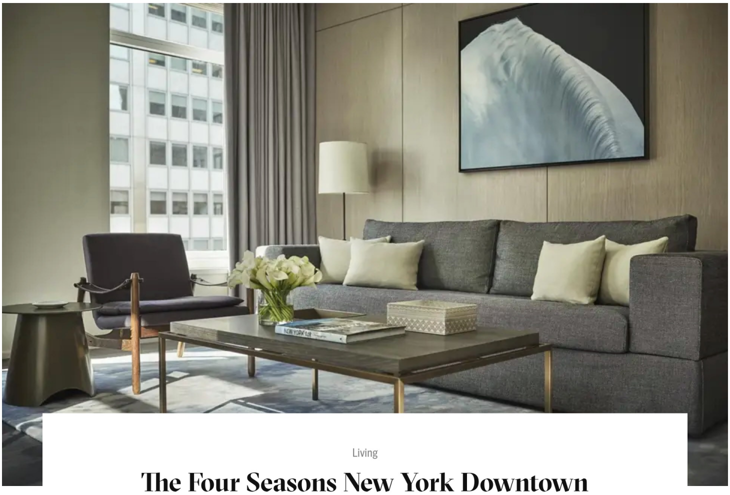

Living

The Four Seasons New York Downtown receives coveted Forbes Travel Guide Five Star Award

It's one of three hotels in Manhattan to hold a 10-star rating

by Sara Feigin • New York • 12 February 2020

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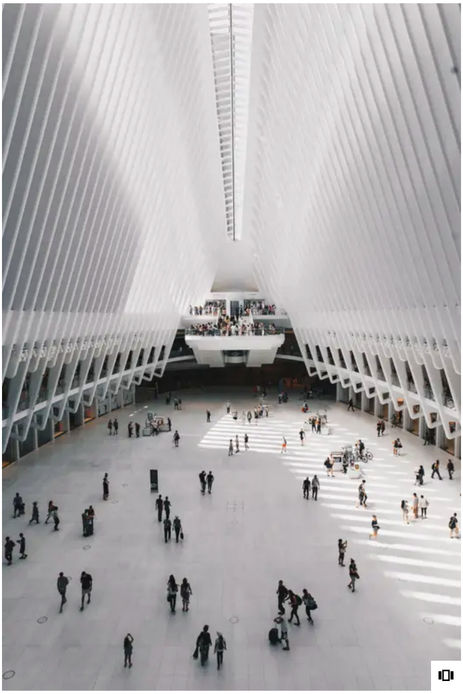
The Four Seasons New York Downtown's hotel and spa have both received the much-coveted Forbes Travel Guide Five Star Award, giving the hotel a 10-star rating in total.

This makes the New York Downtown location one of three hotels in Manhattan to hold such a sought after rating - the other two are The Peninsula and The Mandarin Oriental.

To find out what it takes to be not only a 5-star hotel but a 10-star hotel and spa, I stayed at the Four Seasons New York Downtown location and also spoke with Amanda Frasier, the Executive Vice President of Standards & Ratings for Forbes Travel Guide, about the 5-star inspection process and what it takes to stand out.

The lowdown



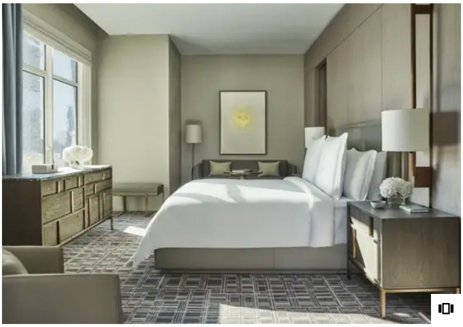
The Oculus

The Four Seasons New York Downtown sits in the hub of Manhattan's Financial District, an area that has seen a major tourism uptick since the opening of the Oculus and the 9/11 Memorial Museum.

The hotel occupies the first 24 floors of the 84-floor skyscraper in one of the tallest residential buildings in Manhattan.

The hotel currently has 189 guest rooms including 28 suites as well as a spa with seven treatment rooms, a 24-hour fitness center and a 75-foot lap pool to enjoy when you've had your fill of city-scapes.

The rooms



I was lucky enough to stay in one of the spacious Gotham Suites on the 24th floor of the hotel, with an amazing view of the streets of Downtown Manhattan.

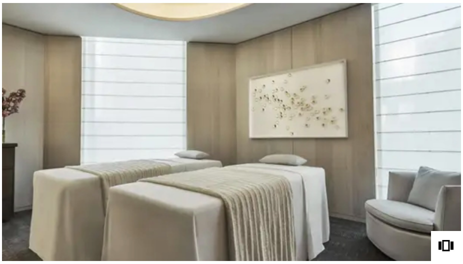
All the rooms at the New York Downtown location are designed by Yabu Pushelberg and have a calming palette of creams, greys and blues. They're fitted with the signature Four Seasons bed, which never fails to make you feel like you're sleeping in the clouds.

The spacious lounge was definitely a highlight of the room which made my morning room service feel like a true once in a lifetime experience. There's no need to sit at an uncomfortable desk to enjoy room service - instead, the hotel provides a proper table to enjoy breakfast and views.

To top it all off, there's a gorgeous soaking tub in the bathroom, truly making this suite luxury living at it's best.

Rates start at $495 per night.

The Spa



Experiencing the Four Seasons New York Downtown Spa was almost an out of body experience. Every moment, from entering the locker room to the end of your massage, feels like you've stepped foot into another dimension that solely exists to relax.

During my stay, experienced the Bespoke Aromatherapy Experience by SOVERAL, which is an 80-minute massage treatment encompassing the use of three perfectly blended aromatherapy oils. The massage therapist asks what you're hoping to feel like when the massage is over and then picks three aromatherapy oils to create a bespoke blend. I asked for pure relaxation, which led to e a blend of lavender, eucalyptus and chamomile.

Eating and drinking

While there are only two dining options at the New York Downtown location, they're both top-tier and completely different experiences. Your sit-down option is CUT by Wolfgang Puck, or if you want a chill night in, you can indulge with the "Restaurant in your Room" experience.

Steak tartare (Sara Feigin)

At CUT, I tested out Puck's take on tuna tartare, which was served in a sesame sea cracker, and steak tartare which was made with prime sirloin and tasted heavenly.

For mains, I stayed on trend and tried the Montauk Diver Scallops, which was fresh from the Long Island shore, and the bone-in Ribeye Steak. Both dishes were equally impressive - the scallops were fresh and the ribeye had the perfect sear.

Bone-In Ribeye (Sara Feigin)

The whole stay, from the exceptional service to the cloud-like bed, made me wonder what really makes a 5-star hotel? I spoke with Amanda Frasier, the Executive Vice President of Standards & Ratings for Forbes Travel Guide, to find out what goes into deciding which hotels tick all the boxes when it comes to luxury tourism.

What makes a 5-star hotel a 5-star hotel?

Walk me through the process of inspecting a hotel property.

"An evaluation begins from the point of making the reservation. The inspector usually stays for two nights and three days and remains incognito, posing as a normal guest. The inspector will go through the usual guest experiences, but we require them to closely evaluate services such as housekeeping, hotel dining and turndown service.

They focus on the quality and genuineness of the interaction and are required to pay attention to details, such as the quality of the linens and even where items in the room are placed. Upon departure, when their report is complete it is submitted to our corporate headquarters for quality checking before a rating is then finalized. The composite score achieved during the evaluation is what determines the final rating outcome."

What are some of the hyper-specific things you look for when making an inspection that people wouldn't expect?

"We do look closely at the welcome amenity. To achieve a yes in our system it is not enough to provide just anything, we are looking to see it is high quality and as is the case for most of the hotels on our list, unique and even destination centric."

Are there different levels of scrutiny depending on how established the hotel is?

"No. Every hotel is evaluated on the same set of standards with the same application. We take cultural nuance and geographical location into account - but every property is assessed on an even playing field."

What are your favorite hotels in New York and what makes them stand out?

"All the hotels on our New York City list are amazing and it really depends on what you are in town for as to which one we would steer you towards over another.

There is no better hotel to visit during the holiday season than the iconic and completely classic Plaza Hotel. For those looking for a modern design without compromising on service, The Four Seasons Downtown is a wonderful hotel with a new 5-star spa for 2020, too."

What are a few of the hotels around the world that really stand out to you because of their service and standards?

"Brands that stood out to us this year were the One&Only properties and we are seeing continual growth in service standards from the Rosewood Hotel group. It's also worth a mention that Red Carnation Hotels now have a triple 5-star win in London with both the Egerton House and Milestone

Hotel and Residences joining sister property Hotel 41. We love how our list is diverse and shows whether your taste is for large or small brands, mega-casinos or intimate inns, there is a luxury experience to fit every traveler."

Four Seasons

four seasons new york

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