

New York, new start

Big Apple hotels are known to be expensive and small-roomed but The James in SoHo offers an airy downtown hideaway where guests can reboot in style

Heading to our hotel through crowded Manhattan we pulled up on a cobbled street in downtown SoHo. The first thing you notice about The James New York is that the façade of the building is very understated: there's no big sign – just an entrance with friendly doormen waiting to give you a warm welcome and guide you through into the lobby.

The second thing is the space. When we checked into our deluxe corner room, the floor-to-ceiling windows displayed a fantastic view of the Manhattan skyline, illuminating the large room with natural light. We could barely hear the sound of the teeming New York traffic below us – and, despite the king-sized bed, table and chairs and large bathroom, there was more than enough room: unusual for a boutique New York hotel.

The James New York opened for business in September 2010, the second property of the James Hotel brand (after Chicago and before Miami). Each of its 114 rooms contains bespoke

furnishings and a large bathroom separated from the living area by a floor-to-ceiling glass wall, with a remote-controlled screen for privacy.

The rooms include four one-bedroom suites and the 1,300 sq ft Penthouse Loft suite – ideal for checking out the Brooklyn and Manhattan bridges – and they all come with complimentary WiFi, full-sized bath products, individual climate control and a flat-screen

TV. Pleasingly, each of the hotel's floors also exhibits artwork from a different local artist, whether in the rooms, corridors or public spaces. The curator, Matthew Jensen, worked with the not-for-profit organisation, Artists Space (artistspace.org), to discover new and emerging artists. Each of the artworks on show has been allocated a QR code, in order for interested guests to find out more about them.

RELAX AND RECHARGE

The James New York might be located in a very lively neighbourhood, but it has a range of indoor and outdoor spaces, where guests can escape to from the noise and the bustle of Manhattan. The lobby, known as The James Club, is a great place for guests to meet and unwind. Complete with a small library and complimentary WiFi, it offers guests assorted free snacks and refreshments

throughout the day, including coffee and pastries at 9am, wine and cheese at 6pm and cookies at 9pm.

Meanwhile, the Urban Garden on the second floor, curated by award-winning landscape designer Rebecca Cole, is the perfect place to enjoy the weather during warmer months. Home to The Garden by David Burke, it's landscaped with herb beds, flowers and offers outdoor dining with a Chef's Table and private dining cabanas.

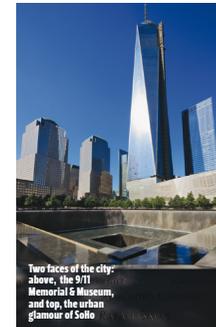
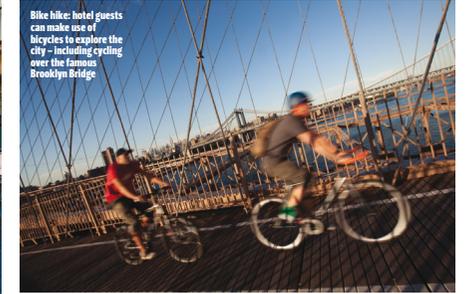
On the 18th floor The Rooftop Pool Deck affords panoramic views of the city and sun loungers. At night the sun loungers are removed and chairs put in their place so guests can still enjoy the skyline lit up in all its glory at rooftop bar Jimmy. The glass-enclosed all-season bar and lounge has a 1970s New York twist and the friendly staff are on hand to serve a range of cocktails and bar snacks.

For the more active, the Urban Athlete programme offers a variety of options to help guests de-stress and recharge.

Rooftop yoga takes place every Wednesday morning with instructor Julie Weber. Yoga mats were provided for us and set up in front of the pool, as Weber explained to us what she was doing, and the benefits of each move. The hour-long session ended with a massage and eucalyptus oil and we were left feeling de-stressed and revived. If yoga isn't enough for you, the fully equipped fitness centre, with floor-to-ceiling windows, is open 24 hours a day – and also offers personal training services with celebrity trainer Oscar Smith.

If you want to get outdoors, The James offers use of public bikes with which to explore the neighbourhood. Handy pocket maps, with recommended routes, can be picked up at reception. The hotel also offers a personalised guided running tour of the city. The four-mile run – designed for athletes of all abilities – allows visitors to explore Manhattan's rich history, culture, urban myths and a few famous landmarks.

Bike hire: hotel guests can make use of bicycles to explore the city – including cycling over the famous Brooklyn Bridge



Two faces of the city: above, the 9/11 Memorial Museum, and top, the urban glamour of SoHo



Keen as mustard: one of New York's many hotdog stands, with equally iconic yellow cab in the background

FOODIE HEAVEN

David Burke's Kitchen serves a range of delicious and healthy meals to keep you energised after workouts. Along with the 24-hour room service, the restaurant provides all-day dining with delicious modern American cuisine – and there's plenty to choose from, including the very berry smoothie, chicken and shrimp salad and kale ravioli. However if you're looking to indulge in a sweet treat we can highly recommend the amazing Burke's cheesecake lollipop tree, served with bubblegum whipped cream.

We were also lucky enough to experience the ultimate indulgence of an eight-course dinner, which is part of the foodie package available at The James. The restaurant manager welcomed us and asked if we had any dietary requirements he needed to take into account when preparing our meals.

Each course is paired with a specific wine and the bar even went to the trouble of creating a series of non-alcoholic cocktails

as one member of the group didn't drink alcohol. All the dishes were spectacular and included delicious fried oysters, lobster dumplings, steak and an indulgent chocolate hazelnut crunch bar to finish off.

The fantastic customer service was with us right up until we were due to leave for our flight home. The same doormen we met on arrival loaded us into our cab and waved us off, asking if we'd be back. After looking after us that way, they can count on it.

Behjiye Hassan

FACT FILE

Getting there United Airlines offers five non-stop flights a day from Heathrow to Newark/New York. Return fares start from £691.11 (including taxes).

Or book through WEXAS Travel (www.tod.com/traveloffers or call 020 7838 5976).

Accommodation Rooms cost from £218 per room per night (based on two sharing) excluding tax, and breakfast is included.

www.jameshotels.com/new-york



Home, James: left, the 18th floor Rooftop Pool Deck with sun loungers and panoramic views, and right, a stylish and spacious one-bedroom suite