

San Francisco Chronicle

SF's newest hotel may have best view in town

By Spud Hilton
June 18, 2018

When it opens next week, San Francisco's newest lodging will offer rooms with a well-stocked minibar, USB charging ports and contemporary styling. And a view that's never been seen before by hotel guests.

Until now, the view had been reserved for soldiers.

The Lodge at the Presidio is the result of the federal Presidio Trust taking a pair of 123-year-old Army barracks and turning the insides into a modern, 42-room boutique hotel. The Lodge opens to guests on June 28 but has begun taking reservations.

The Lodge is the latest piece in the Presidio's transition from former U.S. Army base to national park property. The area is feeling increasingly like a small, self-sufficient town within the larger city.

During a media opening at the property last week, officials discussed what it took to convert the three-story property and what it means to hotel guests who they say will get an experience very different from staying downtown.

More Information

The Lodge

at the Presidio

Rates start at \$275 per night, not including tax or parking (\$9 per day). 105 Montgomery St. 415-561-1234. www.presidiolodging.com

“The biggest thing that we’re proud of is the hotel experience being in the park itself,” said Terry Haney, general manager of the nearby Inn at the Presidio, the former officers’ quarters at the former Army base that opened in 2012 as a small inn. The Presidio is part of the National Park Service.

“We are an alternative to being downtown,” he said. “We offer the park experience, with the running trails and the bay views and the much more relaxed atmosphere, with the same beauty of being still in town.”

The top benefit of the Lodge’s location becomes obvious stepping out the back door and coming face to face with the Marin Headlands and the towers of the Golden Gate Bridge. When the Lodge opens, according to officials with the trust, it will be the closest hotel in the city to the huge landmark. (The Cavallo Point Lodge, in the former Fort Baker on the Marin side, has a slight edge on distance from the bridge.)

As with the Walt Disney Family Museum next door on the Presidio’s Main Post, the exterior of what was Building 105, built in 1895 to 1897, is unchanged from its original red-brick Colonial Revival architecture. The interior, however, is radically removed from its original use.

The \$25 million in improvements ranged from reshuffling the floor plan and knocking out walls to installing new heating and air conditioning, lighting, plumbing and an elevator to bring the project to federal Americans with Disabilities Act standards. On the lobby floor, darker wood has been inlaid to show guests where the old walls stood when Building 105 was home to companies of the 30th Infantry Regiment, among other residents.

“The Army gifted us with iconic buildings in a great location. There’s an authenticity to the building you’re in and the place you’re in,” said Josh Bagley, director of real estate development for the Presidio Trust, the autonomous agency that manages nearly all of the 1,491-acre federal park.

“The plan was putting these buildings back into service in a way that respects their histories and that allows guests or visitors to experience them in a new way,” Bagley said.

During a brief tour for media, Bagley pointed out the walls festooned with “place-based art,” including photographs, paintings and installations reflecting the history of the former military base (originally settled by the Spanish in 1776), as well as the natural flora and features of the Presidio’s sprawling landscape. History-related touches in some rooms include headboards decorated with military tent canvas and Pendleton blankets on the beds. Rates will start at \$275 per night.

While the view of the bridge and the rest of the bay is the top advantage of the location (there’s a firepit in the patio area for bridge viewing at night), there are other benefits, according to Bagley. The Presidio includes 24 miles of hiking trails, 25 miles of biking trails, and, from the Lodge, guests have a 17-minute walk to the Palace of Fine Arts, less than 10 minutes to Crissy Field and about 20 minutes to Fort Point. Within the Main Post area are restaurants, the visitors’ center and the base bowling alley.

“Think of the Presidio as its own little village. It has its own ZIP code, its own post office, its own police department, and it’s like a city within a city,” said general manager Haney. “We’re in San Francisco, but we’re not part of San Francisco.”

And unlike with hotels downtown, he said, parking for 24 hours is just \$9. “That’s a tip downtown.”



Features a slideshow of 12 more images of the Lodge at the Presidio.



