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Hartford , CT-

So what do you get when you combine a little bit of Versace, a little bit of Times Square and Las Vegas? The Marriott Hartford Downtown. When just the ordinary won't do let us take you to the beautiful wonderland you can expect while staying at the best property Hartford has to offer.

Our first visit to the quaint area of Mystic we agreed was going to be hard to beat until we spent a weekend at the Hartford Marriott. Marriott certainly has given a touch of class to the once dying area of Downtown Hartford area with their lavish property attached to the state of the art Hartford Convention Center, this is the place to be if you have any business or pleasure in and around Hartford. The AAA Four Diamond award winner makes it like no other around and with what we experienced; the ratings are true to form.

When you first walk into the lobby of the Hartford Marriott you will see why this is one of the most inviting hotels that guests can expect to find in the east. They truly mixed in the wants of travelers looking for a little bit of the Boston and New York flavor. Boasting 22 floors, 401 rooms, 8 suites, there is a room type for all guests.

The foyer of the lobby is worth taking a second look. The cool black vine patterns on the marble floor to large rotunda look of the ceiling make this the lobby of all lobbies. The large full service Starbucks with a huge lounge area give guests a nice open not cramped feeling while checking in and out. The bell staff is on point and the front desk staff will assist and make sure you are right in your room. Our process from check-in to room lasted no more than 10 minutes and the front desk staff went out of their way to make sure we had the right parking pass to drive in and out of the parking garage.



Guest room furnishings were very well done, towels plush, robes, bed linens were all of very high quality and 300 thread count. One thing said, if you book one of their suites, this is a room that you will fall in love with very easily. The bed is a great place to kick back and watch a game or movie. It is also a bed that will take you off to la-la land very quickly if you happen to be just the slightest bit tired.

In the bathroom, most of our staff has always been a huge fan of large bathrooms and this one was one you could lose yourself in. The big shower, curved shower bars, marble everywhere and the Bath and Body Works toiletries are an added bonus for all travelers. We asked for extra towels and the maid service was timely and responsive to my needs.

Even the housekeepers greeted us in the hall as you pass as we passed each time, can you imagine?

What really makes this hotel special is VIVO Restaurant and Crush Nightclub. These are two award winners in their own respect and they would put many hotel restaurants and bars to shame.

VIVO is not only Zagat rated, but has earned Hartford Magazine's "Best Hotel Dining" two years in a row, and Connecticut Magazine's "Best Hotel Dining" for Hartford County 2008. Their service is impeccable; request one of the best servers we have ever had the opportunity to be filled with knowledge of the food and wine pairings, Jon Carlo, who has been with VIVO since its opening and you will see why he is the best money can buy.... With your tip that is....



The inside of the restaurant offers another upbeat setting with rich dark wood colors, an open kitchen area for guests dining can see the food prepared and tall glass windows overlook the streets of Hartford. While we were dining it was great to see the snowfall through the window and all the while being kept warm inside with some of the most amazing tastes found in the State of Connecticut.



VIVO uses the "Fresh Ingredients prepared simply as their signature tagline and it holds true for some of the best selections offered both for lunch and for dinner. The combination of the Napa Valley style and the Mediterranean flavors will leave you yearning for more.

For appetizers, or small plates as VIVO would describe them, the ones you can not miss are the Seared Beef Carpaccio with Lemon Parmigiano Aioli for \$11 and the Baby Arugula Salad with Sliced Bosc Pears, Candied Pecans served with a Vanilla and Honey Vinaigrette for \$7. This gives a whole new meaning to salad. Just when you thought lettuce was just lettuce, not after trying this sweet delight. If you're looking for a little more New England flavor, try the Sautéed Prince Edward Island Mussels, with Shallots, Garlic and Red Pepper Chili Flake and finished with Sherry Wine and Marinara.



The appetizer that takes our best of menu and is not to be missed is the Smoked Salmon Tian stuffed with Avocado mousse and served with crème fraîche and topped off with caviar. Nothing says royalty like this one. Well worth the \$12 and then some.

While the appetizers are more than enough food for a casual evening with drinks, you will not want to pass up their "Big Plates." VIVO's Chef de Cuisine William Reardon wants you to experience the difference with unique menu items and large proportions that are going to leave you spinning in circles from delight when you leave after dessert.



Our first big plate was the Grilled Certified Angus New York Strip served with Gorgonzola Roasted Potatoes, Asparagus and a Zinfandel Demi-Glace. A huge slab of meat prepared perfectly simply melts in your mouth with every bite. This steak was better than some we have sampled for \$48-50 in New York restaurants.

Since VIVO has created an opportunity to really enjoy seafood, we highly recommend the Seared Sea Scallops served over Risotto with watercress and roasted pignoli nuts and scented with a Penrod drizzle. Can you say flavor! The flavor pops so much it is likely to sock you in the face literally with something to go home and try to recreate.

Desserts, ah Desserts... how could one enjoy this Italian fare without sampling some of the signature desserts VIVO has to offer. Our sampling included some of their house made Tiramisu, the Zabaglione with fresh fruit and the Pumpkin Cheesecake with a Cinnamon Infused Crème Anglaise. While these three are highly recommended, there are nine choices to choose from, all of which are

amazing and make it hard to pick just one.

If you thought VIVO had great dinner options, we recommend stopping in for lunch. Their pizzas are nothing short of impressive. Forget about those fake pizzas and check out their flat bread wood fire pizzas, they are worth every penny. Combine a Pannini and one of their tall cool drinks and lunch will have never sounded this good before. The Vanilla Lemonade with fresh fruit is the best non-alcoholic drink anywhere!



While some will really want to just relax after dinner and overcome the food coma, we suggest taking just a short break and head down to one of Hartford's hottest lounges Crush, which because it is located in the lobby, makes it even more appealing..



Our experience came from one of Crush's Monthly VIP events, titled From Crush With Love a special Valentine event featuring martinis with names like Love Potion Number 9 and Valentini. If you are looking for a place that is all the likes of Miami, New York and Vegas all wrapped into one quaint spot with plush white leather couches, nice mood lighting and one heck of a nice bar area. When the live DJ is there and the video images are shown on the wall, it makes for one cool party. The best thing about Crush is if you are kicking back the martinis like we did, you can just stumble back to the room as the elevators are right across the hall for the convenience of those who like their signature drinks as we did.

After you have enjoyed the guilty pleasures of fine dining and a night of too many alcoholic beverages, we highly encourage taking the time to schedule a spa service at Glo, which is located on the 22nd floor of the hotel and with the infinity pool and full glass windows surrounding a complete sense of beauty and well being is finalized with a nice relaxing time by the pool with

stunning views of Downtown Hartford.



Two must have services that will leave you wondering where

reality starts and the dream world ends are the Glo Stone Massage and the Monticelli Mud Wrap. Their staff is all about your relaxing experience. From the tranquility welcome that includes a special blend of palmarosa, rosewood, cedar, grapefruit, rose and orange essential oils placed just below the nose to help the relaxing experience start to the knowledge of each of the therapists walking you through each step of a treatment to make sure you are more than just relaxed, but put into a state of enjoyment you will not forget.

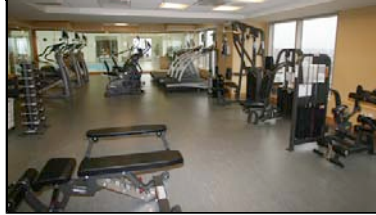


Glo offers a very intimate setting for their clients and even offers a chance to continue with a relaxing afternoon or early evening. A full selection of spa products is available for purchase as well.

If you do not want to leave home without working out for a couple of days, the workout facility is a hotel dream. While most facilities will offer a couple of treadmills and one basic machine for weights, the Marriott Hartford Downtown has created an area that with the views will make you want to workout while you are traveling. The nautilus equipment is state of the art and all of the treadmills are equipped with flat panel televisions to keep you current on all the latest sports and news.

The Marriott Hartford Downtown centrally located within walking distance of the Wadsworth gallery, the river, Busnell Park and it is just off the I-91, for those looking for an easy on and off the Interstate, this is your hotel.

Whether you are traveling to Hartford on business or just looking for a weekend get-away, the Marriott Hartford Downtown is a place that is right for every level of traveler. It will fit those on a tight budget and will allow those who want to splurge on a weekend that they will not forget for a long time.



To make a reservation, visit the Marriott website at www.marriott.com or contact the hotel directly at 860 249-8000

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