

Baglioni

60 Hyde Park Gate, SW7 5BB (7368 5700/www.baglionihotellondon.com). High Street Kensington/South Kensington tube. **Rates** £300-£390 single/double; £500-£1,900 suite. **Credit** AmEx, MC, V. **Map** p396 C9.

Attention, fashionistas. The Baglioni, part of an exclusive Italian group, has made a flamboyant foray into London. In a bold move, it has nixed the tired minimalist aesthetic and upped the glam. The fantastic lobby bar is part baroque, part Donatella Versace: spidery black chandeliers, burnished gold ceilings and gigantic vases filled with roses. The chic bedrooms are more masculine: dark wood floors, black lacquered tables and taupe walls, enlivened by brash, clashing, striped sofas. In the swanky black bathrooms, the flattering lighting would make even Norma Desmond look young. Downstairs, the flashy Brunello restaurant serves expensive Italian food to ladies in sparkly tops. Ostentatious, yes. And about time, too: when you're spending this kind of money, you want a good show. The Baglioni has brought a welcome touch of bling to the boutique market.

Hotel services Bar. Business centre. Concierge. Disabled-adapted rooms. Gym. No-smoking rooms. Internet (dataport, high-speed, web TV, wireless). Parking £40/day. Restaurant. Room service. Spa. TV (pay movies/music).

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Savoy

Strand, WC2R 0EU (7836 4343/fax 7240 6040/www.savoygroup.com). Covent Garden or Embankment tube/Charing Cross tube/rail. **Rates** £341-£410 single; £405-£499 double; £546-£1,821 suite. **Credit** AmEx, DC, MC, V. **Map** p401 L7. Built in 1889, the Savoy is London's original grande dame. And what a legacy. Monet painted the views from the River Suites; Noel Coward played in the Thames Foyer; and Vivien Leigh met Laurence Olivier in the Savoy Grill. More importantly, a bartender invented the Martini at the chic American Bar. So you know this place is glamorous. But where the Ritz is ostentatious, the Savoy's grandeur is more dignified. Its aesthetic is mixed: neo-classical, art deco and gentlemen's club. Bedrooms are luxurious but restrained: most people remember the watering-can showerheads and – in certain rooms – the Thames views. The rooftop gym, with a small pool, is another forte. The legendary Savoy Grill has had a revamp: chef Marcus Wareing updated the menu and Californian designer Barbara Barry jazzed up the decor. A new casual restaurant, Banquette, is a chi-chi homage to a 1950s American diner.

Hotel services Bars (3). Business centre. Concierge. Disabled-adapted rooms. Gym. Internet (dataport). No-smoking rooms. Pool. Restaurants (3). Spa. TV (pay movies, DVD).

Contributors

Introduction Ruth Jarvis. **History** Cockneys – or Mockneys?, The Great Stink, Gimme Shelter Juliet Gardiner. **London Today** Rebecca Taylor. **Architecture** David Littlefield. **Where to Stay** Hugh Graham. **Sightseeing Introduction** Ruth Jarvis. **The South**

Bentley

Harrington Gardens, SW7 4JX (7244 5555/fax 7244 5566/www.thebentley-hotel.com). Gloucester Road tube. **Rates** £250-£425 double; £575-£4,000 suite. **Credit** AmEx, DC, MC, V. **Map** p396 C10.

In a backlash against minimalism, chandeliers are back in fashion. And there are plenty to swing from at the Bentley, London's most opulent new boutique hotel. They sparkle in the lobby; they glitter in the bedrooms; hell, you can even shave under one in the luxurious bathrooms. Over the top? You bet. Like a miniature version of the Dorchester, the Bentley's decorative template 's Versailles: hence the Louis XV-style furniture, the gilt mirrors and gleaming marble – 600 tons of it, imported from Greece and

Italy. The bedrooms are pure *Dynasty*: thick carpets, gold satin bedspreads and jacuzzi tubs. And the spa features gold-laced mosaics and a Turkish hammam. Next to the glitzy restaurant 1880, the Malachite Bar is a dim, decadent hideaway. But the real showpiece is the lobby's sweeping circular staircase – perfect for making a grand entrance.

Hotel services Bar. Business centre. Concierge. Disabled-adapted rooms. Gym. No-smoking rooms/floors. Internet (dataport, high speed). Restaurants (2). Room service. Spa. TV (pay movies/music/DVD).

Sanderson

50 Berners Street, W1T 3NG (7300 1400/fax 7300 1401/www.morganshotelgroup.com). Oxford Circus tube. **Rates** £400-£458 double; £658 loft studio. **Credit** AmEx, DC, MC, V. **Map** p398 J5.

London may be drowning in design hotels, but this Schrager and Stark creation still thrills. The theatrical lobby resembles a surreal film set, with its sheer flowing curtains, Salvador Dali red-lip sofa and ornately framed portraits of chihuahuas. Next door, the silvery Long Bar is similarly ethereal; the glamorous Purple Bar – open to residents only – is dark and discreet. Spoon, the acclaimed Alain Ducasse restaurant, offers a playful fusion menu. Upstairs, the minimalist bedrooms continue the dreamy theme, with landscape paintings on the ceilings and more filmy curtains. But the hotel's real showpiece is the spa, a maze of shimmering curtains, romantic lighting and beautiful bodies.

Hotel services Bars (2). Business services. Concierge. Disabled-adapted rooms. Gym. Internet (dataport, wireless). No-smoking rooms/floors. Restaurant. Room service. TV (DVD).