

# Forbes

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## Why Do The World's A-List Celebrities Always Flock To This Boutique New York City Hotel?

By Peter Lane Taylor



The phrase “luxury hotel” has become as diluted of its essential prestige in hospitality these days as “gourmet kitchen” has in real estate. If you buy what many hotel brands are pitching, a flat screen in the bathroom and a button on the phone that says “Concierge” now means you’re valeting your bags right alongside the A-listers.



I know. This sounds snotty. But not if your job or company's reputation depends on how you maintain the perception of being a "luxury brand". Whether you make cars or watches, put Cabernet into a bottle, or sell hotel rooms, you don't stay the "leading" anything in the world these days without constantly setting the standards that others have to follow. Yet how do you actually do this in the ever-louder "I'm luxury too" noise? And what are the criteria for success?

If you're a hotel, especially a Manhattan 5-star hotel with competing properties on every other block, one good way to judge achievement is by your little black book of regular guests.

<http://www.forbes.com/sites/petertaylor/2016/09/28/why-do-the-worlds-a-list-celebrities-always-flock-to-this-boutique-new-york-city-hotel/#2b2dbc0634cf>





For **The Mark Hotel**, discretely tucked away on 77th Street between Madison and Fifth Avenues on Manhattan's Upper East Side and the preferred New York City refuge for the global celebrity-industrial complex, this list recently includes Oprah, Anna Wintour, Russell Crowe, Marc Jacobs, Katie Holmes, Kelly Ripa, and world tennis #1 Novak Djokovic, who I bumped into three times in the lobby the days of his U.S. Open semi-final and final matches when I recently stayed at **The Mark** after Labor Day. Don't even think about getting a room here during the Metropolitan Museum Of Art star-studded fundraising gala or Fashion Week, unless you're the personal assistant to Brad Pitt or a member of the British Royal family.

**The Mark** doesn't just cater to the A-list, pied-a-terre elite, however. Woody Allen and various other local entertainment, art, fashion, media, and business masters of the universe are regulars here for breakfast or lunch at **The Mark**'s Jean-Georges Vongerichten-led restaurant, which is purposefully ensconced off of the street in the back of the hotel to ensure you won't find it unless you know exactly where you're going.





Completely reimagined in 2009 by one of the world's leading interior designers Jacques Grange—who has designed homes for Princess Caroline of Monaco and Valentino among others—**The Mark** has set a new global standard for boutique-chic at the upper end of luxury hospitality, gracefully respecting the Old World, Art Deco architecture of the 1927 building's brick and limestone facade, while importing a bold, modern, and avant-garde feel throughout the hotel's interiors including the 156 guest rooms and suites.

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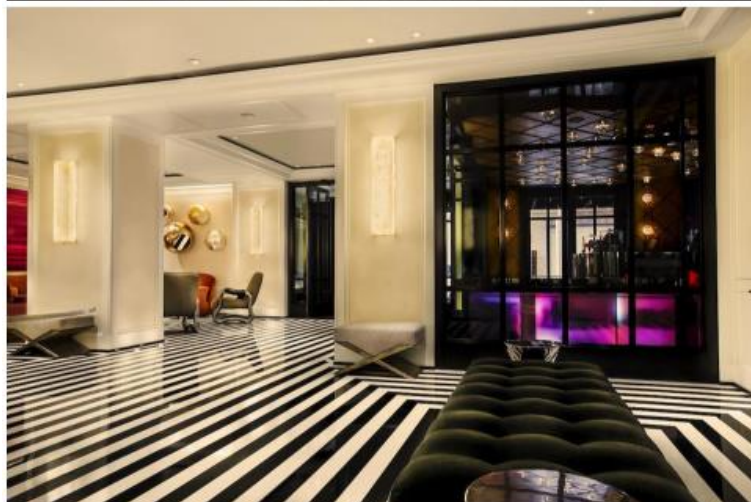


From a pure design standpoint this is part of **The Mark**'s mastery: Somehow managing to blend together the design and vibe required to appeal to a newly minted Russian oligarch, a fashion icon like Marc Jacobs, a tennis star like Novak Djokovic, and the Chanel-clad mother hens of the Upper East Side all at the same time in the same place.

Much of **The Mark**'s allure to the 1% crowd is good old fashion location. On Manhattan's Upper East Side—historically one of the most affluent neighborhoods in America—the traditional meaning of the word “luxury” is still stubbornly coveted, whether it comes to fashion, retail, art, food, or, especially, hotels. And **The Mark** is dead center in the middle of it all within ten blocks of New York's Metropolitan Museum Of Art, Central Park, the Central Park Zoo, the Guggenheim, Whitney, and Frick Museums, the wallet-pulling Chanel, Manolo, and Bergdorf windows along Madison and Fifth Avenues, and many of the most hard-to-get-into restaurants in New York City (**The Mark**'s concierge of course can assist with that).

The more critical element of **The Mark**'s standing among the notable class is the absolute respect for their privacy—as well as maintaining a sense of “normalcy” for high net worth clients who are often traveling to New York from London, Russia, Europe, and other global cities and don't like “change”.

Wherein lies the geographic beauty of Manhattan's Upper East Side. The people who live here tend not to be easily impressed (to wit so what if you're the world tennis #1, I'm the CEO of Goldman Sachs). The few tourists who venture this far north from Midtown and Times Square are fashionistas looking for a new, retail-priced Gucci bag. What you won't find here are people looking for selfies with Oprah or Djokovic or aspiring directors or artists with their portfolios in hands. And that's precisely why celebs love **The Mark**.





Not surprisingly, the hotel's staff is stubbornly-trained on discretion and never divulging any information about who's sheltering in place at the hotel at any given time. When my wife and I stayed at **The Mark** over finals weekend during this year's U.S. Open tennis tournament (which was also fall Fashion Week in NYC), all **The Mark**'s Director Of Marketing would tell me is that, "We have a number of tennis players here this week". A few hours later, I bumped into Novak Djokovic strolling through the lobby with his wife and entourage in a T-shirt and shorts. He grabbed a bike from out in front of the hotel and rode off into Central Park like any other guest.

"The utmost in discretion is a given for our guests and goes hand in hand with the type of five-star service we pride ourselves on" says **The Mark**'s General Manager Olivier Lordonnois,"Which is why many celebrities, fashion editors and high-profile business moguls consider **The Mark** their home while in New York".





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Nothing else at **The Mark** symbolizes this reputation as the world's most boldly lavish hotel more than its two-story, dual full-floor penthouse suite, currently ranked the largest and most expensive in the world according to the luxury lifestyle magazine *Elite Traveler* (besting Geneva's Hotel President Wilson at #2 whose penthouse has hosted the likes of Bill Clinton and Mikhail Gorbachev).

Given the arms race over the past decade in the global hospitality industry to lay claim to the world's most luxurious super suite, it's no small hubris that the crown goes to a boutique, historic hotel on New York's (relatively) quiet Upper East Side. You'd more likely expect to drop \$150,000 for a weekend at the Ritz in Dubai, a palace in India, or an A-lister hotel in Cannes.



For Grange, his signature on **The Mark**'s penthouse was his biggest magnum opus to date, telling the *Daily Mail* recently that, "This majestic penthouse is the ultimate residence away from home for those who truly appreciate rarified luxury, who seek a grand space that is equally equipped to lavishly entertain as it is to provide a homely private oasis with the extraordinary amenities and services **The Mark Hotel** offers."

During the holidays and on peak weekends, the five-bedroom, 12,000 square foot penthouse, dubbed the "castle in the sky", rents for \$86,000 a night. There's a vaulted living room with 26' ceilings and a grand piano (which also doubles as a ballroom), a formal dining room for 24, a private conservatory and library, and a 2,500 square foot roof top terrace that could host a small wedding with views of the Upper East Side and the sun setting over Central Park in every direction. All accessible of course via private elevator.





*All photos courtesy of The Mark Hotel*