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Travel Articles

Chic Manhattan Getaway at the Gramercy Park Hotel

- By Jessica Colley

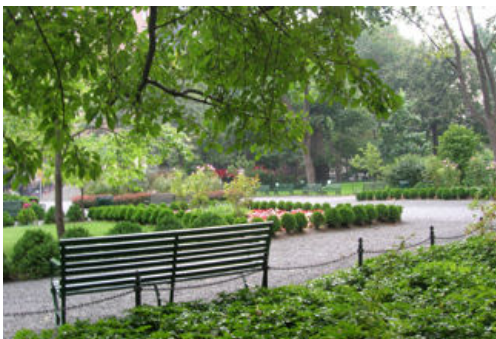
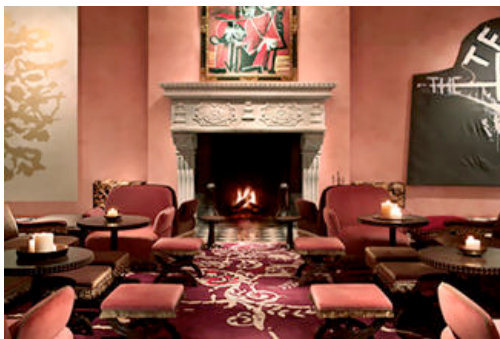


Had I stepped into a photo shoot or my hotel? The lobby of the Gramercy Park Hotel, with its romantic lighting, stunning original art and staff with model looks left me waiting for the flash.

A strong concept was apparent from the moment I stepped into the imagination of [Ian Schrager](#). The [Gramercy Park Hotel](#) experienced its renaissance in 2006 when it shed its rock and roll past, transforming the historic building into a whimsical individual on the New York hotel scene. The traditional flow of celebrities has continued, both as hotel guests and patrons of the art-rich Rose and Jade bars in the evening.

A distinct, pleasant aroma was the first greeting I received walking through the doors of Gramercy Park Hotel. From this stimulation of the senses to the oversized, seemingly Alice in Wonderland inspired fireplace, the hotel itself resembles a good piece of art as it arouses an emotional response from guests. Passing the smartly dressed concierge, seated at a simple desk in the lobby, I left the noise of New York City for a Bohemian parlor with a view.

The 185 rooms and suites in Gramercy Park Hotel share a palate of rose, jade green and renaissance blue. My suite on the 10th floor was jade green. An excellent backdrop for black and white photographs, a distinct vision was accomplished in the room. The wide planked wood floors and rose carpet made the suite feel like home and a blue velour blanket draped across the bottom of the bed added a dose of drama.



A rare feature for a New York City property, green space is on the doorstep of the hotel. As the only private park in New York, a key is required to enter the gates of Gramercy Park for a stroll. The gravel paths and modest landscaping remind visitors of an earlier time in New York, and the park could serve as a quiet place for a gourmet picnic. The best part of the park however, may just be the stares I received from outside the gate, people gazing and questioning, "Just how did you get in there?"

A relaxing feature 16 stories above the street commotion is the Private Roof Club and Garden. Accessible by key card only (or reservations for the general public) I exited the elevator into a luxurious greenhouse. Wicker chairs and couches were arranged to form small sitting areas, ready to accommodate groups of four to five. Exotic plants were almost in bloom. Although a rainy day, I could imagine the retractable roof open and New York City in June buzzing below.

A few couples and business meetings were dining over strong coffee and healthy options. If you prefer to eat at a table, do ask the hostess, or she may first seat you in one of the lounge areas. The deep couches are perfect for coffee or cocktails, yet not as ideal when your fresh berry, yogurt and homemade granola parfait arrives. The intimate environment encouraged conversation, as if some mysterious host had invited guests to an elegant brunch party and had yet to make an appearance.

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Recurring guests of the hotel were sitting nearby, and revealed through conversation their love of the Rose Bar and Jade Bar on the lobby level. After 9pm, the Rose Bar transforms to a reservations-only drawing room, where each section of the bar, and even standing room, is reserved, guaranteeing the comfort of guests. My new friends recalled one evening of glancing at the next table, to see Bono of U2 enjoying conversation beneath an original Andy Warhol painting.

Art is the core that links the design of the entire hotel. From the interesting multi-bulb light installations in the bathrooms, to the towering pieces of the lobby and bars, this hotel offers visitors a chance to experience museum-quality work without going to a museum. Only at Gramercy Park Hotel can art lovers contemplate a piece by Damien Hirst while drinking a signature cocktail.

New York City is right on the doorstep of the hotel as well. With its Lexington address, many desirable attractions are within close proximity. Currently undergoing construction is a new restaurant by famed New York City restaurateur Danny Meyer, who will share his love of Italy beginning in autumn of 2009. Taking over the cuisine of the entire hotel, including room service and the rooftop restaurant, Mr. Meyer is sure to leave his signature stamp on the hotel.



If you can't wait for this restaurant to premier, walk a few blocks to his well-established [Gramercy Tavern](#). Be sure to make reservations ahead of time, as strolling by on a Tuesday evening well after midnight, the tables were still full. Other dining options in the area include [Casa Mono](#), celebrity chef Mario Batali's Spanish tapas restaurant, known for a wide selection of Spanish wines.

The following evening I returned to a unique turndown service of a soft candle flickering in an intricate red candleholder, easing me into sleep. If the turndown service knocks on the early side, ask them to return later at the time of your choice, as this touch illuminated the vibrant colors of the room, making the city feel even more distant. I didn't hear a trace of the restaurant construction 10 floors below as I rose after a great night's sleep.

I opened the dramatic curtains to reveal floor to ceiling, practically half-block wide windows facing the park and downtown. It should come as no surprise that Ian Schrager was deemed 'Design Champion' by Travel + Leisure magazine, and that the hotel has been covered in Vogue, The New York Times and Fortune. Departing the hotel, I said goodbye to the models and wondered what masterpiece would be hanging over the fireplace when I returned.



When to go:

- There is reason to visit New York City year-round. Take advantage of an offer from [Gramercy Park Hotel](#), and receive 20% off your booking when reserving and paying in full 21 days in advance.

Where to Stay:

- Gramercy Park Hotel (2 Lexington Ave, 212 920 3300, www.gramercyparkhotel.com)

Where to Eat /Drink:

- Rose Bar and Jade Bar (Lobby Level, reservations after 9pm, Gramercy Park Hotel)
- Gramercy Tavern (42 E. 20th St, 212 477 0777, www.gramercytavern.com)
- Casa Mono (52 Irvin Place, 212 253 2773, www.casamononyc.com)
- Friend of a Farmer: Serving country-style brunch fare, this spot on leafy Irving Place is sure to impress with its French-press coffee and old-fashioned iron skillet. In good weather, grab a table on the sidewalk. (77 Irving Place, 212 477 2188, www.friendofafarmernyc.com)

What to See:

Gramercy Park Hotel is located directly across from Gramercy Park, the only private park in New York City, in the heart of Manhattan. Walking distance to Union Square, the Chelsea Art Galleries, the MeatPacking District, Soho, Noho, Nolita, the East and West Village and nightlife, shopping and restaurants. Convenient to the Jacob Javits Convention Center, Times Square, Fifth Avenue and Madison Avenue shopping districts, Museums, Theatre, Fashion and Financial Centers.

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