

CLASSIC DRIVER

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Blakes



Whether on business or pleasure, London offers many things to do, and there are only 24 hours in the day. Shops, restaurants and art galleries are great to visit, but at some point you need a break. Spending a night at one of these hotels, where you can relax and enjoy the best service without missing out on the London 'buzz', is the best way to 're-charge the batteries' for the following day. Classic Driver presents our three favourite hotels for you...



In quiet South Kensington, just a few streets away from Kensington Gardens, lies Blakes, the hotel set out by interior designer Anouska Hempel. A one-off, exclusive, small and unconventional hotel, it creates an almost mystic aura in the middle of modern metropolitan London. From her travels in India, China, Indonesia, Thailand and Africa, she has collected an eclectic array of furniture, artefacts, works of art and accessories that once combined make an unforgettable experience. The 50 rooms and suites are decorated in a combination of deep colours, wonderfully aged lacquered antiques, and subtle décor swings between classic British elegance and exotic Colonialism.



It's no coincidence that among the regular, discerning guests are Hollywood stars or top designers. This is due not only to Blakes' highest level of discretion regarding the press and paparazzi, but also the very best level of personal service. "What happens at Blakes, stays at Blakes" says Anouska Hempel. Although if you choose to leave this protective and warm environment you will find yourself just a few footsteps away from

the well-known Brompton Cross with boutiques from Chanel to Maharishi. There's always the Science or Natural History Museums for those looking for culture.

Blakes Restaurant



If you are staying at Blakes you must take a few steps downstairs to the basement where you will find one of the best, and most mysterious, restaurants in town. The 'Opium Den' atmosphere and design of the restaurant continues the theme from the rest of the hotel - but even more so, with a heady mix of exotic bird feathers and Chinese prints on the walls. The menu includes Ginger consommé, Orange Salmon sashimi with green rice, coriander, Chicken and Coriander, Beef teriyaki, Lobster toast.



The hotel personifies gentle and elegant service that glides unobtrusively from room to room, and one is given the most discreet attention one could ever wish for - yet at the same time the place is busy, bustling, bohemian and beautiful.

Halkin



Moving towards Belgravia and Knightsbridge you will find another prestigious hotel - The Halkin. Described as an 'oasis of silence, relaxation and comfort', it offers an escape from London's busy streets. The four floors are decorated in different colours to symbolise the four elements of nature; fire, water, earth and air.



The simple elegant design of the rooms and suites invites the guest to relax, and in case you can't leave work behind, there are three telephones with voicemail, internet and fax per room - in fact you can even lease the services of a personal secretary, which the hotel offers to its business clients.

The Zetter



The trend-setters amongst you should reserve a room in the 'designer hotel' The Zetter, situated in one of London's up and coming areas, Clerkenwell. Passing through stylish bars and galleries you will get to the entrance hall and walk through spectacular sliding glass doors into a reception area enlivened by a

chandelier made of pink glass lilies. The 59 individually decorated rooms can be reached through a spiral staircase from a dramatic archway.



Through use of decorated-panels, objets d'art, ceramics and furniture young artists and designers have transformed the 19th Century building into a mixture of Kubrick's "2001 Space Odyssey", a Louis XV ballroom, and the high gloss of Elle Decoration. The services available in the rooms are, however, very 21st century. Via a broadband connection, and an interactive TV or a laptop, one can access more than 4,000 digital music tracks for example. Our suggestion would be the 'Superior Rooftop Studio' with its 360° panorama view; you can celebrate the New Year in style with a bottle of champagne, a disposable camera (both available from the machine in the lobby) and nice company...

For reservations call Blakes on +44 (0)207 370 6701 or visit www.blakeshotel.com. If you want to experience another hotel designed by Anouska Hempel, then why not try The Hempel (www.the-hempel.co.uk, +44(0)207 298 9000).

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Gallery

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