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Review: Witt Istanbul Hotel, Turkey

With slick décor and breathtaking views across one of Turkey's most impressive cities, the new penthouse suites at Witt Istanbul should come with a word of warning: you may never want to leave.

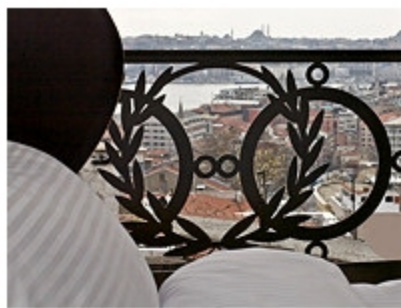


When we arrived at the hotel one blazing August day, we were immediately gobsmacked by the view from the terrace: a panoramic sweep of the famous Bosphorous shoreline and, inland, stunning landmarks such as the Aya Sophia looming majestically on the horizon. The floor-to-ceiling windows look out onto two private plant-lined terraces - one with a sun lounger, which swiftly proved to be a very scenic way to relax after an early flight.

The Suites opened in April 2008, but the two glorious penthouses are a recent addition. Ours, number 61, has retro American design touches: a tongue-in-cheek mural behind the bed looks like it's straight out of a 1950s diner, as does the huge curving wooden headboard.

The bed is enormous and extremely comfortable, although it is certainly worth dragging yourself out of it for breakfast downstairs in the slick and airy reception/dining area, adorned with glistening black tiles and beige furniture.

For breakfast we were greeted with a continental buffet and the option of eggs (my eggs had cheerfully been made into a smiley face with the additions of a cherry tomato and a sprig of rosemary) and among our fellow diners - a mix of well-heeled Americans and Europeans - were a couple with their young baby, whom the staff cooed over delightedly.



The English-speaking employees were a friendly and helpful bunch and happy to chat about their city, although there was a tendency to assume complicated directions were easy to understand. Don't be afraid to ask for clarification about anything, whether it's how to buy ferry tickets at the port, or whether or not the hotel has a DVD collection.

Turns out it does, by the way - the large flat screen TV in our suite being another draw, as well as a comfortable sofa, a dining table and a desk from which you can take advantage of the free Wi-Fi Internet access. Emailing your friends from the terrace is something else again: one glance at those views and you can't help but grin excitedly and feel like pampered royalty (just try not to show off too much on Facebook). The room even has its own small library: an eclectic jumble of fiction and coffee-table tomes. Alan Bennett's *The Uncommon Reader* proved the perfect size, weight and tone for a blast on the sun lounger first thing in the morning before city explorations.

The Suites are located on a hilly street in the Cihangir district, so a bit of a walk from the main attractions, although the trams and funicular prove very convenient. Over our four-day trip to the stunning Turkish city, we wandered from mosques to bazaars and stopped in at hip rooftop bars that boast the "best views of the city". But, each time we sat there, sipping a glass of 13 lira wine and taking in the scenery, we felt quietly smug. We knew where the best view of the city was to be found, and it was all ours (until the flight home, that is).



The Witt Istanbul

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