

New York City's Hotel Scene Is More Glamorous Than Ever

Hotel trends sweep over **New York City** in waves. The last sea change began in the 1980s, when Studio 54 impresario Ian Schrager pioneered the concept of the boutique hotel and “lobby socializing,” making the sleek bar with a 20-foot fireplace at his Royalton the hottest spot in town, as fashionable New Yorkers jockeyed to get past the velvet rope. Simply put, Schrager turned hotels into scenes.

The impact on the hospitality universe was so profound that we can almost think of **New York hotels** as pre-Schrager and post-Schrager. Before his arrival, little had fundamentally changed since the first wave of chic hotels arrived in the Gilded Age, including the Astor and The Plaza, when New Yorkers basking in unprecedented wealth wanted theater sets where they could see and be seen. These splendid palaces, whose scale, over-the-top luxury, and sumptuous decor put the hotels of **Paris** and **London** to shame, became part of New York City's very identity.



Zaytinya, from José Andrés at The Ritz-Carlton New York, NoMad Jason Varney



A spread at Zaytinya Jason Varney

The Ritz-Carlton New York, NoMad

When Ritz-Carlton **announced its ambition** years ago to open a hotel in the

NoMad neighborhood, it raised some questions: Would the brand deliver its trademark style of traditional luxury or incorporate some of the energy of the hip hotels that more than a decade ago began transforming this once anonymous neighborhood into a place with a pulse? A José Andrés restaurant serving seriously delicious branzino, a lobby with hand-blown Randy Zieber light fixtures, and an arboretum's worth of potted plants all show that the answer lay behind door number two. Through the hotel's outdoor plaza, passersby can spy stylish entrepreneurial types sipping old-fashioned on the green barstools beneath a canopy of shrubbery. Upstairs, the rooms have cloudlike beds and wide windows with expansive views. In the subterranean spa, therapists give deep-scrub facials in black Italian-marble treatment rooms. It's an indulgence straight out of the Ritz's old playbook, but like everything else here, it fits in perfectly. —*Scott Bay*

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