

ORACLE TIME

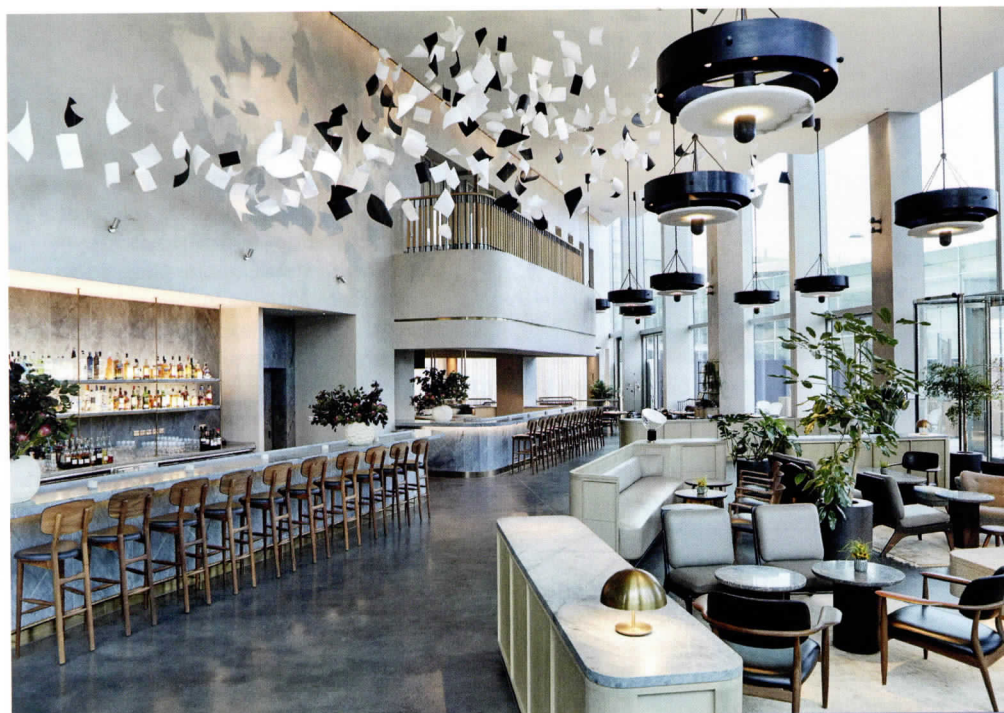


Under the hood of
AUDEMARS PIGUET

the Hedonism Issue

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Ben Harrington's Stratford Brasserie at the 42-storey hotel, which offers true 360-degree views



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Words: Mark Edwards

If you're in the know with London's property development scene, Harry Handelmans will be familiar. Handelmans founded the London-based Manhattan Loft Corporation in 1992 and has re-developed some of London's most admired buildings, including the Chiltern Firehouse and St. Pancras Renaissance London Hotel.

Handelmans thrives on ambitious projects and his latest, The Stratford, has once again raised eyebrows. In anything but a subtle manner, this spectacular 42-story double-cantilevered skyscraper towers over the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park area in Stratford, split between 248 luxury residential apartments and a five-star design hotel that occupies the first seven floors.

Like myself you may initially question the location; it's some distance from my usual haunts. However, this is an up-and-coming cultural hub, with an international train station six minutes away, as well as a good selection of new bars and restaurants – not to mention some high-end boutiques – at Coal Drops Yard. It isn't quite the West End yet, but watch this space.

The hotel certainly does things differently, evoking the timeless glamour and maverick social spirit of New York's legendary long-stay hotels. As you enter the triple-height lobby, you are greeted

with a stunning nine-metre fireplace, cocktail bar and an open-kitchen brasserie. It's sophisticated and pleasantly lively, overlooked by The Mezzanine; a relaxed bar by day and a glamorous club hosting DJ's in the evening. Oh, and the cocktails? Amazing.

There are seven different room types, ranging from Standard up to the impressive Manhattan Studio. The décor fuses Scandi style with old-world opulence using serene pastel tones and natural woods. The floor-to-ceiling windows provide generous light (and interesting views) and you'll find everything that you would expect from a five-star hotel, with nice modern additions such as a tablet for requests and an iPhone dock and wireless charging station.

To eat, head to the hotel's Stratford Brasserie, which is run under the creative direction of Ben Harrington, formerly of Soho House Group and Gordon Ramsay

at Claridge's. He has created a seasonal menu, characterised by local produce and European influences which blends classic brasserie staples with a few surprises. The food is, of course, great (I highly recommend the whole baked sea bream to share) and I always find an open kitchen adds a dash of theatre.

The Stratford provides all the facilities you would expect, but with a couple of nice surprises including the sky gardens with spectacular views and a state-of-the-art, 24-hour gym. Forget the neglected token hotel gyms that no-one uses; this is serious stuff!

The Allegra restaurant has just opened on the seventh floor serving seasonal European dishes led by former Chiltern Firehouse head chef Patrick Powell. There are many sky-high restaurants in London but this space is truly unique with 360-degree views over London, a huge outside terrace and herb garden. I am yet to try the food, but there's a silver lining: I have a reason to come back soon. Find out more and book your stay at thestratford.com