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SLEEPOVER THE LUDLOW

Cozy on up to the Lower East Side

AMY ROSEN NEW YORK

Everything old is new again on the Lower East Side, where gentrification was slow to come to this historically Jewish working-class neighbourhood. But once it happened – in the mid-2000s – it happened fast, with condos and boutique hotels sprouting up amid bars, bakeries and galleries. The latest addition is The Ludlow hotel, which opened in June, tucked away on a quiet street just around the corner from Katz's Delicatessen, a beacon of a bygone era in an ever-evolving district.

LOCATION, LOCATION

While the Lower East Side isn't the first neighbourhood that comes to mind when planning a Big Apple getaway, perhaps it should be. The subway line is mere steps away, so you can easily hit midtown for Broadway, Central Park, Rockefeller Center and Bloomingdale's, then come back east to roost in the evening at Clinton Street's white-hot restaurant row and the area's live-music venues and bars. Joining the ranks is the Ludlow's lobby bar, all tufted couches and faux-pony-hair pillows – an



The refined decor of The Ludlow's guestrooms features Indo-Portuguese-style beds, dark-stained hardwoods and handmade silk rugs. ANNIE SCHLECHTER

instant hit with the artisanal-cocktail-loving crowd.

DESIGN

With its brick façade and factory casement windows, the lobby's oak-panelled walls and marble mosaic floors, as well as the lounge's distressed limestone fireplace, you can't get over the time and care that went into preserving this handsome old gem. You inquire: "What was this place before? A garment building? A tenement?" And then you're blindsided by the answer: "It's a new build." The refined decor

continues in the guestrooms, with their whitewashed wooden beams, oversized windows with lush curtains, Indo-Portuguese-style beds and dark-stained hardwoods warmed by handmade silk rugs. Bathrooms are a slice of Paris – all black-and-white tiles and brass fixtures – while many rooms have something unusual for NYC hotels: private balconies and terraces from which to take in the sweeping views.

IF I COULD CHANGE ONE THING

New York hoteliers Sean MacPherson, Ira Drukier and Richard

Born rescued a derelict building that had been abandoned by its original developers after the 2008 financial crash. The trio then took years to lovingly reclaim, rebuild and renovate it. But one thing was left off the list: a freight elevator. All 18 floors are serviced by two slow-moving elevators, which at any time may be full of house-keeping and maintenance staff with bags of sheets or garbage.

BEST AMENITY

This is a hotel that doesn't nickel and dime you. There's free WiFi, complimentary continental breakfasts, local Red Flower bath products with a signature Ludlow scent and a mini-bar stocked with some fun, regionally sourced offerings such as Uncle Jerry's extra-dark pretzels and Deep River mesquite barbecue potato chips. But for me, the best amenities were the Band-Aids that the kind reception staff found for my friend and me when we returned with bloodied feet after a day spent shopping in impractical footwear. (At the time it felt as if they had literally saved our lives.)

EAT IN OR EAT OUT?

Stick around for that free break-

fast, taken in the lovely courtyard or cozy lobby lounge, and read the Times. When I visited, the hotel's signature restaurant, a New York bistro called Dirty French, hadn't yet launched, but it has since opened and offers classic dishes with innovative twists such as duck à l'orange with ras el hanout and preserved oranges. That said, I can recommend the cocktails in the lobby lounge, especially the Pigalle: bourbon, ancho chile, bitter aperitif and fresh orange and lemon juices. And explore the surrounding streets for great eats, from Russ and Daughters to Katz's, Mission Cantina, Clinton St. Baking Co. and Il Laboratorio del Gelato with 200 flavours of heaven.

WHOM YOU'LL MEET

A lot of classy-looking French people, area hipsters, fashionistas (we were there during Fashion Week) and regular folk, just like us, relaxing by the fire.

The Ludlow, 180 Ludlow St., NY, 212-432-1818, ludlowhotel.com. 184 rooms from \$325 (U.S.).

Special to The Globe and Mail

The writer was a guest of the hotel.