

DEPARTURES

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BLACKBOOK

A GUIDE FOR THE SOPHISTICATED TRAVELER HERE & ABROAD

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Madison Avenue's grande dame hotel has been transformed into the smartest new address on the Upper East Side.

The Chic of the New

Mark: The Spot

On one recent evening on the corner of 77th and Madison, in the lobby of Manhattan's newly redone Mark hotel, Barbara Walters came through the Jacques Grange-designed bar and into the new Jean-Georges restaurant; Candice Bergen followed. There was a popular though somewhat disgraced grande dame, a few young couples on their way to a museum benefit, and, in the corner, one Real Housewife of New York City. The Mark's bar has quickly become a neighborhood gathering spot (as has the Frédéric Fekkai salon, on the second floor), but general manager James Sherwin (ex of The Carlyle, just across the street) would rather focus on the mini-bars in the 118 hotel rooms (there are also 42 residential units).

"They're designed," says the properly English Sherwin, dressed, as is the staff, by Turnbull & Asser, "to be within arm's reach. Is there anything more degrading than getting on one's knees for a cocktail?" Other, perhaps more universally relevant, details in the rooms designed by Grange (decorator to Yves Saint Laurent and Princess Caroline of Monaco) include artwork by Karl Lagerfeld, linens by Quagliotti, and furniture from Ron Arad, Pierre Passebon, and Piero Lissoni. It's all very plush and stylish, and even the rooms facing Madison are remarkably quiet. The staff, trained in shoe-shining by John Lobb and in elegant discretion by Sherwin, might loosen up just a bit. In such a chic, modern lobby, their chilly perfectionism seems a tad old-fashioned. *From \$650; themarkhotel.com.* —STELLENE VOLANDES