

Soon-to-be-home of the V&A East, a new campus for London College of Fashion and the BBC Symphony Orchestra — Stratford is moving from glossy retail hub to creative destination. Until then, this new hotel has added serious style to the East End

IN BRIEF

First impression Let's just stay here by the fire

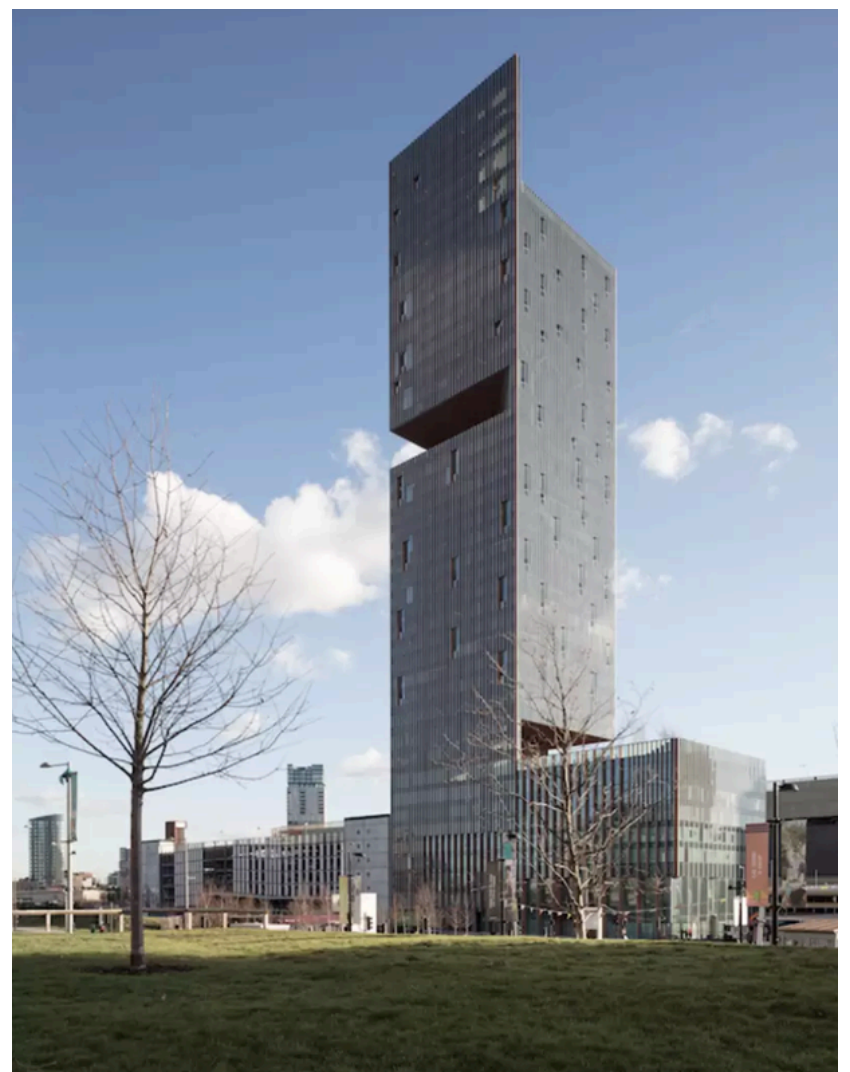
Staff Polished but not stuffy

Food and drink Farm-to-table food you'll fight over

Bed and bath Unfussy Nordic minimalism

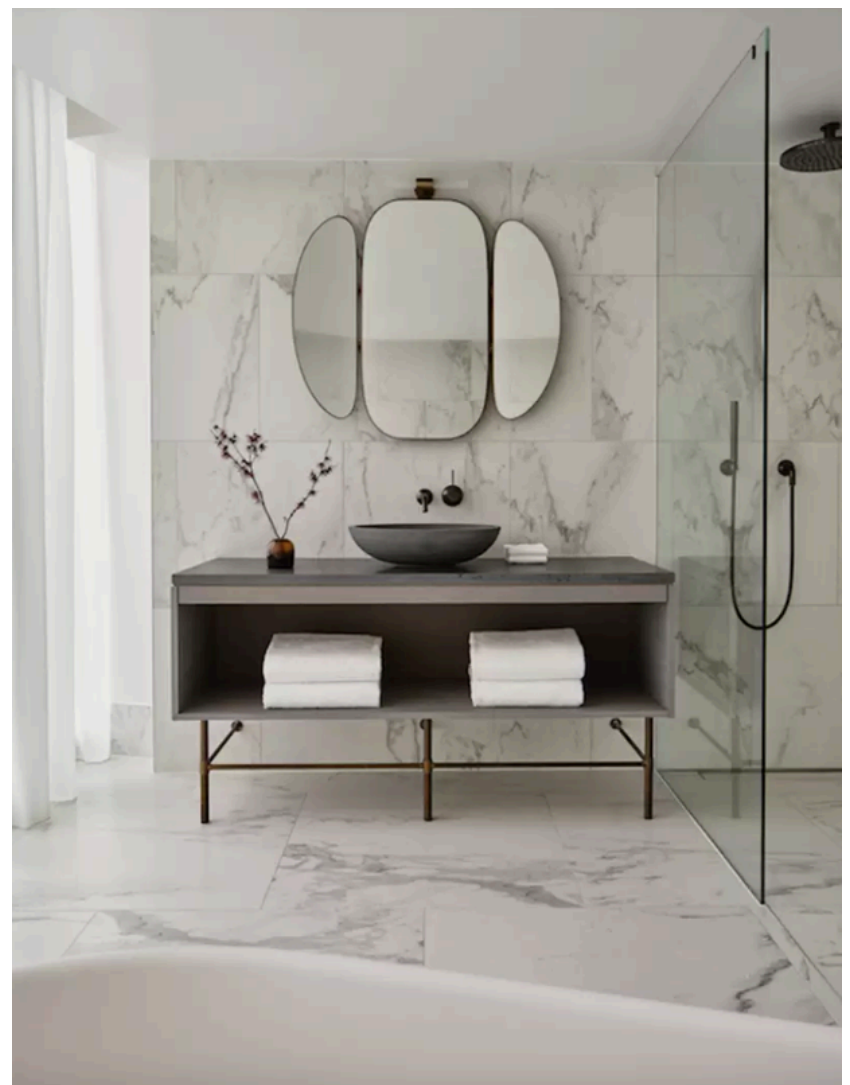
The crowd Executives charming clients over cocktails, and smart professionals

In a nutshell Streamlined style for city slickers



Set the scene

From one angle, The Stratford looks like the sun has set on it, while from another, the [hotel](#) glistens in the changing light of the day. The serrated dual-material surface, where short strips of terracotta meet longer panes of glass, means the hotel stands out in Stratford's monotonous sprawl of [apartment](#) buildings, shopping malls (the Westfield here is the fourth largest in the UK) and the London Stadium in the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park. In a [city](#) not known for its skyscrapers, The Stratford is a spectacular addition. It's 42 storeys combine loft-style apartments for long-term stays, a traditional hotel occupying the first seven floors and impressive sky [gardens](#) cut into the building's façade. Inside, it's all fires and Scandi design, making it a polished pad for professionals.



What's the story?

Designed by SOM architects, whose portfolio includes some of the world's tallest buildings — there's the Burj Khalifa in [Dubai](#) and One World Trade Center in [New York](#) — The Stratford stands in good company. Though its location has raised a few eyebrows, there's every reason to trust the seasoned property developer Harry Handelsman, who bought the plot on which the hotel stands a decade ago. He's already created a glamorous celebrity haunt out of Chiltern Firehouse, and in 2004 he gained planning permission to redevelop the Grade I-listed Neo-Gothic St Pancras railway station into a new hotel, triggering the rejuvenation of then-less-than-desirable Kings Cross.

What can we expect in our room?

Thanks to Space [Copenhagen](#), the interiors are smart and simple, with just enough luxury. There's floor-to-ceiling marble in the bathrooms, huge tubs, fluffy towels and REN toiletries. The rooms show off textured bedding, curved lines, natural woods and a neutral palette with splashes of colour. Also cleverly utilised are the building's jagged windows, which make a feature wall out of the curtains. This is smart, since the views of either a train station or the giant red neon Westfield sign will encourage you to keep them closed. In fact, 15 of the rooms don't have any direct light at all, being illuminated instead by the light from an internal courtyard that hosts Anatomy of the Void, an [art](#) installation by Petroc Csesti featuring a glass ball on a pole with an ominous spinning centre.



How about the food and drink?

There's been much buzz around the opening of Allegra, a farm-to-table restaurant on the seventh floor that's touted to become a destination in its own right. As far as food is concerned, we agree. From the start, there's delicious bread – a recipe from former Chiltern Firehouse head chef Patrick Powell's Irish granny – served up with a green sauce made from herbs grown on the organic farm owned by The Stratford, 40 minutes away from [London](#). A light pistachio choux is filled with liver parfait, and we fought over the last oat cracker topped with beetroot marmalade and shaved blue cheese. Starters of chicken, parmesan and wild mushroom dumplings (similar to gnocchi) and a celeriac velouté that's poured at the table are not to be missed either. Just like the impressive mains: monkfish in a rich shellfish sauce and a Cornish plaice that's delicate and dripping in champagne. Afterwards, head to the Mezzanine bar or to the lobby for a drink — the fire-filled spaces and delicate cocktails encourage post-dinner lounging.

Breakfast is served in the Brasserie, which, with its huge windows, grey palate and plain interiors, has a faintly airport-lounge feel. An a la carte menu offers up straightforward staples – just don't bother with the croissants.



Anything to say about the service?

Service is impeccable — staff are helpful and attentive, but it all feels fairly laid-back.

What sort of person stays here?

Young professionals and hardcore shoppers. For a hotel outside of Zone 1, The Stratford is perfectly convenient. It takes less than 20 minutes on the underground to both Bank and Oxford Street, and just 6 minutes to St Pancras International by High-Speed Rail. Foodies will appreciate the hotel's proximity to both trendy Hackney Wick and Shoreditch too.



How does it fit into the neighbourhood?

Like much of the East End, Stratford suffered significantly from the deindustrialisation of the 20th century, particularly after the London Docks closed in the 1960s. Recently, money has been poured into rejuvenating the area as a retail, residential and business district, glossing up Stratford significantly. The area still lacks creativity and soul, but as the soon-to-be-home of V&A East, a new campus for the London College of Fashion and the BBC Symphony Orchestra, that could all change.

Anything else?

Lovers of New York's High Line will be suitably impressed by The Stratford's replica on its seventh-floor terrace. Using the steel tracks for the window-cleaning machines as a substitute for the disused railway, the architects have installed the same moveable wooden deckchairs and wild grass — but here catch a glimpse of the London skyline instead.



And anything you'd change?

For a hotel situated in one of London's taller buildings, with three roof terraces looking out onto showstopping views of the city, it seems a shame that only long-term residents can enjoy the top two roof terraces.

Is it worth staying here?

For Allegra, the price and the surprisingly convenient location – yes.

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Price: Doubles from £145

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