

# Robb Report

UNITED KINGDOM

THE MANUAL OF MODERN LUXURY

WINTER 2020

AUTOMOTIVE • STYLE • WATCHES • AVIATION • JEWELLERY •  
TRAVEL • SPIRITS • WINE • BOATING • ART & DESIGN

## BEST — of the — BEST

RRP £9.95  
Issue 17



robbreport.co.uk

**PLUS:** Hugo Lloris, David Adjaye,  
Harley Davidson goes electric and  
the year's most compelling watches

STAYING POWER

# THE WALDORF ASTORIA, NEW YORK



The upper portion of a hotel that richly deserves the word “iconic” has been converted into ultra-luxe apartments. **Nick Scott checks in.**



**H**otels are sprinkled more liberally with stardust. Its popular culture credentials go well beyond starring roles in movies (including *The Godfather: Part III*), and a certain fruit and nut salad demanded of Basil Fawlty by a bumptious American guest: it was here that Cole Porter wrote much of his canon, during a 30-year residency, on a Steinway piano (which remains in the lobby) gifted to him by the hotel. After his death in 1964, Frank Sinatra took over his apartment for \$1m a year.

Grace Kelly and Prince Rainer of Monaco's engagement party was held here. Marilyn Monroe was a regular. The Duke and Duchess of Windsor, Winston Churchill and Presidents Hoover and Eisenhower also stayed within the splendid art deco edifice, which has become an integral part of New York's architectural fabric since it was built at 303 Park Avenue in 1931 (the hotel was previously on the site of the Empire State Building). Now, the 52-storey building's 1,400 guest rooms, just a few blocks from Central Park as well as Madison and Fifth Avenues, is being converted into 375 contemporary residences (from studios to penthouses, ranging in price from \$1.7 million to \$18.5 million) sitting atop what will, from 2022, be a 375-key hotel.

The Towers of the Waldorf Astoria project ([www.waldorftowers.nyc](http://www.waldorftowers.nyc)), which began

in 2014 and has cost over a billion dollars, involved a tricky balancing act for developer Dajia Insurance Group, architects Skidmore, Owings & Merrill and Paris-based interior designer Jean-Louis Deniot (whose CV also includes Paris's Four Seasons Hotel George V and London's Savoy). Modernisation of a building that is protected under New York's Landmarks Preservation Law is no walk in the park—doing so with an impetus to modernise in harmony with the art deco aesthetics that have prevailed for almost a century is another feat altogether.

It's a project which deftly orchestrates an interplay between restoration, preservation and renovation. Referring to the Waldorf Astoria's "forever lavish aura", Deniot set out to ensure that the apartments interiors would "reflect the magnificence of the past mixed with today's great sense of energy", adding that his intention was to make them "grand and playful, all highly inviting, with many elements of surprise and excitement". His interior choices—think herringbone floors with cerused finish, solid custom-panelled interior doors, polished marble worktops, polished nickel fixtures and tile mosaics in a pattern inspired by the building—live up to these ambitions admirably. Cabinets, meanwhile, are by Italian embassy-furnishers Molteni&C, fully integrated kitchen suites by Gaggenau.

Naturally, the residences offer a repertoire

of amenities, both requisite (25-meter swimming pool with a relaxation lounge and sculptural water fountain, fitness centre with private training studios, 20,000 sq ft spa, men's and women's wellness lounges, co-working spaces and board room, private offices) and gloriously immoderate (library and tasting room, bar and lounge with billiards and games rooms, theatre, cinema, private wine storage). Unsurprisingly, given that it remains a fully functioning hotel, it's pretty red hot on services - 24-hour valet service, fully staffed entry lobbies, resident manager, laundry and, of course, given that the Waldorf Astoria invented it, room service too.

The residences offer the chance to experience the high life, in every possible sense – and in the footsteps of showbiz and actual royalty that have done so to the max - every time you step through that private porte cochère. "For almost 100 years, the Waldorf Astoria has been New York's 'Unofficial Palace,' and was famously anointed by Conrad Hilton as 'The Greatest of Them All,'" as Andrew Miller, CEO of Dajia puts it. "Now, with residences for sale for the first time, buyers from New York and all over the world can call it home."

*Clockwise from far left* The Waldorf Astoria's iconic Park Avenue facade; the Starlight Pool; The Winter Garden; the Grand Salon's arched, high ceilings