



Christmas *at* Claridge's

"Christmas isn't a season, it's a feeling," said American novelist Edna Ferber, and there is one particular hotel in London that is renowned for evoking just that. From its legendary tree taking centre stage in the lobby to hand-stitched stockings for its guests on Christmas Eve, every thoughtful touch and luxurious detail at Claridge's captures the magic of the season

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CONSIDERED ONE OF the very best five-star hotels in the world, Claridge's embodies grand English style, timeless glamour and impeccable, intuitive service. It began life in 1856 and its reputation grew quickly; in 1860, the hotel was visited by Queen Victoria and Prince Albert and immediately became a favourite with heads of state and royalty throughout Europe. In the vibrant 1920s, it was the place to party to the sounds of Gershwin and do the steps of the Charleston, and

in the 1950s it was something of a Hollywood home from home, with the likes of Cary Grant, Katharine Hepburn and Bing Crosby all coming to stay. Today, crossing the hotel's historic threshold is like stepping into a bygone era of art deco glamour and elegance. When it's adorned with opulent festive decorations it is more enchanting than ever, and Louise Murray, *Dream Escape's* Head of Travel and Design, organises truly unforgettable stays at this most magical time of the year. Among the most spacious in London, each of the hotel's elegant rooms and suites has →



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been beautifully designed and luxuriously furnished. The same sophisticated style is applied throughout the hotel and even includes its famous Christmas tree, which each year is brought to life by a different world-renowned designer. Christian Louboutin once transformed the entire lobby into a frosted forest, complete with a traditional tree dressed with fairy lights and gingerbread stilettos. Dolce & Gabbana’s tree was adorned with more than 450 hand-blown Italian glass baubles, while Christopher Bailey for Burberry’s creation featured over 100 gold and silver umbrellas and thousands of motion-sensor

lights, programmed to sparkle as guests walked by. In 2020 it was the turn of McQueens Flowers, who created a frozen dreamscape inspired by the roaring twenties, with a white frosted tree covered with shimmering swathes of over 10,000 crystal garlands and pendants.

This year, the seasonal London landmark has been transformed by Kim Jones of Dior, mixing holographic projections with ethereal white toile and baubles that seem to magically float in orbit around the tree.

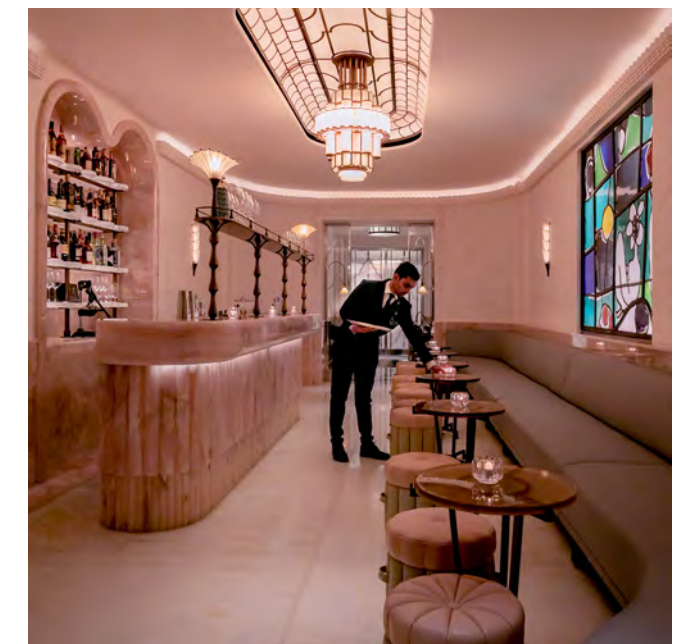
Despite its enduring popularity, Claridge’s never rests on its laurels. Earlier this year, the



Pictured from left to right: Claridge’s at Christmas; Claridge’s Kim Jones of Dior Christmas Tree, 2021; Bar in the Painter’s Room; The Painter’s Room

hotel unveiled its two brand new Mayfair suites and launched ArtSpace, a permanent art gallery with an inaugural exhibition featuring works by Damien Hirst (on until 31 December 2021). The Painter’s Room is the hotel’s chic new bar; inspired by the artistic haunts of Provence and Italy, its blush pink tones and soft lighting make it an ideal spot for a cosy cocktail à deux, but *Dream Escape’s* travel designers also arrange private hire of this beautiful new space.

For larger festivities, the hotel’s magnificent ballroom has also been immaculately restored. This English-Heritage-listed space has hosted high society for more than 100 years, from high-profile weddings and state →





banquets to opulent balls. It was the venue of choice for the Queen and Duke of Edinburgh's ruby wedding anniversary, and where Audrey Hepburn celebrated at the wrap party of *Roman Holiday* in 1953. Today, it can accommodate up to 500 guests for a Champagne reception and up to 240 for a sit-down dinner dance.



Pictured clockwise from top left to right: Claridge's Ballroom; The Ballroom entrance; L'Epicerie; The Mayfair Suite lounge; The Mayfair Suite bedroom



‘L'Epicerie (offers)...a rare opportunity to glimpse the hard work and attention to detail that goes on behind the scenes’

Another exciting addition is the hotel's newest culinary space, which offers a unique and exclusive dining experience, and a more intimate space in which to entertain.

Set within Claridge's hallowed kitchens, L'Epicerie is designed to seat just 14 and offers front-row seats to the theatre of the kitchen, as dishes are prepared and presented on a marble pass directly in front of guests, providing a rare opportunity to glimpse the hard work and attention to detail that goes on behind the scenes.

The chef's table is its striking centrepiece crafted from American black walnut alongside buttery soft red leather chairs. Here, *Dream Escape's* travel designers arrange a choice of private dining experiences, bespoke wine

dinners and interactive feasts, all led by executive chef Martyn Nail. Private masterclasses are also organised, providing new skills and knowledge to take home to your own kitchen and dining room. Designed and hosted by the hotel's expert team of sommeliers, chefs and patissiers, these cover a wide range of mouth-watering subjects, from delicate afternoon-tea cakes to the secrets of the hotel's signature Lobster Wellington.

Indulgent food and lavish feasts are a much-loved part of Christmas, and the hotel is brimming with seasonal delights. Served in The Foyer, traditional afternoon tea has a festive twist and is accompanied by carols sung by a live choir. Elsewhere, dishes such as the hotel's seafood cocktail with lobster, langoustine, →



Pictured from left to right: Claridge's at Christmas; Claridge's Christmas decorations; Claridge's Christmas turkey

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crab and Marie Rose sauce appear alongside the likes of beef tournedos with chestnut and foie gras pithivier, truffle purée, spinach and parsnip gratin. There are also tempting traditional highlights: roasted Cambridge Bronze turkey is served with chipolatas wrapped in bacon, parsnips, carrots and bread sauce, and a taste of Claridge's famous Christmas pudding is a must — served with lashings of brandy sauce; this sweet treat has been stirred to perfection by the entire pastry team in an annual ritual that dates back over 100 years.

Set in the heart of London's Mayfair, the hotel is perfectly positioned to enjoy the many festive

delights that the capital has to offer. The city's Christmas lights are a sight to behold; glorious golden angels soar high over Regent Street, and Trafalgar Square's towering spruce twinkles nearby, while Mayfair itself also undergoes a stylish seasonal makeover. If the magic of a Christmas show or traditional pantomime appeals, then London's theatreland is only moments away. *Dream Escape's* travel designers also take the stress out of Christmas shopping by arranging private visits to some of London's finest establishments, all of which are within easy reach; follow in the footsteps of royalty and head to Berry Bros. & Rudd for fine wine,



Paxton & Whitfield for world-famous cheese, Floris for finely crafted fragrances and soaps, and Fortnum & Mason, known as the 'Queen's grocer', for rare teas and whimsical gifts.

Once all the shopping and sightseeing is done, it's time to relax and enjoy the precious period of Christmas itself. Despite being in the heart of the hustle and bustle, Claridge's is an oasis of calm, and luxury touches await. Guests arriving on Christmas Eve are invited to toast the beginning of their stay with a bottle of Champagne on arrival, enjoyed perhaps by the beautifully decorated tree found in every suite. Later, there is storytelling for children by the staircase, courtesy of Claridge's very own elf and, as night falls, mince pies and carrots are provided to leave out for Father Christmas and his reindeers. Each guest, whether they've been naughty or nice, will receive a hand-stitched stocking to place at the foot of their luxurious bed.

On Christmas morning, the sound of carol singing fills the lobby, and guests are invited on an enchanting horse-drawn carriage ride through Mayfair, with hot chocolate and marshmallows served along the way. Back at the hotel, a lavish lunch awaits, and rumour has it that Father Christmas himself might even make an appearance. This is Christmas at Claridge's, after all... ☺

Find out more



Holly Mackie, Owner and Director

“There is nothing more magical than walking into the timeless elegance of Claridge's after a busy day shopping or sightseeing. It is one of my favourite locations in London, and each year they engage with one of the biggest fashion names to design their Christmas tree. This is certainly a festive highlight and not to be missed!”

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