

THE WEEK FASHION

TRAVEL

Paradise found Sailing in St Barths Stylish sleepovers The dreamiest hotels to wake up in
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SUMMER 2019

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Check out London

This year sees a slew of new hotel openings across the UK’s capital – places that offer not only a bed for the night but amazing restaurants, bars and spas. John O’Ceallaigh reports

EXCUSE THE CORRUPTION OF DICKENS’ words, but the worst of times can be the best of times – London’s hotels right now are a case in point. Think back to those carefree days of Cool Britannia, when cocktails at the Metropolitan hotel’s Met Bar – perhaps sipping a pineapple Martini in sight of All Saints – was about as good as it got. Strangely, it’s only now, while in the perpetual grip of Brexit hysteria, that the capital can decisively lay claim to the world’s most exciting hotel scene.

There are multiple reasons for this. The consolidation of extreme wealth has prompted many a London hotelier to launch shiny super-suites in an effort to part sterling from big spenders, but then, aren’t we all



looking for escape and sanctuary? It’s available from the first second you breathe in the lobby’s faintly perfumed air before sitting down for the new Christian Dior-inspired afternoon tea at The Berkeley. Plus, London’s innate dynamism and creativity means customers expect innovation and are responsive to experimentation.

Still, hotel hedonism takes different forms these days. The Met’s storied bar was recently converted into ‘live fire grill restaurant’ Gridiron. Clean-eating considerations and the hazard of indiscretions ending up on Instagram have influenced the shift from drunken evenings to creative dining concepts. This summer’s most exciting restaurant opening will be Davies and Brook at Claridge’s; in charge is Daniel Humm, responsible for the success of ‘the world’s best restaurant’, Eleven Madison Park in New York. For thoughtful boozing, the new Lyaness bar at Sea Containers London serves some of Europe’s most creative libations. Sample ingredients: onyx, milk wine, sandalwood.

Healthy living also makes hotel gyms no longer an afterthought. Launching this month, Lanserhof at The Arts Club occupies a standalone townhouse by the members’ club and hotel. Alongside a vast gym, this facility will feature a cryotherapy chamber and on-site medics (the annual membership fee is £6,500).

Proper misbehaviour, then, is confined to hotels’ fanciest suites, providing you can afford it. Recently unveiled at The Connaught, The Mews is a £12,000-a-night townhouse with a grand piano and artwork that includes a piece by Louise Bourgeois. The city’s most expensive suite is the penthouse at the just-reopened Mandarin Oriental Hyde Park: £42,000 a night will get you masses of space and butler service.

Extreme though they are, people really do pay these prices. A few years back, my stay in the city’s largest suite, the Sterling Suite at The Langham – then £24,000 a night – was succeeded by a six-week booking worth over £1m. The daily rate was recently upped to £27,000 – a sign, surely, that in these times of uncertainty, providing a place where privileged punters can find escape is more lucrative than ever.

NOW AND NEXT London’s new hotels (and the best to come)

BELMOND CADOGAN HOTEL Chelsea
(Opened in February)
On offer are Belmond grandeur and the keys to the private Cadogan Place Gardens.

ONE ALDWYCH Covent Garden
(Reopens this month)
The property returns after a full refurbishment, with beautifully conceived rooms and a fresh emphasis on British design and produce.



THE STRATFORD Olympic Park
(Above; opens this month)
Occupying a distinctive new skyscraper, this intriguing opening aims to lure travellers east with austere, Scandi-style interiors and cultural activities.

THE STANDARD King’s Cross
(Opens this August)
The London outpost of this US brand will make a mark with outdoor hot tubs and a 10th-floor restaurant.

RAFFLES Whitehall
(Opens next year)
The Grade II-listed Old War Office will re-emerge as a 125-key luxury hotel.

Photography: LUKE HAYES



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