

CHECK IN, CHECK OUT

Hotel Review: SLS Hotel at Beverly Hills, Los Angeles



Stephanie Diani for The New York Times

The Philippe Starck-designed SLS Hotel at Beverly Hills has a rooftop pool and cocktail lounge.

A grand hotel transports you back in time. In this case, expect to be transported back about a year, to a gilded age when hotel minibars swelled with Champagne and hotel bathrooms featured \$85 bottles of lotion. [SLS](#) is a throwback. But it's a wonderful throwback, thanks to [Philippe Starck](#), who has been designing groundbreaking hotels for decades, and Sam Nazarian, the owner, who let him spend more than \$100 million on the first in a planned chain of SLS hotels. The result is beautiful and innovative; it's amazing that Mr. Starck has so many ideas left in him. Indeed, the biggest problem with this 297-room hotel, which opened in November, is that its design is so complex you may feel overstimulated.

THE LOCATION

Near the Beverly Center, on the edge of West Hollywood and the La Cienega Design Quarter. Because it's about a mile downhill from the Sunset Strip, the SLS doesn't have the spectacular views of the [Chateau Marmont](#) or the [Mondrian](#). On the other hand, its location lets you avoid the traffic than can make getting in and out of those places a nightmare.

THE ROOM



A large square filled with furniture and fixtures of Mr. Starck's invention, including a bed with a faux-mink throw and chairs shaped like teacups. A mirrored panel on one wall conceals a flat-screen TV. Another large mirror slides back and forth, allowing the bathroom to be part of the main room, or not. The overwhelming feeling is of updated elegance. But there's also a jokey subtext. Everywhere you turn is some phrase that plays off of the SLS name: a coffee cup says "Sip liquids slowly"; the card announcing the hotel's environmental policies reads "Sparing Land's Supplies." Somebody loves slogans.

THE BATHROOM



A bit odd — the towel rack is in its own alcove, but the toilet, which could use a bit more seclusion, is front and center. No tub in my room (No. 460),

but the shower was perfect. The body wash, shampoo and conditioner come in full-size (not hotel-size) bottles.

AMENITIES

The main event is the Bazaar, a vast ground-floor space containing restaurants, bars and an outpost of the Manhattan design temple Moss, where you could spend hours just admiring the Starckian details. The chef José Andrés created menus that focus on modern tapas (\$5 to \$18). The Bazaar also contains a patisserie with extraordinary chocolates (a saffron bonbon was a bargain at \$3). The pool on the roof is too small for serious swimming; it's really just the centerpiece of a lounge crowded with 20-somethings ordering 20-something-dollar cocktails. The second-floor fitness center is spacious and well equipped with Technogym equipment.

ROOM SERVICE

I ordered a continental breakfast at 7:25 and was told to expect it by 7:55. It arrived at 7:42. Twenty minutes later, I received something unexpected — a call asking if everything was O.K. with my order. More than O.K.; each element (tea, orange juice, pastries) was perfect. The 24-hour menu includes items like onion soup poured over an egg (\$10) and seared salmon with quinoa, both of which I loved at Tres, the lobby restaurant.

BOTTOM LINE

At a time when many hotels are offering steep discounts, SLS is trying to keep prices where they would have been a year ago. Expect to pay a lot (rates start at \$349 plus tax), but to get a lot for your money.

SLS Hotel at Beverly Hills, 465 South La Cienega Boulevard, [Los Angeles](#); (310) 247-0400; www.slshotels.com.