



Great Escapes

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Hotel brings back movie glamour

PORTLAND, Ore. — Jimmy Stewart gazes out from the wall in trademark befuddlement, trying to grasp the vagaries of representative government in the 1939 classic film "Mr. Smith Goes to Washington." Jean Arthur and Thomas Mitchell lend patient support.

The scene plays out — in black and white, of course — in a photo above the sofa in our guest room.

Hollywood's Golden Age might seem a peculiar theme for a new boutique hotel in Portland, but it makes more sense when you learn that the Hotel deLuxe occupies a building constructed in 1912. Surely the heyday of this old girl coincided with the era it now celebrates: the 1930s, '40s and '50s.

Spokeswoman Dina Nishjoka says that the Aspen Hotel Group simply "wanted to bring back the old glamour of the hotel."

Consider it done. The deLuxe replaces the Mallory Hotel, a local institution that had seen better days. An exhaustive, three-month renovation cost more than \$10 million, and when the 130-room deLuxe opened this past spring, it provided Portland a welcome dose of boutique-hotel charm. (It is a sister property to the city's most trendy boutique option, the Hotel Lucia.)

From the street, the lobby is reached by a wide interior staircase — something you don't find in hotels much anymore, and a bit like the climb from Hollywood Boulevard to the Kodak Theatre on Oscar night. Straight ahead is a huge screen on which is projected an ever-changing sequence of still frames from those chestnut movies.

Other Hollywood photos — more than 400 in all — are exhibited throughout the hotel. Entire floors are devoted to



filmmakers or stars, with Hitchcock warranting a floor all to himself, and such song-and-dance stalwarts as Judy Garland, Fred Astaire and Gene Kelly getting another.

One Sunday each month, a classic film is screened for free in one of the ballrooms. Guests may settle in with food and drink.

Of course, this Hollywood gimmick alone would not be enough to keep a refurbished hotel viable. But the deLuxe also delivers impressively in the areas of creature comfort.

The building obviously has great bones, and a number of 1940s design touches were appreciated in our room: high ceiling, crown molding, baseboards, walk-in closet, double-hung windows that actually open (a blessing in a city of such moderate climate and invigorating air).

The color scheme was soothing — butter yellow and pale yellow with white trim. The design touches were art deco, but with the contemporary flair you might find at a Restoration Hardware store. The linens were of supreme quality, requisite these days for an urban boutique hotel. And there was a dose of whimsy: Where else do you see green seersucker fabric used for guest-room robes?

All the modern amenities were here, too, including a pivoting flat-screen, high-definition TV.

The staff was friendly from the front door to the lobby to the restaurant (Gracie's), but one front desk receptionist was a bit too cavalier in offering advice on Portland's public-transportation system. Her information was incomplete in one instance, wrong in another, nearly costing us a dinner reservation. Might be better to investigate that kind of thing on your own.

Gracie's serves a fine breakfast and lets you order off a menu and be served at your table — eschewing that unexceptional buffet you find at just about every chain hotel.

The Driftwood Room, meanwhile, evokes the same Hollywood era that the hotel's photographs depict. Its curving bar is accented with leather, while low, indirect lighting creates a cozy vibe. Only one of Jimmy Stewart's characters would be flummoxed in here.

■ The Hotel deLuxe is at 729 S.W. 15th Ave., Portland, a few blocks' walk from the city's stylish Pearl District, as well as the downtown magnet of Pioneer Square. Room rates from \$139. Information and reservations: (866) 895-2094, (503) 219-2094; www.hoteldeLuxeportland.com.

— Eric Nolan



In the lobby of Portland's Hotel deLuxe, images of Doona Rees and Jimmy Stewart in "It's a Wonderful Life" are projected on the wall. Above left, rooms now have high-definition TVs.