



India Post

भारतीय डाक



September, 2010

When you find a good thing, especially in hotels, you keep coming back... until things change... as they do for almost all lodgings and restaurants. Most often change is bad... but sometimes change can be for the better. However, for many travelers NO change is the best!

That's what I found with the Affinia Manhattan this past spring. I'd not been there for over a year and in the hotel biz a year can be an eternity.

Originally opened in 1929 as the Governor Clinton Hotel, Affinia has brought the building completely up to date. Yet it retains a certain Old New York charm in its bronze-relief elevator doors, its chandeliered Grand Ballroom, and its 526 generously sized suite rooms. A number of Terrace Suites offer especially appealing spaces with great city views.

I sometimes stay in Midtown, but I find it a zoo, especially in the spring and summer. Since I know the subway system well, I like the so-called Chelsea district because it is not as crowded and from Penn Station you can get anywhere in NY with relatively few train changes. The Affinia is across the street from Madison Square Garden which connects to Penn Station and Amtrack.

True, the Affinia is not five stars but I found the service was just as good and the rooms just as clean as their more upscale cousins.

A seasoned business traveler can judge a hotel's "culture" by the doorman and check-in staff. The Affinia doorman was so pleasant when he opened the door of the limo and welcomed me to the hotel. Most door-people grunt something like "Are you checking in?" What a nice surprise to have someone simply welcome me... whether I was a paying guest or just a guy wanting to get out of the rain.

Checking in was a breeze... their computers had all my info. A swipe of my AMEX card and I was on my way up the elevator to get some well-need sleep after my 15 hour flight from overseas.

Many of the rooms at the hotel are suites and have small kitchens. If you are traveling with children or business associates, and need a bit more space than the usual hotel-cells you find in New York, this is a perfect arrangement. I didn't do any cooking but I did host a small reception in the sitting room and having the kitchen for the bar was convenient.

I was in one of the newer rooms on one of the higher floors. Because I had a lot of (late night) writing to do for the events I

was covering, I appreciated the well lighted, large desk and the computer connections. My only complaint was that the desk chair was way too low and there was no way to raise it to a comfortable position for typing. Also, some of the rooms only have plug-in Ethernet internet, not wi-fi. Apple iPad travelers take note.

I was expecting a box with my computer and camera tripod and the hotel staff cheerfully delivered it to my door. You don't often get that at most hotels anymore. You go and get it yourself... if they haven't misplaced it!

I was impressed with the courtesy and professionalism of the staff. All were well-trained in the hospitality industry. I was especially pleased with the housekeeping staff. The room was made up promptly each day and was spotless. My only complaint was not getting more than one bath towel each day... but that was quickly rectified after I mentioned it to one of the staff members at the front desk. (Seasoned travelers know how to wash clothes and roll them up in a towel to wring them out.)

The Affinia has a reputation for having some of the best concierge people in the city. I had to travel to several areas in the Bronx and they gave me perfect subway and walking instructions. I know the subway system by heart but not the Bronx! They also knew of a terrific veggie restaurant on 9th and 21st... Blossom... (bring lots of money!)

As mentioned, the location of the hotel is excellent for the business traveler. The neighborhood is undergoing a revival of sorts and there are lots of new shops as well as reasonably priced places to grab a quick meal. You can walk a few blocks south to Whole Foods and bring an inexpensive meal back to your room. On the same block as the hotel is a brand new Fresh and Easy where I had breakfast each day... for a reasonable price. Around the corner is Jacks, a liquidation store where you can get just about anything on the planet wholesale!

There is a good reason why I give this hotel high marks for business executives. The Affinia Manhattan, part of the Affinia chain, knows what business they are in and they work hard to earn the respect and admiration of those who stay there. The level of service and comfort at this hotel sets the standard for hotels of its class in the USA. I'll be back.

The Affinia Manhattan 317 7th Ave, New York, NY 10001 can be reached at (212) 563-1800.

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