

CONDÉ NAST

Traveler

Equinox Expands Into Hotels

The upscale gym giant unveiled plans to open a luxury hotel in New York City.

February 15, 2016 | By Andrew Sessa



Equinox has been on an acquisitional ultra-marathon for the past few years, pumping itself up with buys of Pure Yoga and Soul Cycle, followed more recently by takeovers of the Reebok Sports Club/NY in Manhattan and Sports Club/LA locations in New York, Boston, Miami, San Francisco, and Washington, D.C. Today, the high-end gym chain—where monthly membership in NYC can be upwards of \$230—operates nearly 80 clubs in nine cities around the country, plus others in Toronto and London, with as many as one million members.

Now Equinox is pushing its purview even further, expanding well beyond gyms to spin itself into a 360-degree fitness- and wellness-minded lifestyle

company. Last month, it debuted *Furthermore*, its new digital magazine. And by early 2019, Equinox plans to launch its very own hotel brand, targeting as guests the same sort of high-flying, driven clientele its fitness clubs have earned.

The brand will open its first property in New York City, with high-end hospitality design go-to Yabu Pushelberg handling interiors. The hotel will rise in Manhattan's Hudson Yards district, a multifaceted residential, retail, and commercial development overseen by Equinox's parent company, Related. While that area is still a construction site in a less-than-desirable part of town at the moment, the hotel's well-heeled neighbors will eventually include Coach, L'Oreal, and Neiman Marcus. After the project is complete, locations will line up in major cities, with Chicago reportedly in the works, according to *Crain's Chicago Business*.

That debut NYC arrival is still several years off, but we recently caught up with Equinox CMO Carlos Becil to get the inside word on the project.

Carlos Becil: The demand for fitness and high performance living has never been greater, and we don't see it slowing down. It's visible across categories, including technology, wearable devices, fashion and, of course, in our own business. We're opening a record ten clubs this year and will soon have 100 clubs in three countries. We're experiencing record levels of demand for the Equinox brand.... We polled our members and we received a 95 percent response rate that our members would be interested in staying at an Equinox hotel. [Anyone will be welcome to stay at the properties, though members of Equinox gyms will get special privileges.] A majority feel it's important to maintain a healthy routine and don't want to compromise their commitment to wellness and fitness because they are away from home.

Traveler: How will the fitness centers in Equinox hotels differ from the company's current gyms?

CB: We believe that to maximize results and reach your goals, you need to place equal focus on, and carefully plan, how you move, nourish, and regenerate your body. The hotel experience will enable us to keenly focus on each of those three areas to a degree not possible in our standalone clubs.



Traveler: What details can you reveal about the first Equinox hotel?

CB: The Equinox Hotel in Hudson Yards will include the largest club we've ever built, 60,000 square feet, with indoor and outdoor space and pools. In addition to the club, spa and hotel, we will have an additional 150,000 square feet for office space, and above the hotel will be luxury condos.

Traveler: Beyond the hotels' gyms, what kind of fitness-focused in-room amenities and offerings can guests expect?

CB: We are working with world-renowned leaders [in the food and restaurant world] to create an inviting environment and bringing to life an intriguing culinary experience that provide healthy and delicious fair. The concept will be for in-room dining as well as a destination restaurant within the hotel. As the second largest operator in spas [in the U.S.], we are [also] developing a new spa concept that redefines recovery and regeneration.