

TRAVEL TALES

## An Indulgent

# LONDON ESCAPE

SLOW YOUR PACE TO ENJOY THE BRITISH CAPITAL'S ELEGANCE, SERENE PARKS, AND EXCEPTIONAL CUISINE.

By Pallavi Pasricha

As I walk into my room at The Peninsula London, the curtains glide apart to frame one of the city's most iconic landmarks – The Wellington Arch. When the owners spend more than 30 years searching for the location, it has to be exceptional. After all, this is London's first billion-pound hotel.

Lounging on a chair facing the window, I watch the city pass by. Every detail is effortlessly luxurious. As I relax in the bathtub, the touch of a button transforms the honey onyx bathroom into a dimly lit spa-like space.

Heated floors and Toto fittings enhance the indulgence. Thoughtful touches like a nail dryer and a valet box – a two-sided compartment – in which my tonic water is delivered discreetly without a knock make such a difference.

The interiors and architecture of the eight-storey hotel, which is home to 190 rooms and suites, are done by famous New York based artist Peter Marino. "He was very inspired by our neighbouring royal parks and the English countryside. So in the lobby you'll see a lot of natural elements, earthy tones, and hand-painted murals by wallpaper specialist de Gournay," explains Leela Rose, Communications Executive at The Peninsula London.

The lobby with a gorgeous blown glass chandelier buzzes all day, especially during afternoon tea, a cherished London ritual. After dainty sandwiches with smoked salmon and egg truffle, I move on to the softest scones with clotted cream and jam.

### TAKING LONDON SLOW

Having already ticked off the usual sightseeing checklist on my previous trips, I decide to soak in the city at a gentler pace. But the British capital always holds a surprise.

During a city tour, my animated guide, Joe Morris, was chatting outside Buckingham Palace when he suddenly shouts, "keep your cameras ready." King Charles is passing by. As he waves at us from his car, a group of young girls squeal in delight – the royalty still holds sway in British hearts.

Strolling around some of London's most iconic parks – Hyde Park, Green Park and St. James's Park – that lie within walking distance of the hotel, I realise that every street and park tells a story. I learn that some centuries ago these serene spaces served as royal hunting grounds for deer.

As we drive down St. James's Street, we see former British prime minister Winston Churchill's favourite stores like Berry Brothers, from where he bought some 43,000 bottles of champagne in his lifetime. During World War II, one of his most famous quotes was, "Remember gentlemen, it's not just France we are fighting for. It's Champagne!"

No visit to London feels complete without watching a show at The West End. With the second movie of *The Devil Wears Prada* releasing now, I watch this musical after reaching Dominion Theatre in style – in the Rolls Royce of the Peninsula hotel. The riveting production holds me in thrall.

### WHERE STREET EATS MEET FINE DINING

My dive into the city's diverse food scene begins at the famous Borough Market, which goes back almost a 1000 years. From the iconic chocolate covered strawberries, triple-cooked chips, to the famous pork sandwich, it is a foodie's dream world.

My destination is The Black Pig, known for its indulgent sandwiches. I opt for 'The Best One' – a layered, slow-roasted

*"The lobby with a gorgeous blown glass chandelier buzzes all day, especially during afternoon tea, a cherished London ritual."*





**“A stem cell vitality and LED facial leaves my skin smooth, soft and supple, while a full body massage rejuvenates me.”**

pork creation which transports me into culinary heaven. An Indian meal is never on my to-do list abroad, but my opinion changes after I dine at Ambassadors Clubhouse, the first Punjabi cuisine restaurant in London to get a Michelin star. All dishes I have like BBQ butter chicken chops, nargisi chicken koftas and beetroot raj kachori chaat strike a perfect balance between authenticity and innovation.

Another memorable experience comes at The Peninsula hotel’s two Michelin-starred restaurant, Brooklands by Claude Bosi where the design inspired by the historic Brooklands racetrack is as much a draw as the food.

Hallmarks of British motoring and aeronautical legacy are everywhere. In the bar, the chandelier replicates the blades of a Rolls Royce turbine engine. A small PDR, where I sip a drink, resembles the body of a car with metalwork on the walls and a window resembling a windshield. The theme defines the signature cocktails too – my delicious tequila-based drink, is called the Austin 3000. Spectacular city views extend all the way to St. Paul’s, Big Ben and The London Eye.

The restaurant’s ceiling has a striking model of the Concorde. My three-course tasting menu, prepared with British ingredients and French techniques, is delicious. The delicate Scottish cod is the standout dish.

Between the culinary experiences, I experience some of the latest technologies at Peninsula’s subterranean spa. A stem cell vitality and LED facial leaves my skin smooth, soft and supple, while a full body massage rejuvenates me.

**LUXURY, UNTIL THE LAST MILE**

When the stay has been so luxurious, how could my return home not be the same? Flying business class or ‘Upper Class’ on Virgin Atlantic, my experience begins at The Clubhouse, their refurbished lounge at Heathrow airport’s Terminal 3.

After a quick security check, I make myself comfortable and order their signature cocktail ‘The Redhead’ – prosecco, berry liqueurs and gin. Their tempting food menu ranges from Fish & Chips to Afternoon Tea.

On the flight, I am glad to see a semi-partition for privacy in my wide, window-facing seat in the Airbus A350-1000. The dinner of tiger prawns and baked cod, accompanied with champagne, wraps up with a British cheese platter. My last thought as I slip into a deep sleep on my flatbed: I could not have asked for a better ending.

