

# Forbes

## LIFESTYLE

### A Surprising New Nature Oasis In The Heart Of New York City: 1 Hotel Central Park

BY ANN ABEL, CONTRIBUTOR

Whatever the marketers may say, there's no such thing as a truly 100% sustainable hotel. Any development has a footprint, and if we're going to be rigorous about it, the only fully sustainable approach would be to leave the land alone and let nature do its wild thing.

But we don't live in caves, and we like electricity and modern plumbing. And in fact, many of us live in New York City and even more of us would like to visit. When we see sustainability through that lens, it's clear that there are shades of green. Some hotels market themselves as sustainable while others walk the talk and really do impose the smallest footprint possible—even in midtown Manhattan. *Conscious* may be a better word than *sustainable*. And if a place can be pretty in the process, all the better.

The new 1 Hotels brand, the brain-child of hospitality innovator Barry Sternlicht—the former Starwood exec behind the luxury upstart Baccarat Hotels & Resorts brand last year—is undeniably conscious. And pretty. Sternlicht took inspiration for 1 Hotels from his children, who are passionate about the environment (one even majored in it in college). Opened in August, shortly after a Miami Beach flagship, the 1 Hotel Central Park is the second in the brand, and it has nailed the idea of responsible hedonism.



The dining room at Jams, the restaurant in the 1 Hotel Central Park. Photograph: Eric Laignel

As much as we want our lodging choices to care for the planet, many of us just want to have an engaging, uplifting stay in a hotel. And in this regard, the 1 Hotel Central Park, for all its LEED certifications and “green” positioning, succeeds. It wins guests over on its own enjoyable terms. (I recently stayed as a guest of the hotel.)

It's a sustainable hotel that doesn't feel like Ikea,” the hotel's PR representative told me during a tour of the AvroKO-designed hotel, and he was right. The place is simply stylish—and cool. Details don't have to be cheap to minimize impact. Sustainably and style can coexist.

With some 24,000 plants inside the hotel, and a lot more ivy on the three-story living walls on the exterior (designed by AgroSci), the hotel feels alive in a way that few others do. There are hanging plants and terrariums in the lobby, an eminently Instagrammable piece of living art that reads, “No thing is ever really lost” by the elevators, and windowsills strewn with plants in the 229 guest rooms—a less flashy but much appreciated upgrade from the little pink blossoms in bud vases that hotels traditionally needed to earn a five-star designation. (Fresh flowers: Check. Soul: Was that on the checklist?)



**The organic (in the most literal of senses) lobby of the 1 Hotel Central Park.** Photograph: Phillip Van Nostrand

Many of the building materials are organic, not only in an Ecocert sense, but in a just-sprung-from-nature sense. The front doors are composed of 16,000 twigs. Floors and walls are made from reclaimed wood, which has a weathered patina that's more appealing than the freshly harvested stuff. The anchor art in the lobby's compact sitting area is a beautiful piece of driftwood.

While the hotel avoids greenwashing, some of the eco elements go to the extreme: When I checked in, the front desk manager told me she loved the hangers in the rooms, which are made of compressed, recycled diaries and maps. My TV was set to a hotel channel that rehashed the environmental bona fides: hemp-blend mattresses from Keetsa (quite comfortable), reclaimed chalkboards for notes and doodles to make the rooms "paper smart" and—bravo, really—triple-filtered tap water to obviate the need for bottled. The desk was stamped "reclaimed white oak, Pennsylvania," and the fine print at the bottom of my welcome letter from the GM specified that the stationery could be planted in my garden.

If those details appeal to you, you'll be in heaven. If not, squint. Stop reading the fine print on your desk. The hotel has an enviable location one block from Central Park, and some of the rooms have (at least partial) views of the lawn. The rooms are enticing, with glass cube showers poking into the sleeping areas. (Stay alone or with someone you like a lot.)

The restaurant, a reincarnation of Jonathan Waxman's beloved 1980s Jams, has earned lackluster reviews, but the farmhouse-style dining room is pretty, especially during breakfast. The mezzanine is a communal workspace, the gym has top-notch equipment and outstanding views (and a vintage basketball floor reclaimed from a Midwestern university court), and the hotel offers training in the park from the elite Spartan fitness program.

No one can say they're against LEED certifications, compressed-paper hangers or water-filtration systems. But those aren't enough. Sustainability aside, the 1 Hotel Central Park appeals aesthetically: an inadvertent conserva-

tory, a place to dive into nature right in the heart of the city.

*Contributor*

**Ann Abel**

*I've been a travel writer and editor for 14 years — including several as a senior editor at ForbesLife — and I've written about more than 450 luxury destinations and hotels in 75 countries (and counting). I know the difference between what's merely expensive and what deserves its high price tag. I'm discerning but not jaded, and I appreciate the hard work that goes into crafting experiences as well as crafting luxury goods. (I've written about those, too.) I've shared that wisdom with readers of Forbes, Departures, Conde Nast Traveller, Robb Report, Afar, National Geographic Traveler, Islands, Hemispheres, Brides, Modern Bride, Luxury SpaFinder, Tablet Hotels, Well + Good NYC, and other print and online publications. In the name of lifestyle journalism, I've gotten a tattoo in Bora Bora, been bitten by a massage therapist, and flown small aircraft above three continents.*

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