

## PAMPERING PLEASURE ROOFTOP CLEOPATRAS

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With room prices up 10 per cent this year, you don't get much for your money in an average London hotel. So what might you get for £5,420 a night (plus VAT)?

The Dorchester this month reopened its rooftop suites – the final touch in a multimillion-pound upgrade. Once a sort of displaced country manor with art deco flourishes, the grand old house of English hospitality has changed as London has changed. It is still roast beef at the Grill. It is still afternoon tea in the Promenade. But now it is also Cantonese cuisine at China Tang and, soon, fine international dining at Alain Ducasse.

The reborn rooftop suites similarly cling to "Englishness" while upgrading with £3,000 Bang & Olufsen flatscreens, dimming glass around the Jacuzzi and global chic from designer Alexandra Champalimaud. It's more than I'm used to in a hotel room: walnut floors, leather, silk and beaded-glass panels; moonstone finishes;

integrated this and touch-sensitive that. The Terrace suite also has an ensuite conservatory.

The Dorchester claims its baths are the deepest in London and in these ones you can virtually dive.

Across the heated marble floor, past the Belgian black fireplace, the balcony presents me with all the sites conveniently arranged in one vista: Westminster, St Paul's, the Eye, Canary Wharf.

From the Harlequin, French doors curtained in antique gold silk frame a vast terrace, from where I can survey Hyde Park. Here, Elizabeth Taylor was told she would play Cleopatra, and the refurbishment retains a whiff of queenly excess.

This is what you get for your money: on the balcony, a sense that London is yours. And for those whose good fortune is exceeded only by their enviousness, you can look in on your neighbours. Next door is the Royal Penthouse, but that will cost you £15,000 a night.

**Peter Barber**

*www.thedorchester.com*

