

Soho House Chicago joins the club

ROCHELLE LASH
SPECIAL TO THE MONTREAL GAZETTE

I was in turmoil.
My hipness quotient was crashing. My street cred was crumbling.
The problem? I had not yet spent the night at a Soho House and my family's younger generation was becoming hipper-than-moi. My nephew Marty Lash had married Kara Crudo in a dazzling celebration at the celebrity hangout Soho Beach House in Miami, but I stayed with friends. That put me so out of the loop.
Had I morphed into the old auntie? Was I irrelevant, out of touch? Yikes, even B-list?
Now, it's all good. The new Soho House Chicago saved the day. I snared a hard-to-get reservation, made the scene and I rock, once again.

DÉCOR DELIGHT
This handsome boutique hotel and private club opened in August in a former belting factory, bringing Soho's international brand of cool to one of America's most exciting cities.
Richly decked out like a vintage British gentlemen's club, Soho Chicago has left no decor stone unturned. Antique tables, tavern chairs, tufted leather sofas, étagères of books and kilim rugs over floors of reclaimed wood all radiate the burnished patina of a century-old establishment. But somehow you know that it is all so very today.
The level of detail is staggering and the effect of all these precious "objets" is downright sumptuous. A set of six matched crystal chandeliers comes from a Paris hotel. And the extensive artwork that dresses up the walls, mostly graphics and photographs donated by local artists, has a black and white theme so the displays are particularly striking.
The Soho also is playful. The four hotel room categories are tiny, small, medium or medium-plus, all with charming individual décor. Each room is warm and inviting, decorated with a tea set and crystal whisky decanter, industrial light fixtures, upholstered headboards, linen curtains and compact bathrooms in white tiling.

PRIVACY POLICY
Soho House Chicago is the newest of a group of hotels in London, Berlin, New York City and Miami Beach, plus private social clubs in West Hollywood and Toronto. The concept started in England as a fashionable home-away-for-creative types.
The twist is that both travellers who rent hotel rooms and Soho members can use all the facilities and restaurants, but non-members have access only to the ground floor options for dining, drinking and mingling.
That policy of privacy adds a tantalizing whiff of celebrity and exclusivity and creates an irresistible cachet. That's the elusive intangible that has made Soho House Chicago an instant success. When I visited recently, its 40 boutique-size hotel rooms were sold out and the place was popping with patrons.
To ensure its cool style and distinctive status, Soho House's private side has rules, starting with a dress code of "no suits." That's a new-age vibe, for sure. Plus, the lounges do not permit cellphones

IF YOU GO
Soho House Chicago: 312-521-8000, sohohousechicago.com; 113-125 N. Green St., Chicago.
Price: \$300-\$480 U.S. per night, including Club Bar, Gymnasium, Lounge activities and other social spaces. Membership to all Soho Houses: sohohouse.com: \$1,400 U.S. for under age 27, per year, or \$2,800 for 27 and over.
Chicago tourism: www.choosechicago.com.

or photography. That means no texting, e-ticketing, Facebooking or posting selfies to Instagram. So if Justin Timberlake or Katie Perry want to sip Pommery Champagne in peace, you cannot play the paparazzo.
On the members' side, the cushy Drawing Room is the place to fire up your Kindle or have a rendezvous.
The Library is an event room with an eclectic calendar that includes live performances, TV viewing parties, movie screenings, gallery tours and fashion shows.
The private Club Bar is the ultimate mingling and networking spot and likely the reason that many people join Soho House. There is food, too, dishes such as lobster spaghetti, oysters, charcuterie, steak and fish. Bartenders have crafted the Soho Mule, which kicks hard with vodka, ginger and lime; and the Picante de la Casa, a fiery mix of tequila, lime, agave, chili and cilantro.
The Rooftop is home to a swimming pool (seasonal) and a bistro (year-round). The Gymnasium adds rare extras such as a pro-calibre boxing ring, aerial yoga and steam showers.
At the Screening Room, you could invite Harvey Weinstein to see your latest director's cut, and seduce him with cocktails and popcorn.

FOR THE PUBLIC
If you are not a hotel guest, you still can be part of the in-crowd at Soho House's lively restaurants and its day spa.
The Allis in the lobby level is the place for afternoon tea and scones, a lunch of pork pie or an after-work small plate of burrata on toast and wine.
Pizza East and Chicken Shop are two inexpensive, family-friendly eateries with retro décor and fast service of comfort food.
The Cowshed Spa, which has a luxe rustic look like its original location in England, offers treatments such as the Ultimate Cowshed Pedicure, which starts with a scalp and shoulder massage, and the Cowshed Moody Massage which uses aromatherapy. Men in search of grooming also have vintage-style barber chairs for hot shaves and haircuts.
NON-STOP CHICAGO
Besides the impressive Bowie exhibit running at the Museum of Contemporary Art until Jan. 4, the U.S.'s third-largest metropolis (after N.Y. and L.A.) is bursting with events: Jerry Seinfeld will play the Rosemont Theatre, Nov. 21; the Blackhawks face off against the Montreal Canadiens, Dec. 5; Andrea Bocelli will hit the high notes at the Allstate Arena, Dec. 13. Cher says farewell — again — at the United Center, Jan. 21, with Pat Benatar and Neil Giraldo.



The Rooftop is one of the private spaces for hotel guests and members at the new Soho House Chicago. PHOTOS: DAVE BURK OF HEDRICH BLESSING

DIRECT FLIGHTS FROM MONTREAL

your travel companion

TMR

holidays

Cuba

mania

Save up to 50%*

TMR HOLIDAYS

THE REFERENCE ON CUBA!

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| CUBA - SANTA LUCIA | | |
| Brisas Santa Lucia 3,5★ Departures on January 8, 15 & 22 | | |
| <div>\$799 ONE WEEK • ALL INCLUSIVE</div> | | |
| CUBA - CAYO COCO Sol Cayo Coco 3,5★ Departures on January 9, 10, 16 & 17 | CUBA - CAYOS DE VILLA CLARA Eurostars Cayo Santa Maria 4★ Departures on January 8, 13 & 15 | CUBA - HOLGUIN Playa Costa Verde 4★ Departures on January 9, 10, 11 & 14 |
| <div>\$959 ONE WEEK • ALL INCLUSIVE</div> | <div>\$979 ONE WEEK • ALL INCLUSIVE</div> | <div>\$989 ONE WEEK • ALL INCLUSIVE</div> |
| CUBA - VARADERO SuperClubs Breezes Varadero 4★ Departures on January 8, 9 & 10 | CUBA - VARADERO Barcelo Solymar 4★ Departures on January 12, 15 & 16 | CUBA - CAYO LARGO Sol Cayo Largo 4★ Departures on January 10 & 17 |
| <div>\$999 ONE WEEK • ALL INCLUSIVE</div> | <div>\$1099 ONE WEEK • ALL INCLUSIVE</div> | <div>\$1099 ONE WEEK • ALL INCLUSIVE</div> |

DISCOVER TMR HOLIDAYS TREKKING EXPERIENCE!

7-NIGHT TREKKING PACKAGE

Departure January 24

\$1559

Other departure dates available on request

CONTACT YOUR TRAVEL AGENT OR VISIT TMRHOLIDAYS.COM

clubvoyages

clubvoyages.com

Earn AIR MILES reward miles at Club Voyages.

Cubamania: Valid for new individuals bookings made from November 6 to 24, for departures January 1st to February 28, 2015. *Savings of 50% calculated on the price before taxes and fees and applies to the Sol Cayo Coco, January 9, 10, 16 & 17 departures. Flights are from Montreal via Air Transat. Prices per person, based on double occ., in lead room category, including applicable rebates, taxes and fees. Prices available at press time, valid for new individual bookings only made from November 8 to 10, 2014 and subject to availability. For full descriptions and terms and conditions, refer to www.tmrholidays.com. Travel agency fees may apply. TMR Holidays is a division of Transat Tours Canada Inc. and is registered as a travel wholesaler in Quebec (Reg # 754241). ©TMR Trademarks of AIR MILES International Trading B.V. Used under license by LoyaltyOne, Co. and Transat Distribution Canada Inc. Travel agency fees may apply. Club Voyages is a division of Transat Distribution Canada Inc. Quebec (Reg. #753141).

Prices excluding \$1.00/\$1000 of travel services representing the clients' contribution to the Fonds d'indemnisation des clients des agents de voyages (Indemnity Fund).