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FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

Spectacular (radiocitychristmas.com) runs from November 13 to January 3. With dancing Santas and fallen Nutcrackers, Radio City Music Hall turns into a winter wonderland complete with snow.

- Manhattan's outdoor ice skating rinks are now open for the holiday season. With a spectacular Christmas tree as the backdrop, head to The Rink at Rockefeller Center (therinkatrockcenter.com). Alternatively, Central Park has its own rink, The Wollman Rink in Central Park (wollmanskatingrink.com), where you can glide under snow-covered trees.
- NEW York City Ballet (nycballet.com) presents one of its most iconic performances, *The Nutcracker* at the Lincoln Center. Complete with marching toy

Ballet, jazz and gingerbread

soldiers, a one-ton Christmas tree grows before the audience's eyes and crystalline snowflakes fall from the rafters. From November 27 to January 3.

- THE Metropolitan Opera (metopera.org) will be offering a special half-price holiday promotion. Those who buy a full-price ticket will get the second one at half-price. A family-oriented performance of *The Barber Of Seville* runs from December 16 to January 2. Also available is the adult-centric performance of *Die Fledermaus* from December 4 to January 7.

- Everyone loves a Christmas window and no one does it better than New York. *WindowsWear* (windowswear.com) offers walking tours of the city's famed department stores and hotels. Starting from Macy's in Herald Square, you can wander up Fifth Avenue where many of the shops are gift-wrapped. You'll pass the Empire State Building and many other landmark buildings.
- ALL aboard the Holiday Train within the Botanical Gardens in The Bronx. See quaint, historical model trains whizz along half a mile of narrow-gauge track. Then travel



through a realistic miniature city landscape past more than 150 iconic buildings. From November 21 to January 18. (nybg.org)

● New York Hall of Science (nysci.org) hosts *Gingerbread Lane*, in its 22nd year, a village of more than 1,000 houses of gingerbread, icing

DIFFERENT SCALE: The tiny railway of The Bronx Botanical Gardens and, left, Macy's Parade

and chocolate. It's aiming to hold the Guinness World Record for largest gingerbread village for the third year in a row. There are also gingerbread workshops and giveaways throughout the season (November 14-January 10).

● Visit the Queens home of jazz supremo Louis Armstrong (louisarmstronghouse.org). All December, hear his recording of *Twas The Night Before Christmas* plus other favourites on a tour of the humble house. [New York tourism: nycgo.com](http://NewYorktourism.com)

ALLISON FRITH

suite dreams

THE roads are gridlocked. It's 35 degrees and tempers are flaring. Not least of all mine as I sit in a taxi on New York's Sixth Avenue. Welcome to New York. It's Fashion Week but are there really that many models, journalists, buyers and hangers-on all sitting in taxis trying to get to their next show? I'm a block away from New York's newest "green" hotel, 1 Hotel Central Park. And I'm hankering for a glass of wine to pep me up after a three-train journey from Washington.

After an indeterminate amount of shuffling along the avenue, I see it. The whole of the hotel's façade is alive. All three storeys of it, covered in English ivy. What a welcome oasis in the concrete jungle that is Manhattan.

Created by hoteliers SH Group, it is hoping to highlight the need for environmental protection, to make us think about where the furniture, the toiletries and the food comes from while making certain, by using recycled materials, it creates a minimum carbon footprint.

They must have been on a serious mission of consciousness the day I arrived. At check-in I was told the bar and restaurant were closed for a private function - for two nights!

A super-skinny, scarlet-lipped PR girl, clutching the all-important clipboard with an InStyle magazine logo emblazoned on the front, confirmed they'd given it over for a Fashion Week party. That's all very well but I'm no supermodel. What a pity I wouldn't be able to try out Jonathan Waxman's farmstead fresh produce in Jams restaurant. Not a spoonful of roasted butternut squash soup, crispy kale salad or mouthwatering Maine lobster gnocchi would pass my lips. But I have it on good authority that he's a genius.

As a distraction from my groaning stomach, I turned my attention to the environment, metaphorically and literally. I had arrived in the Enchanted Wood, in a five-star cave where the walls, ceilings and floors were practically breathing. Even the imposing entrance doors are

Living oasis in the heart of the city

made from around 16,000 twigs embedded into the frame. The ceilings and floors are suitably organic, constructed mostly of brick. And the whole place seemed to drip of moss. Suspended on one of the reclaimed-brick walls is a monster of a tree stump. From the ceilings sway ceramic lampshades that look like they've gone wrong on the potter's wheel, all squashed and distorted, interspersed with hanging terrariums. What a job for the gardener. Heavy, sensible



recycled furniture; an eclectic mix of armchairs, which if placed anywhere else would look a bit like a junk shop: here they look like designer industrial antiques. And the best check-in pressie: a paper bag with a carton of still water and a perfectly ripe plum. Food and drink, at last.

Door keys and plastic cards are forbidden. Instead, you get a little wooden disc with a chip inside which activates your door. Clever.

Upstairs it's cozy, enveloping and scrumptious. Little niches contain more of the moss and floor numbers are repurposed materials: nails and acorns. My room is like a ski lodge. Some of the wood is sourced from old water towers. Other bits come from the Everglades, reclaimed from damaged properties after Hurricane Sandy. The bed, made from hemp, is glorious and almost takes up the

entire room. The bedhead - a full-height wooden-plank affair - is again part of an old water tower with a dark, brooding leather headboard. Recycled, of course. No notepaper but an adorable mini-blackboard and chalk mounted on the wall for messages and notes to self (don't throw away old furniture).

A window seat, adorned with bulbous cushions, all natural linens and cottons, beckons. I climb up over my thick wooden step and recline. An exceptional spot to peer into the squillion-dollar apartments opposite.

I wonder if the prints on the wall are indeed real Andy Warhols before cosying up with a book and my carton of water.

New York and cosy are practically unheard of in the same sentence but here's where 1 Hotel Central Park gets the balance right, from the natural cotton robes to cashmere socks and designer cocktails.

Space may be at a premium as in most of New York, yet style hasn't been forfeited. The bathroom - a glass panel box, marble floors, mushroom wood and reclaimed bricks - sits "within" the room. Showers (only) big enough for two and fabulous rustic copper taps look sensational against a concrete sink. Of course, the toiletries (plenty of them) are all-natural.

Downstairs the foyer was abuzz. Most guests didn't seem perturbed by the lack of sustenance. They were too busy reclining on sofas or distressed leather chairs, checking emails and sipping fizzy water. Then again, this is Fashion Week.

And if all this inspires you to convene with nature, New York's green lung, Central Park, is only a block away. You could grab a pretzel from a corner stand and have breakfast with the ducks.

JANE MEMMLER

1 Hotel Central Park



ECO RETREAT: A contemporary suite with a rustic touch and, inset, the bedroom

Guernsey 129

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