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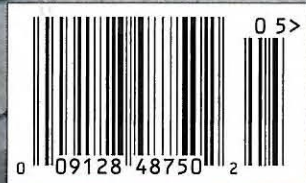
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FLIP ISSUE

HOTELS



THE SURREY, NEW YORK



Bar Pleiades

WHAT'S IT LIKE? Following a \$60-million-plus remodel, the 1920s Surrey reopened in late 2009 like the Upper East Side salon of a contemporary-art collector, catering to similarly sophisticated business travelers, power shoppers and culture vultures. Its Beaux Arts exterior suggests the old order, yet Dallas-based designer Lauren Rottet's interiors dazzle with 21st-century minimalism, spotlighting art by Chuck Close, Jenny Holzer, William Kentridge, Claes Oldenburg and more.

Public spaces are studies in black, white and shades of gray. During my check-in, as if on cue, a guest paraded a pair of gray-and-white poodles across the gray-and-white mosaic tile floor. (The Surrey is also pet-friendly.)

WHERE IS IT? The journey from Midtown Manhattan or the Financial District to The Surrey, in the heart of the Upper East Side on 76th Street between Fifth and Madison avenues, is a significant attitude adjustment in itself. It's half a block from Central Park and only slightly farther to world-class art galleries and tippy-top fashion boutiques. The Metropolitan Museum of Art and Whitney Museum of American Art are within another block radius. Bus lines are half a block away, and

it's three blocks to Lexington Avenue subway lines.

HOW MANY ROOMS?

Though its scale makes it feel much smaller, The Surrey has 189 rooms (called salons), including 30 one-bedroom suites, plus a Presidential suite and penthouse. Rooms range from 350 to 2,127 square feet (Presidential suite).

ROOM FACILITIES

Salons and suites continue the black-and-white color scheme, with clean lines and right angles broken only by a motif that reminded me of creeping vines. Dux-brand beds are made up with plush Sferra linens. In-room art mixes prints of 18th-century Italian etchings and atmospheric black-and-white photos of Central Park. Rooms with window seating feature banquettes topped with cushions stitched with quotes about New York (e.g. "Through these windows, stories are told").

Bathrooms gleam with white marble and aromatic Italian bath products. Minibars boast quality spirits in half-bottle sizes. From the generous-sized work desk (which flips up into a vanity), fast, in-room wireless Internet costs \$14.95 per day. Turndown service includes bottled water, cushy slippers (black, naturally), and a sheet highlighting the next day's weather and happenings. (During my stay, these included everything from a new restaurant nearby to a boxing match.)

RESTAURANTS AND BARS The original Daniel, by star chef Daniel Boulud, was here, before it decamped to downtown. The space has reopened as Café Boulud, an understated setting for seasonal breakfasts, lunches and dinners supervised by executive chef Gavin Kaysen. Two- and three-course

Penthouse suite dining room and private roof garden (left)



prix-fixe lunches (\$28 and \$35, respectively) make it seem like Restaurant Week all year. Café Boulud also oversees the 1,200-square-foot Bar Pleiades across the lobby, serving old-school cocktails in a very modern space. Rottet's bar design was inspired by Chanel makeup compacts, and poetry about Manhattan is stitched into the carpeting. Room service includes both Café Boulud meals and in-room cocktails; mixologists bring ingredients, serve a round and instruct guests on how to make their next round.

LEISURE FACILITIES On the second floor, the Spa at The Surrey offers a home-like environment for personalized treatments from a carefully chosen menu. It's a flagship spa for Darphin and Li'Tya products, from France and Australia, respectively. Treatment rooms are private suites, complete with dressing areas, showers and robes. Down the hall is a well-equipped fitness center with new cardio equipment and weight machines, open 24 hours. Across from the Penthouse suite on the 17th floor, the roof garden (open in warmer months) offers drinks and light meals served by butlers, with a backdrop of boxwood trees, trailing ivy and clear views to Midtown Manhattan.

BUSINESS FACILITIES There's concierge service adjacent to the front desk, and a small business center of two computers and a printer. Printing boarding passes is free; other access costs \$0.50 per minute. A couple of meeting/dining rooms (276 and 253 square feet) sit behind the lobby. The Penthouse and Presidential suites can also be rented for meetings and overnight.

VERDICT Like peer hotels—the nearby Carlyle or Mark, or The Ritz-Carlton or Four Seasons in Midtown Manhattan—The Surrey offers top-flight amenities and design for well-heeled travelers. Its intimate scale and personal service are welcome reminders that hotels can be a home away from home, and the knowing art collection is worth visiting, even if you're not staying here.

PRICE Rates start from \$629 per night.

CONTACT The Surrey, 20 E. 76th St., New York, N.Y.; tel. 1-212-288-3700; www.thesurrey.com. —Andrew Bender