

Tried and Tested

HOTEL CHECK WASHINGTON, D.C.

The Dupont Hotel



Heights boardroom balcony and Superior Room (below)



WHAT'S IT LIKE? The Dupont Hotel sparkles from head to toe, having undergone a full transformation to one of the sleekest modern luxury properties in Washington, D.C. It embodies its distinctive Dupont Circle neighborhood—quite an achievement for a hotel of its size—and its polished, though unfussy way made for a very comfortable and productive stay.

WHERE IS IT? Undergoing a renaissance of its own, the Dupont Circle area is one of the most vibrant and diverse residential and business areas of Washington, D.C. Tree-lined avenues lead to high-end retail stores and boutiques, coffee houses, museums and national monuments. It's about a 15-minute cab ride from Union Station, 30 minutes from Reagan National Airport, and around an hour from Dulles International Airport, depending on traffic, and is near the Dupont Circle Metro station.

HOW MANY ROOMS? There are 327 rooms, including 15 suites, and a multilevel Presidential Suite.

ROOM FACILITIES With cool, plush furniture and luxurious touches, all rooms feature complimentary high-speed Internet access, ergonomic work areas, iPod docking stations, 42-inch flat-screen plasma TVs and DVD players. My studio suite was apartment-like, with hardwood floors, dramatic 180-degree city views from floor to ceiling and a shared balcony. I slept well on the natural down duvets and bedding. The bathroom design was clean, contemporary and luxurious, yet functional, from the bathroom's heated tiled floors and towel racks, to the large walk-in shower with dual heads, Kiehl's bath products and plush Sferra bathrobes.

I was on Level Nine, a separate, exclusive luxury experience within The Dupont Hotel. It was a concierge floor, with personalized services, complimentary food, and total privacy. Dedicated staff made sure my needs were met, and their kindness and attention to detail were exceptional. They sent me a questionnaire in advance to get a sense of my interests and what I liked to eat and drink—and then provided those things in my room upon arrival, along with books on the subjects I enjoy. Complimentary culinary offerings throughout the day included breakfast, hors d'oeuvres, beverages and sweets in the lounge,

and the private driver service (based on availability) was a real help in D.C., where back-to-back meetings are often your fate.

RESTAURANT AND BAR

Café Dupont is the hotel's modern French bistro, and clearly a go-to neighborhood spot. I enjoyed not only creative steak frites and several oyster varieties, but also fresh produce and ingredients from local sources. A garden nearby provides seasonal menu inspiration. Filled with natural light, the Bar Dupont is a popular spot for business drinks. The smart, chic style continues throughout the bar and restaurant.

BUSINESS AND MEETING FACILITIES

A business center with computers and printers is open around the clock, and complimentary high-speed

Internet access is available throughout the hotel. More than 9,000 square feet of flexible, brand-new meeting and event space can cater to up to 350 guests; 10 dedicated suites are equipped for meetings.

LEISURE ACTIVITIES A 24-hour fitness center, in-room fitness training, massage and spa services are available. The concierge staff arranged a last-minute aromatherapy massage in the comfort of my suite, which allowed me to relax after a busy day of meetings. Shopping, cafés and galleries abound in the neighborhood, as it's one of the top areas to live and work in D.C.

VERDICT With a central location on the historic Dupont Circle, The Dupont Hotel is an outstanding choice for modern luxury and superlative service. I loved the apartment-like feel of the accommodations, the balcony, the free access to Wi-Fi, and friendly staff. The fact that the hotel takes time to learn about what makes guests comfortable prior to arrival, and then provides it, is a service that should turn first-time guests into loyal followers.

PRICE Standard rates start at \$349.

CONTACT The Dupont Hotel, 1500 New Hampshire Ave. NW, Washington, D.C.; tel. 202-483-6000 or 800-423-6953; www.doylecollection.com/dupont —Clint White