

In The Heart Of Mayfair

An Interview with Silmiya Hendricks, Commercial Director, Iconic Luxury Hotels

EDITORS' NOTE *Silmiya Hendricks was appointed Commercial Director for Iconic Luxury Hotels in January 2023. Prior to this appointment, she most recently served as Director, Member Services U.K. and Ireland for Relais & Châteaux. With more than 22 years of experience in the luxury hotel sector, she has also worked with Millennium and Copthorne Hotels and Hilton.*



Silmiya Hendricks

COMPANY BRIEF *The ethos and purpose of Iconic Luxury Hotels (iconicluxuryhotels.com) is simple: to provide iconic luxury in its finest form. Staying at an Iconic Luxury Hotel is an experience that lives long in the memory. Service is thoughtful and discreet; food attains culinary perfection yet is delivered in a relaxed, comfortable environment; and rooms project opulence but make the guest instantly feel at home. Iconic Luxury Hotels each have their own stories, traditions and character which mark them as unique.*

The Mayfair Townhouse (themayfairtownhouse.com), located on Half Moon Street alongside Piccadilly and overlooking Green Park in London, is a gloriously eclectic combination of 15 Georgian townhouses, 7 of which are listed. Engaging, witty, rich in history, and a haunt for colorful characters, The Townhouse is a place where Oscar Wilde meets Alice in Wonderland, delivering the unexpected and redefining what it means to be a London hotel. The Mayfair Townhouse is part of Iconic Luxury Hotels.

Will you provide an overview of The Mayfair Townhouse?

The Mayfair Townhouse is a new high-end neighborhood hotel overlooking London's Green Park. Curious, engaging, witty – The Mayfair Townhouse delivers the unexpected and redefines what it means to be a London hotel. Part of Iconic Luxury Hotels, this is the fifth hotel in our portfolio and offers an unexpected new personality from what the brand was traditionally known for. Bringing a new lifestyle product into one of London's most distinguished neighborhoods, The Mayfair Townhouse is the new, charismatic “kid on the block” – a product that has never been experienced in Mayfair. It is a carefully stylish, imaginative home for the modern traveler – the essence of the new Townhouse invites discerning

travelers who appreciate an intuitive, perceptive level of service and a guest who, above all, has a refined palette for curiosity.

At the heart and soul of the Townhouse is the aptly named Dandy Bar, inspired by the dandy characters of Mayfair's past and present, The Dandy Bar is a theatrical, subtlety lit, sophisticated bar where you will find eclectic signature drinks paired with smaller shareable plates. It has the essence of a private club, without the frills of membership. Free from the

constraints and traditions of a regular hotel, there is no room at The Mayfair Townhouse that has not been thoughtfully curated. The hotel bridges the gap between ritzy high-end lavish hotels and the corporate enterprise properties that currently stand in Mayfair.

Will you discuss your role and areas of focus for the Iconic Luxury Hotels portfolio?

I was appointed to the role of Commercial Director in January 2023 and lead the overall commercial strategy for Iconic Luxury Hotels, which was founded in December 2016 and is an expanding hotel company with an international focus. The collection of owned and managed hotels comprises an eclectic mix of properties, each of which celebrates distinctive architectural style, cultural heritage, and natural surroundings. Each property has its own character, traditions, and stories but they share a common commitment to delivering outstanding experiences.

The current portfolio includes some of the world's most famous hotels from Cliveden House, one of England's finest country estates, to the Hotel Excelsior in Italy which is the home of the Venice International Film Festival. The other U.K. hotels comprise the Chewton Glen, an English estate on the South Coast; The Lygon Arms, a 14th Century Coaching Inn in the Cotswolds; 11 Cadogan Gardens in Chelsea, one of London's most prestigious residential neighborhoods; The Mayfair Townhouse which sits in the heart of exclusive Mayfair; and the newest addition to the collection, The Chelsea Townhouse, which opened its doors in September 2023. Later this year we will see the opening of the luxurious Palm House Hotel in Palm Beach, Florida.

Iconic Luxury Hotels is part of L+R Hotels, a family-owned global hotel investment and



management company with an extensive portfolio of more than 115 hotels, with 23,000 bedrooms across the U.K., Europe, the U.S., and the Caribbean. It is an evolving collection, ranging from select service hotels in Europe's most sought-after cities, to opulent, five-star assets, and breath-taking leisure resorts, many of which are in the world's most exclusive locations, including Barcelona, Grand Cayman, Ibiza, London, Los Angeles, Mallorca, Monte Carlo, Turks and Caicos, Venice, and more.

Prior to my appointment, I held the role of Director of Member Services for the U.K. and Ireland for Relais & Châteaux, a global association of 580 individually owned and operated luxury hotels and restaurants, which included several of Iconic Luxury Hotels properties, including Chewton Glen, Cliveden House, and 11 Cadogan Gardens, and I have more than 22 years of experience in the luxury hotel sector in the U.K., Middle East, and Asia. I am commercially driven, energetic, and passionate about the hospitality sector, and my role is to support the growth of the Iconic brand and the Iconic portfolio.

Will you highlight The Mayfair Townhouse's suite product and other offerings?

The suite product at The Mayfair Townhouse is surprising and unexpected like much of the property. When we began the complete renovation and refurbishment of the hotel, which comprises of 15 Georgian townhouses, 7 of which are listed, spanning two-thirds of Half Moon Street in the heart of London's Mayfair, we made a very conscious decision to create a “townhouse” model that is without the constraints of a traditional hotel. We focused on giving our guests exactly what they wanted when choosing a city hotel, namely a brilliant location and well-designed and very comfortable rooms with exceptional basics, such as beds and bathrooms, that are noticeably better than the competitor set. We focused on delivering value for guests with luxury sustainable bathroom amenities, five-star towels and bed linens, and a generous complimentary

minibar offering. We focused on delivering an exceptional breakfast in The Club Room and an exceptional cocktail bar experience in The Dandy Bar. We focused on delivering exceptionally friendly and welcoming guest services, which are hard to find in London/city hotels, but we did not focus on creating ritzy suites that would be underutilized while our guests are out of the hotel enjoying this most distinguished neighborhood with its wealth of acclaimed restaurants, luxury shopping, art galleries, and museums. Out of a room stock of 172, we have created just 12 fabulous, individually designed suites, including Garden Suites with their private outside space and a Loft Penthouse suite with a rooftop terrace area and fabulous views.

How has The Mayfair Townhouse approached its food and beverage offering?

As previously mentioned, there is no traditional restaurant at The Mayfair Townhouse, as our neighborhood is brimming full of wonderful independent restaurants and bars and, rather than seeking to compete with these excellent establishments, our food and beverage offering complements them brilliantly. The Club Room was created to provide a generous breakfast offer and serve as an area for hotel guests and locals to meet, gather, and work in during the day, and then serves as an events venue for cocktail parties and private gatherings in the evening. But the heart of The Mayfair Townhouse is The Dandy Bar, aptly named, and inspired by the dandy characters of Mayfair's past and present. A theatrical, subtlety lit, cozy atmosphere creates a place to see and be seen in the heart of Mayfair. Taking inspiration from the British Dandy actors of today, while serving the very best in classics, we tell imaginative stories through expressive cocktails. An extensive



curated list of cocktails and spirits define the menu, and avant-garde takes on the classic Dandy cocktail once enjoyed by hedonists of the area which can be enjoyed throughout the day paired with smaller shareable plates.

Will you highlight The Mayfair Townhouse's meeting and events capabilities?

The meeting and events spaces at The Mayfair Townhouse are located on the Lower Ground, the lowest floor of the Townhouse, home to The Club Room, The Den and Oscar's Study. The latter are two small and larger meeting spaces and/or private dining rooms. The Club

Room is a modern, stylish hub for entertaining and the versatile spaces can be transformed to suit any occasion, for up to 100 people with bespoke menus, fabulous cocktails, and creative canapes, all in an engaging, warm atmosphere. The Den is a semi-private space that has the feeling of belonging to the residences' owner. This versatile oasis can be used for intimate celebrations, private dining or simply a meeting of the minds gathering place. Oscar's Study is a private meeting space or private dining room that is available for exclusive use.

How do you define a true luxury hotel experience today?

This really would depend on your reason for traveling and where in the world you find yourself and the reason for your journey. But perhaps from the perspective of Iconic Luxury Hotels, we would define a luxury hotel experience as one that provides intuitive service; hospitality that is provided seamlessly, almost without effort; excellent facilities; and the luxury of time to relax in surroundings where you feel at home and are cared for by our remarkable team who have the ability to help you create memories that will last a lifetime.

What advice do you offer to young people interested in working in the hospitality industry?

Naturally, I am totally biased about this, but the hospitality industry can provide amazing opportunity to experience some of the most spectacular and breathtaking destinations in the world. The industry offers career progression from entry level to senior management with a clear training pathway that can take young people to the top of the industry where they could shape the future of hospitality for the next generation. They will meet incredible mentors and inspirational hoteliers along the way, but none of this is possible without embracing the industry and appreciating that hospitality is a career opportunity of choice, and not just a job. ●



The Mayfair Townhouse facade (opposite page); The Dandy Bar (above); The Den (top)