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Basic Stuff

Face it: This city makes you pay through the nose for a place to lay your head. You'll have to capitulate and consign half your vacation funds to the hotel bed. It's also true, though, that many London hotels have lowered their prices, and more and more of them are offering special "promotional" deals. They are doing what they can to lure back tourists, especially American tourists, who are particularly important to the London economy (though no one likes to admit this). So it pays to do a bit of Web surfing because you can sometimes snag unbelievably low (for London) online rates for the city's top properties.

London is blossoming with smaller "boutique" hotels. I list several, and they're very good bets, offering a much deeper London experience than those cookie-cutter chains or even some of the swankiest grand hotels. Then there are the legions of B&B hotels, the low- to mid-range hostelries that service low- to mid-range tourists. Some are great, but you have to be careful or you'll be stuck in a depressing room with a prefab bathroom no larger than what you'd find on an airplane. Some of these places are really pleasant, though, and you needn't feel ashamed to stay in them. Of course, the best (and cheapest) way of all to get under London's skin is to stay with friends. If you don't have any, you can buy the next best thing—the hospitality of strangers in upscale B&Bs, still a relatively new concept in town. These are rooms you rent in private homes through an agency. *And here's a tip:* One of the cheapest ways of all to experience London is in your own flat, rented through an agency.

Winning the Reservations Game

Try not to arrive roofless. Booking ahead not only gives you peace of mind, it also yields any special, weekend, or corporate rates that might be offered. Typically, though, it's the more expensive and bigger places that offer discounts, while the smaller hotels, guesthouses, and B&Bs don't reduce their already lower rates. If you book a packaged holiday, you may be given a hotel's most boring, boxy, and smallest room, but the rates are probably the lowest you can get for that property. Check into the air/hotel packages offered by most airlines that fly into London—you'll usually save a bundle and get a more-than-decent hotel room. Also check into the half-price programs—they're worth it if they include a hotel you like. Usually, you register, join, or buy a directory, which then accesses savings of up to 50%

on the hotels in that program. One to try is **Privilege Card International** (237 E. Front St., Youngstown, OH 44503; Tel 800/236-9732; www.privilegecard.com). You can also book hotels online—usually with considerable savings—at the “official” London website, www.visitlondon.com, and also at www.londontown.com. If you arrive without a room (or want to book a room in advance by phone), try calling the **British Hotel Reservation Centre** (Tel 020/7340-1616; www.bhrc.co.uk).

One last thing: try not to arrive in London at 6 or 7am, because, chances are, you won't be able to check into your hotel until around noon. Who wants to walk around with un-brushed airline teeth all morning and “flight hair?”

Is There a Right Address?

To a certain sort of Londoner (they're usually called Sloane Rangers, after their Sloane Square stomping grounds), **Knightsbridge** is the center not only of London, but of the world. For tourists, too, it's hard to beat, well served with Tube, restaurants, and shopping—and Hyde Park on the doorstep. Just south of Knightsbridge, **Belgravia** is embassy territory, and home to some of the priciest real estate in town. As a tourist base it sure is peaceful, but there's not much more, except for pleasant strolls and Hyde Park.

Famously swinging in the '60s and boutique-heavy today, **Chelsea**, a onetime artists' ghetto west of Belgravia, is expensive to live in and lovely to walk in. Its main drawback for visitors is inaccessibility, since there's a weird dearth of Tube stops. There are buses galore, though, and lots of fab-o shopping and dining in the borough. Also west of the West End, green, peaceful, and expensive residential **Holland Park** is 15 minutes by Tube from practically anywhere, yet has a distinct out-of-the-maelstrom ambience and one of London's loveliest small parks. **Kensington** is busier and more urban than neighboring Holland Park, as well as being home to some good shopping, while sharing some of its green and pleasant peaceful feel. **South Kensington**, with its high-ceilinged houses, contains those giant Victorian cultural palaces—the museums. Streets are quieter and prices higher than farther north, except on the main roads (Brompton, Gloucester, Cromwell), where the opposite is the case. If you're a snob, you probably don't want to go much further west than **Earl's Court**, and maybe not even, though this formerly down-at-the-heels neighborhood is gradually gentrifying all over the place and has a few really nice

hotels that would cost twice as much in another borough. Earl's Court isn't as gay as it used to be (Soho has taken over as Gay Central), and you probably wouldn't want to stick around for dining or evening fun. But it's only 15 minutes by Tube to Piccadilly. North of Holland Park, **Notting Hill** is the hippest district, centering on Portobello Road with its market. Antiques shops, a Caribbean-style carnival in August, and exciting young restaurants and galleries give Notting Hill a multicultural buzz. (With the arrival of the film *Notting Hill* a few years back, however, some say the area lost a bit of its "hip credibility" and a few fled east to **Shoreditch** and **Clerkenwell**. While thin on accommodations, these districts see plenty of other action; see the Dining, Shopping, and Nightlife chapters.) East of Notting Hill is **Bayswater**, between Oxford Street and Queensway, between residential and midtown, and between swanky and seedy. It's full of cheapo hostelries in huge white wedding-cake Victorians. Those I list are on the upper end of this spectrum, though still bargains, easy to get around from, and bang on Hyde Park.

Mayfair is London's true center, and you'll feel most urbane and sophisticated staying here. Bond Street shopping, Cork Street art galleries, tree-filled squares, restaurants—it's all here. Less expensive and less tony are Oxford Street and the streets to its north. Just across Piccadilly from Mayfair, **St. James's** has been known as "Gentleman's London" on account of its anachronistic clubs and its legions of shops selling hats, canes, shaving sets, ties, shirts, and handmade shoes. It retains an old-fashioned and courtly air, has two beautiful parks, its own palace, good restaurants, and top hotel rates. East of Regent Street, **Soho** on weekend nights is the nightclubbers' theme park, with hordes of youths and a thriving gay scene. Other times, the confusing grid of streets is restaurant paradise. Great fun, but very few hotels.

On the east side of Charing Cross Road, **Covent Garden** is another center of London, not packed with hotel beds but rife with shopping, strolling, and eating places. It's as near as you can get to theaterland. North of Covent Garden lies **Bloomsbury**, made famous by Virginia Woolf and her bitchy circle. Convenient to the British Museum and lined with moderate small hotels, it's somewhat dusty and noisy but nevertheless a central place to stay. **Marylebone**, to the north of Bloomsbury and cupping giant Regent's Park, is a grab bag of the commercial and the cultural, though nobody can ever claim to feel

uplifted by viewing the wax dummies in Madame Tussaud's, Marylebone's most famous—and overrated—tourist attraction. (If you have any class, you'll prefer the Wallace Collection instead.) If you know where to look, though, Marylebone has some very fine hotels. There are some, but I don't list any hotels in the **Docklands**, way downstream on the Thames about halfway to Greenwich. This is London's new business district that never quite took off—part de Chirico ghost town, part riverside theme park. The area will start popping soon, though, because the 2012 Olympics are planned to be held east of Central London.

The Lowdown

Old faithfuls... The “Old Lady of Park Lane” is first in line. She is **Grosvenor House**, built on the grounds of the earl of Grosvenor's late-18th-century estate. She's bulky, none too glamorous, and, like many an old friend, reassuringly homey and undemanding. Even more glitzy, **The Savoy** never changes either, and we're glad of that; the nearby **Fielding Hotel** is like the frumpy friend, dressed in sweats but seen in the right places. Some surprisingly wealthy people savor the continuity and fab location (in the heart of Covent Garden) of the little Fielding. Another old faithful that is refreshingly unglam and reassuringly welcoming is the **Hart House Hotel**, where the current owner carries on the traditions of his parents, who ran this small Marylebone B&B hotel for decades.

Grand duchesses... Masquerading as an old friend, but more of a snob than she cares to admit, is **The Connaught**, where you practically need a letter of introduction to get a room. It's considered very crass to ask for prices here. **The Dorchester** is the place to unpack your ball gown, or boogie in the nightclub if you lack an invitation to the ball. **Claridge's** is the epitome of understated elegance—royalty feels at home on the sweeping marble stairs here, as do ancient dowagers lurching on smoked fish in its restaurant.

Favorite uncles... Slightly racy, a little unpredictable, these are relatively new guys in town. In brazen Soho, **Hazlitt's 1718**, with its nooks and crannies, Victorian bathtubs, and

many thousands of etchings, is popular with antiques dealers and literary lions; it's the oldest uncle of the lot, dating back to 1718. Its younger but bigger brother, **The Gore**, shares its style but expands on it, and features several over-the-top rooms. The **Stafford** has an interesting side: The carriage-house rooms, which have the names of racehorses on their stable doors, are fun. The **Landmark London** is full of surprises—it's a fully fledged grande dame with no dress code in an unstarchy part of town (Marylebone), with an outrageous atrium behind its unremarkable facade. More of a collection of pied-à-terre than a hotel, the slightly down-at-the-heel **Dolphin Square** is redolent of clandestine encounters, especially in the brasserie and in the bar overlooking the swimming pool with its 1950s-era murals, while the library at the **Covent Garden Hotel** is the very place for avuncular advice sessions over a glass of bubbly. **Twenty Nevern Square** is a younger and unsnobby uncle in Earl's Court (well, you have to be unsnobby in Earl's Court), full of stylistic verve and determined to go his own way.

Where to misbehave... **The Savoy** has always had a louche air about it, perhaps because it has its own theater, or maybe it's the handmade beds or the breezes rolling in off the Thames. Many Londoners who had a rock 'n' roll phase misspent part of their youth in the bar of the **Columbia**, which never closes to the bands in residence; the bedrooms, meanwhile, host photo shoots for sleazy fashion articles in famous glossy magazines. Completely the opposite form of chic has its home base at **The Hempel**, which is so pristine, hushed, and downright Zen-like, you can't help wanting to besmirch its immaculate surfaces. At **The Portobello Hotel**, the round-bed suite with a fully functioning Edwardian brass bathing machine is practically perverted. And let's not forget to mention the **St. Martin's Lane** near Leicester Square, where you can coordinate the color of the lighting in your room to match whatever naughty mood you might be in.

Britishest... Every other hotel in London has a faux-Brit chintzy decor, a couple of four-poster beds, and afternoon tea, but no hotel is more genuinely English than **The Connaught**, where oils hang in oak-paneled hallways and you

get the feeling that a nanny may be lurking around the corner to scold you for making too much noise. The **Basil Street Hotel** is the cut-price version—it's like a dowager Knightsbridge aunt's house. The B&B agencies **The Bulldog Club** and **Uptown Reservations**, mind you, will book you into actual dowager aunts' houses in Knightsbridge, Kensington, and all the best addresses, while taking an apartment at **Dolphin Square** will make you the temporary neighbor of many members of Parliament, not to mention Princess Anne.

Worst simulated English... The clear winner of the Lionel Bart "London!" award is the **Lanesborough**. Great Britain was never as British as this—with drawing rooms, frills, and furbelows, and a genuine Jeeves on duty in every room (though the management is forever having to train new butlers, as American guests poach them). Honorable mention: **Brown's Hotel**, especially for the venerable afternoon tea service, heavy on scones with lashings of clotted cream. Tea is better elsewhere (see the Dining chapter), but the tourists don't seem to know this.

Eurotrashiest... What with the Channel Tunnel and all, London now wants to pretend it is Europe's newest capital—without being a part of Europe. The question these days is really what neighborhood is *not* Eurotrashy. The style kids with cash would not be seen dead except in a very few hotels, and, frankly, darling, they'd rather stay with friends. But if they have to buy a bed, they get it at the **Sydney House Hotel**. Those who don't sneer at hostelries flock to **The Metropolitan**, which was shamelessly designed expressly for them, though **Claridge's** is still okay, and while **Blakes** is a bit too music-biz, **The Hempel** continues to be a safe bet from the plebs—at least for the moment. **St. Martin's Lane** attracts some of the Continental martyrs to style, too.

Was that Gwyneth Paltrow in the elevator?...

Before it closed, the Halcyon was the hands-down winner in this category. Now the truly hip slum it at the so-out-it's-in **Columbia**. Madonna and Michael Jackson have been known to choose fittingly ungroovy hotels: Ms. Ciccone queened it at the **Lanesborough** before she became a

local, while the Weird One went to the **Montcalm** (which has London's only nonallergenic bedrooms. Surely no coincidence?). **The Metropolitan's** Met Bar has young Hollywood, half the music biz, and all the fashion crowd in a holding pattern (with Momo and the Soho House taking the overflow).

Suite deals... A person could move into the penthouse at **Dukes**—though not over-opulent, it's deeply carpeted, with plenty of space and a balcony, and you wake up looking at distant Westminster Abbey. **Hazlitt's 1718's** sole suite—a black oak Tudor fantasia with its own “Great Bed of Ware”—is fun for playing Lancelot and Guinevere, while Hazlitt's sister hotel, **The Gore**, has a suite with a bed Judy Garland once owned, and outrageous Grecian tiles in the bathroom. The **Stafford's** carriage rooms have fireplaces and Jacuzzis (downstairs), and entrances off their own cobbled mews. Two bargains in accidental suites (they don't claim to be, but they are virtual suites): the none-too-handsome basement (number 77) at **The Bryanston Hotel** and the **Commodore's** wonderfully quiet, lemon-yellow duplex (number 11). Elegant two-story suites, not large but very fun, are to be had at **41**, and **The Milestone Hotel** has some luxe suites and flatlets (apartments).

Silent nights... Yes, the **Commodore** is quiet, as is the above-mentioned **Stafford** and its neighbor, the even quieter—since it's set in its own gaslit alley—**Dukes**. Another group of neighbors with peaceful postcodes are the **Beaufort**, the **Franklin**, and the **Claverley Hotel**, tucked on a residential South Kensington side street just off the Brompton Road. The **Sydney Hotel**, also in South Ken, won't keep you up late—neither will ambient noise at **Blakes** or **The Portobello Hotel**, though your fellow guests' partying might. While at Blakes' sister, **The Hempel**, the peaceful garden square (which Anouska Hempel failed to have renamed Hempel Sq.) brings peace as deafeningly Zen as the decor. High rooms at the **London Hilton on Park Lane** don't even need their sound insulation. The most peacefully positioned hostelry of all is **Holland House Youth Hostel**—too bad its dorm-style sleeping arrangements take away your privacy.

Best park view... **Holland House Youth Hostel**, being inside Holland Park, has to lead this category. If you like to look upon green, though, this is a fine city. All the Park Lane grands (**Grosvenor House**, the **London Hilton on Park Lane**, **The Dorchester**), as well as the **Lanesborough** and **The Metropolitan**, overlook Hyde Park—if you get a room on the park side, of course—and at the latter, if you snag a corner suite, you are practically floating on top of the trees. From the **London Hilton on Park Lane**'s highest floors, you can also see a corner of the queen's private gardens at Buckingham Palace. A different side of Hyde Park is available for half the rates at the **Columbia** and the **London Elizabeth**. Peep into private squares from **Egerton House Hotel**, the **Franklin**, **The Hempel**, and **The Portobello Hotel**. Stay in any room numbered 201 to 205 at the **Athenaeum** to get an eyeful of gorgeous Green Park. And from the front rooms at **The Milestone Hotel** you can see into Kensington Gardens, right across the street. The expensive river-facing rooms at **The Savoy** look down into the Embankment Gardens.

May I get that for you, sir?... Service is a difficult commodity to pin down, since star individuals move on, but Donald and Alex, the pair of lovely concierges at the **Athenaeum**, have been there for a long time and show no sign of leaving. In general, this hotel apparently attracts kind people. The **Beaufort**, similarly, has an all-female staff that goes out of its way to make you happy, as does the neighboring crew at the **Claverley Hotel**. The ferociously modern **Halkin** looks like the kind of place where you'd get snubbed for no reason, but the Armani-uniformed Euro types who work there are especially nice, as are the informal staff at the very central **Covent Garden Hotel**. The small **London Elizabeth** has a loyal team of smiling staff, and first-class service is a hallmark at the Red Carnation properties: **41**, **The Montague**, and **The Milestone Hotel**.

Bargain beds... Top-value prize goes to the high-end B&B agency **The Bulldog Club** for the ultimate in homey luxury. You get to live in the kind of house you'd want to own if you lived in London and will probably be given the insights of the family that actually does live there. **Uptown Reservations** does the same thing, offering relatively inexpensive

but inspected and shipshape homes in all neighborhoods. **Hart House Hotel** in Marylebone is a bargain. It goes without saying that the **Holland House Youth Hostel** is cheap; those allergic to communal living should note that there are a couple of rooms (as opposed to dormitories) here.

The millionaire look, at Scrooge rates... Well, I should point out that “Scrooge” is a relative term here, because the millionaire look is usually paired with impeccable service and the two of them together equal top-dollar digs. But if you do some Web surfing you may come up with a Scroogey rate. All the hotels of David Naylor-Leyland and of Tim and Kit Kemp’s Firmdale Hotels are beautiful to behold. So are the hotels in the Red Carnation group: **41, The Montague**, and **The Milestone Hotel**. **Egerton House** was Mr. N-L’s first, and the one on which he lavished his best pieces and spared no expense. He takes the furniture home when it’s too threadbare for his hotel. The penthouse suite at his **Dukes** hotel looks pricier than it is, and his **Franklin** hotel also gives a good deal of swank for the money. The Firmdale hotels I list are the **Covent Garden Hotel** and the **Pelham Hotel**. Both have probably been in the British decor-porn magazine, *World of Interiors*, along with the Red Carnation hotels, which are individually decorated to the most exacting standards by their glamorous South African owner. A relative newcomer to the millionaire look is **Twenty Nevern Square**, on the Earl’s Court square of the same name, where lovely natural fabrics and finishes enhance every room and the prices are about half of what they’d be in another part of Central London. The tiny independent that runs away with the honors in this category, however, is the **Sydney Hotel**.

Family values... If your family wants to stay together in a family room, here are the best deals in town. Close to Madame Tussaud’s and Regent’s Park (the zoo!), **Hotel La Place**’s five family rooms are a great value, and **Hart House Hotel** has some reasonably priced family-size rooms as well. Both properties are child-friendly, as is **Basil Street Hotel**. Some of the many family rooms at the **Columbia** are big enough to play hide-and-seek in on a rainy afternoon; you can fit a family of five (one being a baby) in here for a hundred quid a night, English breakfast

included. The **Commodore**, down the block, has better-looking multiple rooms, but they aren't the best rooms in the place—those are the two-level almost-duplexes, in which you could easily fit a family if you request a cot. For older kids who demand their own room, **Dolphin Square's** larger apartments are the business. At the **Stafford** there are some triples, or you could fit an extra bed in a carriage-house room without feeling cramped.

For history buffs and Anglophiles... It was founded by Lord Byron's butler, honeymooned in by FDR, and was the place where Alexander Graham Bell made his first experimental telephone call. No wonder **Brown's Hotel** is the number-one pick for amateur historians, especially when you consider the fame of its afternoon tea (you'd do better, actually, to take tea elsewhere). **Grosvenor House** has quite a history, too, or at least the land it stands on does. The oils in and around the fake library depict the former earl of Grosvenor's estate on this site. And above the fireplace in the main lobby (the other end from Park Lane), look for the painting of Victorian ice skaters on a rink that is now the Ballroom. **The Savoy** celebrated its centenary a few years ago and has certainly had its share of rollicking parties and happenings. For a re-creation of the lifestyle of the late cousin-to-the-queen Lord Mountbatten, check in at what used to be the plain old **Mountbatten**, now the branded **Radisson Edwardian Mountbatten Hotel**. The conservatory/breakfast room of the small, tony **41** was once the gathering spot for twittery debutantes about to make their first curtsy to the queen at Buckingham Palace. The oldest house of all? The surviving Jacobean parts of the **Holland House Youth Hostel**.

For enemies of chintz and Regency... You're in trouble. Cabbage roses, brocade, and Regency stripes are de rigueur, with the English-country-house look beating all others hands down. Relief is possible in places where low budgets forbid decor, like the **Holland House Youth Hostel**, and also at the **Columbia**, and certain floors of **Dolphin Square**. **The Portobello Hotel** has a faded Victorian look filtered through the owners' 1960s heyday, all very reminiscent of sets from the Mick Jagger/James Fox cult movie *Performance*. Standouts for different decor include

Anouska Hempel's also-slightly-'60s (and '70s) **Blakes**, and the stunning, Milano-modern **Halkin**, both of which have been overtaken by their own younger siblings, **The Hempel** and **The Metropolitan**, respectively. Even less dependent on chintz 'n' china is the **St. Martin's Lane**, designed by Philippe Starck with a minimalist flair that turns slightly surreal in the lobby. **Twenty Nevern Square** in Earl's Court manages to look elegant in a comfortable but non-Englishy way, and so does the nearby **Kensington International Inn**, where the interior with its wheaty-colored fabrics and sleek pale-wood headboards looks more truly European than anything else for miles around.

Best health club... Dolphin Square has a big pool, squash courts, and weight machines, but the public's allowed in, so it's busy. The health club at **Grosvenor House** has a big pool, plus a good gym that also gets busy with nonresidents. The **Landmark London** has a pool that's on the small side but chlorine-free and pretty. Fitness on Five at the **London Hilton on Park Lane** is the flashiest and newest facility. It has personal trainers, plus sessions of acupuncture or hypnotherapy, but no pool. Best for sybaritic spas, with the only sweat generated by the sauna, are the **Athenaeum's** little basement salon and the Elizabeth Arden-run pampering joint at **The Dorchester**. **The Metropolitan's** reflexology, aromatherapy, and shiatsu rooms are the best for alternative care.

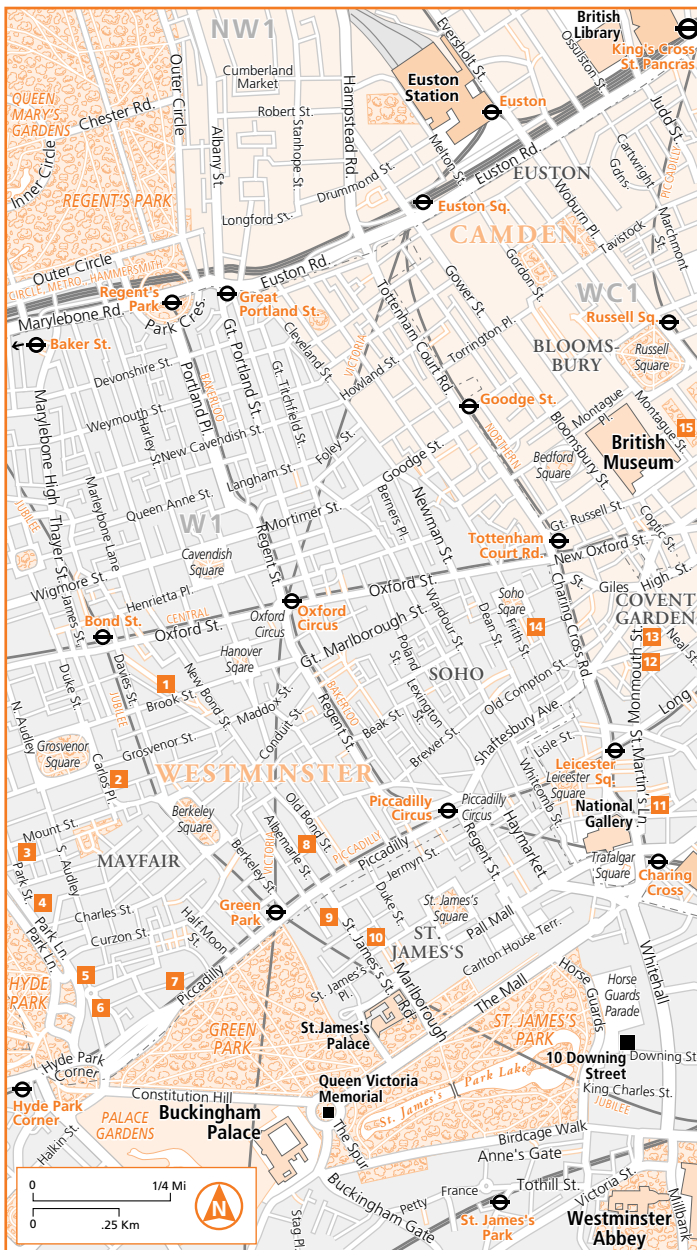
Taking care of business... The Savoy wins surprisingly many accolades from the corporate world; it's handily located, too, in a part of the West End that's as near to the City as the West End gets (10 minutes in a cab). **The Halkin** is a fantastic business base—rooms have two phone lines with conference-call capability, a fax (request it), and the Reuters news service—and the very look seems so efficient, with none of the flounces and curlicues that are endemic to London hotels. **The London Hilton on Park Lane**, like most Hiltons, is okay for business stays, and there'll probably be a convention group around to prove it; ditto at **Grosvenor House**, where there's a huge business center. **The Athenaeum's** apartments are great for anyone who needs to entertain in a homey atmosphere, while the **Commodore**, which also has a business center, is a good

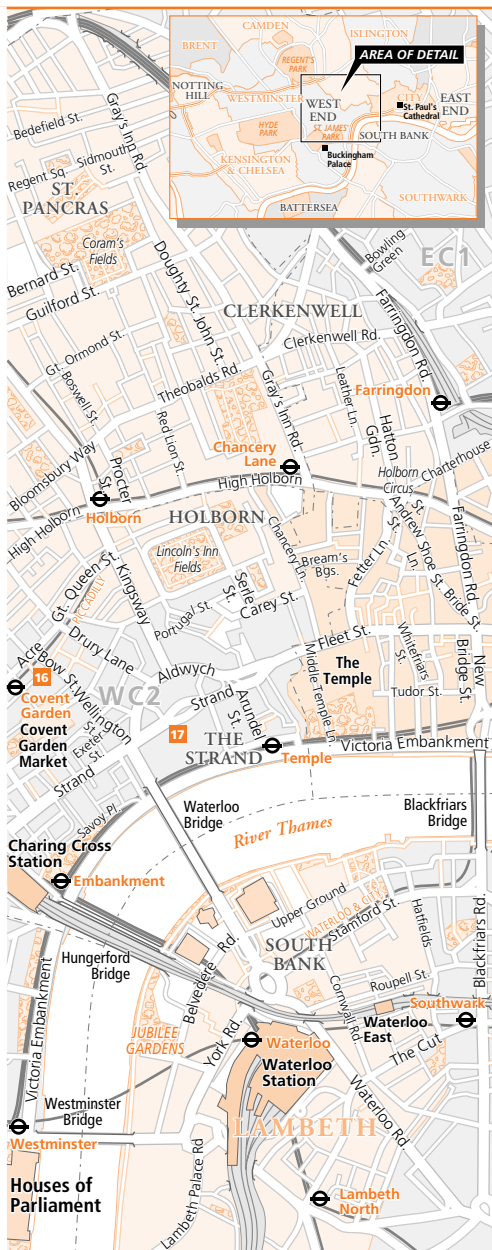
pick for small businesses that don't splurge on expenses. Many hotels are upgrading their computer-friendly aspects, with ISDN lines, wi-fi, and the like. Most hotels listed have websites (see index), and it is worth checking facilities in advance, as this is an area that is in constant flux.

The twilight zone... There's eccentric on purpose and then there's plain weird. In the first category, **The Portobello** wins the "individual piece of furniture" award for the Edwardian bathing machine in its suite—a perverted, though functional, contraption of brass rods and faucets. The **Basil Street Hotel** isn't weird, but it is deeply anachronistic, with its Parrot Club, counterpanes, and slightly threadbare Persian rugs. **Dolphin Square** is a time warp of a different stripe, with a minimall of shops that seems still stuck in the 1950s, and an atmosphere to match. The **Fielding Hotel** has the charm of a warmhearted person who dresses appallingly; meanwhile, **The Metropolitan** has the *froidueur* of a coldhearted person who dresses like a fashion plate—yes, London's wannabe swankiest hotel belongs in the twilight zone for the quantity of complaints we've heard about its haughty staff, both in the hotel and its ultra-trendy basement bar, The Met.

Try these when there's no room... You won't have a hope at the grands during sold-out times (admittedly rare nowadays), but the **Landmark London**, being a little off center and perfectly enormous, has been known to have a spare bed at the 11th hour. So has the very expensive **Lanesborough**. The **London Hilton on Park Lane** and **Grosvenor House**, being huge, might have rooms, too. Paradoxically, some of the less-known tiniest places are worth calling at the last minute—specifically the **Sydney Hotel**, **Hart House Hotel**, **Twenty Nevern Square**, **Kensington International Inn**, and **Hotel La Place**. Three Bayswater addresses that might yield a late-booking success are (in descending order of cost) **Thistle Hyde Park**, the **London Elizabeth**, and the **Columbia**. Among more central properties, try the **Radisson Edwardian Mountbatten Hotel**.

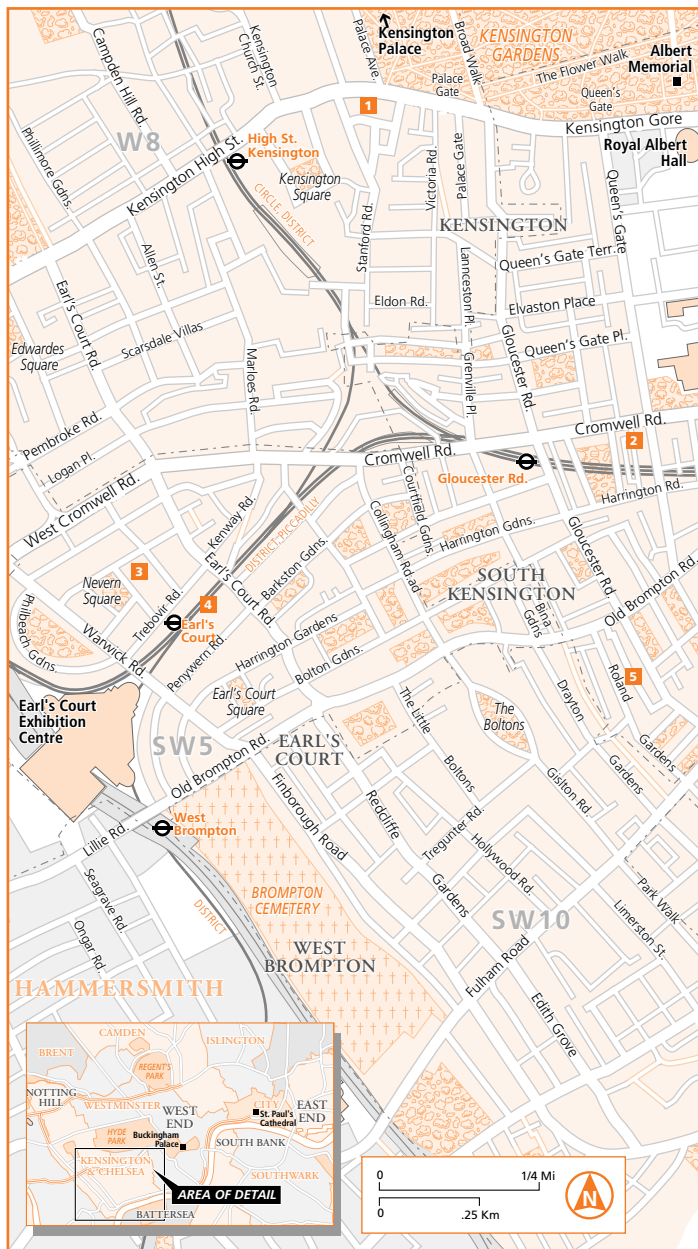
Map 2: West End Accommodations





- Athenaeum **7**
 Brown's Hotel **8**
 Claridge's **1**
 The Connaught **2**
 Covent Garden Hotel **12**
 The Dorchester **4**
 Dukes **10**
 Fielding Hotel **16**
 Grosvenor House **3**
 Hazlitt's 1718 **14**
 London Hilton
 on Park Lane **5**
 The Metropolitan **6**
 The Montague **15**
 Radisson Edwardian
 Mountbatten Hotel **13**
 St. Martin's Lane **11**
 The Savoy **17**
 The Stafford Hotel **9**

Map 3: Knightsbridge to South Kensington Accommodations

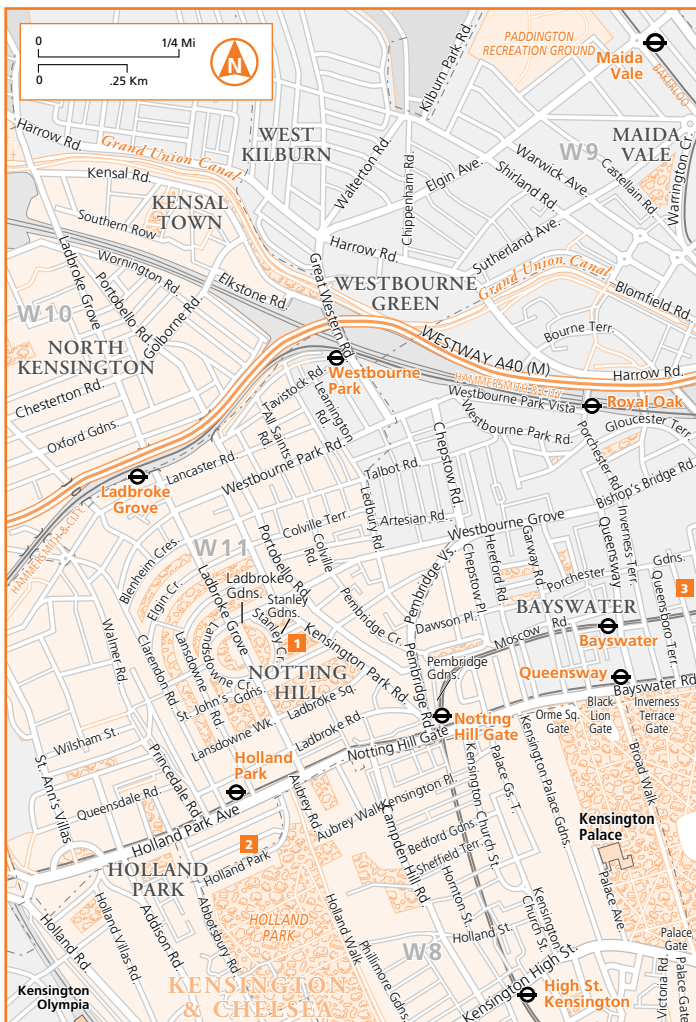




Basil Street Hotel **12**
 Beaufort **11**
 Blakes **5**
 Claverley Hotel **7**
 Egerton House Hotel **8**
 Franklin **9**
 The Gore **2**
 Kensington International Inn **4**

The Milestone Hotel and Apartments **1**
 The Pelham Hotel **6**
 Sydney House Hotel **10**
 Twenty Nevern Square **3**

Map 4: Marylebone to Holland Park Accommodations



The Bryanston Hotel **12**

Columbia **6**

Commodore **5**

Hart House Hotel **9**

The Hempel **3**

Holland House Youth Hostel **2**

Hotel La Place **10**

Landmark London **8**

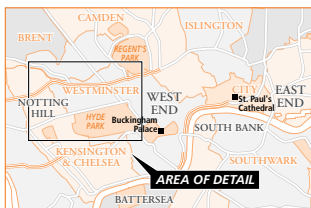
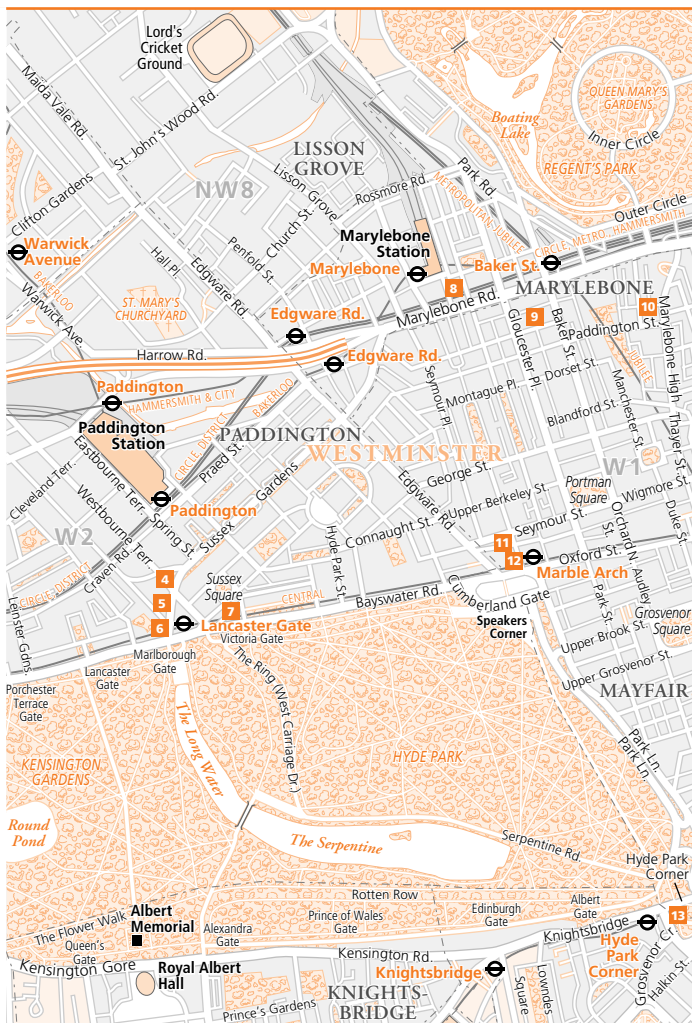
Lanesborough **13**

London Elizabeth **4**

Montcalm **11**

The Portobello **1**

Thistle Hyde Park **7**





The Index

Note:	1£ = \$1.85
\$\$\$\$\$	over £275 (over \$509)
\$\$\$\$	£226–£275 (\$418–\$509)
\$\$\$	£151–£225 (\$277–\$416)
\$\$	£86–£150 (\$159–\$277)
\$	under £85 (under \$157)

Price ratings are based on the lowest price quoted for a standard double room in high season, including taxes and charges. Unless otherwise noted, rooms have air-conditioning, phones, private baths, and TVs.

The following abbreviations are used for credit cards:

AE	American Express
DC	Diners Club
DISC	Discover
MC	MasterCard
V	Visa

Athenaeum (p. 29) WEST END This Regency-meets-Art-Deco-at-Laura-Ashley-style independent is the nonobvious Mayfair choice, scoring for low-attitude service, cute little health club, and attention to detail (just check out the minibar); the Athenaeum is also good to remember for its 34 apartments. Its restaurant, Bullocks, is Mediterranean-esque, semicasual, and relatively inexpensive (remember, I said **relatively**).... *Tel 020/7499-3464 (800/335-3200 in the U.S.). Fax 020/7493-1860. www.athenaeumhotel.com. 116 Piccadilly W1J 7BJ. Tube: Green Park. 133 rooms. AE, DC, MC, V. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$\$*

See Map 2 on p. 34.

Basil Street Hotel (p. 27) KNIGHTSBRIDGE Staying at this venerable hotel, you can breakfast at Harrods, yet it's peacefully set back from the Knightsbridge maelstrom. Antiques are strewn about, though it's not remotely designed. Guests—American academics and English country ladies (who get use of the private ladies' club)—come back and back and back, until they're "Basiliters" and thus eligible for frequent-stayer miles.... *Tel 020/7581-3311. Fax 020/7581-3693. www.thebasil.com. Basil St. SW3 1AH. Tube: Knightsbridge. 92 rooms. AE, DC, MC, V. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$\$*

See Map 3 on p. 36.

Beaufort (p. 28) SOUTH KENSINGTON One of the first of the swelling genre of boutique hotels, where you have a latchkey instead of a reception desk and a sitting room instead of a lounge, this one includes breakfast and afternoon tea. Run by a mainly female team of fiendish efficiency, the Beaufort's even nearer to Harrods than the Basil Street Hotel. It gets top marks for friendliness, squashy-couch designer decor, and not charging premium phone rates.... *Tel 020/7584-5252. Fax 020/7589-2834. www.thebeaufort.co.uk. 33 Beaufort Gardens SW3 1PP. Tube: Knightsbridge/South Kensington. 27 rooms. AE, DC, MC, V. \$\$-\$\$\$*

See Map 3 on p. 36.

Blakes (p. 27) SOUTH KENSINGTON Anouska Hempel, once synonymous with swinging Beatles London, became Lady Weinberg and opened this glamorous stage-set hotel. Her eclectic visual vocabulary (Biedermeier and black lacquer, moiré walls and halogen spotlights, oatmeal raw silk) has since been imitated to cliché, but despite some very tiny rooms, the Blakes style still stuns. So do the ridiculous prices in Blakes the restaurant.... *Tel 020/7370-6701. Fax 020/7373-0442. www.blakeshotels.com. 33 Roland Gardens SW7 3PF. Tube: South Kensington. 49 rooms. AE, DC, MC, V. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$\$*

See Map 3 on p. 36.

Brown's Hotel (p. 27) WEST END Ever-popular with Connecticut Yankees, Brown's does the ersatz Victorian country house thing fairly well, though its soulless afternoon tea is overrated. Labyrinthine corridors and dark-stained wooden staircases connect the various town houses that comprise this hotel begun in 1837 by Lord Byron's butler. There's now a health club, too.... *Tel 020/7493-6020. Fax 020/7493-9381. www.brownshotel.com. 30 Albemarle St. W1X 4BP. Tube: Green Park. 118 rooms. AE, DC, MC, V. \$\$\$\$-\$\$\$\$\$*

See Map 2 on p. 34.

The Bryanston Hotel (p. 28) WEST END Best Western affiliation brings Americans to this functional, better-since-its-1997-refurbishment hotel. Most rooms are small, with postage-stamp-size bathrooms, but rates are great for this area behind Marble Arch. There's a rather elegant lounge with leather chesterfield sofa, oils, and a fireplace, plus a restaurant and a bar.... *Tel 020/262-3141. Fax 020/7262-7248. www.bryanstonhotel.com. 56-60 Great Cumberland Place W1H 8DD. Tube: Marble Arch. 54 rooms. AE, DC, MC, V. \$\$*

See Map 4 on p. 38.

The Bulldog Club (p. 27) For only £25 (\$46) for a 3-year membership, you can book a room in one of Emma Webley's many stunning houses in good neighborhoods, all centrally located for hassle-free sight seeing. Accommodations are similar to the

best U.S. B&Bs, but most unusual in London—especially at these prices. Expect to pay £105 (\$194) for a double room, £85 (\$157) for a single room. You'll also get deluxe treatment: full British breakfast, daily newspaper, fruit, fresh flowers, tea/coffee-maker in your room, mineral water by the bed, and bath oils and robe in the bathroom, plus special offers for members... *Tel 02392/631-714. Fax 0870/622-0021. www.bulldogclub.com. 2 Forestry Cottages (Stoughton, West Sussex). PO18 9JN. MC, V. \$\$*

Claridge's (p. 25) WEST END Palatial, peaceful, and nearly perfect, this Savoy Group classic hosts the royal, political, and business worlds in spacious rooms, some of which feel like 1930s oceanliner staterooms, others like the setting for a fox-hunting weekend. Take tea in the foyer or dine in the Gordon Ramsay-helmed restaurant... *Tel 020/7629-8860 (800/637-2869 in the U.S.). Fax 020/7499-2210. www.savoy-group.co.uk. Brook St. W1A 2JQ. Tube: Bond St. 204 rooms. AE, DC, MC, V. \$\$\$\$-\$\$\$\$\$*

See Map 2 on p. 34.

Claverley Hotel (p. 28) KNIGHTSBRIDGE The Beaufort's neighbor, the quaint and friendly little Claverley has decor of rampant color and occasional four-poster beds. A big English breakfast is included, plus tea, coffee, and hot chocolate anytime in the wood-paneled reading room or lounge. The very few single rooms with shared baths are inexpensive.... *Tel 020/7589-8541. Fax 020/7584-3410. www.claverleyhotel.co.uk. 13-14 Beaufort Gardens SW3 1PS. Tube: Knightsbridge. 33 rooms. AE, DC, MC, V. \$-\$\$\$*

See Map 3 on p. 36.

Columbia (p. 26) BAYSWATER An anomaly—half rock 'n' roll hang-out, half family tourist bargain—this vast Victorian opposite Hyde Park (which many rooms overlook) is clean and bright, if no great shakes in the decor department. Acres of first-floor lounges, a 24-hour bar, a breakfast room that serves dinner, too, and an echoing lobby. The bedrooms are not very big.... *Tel 020/7402-0021. Fax 020/7706-4691. www.columbiahotel.co.uk. 95-99 Lancaster Gate W2 3NS. Tube: Lancaster Gate. 100 rooms. AE, MC, V. \$\$*

See Map 4 on p. 38.

Commodore (p. 28) BAYSWATER Another bargain, down the block from the Columbia, this well-run, quiet hotel has some special duplex rooms in subdued colors. Rates include continental buffet breakfast in the separately owned Spanish restaurant in the basement.... *Tel 020/7402-5291. Fax 020/7262-1088. www.hotel-commodore.com. 50 Lancaster Gate W2 3NA. Tube: Lancaster Gate. 90 rooms. AE, DC, MC, V. \$\$-\$\$\$*

See Map 4 on p. 38.

The Connaught (p. 25) WEST END The honorary consul would feel at home here among the spacious corridors, the invisible staff of old retainers, and the sizable rooms. Beneath the air of picturesque aristocratic decay, all is shipshape, spotless, and silent as Sunday. Its classic Grill Room is among the best in town and the new Angela Hartnett's menu is also worth trying.... *Tel 020/7499-7070 (800/223-6800 in the U.S.). Fax 020/7495-3262. www.savoy-group.co.uk. Carlos Place W1K 2AL. Tube: Bond St. 90 rooms. AE, DC, MC, V. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$\$*

See Map 2 on p. 34.

Covent Garden Hotel (p. 26) COVENT GARDEN A designer/architect couple, Tim and Kit Kemp have a clutch of haute couture, baby-grand hotels around town (see also Pelham), all distinctively English-countrified with loads of swagged drapes, lace antimacassars, antique cushions, and candlesticks, in the best possible taste. This one outdoes its sisters in theatrical ambience, achieved through layer upon layer of calorific drapes, antiques (including trademark dressmakers' dummies), and an adorable library, with an open fire, where the tea—or champagne—is always flowing.... *Tel 020/7806-1000. Fax 020/7806-1100. www.firmdale.com. 10 Monmouth St. WC2H 9HB. Tube: Covent Garden. 45 rooms. AE, DC, MC, V. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$\$*

See Map 2 on p. 34.

Dolphin Square (p. 26) WESTMINSTER This 1930s-era quadrangle, a 5-minute cab ride from the Houses of Parliament (many MPs keep a pied-à-terre here), is one of the few all-suite hotels in London. The overall look is functional rather than beautiful. What it lacks in hotel services it makes up for with its 1.4 hectares (3.5 acres) of gardens, health club (with its famous pool mural, squash courts, and gym), its brasserie (with jazz brunches), its shops, and even a Laundromat.... *Tel 020/7834-3800. Fax 020/7798-8735. www.dolphinsquarehotel.co.uk. Dolphin Square, Chichester St., SW1V 3LX. Tube: Pimlico. 148 rooms. AE, DC, MC, V. \$\$-\$\$\$*

See Map 5 on p. 40.

The Dorchester (p. 25) WEST END A legend among hotels, there is no faulting the opulent Dorchester, with its miles of gold leaf, marble, and antiques, plus climate control, marble bathrooms, cable TV, etc. There's not only a beauty spa and gym, but also a nightclub, lounges, shops, ballrooms, and three restaurants.... *Tel 020/7629-8888. Fax 020/7409-0114. www.dorchesterhotel.com. Park Lane W1A 2HJ. Tube: Hyde Park Corner. 244 rooms. AE, DC, MC, V. \$\$\$\$*

See Map 2 on p. 34.

Dukes (p. 28) ST. JAMES'S In the heart of St. James's, this flagship of small-hotel maven David Naylor-Leyland has its own gaslit driveway; oil portraits of assorted dukes in the foyer justify its

name. Rooms have great detail (heated towel rack, real hair dryer, portable mirror, many outlets), and the staff is young, friendly, and efficient. Green Park is steps away.... *Tel 020/7491-4840. Fax 020/7493-1264. www.dukeshotel.co.uk. 35 St. James's Place SW1A 1NY. Tube: Green Park. 64 rooms. AE, DC, MC, V. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$*

See Map 2 on p. 34.

Egerton House Hotel (p. 29) KNIGHTSBRIDGE The first Naylor-Leyland property (also see "Dukes," above) is still strong, liked by bankers in particular for some reason. They are greeted by good antiques, a lovely garden view in back (but no access), and a charming staff. Trademarks of the N-L hotels are intimate size, no restaurant (but 24-hour room service), good-value rates, and a greater tendency toward vivid colors than your average English-country-style place.... *Tel 020/7589-2412 (800/473-9492 in the U.S.). Fax 0207/584-6540. www.egertonhousehotel.co.uk. Egerton Terrace SW3 2BX. Tube: Knightsbridge. 30 rooms. AE, MC, V. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$*

See Map 3 on p. 36.

Fielding Hotel (p. 33) COVENT GARDEN This somewhat eccentric guesthouse occupies a choice spot in the dead center of Covent Garden, where shopping, theater, and opera collide. Expect narrow stairs instead of an elevator, showers instead of tubs in the tiny bathrooms, and no room service or restaurant, although there is a breakfast room and a tiny bar.... *Tel 020/7836-8305. Fax 020/7497-0064. www.the-fielding-hotel.co.uk. 4 Broad Court, Bow St. WC2B 5QZ. Tube: Covent Garden. 24 rooms. AE, DC, MC, V. \$\$*

See Map 2 on p. 34.

41 (p. 28) VICTORIA What is today the breakfast room/conservatory in this small, luxurious hotel overlooking Buckingham Palace Mews was once the waiting room for sweaty-palmed debutantes on their way to be presented at Buckingham Palace. The level of service at 41 is impressive, and the rooms, all done in black and white, have the highest grade amenities, including gas fireplaces and a help-yourself pantry for around-the-clock snacks. It's an unusual place and unusually friendly.... *Tel 020/7300-0041(877/955-1515 in U.S.). Fax 020/7300-0141. www.redcarnationhotels.com. 41 Buckingham Palace Rd. SW1W OPS. Tube: Victoria. 18 rooms. AE, DC, MC, V. \$\$\$\$\$*

See Map 5 on p. 40.

Franklin Hotel (p. 28) KNIGHTSBRIDGE Yet another Naylor-Leyland lodging, you can spit on this one from its sister Egerton House, with which it shares most of its characteristics. There's a handsome double parlor for a lounge, with stairs leading down to a long private garden.... *Tel 020/7584-5533. Fax 020/7584-5449. www.franklinhotel.co.uk. 28 Egerton Gardens SW3 2DB. Tube: Knightsbridge. 47 rooms. AE, DC, MC, V. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$*

See Map 3 on p. 36.

The Gore (p. 26) SOUTH KENSINGTON Very near the Albert Hall and Kensington Gardens is this big Victorian house hung with trillions of prints and strewn with antiques. Some rooms are funny follies—one with Judy Garland's former bed, another all leopard skins, another with a Tudor minstrels' gallery and oaken four-poster. Bistro 190 serves as the restaurant.... *Tel* 020/7584-6601. *Fax* 020/7589-8127. www.gorehotel.com. 189 Queen's Gate SW7 5EX. Tube: Gloucester Rd. 53 rooms. AE, DC, MC, V. \$\$\$\$-\$\$\$\$\$

See Map 3 on p. 36.

Grosvenor House (p. 25) WEST END After Le Meridien cast off the "old lady of Park Lane" like an unwanted mistress, she fell into the arms of the Great Hotels of the World group and is now known as Grosvenor House. She's still into the heavy color of her Le Meridien days and is fitted out with marble floors and fireplaces, velvet couches, and flowers, and has one of the city's most impressive hotel health clubs, complete with pool. There's also a lounge for tea, and two more restaurants, plus new-as-of-2002 rooms appointed with light wood, glass, and the last word in functional luxury. Expect to be pampered and impressed.... *Tel* 020/7499-6363 (800/032-4254 in U.S.). *Fax* 020/7629-9337. www.ghotw.com/hotel/home/grosvenor-house.htm. Park Lane W1K 7TN. Tube: Marble Arch. 444 rooms. AE, DC, MC, V. \$\$\$\$\$

See Map 2 on p. 34.

Halkin (p. 29) WEST END The Halkin stands out by a mile, with its exotic wood trim and paneling and many-hued marble, its non-fogging mirrors and keypad lighting controls. Once totally Milanese, the Halkin recently exchanged its Italian restaurant for an expensive Thai joint called Nahm; good, but at these prices, so it should be. The hotel is tucked away from the traffic, behind the Lanesborough (see below) in tiny Belgravia. In-room VCRs, faxes and two-line phones please image-conscious Wall Street types. See also its brash sister, the Metropolitan (below).... *Tel* 020/7333-1000. *Fax* 020/7333-1100. www.halkin.co.uk. 5 Halkin St. SW1X 7DJ. Tube: Hyde Park Corner. 41 rooms. AE, DC, MC, V. \$\$\$\$\$

See Map 5 on p. 40.

Hart House Hotel (p. 25) WEST END This is one of the best small B&B hotels in London, with only 16 rooms and no attitude. Forget about elevators—they didn't exist back in the Georgian era when this mansion was built—but expect an extremely warm welcome and recently refurbished bedrooms with small, immaculate bathrooms. Some of the rooms are large enough for families. A full English breakfast is included in the bargain rate.... *Tel* 020/7935-2288. *Fax* 020/7935-8516. www.harthouse.co.uk. 51 Gloucester Place W1U 8JF. Tube: Marble Arch. 16 rooms. AE, MC, V. \$\$

See Map 4 on p. 38.

Hazlitt's 1718 (p. 25) SOHO The self-styled “only hotel in Soho” has kept its fans, though its funky antiques style has been appropriated by others. Visual trademarks include Victorian claw-foot tubs in the bathrooms and multitudes of prints on all walls; it has no elevator, only a small lounge, and no restaurant (but that's the last thing you need on this street of restaurants).... *Tel 020/7434-1771. Fax 020/7439-1524. www.hazlitts.co.uk. 6 Frith St. W1D 3JA. Tube: Leicester Sq. 23 rooms. AE, DC, MC, V. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$\$*

See Map 2 on p. 34.

The Hempel (p. 26) BAYSWATER Seen Blakes? This, Anouska Hempel's other place, is its diametric opposite. In its smooth white lobby, you lounge on a padded dip in the floor by a single blue flame of a fireplace, having entered via a room of single orchids upstanding in serried ranks. It's rather precious, but appealingly Zen-like.... *Tel 020/7298-9000. Fax 020/7402-4666. www.the-hempel.co.uk. 31-35 Craven Hill Gardens. W2 3EA. Tube: Paddington. 48 rooms, 6 apts. AE, DC, MC, V. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$*

See Map 4 on p. 38.

Holland House Youth Hostel (p. 28) HOLLAND PARK Possibly the world's best city youth hostel setting, though the accommodations themselves are as basic as dormitories get. It's housed partly in the remains of a Jacobean mansion and partly in a modern block, set in the middle of gorgeous little Holland Park.... *Tel 020/7937-0748. Fax 020/7376-0667. www.yha.org.uk. Holland Walk, Holland Park W8 7QU. Tube: Kensington High St. 201 beds. AE, MC, V. \$*

See Map 4 on p. 38.

Hotel La Place (p. 30) MARYLEBONE Just-off-center, not far from Regent's Park, this small, sweet hotel has good facilities for the price and an appealing English decor. Single women feel comfortable staying here.... *Tel 020/7486-2323. Fax 020/7486-4335. www.hotellaplace.com. 17 Nottingham Place W1M 3FF. Tube: Baker St. 21 rooms. AE, DC, MC, V. \$\$-\$\$\$*

See Map 4 on p. 38.

Kensington International Inn (p. 32) EARL'S COURT Like the elegant Twenty Nevern Square, this newly refurbished hotel might make you change your mind about Earl's Court. Okay, many of the rooms are minuscule. But they all have a sleek, minimalist, international-style decor that's quite welcome after the overblown English-chintz look found in most places. There's no restaurant here, but there is a small bar and a breakfast room.... *Tel 020/7370-4333. Fax 020/7244-7873. www.kensingtoninternationalinn.com. 4 Templeton Sq. SW5 9LZ. Tube: Earl's Court. 60 rooms. AE, MC, V. \$\$-\$\$\$*

See Map 3 on p. 36.

Landmark London (p. 26) MARYLEBONE The extraordinary feature of this Marylebone giant—once the Great Central Hotel, then British Rail offices—is the soaring, palm-filled, eight-story Winter Garden atrium, which about half the bedrooms overlook. Rooms are very spacious and quite glamorous, with marble bathrooms and fax machines; and there's a pretty pool in the basement health club. There's an excellent French restaurant, but many prefer the small menu served right in the Winter Garden itself.... *Tel 020/7631-8000 (800/323-7500 in the U.S.). Fax 020/7631-8080. www.landmarklondon.co.uk. 222 Marylebone Rd. NW1 6JQ. Tube: Marylebone. 309 rooms. AE, DC, MC, V. \$\$\$\$-\$\$\$\$*

See Map 4 on p. 38.

Lanesborough (p. 27) WEST END A Disneyesque version of Regency London, converted from the former St. George's Hospital. The bar is lined with random leather-bound books; check-in is achieved by signing the visitors' book; bedrooms contain fax machines, personalized stationery, an umbrella, big jars of bath unguents, a disturbing infrared security system that knows where you are—and (no joke) a butler of your own. The hotel's Conservatory restaurant is somewhat twee.... *Tel 020/7259-5599. Fax 020/7259-5606. www.lanesborough.com. Hyde Park Corner SW1X 7TA. Tube: Hyde Park Corner. 95 rooms. AE, DC, MC, V. \$\$\$\$\$*

See Map 4 on p. 38.

London Elizabeth (p. 29) BAYSWATER Set near the depressing guesthouses of Sussex Gardens, this likable and friendly family-run hotel was redesigned by the owner's American wife. Rooms are fresh and English-chintzy in pale blues and yellows; some have tiny balconies, deluxe rooms have Hyde Park views. There's an old-fashioned Continental restaurant, the Rose Garden, and 24-hour room service.... *Tel 020/7402-6641 (800/721-5566 in U.S.). Fax 020/7224-8900. www.londonelizabethhotel.co.uk. Lancaster Terrace W2 3PF. Tube: Lancaster Gate. 49 rooms. AE, DC, MC, V. \$\$-\$\$\$\$*

See Map 4 on p. 38.

London Hilton on Park Lane (p. 28) WEST END It's not the only grand hotel on the block, but it is the tallest, with great high-floor views for which you pay a premium. The boring room decor has Regency stripe brocade and repro Chippendale. The fabulous feature here is the Fitness on Five health club, with personal trainers, three studios, a gym, and a spa. There's a brasserie/cafe and a bar; on floor 28 is the restaurant Windows; in the basement, Trader Vic's hokey Polynesian.... *Tel 020/7493-8000 (800/445-8667 in the U.S.). Fax 020/7208-4142. www.hilton.com. 22 Park Lane W1K 1BE. Tube: Hyde Park Corner. 446 rooms. AE, DC, MC, V. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$*

See Map 2 on p. 34.

The Metropolitan (p. 27) WEST END This louche pocket grand, from the owner of the Halkin, is to its neighbors—The Dorchester, Four Seasons, Grosvenor House—what Kate Moss is to Liz Taylor. The Met Bar is the hangout du jour—or was for about a year—and Nobu (see Dining chapter) does service as the dining room. The best rooms have many windows overlooking Hyde Park; all are beige and cream, with pearwood fittings, minibars stocked with Budvar beer and Red Bull natural stimulation beverage, and Kiehl's products in cool bathrooms. Cool all 'round. Reports of snottiness from Armani-clad doormen are fewer than they used to be, a sign that some of the new-edge glamour may be wearing off.... *Tel 020/7447-1000. Fax 020/7447-1100. www.metropolitan.co.uk. Old Park Lane W1K 1LB. Tube: Hyde Park Corner. 155 rooms. AE, DC, MC, V. \$\$\$\$\$*

See Map 2 on p. 34.

The Milestone Hotel (p. 28) SOUTH KENSINGTON Expect superior service and a country house feeling in the public rooms of this small, stylish hotel wonderfully situated across from Kensington Gardens. The individually designed guest rooms and six apartments are posh and sometimes tip over the top, with fur coverlets and intriguing antiques, and all have the most up-to-date technology. Wonderful bathrooms, and if you want a personal butler, just ask..... *Tel 020/7917-1000 (877/955-1515 in the U.S.). Fax 020/7917-1010. www.milestonehotel.com. 1 Kensington Court W8 5DL. Tube: High St. Kensington. 57 rooms. AE, DC, MC, V. \$\$\$\$\$*

See Map 3 on p. 36.

The Montague (p. 29) BLOOMSBURY From this gorgeous hotel you can spit on the British Museum, shop Covent Garden, and take in a few plays. Every room is individually decorated and full of glamorpuss amenities and high-end service, including twice-daily maid service and 24-hour room service. Everything is kept up to snuff at all times, there's a fab bar/lounge for cocktails or tea, and a good restaurant. Most enjoyable.... *Tel 020/7637-1001 (877/955-1515 in the U.S.). Fax 020/7637-2516. www.montaguehotel.com. 15 Montague St. WC1B 5BJ. Tube: Russell Square. 104 rooms. AE, DC, MC, V. \$\$\$\$-\$\$\$\$*

See Map 2 on p. 34.

Montcalm (p. 28) WEST END Once the hippest deluxe lodging, with a Studio 54-style club in the basement, this Japanese-run (Nikko) establishment is now a haven of peace, complete with Japanese breakfast and London's first hypoallergenic rooms.... *Tel 020/7402-4288. Fax 020/7724-9180. www.montcalm.co.uk. Great Cumberland Place W1H 7TW. Tube: Marble Arch. 106 rooms. AE, DC, MC, V. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$*

See Map 4 on p. 38.

The Pelham Hotel (p. 30) SOUTH KENSINGTON Another, earlier number from Tim and Kit Kemp (see “Covent Garden Hotel,” above), this one is slightly grander, being in a high-ceilinged South Kensington town house, though the abundant antiques and drapery are familiar. Kemps restaurant is up to the neighborhood competition, and it offers 24-hour room service.... *Tel 020/7589-8288 (800/553-6674 in the U.S.). Fax 020/7584-8444. www.firmdale.com. 15 Cromwell Place SW7 2LA. Tube: South Kensington. 51 rooms. AE, MC, V. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$*

See Map 3 on p. 36.

The Portobello Hotel (p. 26) NOTTING HILL Once the haunt of major rock stars and other celebs, the peaceful and still hip Portobello has seen better days. A beautiful lounge leads to huge private gardens (no access for hotel guests, but many rooms enjoy a view over them). Decor features such follies as free-standing canopied Victorian tubs, a four-poster bed with its own stairs, and wood-paneled cabin rooms that make a virtue out of being small. The place has style, all right—plus breakfast is included in the rate and a 24-hour basement bar serves food.... *Tel 020/7727-2777. Fax 020/7792-9641. www.portobello-hotel.co.uk. 22 Stanley Gardens W11 2NG. Tube: Notting Hill Gate. 24 rooms. AE, DC, MC, V. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$*

See Map 4 on p. 38.

Radisson Edwardian Mountbatten Hotel (p. 31) COVENT GARDEN It's a Radisson Edwardian, a reliable, if unexciting, chain, with decor that nods to that era and, in this property at least, has a gimmicky theme: Everything pays homage to Lord Mountbatten. It's in an absolutely central Covent Garden location, secreted in one of the winding lanes. There are so many restaurants nearby, you won't need the French brasserie, but the bar's handy.... *Tel 0207/836-4300 (800/333-3333 in the U.S.). Fax 0207/240-3540. www.radissonedwardian.com. 20 Monmouth St. WC2H 9HD. Tube: Covent Garden. 151 rooms. AE, DC, MC, V. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$*

See Map 2 on p. 34.

St. Martin's Lane (p. 26) WEST END Ian Schrager and designer Philippe Starck transformed a 1960s office building next to the London Coliseum near Leicester Square into this oh-so-hip hang-out. The decor is starkly Starckian, natch, with surreal touches in the lobby and elegantly minimalist, mostly white rooms that allow you to control color and mood (but don't touch any of those pretty amenities that you thought might be free). Asia de Cuba is the hotel's main restaurant, but there are two others, both quite swish, with snotty people guarding the entrances.... *Tel 020/7300-5500. Fax 020/7300-5501. www.stmartinslanehotel.com. 45 St. Martin's Lane WC2N 4HX. Tube: Leicester Sq. 204 rooms. AE, DC, MC, V. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$*

See Map 2 on p. 34.

The Savoy (p. 25) WEST END There's something especially glamorous about this over-a-century-old, Thames-side, Victorian/Art Deco palace, the only London hotel with its own theater. I has handmade beds, most staff are from its world-renowned training school, and the shower heads are the size of hubcaps. The Savoy Grill is one of London's power-lunch places; the Restaurant and more casual Upstairs aren't at all bad, and the American Bar brought the martini to town.... *Tel 020/7836-4343 (800/637-2869 in the U.S.). Fax 020/7240-6040. www.fairmont.com/savoy. Strand WC2R OEU. Tube: Charing Cross. 263 rooms and suites. AE, DC, MC, V. \$\$\$\$-\$\$\$\$\$*

See Map 2 on p. 34.

The Stafford Hotel (p. 26) ST. JAMES'S Sandwiched between the Ritz and Dukes is this little place in an 18th-century town house. It's remarkable for its barrel-vaulted, wine-cellar private dining salon, and for the dozen secluded Carriage House rooms in back, converted from stables and overlooking a cobbled mews. Decor here and in the main hotel tries a little too hard to be British, with displays of firearms and silverware and some overbearing color schemes, but everyone means well and there is air-conditioning. The American Bar, its ceiling strung with toys, is a useful martini hideaway, and there's an English restaurant.... *Tel 020/7493-0111. Fax 020/7493-7121. www.thestaffordhotel.co.uk. St. James's Place SW1A 1NJ. Tube: Green Park. 80 rooms. AE, DC, MC, V. \$\$\$\$-\$\$\$\$\$*

See Map 2 on p. 34.

Sydney House Hotel (p. 27) SOUTH KENSINGTON Formerly Sydney House, the Sydney is superchic but without pretensions. This Chelsea boutique hotel was originally designed by young Jean-Luc Aeby, who has an eye for the witty antique—more of a flea-market than a Sotheby's sensibility. There's 24-hour room service rather than a restaurant, and satellite TV in the rooms, some of which are pretty small.... *Tel 020/7376-7711. Fax 020/7376-4233. 9-11 Sydney St. SW3 6PU. Tube: South Kensington. 21 rooms. AE, MC, V. \$\$\$*

See Map 3 on p. 36.

Thistle Hyde Park (p. 33) BAYSWATER One of the white palaces that line Bayswater Road, this is the only one with any glitz. The hybrid Victorian–Louis XV decor leans heavily to the rococo, in lemon and rose and powder blue colors. The best rooms have high ceilings and balconies overlooking Hyde Park. There's a little-known restaurant/bar with a pretty conservatory facing the park—great for breakfast, tea, or aperitifs.... *Tel 0870/333-9110. Fax 0870/333-9210. www.thistlehotels.com/hydepark. 90-92 Lancaster Gate W2 3NR. Tube: Lancaster Gate. 54 rooms. AE, DC, MC, V. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$\$*

See Map 4 on p. 38.

Twenty Nevern Square (p. 26) EARL'S COURT No one blames you for wanting to avoid Earl's Court, but this elegant boutique hotel on a pretty street of Victorian town houses might make you change your mind. The decor is flagrantly stylish, utilizing gorgeous natural fabrics and woods, and the overall feel is blissfully contemporary. Bathrooms you'll never want to leave, and a good restaurant, too.... *Tel 020/7565-9555. Fax 020/7565-9444. www.twentynevernsquare.co.uk. Nevern Sq. SW5 9PD. Tube: Earl's Court. 20 rooms. AE, MC, V. \$\$-\$\$\$*

See Map 3 on p. 36.

Uptown Reservations (p. 27) A reputable B&B agency, with fewer swanky uptown addresses than The Bulldog Club (see above), but a much greater selection in different neighborhoods. All homes have been inspected. See London as she is lived.... *Tel 020/7351-3445. Fax 020/7937-6660. www.uptownres.co.uk. AE, MC, V. \$\$*

