

# FOR THE LOVERS OF HOTELS

New York and London, two of the world's finest cities, offer some of the world's best hotels. There are ultra-luxe establishments evoking a bygone era, and chic, modern hot spots. By **Daniel Scheffler**

## A casual affair at the **Crosby Street Hotel** in New York



Somehow New York hotels are usually dramatic, intellectual and serious, dark and ever so cutting edge with beyond-the-times design aesthetic and a strong predisposition for retrospective meets futurism. But then comes another Kit Kemp paradise, the Crosby Street Hotel, and turns all of that on its head. With kaleidoscopes of colour, eccentric pieces that are unique and totally distinct, and a certain British madness is where the eased hotel then berths itself in Manhattan's teeming Soho.

As always mentioned in the social pages, Anna Wintour and neighbour David Bowie are regulars, so it must mean the hotel is getting something right. And it is, but more than just strictly right. The fun, as it seems to always be, is in the detail. From crazy sculpture gardens to oversized sofas, from film screenings on Sunday evenings featuring Hitchcock to Oscar winners, to a rooftop chicken coop complete with furry roosters, and acute service staff that miss not a simple wink are just some of the ways the hotel buttresses its allure in a capricious town like New York.

A Londoner, Kemp manages to bring enough of her English risibility to give the spacious rooms with floor to ceiling metropolis views an element of effortless, where guests want to move in, as opposed to stay the night. Suites are complete with king-sized beds and come standard with in-suite check in and all the other high-tech modernities travellers crave.

Layered and eclectic, the style of the hotel evokes a modern art museum feel that somehow inspires guests, late attendees of weekend brunch, businessmen swamping in and, of course, the rest of Manhattan's gaggle.

## Wickets at the **Dorset Square Hotel** in London

Even if cricket isn't your game of choice, there is a quirky incantation to a hotel that awes with playfulness and pared down sophistication. And so surfaces the Dorset Square Hotel, close to the Lord's Cricket Grounds of St John's Wood in London. Inspired by the game of English Tudor times, with kooky details like ambulance red stitched cricket balls as door handles, the hotel blends a jollification with sensibility.

An old townhouse bought in 1985 as the first of the Firmdale properties by designer Kit Kemp and her husband, the developer Tim Kemp, has recently (yet again) been renovated and so turned into a cozy 38-roomed hotel. Dorset Square, overlooking a perfect patch of greenery in Marylebone, so astutely incorporates the English charm of designer Kemp's personal taste for colour, bold pattern, and zany "objets" in a new British aesthetic. Away from obvious floral and cottage gorging, her design appears polished but is fun-filled enough to encourage guests to return repeatedly.

The below street level restaurant, The Potting Shed, is like eating at your mother's house. Big bowls of chopped salads, steaks coming off the griddle, hot sticky fudge pudding and everything else you probably crave all the time. The bar, usually filled with neighbourhood folk and honorees of the off-the-scene London setting, is the perfect place to find stanchion in the clichéd grey of the city.





## Courtliness at the **Lanesborough Hotel** in London

Stationed on the finest corner of Hyde Park across the way from the Royal Artillery Memorial and a wink from the Wellington Memorial, the most exclusive hotel in all of London does come with a certain ceremony. With design redolent of 19th century classic and legions of weighty antiques, the Lanesborough overwhelms with its stature.

The hotel's Michelin starred chef, German-born but Italian-loving Heinz Beck, executes the perfect Mediterranean-inspired menus in a dining room of exaggerated Venetian panache. The restaurant's designer, Adam Tihany, over-plushed the room and it flatters the hotel with all its pomp. Dishes like carbonara fagotelli, slow-braised veal, and sea bass cannolo with melon and celery seem undemanding but dazzle with their clarity.

The suites, pricing right up to a near £20 000 (R280 000) a night, come with the finest butler service London has to offer. This is just one of the many Lanesborough Hotel throwbacks to a time of formal suiting with those extra shiny shoes and all the razzle-dazzle of more forgotten epochs. The Lanesborough Suite, for instance, gambols with four bedrooms and two living rooms, not to mention the walk in cupboards, enormous bathrooms and king-sized beds.

But if the room isn't enough of a reason to stay in the hotel all day, and night, the Library Bar downstairs surely is. Lined with leather bound books and furnished with wingback chairs next to the fireplace — and offering an assemblage of cognacs — it feels like a place where you can finally truly recline.

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# HOTELS VIR DIE FYNPROEWEERS

New York en Londen, twee van die wêreld se voortreflikste stede, bied van die wêreld se beste hotels. Daar is ultraluukse plekke wat mens herinner aan vervloë dae, sowel as sjiek, moderne uithangplekke. Deur **Daniel Scheffler**

## 'n Terloopse ontmoeting by die **Crosby Street Hotel** in New York



Om een of ander rede is New York-hotels gewoonlik dramaties, intellektueel en ernstig, met 'n sterk neiging tot 'n mengsel van die retrospektiewe en die futuristiese. Maar dan kom nog 'n Kit Kemp-paradys, the Crosby Street Hotel, en keer dit als op die kop. Met 'n kaleidoskoop van kleur, eksentrieke stukke wat uniek is in 'n soort Britse waansin, anker hierdie ruimhartige hotel homself in Manhattan se bedrywige Soho.

Die hotel doen iets reg want, soos wat gereeld op die sosiale blaaie berig word, is Anna Wintour en buurman David Bowie gereelde besoekers. Die prettige atmosfeer word deur die detail geskep. Van malkoptuine vol beeldhoukuns tot oorgrote rusbanke, van Sondagaand-rolprentvertonings met Hitchcock tot Oscarwenner, tot 'n hoenderhok op die dak met dikgeveerde hane, en skerpinnige personeel wat nie die eenvoudigste oogknip mis nie — hierdie is bloot enkele maniere waarop die hotel sy bekoring in 'n wispelturige stad soos New York skep.

As Londenaar slaag Kemp daarin om haar Engelse humorsin te gebruik om die ruim vertrekke met hulle vloer-tot-plafon-uitsig oor die stad toe te rus met 'n element van sorgvryheid sodat gaste nie net die nag daar wil deurbring nie, maar eerder wil intrek. Die suites het almal reusagtige beddens en al die ander hoë-tegnologie nuwerwetshede waarna reisigers smag. Boonop hoef mens nie eens in die ingangsportaal jou beurt af te wag om in te teken nie. Jy doen dit sommer in jou kamer. Die hotel se eklektiese styl herinner 'n mens sterk aan 'n moderne kunsmuseum. Maak nie saak of jy 'n oorslaappas, ontbyteter oor naweke of haastige sakeman is nie, jy verlaat die hotel vol inspirasie.

## Paaltjies by die **Dorset Square Hotel** in Londen

Al is krieket nou nie jou gunstelingsport nie is daar 'n eienaardige bekoring aan 'n hotel wat 'n mens oorweldig met uitgelatenheid en afgeskaalde elegansie. En dit is hoe die Dorset Square Hotel, naby Lord's-krieketveld van St John's Wood in Londen, daar uistien. Geïnspireer deur die spel wat dateer uit die Engelse Tudor-era, met sonderlinge detail soos ambulansrooi gestikte krieketballe vir deurhandvatse, meng die hotel vrolikheid met waardigheid.

'n Ou plaashuis wat in 1985 deur die ontwerper Kit Kemp en haar man, die ontwikkelelaar Tim Kemp as die eerste van die Firdale-eiendomme gekoop is, is onlangs (wéér eens) opgeknip en in 'n gesellige hotel met 38 kamers omskep. Só vermeng Dorset Square, met sy uitsig oor 'n perfekte lappie groenigheid in Marylebone, Kit Kemp se persoonlike voorkeur vir kleur, forse patrone en eksentrieke dekorstukke in 'n nuwe Britse estetika. Haar ontwerp is afgerond dog steeds prettig genoeg om gaste herhaaldelik terug te lok.

'n Ete by die restaurant onder straatvlak, The Potting Shed, is soos om by jou ma te eet. Groot bakke slaai, biefstuk reguit vanaf die roosterplaat, warm, taai fudgepoeding en alles waarna jy waarskynlik die heelyd smag. Die kroeg, meestal gevul met mense van die omgewing en mense aan die rand van Londen se A-ly, is die perfekte plek om bestendigheid te vind in die geekte grouheid van die stad.





## Swierigheid by die Lanesborough

Met sy ligging op die vernaamste hoek van Hyde Park, reg oorkant die koninklike artillerie-gedenkteken en 'n hanetreetjie van die Wellington-gedenkteken, is daar 'n mate van plegtigheid verbonde aan die mees eksklusiewe hotel in die ganse Londen. Met 'n ontwerp wat herinner aan klassieke neentiende eeu, en hordes swaar oudhede, oorweldig die Lanesborough 'n mens met sy statuur.

Die hotel se Michelin-bekroonde sjef, Duits-gebore maar Italiaans-gesinde Heinz Beck, berei die volmaakte Mediterreens-geïnspireerde spyskaart voor in 'n eetsaal deurspek van Venesiese panache.

Die restaurant-ontwerper, Adam Tihany, het die vertrek oordadig bekleed met weelde, en dit vly die hotel met al sy prag en praal. Geregte soos carbonara fagotelli, stadig-gesmoorde kalfsvleis en seebaars-cannolo met spanspek en seldery klink maklik, maar verbyster tog met hul suiwerheid.

Die suites, wat tot amper R280 000 per nag kan kos, kom met die beste butler-diens wat Londen kan bied. Dit is maar net een van die vele herlewings in die Lanesborough Hotel uit 'n era van verblyf met daardie ekstrablink skoene en al die opwindende van vergete tydperke. Die Lanesborough Suite pronk byvoorbeeld met vier slaapkamers en twee woonkamers, om nie eens te praat van die instapkaste, enorme badkamers en reusebeddens nie.

En indien die kamers nie genoeg rede is om heeldag en heelnag, in die hotel deur te bring nie, dan is die Library Bar op die grondverdieping wel. Propvol leergebinde boeke en leunstoel langs die kaggel – en 'n versameling goeie konjak – voel dit soos 'n plek waar jy uiteindelik agteroor kan lê.

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