

Southbound

NEW ORLEANS TURNS **300**

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with*

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**GEEKY
GETAWAYS**
TOP
DESTINATIONS
FOR DORKS



Lobby

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 Romanesque 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 some preservation-minded investors, Union Station Hotel was born. A \$15.5 million renovation last year

restored its polish and added modern touches, including marble bathrooms, ergonomic work spaces, 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 admit I had reserva-



tions 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 cowhide headboard gave way to an adorable second room with bunk beds, bean bags, and a magnetic dartboard. My worries about child-friendliness flew out the window.

Before heading out for dinner, we opted for a drink in the lobby at Carter's Bar, situated at the terminal's former ticket counter. I knew we made the right deci-

WHILE YOU'RE THERE

ENLIGHTEN One of Nashville's most beautiful historic landmarks—the 1934 old main post office—houses Frist Center for the Visual Arts. See both regional and international exhibitions, including this fall's *Nick Cave: Feat.*, showcasing the Chicago-based artist's eye-catching "soundsuits," elaborate human-shaped sculptural forms made from repurposed and found materials. Opening November 10. fristcenter.org

INDULGE Born of buildings that housed Marathon Motor Works in the early 1900s, Marathon Village is a unique enclave of Nashville artisans and craftspeople. Snag a one-of-a-kind piece of jewelry at Island Cowgirl or a premium leather handbag at Ceri Hoover. Don't miss Mike Wolfe's store, *Antique Archeology*, made famous on the TV show *American Pickers*. Finally, toast your shopping luck at Grinder's Switch Winery or Corsair Artisan Brewery and Taproom. marathonvillage.com

sion as I sipped the "Gladys," made with local Pickers Vodka and named after Gladys "Happy" Carter, a beloved terminal worker from the station's heyday. Seated in front of one of the fireplaces, we listened to live music (a frequent happening here) by a country duo called the Young Fables; my music-loving younger daughter was smitten 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 terminal once again. ❖

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