

DEPARTURES

July/August 2012

CHECKING IN

That One Perfect Room

Forget the expensive suites, the over-the-top penthouse. And who needs a hotel bar scene? All we wanted was that one perfect room—reasonably priced, perfectly portioned and absolutely appropriate. **REBECCA SACKS** gives the lowdown.

A bed. A window. A washroom. That's all there in a hotel room. Three simple things, and yet so much more. New York City is a town of great hotel rooms, so we set out to identify the very best of the best. Not the most opulent suites, but, rather, those standard rooms that exceed themselves. We started with a list of about 50, which we managed to narrow down

to about 30, and then visited each and every one. We saw more than 100 rooms all over the city—from Central Park West to the Bowery and back. We jumped on beds, tested showers, crawled around looking for electrical outlets, opened and closed blinds, found ourselves standing in darkened rooms with strange men in order to test the blackout shades, tried on robes and gazed wistfully out

windows. But what stood out most was the philosophy of hospitality that each hotel exhibited. It was the incomparable Amy Vanderbilt who said, "Good manners have much to do with the emotions. To make them ring true, one must feel them, not merely exhibit them." Ultimately, it is the sincerity and graciousness of a hotel's staff that make the rooms feel like home—or something better.

WYTHE HOTEL THE YOUNG BLOOD

In strategizing how to convince the magazine's editor in chief to let us include a Brooklyn hotel on the list, one of our most erudite, well-considered travelers said simply, "Tell him to see it. The Wythe Hotel is pivotal. Something that will change all things." Located in the youthful Williamsburg neighborhood, in a beautifully renovated old factory, the Wythe preserves the old wood beams and brickwork. The large, airy rooms get tons of light and feature the most breathtaking views of Manhattan you'll ever see. Room designs are simple but charming: custom-made Brooklyn-themed wallpaper from local designer Dan Funderburgh, vintage mirrors, handcrafted beds by local woodworker Dave Hollier and heated floors. The hotel has two bunk-bed rooms on the sixth floor for touring bands, which guarantees a lively mix at the rooftop bar (what a view!) as well as Andrew Tarlow's restaurant downstairs (Diner, Marlow & Sons). No room service.

Room to book North 7th or North 8th Lofts—best views, highest floor. *North 7th and North 8th Lofts start at \$350;* 80 Wythe Ave.; 718-460-8000; wythehotel.com.

