

Prestonfield House  
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From grand dames to new boutique openings, these are the Edinburgh hotels that will make your trip to Auld Reekie exceptional

MELANIE MCDONAGH | LUCIANA BELLINI  
2 DAYS AGO



The charm of Edinburgh, if you live in London, is that it has all the familiar trappings of a capital – the shops! The National Gallery! – only it is blessedly compact, with a spectacular topography. Plus there's the lure of its literary history, cobbled streets and beautiful architecture.

If you are planning to escape the capital for a Scottish weekend, you can get there in four and a half hours by train, taking in some of the finest views in Britain from Durham northwards along the sea.

Here are three of the best hotels in the city, housed in historic buildings and a brief – less than 15 minutes - walk from the city's principal Waverley Station.

## Prestonfield House



THE GRAND ENTRANCE OF PRESTONFIELD HOUSE

PRESTONFIELD HOUSE

Think of all the things you want from the perfect Scottish hotel and Prestonfield House may have them all. It's less than ten minutes by taxi from Waverley station, which you'll chug into from London, and yet somehow in the country, in 20 acres of its own, and next to 650 acres of royal Holyrood Park. The house dates from 1687 but its foundations are much older, going back to a Cistercian monastery on the same site. It's the first place where rhubarb was grown in Scotland from seeds brought from China, meaning its descendants are still in the garden. The rhubarb theme is evident indoors in the stripey carpets and wallpaper and the rhubarb pink ceiling in the restaurant (aptly called Rhubarb).

If you like original family portraits there are any number here — and, come to that, sixteenth century tapestries from Mortlake — but there are also clever design elements to lighten the mood. Think trompe l'oeil silk swag wallpaper right next to the luxuriously draped curtains, and leopard print carpet and footstools to help you climb into your large, comfortable bed.

Historic houses can be staid; not this one. Each of the 18 bedrooms has its own pieces, its own flair. And if that weren't enough, the toiletries are Penhaligon's Blenheim Bouquet. James Thomson, the owner, has a taste for stage design and it shows everywhere you turn. There's a Roberts radio playing when you come into your room, and the scent of delicious fragrance sticks; you feel spoiled from the off.

The restaurant is very good indeed. At breakfast you can have the full Scottish, so pudding (white and black) as well as bacon, sausage and the lot. And if you precede this with porridge, you're set up for the day. There's a simple, less expensive menu available at lunchtime (bring on the fish pie) and at dinner the full works; I had a memorable dressed crab under a sweetened crust, a fine Chateaubriand and an excellent tarte tatin. Yum. There's an excellent wine list, including superb Beaune. Tea is a thoughtful combination of the traditional and dainty, so there are savoury tartlets and beetroot blini followed by sandwiches and rolls (there was a very good Coronation egg), scones with flavoursome jam and a dainty dessert layer. At £60, it's cheaper than the London equivalent. Staff are friendly and attentive.

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Edinburgh grandees come here, plus occasional royals (the Queen Mother was a fan of the house), and I can see why. Indeed, the old dining room now used for private parties, with its painted panels showing the sights of the Grand Tour, once hosted the bigwigs of the Scottish Enlightenment; it's a lovely space. Add to all this that you're a pleasant 20-minute walk from Arthur's Seat, and really you can't ask for more.

*Room start at £375. [prestonfield.com](http://prestonfield.com)*