

Condé Nast Traveller (UK) online
27 April 2026

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REVIEW

The Mark Hotel, New York

The Upper East Side's chicest address remains a timeless go-to for stylish staycationers and discreet out-of-towners

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Reviewed by TAMARA SOUTHWARD

Best for: Couples, best pals, or solo travellers looking for a sophisticated city stay

Location: Upper East Side, Manhattan

Can't-miss: The famous black-and-white-striped lobby which evokes an instant "ahhh," the deep-set bathtubs worth planning your evening around, and the hotel's iconic "haute" dog stand, whose grass-fed hot dogs give the rest of Central Park's storied carts a run for their money

In a nutshell: You don't need to have grown up on *Gossip Girl* to know that this is (in my unbiased opinion) the best post code in Manhattan. And The Mark's landmark digs have the suites, service and skyline views to prove it. It's the kind of place where a night in one room will cost you a thousand, and another 100 thousand – depending on whether you're planning an intimate getaway or a penthouse afterparty



THE MARK

Rooms

A stay here is like stepping into your favourite coffee table book (and speaking of, there's an Assouline edition available, as fashionable as the hotel itself). All rooms are designed by Jacques Grange, and outfitted to perfection with plush sofas, subtle lighting fixtures and mismatched modern tables. The suites are light-flooded, have kitchens perfect for whipping up a cheese plate from the nearby Butterfield Market (though in my view all food here should be left up to Jean-Georges Vongerichten) and the oh-so-East-coast minibar is decked out with Tate's Bake Shop cookies and Cape Cod chips. The beds, simple as they look, offer a cloud-soft night's sleep, and when the automatic blinds roll up, it feels like they're revealing a New York made just for you. The marbly bathrooms make getting ready for a night out something to relish: "You won't believe how deep the tubs are," a friend tells me beforehand; but one Benny Goodman playlist and a Tito's and tonic later, I'm in bubble bath heaven.

Food and drink

Storied, swanky hotels sometimes rest on their laurels, and all too often you'll hear of food that's "gone downhill". The Mark could not be further from this. I've perhaps never felt more spoiled than at Caviar Kaspia, the hotel's adjoining restaurant where you'll wash down your gold-tinned omega-3s with champagne under low lights. But the brightly-lit The Mark Restaurant by Jean-Georges (a chef with three Michelin stars to his name) feels truly timeless, and attracts the kind of smiley crowd that asks after each other's orders. The tuna tartare marinated in ginger and radish is one of the best I've *ever* had – and I state this as a bona fide toro seeker. The beauty of JG is you'll find everything from hamachi sashimi to a Maine lobster burger and pizza – it's a big menu with small menu quality. After I've checked out, a friend tells me off for not ordering the chicken coconut milk soup, which tells me this is the kind of place where people have personal favourites, versus one viral dish.



Sweeping views of Manhattan from the penthouse



A spring lunch by Jean-Georges Vongerichten



THE MARK

Highlights and experiences

Like any of the hotel's offerings, the off-property experiences are exceptionally curated. Think chartered sailing through New York Harbour on The Mark's picture-perfect boat, branded bikes for cycling around the Reservoir, or the blowout of a lifetime at the second floor Frédéric Fekkai hair salon. But most simply and importantly, don't sleep on a martini at the Mark Bar.

What to do nearby

An amble through the Old Masters at The Frick and – need I say it – The Met. The hotel is notoriously a second home to the museum's gala attendees come the first Monday in May, and can organise private or after-hours tours of the museum for guests. It's also a five-minute walk from Central Park, meaning you can run or stroll to your heart's content with one of the hotel's chic takeaway coffees. I'm also a fan of getting a cappuccino and pastry from the round-the-corner Sant Ambroeus on Madison. Bemelmans and Melody's Piano Bar are great options for date night, and a classic is JG Melon – perhaps the antithesis to Caviar Kaspia, but an essential juxtaposition – which takes only cash, and serves its inimitable martini up with baskets of to-die-for burgers and fries. The hotel is also hemmed by all the designer shops you'd expect from uptown, most notably the men's and women's adjoining Ralph Lauren mansions, where I'd happily spend any Saturday.



A beautiful day for backgammon



The Mark's sleek cold plunge



THE MARK

Insider tip

Become friendly with the doormen and bellhops, who make your stay wonderful from the second your car pulls up and are reminiscent of old New York. Per usual I forget my phone charger and Eugene, the night manager, lent me his. I later learned he didn't have the heart to tell me that the wireless charging pads next to my bed (that I thought were coasters) would have worked just fine.

On another note: the ginger shots. They're next-level and, given I check in here after back-to-back travel and no sleep, I'm convinced they're what kept me from getting sick. "The owner is really big on these," their head of marketing tells me as we wipe our eyes after downing ours. Needless to say, I'll be coming back for these next time I'm in New York – whether or not I'm a guest here. Juice bars, take note.

Final considerations

Family friendly: Yes. The hotel even sets up personalised slumber parties, featuring a tent, and milk and cookies-fuelled movies. It also organises kids' tours of The Met, and has the cutest colouring books and pencil sets for channelling post-museum inspiration.

Accessibility: The hotel's main areas are ADA compliant, including the main entrance, the restaurant and bar, private event rooms, hair salon and fitness center. Six of the rooms are fully ADA-compliant, and include roll-in showers. The elevator is also accessible with braille instructions.

Wellness: The hotel offers in-room wellness treatments ranging from lymphatic drainage massages to IV drips and Dr. Barbara Sturm facials.

Loyalty group/hotel brand: Independent

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