

Old homes, new look, new residents

Hutong hotels for summer guests

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By Annie Wei

Summer is a busy season for entertaining guests from out of town or overseas. People who have a cramped apartment or who have difficulty finding a short-term one for their visitors should check out hutong inns or hotels. Nothing beats the experience of being immersed in a traditional Beijing atmosphere from dusk to dawn.

West meets East design

Duge, a boutique hotel inspired by a courtyard home, is hidden in a quiet hutong close to the Nanluogu Xiang dining and shopping area. Passersby who have no clue will not believe it's a hotel because next to its red-and-blue doors is a sign that says, "no visiting." Besides providing a "courtyard experience," there is no doubt – as Duge claims – that it offers privacy. The hotel's decor gives it special character. The owner, after whom the place was named, is a local businesswoman who treasures hutong life. When Du Ge first saw the original courtyard home, she immediately envisioned on it a modern hotel that incorporated traditional courtyard architecture. She hired the Belgian-Chinese designer team of Jehanne de Biolley and Liu Linian, who renovated the building and decorated the interior with lacquered furniture and rich fabric.

Du put many of her personal collections in the guest rooms to share with tourists who are interested in Chinese culture. Some of the items were produced by ethnic minorities, while others tell of the imperial lifestyle.

Each room has a predominant color to reflect its theme. For example, Peony Pavilion, named after a drama from the Ming Dynasty, has patterns of red peonies and green leaves on glass screens, curtains and sofa covers.

Since the hotel formally opened this year, it is offering rooms at a promotional rate: Standard rooms cost 1,200 yuan a night; suites are 1,800 yuan a night. It also has two rooms (800 yuan a night) specially designed for children.

Each room has a matching bath or shower. Black paper-cuts adorn the courtyard-facing windows.

Many guests fall in love with the Bamboo Room, Simone Liu, the hotel's

marketing and public relations officer, said. The suite features a bamboo-saped wood-carved moon gate, a circular opening in ancient garden walls that served as a passageway.

The gate dates back 150 years and the original owners requested it be kept, so Du and her designers decided to turn it into one of their premier rooms. The hotel used to be a residence called Suojia Garden; its first owner was Ming Shan, minister of the imperial household in the Qing dynasty.

The hotel also provides 24-hour butler and kitchen service.

Duge hotel

Where: 26 Qianyuan'ensi Hutong, Dongcheng DistrictTel: 6406 0686

Web site: dugecourtyard.com