

LIFE

# One of the Best New Places to Stay in London Isn't a Hotel

Templeton House, a restored 18th century villa, offers city living with all the comforts of a country estate.

BY KEN RIVADENEIRA | LIFE | APR 22, 2019



Photos courtesy of Templeton House

London has no shortage of well-appointed apartments, hotels and townhouses that visitors can rent for an extended stay. But like New York, the city can feel oppressively dense. Even at the top end of the rental property market, visitors can expect cramped bedrooms, narrow galley kitchens and, if they're lucky, a confining patio surrounded by other buildings and prying eyes. None of these options are particularly appealing for families who prefer open spaces, airy accommodations and utmost privacy. That's who property developers David and Laura Rich-Jones want to attract with their newly restored Templeton House.

As part of the Rich-Joneses' Richstone Collection of luxury homes, the 3-acre, 18th century estate—situated within the city of London in the tree-lined neighborhood of Roehampton—creates a self-contained, quintessentially British ambience ideal for families and large groups. But the couple, who also own a similar villa concept in Provence called *La Bergerie*, strove to create a show stopping home that is at once relaxing and unfussy. They liken the style and level of service of Templeton House to that of a superyacht: elegant, efficient and intuitive. “And it's a stewardship,” says Laura Rich-Jones. “We wanted to guarantee the preservation of this home and be true to its heritage.”

*Worth* visited the home as it announced its official opening as a guest villa to discover how much it differs from the traditional offerings in London, and we spoke with some of the notable collaborators behind its six-year, multimillion-dollar renovation.

## THE RESTORATION



There are countless pitfalls to restoring a historic home. Beyond the multitude of inspections and permits required of such a project, there are subjective decisions that determine how timeless the outcome is. When the Rich-Joneses purchased the home six years ago, it was by all accounts in severe disrepair following decades of use as a 40-room boarding house for a nearby day school. “It was collapsing in the most romantic way,” said landscape architect Todd Longstaffe-Gowan during the villa’s launch event, describing crumbling plasterwork, dilapidated infrastructure and overgrown foliage among many of the challenges.

Built in 1786 as part of the large Grove House Estate in nearby Richmond Park, the 35,000-square-foot Georgian home housed various nobles and politicians—Winston Churchill even lived here for a year when his cousin, Freddie Guest, owned the home. David Rich-Jones, whose philosophy for any home project is to begin from the outside (“we always start with the garden,” he says) commissioned Longstaffe-Gowan to restore the unkempt property back to its original grandeur based on historical drawings and description. “The aspiration has been to give this place life again,” said Longstaffe-Gowan, who has redeveloped gardens at venues such as Hampton Court Palace and the Tower of London. The result is a 2-acre Versailles garden with tranquility pond that blends with the 2,300-acre Richmond Park on the horizon, giving it an endlessness that’s rare even in suburban London.

For the house’s painstaking renovation, precision was key to capturing its former glory. Each brick composing the exterior of the home and the garden walls, for example, had to be individually painted to match the original color. Portions of the home such as the loggia were carefully disassembled, refurbished and reassembled. Four-century-old oak flooring was installed. Guest rooms were reconstructed to form eight stately suites. But perhaps most notably are ceilings adorned with handmade plasterwork designed by the home’s original resident and namesake, Elizabeth Upton, the Baroness Templeton. As an artist, Lady Templeton designed patterns for Josiah Wedgwood, of fine pottery and china fame, which became bestsellers. “Lady Templeton was one of the first people to collaborate with Josiah,” said Antony Robson, a spokesman for

the Wedgwood company, which helped to recreate Lady Templeton's designs. "It's amazing to see these 12 bas-reliefs in their Georgian setting."

## THE MODERNIZATION



Beneath all the historical details is a thoroughly modern luxury home. Radiant floor heating runs through the house. Despite their classical appearance, all 136 windows are actually new, double-glazed replacements that improve insulation. Smart lighting and gas fireplaces feature throughout the house. Fashionable Farrow & Ball hues give the walls an ethereal glow. There is even a discreet eight-person elevator on the western side.

But it's the recreational amenities that showcase the home's adaptation to the modern era. More than 9,000 square feet in the subterranean level serve as leisure facilities, with a full-service spa and gym, a climate-controlled wine cellar and tasting table, a cinema with 125-inch screen and wet bar, and a games room complete with jukebox, pool table and bar. There is also an outdoor-facing 25-meter Roman-inspired swimming pool—reputed to be the largest residential swimming pool in London—along with a hot tub, sauna and steam room.

## THE EXPERIENCE



Each of the eight suites at Templeton House acts as its own apartment. The rooms are named after the home's most prominent historical personalities—we stayed in the Churchill suite, where the British Bulldog himself stayed in 1919. Guests enjoy an abundance of space and daylight that is seldom seen in London outside of royal residences, punctuated with sitting and dressing areas. The bathrooms are nearly as large as the bedrooms, all outfitted in Italian marble and featuring rain showers as well as soaking tubs. “David wanted every room to feel as good as each other—each one should have equal standing,” said Joa Studholme, color curator for Farrow & Ball, whose color choices informed the design. “The style is such a balance between opulence and restraint.”

Much like the Rich-Joneses' other villa, La Bergerie, in France, Templeton House combines top-level amenities with personalized service. The resident team includes a chef, a butler, a house manager, a housekeeping team, gardener and a security officer; spa, wellness and beauty staff are also available. True to the yacht-inspired ethos of the home, the team is practically invisible yet always at the ready for any request, large or small. Want customized weight training? The team will bring in an expert to work privately with you. Need to commute to LHR via helicopter? The grounds are approved for chopper landing.

In addition to its creature comforts, the location of Templeton House is within walking distance to the Roehampton Club, one of London's most exclusive private sports clubs, with arguably the closest 18-hole golf course to the city. (Yes, Templeton House guests have access to it.) Its proximity to Richmond Park also allows guests to bask in nature—whether by cycling through the green expanse or accessing via horseback. David Rich-Jones, an avid polo player, has plans to build a stable on the grounds of Templeton House.

And that's just one of the many features still to come at the villa. A self-proclaimed perfectionist, David Rich-Jones intends to continually add and adjust the home to maintain its supreme quality. “It's an illness but a very healthy one, this OCD,” he says. “We don't get everything right the first time,” adds his wife, Laura, “but we will not stop until we get it right in our eyes.”

*Templeton House is available for short- and long-term rental from \$155,000 to \$225,000 per week or \$1,390 per person per night. Contact [info@templetonhouse.com](mailto:info@templetonhouse.com), 44.0.20.8878.5333, [richstone.co.uk](http://richstone.co.uk)*

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