

Review: The Rittenhouse, Philadelphia

Saturday, 17 Oct 2009 15:39

"Welcome to Our House" is the motto of The Rittenhouse, and I certainly felt nothing but warmly welcome. Yes it's quite posh and regularly frequented by stars of stage and screen, and White House. But the atmosphere is relaxed and very "boutique" hotel.

The Philadelphia hotel seems to be universally acknowledged as the best place to stay in Philadelphia and David Benton and his team go out of their way to ensure guests have everything they need to have the best time in Philly. I got the feeling this is so whether you're an ex-president or just me.

They may strive to provide all the comforts of home but with the largest rooms in the city and 42" television screens, you may be tempted to stay away from home. In the lobby it is all polished marble and wood panelling but there is also a "treasure chest" of children's toys and story books to make young guests feel at home.

It is perfectly located for exploring the city's premier shopping districts and tourist sights of this most walkable of cities, as well as the business district should you be that way inclined.

One of its best visual assets is outside the door – the English-style gardens of Rittenhouse Square. This is the heart of one of Philadelphia's poshest shopping and residential districts but the leafy pathways and the Victorian bandstand attract all sorts, from well-heeled ladies walking their labra-doodles to loitering skater boys. It's a great spot for people-watching, either from a park bench or from one of the cafes and restaurants lining the east side.

I was lucky enough to stay in one of the rooms ending in the number eight – overlooking Rittenhouse Square and my deluxe guest room had separate sitting, work and dressing areas, as well as the divinely comfortable bed and luxurious bathroom. Rich furnishings give the place a warm characterful touch.



The Rittenhouse Hotel, Philadelphia



Guest room at The Rittenhouse Hotel, Philadelphia

At the same time the personal touch was very much present, with a plate of homemade chocolates and chocolate-covered strawberries displayed on a dish on which my name and a welcome message had been inscribed in chocolate.

Even if you don't stay at The Rittenhouse while in Philadelphia, don't miss brunch at the elegant Lacroix restaurant on a Sunday morning. This is the most popular meal of the week in Philly and Lacroix has been named as the best of the best when it comes to pancakes and eggs. The French toast is incredibly light and satisfying and you must try the smoked strawberry jam.



Lacroix restaurant at The Rittenhouse Hotel, Philadelphia

Chef Matt Levin has been lauded by many publications for his sophisticated contemporary cooking and Lacroix is justly proud of its chef's table kitchen events. Ducking through the kitchen to the in-house pastry and chocolate-making quarters. I found Fred who makes the scones for the Devonshire tea and the hand-crafted chocolates. I was treated to his latest concoction: dark chocolate covering an intense raspberry jam paste made from a load of fresh raspberries recently delivered from Washington State. And topped with a grating of orange peel. Delicious.

Part of Lacroix restaurant was recently converted into the stylish Bar 210 - perfect for a pre or post theatre tittle. Other beautiful spaces within the hotel include the Cassat Tea Room and the grand ballroom. If your coiffure requires a touch up, one of the most popular salons in town is right here at Adolf Blecker. And the spa, gym and pool facilities are all top class.

Natasha von Geldern

The Rittenhouse Hotel is located at 210 West Rittenhouse Square, Philadelphia, and rates start from \$275 per room per night.