

It's a Locke In

It's vibrant, it's hip, and it's happening. This is Aldgate, the gateway to the East End. Giselle Whiteaker checks in.





Aldgate was originally the eastern-most gateway through the London Wall leading from the City of London to the East End. It's still more or less a gateway between the business-oriented City and the East End, but the latter has become a vibrant oasis for hipsters and the uber-cool. It's the perfect place for contemporary design to lay roots: enter Leman Locke, a "...design-led aparthotel for those who want to challenge the status quo, and experience the unique and authentic."

I'm all for unique, hence I find myself checking into one of the 168 apartment-rooms on one of the higher floors of the building on a Friday afternoon, ready to spend the weekend exploring all the the hip hub of the East End has to offer. Leman Locke seems the natural place to start.

The concrete corridors lead me to expect industrial minimalism, so it's with some surprise that the grey and black shades of décor I'm

the spacious bathroom, note the mohair blanket draped on the end of the bed, and flick through the Hemsley + Hemsley cookbook on the kitchen bench. My eyes are soon drawn to the windows, where the City is stretched out before me; I can't wait until night falls. The view will be even more spectacular when the City turns on its fairy lights.

I flop onto the powder-pink L-shaped lounge and flick on the flat-screen television before I realise what's different about this space: the lounge is the focus of the room, rather than the bed. It's not about staying at Leman Locke, it's about living.

Even the entry to the hotel is somewhat different. The door on Leman Street leads into Treves & Hyde, a funky café space, from which there is a short corridor leading to reception at the rear of the building. The reception has its own door on a side street, but the Treves & Hyde entry

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anticipating, perhaps with a few copper highlights, have been replaced with soft pastels – pinks and blues, paired with bleached wood. It's Nordic chic, but with an industrial edge that elevates it beyond being the love child of Ikea and Muji. The best part is that it's actually comfortable. I wheel my bags into a nook in the wardrobe, throw my jacket on the back of a chair in the kitchen, and flick the kettle on in the fully-equipped kitchen before I remember I'm not at home.

With a cup of tea in my hand concocted from the contents of a brown paper bag in the kitchen, which, I note, also contains a box of Doisy & Dam organic cocoa nibs that I plan to devour later, I wander into

is more popular. When I order a latte and take a seat in the casual lounge area, I understand why. This is great coffee. It might be one of the best coffees in London. It's only to be expected when you have a "Head of Coffee" and that Head is James Wise, one of the UK's most talked-about coffee professionals.

The lounge space is wrapped around a winding staircase that will soon lead to the Treves & Hyde restaurant, which, together with the café set up, will serve food from breakfast to late night cocktails. The terrace will have an American smoker and Argentinian grill, offering menu items such as slow-cooked brisket; smoked lobster rolls; and buttermilk

wood-roasted chicken. Supper clubs, masterclasses and chef collaborations are all on the cards. It's definitely one to watch. In the meantime, Banglatown, aka Brick Lane, is around the corner, with its plethora of curry houses and the Truman Brewery, and Spitalfields is a few short blocks away, with Shoreditch not much further. Food is not a problem in this part of London.

Neither is culture. There is a vast choice of galleries in the area and Wilton's Music Hall, the oldest surviving theatre hall in the world, now home to original theatre, is an eight-minute walk away. Markets abound, the Tower of London beckons, and a number of tube stations are within easy proximity to explore further afield.

The weekend flies by, and before I know it, it's time to check out. Leman Locke is a such a perfectly executed combination of a boutique hotel and a serviced apartment that it has become my new home. Blended with a large dollop of creativity and flair and exemplary, personal service, it's somehow more than the sum of its pastel-tinted parts. It's hip, its cool, and it's only going to get better.

For more information about Leman Locke, see www.lockeliving.com.

