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SWEETS Hotel

Amsterdam, The Netherlands

Various Architects, overseen by Space&Matter

Photography by Mirjam Bleeker or as noted



Photography by Lotte Holterman

Against considerable odds, the SWEETS Hotel offers visitors to the watery city a totally unique experience. Located in 28 different bridge houses on many canals, the guestrooms are each unique in their own right, but united in their unusual take on privacy and 'getting local'. The structures date from as long ago as 1673, and as recently as 2009, combining to offer an architectural-history archive of styles, even as their primary original function was the same: to monitor conditions and passage in the canals and bridges. Once that function was made redundant in 2012 by a centralised system, they might have been demolished... but for this project.

Although they come as small as 10.5 sqm in size, they each now have sleeping accommodations for two, and a full bathroom, albeit sometimes minute. They also boast pantries; after all, room service is difficult. One boggles at the administrative challenges of the operation (room cleaners on bicycles?), but staying here would certainly be memorable. The rooms tend to be on or near grade, at nodes of the city, so people-watching will be prime, but this isn't for a secretive tryst or solitary retreat. For the designers involved, many of the structures unveiled original details and features that were then incorporated into the room designs. Still, this wasn't an effort at restoration purely; the hotel is modern and of its own time. Yet even indirectly, the rooms nod to their particular ancestry. For instance, in the 'Hortusbrug' room, which dates back to the period of the





Photography by Lotte Holterman



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De Stijl movement, famed Dutch architect Gerrit Rietveld became the source of inspiration for the colours and finishes employed.

There is no lobby in the SWEETS Hotel – the city itself serves that function, according to the management. This is truly a contextual scheme, though clients might lament there's no chance to compare notes with fellow guests. There ought to be a secret way to connect, in cafes or parks, like a lucky club membership. Or maybe SWEETS should operate a single hotel boat that roams the waterways between the rooms, hosting drinks and communality.

The rooms are cosy, casual, colourful and, as expected, dominated by the views through what tend to be ample windows, thanks to their original function. Some are located on quieter canals, others amid giant industrial neighbours. Collectively they comprise a fanciful record of an aspect of Amsterdam's history, centred on its most famous characteristic. Landlubber or seafarer, both will wake up content.



Photography by Lotte Holterman