

# For a twist in the plot

Like it or loathe it, one of New York's latest downtown stays catches the eye, writes **Rachael Oakes-Ash**.

THE taxi driver had difficulty finding the Cooper Square Hotel in downtown Manhattan's Bowery district. The \$US110 million (\$115 million) building has no street number or signage, a deliberate move by the hotel's co-owner, Klaus Ortlieb, who favours a discreet, in-the-know marketing approach.

His theory is that the impressive, 21-storey Carlos Zapata-designed glass and steel building that rises conspicuously above the East Village will itself become a landmark.

The building has certainly turned heads since opening early last year, splitting the notoriously critical New York hotel scene, with some



Housing Works, a New York charity dedicated to ending HIV/AIDS and homelessness.

The doormen/porters may appear to have stepped from a fashion week catwalk, given their designer-style pea coats and trousers, but their personality is pure New York. Red (that's his nickname) takes me through the nuances of my room, giving me his "two nickels' worth" at every opportunity in the hope of at least a 10-nickel tip. He's pure Neewww Yoik and I love it.

The Cooper Square has its eye firmly on the fashion, film, music and advertising set, with a purpose-built 100-seat screening room and has attracted the likes of Anna Wintour, Gwyneth Paltrow, Sienna Miller and their friends to step within its walls. West Village, SoHo, Nolita and Greenwich Village are all within spitting distance of the front door and the New York Film Academy is up the road, as is the New Museum of Contemporary Art and the buzz bar of the moment, Madam Geneva.

Cooper Square has stiff competition in a city that created the boutique hotel trend but Ortlieb knows what he's doing – he was



responsible, after all, for opening the celebrity obsessed Mercer Hotel.

Cooper Square has 145 guest rooms and a penthouse just begging for a swanky martini party.

Standard guest rooms are typical of New York sizing, though, with space a commodity. Even with a corner king room, I find myself bumping into myself. However, I wouldn't trade the mammoth bed for extra wardrobe space. By myself, the hotel bed is a luxury, with a partner it's a sin, in the best way, especially when turndown service includes a vintage *Playboy* magazine (circa 1960-70s).

My room's mini bar is cool, as expected, with designer liquids for

healthy insides, aka coconut water. Girls may love the mini make-up kit and Tina Thor jewellery and canine devotees are welcome to bring Fido, so long as he or she weighs less than 40 pounds (18 kilograms) – so put him in your handbag or on a diet.

There's also the usual iPod docking station, flat-screen TV and DVD player in rooms. Add free Wi-Fi throughout the hotel, gym passes to the New York Racquet Club on the opposite side of the street and in-room spa treatments. Red Flower organic perfumery has created a signature scent for the Cooper Square Hotel, suitably titled *Wanderlust*. With this much attention to detail, it's hard to fault.

## Trip notes

**Where** The Cooper Square Hotel, 25 Cooper Square, New York. +1 212 475 5700, thecoopersquarehotel.com.

**Getting there** V Australia flies to Los Angeles with connecting Virgin America flights to New York City, 13 82 87, vausalia.com.au.

**How much** From \$US425 (\$440) for a king room with courtyard view.

**Top marks** The hotel's dedication to local community philanthropy; buy a book from the hotel library and the money goes towards housing for people living with HIV/AIDS.

**Black mark** The lack of an actual lobby check-in can be daunting on arrival.

**Don't miss** The hotel's south wall is an art gallery, on which emerging artists present new murals every few months.

**Eye-popper ... (from far left) the second-floor bar; Cooper Square Hotel.**

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Turndown service includes a vintage *Playboy* magazine.

commentators claiming the hotel is Dubai-esque in its thrusting and angular design and vulgar for its Bowery site, considered a creative neighbourhood.

In keeping with Ortlieb's inner-sanctum theme, there is no reception at Cooper Square. Instead, guests enter a slate-filled space filled with Antonio Citterio's designs, B&B Italia furnishings and mirror-glass walls. Staff guide guests to a library-style lounge with a modern fireplace and 4000 second-hand and antiquarian books. Purchase one of these and the proceeds go to

The hotel's original restaurant, Table 8, opened amid much fanfare with a salt bar for fresh seafood and leather-clad interiors. It lasted seven months but has since been replaced with Faustina, an Italian-inspired restaurant with lusty Mediterranean meals from Scott Conant of Scarpetta restaurant fame.

I ditch the cab for the return to the airport. The hotel has recommended OZOcar, a private car service using hybrid vehicles and, after spending three days here, I'll definitely have what they're having.

*The writer was a guest of Zuji, V Australia and the Cooper Square Hotel.*

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