VIRGIN HOTEL CHICAGO
Project Spotlight

CUSTOMER: Virgin Hotels
Miami, FL

INSTALLER: Bourbon Tile and Marble
Buffalo Grove, IL

GENERAL CONTRACTOR: McHugh Construction
Chicago, IL

DESIGNER: Otto and Rockwell Group Europe

ARCHITECT: Booth Hansen
Chicago, IL
Virgin Hotels launched its brand in the U.S. in 2010, and recently opened its first location — on the corner of Lake and Wabash in Chicago, the site of the Old Dearborn Bank Building in Chicago’s downtown area and business heartland. During the construction phase that lasted for several years, the original building was gutted and completely renovated into 250 rooms that occupy 45,000 square feet (4,181 square meters) with a number of unique features and amenities. Common areas, which include event and meeting areas for groups of up to 150 people, were added and take up between 15,000-25,000 square feet (1,394-2,323 square meters) of space. Bourbon Tile and Marble, a longtime MVP partner of LATICRETE and one of its top 10 tile contractors in the country, was contracted to install all the tiles for the project. Architects and designers worked diligently to preserve as much of the character of the original building as possible, and the new facility is now both Green Seal and LEED certified. The company plans to have hotels in 20 U.S. locations by 2025.

The Virgin Hotel Chicago was an exceptional opportunity for both LATICRETE and Bourbon Tile. Its success is an indication of trust in the LATICRETE name and its products and the ability of the LATICRETE team to work with customers to achieve critical success on unique and challenging projects.”

~ Jeff Kimmerling  
LATICRETE Contractor Sales Representative

Installer Bourbon Tile and Marble faced three major challenges with this project:

**UNPROVEN MATERIALS** — A number of stones and tiles used on this project had not been used on any previous project and it was not known how well they would perform once installed.

**WARRANTY PRESERVATION** — The installer needed to come up with a new, high-quality installation process to ensure that all work carried out did not void any warranties on the stone and tiles used in the project.

**SOUND DAMPENING** — Because Chicago is a busy city with lots of street noise and the building would be housing hundreds of guests at any given time, the hotel needed effective sound dampening that was compatible with the tile installation materials in all locations including common areas and guest rooms.
A LATICRETE Solution

LATICRETE® solutions used in the Virgin Hotel Chicago project include:

LATICRETE NXT™ Level was used throughout all floor areas including the guest rooms, Café and Bar to level, flatten and make the floor areas smooth. NXT Level is a high performance Self Leveler that allows tiling in as little as 3-4 hours and membranes in 72 hours.

LATICRETE 9235 Waterproofing Membrane was used to waterproof all shower and bathroom floor areas. The 9235 Waterproofing Membrane is a thin, load-bearing waterproofing designed specifically for the special requirements of ceramic tile, stone and brick installations, which was perfect for the hotel. Bourbon Tile applied a self-curing liquid rubber polymer and a reinforcing fabric which quickly formed a flexible, seamless waterproofing membrane that bonded to substrates in the bathroom.

LATICRETE 254 Platinum was used to install 30” (76.2 cm) Hex by ¾” (1.91 cm) thick concrete tiles in the Bar area and the 4” (10.16 cm) Hex by ¾” (1.91 cm) thick concrete tiles in the Café. 254 Platinum is a high performance polymer fortified adhesive mortar.

LATICRETE Glass Tile Adhesive Mortar was used to install the glass tile on backsplashes. Glass Tile Adhesive Mortar is a water mixed, non-sag, polymer fortified adhesive mortar that is specifically formulated for use in glass tile applications. Glass Tile Adhesive Mortar has great workability and produces an ultra-white finish that enhances the look of glass mosaics, glass tile, and most any translucent tile or stone. In addition to containing antimicrobial protection, Glass Tile Adhesive Mortar is GREENGUARD certified for low VOC. Glass Tile Adhesive Mortar can also be used with porcelain or ceramic tile.

LATICRETE 253 Gold was used to install 1” (2.5 cm) penny round tiles as well as the 3” x 6” (7.6 cm x 15.2 cm) floor and wall tile. 253 Gold is a superior polymer fortified bagged cementitious thin-set powder that Bourbon mixed with water to install ceramic tiles using the thin-set method of installation. It is designed for interior and exterior floor and wall installations of all types of ceramic tiles, porcelain tile and stone over concrete, exterior glue plywood and a variety of substrates. It proved perfect for the hotel.

Able to handle various sized grout joints and available in 40 colors, LATICRETE PERMACOLOR® was used to grout all areas, tiles, and stone. PERMACOLOR Grout provided a high-performance joint between tiles that was fast setting dense and hard. It was color consistent with the tiles and contains which inhibits the growth of mold and mildew. PERMACOLOR can also be used in joint sizes ranging from 1/16” (1.6 mm) to ½” (13 mm).

“This was an exciting project because of the new materials that were involved and the historical significance of the building. We’ve had such great experiences with LATICRETE® products so we had no doubt that the process would run smoothly and produce the results the customer wanted.”

~ Eddie Bourbon
Bourbon Tile and Marble.

Outcome

The hotel opened in early 2015 to rave reviews and is proving to be an excellent launch for the Virgin Hotel brand in the United States. Guests love the many features that were preserved from the original building, including a 1920s cigar bar that serves as the hotel’s front desk and the restored brass elevator doors. The entire project was a success for a number of reasons. Bourbon Tile and Marble, a Trowel of Excellence award winner, completed the installation with the highest of quality while also finishing the project well within an aggressively scheduled Grand Opening finish date. It also provided an excellent opportunity to get American products into the international mix and show how they could not only compete with the best, but also exceed expectations.