

Checking In and Checking Out The Boutique Hotel Experience

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Checking In and Checking Out

The Boutique Hotel Experience



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I. Checking In

Why Study Hotels?

Whether you are travelling on business, set out on a weekend escape, or seek an enriched leisure travel experience, there are a number of factors that influence the choice in hotel and, ultimately, determine the guest experience.

A set of core design features drive overall guest experience in boutique hotels. Architecture, design and experiential moments are intertwined and they are defined by the point of arrival and check in, the interaction and flow from integral spaces through transitional spaces within the hotel, the adjacent areas - both interior and exterior, the destinations in the immediate neighbourhood and beyond, the character and layout of the amenities including cafes, cocktail bars, lounges and restaurants, outdoor spaces, spa and wellness offerings and the blurring of boundaries between the hotel and neighbourhood as well as guests and locals.

Objectives

The objectives of the study were:

- to understand the defining architecture, design and experiential moments in boutique hotel design,
- to capture how the guest experience is shaped by these defining design features,
- to illuminate how the guest experience is enhanced by a connection to the community,
- to characterize how the boutique hotel experience differs from, extends beyond and compares to the large chain hotel and other stay experiences, and
- to offer insights on how to optimize design and user experience.

We focused empirical attention on what is often taken for granted. The attempt was to capture, what Perec might

refer to as the “infraordinary” or what happens outside the boundaries of ordinary activity (Perec, 1975). What happens outside of the boundaries of traditional guest experience, in the exploration of people’s interactions with the built environment more generally and beyond the hotel room and property itself to the neighbourhood and extended experiences?

Methodology

Multiple Case Study Research Design

The research design consisted of multiple case studies (Stake, 2006; Yin, 2003) to explore how the hotel design shapes experience and guest behaviour. The study focused on observing patterns of behaviour and how key aspects of hotel design may influence and enhance the user experience. We sought to uncover the commonalities in design, observed behaviour of guests across hotels and how these patterns vary as a function of the urban and cultural context.

Study 1: Ethnographic Research Methods

Study 1 focused on capturing the guest experience via ethnographic research methods. Our approach was based on principles of naturalistic and participant observation.

Naturalistic Observation. Naturalistic observation is the fundamental base of all research methods (Adler & Adler, 1994). It is a qualitative research method that is widely used in environmental psychology (e.g., Cotterell, 1984; Czalczynska-Podolska, 2004; Hergatt-Huffman, 2014; Johnson & Barch, 2008; Vittoria Guilliani & Scopelliti, 2009). Naturalistic observation involves observing people in natural settings without their awareness (Hoepfl, 1997).

People often change their behaviour when they know they are being watched (Hawthorne effect; Salkind, 2010). Executing natural observation techniques cannot be described as simply “watching people”. In covert naturalistic observation, researchers try to ‘blend in’ without being noticed as they observe the behaviour and interactions of people in various settings or spaces

without disrupting naturally occurring behaviour; thereby decreasing the potential reactivity of participants (Hoepfl, 1997).

Methologica has developed an application for its use in user experience, design research and design evaluation (e.g., Alvaro and colleagues, 2019; 2018; 2016; 2015; 2014; 2013) to study people and their interactions with the built environment. It offers the ability to document observations in an unobtrusive manner and pick up and go before our cover is blown.

Participant Observation. Whereas naturalistic observation relies on unobtrusive and direct observation, participant observation is a qualitative method of social investigation, whereby the researcher participates in the everyday life of a social setting, and records their experiences and observations.

Participant observation connects the researcher to the most basic of human experiences, discovering through immersion and participation the hows and whys of human behavior in a particular context (Guest et al., 2013).

Both naturalistic and participant observation enhance external validity and generalizability by observing behavior in the natural setting which reflects the reality of the user experience of the built environment (Corral-Verdugo, 1997; Lecompte & Goetz, 1982; Levine, 1977).

Featured Hotels

The hotels included in the multiple case study were sampled from multiple locations across various North American and European cities including Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver, Los Angeles (Santa Monica), Claremont, Palm Springs, London (Soho and South Kensington neighbourhoods, UK), Brussels, and Lisbon.

The hotels represent a mix of boutique independent design hotel operators. The smallest hotel included in this study consisted of only eight rooms, whereas the largest hotel had over four hundred rooms.

Three additional properties were included as they represent a destination unto themselves with unique experiential offerings on site as well as the adjacent surroundings.

Two of these three destinations were located in non urban or rural settings: Prince Edward County - located approximately 1 hour and 30 minutes outside of Toronto, Canada; and Comporta - located 1 hour and 30 minutes south of Lisbon, Portugal. The third destination property was in South Beach - located on the main strip in Miami, Florida but offers a private beach and a variety of in house experiences.

Target Spaces for Observation

Key destinations within each of the hotels were selected on the basis of their alignment with the design intentions and availability of comparable spaces across the hotels under study - matched as closely as possible across sites. Although architecturally distinct, there were comparable target spaces selected for observation at each hotel.

Study 1 focused on the overall guest experience - beginning with the point of arrival (either on foot, on transit, via taxi or parking), the ease of wayfinding, the check in experience, the transition and flow from the entrance to the lobby and circulation corridors, the navigation and journey to the guest room, the guest room, the amenities, concierge services, turn down service (where applicable), the surrounding neighbourhood and adjacent areas, the connection to the community and, finally, the check out experience.

Thematic Analysis

To extract major themes, the similarities and differences in patterns of use and behavior as well as contextual factors (e.g., design elements and configuration of the space, extraordinary events, adjacencies, neighbourhood activities, etc.) that may have contributed to the observed patterns of behavior and emergent themes across facilities under study were identified.

We begin by contextualizing the observations and guest experience in light of the building and site history and the overall design intentions for each property.

Using the design intentions as the basis for our observations, the guest experience is captured and organized according to four thematic content areas: design features; neighbourhood and community connection; observations, experience and insight, and the little things.

Within each of the thematic content areas, guest experience is documented on the basis of observations and user interactions across key touchpoints from arrival to the post stay experience.

Design Features: Captures observations and experience relative to user interactions with design features and spaces - both indoor and outdoor - across the hotel property.

Neighbourhood and Community Connection: Captures observations and experience relative to the neighbourhood and connection to the area.

Observations, Experience & Insight: Captures insights that can be gleaned from the collection of observations throughout the hotel stay and the overall guest experience.

The Little Things: Captures the unique or signature small touches that enhance the guest experience.

Study 2: Content Analysis of Hotel Surveys

Study 2 focused on a content analysis of hotel survey and courtesy follow up. Content analysis focused on surveys that are administered during the stay, surveys that are administered post stay, and follow up correspondence from the hotel.

The objective was to identify the thematic content areas that are most typically featured in the surveys. Examples include overall impressions of the hotel, experiences at various touch points including check in and check out, the hotel room, experience of the amenities, room service, cleanliness and overall experience.

Based on our observations in Study 1 and the emerging themes identified in Study 2, we offer behavioural and experiential insights to improve hotel surveys during and post stay to better reflect and inform user experience with the design.



The Viceroy Hotel Santa Monica

II. Notes from the Boutique Hotels

Hotel Experience Touchpoints

- Getting to the hotel, point of arrival and wayfinding
- Check in experience
- Flow from the entrance to the lobby and circulation corridors
- Journey to the guest room, guest room layout and experiential elements
- Concierge services
- Amenities & adjacencies
- Neighbourhood, connection to community and surrounding areas
- Turn down service, creature comforts and the little things
- Check out experience
- Post stay experience and courtesy follow up

NUMBER SIXTEEN

South Kensington, London, UK | 41 Rooms



DESIGNER(S)
Kit Kemp



NEIGHBOURHOOD
South Kensington



LITTLE THINGS
Courtyard Garden

Notes from Number Sixteen

BUILDING & SITE HISTORY: Classic Victorian London architecture, white stucco townhouse style building nestled into the South Kensington neighbourhood. Four early-19th-century townhouses discretely tucked away in a row of upscale residences reimagined as a boutique hotel. Two blocks from South Kensington tube station.

DESIGN AESTHETIC: Fresh, eccentric, relaxed modern townhouse.

DESIGN INTENTIONS: Upon arrival, Firmdale Hotels' Number Sixteen creates the impression that you are staying at an upscale private residence - a private oasis in a vibrant and bustling neighbourhood filled with cafes, boutiques and museums.

DESIGN FEATURES: The reception area invites guests to step beyond the foyer and into the great room. Guest rooms are located off corridors and staircases which give the impression that they are upscale bedrooms in a familiar townhouse rather than hotel. The guest rooms are well appointed with a mix of contemporary and antique furnishings and signature Kit Kemp eclectic patterns. Some guest rooms have street facing balconies to admire the mid Victorian architecture or private courtyards that overlook the English garden. Amenities include a tranquil tree-filled private garden, a drawing room and library are found adjacent to the reception area - with multiple points of entry to the garden courtyard.

NEIGHBOURHOOD & COMMUNITY CONNECTION: Given its location in a mixed residential and commercial enclave, Number Sixteen is steps away from the Victoria & Albert and Natural History Museums, walkable to Harrods, Knightsbridge and the boutique shops of Brompton Cross. Kensington Gardens is close by and the area is filled with convivial bars, cafes, restaurants and boutique shops. From Number Sixteen, guests can meander and visit local shops, cafes and restaurants with indoor and terrace seating facing a central "town square". Venture out to Brompton Cross for a more "boutique/local" shopping, design and foodie experience. It is a perfect home base to explore more of the "neighbourhood" aspects of London life while offering ease of access to high density city life and attractions in London.

OBSERVATIONS, EXPERIENCE & INSIGHT: Whereas the chic hotels of central London offer the typical high energy high density experience, Number Sixteen truly feels like a home away from home. Guest mingle in the lobby, drawing room



Number Sixteen | Firmdale Hotels

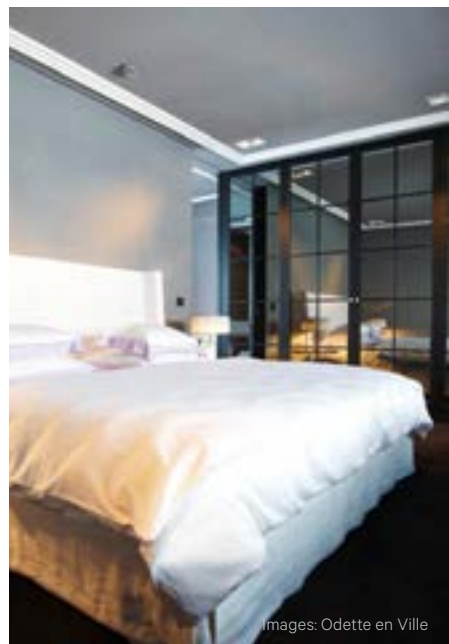


or library which feel more like living room nooks filled with visiting friends and family. It is quiet but the guests, if present at the same time you are enjoying the space, are approachable. Given its setting in a residential enclave, guests of Number Sixteen feel more like they are living a typical Londoner's life. You almost forget you are staying at a Firmdale property - until you recognize the Kit Kemp signature interior design.

THE LITTLE THINGS: The courtyard garden, complete with fountains, various seating arrangements, and open sunshine. On Saturdays, be sure to enjoy the farmer's market on your morning stroll before visiting the shops.



Odette en Ville



Images: Odette en Ville



ODETTE EN VILLE

Ixelles, Brussels, Belgium | 8 Rooms



Notes from Odette en Ville

BUILDING & SITE HISTORY: A restored 1920s townhouse in the Ixelles neighbourhood. It is situated within the Chatelain fashion district - nestled alongside independent shops, charming cafes and restaurants.

DESIGN AESTHETIC: Art Nouveau, elegant, cozy ambiance.

DESIGN INTENTIONS: The 1920s townhouse offers an intimate and unpretentious experience that feels more like a stay at your fashionable Belgian friends' pied-a-terre than a typical hotel down the hill in the main tourist district or central business area. The design is a mix of French film glamour with nods to the building's original architecture where roll-top bathtubs, fireplaces and vintage decor are featured alongside contemporary marble bathrooms, dark walls, modern touches and occasional splashes of colour.

DESIGN FEATURES: The property features 8 guest rooms in a 1920s walk up townhouse. The guest rooms, located on three levels off the dimly lit main staircase, are painted black, equipped with a gas flame fireplace, and flat screen television. Amidst all the black, a lilac coloured bed with crisp white linens is a delight to climb into after exploring the city, restaurants and nightlife. The white marble bathroom features a long deep soaker tub that is equipped with a typical European hand held shower faucet. Windows offer subdued natural light in the morning and are equipped with black out window treatments for nighttime. Amenities include a dimly lit lounge with plush seating and library offering a selection of coffee table books and Fellini films on heavy rotation, a cocktail bar, Michelin restaurant renowned for its fine French and Belgian cuisine and terrace cafe at street level which offers views to pedestrian life and and neighbourhood ambiance.

NEIGHBOURHOOD & COMMUNITY CONNECTION: Odette is a hidden gem in an animated convivial neighbourhood whose character is defined by small independent restaurants, independent boutiques, and lesser known charming attractions where locals gather; like the local Chatelain market held every Wednesday evening on the Kasteleinsplein.

OBSERVATIONS, EXPERIENCE & INSIGHT: With only 8 rooms, the staff feel more like local hosts with an affinity to engage and offer recommendations for local experiences, invite you to join them for a cocktail in the bar, a cappuccino in the morning, or other nice touches that they are happy to charge to your room. If you visit during a heat wave, rest assured that the air conditionning has been switched on - though it may not feel like it.

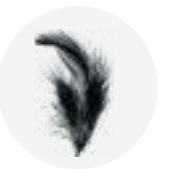
THE LITTLE THINGS: Hospitality, card at turn down with next day's temperature, two sets of slippers left on either side of the bed.



DESIGNER(S)
Michel Penneman
& Olivier Hannaert



NEIGHBOURHOOD
Ixelles



LITTLE THINGS
Hospitality

CASA 425

Claremont, California, USA | 28 Rooms



DESIGNER(S)
Tolkin Architecture



NEIGHBOURHOOD
Claremont Village



LITTLE THINGS
Branded Ear Plugs
Citrus Infused Water
in the Lobby



Notes from Casa 425

BUILDING & SITE HISTORY: Casa 425 is a three-story boutique inn situated amidst a mixed-use development complex. The boutique property is located on the town square in the heart of Claremont Village.

DESIGN AESTHETIC: Modern Southern Californian villa.

DESIGN INTENTIONS: The exterior design reflects traditional California mission style architecture. The boutique property offers a contemporary twist on a Southern California villa. The lounge opens onto a courtyard in the heart of the historic and animated Claremont Village. The well appointed modern loft style guest rooms wrap around the building with balconies overlooking the courtyard.

DESIGN FEATURES: The wrap around balconies on each floor are the entry point to the loft style guest rooms. On the ground floor, french doors open from the guest rooms onto individual cabanas. On upper floors, the balconies offer views to the courtyard and gardens below and sightlines to the mountains in the distance. An intimate yet lively lounge is equipped with a fireplace, various seating arrangements and a small bar. The lobby flows into an expanded outdoor living room with lounge seating, fountains and fire pits. Meeting, event and reception space along with a small business services area are among the more practical elements.

NEIGHBOURHOOD & COMMUNITY CONNECTION: Situated in the central hub of the new Claremont Village, Casa 425 offers a connection to the adjacent cinema, retail and restaurant complex as well as the collection of street level shops, cafes, bakeries and restaurants. The location offers connection to the neighbouring residential areas, prestigious Claremont Colleges and animation of the original historic Claremont Village.

OBSERVATIONS, EXPERIENCE & INSIGHT: Guest rooms incorporate high ceilings and open tubs - creating a modern loft living space. The balconies that extend from the guest room and wrap around the building offer some privacy as there is a white stucco wall between adjacent rooms - though privacy is limited when others pass by or are enjoying their balcony on the opposite side of the building. However, they are a perfect place to to enjoy the sunshine and fresh air, read a book, or observe the activity below in the outdoor living room (courtyard).

Guests, visitors and locals coming in the outdoor living room to enjoy breakfast, extended happy hour (cocktails and appetizers), a meal from the restaurant or listen to live jazz in the evening



THE LITTLE THINGS: A little note accompanies a set of orange ear plugs that are tucked into a tiny orange organza drawstring bag. Although the boutique property is relatively quiet, they are a simple and considerate touch for guests who might need to hit the pillows a little early or prepare for an academic meeting or presentation at the nearby Claremont Colleges.

You will find a dispenser filled with citrus infused water in the lobby. Fill a glass on the way to your guest room or fill your water bottle as you venture out for the day. Bicycles are available for you to explore Claremont and cover a little more ground than you might on foot.

THE AVALON HOTEL & BUNGALOWS

Palm Springs, California, USA | 67 Rooms



DESIGNER(S)

Frank Pershing
Proper Hospitality
Kelly Wearstler



NEIGHBOURHOOD

Old Downtown



LITTLE THINGS

Luxurious Toiletries
Poolside Lounge Seating



The Avalon Hotel Palm Springs

Notes from The Avalon Hotel

BUILDING & SITE HISTORY: Avalon Hotel and Bungalows Palm Springs is approximately a 2½-hour drive from Los Angeles, San Diego and Orange County. Four acres of stunningly manicured gardens in the heart of old downtown Palm Springs are dotted with 13 secluded villas featuring gas-burning fireplaces, large parlors, and full kitchens, as well as 54 guestrooms. Spanish architecture with Hollywood Regency-inspired interiors by style icon and designer Kelly Wearstler.

DESIGN AESTHETIC: Contemporary desert hideaway, iconic, Spanish villa, old Hollywood glamour.



DESIGN INTENTIONS: The Avalon is reminiscent of typical 1950s architecture. It is a self-contained Spanish hacienda style retreat with tile roofs and whitewashed stucco walls. The vibrant greenspace, manicured gardens and palm trees are a striking contrast to the blue desert sky.

DESIGN FEATURES: Kelly Wearstler has outfitted the property with stylish interiors decorated in a smart contemporary palette of blacks, whites, and yellows. Each of the Avalon’s three courtyards is centered around one of the 3 heated pools with private cabanas. Poolscapes are surrounded by manicured gardens and citrus trees, and each is served by Chi Chi restaurant, Villas featuring gas-burning fireplaces, large parlours, and full kitchens. Each room, suite or bungalow features a terrace or patio. The property also features a ballroom with a courtyard to host events or large gatherings.

NEIGHBOURHOOD & COMMUNITY CONNECTION: The Avalon Hotel is situated between Old Downtown Palm Springs - a vibrant shopping and dining district - and the base of the San Jacinto mountains. Nearby, guests will find a pilates studio, the architecture and design museum, shops and restaurants within walking distance in Old Downtown Palm Springs. If Old Downtown begins to feel a little touristy, stroll, bike or drive up the street to the Design District where you will find yourself surrounded by mid century modern design boutiques, upscale but unpretentious clothing boutiques, independent cafes, local eateries and watering holes. Our favourites are Elizabeth & Prince, the Workshop Kitchen + Bar, and Truss & Twine - all located in a charming complex on Palm Canyon Drive..

OBSERVATIONS, EXPERIENCE & INSIGHT: Guest rooms are generous and comfortable. They offer ample seating and large (though somewhat dated) bathrooms. The villa experience is highlighted by guests’ ability to enjoy the terrace overlooking the pool. Lounge chairs offer the perfect place to enjoy the sunshine poolside, float, swim, or enjoy a moment in the hot tub. Cruiser bikes are available (included with your stay) for guests to enjoy a morning bike ride to experience the architecture of Old Las Palmas and other districts made famous by the Hollywood Rat Pack. In the eveings, guests can enjoy happy hour cocktails by the outdoor fireplaces, a cocktail at the bar before they head out for the evening or upon return, or simply dine at the delightful Chi Chi restaurant on site.

THE LITTLE THINGS: A pleasant surprise to find generous sample size Davines shampoo and conditioner - one of our favourite salon products. If you run out, the front desk staff or housekeeping are happy to supply you with extras upon request.

THE DRAKE HOTEL

Toronto, Ontario, Canada | 19 Rooms (+32 Room Expansion)



DESIGNER(S)

John Tong | 3rd Uncle
Jeff Stober | ERA (Original)
ERA | Diamond Schmitt Architects
(Expansion)



NEIGHBOURHOOD

West Queen West
Art & Design District



LITTLE THINGS

Welcome & Turn Down
Service Surprises



Notes from The Drake Hotel

BUILDING & SITE HISTORY: The Drake Hotel is located in a historical 1890s building in the Beaconsfield neighbourhood in Toronto. When it opened in 2004, The Drake Hotel served to revitalize the West Queen West neighbourhood. It is currently extending its footprint in the Art and Design District with an expansion under way by Diamond Schmitt Architects. The expansion includes 32 additional guest rooms and a reimagined lobby that offer a thoughtful and provocative addition to the architecture of the original building. *“The expanded Drake presents a welcoming and engaging new face on the vibrant West Queen West cultural scene, inviting closer inspection of an expanded destination that remains firmly rooted in history”,* (Don Schmitt, Principal, Diamond Schmitt Architects).

DESIGN AESTHETIC: Vibrant, kinetic and kitschy.

DESIGN INTENTIONS: The Drake Hotel was designed to be both a conduit to and reflection of the city. It is a cultural hub for locals and visitors alike.

DESIGN FEATURES: Historic elements like the grand staircase in the front lobby that leads to the 19 guest suites and the Sky Yard as well as the staircase to the Drake Underground music venue are incorporated with an industrial yet kitschy feel throughout the hotel. Adjacent to the lobby and front desk are the Drake Cafe and the Lounge. The Drake Hotel features rotating art installations, culinary events, a rooftop patio (The Sky Yard), a cafe with an adjacent streetside patio, lounge, live music venue and event space. The guest rooms range from a Crash Pad to a Suite but they are all well appointed and feature rich jewel tones, nostalgia, a uniquely Drake Hotel mini bar, artwork and a sexy enclosed glass shower.

NEIGHBOURHOOD & COMMUNITY CONNECTION: West Queen West is known as the Art and Design District (Unofficially: Convivial animated neo bohemian residential neighbourhood of working artists). The neighbourhood is both residential and lined with galleries, event spaces, independent shops, cafes, restaurants, and bars. Unlike most hotels, it is a local hotspot - where locals and guests are not differentiated to any great extent. In fact, you will often find more locals gathered here.

OBSERVATIONS, EXPERIENCE & INSIGHT: Essential to optimizing The Drake Hotel experience is the ability to take advantage (and quite intuitively navigate) the on site offerings - including the art (the hotel has an in house art curator), cafe, bar, nightlife, skyyard, lounge - as well as the adjacent community shops, restaurants, creative art and entertainment venues and the city beyond the Beaconsfield neighbourhood. The Drake Hotel has a bit of a reputation as a “sex hotel” or “party hotel”. After all, it was the first North American boutique hotel to offer a ‘pleasure menu,’ featuring items from a local sex shop. A nod to this is reflected in the handcrafted bondage dolls that adorn the top of each guest bed. However, the experience is more like living in an incredibly and effortlessly cool crash pad, den or suite above a bar, event space and cafe/restaurant in a neobohehman and lively residential neighbourhood.



Whereas the Drake Cafe can be accessed without entering the hotel lobby, a host is stationed at the front door to direct guests to check in, dine in the lounge, access the Sky Yard, or attend an event, check out a live band, poetry slam or party at the Drake Underground at night. Guest rooms, though they range in size from a crash pad to a suite with a den and are designed with efficiency of space and lifestyle comforts, are not necessarily intended for long stays; even though the first author has lived there on occasion during renovations at her loft or to accommodate family visits. Limited space and the staircase leading to the guest rooms on the second floor (it is a walk up - no elevator) might inspire you to pack light. However, guest rooms feature a functional luggage rack along one wall that doubles as a clothes rack. In keeping with its presence in the Art and Design District, guest rooms feature bold colours and patterns, retro-style furniture and lighting, simple wood shelving and original artwork. Guests will be welcomed by a somewhat creepy handmade doll, accessorized in leather, on the bed. The doll, no matter where you place it during your stay, ends up neatly resting on top of your bed after a housekeeping visit. Bathrooms, raised by one step from the guest room floor, extend along an entire wall. A sliding door with frosted glass can be positioned in front of the loo, or the peek-a-boo glass enclosed shower with a sink, mirror toiletries and hairdryer at the opposite end.

THE LITTLE THINGS: Welcome note and popcorn, turn down service note with cookies or fudge, free wine and/or drink coupons if you stay there long enough. Pick up your free coffee at the Drake Cafe - a carafe of fresh coffee can also be found on a window sill in the guest room corridors in the morning. Access to the events at the Drake Underground during your stay. Do you fancy one of the items you sampled from the unique and fully loaded mini bar - candy by Squish? Malin and Goetz toiletries? Guests receive a discount at The Drake General Store lifestyle emporium and apothecary.

OPUS HOTEL

Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada | 96 Rooms



DESIGNER(S)
IB/HB Architects



NEIGHBOURHOOD
Yaletown



LITTLE THING
Lavendar-Infused Towels



Notes from Opus Hotel

BUILDING & SITE HISTORY: A new build, mixed use architecture project. Yaletown was historically an industrial warehouse district, but over the past 30 years the neighbourhood has gentrified and bloomed into a fashionable hubbub of designer stores, cocktail bars and restaurants with packed summer patios. Perfectly situated, adjacent to picturesque False Creek waterfront and surrounded by the city’s best restaurants and lounges.

DESIGN AESTHETIC: Bohemian luxury.

DESIGN INTENTIONS: The hotel exterior resembles a former warehouse that is typical of the Yaletown district. Opus exemplifies this stylish ‘hood with a red brick exterior and exuberant interior complete with sleek mosaic columns and neon artwork. Opus is more than a place to stay (or live) - it is somewhere to be in a fabulous location in the heart of hip Yaletown, downtown Vancouver.



DESIGN FEATURES: Bold colour choices like chartreuse, periwinkle blue, magenta and organge permeate the boutique hotel and reflect the vibrancy of the neighbourhood. The guestrooms have a sensual feel - with plush velvet ottomans, wallpaper, textured headboards and luxurious linens. Hotel amenities include a small fitness room, meeting space, a La Pentola restaurant - offering breakfast, lunch and dinner as well as in room service, Opus Bar, and the adjacent Artigano cafe.

NEIGHBOURHOOD & COMMUNITY CONNECTION: This hip neighborhood in the heart of downtown is an elite 12-block historic district home to over 60 of the city’s most stylish restaurants, boutiques and spas. The Yaletown Skytrain station is opposite the hotel and links direct to YVR Airport in 22 minutes. The city’s famous 17-mile seawall which wraps around Stanley Park from the Convention Centre to beaches of Spanish Banks is five minutes away, along with the water taxi stop for Granville Island. Yaletown is walkable and its location allows for exploring nearby Gastown, shops along Robson Street, the art gallery and nearby Chinatown. Cross the bridge and you’ll find yourself in Kitsilano or South Granville. The Cross Design - a favourite Yaletown design boutique, Small Victory for a treat in between shops, and The Flying Pig during happy hour are part of the local experience.

OBSERVATIONS, EXPERIENCE & INSIGHT: Once you check in, be sure to have your room key card in hand as you enter the elevator - you will need to insert the key card into the panel in the elevator to gain access to your floor. This can be a little tricky with luggage in one hand and the prosecco that is offered upon arrival in the other. Raise the shade in your bathroom to find floor to ceiling windows and the animated Yaletown streets below - modest guests might be inclined to keep the blinds down. Being a guest at Opus offers an experience akin to being a resident of the nearby wearhouse loft conversions or condos. During the day, the lobby bar - complete with fireplace and serpentine style blue banquettes - operates as a cafe and hangout space for locals to meet, guests to wait for others, or taking a break from enjoying the city. La Pentola offers breakfast, lunch and dinner - here you will meet fellow guests and local patrons. On weekend nights, you will find well dressed locals and guests with cocktails in hand as they mingle while the DJ spins some music. Feel free to partake in the experience before heading out for the evening or enjoy a nightcap before heading up to your room.

THE LITTLE THINGS: Malin & Goetz toiletries. Pop rocks and Pez dispensers in lieu of chocolates at turn down service. iPads in every suite. Lavender-infused towels (hot in winter and chilled in summer) and a glass of sparkling wine from the nearby Okanagan Valley. Car service is offered to guests; however, it never seemed to be available when we hoped to take advantage of it.

ST. PAUL HOTEL

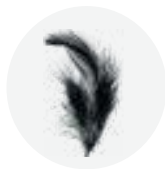
Montreal, Quebec, Canada | 119 Rooms



DESIGNER(S)
Borrallo Interiors



NEIGHBOURHOOD
Historic Quarter
Old Montreal



LITTLE THINGS
Turn Down Service



Notes from St. Paul Hotel

BUILDING & SITE HISTORY: Nestled in an original 8 storey Beaux-Arts building in the historic quarter of Old Montreal, the St. Paul opened in 2001 as Canada’s first ever boutique hotel. The property, designed by Montreal-based design firm Borrallo Interiors offers a timeless blend of past and present, and an innovative design that maintains the integrity of the building’s original architecture.

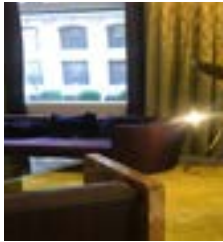
DESIGN AESTHETIC: Ethereal, airy, sophisticated comfort.

DESIGN INTENTIONS: The design reflects Canada’s natural landscape—reclaimed wood furniture, tranquil color palettes, stone walls and an overall sense of spaciousness. Fire, ice, earth, and sky are used as abstract metaphors, while understated furnishings combine materials such as silk, stone, and metal to create a comfortable setting with gorgeous light fixtures and designer furniture sourced from throughout the world. Bold juxtapositions of colour and texture heighten the senses and transport guests on a visual journey throughout their stay.

DESIGN FEATURES: The minimalist and comforting decor is both offset and enhanced by dramatic colour choices and plush fabrics and a translucent alabaster fireplace feature in the lobby. Embodying an elemental theme, the hotel alternates between airy and earthy elements, whether in public spaces or in guestrooms. Tucked away behind luxurious drapery are the dimly lit elevators - guest and service - that take you to the guest room and amenity levels. Guestrooms all feature a bathroom with a shower and a bathtub, a generous closet, seating area, large bed and windows with meaningful views to the Old Montreal neighbourhood. The hotel also has a small fitness centre, a business centre, dining and banquet halls.

NEIGHBOURHOOD & COMMUNITY CONNECTION: Historic quarter of Old Montreal that is characterised by European charm. It is lined with cobblestone streets, restaurants, boutique shops, world class galleries, and bars. The waterfront, arts centres, downtown and adjacent neighbourhoods are easily accessible on foot, by metro or by car.

OBSERVATIONS, EXPERIENCE & INSIGHT: In contrast to business and/or larger chain hotels, the St. Paul is characterized by a warm and welcoming atmosphere. This is evident in the minimalist and comforting decor that is both offset and enhanced by dramatic colour choices and plush fabrics as well as in the ease of interactions and service provided by the hotel staff. Upon arrival at the grand entrance, guests are greeted by hotel staff (a doorman or bellhop) and guided to check in, led behind the drapery to the elevators that are befitting of the building architecture. Guest rooms feel more like a well appointed loft conversion for extended stays than a hotel. Open floor plans, high ceilings, generous bathrooms, large closets and dressing area, seating area that doubles as a dining or work space, the well appointed queen or king size bed and luxurious linens, along with meaningful views of the city offered by the expansive



windows once you pull back the drapery interact to create an inviting and comforting experience. Hambar restaurant and bar is trendy spot where locals mix with hotel patrons. Step out the door and around either corner you will find yourself among the most delightful boutique shops, cafes, restaurants, and art galleries in Vieux Montreal.

THE LITTLE THINGS: Turn down service includes chocolate from a local chocolatier and a card that offers the forecast for the evening and next day so that guests can plan accordingly. Ask your concierge to book you in to Bota Bota on the waterfront or Scandinave Spa if spa experiences are up your alley.

SOHO HOTEL

Soho, London, UK | 96 Rooms



DESIGNER(S)

Kit Kemp



NEIGHBOURHOOD

Entertainment District
Soho



LITTLE THINGS

Turn Down Service



The Soho London | Firmdale Hotels

Notes from Soho Hotel

BUILDING & SITE HISTORY: The first deluxe hotel in the bustling borough of London’s Soho was created on the site of a former multi-level parking garage. The Soho Hotel was built from scratch, yet still respects the original red brick structure. Located in a subsection of London’s gentrified Chinatown, the area is notable for its history and culture.

DESIGN AESTHETIC: Eclectic. Cool Britannia vibe.

DESIGN INTENTIONS: Contemporary art in its many forms embellishes the interiors, while funky furnishings and natural materials in a plethora of styles, colours and patterns create elegant, playful spaces. These spaces have as much energy as the hotel’s surroundings. At the same time, the hotel offers a luxurious retreat once inside the property and tucked into your guest room and the opportunity to recoup energy and refuel for the next day.



DESIGN FEATURES: The hotel features the Refuel bar and restaurant, a drawing room, library, gym, 2 screening rooms & a film club. Guest rooms are unusually large with floor-to-ceiling warehouse-style windows. The spacious rooms and junior suites feature a separate sitting area and top floor suites have beautiful large bathrooms with walk-in showers and double basins. There are four two-bedroom apartments available with fully equipped kitchens, two spacious bedrooms and bathrooms, plus a drawing room. These apartments also have an optional private street entrance.

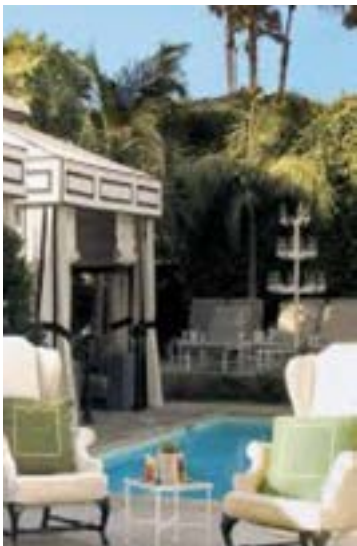
NEIGHBOURHOOD & COMMUNITY CONNECTION: Entertainment district Soho. Once a red light district and a bastion of beatnik lifestyle, the area was repurposed into cool public houses and boutiques. The cobblestone streets have stood the test of time as have the established family run restaurants. They operate alongside the vibrant nightlife, theatres, pubs and bars.

OBSERVATIONS, EXPERIENCE & INSIGHT: Intrigue is built in to guests’ arrival at the hotel - whether you enter via the non descript alleyway where you see the first glimpse of the warehouse style windows and are greeted by a doorman to facilitate your entry and check in at the main lobby or you enter via the Refuel restaurant and bar. SOHO London is an urban oasis among Kit Kemp’s Firmdale brand of London hotels. Guest rooms feature floor-to-ceiling, warehouse-style windows with Kit Kemp’s signature quirky, print-laden designs. Much like the city of London, the decor offers an eclectic mix of elements that capture your interest. Large, well appointed guest rooms in Kimpton style are a welcome retreat from the bustling streets of London. It is there where guests can retreat and refuel - as London awaits when you wake the next day and takes you well into the night. The SOHO London features a basement screening room that is not just for media types—the hotel hosts weekend “Film Club” events that include lunch and a movie.

THE LITTLE THINGS: Turn down service, water, welcome and mid stay notes with treats from local chocolatiers and confectionaries. REN toiletries. In a pinch, you can pick up an apple and bottle of water at the hotel fitness amenities. Forgot to pack an umbrella? Not to worry, you will find a generous offering of oversized Soho Hotel branded umbrella’s as you exit the lobby.



The Viceroy Hotel Santa Monica



THE LITTLE THINGS: Prosecco upon arrival and complimentary bikes available during your stay. Convivial hospitality and conceirge that will book you in to the best restaurants on Abbot Kinney in Venice, recommend a place to enjoy a drink, or assist you in securing event tickets. White marble spa like bathrooms with excellent water pressure and toiletries by ROIL. The subtle signature scent that permeates the lobby and hotel corridors.

THE VICEROY HOTEL

Santa Monica, California, USA | 162 Rooms



Notes from The Viceroy Santa Monica

BUILDING & SITE HISTORY: A former 1960s budget seaside hotel, the property was transformed into the luxury Viceroy Hotel in the early 2000s. Extensive renovations are once again underway (Summer 2020).

DESIGN AESTHETIC: Salt air and sun kissed sophistication.

DESIGN INTENTIONS: Luxurious design driven beachfront hotel. A green glow can be seen through translucent glass behind a discreet and unsigned building facade - hidden behind the trees a driveway leading to the hotel entrance.

DESIGN FEATURES: The lobby is equal parts beachside retreat - complete with painted oak floors - and English country livingroom envisioned by designer Kelly Wearstler. On one side is the lobby bar cast lounge, on the opposite side sits a yellow shag-carpeted library. Cast restaurant features eclectic California cuisine and offers indoor, outdoor and in room dining. The lobby and restaurant extend to the courtyard and poolside lounge area. There are two outdoor heated plunge pools, crisp white poolside cabanas, lounge chairs and a dining area. Wearstler's iconic mural of plates appear on the restaurant walls and are repeated in the guest rooms. Ocean View guest rooms offer meaningful views with the golden California sunset, the beach and the boardwalk in between towering palm trees, beachside hotels and motels.

NEIGHBOURHOOD & COMMUNITY CONNECTION: Ocean Avenue. It's a 15-minute cycle down the beach promenade on the hotel's complimentary bikes to Venice Beach. Make your way to Abbott Kinney for cool boutiques, followed by lunch or happy hour at delightful restaurants like Gjelina, The Tasting Kitchen or Salt Air. Santa Monica's Main Street is a good spot for shops and cafés. Travelling in the opposite direction will land you on Montana Avenue, Pacific Palisades and Malibu (be sure to visit Malibu Farms) - or further if you feel like driving up the coast to Santa Barbara. The Santa Monica Pier and 3rd Street Promenade - though touristy are within walking distance. The hotel is a 20-minute drive from Los Angeles International Airport.

OBSERVATIONS, EXPERIENCE & INSIGHT: Step out of the elevator in the morning to find free coffee, tea and the LA Times and meander down to the beach and boardwalk. On weekends, the lobby lounge and bar transforms from its contemporary English cottage beachside retreat vibes into a hip night spot for locals and guests - complete with cocktails, DJ and animated patrons. The outdoor pool area offers a space to dine and/or lounge at night - an extension from the lobby lounge, bar and Cast restaurant and lounge. Retreat to the luxurious guestrooms - "Viceroy blue" wallpaper, inviting bed with oversized down filled pillows and crisp white linens, seating area, large closet, and spa like bathroom. You will be well on your way to enjoy Santa Monica and Venice again the next day.



DESIGNER(S)
Arquitectonica
Kelly Wearstler



NEIGHBOURHOOD
Ocean Avenue
Santa Monica



LITTLE THINGS
Signature Scent
& The Concierge
Experience

MEMMO ALFAMA

Alfama, Lisbon, Portugal | 42 Rooms



DESIGNER(S)
STC ARQUITETURA
MEMMO DESIGN TEAM



NEIGHBOURHOOD
Historical Alfama



LITTLE THINGS
View from the
Terrace



29 | Checking in & Checking Out

Notes from Memmo Alfama

BUILDING & SITE HISTORY: Former 19th Century shoe polish factory.

DESIGN AESTHETIC: Laid back, relaxed, casual Scandanavian style.

DESIGN INTENTIONS: Much like the chameleon found on their logo, Memmo Alfama blends into its surroundings. The colours mimic the palette of the neighbourhood - from the terra cotta rooftops to the white facade, natural sand colour linens, light wood tones, stone and concrete. The design inspires guests to meander and explore - to create memories via their lived experience of the Alfama neighbourhood in Lisbon.

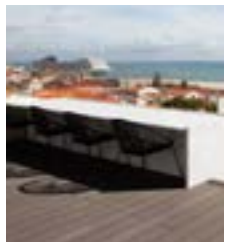
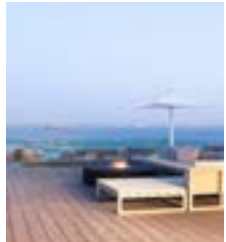
DESIGN FEATURES: Terrace and pool with one of the best views of the Tagus River in Lisbon, meaningful views from the rooms, living room style lobby, well appointed and comfortable guest rooms with an abundance of light and shuttered windows for sleeping.

NEIGHBOURHOOD & COMMUNITY CONNECTION: Historical Alfama. Getting lost in the narrow streets is part of the charm, but for those who prefer a local guide, reception can make arrangements for you to optimize the experience and immerse yourself in the history and the culture of Alfama. You soon discover that following those narrow streets and steep hills will lead you to the Baixa, TimeOut Market, Chiado, Bairro Alto, Príncipe Real and other charms of Lisbon.

OBSERVATIONS, EXPERIENCE & INSIGHT: The experience begins on the climb of the narrow winding cobble stone (calçada) street as the point of arrival to the hotel's courtyard entrance, it continues past the reception lobby to the dark and cavernous dome library (former bakery) and breakfast dining area, beckons you up the stairs and passageways to the guest rooms, and leads to the rooftop restaurant and terrace - seemingly carved into the hillside. Once settled in at the hotel and the surroundings, guests are encouraged to explore by meandering along the cobble stone streets of the historic district.

Memmo Alfama is a perfect launching point to start your journey in Lisbon. Alfama allows for a true placemaking experience - to capture the architecture, historical and cultural context of Lisbon before exploring the boutique shops, gastronomie, and contemporary Lisbon city life. Given the typical 3pm check in time in Europe, opt to leave your bags with the concierge, enjoy a refreshment, take in the view and soak in the Lisbon golden mid afternoon light before you unpack your bags and settle in after your flight.

It is quite disconcerting if, by chance, the serenity is disrupted by a massive cruise ship entering the port. After a while, however; even the cruise ship somehow manages to disappear in to the surroundings. For those with practical inclinations,



rates include a buffet breakfast of fresh fruits, pastries, cold meats and cheeses, as well as a selection of hot dishes such as eggs, bacon and crepes - essential fuel for “getting lost” in the streets of Lisbon. Explore on your own, with others or with a local Memmo tour guide.

THE LITTLE THINGS: The view from the terrace - enjoy a gin and tonic or a glass of vinho verde and peixinhos da horta (vegetable tempura) while you wait for your room to become available or at happy hour before venturing out for the evening.

MEMMO HOTEL

Principe Real, Lisbon, Portugal | 41 Rooms



DESIGNER(S)
STC Arquitetura
João Corrêa Nunes
Memmo Design Team



NEIGHBOURHOOD
Principe Real
Trendy Shopping & Gastronomie
Vibrant Social Scene



LITTLE THINGS
The View, Lisbon
Light, Port Tonic



Notes from Memmo Hotel

BUILDING & SITE HISTORY: Principe Real, an extension of the historic Bairro Alto, has a reputation as an affluent, trendy and design forward neighbourhood in Lisbon. It is home to galleries, tile merchants, pastelarias, fine restaurants, high end boutiques, and the Jardim do Principe Real. Traditional townhomes are being converted to multi million Euro luxury apartments.

DESIGN AESTHETIC: Classic, contemporary, provocative.

DESIGN INTENTIONS: Set high on a hill with a phenomenal and memorable panoramic view of the city, the four story hotel blends into the setting. A secret passageway via a cobble stone road and limestone public square create anticipation and lead guests to the reception and ground floor public areas. Materiality mimics that of the outdoor courtyard and serves to amplify the transparency between the courtyard, ground floor restaurant, terrace and public amenities. The distinct geometric form of the upper floors give rise to the guest rooms and elevate the experience on the top of the city. The cobblestone pathway likewise leads guests to experience the vibrant lifestyle of a Lisboetta in the trendy Principe Real neighbourhood with endless opportunities for discovery.

DESIGN FEATURES: Inherent in the design is the transparency and blurred boundaries between the outdoor courtyard, ground floor reception, restaurant, terrace, infinity pool, seating areas and public amenities. The site plan and functional program is enhanced by an elevated view of the city, its terracotta rooftops and beautiful sky - equally captivating in the golden sunlight during the day or the

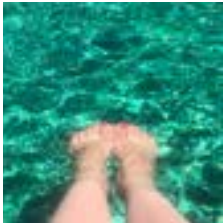


city lights and night sky. The interiors are decorated in luxurious and warm tones of green velvet juxtaposed by local limestone and oak floors. Artwork from contemporary Portuguese artists honouring the neighbourhood's heritage adorn the walls. Natural oak wood features strongly in the form of custom-built cabinetry, walk-in closets, headboards, and sliding separation doors, while darker finishes on the floors anchor the design. Bathrooms are entirely outfitted in limestone, the sandy-tinted stone deftly straddling the raw earthiness and modern sleekness that defines the hotel - and they are, in fact, the colours of Lisbon that are offered in your sightline to the city.

NEIGHBOURHOOD & COMMUNITY CONNECTION: A secret hideaway that offers tranquility and elegance among the trendy shops, art and design, gastronomie and vibrant social scene in Principe Real - a coveted residential neighbourhood that was once the site of ancient royalty.

OBSERVATIONS, EXPERIENCE & INSIGHT: Experience life as a local Lisboetta. Meander from the convivial restaurants and shops of chic Principe Real down the pathway to the hotel overlooking the city below. Cafe Colonial is a neighborhood fixture that draws in locals and guests alike where you will encounter people engaged in lively conversation. A convivial spirit of community reflects Portuguese hospitality. A convivial hostess mingles with guests at breakfast and offers insight into exploring the city in lieu of a typical concierge experience. The breathtaking views of the city, a private terrace that overlooks the city, a stunning pool that seems to float above Lisbon, and a welcoming atmosphere are as captivating as the experience of Principe Real and other burroughs.

THE LITTLE THINGS: The view of the Lisbon skyline from the terrace at night. Ingredients, supplies and instructions to enjoy a refreshing white Port and Tonic for two in your room after shopping in chic Principe Real, before dinner or as a night cap. Hermès toiletries are non essential in "real life"; however, they are a nice touch during your hotel stay - including the full-size soap and carry case for guests to enjoy at home. Six down filled pillows on the bed were a lovely, though perhaps not essential, touch.



THE DRAKE DEVONSHIRE

Wellington, Ontario, Canada | 13 Rooms



DESIGNER(S)

ERA Architects & +tongtong inc.



NEIGHBOURHOOD

Lakefront



LITTLE THINGS

View from the Terrace



Notes from The Drake Devonshire

BUILDING & SITE HISTORY: The Drake Devonshire opened in 2014. It is the Drake Hotel's sister property in Prince Edward County - approximately 1.5 hours east of Toronto. Neither property has anything to do with the rap star Drake. The hotel sits back from the property line, tucked into a corner, surrounded by other residential Wellington properties. The building was once an iron foundry, an estate, a nursing home, and a bed and breakfast prior to its development as a boutique hotel.

DESIGN AESTHETIC: Relaxed, quirky, hip, modern farmhouse by the lake.

DESIGN INTENTIONS: The Drake Devonshire is an all-season retreat which features art installations, cultural programs, events, along with food and beverage menus that proudly represent nearby farmers and vintners. The property is “a rural getaway where travelers, culture seekers and local neighbours all intersect to enjoy thoughtful contradictions of new and old, rural and urban, and sweet and savoury”.

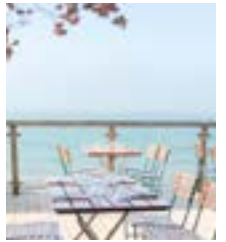
DESIGN FEATURES: The property offers a 13-room boutique hotel. It features a lakeside restaurant dining room and bar, outdoor patio, lakeside fire pit, outdoor fireplaces, and beautiful event spaces. Spaces include the Pavilion, the Glass Box, a library lounge and a recreation room that features a ping pong table, game of backgammon and other memorabilia. Like the original Drake, the Devonshire has revolving installations by local artists, as well as permanent pieces. The guest rooms range in size and they are located in the original foundry building above the lobby, and in the new building with Creekside or Courtyard views.

NEIGHBOURHOOD & COMMUNITY CONNECTION: Wellington, Prince Edward County. The Drake Devonshire is located steps from the Main Street in Wellington on the shores of Lake Ontario. A quick drive can lead you to County vineyards, farm to table restaurants, and farmer's markets.

OBSERVATIONS, EXPERIENCE & INSIGHT: Set directly off the main street of Wellington, amid a burgeoning community of wineries, shops, and restaurants the Drake Devonshire offers a unique (and equally appealing in all seasons) experience in rural Prince Edward County. Perched on the shores of Lake Ontario, the Drake Devonshire has the charm of a cottage or historic country home – yet one filled with contemporary design, quirky art objects, and creature comforts (including a recreation room, restaurant - including indoor and outdoor seating, bar, event space and performance venue). The experience is observed in the architecture of the old foundry building juxtaposed by the addition that makes up the “new” and more contemporary part of the building. It is an upscale boutique experience without the stuffiness – the setting, design and staff contribute to a casual and relaxed atmosphere.



The Drake Devonshire



Overall, the Drake Devonshire welcomes guests - for a daytrip, an overnight stay, a weekend getaway, a celebration, special event, retreat or wedding - with uninterrupted views of Lake Ontario, unique destinations in the hotel (including indoor and outdoor dining, seating and recreation spaces, a living room and fireplaces) that set the tone for relaxation and inspiration. It is equally appealing to remain on site as it is to meander up to Main Street or venture further into the county to experience wine country, provincial parks, beaches and other offerings.

THE LITTLE THINGS: Quirky (sometimes creepy) artwork. Look for the hand crafted doll on the bar in your guest room. Enjoy the mesmerizing view and experience the outdoor patio - in the summer with a light refreshment or in the winter with the sound of the waves meeting the shore (they supply blankets for chilly days/evenings). Unpretentious laid back but attentive staff.

1 HOTEL SOUTH BEACH

South Beach, Miami, Florida, USA | 425 Rooms



DESIGNER(S)

Kobi Karp Architecture and
Meyer Davis Studio



NEIGHBOURHOOD

Beachfront



LITTLE THINGS

Subtle and Soothing
Woodsy Scent



Notes from 1 Hotel South Beach

BUILDING & SITE HISTORY: Former site of a 1970s oceanfront condo building, 1 Hotel South Beach in Miami occupies an entire city block on Collins Avenue and features 600 feet of pristine beachfront.

DESIGN AESTHETIC: Sophisticated, eco-conscious, relaxed beachfront retreat.

DESIGN INTENTIONS: Designed for comfort using reclaimed materials. Weathered-wood accents, polished-concrete floors, and white-linen upholstery contribute to the relaxed, sophisticated atmosphere.



DESIGN FEATURES: The guest rooms invite nature indoors with ocean views, a natural colour palette, organic cotton linens, reclaimed wood and polished concrete bathroom floors. A range of suites are available - with views to the ocean, balconies, large seating areas, kitchenettes, and all feature a large bathroom with dressing area as well as a large glass shower that separates the bathroom from the sleeping area. Amenities include four uniquely designed and scenic pools - including a rooftop pool and lounge, private beach, signature farm to table hotel restaurant, laid back lobby lounge bar and poolside restaurant. The lobby and concourse features a juice bar, expanse and varied seating options, a gift shop and spa. With a focus on wellness, the property features a large fitness centre which offers a variety of equipment as well as private fitness and group fitness sessions.

NEIGHBOURHOOD & COMMUNITY CONNECTION: A self contained beachfront property situated on Collins Avenue mid-South Beach, Miami with proximity to shopping district and art deco architecture.

OBSERVATIONS, EXPERIENCE & INSIGHT: 1 Hotel South Beach is a destination worthy of experience unto itself. The hotel design includes unique destinations or “neighbourhoods” for guests to gather. Upon arrival, the subtle “woodsy” scent of Palo Santo and subdued filtered light guides guests to the check in and concierge area. Fluid and intuitive, the lobby and lounge offers ample and relaxed seating to meet others and/or decompress. The expansive main floor lobby extends to the cocktail bar and beyond to the restaurant where guests gather for an organic, seafood forward dining experience. Without feeling like a “resort”, 1 Hotel South Beach guests take advantage of the amenities. Guests can be found sweating it out in various fitness offerings on site, visiting the smoothie bar post workout, lounging - on their own, with their travel partner, or in small groups at one of the many distinct pools, or meandering to the property’s private beach. At each destination, guests can enjoy the sunshine, relax, cool off with a refreshment and/or treat themselves to a light snack (the shrimp tacos are a favourite). At night, the rooftop bar and poolside becomes animated - a place to gather with convivial guests. 1 Hotel South Beach offers a perfect base to stay while South Beach and Miami beckon you to explore the city’s vibrant arts and culture scene.

THE LITTLE THINGS: The subtle signature woodsy scent throughout the property. The generous guest rooms. The private beach and pools. The dining experience. Perfect climate control throughout the property makes you almost forget about the humidity.



THE LITTLE THINGS: The farmers’ food circle experience and the proximity to Praia de Comporta beach along the southwestern coastline.

SUBLIME COMPORTA

Comporta, Alentejo, Portugal | 34 Rooms



Notes from Sublime Comporta

BUILDING & SITE HISTORY: For generations, Comporta was a quiet agricultural stretch - mostly farmland, vineyards and a seaport in nearby Setubal. In the early 2000s, a pilot for the Portuguese airline TAP purchased a wooded inland property south of Comporta Village. The intent was to build a family beach house; however, tourism potential drove the construction of a boutique hotel property.

DESIGN AESTHETIC: Upscale, homey, serene.

DESIGN INTENTIONS: An environmentally friendly experiential and sensory escape from the city.

DESIGN FEATURES: A self-contained property set on a 17 hectar estate. Guests are welcomed into a casual and inviting reception area that resembles an expansive open concept living room and flows into the lounge and bar area. The adjacent restaurant serves locally sourced Mediterranean food with many of the vegetables, herbs, and fruits coming from the hotel's gardens, and local wine. Outdoor features include an organic garden, fire pit, pool with food and beverage service, poolside bar, various seating areas, spa, fitness area, tennis court and smaller pool area for families. Serene guest rooms are located in villas with a design inspired by seaside salt houses. The villas offer self contained or adjoining suites, wooden decks and private pools along with a stunning bathroom that features a free standing bathtub, separate shower, and dressing area. Floor to ceiling windows and sliding doors offer views of the landscape, natural surroundings and architecture of the main building and/or private villas.

NEIGHBOURHOOD & COMMUNITY CONNECTION: The rustic village of Comporta, approximately one hour outside of Lisbon, is located in the Alentejo region along Portugal's southwestern coast. Alentejo is revered for its wineries, pine and cork forests, rice fields and proximity to a fishing port and marine base of historical significance in Setubal. Comporta has garnered considerable attention and has been described as the “*California of Portugal*” - as much for its climate, wineries and beaches as well as the designers, foodies, and elite set and *surfistas* that are drawn to the area.

OBSERVATIONS, EXPERIENCE & INSIGHT: Sublime Comporta is not necessarily the “typical local experience”. The overarching experiential concept is evident upon arrival. A contrast from the animated streets, sights and sounds of Lisbon, Sublime Comporta exudes serenity. From its setting in the unique Alentejo landscape, to its offerings which include garden to table dining experiences, garden to body spa rituals with organic essential oils that were created on site, private and peaceful villas, tranquil swimming pools, and seating areas that appear to be part of the natural landscape, Sublime Comporta is food for the soul as much as for the body.



DESIGNER(S)
Jose Alberto Charrua
Miguel Cancio Martins



NEIGHBOURHOOD
Comporta, Alentejo
Wineries, Beaches &
Agriculture



LITTLE THINGS
Food Circle
Experience



III. Notes for the Design Teams

User Engagement and Design Research

Building on the insight gleaned from the discovery and early visioning sessions with the client and stakeholders, how can design teams optimize design through user engagement and design research?

User engagement and design research (eg. evidence based design, user experience, ethnography, observational studies, focus groups, mock ups and simulations, surveys) are an integral part of the design development process. These activities can inform design decisions, offer proof of concept before a design intervention is developed, test fit design solutions and validate investments in design.

Optimizing Hotel Design: Behavioural Insights & The Psychology of Design

A building site offers context and inspiration for creating a sense of place and defining the boutique hotel experience as an extension of the neighbourhood and/or immediate surroundings (urban, nature, or otherwise).

User experience and design research can offer insights into guest behaviour and interactions with the built environment, how design can shape behaviour and enhance user experience. By understanding user experience and pairing this with design principles, unique design opportunities can come to light.

For example, what drives behaviour in the boutique hotel context? What draws people into spaces other than the guest room? What opportunities exist to shape user experience? What design interventions are required to achieve this in design?

Capturing User Experience and Outcomes: Design Evaluation

The boutique hotel experience is unique. It represents more than a practical overnight stay for most guests. The building site, its location relative to key destinations, the adjacent local neighbourhood and its offerings – boutiques, restaurants, local experiences, and the hotel design along with corresponding services collectively shape the guest experience.

The guest experience can influence impressions of the hotel, the overall hotel brand and the experience of the city. It can affect the likelihood of recommending the hotel to others or returning for a future stay.

There is both an art and a science to design. Understanding the mechanisms by which design can affect psychological states (eg. mood, well being, stress, sense of connection), impressions, interactions, experiences, and behaviours can enhance user experience and enhance outcomes.

How can we collectively design hotels and adjacent spaces to optimize outcomes – for the designers, the hoteliers, the guests, and communities?

Our approach, developed in collaboration with architecture and design teams, is integrated into design development. The central tenets are user engagement, the use design intentions as the theoretical basis against which to identify anticipated outcomes, and a methodology that measures the extent to which the outcomes materialize (<https://methologi.ca/projects>).

Concept Mapping

An opportunity exists to define the boutique hotel experience in the context of a specific design project.

As an aspirational direction, we suggest mapping and defining concepts related to “Overarching Design Intentions” a “Thriving Boutique Hotel Guest Experience” for any specific boutique hotel design project.

- What are the overarching design intentions for the boutique hotel?
- What are the design interventions (eg. design features) that aspirational or existing that were developed to realize the deisgn intentions?
- What spaces are integral to the design?
- What are the anticipated outcomes? What are the potentially unanticipated outcomes? For whom (eg. guests, staff, local community)?
- What defines an optimal guest experience? How can the design be optimized to enhance guest experience?

A series of stakeholder and user engagement sessions will serve to identify the elements of these overarching constructs. The ultimate aim is to begin to operationalize the concepts and their associated elements to develop a corresponding set of metrics to be captured as measures of success.

Building this into the design development process allows for the opportunity to create bespoke measures, redefine and elevate the standards for boutique hotel design..

Developing a Research Implementation Strategy and/or Evaluation Framework

The next step is to develop an evaluation approach to capture the impact of the hotel design on user experience and outcomes.

- What are the questions you hope to answer?
- What are the conclusions you hope to make?
- What are the methods that are best suited to your research questions?
- What is the best approach to capturing observations and user experience?
- What are the operational definitions of the concepts to be measured in the evaluation?
- How can we ensure the measures capture the

outcomes of interest?

An evaluation framework is comprised of research design, proposed bouquet of evaluation methods, bespoke measures, and the identification of a relevant set of outcomes to be included in the evaluation. The evaluation framework is guided by the design intentions, specific design elements, and anticipated outcomes to be included in the study along with its potential integration into design development at any stage of the continuum.

The evaluation framework includes a rationale for its execution along with the desired inferences to be made (eg. causal inference between design and outcome or otherwise) and, therefore, the logic for the selected methodology. The strength of an evaluation framework depends on the extent to which the methods map on to the desired conclusions to be made.

Coordination and Execution of User Experience Research, Design Research, and Evaluation Activities

Consideration of the coordination and execution of design research and evaluation within the project schedule is essential. It is important to consider timing of user experience, design research and evaluation activities and embedding them into the design development process and overall project schedule.

It may seem like an overwhelming amount of added work and scope that affects project costs. However, these activities are natural extensions of the design development process. If you do not have the capacity in house, engage a research and/or evaluation scientist as a member of you Integrated Design Team. It may offer competitive advantage and data to justify investments in design.

By identifying what works, for whom and in what context, the design team gains insight for the current boutique hotel design as well as the potential to reimagine the future of hospitality projects and optimizing outcomes that extend beyond the hotel property.





IV. Notes for the Hoteliers

Insights for Optimizing the Guest Experience

Good design is good business. Investments in boutique hotel design, at first glance may seem frivolous, but there is an art and a science to captivating and shaping human behaviour towards an optimal guest experience.

Our user experience insights stem from an attempt to capture observations of how the boutique hotel design can serve to optimize the guest experience. To this end, we encourage your consideration of key touchpoints during the hotel stay.

- First impressions matter and give the guest a sense of what they can expect during their stay, consider the design of the lobby and how this affects the arrival and check-in experience
- Whether it is the direct placement of a concierge at an obvious location in the lobby or a convivial host who greets guests as they wait in the lobby, stop enjoy a drink in the lounge or a dining experience, dining area, a personalized service (vs a standard checklist of places to see) is an asset
- Leverage neighbourhood assets - the boutique hotel experience is as much about the property and on site offerings as its placement within a vibrant neighbourhood
- The little things and personalization go a long way - making a guest feel at home with special touches are often what we remember most from our stays
- Efforts to make the hotel an extension of the neighbourhood feel are noticed and appreciated by guests
- Offering a tailored variety of amenities, adjacencies, and on site experiences keep guests nearby and wanting to explore the hotel community

The Boutique Hotel as a Host to the City and Neighbourhood

The boutique hotel experience can define the guests' experience in the host city. The boutique hotel and neighbourhood, by extension, becomes and ambassador to the city. It becomes the destination, or launching point, for an "authentic experience".

Given urban design and renewal initiatives, can boutique design hotel revitalize and rebrand a neighbourhood? Can it provide a mechanism for a neighbourhood to thrive? Alternatively, might it offer a little boost?

Themes from our observations from the hotels include connection to the neighbourhood, adjacencies - within and surrounding the boutique hotel property, a "brand" that defines a neighbourhood and the experience as much as it does the boutique hotel design.

The boutique hotel experience offers an opportunity to leverage what makes your the property as well as the neighbourhood unique. How can that insight be leveraged for optimal outcomes?

Replicating the Boutique Hotel Experience: Insights for Large Hotel Chains

The boutique hotel experience has been an inspiration for larger hotel chains. Although it represents a different target market - the locations are prominent in central and accessible tourist destinations - the large hotel chains have long been offering more "boutique" style propoerties under their large brand umbrella. Is it possible to offer the boutique hotel experience in a larger environment?

By their size and footprint larger chains are less likely to be in neighbourhoods. They have a notable presence in the downtown core with proximity to the financial district and major attractions (theatre, sports venues, convention centres, malls).

Large hotel chains also offer comfort by way of design, albeit in an altogether different way. Most notably, they offer consistency and predictability of experience.

For this reason, and given the potential draw of a broader demographic to the large hotel chains, we offer some insights to supplement existing large hotel chain offerings:

- Leverage the benefits of a large hotel (e.g., anonymity, efficient service, bigger budget) to offer a unique experience
- Large hotel chains may consider investing more in neighbourhood assessments and corresponding experience offerings that would entice guests to visit those areas

- Pay special attention to the little things that can be done to make a large hotel feel like an intimate experience (e.g., personalized concierge, convivial host, small in-room touches)
- Instead of their guests already being in a neighbourhood for the duration of their stay, they need to be pushed to neighbourhoods that offer a glimpse into the city
- Use your central location to your benefit and aim to bring the hustle and bustle inside with animated restaurants and adjacent spaces
- Consider expanding a hotel chain loyalty points program to offer spending of points in ways that allow guests to explore the adjacent neighbourhoods and experiences across the city

Small personal touches amidst an anonymous and otherwise consistent stay might set the chain apart.



The Drake Hotel

V. Notes for the Guests

Optimizing Your Boutique Hotel Experience

The fourteen boutique hotel properties included in this study each offer their own unique collection of amenities and experiences - all of which go above and beyond guest expectations. Relish in the comfort that you truly cannot choose poorly from this curated list of hotels for your next getaway. Choose your own adventure based on the aspirations for your travel experience. Whether it is one of the hotels mentioned in our study or another destination, consider aspects of the design at similar hotels that might align with what you hope to experience.

Remote, resort-like:

- Drake Devonshire
- Sublime Comporta
- 1 Hotel South Beach

Big city, yet unique neighbourhood:

- Number Sixteen
- The Drake Hotel
- Opus Hotel
- Soho Hotel

Beach and seaside escapes:

- The Avalon Hotel and Bungalows
- The Viceroy
- Memmo Alfama + Hotel

Live like a true local with a little extra:

- Odette en Ville
- Casa 425
- St. Paul Hotel

Choose boutique for all of the reasons mentioned throughout this report - experience a specific neighbourhood lifestyle, unique, special touches, feel at home level comfort on vacation, and feel valued as a member of the hotel community. In addition, and specifically in light of current pandemic circumstances, choosing the boutique experience is a great way to support local, small businesses, who in a post-pandemic world will need our support more than ever before. You might notice a few favourite businesses listed in our *Notes From the Hotels*. That is mostly due to feeling like a resident while meandering the neighbourhood - living in the city or destination - and supporting the places that make it special.

We have our favourite spots, and some that may have been omitted but deserve honorable mention (eg. a few boutique properties in New York, Barcelona, San Francisco and elsewhere). Choosing a boutique hotel experience is as much a personality assessment as it is a guide to your neighbourhood. Both will shape the experience.

Design Your Experience

Boutique design hotels come with their own set of rewards. Boutique hoteliers have developed an interesting twist to entice (or simply reward) travelers.

Memberships (eg. the Viceroy Platinum Membership, Mr. & Mrs. Smith, Tablet Hotels, Black Cards and others) offer free room upgrades, a bottle of wine, experiences and loyalty rewards. Accumulate rewards for experiences - tailored to the interests of guests. It is something a little more than an extra night stay or a free upgrade that typically requires multiple stays to accumulate at the larger chain hotels.

It is important to note that one of the draws of a large hotel chain vs bed and breakfast (by direct contrast) is the anonymity that it offers. This is there with the boutique property but it is almost hidden in plain sight - you can make use of the perks or simply blend in, seemingly unnoticed, at your new home for a few days.



VI. Checking Out

Check Out Experience

Checking out can be as simple as leaving your key card in your room or in a drop box on your way out or the traditional check out complete with a paper copy of the transaction and experience.

As a nice touch, some properties (eg. Memmo Alfama and Memmo Principe Real) offer a discount on your next stay by inserting a card with a code in the envelope with your invoice.

As an little luxury, Odette en Ville arranges for car service (almost without you taking much notice) to take you to your next destination while you enjoy one last capuccino in the lounge.

Whereas the check in experience can set the tone for the duration of guests hotel stay, the check out experience doesn't necessarily mean goodbye. In some ways, the relationship begins - at least for the post stay follow up and engagement strategies.

Guest Surveys

Given the boutique hotel design and its departure from traditional large chain hotels, we were curious about whether the hotel surveys capture the unique guest experience.

To this end, we conducted a content analysis of hotel surveys - including surveys that are administered at various points over the course of the stay and those administered post stay as well as post stay experience correspondence from the hotel. The objective was to identify the thematic content areas that are most typically featured in the surveys.

Interestingly, we generally found that boutique hotel surveys are not much different from those in large hotel chains. The surveys typically capture:

- Cleanliness
- Use of amenities
- Satisfaction with the amenities
- Cleanliness (eg. guestroom, other areas)
- Satisfaction with services (eg. room service, concierge, check in, etc.)
- Overall impressions of the hotel
- Satisfaction with your stay
- Likelihood of a future stay
- Likelihood of recommending the hotel to others

Based on our observations in Study 1: Notes from the Hotels and the emerging themes identified in Study 2: Content Analysis of Guest Surveys, we offer insights to improve hotel surveys during and post stay to better reflect and inform user experience with the design.

Preliminary suggestions for optimizing the guest experience survey extend beyond the traditional metrics. The boutique hotel experience is elevated beyond mere use, satisfaction and impressions of the amenities. An expanded set of metrics could include:

- Alignment of the content of the surveys with the design intentions, design features and spaces of greatest significance
- Development of intercept surveys during the course of the stay and at specific touchpoints. For example: check in, navigating the hotel to arrive at the guestroom, the guest room experience, experience of the amenities, use and experience of various spaces (interior and exterior) in the hotel, experience of the neighbourhood as an extension of the boutique hotel
- Capturing experiences beyond the hotel to the adjacent neighbourhood
- Integration of guest surveys with existing experiential

offerings (eg. in room iPads, fitness centre, restaurant, other amenities) to capture on the fly experiential data

- Capturing the sentiment or brand personality of each boutique hotel along and whether the experiences are in line with what was anticipated by the design
- Optimizing follow up engagement initiatives by capturing post stay user insights into their experience and/or likelihood of a return visit

Guest Surveys as Drivers for Design Interventions, Experience & Post Stay Engagement

As a final point of consideration, we encourage the boutique hotel design and hospitality industry to consider the expanded opportunities that can be offered by the collection of guest experience surveys.

Insights can be gleaned from survey data to shape future design, experience and engagement. Consider the following:

- Use guest experience survey data to inform design
- Design a unique and tailored guest experience or collection of possible experiences
- Optimize the post stay guest surveys - what to measure - surveys / concepts and how to use it?
- Include intercept surveys during the course of the stay and at specific touchpoints that might alter the course of the guest experience (if desired)
- Integrate guest experience with in room and in hotel amenities and technology (eg. iPad, interactive maps, neighbourhood assets)
- Customize experience offerings (personalized concierge) based on guests

- Establish and maintain lasting relationships with thoughtful targeted communications (eg. 1 Hotels offer Notes from the Field, Proper Hotel Essentials, and others) to continue the connection and spark interest in a future stay should the opportunity present itself
- Remember, it is about more than the boutique hotel property itself - what are the neighbourhood and other corresponding assets to be leveraged for optimal guest experience?





VII. Authors & Acknowledgments

Authors

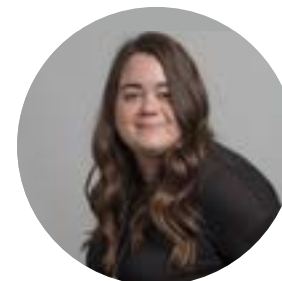


Celeste Alvaro, PhD

Principal Design Research & Evaluation

Dr. Celeste Alvaro is the Founder and Principal of Methologica, a user experience, design research and evaluation firm that specializes in assessing how the design of the built environment impacts human behavior, social interaction and well being. As an experimental social psychologist, Dr. Alvaro provides research and evaluation expertise on architecture teams and leads user experience, design research and the pre and post occupancy evaluation of capital redevelopment projects that extend to a variety of settings. She focuses on the application of well established quantitative and qualitative research and evaluation methods along with measurement techniques in creative ways to understand the direct and indirect effects of the built environment on users.

Upon earning her Ph.D. in experimental social psychology at Simon Fraser University, Celeste completed a three-year post-doctoral fellowship in the built environment and well being at the Atlantic Health Promotion Research Centre, Dalhousie University. Dr. Alvaro was also an Assistant Professor of Research in the Faculty of Health Professions at Dalhousie University. As a Research Scientist at the Bridgepoint Collaboratory for Research and Innovation and Adjunct Professor in the Department of Architectural Science at Ryerson University, she led a program of research in architecture and health where she created and executed the exemplar design research and evaluation at Bridgepoint Active Healthcare, secured over \$1M in research funding and developed an interdisciplinary training lab in design research and evaluation. Methologica was launched as an extension of this work.



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Melanie Elliott is passionate about community health. She uses place-based methods to understand the user experience and applies that knowledge to improve lives and well being. Her role on the team encompasses participation in early development workshops, liaising with the redevelopment teams and onsite management, preparation of ethics protocols, coordination of in-field researchers and evaluators, administration of both quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews as well as analysis of qualitative data. Melanie is the team lead for the moving interviews by accompanying participants on their natural outings and actively explore their physical and social interactions with the built environment.

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Image Credits

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