

JUL 9, 2017 @ 01:07 PM

Inside The Newly Renovated Hôtel de Crillon In Paris

**Christina Liao**, CONTRIBUTOR[FULL BIO](#) ▾

Opinions expressed by Forbes Contributors are their own.



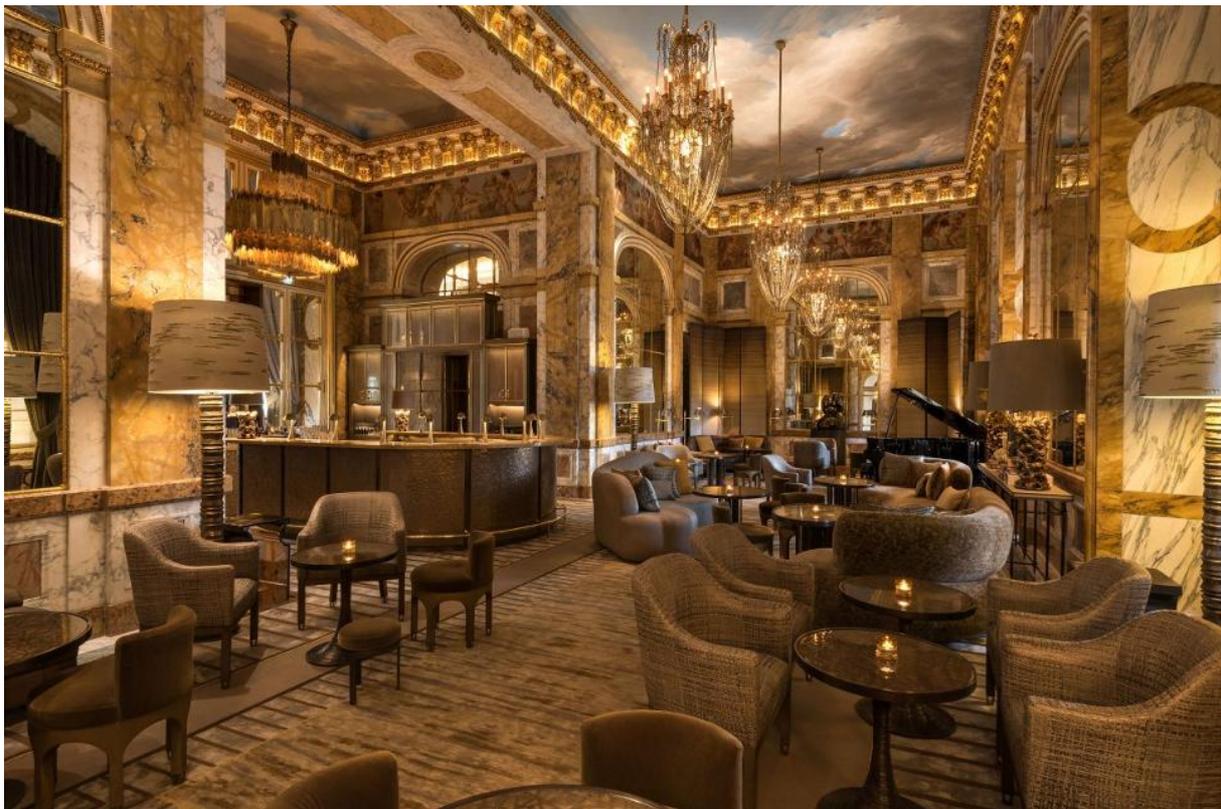
The Louis Benech–designed Cour d'Honneur - Courtesy Of Rosewood Hotels & Resorts

Just a few days ago—July 5, to be precise—[Hôtel de Crillon](#) reopened its doors after four years of renovation. Work was originally estimated to only take two years, but given the restrictions around refurbishing listed sites accompanied by the magnitude of the project (including the need to dig two floors underground to accommodate the new spa and pool), things understandably took a little longer, and it was certainly worth the wait.

The storied landmark was commissioned by Louis XV in 1758 and served as private residence until it was transformed into a hotel in 1909. Fast-forward to just over a century later and the property was purchased by Prince Miteb bin Abdullah bin Abdulaziz in 2010, who then shuttered the Crillon in 2013 for its much needed face lift. There was previously a lack of central air conditioning, and with 114 years of people—albeit upper-echelon guests—walking in and out without any sort of large-scale restoration, it was bound to lose its *je ne sais quoi*, if you will, just like any other historical building. In turn, no expense was spared when the ambitious task began, bringing in four Paris-based interior designers (Tristan Auer, Chahan Minassian, Cyril Vergniol and Aline Asmar d’Amman) to work with talented artisans. The

goal? To embrace the Crillon's legacy, enhancing its 18th-century furnishings, while bringing the hotel into the 21st century.

But let's get on to the good stuff. The facade is magnificent in every sense, with its French Neoclassical style, Corinthian colonnade, Coustou sculptures, and Baccarat chandeliers. Its imposing presence in the already marvelous Place de la Concorde commands your attention as you approach. There's even a vintage 1973 Citroën DS parked out front for passersby to awe at. And as you're greeted by handsomely suited men (an 80-piece wardrobe by ANDAM-nominated designer Hugo Matha was specifically commissioned for the staff) at the entrance, you already know your experience is going to be a spectacular one.



The Les Ambassadeurs bar - Courtesy Of Rosewood Hotels & Resorts

There are two elements that are noticeably dominant at the Crillon: marble (represented in 40 variations) and gold. With that being said, it thankfully doesn't feel garish. There's no doubt that the now [Rosewood Hotels & Resorts](#)-managed property is opulent, but it's not overly pretentious by any means. Stroll in and to your left is an intimate reception room with low tables and comfortable seats; gone are the days of formal check-ins behind a counter. To the right is Les Ambassadeurs, the former stomping grounds of the hotel's gastronomic restaurant of the same name that has now been transformed to a 60-seat bar. The warm, gilded space is, of course, packed with marble and wrapped around with frescoes and rococo-style detailing. The original roofing, a registered landmark, is hidden beneath the new sky-painted ceiling, where preserved 19th-century chandeliers that have been updated with chain trimmings hang. Here, you'll find the three Cs: cocktails, caviar, and champagne (over 100 options of bubbly are listed). Live piano music floats through the room in the early evenings while late nights call for a DJ.



The hotel's Jardin d'Hiver - The Les Ambassadeurs bar - Courtesy Of Rosewood Hotels & Resorts

Make your way through and you'll find Jardin d'Hiver, ideal for afternoon tea and to enjoy the delights of pastry chef Jérôme Chaucesse. Walls decorated with shimmering mica panels complement the aubergine-hued chandelier lampshades and multi-directional sofa of similar color. In this lounge not only is the ceiling adorned with gold leaf and the location of the famed Baccarat crystal elephant that was created for the Paris Universal Exhibiton of 1878, but hidden behind a mirrored door is L'Ecrin. Sitting only 22 to 24 diners, the restaurant is helmed by Michelin-starred chef Christopher Hache, who previously oversaw the brigade at Les Ambassadeurs. During the hotel's closure, he traveled around the world and worked with acclaimed chefs to diversify his flavors, keeping an open mind on how to approach French cuisine for Hôtel de Crillon's new fine-dining establishment.



L'Ecrin is incroyable, no doubt, but there's something to be said about the hotel's more casual eatery Brasserie d'Aumont. Beautifully plated classics can be enjoyed indoors, where there's a very distinctive brasserie vibe along with an inviting oyster bar, or alfresco in the posh courtyard by landscape architect Louis Benech, who redesigned the Water Theater Grove at Versailles. A colorful heirloom tomato salad is accompanied by avocado sorbet and cubes of sesame-crust watermelon that adds just the right amount of natural sweetness to the summery plate. The chicken, perfectly roasted with no hint of dryness, is served with chicken jus and a suprême sauce made of wild celery, cream, and, of course, butter. And the apricot mille-feuille is a great way to end the meal without feeling overly indulgent.

Head toward the back of the property and you'll find a boutique filled with bespoke and limited-edition products by brands such as Delfina Delettrez and Noor Fares. Then there's the soothing Sense spa that opens into a shrouded garden, replete with a 14-meter sky-lit pool composed of gilded fish scale-shaped mosaic tiles and a David Lucas hair salon where a spectacular creation by Eric Charles-Donatien consisting of black and gold feathers hangs above one of the windows. And as much as this oasis is to be adored, the most pleasant surprise is the grooming salon, where men can stop in for a cut or shave or recline in a revamped Aston Martin car seat for a shoeshine. (There's also a members-only cigar lounge should you wish to subscribe to it.)



But what is it like to actually stay at the Crillon? The Signature Suites are undoubtedly the ultimate prize. The Bernstein, named after the composer who was once a frequent guest, is the largest, outfitted with a wraparound terrace that boasts incredible vistas of the Eiffel Tower and Grand Palais. Then there's the Marie-Antoinette, decorated in blush and taupe tones, with rose gold faucets and vases of pink roses scattered throughout. You can even book the suite to include the adjacent salon, which is named after the former French Queen and where she once took her piano lessons. (The neighboring Salon des Aigles witnessed the signings of the 1778 French-American treaty recognizing the Declaration of Independence as well as the 1919 covenant of the League of Nations.)

And as exquisite as the aforementioned suites are, one can't talk about the Crillon's accommodations without mentioning the two Grands Appartements by Karl Lagerfeld. The

legendary designer was asked to contribute to the project due to his affinity for 18th-century antiques. (Funnily enough, he had even purchased a model of the Crillon at a Christie's auction several decades ago.) His photographic work is displayed throughout and powder rooms in both feature a red marble fountain from the hotel's original courtyard, which has now been refashioned as a sink. However, the larger of the two has a Lagerfeld-curated library and a bright bathroom with a massive tub carved out of a single block of Carrera marble, weighing in at two tons and with direct views of the Place de la Concorde. To go the extra mile, you can combine these two suites with the adjoining Chouquette room—designed with Lagerfeld's cat in mind, it's the smallest in the hotel, but absolutely the cutest—for a three-bedroom flat. Extravagant suites aside, even the standard amenities throughout all 124 rooms (decreased from 147) are commendable. Beauty fanatics will thoroughly appreciate the bespoke Buly 1803 bath toiletries. Mini bars are stocked with Alain Milliat juices, La Mortuacienne lemonade, and custom-bottled Avantgarde Spirits cocktails (of note is the one marked 10, representative of the hotel's address and aptly named Les Ambassadeurs). Even the Nespresso machine is encased in leather, with an accompanying Cristolfe container holding coffee pods and tea packets. Plush robes with checkered detailing on the cuffs and hood are ridiculously delightful, as are the slippers that will make your feet feel like that of a bunny's. And we can't forget the divine beds, enrobed with fluffy Drouault duvets and pillows that ensure a good night's rest.

Needless to say, this is one of Paris's best hotels. Not just because of its head-to-toe makeover or its historic past, but because everything falls in line from the second you step in to the painstaking moment you must depart. An icon has truly been reborn.

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/christinaliao/2017/07/09/inside-the-newly-renovated-hotel-de-crillon-in-paris/#7d3e8e8f7bd>