

## Design hotspot: live like a designer in Hotel De L'Europe's one-of-a-kind rooms

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Amsterdam's grand dame let artists and designers run riot during lockdown. The result is a suite of some of the most original hotel rooms you can find

De L'Europe's neoclassical facade graces the side of the Amstel River, ideally positioned for visitors looking to explore central Amsterdam before retreating to their well-appointed chambers.

Having first opened its doors to Europe's fin de siècle elite in 1896, the hotel was bought by Alfred 'Freddy' Heineken in the 1950s.

Known for his fabulous wealth, the story goes that Freddy was such a regular guest he had his own table at the hotel's brasserie. Following regular disagreements with the in-house sommelier, he opted to buy the hotel outright. The hotel, now a registered landmark, has remained in the family ever since.



The De L'Europe occupies prime position on the riverside

De L'Europe

After 125 years, any venerated grande dame would need a facelift. So in 2021 Amsterdam-based interior architecture studio Nicemakers was bought in to remodel the De L'Europe's 97 suites, grand lobby and three restaurants.

The result is a retro-modern space that both restores the venerable hotel's grandeur and has transformed it into the place where Amsterdam's brightest young things flock to see and be seen.

Most inventively, the De L'Europe made the most of the renovation downtime and pandemic travel lockdowns by inviting local artists and designers to take up residencies in the unfinished rooms.

The creative energy of these ad-hoc studios proved so febrile that these residents were invited to re-design 14 of the suites. The result is one-of-a-kind rooms that, if you're lucky enough to book into, offer a truly unique hotel experience.

## Design details

It was a fine line to tread when bringing history into the present, encouraging a new generation of guests without alienating history appreciators, but Nicemakers have managed it masterfully.

Guests enter through revolving space into a plush lobby space that's Titanic by way of Annabel's nightclub. Original delft tiles on the reception desk have been retained, screened behind rich velvety

curtains that tie the space together without overwriting the past.

Mirrored panelling above doorways allow for a true appreciation of the lobby's formidable ceiling height. Time-controlled curtains pull back in the evening to reveal the Heineken family's impressive art collection, which has been re-hung against polished bronze panels that bounce the lights of the glittering (and painstakingly restored) glass chandeliers.

Nicemakers has also expertly unpicked some retro missteps from a 2008 expansion, where a quick-to-date revamp had given De L'Europe's grand function rooms all the charm of an airport lounge. Vintage and antique furniture has been carefully sourced to compliment the period details.



RDVK is one of the local designers invited to design a concept room

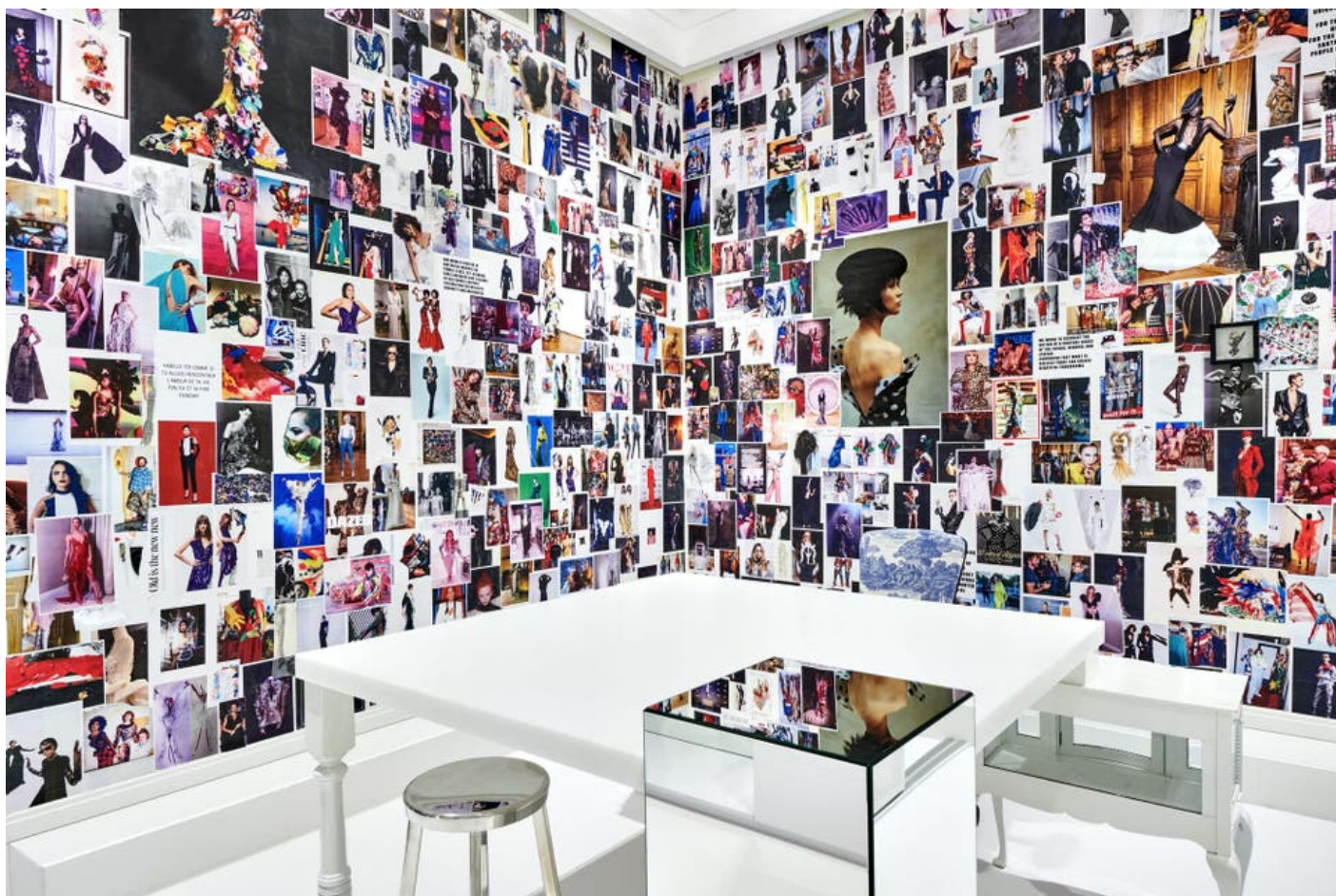
De L'Europe

The hotel was extended in 2008 through the purchase of the adjoining building, a former bank. Amsterdam creative studio D/Dock has transformed this additional wing into 'T Huys, with a new entryway from the street.

Alongside a concept store (more on that later) and trattoria Graziella there is The Wunderkammer, a fabulous florists and curiosity shop curated by friends of De L'Europe Florian Seyd and Ueli Signer. Expect rare plants and fascinating trinkets.

## Which room?

If you're weary of bland plug-and-play hotel rooms, the 'T Huys suites are a riot of individual design to spark the imagination. Be warned, you may return home with a desire to overhaul your own living space in radical ways.



The ultimate work-from-hotel room in the RDVK suite

De L'Europe

Sustainable haute couture designer Ronald van der Kemp's RVDK Suite is a fashion-lovers dream. A walk-in-wardrobe slash atelier is dominated by a custom desk fashioned out of repurposed objects and backdropped by an editorial collage – making it the perfect Devil Wears Prada-esque Zoom backdrop for a working holiday.

The all-white bedroom features wall-to-wall mirrors, shag carpet and wrap-around white fringe curtains that put the camp in van der Kemp.



Back to the womb in the Sisters Janssen Suite

De L'Europe

For a sensuous experience, the Sisters Janssen Suite is painted in pulsing red and purple, with murals and sculptures that evoke the divine feminine.

If you're ready for some out-there zen, the suite from creative studio D/Dock breaks the hotel room mould entirely with moody grey walls ringed with fringing, a wall of ceramic vulvas, and tatami mats that allow you to sleep on any conceivable surface.



Tatami mats allow guests to sleep where they please in the D/Dock Suite

De L'Europe

Art history lovers will gravitate for the Van Gogh Museum Suite, which features replica's of the painter's work and sketches that will whet your appetite for a tour of the museum itself, just down the river.

For those in search of a more standard luxury hotel experience, the original rooms refurbished by Nicemakers offer classic continental elegance. Extra large beds are framed by pleasingly patterned fabric headboards and full-height curtains, and capacious wardrobes have a built-in bar that elevates the hotel minibar to glamorous heights.

Try and reserve one with a balcony overlooking the canal and order an extravagant hotel room service for breakfast with the best view in all of Amsterdam.

## Good to know

Be sure to have a drink at Freddy's Bar, named for the original Heineken patron. British national treasure Nigella Lawson filmed her Christmas special here. We are reliably informed her favourite tipple is the Tuschinski, starring blackcurrant brandy from the wonderfully named Wynand Fockink.



IN HUYS is the in-house concept store

De L'Europe

If staying in the 'T Huys suites has given you a fierce case of the shoppies, make a pilgrimage to concept store IN HUYS on the ground floor.



Along with pieces from each of the designers and artists who designed the rooms (including RDVK's delicious fragrance Mind Vaccine), there are curated pieces from Amsterdam's coolest artisans – including hats crocheted by one of the staff at the trattoria next door.

Make sure to leave room in your suitcase for art books or a one-off afghan coat. The hotel is also dangerously close to the wonders of the Nine Streets shopping district.



Fine dining with eco-sensibilities in Restaurant Flore

De L'Europe

Knowing you'll be laden down with finds is an excuse to plump for the Eurostar and enjoy the far more civilised alternative to flying that is a comfortable train ride — an unlimited champagne top-ups if you treat yourself to first class.

You don't even have to leave the hotel if you want to sample Amsterdam's fine dining. Chef Bas van Kranen won the hotel's Restaurant Flore two Michelin stars – plus a green star for his commitment to sustainability. The menu changes constantly, but if you're lucky you'll get to try the delicious drunken gummy bears that bring childish wonder to imbibing a grown up cocktail.