



THE LANGHAM  
London

## PRESS RELEASE

### A HISTORY OF THE LANGHAM, LONDON – EUROPE’S FIRST ‘GRAND HOTEL’.



The Langham, London opened in 1865, and immediately became the Capital’s first purpose built Grand Hotel and the first ‘Grand Hotel’ in Europe. This Grade II listed building has existed for 144 years and its success has allowed The Langham, London to become a member of The Leading Hotels of the World.

The Langham, London dates back to 1814 when the architect John Nash bought the site and constructed a 275ft wide mansion. It was not until 1863 that the site was then turned into The Langham Hotel; a construction project that cost £300,000, an enormous sum at the time. This project was lead by architects John Giles and James Murray, who quickly turned this building into one of the largest in London - a palace of 7 floors with 600 rooms, 300 water closets and the first ever hydraulic lifts. Two years later, on Saturday, 10 June 1865 The Langham, London was finally opened by HRH The Prince of Wales (later, King Edward VII).

In 1867, Britain was facing an economic crisis and England’s then premier earl, the Earl of Shrewsbury, President of the company that owned The Langham, was forced to liquidate the company. As a result, The Langham

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was purchased in 1868 by the Court of Chancery for only half its value at £155,715.

Situated at a commanding position on Portland Place, at the top of Regent Street, The Langham has been at the forefront of sophisticated and glamorous hospitality for over a century. From its opening date it didn't take long for such a landmark building to become prominent in the social calendars of London's elite, attracting Royalty, Statesmen, artists, writers and musicians from across the globe. As Queen Victoria was mourning Albert in solitude, many foreign potentates visiting London were left to find their own accommodation as they waited for an audience. The Prince of Wales continued to patronise the hotel so it was natural that visiting royalty and leaders should take apartments at The Langham. Other notable visitors included the composer Toscanini, poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow and even the author and creator of Sherlock Holmes, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. In 1890 The Langham celebrated its silver jubilee and was immortalised in writing by Conan Doyle using it as the setting for several Sherlock Holmes stories, including "A Scandal in Bohemia" published in 1889. In the book, the central character Count Von Kramm, was asked by Sherlock Holmes where he was staying, and the Count informs him, *"you will find me at The Langham, under the name of the Count Von Kramm."*

It was business as usual for The Langham, London during the First World War. From 1914-1918 guests who stayed continued to enjoy an excellent service. The only notable interruptions to the hotel during this period were the Zeppelin raids, where guests were asked to shelter in the hotel basement on wicker chairs and cushions. Thereafter, The Langham continued from strength to strength, experiencing a period of modernization in the 1920's and 30's. This included the installation of electric fires, radiators and coal fires in guest rooms. Noteworthy guests during this time included the playwright and novelist W. Somerset Maugham, actor and playwright Noel Coward, actor Charles Laughton, actresses Anna Neagle and Gracie Fields and the exiled Emperor



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of Ethiopia, Haile Selassie. Mrs Wallis Simpson also stayed at the hotel during her controversial courtship with Edward VIII.

Despite The Langham's popularity with London's rich and famous during the 30's, the depression had a huge affect on the hotel. Shares fell and unsuccessful negotiations with the BBC took place, to buy the building for £500,000. In 1940 the BBC was granted a part tenancy for storage and effects, and later moved some of its offices and recording studios into The Langham in 1945. During the Second World War, The Langham became a venue for a platoon of soldiers and was turned into a local first aid post. In 1939-41 air raids and evacuations take their toll and in December 1940 bombs destroyed the West Wing, setting fire to the roof and fracturing the water tank, flooding the building and forcing The Langham to close its doors. In 1965, The Langham was bought in its entirety. The Palm Court housed the eponymous Palm Court Orchestra, BBC comedy acts such as The Goons with Peter Sellers were recorded at the hotel, the ballroom became the BBC Record library and the bar, the BBC Club.

In 1980, the BBC applied for permission to demolish the old Langham building and to redevelop the site by building a new office block designed by Sir Norman Foster, but the permission was declined. Six years later The Ladbroke Group purchased the hotel for £26 million and set about returning The Langham to its original Victorian splendour. In 1991 The Langham Hilton was officially opened and the hotel again played host to a regular stream of famous visitors including Diana, Princess of Wales, Rod Stewart, Elton John, Richard Gere and Cindy Crawford, Martin Sheen and John Major.

The Langham, London was operated by the Hilton Group until 2004, when the contract expired and the management was passed to the Hotel's owning company Langham Hotels International, (the hotel arm of Great Eagle Holdings, based in Hong Kong). Under this new management began the



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hotel's re-awakening as one of the most important and stylish 5 star hotels in London and one of The Leading Hotels of the World.

In 2009, The Langham, London unveils an extensive programme of restoration that has taken five years and a remarkable £80 million to complete.

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### **About Langham Hotels International & Its Affiliates**

Langham has a legendary hotel heritage dating back to 1865 when The Langham in London originally opened as Europe's first Grand Hotel. For over 140 years, this flagship hotel has been at the forefront of sophisticated and gracious hospitality. Today, all Langham Hotels worldwide inherit the same philosophy that reflects elegance in design, innovation in hospitality, genuine service and captivation of the senses creating a truly unique hotel experience.

The group is pursuing an aggressive portfolio growth strategy using its distinctive brands and affiliate – The Langham, Langham Place and Eaton. Currently 15 hotels, including affiliates, are open or in the pipeline across four continents.

The Langham is where guests can enjoy service with poise and be enchanted by our innovation and traditions while Langham Place, the fun sibling of The Langham, is about living the 21<sup>st</sup> century through design, technology and attitude, epitomizing stimulating and artistic hospitality

Eaton, a premium four-star affiliate property, aims to surprise and delight our guests with a value-for-money proposition that delivers a stylish, modern level of comfort with spirited, can-do service.

Langham Hotels International is a wholly-owned company of Great Eagle Holdings (Stock Code: 0041) which was founded in 1963 and listed on the Hong Kong Stock Exchange in 1972.

Reservations for Langham hotels can be made by logging onto [langhamhotels.com](http://langhamhotels.com) or [eatonhotels.com](http://eatonhotels.com).

#### **EUROPE:**

The Langham, London

#### **INDIA:**

Langham Place, Koregaon Park, Pune (2010)

#### **NORTH AMERICA:**

The Langham, Boston

The Langham, Huntington Hotel & Spa,  
Pasadena

#### **PACIFIC:**

The Langham, Auckland

Langham Place Vineyard Resort + Spa,  
Waiheke Island, Auckland (2010)

The Langham, Melbourne

#### **ASIA:**

##### **Hong Kong**

The Langham, Hong Kong

Langham Place, Mongkok, Hong Kong

Eaton Hong Kong

##### **China**

The Langham, Yangtze Boutique, Shanghai  
(2009)

Langham Place, Beijing (2010)

Langham Place, Beijing Capital Airport (2010)

Langham Place, EDZ, Guangzhou (2010)

##### **Thailand**

Langham Place Miora Resort + Spa, Kalim  
Bay, Phuket (2010)

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