

Boutique, sleek, with bikes or pools, all new

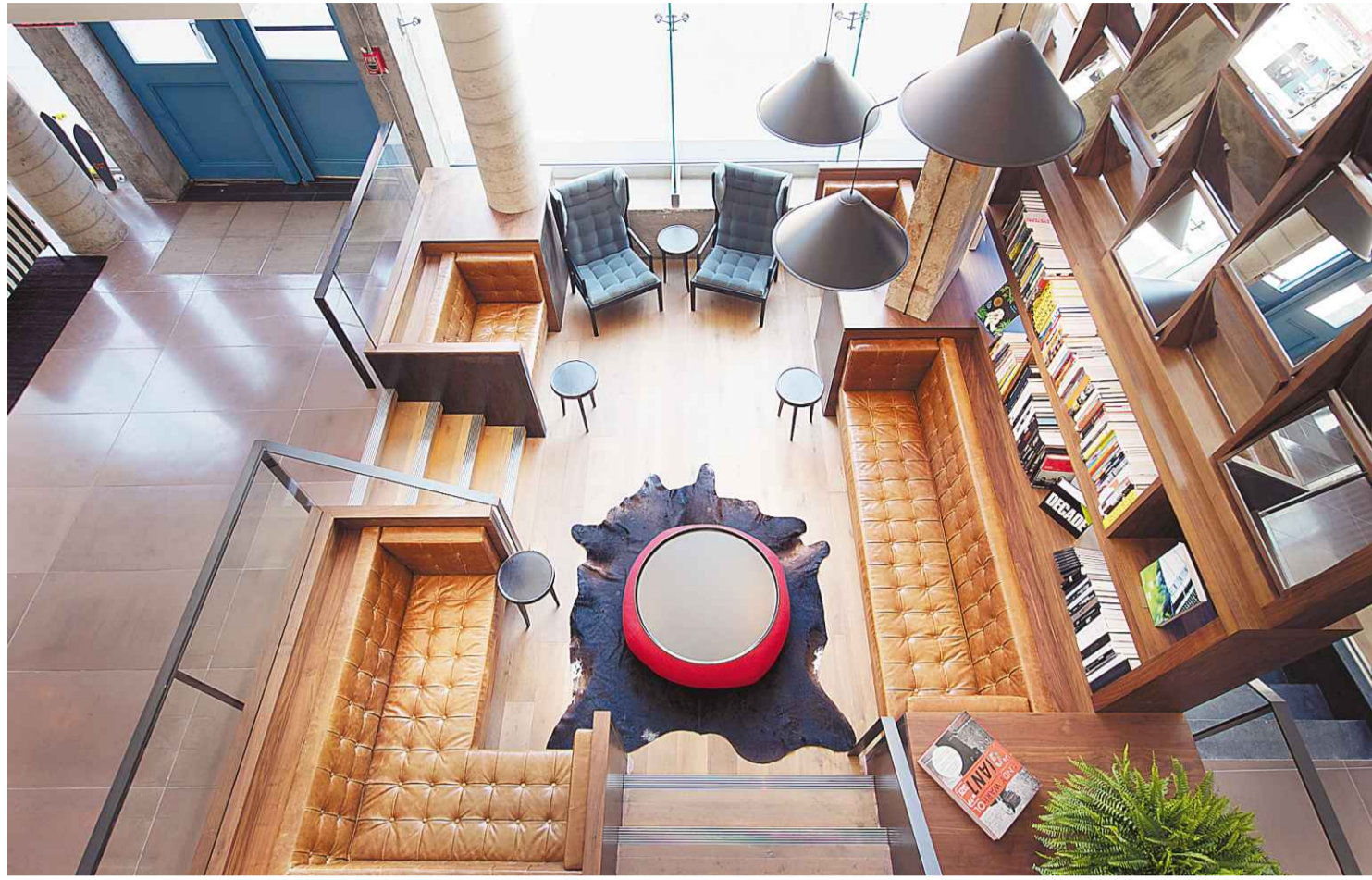
By Marie Elena Martinez
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

For New York's annual influx of holiday travelers, deciding where to stay is harder than ever. More than 2,700 hotel rooms were added to the city's inventory this year, with construction in not only Manhattan but also Brooklyn and Queens. From swank downtown offerings in SoHo, Nolita, and Chelsea, affordable options in Times Square, a hot boutique in Williamsburg, and rooms with a view in Long Island City, here are 10 of the newest spots to check-in, kick back, and enjoy the city's many diversions.

In February, Morgans Hotel Group, the company responsible for the boutique hotel concept, put down roots on SoHo's cobblestone streets with **Mondrian SoHo** (9 Crosby St., 212-389-1000, www.mondriansoho.com). Surrounded by art galleries, A-list shopping, and renowned restaurants, the 270-room hotel resides in SoHo's tallest building, and was inspired by Jean Cocteau's 1946 fantasy film, "La Belle et la Bete." A topiary portico off Crosby Street meets a playful French blue lobby off of which celebrity Top Chef Sam Talbot's sexy restaurant Imperial No. Nine draws a hot nightly crowd and a partnership with Equinox fitness clubs keeps the health-conscious in their best travel shape. Rates from \$400.

Tomorrow the eagerly anticipated **Hotel Williamsburg** will open to the public. The borough's first luxury boutique hotel (160 North 12th St., 888-867-6767, www.hwbrown.com), it draws on locally-sourced extras including uniforms by Brooklyn Industries and a Brooklyn Brewery signature brew, while the 64 guest rooms and four suites have whimsical touches such as a Crosley record player and in-room coffee service delivered in a retro green Stanley thermos. A lively bar in the center of the lobby overlooks a sunken dining room, and on the roof that overlooks McCarren Park, the East River, and midtown Manhattan is a buzz-worthy terrace. Rates start at \$295.

Bright and white on the outside, moody and atmospheric within, **Sanctuary Hotel New York** (132 West 47th St., 800-388-8988, www.sanctuaryhotel.com) is a former two-star property redesigned as a five-star experience. A peaceful retreat from the hustle and bustle of Times Square, the hotel's sexy nooks and common spaces make this stylish property one of Midtown's standouts. The hotel's 111 guest rooms feature such colors as burnt orange and deep chocolate and dramatic touches such as crystal chandeliers and an open bathroom, while the sleek lobby lounge invites guests to unwind with a drink.



Clockwise from above: The lobby of the Nolitan, the first hotel in the Nolita neighborhood; the rooftop of the Z New York Hotel has a pizza oven and cocktail bar; the pool at Hôtel Americano; and the lobby and xyz bar at Aloft New York Brooklyn.



BRUCE BUCK



REUBEN NEGRON

After a \$270 million renovation of a 1960s building, the Andy Warhol-inspired **Dream Downtown** (355 West 16th St., 800-336-4110, www.dreamdowntown.com) by hotelier Vikram Chatwal is poised for greatness. On the border of Chelsea and the Meatpacking District, the hotel boasts an eye-catching stainless steel facade that creates amazing celestial reflections, and a sleek central pool called Dream Beach that links the hotel's north and south towers. With 316 high-tech guest rooms and suites — the most impressive being those on the seventh floor — an open-air lobby restaurant called Marble Lane, a VIP penthouse lounge, and a just-opened fine dining restaurant by acclaimed Barcelona chef Miguel Sánchez Romera, the Dream is not only a hotel, but a night life destination. Rooms from \$395.

Just over the 59th Street Bridge in Queens, a former warehouse has become the area's first



HOTEL AMERICANO

destination property. **Z New York Hotel** (11-01 43d Ave., 212-319-7000, zhotelny.com) is a slick boutique spot that welcomes guests with a train station departure and arrival board bearing destinations such as France and Israel. On the ground level, a lounge-den awaits; upstairs, a rooftop bar delivers sweeping panoramic views of Manhattan

and churns out brick-oven-baked pizzas. Common lounges anchor every floor. The Z's hundred rooms are decorated with murals of New York images and feature mason jar scones, floor-to-ceiling windows, flip-flops next to the bed instead of slippers, and free Wi-Fi. Rates from \$195.

The first hotel to open in Nolita, the 55-room **Nolitan** (30 Ken-

mare St., 212-925-2555, www.nolitanhotel.com), located just off trendy Elizabeth Street, is dripping in perks. Whether you head downstairs to the excellent restaurant, Ellabess, for a bite, grab a community skateboard or bike for some morning exercise, sleep until 2 p.m. checkout, or play Xbox, PlayStation, and Wii until your eyes cross, the Nolitan will make you feel pampered. A neighborhood shopping program offers exclusive savings at many area boutiques such as John Varvatos, Calypso, and Vince. The minimalist design and lush open bathroom round out the experience. Rates from \$300.

Originating as a hotel in London's Gatwick South terminal, the United Kingdom-based Yotel brand opened its first city hotel in Times Square this summer. Featuring over 669 cabins, it marks New York's largest hotel opening in 2011. A nod to the sleek, modern look of first-class airline cabins, the futuristic de-

sign of **Yotel New York** (570 Tenth Ave., 877-909-6835, www.yotel.com) sets it apart. Self-service check-in and a luggage-collecting robot make arriving a breeze. **FOUR**, the property's hub, includes a Club Lounge — meeting space by day, social scene by night — DohYo restaurant by Richard Sandoval, and the largest outdoor terrace (4,000 square feet) in the city. Though the rooms are small, the flick of a switch converts beds to a sofa and vice versa. Rates from \$249.

Capitalizing on the success of Aloft Harlem, Starwood opened its second ultramodern hotel in the city, **Aloft New York Brooklyn**, in June (216 Duffield St., 718-256-3833, alofthotels.com). With 176 guest rooms, Aloft Brooklyn occupies prime real estate minutes from the Brooklyn Academy of Music and Brooklyn Bridge Park. A two-story lobby atrium and signature xyz bar await guests, as do re:charge fitness center and an indoor pool. Every room has a plug-and-play station, a one-stop connectivity spot for PDAs, iPods, and laptops that links to a 42-inch, flat-panel HDTV. Nine-foot ceilings and oversized windows give the space an airy, open feel. Rates from \$200.

The mesh frontage of the just-opened **Hôtel Americano** (518 West 27th St., 212-216-0000, www.hotel-amicano.com) from Mexico's Grupo Habita captures the industrial feel of its Chelsea neighborhood. Surrounded by a sea of art galleries and the High Line, the 10-story hotel has 56 guest rooms. Within, Latin hospitality is fused with Japanese design elements such as wooden platform beds inspired by ryokans and room service served in bento boxes. Custom Alpaca throws, free bicycle use, and luxury touches such as iPads are offered to all guests, while The Americano restaurant, a rooftop bar and grill open year-round, and two bars complete the amenities. Rates from \$325.

When it opens later this year, the **Conrad New York** (102 North End Ave., 212-945-0100, conradhotels1.hilton.com) will be a welcome addition to Lower Manhattan's Battery Park City. With magnificent views of the Hudson River, the hotel's 463 suites offer guests over 430 square feet of living space, a rarity in Manhattan hotels. The Conrad is pursuing Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Gold certification, and its restaurants will be manned by James Beard award-winning chef Danny Meyer of Shake Shack fame, bringing a "roof-to-table" concept to life with a garden on the hotel's roof. Rates from \$300.

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Born to travel, now off and running to adventure

By Bonnie Tsui
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Last in an occasional series on traveling with baby.

At 7 months, Felix learned to crawl in the Singapore airport. At 10 months, he learned to walk in the Newark airport, en route to Switzerland. Now, at 1 year, he's off and running. The chase has begun.

People told us early on that the first year of travels with a baby — scream-ready, but sans mobility — would be the easiest. In that respect, they were right. Felix now wanders around planes and trains, exploring with his hands (and putting everything into his mouth). Forget trying to watch a movie or getting a little shut-eye: We are on constant high alert. We pry his fingers from flight attendants' lunches, snatch him up from the aisles when he toddles too far, and keep him away from automatic train doors.

My husband, Matt, and I joke that when we go on solo business trips now, an 11-hour red-eye flight to London or a four-hour layover in Denver seems positively luxurious; the time is our own to do with what we please. We can snooze or read, or (gasp!) be insanely productive on our laptops. It's amazing what you can get done without a little man to watch over.

On the other hand, Felix now is a harder and more inquisitive



BONNIE TSUI FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

Felix finds the Newark airport a fascinating eye-fel.

soul, interested in eating what we eat, excited about new places, and curious to engage with locals. Pureed carrots won't cut it anymore; he likes curried chicken and rice and gelato in a cone. He likes going to the beach and putting his face in the sand. In other words, he has become a real traveler.

The real traveler has preferences. He doesn't like to be awakened on red-eyes. He prefers not to wear a seat belt. He wants room to roam around and no one interfering with his stuff. He likes tasting menus, and he would prefer to have what you're having. (Al-ways.) Three-hour marathon

meals at seaside Italian restaurants, even if they are Michelin-starred, are too long — unless there are breaks between courses to play on the lawn.

The real traveler gets bored, and cranky. In an excursion to the green expanse of Jiva Hill Park in Crozet, France, we were forced to order room service instead of eating al fresco on the inviting outdoor terrace. The snowy limestone peaks of the Jura Mountains served as a lovely backdrop, but, sadly, we didn't get to look at it. In some cases, containment is a grave necessity.

But in general, the real traveler likes grass and flowers, the

wind in his face, and water lapping his feet. He enjoys terrain changes. Mountain lakes are great for swimming, but the ocean is really something. The worst thing in the world is being held by someone who is sitting.

Which makes trains and planes a challenge. But always we keep moving: bringing a ball along on a train ride through the Swiss Alps, setting him free on the cobbled stones of a pedestrian piazza for exercise, hiking up the Sacro Monte overlooking Italy's glittering Lake Orta as a never-fail lullaby to naptime.

As our child grows from baby to boy, the list of items to schlep has changed. We can still travel far with carry-ons. The car seat has gotten bigger, but it can also double as a stroller with a handy wheeled attachment (the Travelmate, which fits most every car seat and turns it into a roller). We have graduated to a lightweight Deuter frame backpack for hands-free carrying. Clothes still take up minimal space, and we simply bring enough diapers to make it through the trip.

When Felix was born, Matt and I worried that we would never travel again. So we made a pact to just do it, and we did. In the last year, we have traveled more — and farther — than we had thought we would: making laps cross-country, up and down the California coast, to Canada, to Asia, to Europe.

If the definition of adventure is something exciting or unusual,

my son is always up for one. It's a joy to watch his face as he experiences something new — reading the changes like an always-moving picture book. Even at home, there are adventures around every corner: the recycling truck rumbling down the street, a juicy bite of nectarine, a walk to the neighborhood grocery store.

In short, we have kept moving. I like to think that, actually, we have never traveled so far.

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