

enterprise zone

URBAN OASIS

Catch your zzzz's in style at New York City's uber-chic Shoreham Hotel

> By David Yi



PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE SHOREHAM HOTEL

A step inside the Shoreham Hotel is a welcome escape from an urban jungle, where taxi horns reverberate, where pushy New Yorkers stomp over tourists, where the summer haze oozes over you like warm syrup.

Tucked away on West 55th, the quirky boutique hotel has a futuristic ambiance, with subtle thumping beats moving guests through the chic interior space. With complimentary glasses of champagne in hand, they interact with the digital art or lounge on green chairs juxtaposed against the bright white walls.

"One of our guests said they felt they were staying in a Mac store," says John Yoon, owner of the hotel. "I took it as a compliment."

Yoon, 38, is the president of Willow Hotels, a portfolio of five hotels ranging from award-winning Pur in Quebec to the historic Mansfield in New York. The first in the family was the Shoreham, purchased with partner Brad Reiss in January 2004. It's like their baby, special and close to their hearts.

"When we put up the Shoreham sign, we looked at each other," Yoon says of that moment. "People are going to remember this forever, I thought. We built history."

Yoon arrived in the U.S. when he was 3. His parents struggled as owners of a variety store in Queens while Yoon studied diligently, graduating from Columbia.

"I started off in pre-med and took Organic Chemistry and said no," he says. "I looked around, and saw that all my older friends went to Wall Street. I saw wealth that could be built."

As a hotel owner, Yoon is nitpicky. Everything in the rooms, from the fresh orchids laid on a table to the magazine selection (which includes *BlackBook* and *Time Out New York*) is closely scrutinized.

A standard room, which costs \$200 to \$250 a night, has at least one flat screen television, a Bose sound system and a bathroom with exclusive Aveda products. More expensive rooms, which can cost up to \$500 a night, can include iJoy massage chairs, rainforest showerheads, marble floors and a huge Jacuzzi bathtub.

Yoon says most of the guests are in the fashion industry and are loyal customers, staying at the hotel whenever they travel to New York.

One such guest is Cristina Daireaux, a general manager for Prada in Las Vegas.

Swishing her martini glass, she says she's been staying at the hotel for more than seven years.

"It's a great deal, good price, positive vibe," Daireaux says. Just what Yoon wants to hear.

"It takes seconds to change reality, but years to change perception," Yoon says. "It's difficult for guests to return when something is perfect."

And when his first hotel built from the ground up completes in June of next year on 57th street, it will be yet another milestone for the man who wants his hotels to be remembered.

"I'm a light sleeper," says Shoreham guest Wilson Mark, who works for Hugo Boss. "I get the greatest sleep when I stay here."

"I just want people to have a good rest," Yoon says.

When they sleep happy, so does he. ☑



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