Southbound

NEW ORLEANS TURNS 300

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Plus
GEEKY GETAWAYS TOP DESTINATIONS FOR DORKS
Union Station Hotel Nashville

Fresh off a major renovation, this boutique Music City hotel is back on track

by JENNIFER GREEN

In the early twentieth century, Nashville’s Union Station was a bustling terminal, serving passengers traveling on eight railroads. It was also an architectural marvel, with Beaux-Arts Revival–style towers and turrets that made it a stunning downtown landmark. But by mid-century, the station—along with the popularity of rail travel—had begun to decline, and in 1979, it was abandoned. Nearly a decade later, with the help of a preservation-minded investor, Union Station Hotel was born. A $15.5 million renovation last year restored its beauty and added modern touches, including marble bathrooms, ergonomic workspaces, and striking commissioned art pieces.

My husband and I decided to bring our young daughters—who adore staying in even pedestrian hotels—to experience the property, but I had reservations about bringing children to a boutique hotel without a pool. Turns out, I needn’t have fretted.

Their jaws dropped as soon as we passed through the massive lobby doors. Warm light poured in through the original stained glass of the barrel-vaulted ceiling, which holds three massive crystal chandeliers. Gold-accented “angels of commerce” figures graced the atrium walls; below them, giant limestone fireplaces anchored the ends of the marble-floored sitting area.

Upon entering our suite, we discovered that our room with a king bed, white oak accent wall, and custom New York–made headboard gave way to an exquisite second room with bunk beds, bean bags, and a magnetic chalkboard. My worries about child-friendliness flew out the window.

Before heading out for dinner, we opted for drinks in the lobby at Carter’s Bar, situated at the terminal’s former ticket counter. I knew we made the right decision; I sipped the “Gaidy’s,” made with local Pickers Vodka and named after Gladys “Happy” Carter, a beloved terminal worker from the station’s heyday. Served in front of one of the fireplaces, we listened to live music, a frequent happening here, by a country duo called the Young Fabian; my music-loving younger daughter was thrilled with their Patsy Cline covers and original songs.

As I finished my drink, I looked around the lobby at guests wheeling suitcases and people pointing at the stained-glass ceiling. In many ways, Union Station is experiencing another heyday with travelers filling its rooms once again.

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WHILE YOU’RE THERE

ENLIGHTEN One of Nashville’s most beautiful historic landmarks—the 1890s old main post office—houses the Center for the Visual Arts. See both regional and international exhibitions, including prints from MoMA. VisitWatch out, Nashville! Be sure to take in the Chicago-based artist’s eye-catching sculptures in the beautifulhuman-shaped bustiful ball made from repurposed and found materials. Opening November 10, foxglove.org

INDULGE Here or buildings that housed Marathon Motor Works in the 1960s, Marathon Village is a unique enclave of Nashville artisans and craftsmen. Shoppers can find a blend of jewelry at Island Cowgirl or a premium leather handbag at Caro. Hoover. Don’t miss Nashville’s story. Antiques, Archeology, movie memorabilia on the TV show American Pickers. Finally, after shopping, walk to Graceland. Switch names to Darden Ar- tisan Brewery and 7us.com. marathenvillage.org

bread & BUTTER