



The Franklin, London-Starhotels Collezione. A heritage-listed building in the Knightsbridge district

Located in the area synonymous with the London upper-class, the red-brick residency dating back to the 1840s was transformed in 2016 in a hotel structure: The Franklin, London-Starhotels Collezione

The Franklin, London-Starhotels Collezione: from house to hotel in the Knightsbridge area

The Franklin, London-Starhotels Collezione is a five-star boutique hotel in Knightsbridge, London. Hidden in plain sight on a side street surrounded by red-brick residences, The Franklin is a heritage-listed building, and a grade two listed building. It consists in the joining of four townhouses, and it is set in a residential area. That's what it was originally built to be – a house. Therefore, this was kept in mind when it was transformed into a hotel. Externally, it has an authentic English style, yet inside is the warmth of an Italian home.

Knightsbridge was originally a small borough located outside the City of London, between the villages of Chelsea, Kensington, and Charing. Knightsbridge took its name from a bridge over the Westbourne River that is now silted up. There are ancient sources reporting that Empress Matilda met the citizens of London at Knight's Bridge in 1141. Today, Knightsbridge is a residential and commercial district. Bordered by Hyde Park to the north, Belgravia to the east, Chelsea to the south, and Kensington to the west, the district is internationally known for the presence of the Harrods department store, located on Brompton Road. Sloane Street, one of the district's main streets, is home to boutiques as well as the Harvey Nichols department store.

The Franklin, London-Starhotels Collezione opened in 2016, although its history predates this. English architect George Basevin designed the structure in the 1840s. The Franklin is among twenty-four of his early Victorian terraces on Egerton Crescent.

The Franklin, part of Starhotels collection, a Florence-based group

The destination is one of the Starhotels around the world, and one of twelve chosen to represent the Starhotels Collection. Starhotels is a family-run Florence-based hotel group. It was founded in 1980 and specializes in four and five-star hotels across Europe, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Its vision is to bring a quintessential Italian atmosphere to its collection of hotels that encompasses four-thousand-and-two-hundred rooms.

Starhotels Collezione acquired the hotel in 2014. After that, it underwent a revival that spanned two years. Comprising thirty-five guest rooms and suites, The Franklin revels in its facade. Externally, one could miss the building if not for a flag donning the letter F hung above the entrance. On entering the property, the atmosphere morphs into that of an Italian salon featuring moody greys, Carrara marble, floor-to-ceiling Venetian screens, mirrored surfaces, and Art Deco aesthetics.

Anouska Hempel, the designer behind the renovation of The Franklin

Anouska Hempel is responsible for designing the interiors of the hotel. Born in New Zealand, the actress starred in films including James Bond, *On Her Majesty's Secret Service*, before turning her attention to interior design. Her agency – Anouska Hempel Design – works with restaurants, homes, and hotels in the United Kingdom and overseas. Hempel is a familiar name in London's high-end hotel market. She is known, in fact, for her work on the Blakes Hotel in South Kensington.

Anouska Hempel sourced inspiration for the designs seen throughout the hotel from her travels around the world. Many of the design elements have to be made from scratch for The Franklin. Even the marble tables that denote the foyer were designed to mimic the pattern of the Italian tiled floor. The four hundred thread count Italian cotton bedding and Simmons beds were also sourced especially for the hotel. This custom approach characterizes the property, and merges into the guest experience.

Space distribution at The Franklin: the transitional atmosphere

With rooms across five floors in addition to the ground level and a basement featuring an authentic hammam, a fitness center, and a treatment room, The Franklin remains true to the residence's former blueprints. It does not attempt to mimic a classic hotel environment. The layout, in fact, flows from one room to the next. It is small in scale, and with that, is intimate in ambience.

Depending on the time of the day which you visit the bar, restaurant, or lobby, the spaces can feel transitional. When you are in your room it should feel like your private space. Then you could come to have some afternoon tea, and later, if you visit the bar the atmosphere has transformed. Utilizing lighting and atmospheric elements, the spaces evolve based on the time of day.

Welcoming the guests at The Franklin: a tailored experience

Another characteristic element to the designs of The Franklin hotel is the split-level executive suites which support separate living and sleeping space. The aim of this design scheme was to cater for guests who entertain friends during their stay. The rooms have the objective of enabling guests to feel at home.

Facilities at The Franklin

As for facilities, The Franklin offers some unexpected additions. The aforementioned hammam is a feature inspired by Hempel's Moroccan travels. Hidden from sight in the building's basement, guests staying at The Franklin can book it with thirty minutes notice. Groups of one household can also book together, while it's still recommended to do the experience in solitude.

On the basement level is a small fitness center. The space is at its best for two at a time. A treatment room is located on this lower floor, too. Here, guests can avail of a catalogue of beauty and wellness treatments brought in by Viva Therapies. A mobile salon that is also available to guests within thirty minutes of booking. Deep tissue massages, reflexology, facial treatments, yoga classes, personal trainer sessions, hairdressing and make-up artistry are possible any time of the day or night. And, for those who prefer to be in the privacy of their room, treatments can take place there on request.

On the ground floor, neighbor to the lobby, a library with no books, but instead a handful of coffee table editions, is open throughout the day. It is here that guests can spend some time or watch the flatscreen television.

The Franklin Restaurant by Alfredo Russo and The Franklin Bar

On the ground floor is The Franklin Restaurant and separately, The Franklin Bar. The restaurant is led by the Italian Michelin-star chef, Alfredo Russo. The chef, who began his career in the culinary arts at the age of thirteen, is responsible for Dolce Stil Novo in Turin, Italy, the sole restaurant inside a royal abode, Venaria Palace. Alfredo Russo's culinary heritage is Piedmontese cuisine. The food has a focus on locally sourced produce. The menu has an emphasis on Piedmont classics revisited in a modern way.

Joining Alfredo Russo is head chef Roberto Roncolato. He has experience in several restaurants with one and two Michelin stars. While working at DeGusto, he was instrumental in getting his first Michelin star before moving on to serve as head chef operations and development for a company with more than 20 restaurants (including Hosteria Moderna, Bella Italia and Happy Fish). In the United Kingdom, Roncolato has worked at The Langley in Berkshire – part of Luxury Collection Hotels – at the three-Michelin-starred Gordon Ramsey restaurant and the Texture restaurant.

The Franklin Bar, next to the restaurant, is a Martini & Champagne Bar embellished with walls of mirrors and inspired by the 1920s style of *The Great Gatsby*. The Franklin Grand Tour – now in Chapter 2 – is an immersive cocktail experience designed by Bar Manager and Head Mixologist Antonio Papariello. It is a journey to discover Italy through its most iconic flavors and products. The Grand Tour set off in October 2022 from the North of the country, traveling through the upper part of the Peninsula throughout the autumn-winter. As spring blossomed, the Franklin Grand Tour headed south, reaching the Eternal City, the Italian coastline and islands.

The hotel's partnership with the V&A Museum

Franklin London is a corporate member of the Victoria and Albert Museum and host made to measure experiences, such as themed afternoon teas, to celebrate the museum's major exhibitions. Guests can enjoy access to an exhibition of their choice in the world's largest museum of applied and decorative arts and design, as well as sculpture, housing a permanent collection of over 2.27 million objects.

The Franklin, London-Starhotels Collezione

The Franklin, London-Starhotels Collezione is one of three destinations belonging to Starhotels' Collezione portfolio in London. The two other hotels include The Gore, which is located beside Hyde Park, and The Pelham, which is next to South Kensington Station. Customers can find additional Starhotels Collezione properties across cities, including Rome, Paris, New York, and Florence.

Starhotels, a Florence-based group

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Matteo Mammoli



THE RED-BRICK FACADE OF THE FRANKLIN, LONDON



NATURALISTIC DETAILS IN THE ROOM AT THE FRANKLIN, LONDON



THE FRANKLIN BAR, LONDON



THE PRIVATE EGERTON GARDENS AROUND THE FRANKLIN

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