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Glory Days

Immerse in retro style and aviation history at TWA Hotel.

BY AMANDA MACTAS

Year-Round Fun: Rooftop pool (top), and (bottom, left to right) the pool, the Runway Chalet at the Pool Bar, and the lobby

PHOTOS: © TWA HOTEL

Stepping into the lobby at TWA Hotel transports travelers in a whole different way. While most people plan vacations to travel to another destination, this particular hub instead takes you back in time to the golden era of aviation. The award-winning space resides in the expertly designed and restored former Trans World Airlines Flight Center, originally constructed

by Eero Saarinen in 1962. Two added wings house more than 500 guestrooms overlooking the runways at the airport. But unlike many other airport hotels that get a bad rap, these rooms are insulated from the noise and activity surrounding the airport.

It's not often your hotel serves as both your respite for the night and a cultural attraction, but that's what I found during my stay at TWA. Whether you're just passing through on a layover or staying for a night or two, you'll find a lot to explore at this retro lodging. While the details throughout the entirety of the space prove enough to keep you smiling — from hidden alcoves to cutesy photo ops — there's plenty to learn here, too. The New York Historical Society teamed up with the hotel to curate TWA-era exhibitions strewn throughout the hotel. Meander around to find them all and you'll

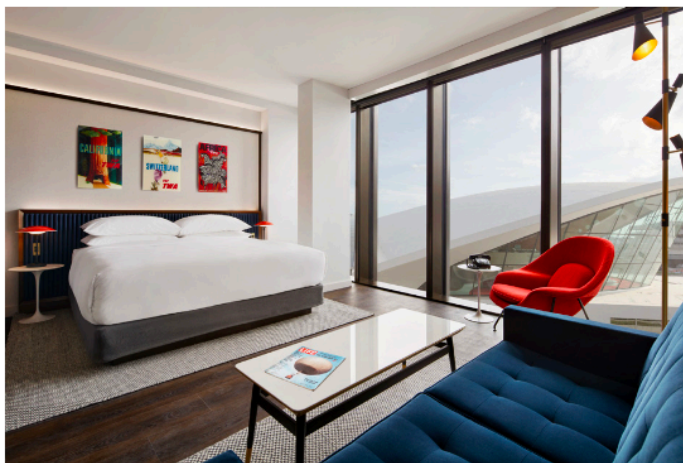
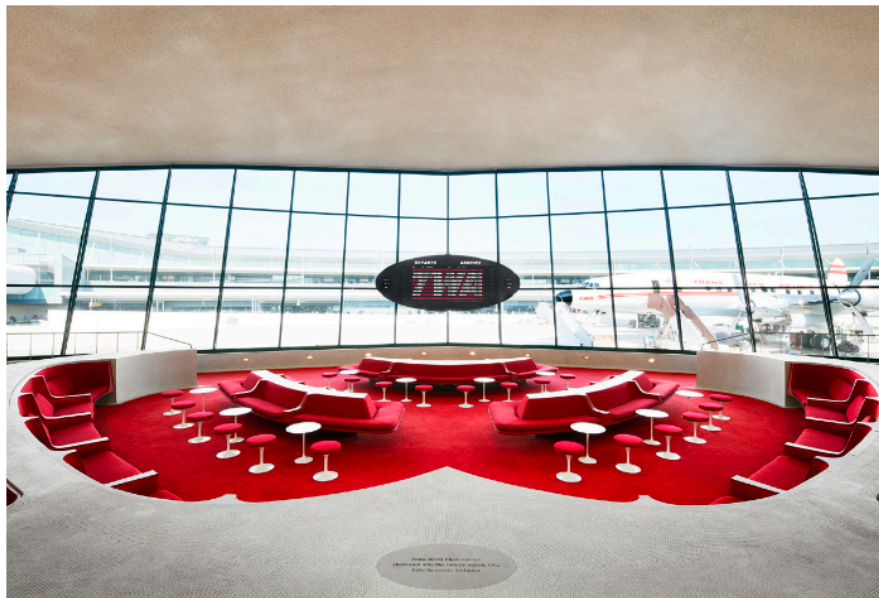
get to see office replicas, original TWA uniforms and even a complete model of the original flight center.

Perhaps my favorite place on the property is aboard *Connie*, a 1958 Lockheed Constellation airplane-turned-cocktail lounge outfitted in the same bold red retro style as the hotel. While taking a glance at the original cockpit, you can sip on innovations like the Mile-High Margarita or classic Paper Plane and revel in the nostalgia of air travel's former glory.

After fully delighting in a pre-dinner drink (or two), I was good and ready to see what the hotel's restaurant, The Paris Café by Jean-Georges, had to offer. The Michelin-starred chef drew inspiration for the restaurant's menus from vintage TWA flight menus, apparent in playful nods to the era in dishes such as corn nut-crust salmon and bittersweet chocolate pudding. But that's not the only place to grab a bite to eat. The Sunken Lounge offers homey-feeling comfort foods like nachos and buffalo chicken wraps, as does The Pool Bar, while the Food Hall offers options including Vinny's Panini, Mister Softee and Fly-By Bagels. Add to that Intelligentsia Coffee and all of the cocktails and libations available at each spot, and you're bound to find something to suit your needs (but the jumbo chocolate chip cookie from Paris Café was all I needed).

Another of the hotel's main draws is its rooftop pool, open year-round and heated to a whopping 95 degrees Fahrenheit during wintertime. While the pool isn't large by any means, it makes up for its size with its views. The infinity pool overlooks the runways at JFK's Terminal 5, giving pool goers an up-close-and-personal look at all of the air traffic coming in and out of the airport. Plus, it changes up its wardrobe depending on the season: In winter, you'll find the pool alongside a cozy chalet-themed bar serving après-ski-style drinks; during warmer months you can expect endless summer vibes with frozen cocktails to help cool you off.

And whether you're traveling with kids or simply your own inner kid, TWA offers more up its sleeve than just a place to sleep. Outside, alongside *Connie*, you'll find a curling rink open on weekend afternoons (although depending on the time of year you might find a roller rink or bumper cars instead). Between the endless exploration, the otherworldly feeling and a sound night's sleep, this was one airport hotel I didn't want to leave.



Shades of Yesteryear:

The Sunken Lounge (top), uniforms on display (middle), and guestroom (bottom)

PHOTOS: © TWA HOTEL

INFO TO GO

Located at John F. Kennedy International Airport, TWA Hotel is accessible to visitors flying in to any terminal. Most easily, patrons can walk from JetBlue's Terminal 5 baggage claim area to the hotel's elevator, taking them straight to the hotel. Travelers arriving from other terminals can take the AirTrain to Terminal 5 and head to Level 3, then follow signs to the hotel. Those driving to the hotel can follow directions to JFK Airport's Terminal 5 and follow signs for the hotel's main entrance, where on-site parking is available.

Anyone may visit the hotel and check out its exhibitions, even without a room reservation. Additionally, those with delayed or canceled flights can opt to book a Daytripper reservation, available hourly 6 a.m.–8 p.m. for a minimum of four hours and a maximum of 12 hours, or purchase a pass to the gym.