



AMAN NEW YORK – DESIGNING AN ICON

Aman New York is the culmination of a monumental transformation that has seen Manhattan’s landmark Crown Building become a new design icon in the realm of luxury hospitality. The most recent in a long line of collaborations between the Aman brand and Jean-Michel Gathy of Denniston Architects, the 83-suite hotel and its 22 branded residences bring the peace promised by Aman’s Sanskrit-derived name and the palpable tranquility of its Asian roots to one of the Western world’s most vibrant cities.

A feat of design engineering, this transformation required the balancing and subtle juxtaposition of many contrasts – old and new, East and West, natural and manmade, and even fire and water – to create what is seemingly a paradox: an urban sanctuary. Yet this is the true essence of Aman New York: From the moment of arrival – be it in the breathtaking, double-height atrium on the 14th floor or the entrance on 57th Street – every detail of the design effortlessly contributes to Aman New York’s aura of rarefied calm.

Organic materials and motifs are integrated throughout Aman New York, imbuing spaces with the meditative beauty and inimitable tranquility of nature. Oak, walnut, and aromatic cinnamon woods add lustre to finishes, floors, doors, and custom furnishings. Bronze, brass, and stainless and blackened steel contribute gleaming warmth and edgy allure. Belgian Blue and Chocolate Brown marble complement the masculine architectural palette – the yang to the more feminine yin hues introduced through soft furnishings, rugs and artworks. Natural stone – textured rather than polished – and wooden floors form a weaving pattern reminiscent of rattan baskets used across Asia, and straw marquetry, an ancient Asian technique, burnishes fireplace mantels. Walls are dressed in natural fabrics and flower arrangements inspired by Japan’s classical Ikebana artform literally bring nature inside.

Respecting the Crown Building’s storied heritage was key to the design process from the very outset. Embodying the splendour of America’s Gilded Age, the building was designed by Warren & Wetmore, the influential architects of Grand Central Station and the Helmsley Building. Built in 1921 on the corner of 57th Street and Fifth Avenue, its Neo-Classical exterior, French Renaissance detailing and chateau-esque tower make it one of the finest examples of Beaux-Arts architecture in North America today. The first home of the Museum of Modern Art from 1929 to 1932, the building’s crown-like finial became its eponymous feature in 1983, when lighting designer Douglas Leigh was commissioned to gild and illuminate the ornamental spire using 30 gallons of liquid gold.

All this history was sensitively considered as Aman and Denniston undertook the building’s restoration and epic conversion. Using a period approach, the building’s palatial proportions were retained via spectacular double volume public areas, but with Denniston’s trademark creation of spaces within spaces to create intimacy despite the grandeur. Discreet gold details, paired with Aman’s signature muted tones, throughout the interiors hint at the gilded pinnacle reaching for the sky – a beacon that has stood for progress and the timeless dynamism of Manhattan for over a century.

With its iconic status and long-held associations with the uppermost echelons of New York society, the Crown Building was the natural home for America’s first urban Aman. Yet bringing the peace associated with the brand to New York’s urban whirl was the next challenge. Denniston’s layered response included complex glass soundproofing to ensure complete serenity within, transporting guests audibly, as well as physically, away from the frenetic pace of the city below. Aman’s origins in Asia and harmonious design language inspired the soothing, minimalist interiors that reflect the pared back elegance of Japan and the handcrafted warmth of Indonesia. Nature was Denniston’s third trump card, drawing on the Crown Building’s proximity to Central Park.

In a further nod to the brand’s roots, each suite also features a large-scale art mural inspired by the 15th-century masterpiece Pine Trees (Shōrin-zu byōbu) by Hasegawa Tōhaku. One of Japan’s most celebrated works, Pine Trees, owned by the Tokyo National Museum, was designated as a National Treasure in 1952 and is internationally acclaimed. The piece perfectly captures its eminent pre-Edo influence, and is a homage to Tōhaku, printed on delicate rice paper and spanning the walls as a captivating focal point.

Inspired by the airy architecture and seamless indoor/outdoor flow of Aman’s properties in Southeast Asia, the suites also allow for flexible layouts, with each featuring up to seven pairs of lightweight, pivoting louvre-doors that can be angled and moved to open-up or contain areas, thereby enabling guests to personalise their space. Guests can also adjust mood via lighting: Backlit rice paper panels with a woven motif are set within the louvre doors, created by international lighting design company, The Flaming Beacon. These glowing partitions can open each suite’s opulent, oversized bathroom with its free-standing oval bathtub, marble rain shower and twin vanities to the bedroom and living area, creating a large loft-style space. Large windows offer immersive city views from every angle.



Offering an entirely new concept to the city, Aman New York is also home to many ‘firsts’ including working fireplaces in every suite and residence - a stand out design feature and a first in New York. Then there’s the 20-metre indoor swimming pool on the 10th floor. The 14th floor features a dramatic circular firepit within a square reflective pool – geometrically symbolic of the marriage between heaven and earth – the 650-square-metre outdoor space benefits from an innovative retractable glass roof – a true architectural marvel considering the building’s historic façade – allowing the terrace to be used throughout the year.

In fact, Aman New York’s public areas – from its three-storey, 2,300-square-metre Aman Spa to its two signature restaurants – are equally a triumph of design. Each space has been intelligently and thoughtfully curated to enhance the guest experience and provide an unwavering yet nuanced sense of place: Unmistakably New York but with a nature-imbued, Asian-inspired, peacefulness that is so intrinsically Aman. A destination unto itself with the Crown Building, the Aman Spa New York distills the hotel’s design ethos into its purest, simplest form. Active spaces including the pool and fitness centre feature light timbers and grey tones, while passive spaces where treatments are enjoyed at the very core of the building are more nurturing, with curves and warmer hues.

Placed in the building’s southeast corner, light filled Arva is Aman New York’s convivial Italian restaurant. Banquettes, screens and plants create a series of spaces around the central open kitchen, while floor-to-ceiling Grand Cru wine cabinets wrap the northwest walls. Nama, Aman’s celebration of Japan’s washoku dining tradition, features dramatic cubes of chiselled rock at its entrance, a Japanese Hinoki wood counter for omakase-style fine dining and staggered Frank Lloyd Wright inspired ceilings and lighting pendants, with a feature by local artist, Melissa Hart.

Other artworks of note commissioned exclusively for Aman New York include the large Joseph Borde natural fibre canvas painted with Japanese natural pigments, ink, turmeric, ginger and saffron that contrasts with the hammered stone wall in the 14th floor lift lobby. The 57th Street arrival desk rests beneath a hand-modelled, sundried, masterpiece by Brazilian artist, Domingos Totorá. Then there is the Oriental-lantern-inspired series of giant paper and bamboo sculptures that float between four stone columns in the 14th floor atrium created by Peter Gentenaar. Each artwork reflects Aman New York’s soul in its own way and transforms the space.

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ABOUT AMAN

Aman was founded in 1988 with the vision of building a collection of intimate retreats with the unassuming, warm hospitality of a gracious private home. The first, Amanpuri (place of peace), in Phuket, Thailand, introduced the concept and, since then, Aman has grown to encompass 34 exquisitely serene hotels and resorts, ranging from the urban to the remote, in 20 destinations across the globe, of which 12 feature Aman Branded Residences. Aman has a further ten projects in the pipeline with several under construction.

In recent years, Aman Group has grown to offer its coveted lifestyle beyond the parameters of its havens including Aman Skincare (2018), supplement range Sva (2020), Aman Fine Fragrance (2020), ready-to-wear collection The Essentials by Aman (2021) and performance skincare line Aman Essential Skin (2023).

With innovation a cornerstone of the brand’s philosophy, in 2020 Aman Group welcomed a new hotel brand, Janu – meaning ‘soul’ in Sanskrit. Janu offers a unique take on hospitality where genuine human interaction, playful expression and social wellness are at the core of the experience. Seven forthcoming Janu hotels are in the pipeline for the brand including Tokyo (2023) and AlUla in Saudi Arabia which are currently under construction.

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