

# **GREAT HANGER STEAK AND GREAT HANGERS TOO**

## **THE CORNELL CLUB, NYC**

by

Lew Toulmin

### **SUMMARY**

We stayed at the Cornell Club of New York for four nights in early August 2010. The Club is about 200 yards west of Grand Central Station in a very good location. The public rooms are relatively modest but the bedrooms are excellent and more reasonably priced than most NYC reciprocal clubs. Rates for a twin room were \$220 per night in the low summer season (a negotiated rate), including breakfast, rising to \$302 in the fall.

### **CLUB HISTORY AND FACILITIES**

The Club was founded in 1889 and rented rooms at the Royalton Hotel for a time. Subsequently the Club moved five times around Manhattan, arriving at the current location in 1985. A three year renovation of the existing building was required. The Club is in a 14 storey building at 6 East 44<sup>th</sup> Street, about a short block west of Grand Central Station, between Madison Avenue and Fifth Avenue. (Unfortunately, this station does not offer train service to and from Washington, DC. The Station is a landmark in itself, with a fruit, veg and meat market, restaurants, shops, great architecture, regular tours and access to the subway.)

The Club library is very modest, consisting of a couple of walls of books. There are five function rooms, with square footage totaling 3500 square feet. These rooms are all right but not gorgeous, and in fact the bedrooms are definitely nicer than the public rooms, the reverse of the usual club situation. Other Club facilities include a moderate sized gym, about 50 x 50 feet with free weights, stationery bicycles, exercise balls and treadmills. There is complimentary WiFi service in the bedrooms. The Club has a reciprocal network of about 97 clubs around the world. The business center consists of a small area near the lobby with five computer stations, rather cramped. Download speed is good. Service at the front desk was helpful and knowledgeable. There are 48 bedrooms.



## **MEMBERSHIP**

Membership is open to persons who have attended Cornell or Duke, Colgate, RPI, Brown, Georgetown, Wake Forest, Stanford, Notre Dame or Tulane.

Initiation one time fees for persons who graduated from college more than 12 years ago are \$1166 for NYC residents, \$586 for NYC suburban residents, and \$463 for non-residents. Annual membership fees are the same amounts, respectively.

## **DRESS CODE AND RULES**

The dress code is “business casual” year round, which is defined as “collared shirts, slacks, blue jeans, sneakers, and knee length shorts.” (Hmmm, declare victory and depart, an interesting strategy.) The only prohibited apparel: “tee shirts, athletic apparel, flip flops, torn/tattered jeans, and ball/casual caps.”

“Discreet display and/or use of business papers and hand held computer instruments” is permitted in the lobby, tap room and library. “Full use of business papers” is confined to the business center and private meeting rooms. There are no gender restrictions in the Club. The entire facility is non-smoking.



## **BED ROOM DESCRIPTION**

Our twin bedded room was the most attractive of all the five NYC university clubs we surveyed or stayed in. It was about 11 by 15 feet but felt larger due to its nice tan and toupe decoration, with gold and red trim. The room had been recently renovated. Features included a 28 inch flat screen TV, a Keurig coffee maker, Tivoli audio radio, bureau, desk, comfortable armchair and moderate sized bathroom en suite

with tub and shower. The Tivoli radio malfunctioned at first, but an engineer showed up in five minutes and replaced it. Turndown service is provided at night, quite unusual. The highlight of the room: REAL HANGERS! Yes, these still exist, and I have the pictures to prove it. The AC system was rather noisy and cycled on and off frequently.

## **BED ROOM RATES**

The rate for our renovated twin room en suite in August was \$220 per night, including buffet breakfast but not tax of 16.345%. This was the best August rate of all eight NYC reciprocal clubs we surveyed, and yet it yielded one of the nicest bedrooms. (We estimate that Cornell was the third best rate for the rest of the year, after the Union

League and NYAC.) Our rate of \$220 should have been \$10 higher, but I was able to negotiate a lower rate by offering to stay multiple nights, and mentioning that I had a good rate at a competing club. This rate of \$220 (or \$230) will increase to \$302 per night for the fall and rest of the high season.

## **FOOD**

Buffet breakfast at the Club was included in the room price (very unusual), and consisted of scrambled eggs, bacon, sausage, Danish, coffee, etc. Oddly, there was no toast.

My dinner at the Cornell Club consisted of a kobe burger and string fries, which I gave a grade of B; the cost was \$20. My wife did better, with a hanger steak, an A, very good with nice flavor, and excellent sweet potato fries, and a starter garden salad of a B. Her key lime pie was rather bitter and hence was a C or worse. Her total price for all three courses was \$29.