



LIVING THE HIGH LIFE

The Standard High Line Hotel, New York City

From one of New York's sexiest hotels, Sarah Lewis samples the best of the city, including daring Andre Balazs designs, gourmet burgers and champagne cocktails with a view.

Sitting pretty above the High Line in New York's Meatpacking District, the Standard boasts 338 guest rooms, all with floor-to-ceiling windows that provide knockout views out and – if you're not careful – va-va-voom vistas in. When the hotel threw open its designer doors in 2009, it immediately drew the attention of style-savvy travellers, cocktail fiends and all-out exhibitionists, as loved-up couples came to make their private moments oh-so public.

It's not as if designer Andre Balazs wasn't trying to court controversy: in the ultra-exclusive Boom Boom Room cocktail lounge (a favourite among the NY style set) the unisex bathrooms flaunt the same look-at-me windows, though thankfully

on our visit a flimsy wisp of fabric provides some modesty.

So even though there's a note in our room reminding us not to do the wild thang in full view of the West Village, there's a certain frisson to a stay here. It's amplified by the seriously sexy decor, from the gallery-style reception space to the burlesque murals in the pitch-dark elevators. Plus, it's home to some of the city's hottest bars, including Jacuzzi-toting rooftop haunt Le Bain, and street-front boozier Biergarten.

Our room has a pared-back style that hints at Scandinavian simplicity, with a sumptuous soaking tub in the centre of the room. The minibar is one of the best-stocked we've seen, filled with full-size bottles of Grey Goose vodka and Patron tequila. As we've reserved a table at the Boom Boom Room, we abandon

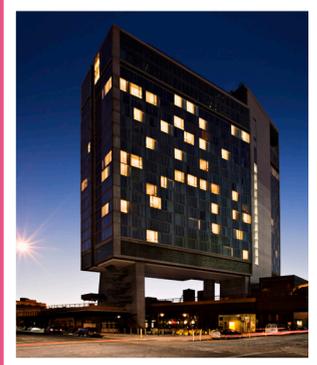
the DIY drinks and hightail it to the 18th floor for champagne cocktails and Asian-accented canapés. It's a luxe, lavish space of candle-topped tables and piano tunes, with Manhattan's skyline acting as a sparkling backdrop.

We could happily linger here all night, but we've got a foodie hit list to complete, so we slip out for pork buns at Fatty Crab, burgers at the Spotted Pig and bespoke brews at Bathtub Gin.

The night ends in far less salubrious surrounds at a dirty dive bar called Hogs and Heifers, a Coyote Ugly-style den with bras hanging from the ceiling. Having experienced New York's highs and lows, we slink back to the Standard and draw those blackout blinds, no longer worried about prying eyes so much as the sun sneaking up over the city. 



PACK YOUR BAGS



BEST FOR:

Lording it up over the High Line and hanging with the city's beautiful people.

BEST FEATURE:

Ultra-exclusive Boom Boom Room; the mix-and-mingle beer garden; those wow-worthy views.

BEST TIME TO STAY:

Summer sizzles; winter is festive but freezing. Hedge your bets with a spring/autumn stay.

HOW MUCH WILL IT COST?

From US\$295 a night.

HOW DO I GET THERE?

All the major players fly to JFK, generally via LA from Australia.

WHAT ELSE SHOULD I KNOW?

The Top of the Standard morphs into private members' club the Boom Boom Room after 10pm. Make an early evening reservation to get a taste of the Top, or wangle a late-night invite to the seductive lounge bar, a favourite haunt of Leonardo DiCaprio and NYC's hottest movers and shakers.

