

Martin Lea was a guest of The Levin Hotel in Basil Street, Knightsbridge, yards from Harrods and Knightsbridge tube. The Levin is surrounded by some of the UK's best known brands and a short walk away are the boutiques of the King's Road and at The V&A museum an exhibition on the brief history of underwear. This fascinating exhibition showcases the history of underwear design from the 18th century to present through an array of objects, photography and film.

The Levin offers a Shop til you Drop Package (perfect for Christmas and January sales) priced from £175 per person per night based on two sharing a luxury double room, a £50 voucher per room for either Rigby & Peller, Harrods or Topshop, full Continental breakfast, and a reviving Cosmopolitan cocktail. From £175 per person (two sharing). Must be booked directly with the hotel. For reservations please call +44 (0)20 7589 6286, or email reservations@thelevinhotel.co.uk.

The Metro Restaurant and Bar is open daily from 7.30am to 10pm (to 5pm on Sundays), it serves excellent value-for-money breakfast, lunch, afternoon tea and dinner and is famous for classic British favourites such as fish 'n' chips and double-baked cheese soufflé. The two- and three-course set lunch menus are priced at £14 and £18 respectively and a glass of Le Vin du Levin (red, white, rosé) from the Levin Estate (levinwines.com) is just £5. Happy Hour, from Monday to Friday between 5 and 7pm, is when The Metro offers two glasses of house wine and a bowl of nachos for £8. The Metro Restaurant & Bar is part of The Levin Hotel. For reservations call 020 7589 6286 or visit: thelevinhotel.co.uk.

Prices are subject to availability, include VAT, and based on two sharing a room.

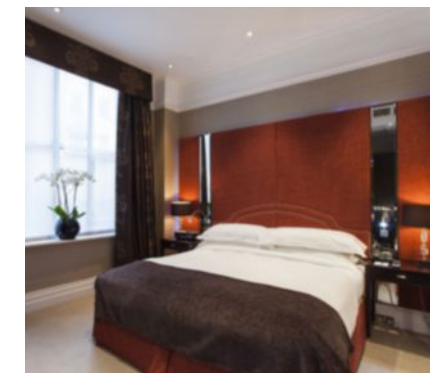
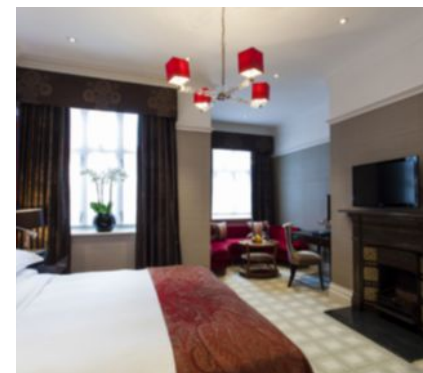
CAPITAL CLASS

Martin Lea explores an oasis of luxury in the capital

"London calling", the Clash once sang. Well, our great city was calling me as I decided on a short break. Not for me though a soulless, budget hotel for an overnight stay, as had been chosen in the past. This time I was going for luxury, and a swish hotel in swanky Knightsbridge. Now there's a few addresses which are described as "swanky" but surely Knightsbridge, with its designer shops, famous Harrods department store, higher than London normal property prices, and super cars lining the streets, is one of the districts which is justified in claiming this title. My base for, alas, just one night was a hotel at the heart of all this opulence. A stone's throw from Knightsbridge tube station and just around the corner from Harrods and London's finest museums, the Levin Hotel is described as an "oasis of luxury".

Rated as one of Britain's top 25 cosiest hotels by the Telegraph, the Levin is the ultimate in chic; a sophisticated art-deco style boutique townhouse hotel with 12 luxury bedrooms located in a quiet residential street. It's place perfect to unwind after the hustle and bustle of shopping and battling the crowds in Harrods. Launched in 2007, it is owned and operated by renowned hotelier David Levin whose idea was to create a grand hotel with luxury and charm, but on a small scale. From the pale duck egg blue walls that greet you on arrival, to the designer lighting by Sarah Marsden that hangs down the stairwell (an 18-metre chandelier), the Levin oozes elegance. It has been designed to please those customers with an eye for detail and a love of beautiful things. David Levin's vision also extends to an

organic vineyard on the rolling hills of the Loire Valley. From here he produces Levin Sauvignon Blanc to rival anything from the "New World". The Levin's sister, or rather big brother, property next door, is the five-star Capital Hotel and guests at the Levin are able to make use of the cocktail bar and Michelin-starred restaurant there, as well as the Levin's own restaurant, of which more about later. Accommodation at the Levin is what you would expect for such luxurious surroundings; beautifully appointed bedrooms elegantly designed with comfort in mind, fine linen, exclusive toiletries and with many unique finishing touches. There are three different types of bedroom available but whatever you choose you will expect to find hand-stitched Savoir beds, the finest Egyptian cotton bedding, and marble bathrooms with under-floor heating as standard.



There are also some lovely additions such as a Champagne mini-bar (make your own cocktail using one of the supplied recipes), Nespresso and Birchall Tea making facilities, and iPads on request. It was a delight to find also a selection of classic paperbacks next to the coffee machine. What a lovely, literary touch! And so to dine at the Levin, and guests head down to the basement to feast at the stylish Metro Bistro and Bar. As well as catering for guests it's also apparently a favourite with lovers of Knightsbridge. Serving breakfast, brunch, lunch, afternoon teas and dinner, it uses the best of British produce (and serves Mr Levin's wine of course). Classic favourites rule here and for such a luxurious hotel I was surprised to see such a down-to-earth menu – fish and chips, crab linguine, steak and chips, and salmon were the choices on the main course. My partner had the steak and was

delighted with it but, as a vegetarian, I was left disappointed. The Levin is surrounded by some of the UK's best known brands and a short walk away are the boutiques of the King's Road, and at the Victoria & Albert Museum, an exhibition on the brief history of underwear. This fascinating exhibition showcases the history of underwear design from the 18th century to present day through an array of objects, photography and film. Of course a trip to Knightsbridge is not complete without a trip to Harrods. While it may be quite garish, there is something quite fascinating about the place with its designer handbags, expensive cigars, souvenir teddy bears and Prosecco bar, almost a reminder of a bygone age. While we enjoyed being out and about in Knightsbridge, we didn't stray too far from the Levin and its luxuries. It's a hotel that calls you back again and again.