

## TEN MANCHESTER STREET

Marylebone, London W1 (0870 111 1626; [tenmanchesterstreethotel.com](http://tenmanchesterstreethotel.com))

### FIRST IMPRESSIONS

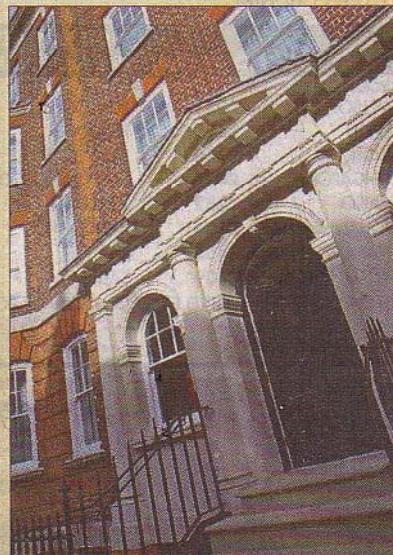
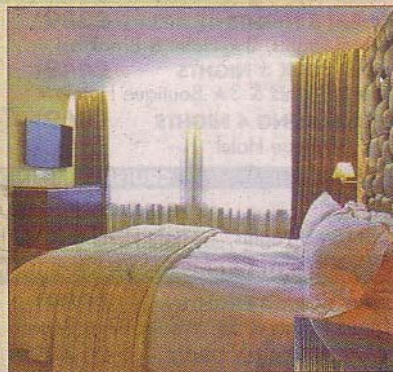
The handsome Georgian façade and big black door of the Bespoke Hotel Company's latest offering makes it appear not unlike a certain other No 10. In fact, given its Marylebone location, and no clue anywhere outside that this might actually be a hotel, you could easily be walking into one of Tony and Cherie's post-Downing Street portfolio properties. The hotel clues don't exactly come thick and fast once you've entered, either. The small, black-marble-floored reception area contains a brace of plush, red armchairs by Christopher Guy, and a woman sitting behind a dark-wood desk on a golden velvet throne-like creation. It could be the reception area of a Mayfair hedge fund, to the extent I almost announce that I have an appointment and not a reservation. My details, on a sheet of embossed A4, are produced from a concertina file. No impersonal tip-tapping away on a computer here. On the wall hang lovely large black-and-white prints with London street scenes and architectural details of the capital's buildings. I'm guessing that the hotel's jetsetting business clients need the odd reminder of where in the world they are.

### THE ROOMS

All the ingredients of an upscale city centre boutique hotel room are present and correct in my junior suite: Egyptian-cotton bed linen with a thread count off the scale; two enormous flat-screen TVs – one facing the seating area, and one the bed; muted colours on the walls; minibar with a comedy pricelist; plush velvet headboard; rain shower; Aveda toiletries; electrically operated curtains that, because I'm easily amused, get opened and closed half a dozen times. It's all deeply lovely but, equally, deeply unexciting. This is no criticism. I imagine it's a conflict that luxury hotel designers face constantly.

### THE FOOD

On the hotel's covered heated cigar terrace I have a Meantime beer (Bespoke's decision to serve pilsner and pale ale from a London microbrewery helps, along with the prints, to give the hotel some sense of place), followed by a tour of the walk-in humidor. Then it's in to dinner, eaten perched on a sofa fractionally too deep and low for you to reach the table in comfort. The dining room, divided from the cocktail lounge by a Japanese-style lacquered screen and lit with dimmed pin lights, is small but cosy, the walls and fabrics in deep, rich shades of browns and golds, the sound of the rain now pounding against the windows making it feel even cosier. The menu has just four starters and four main courses which, as someone paralysed



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by the anxiety of choice, I like. The waiter strongly recommends the burger. I order the beef fillet. He brings the burger anyway. I point out the mistake, and he retreats to the kitchen with the offending object from where, because people who work in expensive hotels tend to take these things seriously, I half-expect to hear a single shot ring out. The beef, when it arrives 45 minutes later, is accompanied, not by the new potatoes I ordered, but by five thick-cut chips standing upright in a small copper saucepan. I have no desire to add to the man's woes and so eat up. The beef is delicious. Breakfast is delicious too, though at £18.50 for the full English, and that's before the 12.5% service charge is added, you'd be disappointed if it was anything else.

### THE VERDICT

Friendly, attentive staff, great food and lovely, if rather unadventurous, interiors. Ten Manchester Street's location, in a quiet part of Marylebone, could work for those who want to be within walking distance of the West End, but feel the need for a peaceful bolthole.

### THE COST

Doubles from £169, room only. Junior suites from £359. Main courses from £12.50.