staffed with French-speaking ambassadors in each department, and our staff speaks a combined total of 52 languages."

DISTINCTIVE DIGS

True to Nagesvaran's word, I was greeted by multiple hotel staff with a friendly, "Bonjour," making me feel like I was actually in the City of Lights. Even once I settled into my room, which incidentally had a direct view of the Empire State Building off to the left, the feeling that I was in a Paris flat remained. All rooms at Sofitel New York feature spacious marble baths outfitted with a separate tub and rain shower, wood-framed beveled mirrors, and marble vanities stocked with imported French bath amenities by Lanvin or, if you're staying in a suite, by Hermès.

The focal point of each guest room is a custom maple or rosewood three-paneled, full-wall headboard with a recessed, spot-lit niche—the perfect display for the large colorful painting above each bed. And, speaking of beds, New York may be the "city that never sleeps," but with Sofitel's signature feather-top and duvet "SoBeds," catching a few winks to recharge for a night on the town is a wonderful indulgence. To further evoke a sense of geography, the walls in the rooms are like an art gallery, showcasing both vintage and current black-and-white photography from Paris and New York. Of course, windows provide various Manhattan vistas that range from 44th Street to the Chrysler Building. All rooms are bathed in natural light, and if you're looking for something extra, two of the rooms feature private balconies.

On the practical side, each guest room includes a built-in or standing desk with integrated data port and multiple phone lines, a flat-screen television, a BOSE music system, wireless internet access, and a fully stocked minibar.



FRENCH FARE

No visit to Sofitel New York is complete without a visit to Gaby, the hotel's acclaimed on-site restaurant that is another source of pride for Nagesvaran, who remarked, "Fine French cuisine served at Gaby Brasserie Française is another differentiator for us. Executive Chef Sylvain Harribey, who won Food Network's Chopped among many other culinary achievements, serves up classic French cuisine with tons of personality."

With such an endorsement, I eagerly visited Gaby for dinner where I reveled in the restaurant's creamy Eggplant and Porcini Soup, Mesclun Salad topped with shaved parmesan, and a classic Duck Confit, all capped off with a seductive Tahitian vanilla crème brûlée topped with fresh berries. Gaby is also known for fusion fare, with a range of international dishes containing Asian, Latin, or African influences. The bar at Gaby is a great spot for happy hour, where patrons can partake in 40 different wines by the glass that pair perfectly with artisanal cheeses the restaurant rotates monthly.

A LOOK AHEAD

When asked about the hotel's plans for the future, Nagesvaran is excited about a bevy of upcoming changes that will continue to position the hotel as a premier reference point for the Sofitel brand in New York and globally. "We have plans to renovate the lobby," she says, "bringing a modern and contemporary feel to the space. Updates will also be made to Gaby Brasserie and Gaby Bar. In the long term we're looking at room renovations."

Sofitel New York has it all with world class service, well-appointed accommodations, and an array of on-site amenities. But what truly sets this hotel apart is the authentic cultural character expressed in art, style, food, drink, and that certain je ne sais quoi only the French can deliver. ☐



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