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International Media Production Zone

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## Luxury on a lavish scale... welcome to London's The Langham hotel

by Monica Kapila

The busy location of London's Oxford Circus though is completely juxtaposed with the feeling you get when you walk in to the lobby of the Langham. Calm, tranquil spaces filled with signature pink roses and smiling personal assistants who take your bags and ask you how they can make your stay more pleasant.

**W**e all know London is the destination of choice time and time again for discerning travellers the world over, but sometimes it's the hotel that becomes the destination, it just happens to be located in London!

Your reporter knows London well, having been born and brought up there, but living in Dubai for the last 10 years brings a new standard of service and luxury to mind that's not easy to reproduce in a developed European city. But a two-day stay at the Langham convinced me that we now have a home from home.

It opened in 1865 and was the first Grand Hotel in the city. Home to emperors, princesses and high society, it pioneered the installation of electric lights, hydraulic lifts and even air conditioners! Read on to see how it's still first in its class and still innovating today.

The Langham hotel is located at the iconic Number 1 Portland Place W1, directly opposite the contemporary BBC building and a couple of minutes walk from every main store you can think of in London's Oxford Street; Bond Street and Regent Street are just a few more minutes walk away. It was so cold during our recent visit, I had to buy a hat on my first day from the polar gear shop North Face, luckily just opposite the hotel!

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Going back to the cold, the uniformed doorman asks if you would like to step into his "office" in the front porch – a cosy little area with an outdoor, overhead heater, which makes waiting for our Ubers more bearable!

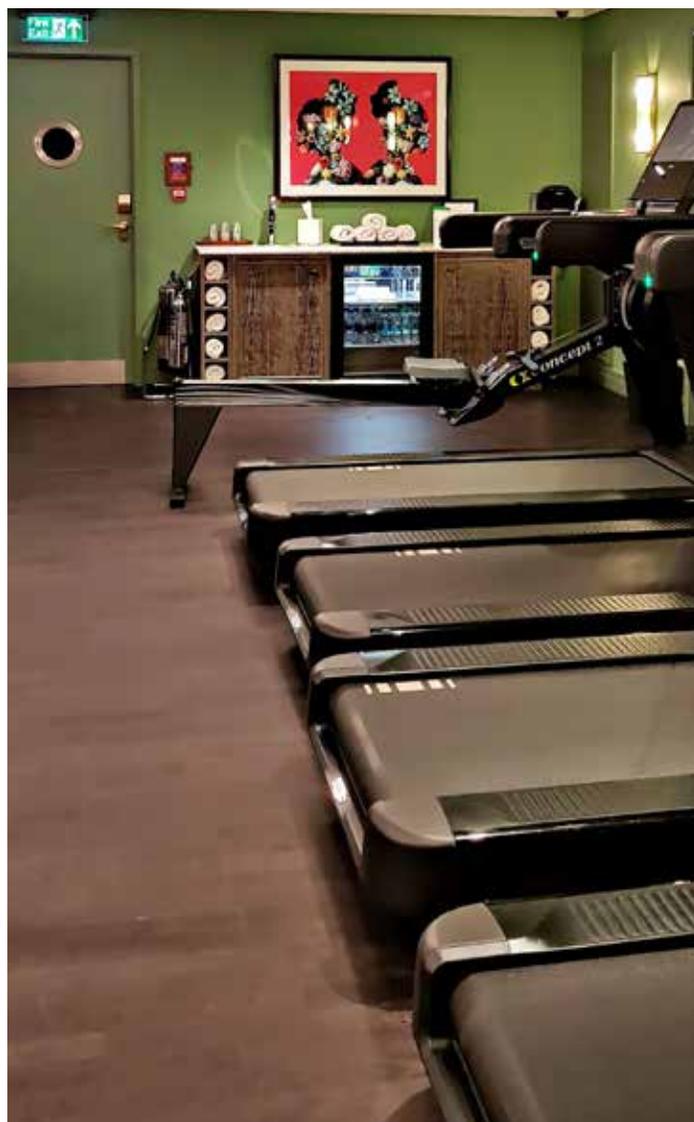
In this part of the world, we're all familiar with the various tiers of airline loyalty cards that permit us into club lounges at airports, but which hotels have club lounges that rival and surpass any first class airline lounge you've experienced? The Langham's of course. The only five star hotel in London to have a club lounge concept, but not just your standard club lounge with urns of free flowing tea and coffee, this is a five star, first class club lounge, worth upgrading for every time.

On our first evening in the Langham's club

lounge we spoke to some fellow guests relaxing at our adjoining table, "Good Evening, are you here on holiday?" I asked. The two guests from the North of England were there celebrating a special birthday and thought very wisely to skip walking round London in the freezing cold, but rather to simply stay and sit by the roaring fireside while enjoying everything the club lounge had to offer.

We had our evening drinks and canapés, went off for dinner and returned to the lounge just before 10pm and found the same guests

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still there, more relaxed than ever. And that's the kind of place the Langham's club lounge is, somewhere you really don't need to leave, unless you have to!

The lounge is open for breakfast from 6.30am till 11am but later at the weekends and holidays. We didn't have breakfast here, as we tried both the Palm Court and the newly opened (the day we arrived!) Roux at the Landau on the ground floor of the hotel. I suggest the latter for a stylish

breakfast in an elegant, contemporary dining room with service that should be a benchmark for the industry.

There is the great British tradition of Afternoon Tea at the Palm Court but you can try everything you'd receive there in the comfort and privacy of your club lounge between 2.00 and 5.00pm. Expect a sophisticated selection of both sweet and savoury bites with any kind of tea you can imagine, all included in your room rate!

The canapés and cocktails served from 5.30 onwards really don't describe well enough what's on offer in the club lounge's evening service! There is a fresh, hot soup, a whole array of charcuterie and some moreish Middle Eastern dips all spread out over a large marble table for guests to help themselves.

Waiters come to your seating area by the fireside lounge, at the high marble counter tops or the dining tables to take your drinks orders



that you choose from a comprehensive beverage menu that includes cocktails, mocktails, fresh juices and champagne.

Do you see now why those two guests from the North didn't bother leaving the hotel?

But if you are going to eat and relax on a lavish scale, then start your day with some delicious exercise in the Langham's health club. Definitely try the peaceful, zen like swimming pool and the modern gym if you can.

The club lounge also offers private check in and check out of the hotel and the pressing of three garments if you need it, all free of charge.

There is also complimentary Internet access and use of the business center. They don't mind if you ask to take home one of their pretty, pink pens either!

So make the Langham synonymous with London and don't think about upgrading to the club lounge rooms, just do it and send your reporter's warmest regards to the charming Emilija, who manages the Club.

But before you leave, buy some of the sublime Ginger Flower room spray that the hotel has adopted as it's signature scent so once you're back home you can be reminded of that Langham in London feeling.

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