

SLEEK DÉCOR, EXPENSIVE BEDROOMS

THE PRINCETON CLUB, NYC by Lew Toulmin



SUMMARY

We visited the Princeton Club, viewed two bedrooms, and ate dinner there in early August 2010. The building is quite different from all the other NYC reciprocal clubs, resembling a sleeker, cooler version of a 1960s Holiday Inn. The Club's bedrooms have been recently renovated, although not all the hallways and bathrooms have been redone. Bedroom rates are rather expensive, at \$296 including tax but not breakfast in the summer low season up to \$417 in the high season, for a twin bedded room. Food varies in quality.

CLUB HISTORY AND FACILITIES

The Club was founded around 1875 as a dining club. A facility was leased in 1895 and the Club was incorporated in 1899. The Club moved several times, then built the present structure in 1963. Club facilities include a library with 10,000 volumes, several meeting rooms, member's lounge, the Tiger Bar and Grill, and the small, formal Woodrow Wilson Dining Room.



The Club boasts two squash courts, and an exercise room with rowing machines, weight machines, treadmills and elliptical trainers. There are 52 bedrooms, including three suites. The Club is located in the heart of NYC "club land" at 15 West 43rd Street,

between 5th and 6th Avenues. This is about 400 yards west of Grand Central Station and 500 yards east of Times Square. The Club has an impressive reciprocal network of about 134 clubs around the world, including 84 overseas and 50 in the US. Staff ranged from knowledgeable to uninformed.

MEMBERSHIP

Membership is open to persons who have attended Princeton, NYU, Columbia or Williams (the latter since the recent lamented demise of the Williams Club.)

Initiation one time fees for persons who recently graduated from college vary from zero to \$750. For older graduates, initiation fees are \$1000 for NYC residents, \$1000 for NYC suburban residents, \$500 for non-residents, and \$300 to \$400 for retired persons, depending on their residence location. Annual membership fees are \$1605 for NYC residents, \$1225 for suburban residents, \$815 for non-residents, and \$550 to \$850 for retired persons, depending on their residence location.

DRESS CODE AND RULES

The dress code is “smart casual” year round throughout the facility, which is defined for men as “collared shirts, dress shirts, button downs, golf shirts, turtlenecks or sweaters, blazers or sport jackets, tailored trousers, denim jeans, and loafers or lace up shoes with socks.” For women, smart casual is defined as “collared shirts or blouses, turtlenecks, sweaters and sweater sets, skirts or tailored pants, denim jeans, and flats, pumps, boots, or dress sandals.” Between Memorial Day and Labor Day “relaxed casual attire” is allowed on weekends in most of the Clubhouse; this dress includes knee length shorts and athletic shoes.

Business papers may be displayed “discreetly” in dining areas. Cell phone usage is restricted to a few designated areas. There are no gender restrictions in the Club. The entire facility is non-smoking.

BED ROOM DESCRIPTION

We visited two bedrooms, one on the sixth floor and one on the fifth. The sixth floor king-bedded room had been redecorated in the bedroom portion but not in the bathroom. It was attractive but perhaps a little cold-feeling, about 12 x 15 feet, with no closet, an armoire, a large window looking out on 43rd street, flat screen TV, WiFi access, and a small bathroom with tub and shower.



The fifth floor (The Governor's Floor) bedroom was a queen bedded room, also about 12 x 15, with a fully renovated bath which involved removing the tub and inserting a high end shower stall, room safe, WiFi access, larger TV, custom art work, and large window. The hallway on this floor was fully renovated, also.

BED ROOM RATES

The rate for the sixth floor king room was \$313 (including tax) plus \$5 guest fee for the low season of June through August. The rate for this room during the high season (rest of the year) was \$440 plus \$5. (Rates do not include breakfast.) The rate for the Governor's Floor queen room was also \$313 plus \$5 for June through August, and \$417 plus \$5 in the high season. These rates were higher than the Union League, NYAC and Cornell clubs. We estimate that for the high season (fall, winter and spring), the Princeton rates are the highest for comparable rooms, of all the reciprocal clubs in NYC.

FOOD

My dinner at the Club's Tiger Bar, utilizing the bar menu but sitting in the sit-down portion of the informal restaurant, consisted of two small crab cakes. The crab was shredded not lump, and had an odd "Princeton orange" -- colored sauce, with too much pepper, rather poor, a C or D grade. This appetizer-sized dish cost \$11 plus tax. My wife had three hamburger sliders, which she rated as good, a B+. This cost \$10 plus tax. These two dishes plus two mixed drinks, tax and service charge came to \$52. Overall impression: mixed.

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