

“INSIDE LONDON’S TRENDY NEW ‘SLEEP COCOON’  
HOTEL WITH ONE CATCH...NO WINDOWS”

*The Telegraph*; MAR 2020

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/health-fitness/mind/inside-london-trendy-new-sleep-cocoon-hotel-one-catch-no-windows>

**The Telegraph**

## Inside London's trendy new 'sleep cocoon' hotel with one catch... no windows

A new London hotel is devoted entirely to relaxation and a great night's sleep. Our intrepid reporter went to see if it lived up to the hype

By Tom Ough

12 March 2020 • 4:30pm

• Premium



'I felt like a mid-ranking Cabinet official who had been given a nice berth in a post-apocalyptic bunker' | CREDIT: Heathcliff O'Malley

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It takes some guts to open a sleep hotel next to Piccadilly Circus. I mean, it’s like Piccadilly Circus there! That’s why I knew Zedwell, the new hotel, deserved credit.

Maybe they’d created an oasis of slumber in perhaps the last place I would ever willingly sleep, or maybe they’d had the chutzpah to pretend they could. Either way, you’ve got to salute the audacity.

In the run-up to [World Sleep Day](#), which falls on Friday 13 March, I went to spend a night there. Via its promotional bumf, Zedwell bills itself as a “private sanctuary” containing “cocoon” that are “crafted to give your body and mind what is needed for absolute rest”.

Though it doesn’t say so explicitly, the hotel’s USP is that it might just give you one of the best nights you’ve ever had (sleep-wise).

What it’s not going to give you is a great view of the capital. Virtually none of the 721 rooms have windows (to “remove distractions from the world outside”), which I must confess sounded an awful lot like a drawback. Then again, anything would be better than my bedroom at home, which is a flat two floors above a Domino’s on a busy and polluted main road in east London.

I can usually get by with wax earplugs, an eye mask, and the white noise of an air purifier, at least until a particularly heavy lorry rumbles past.

On the whole, though, I don’t fall asleep so much as frogmarch myself to the Land of Nod. Surely Zedwell will clear that low bar, I thought. I might not catch 40 winks, but I’d be happy with 30.

It was a Wednesday evening when I went to stay. Not only is the hotel next to Piccadilly Circus, it is also a building site. About a third of the rooms are currently bookable, but the rest are still being finished. So are the lounge, yoga studio, and rooftop bar.

You wouldn’t know it from the entrance hall, though; its quiet expanse is filled not by sawing and clanging but lo-fi beats and the scent of jasmine.

Unbelievably, this was once the site of the Trocadero’s massive gaming arcade, which I remember as a noisy, epilepsy-inducing haven for nerd and tourist alike. And look at it now, with its soft lighting and vertical slats of oak. Sonic the Hedgehog must be spinning in his grave.

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You check in via tablet, which spared me the sleep-wrecking trauma of interacting with a fellow human. I went upstairs to my room, which, sure enough, was unambiguously windowless.

There was a grey tiled floor, an en suite behind a translucent screen, and a white mattress and duvet within a sort of hollow, open-sided oaken cube. There wasn't much else: no chair, no desk, no kettle, no TV, and no noise, either, apart from the breathy hum of the air conditioning.

I had a photographer with me, but once he'd left I had just a lone succulent, hanging pensively below a light, for company. With no window and no discernible outside noise, I felt oddly dislocated; lonely but well looked-after. It was as if [Covid-19](#) had got completely out of hand and I, a mid-ranking Cabinet official, had been given a reasonably nice berth in a post-apocalyptic bunker.

I lay on the bed, which was futon-low and pleasantly squashy, to ponder my situation, and slowly became aware that my muscles had fallen into relaxation. It wasn't even 7pm and I felt something like sleepiness. I had dinner plans, so I forced myself outdoors again, but it was a promising start.

Two hours, one dinner and a single pint later, I returned. I had a hot shower, since that's supposed to help with falling asleep, and turned the lights down low. Shortly after 11pm, which is pretty early for me, I turned the lights out (having carefully noted how to find the switch in the dark, so as not to be trapped in sightless gloom for the rest of my life).

And then, I tossed and turned, turned and tossed. I could feel that my heart was beating more strongly than it should have been. It took me an hour to get to sleep, and I woke several times in the night. I'd liked being able to precisely adjust the temperature, but the air conditioning seemed to dry me out. My night's sleep felt attritional.

When I woke at 8am, the room was as dark as it was when I'd turned the lights off. I showered, dressed, and left the building, glad to get some sun on my skin.

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'I tossed and turned, turned and tossed' | CREDIT: Heathcliff O'Malley

The problem with assessing the extent to which Zedwell is as sleep-friendly as it would like to be is that sleep is such a complex system. I hadn't had a particularly good night's sleep, but maybe I'd been imperceptibly more stressed than usual, or maybe something about my dinner had stopped me metabolising the pint efficiently.

Maybe I'd have had a worse night's sleep at a different hotel.

I hunted diligently for answers. James Wilson, a sleep expert who goes by "[the Sleep Geek](#)", spoke to me on the phone. "They're trying to do it right," he said of Zedwell's management, praising the noise reduction and the mood lighting. "But maybe they could do the emotional side better."

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Feeling at home, Wilson explained, is fundamental to good sleep. When professional footballers sleep in hotels before games, he advises them to bring something that smells of their partner. If they’re youth players, he suggests a pillowcase that smells of familiar washing powder.

A family photo might be similarly helpful. The hotel, he suggested, could make such a recommendation to guests before they arrive.

Not having a window, he said, “probably confuses the body”. It might not have hindered my getting to sleep on that particular occasion, but it might have made me feel less alert in the morning. Natural light regulates your body clock. “Your body needs that progress from daylight to darkness.”

Zedwell makes for a good-value night in central London, but my dispiriting conclusion was that the best place for sleep is almost always home. I returned to my noisy, polluted flat for one of the best sleeps I’ve had this year.