



NEWS

BlackBook

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A 'Magical' NYC Staycation: Lotte New York Palace Hotel



Despite New York City's often unsentimental view of its historic treasures, there's something about its legendary hotels that carries a uniquely emotional heft in the hearts of the citizenry, and even visitors.

One such hotel is the [New York Palace](#), now part of the Lotte group – which had its moment of 20th Century infamy under Leona Helmsley. But these days it's an imperative stop on the Gotham holiday whirl, with its magically lit courtyard and all-around joyously festive atmosphere. But that same storied courtyard, in all its Neo-Classical splendor, is soon to open for spring-summer-weather food and drinks service – meaning it will surely be a people watching paradigm. (The likes of Blake Lively, Brooke Shields and Helena Christensen have all done time at the Palace.)



But there's another really good excuse to be at the Palace this season: they've brought on legendary New York magician Steve Cohen, who had been doing time at the now shuttered Waldorf around the corner. It's more than enough reason to book in for a full on staycation weekend – for which, if you include a couple of trips to the in-house [spa](#), you'd hardly need to leave the hotel.

Here's what to expect.

The Hotel

Housed in the historic Neo-Renaissance Villard Mansion, dating to 1882, it's the rare opportunity in New York to stay in a bit of genuine Gilded-Age history. And indeed, traversing its dramatically columned lobby or ascending its grand staircase is never without a sense of old-world glamour. There's now a modern tower of rooms attached, with its own check-in desk and concierge – and they know how to make you feel very special.

The Rooms

Resisting any temptation at a remake in a soullessly modern style, the rooms retain a stylish, unstuffy elegance – from the sumptuous fabrics to luxuriant marble bathrooms to the large windows framing breathtaking skyline views. For a special splurge, book a suite in the Tower on a higher floor, looking spectacularly down on St. Patrick's Cathedral below. Wow.



Pomme Palais

A swish bit of epicurean Paris on Madison Avenue, Michel Richard's Pomme Palais isn't so much just a bakery, as a chic boutique offering impossibly decadent pastries. Everything is so fancifully presented, you might be tempted to spend more time Instagramming than eating – but don't. Come at lunch time for excellent salads and sandwiches.



Villard

This awe-inspiringly palatial room might just be the most lavish dining spot in all of NYC. Breakfast is a treat here, but brunch is a genuine scene. Below a spectacularly vaulted ceiling, original frescoes and those stunning stained glass windows, take in some of the city's best Saturday / Sunday afternoon people watching. Specialties are the brioche pudding french toast, country shrimp & grits, wild mushroom & goat cheese flatbread...but particularly impressive is Chef Oscar Granados' ability to veritably reinvent trendy avocado toast, adorned as it is with crispy prosciutto and romesco sauce, and with a melt-in-your-mouth texture. Pair with a spicy Spanish bloody mary or fresh-pressed juice flight. Come summer, service will extend to the courtyard, with its awesome view of St. Patrick's across the street.



Chamber Magic

It's impossible to fully explain how astonishing and mystifying it is watching such a proficient purveyor of magic up so close, unless you're actually there. Steve Cohen is Gotham's premiere illusionist, with his Chamber Magic show now going on its 18th year. At the Palace, it takes place in the intimate but opulent Madison Room, a lavish drawing room located in the historic part of the hotel. Italianate marble columns frame the space, which is adorned with Nineteenth-Century oil paintings and glittering chandeliers. (Appropriately, there's a dress code.)

During the course of his mind-altering show, Cohen might turn a coin into a brick, pour five different cocktails from the same kettle, link rings together right before your eyes, and fire cards into the air without touching them. His wit is nearly as sharp as his card play, so you can have quite a few good laughs between moments of utter bewilderment. But when he starts revealing your own deepest secrets to the assembled audience, it's positively chilling.



Trouble's Trust

Named for former owner Leona Helmsley's dog – who infamously inherited \$12 million upon her death – this is a sexy, subterranean cocktail bar, where the drinks are stiff and you half expect to see Cary Grant and Audrey Hepburn suddenly come striding in. To a soundtrack of Shirley Bassey and Dusty Springfield, order up a Queen of Mean (Helmsley's nickname) cocktail, or the rum based Pampered Pooch (sensing a theme here?). The hotel actually boasts a total of four very classy watering holes, including the casual lobby lounge, the clubby Tavern on 51, and Rarities, where you can sip some of the world's finest whiskies in a fireplace-adorned room, by appointment.



