

HOTEL INTEL

# ROCK AND RELAX AT VANCOUVER'S HIP HOTEL BELMONT

*A happening scene for music, drinks, eats in heart of city's entertainment district*



ROCHELLE LASH

“The Belmont’s appeal is not about age,” said Jeff Leung, general manager of Hotel Belmont, a new boutique hotel in downtown Vancouver. “We’re all about mindset. It’s informal and fun, an insiders’ kind of place.”

Leung is calling all urban adventurers to the heart of Vancouver’s entertainment district. Funky Granville Street pulses with day trippers and night lights, and is lined with coffee bars and clubs, pubs and patios and lots of shops. Imagine Vancouver’s version of St-Laurent Boulevard or Toronto’s Queen or King Street W., but as busy with walkers as Times Square.

**The scene:** The pandemic took its toll on Vancouver’s venues, but Hotel Belmont is still a happening scene for music, drinks and scrumptious comfort eats.

Perhaps you’d like to feast on Belmonteroni pasta, which is a riff on ravioli, followed by key lime pie pavlova. Or maybe your taste runs to a Belmont Boozy frozen treat flavoured like a jalapeño-mango margarita.

“The hotel attracts people looking for a good time culturally,” said Leung. “We pride ourselves on knowing the scene, so we can guide you to a true in-the-know experience.”

Basically, you are meant to chill. Hotel Belmont is an indie getaway with a rock ‘n’ roll vibe, a vending machine that dispenses rolling papers and, if you get the munchies at midnight, a late-night takeout menu with coconut prawns and s’mores sundaes.

**The look:** Hotel Belmont’s decor is a fun pastiche of retro furnishings. Crafted by CHIL Interior Design of Vancouver, it’s kind of kitsch, definitely cool and far from traditional.

The exterior is painted hot pink and is plastered with posters announcing performances, past and future.

The entrance to the Living

IF YOU GO

**Hotel Belmont:** 604-605-4333, hotelbelmont.ca; 654 Nelson St., Vancouver. Pet-friendly. Prices fluctuate; rooms start at \$169, including bicycles, guest computer, Wi-Fi, premium movie channels, business services, in-room coffee, PressReader, interactive concierge.

**Extra:** Fitness World, a few blocks away.

**The Living Room resto-bar:** 4 p.m. to 3 a.m. Wed.-Sun. (Belmont guests get 15 per cent discount on food); The Basement: DJs, 9 p.m. to 3 a.m., Fri.-Sat.

**Vancouver tourism:** 604-682-2222, destinationvancouver.com. British Columbia tourism: hellobc.com.

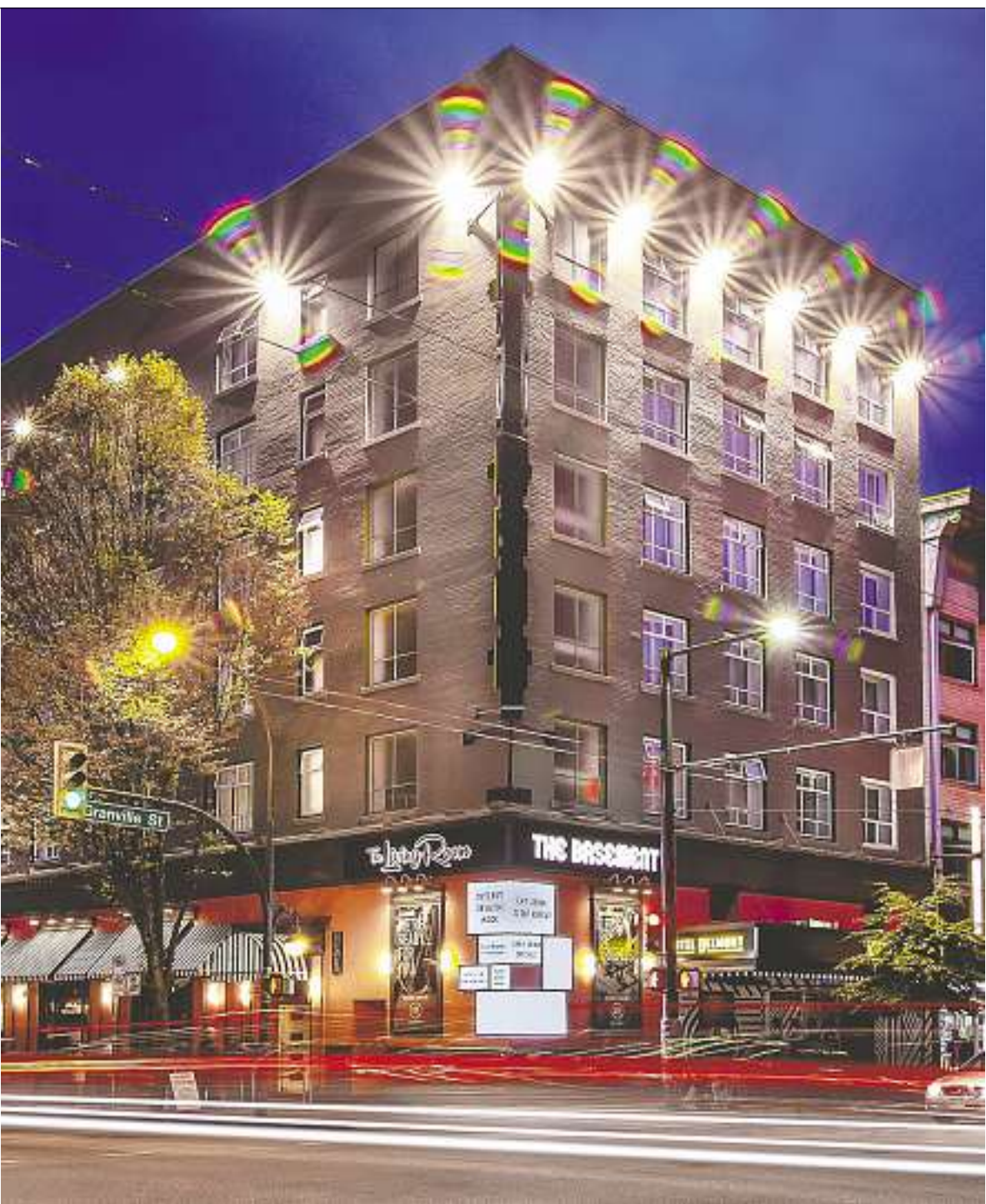
Room resto-bar is splashed with graffiti, but once you step inside, the look relaxes into a welcoming rainbow of colours on high-topped tables, bar stools and booths. For more intimate gatherings, there are cosy corners with sofas, set around gas fireplaces.

The 82 guest rooms and bathrooms are clean and fresh. Skoah toiletries from Vancouver are blended with peppermint oil, so they have an energizing, refreshing feel. And most rooms have mini-fridges built to look like 1960s Marshall amplifiers, so you are never far from musical inspiration.

**Eat/drink:** The Living Room is a casual resto-bar where, “unlike at your parents’ place, you’re allowed to eat in front of the TV,” said Ted Wilkie, director of food and beverage.

You can start with cocktails like the Sloe Sipper or try sangria, sake, mescal or bourbon, then ease into bar bites like wings, poutine or pulled pork tacos, or main courses like veggie bowls, burgers, pasta or chicken satay. Desserts, a sweet tooth highlight, include cookies and cream cheesecake or warm double chocolate cookies.

At the Basement, the Belmont’s neon-lit club, DJs play house



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music and top 40, including hits by Justin Bieber, Drake and The Weeknd and mixes by hip-hop producer DJ Khaled. The late-night dance parties — some of the best in Van City — are on hold, due to COVID rules.

The Basement has a bowling lane and arcade games from back in the day, so you can have a drink and roll a game of fivepin or tackle pinball, skee-ball and video games.

**Nearby:** You’ll need breakfast and lunch. Railtown Café has hefty portions and moderate prices. For now, it’s open only for takeout and delivery. Breakfast features smoothies, egg sandwiches or quiche; for lunch, there are salads and club sandwiches. (968 Howe St.; 604-428-8255, railtowncafe.ca; closed weekends and holidays; vegan available.)

At the Rogers Arena, the Vancouver Canucks’ home games include the Toronto Maple Leafs (Dec. 18), the Ottawa Senators (Jan. 8) and the Montreal Canadiens (March 9). The Bryan Adams New Year’s Eve Extravaganza will rock the arena Dec. 31.

B.C. Place holds mega-events like Canada Sevens men’s rugby, returning Feb. 26 and 27. Don’t forget the “fancy dress” costume tradition — the crazier, the



Rooms at the Belmont Hotel are modern with retro accents. *HENRY LOW*

better. And tickets are selling fast for Elton John’s farewell tour, which stops at the venue on Oct. 21, 2022.

At the legendary Commodore Ballroom, the lineup includes the indie rock band Mother Mother (Dec. 2 to 5) and the electronic

duo Thievery Corporation (Dec. 6 and 7).

The Belmont loans bicycles, and a bike lane right outside the door brings you to the stylish district of Yaletown and its waterfront cycling path along the False Creek seawall.

TRAVEL BRIEFS

# Airline offers deals to World Cup fans

With Canada closing in on a World Cup berth for the first time since 1986, Qatar Airways has unveiled a range of travel packages for soccer fans. The Gulf-based airline says its FIFA World Cup 2022 deals will include match tickets, return flights and accommodation options. There will also be add-ons available for those who want to explore the host country, which is holding the soccer showcase for the first time next November. Fans who join the Qatar Airways Privilege Club will also get booking flexibility and reserved seats at their preferred matches. As well, supporters will be able to reserve a total of seven games by combining more than one package. The carrier’s chief executive, Akbar Al Baker, said: “We anticipate unprecedented demand throughout the tournament, and as part of our agreement with FIFA, fans can rely on us to enjoy a seamless journey from more than 140 destinations across the globe.” The packages will guarantee a fulfilling experience with “hassle-free” arrangements, he said, adding that fans will be able to choose from standard to premium accommodation based on individual budgets. The Canadian men’s soccer team is in a



Soccer fans will be offered “hassle-free” arrangements from Qatar Airways for the upcoming World Cup. *AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE*

comfortable spot in its qualifying group with six games remaining. The top three squads will earn an automatic berth to Qatar, with the fourth-place team advancing to a playoff for an extra spot in the 32-team tournament. For more information, visit qatarairways.com/app/fifa2022/

**Promo helps Jakes get out of town**

What’s in a name? A chance to

get out of Dodge — if your handle is “Jake.” In a promotion that parlays the latest in pop-culture trivia, the App in the Air “personal travel assistant” has launched with a contest that will provide lucky winners named Jake US\$300 in flight credits. It’s designed to allow those who share their moniker with the actor Jake Gyllenhaal to get out of town after a series of splash headlines linking him to former flame Taylor Swift, whose album

Red has been described as “monuments to the myth of Taylor and Jake.” One of the songs on the album is titled We Are Never Ever Getting Back Together and commentators have suggested it refers to the actor. The pair dated for a few months in late 2010. The designers of the app decided to cash in on the publicity after Slate suggested Gyllenhaal consider witness protection “or at the very least turn his phone off for the foreseeable future.” Jakes out there who want to enter the contest have until Dec. 13 to file their papers — a copy of their identification emailed to jake@appintheair.com. Winners will be selected randomly, a spokesperson for the app announced.

Colosseum fines beer smugglers

Sports stadium drinks are notoriously overpriced, but a pair of U.S. visitors can make new claims to overcharging after being fined about \$1,100 for sneaking a beer into Rome’s Colosseum. The unnamed duo, aged 24 and 25, were spotted sitting in an upper tier of the ancient amphitheatre, which attracted a pre-pandemic average of seven million tourists annually, around

5:30 a.m., the newspaper Corriere Della Sera reports. Police found them “having a beer” and they were slapped with €800 in penalties for “failure to comply with the ban on entering the archeological areas and the ruins of ancient monuments” outside designated hours. Despite the absence of visitors to the site, and the lack of damage, the trespassers fuelled an angry backlash. Journalist Fabrizio Peronaci, writing in the daily, said Rome’s bounceback from the health crisis is hindered by such selfish acts. “Monumental Rome needs everything except unrestrained groups, night climbers, vandals armed with screwdrivers to carve the name of their beloved in the millenary marble,” he thundered. He blasted the “half-drunk and happy Yankees” and questioned how they were able to get into the stadium in the first place. “If it is so easy, beer in hand, to climb the Colosseum, does not (also) arise a problem of vigilance and prevention?” Commissioned around AD 70 by the Emperor Vespasian, the massive stone structure was legendary for its gladiatorial combats and animal fights, and remains an abiding symbol of the Italian capital. At one time it had seating for more than 50,000 spectators.

*Andre Ramshaw, For Postmedia News*