

## ‘CONNIE COCKTAIL LOUNGE’ AT THE TWA HOTEL

*Interior design by Stonehill Taylor*

For a one-of-a kind bar experience, top New York architectural and interior design firm Stonehill Taylor has transformed a mid-century 116-foot Lockheed Constellation L-1649A Starliner aircraft (one of only four of its kind left in the world) into a nostalgic cocktail bar for the TWA Hotel—itself a restoration of architect Eero Saarinen’s famed TWA Flight Center completed in 1962 at New York’s JFK Airport. This specific Starliner model was originally built in 1958, and currently sits outdoors between the lobby and the airport’s modern Terminal 5.

Connie has gone through a number of incarnations since it first served passengers for TWA until 1962. After becoming an Alaskan bush plane for five years, to later being sold at auction in 1979 for a mere \$150, it also became an airdrop for marijuana in the 1980’s. Abandoned in Honduras and later rescued in Maine during the past few decades, the full design team’s direction for its current use demonstrate the dedication to historic preservation and adaptive reuse along with the TWA building that it complements.

Stonehill Taylor married a contemporary guest experience with design details that evoke the glamour of 1960’s air travel and the industrial marvel of aviation. Connie’s design reflects the interiors they completed for the hotel’s lobby and guestrooms, putting the perfect final touch to an already world-class destination. Throughout the lounge, there are moments that pay homage to the industrial and technological achievements that defined the era.

Ascending an original staircase with playful “*Up, Up, and Away*” lettering, guests enter Connie through the forward hatch, arriving just behind the pilot’s cockpit. Once inside, the main cabin echoes the TWA Flight Center’s recognizable terminal “tube” design, with soft glowing ceilings and Eero Saarinen “Chili Pepper Red” carpeting running underfoot.

Working under a tight space with low ceilings challenged the team to find a way to visually open up the space: To achieve this illusion, running almost the full circumference of the cabin at its belly, is a one-foot-wide backlit “reveal” that uncovers the raw bones of the aircraft. The tambour-clad backbar separates the lounge from a rivet-lined brushed-steel backdrop inspired by both the plane’s fuselage and Saarinen’s Gateway Arch elevators in St. Louis.

Perhaps the most telling style of the era are the bar’s 16 reupholstered original airplane seats in a plaid pallet of pink, orange, red, and beige hues. Additional seating vignettes nod to the original styling of the TWA Commodore Club where chili pepper red banquet seating with fold-down drink holders and Saarinen tulip tables and stools can be found.

Toward the front of the cabin, guests can capture a picture-perfect moment looking out the original “constellation” window, once used to guide the plane by starlight on overnight flights. Toward the back, the design team tapped into a more direct inspiration: installing reproductions of two 8-by-4-foot murals by artist Mario Zamparelli. The originals, which showed models in destinations from Bangkok to Boston, lined the airplane’s Starlight Lounge, a pre-dinner spot for cocktails in the ‘60s.

### ***Fabrications:***

Murals, curtains, seat covers, seatback pockets, ‘TWA’ vinyls/double stripes, further accents by:

-Aaron Sciandra

-Tara Romeo (MCR/Morse Development)

### ***About Stonehill Taylor***

Stonehill Taylor is a hospitality-focused architecture and interior design firm based in New York City. The firm’s approach to designing destinations is to create an inspired and distinct reflection on the location, space, history and culture for each project. Stonehill Taylor’s distinguished portfolio in interior design and architecture includes: TWA Hotel, The Whitby, Renaissance New York Chelsea, Moxy Chelsea, Ace Hotel New York, The Refinery Hotel, InterContinental Barclay, JW Marriott Nashville, and the Eliza Jane Hotel in New Orleans. Stonehill Taylor is at the forefront of sustainable design, developing projects that are conscious of their impact on local communities and the world such as: The Crosby Street Hotel, The NoMad Hotel and Nomad Las Vegas, and Portland’s Press Hotel. For more information, visit [www.stonehilltaylor.com](http://www.stonehilltaylor.com)

**For more information on Connie, please visit:**

<https://www.twahotel.com/connie-airplane/cocktail-lounge>