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# Traveler

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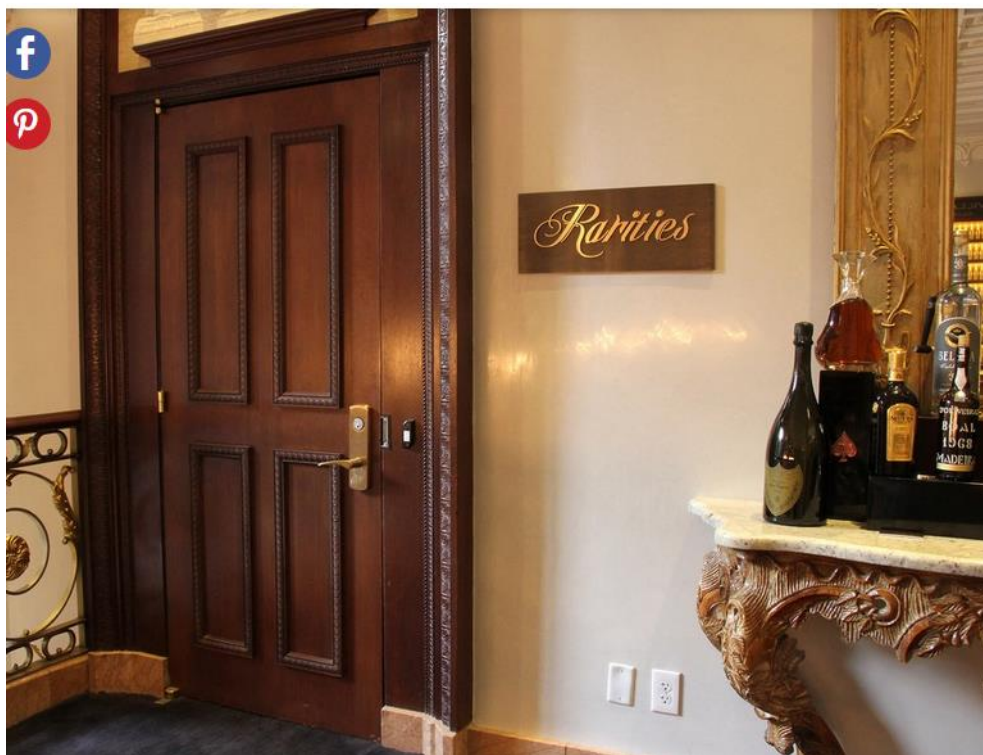
## A Peek Inside Rarities, the World's Most Exclusive Hotel Bar

*Written by* **Lilit Marcus** *Photographed by* • **Corrie Vierregger** • *July 20, 2015*

8 PHOTOS



Hidden inside the [New York Palace Hotel](#) is [Rarities](#), an ultra-exclusive lounge for the most dedicated barflies only—where the bottles are single vintage and the members have famous faces.



The glittery, over-the-top [New York Palace Hotel](#) was built as a shell around an historic Gilded Era home—and within that space is [Rarities](#), hidden in plain sight on the hotel's mezzanine. Where the Palace is bright, well-lit, and decked out in gold and crystals, the bar has an elegant, almost eerie feel—and because the house is protected by the city, little about it can be changed or upgraded. Like reading an Edith Wharton novel, Rarities transports you to a New York City that doesn't exist anymore.

*Photo by Corrie Vierregger*



Where the rest of the hotel is flashy—it was a regular filming location for *Gossip Girl* and has a [jewelry-themed suite](#) with more than \$1 million in baubles on display—Rarities is cloistered and sedate. In the spirit of Gatsby-era Manhattan, this bar's doors don't just open for anyone. Membership to the bar costs \$10,000 per year, or the price of a night's stay in one of the hotel's suites, which begin at \$15,000 per night. On top of that, you still have to make reservations ahead of time—and pay for your drinks.

*Photo by Corrie Vierregger*

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The walls are covered in floral brocade wallpaper in appropriate shades of merlot and cabernet. Richly textured paintings adorn the wall—an ominous-looking peacock peers out from the back wall, while the spot next to the portable bar is occupied by a regal red-haired woman in an empire waist dress who has been nicknamed Cordelia.

*Photo by Corrie Vierregger*



Once you've breached the barricades of Rarities and set foot in the dark, elegant space, what you find is worth the challenge to get in. Every bottle in the bar lives up to its name—one-of-a-kind (or perhaps ten-of-a-kind) ryes from recipes that no longer exist, bourbons from factories that have since burned down and ceased production. This is the gold standard of hotel bars.

*Photo by Corrie Vierregger*



Rarities is managed by Justin Lorenz, who oversees the wine program for the New York Palace. He arranges the bottles of alcohol loosely by style—gins together, and madeiras clustered in the back—but chooses some of the most interesting or unusual-looking ones to feature in the well-lit glass cases in the center of the bar.

*Photo by Corrie Vierregger*



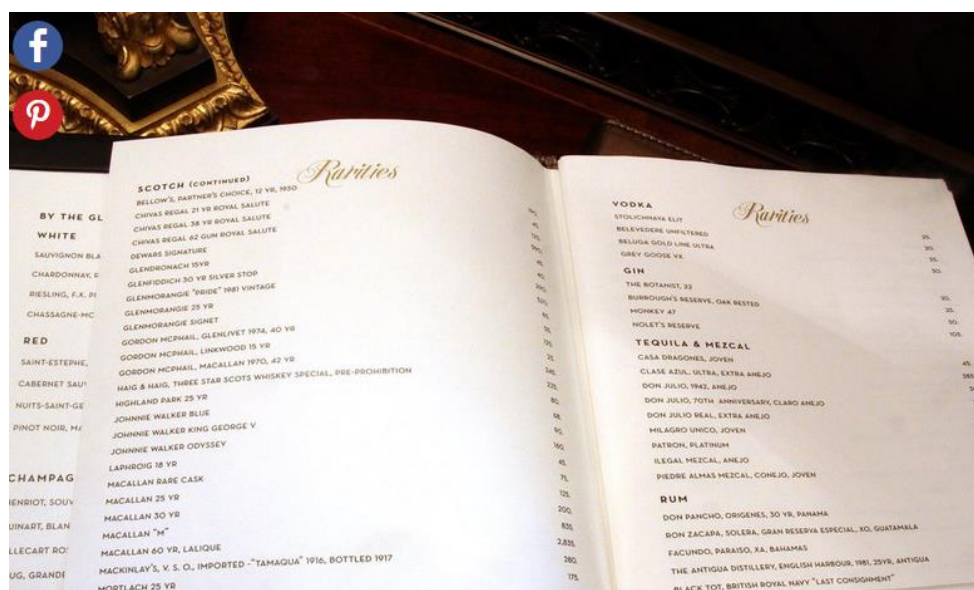
Considering how unique many of the alcohols are, you have to drink them as-is: Rarities is not the kind of place where you order a tequila sunrise. Lorenz will, however, pour your drink over ice—luxurious spheres with crown shapes (the hotel's logo) in the center, which are handmade by an artisan in Brooklyn and cost about \$2 each. They add another element of opulence to an already-opulent space. Pictured here is a brand of rum known as Black Tot, which was given to members of the Royal British Navy as part of their salaries. When the practice was discontinued, the remaining barrels were stored in government warehouses and the rum is only brought out for special occasions—like Prince William and Kate Middleton's wedding reception.

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The bar consists of two rooms separated by a hallway that leads to a private bathroom. The reservation system ensures that the bar will never be more than two-thirds full, so no one ever has to worry about finding a seat. It can also be reserved for the occasional special event, like a bachelor party, although a member will have to pay the night's fee and vouch for all the attendees. It's not unusual for drinks to cost several hundred dollars each.

*Photo by Corrie Vierregger*



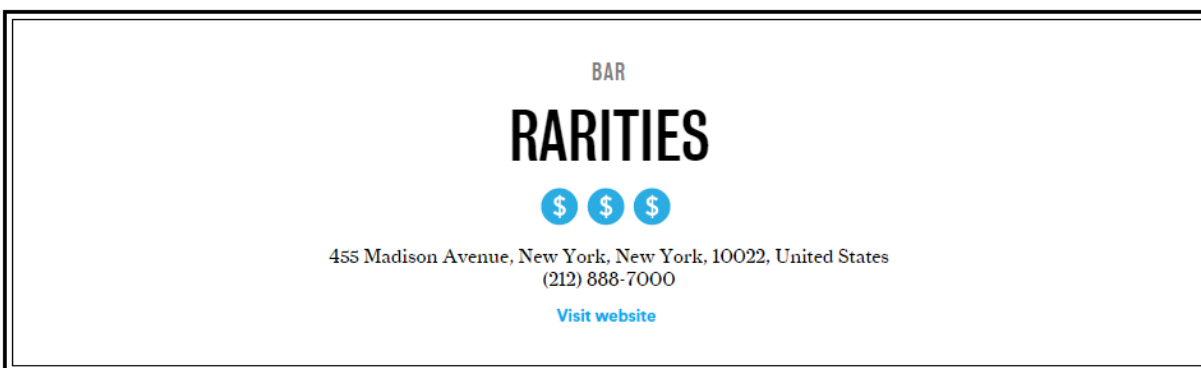
The high cost of entry makes for an eclectic mix of members: Titans of industry who need a place to close a deal, NFL players who can have a drink without being asked for an autograph, and even a certain elaborately outfitted pop star are all reportedly on the bar's well-guarded register. Many members don't even live in New York; they are willing to pay the membership fee just for the love of the drink and a boozy living room to hang out in whenever they blow into town. If you can manage to finagle an invitation, a night at Rarities will guarantee a one-of-a-kind experience, drink or no drink.

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The glittery, over-the-top New York Palace Hotel was built as a shell around an historic Gilded Era home—and within that space is Rarities, hidden in plain sight on the hotel's mezzanine. Membership costs \$10,000 a year, and you still have to make reservations and pay for your own drinks. However, you can also try the place out for a night if you're staying in one of the Palace's suites. Once you've breached the barricades of Rarities and set foot in the dark, elegant space, what you find is worth the challenge to get in. Every bottle in the bar lives up to its name—one-of-a-kind (or perhaps ten-of-a-kind) ryes from recipes that no longer exist, bourbons from factories that have since burned down and ceased production. This is the gold standard of hotel bars.