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The best places to stay in the UK and what to do when you're there



THE APARTMENTS BY THE SLOANE CLUB

Chelsea, London

London is consistently the most popular destination for British citizens looking for a short break. Not Cornwall, not the Lake District, but our crowded, creative, multicultural capital city. It's fun in London. But where to stay?

London has more than its fair share of great hotels, but standout places that are a bit more of a home from home are less easy to find. And how nice it would be, for a treat, if that home also offered elements of a hotel if you wanted them.

Cue the new Apartments by The Sloane Club. Located in Sloane Gardens, they are around the corner from, and belonging to, that bastion of upper-class Britishness The Sloane Club, as cosmopolitan as cucumber sandwiches and as hip as tea on the vicarage lawn.

If you know and love The Sloane Club, as I do (walls crammed with affectionate cartoons of toffs; diners who are apt to tuck napkins under their chins; sensible bedrooms), you'll be amazed by its new apartments. In a late 19th-century Pont Street Dutch building, a mix of studios and one and two-bedroom apartments, 18 in all, have been created for long or short stays (the latter, including one-night stays, are offered up to a month in advance of the date required).

Expecting something nice and sensible? Perhaps Herend ornaments on the shelves and a three-piece suite from Peter Jones? Even the most stiffly coiffed Sloane Club lady would find her hair standing on end at the shebang that Rosemary Earl, in-house

interior designer, and E.G Newell Interiors have concocted: Apartments with a modern Art Deco feel in four different colour schemes of red, blue, aqua and taupe.

And such colour. The silver-studded sofas in our sitting/dining room are red: the reddest red you can imagine. The principal bedroom's Designers Guild curtains, its chest of drawers, headboard and throw on the large and impeccably dressed bed (Siberian goose-down duvet) are all a vibrant aqua. There are sparkly crystal chandeliers and sparkly etched glass mirrors. The Poggenpohl kitchens are modern, streamlined and fully equipped. Can't turn the oven on? You'll find the instructions on the big internet-enabled smart television that comes complete with a host of other features, including local information, room-service menu and the ability to stream content from your mobile or smartphone in order to view your emails and photos or listen to music, plus zillions of channels.

The Apartments by The Sloane Club? More like Apartments by Beverly Hills: these will make you feel glam, perfect for a girls' (or chaps') get-together, with a fridge filled with "Girl's Night In" (and "Boy's Night In") champagne (or beer) and goody boxes (including cheeses, chocolates, nachos and dips) from £25 per person. And those hotel touches, if you want them (porter, concierge, room service, housekeeping) are all there too. Hometels, I call them: the way forward.

• 15 & 19 Sloane Gardens, Chelsea, SW1W 8EB (020 7730 9131; clubapartments.co.uk). Studio apartments from £220 per night/£1,540 per week; one-bedroom from £316/£2,212; large two-bedroom from £480/£3,360. Free Wi-Fi. Access for guests using wheelchairs.

FIONA'S CHOICE

WHAT TO DO

A couple of minutes' walk brings you to The Royal Hospital, home of the Chelsea Pensioners (020 78815200; chelseapensioners.co.uk); see website for details of tours and visits. Farther along Royal Hospital Road is the National Army Museum (020 7881 6606; national-army-museum.ac.uk), and in King's Road is the Saatchi Gallery (saatchigallery.com), with an airy all-day restaurant. Gallery Mess. Also close by is the delightful Chelsea Physic Garden (020 7352 5646; chelseaphysicgarden.co.uk). Music lovers have the Cadogan Hall (020 7730 4500; cadoganhall.com) in Sloane Terrace. Theatregoers have



the Royal Court (020 7565 5000; royalcourtheatre.com), while book lovers should not miss a visit to John Sandoe Books in Blacklands Terrace (020 7589 9473; johnsandoe.com) behind Peter Jones. As for Peter Jones (johnlewis.com), to me it's indispensable - but I would say that, since my father was the general manager when I was a child. For eateries in Sloane Square, try The Botanist (020 7730 0077; thebotanistsloanesquare.com) and Colbert (020 7730 2804; colbertchelsea.com), both places to see and be seen, and the Bar and Kitchen (020 7565 5058) at the Royal Court. And, of course, the top-floor coffee shop in Peter Jones.

LOCATION (OUT OF 10)	9
STYLE/CHARACTER	8
SERVICE	10
ROOMS	7
FOOD & DRINK	6
VALUE FOR MONEY	9
OVERALL RATING	8

