



## HOTEL SPY

# The Slaak, Rotterdam

### Why should I visit Rotterdam?

Admittedly, the city isn't as pretty as Amsterdam. Rotterdammers had to rebuild after heavy WWII bombing, but the resulting gritty, Modernist skyline does include some bold and quirky architecture, such as Piet Blom's Cube Houses (see right). Now Eurostar runs direct trains from London, making Rotterdam an intriguing alternative city break.

### So, where am I staying?

The 1950s Het Slaakhuis building, home until 1976 to the socialist newspaper *Het Vrije Volk* ('The Free People'), has now been refashioned as a boutique hotel. The Slaak makes a virtue of its history, from

the '50s-style wallpaper and carpet patterns to the in-house restaurant Didot34, named after the newspaper's typeface.

### What's the vibe?

Expansive and welcoming. As you step through the doors, you enter a light, double-height space with original tiled columns, a bar to the left and restaurant with an open kitchen to the right. A background hum of happy chatter can be heard from the sofas that are woven through the dining area, while a wide slanted staircase – also original – rises to a gallery where you can watch the action unfold below. It's a socialising place for locals as well as for hotel guests.

### What's my room like?

Designed with writers in mind, each of the 74 rooms has a handcrafted wooden writing desk; suites have typewriters. Custom-made sofas and wardrobes in muted tones, again inspired by the '50s, are a nod to the building's heyday, when harried journalists and editors would have filled the pressroom and corridors. High concrete ceilings and rows of tall windows in loft-style rooms create an airy space and reflect an industrious past. The generous king-size beds are luxuriously soft, though some of the abstract murals facing them can be quite overpowering.

### What am I eating?

Didot34 serves an international menu of small plates. A typical lunch might involve steak tartare with runny egg, tender cod with parsley, leek and potato, and yoghurt panna cotta with crunchy liquorice crisps and fennel.

From £130; [tributeportfolio.com](http://tributeportfolio.com)

**👍** The hotel is close to many top sights such as the Markthal food hall, Old Harbour and Erasmus Bridge.

**👎** Don't mess around with the thermostat: a slight adjustment and you risk baking.



### OUT AND ABOUT

Piet Blom's Cube Houses are a local landmark not far from the hotel. Built in 1977, each house is a bright yellow cube, tilted at 45 degrees and placed atop a pillar. They were intended to create an 'urban forest', and today they include a mix of Airbnb rentals, a hostel, restaurants, shops and a museum ([kubuswoning.nl](http://kubuswoning.nl)).