



# paris chic

Forget stuffy budget accommodation! Live it up in designer style at Philippe Starck's Mama Shelter in Paris

Text: Deborah Jane Goon Images courtesy of Mama Shelter

From the exterior, Hotel Mama Shelter in Paris looks simple, calm and ordinary. There are no showy flashing lights, no loud, in-your-face designs nor wacky prints and patterns in sight. In fact, the hotel doesn't even have a driveway and is almost as inconspicuous as the subdued neighbourhood it resides in.

But once inside, it's a whole different story. Black ceilings become a sprawling firmament of artsy graffiti, while kitschy and playful furniture run amok with an unpredictable and surreal vibe. Indeed, buzzing would be an apt description for this unique establishment.

Created by the Trigano family (the founders of the famous Club Med), along with philosopher Cyril Aouizerate, and designed by renowned maestro Philippe Starck, Mama Shelter is certainly poised to become the vanguard for a new type of boutique hotel - one that encapsulates a refuge built with the chic yet budget-savvy jet-setter in mind. A safe haven of sorts that does not discriminate, yet offers a designer experience minus the prejudice and pompous reception you might get at other so-called chic retreats.





With Philippe Starck on board, you can guess as much that the Mama Shelter will be nothing short of a masterpiece. And even though critics tend to have a field day with this term itself, they know just as well that his ingenious frame of mind and the actual functionality of his designs will be the defining factor in this hotel. In this case, the Mama Shelter has managed to coin the adage 'cheap chic', with room rates starting at an affordable 79 Euro a night (Parisian hotels are fairly expensive). There are of course more expensive rooms, and as we hear, the hotel is usually fully booked on weekends and prominent public holidays. The clientele is far from cheap, though. Design-savvy yuppies, chic art director types and funky thirtysomethings strut around displaying their signature styles, complemented by a dash of independent designer garb that echoes the hotel's very own mantra.



Despite the disbelief of many sceptics, this 172-room hotel spread over seven floors that are dressed in five colour themes certainly has got our vote of confidence. The floor we stayed on had a luminous green panel at the end of the hallway depicting a friendly dinosaur graphic having a bite to eat. Each room has individually sketched graffiti as doormats, keeping your eyes glued to the floor once you step out of the lift. Each morning, Paris' current weather and cultural calendar is inscribed in chalk on a board so guests remain in the know.





Inside the rooms, large mirror panels amplify the space, while creating a cheeky appeal. All rooms come with a sleek kitchenette that boasts a minibar, microwave and sink. Beds are dressed in 5-star 100% cotton satin sheets, with an incorporated bedhead that illuminates with the flick of a barely discernible switch. Since the rooms are not large to begin with, high beds allow for ample suitcase storage. A sleek table top hosts the standard 24-inch iMacs (TV, radio, CD/DVD players) that offer ample entertainment and the chance to get your picture taken and displayed in the photo montage downstairs. Adding a twist to the otherwise minimalist space, Batman face masks are clipped onto light beams for a quirky take.

Downstairs, the flurry of activity never ends. The restaurant and newly opened pizza bar are always busy so the receptionist advised us to make a reservation. (Thankfully, we chose to listen to her!) The restaurant shares the same graffiti-covered ceilings with an assortment of seating that caters to all sorts of butts. There are loungey sofas, large portrait-adorned armchairs, bench style diners and a variety of mixed up occasional seating as well. Kartell Bubble Club armchairs adorn the outer veranda area, which seats those who prefer a quieter meal.

If you're up for a little stay-in time, you'll be pleased to know there's an 8-person foosball table, a yoga room and a pool table to keep you entertained. Thrill-seekers can also rent electric scooters or motorbikes to take in the sights. Just a few more sensational twists that this hotel offers to complete your well-anticipated stay in the City of Lights.



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