

TRAVEL TALES

HELPFUL HINTS FOR THE JEWISH TRAVELLER

By MIKE COHEN

THE SOFITEL EXPERIENCE: My family and I have indeed experienced heaven. That is because we spent four nights at the Sofitel New York (www.sofitel.com) located at 45 West 44th Street, a very short walk from Times Square and Broadway theatres. For us, the location could not have been better.

This elegant 30-storey midtown Manhattan hotel is just a stone's throw from Fifth Avenue. There are 398 spacious rooms on 30 floors, including 52 suites and one presidential suite all featuring Sofitel's luxurious feathertop and duvet sleep system - SoBed. The executive suites encompass a bedroom with a separate seating/work

area, which can be closed off from each other for in-suite meetings. Most suites have southern exposure, offering a downtown view. Five terrace suites have outdoor terraces with commanding views of Manhattan. There is excellent cupboard space, bathrobes and slippers to use during your stay and an in-room safe with plenty of room to place your valuables.


Elegantly decorated with Paris-meets-New York motifs, all guestrooms have a spacious marble bathroom, three telephone lines, broadband Internet access and fully stocked mini-bars. Room service is available 24 hours along with international newspapers; nightly turn-down service with Evian water; and imported French bath products. There is a fully equipped fitness centre on the basement floor. All kosher meals are out sourced. The hotel is used for kosher functions.

BEVERLY HILLS: Synonymous with luxury, from world famous Rodeo Drive to five star restaurants and hotels, Beverly Hills (www.lovebeverly-hills.com) is one must stop on any visit to California. Following our excellent experience in New York City, we found accommodations at the Sofitel Los Angeles at Beverly Hills (<http://www.sofitel-los-angeles.com/en>) at 8555 Beverly Blvd. The hotel boasts a prime location, one mile from Beverly Hills

(Please turn to following page)

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(Continued from preceding page)

and West Hollywood, at the epicenter of LA style. It is located across the street from the Beverly Shopping Center, just minutes from Rodeo Drive (where native Israeli Maor Batito assisted us at the David Yurman designer jewelry store).

There are 295 rooms here on 10 floors, including 26 suites and two Presidential Suites. We loved the unique rainfall shower and the luxurious French toiletries in our Beverly Luxury King room. There is a lovely outdoor pool with lounge chairs on the second floor.

Many of LA's best restaurants are in Beverly Hills. On North Beverly

Drive, you will find St. Urbain Bagels and Nate 'N Al of Beverly Hills Delicatessen - two spots with deep Jewish roots. Native Montrealer Rudy Meleiezer opened the former and upon entering the bagel and sandwich stop you are greeted by a message which describes St. Urbain Street in Montreal and its Jewish history. The latter was established in 1945 and is one of the Los Angeles area's most noted Jewish delis.

For dining, people kept pointing me towards Mastro's, of which there are locations in California, Nevada, Arizona, Illinois and soon New York

(Please turn to page 14)

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JEWISH CONNECTIONS

(Continued from page 6)

KOSHER CUISINE:
The five star Château Vaudreuil Hotel (www.chateauvaudreuil.ca) at 21700 Route Transcanadienne is extraordinary. It is not only a wonderful choice for tourists, but Montrealers should consider this place for an easy weekend getaway. Over the last few years, the Chateau Vaudreuil has become very popular for Jewish weddings. It has a kosher kitchen, partnerships with two prominent kosher caterers (Tradition/Romano Giorgi and Black Tie/Ernie) and hosts other Jewish functions and business meetings. The Villa d'Este Restaurant even goes the extra mile. Guests requiring kosher meals need only provide 24 hours notice. Breakfast will be brought to your room, with lunch and dinner served in the dining room. This option has

greatly increased the number of Jewish guests choosing the hotel, especially those coming by car from Ontario.

The Château Vaudreuil is presently marking its 25th anniversary.

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(Continued from page 8)

City. We made a reservation at Mastro's Steakhouse (www.mastrosrestaurants.com) at 246 North Canon Drive in Beverly Hills, arriving at 8:30 p.m. on a weekday evening. The place was packed. Recognized as one of the top 10 steakhouses in the U.S., it is also known for its sumptuous seafood selections and one of the best desserts I have ever tasted in my life - the famous and irresistible warm butter cake. Mastro's was purchased last year by Landry's Inc. of Houston, which already owns the Mortons chain. Their Jewish chairman and chief executive is Mark Levy.

Mike Cohen's email address is info@mikecohen.ca. Follow his travels at www.sandboxworld.com/ travel and on Twitter @mikecohensl.

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