

JUST OPENED

A NEW KIND OF SOUTHERN COMFORT

After a \$27 million renovation and expansion, the Restoration hotel, in Charleston, South Carolina, redefines heritage in a contemporary way.



Clockwise from top left: a room at the Restoration; the spa; Rise Coffee Bar; the library, which carries Assouline's full line of books; Port Mercantile, the artisan lobby shop.

The Restoration, a boutique hotel that opened earlier this year in downtown Charleston, South Carolina, owes its existence to a curious fact: that the line for the 2013 Cartier exhibition at Paris's Grand Palais was too long.

The story goes that Darlene Anderson—wife of Jeffrey Anderson, of the Cincinnati-based development firm behind the hotel, Jeffrey R. Anderson Real Estate—having been thwarted from seeing Cartier, repaired to the Palais's restaurant. There she bumped into Cory Ingram, of the branding firm Identity Atelier. As it happened, the Andersons were rethinking their small (16-room) hotel, the Restoration on King. They had bought a neighboring industrial building and imagined joining the spaces to create a more

ambitious, 54-room property. From that unlikely meeting, Ingram, whose clients have ranged from W Hotels to Mandarin Oriental, became the designer.

Ingram says he wanted the hotel to "abstract culture, heritage, and history, redefine it in a fresh, modern way for the contemporary elite traveler." Instead of the traditional trappings of antebellum gentility—the sepia-tinged photographs of steamboats, or sweet tea—there's rosemary-infused coffee.

The hotel is now a set of connected buildings that house the Port Mercantile shop (in the old hotel's former lobby) and the Rise Coffee Bar, accessed via a discreet door from the hotel's library. The aesthetic is raw yet refined: wood beams and brick, vintage typewriters resting on Amish furniture.

The Restoration occupies a middle ground between the more packaged sense of style embodied by the W and the beguiling eccentricity of a spot like the Yard in Milan. In Charleston, it works as sheer novelty; in other, more saturated markets, it might have to push for a stronger sense of character. But it is on the right track with its rotating art exhibits and events like a class on biscuit baking with local sensation Carrie Morey (of Callie's Charleston Biscuits). The Andersons are renovating the old wing room by room, so for a taste of the new, lighter direction, book in the taller property. A quibble: The breakfast basket delivered each morning would be enlivened by a glass of fresh-squeezed juice in place of the carton of Tropicana. *Rooms from \$299; 75 Wentworth St.; 877-221-7202. —Tom Vanderbilt*