

# Christmas shopping or January

London's Royal Lancaster Hotel is a hotel of constant surprises. Overlooking Hyde Park is an obvious advantage, but the views from both bedrooms and public rooms are much better than you would expect.



The outside entrance of the Island Restaurant and Bar

In terms of location, it has a central line station beneath the hotel, and Oxford street is a couple of stops one way, and the new Westfield with over 300 shops and restaurants under one roof is just four stops in the other direction. But perhaps the best surprise is the quality of the accommodation, restaurants, and above all the service. The Royal Lancaster scores top marks on so

many points that it gets our recommendation for readers wanting to take advantage of a great Euro/Pound exchange rate, the new lower VAT, the big discount sales and the low fares being offered especially from Faro during the low season of December and January (except for the holiday period). What better excuse could you need to for a weekend's shopping in London?

First impressions count for a lot, and the moment our taxi pulled up at the hotel entrance, the doorman opened the door with a friendly welcome and our bags were whisked away. The Royal Lancaster Hotel is "traditional" in the very best way, and you walk into reception over the thickest pile carpets I can remember, to a discrete reception. It's all wood, comfortable armchairs

and tasteful paintings, and there is no sign of gilt or glitter that so many modern hotels seem to rely on these days. Lighting is at exactly the right level, not too bright, and not too dim and the whole impression is of discreet luxury and good service.

There is a good range of room rates, and all the rooms are light and airy with large windows to enjoy the views, and all are fully equipped with all the facilities you would expect, including large en suite bathrooms with power showers, satellite TV etc. The higher the floor the larger the rooms and of course the room rate rises at the same time, though not unreasonably. You can request a floor level and a park or city view.

Our room was on the 18th floor, and these rooms are large and very comfortable with "picture" windows and some of the best views across London. The bathrooms are marble, and with large basins, and a really large traditional bath that you can stretch right out in. If you prefer a shower, it was good to see that the shower had its own separate heat and water strength controls; it wasn't just an extension off the bath tap. Towels are thick, large and plentiful, from large bath size right down to flannels, and all are monogrammed, a nice touch. Bath robes and slippers are also provided. There was a nice range of toiletries from Gilchrist and

Soames in a small basket by the basin. There was the inevitable hair dryer attached to the bathroom wall, but there was also a separate hair dryer in the room for those who don't like the fixed bathroom variety.

Strangely I couldn't find a shaver socket in the bathroom, but then almost everybody has rechargeable shavers these days.

A really nice and very unusual touch was that by the desk in the bedroom there was a range of sockets to accommodate British 3 pin plugs, continental European plugs, and even 110 volt American plugs. Whatever laptop or other device you have brought with you, like your phone charger, there was no need for a plug converter. The bedroom was large and spacious, with a settee and coffee table, a work desk, and a high quality flat screen TV with over 50 channels, and as far as I could see, in house movies were not charged for. The beds are firm and very comfortable with duvets and extra feather pillows on request.

Storage and hanging space was no problem, in fact it was gener-

ous, and a room safe was provided along with plentiful space to unpack your cases. Everything is very well thought out, spacious and very clean. Room service was impressive, with an evening turn-down service, and the maid never forgot to top up the tea and coffee etc, which is often overlooked until the morning in other establishments. Unfortunately the hotel provides mugs rather than cups and saucers, but that seems to be standard these days, and preferred by many guests.

Breakfast is served on the first floor in a modern dining room with superb views over the park and specifically the fountains at Kensington Gardens and the upper reaches of the Serpentine. We found a few minutes delay waiting to be seated each morning on the Saturday and Sunday, though on Sunday the hotel opened the Thai restaurant for breakfast as well. It wasn't a shortage of tables, simply the wait for seating. A nice touch was a table of coffee and tea and juices for you to drink while you waited to be seated, though there wasn't really time. A good range of cereals, yogurts,



The Nipa Thai Restaurant overlooking the park.

AN OASIS...



IN A BUSY WORLD

## GIBRALTAR

...is closer than you think!

A bit of home away from home, around four hours drive from the Algarve!

sights international shops  
english speaking duty free

A three night short break at the famous Rock Hotel could be just what you deserve.

Built in 1932 by the Marquis of Bute, the hotel to this day still offers standards of comfort and care from that bygone era.

A three night break based on two adults sharing a twin or double bay facing room including a full english breakfast and including complementary Internet usage

**£155 per person**

Call Liz Valerga in reservations for availability, quoting Portugal News.

Europa Road, Gibraltar

Tel: +350 200 73000 Fax: +350 200 73513

E-mail: info@rockhotel.gi www.rockhotelgibraltar.com ★★★★★ AA



**LONG WEEKEND  
in MONTE GORDO**

**€51 PER PERSON (min 2 pax)**

\*\*\*\*HOTEL CASABLANCA INN\*\*\*\*

3 Days, 2 Nights, Half board, Welcome drink  
on arrival Friday, after 15:00hr + Dinner  
Saturday, Breakfast + Dinner

Sunday, Breakfast and Check-Out at 12:00hr

(Extra nights: €24 per night, per person, half board)

Bookings: Direct with Hotel Tel: 281 511 444 • Fax 281 511 999

E-mail: hotel@casablancainn.pt www.casablancainn.pt



[www.the-news.net](http://www.the-news.net)