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Stay in style when visiting New Orleans

Windsor Court Hotel offers taste of utopia

Perhaps Louis Armstrong was thinking about the Windsor Court Hotel when he trumpeted, "Way down yonder in New Orleans, in the land of dreamy scenes, there's a garden of Eden, you know what I mean."

AWAY WE GO

By Margaret Horton Edsall

For those who have had the pleasure of staying at this utopia, nestled ever-so discreetly in the heart of what was once known as the Paris of the New World, Satchmo's sentiments might well be referring to such a memorable experience.

The walled courtyard entrance sets the tone; a visual feast of reds and purples of lush plantings interspersed with flowers and shaded by fanned palms and manicured trees. In the center of it all stands John W. Mills' larger-than-life statue depicting St. George the dragon-slayer.

Once over the lobby threshold, guests know they have "arrived." This is a destination onto itself; paradise found. The art of living well is about to be experienced.

The Windsor Court is an expression of New Orleans' James J. Coleman Jr.'s love of all things English. Opened in 1911, the French Quarter is presiding over the festivities, the hotel stands alone in its unique ambience in a city steeped in French and Spanish history. In 1981, the hotel caught the eye of another anglophile, James B. Sherwood, who soon decided to add it to his Orient-Express Hotels, Trains and Cruise Ship Holdings.

Designed to replicate the interior of a stately English manor, the hotel is filled with gorgeous antiques and period reproductions from the 17th and 18th centuries. Decorated



Windsor Court's relaxing lobby features high ceilings, marble floors and plenty of fresh flowers.

in soft, restful hues, the lobby is a haven of civilized tranquility, with its high ceilings, intricate moldings, beautiful marble and woven floor coverings plus arrangement upon arrangement of fresh flowers.

Guests can enjoy original works of art installed in every public space throughout the hotel. Lord James Crathorne was commissioned to travel around England, Europe and the United States in search of suitable pieces for the collection, which is valued at more than \$8 million.

The hotel offers 323 distinctive accommodations. Be it a deluxe room or one of its 267 suites — complete with a petty suitcase — all are spacious and elegantly decorated, with marble bathrooms and pampering dressing areas, oversized bay windows and balconies that look out onto the city.

The art of living well at the Windsor Court is brought to even greater heights with the Club Rooms found on four upper floors of the hotel. With keycard access, guests enter into an extra-luxurious accommodation highlighted by the finest views of the Mississippi River and the cityscape. Club

Floor guests also receive exclu give access into the new Club Lounge accented with curvy furnishings and spectacular artwork, a fireplace and a library. Comfortable tables make the enjoyment of complimentary breakfast, afternoon tea and evening hours d'ouevre mood pleasurable. Walkout terraces offering commanding glimpses of the Big Easy complete the scene.

For guests desiring the ultimate extravagance, there is a 2,000-square-foot penthouse featuring the finest in furnishings and artwork, a grand piano and private landscaped terrace with stunning panoramic views.

Along with the health club, the outdoor heated rooftop pool and large Jacuzzi provide a resortlike setting with a bird's-eye view. In-room spa services (massages, facials, manicures, pedicures and body wraps) are just a phone call away.

The Crescent City is known internationally for its cuisine and fine restaurants. One of these dining establishments — the New Orleans Grill — is found on the second floor of the hotel. Here, just beyond the intimate interlude called the Polo Lounge, the spot voted by Zagat



The Windsor Court Hotel is the height of luxury in the heart of New Orleans.

Courtesy photos

as the top hotel restaurant in Louisiana awaits.

Executive chef Greg Soumier — one of New Orleans' most lauded masters and former apprentice to Chef Paul Prudhomme — oversees the restaurant's menu, which pulsates with contemporary Louisiana selections. The restaurant's award-winning wine list also is one of the best in the city.

The hotel's Le Salon, subtly situated in the lobby, is the place to partake of a proper English-style tea. Known for impeccable service and a 267-variety selection served in Wedgwood china, this afternoon delight is always highlighted with live chamber music.

The Windsor Court's convenient location on Gravier Street makes exploring the Big Easy an effortless walking activity. Canal Street is just steps outside the entrance, and the Convention Center, Harrah's Casino, Aquarium of the Americas, the Moonwalk, Louisiana Superdome and the docks for boarding legendary paddlewheelers are all within walking distance.

The area most tourists want to experience — the Vieux



The hotel's elegantly decorated rooms come complete with breathtaking views of the city.

Carre, better known as the French Quarter — is just a few minutes' stroll away. Too. Here, antique shops, boutiques, art galleries and confectioneries tempt with treasures and treats galore. Restaurant and food options are limitless, too, from corner po' boy and muffulettas coffee to sophisticated four-star establishments.

Thankfully, Hurricane Katrina caused relatively insignificant damage in the French Quarter compared to the devastation still realized elsewhere in the city. Everything in this area is cleaned up and running. preserved National Historic Landmarks offering glimpses

back into their eclectic past are open; businesses and restauranants are thriving; the streets, jazz clubs and Preservation Hall are filled with the sound of music, and the good times are rolling once more.

For more information about the Windsor Court Hotel, including room rates and special packages for upcoming events such as the 25th annual French Quarter Fest (April 11-13) and the 2008 Jazz & Heritage Festival (April 25-27 and May 1-4), call 800-963-2652 or visit the Web site at www.windsorcourthotel.com
casuycy@8
hormtounonnapolis.com