

Celebrate New Year's every day at NYC's Novotel

Innovative, ultracontemporary redesign puts visitors in the heart of Times Square

Let's not call it a renovation. That's too modest. It's a transformation.

Novotel New York Times Square has been totally rebuilt into a boutique-style getaway with the colourful and electric theme of New Year's Eve. Innovative, high-tech and ultracontemporary, the hotel officially reopened recently featuring an e-lounge with X-Box 360, a wraparound terrace for outdoor drinks and dining, and totally redone interiors throughout the 24-storey tower.

The focus of the hotel is its view of iconic Times Square — the gnarly nexus of Broadway and 42nd St. The action is 10 short blocks away, but crystal clear from Novotel's dining room, lounge, lobby and half of the 480 guest rooms that face south.

Around the clock, guests are treated to a high-intensity show of dazzling lights, with thousands of people mingling on the famous plaza and multiple lanes of traffic. About 40 million visitors pass through Times Square every year, making it the No. 1 tourist attraction in the U.S. And here it is, in living, pulsating colour, outside Novotel's panoramic windows.

Design-wise, Novotel wants to relive New Year's Eve every day. Guests enter through glass doors on busy 52nd St. and take the elevator to the reception desk on the seventh floor to check-in in a space awash in coloured lights.

Then the entrance streams into attractive, bright and open-plan public spaces surrounded by windows, high above the mêlée of New York's streets.

"We don't want to limit our guests," said general manager Marc Sternagel. "We are all about open spaces, flow and multi-functioning."

That means everything is one — at least on the main floor. The lobby flows into the concierge space and then into the bar-lounge and on to the restaurant, SuperNova. One outstanding feature is Novotel's interactive e-lounge, which encompasses various computer areas: tabletops loaded with Microsoft applications, a bank of Macs and a gaming corner



ROCHELLE LASH
CHECKING IN

with large-screen monitors, X-Box 360 and vibrating bucket seats. Soon, there will be a photo booth so guests can share images on Twitter and Facebook.

The decoration throughout is ultracontemporary, inspired by the great extravaganza of Dec. 31, and even more specifically the dropping of the crystal ball at midnight. The lobby walls are draped in curtains of chain metal, with large abstract murals popping with party scenes. A column of LED lights projects You Tube images of New Year's Eve traditions in other countries and the huge chandeliers look like starbursts of fireworks dropping from the sky.

SuperNova specializes in American cocktails so elaborate you might actually think it's New Year's Eve every day. It's a great place for pre- or post-theatre bites, especially on the terrace, which has fire pits and telescopes to bring those fabulous views even closer. Indoors, there is a lot of black, silver and deep purple, as it should be at every party. The bar and lounge are decked out with leather stools against a low-slung bar of dark stone.

Cocktails here are an art, a science and a passion. The Barnum's Ingenious Glassblowers, named for an attraction made famous by the world's greatest showman, is a gin sour with apple brandy and cinnamon served with a frozen lollipop of absinthe. As the absinthe melts, the flavour and blue hue gradually cloud into the glass and the colours and tastes of the drink change, so every sip is different.

SuperNova's food is a family-friendly update on American comfort cuisine: braised short ribs, roast chicken, lobster mac 'n' cheese, grilled fish and steak, meat loaf, crab cakes, seafood jambalaya, burgers and dogs, plus a few modern dishes such as tuna cured in ginger citrus dressing and fries with truffle oil and Parmesan.



PHOTOS: NOVOTEL NEW YORK TIMES SQUARE

Novotel New York Times Square, with its panoramic windows, has been rebuilt with the theme of New Year's Eve.



Novotel New York Times Square reopened recently with ultracontemporary décor.

SuperNova's No. 1 dessert is the latest craze in the U.S.: doughnuts by Doughnuttery Doughnuts, which you can customize, choosing from dozens of flavours such as maple, banana, raspberry or lemon, and adding dipping sauces such as beer caramel or dark chocolate.

The midtown Manhattan property is the only Novotel in the United States, although there are 395 worldwide, including seven in Canada. Here, we have Novotel Montreal Airport and Novotel

Montreal Centre. The chain is owned by a French company, Accor, which also runs Sofitel hotels. With this global presence and a staff representing more than 50 nationalities, Novotel New York attracts an international crowd.

Novotel is at the heart of the Broadway theatre district. In the past few months, stars such as Tom Hanks, Bette Midler and LaToya Jackson have taken to the stage. Here is a celebrity roundup of what's on now: Billy Crystal in 700 Sundays

until Jan. 5; Orlando Bloom in Romeo and Juliet until Jan. 12; Ethan Hawke as Macbeth until Jan. 12; K.D. Lang in After Midnight until March 9; Daniel Craig and Rachel Weisz in Betrayal until Jan. 5; and Alan Cumming and Michelle Williams in Cabaret through August.

Rochelle@rochellelash.com
Twitter: rochellelash

The writer was a guest of the hotel. The hotel did not approve or review the story.

IF YOU GO

New York City is about a six-hour drive from Montreal via Interstate Highway 87 south. Air Canada, WestJet, Delta and American are among the airlines that fly daily.

Novotel New York Times Square Hotel: 212-315-0100, www.novotel.com/gb/hotel-0753-novotel-new-york-times-square; 226 W. 52nd St., between 8th Ave. & Broadway, New York, N.Y. Pets smaller than 22 kilograms are accepted at no charge.

Price: \$250-\$400 U.S. per night, including fitness room. Indoor parking costs \$30 for 24 hours at Icon garage, 206 W. 52nd St., between Broadway and 7th. Up to two accompanied children age 15 and under stay and have breakfast free.

NYC & Company tourism info: 212-484-1222; 810 Seventh Ave., between 52nd & 53rd Sts. (one of several locations); www.nycgo.com for maps, events and online bookings with discounts on hotels and sightseeing tours such as New York City Pass, New York Explorer Pass and Downtown Culture Pass.

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