

THE HINDU

Business *Best* in New York

When you ask most business travelers what they want in a hotel, they want good service, comfortable rooms, and some luxury. Pick two! That's all you get... unless you make a change from the big corporate chains and try some of the smaller "boutique" hotels... and New York City has many fine ones. The one I found is the Lombardy Hotel

The Lombardy with its spacious rooms and magnificent décor captured the spirit of an age in history when elegance was the norm. The famous newspaper mogul William Randolph Hearst owned the Lombardy for nearly a decade and many notables have chosen to stay there ever since.

Today, The Lombardy remains a sophisticated oasis on mid-Manhattan's fashionable Eastside. The location has become even more desirable, with the hotel's neighbors now including corporate offices and leading law firms.

I sometimes stay in Chelsea or the Times Square area, but I find both a zoo, especially in the spring and summer. Because I know the subway system I can get anywhere I want in New York and don't feel I need to reside close to whatever my destination might be.

The Lombardy is not five stars but I found the service was just as good and the rooms just as clean as their more upscale corporate cousins.

A seasoned business traveler can judge a hotel's "culture" by the doorman and check-in staff.

The Lombardy doorman was so pleasant when he opened the door of the limo and welcomed me to the hotel. Most door-people grunt something like "Are you checking in?" What a nice surprise to have someone simply welcome me... whether I was a paying guest or just a guy wanting to get out of the rain.

Checking in was a breeze... their computers had all my info. A swipe of my AMEX card and I was on my way up the elevator to get some well-need sleep after my 15 hour flight from overseas. Oh... and the Lombardy has an elevator operator... who greeted everyone with a smile and a kind word!

Many of the rooms at the hotel have small kitchens and if you are traveling with children or business associates, and need a bit more space than the usual hotel-cells you find in New York, this is a perfect arrangement. I didn't do any cooking but I did host a small reception in the sitting room and having the kitchen for the bar was convenient.

I was in one of the newer rooms on one of the higher floors. Because I had a lot of (late night) writing to do for the events I was covering, I appreciated the well lighted, large desk. My only complaint was that the wi-fi connection was much slower than I had expected. When I asked about it, I was told that it was faster in the rooms across the hall... something to do with where the router was located.

I was expecting a box with my computer and camera tripod and the hotel staff cheerfully

delivered it to my door. You don't often get that at most hotels anymore. You go and get it yourself... if they haven't misplaced it!

I was impressed with the courtesy and professionalism of the Lombardy staff. All were well trained in the hospitality industry. I was especially pleased with the housekeeping staff. The room was made up promptly each day and it was spotless. My only complaint was having to ask each day for extra bath towels. (Seasoned travelers know how to wash clothes and roll them up in a towel to wring them out before hanging them in the shower.)

The Lombardy does not have a concierge desk... but the staff behind the front desk have been there for years and know their city and how to get anywhere in it. I had to travel to several areas in the financial area and they gave me perfect subway and walking instructions. I know the subway system by heart but not the Battery! They also knew of a terrific veggie restaurant on 9th and 21st... Blossom... (bring lots of money!)

As mentioned, the location of the hotel may not seem like the best for the business traveler but I found it easy to get to the subway three blocks down (or up) Lexington or catch a cab on Park, the next street over.

Because the hotel was having their lobby refurbished they did not serve their complimentary continental breakfast, however they gave each guest a voucher for breakfast at a little diner a block away. The neighborhood is,

of course, "upscale" but there are lots of reasonably priced places to grab a quick meal.

There is a good reason why I give this hotel high marks for business executives. The Lombardy, knows what business they are in and they work hard to earn the respect and admiration of those who stay there. The level of service and comfort at this hotel sets the standard for hotels of its class in the USA. I'll be back.

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