



hotel
REVIEWS

Hyatt Regency Churchill, London

BY ANNABELLE HOOD

ROLLING OFF OXFORD Street on to Portman Square and straight into The Churchill felt both exclusive and convenient, especially as we were ushered to the executive floor for an express check-in. After wrenching ourselves away from the Regency Club executive lounge — with its moreish nibbles and drinks at cocktail hour — we eventually made it to our junior suite on the ninth floor.

Our King Executive Suite featured hip and tasteful contemporary art works, funky vases and a neutral, light decor. It had a spacious desk, large flatscreen TV and cosy sofa, too.

Opening the window of this bijou suite actually meant opening a glass door from our mini wooden decked balcony straight on to peaceful treetop views over Portman Square. In our top floor suite, we felt miles from London, yet we were literally seconds from the city's most famous shopping street.

An in-room yoga mat and relaxation DVDs were a nice touch for those whose bodies are temples; after our blow-out in the executive lounge, ours certainly weren't. But what really blew us away was the amazingly varied, freshly produced breakfast in the hotel's elegantly modern restaurant, The Montagu. The hearty breakfast fuelled us for hitting the shops, purse-strings ablazing.

ESSENTIALS

- ▶ **LOCATION:** 30 Portman Square, London W1H 7BH.
 - ▶ **X-FACTOR:** The leafy views from our quiet central London room.
 - ▶ **WHAT NEXT:** A King Executive Suite costs from £600 per night.
- T: 020 7486 5800. www.london.churchill.hyatt.com

VERDICT: 9/10





Crowne Plaza Hotel, Delhi

BY GLEN MUTEL

When you're sweltering in the Delhi heat, the cool, spacious lobby of the Crowne Plaza is a welcome relief. I was only staying for one night, so I didn't really have time to wait around, but fortunately the check-in process took next to no time and within minutes I was in a starfish position on a large, comfortable bed in a bright, well-appointed room.

Although my stay was brief, I had time to check out the Indian restaurant Seven, where the food was tasty and filling and the service excellent, and room service, which was prompt and reasonably priced. Unfortunately, I didn't have a chance to use the outdoor swimming pool, although I gazed at it longingly from my window a couple of times.

The Crowne Plaza Delhi doesn't have a particularly attractive exterior — things improve considerably once you're inside, although the grand, shiny lobby and atrium aren't particularly to my taste. But crucially, the staff were good-humoured and efficient.

However, my main criticism is the temperature of the hotel. The coolness of the lobby might be refreshing at first, but once you've acclimatised, it very quickly starts to feel unnecessarily chilly. It shouldn't be necessary to take a jumper down to dinner in India.

ESSENTIALS

► **LOCATION:** New Friends Colony, New Delhi, 110 025 India.

► **X-FACTOR:** The spacious lobby.

► **WHAT NEXT:** Rooms from £115 a night.

T: 00 91 11 2683 5070.
www.crowneplaza.com

VERDICT:
7/10

Praia d'El Rey Marriott Golf Resort & Spa, Portugal

BY ANNABELLE HOOD

Leaving drizzly London for blue skies, a deserted beach and an attractive five-star hotel on Portugal's Obidos coast was a happy trade-off. But on entering my room, something niggled, soon morphing into a gnawing disappointment that the view was not of the sea, but of a grassy courtyard facing sunnier rooms opposite.

Something was missing. I was obligingly transferred to a twin room that was in theory sea-facing, but being on the ground floor was still in the shade and set well back, very remote from those crashing waves I craved.

So I counted my blessings and left the room and sat by the azure liver-shaped outdoor pool, then snoozed for a blissfully sun-kissed hour on the quiet beach.

Next morning, after an impressive buffet breakfast, I had a quick look around the hotel's surprisingly basic indoor gym, pool and small 'spa', which consisted of a few beauty treatment rooms and my spa therapist, who had strangely scratchy fingers. I escaped to the beach and paused to look at the beautiful coastline from the top of the cliffs before heading back to Lisbon airport.

ESSENTIALS

► **LOCATION:** Avenida D. Ines de Castro 1, Vale de Janelas, Obidos, 2510-451 Portugal.

► **T:** 00 351 262 905100. www.marriott.com

► **X-FACTOR:** The clifftop location above a deserted white sand beach.

► **WHAT NEXT:** A King room costs from €105 (£95) a night with breakfast.

VERDICT: 7/10





Sofitel London Heathrow, Terminal 5

BY ANNABELLE HOOD

Staying in an airport hotel is usually no more exciting than taking the edge off a late arrival or an early flight. But after strutting the long walkway to T5's plush chrome-and-glass Sofitel, it was clear this was no ordinary airport hotel.

My tastefully styled room was blissfully quiet thanks to triple glazing. I ran a bath in the spacious ebony and cream ensuite, which also featured a separate walk-in shower. Switching on the flatscreen TV above the bath was a treat. But with the screen perched so high, the picture became distorted when I lay back and I had to get out of the water to see the screen straight on and to manually change channels. This kind of undoes the aim of a relaxing bath, so I towelled off and went to bed.

Did I say bed? More a vast, heaven-sent fluffy cloud than what we earthlings mean by the word. It seemed like only seconds later that my alarm went off and I found myself being served perfect bacon by a smiley chef at the hotel's breakfast counter.

"How can you be so chirpy at 6am?" I drawled sleepily. "Madam, it has really made my day that you said this," he beamed, dishing me another helping. Genuine service with a smile. At dawn. In an airport hotel. Now that really is five-star service.

ESSENTIALS

► **LOCATION:** Terminal 5, London Heathrow Airport, TW6 2GD.

► **X-FACTOR:** The proximity to T5 via a covered walkway.

► **WHAT NEXT:** Classic rooms cost from £125 a night. T: 020 8757 7777.

www.sofitel.com

VERDICT: 8/10

Hilton Dalaman Golf & Spa Resort, Turkey

BY JO GARDNER

Not being someone who relishes the concept of large, all-inclusive resorts, it was with slight trepidation that I booked a winter sun holiday at the Hilton Dalaman Golf & Spa Resort, the first of its kind in the area.

Despite intending to see the nearby town as soon as I was suitably rested, I seemed unable to get out of the front door, overrun with head-scratching decisions: private beach, pool or aquapark; game of tennis, squash or massage; the Far East restaurant, Turkish restaurant or gargantuan buffet; or the Champagne bar, rooftop bar or piano bar. And that was without factoring in the many watersports and evening entertainment – all free.

While it was huge in no uncertain terms – 410 rooms and suites, 21 bars and restaurants, four tennis courts, 18-hole golf course – the impending end of the season meant it wasn't at capacity. It felt beautifully peaceful at times and that was particularly true of the adults-only pool, reached from my back door by a set of steps.

When I was offered a day trip out to the Turquoise Coast on the penultimate day of the holiday, I was surprised to find myself making excuses not to go, unusually happy in my little sunny world. Besides, I still hadn't tried the Champagne bar.

ESSENTIALS

► **LOCATION:** Sarigerme Tourism Center, P011 Ortaca, Muğla 48610, Turkey.

► **X-FACTOR:** The swift access from room to pool.

► **WHAT NEXT:** Doubles from £238 per room per night on all-inclusive basis. T: 00 90 252 286 8686. www.hiltonworldwideresorts.com

VERDICT: 9/10

