



QUALITY TIME WITH ANDRÉ BALAZS

Situated on a street lined with sleazy hotels, 'gourmet' delis and souvenir shops, the airy lobby of QT—the new low-budget hotel from André Balazs—is far and away the most inviting destination on the block. QT falls somewhere in the vast grey area between youth hostel and boutique hotel; it offers very limited amenities tempered by abundant style. As Balazs' eighth hotel, it represents the apogee of his unique, streamlined criteria for quality: there's no business centre or room service, but there's a pool in the lobby; none of the rooms have a bathtub or desk, but they're all equipped with flat-screen TVs. By eliminating most of the frills or making clever substitutions—a binder of delivery menus for room service, self-service automated check-in kiosks for front-desk hospitality, high-speed wireless internet access instead of a full-service business centre—Balazs has kept prices relatively low, with standard rooms starting at \$125 a night. Still, the frills he's left intact are the ones that count: plush queen and king-size mattresses, Egyptian cotton sheets and a complimentary breakfast served in the mezzanine overlooking the pool all make for a luxurious-seeming stay. And, as is the case in all Balazs hotels, the bar is becoming a destination in itself, a hip place to grab a drink or throw a private party. But unlike his more upscale properties in Miami and LA where you could linger all day spending money on the various spa treatments or in-house restaurants, at QT his message to New York visitors is clear: check your e-mail, get a great night's sleep, eat your fill of breakfast, then get out and see the city. *Anna Sussman*