

Travel

Bed Check: Georgian Terrace Hotel in Atlanta



The Georgian Terrace Hotel in Atlanta has a Beaux-Arts facade. (Andrea Sachs/The Washington Post)

By **Andrea Sachs** May 23, 2013

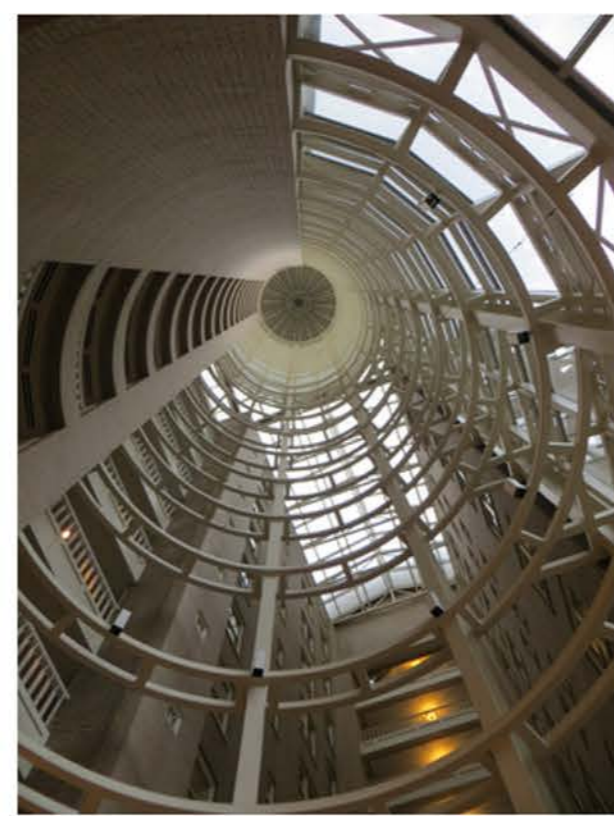
The star power still twinkles at the Georgian Terrace Hotel, just at a different wattage.

The ginger-haired woman I swapped pleasantries with in the parking garage — she's working on the sequel to the "Anchorman" movie, which is being filmed in Atlanta. And that man in baggy jeans and a parsley sprig of hair? He's also with the movie crew. During five floors of elevator conversation, he fretted over his home in the Northeast, still in disrepair after Hurricane Sandy. I'd hoped to break in with a question — is Will Ferrell staying here, too? — but instead method-acted the role of the sympathetic stranger.

As for names that you might recognize: On the first night of my May visit, Glenn Frey, of the Eagles, performed across the street at the legendary Fox Theatre. And for faces that you may one day see in the pages of *US Weekly*: any of the chosen ones selected for the weight-loss reality show, "The Biggest Loser," which held auditions at the hotel.

During the youngster years of the nearly 102-year-old property, the celebrity guests sparkled more brightly than all the rings on Elizabeth Taylor's fingers: Rudolph Valentino, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Charles Lindbergh, Tallulah Bankhead. In 1939, the hotel hosted the world premiere of "Gone With the Wind," with Clark Gable and Vivien Leigh outdressing the drapes. For 75 years, the hotel provided beds for touring Metropolitan Opera performers, including Italian tenor Enrico Caruso. Impresario dancer Arthur Murray taught his fancy-shoe moves in the ballroom. Presidents No. 29 and 30 (Harding and Coolidge) slept here.

Admittedly, the quality of personalities has declined slightly, but the glam quotient is still high. The 326-room hotel, listed on the National Register of Historic Places since 1986, has preserved its original 10-story Beaux-Arts design of cloud-to-ground Palladian-style windows, heaving crystal chandeliers and swooshing marble staircase that transforms the plainest duck into a graceful swan. In the late 1980s, after a period of neglect, developers resuscitated the hotel with a 19-story wing and a 20-story glass atrium bridging the old and the new. In a Rorschach test, I would say that the lofty architectural piece resembles a giant badminton birdie.



A view of the 20-story atrium tower that was added in 1989 as a bridge between the older section and the new 19-story wing at the Georgian Terrace Hotel. (Andrea Sachs/The Washington Post)

The grandeur extends halfway to heaven, to the penthouse-level fitness center and the open-air rooftop pool. The 360-degree view of the skyline, illuminated at night like a Lite-Brite board, can cause vertigo. For safety reasons, don't crane your neck while close to the edge of the pool.

Unfortunately, my corner room on the eighth floor did not share the giant wing span of the public spaces. (Standard rooms measure 160 to 200 square feet; premier luxury rooms are 550 square feet.) I had to tuck in my toes when moving between the bed, the bathroom and the window.

To avoid injury, I placed my luggage in a triangle of open space between the chair and the TV stand (the furnishings blocked easy access to the closet).

Despite the constraints, I felt calm. The camel and sapphire blue color scheme had a soothing effect. I also embraced the cocoonlike quality of my personal chambers; sometimes a girl just needs to fold up her social-butterfly wings and return to a chrysalis state.

When I was ready to emerge, I had a host of fraternizing options. I could sip artful cocktails at the hotel's Livingston Restaurant + Bar, or select a meal from any of seven main menus, including brunch, theater and terrace. Downstairs, old-fashioned bonhomie flowed from Proof and Provision, which the hotel calls a "community drinkery." Cafe Mims, meanwhile, provides a casual kick of caffeine and calories.

The good news/bad news about the Georgian Terrace concerns its Midtown location. On the plus side, I could feasibly stay at the hotel for weeks and sample a new restaurant, bar or entertainment venue every night. The negative: For that same reason, parking is wicked. I feared the evil lurking beyond the hotel's self-parking facility (hardly a sweetheart deal at \$25 per day).

To avoid needy meters and pricey lots, I sought assistance from the front-desk staff. Together, we crafted an itinerary centered on free (Grant Park, Red Light Cafe) or validated parking (R. Thomas Deluxe Grill). The staff also provided walking directions to Piedmont Park that required no daring street crossings. I also discovered a third alternative: not moving.

On Saturday, I parked myself on the portico and watched the "Biggest Loser" hopefuls prepare for their interviews. Depending on next season's show, I could very well say, "I knew them back when . . . they were nobodies at the Georgian Terrace Hotel."

Georgian Terrace Hotel

659 Peachtree St. NE

Atlanta

866-845-7551

www.thegeorgianterrace.com

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Andrea Sachs (not the one who wears Prada) has been writing for Travel since 2000. She travels near (Ellicott City, Jersey Shore) and far (Burma, Namibia, Russia), and finds adventure no matter the mileage. She is all packed for the Moon or North Korea, whichever opens first.

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