

Worth[®]

Spotlight: The Post Oak Hotel at Uptown Houston

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Houston billionaire Tilman Fertitta on creating the hotel that his city needs.



Sitting in the lobby of The Post Oak Hotel with Tilman Fertitta is a study in multitasking. The billionaire owner of the Landry's restaurant group, the Houston Rockets NBA team and numerous entertainment and hospitality ventures—including, most recently, this five-star hotel—Fertitta toggles between chatting about his latest projects, passing on instructions to an assistant and glad-handing a steady stream of passersby, some of whom ask for a photo, others who just want to shake his hand or introduce him to a visiting friend. Through it all, he's constantly scanning the grand room for any minute imperfections, fluffing up a pillow or rocking a side table to see if it's stable. "We did a lot of the design in-house, and they drew what I wanted," he says. "I approved the color palettes, every pillow, every rug and every piece of artwork"—the latter including works by Frank Stella, Robert Motherwell, Donald Sultan and others, pulled from Fertitta's own American art collection.

While the entrepreneur is known for being hands-on in all of his endeavors, this project—opened in late 2018—was a particularly personal labor: Fertitta sees it as a

love letter to his hometown. “Houston is poised to be the third-largest city in the country and draws travelers from all over the world, including those in industries like energy and medicine. But we didn’t have somewhere truly world-class and first-class for them to stay,” he says. “Being in hospitality and a community leader, I wanted to do this for the community, and it gave me as much joy as anything I’ve ever done. The city deserves a property like this.”

Though an official final cost has not been revealed, Fertitta estimates that it took about \$1.5 million per room (multiply that by 250 guest rooms and 20 residential apartments for a guesstimate of over \$400 million) to give Houston the five-star hotel of its dreams. On a recent visit, we got a look at some of the elements that help make The Post Oak stand out and the ways in which Fertitta’s passions have come to life.

DESIGN IN THE DETAILS



Rising 38 stories high in Houston’s Uptown/Galleria neighborhood, The Post Oak is a mixed-use development housing residences, retail, dining, meeting spaces and more, envisioned by Gensler Architects in collaboration with Fertitta’s in-house development department. At its core is the hotel, centered on a dramatic lobby paneled in Frank Stella works, lined with woven silk carpets and topped by a Czech-made chandelier modeled after the one hanging in the Dubai Opera House. Miles of Calcutta marble lead to more art-adorned spaces, including a cozy mezzanine library, an elegant ballroom and the buzzing H Bar, which houses a notable collection of vintage photographs (don’t miss the one of Brigitte Bardot taken at Houston’s now-demolished Shamrock Hotel).

More original photography can be found in the rooms, along with other thoughtful touches requested by Fertitta. (Though he won't reveal any specific hotels that inspired him, he does admit to "taking pictures of everything" when traveling.) With entry-level rooms starting at 500-square-feet, the accommodations are spacious and residential, with a muted palette, separate seating areas and details like shaving mirrors and foot rests in the showers, ring holders by the sinks and fluffy slippers (no paper-thin slide-ons here). Guests of the Concierge Level have access to a private lounge with skyline views, while the top Post Oak and Presidential Suites—featuring perks like full kitchens and dining areas, furnished balconies, wine fridges or private elevators—have already hosted such guests as Beyoncé, Drake and President Obama.

DESTINATION DINING



Given Fertitta's restaurant empire, it's no surprise that dining at The Post Oak is a big draw for both visitors and locals. Operating under the Landry's umbrella, the outlets include both outposts of some of the company's more upscale brands—such as the Maestro's Steakhouse and Willie G's Seafood—as well as all-new concepts created specifically for the hotel. Among the latter is Bloom & B, a light, garden-inspired spot serving beautifully-presented seasonal fare; Craft F&B, for wood-fired pizza and Southern-accented pub favorites; and Bouchee Patisserie, a colorful spot for homemade sweets.

Many of the eateries pull from the hotel's impressive 30,000-bottle-strong wine collection, which was built under the guidance of master sommelier Keith Goldston using a \$3 million "starter fund." While the stock features its share of flashy finds—magnums of every Chateau Mouton Rothschild special label since 1970, several bottles

of Bordeaux from the 1800s, over 100 large format options—the overall collection was crafted with depth and variety in mind. “We could have just spent money, but we wanted to make sure to find a good balance, represent different regions and have something in a variety of categories and price points,” says Goldston. “Every wine has a story to tell, and we want to tell those stories and build a program that will improve and deepen over time.” To truly appreciate the collection, book a tasting or wine pairing dinner in The Cellar, an intimate dining room where some of the best vintages are on display.

LIVE THE HIGH LIFE



Luxury at The Post Oak also translates to the experiences. Shoppers will find elevated options on site, from an auto showroom lined with Bugattis, Bentleys and Rolls-Royces to 29 North, a one-off boutique that—under the direction of a former Bergdorf Goodman buyer—stocks high-end clothing and accessories from around the world, many exclusive to the store. An outdoor pool is ringed by cushy cabanas, while on the fifth floor, the 20,000-square-foot spa features notable amenities (like “zero gravity” relaxation chairs) and a menu of services ranging from the decadent (like two-hour rituals drawing from global healing traditions) to the high-tech (facials performed using the performance-driven In Skin machine). The hotel also helps connect guests to the best of the city Fertitta so loves: Exclusive for this year, to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the lunar landing, is a \$10,000 package that includes accommodations, food credits and spa treatments at the hotel, plus round-trip helicopter and car transfers to NASA Johnson Space Center for a private guided tour and lunch with an astronaut.