

Aoi Travel.

CANADA

**Sleeping Around:
This Chicago Hotel Trumps All Others**

by D. Grant Black



The Trump International Hotel & Tower Chicago is quite a mouthful but in the Windy City, people here just call it "The Trump" since it opened in 2009. Now Chicago's newest, largest and most luxurious property boldly slices the city's downtown skyline like King Arthur's Excalibur sword; at 92-storeys, The Trump easily dwarfs 1920s neighbours like the Wrigley and Chicago Tribune buildings. The Trump Chicago is like a modern in-fill house in a 1920s neighbourhood with polished stainless steel, iridescent-tinted glass — and a whole lot of elegant luxury.

My partner, Patricia, and I arrive via rental car on a Thursday afternoon at The Trump's front entrance, which resembles the facade of a modern international airport terminal. That's when the attentive service begins. The doorman and valet quietly pounce on us with offers to hide away our car while we check in. As I wait to check in, three suit-attired middle-age men ahead of me chat in plummy English accents to the Swedish reception clerk. So far the Trump is very international. When it's my turn to check in, I respond to the Swedish clerk's question on how I am with, "my throat is a bit dry since I arrived in Chicago today."

Within minutes of arriving in our room on the 18th floor, there's a knock on the door. When I open it, a young man from room service stands with a tray of steaming chamomile tea and small jars of Austrian honey. "This will help your throat, sir," he explains like the hotel nurse, then sets it down on a table near the window and quietly slips away. More attentive service. I'm glad I

opened my mouth during check-in. This was no Holiday Inn.

For this kind of attentive service, the Trump Chicago's 339 rooms start at \$475 US for a Deluxe King City View (our room) to \$895 US for a Deluxe One Bedroom Suite City View. Since it's a very new hotel (2009), the rooms exude contemporary flare with custom-designed furnishings, floor-to-ceiling windows and fully-equipped kitchens. We thought that we'd mistakenly checked into a suite but then we were told The Trump boasts the largest hotel rooms in Chicago. The Trump Chicago's hotel portion is only 29 floors then residential suites shoot up another 73 floors to a \$30 million penthouse topper that, according to our helpful concierge, is still for sale.



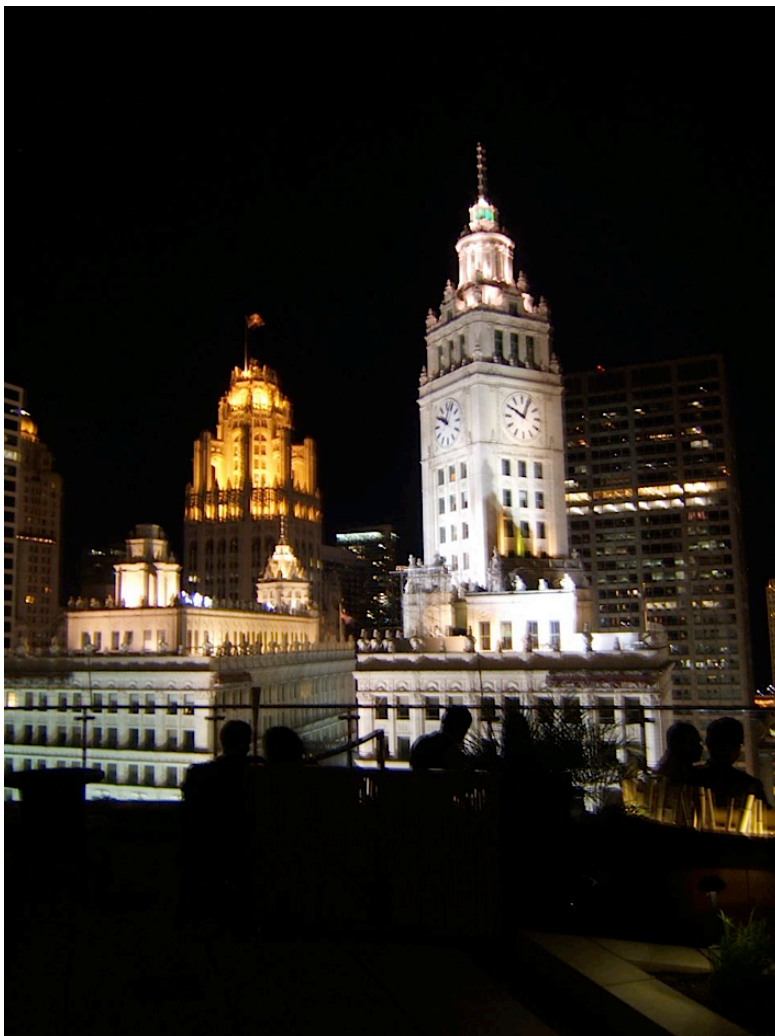
Directly below our north-east facing room is the Chicago River. And, since the Trump Chicago is located at the juncture of the Loop and North Michigan Avenue, we not only look directly across to the Wrigley and Chicago Tribune buildings, but we can also view a slice of Lake Michigan a few blocks away. This four-star Chicago "boutique hotel" is also within walking distance of the Magnificent Mile shopping district and Millennium Park, adjacent to Lake Michigan.

I can safely say that the Trump Chicago is at a higher level of luxury than many other luxury hotels I've stayed in because of their detail-oriented amenities, which includes personal attaché service and those quiet yet attentive staff. I thought I heard another knock at the door when I was in the glass-wall shower stall but then I realized it was just the TV.

At 8 p.m. we pop down two levels on the elevator to the 16th floor for our dinner reservation. When we leave the elevator, we walk through the Wine Gallery's gauntlet of wine bottles, which gives the effect of a wine cellar, to the entrance of Sixteen, the Trump Chicago's signature, Michelin-rated restaurant.



As we sit down, we realize we're directly across from the Wrigley and Chicago Tribune buildings again, which are now lit up like Spanish castles, but now two floors lower than our room. We can spot Lake Michigan, the Chicago River and the glow of this beautiful Midwestern city's downtown on a Thursday evening. Through the large glass panels, we can even spot couples and small groups outside on the Terrace deck enjoying cocktails. When I walk outside to take some photos of the surrounding buildings, the wind on the open deck of the hotel's 16th floor is what I expect in the Windy City; I stay well clear of the edge in case a large gust comes up.



Back in my seat, we find out Sixteen's five-star cuisine is modern American and the staff, from our maitre'd to the service staff, are never far away. Patricia orders a bottle of Mattoni, a Czech Carlsbad sparkling water, and from the extensive wine list that includes an Argentina kosher product, I chose a glass of pinot grigio from Kellerei Cantina Terlan. For appetizers, Patricia orders chilled lobster salad (\$24); I opt for the seared foie gras (\$24). Entrées are pork belly & tenderloin (\$42) with bourbon sauce for Patricia and instead of Midwestern red meat, I go light with wild sockeye salmon (\$40) with asparagus purée and mustard froth. We finish off our delicious, well-prepared meals with a mixed fruit plate for Patricia while I go light again with a berry dessert.

As the dining room starts to clear out around 10 p.m., we begin to chat with an adjacent table. T.J., who hails from a Kentucky city, is staying in a 29th floor suite with his wife, Cathy, who celebrates her 38th birthday tonight. T.J. insists on showcasing his native state's bourbon products so a few minutes later I'm holding a glass of Woodford Reserve, a super-premium small batch Kentucky bourbon, that he's graciously purchased for me.

"We're both staying at the Trump so we must both be successful," chortles the late-thirty-something T.J. "Yes," I agree. "We must be." At least for tonight. At The Trump, everybody feels like a millionaire.