

COOL HUNTING

Inside the Boro Hotel in Queens



TRAVEL

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New boutique lodging in Long Island City doubles as a design showroom, where almost every room has its own balcony

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At the moment, all eyes are on the borough of Queens, as the Billie Jean King National Tennis Center's acrylic hard courts host this year's US Open—where many wait with bated breath to hopefully witness Serena Williams' first-ever calendar year Grand Slam. But there are plenty of reasons to stay and explore the area long after the championship finals are over. Travel guide company Lonely Planet has already called it: they honored Queens with the top spot on their "Best in the US" list for 2015. Part of the lure to this New York borough includes a bumper crop of new (and developing) boutique hotels offering cheaper rates than many closet-sized rooms in Manhattan. One setting the bar particularly high in terms of design and experience is the Boro Hotel in Long Island City, Queens, which soft-opened this summer.

"Hotel" isn't the first word that comes to mind upon entrance. The lobby has a communal dining room-style table in lieu of a traditional check-in desk, and the rest of the ground floor space feels like an expansive industrial space-turned-living room. The structure's concrete and cinderblock skeleton is revealed throughout the floors and ceilings, paired beautifully with hand-scraped white oak floors—it kind of has the spirit (and smell) of a new home. The lodgings could double as a design showroom thanks to the thoughtful selection of interiors. Design nerds will recognize the sculptural Plumen bulbs, Jasper Morrison for Vitra cork stools, custom leather chairs from Denmark's ADD Interior and more.



feel the wind whipping your face, the rooftop offers a stunning view of the Manhattan skyline and is open 24/7. We highly recommend a visit before it transforms into a bar, as the near-private space was perfect for morning meditation, with freshly brewed La Colombe coffee and newspaper in hand.

Just a subway stop or two away from Manhattan, the Boro Hotel is in a pretty accessible location—whether you're headed downtown for work then dinner, or exploring what Queens has to offer, from the Noguchi Museum's sculpture garden and the latest site-specific installation at MoMA PS1 to surfing at Rockaway Beach. "The neighborhood offers a mix of world-class cultural destinations along with local businesses, which lends a certain magic to Long Island City," hotel owner Antonia Batalias tells CH on finding the right spot. "Dutch Kills being in the midst of three NYC subway lines, minutes from NYC airports and an easy hop to Manhattan and Brooklyn also didn't hurt."

Rooms at the Boro Hotel start at \$299 a night. The ground floor restaurant and rooftop bar will soon undergo construction, and are slated for a November opening.



The room's minimal furnishings allow each design element to offer a bigger impact—from the leathery bed headboard to the sizable freestanding bathtubs—seemingly taking tips from the Marie Kondo book on decluttering. And the only "art" you'll find is the "No Smoking" graffiti left behind on the concrete in the hallways.

Interestingly, the structure was built without a clear plan or intention in mind, as the original owner was trying to beat the clock before the zoning changed. Once the building changed hands, NYC-based studio Grzywinski + Pons Architects was hired to transform it into a hotel. "We had to work around what was already built and try to glean a nice hospitality space out of it," principal designer Matthew Grzywinski tells CH. "It was like renovating a disused building that just hadn't really been used for anything previously." He continues, "It is also in the ground floor public spaces that we were most able to exploit what we saw as the best attributes of what we inherited: large spans and high ceilings punctuated with muscular columns. Lest the space became inhospitable we created more intimate zones within the volume and employed a warm palette of materials set off against the structural framing elements that would age well in place."

"I think we were relatively successful 'elevating' some otherwise humble or derogated materials in the hotel in a way that wasn't kitschy," he finishes. "The concrete masonry units, concrete bricks and breeze block were employed in a manner that, I think, transcended their value and did so quite harmoniously with the rest of the space." The architects also designed much of the furniture in the lobby and cafe, as well as the case goods, desks, chairs, bathroom furniture, beds and more in the guest rooms—giving everything a cohesive look.

The smallest rooms range from 200 to 250 square feet, feeling even more spacious due to the pared-down furnishings. Another plus: nearly every room in the hotel has its own terrace or balcony, but if you really want to

