



Taking the Point

A visit to the U. S. Military Academy at West Point always favored the historic. But in a post-9/11 world, it has also become a site of national importance and interest.

These days tighter security means, of course, limited campus access. Academy tours are confined to one-hour bus trips that start outside the gates at the Visitor's Information Center. Photo IDs are a must, and no backpacks or video cameras are allowed. These added restrictions, however, only serve to reaffirm the school's significance as a major U.S. military academy and base. And it's been that way for 200 years.

Insiders say a good way to glimpse military life is with a stay at the Thayer Hotel. The 77-year-old granite landmark, located right on campus, has undergone a \$26 million renovation. A private group, consisting entirely of West Point graduates, handled the makeover. The first phase involved refurbishing and doubling the size of the 127 guest rooms. Plans for additional rooms and a new conference center are in the works.

With its beamed ceiling lobby and grand fireplace, the Thayer is a far cry from the nearby barracks and mess hall. The main dining room, known for its lavish Sunday champagne brunches, is lined with portraits of famous generals, and the conversations you're likely to overhear there are more than just polite dinner chatter. That's because about half of the hotel guests are military related. One ribbon-chested gentleman discusses his service under General Westmoreland; another talks about coded letters to a colleague in the Middle East.

Contact the Thayer Hotel to find out about special promotional packages. The concierge can also provide information on the Hudson Valley's many notable attractions, including narrated

river excursions aboard the *M/V Pride of the Hudson* and the *M/V Commander* (starting in May 2003). And if you plan to time your visit with an Army game, be sure to book early.

*West Point Military Academy: www.usma.edu
The Thayer Hotel: 1-800-247-5047 or www.hotelthayer.com
Army Ticket Office: 1-877-TIX-ARMY*

IYNA BORT CARUSO

Floor Hide

Prehistoric cave dwellers may have lacked sophistication, but they certainly knew a good thing when they found it. From loincloths and sheaths to tanned hides used for ground cover, bedding or wall hangings, animal skins were not only warm and durable; they made domestic interiors more attractive and sensuous.

Today, the lure of leather has taken on a whole new perspective. Coach crossed over from personal leather goods to pillows, throws and chairs, and Damier leather designed their Canadian flagship store using leather wall panels. No longer a fabric limited to uses on chairs, sofas or desktops, leather is emerging as a smooth, rugged and tactile textile. And as one of the world's oldest and most versatile materials, the lure of leather has now expanded to flooring.

Edleman Leather, which has always been a forerunner in the production of special leather finish techniques, has developed an entire leather floor line. Ask Matt Damon, who has helped to make leather hotter and sexier than ever by using it as one of the flooring finishes in his newly renovated Manhattan apartment.

More economical than carpeting and less expensive than a mahogany herringbone floor, leather tiles, like wood, can be laid in patterns, polished, embossed, antiqued or brushed with patina. Leather flooring softens sound, warms the atmosphere and feels good under foot. It's simply luxurious to the touch. Best of all, leather flooring is easy to maintain (requiring only occasional buffing) and will age like a fine bottle of wine, becoming even richer in color and gloss with wear.

Those cavemen were really on to something...and so is this newest trend. Who ever said something old can't be made new again?

LINDA CORREIA