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A New Reason To Visit Maine: The Press Hotel In Portland



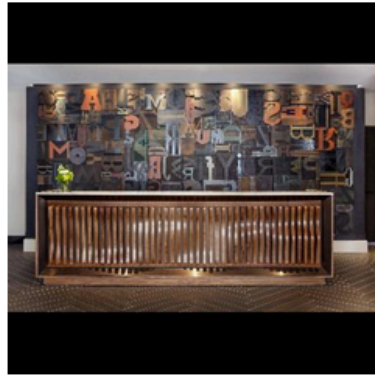
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I travel luxe but smart: I know what's worth shelling out for.

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Portland's Playful New Press Hotel

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We've seen the bank hotels and the prison hotels and more warehouses-turned-industrial-chic hotels than we can count. I've even stayed in the onetime meat locker of a sheep-processing plant.

The cool new [Press Hotel](#) in Portland, Maine, is a novel one, at least to me: the first newspaper office I've slept in (not counting that night on the couch in my college newspaper's office). And unlike some other repurposed-historic-building hotels, whose design ignores the past or turns it into a goofy gimmick, this one gets the nostalgia formula right. (I stayed as a guest of the hotel.)

The designers turned the seven-story landmark *Portland Herald Press* building into a stylish boutique hotel that's smart without being overly clever. An installation behind the front desk references letterpress type blocks, and a more playful one in the lobby is based around a collection of vintage typewriters flying across a wall like so many silk butterflies. These are connections to the building's past and to the city's present—they were created by students and faculty at the Maine College of Art, and the extensive art collection throughout the hotel was all made by Mainers.

The 110 guest rooms are styled to evoke the feeling of a 1920s writer's office, with vintage-style desks and publishing-related whimsy throughout. Desk chairs are printed with *The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog* in vintage type, coffeemakers are labeled *Hot off...the Press*, and the privacy signs quote Joni Mitchell: *My goal as a writer is more to comfort than to disturb*.

Outside the rooms, the hallways are wallpapered with a collage of real headlines taken from the paper. The marketing director told me that she'd already had a guest tell her that he'd written some of them, way back in the day.

That same kind of connection to the fabric of Portland is evident in abundance at the hotel restaurant, Union. The kitchen relies heavily on produce from the city's farmers markets (themselves a compelling reason to visit Maine in the summer or fall) and nearby purveyors. It fashions them into dishes good enough to have earned the place a strong local following—I'd become a regular for the native tomato and plum salad alone.

That's saying something in a food-focused town with the second highest number of restaurants per capita in the U.S.—and another way in which the Press Hotel gets things right.