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New York's Knickerbocker hotel is back in business

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The Knickerbocker photos

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In Times Square, the Knickerbocker received New York City landmark designation in 1988.

By **CLAIRE JURKIEWICZ**

Special Contributor

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NEW YORK — More than 90 years after shutting its doors, the storied Knickerbocker hotel has reopened in New York's Times Square.

Fresh off a \$240 million renovation by Irving-based owner FelCor Lodging Trust, this Beaux Arts landmark now offers 330 contemporary rooms, a culinary program spearheaded by Charlie Palmer and an array of exclusive experiences.

Founded by John Jacob Astor IV in 1906, the glamorous hotel drew famous clientele, with John D. Rockefeller, F. Scott Fitzgerald, dignitaries and Broadway stars among its regulars. Lavish dinners were presented on gold plates and, according to one legend, a bartender named Martini created the now-ubiquitous cocktail there.

Prohibition arrived, and the hotel's business declined. In 1921, the property was converted into an office building and remained so until FelCor, a real estate investment trust, purchased it in late 2011.

From then until this February, an extensive renovation transformed the interior into a modern retreat. The serene accommodations offer city views, Egyptian cotton sheets, smart TVs and bath products from Ted Gibson, a New York celebrity stylist who has made appearances on makeover shows such as TLC's *What Not to Wear*. Upon request, guests can book on-site hair, makeup and styling appointments with Gibson himself.

On the corner of the fourth floor overlooking Times Square, Broadway and 42nd Street, the Charlie Palmer at the Knick restaurant serves American cuisine with a twist. The house burger, for example, brings together beef, braised short ribs and pickled vegetables. Indulge in a "when in Rome" cocktail experience by ordering a martini; the staff will ceremoniously wheel out the signature martini cart.

As a hotel guest, you also receive priority reservations to the chef's Aureole flagship, just steps away from the hotel.

For Palmer's small plates and drinks surrounded by Times Square and living greenery walls, head up to St. Cloud, the Knickerbocker's 7,500-square-foot rooftop bar and terrace scheduled for completion this spring. The chic hot spot is set to pour custom cocktails and craft beers, provide indoor and outdoor seating and host two upscale attractions: the Waterford Crystal Lounge, where the elegant glassware will be used; and the Nat Sherman Cigar Lounge, where experts will recommend cigar pairings.

The hotel boasts two gyms, with cardio and strength training equipment. Former New York Knicks forward Larry Johnson oversees the Knickerbocker's weekly fitness program, which includes various group classes.

Prefer to exercise outside? Sign up for a guided run through the city, or walk to the nearby Central Park.

Claire Jurkiewicz is a Dallas freelance writer.

