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A stay in the heart of New York City at the Roger Smith Hotel [Family travel review]

Take a bite out of the Big Apple at this quirky and comfortable family-run hotel in midtown Manhattan, where every guest is made to feel right at home



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There is a magic about New York that is eternal. Whether you are young or old, visiting for the first or fiftieth time, or going in winter or summer, it will charm you from the moment you step off that plane – and keep you under its spell until long after you've returned home.

But the idea of visiting the hustling, bustling city that doesn't sleep with small children may seem like a foolish endeavour. Well, start spreading the news – we've found just the place for families to stay and experience all the stardust and none of the stress of staying in NYC...



THE HOTEL

Arriving at the [Roger Smith](#), we felt like we had just stepped into a Woody Allen film. The hotel sits in the heart of midtown, a stone's throw from the UN, Grand Central and Bloomingdale's, yet it has been in the hands of the same family since 1929. A unique boast – and a sign that they are clearly getting something very right.

This could be the owners' ethos of doing what they believe in rather than following travel trends of the day. The reception area has a comfortable, welcoming feel rather than the wow factor, which puts a weary traveller instantly at ease, especially coupled with the incredibly warm and friendly staff.

You'll also quickly notice the array of quirky paintings and sculptures, all chosen by the hotel's president, James Knowles, a Yale-educated sculptor, which are a running theme throughout the building. It's a welcome change to "look but don't touch" fancy design hotels (especially when you have little ones with curious fingers in tow!).

The hotel is all about these unusual little elements, offered because the team genuinely care about certain causes or facilities, rather than a cynical attempt of creating a USP. For example, a pair of brass statues out front are actually electric car charging stations, while there is an art curator on staff, who organises regular exhibitions and events in Lily's, the cosy cocktail bar in the lobby.

Roger Smith also boasts a second bar on the rooftop terrace called Henry's, named after an English bulldog, which is open seasonally and has the feel of a secret hangout for locals – we loved popping up there for a cocktail and nibbles after a long day of sightseeing.



Henry's bar is the perfect place for a sundowner after sightseeing



The suites boast comfortable lounge areas with fireplaces and dining tables.

THE ACCOMMODATION

Homely is the best way to describe the rooms here – a style the hotel prides itself on. Each one is different, decorated in a clean and airy manner, and furnished with a mix of antiques and artworks, with live plants, plentiful toiletries (no need to call reception if you forget a toothbrush – they've already thought of it) and a selection of paperbacks you are welcome to take home to finish.

Our premium suite was ideal for a family and felt like our very own Manhattan apartment. It was incredibly spacious, offering a lounge complete with fireplace, sofas and dining table, plus two bedrooms - one king size with a closet Carrie Bradshaw would adore and another with a single bed, known as the “Nanny Room”. Having a proper bedroom for little ones rather than a pullout sofa bed makes all the difference in terms of comfort, as did having our own fridge and microwave, plus a cupboard with crockery and cutlery.



The stunning murals in our one-of-a-kind bathroom.

The real showpiece of our suite (number 811 if you're booking), however, was the vast bathroom – the grey marble walls featured simple line drawing murals of the faces of four long-standing staff members, crafted from black marble. Truly a one-off! We loved it, along with the vast amount of natural light feel – and the fact it was so quiet despite being in the middle of million-mile-an-hour Manhattan.

Smaller one bedroom suites are also perfectly comfortable for families, or you can happily fit two adults and two children in a junior suite, with king sized bedroom and double sofa bed.



The bedrooms are spacious and comfortable, with plenty of storage.

WHAT WE ATE

There's no restaurant at the Roger Smith but guests are invited to help themselves to the selection of complimentary Green Mountain yogurts from Vermont in the lobby, along with green apples and various different granolas. This light, healthy breakfast, picked up the night before and taken at our own pace in our room as we got ready, kept us going until a late diner brunch each morning.

You can also order in from local restaurants and eat at the dining table in your room – a nice option for families after a hectic day of sightseeing. Staff are full of local recommendations too – they booked us a table at Foxy John's, an Irish pub a stone's through away, and the burger was as delicious as we were promised.

Eating out, whether it is pancakes at a diner or a trendy sushi restaurant, is a key part of the New York experience and one your family will love. Read our [tried-and-tested tips for family dining in NYC](#)



Guests are invited to help themselves to yoghurt, granola and fruit to enjoy in their room.

WHAT WE DID

Sitting on Lexington Avenue and E47th St, the Roger Smith's location makes exploring a piece of cake. Many of the must-see New York sights are a stone's throw away, including Central Park, Grand Central Station, Times Square, the Chrysler Building and MoMA. We were able to while away a day strolling between them and taking the obligatory touristy photos.

It's also an easy taxi, bus or subway ride to the Upper East Side for the Metropolitan Museum of Art (we loved its current rooftop installation by Cornelia Parker, PsychoBarn) and Guggenheim, and downtown to the Empire State Building, Brooklyn Bridge, Statue of Liberty and new Freedom Tower. Public transport in the city is cheap, speedy and convenient, but be aware if you are using a buggy that most subway stations do not have escalators or lifts, and some older buses are accessed by a number of stairs.

Travelling with creative kids? The hotel offers a variety of Blooming Young Artists packages in conjunction with art tutors Private Picassos. It includes a themed tour of MoMA or one of the High Line, Bryant Park or Central Park, plus a private art lesson. Children who take part are asked to donate one of their masterpieces to the hotel's art collection and they get a goodie and snack bag too. The cost is \$145 for one adult and one child, with a supplement of \$60 for every extra adult and \$40 per extra child.

Need some more inspiration? Read [our guide to the best family-friendly museums, parks and attractions in New York](#)



The PsychoBarn installation at the Met runs until 31 October 2016.

THE VERDICT

Roger Smith ticks all the boxes for a families who want to embrace all that New York has to offer. Comfortable and spacious accommodation, great location and service with a small. We loved that 'right at home' vibe - it made us feel like chilled out locals for a few days instead of jetlagged tourists. It's so rare to find a midtown hotel that feels more than just a place to lay your head - we'll definitely be back!

ESSENTIAL INFO

Roger Smith Hotel, 501 Lexington Avenue, New York City. Rooms from about £170 a night.
rogersmith.com
