

March 11, 2026  
Town & Country

# TOWN&COUNTRY

## The Secret History of New York City's Most Glamorous New Pool

*The private space inside the recently revamped Waldorf Astoria once hosted the likes of Ella Fitzgerald, Count Basie, and Cole Porter.*

By: Rachel King  
Impressions: 2,690,996

Agilded ceiling that once echoed with the voices of Ella Fitzgerald and Frank Sinatra now reflects ripples of water on the 25th floor of the [Waldorf Astoria New York](#). Known as the Starlight Pool, the luxe amenity was carved out of the former Starlight Roof, previously a rooftop dining and entertainment venue. The 6,000-square-foot space, once associated with performances by jazz age luminaries such as Count Basie and Cole Porter has been transformed into a swimming pool reserved for residents of the newly opened [Waldorf Astoria Residences](#) on Manhattan's Park Avenue.



*Drawing inspiration from a 1930s Art Deco Japanese kimono, Deniot reinterpreted the abstract floral pattern of the piece into the ceiling grill design and the floor mosaic surrounding the pool.*

March 11, 2026

Town & Country

The Starlight Pool anchors more than 50,000 square feet of private residential amenities. Designed by French architect Jean-Louis Deniot, [whose portfolio of work](#) spans from Bangkok to Belgravia, the room retains the drama of its past life while shifting its purpose for a new era. “My goal, and the main challenge, was to convey the Waldorf DNA without being too literal,” Deniot tells Town & Country. “Because it is a period building, it was important to preserve a real sense of atmosphere. I did not want the result to feel like a brand new box without a soul.”



*Waldorf Astoria Residences New York*

*An archival photograph shows the dance floor positioned at the center of the room, flanked by columns. The decor includes strings of lights draped between columns and large palms, reflective of the Art Deco era.*

The Starlight Roof first opened in 1931, coinciding with the opening of the hotel's new Park Avenue location. (The original Waldorf location opened in 1893 at Fifth Avenue and 33rd Street, but [moved to make way for the Empire State Building](#).) The roof became known as [a premier supper club featuring a retractable roof](#), allowing guests to dine, dance, and drink (post-prohibition) under the stars. It closed in 2017 when the hotel began what became an eight-year, \$2 billion renovation.

March 11, 2026  
Town & Country



*Bettmann//Getty Images*

*Composer Irving Berlin (left) with his wife Ellin and friends at the Starlight Roof in 1938.*



*Bettmann//Getty Images*

*Ethel Kennedy, Marlon Brando, and Jean Kennedy Smith at the Starlight Roof in 1974.*

The restoration converted much of the upper floors into condominiums while preserving the hotel's public spaces. But the ballroom's reinvention as a pool required significant structural work while preserving key architectural elements. The ceiling, for

March 11, 2026

Town & Country

example, rises 19 feet above fluted ceramic columns, with Art Deco motifs embedded in the detailing, a nod to the building's original aesthetic.



*Waldorf Astoria Residences New York*

*The footprint of the space, flanked by the original columns, was maintained, while Deniot updated the columns with fluted Raku ceramics, a Japanese enameled tiling technique.*

“The design needed to carry a sense of history without resorting to historical pastiche. The same thinking applied to the amenities, where there was no real starting point,” Deniot says. “Each space had to feel grounded in the Waldorf spirit and reflect that history, not by recreating the past, but by presenting a fresh interpretation of the Waldorf essence.”



*Waldorf Astoria Residences New York*

*Deniot says the new design should evoke the feeling of being in a pool area and an opulent ballroom simultaneously.*

March 11, 2026

Town & Country

The Starlight Pool's debut comes as the historic Park Avenue property marks its 95th anniversary this year. Over the decades, the Waldorf hosted royalty, heads of state, and entertainers, cementing its image as a center of power and glamour in New York. The Duke and Duchess of Windsor, for instance, met with the press upon their [arrival at the hotel in 1941](#). In 1954, dressed in the [Oriental Circlet Tiara and Queen Victoria's Crown Ruby Parure](#), the Queen Mother attended a ball at the hotel. Three years later, Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip stayed at the Waldorf Astoria [during their first visit to the United States](#), with a banquet held in their honor in the Grand Ballroom. That same year, the April in Paris Ball guest list, according to [Life Magazine](#), included the Duke and Duchess of Windsor, future President John F. Kennedy and Jackie Kennedy, and Marilyn Monroe and then-husband Arthur Miller.



*Bettmann//Getty Images*

*The Queen Mother seen walking through an honor guard formed by former Buckingham Palace guards at the Waldorf in 1954.*

Among the hotel's most enduring artifacts is [its lobby clock](#), which Queen Victoria had commissioned to be produced by The Goldsmiths' and Silversmiths' Company of London for the 1893 World's Fair in Chicago.

<https://www.townandcountrymag.com/leisure/travel-guide/a70595622/waldorf-astoria-residences-new-york-starlight-pool/>