



LANGHAM HOTELS International

THE LANGHAM: A (HI)STORY OF GLORY AND GRACE

- **A royal occasion:** The 10 June 1865 opening of The Langham, London was presided by none other than the then heir to the throne, The Prince of Wales (later to become Edward the VII). The occasion immediately sealed The Langham's reputation as Europe's first 'Grand Hotel'.
- **Elegance in design:** The hotel took fifteen months to build at a cost of £300,000, and was conceived as the last word in luxury. Skilled Italian craftsmen were brought to London to design and cast the plaster relief ceilings and lay the intricate mosaic flooring, decorated in white gold and scarlet. The public spaces were lavishly decorated in marble and silk, and featured 15,000 yards of Persian tapestries and hand-printed wallpaper.
- **Innovation in hospitality:** Technically the building was a tour de force, with the first hydraulically powered lifts in the world, air conditioning, its own steam-pumped artesian well, hot and cold running water and WCs in every bedroom. All this was previously unheard of in hotels.
- **Extraordinary facilities:** Other services and facilities included: the only Post Office in a London hotel, an Ambassador's Audience Room, two libraries, a railway ticketing and shipping office (the original travel agency manned by Thomas Cook & Son). To suit the fashionistas of the day, corridors were designed to allow "two ladies in crinolines to pass by each other".
- **Facilities fit for an emperor:** The Prince of Wales continued to patronise The Langham, and it was de rigeur for visiting royalty and leaders to take up residence there. Even former heads of state were granted a gracious welcome, and Emperor Louis Napoleon III spent much of his last enforced exile from France at The Langham.
- **Truly international:** By 1870 the hotel had in its employ several hundred people, among whom were "persons qualified to converse in every language, from pure Yankee to High Dutch".
- **Lighting up for the 20th century:** In 1879, the entrance to The Langham and the courtyard were illuminated with the latest technology called electric light. To progressively outfit all the rooms cost £5,000, the equivalent of three months of the hotel's profit.
- **"You can call me at The Langham":** The Langham kept up with innovation and in the 1890s installed a new device called a telephone. Eventually the fame of the hotel ensured that the telephone exchange for the whole district was named 'Langham', and the hotel was given the number 20809, with no less than twenty lines!
- **"Anyone who lives within their means suffers from a lack of imagination":** Poets, writers and playwrights were among the major celebrities of the past and Oscar Wilde, Mark Twain, Somerset Maugham, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Robert Browning and George Orwell were all inspired guests at the "Poet's Corner" at The Langham, London.



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- **Visionary management:** By 1888, the hotel had gained a reputation for attracting the most cosmopolitan and fashionable visitors. The hotel's Management set out their policy in a guide issued to visitors to London: "The Executive has striven to introduce the best points of the three systems – English, French and American; the object being to combine the comfort and discipline of the first with the elegance of the second and the organisation of the third. In the dining hall the visitor can regale himself English fashion, take his seat at a well-furnished table d'hote, or if aesthetic in his proclivities, dine à la carte in the latest French mode."
- **No mystery for Sherlock Holmes fans:** A royal visit by HRH Wilhelm Gottsreich Sigismund von Ormstein, the King of Bohemia, inspired the writer Sir Arthur Conan Doyle to put pen to paper and create his first Sherlock Holmes story, "A Scandal in Bohemia". The central character, based on van Ormstein, informs Sherlock Holmes, "You will find me at The Langham." The Langham featured in several Sherlock Holmes mysteries and novels by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle.
- **Historic milestones celebrated:** In 1919 The Langham was the scene of a party given to celebrate the first non-stop flight across the Atlantic by John Alcock and Arthur Brown. The two heroes were the talk of the town and both were subsequently knighted.
- **"Doctor Livingstone, I presume":** The American explorer Henry Stanley stayed at The Langham while preparing his journey to search for Dr Livingstone in Africa. In 1993, Dr David Livingstone's great-grandson set out from the steps of The Langham to retrace his ancestor's journey through Africa.
- **Origins of The Blissful Bed:** A 1930s brochure states that, "The Langham's bedrooms were not just places to retire to but a place where the most seductive of mattresses and pillows soothe you to sweet sleep." This is testimony to our never-failing quest to provide an environment of great comfort, and confirms the heritage behind our "Blissful Bed".
- **"I'll go through life either first-class or third, but never in second":** As the hotel entered the 20th century, the famous still came, and the suave and debonair Noel Coward frequently took up a suite at The Langham when he was working on his pre-World War II stage spectaculars and such witty songs as "Mad Dogs and Englishmen".
- **Serving the brilliant:** Sir Donald Bradman (the most famous of all cricketers) and the Australian cricket team chose The Langham hotel to stay at when the battle of The Ashes was fought at Lords Cricket Ground and the Oval in the 1930s.
- **A haven for royalty:** In 1936, Haile Selassie became the second emperor-in-exile to stay at The Langham. He was not restored to the Ethiopian 'Lion of Judah' throne until 1941, when the British drove Mussolini and the Italians out of his country.
- **Genuine service:** The courtship of Mrs Wallis Simpson by Edward VIII, Prince of Wales, required the discretion only a hotel of maturity could call upon. The Langham provided the scene of what is undoubtedly "the love story of the century", and is testimony to the hotel's genuine service philosophy. As history determined, the monarch abdicated, as he could not continue without the "help and support of the woman I love".



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- **Royal celebrations in style:** After the abdication of Edward VIII, London turned its attention to the forthcoming coronation of the Duke of Windsor's brother, George VI. The Langham planned an entire week of festivities and on 11 May 1937, the eve of the coronation, laid out a seven-course gala dinner which, at 15 shillings, was priced "unusually steep".
- **Resistance proved useful:** Brigadier General Charles de Gaulle, the self-declared leader of the Free French Resistance and who later became President of France, lived briefly at The Langham, at the time of Germany's occupation of France during the Second World War.
- **"I am easily satisfied with the very best"** – Sir Winston Churchill: During WWII Sir Winston Churchill was often in attendance at The Langham when broadcasting messages to the nation via the BBC.
- **"We shape our buildings; thereafter they shape us"** – Sir Winston Churchill: The cumulative effects of direct and indirect bomb attacks during the Second World War eventually caused the public closure of The Langham in the 1940s. However, The Langham still continued to operate as a hotel for the journalists and guests of the BBC, and the Bolivar restaurant still traded.
- **The spirit and traditions live on:** The BBC bought the hotel from The Langham Hotel Company in 1965 and The BBC Club restaurant and bar operated literally inside The Langham, attracting through the years actors, politicians, writers and other famous personalities.
- **"Though lovers be lost, love shall not":** "Poet's Corner" again became a reality when Dylan Thomas broadcast from The Langham.
- **Like a phoenix from the ashes:** The hotel was earmarked for restoration in 1986 when the BBC sold the property following planning consent by Westminster Council and the blessing of English Heritage.
- **Four years in the re-making:** The Langham was reopened on 4 March 1991 after a £100 million restoration that took over four years. Everywhere in the stunningly restored building were examples of skilled craftsmanship of which bona fide Victorian artisans would only be proud. The elegance of old – a world of marble, gilt, silk and mahogany – was once again a reality as gracious hospitality and history met in this corner of London's West End.
- **Royalty returns:** In 1991, HRH Diana, Princess of Wales became a regular visitor to the hotel, once more making The Langham a destination of choice for fashionable London.
- **"Leading Hotels of the World":** The hotel is now one of the Leading Hotels of the World and the flagship property for Langham Hotels International's expanding portfolio, which already spans four continents.
- **The pedigree and lineage of a distinguished family:** Taking its name from the historic Langham Hotel in London confirms the commitment of Langham Hotels International to operate luxury hotels that offer traditional elegance, contemporary innovation and genuine hospitality.