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Lucia, Meet Max

There's just something funny about Betty. At first glance, she's a slightly younger, only modestly hipper June Cleaver – all late '50s, early '60s bouffant hairdo and buttoned-up blouses with little Peter Pan collars. But when you check into your room at Portland's Hotel Lucia and find a little note or two from Betty, all bets are off. A missive near my phone started off with "Honey, I had Irina gussy up your room a little. Doesn't it look fabulous?!" and finished off with the kinds of Xs and Os my mom used to put on the notes in my lunchbox. On the other hand, when my mother advised me on my love life in later years (as if) I don't remember it ever involving calling down to room service for champagne, body crayons, a Kama Sutra



guide or, uh, restraints.

In the last few years, the number of luxury boutique hotels springing up in major cities has created adjective fatigue among copywriters and travel writers alike; these days, hearing the words “hip,” “sleek,” and “sexy” in connection with a recently opened or renovated hotel is enough to make most reviewers pause for a moment before politely ... yawning.

The good news is Hotel Lucia *is* hip, sleek, and sexy; it’s contemporary interior design is a masterful mix of clean lines, luxurious textures, beautifully placed lighting and the entire hotel – hallways, elevators, and guestrooms – contains enough signed David Kennerly black-and-white photography to make a Manhattan gallery owner weep with jealousy.

Kennerly, the Pulitzer Prize-winning photojournalist famous for his candid portraits of world leaders – Reagan, Ford, Kennedy, Bush, Seinfeld – agreed to use Hotel Lucia as a massive “living space gallery” and at any moment a guest can turn and visually encounter anyone from a Supreme Court Justice to a cast member from *Friends* while walking down to the hotel’s fitness center or taking an elevator ride to their guestroom.

Of course, the three year-old Hotel Lucia wasn’t always this hip and Betty – that sassy, make-believe hotel mascot – is a wink-wink acknowledgement to the older, working-class business hotel that the property was before hotel group Aspen Investments stepped in and did a complete revamp to the interior.

There’s a strong contemporary Italian design sense to the Hotel and the toffee, mocha, and paprika tones in most of the guest rooms provide “exhale” ambiance in contrast to the

bustle of downtown Portland that lies right outside.

In keeping with that ambiance, the rooms are well-stocked with the accouterments you’d expect from an upscale hotel these days—flat-screen TVs, top-of-the-line amenities, pillow-topped mattress, WiFi, and a “get it now” button on each telephone for special requests.

With complete understanding that even the most design-conscious guest wants comfort along with beauty, there are nine choices from the hotel’s pillow menu and, should you want a little privacy, Betty keeps it simple – the traditional door placard that usually features politely worded requests for service or cleverly drawn fingers over lips mouthing “ssshhh” for privacy have been replaced with the lime-green, minimalist declaration of either “Not Now” or “Okay, Now.”

Hotel Lucia’s “Did I Mention I Want You?” package is blatantly pre-meditated; you need to book a week in advance but what’s waiting for you includes champagne, rose petals, body crayons, a Kama Sutra guide, massage oil, furry handcuffs, a blindfold and assorted other paraphernalia designed for a safe adventure followed up by breakfast in bed the next morning. That’s our Betty – safety and nutrition first.

Those willing to drag their relaxed bodies out from underneath high-count sheets won’t go hungry once they rejoin the real world. Typhoon, the Thai restaurant connected to Hotel Lucia’s lobby, offers some of the best Thai food the entire Pacific Northwest has to offer.

Hotel Lucia, which has sister properties in Seattle (Hotel Max) and Nashville (Hotel Prescott), will offer a second location in Portland by late summer. –BETSY MODEL

More: 877-225-1717; www.hotellucia.com