

# Scents, Sounds and Smart Stays

---

Around the corner from the somewhat down-at-heel Victoria Coach Station, Elizabeth Street is arguably the prettiest street in London. Throw in creative hub Eccleston Yards and this area looks set to be on every fashionista's radar. Giselle Whiteaker finds the smartest places to stay and play.



Eccleston Yards is a new creative quarter

The door swings silently open before I even reach for the handle and I step onto black and white zig-zag tiles that pave the way to the reception desk of the Eccleston Square Hotel. This gem in Belgravia, across the road from the leafy, green and private gardens of Eccleston Square, has quite the reputation as one of the most technologically advanced boutique hotels in the world. The door is only the beginning.

Earlier this year, the hotel underwent its first technical upgrade and while the tech-minded will appreciate the

unique combination of AI and cloud-based technologies, the rest of us might wonder what it all means. The reception doesn't give the game away – it's light and airy, staffed by regular, personable humans, who efficiently check me in. The fun starts in my room.

To turn on the lights, I select the relevant icon on the VDA Vitrum glassware keypad – the same goes for opening and closing the curtains and controlling the air conditioning. I clock a plethora of power sockets available – no adapter needed – along with the in-wall docking points for phone

charging. Apparently the charging points on either side of the bed remain active even when I head out. Handy.

The television is a high point. Along with the entertainment function, it's an information portal, and it provides 4K content – so I can cast Netflix or mirror my laptop screen. I can even order a pot of tea to be delivered to the room via the TV. The best viewing point is from the bed, which is by acclaimed Swedish manufacturer Hästens and includes a massage function.

The room isn't large, but it's cleverly designed. The bathroom has clear glass walls, which makes it all feel larger and airier. Even this is smart – when privacy is needed, press a button and the glass wall dividing bedroom and bathroom turns opaque. It's like a magician's trick. I turn it on and off in quick succession but have no idea how it works.

It's not all technology either. Other welcoming touches include a Nespresso machine, drinking water and, because I've booked direct, I'm rewarded with a daily restocked free mini bar. By the bed there's a small pouch containing all of the ingredients of a good night's sleep – L'Occitane cleansing face cream, a lavender pillow spray, and hand cream – along with instructions for a relaxing pre-bed ritual.

It's clear I'm going to be comfortable here but, while I'm looking forward to a good night's sleep, I also want to explore this part of London. A few minutes' walk down the road, I find Elizabeth Street. It's packed with interesting little boutiques and businesses, many with elaborately dressed windows. Peggy Porschen is the first to catch my eye, with its pink façade and doorway framed by pastel-hued toadstools. The theme continues inside, where the décor is as sweet as the cakes on display.

Across the road, I duck into Jo Loves, created by Jo Malone, where the Fragrance Brasserie Bar beckons. Here, I indulge in a Fragrance Tapas experience. I'm immersed in scents and stories, ranging from No 42 The Flower Shop, the scent that represents this street, to Smoked Plum and Leather, the scent of a ranch in Montana. Shower gel in my chosen scent is prepared in a cocktail shaker, poured into a martini glass, for my olfactory pleasure. Bath Cologne is warmed within a tagine and released via a cloud of scented steam. My favourite two scents are applied to my hands with a paint brush. I spend the rest of the day smelling divine.

My wanders next take me into Re:Mind, where I join a drop-in meditation class. I've never been capable of traditional meditation – my mind is far too busy for that – but in the Re:Sound session there are long moments where my brain pauses and I am able to think of nothing. This unusual class sees a practitioner playing the gong harmonically for the duration. It feels like serenity is transmitted through the sound vibrations.



The glass wall between bathroom and bedroom can be set to opaque for privacy



Meditation at Re:Mind



Peggy Porschen



Fragrance Tapas at Jo Loves



The funky bar at Jones Family Kitchen

Feeling wonderfully relaxed, I duck into Eccleston Yards, a new hot spot for funky brands like high-tech tailors Tailor Made, Barry's Gym, Studio Pottery London and Hotpod Yoga. I stop at the Jones Family Kitchen, sibling to Shoreditch's Jones Family Project. This eatery has been listed as the Top Steakhouse in London (2019) by Steak Society and, after indulging in a Jospir-grilled Longhorn sirloin steak with a delectable black garlic chimichurri sauce and a bowl of English greens with chilli, sesame and soy, I can understand why.

My final extravagance is a blow-dry at SMUK London, an eco-friendly hair, beauty and lifestyle studio, founded by

Danish Celebrity Stylist and Make-up artist Miabella Ristorp. I'm envious of senior stylist Caine's curls, but by the time I leave, my wild mop has been tamed into a sleek, modern do that makes me think I should be hitting the town.

Instead, I idle back to Eccleston Square Hotel, enter hands-free, and tap the room lights on and curtains closed. I use the television to order a pot of tea, raise the upper section of the bed to a relaxed half-sitting position, and scroll through the channels. A cosy night in this comfortable spot seems like a far better plan.



The reception at Eccleston Square Hotel



SMUK in Eccleston Yards

For more information about Eccleston Square Hotel, see [www.ecclestonsquarehotel.com](http://www.ecclestonsquarehotel.com)  
 For Eccleston Yards, see [www.mayfairandbelgravia.com/eccleston-yards](http://www.mayfairandbelgravia.com/eccleston-yards)