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HOTEL INTEL

1 HOTEL TORONTO COMBINES SUSTAINABILITY, STYLE

Plant-plentiful establishment follows scrupulous environmental practices



ROCHELLE LASH

TORONTO Totally gorgeous and majorly green, the just-opened 1 Hotel Toronto syncs meaningful sustainability and a knockout eco-chic style, in the city’s most influential opening in several years.

Even the building is recycled. The captivating new establishment reimagined the downtown Thompson Hotel and created a hospitality Eden that follows scrupulous environmental practices and boasts a pure, leafy design that Mother Nature would envy. Plants are paramount and repurposing is a religion. Fresh is the keyword.

1 Hotel Toronto is boutique in feel, but it is decidedly full service. It has 112 Insta-worthy rooms and suites, four superlative drinking and dining venues, two ballrooms and high-tech meeting spaces.

Fancy amenities include a 16th-floor rooftop pool; sublime organic toiletries and bedding; and mini-bars with artisanal local spirits, wine and snacks. The 1 Hotel app activates room keys, climate control and TVs, as well as access in-room dining, digital newspapers and concierge services.

“Our focus is service, with personality,” said managing director Todd Orlich. “As the pandemic eases, our sustainable sanctuary offers guests thoughtful touches, kindness and TLC with professionalism.”

The winsome and woodsy 1 Hotel also radiates star quality. Its VIP-worthy suites are just in time for TIFF, Toronto’s splashy film fest, Sept. 9-18, with glitterati including Benedict Cumberbatch, Jake Gyllenhaal, Naomi Watts, Octavia Spencer, Judi Dench and Danny DeVito.

Green scene: The Garden Pavilion is both an event space and an urban mini-farm where the hotel’s compost fertilizes organic vegetables, herbs and pollinator shrubs for bees. There are occasional happenings like spinning classes or farmers’ markets.

In terms of operations, 1 Hotel is committed to zero waste, eco-cleaning products, water- and energy-reduction systems, and the conversion of kitchen oil to biofuel.

1 Hotel is paper-free, so notepads are replaced by chalkboards and menus are digitally accessed through QR codes. The in-room Nespresso coffee-makers use lots of pods, that’s true, but they are recycled.

Design: The guest rooms are streamlined, befitting a contemporary urban hotel, and the lofty views of Toronto’s skyline unequivocally reflect North America’s fourth-largest city. But 1 Hotel Toronto has an unexpected nature theme that uses the palest tones of earth, sand and sky, plus granite and raw timber to recall a lakeside escape.

Here, artworks are fashioned of driftwood, moss and dried flowers, and textures are richly layered from natural fabrics like linen, wool and leather.

The architectural masters at Rockwell Group of New York and design maestros of International Landscaping of Toronto bedecked the hotel with 3,300 plants and native trees. Local partner Just Be Woodsy crafted salvaged wood into stout furniture and engraved it with the tree’s provenance.

Dining and drinking: Executive chef Derek Powers Jr. and his team have foraged throughout Ontario for organic, farm-to-table ingredients from the finest suppliers such as Nolan Angus Beef in Grey Highlands and Homestead Farm Dairy in Newmarket.

1 Kitchen is fresh, bright and lively, with a sidewalk terrace, a juice corner and a bar with an organic wine happy hour on Wednesday afternoons. Powers is strong on plant-based dishes such as a peach salad, cavatelli with braised tomatoes or sweet potatoes with mushrooms, yogurt and saffron. Fish and meat choices include grilled Atlantic prawns, Fogo Island cod, rack of lamb or Angus steak.

Flora Lounge serves a 100-km club sandwich, an Angus beef burger or a trio of toasts with mushrooms, olives and avocado, as well as craft cocktails with Canadian spirits, garnished with fresh herbs and tangy syrups.

Opening Sept. 8, Harriet’s Rooftop promises to be a glamorous, sky-high hot spot for drinks, small plates and sushi.

In autumn, the sumptuous Casa Madera by chef Olivier Le Calvez will spotlight Mexican and Mediterranean inspired gastronomy: sustainable seafood and beef, with picante accents of jalapenos, cilantro and salsa. **Around town:** 1 Hotel is in King



Flora, the lounge at the new 1 Hotel Toronto, embodies a striking back-to-nature design with living foliage, natural wood and lots of comfortable seating. PHOTOS: BRANDON BARRÉ



The Willow House Suite at 1 Hotel Toronto is a luxurious hideaway.



Even the bathrooms at 1 Hotel Toronto have a nature theme.

West, called “Canada’s coolest neighbourhood” by Travel + Leisure. It’s near the nightlife of the Entertainment District, plus Stackt Market, a funky collection

of culinary pop-ups (stacktmarket.com), Queen Street West shopping and the Queens Quay waterfront. Toronto’s Never Have I Ever

IF YOU GO

1 Hotel is about 1½ km from Billy Bishop Toronto City Airport.

1 Hotel Toronto: 416-640-7778, 833-624-0111. 1hotels.com/toronto; 550 Wellington W., Toronto; Pet-friendly. Accessible throughout. 1 Hotels are in Miami Beach, New York City and Cabo San Lucas, Mexico and elsewhere. Loyalty program at shhotelsandresorts.com.

Prices fluctuate: opening offer of 30 per cent off (reserve by Sept. 30) starts at approximately \$475 for rooms or \$740 for suites, including a \$50 food / beverage credit (excluding Casa Madera), and a 1 p.m. checkout, on availability. Regular rates start at \$550, rooms; or \$850, suites.

Additional amenities: fitness centre, yoga mat, bathrobes, digital newspapers, Bluetooth speakers. **Toronto:** destinationtoronto.com

campaign encourages new experiences. The latest kids’ delight is Little Canada, a display of miniature models that includes Niagara Falls, Ottawa, the Rockies and Montreal. (little-canada.ca). Also, Illusionarium showcases magicians and life-size holograms, including the famed Houdini (until Oct. 31, illusionarium.ca).

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TRAVEL BRIEFS

Doc Martin pub seeks manager comfortable with TV fans

It may be the perfect job for fans of Doc Martin — tending bar at the idyllic pub in Cornwall made famous by the prickly physician in the beloved British comedy-drama. But anyone who takes up the offer to run The Golden Lion, which overlooks Port Isaac where the show is filmed, will need to be comfortable with a summer influx of fellow fans. Part of the St. Austell Brewery estate in southwest England, the bar is familiar to millions of

viewers of the TV series starring Martin Clunes, and for scenes filmed for the 2019 rom-com Fisherman’s Friends. That means a lot of star-struck fans showing up at the door — or “very large seasonal uplift,” as the brewer put it. “Being set in such a desirable location means the pub experiences significant seasonal demand over the summer,” a spokesperson said of the tenancy. “Taking the helm of an establishment that not only resides in a

north Cornwall coastal haven but has also appeared on the silver screen represents a unique and exciting prospect.”

Sweden’s highest peak is now shrinking

Talk about shrinkage: Sweden’s once-highest peak has unceremoniously lost two metres of height due to melting ice caused by rising global temperatures. Researchers at Stockholm

University say the Kebnekaise south mountain in the Lapland region, north of the Arctic Circle, has shrunk to 2,094.6 m in the space of a year. In 2010 its elevation was measured at more than 2,100 m and it was Sweden’s tallest peak until 2019 when retreating snow and ice caused it to first begin receding. Scientists said the latest reading is the lowest height recorded since measurements began in the 1940s.

Whisky fans will love new Scotch Club

Forget the liquor cabinet: Deep-pocketed whisky connoisseurs can now lock up their favourite tippie in the legendary Balmoral bar in Scotland. The new Scotch Club, a collaboration between the Balmoral Hotel in Edinburgh and the Macallan distillery, is offering a personalized “membership experience” to whisky lovers around the world. *Andre Ramshaw, Postmedia*