

Escape Routes

A CAPITAL IDEA



ENJOY LONDON IN STYLE - AND ON A BUDGET

Soaking up the cultural delights over a weekend in London needn't cost the earth finds *Stylist's* photography and specials director, Tom Gormer

2017 and there is no better year to visit London for a weekend of culture*. Next month the comprehensive David Hockney retrospective at Tate Britain (tate.org.uk) opens and you can also cross the Thames to reach Kensington Palace (hrp.org.uk/kensington-palace) and trace the evolution of Princess Diana's style at *Diana: Her Fashion Story*. If you wait until summer you can enjoy the full impact of the temporary White Garden, designed to complement the exhibition and reflect memories of her life (expect white roses and delicate cosmos daisies).

Come September and the Barbican will be showing provocative American artist Jean-Michel Basquiat's first large-scale UK exhibition *Basquiat: Boom For Real* (barbican.org.uk). Then from October you can immerse yourself in JK

Rowling's own archives at *Harry Potter: A History Of Magic* at the British Library (bl.uk). Or round off the year at the V&A (vam.ac.uk) with a nostalgic look at pencil sketches, proofs, photos and letters of Pooh, Tigger and Eeyore in *Winnie-The-Pooh: Exploring A Classic*.

"Great," I hear you say. "This all sounds brilliant and a weekend in London is all good and that, but where the heck am I going to stay?"

When you think of booking a hotel in London, you probably imagine two extremes; the massively expensive posh hotel that has 10 types of cutlery and room service that you can't afford or the hotel you optimistically book online only to discover it's in zone 12 on the Tube map and you're convinced the owner is spying on you so you sleep with a heavy wine bottle by the bed as security.

Z Hotels will change all of this. With branches nationwide and a reputation for affordable modern style, they have recently taken over six large Georgian townhouses along the grand boulevard that is Gloucester Place, literally a stone's throw from Selfridges, Hyde Park and must-visit London restaurant of the moment, Jikoni (jikonilondon.com).

Number 87 Gloucester Place is also known as the Club, a 20-room conversion which is simple, slick, clean and comfortable. The bespoke, hand-crafted bed gave me a good night's sleep, the shower was powerful and the wifi refreshingly fast.

There is no stuffy hotel restaurant or awkward cafe. Instead you have access to a complimentary buffet breakfast and, if you're staying at the Club, you simply go to the kitchen and help yourself to snacks, morning, noon and night - all included in the price. Fridges are filled with chilled drinks and there's a member of staff on hand if you want something that isn't there (bacon sandwich in the courtyard? Fine). In the evening there are also cocktails to enjoy with other guests, or take to your room.

With prices starting from £85, this is the future of city accommodation and means more money left over for a limited-edition print in your favourite gift shop.

Rooms at Z Hotels at Gloucester Place start at £85, including breakfast; thezhotels.com, 020-3551 3719

