

Hollywood's Hummingbirds

By IT Blog

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Lawrence Ferber dishes on one of Hollywood's newest boutique hotels, Petit Ermitage, which also happens to be a haven for hummingbirds.



Even for Hollywood, boutique hotel **Petit Ermitage** boasts bragging rights to possibly the most exclusive regulars that frequent its gorgeous, private rooftop deck: hummingbirds. The adorable critters zip and zag by at near blurry speeds through the roof's perfectly manicured trumpet vines, lantanas, and butterfly bushes. The National Wildlife Federation in fact recognizes the space, formally known as the Private Rooftop Deck Club, as a butterfly and hummingbird sanctuary. As I sip a cocktail - the delicious gin-based *Respetini*, garnished with fresh basil leaves and a slice of serrano pepper - one dive-bombs past and perches nearby on a curly iron railing, eyeing me to make sure I don't mess with its territory. Sassy little thing!

West Hollywood's boutique hotel revolution - from chic retro-ironic The Standard to hotelier Jeff Klein's bona fide 1920s landmark, Sunset Tower - takes a comparatively discreet, eco turn with Petit Ermitage. Tucked within a residential crevice between busy Santa Monica and Sunset Boulevards, the greenery-nestled Private Rooftop Club and restaurant is one of Petit Ermitage's star attractions. A place to relax with a drink, take a dip in the saltwater pool, dine al fresco on Executive Chef Joseph Antonishek's amazing Mediterranean-tinged cuisine, or just take in the 360-degree views of Hollywood Hills, it alone makes the hotel worth a stay. "Saltwater smells better," notes owner Stefan Ashkenazy of the pool. "And it doesn't turn bleached blonde hair green."

Chef Antonishek grows fresh herbs and produce on the deck's garden, including parsley, rosemary, peppermint, tomatoes, strawberries and kumquats, for use in dishes - like the grilled cactus salad with lime and serrano chili, and a coconut milk-braised lamb shank with mint, apricots, kumquats and couscous - and inventive original cocktails including the refreshing Babushka (pear Grey Goose, cucumber, lemon, lime, in-house filtered water, and sugar). Besides outdoor deck seating in the company of hummingbirds, there's also an indoor dining area.

The hotel's interior is artful yet unpretentious, blending bohemian with upscale and a sort of colorful-rustic aesthetic. Eighty suites, which range from 400-600 square feet in size, boast fireplaces, while much of the furniture is fashioned from reclaimed wood and rescued pieces. Further unique touches include an impressive collection of artwork commissioned from local artists as well as iconic names like Miro, Rauschenberg and Dali; a quirky circus-themed hallway restroom; and a jar of freshly baked chocolate chip cookies at the check-in desk. Sorry hummingbirds, those aren't for you.