



Stephanie Diani for The New York Times

The lobby of the London West Hollywood. It opened this spring in the old Bel Age Hotel.

CHECK IN, CHECK OUT

West Hollywood, Calif.: The London West Hollywood

By OLIVER SCHWANER-ALBRIGHT
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THE BASICS

The London West Hollywood opened with a whisper in April, relying on word of mouth and the reputation of the London NYC to fill its 200 rooms. That should soon change, now that Gordon Ramsay at the London West Hollywood has started serving dinner and ratcheting up the buzz. Located in the old Bel Age Hotel, the stucco building isn't much to look at from the outside, but the rooms are luxurious and airy — the smallest one is a lavish 750 square feet — and the staff is remarkably helpful, bringing some Old Hollywood attentiveness to New Hollywood glitz.

THE LOCATION

Steps away from the Sunset Strip, the hotel is as centrally located as possible in the Los Angeles area: Beverly Hills, Century City, Westwood and Hollywood are all less than 10 minutes by car. The downside: rooms facing Sunset Boulevard are exposed to traffic and noise, especially from crowds outside Whisky a Go Go. (The quietest rooms face south.)

THE SCENE

Guests in \$300 jeans and flip-flops pad across the lobby's glittering mosaic floor. They contrast with the well-dressed staff — men in soft gray suits and ties, women in pinstripes — who are disarmingly cheerful and courteous. For the time being the hotel is low-key, but it's likely to heat up when the rooftop pool opens this summer. By fall, when the lobby bar opens, it'll be a scene.

THE ROOMS

The spacious rooms are a convincing selling point: the basic London Suite I booked through the hotel Web site felt every bit the advertised 750 square feet. All rooms have a balcony or terrace, and I woke up to a sweeping view over Beverly Hills. The décor by David Collins Studio is both flamboyant and muted. A wall was covered with parquet veneer and chairs had faux-alligator upholstery, but the colors were washed out, and the open-plan suite felt serene. There was only one oversight, and it was significant: despite the renovation the sliding glass door to the balcony was a relic from the old hotel, and it didn't shut properly, letting in street noise.

THE BATHROOM

Enormous, and with enough marble and mosaics for imperial Rome. There was a deep tub, and a shower with sex appeal: an alcove big enough for two, it had multiple shower heads and a full-length mirror. Shampoo and soaps were from an in-house line, and had a pleasing citrus scent.

AMENITIES

There's a well-equipped gym on the roof, and the hotel offers free laundry for workout clothes (the next morning my once-sweaty "Camp Washington Chili" T-shirt was delivered on a hanger). The rooftop pool has a stunning view of the city, but despite its inviting Hockneyesque shimmer, it's off limits until the landscaped terrace and cabanas are finished this summer. The Wi-Fi throughout the hotel is free.

ROOM SERVICE

When I was there in late April, Gordon Ramsay at the London hadn't yet opened, but the hotel staff offered delivery from any local restaurant. My chicken salad and dumplings from Chin-Chin not only were at the door within 20 minutes, but the cost was conveniently charged to my room, too.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Nearly flawless despite its youth, with a level of service far above what you'd expect for its introductory rate of \$299 in this fashionable neighborhood. The London West Hollywood, 1020 North San Vicente Boulevard; (310) 854-1111; www.thelondonwesthollywood.com.