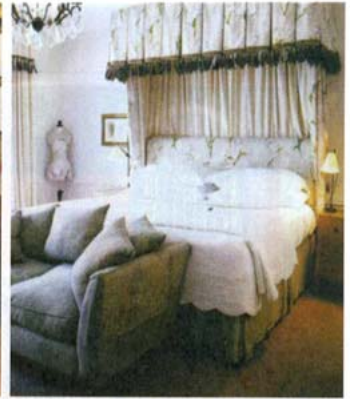


LOCAL FACES

INN STYLE

Christine Samuelian's latest book provides a guide to the most elegant hotels in the capital. **Belinda Fisher** uncovers the NW8 resident's favourite rooms to rent



The Covent Garden Hotel

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Writer, editor and media consultant Christine Samuelian has suggested I meet her at Primrose Hill Books, one of her favourite places near her home. It's an appropriate rendezvous considering we're getting together to talk about the book she's just written, *London Hotels & More*.

"I love living in St John's Wood. There is a real village feel to the whole area yet it's still central. I especially love Regent's Park and Primrose Hill."

Having spent much of last year writing *London Hotels & More*, Samuelian has hotels on the brain. She's clear on what makes a hotel stand out "A good hotel will have a flavour to it and bring out an emotion. A lot of this comes down to the interiors and how the hotel is designed."

Seductive photographs present every one of these hotels in a deliciously captivating light, but Samuelian has her own personal preferences. "One of my favourite hotels in London is the Covent Garden Hotel. It has a theatre-feel about it, an old-world, quirky edge. I'll never tire of the way the owner/interior designer Kit Kemp mixes old and new together. She travels a lot and finds amazing stuff. She'll put a contemporary chair on top of an antique carpet and it really works."

Kemp's distinctive 'modern English' style is highlighted in three other of the carefully chosen hotels in the book (The Soho Hotel, Number Sixteen and Charlotte Street Hotel). The look of these hotels sits midpoint along the design continuum of those chosen to grace the book's pages. For old-school maximalism where almost every



surface is covered with something antique, Miller's Residence in Notting Hill transports visitors into a world of eccentric, individually chosen interiors. Turn to the relatively new Zetter in Clerkenwell for fresh and contemporary bedrooms decorated with Eley Kishimoto textiles, and bathrooms punctuated with coveted Elemis products.

Despite her background of writing for the likes of *Wallpaper**, *Vogue*, *Conde Nast Traveller* and *The New York Times*, Samuelian is refreshingly realistic about what people should take away from the book's beautiful subject matter. "A good hotel should be a total fantasy, and taking that fantasy into your own home just isn't practical."

So from a practical view, what are the key elements in the perfect hotel room? According to Samuelian the essentials are clear – a big bathroom and a comfortable bed. But it's definitely the details, not the basics that make this a must-read not only for visitors but also for Londoners, who perhaps only make it as far as the foyer or the bar: order a Scottish beer if you find yourself at The Connaught; say hello to the lady in the Claridge's

bathroom who turns on the tap; for amazingly comfortable beds, book into the Number Sixteen Hotel and for a spot of history check into Brown's where Alexander Graham Bell made the UK's first telephone call and Rudyard Kipling penned *The Jungle Book*.

As the title implies, *London Hotels & More* also supplies a sensitively chosen selection of hot spots for each hotel's neighbourhood. "When people travel, they don't want to go to far afield from their

hotel if they don't have to," says Samuelian. "They definitely don't want to feel like a stranger in the neighbourhood they're staying in." With nostalgic postcards in the back and a quintessentially English wallpaper pattern on the front cover – anyone armed with *London Hotels & More* will feel right at home in the capital.



London Hotels & More is published by Taschen

CHRISTINE'S NW HOT SPOTS:

- Anna, clothing boutique – 126 Regent's Park Road NW1
- Primrose Hill Bookshop
- Press, clothing boutique – 3 Erskine Road NW3
- Marine Ices, ice cream fun for kids in Chalk Farm
- Camden Market, great for vintage furniture
- Swiss Cottage Leisure Centre, "the best thing to happen to the area in ages"
- The Roundhouse
- The Food Market near Hampstead Theatre on a Wednesday "especially the coffee stand – they have some of the best coffee I've ever had"
- The view from Primrose Hill