

Cognoscenti

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Grand Hotel Nord Pinus Arles

The **Grand Hotel Nord Pinus** has become *the* hip place to stay at in Arles, as **Cognoscenti Magazine** editors discovered during a recent second visit to the property. This is in large part due to Mme. Igou's decorative acumen. "A hotel is a *lieu de voyage*, a place of travel," she explained in an exclusive interview. The sense of journey is noticeable in the global art found in the lobby, which includes stylized safari photos by Peter Beard, intriguing African statues, and world music playing in the background. Just off the lobby is a trendy bar, with copper-topped tables, an unusual bullfighting matchbox collection, a display case with embroidered suits once worn by famous matadors, and a chandelier in colored stone.

How can styles from different periods and different parts of the world be combined to create a warm, harmonious, and lively atmosphere? Mme. Igou plays with light, color and fabrics. "If these three work, then other materials—wood, iron, etc—can easily enter into play."

Upstairs, the rooms each have their own style and feeling. "People in the 21st century are not going to be particularly comfortable in furniture from the 19th century," notes Mme. Igou. Instead of keeping to the long-standing provençal themes often found at other establishments in the region, many of the rooms here incline towards a sort of Zen-like minimalism. What



*Grand Hotel Nord-Pinus:
More than a hotel—a place of travel*

Because life is short

the hotel lacks in the amenities that are usually expected of a 4-star establishment (such as good sound insulation, mini-safe or bathrobes), it makes up for in style.

Just off the lobby is the restaurant, where we sampled a few tasty dishes. (In summer, meals are served outside on the Place du Forum.) Inside, highly stylized black and white shots of Malaysian life offer a feast for the eyes. The veal in *escalope de veau milanaise, pâtes gratinées au parmesan, sauce vierge* was tender, although not particularly inspiring. Fresh desserts included a lovely *carpaccio de mangues fraiches*, or fresh

mango carpaccio.

After dinner at Nord Pinus, there's no finer activity than meandering Arles' picturesque back streets before returning to the hotel, which is situated in the heart of the town.

This article was written by Contributing Editors to *Cognoscenti Magazine*.

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