



THE RITTENHOUSE

THE RITTENHOUSE - PHILADELPHIA'S WORLD CLASS HOTEL

BY BARRY KAY

The Rittenhouse Hotel is located in downtown Philadelphia, adjacent to the business district, premier shopping and restaurants. The 33-story luxury hotel overlooks historic Rittenhouse Square in one of Philadelphia's toniest districts. The hotel features 98 guestrooms ranging in size from 450 to 600 square feet, the largest in the city. Aside from the beauty of the Rittenhouse, its fabulous location, and Lacroix, its haute cuisine restaurant, the hotel's biggest asset is its ubiquitous, charming and dynamic vice president and general manager David Benton. David is the quintessential goodwill ambassador who views the hotel as his house and the guests as his family. On Fridays and Saturdays, guests often meet David at the concierge desk, where he offers them a flute of fine champagne and chocolate-dipped strawberries as they check in. For families with small children, David produces his Treasure Chest, toys for their children to choose from as their "Welcome to the Rittenhouse" present.

David Benton's work at the Rittenhouse is his passion. It doesn't surprise his staff to see the great lengths he will go to in order to satisfy his special requests. In fact, David has personally empowered each member of his staff to make sure guests are satisfied even if he is not there. On one recent Friday night, a sudden snow and sleet storm took Philadelphia by surprise and the staff at the Rittenhouse was concerned about the day's events. There was a large fundraiser with 300 guests and a wedding party with 200 scheduled that evening. As evening approached a panicky bride was afraid that she would not arrive at her own wedding on time because of the horrendous weather. To the rescue came David Benton in his SUV to securely and safely deliver the bride to the hotel in plenty of time for her extra special event. Whether it is an urgent bridal request or a request by a Far Eastern diplomat for Chinese food at 1 a.m., there is nothing that the Rittenhouse will let stand in the way to make their guests happy. Their empowerment and level of service makes the Rittenhouse stand out among the finest hotels in the world.

A seductive and alluring symbol stands in the courtyard of The Rittenhouse Hotel in the form of an Evangelos Frudakis bronze statue of an enchantress, gesturing as if to say, "Welcome to all who seek comfort!" But unlike the sirens of Greek mythology, this one offers to make good on her promise of comfort, indulgence and pleasure in an environment of magnificent cuisine and skilled service.

Our review team pulled into the driveway and approached the overhanging portico protecting the entrance to the hotel. We were immediately surrounded by a flurry of uniformed attendants who greeted us warmly while opening the door to the limo. A handsome doorman in a fur-collared overcoat and leather gloves escorted us through the main entrance, past smiling bellmen each nodding a greeting. The lobby of the Rittenhouse is a combination of Italian marble floor, ornate Greco-Roman columns and dark wood panels and glass. We were greeted at the front desk by a staff that saluted us with a hospitable and warm "Welcome to our home." A quick glance around the lobby produced a cozy feeling of actually standing in the vestibule of a large and stately mansion, which is punctuated with delicate hand-blown glass vases sinuously reaching for the ceiling with their thin elongated necks. "Flowers are an important feature in making this hotel feel more like you're in someone's home," says Benton. "It goes according to our team's master plan of providing a gracious, comfortable setting for our guests, as if they were

part of our family."

Our review team's room, although referred to as "standard," in fact, resembled a junior suite in any other fine hotel. It was spacious and well appointed with a comfortable couch and coffee table, elegant writer's table, and hi-speed Internet cable network available for complimentary use. Other amenities included large flat screen TVs, and a marble bathroom with oversized shower. The Rittenhouse is Wi-Fi equipped and Internet service is available from any room anywhere in the hotel. The room's walls were adorned with subtle earth tone wall paint and lovely framed works of art, and the floors were covered in beautifully designed fine carpeting the size of the room. The enormous, extra comfortable bed with pillow top mattress and 310-count sheets was sooo inviting after a long trip. All guest bathrooms are equipped with Aromatherapy amenities that revive, balance and relax. Of course, the ultimate deluxe surprise was a plate of chocolate-dipped strawberries dressed in tuxedos of white and dark chocolate. Written in chocolate across the fine china plate was Welcome Back Mr. Buehrmann, addressed to the president and founder of Seven Stars and Stripes Inc.

The Rittenhouse is also blessed with Lacroix, a top gourmet restaurant rated one of the best in the U.S. Chef Mathew Levin is reinventing fine dining in this city with daring ingredients and unorthodox cooking techniques. He experiments with tastes and styles and offers a tasting menu of three to five courses, as well as an a la carte menu. How about abalone with charcoal sauce? Also on the menu are beautifully prepared scallops with a sun dried tomato jam.

After touring the hotel and fabulous Rittenhouse "chocolate factory," which would have made Willy Wonka jealous, it was time to present our world-recognized Seven Stars and Stripes hand-crafted Brass Award of Excellence to David Benton, Mathew Levin and the Rittenhouse. We then bid farewell to the fabulous Rittenhouse Hotel and David Benton, the true secret behind the success of this amazing hotel. David's efforts and his wonderful staff have put the Rittenhouse in a league all its own.

Go to www.rittenhousehotel.com

