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Greenwich's J House celebrates 10 years of fun and style

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For the past decade, the J House has served as a premier destination for visitors to Greenwich as well as an attraction in its own right. Prior to John Fareri's acquisition the property was a Howard Johnson's, but since then an infusion of style, art and creativity has brought forth a unique luxury boutique hotel known to draw both local residents and world-famous celebrities.

Upon entering the lobby guests are greeted not only by the staff but an eclectic collection of art including a video installation featuring

looping video of those who played a role in the opening of the J House, a photo collage of Mick Jagger, robots composed of recycled materials and an intensely curved couch named "Ursula." Only seven examples of the avant-garde sofa, exist according to General Manager Janice Perna-Nicholas.

"I would say that the theme is 'fun,'" Perna-Nicholas declared when asked what the hotel's overall style is. "If I had to summarize it it's fun, it's different, it's contemporary, it's upbeat. It's just got a different spin."

Also off of the lobby is the Nest Seekers International Café, where guests can find their continental breakfast served, but it also doubles as a space to host a meeting. The name comes from the Nest Seekers International real estate company that has offices within the J House, a useful feature for those visiting Greenwich in search of a residence.

Repeat visitors are also likely to discover new things about the J House as it continues to reinvent itself throughout its 10th anniversary year. Updated furnishings are on the way for many rooms, new flooring is in the works for the entire hotel, electric vehicle charging stations are being installed. Signature spaces like the terraces outside the Presidential and Ambassador Suites are undergoing renovations and the installation of new furniture from Restoration Hardware which Perna-Nicholas described as "even sexier."

The hotel's luxurious spaces also include private event spaces which host rotating collections of art, usually featuring a local artist. Presently the J Gallery, one of the largest event spaces, is hosting a showing by Sholeh Janati, a Westport-based Persian-American painter.

“We’ve been doing this now for 18 months,” Perna-Nicholas said of efforts to incorporate a changing line up of art into many of the hotel’s spaces. “We wanted to take a room that wasn’t too exciting and make it exciting. If you wanted to have a rehearsal dinner or christening in that room, you’d get to do it in a cool space that has really great art, that makes it fun.”

“Now,” she added, “clients rent the room and expect to see art in there and we’re committed to having something new all the time.”

Full spa services, a beautiful outdoor pool, and fine dining are also part of the J House’s attractions, and not just for weekend guests.

“Some of our corporate customers booking meeting rooms have started adding on spa treatments for their employees that are coming in,” said Casey DeSouza, the J House’s director of sales and marketing.

The full-service spa offers everything from treatments for sports injuries to couples’ massages and hot-stone services, and the latest high-tech facial equipment.

Tony’s at the J House rounds out the experience with its Italian steakhouse menu, supplemented by Japanese flare in the shape of Miku Sushi, an in-house sushi bar. Restaurateur Tony Capasso, described by Perna-Nicholas as part of J House’s entertainment, is also a local fixture.

“I’ve been here for 25 years,” Capasso said while giving a tour of his stylish dining room, “I know everybody from Ray Dalio to the guy who pumps gas down the block. I know the town pretty well.”

During the height of the pandemic, Tony’s stayed open for takeout while the hotel offered rooms to first responders who couldn’t go home to their families, thus helping the hotel become a community institution.

Capasso explained how the space, lined with plants and with ivy creeping up the pillars, is perfect for everything from happy hours to weddings.

“We ended up doing this probably six months before Covid and it was perfect,” Capasso said, “because they ended up having a wedding but couldn’t go inside and they wanted to do something special. We didn’t know it was coming but it seemed like we were geniuses it worked so well. It was more of a lounge space before, but you know what we were selling so much food and drink that it made sense to put tables out here and I never changed it back because, thank God, we’re keeping it full.”

More than the food, attractions or surroundings though, Capasso said what sets the J House apart is that it has created an atmosphere suffused with “cool.”

“It’s just kind of a cool place to see and be seen too,” he said before explaining the hotel’s service philosophy: “One happy customer makes you 10 more customers, while one unhappy customer can lose you 20.”