



## Beyond the stars at the Washington Jefferson Hotel in NYC

*Posted on Thursday, February 26th, 2015 by Mike Dunphy*



*The Washington Jefferson Hotel in Hell's kitchen*

Location, Location, Location—probably nowhere else in the world does the familiar mantra ring truer than in New York City, where costs of just about everything, from haircuts to shoe shines, change from block to block. Indeed, for hotels, the address can factor more into room rates than the number of stars or diamonds on the resume. For guests to New York, this often means triangulating the sweet spot between the two, usually in proximity to Times Square, the default starting point for accommodation in New York. But visitors to the city, especially first timers, should considering doing as the locals do and keep well clear of blocks around Broadway and 42nd St and discover far more value just a few blocks west at hotels like the [Washington Jefferson Hotel in Hell's Kitchen](#).



*the Lobby at the WJ*

Turning the corner of 51st St. and 8th Ave on a particularly frigid day in February, the glowing red calligraphy WJ on the marquis above the main entrance of the hotel appeared especially welcoming for its promise of warmth and shelter. Stepping inside, there's no roaring fire, but plenty of wood, or wood panels at least, in the lobby, atop a marble floor and backed by a classic panoramic black and white Manhattan scene behind the reception desk. Taken together, along with the small lobby to the right, the space appears as a handsome, yet modest, fabrication of something a bit more luscious and spacious at a more luxury hotel.





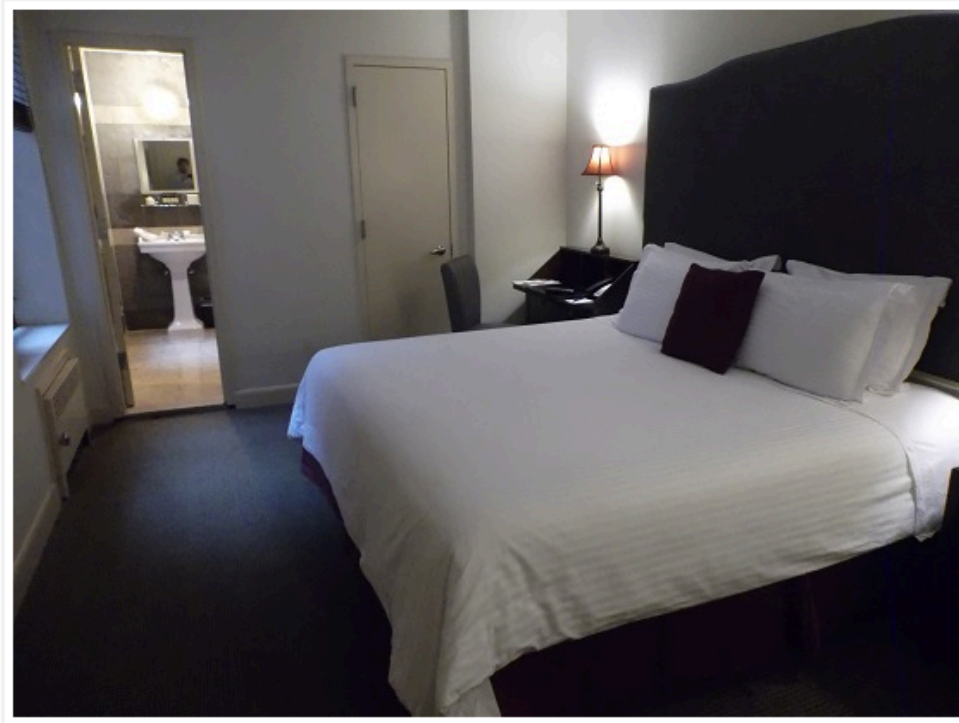
*Out the lobby window at the WJ*

Nonetheless, it's a bit of surprise to learn the Washington Jefferson has just three stars, considering the polish of both the material and staff, who welcome guests and perform all duties with the gait of a higher rating, although perhaps without the quality of suit, meticulous arrangement of every single hair, and no-questions-asked policy for guest requests ("Do you not already have shampoo in your room?").



*Up the stairs at the WJ*

It's in the somewhat narrow elevator and decades-worn marble slab staircase to the 158 rooms and suites upstairs that hint at the hotel's history, which started before World War II as two separate hotels — the Washington and the Jefferson—that mainly housed performers who worked in the area.



*Room 431 at the WJ*

Number 431 opened into a Superior room (starting at about \$200 per night) one of the hotel's larger units (solo travelers, check out the [petite rooms](#)), well-appointed (but not overwhelmingly so) with a very comfortable king bed topped with Frette linens with a work desk on one side and a small seating area on the other. On the farthest end, a good-sized bathroom comes stocked with [C.O. Bigelow products](#), a nice NYC touch, and a Jacuzzi tub, which is only really useful if you're 5' 9" or less. Free Wi-Fi is definite highlight, especially considering how many other NYC hotels charge exorbitant rates for it. The one window, however, looks to an uninspiring view of the building's (or two buildings') central shaft, complete with [Rear Window-close views](#) into other rooms, but it's quieter than rooms on the street side.



*C.O. Bigelow at the WJ*

Outside of rest, there are few reasons to linger long in the hotel during your stay, but who wants to in a city like New York? Happily, the WJ is easy walking distance from Times Square, Central Park, and the Theater District, while Hell's Kitchen, a neighborhood of immense variety, value, and culinary talent, is just outside the door, but not right on the stoop. Despite the range of dining choices, it's worth taking at least one meal in the [Shimizu Sushi](#) and Shochu Bar, attached to the hotel, which does some excellent, although not euphoric, kitchen work at a very affordable price.





#### *Complimentary walking tours at the WJ*

Ultimately, what sticks in the mind when checking out of the Washington Jefferson is the more than 3-star effort by the staff and management, both of which demonstrate ambition and thoughtfulness beyond the usual for the class, as demonstrated by the free tours of the neighborhood runs each week for guests. Sure, the rooms and amenities probably aren't the stuff of dreams, and the narrowness and occasional tight spaces of the old building can surprise those not unaccustomed to the New York scale of space, but it's plenty for modest appetites, and quite rich to those with less.

*Mike Dunphy stayed as a guest of the Washington Jefferson Hotel and Shimuzu Sushi*