

BRITAIN

The cool hotel guide: Dunstane House, Edinburgh

The city has a new design hotel that's ideal for cocktail and art lovers



Dunstane House, Edinburgh, was built in 1852

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In the West End of Edinburgh, about a 15-minute walk from Princes Street, vintage soul music plays in the cocktail lounge. Dan Welsh, the super-smooth lounge manager, is advising bar-goers on the best “intense smoky and peaty” single malts one minute while recommending the latest blood orange-flavoured liqueurs the next. Guests are seated on velvet sofas scattered on authentic Persian and Afghan rugs. Lamps emitting soft light hang from the high ceiling, with its lovely swirly Victorian cornices. Edinburgh has a new design hotel.

In a nutshell

Dunstane House comprises 17 rooms and is owned by Shirley and Derek Mowat, who bought the 1852 property two decades ago. They brought in the designer Hannah Lohan, who is behind The Fish Hotel in the Cotswolds (and sister to James Lohan, the founder of the hip hotel group Mr & Mrs Smith), for a swanky £1 million makeover, completed in June. The look is of neutral hues lifted by splashes of art and colourful furniture.



There are 17 eye-catching rooms at the hotel

What are the rooms like?

Rooms are homely yet eye-catching, with vivid colours and more original art. The paintings and sketches have been selected by Nicky Brooks of Edinburgh's Red Door Gallery, and many are by Edinburgh College of Art students. There are lots of local scenes and Orkney landscapes. Persian rugs add warmth, as do orange velvet sofas and wallpaper with a blue-and-gold peacock motif. Of the cheapest "wee luxury" rooms, No 16, which is tucked away on the top floor with a skylight, is the pick (from £139 B&B). The Mowats plan to open eight more rooms in a property across the street early next year.



The huge Dunstane suite comes with a copper bath

Which is the best room?

The Dunstane suite is huge, with a copper bath (from £299 B&B).



Small dishes at the bar are priced at £4 to £8

So what's the food like?

There is no restaurant, but a lounge bar menu offers “bites” and you can reserve tables; the best is by the front bay window. Soups, smoked mackerel and cheese fritters with chutney are some of the “smaller bites” (£4-£8), while “bigger bites” comprise vegetable risotto, salmon teriyaki and honey-glazed pork (£8.50-£13.50). My gin and orange-infused smoked salmon on toast was followed by scallops served with black pudding — the delicate seafood went nicely with the salty black pudding. The breakfast menu includes a dizzying array of rare-breed sausages, Ayrshire bacon, haggis, kippers and free-range eggs.

Who goes there?

Cocktail-lovers and the Edinburgh art crowd have already discovered Dunstane.

What else is there to do?

Wander into the old town to explore the sights (visitscotland.com). And make sure you try one of the reasonably priced cocktails in the hotel bar (from £7).



Dunstane House is popular with the Edinburgh art crowd

The highs, the lows, the verdict

Eight out of ten

The redesign is brilliant and the cocktail lounge is worth visiting even if you're not staying, but it's quite a walk into town and there is traffic noise in some rooms (Nos 4, 5, 7 and 15 at the back are quietest).

Need to know

Tom Chesshyre was a guest of Dunstane House (0131 337 6169, thedunstane.com), 4 West Coates, EH12 5JQ; B&B doubles cost from £139; no wheelchair-access rooms; single-occupancy discount of £10; no dogs

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