BUSINESS INSIDER

One of NYC's most iconic luxury hotels was used to film 'Gossip Girl' scenes and is home to two \$25,000-a-night penthouse suites. I got a tour — here's what it looks like inside.

Katie Warren 1 hour ago



- The Lotte New York Palace is one of New York City's most iconic luxury hotels.
- Rates range from about \$349 for a standard king room to \$25,000 a night for each of the two penthouse suites at the five-star Manhattan hotel.
- I recently got a tour of the \$25,000-a-night penthouse suites, the Champagne Suite and the Jewel Suite.
- The suites are commonly booked by diplomats and heads of state, Middle Eastern monarchs and royal family members, and business leaders, according to the hotel's director of sales and marketing.
- Each suite spans three floors, 5,000 square feet, and comes with its own private elevator and landscaped terrace.

The <u>Lotte New York Palace</u>, one of New York City's most iconic luxury hotels, claims to be the oldest operating luxury hotel in the city.

Staying there doesn't come cheap. Nightly rates start at about \$349 and can run up to \$25,000 to stay in one of the hotel's twin penthouse suites.

The <u>Champagne Suite</u> and the <u>Jewel Suite</u> each spans three floors and 5,000 square feet. The two suites are commonly booked by diplomats and heads of state, Middle Eastern monarchs and royal family members, and business leaders, according to David Shenman, the hotel's director of sales and marketing.

I recently got a tour of the two suites. Here's what they look like.

The Lotte New York Palace hotel is one of New York City's most iconic luxury hotels.



Katie Warren/Business Insider

Opened in 1981, the Lotte New York Palace claims to be the first luxury hotel in New York City.

That, however, is a disputed title. Take, for example, the Waldorf Astoria: The original hotel was built in 1893, and the current hotel opened in 1931.

David Shenman, the hotel's director of sales and marketing, clarified that when the Palace opened, it was awarded the AAA Five Diamond Award from the American Automobile Association.

"This was certainly the gold standard of hotels at that time," Shenman said.

The Palace was the first hotel in New York state to receive the prestigious award, according to Shenman.

Today, the hotel has a four-diamond AAA rating.

The hotel comprises two sections: the original 140-year-old mansion, and the 55-story skyscraper addition built about 40 years ago.



Katie Warren/Business Insider

Nightly rates at the Palace start at about \$349 and can run up to \$25,000 to stay in one of the hotel's twin penthouse suites.

The two penthouse suites are commonly booked by diplomats and heads of state, Middle Eastern monarchs and royal family members, and business leaders, according to Shenman.

The hotel's courtyard, which has a rear view of the ornate St. Patrick's Cathedral, used to be used as a horse and buggy turnaround area, according to Shenman.



The courtyard — and other parts of the hotel — became famous as filming locations for the teen drama CW series "Gossip Girl."

In fact, the hotel offers its own "Gossip Girl Getaway" package, which includes accommodations in the hotel, a welcome snack of macarons and Prosecco gummy bears, two "Gossip Girl" Champagne cocktails at Trouble's Trust, one of the hotel's cocktail bars, postcards featuring the show's filming locations at the hotel, and a 25% discount on tickets to the "Gossip Girl Sites Tour" operated by On Location Tours.

On a recent afternoon, I got a tour of the Lotte New York Palace and its two \$25,000 penthouse suites with David Shenman.



The hotel's main entrance is on 50th Street between Park and Madison Avenues, but it also has entrances on Madison Avenue and 51st Street.

The lobby was bustling with people checking in and out.



My visit was during the United Nations General Assembly, when the hotel goes into a sort of "lock down" mode because so many diplomats and heads of state stay there, according to Shenman.

The Towers, however, has its own separate lobby, which was much quieter.



We took the elevator up to the top of the towers and stepped into the Champagne Suite. The formal living room features floor-to-ceiling windows with panoramic views of Manhattan, including the Empire State Building.



The Champagne Suite claims to be Champagne-inspired. While I can't say that being in the room quite conveyed that (whatever it means) to me, the fridge was prepared to deliver on the premise: The suite comes with a fully stocked Champagne fridge and a fully stocked cocktail bar.



The formal dining room seats 10 people.



Past a 29-foot-wide mural by French artists Alex et Marine is a grand curving staircase that leads up to the next floor, although the suite also has its own private elevator.



The master bedroom suite includes a king bed with luxury imported linens and a pillow menu.



In the master bathroom is a jetted bathtub, microfiber robes and slippers, a bidet, and Molton Brown bath products.



The master bedroom views face north toward the skinny, supertall skyscrapers rising on Billionaires' Row along the southern edge of Central Park.



Outside the master suite is a second living area with an additional dining table that seats six people.



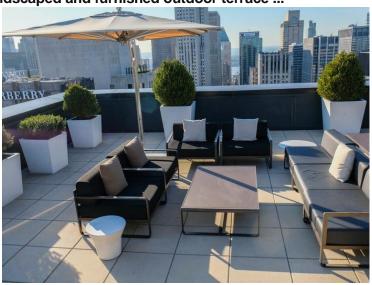
There's also a second bedroom with two queen beds, meaning the suite can sleep at least six guests.



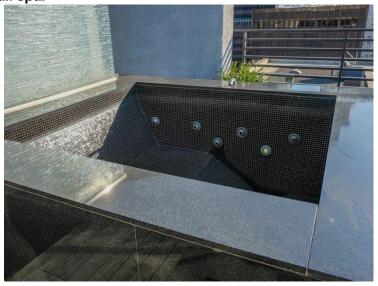
Upstairs is a third living room ...



... which opens up to a landscaped and furnished outdoor terrace ...



... that includes a "waterfall spa."



Before my tour, I wasn't totally sure what a waterfall spa was. Turns out, it's a hot tub with a fancy name.

We moved on to the Jewel Suite, which was designed in collaboration with jewelry designer Martin Katz.



The first thing I noticed was an over-the-top, two-story "cascading crystal" chandelier just inside the entryway.



The suite was designed to evoke the feeling of "living in a jewel box," Shenman said.



Indeed, glass display cases next to the chandelier contain more than \$1.5 million of Martin Katz jewels.



The Jewel Suite had a much more romantic vibe than the Champagne Suite. The master bedroom was decorated in warm neutral tones with lavender highlights.



The bathroom features plenty of sleek white marble.



Guests staying at the Jewel Suite can book a private consultation with Martin Katz or an associate, which would take place in this room just off the master bedroom.



The suite even comes with a complimentary Martin Katz diamond microband ring.



Like the Champagne Suite, the Jewel Suite includes a second bedroom with two queen beds.



Like the Champagne Suite, the Jewel Suite comes with a kitchenette, but a much larger one than in the Champagne Suite, which was so small that I didn't even bother to take a photo.



While the Champagne Suite seemed to be geared toward those who want to entertain, the Jewel Suite seemed ideal for couples — and the hotel will help set it up for the ultimate proposal, according to Shenman.

The Jewel Suite has its own expansive terrace and hot tub, but unfortunately, I didn't get a chance to look at it, as a guest was about to check in to the suite.



In addition to the tour of the penthouse suites, I got a peek into the hotel's Gold Room, a lavish cocktail bar with original guilt ceilings from 1882.



Several "Gossip Girl" scenes were filmed in this bar.

Down the hall is an opulent ballroom that holds special events such as the hotel's weekend magic shows.



On Friday and Saturday, <u>magician Steve Cohen conducts a show at the hotel</u> of "old fashioned, old world magic," Shenman said.

About 60 people attend each show in cocktail attire. Tickets typically cost between \$150 and \$200.

According to the hotel, Michael Bloomberg, David Letterman, and Warren Buffet are fans of Cohen's magic show.

I got a look inside Rarities, a 25-seat lounge that's typically only open to a small group of members and their guests.



Membership at Rarities is \$15,000 a year, Shenman told me.

When I asked what kinds of people are members, he said only, "A number of prominent people who don't mind spending \$15,000 a year."

The membership includes a \$5,000 spending credit at the bar and room credits at the hotel.

As the name suggests, Rarities offers some of the world's most rare and expensive liquors and wines.



A two-ounce pour of this Louis XIII rare cask cognac, for example, will cost you about \$4,000.

The cognac is a blend of 1,200 cognacs, each of which is over 100 years old.

And a two-ounce glass of a rare Macallan scotch whiskey goes for about \$3,000.



In August, the hotel hosts its annual Palace Invitational in its iconic courtyard, a sort of pre-party for the US Open where some of the world's top tennis stars compete in a playful badminton tournament.



<u>I attended the event this year</u> and watched Serena and Venus Williams face off against Rafael Nadal and Cori "Coco" Gauff in the 90-degree heat, while guests in button-up shirts and summer dresses sipped sangria cocktails and rosé and snacked on small bites like Kobe beef sushi.

After my tour of the Lotte New York Palace and its \$25,000-a-night penthouse suites, it was clear why the hotel is a New York City institution.



I've visited a \$10,000 penthouse suite at the Time Square Edition in Manhattan and I've spent a night at the \$18,000-a-night presidential suite at the Moscow Ritz-Carlton.

While those are both cheaper than the Champagne and Jewel suites, one big advantage the Palace suites has over them is the separate lobby and elevator that keeps the Towers and the penthouse suites more private from the rest of the hotel.

The Palace penthouse suites also have huge outdoor spaces, a coveted amenity in New York City. At <u>the Times Square Edition</u>, the terrace is a fraction of the size, and there's no outdoor space at all at the Ritz's presidential suite in Moscow.

However, I did prefer the sleek and calming aesthetic of the Edition suite to the more lavish, dramatic décor of the Palace suites.