

Take me to THE PLAZA!

THOSE ON THE S/S 09-10 CIRCUIT KNOW THE IMPORTANCE OF SLEEPING IN STYLE. IN NEW YORK, ONLY ONE ADDRESS WILL DO, SAYS LINLEE ALLEN

YOU know that you're somewhere important when you spot Diane Keaton out of the corner of your eye, Mariah Carey is deep in conversation with a Hollywood director at the table next to you, and a split second after some random guy pays you a compliment you realise he's Billy Zane. And that's only the first five minutes in the hotel lobby.

Welcome to The Plaza hotel, the iconic Fifth Avenue landmark address in New York with an awe-inspiring history. Indeed, its legacy ranks as a veritable name game of high society, American presidents, plus The Beatles, the Duke and Duchess of Windsor and even F. Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald. Greta Garbo was famously photographed by Cecil Beaton in one of the rooms, and residents have included Marlene Dietrich and Frank Lloyd Wright.

But that was before the recently completed \$460 million overhaul spanning two years and involving the introduction of private residences, an underground shopping mecca, and the restoration of events spaces, restaurants, a champagne bar and lavish rooms.

Designed to reflect the grace of a glorious past, each of the 282 rooms (including 102 suites) echoes the spirit of Louis XV decor: plush velvet sofas, polished wooden floorboards, exquisitely tiled mosaic bathrooms, 24ct gold-plated taps and traditional embroidered bedlinens. Not forgetting state-of-the-art flat-screen televisions – because what's a five-star experience without CNN and movies on demand?

In the mood for picture-perfect views of the city skyline? How about

one of the new duplex Terrace Suites or, better still, the Royal Terrace Suite: located on the southwest corner of levels 20 and 21, it is nicknamed "the crown jewel" and measures about 195 sq m, with spectacular views over Central Park.



Watch out for the iconic hotel in SATC2



Rest your weary post-show head on embroidered bedlinen



PHOTOS: WIREIMAGE.COM, ASHBY XZ, JILLIEN ALLEN/FOX

"After a \$460 million overhaul there are now private residences, an underground shopping mecca, a restored champagne bar and lavish rooms"



High tea at The Plaza's Palm Court is a New York experience not to be missed. Eloise (right) is a girl after our own heart.



FOLLOW THE FASH PACK!

For those who prefer their views closer to the ground, why not start with the Caudalie Vinotherapie Spa, complete with its own sommelier serving vintage drops of sauvignon blanc. Or, for those in desperate need of on-site retail therapy, don't miss the elaborately designed downstairs shopping complex with everything from

The Plaza Beauty (where one can source exclusive lines selected by hairstylists Edward Tricomi and Joel Warren), to boutiques including Anna Hu (Madonna's favourite new jeweller) and Demel, an ultra-quiet Viennese bakery founded in 1786.

High tea, anyone? The dreamlike setting of the Palm Court area on the ground level is a quintessential New York experience, offset by an opulent Beaux Arts skylight.



Dream of the Michael Angel (right) and Max Azria (far right) collections from your room at The Plaza

Further along a facing hallway, amid a sea of crystal chandeliers, it's hard not to reflect upon the history of this hotel. From Truman Capote's Black and White Ball (hosted in the Grand Ballroom) to the Terrace Room (where Marilyn Monroe's scandalous wardrobe malfunction wreaked havoc at a press conference), The Plaza even has its very own album – *Jazz At The Plaza* was recorded live in 1958, with performances by Miles Davis, Billie Holiday and Duke Ellington.

Admittedly, that was then and this is now, but in the lobby-level Oak Room and Oak Bar it's impossible to resist stepping into history and opting for the table where Cary Grant was kidnapped in *North By Northwest*. Or where Dudley Moore once slurred his words in *Arthur*. And, after dining in style (the mouth-watering taco sampler dish by executive chef Eric Hara is a must!), who can refrain from voicing the all-important words made famous in 1955 by The Plaza's very own mascot – a precocious six-year-old resident of the hotel, named Eloise, who delighted in ordering room service, and upon receiving the cheque would declare: "Charge it!" *Next week, London as we follow Fashion Week around the world*