



This is one of the coolest hotels I've stayed in

Danielle Lett heads to London to check out The Andaz – an historic hotel in the heart of the city

If you're like me, chances are you hate January. It's cold and wet. Payday seems ages away. And a lot of your mates are doing Dry January. Not me though. While I've done it twice before, I need a drink to get me through what feels like the longest month of the year.

To combat the winter blues I thought a long overdue trip to London would be a great way to help see in the new year.

A quick getaway was in order – albeit overnight – so I made my way to The Andaz Liverpool Street in London.

I've always wanted to stay here. Whenever I get the train into the city and leave the station, I have to walk past it.

Besides being a great day out, I love how easy it is to get to the capital from East Anglia (from Colchester it's about 58 minutes on the train, 1 hour and 14 minutes from Ipswich, and 1 hour 51 minutes from Norwich – all direct).

Mum and I checked in on a Saturday afternoon so we could see what all the fuss was about.

BELOW:
The Andaz Hotel at
London Liverpool
Street

RIGHT, TOP:
Lamb souvlaki wrap

RIGHT, BOTTOM:
Fondant au chocolat

Pictures:
THEANDAZ/
DANIELLE LETT

As you approach The Andaz, you can't help but marvel at its aesthetics – nor its interesting history.

The hotel was relaunched as a Hyatt in 2007, but its origins as a hotel go back hundreds of years. In 1884, it opened as the Great Eastern Hotel where the original Bethlehem (Bedlam) hospital once stood in the 1200s.

Today, the Grade II-listed building houses 267 rooms (including 15 suites), successfully marrying the hotel's long heritage with bold contemporary design.

Throughout the lobby there are vibrant pops of colour and plush velvet seating, with art adorning the walls at every turn. A feature wall behind the front desk is by art collective Le Gun, and the Rhino is by famous graffiti artist Otto Schade (the original art is in Shoreditch and was replicated for the lobby).

Our host, Ryan, gave us an incredibly warm welcome – with complimentary Champagne, of course.

Usually I love doing things online where I can, but nothing

beats checking in with someone behind the desk and having a chinwag (although according to the website there is a digital option for checking in if you're looking for something less human).

Ryan handed me the key, and we made our way up to room 216.

"Wow", we both said, as we hauled in our cases. The rooms at The Andaz tick all of the boxes. Luxurious. Spacious. And comfortable.

Our accommodation paired muted grey walls with accents of mustard and plum. Gentle lighting kept the space feeling cosy against the sky-high ceilings. And opening the windows gives views across some of London's iconic skyscrapers, as well as the hustle and bustle of Bishopsgate below.

And I mustn't forget the bathroom. It was bright and spacious, the shower was huge, the lighting was perfect for applying make-up, and there were full-sized bottles of T-London products.

Other amenities included a fully-stocked complimentary mini-bar, a Nespresso coffee machine with pods, and 55-inch TV. The hotel is also pet-friendly, and offers in-room spa treatments if you're looking to unwind.

But it was London on a Saturday night, and there was no time to relax. We were keen to head out for a bit of exploration before dinner. Mum and I recently returned from Las Vegas, so fancied trying our luck in Leicester Square with a gamble. Sadly, we didn't win more than a tenner.

Back at the hotel and being right next to Liverpool Street there's plenty to do within walking distance. You've got Shoreditch hotspots such as Old Spitalfields Market, Brick Lane and Columbia Road Flower Market. There's a plethora of restaurants, pubs, and bars to check out, and if you want to go further afield, other nearby tube stops include Moorgate Railway, Aldgate and Shoreditch High Street, all with great connections to take you where you need to go.

Anyway, back to dinner. Dining

options at The Andaz are vast, and there really is something for every taste and budget. You've got Eastway Brasserie which offers a relaxed dining experience with a focus on high-quality British classics; contemporary pub Lady Abercorn's Pub & Kitchen; the elegant 1901 Wine Lounge; and authentic Japanese restaurant Miyako.

But we were booked into Rake's Café.

Spread across three distinct rooms, the interiors at Rake's are amazing. Lots of greenery, more plush velvet to plonk yourself on, and low, atmospheric lighting.

As we sat down, our waiter brought us our menus (and a bottle of wine) – and everything on offer sounded amazing.

To start, I ordered the calamari and shrimp, which came with saffron aioli and chilli gremolata, while mum had the cured salmon, served with with tequila sunrise, pressed cucumber, smoked cod mayo and avocado cream celeriac remoulade.

As much as I love seafood, I can sometimes be wary of calamari as it's often overcooked, but this was perfection – and the crispy breadcrumbs really added to the texture. The prawns were great, too, and the saffron aioli was gorgeous. Really rich and creamy, and the perfect accompaniment.

The cured salmon looked as good as it tasted. In fact, all of the dishes were presented really well.

I'm a sucker for presentation, so hats off to whoever plated up the dishes.

Now, onto the mains. I had the beef shortrib, cooked in a barbecue glaze and served with creamy truffle mash and green peas. Mum ordered the slow-braised lamb leg souvlaki wrap with mixed vegetables, tzatziki sauce, and fries.

My beef was tender, falling off the bone as soon as I put my fork in it. Paired with the truffle mash, it was heavenly.

And the lamb wrap was fantastic. The lamb itself was flavourful and the wrap must've been baked that day, it really did taste fresh and homemade. I liked that the chips were nice and





crispy, too.

By this point, we were stuffed, but the dessert menu was too tempting to ignore. This is the perfect time of year for those warming, rich desserts filled with chocolate, so of course I went for the fondant au chocolat, served with vanilla ice cream and a cherry compote.

As I dug in, my spoon I was met with the most delicious, viscous chocolate filling. Paired with the warm ice cream, it was wonderful.

Mum ordered the mille-feuille, which is a rich pastry slice served with lush cream, caramel, pecans. Neither of us had eaten mille-feuille before, but mum said it's her new favourite dessert. It was a culinary work of art, and ideal if you want something not-too-sweet to round off the night.

The next morning we headed down to the Grade II listed 1901 Ballroom. An impressive space with dramatic ceilings and an original stained glass dome that survived two world wars. Definitely the fanciest place I've ever had breakfast.

It was buffet affair, so pretty

much whatever you fancied, they had. Think sausages, bacon, eggs, cold cuts, cheese, a plethora of fruit, pastries, cereals, and even a bar where they were serving freshly-pressed juices. I'm never usually hungry when I wake up, but managed to tuck into a small plate of scrambled eggs, sausages, bacon, and fruit - washed down with a black coffee. This had to be one of the nicest hotel breakfasts I'd ever eaten - and I couldn't get over the architecture of the ballroom it was served in.

Once we'd eaten, we checked out said goodbye to The Andaz. I've stayed in a lot of hotels in London (usually when I'm in the city overnight for gigs and nights out), but this was definitely the best I've stepped foot in. The history, the architecture, the interior design, the food, and the service were all top notch. And, of course, the handy location really gives it an extra tick. If you're looking to escape and have a quick city getaway, this is the perfect hotel for that.

Prices start at £400 per night. To find out more, visit hyatt.com

ABOVE:
The lobby inside The Andaz

RIGHT:
A room inside The Andaz

